

## **SYMBOLIC ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE NETHERLANDS**



VERHANDELINGEN  
VAN HET KONINKLIJK INSTITUUT  
VOOR TAAL-, LAND- EN VOLKENKUNDE

95

**SYMBOLIC ANTHROPOLOGY  
IN THE NETHERLANDS**

Edited by

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THE HAGUE - MARTINUS NIJHOFF 1982

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*Printed in the Netherlands.*

ISBN 90.247.6175.1

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## INTRODUCTION

ERIK SCHWIMMER

### STRUCTURAL AND SYMBOLIC ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE NETHERLANDS TODAY

#### I

The collection published here was brought together to form an issue of the *Yearbook of Symbolic Anthropology*. The Yearbook had embarked on what proved to be too difficult a project — that of bringing to world attention a number of the peripheral traditions of structural and symbolic anthropology, namely those outside the major world schools domiciled in France and the United States. These smaller anthropological centres appeared to me to offer solutions whose importance was underestimated in the centres where the basic theories had been formulated. Apart from the Dutch collection, a Danish, Brazilian and Soviet collection had been planned.

The fact that the Dutch collection now appears in the Netherlands, after years of delay, shows that the position of what I called the smaller centres is even more precarious than I had supposed. It was generous of the publishers of this series to permit me nonetheless to make the points I had in mind in the context of their series.

The basic virtue of the smaller anthropological centres is that they have tended to counteract dangerous fissional tendencies within structural and symbolic anthropology. It is not my purpose here to discuss these fissional tendencies in general terms, but a good example of them, clearly evident in the contributions of the present volume, is the polarizing of structural and symbolic anthropology into two supposedly opposed camps whose leading figures would be Claude Lévi-Strauss and Victor Turner.

The inconvenience of such intra-clan feuds lies in the threat by powerful outside forces to destroy the whole tradition of social anthropology and thus finally dispose in one blow of the Turnerians and the Lévi-Straussians together. They should therefore be mindful of what unites them as well as what divides

them. The value of the articles brought together here, quite apart from their particular ethnographic and semiotic virtues, is that they demonstrate this unity in their practice, even if not always in their theory. By and large, phenomenology and rationalism are here kept in equilibrium, as indeed they have been in Dutch thought over the centuries.

When I first conceived this volume, I had hoped that van Baal and Pouwer would have been represented here, as their work exemplifies very clearly the kind of equilibrium I had in mind. Aware of the compelling force of both structuralism and phenomenology, they have used both as tools to bring intelligibility to the symbolic systems of their chosen culture area. The younger authors in the present volume have not always been fully conscious of the contradiction between these two tendencies, nor of the methods by which it can be transcended, but if all contributions are taken together they point at the same message which, in any case, is made explicit in the contributions by de Josselin de Jong, Locher and Moyer.

The present contribution will demonstrate the point made above with reference to the collection of articles presented here. In a further section, it will take up the crucial question posed in de Josselin de Jong's article, namely within what limits anthropology can be and to what extent it should be deductive. For it seems that a balanced reply to that question would provide us with a viable working relationship between structuralism and phenomenology. It would also seem that the answer given by de Josselin de Jong is very much in the main stream of the Leiden tradition. Finally, we should like to examine the relevance of that answer for anthropology in general.

## II

The present volume appears to have affinities with the work of both Lévi-Strauss and Victor Turner, as well as having been influenced by various forms of phenomenologist thinking. Some influence of Marx is discernible only in the work of Schefold. The contributions here take none of these schools for granted but abound in critical questions in regard to all of them. Moyer sums up well this eclecticism when he points out that the specific interest of "de Leidse richting" lies in the articulation of the lived-in and the conceived orders. Moreover, this articulation is, as Moyer correctly argues, proposed not in a universal model but only on the level of a particular culture area or "studieveld".



Yet a *studieveld*, in this sense, is by no means to be equated to a single culture, nor exactly to a culture area. It has, for instance, been used in the context of making a comparison between Indonesian and Proto-Indochinese agricultural rituals. The relationship between the conceived and the lived-in order in a socio-cultural unit of such range cannot therefore be established by a phenomenological inquiry, such as that by Victor Turner of the Ndembu. On the other hand, there are still important uniformities within the *studieveld*, such that structural relationships need never be justified by some blanket theory about universal mental structures, but rest — at the very least — on a broad history of communications within a given region. Moyer points out that Lévi-Strauss' own work has a similar historical foundation, even though the *studieveld* in this case extends from South America to the Northwest Coast. Thus the concept of *studieveld* is broadly consistent with the structuralist method.

As such, it is apt to occupy an uncomfortable intermediate position between major schools outside the Netherlands. An excellent example of the discomfort of this position is furnished by Locher's description of how he was caught in the crossfire between Boas and Preuss in the 1930's. Locher, like his thesis director J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, was opposed to Boas' particularism, nor could he be identified with the theories of Preuss, even though the latter appears to have come to his rescue. The ancestry of Locher's methodology, as he explains in detail, was Dutch and French, hence focussed on the holistic analysis of specific systems of varying range. In the end, this approach won adherents also in the United States so that Irving Goldman's recent standard work accorded Locher the international recognition he had deserved much earlier, for having pioneered the systematic study of Kwakiutl mythology.

Another case of the same search for articulations between the conceptual and lived-in orders is given by Kamma's article, which should be read together with his well-known book on Koreri movements. While the earlier book describes the strictly religious content of these movements in historical context, the article published here articulates them with two action systems, namely the repertoire of rituals and the political, ritual and religious levels of the relationship between Biak and the Tidore sultanate.

Some might argue with Kamma's assessment of the political relationship, as all State formations, even the most oppressive, may well have grown from such seemingly innocuous beginnings, but it remains a fact that we have few descriptions as detailed as

Kamma's of the religious and ritual transactions of this seminal phase. The feudal lord might never be able to become the oppressor he often turns out to be, if the early phases of his ascendancy did not give rise to the religious adulation, in fact to the love of participation in the State formation, so well evoked by Kamma.

During the phase of culture when ritual closure is effective, it would appear that millennialism offers a solution to the contradiction between forced tribute payment and autonomy. Koreri offers a symbolic sultanate in opposition to the physical one. It is only when we learn about the magico-religious transactions with the Sultanate that the Biak Koreri movements become entirely clear in their articulations with the lived-in orders. Kamma's article lies thus entirely within the tradition Moyer attempted to interpret.

The problem of resolving contradictions between the Lévi-Strauss and Turner approaches is especially evident in the articles by Schefold, Visser, van Beek and Creyghton. Though these authors do not seek to resolve this contradiction on the theoretical level, they all seek their individual ways out of the dilemma without becoming camp followers.

Creyghton comes close to suggesting that the contradictions between Lévi-Strauss and Turner are reducible to the contradiction between "sign" and "symbol". On this complex issue, I shall say here only that in two vital passages Lévi-Strauss proclaimed himself a follower of Peirce and that his method displays several Peircian characteristics (though not, to be sure, the vocabulary). When Creyghton writes six illuminating "equations" to specify the meanings of the opposition open/closed among the Khoumirians, she presents in fact six connotations, "interprements" or "transformations". This series is in principle an infinite one, in that the act of tying a girdle too tightly or of putting a safety pin into the mouth can always be fitted in as part of the series. This kind of semiosis is practised by Lévi-Strauss as well as Turner.

Creyghton does, however, put her finger on the real contention between the two theorists as she evokes, in the opening sentences of her contribution, the phenomenological starting point of her own enquiry, for it is at that point that a subjectivist element enters. She evades the traps of subjectivism, at every step of her argument, by reducing the sense-data to fundamentally cognitive categories. Questions such as spirit attack, barrenness, loose morals, loose bones and especially the deflowering of virgins are

never resolved in the end by reference to the inherent qualities of ritual symbols (e.g. the potency of blood), but by reference to the problems of excessive openness or excessive closure.

While this reduction is essentially structuralist, the problems Creighton sets herself are close to those traditionally posed by phenomenologists. She thus effects a skilful confluence of the two approaches.

Visser, on the other hand, gives the impression of being rather critical of Turner. She is concerned to show that the famous triad red/white/black is not really a triad but two binary oppositions. A structuralist would now proceed to argue that colour *on its own* is not analysable but only colour in particular relations. Visser however does not choose this road, for in her conclusion she calls the white/black opposition “metonymic” while the white/red opposition is called “more metaphorical”. Like Christopher Crocker, who draws similar distinctions, she seems to occupy middle ground between Turner and Lévi-Strauss.

Van Beek, in contrast, claims that his contribution proves “testable hypotheses” based on Lévi-Strauss’ theory of totemism. He manages to articulate ethnozoological classification of taboo animals with social categories among the Kapsiki (Northern Cameroons). The social category of the blacksmiths is said to be “defined” by the type of taboo animals they are exclusively allowed to eat.

It turns out that the “test” is based on a selection, made by the investigator, of six properties one or more of which are supposed to be shared by 61 species eaten exclusively by blacksmiths. The six properties were not elicited as such from informants; they were supposedly “self-evident” from “symbolic analysis”. Some of these properties are highly specific, others (like “special function”, “oddness”) lack precise boundaries. Nonetheless, van Beek raises a question of the greatest interest: why the blacksmiths, in spite of their supposedly low status, are provided with a massive supplement of protein foods. Is their low status an objective reality or is it an ideological fiction to cover over profound status ambiguity? Perhaps van Beek’s basic orientation to this question is as close to Turner or Douglas as it is to structuralism.

Schefold’s article is the most complex of this set, as it not only seeks to find a bridge between Turner’s and Lévi-Strauss’ symbol analysis but in addition appears to adopt a Marxist evolutionary model in which the opposition: use values/exchange values acts as the basic variable to explain differences between the Sakuddei of Mentawai and the Khmir of Morocco. The chief problem he

poses is what is the objective efficacy of symbolic activities — how symbolic values in a culture become “activated”. He seeks to answer it by a close analysis of some well-chosen events in each culture examined.

His opening section restates Lévi-Strauss’, Turner’s and Geertz’s methods of symbolic analysis, but without bringing out the opposition between them. He argues that none of these methods fully answers his question. This is basically because Schefold distinguishes at least two kinds of symbolic efficacy: “direct” (like the *uma* of the Sakuddei) and “indirect” (like milk among the Khmir or national flags). Where we find the latter kind, there is a “figure established at a higher level in the order which is symbolized in various rules concerning behaviour with” the symbol. Groups where symbols are “directly” efficacious are those where the symbol (e.g. the *uma*) is seen as the *equal partner* of man, where ideology emphasizes the need for equilibrium between partners, where economic activity is centred on the production of use (rather than exchange) values and where class contradictions are insignificant.

Whereas Schefold uses a basically Lévi-Straussian terminology when discussing the Mentawai, his discussion of the Khmir case follows more closely Turner’s well-known approach to the topic of milk. Like David M. Schneider did on one occasion, Schefold appears to allocate different social theories to appropriate geographic regions where they fit best. In effect, he is rejecting all existing theories and looking for his own.

These summaries serve to exemplify in what sense Dutch anthropology is very eclectic today and refuses to identify itself with foreign schools. Other articles, however, can be more easily classified as having a place — albeit a very personal one — in particular schools. Platenkamp, for instance, offers what is essentially a classical structural analysis, blending Lévi-Straussian and Leachian methods. De Ruijter, on the other hand, appears to adopt a firmly functionalist perspective, following Nutini and (by implication) Nadel.

As for de Ruijter’s concern to render a difficult Lévi-Straussian text intelligible, may we suggest that the distinction between mechanical and statistical models was part of the apparatus of the American configurationalist school and that it was first developed by Margaret Mead in proposing the methodology of her Arapesh studies. As Lévi-Strauss presented his theory first in the United States in 1952, when Margaret Mead’s work occupied a dominant position there, he may have hesitated to make overt

reference to it, as he made many changes in Mead's method. The audience will nonetheless have recalled Mead's arguments why the statistical method was not useful to her Arapesh work and why every case, every exception had to be accounted for if a valid "pattern" for Arapesh culture was to be derived. Neither Margaret Mead nor Lévi-Strauss were ever concerned with the distinction between real and ideal norms. If Mead's distinction between mechanical and statistical methods be accepted, then it seems reasonable to use the former for elementary forms of marriage exchange, while mechanical models are clearly useless on their own as soon as non-reversible time enters into the analysis.

### III

It has been rightly said (in Paris) that structuralism has many mansions and no doubt the direction indicated by the work of P.E. de Josselin de Jong is one of these mansions. Moyer's article in this volume outlines well enough for our present purpose the general characteristics of that mansion. Far from eliminating history from his investigations, de Josselin de Jong chooses settings in which the naked eye (or rather, the non-structuralist eye) perceives only an intricate web of forces of history. De Josselin de Jong then proceeds to show the interesting results that follow by operating a structuralist reduction on this mass of data. The vast resources provided by the *studieveld* approach minimize the risks always involved in such reduction.

His article published in the present volume is directed against the facility with which functionalist theorists construct supposedly universal "social laws", in this case laws specifying the prerequisites of matrilineal societies. His point is that such "laws" lack all serious predictive power. He demonstrates it by the case of the Minangkabau system which none of the theorists appear to know very well. But if their theories were truly predictive, they ought to be able to predict its prerequisites. De Josselin de Jong shows that they were unable to do this.

Yet, he could hardly deny anthropology has predictive power in certain circumstances. His own analysis of Minangkabau society is, after all, based on a mathematical model which he uses deductively. Moreover, as I shall show, deductivism is by no means absent from the article in which he attacks "deductive anthropology". The question before us is therefore not whether we should accept deduction but rather: within what limits we

should accept deduction and in what conditions it is actually indispensable?

De Josselin de Jong's own practice shows clearly enough where he thinks it indispensable. The Minangkabau have an elaborate system of *adat* which, as they pretend, describes how their society works or should work. But a good deal of this apparatus (whether on the level of real or so-called ideal norms) serves to obscure not only their practices but also the rules to which the practices actually conform. There are no lies in *adat*, but there are many omissions — rules which are not in the *adat* but which modify the operation of the *adat*. Not only can the existence of such rules be *deduced* from repeated hints in the published literature, but they can be *deduced* also on logical grounds when the systemic interrelations of the *adat* are examined.

When I studied the Minangkabau in the field, I found that de Josselin de Jong's deductions were not exactly popular with so-called *adat* experts, because they would elevate to the status of "rules" certain practices which they considered "wrong", which "should not exist" and of which they were very ready to deny the existence. The whole of de Josselin de Jong's work is therefore a sort of deduction. It is a set of hypotheses that there are hidden characteristics in that society that anthropologists ought to be able to find if they systematically looked for them.

Among these hypotheses I shall quote three because they figure prominently in the paper in this volume. The first one is that the status of a matrilineage is affected by the status and genealogy of male ancestors, the so-called *bako*. This hypothesis was derived very skilfully (1951) from scattered hints, but no field work was ever done to test it until Ms Ok Kyung Pak, very recently, gathered stratification data of sufficient density to show the ubiquity of this tendency so often denied. The second hypothesis is that the Minangkabau have a system of circulating connubium between *kaum* based on male hypogamy<sup>1</sup>. This likewise has the status of an hypothesis derived from a model, as the only way of testing it adequately is to find the marriage rules of every *kaum* in a given community (these rules are at the level of the *kaum*), and again, such data were not available to de Josselin de Jong. Moreover, the existence of such rules are denied even more hotly by the *adat* experts, because the latter are ideologically committed to an egalitarian model of Minangkabau society which they hope to fully institute. Their strategy in that laudable objective is to deny the ranking system and express surprise that there are still some villagers backward enough to marry according

to that system. Here the anthropologist has a serious problem because he does not wish to fight egalitarianism, yet scientific objectivity appears to require us to say de Josselin de Jong's hypothesis is quite right.

The third hypothesis is one that appears for the first time, to my knowledge, in the present volume. It is that the Minangkabau system generates some centrifugal force causing male mobility on a vast scale and ranging, today, over the whole of Indonesia and beyond. This is the so-called *merantau* complex, which was little studied until Mochtar Naim wrote a book about it recently. Naim does convincingly establish a strong link between the *merantau* complex and tensions within the matrilineal kinship system, but he does not clarify *merantau* as a cultural construct (i.e. its ethnosemantics), nor does he show the effective cause of the phenomenon. De Josselin de Jong, hypothesising from his earlier theory, postulates *merantau* is effectively caused by the excessive *responsibilities* generated by the bilocal residence of males. To my knowledge I have been the first to test that hypothesis in the field. This is not the place for reporting my findings, but it is relevant to say briefly what such a test involves.

First of all, on the level of individual life histories, *merantau* is explained by a variety of economic, but also educational, political and religious causes. Moreover, the institution has gone through a number of profound historical modifications. I had in fact to do a microstudy in Minangkabau history. With regard to kinship structure, two questions proved relevant:

1. In view of the proved fact of hypogamy, to what extent does male *achievement* provide the subtle differential that makes a woman proud to accept as husband a man whose genealogical status is not (and on a global view, cannot be) superior? Is *merantau* a road to such achievement?
2. Given the fact that the status of a male suffers if he appropriates much of the yield of his *kaum*'s land, and that his wife's *kaum* will not give him anything except payment for specific physical services rendered, to what extent does the traditional bilocal system allow the male room for economic self-improvement? Are his prospects better if he goes outside his own and his wife's *kaum*? Is *merantau* in fact often motivated by a man's search for the best way of furthering the prosperity of his mother's house?

It will be seen that the answers to these empirical questions are necessary for the testing of de Josselin de Jong's hypothesis. We also need to know what are the responsibilities of the male under

bilocal residence and how taxing they are, whether they are resented and whether they are the effective cause of *merantau*. Let me only say here that preliminary impressions of the results of this investigation support the general hypothesis.

If predictive anthropology is sometimes useful (as we have seen), what are the limits of its usefulness? It is clearly *within* the limits of permissible prediction to say: *because* male bilocality is an essentially unstable arrangement, the society *must have* some institutionalised escape valves. Having said this, one can then go out and look for them; this is a good way to make progress in anthropology.

It is not, however, within the limits of permissible prediction to say: all matrilineal societies in the world must be of one of a specified finite number of *types*. It is not permissible, precisely because someone will always be able to find cases not included in the original hypothesis, and because these cases do not constitute types. There is, of course, no Minangkabau “type of matrilineal society”; for at the point of specifying such a type, we have to account for all the changes in the Minangkabau system throughout history. There always has been a centrifugal force driving males out of the bilocal system, but at the same time there has been restructuring so as to retain the principle of bilocality. Kato showed recently that *in the 19th century*, two different sub-systems developed in Minangkabau, each with very different social values, epitomized in the terms *darek* and *rantau*. Every man henceforth has two roads, the road of *darek* and of *rantau*, between which he can choose. Kato shows this development to be quite specific in its historical determination, hence essentially unpredictable.

Now there are essentially two ways of relating “predictive anthropology” to history. We may be able to predict at the cost of eliminating history from the equation, as Moyer appears to advocate. Secondly, we may reduce aspects of history to a model. Of the authors represented in this volume, both Kamma and Schefold have tried this. De Josselin de Jong’s *merantau* hypotheses seem to point in the same direction. Male bilocality is part of what one may call a timeless model of Minangkabau. But due to developments which started in the 19th century, bilocality today has two dimensions. The ancient dimension (where the two places are the sister’s and the wife’s *kaum*) has not disappeared, but in addition the male tends to divide the mental world into the provinces of *darek* and *rantau*, the first of which is based on the immemorial *adat*, whereas the second is, as it was



explained to me, like climbing a stiff hill, which cannot be climbed if one carries one's brother on one's back. It is, then, the province of adventure and self-fulfilment, antithetical to the values of the first, but not incompatible with it, for many *perantau* bring the fruits of their *merantau* gains back to the mother's house and marry well on the reputation they thus acquire.

Structural analysis thus reduces historical change to a logical transformation — from one form of bilocality to another, thereby making the change intelligible on a symbolic level. Yet history is not set aside by this kind of prediction, for we have treated it throughout as a phenomenal reality. Our model has accounted for the specificity of *merantau*, for many features that distinguish it from mobility in other cultures. This is, I think, the kind of predictability which is possible if structuralism is combined with the *studieveld* approach and with an unrelenting preoccupation with the mysteries of phenomenal reality. If there is a distinctive Dutch tradition in anthropology, or at least a distinctive movement identified as “de Leidse richting”, it must lie in the combination of these qualities. The present volume is but a fugitive moment in its development.

## NOTE

- 1 I.e. the exchange among females of male marriage partners who are of higher status.

DAVID S. MOYER

MYTH AND LAW<sup>1</sup>

The term "Dutch structuralism" is perhaps unfortunate. In English one finds the expressions "Dutch treat" (which isn't really a treat at all), "Dutch courage" (which at best may be viewed as synthetic courage), and "Dutch uncle" (which is a negation of the normal English associations of "uncleanness"). Thus at an unconscious level the term "Dutch structuralism" may imply a structuralism that isn't really structuralism, an artificial structuralism, or indeed the negation of structuralism, and more important, by implication, that "real" structuralism is French structuralism. Faced with such a problem it seems best to resort to the normal anthropological solution, i.e., the use of the native term. It is significant, in this regard, that the literal translation of "Dutch structuralism" into Dutch, i.e. "Nederlands structuralisme", is rarely used. Instead one finds the expression "Leidse richting" used most often to refer to the study of structural phenomena in the Netherlands. The word "Leidse" is the adjectival form of the word "Leiden". And if one wants to be thoroughly pedantic one might argue that the word "Leidse" refers as much to the city of Leiden as it does to the University of Leiden, for in its formative days the "Leidse richting" was more closely associated with the National Museum of Ethnology (which, largely as a result of the efforts of J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, is still situated in Leiden) than with the University. Now, however, the term "Leidse richting" is intimately associated with the study of anthropology at the University. Though this is the customary usage, this is not to say that all Dutch structuralists are or have been associated with Leiden. Just to name one exception, H.G. Schulte Nordholt, an important Dutch structuralist, studied at Utrecht under Fischer.

Though these remarks on the association of the practice of structural analysis in the Netherlands with Leiden are perhaps interesting, it is the use of the term "richting" that is significant and revealing. The normal meaning of the word "richting" is

“direction” or “trend”. But more significant is the use of this word instead of the more usual, and indeed stronger terms “school” (school) or “traditie” (tradition). As the usage implies, the study of structural and cognitive phenomena at Leiden has always avoided orthodoxy and pursued its work on a broad front. Thus the appearance of Lévi-Strauss’ *Les Structures Élémentaires de la Parenté* was welcomed at Leiden as fascinating and stimulating even though there were certain rather basic divergences with the views set forth by Lévi-Strauss. Though these differences of opinion existed and still exist one could argue that Lévi-Strauss’ work fits in with the broad spectrum represented by the “Leidse richting”. This is not to say, however, that it is impossible to distinguish Leiden structuralism from Paris structuralism.

One can denote several general characteristics of Leiden structuralists that distinguish them from their Parisian counterparts. First, until very recently the “Leidenaars” have been almost exclusively concerned with the analysis of Indonesian material. Furthermore, this regional interest rests on and is supported by an important analytical concept, i.e., the “ethnologisch studieveld” (usually translated as “field of ethnological study”). In accordance with this concept most Leidenaars have accepted that in the first instance the analysis of structural phenomena should be confined to a group of closely related cultures.<sup>2</sup> In practical terms this has meant that the Leidenaars have tended not to seek out cultural universals as the Parisians have done. The Leiden view on the search for universals has tended to be that while such universals undoubtedly exist, it is more practical to begin with a closely defined regional field of study. Parenthetically, it is worth noting that the Leidenaars see in Lévi-Strauss’ preference for the material from Central Brazil and the Northwest Coast the tacit use of a “studieveld” concept.

Another important feature of the practice of structural analysis in Leiden is also directly related to the focus on Indonesian societies. Because many Indonesian societies are highly literate, one of the most obvious sources of data on these societies has been textual material, not only that collected and transcribed by Europeans but also texts written and composed by the local people in their own language. Many Leiden anthropologists have done their own philological and translation work in preparing these texts for analysis. This is due not only to familiarity with the indigenous languages but also to the sheer bulk of the available material. When translations and critical editions do exist, the

Leidenaars tend to check the original text as a matter of habit. Though it is difficult to assess the precise consequences of this use of texts and knowledge of native languages, it has given the work of the Leiden structuralists a certain pragmatic if not empirical cast.

