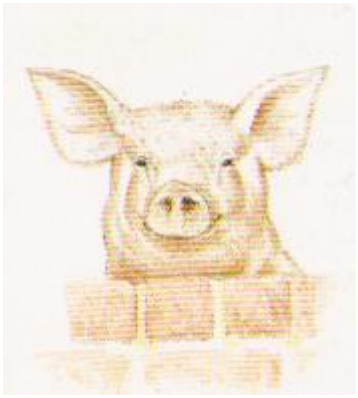
SCOTTISH PORK TABOO

SCOTTISH FOLK-LORE AND FOLK LIFE.

STUDIES IN RACE CULTURE AND TRADITION.

BY DONALD A. MACKENZIE



CHAPTER I

A remarkable and outstanding feature of Scottish folk-lore is the superstitious treatment of the pig, which involves so deep-rooted a prejudice against the use of pork as food as to suggest he existence in ancient times of a definite religious taboo connected with a body of non-Celtic beliefs. There is no race of a similar prejudice in the folk-lore of Wales or Ireland or in that of any Scandinavian country. In England, where pork has so long been freely eaten, north-eastern fishermen dislike reference being made to the pig in connection with their work. One wonders if this is a result of a fisher migration from Scotland.

This Scottish taboo is not yet entirely a thing of the past. There are still thousands of Highlanders and groups of Lowlanders who refuse to keep pigs or to partake of their flesh. Others, who may not refuse to have bacon at breakfast, decline to eat roast pork at any othe meal. The prejudice is now of more tardy survival in rural areas than in cities. Individuals whose fathers or grandfathers despised the flesh of swine have abandoned the immemorial prejudice and retain no memory of it.

Sir Walter Scott testifies as to the former prejudice against the pig in the south of Scotland. In a footnote in *The Fortunes of Nigel* we find him writing:

"The Scots (Lowlanders) till within he last generation disliked swine's flesh as an article of food as much as the Highlanders do at present."

He was commenting on the statement made to Nigel by the Greenwich barber:

"Sir Munko cannot abide pork, no more than the King's most sacred Majesty, nor my Lord Duke Lennox, nor Lord Dalgarno. . . But the Scots never eat pork – strange that! Some folk think they are a sort of Jews."

In *The Two Drovers* Scott makes a Highlander exclaim in Gaelic regarding he Englishmen who are subjecting him to a "torrent of general ridicule":

"A hundred curses on the swine-eaters, who know neither decency nor civility!".

It was immediately after the Union of the Crowns, when James VI of Scotland succeeded Queen Elizabeth of England, that English writers became particularly interested in the Scottish prejudice against pork, especially as it was shared by "the King's most sacred Majesty". Ben Jonson, in his *A Masque of the Metamorphosed Gipsies*, makes a gipsy approach the masqued monarch and say:

"Here's a gentleman's hand.
I'll kiss it for luck's sake; you should by this line
Love a horse and a hound, but no part of a swine."

One of the gipsies had previously barred the inclusion of "grunters", and Gifford, the annotator, explains this as "a side compliment to the king, who hated pork in all its varieties". On another page, the gipsies having made a reference to "a sow's baby in a dish", the annotator states in a footnote:

"Three things to which James had a great dislike, and with which he said he would treat the Devil were he to invite him to dinner, were a pig, a poll of ling with mustard, and a pipe of tobacco for digesture."[1]

Shakespeare appears to have been interested in the Scottish prejudice and the associated lore, for we find a significant reference in Macbeth (Act I, scene 3). The first witch asks, "Where hast thou been sister?" and the second replies, "Killing swine". An English witch would regard this as a commonplace action, but in Scotland swine's blood was used in magical ceremonies.

[1] *The Works of Ben Jonson*, edited by W. Gifford (London, 1816) Vol. VII pp. 372, 380, 420.

There are less respectful references to the Scottish prejudice in the English topical songs of the seventeenth century. One entitled "The Brewer" is included in "A Collection of Loyal Songs written against the Rump Parliament between the years 1639 and 1661".[1]

It contains the verse:

"The Jewish *Scots* that scorns [*sic*] to eat
The Flesh of swine, and *Brewers* beat,
'T*was* the sight of this Hogs-head made `em retreat,
Which nobody can deny."

John Graham Dalyell, the Scottish advocate and a pioneer folklorist refers in his *Darker Superstitions of Scotnald*[2] to the query in the *Athenian Mercury*, London, in 1691, "Why do Scotchmen (Scotsmen) hate swine's flesh?" , which he says was "unsatisfactorily answered, `They might borrow it of the Jews'."

Dalyell goes on to say:

"The same prejudice though infinitely abated, still subsists. Yet it is not known that swine have been regarded as mystical animals in Scotland. Early in the seventeenth century the aversion to them by the lower ranks, especially in the north, was so great, and elsewhere, and the flesh was so much undervalued, that except for those reared at mills, the breed would have been extirpated."

Two eighteenth century English writers, Captain Burt and Dr Samuel Johnson during their sojourns in Scotland became interested in the prejudice against the pig. Captain Burt was a Hanoverian officer and was consequently precluded from intercourse with Jacobites. In his sixth letter (1730) he wrote:

"Pork is not very common with us, but what we have is good. I have often herd that the Scots will not eat it. This may be ranked among the rest of the prejudices; for this kind of food is common in the (eastern) Lowlands, and Aberdeen, in particular, is famous for furnishing families with pickled pork for winter provision as well as their shipping. . . I own

[1] Collected and published in London in 1731, Vol. I, p. 228.

[2] Edinburgh and London, 1834 p. 425.

I never saw any swine among the mountains, and there is good reason for it: those people have no offal wherewith to feed them; and where they to give them other food, one single sow would devour all the provisions of a family. It is here a general notion that where the chief declares against pork, his followers affect to show the same dislike; but of this affectation I happened once to see an example. One of the chiefs who brought hither with him a gentleman of his own clan dined with several of us at a public house where the chief refused to eat pork, and the laird did the same; but some days afterwards the latter being invited to our mess and under no restraint, he ate it with as good an appetite as an of us."

