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Magic may be divided into Homoeopathic or Imitative and Contagious Magic. A belief in magic has greatly affected the lives of primitive people, leading to economic stagnation as well as to tragic loss of life.

A familiar example of homoeopathic or imitative magic consists in making and injuring a magical image of an enemy. Imitative magic is also employed to facilitate childbirth, as in the Malay States, to relieve pain, as in Celebes, India, and Wales, and to cause sickness or death, as in New Guinea.

Many acts are forbidden in primitive society lest they might, on the principles of homoeopathic magic, entail undesirable effects. Certain foods are also forbidden for the same reason.

A magical sympathy is often supposed to exist between people at a distance, such that the actions of the one directly affect the other. Thus rules of conduct are often imposed upon wives during their husbands' absence in hunting, fishing, or fighting. Infidelity to an absent spouse is particularly dreaded and avoided.

Homoeopathic magic is often employed at sowing and planting to promote the growth and quality of the crops.

A fruitful branch of magic consists in the employment of the relics of the dead. By sympathetic magic birth and death are often associated with the flow and ebb of the tides.

Contagious magic is founded on the belief that things once conjoined remain, even after being disjoined, in sympathetic relation. Contagious magic is supposed to exist between a man and his bodily relics, especially his hair, nails, navel-string, and afterbirth. This has led to many observances throughout the world. Clothing and bodily impressions are often employed in contagious magic.

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An important function of magic is to control the weather, and weather-makers sometimes rise to positions of power and influence. Magicians attempt to cause rain to fall or to cease, sometimes by imitative magic and sometimes by methods that are partly magical, partly religious. Primitive man also sometimes attempts to control the course of the sun, and to cause the wind to blow or be still at his bidding. A common practice is "whistling for a wind."

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Gerontocracy—a state of society in which authority is held by the old men of the tribe—prevalent among Australian aborigines and found elsewhere.

In Africa the political influence of the magician is great, but the rainmaker who fails to bring rain is often punished.

In England sovereigns have been regarded as a sort of divinity. A relic of this belief persisted in England and France in the notion that they could, by their touch, cure scrofula, hence called "The King's Evil."

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Things as well as persons are subject to the mysterious influence of taboo. Thus iron is widely avoided, and sharp-edged weapons, and blood. The human head is often regarded as particularly tabooed or sacred, and the hair, as part of the head. The disposal of cut hair and nails is often an anxious matter to primitive man, since these may be used in magic to his hurt. So, too, with the saliva. Knots are widely regarded as magically potent, and are therefore sometimes tabooed. A knot on the garment of a woman in childbed is believed to retard delivery, hence these should be untied. Knots may be turned to good account, to oppose the inroad of disease.

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through his name. Similarly primitive people are often forbidden to mention or address their relatives by marriage by name. The names of the dead are also frequently forbidden to the living.

A common taboo prohibits the telling of fairy stories at certain times and seasons, particularly during the day.

Sometimes the names of sacred chiefs and gods are tabooed. The same interdiction is frequently laid on the names of common objects of daily life, especially the names of objects for which men are searching, or of animals for which they are hunting. Thus in Malay, Assam, and Africa.

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The great games of ancient Greece were, according to tradition, originally funeral games. Such funeral games occur in Samoa and among the Indians of Alaska.

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Among the Australian aborigines conception is often attributed to the entrance into the woman of an ancestral spirit, and is regarded as independent of sexual intercourse. A precisely similar belief has been discovered among the Trobriand Islanders, and in the Merinas of Madagascar.

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