The structural study of myth is one area in which the general characteristics distinguishing the Paris and Leiden approaches are specifically manifested. Firstly, there is an important difference in the nature of the material used by Lévi-Strauss on the one hand and P.E. de Josselin de Jong on the other. While Lévi-Strauss has dealt with New World myths, particularly those from Central Brazil and the Northwest Coast of North America, de Josselin de Jong (cf. especially 1965b and 1975) has worked with material from Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula (particularly Negeri Sembilan). The New World material seems to deal with universalistic problems such as man's relation to nature, cosmology, and the total social order. On the other hand, the Sumatran and Malay material often appears particularistic and focused on the location and definition of particular groups and individuals in the social order. Probably because of the influence of Islam considerably prior to the collection of ethnographic material the universalistic myth like that found in the New World is rare in Sumatra and the Peninsular region. One of the key differences between these two kinds of myths is that those studied by de Josselin de Jong seem to be more capable of being used by individuals in positions of political responsibility to legitimize their authority than those studied by Lévi-Strauss. Though I believe that the differences between the kinds of material studied by de Josselin de Jong and Lévi-Strauss are real and important, one could easily overestimate the significance of this difference, thereby disguising an important difference in emphasis as a mere difference in regional interest.

Though I do not believe that there are any major theoretical differences between the Leiden and Paris approaches, there are some interesting and significant differences in the pattern of argument. Lévi-Strauss tends to emphasize the global correspondence between the conceptual order and the social order. The conceptual model comes in the end to represent a kind of total world view of a particular society. On the other hand, the Leiden approach tends to emphasize particularistic correspondences between the conceptual and social orders. This emphasis means that the conceptual model is not so much an end in itself but it justifies itself to the Leiden anthropologists by its ability to

explain and clarify certain analytical problems in the observable social order (*l'ordre vécu*). Thus the Leiden approach tends to direct its attention towards the correspondences between the social and conceptual orders, while the Paris approach tends to focus on the global structure of the conceptual order. When these differences in emphasis become coupled with the differences in mythic material used by de Josselin de Jong and Lévi-Strauss respectively, one gets the very clear impression that we are dealing with two different kinds of myth. Those analysed by Lévi-Strauss seem to conform to Eliade's definition: "Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the 'beginnings'. In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality – an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution" (Eliade 1963:5f.). Those analysed by de Josselin de Jong, on the other hand, have a distinctly secular nature and seem to take the form of a history (i.e. *histoire*) or a legend. Furthermore, in de Josselin de Jong's analysis of the variations in the Hang Tuah story (1965) and of the dynastic myth of Negri Sembilan (1975), it is apparent that there is a demonstrable relation between the particular form of the myth and particular political attitudes and values. Though it seems that such an analysis comes perilously close to mixing *structure* and *événement* de Josselin de Jong provides a workable solution to the problem. In both cases he proceeds with the analysis as if there is a single Hang Tuah myth or a single dynastic myth. However, the variants of the myth are analysed as well and it is in the analysis of the variants that the direct link between the *ordre conçu* and the *ordre vécu* is established. Or in other words, the point or articulation between the socio-logical and sociological orders is between the variants of the myth and observable social reality.

#### *Pure myth versus political myth*

Thus I think that it is profitable at this point to make a distinction between two types of myth that is independent of the particular regions from which they might originate. It seems that those of the type most frequently analysed by Lévi-Strauss should be called pure myths. On the other hand, while those analysed by de Josselin de Jong might be called political myths, a more general term would be myths of social rationalization. The

ambiguity associated with the English word “rationalization” is ideal for our purposes. On the one hand, the word rationalize means to make logical or to explain something. On the other hand, the word rationalization is often used to refer to a justification or an explanation that serves to legitimize a group’s or an individual’s behaviour. Though one could proceed to build up a definition of these two kinds of myths in terms of Weberian “ideal types” I feel that this would be premature in that we are not fully aware of the full range of mythic variation and would consequently run the risk of developing a regionally specific typology. However, one could name certain specific myths that appear to be archetypes of these two kinds of myth. For the pure myth I would suggest that the Geste d’Asdiwal (Boas 1912:71-146; Lévi-Strauss 1967) be taken. For the myth of social rationalization the famous (or indeed infamous) *Dolkstosslegende* seems eminently suitable.

Though the Geste d’Asdiwal is well known as Lévi-Strauss’ best analysis of a single myth, and as a demonstration of his method, the myth itself is an exciting and aesthetically pleasing example of “primitive literature”. This latter is so much the case that instead of accusing Lévi-Strauss, as has become fashionable, of finding things that do not exist, one would be closer to the mark in accusing him of not finding enough. On the other hand, the *Dolkstosslegende* presents the essential aspects of a myth of social rationalization. This myth was used to explain or rationalize the German defeat in the First World War. As early as 9 November 1918 the German general Schulenburg had said, “Our men will claim in any case that they were stabbed in the back by their comrades-at-arms, the navy, together with Jewish war profiteers and shirkers...” (Mann 1974:155). This myth explained to the German people how the defeat “really” took place. But at the same time it served to legitimize the actions of the military by laying the blame of the defeat elsewhere. Furthermore, this myth should serve as a reminder for certain theoretical oversights that those of us who have been interested in the analysis of myth have been guilty of. We have had the tendency to analyse myths in relation to a status quo. The myths that have been analysed tend to be backward looking, i.e., they explain the present in terms of the past. On the one hand, the pure myths explain the general structure of society and the universe in terms of the primeval past. On the other hand, myths of social rationalization very frequently serve to legitimize the status quo. This latter is certainly not a chance phenomenon but is related to the

nature of political power. As Parsons points out in his interpretation of Weber, "The 'conservative' tendency among groups exercising political responsibility is heavily determined by their need for legitimation essentially because the use of power without regard to legitimation is possible only in the very short run. However, in the nature of the position of such groups, they are responsible for the more immediate consequences of their decisions. Hence, and this is a very crucial proposition, their general tendency is to rely upon *established* sources of legitimation. That is to say, their interest lies in attempting to stabilize, not necessarily their practical decisions, but the basis on which they can count on continuing in power and on relative freedom from the kind of internal opposition which would seriously impair their capacity to act" (Parsons 1963:xi).

But as seems implicit in this statement myths may not only legitimize a given state of affairs but also may legitimize a proposed course of action. And taking the argument one step further, like the *Dolkstosslegende*, the myth which began as an explanation, and legitimized a given state of affairs, can legitimize a course of action and indeed become an impetus for that course of action. To use another example from Weber, the ethic of innerworldly aesthetic Protestantism simultaneously legitimized a given course of action and served as an impetus for that action.

The continuation of progress in the analysis of myths of social rationalization would best be served by a combined approach by anthropologists, historians, historiographers, and literary scholars (cf. de Josselin de Jong 1975:305). Furthermore, for this combination of skill and backgrounds to be put to effective use a problem would have to be chosen which was intrinsically interesting and gave sufficient scope for the special insights of each of these fields. A potential candidate for such a problem would be the analysis of the manner in which Henry Tudor (Henry VII) established and legitimized the Tudor dynasty. When in 1485 Henry succeeded Richard III as king of England he had a *de facto* political right to be king. However, he had at best a very weak dynastic claim on the kingship. His father's mother was also the mother of Henry VI (1422-1461) and after Henry V's (king from 1413-1422) death she had married the Welshman Owen Tudor, Henry VII's father's father. The other "close" dynastic claim on the kingship was based on the fact that Henry VII's mother's father's father was the illegitimate son of Edward III (1327-1377). However, Henry Tudor married Elizabeth who was

the sister of Edward V (1483) who together with his brother Richard, Duke of York, had been murdered by Richard III (1483-1485), Edward V's father's brother. (It is worth noting that Richard III's memory was blackened in that monument of later Tudor propaganda, Shakespeare's play *Richard III*.) But even though Henry VII might have claimed the kingship *via* his marriage and assumed the role of Prince Consort he did not do so. He only married Elizabeth after his coronation and after his recognition by parliament. And she was not crowned queen until after he had weathered a serious rebellion. From a purely political point of view the problem is anthropologically interesting. However, Henry used and encouraged historical propaganda to legitimize his position. Perhaps the most interesting "historical" source was Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie* ( $\pm$  1135 A.D.) (cf. Fussner 1970:7). But from the viewpoint of the structural analysis of myth it is especially interesting that Henry VII used and encouraged the Arthurian legend to bolster his image. And had it not been for his eldest son's early death, Henry VII would have been succeeded by a King Arthur. But complicating this picture is the fact that the most popular source of Arthurian tales, Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*, printed in 1485 by William Caxton, is also a classic of English literature, thus raising the old problem of historical versus anthropological versus literary analysis. Though the complexity of the problems raised by this case makes its resolution extremely difficult, it nonetheless seems that this would be an ideal case for further study of the problems associated with the structural analysis of myths of social rationalization.

### *The structural study of law*

Compared to the structural study of myth, which has at least reached adolescence, the structural study of law is still in its infancy. My own work in this area has been confined to the analysis of legal texts from South Sumatra. In the final chapter of my monograph (Moyer 1975) I argued that it was necessary to maintain a distinction between *recht* and *wet* (*droit et loi*), and that the structural analysis of legal logic should be confined to laws (*loi*) as a closed system of formally organized categories. This involved the exclusion of the administration of justice from structural analysis. I still believe in the utility of this dialectical opposition in that it provides for a maximal separation of *structure* from *événement*.



Though a separation of *structure* from *événement* is an essential aspect of structural analysis, it is especially critical in the structural analysis of legal phenomena. For unlike pure myths, but in this respect similar to myths of social rationalization, laws must have a high degree of verisimilitude. They have to appear possible, plausible, and even true in their correspondences to the lived in social order (*l'ordre vécu*). Furthermore, and in this respect they are somewhat different than myths of social rationalization, they should appear "reasonable" in relation to the social domain in which they are operating. This second point is all the more problematical due to the presence of legal specialists. Though, in general, law must appear true, its reasonableness need only be apparent to a group of specialists. Be this as it may, the problem of the high degree of verisimilitude required of law makes the confusion of *structure* and *événement* a very real hazard. For the analyst may have difficulty in relation to a particular case in separating the points of fact from the points of law. This is especially so because the arguments may be phrased in terms of legal points that the adversaries see as advantageous to their own position. Thus the apparent logical relation (or opposition) between the legal points presented may be in fact determined by the interpretation of events and not by the internal logical consistency of a legal system as a system of social thought. Thus in relation to particular legal cases one runs the risk of basing one's analysis on an *événement*-determined opposition instead of a genuine conceptual opposition. Even though there are serious difficulties, the manner of phrasing legal arguments (pleading) is perhaps one of the closest points of articulation between the *ordre conçu* and the *ordre vécu*. In the matter of actual decisions the difference may be even greater because in many cases the decision may be directly dependent upon political and social factors essentially external to the actual case involved. However, while the decision actually taken may be determined by political events the manner in which the legal specialist explains or rationalizes his decision may be very revealing from a structuralist point of view. Nonetheless, though there exist certain possibilities for discovering the structural patterns of the conceptual legal order in relation to the use of case material, there are serious difficulties associated with the separation of *structure* from *événement*.

In societies where one finds a tradition of written legal texts one also has the possibility of analysing the conceptual aspects of a legal system with a minimal risk of confusing the conceptual

and lived-in orders. Though written legal texts may often be influenced by particular case material, in certain circumstances this influence is minimal. For example, in the texts analysed in *The Logic of the Laws* (Moyer 1975), the material is relatively uninfluenced by case material because the copies of the texts used were very early ones, in most cases obtained within a few years after the text was written. This means, as I have demonstrated, that one can analyse the patterns involved in text creation and arrangement as a totality without having to cope with piecemeal additions made as a result of legal practice.

### *The Undang Undang Melaka*

On the contrary, in the critical edition of the *Undang Undang Melaka* we are apparently dealing not with the analysis of a single creative situation but with the product of many emendations which were not related to a single overview of the work at hand but fine and detailed adjustments that were apparently not concerned with making the revised text a logical totality. Thus the edition presented by Liaw (1976) represents a reconstructed ascendant of the "best" copies extant. However, this ascendant seems to be substantially removed from the original creative act. Thus one gets many appendages that blur or distort what may have been an original logical structure. Hypothetically, this original logical structure was probably what Liaw meant when he refers to "its nucleus [which] must have been a decree issued by Sultan Muhammad Syah" (Liaw 1976:32). This is not to say that it is impossible to analyse the *Undang Undang Melaka* by the methods which I developed in *The Logic of the Laws*, but that the process of judicial emendation has greatly distorted whatever total structural image existed in the original text.

Having said this, it is perhaps useful to point out that the use of numerical structures to order the texts, and the relations between various payments which formed one of the most striking aspects of South Sumatran legal codes, are also to be found in the culturally more significant *Undang Undang Melaka*. First, there is the problem of the numerical structuring of the text as a whole, that is to say, in some cases the numbering of a fasal is sometimes related to the numbering of other fasals or there is a numerical relationship between a fasal's number and its contents. In two of the texts analysed in *The Logic of the Laws* (i.e., "The Code of Laws" and "The Sungai Lemau Laws") one finds extremely clear evidence of such numerical manipulation. At one time I thought

that such manipulation might have been due to one dynastic line in South Sumatra as the fasal numbering patterns are much more obvious in these two texts while relatively absent in other South Sumatran texts and the authorities associated with their composition were father and son respectively. However, evidence from the *Undang Undang Melaka* suggests that the phenomenon is more general.

In Fasal 21 of the *Undang Undang Melaka* one finds a long series of “rules concerning mischievous buffaloes or oxen”. The first major section of this fasal deals with the activity of animals against men or other animals, e.g. what is to be done when a buffalo gores another animal or a man. The second major section deals with the activity of men against animals. The first specification of this section deals with what is to be done when a person stabs the animal of a high ranking dignitary. The third and final major section deals with the rewards to be paid when a man captures a stray wild buffalo. As is common in law texts from the region one can make an interesting comparison between the attitudes towards buffaloes and those toward slaves. The specifications concerning slaves roughly follow the pattern of the material on buffaloes. The first major section starts with the specification: “If a slave intends to kill his master and is seized by another person he (the slave) may be killed”. The second major section begins with the specification, “if a royal slave has been killed . . .” However, there is an anomaly in the numbering of the fasals. The first major section of the material on slaves is to be found at the end of Fasal 6 while the rest of the material continues to the end of Fasal 7. Fasal 6 itself is a rather strange blend of specifications. The apparent title of this fasal is “On the rules governing people who run amuck, be they slaves or debt slaves”. The first major section of the fasal deals, in fact, with people who run amuck. Then the subject is changed to deal with the six requirements for a minister. Next the subject returns to the killing of amucks and then back again to the consideration of public officials. This time the list is of those offences which may be pardoned by a judge. The link of the public officials mentioned previously in the fasal is made explicit by the fact that the fasal specifies that “all these offences cannot be pardoned by a minister but only the ruler (himself) can do so”. And finally the fasal turns to the subject of a slave attempting to kill his master. Though this fasal appears to be a conglomeration of two notions one notices that the apparently unrelated material is structured according to an A-B-A-B-A pattern. The first four elements of

this pattern clearly interlock the A's dealing with amucks and the B's dealing with public officials. On the other hand, the third element of the A group can be seen as either an isolated element at the end of a tightly interlocking structure or as part of the structure, thus suggesting that a slave who attempts to kill his master must be crazy. Thus the section dealing with a slave who attempts to kill his master is partially but nonetheless distinctly integrated into the structure of Fasal 6. On the other hand, the parallel with Fasal 21 suggests that the final element of Fasal 6 "should be" part of Fasal 7.

However, numerical features help to explain why Fasal 7 begins where it does. The penalty for killing a royal slave is seven times seven the value of the slave. A sentence or two later indicates that this practice has been amended and that only seven times the value of the slave must be paid. Thus there is an extremely strong association between the first specification of Fasal 7 and the number 7. Given the structuring of Fasals 6 and 7 and the nature of the text in general, it is difficult to explain with any certainty the origins of the structure. However, several possibilities are indicated. First, the pattern may have been in the original. Secondly, the numbering of the fasal may have been altered later to draw attention to the seven rule. This alteration may have followed the emendation indicating that only seven times and not seven times seven times the value of the slave was to be paid. Because of the nature of the text as it stands, it is impossible to say with certainty the origin of this formal numerical manipulation. However, the above demonstration serves to indicate that the types of structures and patterns of numerical manipulation found in the legal codes of South Sumatra are not an isolated phenomenon in a region that must be viewed as somewhat peripheral to the centre of gravity of Malay culture.

Another phenomenon that I found in the legal codes of South Sumatra was the numerical structuring of the graduated sequence of fines. The most general pattern was based on the halving of the difference between successive intervals in the sequence. That is, in the sequence A, B, C the following relation applied when  $A > B > C$ :  $\frac{1}{2}(A-B) = (B-C)$ . This was the general form and covered those cases in which  $\frac{1}{2}A = B$  and  $\frac{1}{2}B = C$ . Also there was some evidence, especially in the calculation of interest and the payment of the compensation for homicide, indicating that the system of monetary units played an important role in numerical manipulations.

In the *Undang Undang Melaka* one finds a distinct but nonethe-

less similar pattern. The most commonly occurring amounts of fines are as follows: one *kati* + five *tahil*, five *tahil* + one *paha*, one *tahil* + one *paha*, ten *emas*, five *emas* with two *tahil* + one *paha* being another frequently occurring amount. From the text as a whole it is apparent that one *kati* + five *tahil* and one *tahil* + one *paha* are in some sense the basic amounts. Given the numerical relations between the various units of value (i.e., one *kati* = 20 *tahil*; 4 *paha* = 1 *tahil*; 16 *emas* = 1 *tahil*), one notices that these two basic amounts have the same structure, i.e., one unit of value +  $\frac{1}{4}$  of that unit. Thus one *kati* + five *tahil* is actually  $1\frac{1}{4}$  *kati* and one *tahil* + 1 *paha* is actually  $1\frac{1}{4}$  *tahil*. However, the structuring of the sequences below each of these basic units is different. Below one *tahil* + one *paha* one finds a simple halving sequence. Since one *tahil* + one *paha* = (16 + 4) *emas* = 20 *emas*, the sequence becomes 20 *emas*, 10 *emas*, five *emas*. Notice that in this case the total value of the basic amount (i.e., one *tahil* plus one *paha*) is taken together and then halved. In the sequence starting with one *kati* + five *tahil* the relation is different. There the distinction between the first amount (i.e., the one *kati*) and the second amount (i.e., the five *tahil*) is maintained. In this sequence only the first amount is halved, i.e., one *kati* = 20 *tahil*,  $\frac{1}{2}$  (20 *tahil*) = 10 *tahil*, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  (10 *tahil*) = 5 *tahil*. The second amount on the other hand, is still specified as  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the value of the unit of value of the larger amount. Thus for the first element of the sequence the value of the second amount is  $\frac{1}{4}$  *kati* =  $\frac{1}{4}$  (20 *tahil*) = 5 *tahil*, while for the second and third elements of the sequence the amount is  $\frac{1}{4}$  *tahil* or one *paha*.

Significantly, both of these sequences, though using different rules, contain only three elements. This is exactly the same pattern as in South Sumatran legal texts. Though a given sequential relation occurred very frequently, it rarely applied to more than three elements. Interestingly the two sequential rules of the *Undang Undang Melaka* do not articulate. Thus if one extended the sequence starting with one *kati* + five *tahil* another step, one would get  $\frac{1}{2}$  (5 *tahil*) + 1 *paha* =  $(2\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4})$  *tahil* =  $2\frac{3}{4}$  *tahil*. Applying the rule once more one would get  $\frac{1}{2}$  ( $2\frac{3}{4}$  *tahil*) + 1 *paha* =  $1\frac{1}{4}$  *tahil* + 1 *paha* = 1 *tahil* + 2 *paha* instead of one *tahil* + one *paha*. Similarly if one extends upward from one *tahil* + one *paha* by just inverting the descending rule one would get 2 *tahil* + 2 *paha*. Thus, the two sequences cannot be extended using their own internal rules in such a way that the two sequences meet at a given amount. In short, neither sequential system is a simple extension of the other. However, between the

lower limit of the upper sequence (i.e., five *tahil* and one *paha*) and the beginning of the lower sequence (i.e., one *tahil* and one *paha*), one finds one amount occurring more frequently than the others, i.e., two *tahil* + one *paha*. Curiously, this amount can be seen as an extension of the lower sequential system using an inverted version of the rule for the upper sequential system. Thus  $2 (1 \text{ tahil}) + \frac{1}{4} \text{ tahil} = 2 \text{ tahil} + \text{one paha}$ .

The above material indicates several things. First, some of the features that I found in the legal codes of South Sumatra are also found in the *Undang Undang Melaka*, thus verifying my own previous findings on a more general level. Secondly, because the method applied to these laws was essentially the same, I feel that the general utility of my method as a method is validated. I feel that this is especially important in that one does not need to revert to an ends-justifies-the-means type of argument. And thirdly, though I have imposed restrictions on my method by arguing that one should avoid using legal material that is closely related to particular applications of law this should not be seen as an inherent weakness of the method, but only as analytical caution. That is to say, when one is initially applying the procedures of structural analysis to a new domain such as law one should confine one's efforts to those areas where one is likely to find structures in their purest forms. This is essentially the view taken by Lévi-Strauss with regard to the analysis of myth, i.e., pure myths provide "better" material for analysis. However, as de Josselin de Jong's analyses of the myths of social rationalization have shown, it is possible to articulate the *ordre vécu* with the *ordre conçu* without confusing the two. At present, however, I feel that our knowledge of the legal *ordre conçu* is so scanty that one must rigorously maintain the opposition between *recht* and *wet* (*droit et loi*) until we are reasonably able to distinguish which is which and then proceed to analyse the modes of articulation.

An important feature of the various laws analysed to date (cf. Moyer 1975) and the myths of social rationalization discussed above is that they have a marked secular character. Indeed, the particularistic versus universalistic distinction that was applied to the opposition between myths of social rationalization and pure myths is also an opposition between secular and sacred, or more properly, between more secular and less sacred on the one hand and more sacred and less secular on the other. The type of law that I have been primarily concerned with has been largely secular law. This limitation has not been theoretical but is largely

a consequence of the kinds of problems I have been trying to solve and partly a consequence of the nature of the data involved. For one working with Indonesian texts a natural place to turn for an example of sacred law would seem, at first glance, to be Islamic law.

Unfortunately, though the structural analysis of Islamic law is a highly desirable goal, there are certain methodological problems that complicate the issue and thus make Islamic law a poor test case for the analysis of sacred law. In the first place Islamic law does not make a recognizably clear distinction between secular and sacred matters. While in itself this might not be too problematical, one would be deprived of the assistance that one might gain from an analogy with the differences between sacred and secular myths. But secondly, and indeed more critical from the viewpoint of a methodology for the structural analysis of law, Islamic law like Judaic law gives a fairly prominent place to the influence of judicial decisions in the formation and development of the law (cf. Weber 1972:480).

### *Canon Law*

On both of these points, the Canon Law of the Western Church is eminently suitable. For as Weber points out: "it stood from the beginning in a relatively clear dualism — with a remarkably clear distinction between the fields of both sides, as nowhere else existed in this form — opposed to profane law." (Und es stand ferner von Anfang an in relativ klarem Dualismus — mit leidlich deutlicher Scheidung der beiderseitigen Gebiete, wie sie in dieser Art anderwärts nirgends existiert hat — dem profanen Recht gegenüber. Weber 1972:480.) And secondly, largely as a result of the hierarchical and bureaucratic organization of the church, the law was not developed upon precedents and judicial decisions but upon decrees. However, this exclusion of judicial influence is not the only feature that makes Canon law interesting from a structural point of view. Canon law was and is extremely rational. Two aspects of the origins of this rationality are especially relevant. First, "Canon law inherited both the professional legal techniques of Roman law and the rigorous logic of ancient philosophy". And secondly, "the structure of the university in Medieval Europe . . . facilitated the rationalization of canon law by separating the teaching of sacred law from the teaching of theology and secular law" (Bendix 1962:401). Furthermore, the development of the rationality of this law was relatively free

from mythological constraints for as Weber points out, “The New Testament contained only a minimum of formally binding norms of a ritual or judicial nature – a result of eschatological unworldliness – that even here the path was completely free for a purely rational structure” (Weber 1972:480).

Indeed not only is the path open but in terms of the mythological structure of the Bible one finds a certain degree of hostility to formal law in the New Testament. For example, in Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, one finds an opposition between the Laws of the Covenant of the Old Testament and the person of Christ in the New Testament. “Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian” (Galatians 2:23-25). Thus because of the theological and mythological structuring of the Biblical sources one need not expect any direct one to one correspondence between the Canon law and the Bible. In other words, the laws and the myths, though intimately related, are nonetheless to a large degree independent of each other in terms of their *internal* logical structure.