Burt also refers to the Scottish prejudice gains eating eels and pike. Jamieson, the annotator of Burt, commenting upon the "taboo",[1] says:

"The aversion of many of the Scots, both in the Highlands and Lowlands, to eating pork had nothing superstitious connect with it. They could not eat fat of any kind, not having been accustomed to it."

This explanation is far from convincing. Jamieson appears to have been quite ignorant regarding Scottish pig lore.

Dr Johnson had no theory to urge in making his interesting record. In his *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* in 1773 he writes, when dealing with his visit to the island of Raasay:

"The vulgar inhabitants of Sky, I know not whether of the other islands, have not only eels but pork and bacon in abhorrence; and accordingly I neer saw a hog in the Hebrides, except one at Dunvegan."

Native writers dealing with the prejudice testify as to its widespread character. In Sinclair's *Statistical Account* of Scottish parishes we find reference to it in the heart of Lorne, for long the territory of the intruding Scots from Ireland. The Rev. Ludovick Grant,[2] says that "the deep-rooted prejudice against swine's flesh is now removed: most of the farmers rear some of that species which, not thirty years ago, they held in the utmost detestation." Another interesting *Statistical Account* record is from the pen of the minister of Lesmahagoe (Lesmahagow), Lanarkshire in the ancient territory of the Britons of Strathclyde . It is as follows:

"The people of this part of Scotland had formerly a superstitious prejudice against swine; but now there are a number reared and fed in this parish."[3]

[1] Burt's *Letters from the North of Scotland,* 1I18 edition.

[2] The statistical Account of Scotland, Vol. VI, p. 177; edited by Sir John Sinclair (Edinburgh, 1793) [3] Ibid. Vol. VII.

The most astonishing evidence comes from Galloway. Mr Robert Henderson, who during the latter part of the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century had been a farmer at Broomhill, near Annan, completed on 13th June, 18ll, *A treatise on the Breeding of Swine*,[1] his aim being to convince Scottish farms that pigs were profitable and the prejudice against them absurd. He gives an astounding and entertaining account of the appearance of the first swine in Dumfriesshire about 1724:

Within the last century (probably about ninety years ago) a person in the parish of Ruthwell, in Dumfriesshire, called `Gudeman o" the Brow', received a young swine as a present from some distant part; which, from all he information I could get seems to have been the first seen in that part of the country. This pig having strayed across the Lochar into the adjoining parish of Carlavroc, a woman who was herding cattle on the marsh, by the seaside, was very much alarmed at the sight of a living creature, that she had never seen nor heard of before, approaching her straight from the shore as if it had come out of the sea, and ran home to the village of Blackshaws screaming. As she ran, it ran snorking and grunting after her, seeming glad it had met with a companion. She arrived at the village so exhausted and terrified that before she could get her story told she fainted away.

"By the time she came to herself a crowd of people had collected to see what was the mater, when she told them that there was a diel (devil) came out of the sea with two horns in his head (most likely the swine had pricked ears) and chased her, roaring and gaping all the way at her heels, and she was sure it was not far off.

A man called Will's Tom, an old schoolmaster, said if he could see it he would 'cunger the diel,' and got a Bible and an old sword. It immediately started up at his back and gave a loud grumph, which put him into such a fright that his hair stood upright in his head, and he was obliged to be carried from the field half dead.

The whole crowd ran some one way and some another; some reached the house tops, and others shut themselves in barns and byres. At last one on the housetop called out it was 'the Gudeman o' the Brow's grumphy,' he having seen it before. The affray was settled, and people mostly reconciled, although some still entertained frightful thoughts about it, and durst not go over the door to a neighbour's house after dark without one to set or cry them. One of the crowd, who had some compassion on the creature, called out, 'give it a tork of straw to eat, it will be hungry.'

[3] This very rare book was picked from a barrow of an itinerant second-hand bookseller by the late Dr George Neilson, Glasgow, the Scottish historian who sent it to me.

Next day it was conveyed over the Lochar, and it seemed to find its way home. It being near the dusk of evening, it came grunting up to two men puling thistles on the farm of Cockpool. They were much alarmed at the sight, and mounted two old horses they had tethered beside them, intending to make their way home. In the meantime the pig got between them and the horses, which caused them to scamper out of the way and land in Lochar moss, where one of their horses was drowned, and the other with difficulty relieved. The night being dark, they durst not part one from the other to call for assistance, lest the monster should find them out and attack them singly; nor durst they speak above their breath for fear of being devoured. At daybreak next morning they took a different course , came by Cumlongon castle and made their way home, where they found their families much alarmed on account of their absence. They said tht they had seen a creature about the size of a dog, with two horns in his head, and cloven feet, roaring out like a lion, and if they had not galloped away, it would have torn them to pieces. One of their wives said 'Hout man, it has been the Gudeman o' the Brow's grumphy; it frightened them a' at the Blackshaws yesterday, and poor Meggie Anderson maist lost her wits, and is ay out o' ae fit into anither sin-syne.'

The pig happened to lie all night among the corn where the men were pulling thistles, and about daybreak set forward on its journey for the Brow. One Gabriel Gunion, mounted on a long-tiled grey colt, with a load of white fish in a pair of creels swung over the beast, encountered the pig, which went nigh among the horse's feet and gave a snork. The colt, being as much frightened as Gabriel, wheeled about and scampered off sneering, with his tail on his riggin, at full gallop. Gabriel cut the slings and dropt the creels, the colt dismounted his rider, and going like the wind, with his tail up, never stopped till he came to Barnkirk point, where he took the Solway Firth and landed at Bowness, on the Cumberland side. As to Gabriel, by the time he got himself gathered up, the pig was within sight he took to his heels, as the colt was quite gone, and reached Cumlongon wood in time to hide himself, where he stayed all that day and night, and next morning got home almost exhausted. He told a dreadful story. The fright caused him to imagine the pig as big as a calf, having long horns, eyes like trenchers, and a black like a hedge-hog. He lost his fish, the colt was got back, but never did more good, and as to Gabriel, he soon after fell into a consumption and departed this life about a year after.

