

maximum, like the Orinoco, in the month of August.\* The Nile is two months later, either on account of some local circumstances in the climate of Abyssinia, or of the length of its course, from the country of Berber, or  $17.5^{\circ}$  of latitude, to the bifurcation of the delta. The Arabian geographers assert, that in Sennaar and in Abyssinia the Nile begins to swell in the month of April (nearly as the Orinoco); the rise, however, does not become sensible at Cairo till toward the summer solstice; and the water attains its greatest height at the end of the month of September.† The river keeps at the same level till the middle of October; and is at its minimum in April and May, a period when the rivers of Guiana begin to swell anew. It may be seen from this rapid statement, that, notwithstanding the retardation caused by the form of the natural channels, and by local climatic circumstances, the great phenomenon of the oscillations of the rivers of the torrid zone is everywhere the same. In the two zodiacs vulgarly called the Tartar and Chaldean, or Egyptian (in the zodiac which contains the sign of the *Rat*, and in that which contains those of the *Fishes* and *Aquarius*), particular constellations are consecrated to the periodical overflowings of the rivers. Real cycles, divisions of time, have been gradually transformed into divisions of space; but the generality of the physical phenomena of the risings seems to prove that the zodiac which has been transmitted to us by the Greeks, and which, by the precession of the equinoxes, becomes an historical monument of high antiquity, may have taken birth far from Thebes, and from the sacred valley of the Nile. In the zodiacs of the New World—in the Mexican, for instance, of which we discover the vestiges in the signs of the days, and the periodical series which they compose—there are also signs of rain and of inundation corresponding to the *Chou* (Rat) of the Chinese‡ and Thibetan cycle of *Tse*, and to the *Fishes* and *Aquarius* of the dodecatemoron. These two Mexican signs are *Water* (*Atl*) and *Cipactli*, the sea-monster furnished with

\* Nearly forty or fifty days after the summer solstice.

† Nearly eighty or ninety days after the summer solstice.

‡ The figure of *water* itself is often substituted for that of the *Rat* (*Arvicola*) in the Tartar zodiac. The *Rat* takes the place of *Aquarius*. (*Gaubil, Obs. Mathém.*, vol. iii, p. 33.)