Thus in Canon law there seem to be grounds for optimism for the extension of the structural analysis of law. On the one hand, it is clearly distinct from secular law. And on the other, its own logical organization is not specifically constrained by the mythological structures of the myths to which it is intimately related. Thus hypothetically we can extend and develop the structural analysis of law parallel to the development of the structural study of myth by articulating the oppositions between pure myth and myths of social rationalization on the one hand and sacred law and secular law on the other.<sup>3</sup>

### *Conclusions*

In conclusion, one can make several observations concerning the structural analysis of myth and law and its relation to the difference between the Paris and Leiden approaches to structural analysis. What at first glance appears to be only a difference in region and type of data is developing into a more general inquiry into the nature of the modes of articulation between the *ordre conçu* and the *ordre vécu*. One of the earliest works in this direction was P.E. de Josselin de Jong’s (1956) analysis of how the people of Negri Sembilan (Malaysia) perceived their marriage



system which was based on MBD marriage, asymmetrical alliance, and double descent. The problem examined by de Josselin de Jong centred on providing an explanation of why the people 1. consciously perceived their system of double descent, 2. accepted that they usually married their mother's brother's daughter, when this had been pointed out to them, but 3. were unable to comprehend, even with repeated explanations, what asymmetrical alliance had to do with their social system.<sup>4</sup> More recently de Josselin de Jong has examined the various relationships between myths and political legitimacy. This has not involved a notion of determinism in which the *ordre vécu* determines the patterns of the *ordre conçu* but has focused on the manner in which myths are used to rationalize and legitimize the social and political orders. My own work on the analysis of written legal codes from South Sumatra has focused on how a social elite conceptualized their own social system. The view taken of law here is not so much of a directly functioning system but that written laws by their very existence serve to explain and legitimize the social order. That is to say, written laws may legitimize a social order independent of any uses to which they might be put. There seems to be reason to be optimistic about the possibilities of producing a model that integrates the above viewpoints with the analysis of sacred law and is ultimately capable of dealing simultaneously with pure myths, myths of social rationalization, secular laws, and sacred laws. It is worth noting that at the same time such a model would involve a dynamic synthesis of the Paris-Leiden opposition with respect to the structural study of myth, the dimension par excellence of the cognitive realm.

## NOTES

- 1 The author wishes to thank the Netherlands Organization for the Advancement of Pure Research for the financial support of the research on which this article is based. The author would also like to thank G.N. Geurten, P.E. de Josselin de Jong, and J.G. Oosten for their useful comments and suggestions.
- 2 The original article on "ethnological fields of study" was written by J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong in 1935. An example of the use of the concept in a more restricted sense (i.e. Eastern Indonesia) is to be found in van Wouden 1935 and in a more expanded sense (i.e. all of Indonesia) in Downs 1955. In 1965a P.E. de Josselin de Jong re-examined the concept in the context of making a comparison between Indonesian and Proto-Indochinese agricultural rituals.
- 3 E.S. Vestergaard and T.A. Vestergaard are exploring a similar but more

- complex problem with regard to old Scandinavian religious and sociological structures. In particular their examination of the interrelationships of the logical structures of the Eddas, the Sagas, and Old Norse Law Texts will provide an opportunity for comparing the structures of differing conceptual frameworks within a single cultural context.
- 4 The primary implication of these observations is that at the individual level a person does not perceive the totality of his functioning social system. (Simonis 1968:62 makes a comment in a similar vein.) However, on the basis of this it would be precipitous to conclude that the unperceived structure constitutes the entirety of the essential structure of the system.

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

- BKI Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde  
 JMBRAS Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society  
 VKI Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde

G.W. LOCHER

THE REACTIONS OF FRANZ BOAS AND KONRAD  
THEODOR PREUSS TO A STRUCTURAL  
INTERPRETATION OF KWAKIUTL MYTHOLOGY IN 1933

*1. Introduction*

In the preface of his book *The Mouth of Heaven, An introduction to Kwakiutl religious thought*, Irving Goldman refers to *The serpent in Kwakiutl religion* which I wrote in 1932 as a dissertation for my doctor's degree at Leiden university under the supervision of my teacher of cultural anthropology J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong. Goldman makes this remark: "It is a curious reflection on the state of ethnological maturity in English-speaking anthropology that the subject on which the corpus of Kwakiutl ethnography was most complete, namely, Kwakiutl religious thought, has been virtually ignored. Boas's original aim to reveal to the outside world the character of Kwakiutl thought was achieved only insofar as the new data were set in print. The only attempt at a thoroughgoing understanding of Kwakiutl religious thought has been that of Müller (1955), a work practically unknown in the English-speaking world. Locher's interesting study (1932) of the serpent theme in Kwakiutl religion was devastated by Boas's review (1933) and never gained credence" (1975:IX).

This statement about my publication is right insofar as the English-speaking world is concerned but it is not true of the German-speaking world. Müller's study, *Weltbild und Kult der Kwakiutl Indianer*, which appeared twenty-three years after my dissertation, criticizes my emphasis on the serpent as a simplification of the religion of these Indians but after this critical remark Müller qualified my book as a fine study of a high order in its convincing presentation of the polar primitive view of the world (p. 11). Müller's opinion was not an isolated one in the German-speaking world. In various German books on ethnology and in encyclopedias (e.g. *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd. edition, 1957, s.v. Amerikanistik) reference was made to my study. Without any doubt this was influenced by the highly favourable review of my book by the well-known German

anthropologist and Americanist, Konrad Theodor Preuss. This review appeared in 1933 in "Sociologus, Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Soziologie", published in Germany under the editorship of the anthropologist Thurnwald and an international board of co-editors (among them the anthropologists Malinowski, Sapir and Steinmetz, and the sociologists Ogburn and Sorokin).

The review by Preuss was written after the appearance of the review by Boas, which was originally published in German in the "Deutsche Literaturzeitung". Boas did not confine his devastating criticism to my publication but included all similar attempts to discover a system or structure in oral mythology. That was the reason why Preuss utilized Boas' review of my dissertation to make a full attack on his negative attitude which he regarded as a disaster to the real understanding of mythology and religion. The attack by Preuss did not make the slightest impression on Boas, if he ever saw it. The English version of his review of *The serpent in Kwakiutl religion*, which appeared in 1933 in the "Journal of American Folklore", even was selected by Boas for the collection of his papers *Race, Language and Culture*, published in 1940.

## 2. *An old structural trend in Dutch anthropology*

Various publications on structural anthropology indicate Dutch anthropology as one of the twentieth century origins of the structuralist approach in current practice (Ehrmann 1970:244; de Heusch 1968:33; P.E. de Josselin de Jong 1972). Of course the most important of these origins is the line Émile Durkheim – Marcel Mauss – Claude Lévi-Strauss, which had a strong influence on later developments of the Dutch structuralist trend. As P.E. de Josselin de Jong has pointed out in recent studies (1960, 1972, 1977), this trend had its own origins in the Dutch tradition of studying classification systems in Indonesia, which goes back to the nineteenth century. In particular he refers to the work of H.A. van Hien on the Javanese spirit world of 1896, the result of empirical observations by a man who did not have a training in anthropology. Another figure who had first hand knowledge of the everyday life of Javanese was van Ossenbruggen, a jurist who arrived at anthropology by way of customary law. He presented the results of his study on Javanese conceptual systems as a contribution to comparative anthropology, and he utilized for his interpretations the views of Durkheim and Mauss on primitive classifications. Van Ossenbruggen's approach stimulated the work of the orientalist and

anthropologist Rassers, one of the two founding fathers of the Leiden based structuralist trend in the anthropology of the Netherlands. The other one was his friend J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, since 1922 a supernumerary professor under the Leiden University Fund and since 1935 fulltime professor at Leiden university. It was Rassers who stimulated J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong to a renewed extensive study of the publications by Durkheim and his school. The combination of a selected use of fundamental views of this school with his many-sided knowledge of contemporary mainstream anthropology, together with his own fieldwork experiences in anthropology, linguistics and archeology in North and Central America and in Indonesia, proved to be a fertile one as became evident not only in his publications but especially by the dissertations written under the inspiration of his university teaching.

P.E. de Josselin de Jong rightly emphasized the background of Indonesian studies of the Leiden based structuralist trend. J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, however, was not an Indonesianist when, in the beginning of the nineteen twenties, he became interested again in the work of Durkheim and his school. At that time he was an anthropologist and linguist who had paid much attention to the study of American Indian cultures. The fact that Durkheim and Mauss frequently made use of examples from these cultures to support their view on classification systems certainly influenced his development towards a structuralist approach. In the thirties he became an Indonesianist more than an Americanist, although it would be better to call him a general anthropologist (Locher 1965, 1974).

It was in the second half of the twenties that I became a student of J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong. At that time I was studying history under Huizinga, the scholar of cultural history whose synchronic morphological study on the waning of the European middle ages was one of the outstanding publications of that period and whose interest in anthropology as part of a general science of culture later (1938) became evident in his "Homo Ludens" (Locher 1958; Colie 1968). However, it was not on Huizinga's advice that I began my study of anthropology. I wanted to know more about "myth", a term which I came across in the study of ancient history and, moreover, a notion of actual socio-political importance in the Europe of the twenties. I had heard that de Josselin de Jong paid attention to this subject in his lectures and therefore began to attend them. That is the way I arrived at anthropology and finally took my doctor's degree on

the basis of a dissertation about the mythology of the Kwakiutl Indians. The subject of mythology and culture of the Northwest Coast Indians was suggested to me by de Josselin de Jong. As he told me, there was a large amount of excellent ethnographic materials available, most of it collected directly by or under the supervision of Franz Boas, the outstanding figure of American anthropology at that time. De Josselin de Jong assured me that from Boas no systematic interpretation was to be expected, certainly not in the way of a structural approach as practised by Rassers and de Josselin de Jong.

### *3. A structural interpretation of Kwakiutl mythology*

In the introduction of my dissertation I stated that in the interpretation of the culture of the Northwest Coast tribes, most attention had been given so far to the social and economic phenomena. I mentioned in particular the work of the French authors Davy and Mauss. Although in Mauss' pioneer study "Essai sur le Don" as well as in other works of a more general character there was much to be found about the religion of these population groups, up to that time not a single student had ventured to give a detailed analysis of the religious system as such. Hardly anybody proceeded beyond pointing out such mythic figures as he considered most important, and rendering the myths which in his opinion were most characteristic. The German Americanist Eduard Seler, I said, was the only one who had gone a little farther. In a few of his papers, he made important observations about some principles of the doctrinal system and its representation on ritual objects, especially rattles. However, Seler had at his disposal very limited ethnographic materials. Although his approach was strongly influenced by the "nature-mythological" school of thought, he yet succeeded in pointing out connections of primary interest. The antithesis of sun and moon, in particular, was one of the forms in which the dualism of the religious system prevailing here found expression. Moreover, Seler realized that this antithesis was closely connected with the one between life and death. He did not penetrate, however, to the very core of the system; neither did Boas. I pointed out that the ethnographic work of Boas on these Indian cultures was an enormous achievement, in quality as well as in quantity, but that he never had set himself to work out these extensive materials into a synthetic whole. As regards mythology his interest was chiefly directed towards the diffusion of myth types

and figures. He regarded culture as a more or less arbitrary, fortuitous conglomerate of elements which should be analysed by means of the "historical method". According to this method one should try to ascertain whence those elements originated and where are to be found the principal centres of diffusion. If we leave it at that, I stated, little insight is gained into the culture in its entirety. "For is it not most important of all, particularly as regards spiritual culture, to ascertain how the cultural system has been built up, by which forces and principles it is dominated, and how it functions in practice? Of much greater value than the statement that certain foreign elements have penetrated into a culture, is the answer to the question why and in which manner these elements have been accepted. And for this we need some insight into the culture as such. This is pre-eminently true of mythology, which is dominated by a strict system and which by no means consists of a fortuitous hodge-podge of figures and motifs. This system is based in the root idea of native religion" (p. 2). Then I explained the difficulty of studying a culture like that of the Kwakiutl in modern times because of the unsettlement of such a culture through its contact with modern civilization. In particular the social organization was in confusion, as indicated by Boas too, and therefore several associations and connections between social and mythical elements would be difficult to grasp. For several reasons I decided to make use of the following method. As I pointed out: "We made no attempt to reconstruct the whole religious system and to solve all contradictions, but we have selected a figure of obvious central significance and have tried to determine its relations to other figures in order to acquire gradually an insight into the fundamental idea by which the system is governed" (p. 3).

To concentrate on one figure, who obviously has not a peripheral position, and from there to approach other figures, was a method which I had learned from the publications of Rassers on the figure of Pañji and his place in Javanese mythology and theatre (Rassers 1922, 1959). Rassers had also indicated how to deal with historical problems in regard of his subject by applying the view that foreign influences had been incorporated into the old structure of Javanese mythology and culture. My choice of the serpent as a key figure to understand Kwakiutl mythology was not suggested by J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong but certainly was influenced by his publication (1929) on the origin of the divine trickster, a lecture which he delivered to one of the departments of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences. In this lecture he



stressed the relation of the ambivalent trickster figure to socio-religious dualism. In an incidental remark he referred to Seler's publication on the culture of the American Northwest Coast for the presence there of socio-religious dualism, without, however, specifically mentioning the presence of a trickster figure (1929: 13n).

In his book on Kwakiutl religious thought Goldman's reaction to my choice of the serpent as a key figure to understand the mythology and the ritual is evident from the following passage: "G.W. Locher has seen in the double-headed serpent the grand integrative image of Kwakiutl religion (1932). One need not go so far in reductivism to recognize how deeply the serpent, even though a comparatively minor figure in the entire Winter Ceremonial, does succeed in portraying the main themes. Sisiutl, as Locher has painstakingly shown, has wide-ranging associative connections with almost the entire spectrum of Kwakiutl beliefs. Through it, we see as from another vantage point the panorama of forces and spirits that occupy the great lineage houses during the winter season" (1975:114-115).

I would say that at that time I did not regard the serpent as the grand integrative image of Kwakiutl religion but as the key figure to understand the religious system of the Kwakiutl. In my dissertation I referred to J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong's idea about the triad of primeval god (or divine creator), benefactor (culture hero), and trickster (divine deceiver) as the root principle of primitive religious systems in general (1932:8). "These may be three separate figures in mythology", I said, "or three aspects of the same figure; but they may also be represented in a system by different figures, and this happens frequently." The ambivalent and complicated structure of Kwakiutl mythology, I argued, became especially understandable if it was approached from the position of the serpent (or substitutes of this figure) because this figure combined the dualistic and monistic nature of the religious system. I did point out, however, that the whole system could also be seen in the light of the bird-serpent figure, the bird representing more the upperworld and the serpent the underworld (p. 100).

Finally I said that the whole year could be differentiated in two, mutually polar, periods. The summer was the time in which predominated: the culture hero and benefactor Qaneqelaku, the upperworld, the South, the day sun, the direction East-West, and the unthreatened life. During this time the community, organized in clans, spread and lead a quietly busy life. In winter the serpent

was dominant, with the underworld, the North, the sun and moon after setting, the direction West-East, the struggle of life and death, light and darkness, in which life and light ultimately triumphed and were reborn. During that period the community, which was then organized in societies, showed an intensive group life. The potlatch and the winter ritual with cannibalism as the central rite engrossed the minds to the exclusion of all other things. It was the time of the mystery of rebirth, embracing ruin, death and revival (p. 100-1).

#### 4. Boas' criticism

In the table of contents of his publication *Race, Language and Culture* (1940) Boas summarized his review of my dissertation, which had appeared in 1933, as: "Criticism of the attempt to find a systematic interpretation of mythology". The review was not just a criticism of a specific interpretation as far as Kwakiutl mythology was concerned. Its general purpose was to reject the attempt to find a systematic interpretation of oral mythology. At the end of his review Boas states explicitly: "A systematic explanation of mythological stories seems to me illusory". With reference to *The serpent in Kwakiutl religion* Boas points out: "Dr. Locher seeks a systematic interpretation of mythology without asking himself whether there is such a thing as a mythological system. His method of proving this point, as that of other investigators who work toward a similar goal, appears to me as follows: Myths are not what they appear to be. They hide a deeper significance which we must discover. The investigation is based upon a comparison of the stories which are grouped around the different mythological figures, upon an examination of their names, attributes, actions and associations with other figures. It is hoped in this way to recognize their 'true' significance which is unknown to the living native himself, in part, because the original meaning has been forgotten, in part, I presume, because it is taken for granted that the 'real' system is just as little known to him as the grammatical system of his language. It seems to me that such attempts to discover the 'true' essence of myths are analogous to the primitive way of thinking as assumed by the same investigators. As myths to the student of mythology are not what they seem, so to the primitives sun, moon, stars, lightning, clouds are supposed to hide a deeper meaning. They are conceived as a system, as a form of human life endowed with greater powers. The logic in both cases appears to

me the same.” (p. 447)

As far as the Kwakiutl and Bella Bella are concerned, it can be shown, according to Boas, that parts of the mythology have been introduced quite recently and have never been worked into a system. After giving some examples he declared that the entire method “by which the double-headed serpent is to be set down as the fundamental concept of Kwakiutl mythology” seemed to him to rest upon “a complete misunderstanding of the relation of the Indian to his mythology, and of the development of the mythology of these tribes. Objections such as those here touched upon, could be raised against practically every step of the author’s consideration.” (p. 449).

##### 5. *The reaction of Preuss*

The largest part of Preuss’ review of *The serpent in Kwakiutl religion* in the journal “Sociologus” (1933) consisted of a full attack on the main theme of Boas’ criticism, namely his rejection of the systematic interpretation of oral mythology. Preuss informs us that already in 1892 Boas told his friend Eduard Seler how completely wrong he was in his publication “Die Lichtbringer bei den Indianerstämmen der Nordwestküste” and how since that time Seler had stopped his research in this field. Boas had used the same argument as he did forty years later. Seler did not understand at all the relation of the Indian to his mythology nor the development of the mythology of these tribes.

The fact that Boas had not set himself to a systematic interpretation of the mythology of “his tribes” and the way he reacted to the interpretations by other anthropologists, necessarily must lead to the conclusion, Preuss said, that according to Boas neither he himself nor anyone else could proceed beyond the ethnographic materials collected by him. As Boas did not confine himself to the criticism of the systematic interpretation of Kwakiutl mythology but gave it a general scope, Preuss held himself entitled to attack this criticism on account of his own experiences in fieldwork and study. He stated: “Überall, wo ich geforscht habe, besonders bei den Cora, Huichol, Mexicano, in Mexico, bei den Kagaba und Uitoto in Columbien und in den Altertümern und den reichen Literaturschätzen der Mexikaner zu der Zeit der Entdeckung, habe ich stets eine Art *System* in ihrer Religion und in ihren Mythen gefunden, wenn auch erst nach heissem Bemühen und öfters erst nach der Veröffentlichung der zugrunde liegenden Materialien, und ich glaube trotzdem, dass

damit noch immer nicht das Verständnis der benutzten Quellen allseitig abgeschlossen ist. Wie bei den Kwakiutl waren die Mythen und religiösen Handlungen dieser Stämme das Ergebnis vielfacher Völkerbewegungen und Übertragungen. Ein religionswissenschaftliches Studium muss demnach das Verständnis aus Schichtungen innerhalb von Kulturkreisen gewinnen, indem man darin die reichen Daten eines einzelnen Volkes einzugliedern sucht, sodass es nicht so sehr darauf ankommt, ob eine Zeremonie oder ein Mythos von irgendwoher eingewandert ist, zumal verschiedene Bräuche und Mythen derselben mythischen Erklärungsschicht angehören können. Wer sich dagegen wie Boas auf Grund theoretischer Erwägungen überhaupt weigert, auch nur einen Versuch zum Verständnis zu machen, der kann auch nicht besondere Neigung haben zu einem Verständnis zu gelangen."

After the statement that he had found a kind of system in the religion and mythology wherever he had done fieldwork and research concerning American Indians, Preuss called the approach of Boas a disaster to the study of religion and mythology. Then he said: "Nach dieser notwendigen grundsätzlichen Erörterung dürfen wir uns an der Arbeit von Locher rückhaltlos erfreuen, da sie uns zum ersten Mal einen annehmbaren Ausblick in dem Labyrinth von Mythen und Riten der Nordwestküste eröffnet und dabei eine Methode anwendet, die sich von der engen Anklammerung der Phantasie an das Verhältnis der einzelnen Personen und Tiere zu einander loslöst und nur die Zugehörigkeit zu kosmischen Regionen in Betracht zieht." The last part of this appreciation is correct if the relation to cosmic regions is not seen in the light of the "nature-mythological" school of thought but in the sense in which this concept was used in the work of de Josselin de Jong to indicate the total order with its subdivision of microcosmos and macrocosmos (1935:11).

## 6. Conclusion

In his article on history and ethnology (1949, 1958) Lévi-Strauss stated: "C'est à Boas que revient le mérite d'avoir, avec une admirable lucidité, défini la nature inconsciente des phénomènes culturels, dans des pages où, les assimilant de ce point de vue au langage, il anticipait sur le développement ultérieur de la pensée linguistique, et sur un avenir ethnologique dont nous commençons à peine à entrevoir les promesses." He referred to the introduction which Boas wrote to the *Handbook of American*

*Indian Languages* (1911), several years before the publication of Ferdinand de la Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*. However, as Lévi-Strauss points out in the same passage of his article, we do not find the application of these new insights as far as ethnology is concerned: "Car Boas, qui devait les utiliser pleinement pour fonder la linguistique américaine, et à qui elles devaient permettre de réfuter des conceptions théoriques alors incontestées, a fait preuve, en ce qui concerne l'ethnologie, d'une timidité qui freine toujours ses successeurs" (1958:26-27).

But there is no timidity in the way Boas condemned an attempt at a systematic interpretation of Kwakiutl mythology nor in his general statement which I quoted before: "A systematic explanation of mythological stories seems to me illusory". He also did not accept the idea of a kind of system in mythology which could be compared with the unconscious grammatical system of language.

In the essays on the centennial of Boas' birth, *The Anthropology of Franz Boas*, this problem is discussed by Melville Jacobs in his contribution on Folklore. There he says: "Boas' point of view about the structuring and content of an oral literature made it a thing of shreds and patches. His attitude appears in his review of a book by G.W. Löcher (read: Locher), who regarded an oral literature as a system or structure (1933). Boas demurred, asserting that a folklore is an assemblage of items of which many continue to be contradictory. Although he was correct to the degree that his considerations dealt with some of the borrowed items, his patchwork assumption prevented him and most of his disciples from seeking or accounting for such structuring and internal consistencies as were present." (1959:131).

My dissertation which I wrote when I was twenty-four years old and with the idea of pioneering in a rich field of ethnographic materials under the stimulating influence of de Josselin de Jong's structuralism, did not show much timidity either. It is, therefore, quite understandable that Boas was irritated by this inroad on what he regarded as his domain of anthropology. But the scope which he gave to his criticism made it into an outline of his attitude in general towards systematic interpretations of oral mythology. That was the reason why Preuss replied to this criticism as he did and why in recent times some American anthropologists have brought Boas' review of *The serpent in Kwakiutl religion* to the fore again. It is important that Irvin Goldman did this too, because he was not only a student of Boas

but also worked for him as an assistant on Northwest Coast problems and, moreover, spent many years of his life in studying the Kwakiutl and their neighbouring tribes.

Of course I know that the present interest in my publication of some forty-five years ago has to do with the impact of Lévi-Strauss' structural anthropology on the study of American Indian mythology. Although not in connection with his own publications and statements on the mythology of the Northwest Coast Indians, Lévi-Strauss sometimes has mentioned my name too among the Dutch anthropologists regarded by him as the "précurseurs hollandais" of contemporary structuralism (Locher 1973a:34). I wrote this article to give some substance to this view but also to indicate that in the thirties there was already a debate going on about the interpretation of oral mythology as a system or structure.

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L.