About this time also a vessel came to Glencaple quay, a little below Dumfries, that had some swine on board, most likely for the ship's use; one of them having got out of the vessel in the night, was seen on the

farm of Newmains next morning. The alarm was spread, and a number of people collected. The animal got many different names, and at last it was concluded to be a brock (Badger). Some got pitchforks, some clubs, and others old swords, and a hot pursuit ensured; the chase lasted a considerable time, owing to the pursuers losing heart when near their prey and retreating. Rob's Geordy, having a little more courage than the rest, ran 'neck or nothing', forcibly upon the animal, and run it through with a pitchfork, for which he got the name of 'stout-hearted Geordy' all his life after. There is an old man, nearly a hundred years of age, still alive in the neighbourhood where this happened, who declares he remembers of the Gudeman o' the Brow's pig, and the circumstances mentioned; and he says it was the first swine ever seen in that country."

Dean Ramsay[1] (1793-1872) has an equally amazing story to tell regarding a church scene in Fife.

A clergyman of a fishing village on the east coast had informed a visiting clergyman regarding the local superstitions regarding swine, and finding him incredulous, asked him to conduct a Sunday service.

> "It was arranged that his friend was to read the chapter relating to the herd of swine into which the evil spirits were cast. Accordingly, when the first verse was read in which the unclean beast was mentioned, a slight commotion was observable among the audience, each one of them putting his or her hand on any piece of iron – a nail on the seat or bookboard, or to the nails on their shoes. At the repetition of the word again and again, more commotion was visible, and the words 'cauld airn' (cold iron), the antidote to this baneful spell, were heard issuing from various corners of the church. And finally, on his coming over the hated word again, when the whole herd ran violently down the bank into the sea, the alarmed parishioners, irritated beyond bounds, rose and all left the church in bodies."

Dean Ramsay tells that "the lower orders" in Fife retained "till very recently" a "great horror of swine" and even mention of them. "I can observe," he says, "a great change to have taken place amongst Scotch people generally on this subject. The old aversion to the 'unclean animal' still lingers in the Highlands, but seems in the Lowland districts to have yielded to a sense of its thrift and usefulness . . . I recollect an old Scottish gentleman, who shared this horror, asking very gravely, 'Were not swine forbidden under the law and cursed under the gospel?'"

Mr. J. M. M'Bain[2] testifies as to the prejudice among the fisher people of Arbroath and Auchmithie:

[1] Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character, Chapter II. [2] Arbroath: Past and Present (Arbroath, 1887), pp. 75-6. [2] Arbroath: Past and Present (Arbroath, 1887), ppè75-6è

"They had a great aversion to the flesh of the pig coming into contact with their boats. If any evil-disposed person had managed surreptitiously to place a piece of pork on board a boat before its leaving the harbour on a fishing expedition, although its presence had not been discovered till the boat had reached the fishing ground, those on board would return to the land without shooting their nets rather than proceed with their fishing with the hated junk aboard."

Dean Ramsay tells that if a pig crossed the path of fishermen "when about to set out on a sea voyage, they considered it so unlucky an omen that they would not venture off" In the writer's boyhood a similar superstition prevailed around the shores of the Moray Firth. Caithness fishermen when at sea considered it unlucky to refer by name to a pig or a clergyman. One had to be designated the "could-iron beastie" and the other the "could-iron gentleman". The pig was similarly a beast of ill-omen south of the Forth. Within living memory the fishermen of Newhaven (near Edinburgh) were greatly enraged when mischief-making Leith youngsters shouted to them as they put to sea. "There's a soo at the boo!" – meaning "there's a sow at the bow of the boat." The Rev. Walter Gregor says that "among some of the fishing population it was accounted very unlucky for a marriage party to meet a pig".[1] The miners of Prestonpans, East Lothian, shared the fishermen's prejudice against swine, and refused to descend a coal pit if on going towards it they met a pig. Traces of the lingering abhorrence of the pig extended along the north-east of England as far south as the fishing centres of Yorkshire. Mr. R. Blakeborough[2] has recorded:

"If whilst a fisherman was baiting his nets anyone mentioned anything in connexions with a pig, or *dakky*, as it was called, the worst of luck would be looked for."

The Rev. Walter Gregor refers to the superstition that "pigs have from three to five round marks ranged in the shape of a crescent on the foreleg above the ankle" and says that these "go by the name of the 'Devil's mark'. The men of several villages would not pronounce the word 'swine' when they were at sea. It was a word of ill-omen. The bite of a pig was regarded with horror. It was deemed impossible or next to impossible to cure and was supposed to produce cancer." [3]

[1] *Folklore of the North-east of Scotland*, p. 129. [2] Wit, Charter, *Folklore and Customs of the North Riding of Yorkshire*, p. 141. 3 *Folklore of the North-east of Scotland*, p. 129.

[1] *Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands* (Glasgow, 1900) pp. 290-2.

In the Highlands the devil had a swine form and was referred to as "The Big Black Pig" (*Muc Mhôr Dhubh*). When he appeared in human form he had "usually", writes the Rev. John Gregorson Campbell,[1] Tiree, "a horse's hoof, but also sometimes a pig's foot". He was in the habit of visitng young people who played cards.

"Cards are notoriously known as the devil's books. When boys play them the fiend has been known to come down the chimney feet foremost, the horse's or pig's foot appearing first. When going away he disappears in smoke and neighs horribly in the chimney.

The belief was, until recently, widespread that if one ate pork one would contract some horrible disease like leprosy.

Highlanders who have acquired the habit of eating pork usually make fun of those who perpetuate the immemorial superstition. The Rev Alexander MacGregor, an Inverness clergyman, was one of these "pioneers" and tells[1] of a Skye man, named Farquhar, who had dinner at his manse each Sunday.

"It frequently happened that the servants' dinner consisted of pork or bacon, the look of which Farquhar could not bear, and yet he often dined on it. The servants, knowing his prejudices, had beforehand prepared a quantity of the lean parts of the meat for the old man, which they passed off as mutton and which he never suspected. When partaking of it, however, he frequently said, to the no small amusement and tittering of the domestics: '*Bu tu fèin an fheoil mhaith, cheart, agus cha b'i a' mhuc ghrannda shalach*.' ('Thou art the good right meat, and not the filthy unclean pig'."

A humorous Gaelic folk-story tells of a Jock Mackay employed by a Lowland farmer who had setled in the country of Sutherland. For some years the farmer imported from Leith for the festive season a large box of foodstuffs, including a smoked ham. On New Year's Day morning Mackay had for breakfast, instead of the customary porridge and milk, a dish of ham and eggs.

The farmer began to keep pigs, much to the disgust of Jock, who had to feed them. When the next festive season was at hand, a pig was killed and on the New Year morning Jock was given a dish of fried pork and eggs. He expressed disgust at the idea of his partaking of pork. "But," the farmer's wife reminded him, "you used to be fond of ham." 'Is ham pig?" asked Jock, turning pale. He was assured it was, and he immediately fled from the kitchen and vomited outside. Hence the

[1] *Highland Superstitions* (Stirling 1901), p. 17.

proverbial saying in Gaelic when an individual recalls something unpleasant to his hearers, "You are like Jock Mackay, vomiting last year's pig!"

Members of the Campbell can used to be greatly offended when a non-Campbell reference to a pig as "Sandy Campbell".

The writer must confess to being one of those Highlander who prefer not to eat pork in any form, but for no othe reason than an inherited prejudice such as Englishmen, a well as Scotsmen, entertain towards a diet of horse flesh. During his lifetime he prejudice has been "ebbing" in the Highlands, especially since the experience of food shortage during the war. The rising generation eat ham or bacon, but fresh pork is not very popular. When the late Lord Leverhulme though he could develop Lewis, one of his schemes, which certainly did not meet with success, was that the crofters should keep pigs. In 1920 there were eight pigs in Lewis, which had then population of 24,299, but in 1921 there were only two. A native of Barra informed me that in his boyhood he used to hear that only two pigs were ever seen in his native township. They had been washed ashore from a wreck and were promptly committed to the deep again.

The rapidity with which, in some arts of Scotland, the prejudice against pigs and pork has declined is illustrated by the Dumfriesshire evidence. Mr Robert Hendeson[1] tells that about 1760 there were only about twenty swine in the parish. Ten years later they became more plentiful "and every farm kept one or two". The curing of pork began with a young woman named Betty Liddle, a farmer's daughter in the parish of Middlebie. "A number of the old people thought it was witchcraft, for they could not understand how she cold cur them with the bone in." The trade in cured hams and flitches increased quickly and in 1790 was a general business. The pioneer of the Annandale trade, which was to become so considerable, was one Simeon Johnston. In a generation the Lockerbie market trade rose to the value of about £9000 annually.

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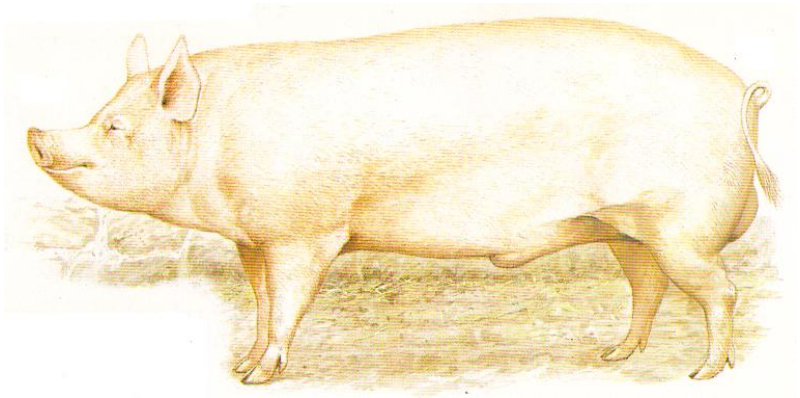
[1] *Op. cit*., pp. 19 *et seq*.

SWINE CULTS: SANCTITY AND

ABHORRENCE OF PIG.

CHAPTER II



Some recent writers have suggested, as did the editor of the *Athenian Mercury*, London, in 1691, tht the Scottish hatred of the pig and the abhorrence of pork "was borrowed from the Jews" – that, in other words, the taboo had origin in early Christian times. References are made in this connection to Christ causing demons to enter the bodies of the Gadarean swine and to the Old Testament taboos:

> "And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean to you. And the swine, though he divideth the hoof and be cloven-footed, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you."[1]

There is no evidence, however, that the early Christian missionaries in Scotland tabooed pork. The earliest of these of whom we have definite knowledge was St. Ninian, who died about A.D. 432. He was connected with the Welsh church and there is no trace of the taboo in Wales. St. Columba migrated from Ireland to Iona in the sixth century, and as pork was eaten freely in Ireland long before he was born, and continued to be eaten there during and after his lifetime, we are not justified in assuming he tabooed pork. The only reference in his *Life* by Adamnan to a food taboo concerns horse flesh.[2]

We find that pigs were kept later at Scottish monasteries and their flesh eaten by the clergy. In the reign of David I (1124-53) a royal grant permitted the monks of Holyrood to cut wood in the royal forests of Stirling and Clackmannan and to pasture swine in them. Scottish barons had "huge herds of swine" and ate pork freely.[3]

[1] Leviticus, xi, 6-7. [2] Book 1, Chapter XV. [3] P. Fraser Tytler, *The History of Scotland* (1863 edition), Vol. I, pp. 233-6.

Dalyell points out that "the duty, rent or tribute, called *pannagium*, which is generally interpreted as due for feeding swine on acorns, is named in ancient writings, such as a grant in the year 1203".[1]

If we are to assume that the Scottish prejudice was of biblical origin, we have not only to explain why the monks ignored it, but why it did not obtain among the early Christians of England, Wales or Ireland. This theory of biblical origin really credits the people of Scotland with a more intimate knowledge of the Old and New Testaments than was possible befor thee sacred books were translated into the local languages and the mass of the people learned to read and write. Long before a Gaelic translation of the Bible was available the pork taboo prevailed. Bishop Leslie in his history[2] (1578) states casually that in Scotland the flesh of fat oxen is salted "as swyne fleshe is uset in uthir cuntries, of quhilke our cuntrie peple hes lytle plesure".