FREERK C. KAMMA

THE INCORPORATION OF FOREIGN CULTURE ELEMENTS  
AND COMPLEXES BY RITUAL ENCLOSURE  
AMONG THE BIAK-NUMFORESE

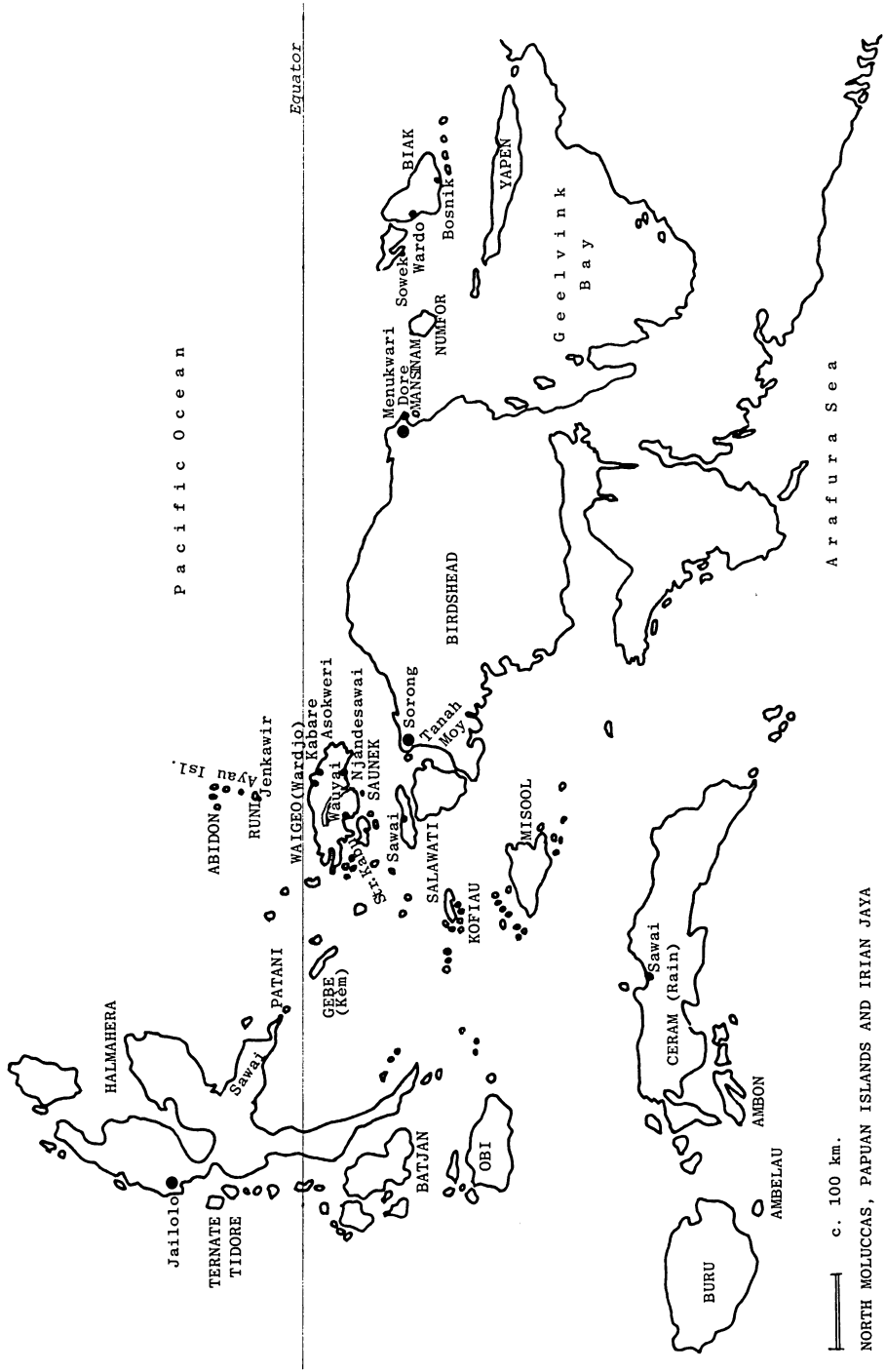
*1. Daily life routine*

Before giving an account of the enclosing or hemming-in of foreign elements in the culture of the Biak-Numforese, we have to give an account of the daily life routine and problems, and of the role of ritual in that context. The people concerned live on islands and along the beaches of the mainland of the vast island of Irian (formerly named New Guinea). They build houses, mostly on stilts or poles, located in bays or along quiet stretches of coasts of the Pacific Ocean, protected by reefs and lagoons against the pounding surf during the westerly storms and gales. Their subsistence economy revolves around two axes: fishing and hunting, mainly performed by men, and gardening in which most of the time women take part.

A strictly kept patri-clan system, the custom of bride-wealth and indirect exchange, offering the possibility of both close cooperation and competition, are directly connected with the core and the focus of the whole culture, viz. the rituals and ceremonies performed by the ever present partners and competitors: the father and his clan members on the one hand and the mother's brother and his relatives on the other. The social economy is furthermore very often marked by stressing rivalry and keeping it alive; by pursuing honour and famous deeds in order to outwit competitors, even during dramatic and religious performances, by which they hope to outshine their partners. But this is done in a playful way: the "homo ludens" is never absent.

The struggle of daily life is mostly concerned with the endeavour to come to terms with the following problems:

1. The geographic environment: the overwhelming forests and the merciless ocean.
2. The human beings: "friend and foe".
3. Time: the process of growth and decay, old age and diminishing life-power.



NORTH MOLUCCAS, PAPUAN ISLANDS AND IRIAN JAYA

#### 4. The Powers: supernatural, benevolent or malevolent.

Culture in general tries to cope with these problems by different methods, one of which, the method of ritual, accompanies nearly all of life, but especially in critical stages and times of stress. One especially hazardous occurrence is undoubtedly the meeting of foreign people and strange cultures. The Biak-Numforese were as a matter of fact predisposed to have these encounters many times, as they used to organize long voyages, and in former times head-hunting raids, on which occasions they caught people and brought them home as slaves. (Slavery itself was already the result of outside influence, namely from Tidore, as we will see later on.)

Meeting people always means discovering other cultures, seeing alternatives for the solving of problems, and therefore results in acculturation in a peaceful — or sometimes hostile — manner. Thus spontaneous acculturation must have taken place during centuries, and not only culture-elements were adopted but even whole culture-complexes such as metallurgy (cf. Kamma and Kooyman 1973). Contacts between different peoples and cultures always implies two possibilities: a threat and/or a challenge. The reaction to foreign influences we have in mind is mentioned in the title of this study. We must begin, however, with an outline of ritual.

#### *2. An outline of Biak-Numforese rituals and ceremonials*

One of the most striking features of the daily-life routine of the Biak-Numforese was the great number of ritual performances, observed and always defined by strangers and visitors as “feasts” or celebrations. This ethnocentric opinion, according to which singing, dancing, etc. are treated as pastimes, is of course misleading. What could be seen was only part of what the people concerned named “the great enterprise” or “the important work” (*fararur beba*), terms which clearly express what was meant and performed. Major parts of the village society were mostly involved, and the so-called “celebrations” could only be performed after a time of hard labour, long travels, and great efforts. Elaborate rituals could only be performed if most of the population were prepared to exert themselves to the utmost. An eyewitness in 1857 wrote: “In order to meet the requirements, there are no lazy or poor people during these preparations for the performances.”

As for the total number of these rituals, I prepared a list of

those most frequently held. There were 44 of them, and as some embraced different sub-divisions as well (22), the total number is about 66. Though most of them are required for one person, some others include the clan-lineage, the sub-clan, the village or some neighbour-villages too. We left out the purely personal and individual acts such as those performed for hunting, fishing, gardening, etc., and falling within the categories of white or black magic, performed without much ado, sometimes in a secret way; no singing or dancing is then required. We do have to mention the very important chants performed during voyages or fishing trips. Some of these were standard features of most of the rituals. The Biak people know at least about 29 varieties of songs, each melody, chant, dirge or ditty having its own name and character, with traditional texts but even more often newly composed ones, created as new experiences and unexpected situations occur. Myths, magic formulas etc. are repeated by telling or acting out the story, chanting and reciting the texts accompanied by community singing, either beginning with a solo or in the form of alternate singing (*kankarem*: answer song).

Classification of the rituals brings out the main issues with which the ceremonials are concerned. A grouping of the 44 rituals shows the following features:

#### A. *Initiation.*

9 or 7 rituals embracing the initiation cycle are named “introductory rites”, the last one is named *wor bepupes*, “concluding ritual”. They are:

1. Divination ritual (before the birth, assuring the sex of the child).
2. The descending or coming into the open of the new-born child (a week after the birth).
3. The first loincloth is donned (at c. 3 years of age) and the earlobes are pierced (to enable the use of amulets).
4. The first bracelet of shell is worn (for girls aged 4-5 years).
5. The first hair-cutting (for boys, aged about 8 years).
6. The perforation of the septum (boys aged about 12 years).
7. The eating of tabooed food, thus far kept from them (about 12 years).
8. Celebrating the first trip “to wash, bathe, the face”.
9. The concluding celebration: initiation of boys and girls (*rebor-insos*): very elaborate rituals involving seclusion, giving the new name, carrying the initiands on the backs of their clans-folk and mother’s brothers.

During these rituals the relatives of the two partners, father's and mother's clan, are the celebrants. They act as hosts, and exchanges of valuables and food take place. Furthermore the participants, friends, neighbours and fellow-villagers of the two partners are present. They join in the giving of presents and food, take part in the dancing and singing. Here the ring-dance is the main and most frequently practised form of celebration. Within the purified circle or ring (i.e. shielded from foreign and malevolent powers, ghosts and spirits) the initiands take their place. Performances such as piercing the nose and perforating the earlobes take place inside this "ring".

In a great variety of performances the first division is sung as an introductory song-cycle from the setting of the sun until midnight. The second cycle is sung at and after midnight and the third cycle near dawn and daybreak. All these songs are called after their main function: songs of protection (*wor-wark*), and not only the initiands directly involved but everybody present gains the "blessing" (*mana*) resulting from these songs and dances. Therefore we may conclude: community rituals reinforce the unity of the people involved in a psychological sense, but the main issue is always to strengthen the life-power, the *mana* (*nanek*), to keep away, even chase away, the evil powers, to promote the positive and benevolent or benignant spirits and, last but not least, to mobilize the ancestors who, according to everybody's opinion, are present at all these celebrations — as witnesses but even more as participants. Therefore the "bejuser song" (the "narrating or journeying song") and the "mourning song" are ever-present in the song-cycles. The journeying or narrating songs always narrate about the past, in which many of the ancestors were still alive. Therefore recalling and telling their history concerns the ancestors too. The presence of the dead is of the utmost importance, and the long series of rituals concerning a newly deceased relative is part of that relative's life-cycle.

*B. Incidental rituals which follow the initiation cycle.*

10. *Karindan auw*, the betrothal ritual, sometimes in the past at a very young age (*auw kamur*: "unripe" betrothal).
11. *Munara* or *wor jakjaker*, marriage.
12. *Fasasna wai babo*, the showing of a newly built canoe, followed or introduced by "watch-keeping" during one night, to stop evil spirits from entering "the soul" of the new canoe (the great seaworthy outrigger canoe).
13. *Wor rak* (raid song) or *do-mamum* (the killing song).

14. *Women apiawer*, slaves in the wooden block (the block for the feet, which are put in the stocks).
15. *Wor bemasi war mbrawen*, the bathing of a slave with “gold water”, i.e. setting free a slave and adopting him as a clan member.
16. *Kafkofer afer*, the throwing of lime, i.e. the peace-making ceremony.
17. *Wor saso-or myow*, trying out the strength and solidity of a new house, mostly that of a hero. A challenge to prove one’s strength or prestige.

*C. Rituals for mature clan members, recently dead.*

The following eleven rituals are all concerned with a newly dead, important, i.e. mature, member of a clan. The more important the clan member was, the longer and more elaborate were the rituals and the mourning periods observed.

18. *Kankanes kajob*, the “weeping of the dead song”.
  19. *Farbabéi*, small souvenirs are put around neck or body.
  20. *Panamomes romowi*, destroying of heirlooms.
  21. *s’Pangun bemarja*, the shrouding of the dead.
  22. *s’Erak bemarja*, the burial or placing of the corpse on a ridge of rock.
  23. *Katerwark*, the sharing of small presents on behalf of the dead.
  24. *Farwar*, the sharing of important valuables on behalf of the deceased as the “host”.
  25. *Sán merbak*, throwing away the mourning attire, i.e. ending the mourning period.
  26. *Masaki merbak*, washing away the mourning.
  27. *Munabai karwar*, the weeping during the carving of the image.
  28. *Befasos aba kor bemar*, the preparing of the ossuary-coffin.
- These eleven rituals are undertaken during a period exactly determined according to the status, or even more the pretended status the deceased had in the community. The offspring and clan members have to live up to this pretended status. Under the heading 23, 24, “the sharing”, this becomes directly clear, because the actions taken are “on behalf of the deceased”. Even if he had no possessions at all, his relatives will see to it that he is given the name of “wealthy”, i.e. “important” man. The deceased in his turn will live up to the standards he now faces, and this means he will try to do the utmost for his relatives while he remains in the *jenaibu* (world of the souls inside the earth or

at the bottom of the sea) with his *rur* (real soul), and his *nin* (shadow-soul) on earth among his kinsfolk. The mourning performances are therefore very important; they determine the status of the deceased and furthermore of his descendants. Being able to perform in accordance with a set standard promotes their status and therefore determines their future. We may conclude that performances and rituals nrs. 18-28 are a means to well-recognized and real ends: the status, well-being and prestige of the people involved.

If, at the time of the dying of an important man, the sea is very quiet and the surface is smooth as a mirror they say: "The ocean weeps, a hero died". The people concerned are then convinced that nature affirms the greatness of the man who just died.

#### *D. Miscellaneous rituals.*

29. *Wor fan nanggi*, the sacrifice to the Sky (or Firmament).  
During this occasion all utensils and tools of fishing, hunting, seafaring and gardening are put at the foot of the scaffold, built out of one or two big trees, and sometimes having three floors. The blessing of a planned enterprise, a voyage and the like, is especially mentioned during this ritual. The ceremony may even be held just for such an occasion.
30. *Wor rum sram*, the ritual during the building of a new sacred cultic centre.
31. *Wor besjun rum sram*, entering this building for the first time, and repeating this on behalf of each new generation.
32. *Worwark mararen*, the protecting song for travelling relatives, especially when great risks are involved. One of the songs is the *armis*, the song of dawn, announcing that "day is near", meaning: victory and well-being are assured. We will further on deal in more detail with this ritual as we found it in the archives (i.e. in my collection).
33. *Wor som korore*, ritual after returning from the voyage to Tidore.
34. *Wor fayakik robenei*, showing a new-born baby to valuables, i.e. bringing the new-born into contact or within sight of solid or shining valuables: houses, ceremonial wealth objects, etc.
35. *Wor manibob*, performed when trade-friends meet.
36. *Wor farbabyan*, a potlatch-like competition in giving away trade-wares, food, etc.
37. *Wor san farares*, an eating ceremony and eating match. The partner with his clansmen and friends has to finish the food

or fruits presented to him, lest he has to pay for everything he eats (and, of even more importance, in order to avoid losing his prestige and name or “face”).

The competitive element is the most striking feature in the last mentioned ceremonies. All equivalent phrases for this kind of “showing-off”, e.g. surpassing, outdoing, outshining rivals can be applied to these activities. However, the “homo ludens” does not fail to appear either, especially during these performances. It is permissible to put one’s opponent to shame, but to humiliate him openly is disapproved, unwise, or even stupid. All groups and individuals get their turn, i.e. their opportunity to answer, react, and even to show their superiority. Nevertheless cooperation appears to be a stronger force and is more needed than a short-lived flaring up of rivalry. Cooperation means life in every respect, and interdependence guarantees the continuation of life in the future. Boasting and bragging is just an outlet for pent-up individual feelings, and one is expected to find an answer by exaggerating in such a way that it causes much laughter and merriment. But life is precarious, and depends on support from the ancestors and supernatural powers. These powers have to be approached in a mood of humility and meekness: by humbly beseeching during divination performances or in song and dance. Sometimes these lead to ecstasy, when the roaring sound of the drums and voices seems to resonate in the bobbing bodies of the participants. Celebration unites, joy is shared; power, prestige and authority separate. Aged people are vessels of *naneh (mana)* and so are titles, strange as it seems. But a title, either nominal or functional, affords a good character. “Only those individuals with the best character get the chance to receive training (as shamans, for instance) lest they cause more harm than profit”, as an old proverb has it. All the elements and considerations just mentioned form the background and base of the community-in-action during the rituals and ceremonies. We will meet it again and again. Continuing our series of rituals we find:

38. *Kuk farfyar*, to prove that someone is really entitled to the status he claims to have, in order to put to shame an opponent who insulted the man concerned by openly calling him a liar. (A kind of ordeal which involves telling the names of one’s ancestors successively and shooting an arrow after having pronounced each name. The arrow has to hit the mark.)
39. *Wor fafyafer besorandak*, performed on the occasion of the arrival for the first time of a member of one’s far-away clan



- or lineage, or of one's trade friends.
40. *Wor mon*, "the shaman". The medicine-man in action. An elaborate complex:
    - a. The arrival of the patient(s).
    - b. Beseeching the presence of the ancestors.
    - c. *Wor waisom*: the voyage in the mind to the powers of the four main winds (an ecstatic performance in an imitated canoe built on the beach by means of small trees and branches). This "voyage in the mind" is undertaken by the shaman, accompanied by the drumming and singing of the participants. The four main sources (points of the compass) of the wind are divided into two sets of opposed powers: East against West, North against South. All of them are mentioned as having a king (*korano*) as their personification. The East wind King is benevolent, as is the Northern one. West and South are the dwelling-places of malevolent kings, feared by the people, and the shamans try to keep their mighty power in check by fortifying their patients with the rites we just mentioned. Apparently shamans rely on defensive rather than offensive means. Remarkable is the word *som* used here.
    - d. Entering song. When the patients go into seclusion for their medical treatment, they have to remain inside during a fortnight. The shaman uses a carved wooden calendar to mark the days.
    - e. *Wor beba* (the great *wor*), concluded by baptism with the blood of a white turtle. A communal performance to purify a group exposed to possible harmful, strange or foreign influences. It is particularly valuable for people going on a long voyage, or the home-coming after such a voyage.
  41. *Wor koreri*. These rituals are composed of all the positive possibilities and means the rituals mentioned thus far contain. As the coming Koreri, the utopian state of well-being, unity and eternal life, includes the overthrow of the existing socio-economic order, the selection of the rituals used at the time the imminent Koreri is expected is appropriate to this end. In the Koreri time, during the Advent nights, the songs are of a certain sequence, in order to build up stress and excitement (cf. Kamma 1972).
  42. *Kinsasor*. Divination of different kinds, as will be described below.
  43. *Wor abrakui*. Tug-of-war divination, but even more a performance to give support, especially to the crew of a big canoe

on a voyage to far-away destinations. Formerly connected with pirate raids, later with tribute voyages. Especially meant for those who are on their first trip, *besorandak*. Their mothers take the initiative and lead the singing. The women start with the selecting and cleaning of rattan, followed by the singing-in during a whole week or more. Then the rattan is pulled out with the roots still intact. This root-end is decorated and transformed into the head of the primeval snake which is imitated as it is carried by the women-folk towards the west (i.e. in the direction of Tidore). Joined by relatives of the crew members involved, the "combatants" start their tug-of-war after the singing has begun. The song texts are a summing-up of all the risky spots the crew has to pass by, starting with Cape Mamori where the dangerous *faknik* dwell, and which is located near the entrance of Dore Bay. A well-known myth explains this:

a. The primeval snake born from a human mother (Insrendi) and father (Mamori) was initiated by the deceased ancestors. The sound of their drums and voices (the surf) reminds one of the mother who disappeared and the father who in despair drowned himself.

b. The snake became the symbol of dangerous life, crawling away but always returning to its place of origin. Therefore, when the real tug-of-war starts, the tail-end has to win, even by means of tying it to a tree. The pulling has to be continued for a long time: the participants support the crew by doing so. At last the tail-end wins: a good omen, the crew is on its way back. (Sources: Numforese manuscripts, Held 1940:141.)

44. *Wor babores*. More than 20 different tunes, each of them with a special character, and sung on every possible occasion: from the fishing trip near the coast up to the great voyage to the most remote places, as we will describe presently.

### 3. Some main outlines of history

Obviously the daily-life routine was not put out of balance by the many performances of the rituals just mentioned. On the contrary: they ever again gave a stimulus to social-economic activities. Every village included *keret* (clans), sometimes many. Each of them had its elders, but no chiefs. A village chief or a more or less central authority was inconceivable. When the people concerned made contact with the petty kingdoms of

Ternate and Tidore, forming a kind of feudal system with influence in the islands of the North Maluku Archipelago, they could not imagine what this meant in reality. As in later centuries Tidore claimed to have certain rights on the Papuan Islands, even to the fringe of the Geelvink Bay area, it is important to know when the first contacts were made.

Many speculations have been put forward about those early days, but if we pursue the traces of history they fade away into the mist of legends and even myths. One of those legends has a certain portion of historical truth, but ends in suppositions. The hero Gurabesi, who, according to de Clercq, came from the island of Waigeo, succeeded in marrying a princess of Tidore (named Boki Taibah) as a reward for his assistance in the war between Tidore and Gailolo. He was given the privilege of being named *Kolano* or Raja. Their four sons were the later well-known Four Kings, the *Raja Ampat*. In the course of time their influence became "paramount". De Clercq added the following, even more important passage: "Furthermore it is mentioned that Gurabessi lived in the time of Sultan Tjiliati, during whose reign the Mohammadan religion was accepted . . ." (de Clercq 1888:305). "The Sultan just mentioned can be placed in the list of sovereigns as follows: 1495 Tjiliati, the first *Sultan* of Tidore." (Before that time they bore the title of *Kaityil*. This Sultan's name was Tjiliatu or Tjiri Leliatu. K.) "And according to tradition (or: as it is told), after the introduction of Islam by the Arab Sech Mansur, he took the name Djamaludin." (And the title of Sultan. K.) In a footnote, however, we find: "About the time of his accession to the throne and his death we know nothing exactly; it is most likely that he was the first Mohammadan sovereign. According to the list just mentioned, however, he remained in power until 1512, and therefore reigned for 17 years." (de Clercq 1890:150ff.)

These "historical facts" are based on the most probable assumptions. But recorded facts at least recorded that: "In 1535 the Maluku Rajas made a treaty of cooperation with some Papuan Rajas, namely of Vaigama (= Waigama, on the island of Missol. K.), Vaigue (= Waigeo. K.), Quibibi and Mincinbo." The last two names are mysterious; the first one could be Gebe. But two of the four Rajas at least are mentioned. We find the same names in 1569, and the very first record is even from 1521: "a Raja Papua in Gilolo". But at that time nobody besides the people concerned knew exactly who the Papuan Rajas were and where the Papuan Islands were located. East Halmahera and

Ceram may have been meant. In 1643 a Raja Salwatti is mentioned, possibly for the first time, and in 1660 it is said: "The Papuans of all the islands are subjected to Tidore". In 1671: "Waigama, Salawati, Batantam Mesowal or Misool, Waigeoe or Pulau Wardjo" (Haga 1884, I:94). In 1678: "Nothing is known about the supremacy of Tidore on the coast of New Guinea" (ibid.:121-22). 1700: "Tidorese influence has increased on the Papuan Islands". This could be an indication of the defeat of the Wardo-Papuans under their heroes Fakok and Pasrefi; we will deal with them shortly.

#### 4. *The Tidorese hongî fleets*

The Tidorese *hongî* fleets were notorious. Initially intended to take the tribute which the peoples they visited had failed to bring to Tidore, the crews took what the inhabitants had to pay. But no sooner had this kind of reprisal started than they became real "Viking raids". People were captured as slaves, villages marauded, garden plots pillaged and destroyed. At first initiated by the Sultans, they were later conducted on his behalf (or said to be). In this way New Guinea became a hunting-field for the eastern Maluku islands. Of these sad and cruel events I have given an outline, and listed the sources of information on them (Kamma 1947-49).

One of these *hongî* fleets led to the following results. In the year 1790, during 5 months, it reached the Kumamba islands (near Sarmi). Results: 178 people captured as slaves, 53 killed, 3 villages destroyed. Of the crew of the fleet, 2 men were killed, 2 missing and many injured. The villages the fleets visited had to feed the crew, and sometimes the villagers had to join the fleet and show the crew the way, acting as pilots.