The taboo must have been established before the introduction of Christianity, and unless it had been connected with a body of pagan religious beliefs, it could not have survived, as it did, the influence exercised by intruding pork-easting peoples and especially the Christian clergy. Ultimately, as we have seen, the Scottish king and certain of the descendants of Norman or Normanized barons became infected by the local prejudice, as did also the descendants of th Irish Scots who settled in Dalriada (Argyll) and of those of the Norsemen who elected to remain in the Hebrides after the Treaty of Perth in 1266.

An important fact which emerges when we investigate the swine lore of Scotland is that ther were two quite different attitudes towards the pig in early times. One cult appears, as has been shown in the previous chapter, to have regarded the animal with abhorrence; another cult regarded the pig as a sacred animal in association with the worship of the mother goddess.

Evidence of the sanctity of the pig is afforded by its Hebridean reputation as a bringer of increase and luck in agricultural operations. The Re. J. Gregorson Campbell[3] provides evidence in these connexions when giving examples of "fairy assistance". It is evident that a pig deity had been invoked by a sower of seed, and that the spell operated successfully until that sower had been interrupted by one who gave expression to a counter spell. Campbell writes:

1 *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland* (1834), pp. 425-6 and *Analysis of the Records of the Bishopric of Moray*, p. 69.

2 Scottish Texts Society edition, London and Edinburgh, 1885, Vol. I, p.32.

3 Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands (Glasgow, 1900), p. 99.

"A man in the Ross of Mull, about to sow his land, filled a sheet with seed oats, and commenced. He went on sowing, but the sheet remained full. At last a neighbour took notice of the strang phenomenon and said 'The face of your evil and iniquity be upon you, is the sheet never to be empty?'

When this was said a little brown bird leapt out of the sheet, and the supply of corn ceased. The bird was called *Torc Sona*, i.e. *Happy Hog* (more correctly *Happy Boar*), and when any of the man's descendants fall in with any luck they are asked if the *Torc Sona* still follows the family.

Here the pig is a shape-changing deity or demon.

The Lucky, or sacred, white Boar figures in one of the legends associate with Glasgow's patron saint, St Kentigern (St Mungo). Joceline, a monk of Furness, relates that when "the most holy St. Kentigern" was in Wales he "found a place fit for building a tabernacle (Monastery) to the Lord, the God of Jacob" by following a wild boar. The saint, accompanied by a crowed of disciples, was wandering over hills and through valleys and forests when -

"a single wild boar from the wood, entirely white, met them, and approaching the feet of the saint, moving his head, sometimes advancing a little and then returning and looking backwards, mentioned of the saint and to his companions with such gesture as he could to follow him. On seing this they wondered and glorified God, who worked marvelous things, and things past finding out in His creatures. Then step by step they followed their leader, the boar, which preceded them.

When they came to the place which the Lord had predestined for them, the boar halted, and frequently striking the ground with his foot, and making the gesture of tearing up the soil of the little hill that was there with his long tusk, and shaking his head repeatedly and grunting, he clearly showed to all that that was the place designed and prepared by God."1

A Black pig plays a similar part in a search for the hidden corpse of a murdered man in the Gaelic folk-story entitled "The Tale of the Shifty Lad", from Arrochar, Loch Lomong.[2]

"They got the black pig and they were going from farm to farm with her, trying if they could to find out where the body was buried."

The pig "hit upon the body in a garden" while those men who had accompanied it were being supplied with food in the adjoining house. The watchful villain stole out and slew and buried the animal. He afterwards pretended that the pig had gone away and the men departed in the direction he indicated, believing they were following it.

[1] *Lives of St. Ninian and St. Kentigern* (Edinburgh, 1874), pp. 75-6. [2] *J.F. Campbell, Popular Takes f the West Highlands*. Vol. I No XVII d.

A wild boar is a striking figure on the "boar-stone" situated at the margin of a field on the farm of Knocknagael (*Cnoc nan Giall*, "Hill of Hostages"), about three miles distant from the town of Inverness. It is incised on the flat surface of an upright boulder and above the head is a double-ring symbol, apparently representing the sun and suggesting that this was a "solar boar", or a boar of heaven".

On a flat rock surface at Dunadd in Argyll are three rock carvings, consisting of a stone basin, the imprint of a human foot and the incised figure of a wild boar, a long-snouted "rooter", like the Inverness boar and similarly of excellent draughsmanship.[1] Dunadd is an ancient fort on the summit of a rocky hill and occupies a strategic position in the strath between the head of Loch Gilp and Crinan Bay. Through the valley runs the modern Crinan Canal. Near Dunadd are monuments of the Bronze Age. From the beginning of the six century till the eighth, or perhaps the ninth, century Dunadd was a stronghold of importance. Withal, there is "an earlier legendary history extending to the beginning of the Christian era".

It may be that the Inverness boar-stone was connected with the Orc (boar) clan of the Picts. When in the sixth century St. Columba visited King Brude I., he found that his headquarters were in the vicinity of Inverness. Brude had previously subdued Dalriada and the boar at Dunadd fort had perhaps a connexion with the recognition of his sovereignty. The carved footprint is of interest in this connexion, because, as will be shown, the custom survived among the MacDonald of investing a new Lord of the Isles with authority while he stood upon a stone on which footprints had ben carved. The basin-like hollow beside the pig was probably used for libations.

The figures of the boars at Inverness and Dunadd are evidently those of holy animals and suggest that, as in Greece and part of Anatolia, there were purifictory sacrifices of swine. No horror of the pig could have existed among a people who had boars carved on rock or on standing stones. Other animals incised on Scottish pagan standing stones include the horse, the stag, the bull, the wolf and the so-called eagle or raven on the Strathpeffer stone, which may have really been intended for a falcon hawk.

Orkney (Inse Orcc, "Islands of the Boars") was for long occupied by the Picts and a curious custom which survived till the eighteenth century in one of its parishes suggests an original pig sacrifice. It is referred to in Sinclair's *Statistical account of Scotland* (1793) as follows:

[1] *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquities of Scotland, Vol. LXIV, sixth series, Vol. IV Edinburgh, 1930. p. 112.*

"In a part of the parish of Sandwick, every family that has a herd of swine kills a sow on the 17th of December, and thence it is called 'Sow Day'. There is no tradition as to the origin of this practice."

James Boswell in his *The Journal of the Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson*, LL.D., refers to what appears to be a tradition of a pig sacrifice in connetion with a loch in the island of Raasay:

"There was once a wild beast in it (the loch), a sea-horse, which came and devoured a man's daughter, upon which the man lighted a great fire and had a sow roasted in it, the smell of which attracted the monster. In the fire was put a spit. The man lay concealed behind a low wall of loose stones. The monster came, and the man with the red-hot spit destroyed it."

Pigs appear to have been sacrificed in parts of ancient Ireland. In the *Three Irish Closaries*[1] the names of different varieties of pigs are given. One is *lupait*, and it is explained as "the name of the pig that is killed on Martin's festival"; the commentator adds, "and it seems to me that it is to the Lord it was offered".

Dr. Geogre Henderson[2] draws attention to the obsolete phrase *an t-sreath chuileanach*, left untranslated in Campbell's *Popular tales of the West Highlands*, and says it should read *an treith chuileanach's dă chuilean deug* ("the mother sow with her litter of twelve"). He refers to *Orc treth* in Cormac's Gl*ossary* and connects *treth* with *triath*, meaning "lord chief", from *treitos*, which Stokes compared with the Latin *tritavos*, an ancestor in the sixth degree.

Those who would here suggest that the Pictish "Orcs" had a belief in a boar ancestor and therefore carved boars on standing stones and rock must find a solution of the problem presented by he fact tht no cat images were cared by the Pictish "Cat" clan. The available evidence is against the theory of a Pictish totemic origin of the pork taboo in Scotland. In the prehistoric Pictish Orkney village of Skara Brae pork appears to have been eaten.[3]

Dr. George Henderson found a Hebridean reference to the "mother sow" which suggests an original connection between the pig and mother goddess:

"I noted a children's game in Eriskay (island) called M*athair Mhôr*, 'Big Mother',[4] where the mother ws feigned to be a pig! It is possible a relic of early ritual."[5]

[1] London, 1862, edited by Whitley Stokes; preface, p.1. [2] *Survivals in Belief Among the Celts* (Glasgow, 1911), p.1. [3] *Skara Brae; A Pictish Village in Orkney*, by V. Gordon Childe (London, 1931), pp. 96, 149, 203. [4] Or "Great Mother". [5] G. Henderson, *op. cit*., p. 24, note 1.

While in Scotland the pig was in an evil sense a symbol of the devil, it was in a good sense, as elsewhere, a symbol of St Anthony. The preceptory of St. Anthony was founded in Leith about 1430 and it was the only one of its kind in Scotland. On its seal, preserved in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, St Anthony wears a hermit's mantle and at his feet is a sow with a bell suspended from her neck. The poet Lindsay in his P*ardouner* refers to

"The gruntil of Saint Anthony's sow quilk bare his haly bell".

St. Anthony's Chapel Ruins.

St. Anthony was reputed to protect mariners and the canons visited ships. The chapel of St. Anthony on Arthur's Seat, Edinburgh, commanding a fine view of the Forth, appears to have been associated with the Leith preceptory. There are no Scottish Celtic place-names connected with St, Anthony, who does not appear to have any particular connection with a pork taboo. He was himself in his youth a swineherd.

The "lucky boar" is referred to in the G*ermania* of Tacitus (Chapter XLV). He informs us tht the Æstyi, a people of Celtic speech, who engaged in the amber trade, "worship the mother o the gods and wear figures of wild boars as an emblem of their superstition". These emblems were reputed to protect warriors in battle. That they were worn by Celts who reached south-eastern England is demonstrated by the bronze boar amulets from Hounslow, Middlesex, and the Witham sheld boar in the British Museum. The Gauls had a pig-god called Succellos and another

named Moccus. Anwyl[1] reminds us that the wild boar "was a favourite emblem in Gaul" and that "there is extant a bronze figure of a Celtic Diana riding on a boar's back". But there is no surviving trace in Gaul of the pork taboo which prevailed in Scotland. Nor is that surprising. The continental Celts were, as a matter of fact, breeders of swine and curers of pork, which hey ate freely. They exported large quantities of salted pork, smoke-cured hams and flitches and "black-puddings", made of the blood of pigs, to Rome and all arts of Italy. The ancient Irish were similarly pork-eaters. Varro refers to the Celtic hams as *taniaccae* or *tanacae*, and Dr. Sullivan points out tht the Gallo-Roman word is almost identical to the old Irish *tineiccas*, the name for smoke-cured hams and flitches.[2] The La Tène settlements of the early Celts on the Continent are usually found to be associated with salt mines. When in the early Iron Age the Celts began to settle in Britain they continued to eat pork. Professor T. H. Bryce of the University of Glasgow in his Rhind lectures in University of Edinburgh in 1924 referred to five southern Scottish graves dating back till the first century B.C. Near the head of one human skeleton were the jaws and other bones of a young pig. In graves of the same period in the East Riding of Yorkshire the bones of pigs have been fond. These and the Scottish graves link with Gaulish graves in the Department of Marne, France, which hae similarly been found to contain pigs' bones and in some cases entire skeletons of boars.

J.F. Campbell in his "Introduction" to his Popular Tales of the West Highlands refers to the strong Highland prejudice against pork, but tells, however, that he "once found a boar's tusk in a grave accidentally discovered close to the bridge of Poolewe (Gairloch, Ross and Cromarty)".