The *hongî* fleets used very large vessels named *cora-cora* (sea-turtle); they had two or three decks or rowing-platforms, not unlike the Mediterranean galleys or triremes, and a crew of fifty to sixty carefully selected men. They were armed with spears, rifles and some *lila* (bronze cannons). Each year about eighteen to twenty went raiding along the coast of the main island of New Guinea. Sometimes the Rajas of the islands and the chiefs of Patani and Gebe revolted, went with their *hongî* fleet to Salawati and proclaimed themselves sovereigns. They captured 150 people, and the Raja of Salawati had to redeem his family, i.e. 104 slaves. This event brought 254 human beings to slavery (Kamma 1947:187). In 1728 Patanians compelled the Salawati

people to assist them as crews on their fleet in a revolt against Tidore. During nearly three years they blockaded Tidore. A treaty, in 1728, put an end to this remarkable event. In 1771 Tidore sent a retaliatory expedition to Salawati (30 *cora-cora* and 1500 men as crew). They punished the Sawai of Patani and executed six of them by hanging (*ibid.*:274, note 20). The colonial Government knew of it, but not in detail. Definitive steps were only taken in 1859. Then the *hong'i* raids were brought to a stop, but it was not until 1879 that slavery was terminated. In Tidore 3078 "slaves" were emancipated, in Ternate alone 1371. They were redeemed by the Government by paying *f* 50,000 to Tidore and *f* 51,000 to Ternate. How many were still held in captivity in the Malukus nobody knows. Some of the last "slaves" were emancipated in 1918 from the court of the then banished Utusan of Salawati; there were still 143 of them. When they were released they settled on Sorong island (Domi), where we met them in 1932, and heard of their experiences. Some of them were born in captivity. We have lived many years among these victims of the aftermath of slavery.

##### 5. Raids and voyages of the inhabitants

Voyages as far as Tidore were no exception for the inhabitants of the coast and the islands. With their seaworthy outrigger canoes they were notorious pirates and we mentioned already two of the most famous ones: Fakok and Pasrefi. Their raids they called *rak*, and they went as far as the islands of Timor, Gorontalo, Ceram, Ablaw, Buru and even Saleier. A very old man who had been to Timor several times told J.L. van Hasselt about these raids, and to the question of van Hasselt what they were doing out there, he answered: "What we had in mind? Just raiding, marauding, robbing and killing" (van Hasselt 1872:72). "He told that he had met at least five Sultans. This appeared not to be the boasting of a c. 80-year old man. Five Sultans? This seemed too many, but I checked his claim, and he was right. It must have been before the time the missionaries arrived (1855)." The Sultans are: "1e: 1797: Mohamadanil Mabusu; 2e: 1805: Mohammed Djainalabidin; 3e: 1810: Mohammed Tahir; 4e: 1822: Achmudal Mansur; 5e: 1857: Achmad Saifudin" (de Clercq 1890). A remarkable proof of the reliability oral traditions sometimes have.

About Timor he was right too: the word Papua there has the meaning of "pirate". And pirates they were. In their songs they still mention the places where they have been. Their saying was:

*snonsya komujen, binsja kujen*: “we killed the men, and captured the women”. They named their children after these places: Haruku, Ponjenamberi (“the first on the beach of the strangers”), Amblaw, etc.

The reports from voyagers, officials, ships visiting those areas are teeming with complaints and remarks about the “Papuan pirates”. Valentijn (1666-1727) in his famous volumes (see the Bibliography) states: “All these inhabitants of the Papuan areas are big and famous pirates, and the people of the Island of Ceram are extraordinarily afraid and scared of them” (ibid., I:248). A remark about the Island of Banda illustrates this. “Due to the increasing brutality of the Papuan pirates, the trade of the Bandanese was nearly crushed and became almost impossible” (Kamma 1948:260) and “the fleet of these pirates numbered seventy to eighty *cora-cora*, crossing the straits between Ceram and Ambon” (ibid.). “In 1765 Papuan pirates destroyed Amblaw (near Ambon and Buru) and ten years later Forrest met two of the captured women at the house of a Tidorese chief, i.e. one nominated by Tidore on the Island of Ayau” (ibid.).

These facts show how far from home the “Papuan pirates” ventured. Yet one more case, the most daring voyage ever made in which a “Papuan” crew was involved, although not on their own initiative: “in 1824 a total number of seventy pirate vessels were sighted near the coast of Banyuwangi (eastern Java). They appeared to be ‘pirates’ from the Malukus, having as their crew natives of New Guinea as slaves or paddlers” (ibid.:264).

We may draw the conclusion that the people involved have a great and rather famous, if sometimes notorious past. We have an important question to put forward: Why did the later generations not profit from the experiences of their ancestors in the past? The answer is: the paddlers and slaves concerned came from a rather limited area. Secondly, “it is very sad but it is a fact: slaves remained slaves and paddlers never returned home; they too were used and sold as slaves” (ibid.). This fact is recorded, but the proof is that in none of the many songs these known facts are mentioned. Even the part the “Papuans” played in the conquest of the island of Ternate (21st July, 1801) (ibid.:262) by Tidorese, Papuans and Patanians is unknown in the homeland of the participants. This past remained silent.

Out of the tumultuous past our attention will be drawn to another more peaceful past. It is not, however, an idyllic but a most serious matter, as we have to show, and it began with violence.

6. *A new element in the struggle, or how did they come to terms with Tidore? Openly, magically or by Koreri?*

Tribute paying was obligatory. Open refusal or inciting others to cease paying tribute seemed impossible, yet it happened and has been recorded. A statement from Numfor: "The Sultan of Tidore once gave the message: 'Everyone who does not pay the obligatory tribute will be killed, together with all the members of his clan or village'" (source: de Bruyn 1947:25).

Was this threat ever executed? We can imagine what would be the Sultan's reaction: a *hong*i fleet. One case is recorded of refusal to pay, of incitement to cease payment forever, and of the Sultan's retaliation. It was a trading schooner's captain (Fabricius: about 1850-55, with his ship "Fear Not") who was the reporter. "Some time ago a Papuan impostor returned from Tidore and settled in Mafoor (Numfor, K.). He made known that Konori (the son of the expected Messiah, K.) had joined him, but had gone into hiding for the time being, until the believers offered gifts sufficiently. He did not succeed too well," and "Finally he began to incite the people to cease paying tribute, and when they protested, saying that the Sultan would promptly retaliate by sending a *hong*i fleet, he assured them that Konori would destroy such a fleet with a single word. This had the desired result: the people readily believed his assurance and the Sultan did not receive tribute any more. But no sooner did the Sultan hear the reason for the delay than he sent his ships against the recalcitrants, and when the people were punished the deceit came to light: the imagined divine messenger was no other than an old slave who had assisted his master" (Goudswaard 1863:93).

In what way the punishment was executed is not mentioned, but some elements shed more light on the opinion of the inhabitants, namely:

1. Having visited Tidore made a visitor important in one way or another. Acting towards him in a friendly manner caused sharing of *nanek* (*mana*). (We shall presently describe this ceremony.)
2. In the case described by Goudswaard the initiator, however, was not satisfied and that made him act as an impostor, with some success.
3. The firm belief of the inhabitants in the imminent Koreri made them also believe in and trust the magic power of the herald of the coming Messiah. He finally believed it himself, and he dared to take the risk. That is how he became a victim of his own greed, but also of his belief.

### 7. Sawai (Patani), Gebe (Gem, Kem) and Biak-Numfor

The experiences of the Biak-Numforese and of the Sawai (Patani) and Gebe (Gem) had a special character. In the first place: resistance, retaliation, victory and defeat. *Kakawai Kré*, from the village Kornasoren on Numfor (inhabited by people of clan Kré after they had left Sopen in western Biak), went on a small *rak* (pirate raid) to the west and came as far as Ayau. On one of the islands (Runi, village Jenkawir) he prepared his attack, but was overwhelmed by a *hong*i fleet from Gebe. As prisoners, and later as slaves, the raiders were kept for a long time in Gebe island (Gem, Kem). They were at last allowed to return home with the title “*sangadji* of Gebe (Gem)”, but had to pay tribute. The name and title only remained as a reminder of the remarkable past.

Much more fortunate were the two well-known heroes, Fakok and Pasrefi, in their encounter with the Sawai from Patani. These Sawai people, emigrants from Biak, in primeval times went as far as eastern Halmahera (Patani, hence their name in history as Patanians), and eventually to Maba, Weda and north-eastern Ceram (where they were named Tidorese Papuans). Even nowadays a village Sawai is located there. In 1653 Patani is mentioned as centre and stronghold of the “Tidorese Papuans”. As for the migration of the Sawai people from Biak, two sources mention it: Kamma 1954:22-23, on migration from Biak; de Clercq 1888:305, on migration from Tidore. Furthermore, the history of Tidore and the Papuan islands teems with *hong*i voyages, raids everywhere, revolts wherever possible (cf. Haga 1884, I, passim).

Therefore they must have had a substantial manpower at their disposal. They resisted and even attacked Tidore successfully, and Salawati too, but they also became the important adversary and the powerful enemy of the Biak people. Official records report the great influence of Biak, especially of the inhabitants of Wardo. The island on which they lived was named “Waigeoe or Poelo Wardjo” in 1671 (cf. Haga 1884, I:94) (*poelo* = *pulau*, island), and Valentijn c. 1700 mentioned them too: “. . . the island is usually named Waygehoe, but others called it Wardjoe” (ibid. I:247). How it happened that their influence was so important already at that time, can be learned from the Biak sources on the two heroes Fakok and Pasrefi, as these two *were Wardo people*. These two famous and notorious heroes clashed with the Sawai in the Raja Ampat area. In the long run the Sawai even were the cause of the dramatic defeat and of the loss of



independence of the Biak people in that area: the north coast of the main island, including Geelvink Bay. Therefore we have to draw special attention to the cause and the *dramatis personae* involved: Fakok(i) and Pasrefi from Wardo.

8. *The saga and drama of the two Biak heroes Fakoki and Pasrefi*

These two well-known heroes came from eastern New Guinea. They were the first two blacksmiths, who forged their weapons (spears, arrow-heads, etc.) and went raiding, pirating, marauding and capturing people in the Far West, i.e. Waigeo, Ceram, Buru, Amblaw, Halmahera, Ambon, etc. Their own strongholds were Asokweri (with the fortress Kapakja (north Waigeo) and Wauyai (in Kabu Bay, southern Waigeo). The latter village was formerly the centre of the Kawé tribe, which tribe claimed to have had Rajas long before Tidore exerted its influence. The two heroes of Wardo defeated the Sawai, who retaliated and pursued them to Asokweri, but had to withdraw their fleet in the end. Then the two planned to attack Patani again. In the meantime they built another domain on the Ayau islands. When they were prepared to make the attack, this time their goal was the great fortress of Tiwyan at Patani. Before they went they performed a divination ceremony, as usual. This time they took the heron as their omen. If the bird flew in the direction mentioned, it would be a good omen, and this happened indeed. But then "it happened", i.e. in his recklessness one of the crew members caught and killed another divination-bird (Indonesian: *Luri Raja*), and the man died on the spot. But nevertheless they continued their raid (*rak*), besieged and took the fortress by surprise and massacred the garrison. The Sawai, however, reorganized their forces and organized a huge fleet with the help of the Gebe people. They pursued the Biak fleet and in their turn besieged the Biak fortress of Kapakja, near Asokweri. Standing on platforms hidden behind shrubs, the Biak killed hundreds of Sawai with heavy boulders during their attack. The barren table-land, however, could not supply the Biak with food and water, and their supply-line was cut off (by treason, they say). Thus at last the Biak heroes ran out of food and water and were starving. In order to save their lives they decided to propose a truce on certain conditions. They lowered the message with their proposal into the river, just below Kapakja: a small imitation of a canoe containing a human figure, some sago leaves, a piece of turtle-shell and a piece of rope (*gon*) with three knots tied in it. These symbols were well understood:

the Biak heroes offered to deliver tribute to the Sawai after three months, and to give the things depicted and laid in the hold of the small canoo: slaves, sago, turtle-shell and mats. The Sawai and Gebe people accepted the conditions and withdrew their fleet. After five weeks of struggle, fierce fighting and starvation, the heroes and with them the Biak people lost their independence and became subjected to Tidore. Their opponents, the Sawai and Gebe, waited and when the tribute promised was brought to them, the chiefs of Patani and Gebe escorted the heroes and their tribute to Tidore. (This was their duty, and it has remained thus ever since.) After they had arrived at court the Sultan bestowed on them two titles: Fakoki was given *Dimara* and Pasrefi, *Sangaji Wardo* as their future functions. Returning home they realized they had become "representatives of the Sultan of Tidore". Had the two heroes ever had in mind that their life-saving surrender would amount to this? Or had they at that time in mind to gain some time to reorganize their fleet again? Nobody knows. But we get an indication of what they had in mind from what is told about their last acts. They made their new stronghold in the atoll island of Abidon, one of the Ayau group. This atoll is protected by an extensive barrier-reef. Nearly inaccessible because the entrance is only small, the island has very fertile soil and is located on a rather remote spot.

While the two heroes were living on Abidon, they were brooding over the past and the future. Impossible, so they thought, that the time of victory and fame as pirates was over and done with. They made plans. But before they could make a start in reorganizing their forces, they had to *kinsor* (perform divination), this time in a grand style. They erected a huge scaffold with three storeys and very high, about ten metres: a construction for the *fan nanggi* (sacrifice to the Lord Sky). They did their utmost to stimulate Nanggi: plenty of food and utensils and offerings, and as near to the Sky as possible. Fakoki acted as a shaman and priest, standing with outstretched arms on the highest platform. They sang the hymn *nambodjaren*: "O, *Nanggi mamfre*" (Oh Sky, look down upon us), but no reaction came, not even after abundant sacrifices and pleadings. The arms of Fakoki did not start to shake, as a sign of approval from above. Time and again the result remained the same. Then they worked themselves into a most frightful rage. Not being allowed to fight on earth, now they would fight against Heaven, the Lord Sky himself. They sharpened their arrow-heads and shot over and over again, even with a *lila* (small bronze cannon). But the roar of

the gun and lightning from the sky boomed and flashed at the same moment. The two heroes were struck dead on the spot. And that was the tragic end of famous heroes and a heroic history.

The Sawai must have lived in that area for a long period. Village names and sites are the witnesses: Jensawai, Njandisawai and Bukor-Sawai ("Sawai skulls", at the foot of Kapakja, near Asokweri). We have no reliable information as to how long they stayed, or even in which century.

#### 9. The "samsom Tidore" (the tribute to Tidore)

What is the meaning of the term *samsom*? Translating it by "tribute" seems reasonable. After their surrender, the two heroes Fakok and Pasrefi, to save their lives, symbolically proposed the paying of tribute. Three knots in a piece of rope meant: after three months we will visit Patani and pay the tribute: products and slaves. The tribute they had to offer afterwards and the required visits to Tidore were new elements. But they did not use the word *bak* = paying (*babiak* = the objects paid), but *som*. *Som* means bowing down, prostrating oneself. The native speakers explain it with the word *kunem* = bowing. But *som*, *sjom* means more. *Som* is literally: hanging, pendent, like legs or hair. *Bukor-sjom* = *bukor*: head, and *sjom*: hanging down, straight hair.

Arrived at the court of the Sultan the tributaries had to prostrate themselves before him (as we shall see) and to approach his majesty by "crawling" on all fours. This precept, strictly kept and controlled, was in fact a humiliating posture. The offering of tribute was in a certain way more positive: the giver of products and valuables is superior to the receiver: this is the basic, well-known corollary of "the gift" and it was understood as such by the people concerned. They sang it in their *armis* song, as we shall see, but, nevertheless, they preferred to name the whole procedure *som* or *samsom*: prostration. This does not mean that they liked to stress the fact that they were subjected to the humiliation of prostration. Nobody would do so or react in this manner, unless another element was more important. And that was the case.

The "other element" was the close contact with the palace, the solid, shining building and floor, which they not only touched with their feet but nearly embraced by prostrating and crawling on hands and knees, on all fours. This meant profiting fully from the magic power, i.e. the *mana* radiating from these objects. This

is a well-known fact which is demonstrated every time gift-exchanges take place. This was the most characteristic feature for the people concerned, and therefore they named it accordingly: *som* or *samsom* (*som*: verb; *samsom*: substantive).

In the course of time, the word came to emphasize the gift as such, and not the way in which it was presented; therefore *som* became the word indicating the tribute. In his dictionary (s.v. *syom*) Mofu explains *som* as: to bring valuables and present them in the presence of kings; *bo ko kunem* = "prostrate, bow". S.v. *som*: "*farser* (sacrifice)", *sjom*, "to bring *som* to the Raja (tribute)". The people involved could easily have used the Indonesian word for tribute, viz. *upeti*, but they had their own explanation.

#### *10. The precautions taken before departure on a voyage*

Some introductory remarks should be made first. The material which will be presented here, we got from: Numfor (Dore Bay), Ayau island, north of the island of Waigeo, and from Biak and Numfor. The last-mentioned sources I owe to my late friend Dr. V. de Bruyn, who in 1947 sent a questionnaire to all the chiefs and clan-chiefs; among these questions one was concerned with our "voyages to Tidore and the *upeti*". We will cite his important contribution many times. The voyage was an extraordinary one for the participants, for several reasons:

1. They were very vulnerable, having a precious cargo, and could never take the risk of attacking an enemy. They had to rely on defence.
2. They left the sites of their ancestors, where they knew the dangers.
3. They had to cope with the problems of malevolent powers, of which they did not know the hiding places. They were thrown on the mercy of these powers.
4. They went in the direction of the land of the dead: the west, and the journey was as precarious as life itself: the west was the realm and the source of westerly gales too. This was the reason why they had to make a constant appeal to superhuman and irrational powers to prevent evil, misfortune and disaster. A successful journey in itself was already a victory which had to be celebrated.

*The preparations and precautions*

1. *Watching the omens*: the flight of birds (direction), and the kind of bird.

2. *Selecting the crew* by means of divination (*kinsor*). *Kinsor*, divination, from *kin* = grip, grasp; and *sor* (*besor*), that which is hidden.

a. The *serem*-leaf method. Cut into two ribbons, each three fingers broad, the leaf is laid above the embers glowing in a split section of bamboo. One of them is the "home part", the other, the "abroad part". If bubbles arise on the abroad part, this signifies an adverse wind, bad weather, etc. Bubbles on the home part are a good omen. How bad or favourable the waves and weather will be can be read by their shape and number.

In the first case the performer, joined by the participants, tries to influence the result by singing "Keep away, keep away, let bubbles arise elsewhere".

3. *The same leaves* are used, but this time the method is: folding one of them as tightly as possible, dip it into some water and hold it near the fire. If the leaf is still wet inside it means a good omen. A dry leaf is a bad omen.

4. *Kinsor ro pume* (areca-nut proof): the palm of the left hand, rubbed smooth with lime, is stretched forward and held stiffly under the chin. A drop of chewed areca-nut juice from the diviner's mouth makes a big stain in the middle of the palm and several small specks on the edges. The line drawn between the main stain and the most remote smaller one points in a certain direction: a person, a house, a village, etc. The aim of this performance is specified before it starts (e.g. the aim is to select crew members). The volunteers sit in a circle around the diviner, and the outcome is easy to control when the diviner is sitting low and the direction in which the specks point are marked by him with a small rod. This method is preferred in the Dore Bay region (cf. van Hasselt 1888:55; his description mentions the "big splash" having a point in a particular direction, which is the indicator).

5. The *rof* or span method. The diviner blows over his two hands or his fingertips. Then he starts taking spans beginning on the right shoulder, crossing the breast and downwards along the left arm. Meanwhile the diviner sings: "Father, predict truly, predict whether the spans precisely reach the length I will be killed if I go" (Feuilletau de Bruyn 1920:92). This last method beseeches a warning in the case of danger.

In all these methods the same procedure is used. Before the start the owner of the canoe or shaman or medicine-man begs for truth to Nanggi (Sky, the High god; de Bruyn 1947:9) or even Nanek, now named Barakas (*mana*). Others state that the prayers are directed to the ancestors, the earth, the spirits of the four corners of world, the winds (M. Kaisiepo, oral statement). Once I heard a prayer just like the ones we have been describing. It ran: "Oh Nanggi, Barakas, Mamfre *ro inggo*", i.e. "Oh Sky, Mana, look upon us", and "ancestors all of you, ground, rocks, all you trees . . .".<sup>1</sup>

A prayer to Nanggi alone, in the song called *randan*, is well known: "Nanggi. e -Nanggi, give us a favourable wind that we may set sail".

Basically all these actions assure them that every plan or action amounts to the same basic attitude: everything depends on divine instructions. Feuilletau de Bruyn confirms this too (1920:91).

Using one or more, or even all methods of divination, the crew is selected.

6. *Preparing the amulets, aifis*, and wearing them, suspending them round one's neck. From the various kinds they select the ones appropriate to the occasion: i.e. either the one which protects against the influence of strangers, or the one which chases away storm or adverse winds and rain. In time of danger or precarious situations the owner brandishes one of them, thus threatening the malignant spirits, the chief of the winds (*korano*), the malignant sea spirit (*faknik*), etc. Each person wears five, six, or more, and among them are the *aimamun* (killing-wood) made from the wood of the aru tree (*endospermum formicercum*, Indon.: *kayu raja*) which has "killing power": nothing grows under or near this kind of tree (van Hasselt 1930:237). The Biak people usually make the hilts of their weapons from this wood too (*ibid.*).

7. *Performing the ritual singing (wor)*, in which the goal of the voyage is mentioned in disguised form, e.g. "the drift-wood *aimando* near the spouting fire" (the Ternate volcano near Tidore), etc. This ritual is named "the singing-in" of the voyage; they sing the *swandibrin* (quieting the sea), "lock-in the winds", etc.

All the participants, meaning everybody who contributed his share to the tribute, take part in the rituals. They sometimes last only one night, or a day and the following night, and Biak sources mention: "a whole week, and people rejoice because their tribute will be sailed to Tidore and make the Sultan happy"

(de Bruyn 1947:3). What does “happy” mean? Do they love the Sultan that much? I assume “happy” refers to a beneficial mood. “Smoothing the sea” also refers symbolically to “tranquilizing the heart”. A benevolent mood sheds *mana*.

In “our” village (Dore) the community unites some nights before the planned departure and sings-in the voyage. Everybody: crew and relatives and the other “participants in the tribute” join in. Nothing is left to chance. Though the decisions are indicated by divine powers, it is the community’s task to prevent evil and take care for the benefit and well-being of all participants, and especially the crew. This is the meaning of the words *disen-wark* (singing, watching, preventing). The relatives at home exactly know their duty to accompany the crew as long as the canoe is on its way.

8. *Besides the obligatory communal rituals, some personal taboos have to be kept.* One has to refrain from

- a. mentioning the names of the crew,
- b. cleaning the sago-bowl with cold water (= cooling the relations),
- c. thinking of one of the crew members (having a person constantly in mind = hampering his trip),
- d. infringing moral precepts, etc.

Neglect of rituals and taboos may cause real trouble. If during the voyage the crew has to cope with serious difficulties or even dangers, the question is put: “What may be the reason we run into these troubles?” (*Mansei (Rosai) bewari ko sma kandera inendi?*). By divination with areca-juice the crew members try to find out whether this reason lies before or behind them. If it lies ahead, they repeat the test several times. If the result remains unfavourable, the voyage has to be interrupted and the crew goes back home. If the source of trouble is behind them (i.e. at home) the journey will be continued but the crew will deal with the case as soon as they are home again. A bad omen during the trip is, for example, a black-and-white striped seasnake crawling into the canoe during a night-stop. If the snake is found in the bow, the canoe has to go back home: the snake is poisonous and peril ahead awaits the crew.

#### 11. *The voyage to Tidore<sup>2</sup> by the inhabitants of Mansinam*

When the Papuans have decided to make the voyage to Tidore, then in the first place they select the crew and their number according the size of the canoe. After that they try by way of

divination to find out if and when the voyage has to be undertaken.

In the meantime the great seaworthy outrigger canoe is prepared and equipped. When the appointed time is drawing near, just before the real departure, once more the crew tries to divine the kind of adventures in store for them during their voyage. To this end they make a fishing trip of one night just behind the island of Mansinam. The result of this undertaking will determine whether the voyage will be an easy or a difficult one. Therefore they try their utmost to obtain a good catch.

A special ceremony is held for the members of the crew who make the voyage for the first time (*besorandak*). A wreath of rattan and leaves is prepared and laid on the ground. The *besorandak* steps inside it and then one of the older members takes this wreath upwards and away over the head of the *besorandak*. It is said that this is performed in order to prevent fever and strange sicknesses.

During the night before the departure the *besorandak* have to be on board and watch the whole night. If it happens that during this time a white cockatoo gives a cry, or a branch falls from a tree, or one of the crew members sneezes, or if it rains (even a faint drizzle is sufficient), then the departure has to be postponed for one day. After this day the same procedure takes place the following night, to watch for an evil or good omen. It has happened sometimes that the voyage was postponed from day to day for a month. When at last they leave the crew does not forget to take the *korwar* (wooden ancestor-images) with them. Even then it is not yet sure that the final departure will really take place. If for instance a fish jumps up from the surface, or if somebody should sneeze before the canoe has rounded the last rock-cape of Dore Bay, or even if another canoe should cross their course, it is sufficient to prevent them from continuing the voyage and they return,<sup>3</sup> for should they nevertheless continue the voyage it would be almost certain that one member of the crew would die during the voyage. Arriving home once more they divine in order to know whose life runs this risk and to replace him by another man.