The Scottish pork taboo does not appear to be of early Celtic origin. Nor can it be held to be a survival from the Bronze Age. Professor R. W. Reid of the University of Aberdeen, in an article on the Bronze Age relics of Buchan, Aberdeenshire, referring to the contents of graves, says that "the presence of the bones of pig in one of the cists shows that this animal . . . may have formed one of their sources of food supply".[2]

The first instance on record of Celts becoming haters of pork is afforded by Pusanias (VII, 17), who, apparently drawing upon Hieronymus of Cardia (fourth century N.C.), states tht the Celtic Galatae, who intruded in Anatolia, ceased, after occupying Pessinus, to eat pork

[1] *Celtic Religion* (London, 1906), p. 30. [2] Strabo, IV, Chapter 4, § 3, and Sullivan's "Introduction" to O'Curry's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Irish,* 1873, pp. ccixix et seq. [3] The Book of Buchan (Peterhead. 1910) p. 72.

because Attis had been slain by a boar. In other words, they became converts to the cult of Attis and the Great Mother, and adopted its food taboos. The Galatians' acquired prejudice against the pig had an undoubted religious significance.

Now, here Anatolian Celts were much employed as military mercenaries by various kings in he Near East.[1] The Galatians must have drawn recruits from the western Celtic area, and in this connexion it is interesting to find St. Jerome stating that after a period of abut seven centuries the Galatians were able to hold converse with the Gauls. When Alexander the Great was planning a campaign in central and western Europe the envoys who visited him in Babylon included Celts and Iberians, a sure indication that the eastern and western Celts co-operated in various was as allies and mercenaries. Xenophon refers to Celts being employed by Dionysius of Sicily to assist his Lacedæmonian allies in the Peloponnesian war. Twenty triremes carried Celtic and Iberian mercenaries to Greece.[2] Pyrrhus and Antigonus, son of Demetrius, both employed Celts iu their struggle for supremacy, as Plutarch states in his account of Pyrrhus.

As the Roman soldiers introduced from the Near East the cult of the Persian god Mithra into Italy, central Europe and Britain, so may Celtic warriors, returning to their western homes, have introduced from Galatia the religion of Attis and the Great Mother. Interesting evidence is afforded in this connexion by the silver Gundestrup cauldron found in the dried peat moss of Raevmose in the district of Aalborg, Jutland.[3] Figures in repoussè work adorn the various plaques and include not only European but Asiatic flora and fauna. A young god wearing a La Tène helmet may represent a Celticized Attis; the Great Mother is shown in characteristic pose, but flanked by Indian elephants; and the horned god Cernunnos is associated with the stag and the hyæna. This hyæna was evidently identified with the European wolf, as is suggested by later evidence.

We find traces of the influence of the Cernunnos cult in the *Life of St. Kentigern*. The saint renders fertile a stretch of barren soil in Glasgow by yoking to his plough a stag and a wolf.

The myth of Attis, who was slain by the boar, appears to survive in the Gaelic story of Diarmaid , who met his death in a wild-boar hunt, a bristle having pierced the vulnerable spot upon his heel which he shared with the eastern Achilles. Diarmaid, like other heroes, had evidently a share of

[1] *Justin*, XXV, 2. [2] *Hellenica*, VII, 1, §20. [3] My *Buddhism in Pre-Christian Britain.*

floating or imported lore attached to his memory. Probably the elements of the Attis cult, including the pork taboo, were carried to Scotland across the Noth Sea by Celtic intruders from the Continent.

We find in the Near East, as in Scotland, that there were two very different treatments of the pig. Lucian in his *De Dea Syria* says of the Galli:

"They sacrifice bulls and cows alike and goats and sheep; pigs alone, which they abominate, are neither sacrificed nor eaten. Others look on swine without disgust, but as holy animals." [1]

Sir William M. Ramsay,[2] who reminds us that "history shows a continuous process of religious influence from East to West", has found that in Anatolia the horror of the pig prevails to the east of the river Halys, but not to the west. He considers the sacredness of the pig, as a purificatory sacrifice in the religion of Greece, to be an important from Lydia. In Lycia "we see a pig under the seat of the deified dead on the Harpy Tomb. . . In Phrygia the custom of sacrificing the pig is proved to have existed by the curious story which Strabo tells of Cleon, the Phrygian robber chief, who was raised by Augustus to the high priesthood of Komana Pontica and who shocked the priests there by sacrificing pigs; it is cler that he was simply carrying out his national habit of sacrifice."

Sir William suggests that the horror of the pig to the east of the Halys was due to the conquest of that part of Asia Minor by the Assyrians, who never actually penetrated west of the Halys. He goes on to say:

"The boundary between the pig-eaters and the pig-haters was not exactly at Halys. In Pessinus, according to Pausanias (VII, 17, 10) the rule of abstinence from the flesh of the pig existed and this abstinence may be taken to imply general horror of the animal and the belief that it caused impunity to every thing and person that touched it. . .

Whatever be its origin, the difference between Western Asia Minor and Greece, on the one hand, and Eastern Asia Minor, beginning from Pessinus, on the other, is most striking. In the west the pig is used in the holiest ceremonies; its image accompanies the dead to the graves to purify them and the living wash with their own hands (in Greece at least) the pig which is to be their sacrifice. In the east the very presence of the pig in the holy city is a profanation and an impurity."

[1] H. A. Strong and John Garstang, *The Syrian Goddess* (London, 1913), p. 85.
[2] *Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (London, 1890), pp. 31 *et seq.*

Sir William's theory of explanation is that "the religion which prevailed throughout Asia Minor in early time was the religion of the northern race, which had no horror of the pig, and that Semitic influence subsequently introduced that horror into the eastern parts of the country". He considers that "the destination of the pig is natural to the hotter countries of the south, where its flesh is unhealthy and hardly eatable food. A northern race does not naturally share this horror."

The existence of the pig taboo in Scotland, therefore, must be due to the influence of an imported faith in early tie. The Scottish taboo cold scarcely be of independent origin.

The Rev. Walter Gregor records a superstition which may have been originally in imported tradition:

> "A mysterious dreaded sort of animal, called 'the yird (earth) swine', was believed to live in graveyards, burrowing among the dead bodies and devouring them."[1]

In the "hotter countries" referred to by Sir William Ramsay, the pigs were no doubt in the habit of raiding the sandy cemeteries and devouring corpses. The fact may lie at the root of the abhorrence of swine. The Egyptian myth of Set, who had himself a boar form, hunting a boar in the delta area in moonlight and finding and rending into fourteen parts the body of Osiris,[2] may well have been a memory of the swine raids upon graves. Attis and Adonis, who had links with Osiris, were, as stated, slain by boars, and the Gaelic Diarmaid met his death after killing a boar, being wounded by a poisonous bristle while measuring it. In Skye the writer was informed that a fresh wave of prejudice against swine was raised by a horrible happening. A pig wandered into a house and killed and partly devoured a baby lying in a cradle. Whether this incident happened or not is uncertain. The story has, however, served to keep alive the tradition of the tendency of the pig to devour human flesh.[3] Much care must have been taken to protect graves in ancient Egypt against the burrowing animal. The custom of building brick and stone tombs may well have originated in the need for preventing cemetery raids by the pig and the hyæna.

[1] *Folklore of the North-east of Scotland*, p. 130. [2] Plutarch, Isis et Osiris, 8, 18.

[3] The Rev. Alexander MacGregor (*Highland Superstitions* (Stirling, 1901) pp. 28-9) tells that the pig devoured the baby's arms and face and that the incident took place in the village of Earlish, parish of Snizort, Skye. In Malaya and elsewhere in the East men have been killed and partly devoured by wild pigs.

There is evidence in Scottish folk-lore of the mixing of traditions regarding the sacred pit and the devil pig.

"The pig" writes the Rev. Walter Gregor "was regarded as a kind of unclean animal, although its flesh is used. Soup made of fresh pork, or 'pork bree', was looked upon as a sovereign remedy for many diseases – dyspepsia, consumption, &c. . . It is a very common notion that the pig sees the wind" (suggesting a connexion with the sacred sky-boar which controlled the elements). At the same time the sinister reputation of the pig as an unlucky animal was perpetuated in proverbial sayings. "To signify that an undertaking had failed, there was used," writes Gregor, the proverb, "The swine hiz (has) gane throu it (through it)", or "The swine has gane throu the kail"[1]

In the Highlands "swine's blood is held to be a sovereign cure for warts",[2] a belief which was probably connected originally with the sacred pig. Another Scottish cure was effected "south-running water and an unction of hog's lard"[3]

Irish pig lore accords with the view that the pig was a sacrificial animal and not abhorred. "Magical swine" issued from the cave of Cruachan.[4] In Greece the pig was "specially consecrated to the powers of the lower world" and was "used for the purification of the ploughed field". The Irish ""magical swine" similarly exercised an influence upon crops. At Poltinae in Bœotia" . . . a sucking pig was thrown into an underground megaron as an offering to Demeter and Kore" In Attic Themorphia women descended to a secret chamber to bring up the decaying remnants of sacrificed pigs and they placed them on altars "mixed with grain" to ensure an "abundant harvest"[5]

Miss Eleanor Hull, 5 in her article on "The Black Pig of Kiltrustan", has brought together a great deal of material reading the pig lore of Ireland and shows that there is evidence to suggest that the pig was anciently "a sacrificial beast" The Irish "enchanted swine" a sacrificial beast" The Irish "enchanted swine "were invariably "transformed human beings" and their connexion is mainly with "the earliest race of deified beings, Manannan, Lugh, Ler and Angus"; they were "usually slain in Connaught"

[1] *Folklore of the North-east of Scotland,* pp. 129, 130. 2 George Henderson, Survivals in Belief among the Celts, p. 175; MacGregor's Highland Superstitions, p. 37.
[3] Dalyell's *Darker Superstitions of Scotland,* p. 84. [4] *Revue Celtique,* Vol. XIII, pp. 426 et seq. [5] Folklore.

There were pigs in the Irish Elysium of Manannan which "preserved those who partook of them from decay or death" The Pig of Truth" could not be cooked "if any falsehood were uttered while it was in the pot". In Wales the story of the hunt of the enchanted boar *Twrch Trwyth* closely resembles the tales of the Irish hunts of magical swine.[1] An Anatolian hunt of like character is given by Herodotus (I, 35 *et seq*).

Apart from Scotland the only other European area in which the horror of the pig has survived is northern Arcadia in Greece. There, according to Dr. J. G Lawson,[2] "the flesh of the pig . . . is taboo, and the result of eating it is believed to be leprosy", a belief which, as we have seen, obtained in Scotland. Lawson suggests that the Arcadian taboo, the only pork taboo in modern Greece, may be a survival from an ancient cult and he suggests ancient Egyptian influence in this connexion. Herodotus (II, 47, 48) sates that the Egyptians regarded the pig as an unclean animal. If a man touched one accidentally he plunged into the Nile to purify himselfe Swineherds were forbidden to enter temples. Once a year the pig was sacrificed to Osiris and the moon. In Scotland, as in eastern Anatolia, however, the taboo was not accompanied by an annual sacrifice But even in Egypt the treatment of the pig was not always uniform. In the "Carnarvon Tablet", for instance which deals with the expulsion of the Hyksos by Kamôse, occurs the passage:

"We are at ease holding our (part of) Egypt. . . . Men till for us the finest of their land; our cattle are in the papyrus marshes. Spelt is trodden out (?) for (?) our swine Our cattle are not taken awayè"[1]

The Egyptians who believed that the souls rejected by Osiris became pigs, or that evil men returned to earth as pigs, cold not have been adherents to the same cult as those which permitted of the domestication of swine and apparently the eating of their flesh. The fusion of cults and the identification of Set with the pig may have ultimately made all the Egyptians sharers in the pork taboo.

THE END S. Pitcairn.

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[1] A famous Irish pig hunt is given by O"Grady in *Silva Gadelica*. pp. 512-3.Journal of Egyptian Archæology, Vol. V, p. 46.

[2] *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, Vol. V, p. 46.