Several days after the definitive departure of the canoe the crew's relatives become curious to know something about the whereabouts of the canoe and its crew. They have a very remarkable manner to get this information, by another kind of divination again.

A piece of a tree trunk is cut, about ten feet long and as thick



as a man's leg. This piece of wood is laid on the beach on the same spot where the canoe stood just before the departure. In the evening the women, i.e. the wives, sisters and girls of the crew, come together in the house of the village or clan-chief, or of the owner of the canoe.

Before this meeting takes place they send the usual refreshments, such as tobacco and areca-nuts, for the night concerned. During this night everybody has to stay awake and to speak only in whispers. If somebody laughs she has to be punished severely. The smoking of cigars and the chewing of areca-nuts is allowed. If during the night no single evil omen occurs, then the next morning all participants go to the place where the log is lying. There they will squat on either side of the log, while they seize the log with both hands. In this way they push the log seawards, saying or chanting: "*Koranda, koranda*" (we go seawards, seawards). Geissler (1873:1-4), who once witnessed this procedure, says that it was ridiculous and that the other people present, who did not take part in the ceremony, laughed because of the antics the participants made.

When the log has been pushed far enough towards the sea, it is loaded into a canoe which is paddled to sea by two girls. At a certain distance from the shore the girls throw the log into deep water. If the current and the waves wash the log to the shore, then it is believed that the canoe on her voyage to Tidore will return and come back without having reached its goal. If the log is caught by the current and waves and floats away the participants start to "sing-in the voyage" with a song in the Tidorese language, which song nobody understands, but it is sung and accompanied by several *sadip* (hourglass-shaped drums). This singing continues a whole night and is named *armis*.

The *armis* song is well-known: it is the song of dawn, achieved by and stimulating victory. Sometimes it is boastful. Here is an example, literally translated: "This canoe is carrying, yes he carries, he carries wealth, the owner of wealth (arrives). The *moref*-wood canoe, this vessel he carries, yes he carries, the owner of wealth is arriving" (cf. Kamma 1978:153).

Singing in a strange language is not unusual. By travelling in strange areas one meets unknown dangers and hostile spirits (*faknik*). Hearing a local language will reassure the powers concerned. These songs can be bought. Feuilletau de Bruyn, when on Biak, mentioned one of these songs bought by the Biak people in the Raja Ampat area. It runs as follows: "Keep the waves, lock them in as in a prison" (loc. cit. 1920:98). Sometimes the per-

formers at home identify themselves with the crew in their manner of singing as well. Singing is pleading, using magical means, boasting, and pleading again. All this is intended and performed.

When the new moon is expected to rise, the relatives of the crew gather again. This time it will last several nights, and the gathering is in a special kind of house or building with an open roof, so that one is able to watch the moon. As soon as the new crescent moon becomes visible all participants shout in unison. They jubilate because they are now assured that the crew of the canoe is in good condition and their voyage is successful. "We know our relatives see the moon as we do and all is well." This performance of the watching of the rising new moon must be repeated as long as the canoe is on her way, usually five or six months.

Yet another ceremony is held especially in favour of the *man-besorandak* (the men who joined for the first time). The same procedure is followed, but now the villagers are invited to take part in it. Two nights of singing and dancing are sufficient, but for the clan which can afford it, it may even last eight days for each *besorandak* separately. The more *besorandak* there are, the more ceremonies have to be performed. The singing and dancing always ends with a common meal, as copious as possible. The singing and dancing is so noisy that foreigners living nearby have not the slightest chance to sleep on such nights.

Those who are not wealthy enough to perform a celebration for several days will at least sing for two nights and attend to the food, even if it should be the last they have in store. The Numforese believe that if these performances for the well-being of the *besorandak* are neglected they or maybe the relatives at home, will fall ill. Therefore when one catches a cold during these times, it is caused by the fact that they have neglected to *disen-wark* for the boys on their trip (*disen* = singing, *wark* = to watch or avoid). Therefore these occurrences always remind them of their duty and urge them to make up for their neglect as soon as possible. Moreover they have to perform it wholeheartedly and as generously as they can afford. At such times there are no lazy people, nor poor ones. They are guided by a devil-like power and spend all those nights eagerly and without sleep. Daily work is completely neglected. At night they dance, sing and eat, and during daytime they have to regain strength by sleeping.

The returning of the crew and their canoe after some months is

organized in a special manner. Before they approach their village, the crew wait until sunset and when night is falling they shoot with a rifle several times to announce their arrival. But after that they turn away from the village and spend the night in a lonely bay or beach. As soon as dawn comes, the crew start to decorate the whole canoe with leaves of the *arenga*-palm and the flags are hoisted. The crew decorate their bodies as well, and thus prepared they paddle home drumming and singing. This means the end of the voyage but not of the festivities and celebrations. If the voyage has lasted six months, the celebrations will take a whole year.

To start with the *besorandak*: they are placed on a great shining brass platter and carried ashore and into their houses by their next of kin. During five days the canoe remains on the roadstead riding at anchor, fully decorated and with flying flags. Then the vessel will be unrigged and the decorations taken home. The crew hang many of the leaves in front of their houses as a sign they participated in the *som* voyage.

They usually did the same after a successful raid. Van Hasselt Sr. describes the "log-divination" too, but in his case connected with a raid they planned (van Hasselt 1888:56).

About Biak we learn: "When the crew arrives the celebration named *apaper sansun* (folding the clothes) is sung with the *randan* (pleading and sacrificing). It has a wonderful melodious tune" (de Bruyn 1947:33). It is accompanied by dancing and even by performances which depict the events experienced by the voyagers. The communal and copious meals form a most important part; they are not only "eating-as-such", but they appease the minds, strengthen the communal sense, encourage the flow of abundant products (a kind of magic), show gratitude and stimulate a beneficial mood. Is this a condition for obtaining *mana*?

Geissler concludes: "it is obvious that the Papuans regard the voyage to Tidore as a very important event indeed". The voyage is repeated once every five years. But why, and what is the real motive, apart from the sense of being obliged to do so? We will try to find an answer which will lead us to the core of the real meaning. This may bring to light the main goal of existence of the people concerned. Many elements we have already heard of are woven into the fabric of daily and special events.

12. *The search for nanek (barakas, berkat). Is nanek mana?*

“We Numforese believe in a power (*kuat-kuasa*) dwelling in the universe. This power is in *nanggi*, the sky, the earth, human beings, the ocean, the sea, rocks, trees and other beings as well. This power we name *nanek*. That is why we swear our oaths to *nanggi*, earth, rocks and other things too, because there is *nank* in them. The *nank* loves and cares for good and friendly people, but he is angry with bad and evil ones and punishes them. People usually offer small gifts to him because they are going to plead for something, that’s why. Outstanding men (shamans, chiefs, etc., K.) are able to talk to him and he grants their plea. *Nank* (*nanek*, K.) takes care of aged people. Therefore young people don’t argue with them or contradict them. If they should behave in such a manner, *nanek* would take revenge surely: trouble, sickness or sin and even death could occur.”

This is a literal translation from a Numforese manuscript written by J. Rumburen, a teacher. The words between brackets, except those marked with my initial, K., are his. The second important contribution runs as follows: “*Nanek*: Magic power ascribed to aged people. A power that is feared, and for this reason people of old age are treated with some respect. They grow old because they have *nanek*. Having *nanek* enables one to approach places where *faknik*<sup>4</sup> (evil, harmful sea and land spirits) dwell. It is the custom to let aged people step over children that they obtain *nanek* too.” (Stepping over people who are lying down, or even letting one’s shadow fall on somebody or on someone’s feet is strictly disapproved, K.) (van Hasselt’s dictionary, 1947, s.v. *nanek*.) Van Hasselt did not yet know the word in 1929. That may be remarkable, but I never heard the word between 1931 and 1962. The people involved spoke about *barakas*. Why? Let another informant tell us the answer. The following remarks form the introduction to the second journey we shall join, and this time a member of the crew is speaking. “In former times the inhabitants (of this area, northern Waigeo and the islands of Ayau) did not know who the real Lord was. Therefore they prostrated themselves (*syom*) before everyone who named himself *Manseren* (Raja, Lord) and offered him gifts. The real motive of these sacrifices (*farsaser*) was that they were in search of life (*bèrkat*, *barakasi*) for the days ahead.”

Yet one more feature, again from Rumburen (Dore). “In times long ago the ancestors assembled at midnight. Then the owner of a big seaworthy canoe started by making a sacrifice to Nanek and

pleaded for a clear sign in the symbols (omens) of fishes, trees or birds, that we might know what lay ahead of the voyagers: whether it would be successful or dangerous and leading to disaster. And they really got an answer." This ceremony is nearly the same as the sacrifice of the "feeding", as it is called, of the Sky, *fan naggi*. In our conclusion we shall mention this ritual again. In addition the informant says: "The same ritual is performed when one plans to build a house or to open up a new garden plot. Most important is the presence and participation of aged people."

*13. The recollection of an old man (once a member of the crew):  
On our way to Tidore*

"In former days our ancestors did not have chiefs, kings or great authorities. The older men of each *keret* (clan) were in charge and we had only some outstanding people: heroes, clever speakers and wealthy men. The heroes made raids and they discovered far-away islands. They saw Waigeo, Ayau, the island of Halmahera and the Sawai people of Patani.

The encounter with the Sawai in many battles ended eventually in the defeat of our two famous heroes Fakok and Pasrefi. After their surrender they had to pay tribute, and the two heroes just mentioned were appointed to be Sangaji and Dimara as representatives of Tidore, and they had to escort the tribute voyages to the Sultan.

After the two heroes died the Sultan appointed two other agents to replace them. These two were the Dimara Usba for his village and area and the Sangaji Wardo on behalf of his people. After their nomination, however, in their turn they appointed other men as their assistants. (Viz. the clan elders of other clans, K.)

The Sangaji Wardo appointed a Faker with the title Rejaw. Rejaw in his turn appointed other assistants such as Kapitalaw, Jurbasa, Kapisa and the like. The Dimara Usba in turn appointed his representatives of lesser rank. In this organization the titles Dimara Usba and Sangaji Wardo were the highest in rank. They were much higher than Faker and Rejaw, who were like clerks. The Kapitaraw, Major, Jurbasa, Kapisa and others were like the police.

Therefore when Dimara Usba and Sangaji Wardo are planning a tribute voyage (*som*) to the Sultan of Tidore, they command their Rejaw and Faker to make the necessary arrangements.

These two men will pass the command to men of the lesser ranks in the villages. Dimara Usba has his own big village and the villages of the Amber tribe at his disposal, while the Sangaji Wardo has eight villages on Ayau island and the ones on the north coast of the island of Waigeo. The last mentioned villages were allotted the task of collecting the tribute, i.e. turtle-shell, ambergris, sea-cucumber, sleeping mats, baked sago and the like. But the Faker of the Amber of Kabaré village had the task to build two giant boarded canoes (*kakures*), called Jiwana. Both of them were fifty metres long, from keel to board seven metres and the beam was six metres. On the decks cabins were built as long as the canoe. On each of the short outriggers special cabins were constructed. We may call the giant canoes sea-going vessels.

Inside these long cabins smaller ones were built intended for the highest to the lowest ranks. Nobody was allowed to leave this apartment or step over the feet of the men in command. Trespassers were punished by a specially appointed *hukum* (judge), therefore named Faker Hukum.

When everything was ready they started to load the complete tribute on to the canoes, where it was stored in three parts. A small part for the Faker Kem (Island of Gebe), a somewhat bigger portion to be given to the Faker Patani (the Sawai on the east coast of the island of Halmahera). This Faker, named Pakmi, escorted the *som*-fleet to the Sultan of Tidore. We called Tidore *Sup Mansren*, land of the Lord. Arriving at Tidore the presentation of the *samsom* (tribute) was performed as a procession in a strictly kept hierarchical sequence instructed and led by the Faker Pakmi of Mabèn (Patani). The performance ran as follows.

The whole group entered the Sultan's courtyard and palace with the Faker Pakmi walking in front. After him Dimara Usba and the Sangaji Wardo walked together. These three men had nothing in their hands. Following the two leaders their seconds in command walked in pairs: Rejawi-Fakreba, Major-Kabisai, Kapitalawi-Sawoi, and the others. These Fakers (representatives) took turtle-shell and ambergris, because they were the ones to meet the Sultan in person. The other crew members followed in their footsteps carrying the cargo of the canoes: sea-cucumber, sleeping mats and baked sago. The crew and the Fakers were constantly watching their Dimara and Sangaji in order to imitate their behaviour. Entering the central chambers of the palace they no longer walked but started to crawl. Thus going on all fours they approached the place where the Sultan sat enthroned.

Arriving at his feet they bowed their heads (*som*) and they seized for a moment the big toe of his right foot. They greeted the Sultan by saying: Jow Mansren (be greeted, o Lord). (In recent times we shake hands, in former times they caught hold of the big toe only.)

After all of them had touched the Sultan's big toe, they donated the tribute they carried along in order to show the Sultan what they had brought with them. After everything had been laid down some of the slaves of the palace brought water and soap and washed the big toe of the Sultan, to wash away the possible dirt of so many hands. Then the crew took away the tribute and laid it down on the place where the female and male slaves were standing.

After the visiting delegation had brought their tribute the Sultan gave nothing in return, he only gave an order and a promise to the delegation by saying: 'When you are returning to your villages and land you are allowed to pay a visit to villages on the island of Halmahera and Patani and Gebe. You just take and rob what you want, all valuables and objects of value. If the owners refuse and become angry at you, just kill them, you get away with it unpunished'.

And thus the delegation of the *samsom* did, obeying the order of the Sultan. All of them had heard these words. They turned away from the presence of the Sultan by crawling just as they did when they entered, but this time backwards; arriving at the gates of the palace they walked in the usual way.

Leaving Tidore they came to Patani. There Faker Pakmi offered some gifts to the Dimara and the Sangaji, namely a flag and some garments. They left Patani and visited the island of Gebe, where the Pantyalima gave the two leaders, the Dimara and the Sangaji, another flag and garments. Only the two leaders were entitled to accept these gifts, the other fakers, the seconds in command, did not receive anything. Nevertheless they did not become angry. The reason for their mild temper was that a bad temper could spoil the *mana* (*nank*, *barakas*, *berkat*) they had just received by touching the toe of the Sultan.

After the canoes paid their visit to Gebe they returned home. Near their villages they went into hiding. There they decorated the canoes with leaves and showed all the flags they already had and the ones they had obtained in the mean time. Adorned in this way as abundantly as possible, the canoe received the name *i be damèser* (he who storms the dawn, or the leaves of the dawn), a name that indicates arriving victoriously at the intended goal or

'gained purpose'. The name reminds us of the song called *armis*, as sung by the relatives remaining in the village during the voyage.

The chiefs of high rank now put on their garments and tied their head-shawls, whilst others put on their hats made of bamboo and the husk of the gold-coloured stems of orchids. The two outstanding chiefs (Dimara and Sangaji) had their chests taken from the hold and had them placed on the deck of the middle section of the canoe, which is the place of honour. They sat down on top of them. The Fakers on the other hand took the gongs, the hourglass-shaped drums and the triton-shells ready at hand. Thus prepared the crew paddled and rowed the vessel in the direction of the village. There the villagers soon caught sight of the homecoming canoe and made their preparations, whilst everybody ran to the beach.

Now the crew starts singing their victory-song at the top of their voices; the gongs and drums are beaten and the shells blown by all the Fakers. The time of the song and the paddling is beaten by the musical instruments, the paddles strike the board of the vessel, giving a roaring sound, and the crew is pulling the paddles and oars with all their strength and in the *fadi* stroke, twice as fast as the usual long pull, spraying the water high with each stroke. There she comes: the adorned canoe, flags flying, voices ringing, instruments sounding, paddles booming, leaves waving and with a foaming and spraying bow-wave, running at top-speed to the village. This must have been an impressive spectacle, and the whole performance is named *pampung sawai korano fiak* (pushing and beating in the Sawai manner of the Four Kingdoms).

The villagers ready to receive their folks start to *wor* (sing) whilst the females are dancing the *fjér* (swinging hips and waving hands with coloured leaves at shoulder-height). The giant canoe, approaching the beach of its village in this jubilant way, does not run to the anchorage straightaway, but makes a huge circle three times at full speed in front of the houses (*si yar naga*: they encircle the dragon, i.e. the dragon image carved in the bow piece). After this performance the steersman lets the canoe stop at the usual place and drops the anchor. This being done the chiefs and the crew prepare themselves to disembark."

#### 14. The great performance of disembarking and mana-sharing

During disembarking complete silence has to be observed. No-



body is allowed to speak or laugh: outstanding men are coming home. In dead silence the "great ones" enter the village where they are surrounded by the people. All of them go forward one by one and shake hands. The leaders of the village, sitting on their clothes-chest, receive their guests as they come and shake hands with them: females, males, the boys and girls. This hand-shaking is performed in a special way: after having received and touched the hand of the Dimara or Sangaji, the villager rubs his/her hands together, then strongly brushes his face, head and chest. The meaning and the purpose is to rub or brush the just received *mana* (*nank*, *nanek*, *nanik*, *barakas*) into his head and body to secure a long life.<sup>5</sup>

The bestower of *mana* has to be rewarded with a gift of cloth or clothing. The informant stated that the gifts thus received were substantial and that the Dimara and Sangaji shared something of it with their seconds in command, the Fakers whom we saw in action during the voyage.

After two or three days the Dimara or Sangaji arrange an important *wor*. This time the victory and *mana* gained are assured once more in the songs. Food and refreshments are shared and the dances and songs continued sometimes for more than one day (as we saw in the case of the voyage to Tidore by the Mansinam people). These dances and songs and performances finish the event.

This celebration completed the official voyage. Dresses and clothes are stored away by the Dimara and Sangaji in their real "treasure-chests". After this, life resumes its daily routine, but when the Sultan deems it necessary to levy tribute he gives the order to the Faker of Patani who in his turn passes the order to the Faker of Gebe. He sends the message to the Dimara Usba and the Sangaji Wardo and they arrange a new voyage in the usual way.

The two huge canoes are named Jiwana; the one of Sangaji Wardo had the special name *Rakamberi* (foreign raid), and the one of Dimara Usba was named *Parawaja* (all-steel, Indonesian). These two names were repeatedly sung in the paddling songs and were a sign of the real meaning of the voyages: to go and gain victory. (The size of these canoes was probably exaggerated in the accounts.)

#### 15. *The nasan (titles, dignities); their real and derived meaning*

Often it is said that the voyages to Tidore for delivering tribute

(*som*) have as their real meaning: taking, receiving a title. This was not always the case, as we saw of the two voyages described above. Titles and functions already bestowed were established once more. But the host of titles received were used derivatively, their origin being found in Tidore. We shall list some of the most important ones showing, between brackets, the way they were distorted and after that the meaning they acquired in the course of time.

*Raja*: vassal, king (*Raja*); *Wakil*: representative, Indonesian-Arabic (*Fakri, Faker*); *Sangaji*: district chief (*Sangaji, sengaji, Sanadi Tanadi*); *Major*: army rank (*Major*); *Djodjau*: Governor (*Rejau*); *Hukum*: highest village chief, Judge, Indonesian-Arabic (*Hukum, Hukom*); *Kapitan Laut*: admiral (*Kapitaraw, Kapitawar, Kapteraw, Kapisai*); *Utusan*: representative, ambassador (*Utusan*); *Gimalaha*: village chief (*Gimara, Dimara*); *Sowohi*: overseer of the Sultan's estate (*Sowo, Sawo, Sawor, Sauwo*); *Marinyo*: overseer (*Marino, Mirino (?)*); *Kolano, Raja*: vassal, king (*Korano*: village chief); *Jurubasa*: interpreter, Indonesian (*Jurbasa, Djurbasa*); *Suruhan*: ambassador (*Suruhan*, village chief). (Cf. de Clercq 1890:324, who gives most of them.)

It will be clear that these *nasan* (titles) were bestowed arbitrarily. In the social organization there was no room for these titles or functions derived from the "feudal" system of Tidore. A general title? *Fakri, Faker* was used as a collective for all the ones below the level of Sangaji and Dimara. A vague sense of a kind of district was attached of these two. Sometimes the bearers of such titles replaced the names of their clans by titles as Dimara, Sanadi, Tanadi, all of which are existing clan names. They lost their function and became just names. It becomes clear from the organization concerned with the voyages to Tidore (*som, samsom*) that they functioned as titles bestowed on the clans in the villages, or if the villages were a closely knit unit, on the village chief (*manir, mananir*). Just before the second World War one of the assistant administrators in the Raja Ampat area gave an account of the functions and use of these titles.

"The *sengaji* appointed and nominated by the Sultan of Tidore in their turn set up (*mengangkat*) other chiefs in order to prepare the tribute needed to satisfy the Sultan. The chiefs in question were: 1. *Faher, faker* (representative of the Sangaji) to collect the tribute, 2. *Urbata, urbasa* (interpreter) who knows some Malay language, 3. *Faher II* (to arrange the canoe, to load the tribute), 4. *Kapita* (to arrange the purchase of a canoe), 5. *Marino* (to arrange the *upeti* (tribute) and repair the canoe in every respect),

6. *Gimalaha* (to lead the escort of the *upeti*)." (Samson 1955:173.)

*16. Some remarks on the history of the Tidorese titles*

Imitation, devaluation and fading-away. These few words characterize the process: the *Kolano* (Raja) of Waigeo imitated the Sultan: he appointed *faker* (representatives) to act as such, and bestowed a dress and a flag on them. They had to hoist the flag and don their dress when foreign ships paid a visit to their villages. The traders (since c. 1840) did the same, they even gave a piece of paper to assure their trade-monopoly (de Clercq 1888:305).<sup>6</sup> The Tidorese princes, visiting the area, imitated the traders. Sometimes three "chiefs" in one village were appointed, to avoid friction and trouble inside the village (ibid.:306). These "chiefs" in their turn imitated the Sultan himself. "The Sangaji from Mansinam received his guest, an outstanding 'chief' from Windesi; this guest approached the Sangaji crawling, then made his request in a sitting position: he wanted a missionary." (Cf. Kamma 1976:180 and sources mentioned.)

The coastal people fooled the Arfak of the interior. They gave them a page of an illustrated magazine. Even the part of the page with the journal's name, STANDAARD, printed in Gothic type, was very popular among the Amberbaken people for a time. Since the prohibition of the Tidorese *hong*i raids by the colonial government in 1861 (Haga 1884, II:159) the tribute paying gradually decreased and almost came to an end. The functional aspects of the titles also disappeared, but the titles themselves were retained. The title-holders first used them as a surname, then dropped their clan name and took the adopted title as their name instead. Titles such as Dimara, Major, Mirino, Kapisa, etc. are employed as clan names to the present day. Having lost their political aspect, they became names only. Let us bear in mind that a title once had been *mana* (*nane*k)-charged. By the remarkable change from title to name, this aspect became permanent.

The history of the bestowing of titles on the Biak islands had its own character. The first titles given by the Sultan caused a proliferation and a constant influx of honorifics. As usual the Biak people took the matter in their own hands by nominating their trade-friends, and each clan was finally provided with a title-bearing clan-elder. The titles Dimara and Sangaji were reserved for the chiefs of the greatest clans and their villages, e.g. the villages of Bosnik, Urfu, Sowe

The smaller villages participated, and their titled men, with lower ranks, collected the tribute, just as was the case on the occasion of the second journey we have described. These lower titles were bestowed by the title-holders' clan members, and later, when a village chief (*mamanir*) was appointed, the village and not the clan received the title. The tribute collected was brought to the Sangajis and Koranos, who brought it directly to the Sultan of Tidore or, in a later period, to the Raja of Salawati or Waigeo. There was at last no clan without a title-bearing elder.

For the Biak we have some information not available for Waigeo (Ayau) or Dore, although these regions may have had the same custom. Before departure to Tidore people from Biak, Waigeo and Dore sang and decorated themselves as precautionary measures; they divined in the same general manner, but in Biak particularly in a way reminding us of the ceremonial sacrifice to *Nanggi*, Lord Sky.

During the departure they sang the *wor-pa*, voyage song: "We are going away, away to sea. We are going to *som* Raja Waigeo-o", etc. Why did they mention their destination directly, and not in a disguised form as usual? Because they mentioned the Raja's title too, which served as a protection or shield. It was also misleading: they were on their way to Tidore, so Waigeo was the disguise this time. The following data are also relevant for our study of names and titles.

1. After returning to their village a taboo was imposed on everyday work. If they should neglect this taboo, sickness and even an epidemic could be caused.
2. As a reminder of the completed voyage to Tidore, the crew gave special names to the tools they had used during the voyage: paddle = *mambaruk*; knife = *kemah*; drum = *niboban*.
3. The crew members gave the names of seas, bays, mountains, islands, etc. to their children and relatives as a permanent memento of their participation, exactly as in former centuries after a successful pirate *hong*i. These names are "mirrors of history", i.e. a part of it.<sup>7</sup>

In the year 1898 colonial government was established in Manokwari and since 1912 taxes had to be paid on behalf of the self-governing areas. But rumour has it that the very last tribute (*som*) was paid in 1914 to the *Utusan* of Salawati by the villages of Sorrido and Awabiadi on Biak. We have already encountered this *Utusan* as the man who maintained slavery until 1918 (cf. section 4: "The Tidorese *hong*i fleets") (Feuilletau de Bruyn 1920:143).

*17. Tidore, magic centre and source of power*

Without the myths one can hardly understand the attitudes towards Tidore. Some mythical themes will be given.

After the great flood survivors went in search of the magic centre, which was apparently situated ever farther westward: the mythical west receded as the geographic west became known through the voyages to Tidore, the Moluccas, etc. The West Land of souls was at the same time the source of power and riches in the form of ceremonial exchange-goods. In what way was this new centre discovered?

A man from Rasië, who had taken refuge on a mountain during the flood, went in search of the origin of the flood. He paddled south to where the land of origin always had been, but in due time he met someone from Wandamen. This man indicated to the other that they should now paddle northward and then to the west. In this way the two men went on until they came to Tidore. There they found the origin of the flood. They received an *airora* (amulet, magic wand, charm) with which they could make everything. Endowed with this power they returned to their country. "According to Kijne this myth shows that there was a time of crisis when the source of eternal bliss was thought to have been transferred from the original and actual south to the now fascinating island of Tidore." (Cf. Kamma 1972:95.)

Important for the explanation in this respect is ritual no. 34, under the heading: "*Wor fayakik robenei*: bringing the newly-born into contact or the presence of solid or shining objects and valuables such as houses, ceremonial exchange-goods and objects of wealth". The palace and the court of the Sultan was in those times the most beautiful building and the greatest store-house of wealth the people ever saw. The awe with which the participants in the voyages must have entered the courtyard of the Sultan's palace was compensated by the positive magical influence to which they were exposed; even the crawling and prostrating meant closer contact, like embracing. The glamour of the court-life was one of these aspects too. All this added to the imitative and contagious magic connected with what Stanner called "the factitious valuation of alien wealth" (ibid.:270). Woelders wrote in 1883 on the occasion of the performance of ritual no. 34: ". . . they all agreed that seeing the house would render the child rich and happy". Proudly a father showed his daughter to Woelders and said: "I was the first who came to and even into your house that the child might see it, and look how big she has

grown" (ibid.).

This belief gave the objects of foreign origin such a fascinating aspect, at least initially, i.e. the presumed correlation between wealth, health and happiness. The inhabitants could only lay hands on this alien wealth in former times by raiding and marauding. Such booty then became a part of their ceremonial exchange-goods; Tidore was in those days the real source of such wealth and power (*nanek*).

### 18. Conclusions

*In general:* Performing rituals and ceremonies meant accompanying and strengthening community and personal life. As supernatural support was assured by means of divination, and the most important sacrifice was offered to the High God (Nanggi = Sky; Fan Nanggi), the people concerned felt reassured. During and after the tribute voyages (*samsom*) the participants did not have a feeling of inferiority and submission. On the contrary, although they were officially subjected, they left nothing to chance or to the whims of the Sultan. Before they arrived at court they had already influenced him ritually and magically and in fact they continued to do so. By appropriate ritual means the "subjects" and not the Sovereign took the lead.

*In particular:* The Biak-Numforese transformed the humiliating character of tribute paying into a beneficial event by the following means.

1. They showed that they were wealthy enough to meet the requirements.
2. Instead of being purely submissive they felt superior in their donation (as they translated the obligation), and by ritually preparing themselves for the encounter with the Sultan they could in fact utilize an exceptional opportunity to gain more than they gave.
3. They used the Sultan and his court as a source of *nanek* (*mana*) and the influence of the palace and the glamour of the court by way of positive contagious magic.
4. They endured the hardships of the precarious voyage and transformed it into a prestige-gaining event and a recharging of personal *nanek*.
5. They adapted common rituals to the special occasion, e.g. the *wor beba* (purification rite, ritual no. 40) of the shaman and the *wor abrakui* (ritual no. 43).
6. Instead of fulfilling the instruction of the Sultan as agreed in

his presence, they did not behave as pirates on their way home, as they could have done with impunity, but made friends by giving the Patani, Gebe, etc. the opportunity to buy off the threat.

7. They used the titles, conferred exclusively in enterprises connected with tribute paying, for their own purposes, and in later years adopted the titles as clan names, thus making permanent the *nanek* attached to them. They imitated the Sultan seriously and as “homo ludens”, also by bestowing titles as a means to ensure monopoly connections.

8. On arriving home from Tidore, they imitated the victorious arrival after a successful pirate raid. The text of the canoe’s song is obviously in strong contrast with the tune: it has the words of an attacking or killing song (*do mamun*), but the plaintive, almost moaning tune is just another way of disguising the song’s real purpose.

9. They made the home-coming the culminating event. *Nanek* was shared by *mana*-charged leaders, prestige and profit was gained, and the *besorandak* had part of their initiation made into a famous performance, whereby proof was given that they were now really adults: sitting on the most valuable object, a shining brass plate, they were carried home as victors.

10. What was meant as a humiliating burden, the *som* (tribute paying) was transformed into a benefit for the whole community. The strange culture-complex, safely enwrapped and ritually hemmed in, could be integrated (be it marginally) without losing face.

11. The key problem we discussed was the term *nanek* (more or less *mana*-like). This term underwent a change, as we indicated. It became *barakas*, with nearly the same meaning as *nanek*, but long afterwards it became, and has remained, *berkat* (orig. Arabic, just as *barakas*). The meaning of the last word, however, differs greatly from those formerly used. This is also apparent from the way the word is accompanied by ritual gestures. At the conclusion of a meeting of the Christian congregation the preacher “blesses” (*byeberkat*) the congregation by raising his arms, but on leaving the building the people shake hands with the preacher, whereas they *in their turn* say “Manseren *byeberkat* au” (the Lord bless you). And then again they (at least the older generation) still make the gesture of lightly touching their chest. Is not this in reality the same ritual, be it in a less elaborate form, as the ones performed at the time of *nanek* and *barakas*? And furthermore, can we resist the conclusion that there remains still the un-

expressed but practised rule of reciprocity? If this conclusion is correct, this is yet another example of a successful incorporation of what was once a foreign culture complex, now serving the communication and the unity of all the participants involved.

#### NOTES

- 1 Formerly I translated *barakas* as blessing (Kamma 1939:192), but that was not correct, as I have just explained.
- 2 It is almost certain that the leader of this voyage was the influential Sangaji Sapufi Rumadas (whose clan claims to have been the very first to make the voyage to Tidore). Fortunately in the unpublished sources of the late van Hasselt Jr. I found the name of the big seaworthy canoe and his song as well. (Each clan had its own big canoe with a special name and proper song, the *bejuser*, which in this special case was a *dow mamun*: a killing or attacking, i.e. threatening, song.) The name of "our" canoe was *Siponyenamber*: the first ones to arrive at *the beach of the strangers*, a disguised name for Tidore. The main outline of the song was: "Wo,e Wo,e: *Alas woe to us* (i.e. to the canoe and its crew, K.). Our vessel *Siponyenamber*, yes, this canoe we should have to speed on properly, (but) my hands are tired and let slip the disliked oar. This canoe, alas, her oarsmen are too few. I am no match for you, canoe, I deplore your condition." (Translated with the aid of M.W. Kaisiepo. In songs the words are distorted in a special manner, K.)
- 3 Van Hasselt Sr. told in 1872 that the Sangaji of Mansinam (the same as mentioned sub 1) had promised him a canoe to cross the straits to the mainland (Dore), but flatly refused when he was actually asked for it. When asked the reason for his refusal, he replied: "Well, the Djurudjan (Suruhan, K.) of Dore is just on his way to Tidore. Nobody is allowed to cross the straits now, lest the *faknik* of the cape (Mamori, K.) should cause storm and waves. If the Djurudjan should run into trouble (because we had crossed his course) I would have to pay for the damage done" (van Hasselt 1872:192).

The *faknik* just mentioned is the notorious snake-spirit, explained in ritual no. 43 as being the real source of the *abrakui* tug-of-war ritual. I also found the name of the canoe of the Suruhan Rumfabe from Dore. It is *Womendisau*: "A slave are you", a reminder of the slave-raiding past of the canoe. Whoever should see the vessel knows at once what his fate will be.

The song mentioned in note 2 is a clear example of the humble mood the crew had to show on their precarious voyage, but the vessel and its very name is their "disguised source of strength and courage". This can also, and even specially, be said of the song's melody, of which strangers had no idea.

- 4 Van Hasselt's dictionary, s.v. *faknik*: "Demons causing storms and disaster at sea", who dwell in rocks, capes, certain rocky mountains, rivers etc. They show themselves on land as snakes. Inamini is their chief. Every poisonous snake that attacks humans is a *faknik*. In the sea their chief is Inkombrof = the octopus (the giant kind). Other incarnations are some



kinds of shark (the hammer-headed and the tigershark), whales, crocodiles (only the ones that attack). On land one puts some weed from a *faknik* place in one's hair. If phosphorizing occurs at sea, it means the octopus is hunting; the crew then has to stop smoking and talking. Thunder-storms are fights between *faknik*. Near a village: *faknik* and the village guardian spirit clash.

- 5 During his first visit in 1933 to a village of the Betew-Biak people of the Raja Ampat area, the present writer experienced exactly the same greeting by shaking hands. Most illuminating was the fact that on arrival there were only a few people, namely the chiefs and shamans. Did these perhaps form the strongest battery they could line up to ward off possible evil influences? Because after my activities: treating the sick people, sharing some medicine, dressing wounds and holding a long discussion, they appeared to trust me. Therefore on my way to embark in my canoe, the villagers crowded round me to shake hands. There was even a young father encouraging his wife who had their new-born baby in her arms, saying: "Hurry, lest he gets cold". She came and shook my hand with a firm grip and placed that hand on the head and body of the child. With a broad smile the father said: "That's it". But also: "Gets cold?" The temperature was high, the sun burning on our heads! Did they compare my body with a battery losing its power when discharged rapidly by excessive use as was happening at that time?

Some people of those areas still have the habit of laying their just shaken hand on their chest. But why their hesitation on my arrival? Was it not because *nanek* is ambiguous, and could act positively but negatively as well? The last mentioned possibility made it precarious enough. Hence the precautions taken before the voyages (as we have seen) and (as we may conclude) during the event just described.

- 6 The captain of a schooner, Fabricius, told Goudswaard about a kind of improvised ceremony: "They gave (a certain person) a pair of trousers, a *kabaya* and a head-cloth, and struck him three times on his head while calling out his title (*major, kapitan laut*). Each time he was hit he shouted "Ho". They then fired off a rifle in his honour" (Goudswaard 1863:60-61).
- 7 In the Geelvink Bay area they used yet another means to memorialize important events, around the middle of the last century. They laid a piece of smouldering tinder on the outstretched left upper arm after every important long journey. This caused deep cicatrices. When the left arm is completely covered with scars, they continued on the right arm. These scars were thus a kind of memorials. The more scars one had, the more prestige was gained, and young men boasted of them among their age-mates (Goudswaard 1863:23-24).

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M.L. CREYGHTON

THE OPEN BODY:  
NOTES ON KHROUMIRIAN BODY SYMBOLISM

*1. Introduction*

It is difficult for Europeans to understand the numinous (Otto 1963). But when I witness the terror of one who has met it, when I see the paleness of the face, the beads of perspiration, I see it dimly through that person. And it makes me doubt the usefulness of a scientific approach which decides that symbolic representations have no meaning. Not that I don't see that, given certain points of departure, such a proposition can't be defended, but it distracts our attention from the human world which created these symbolic representations. Instead, we are offered a philosophical world in which there is much thought, but less emotion and no living.

Symbolic phenomena should be considered in "a total field situation". "Here the significant elements of a symbol's meaning are related to what it does and what is done to it by and for whom" (Turner 1967:46). What a symbol obviously does include is the question how it affects people. That is not easy to investigate. For this reason Turner offers no analytic device for what people FEEL about symbols, though affect is present everywhere in his ethnographic descriptions. When we compare his writings with Sperber's, we see that in the latter affect has disappeared completely from the scene. Sperber is interested mainly in the cognitive aspects of symbolic representation.

We must make a distinction between the meaning symbols have in themselves and the meaning they have for people.

The first meaning is based on an ordering of symbols in categories. This is what Turner calls the *positional meaning*, derived from a relationship with other symbols in a totality, a *Gestalt*, whose elements acquire their significance from the system as a whole. The meaning symbols have for people is based on two things: what they DO with it and what they SAY of it. These are in Turner's terms the *operational* and the *exegetical* meaning

(Turner 1967:51).

The explorer who thinks these are devices to find his way in forests of symbols is deceived. Sometimes it is very difficult to make sure what people do exactly in a ritual (Creighton 1975). Furthermore what people say about what they do adds more to the mystery of symbols than it clarifies and their words must be understood as symbolic as well (Sperber 1975:23). Perhaps most important, the positional meaning can only be ascertained after one knows the forest, not beforehand.

When rethinking anthropology Sperber opposes the view that this field can be studied fruitfully within a semiological frame (Sperber 1975:xi). And I think that he has made a good point when he remarks that “Levi-Strauss . . . proposed the first elaborated alternative to semiological views of myth — and, beyond that, of symbolism — all the while stating that he was, above all else, a semiologist.” (Sperber 1975:83). The writer takes a firm stand against the semiological approach when stating that

- a. symbols are not signs;
- b. they are not paired with their interpretation in a code structure;
- c. their interpretations are not meanings (Sperber 1975:85).

We shall keep these principles in mind when analysing some of my ethnographic material, concerned with body-symbolism.

The notion of sign is central in semiology. It is defined as the linkage of a *signifiant* and a *signifié* (Barthes 1974:103; Eco 1975: 13). But let us bypass this definition because it does not account for the versatility of signs which shade sometimes into symbols. Let us simply say here that a sign is a conventional, recognizable indication of information, a command or a wish. Signs can be interpreted, and if there is an interpretation, there is a message and if there is a message, some code must underlie it.<sup>1</sup> Only signs that are codified into a system can be turned into messages by others who know the code.

Codification, however, is a matter of degree (Guiraud 1973:32) and we can conceive of a continuum with fully codified signs at one end and not yet codified symbolic representations on the other end.

Moreover, what is a sign in one context is a symbol in another. And we can see signs and symbols shift on the continuum for different persons and different situations. Both Fernandez and Guiraud describe this dynamism of signs and symbols (Fernandez 1975:120; Guiraud 1973:32). Signs are slowly codified by convention but they can be decodified as well.

If symbols are not signs which can be used to convey messages, what are they then? Let us stick to the statement of the Concise Oxford Dictionary which says that a "symbol" is a "Thing regarded by general consent as naturally typifying or representing or recalling something by possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought." To me, like Turner, symbols are not only things, but activities, events and gestures as well (Turner 1967:19).

The Khroumirians I have come to know in Tunisia<sup>2</sup> live in a symbolic world, they perform many symbolic and expressive acts, based on tacit knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Most of this is implicit knowledge that an interested representative of the culture is able to paraphrase, until both the anthropologist and his informant understand better what the knowledge is and what it is about. Here I shall present this kind of knowledge.

The unconscious knowledge, another form of tacit understanding, must be derived from a wider field of symbolism than is broached here.

## *2. The nature of Khroumirian ritual*

The Khroumirians live in the Northwestern mountains of Tunisia in tiny villages and hamlets.<sup>4</sup> They are former nomads, famous for their craving for independence. Their meagre subsistence economy is declining and this, together with the overpopulation in some valleys in the region, forces young men to seek work elsewhere.

Culturally the Khroumirians belong more to the Berber civilization of the Atlas Mountains than to the Arab eastern plains. Honour and shame are even nowadays strong motives in daily life.<sup>5</sup> Men passionately defend their terrain and flocks as an extension of their Self. The women, though they have no social personality of their own, are respected and enjoy a limited freedom.

They speak a vernacular of the Arab dialect, used from Tripoli to the Atlantic Ocean, which is coded in a highly restricted way<sup>6</sup> and which I found difficult to master. I could learn, though, the more extended code of the Tunisian towns. When talking with the peasants I used this code and was understood fairly well. Important dialogues were recorded and written out verbatim. They were the basis for long discussions with my assistant Bor, a son of the region.

The Khroumirians are very casual, not to say negligent about

their rituals. Regularly, at performances of a solemn nature, some of the participants interrupted the ritual to argue about what to do next. They were not able to continue and the proceedings would stop. Officially there are no leaders in public life. Decisions should be made by "all of the people together", *en na:s el kul*. This hampers the ritual and makes it short and inauspicious. It is as if people want to hide not only their informal leaders but their symbolism as well.

*A symbol in the wedding night*

We can observe this well in discourse about the consummation of marriage, a *rite de passage* both for men and for women.

Since her puberty and often long before, a girl has been controlled by her brothers in her contacts outside the house. Her virginity in which her father and brothers, and to a large extent, the whole family has invested its honour, has been jealously guarded. All her relatives and especially her mother are emotionally involved with the outcome of her first contact with the bridegroom. Will she prove to be a virgin? Yet, the very act of taking the bride is as short and unceremonious as possible. In one of the villages where I worked, the couple was formerly taken to the bushes while a big, communal feast was going on in the village. Two "helpers" of the groom watched him deflower the bride. What counted for the anxious family and the silent enemies who hoped for scandal was their testimony that the blood on the girl's wedding shirt which they took back to the waiting women was really the proof of her "good habits". Good habits, *tabe:3 behie*, means that the girl is from good stock, for good moral conduct is thought to be a question of inheritance. Good habits and good stock are visible in women. It indicates that in their family the wives are obedient and faithful, the children respectful and men strong and protecting. Such a family is blessed by God, the Giver of Abundance.

Nowadays the couple is no longer wedded in the woods. But the performance is equally short. The groom rushes into the room where the bride waits, dressed only in her wedding-shirt. Nobody else is present. He does not take off his clothes and in effect he rapes her. The quicker it is over, the better. And he flees from the scene, leaving the place for the upset girl and the mothers, whose first inspection is the shirt. If it is duly stained, it is shown triumphantly to the visiting women. If not, shame descends on all, especially on the feast-givers.

If hymeneal blood is a sign, then of what is it a sign? What is

the message it gives? People say that the message is that the bride is a virgin. But one of my key informants, a formidable middle aged woman, who had reasons to fear the sharp tongue of her neighbours, declared frankly: "Do you think I care a hoot for my daughter in law's blood? I am not interested in *her*. All I care for is that my son be a *man* on that night." Hymeneal blood carries two messages: 1. the girl was untouched, 2. the boy is a man. In public, this second condition is not doubted. That is why it is never mentioned. Without hymeneal blood the masculinity of the groom is not proved.

The absence of blood may carry any or more of the three following messages. 1. The girl is not a virgin, 2. the boy is not a man; but as this possibility cannot be accepted, it is immediately replaced by 3. there was sorcery which 'closed' the girl.<sup>7</sup> The motives for this wicked action are assumed to be the desire to protect the woman from the roughness of the first contact and/or to escape exposure of past sexual contacts.

Virginity in North Africa is not a value in itself. It is bound up with the "honour" of the two social parties involved in a marriage: the husband with his close kin, and the father and brothers of the bride and her mother and sisters. If the bride is not a virgin, she brings shame on her father and brothers; for evidently she has outwitted them. They were not capable of disciplining her and keeping intruders out. Her body is a fortress that has to be jealously guarded by true men who hand it over intact to a legitimate occupant in a ritual sanctioned by the group. If it appears that the fortress was taken by some tramp, everybody looks silly, including the groom and his family who spent so much money for the feast.

If a man has not the force to "penetrate" the bride at that moment, nobody will know it — but some will suspect, because a sorcerer will be blamed for the unstained shirt.

A ritual specialist is called to break the spell cast on the bride or bridegroom or both. Maybe the mother hid a safety pin in her daughter's hair to protect her against the painful treatment of the wedding night. Maybe somebody who wished evil tied a knot in his shoe lace. After the intervention of the specialist, haste is no longer important.

Often after several hours, the shirt is stained. People pretend that they can distinguish the marks of hymeneal blood from chicken blood, or blood drawn from the leg of the husband who tries in this way to protect the appearance of his masculinity.

If it is so important to both families and their guests to under-

stand the exact message of the unstained shirt, why have the witnesses been dropped from the wedding scene? The answer must be that they do *not* want to know the truth. If things turn out badly they act *as if* blood were a sign because they want to interpret it as suits them best.

From the point of view of the community, however, it does not matter who is to be blamed. Pre-marital intercourse cannot be revenged anymore, the government has taken justice from the hands of the pater familias and his sons. If there is dishonour, the whole group of bride-givers and -takers is covered with a shame that can no longer be wiped out.

Unable to act, people silently begin to wonder. Will there be no blessing, no *baraka*? Will the husband not be able to live up to the standards for a man? Will lost morals then threaten the peace of family life in the village?

Musing about all this, the villagers are gradually giving less attention to the bride and her virginity and more to their cultural values, especially to those which they feel are threatened. They are shifting their attention from the presumed sign on the continuum to its more complex neighbour, the symbol. The very fact that they are doing this, means that the sign of blood in this context is in a process of decodification. But the force of the symbol, which is "to open and to close", is as powerful as ever.

By ordering my material in different ways when searching for the positional meanings of some symbols which were important to me at that time, I discovered that there are a number of treatments of the body that can be arranged in a category which I call open/closed. Marriage fits within it. Do people, in these treatments, handle signs or symbols? Or do they pretend, as in the case of marriage, to handle signs, while they really handle symbols? And if openness and closedness are symbols, what do they stand for? To discover this, let us look closely at a case in which the symbol of openness is very clear.

#### *The open girdle of Hadda*

Hadda had gone with a group of women to the mountains to fetch firewood. When she arrived on the spot, she quarreled with some of her companions who insisted that she should carry part of the burden of wood for her pregnant sister. She refused and sulking she strayed away. When alone, she was startled by the sudden apparition of an *aba:tha*, a ghostlike monster. Crying she ran home and hurt her leg stumbling over a stone. Bor, my assistant, and I saw her meeting with two elderly women on the



village path. Sobbing she gave her version of the story. The women reproached her for isolating herself from the group. It is dangerous. One is easily caught by evil beings. They untied her three kerchiefs and her sash and they readjusted them so stiffly that Hadda cried out.

In response to my question they said a well-wound girdle would help Hadda. It would give her courage and strength. When I asked why they pulled so hard they said that that was exactly the way it should be done and laughingly they dismissed the matter.

In discussion with some friends it appeared that, though wrapping the girdle and the kerchiefs are technical actions, aimed at supporting the loins and abdomen and at protecting the long, plaited hair from dust, they are always thought of as expressive actions.<sup>8</sup> By stiffly wrapping her sash and kerchiefs, a woman conforms to the picture she should show in public. She must be strong, well-ordered, composed, controlled and even rigid. She should not be "open", so openness meant the reverse of this image. Different interpretations of Hadda's openness were given.

a. Being open means being an easy victim for invisible beings who reside in the woods and who enjoy frightening lonely walkers. Anybody who is alone may be quickly startled by any creature. But alone in the wood one is in even greater danger.<sup>9</sup>

b. Being open means to accept the advances of men in search of adventure. Here the opening of the sash indicates suspicions of sexual activity.

c. Being open refers to a general condition, typical of women.<sup>10</sup> They are unsure, easily tired, weak. They need protection from outside to keep them as they should be. A sash stands to a female body as a male relative stands to his female relative or wife. Informants who were friendly to Hadda favoured interpretation a., while the less friendly and the more cynical preferred b. and c. A well-girdled and kerchiefed woman gives a message to the world about her emotional state of mind or her moral conduct or even her relations with her husband. For if she behaves badly, he must be a weak man easily dominated by her and lacking in self-respect.

As in the case of the unstained wedding shirt, it will never be clear which interpretation is the right one. We will never know what really happened and we may wonder whether the concepts of sign and message are sufficient or useful to analyse this dramatic act.

We have a better entry when we distinguish different elements

in the encounter between Hadda and the women. First there is a cultural symbolism, openness. This refers to an undesirable condition for Hadda. Secondly there is an action. And there is the way the action was performed. This last element really did contain a message and it was Bor who was quick to discover it. He said that the two women were punishing Hadda for violating the rule that no woman should be alone in the mountains. To do this, they cleverly made use of an apparently technical action.

If you look only at the girdling of Hadda, it is not clear what has been done, only that the women had put an end to Hadda's being open. But if you consider the women's roughness, then you know that the danger comes from Hadda herself. Or, at least, that is what the two women let us know.

Perhaps we have to choose interpretation b. When we discussed this with Bor's mother, she smiled, took a sniff and proceeded with her work. We could not elicit a definite statement from her. What does that mean?

In the course of time I have learned that silence of the Khroumirians does not always mean agreement, nor does rejection of an opinion indicate disagreement. Bor, being a young man, immediately thinks of sexual licence. Bor's mother does not deny that possibility. After all she has young daughters and she is aware of the bad influence that loose manners of other women may have on her children. Yet, for her, reared in a traditional way, the dangers of the bush are real. She knows what happens to a person who, unprotected by human company, meets the invisible and horrific. There will be a loss of Self, and confusion and disorder. It is interesting to note that, whether we follow the more mundane path of Bor's thoughts, or the archaic path of his mother's, we arrive at the same point: a disruption of the social order both for one person and for the whole community.

In refusing to choose between a., b. and c. Bor's mother treats the phenomenon as a symbol. Even if she may secretly prefer one of the possible explanations, the other ones are never excluded. She can be so contemplative because she has no vested interests in the affair. She does not want to bring a person round to her definition of the situation. Her attitude is a luxury which only outsiders (like anthropologists) can afford. But even others who take sides with Hadda or the two neighbours, may see less sign and more symbol when they have calmed down. For it is typical of symbols that, even when a certain interpretation is chosen, other homologies are kept in reserve and not abandoned, contrary to what happens in language when a choice is made

between the meanings of an ambiguous word (Sperber 1975:70).

Symbolic representations cannot be split up. They are configurations, a *Gestalt*. In daily life they are used as tools to serve different purposes and the ways of using them is more or less conventional. But not one of these different uses is more right than the other. Behind the use and the way of using, the analyst finds a world of images and actions that introduce him or her to the cognitive aspects of a world-view. The strong affect which permeates it, however, cannot be grasped in this way and I doubt whether we will ever be able to understand it fully. It is this part of any culture, other than our own, which remains most alien to us.

### 3. *The dimension open/closed*

In the analysis of the two foregoing cases, I made use of insights, acquired only at the end of my research by comparing cases which somehow seemed to me to share a *tema con variazione*. The *tema* was the dimension open/closed.

I shall now present a number of cases in which this theme appears with different variations and we shall see how each variation points to both different and similar values. This is a standard procedure in anthropological research where comparison always has been basic. It has been developed in a systematic way by Cl. Lévi-Strauss when he analysed myths according to structuralistic principles (Lévi-Strauss 1958:235). Here the raw data are not myths, but rituals and episodes from daily life in which the open or closed state of the body is prominent.

#### *Treatment of a woman who has given birth*

Three days after a woman has given birth, she is given *zjabra:n*. The mother, the *nefes*, lies on her back on the floor while one woman sits on her left side and another woman on her right. They put their feet against the shoulders of the *nefes*, grasp each other's hands over the stretched body and push hard with their feet against her body, trying to stretch their legs. They also do this on the joints of her hips, the knees and the ankles. Once I witnessed a variation of this ritual, done by the mother of the *nefes*.

The four other women who were present in the room all ignored it. The mother had wrapped her daughter tightly in a *ħre:m*, the traditional violet coloured woman's dress which consists of four yards of synthetic material, artfully draped around the body in

an antique fashion and held together at the shoulder by silver pins. Panting she pulled it as hard as she could and only when her daughter moaned in her cocoon, did she let go.

None of the women could explain why this was done. The ritual proved to be based on tacit knowledge (Sperber 1975:x). The treatment of just the joints in the first variant induced my assistant to declare that “openness” in this case pointed to the danger of *jnu:n* (pl. of *jinn*), chthonic creatures who live parasitically on the blood of man. There are many kinds of *jnu:n*. The sort that jumps into human beings at the moment they are immobilized by sudden fright “suck the marrow from the bones” right at the joints.

#### *Barren woman*

A barren woman visits the tomb of the local saint, the *marabout*. She unwinds her sash and puts it on top of the saint’s wooden shrine. She asks him to give her a child and after some minutes she rewinds the sash around her body and on it she hangs a brand-new padlock which has never been opened or closed (sic!). While praying ungirdled she opens it and when she has locked it on her belt, she drops the keys in the saint’s tomb. The padlock is said never to leave her belt again. To tell the truth, women either lose it or drop it in the course of years.

In their accounts of the visit, my informants frequently used the verbs to open and to close when describing what the woman did with the padlock. They never used them to indicate what she did with the sash or what she was supposed to do with her body in a metaphorical sense.

#### *Blood letting*

The Khroumirians are in the habit of letting blood when they feel ill or have a headache. Men say that they have too much blood or bad blood and this makes them irascible. Women can never have too much blood, because they are weak, but they can have bad blood if they are tired.

There are different ways of blood letting. Usually men and women make superficial incisions on the forehead, right under the hairline. It is called *ishla:ta*. When I saw a local curer do it to a client, he rubbed emergent drops of blood over the incisions and said that this was *zjbirra*.

As in the treatment for a woman who has given birth, *zjbirra* is used for putting an end to the condition of being open because the blood would attract *jnu:n*. I was corrected when I spoke of

*zjbirra* as “closing”. The action of “closing” has a malevolent character. This means that the opposition open/closed cannot be equated directly with opening and closing. In its active form the opposition needs an intermediary. Then we must use three terms, opening – putting an end to the condition of being open or being closed – closing. We will meet a case of true closing in the treatment of unruly maidens.

### *Bor’s illness*

Bor, my assistant, fell ill. He urinated blood and moving was extremely painful for him. He walked wide-legged, slowly and uncertainly. His mother scolded him vehemently, because he was “open” when he walked. He should have walked briskly, with quick movements, as befits men.

Riha:na, an older woman, frowned at my sandals when we visited her. “She is open and you are open”, she warned Bor. “That is a little bit dangerous.”

Riha:na was improvising here. Villagers who walk on sandals are not called “open”. On the other hand they don’t have tender white European feet. Maybe the apparent vulnerability of my feet inspired her – it was the first day in spring that I wore sandals.

In this case there were two quite different warnings of danger. a. Riha:na warned us against invisible beings who will attack my “open” person. And as Bor and I were always together, they would get both of us. Our friend had put my openness and Bor’s tiredness in one category which can be paraphrased as: being weak, womanly, defenseless and liable to supernatural attack.<sup>11</sup>

b. Bor’s mother used the same category but she did not think of the *jnu:n*. She was not concerned with Bor’s real physical condition. She prompted him to behave *as if* he was not weak.

Bor was not a strong young man and already the villagers had some doubts of his virility. Joking comments of some extent would confirm the doubts of others.

### *Swaddled babies*

Babies are swaddled until they are four or five months old. This is done so that the bones and the skin become closed, *maqful*. They are open, *mahlu:l*, in the first month.

Other words to indicate that little children’s bones are soft/solid, are *merkhi/maḥbu:k*.

The baby’s head is often covered by a close-fitting cap to make it *maḥbu:k*, which means intelligent in this context.

Little children are threatened by innumerable dangers of supernatural and natural origin. The action is non-specific, it helps against all sorts of immediate dangers and it will protect the child in the future. One who has loose bones falls easily into a trance, and is easily possessed by *jnu:n*. Intelligence, it must be understood, is to the Khroumirians the reverse of the archaic mode of thinking and feeling. And they look at swaddling as a purely technical action.

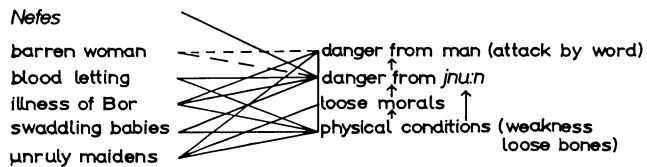
### *Unruly maidens*

If a girl could not be controlled by her brothers and other male relatives, she was taken aside by her mother or an aunt. Seven incisions were made on her knee, three dates were dipped in the blood and she had to eat them. Then she was “closed”. People told me that several young men were unable to consummate their marriages because the mother had forgotten the exact place where she had made the incisions. One mother was accused of malice.

Riha:na who has a vivid imagination described how she did it to her daughter who is feeble-minded. Roaring with laughter she added that now the gate was closed. Even a whole barrack would not be able to open it. Three years later a wicked shepherd proved to be stronger than a whole barrack.

Those who resent the power of mothers read a message in the ritual. They understand: “I, your mother, am stronger. You are at my mercy”. Or: “you are a trollop, you will shame your family”. Those who identified with the mother saw no message. To them the girl was a passive object in the ritual and it did not matter if she understood what was done or not.

Scheme 1.



Open bodies are always threatened by two of the four dangers, which are intricately linked.

a. At the root of these dangers lies a physical condition typical of women: weakness of character and mind. Weakness in this sense has two meanings: first to be womanly; second, to have “loose” or weak bones, the indication that one is easily possessed by *jnu:n*.

b. Weakness of character inevitably leads to loose moral conduct, for women are insatiable in sexual life, they say.

c. The *jnu:n* are in some ways the guardians of sacred values and they punish those with loose morals. They also attack those with loose bones. Here they are not so much guardians of sacred values as they are powerful creatures who take advantages of the weak.

d. Those who are loose or have loose bones suffer ridicule. The analysis of this new material confirms our supposition that an assessment of the state of the body as “open” carries no definite message. It is not a clear sign. Notwithstanding this, Khroumirians often managed to interpret an open body by simply neglecting some possibilities. But no matter how you interpret, you will always arrive at weakness, the condition that causes all other misfortunes. We must now explore that condition.

*Weakness, the source of danger*

When we look at the state of the body, symbolized in the cultural opposition open/closed and ritually treated in order to change an undesirable state of affairs, we find the following equations:

open	closed
feminine	— masculine
weak	— strong
bad	— good
conquered	— conquerer
subordinate	— superordinate
stupid	— clever
liable to assault	— protected from assault.

All these dichotomies play a role in the cases described. They can be viewed as symbolic matrices (Sperber 1975:69) which provide sets of possible interpretations, or rather, accents, in every situation in which the openness or the closedness of a body is desired or signalled or dreaded.

When Hadda was frightened in the wood, her inferred openness stood for weakness of character, body and mind. That was why, at least according to one interpretation, the *aba:tha* were able to

frighten her.

Some people, however, were inclined to pay more attention to elements this interpretation neglected. They doubted whether Hadda saw the *aba:tha*. Neither were they sure of her amorous disposition. "But", they said, "she would not have defended herself." Why not? "Because she was weak." When we mentioned that Hadda is physically one of the strongest persons in her neighbourhood and is kept at a distance because of her aggressive remarks, the answer was: "All women are weak".

Though weakness is in woman's nature, she should not give in to it. She must fight it. A well-girdled woman has the bad side of her feminine nature more or less neutralized. But to reach this state is very hard. She has to meet in daily life a number of social requirements before the values attached to the absence of openness, which we may translate here as being closed, are attributed to her. Rarely it is said of a woman that she is a man, but if it is said, we may be sure that she is at least middle aged; that she has proven to be very honest, dependable and dedicated to her husband, her house and her children; and that she is a good fighter, intelligent, discreet and unafraid.

#### *The symbolizing faculty*

The opposition open/closed and its underlying values is so deeply impressed on peoples' minds that they are capable of using it in new situations in a perfectly adequate way.

#### *The son who could resist the saint*

A widower intended to marry again but his son protested. "I have the right to marry first", he said, "You have had your pleasure." A row followed.

Now we must understand that there cannot be a legitimate marriage in the customary sense without a feast (Boudhiba 1975:24) with ceremonial meals, songs and the joyful shrieks of women guests.

But as money was scarce, only one marriage could be celebrated for the moment. After a row the nineteen year old son stayed away from home and slept outside in the mountains under a tree. "He is roaming in the bush", the neighbours said. It seemed a realistic description. But actually it was metaphoric. The expression is used for somebody who is stricken with holy madness by the saint, the eponymic ancestor to whom all valley-dwellers stand in a child-father relation.

When the symbolic father is neglected or ill-treated, he



punishes his children. The symbolic father is equated with the physical father and with the whole agnatic line in which power and authority is invested. So any rebellion of the son against his father is a rebellion against the saint.

When the father declared that he would give a feast in honour of the saint because he had made a vow to do so, older people understood that on that occasion an attempt to reconcile father and son was to be made. But the son, being not yet fully enculturated did not understand the project. He did not make the equation father : son :: saint : villager.

On the night of the feast the whole hamlet was present and many young men, keen to hear gossip, have a cup of tea and perhaps share in the communal meal, had come from other villages.

The dancers who perform the *hadra*, the ecstatic dance in honour of the saint (Crapanzano 1973:185; M. Gaudry 1961:333) were present with their informal leader, the old Brahim.

When the dancers and their leader had all fallen into a trance and performed their curious dance which is sustained by hyperventilation, leaps and extreme movements of the upper body, Brahim licked his red-hot sickle and winked at the son of the feast-giver.

The son was standing with some friends in the shadowy part. When he realized what awaited him, he quickly took a closed safety-pin from his pocket and put it in his mouth. Only two of his friends had noticed the gesture.

Smiling the son declined to come. He felt safe, strong, "closed". His "bones were not loose", like the bones of those who had fallen into a trance. The guests did not know that he had protected himself from the temptation to surrender to the saint and they shouted: "Go, put out your hand, don't be afraid." When they insisted, the son did not want to make them angry by continuing to refuse. He stepped into the fire-lit space and we saw him extend a trembling hand. On that moment it occurred to the public that he was not confident and willing to join the dancers – and this is the minimum requirement for falling into a trance. They stopped pressing him, for they were concerned not only about him but also about continuing the seance. An accident with fire would certainly end it. Two weeks after the feast the father married and the son left home for good.

In North Africa, men, and especially young men, are not traditional thinkers. Those from rural areas have to find their way in a

new semi-urban world where old ideas and ways of behaving are not respected. They constantly move between this new world and the old world in which their mothers, sisters and wives still primarily live,<sup>12</sup> and it is hard for them to separate these two worlds completely. So it is all the more striking that the son intuitively made the right improvisation. He could not or did not want to explain his gesture to me. It evidently was made to resist the lure of the *hadra*. But whether he did not want to be laughed at by his friends or whether he feared a compelled submission to his father, or both, I am unable to say. Afterwards he was angry with his father and we heard him shout: "It was you who wanted this, not I."

The gesture with the safety-pin points to two symbolic nuclei, both based on the opposition open/closed.

a. It points to supernatural danger. The saint reigns over his armies of *jnu:n* and some call him their *sulta:n*.<sup>13</sup> Because of his connection with *jnu:n* you may use the same device used to ward off supernatural invisible beings: touch iron.

But why not keep the safety-pin in the hand? Why put it in the mouth?

b. To understand this we have to remember what was written about the marriage. A girl who wants to resist a rough initiation into her married state hides a closed safety-pin in her hair or mouth. The places are significant in symbolic representations all over the world. The son who hid a closed safety-pin in his mouth, associated his position with the position of a bride. He did not want to be "open" or to "be opened". *He feared to be weak, female*. He feared to be compelled to submit to the will of the other, no matter who the other was. By the choice of his symbolic action he expressed the greatest anxiety of adolescent Khroumirian boys: not to be a man. To be a man means not to be overwhelmed, not to be forced, not to be seduced, not to lose composure in front of everybody – and to dance is to lose one's composure, to surrender to the saint.

Only those who live in a traditional world can distinguish between the social status – one part a greater respect for men and another part an assessment of their character – in these different Khroumirian worlds: the new market-oriented world and the traditional world where the *marabout* governs. The son was not particularly interested in the traditional world and, as has been said, he did not know it well. Yet he defended himself by traditional means. His main resistance was aimed at the authority of his father, a social force in the boundary between

the profane and sacred world. To be able to resist he had to deny the sacred claims his father tried to make for his authority.

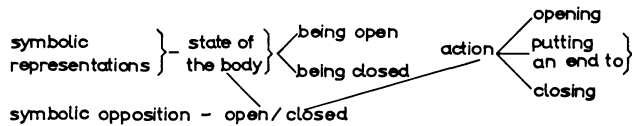
Was there a message here? Curiously, there seems indeed to be a message, sent by the boy to himself. But it is so ambiguous that we may doubt whether he is fully conscious of it. He states: I am not a woman, I am a man. He made the statement by putting a safety-pin in his mouth, so that he may not surrender. But by the very act he performed he acknowledged he is basically a woman in the symbolic sense; one who is weak, liable to be assaulted, easily to be conquered. So the message might be: I am a woman, but to all of you I shall appear as a man. But this is exactly what no Khroumirian man can ever admit.

#### 4. Conclusion

Symbols are not signs, though people pretend they are in order to use them for their own ends. When Khroumirians want to convince others of the rightness of their point of view they interpret that relevant part of the symbolic representation in a way that suits them best. They do so by words or gestures.

The symbolism analysed here consists of a symbolic opposition underlying two symbolic representations. The first was a particular state of the body, the second was an action to change that state.

*Scheme 2.*



There is some coding between the particular state of the body considered here and the dangers it refers to. Yet, we cannot speak of messages because it is never certain which interpretation is the right one. If, however, we consider the whole list of possible interpretations (the exegetical meaning) together with what people do (the operational meaning), after they have defined the particular state of the body, it leads us to a basic value in Khroumirian society: to be a man in the moral sense of the word. And that is the cultural meaning of the symbolism studied here.

## NOTES

- 1 The concept of code is not well developed and it is in need of some revision (Eco 1975:16). Yet it is used by many writers. Most of them refrain from defining it. Sperber does, though. "A code is a set of pairs (message, interpretation) given either, as in an elementary case such as that of Morse code, in the form of a simple list, or in more complex cases, for example cartomancy and of course, language, in the form of rules that potentially define all the parts of the code, and those alone. It is not necessary in this broad definition that the relationship message-interpretation be one-one; in other words, several interpretations may correspond to the same message, and vice versa." (Sperber 1975:14).
- 2 This group of mountain dwellers is called by Reimer Schefold, elsewhere in this volume, Khmir. This is a historical name. For reasons which are irrelevant to state here, I use the name derived from the present indication of the area they inhabit, the Djebel Khroumir.
- 3 Tacit knowledge is either implicit knowledge or unconscious knowledge. Implicit knowledge is tacit knowledge, made explicit. When those who have tacit knowledge are unable to make it explicit, we may speak of unconscious knowledge (Sperber 1975:x).
- 4 The research was sponsored in the years 1973 and 1974 by The Netherland Organization for Pure Scientific Research.
- 5 The description and analysis Bourdieu gives of the pertinent issues in Kabyle society (Bourdieu 1965) fit very well with the norms as the Khroumirians described them. Since the time that loss of honour cannot be revenged (see *infra*), there is a widening gap between expressed motives and values and those which people really hold.
- 6 A restricted code is a way of speaking, understandable only to members of the group who speak in this way. It is based on condensed symbols and tacit knowledge. Elaborated codes are more understandable to outsiders as they are based not so much on metaphor as on rationality and explicit knowledge (Bernstein 1972:164).
- 7 Closed is used here as the negation of "open". "Closing" is performed by closing an object, by laying knots or binding a rope. We sat for hours on wedding nights, our shoe-laces loosened. Binding has its effect on the groom, the bride, or both. If binding is suspected, the more euphemistic and general word for sorcery, *sahara*, is preferably used.
- 8 "Technical actions" serve to alter the physical state of the world out there – digging a hole in the ground, boiling an egg; "expressive actions" . . . say something about the state of the world as it is . . ." (Leach 1976:9).
- 9 To men the *aba:tha* appears often in the form of a beautiful, seductive young woman. It is dangerous to follow her.
- 10 See the case of Bor, my assistant, who fell ill.
- 11 There are long lists of words, indicating the typical feminine condition of weakness. Women may complain on ritual occasions: I am heavy, I am tired, my arms and legs are tired, *hthommet*, *hzjimm*, *fsjillet*, the general name of a weak – implicitly feminine – person who cannot defend him- or herself is *hezma*. The father of many girls is called *boy hzeiyem*, the father of weak ones. And he is pitied.
- 12 In many respects the Khroumirian world is similar to the Moroccan

society of the Middle Atlas, described by Vanessa Maher. High unemployment prevents women from entering the labour market and it is difficult for men to find a permanent job. In occasional contact with the modern market-economy they become superficially acquainted with western non-religious values. Back home, traditional North African religious values prevail (Maher 1974:4).

- 13 The combination of evil forces and saintliness may seem strange. But we must keep in mind that the *jnu:n* are not only evil. They can also live in peace with human beings and it is even said that they transmit *baraka*. Their role of guardians of traditional values is mentioned in the text. Furthermore, the term "saint" for *marabout* is not well chosen because it reminds us too much of the saints we know, Roman Catholic saints. It is true that the *marabout* were pious men. But they are not venerated because of their high moral standards or their love of God. They are venerated because of their power to transmit *baraka*, like the *jnu:n*.

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Amsterdam, July 1976.

LEONTIEN E. VISSER

**THE SOCIAL MEANING OF WHITE, RED AND BLACK  
AMONG THE AHOUAN OF IVORY COAST (WEST AFRICA)**

As a former French colony Ivory Coast gained independence in 1960, and Dr. Felix Houphouët-Boigny became its first and so far only president. The country may be divided physiogeographically in two different parts: the northern half, which is mostly covered by bush-savannah, and the southern half, where secondary forest is dominant.

It is in the northeastern part of the forest region, on the right bank of the Comoë River, that the Ahouan have their villages. The people are culturally related to the Baoulé, Ashanti and other Akan groups in West Africa and it is likely<sup>1</sup> that they invaded their present territory about a hundred and fifty years ago. Throughout this contribution, reference will be made to the autochthonous Ahouan inhabitants of two villages, one with some two hundred and fifty, the other with some five hundred Ahouan people. Apart from the Ahouan inhabitants many foreigners from other regions or from Mali and Upper-Volta live in the village territories. Swidden agriculture is general practice and small fields are cleared in the forest to grow yam as a staple food, in a mixed culture with corn, taro or cassava and a small variety of vegetables like red peppers, egg plant and okra. Important cash crops are coffee and cocoa, and the mid-1960s saw the introduction of non-irrigated rice farming, both as a food and a cash crop.

Each village is composed of a certain number of domestic units (*awlo*) the core of which is constituted by a family head (*awlo-bokpin*) and his matrilineal and patrilineal kinsmen. Each domestic unit is composed of several households, the women all having their own kitchen. These domestic units, of some eight to fifteen individuals, live in rectangular groups of rooms and kitchens around a central courtyard (*awlo*) on two sides of the main road of the village.

Although many villagers have been baptized or converted to Islam, the concepts of the High-God (*Nyamien*), the lesser gods

(*amwin*) and the spirits who are considered to inhabit the earth (*assiebessin*) still hold strong for the majority of the Ahouan. Therefore, it may be said that ritual action, as performed in agriculture or in jurisdiction, is still recognized and performed in most households.

Our interest for the present purpose is in the ritual action contexts and in its colour symbolism. In Ahouan social life three main colours may be distinguished because of their high symbolic value: white (*fufue*), red (*kokore*) and black (*ble*).<sup>2</sup> There is complete consensus about the use of these colour words in all kinds of situations. Other colour words, like yellow (*dale*) and green (*amoi*), exist but are not known to everybody. I am not even sure whether these two words are not borrowed from Dioula language.<sup>3</sup> Green objects, however, are mostly referred to by describing them as “the green of a yam leaf” (*nyia*). Furthermore, a genuine Ahouan word for blue does not seem to exist, since the French term “bleu” is used when necessary (e.g. in cloth). However little evidence there is so far, I suppose that the Ahouan language belongs to the Stage II systems as described by Berlin and Kay (1969). In the languages categorized by the authors as Stage II systems, white, red and black exist as so-called basic colour terms (1969:25-28). This is the case in several areas in the world, of which they cite Ndembu in Congo (1969:26).

The Ndembu colour symbolism as analyzed by Victor Turner (1966) will be of special interest to this study. Symbols — and colour symbols as just one aspect — are susceptible of many meanings and, according to Turner, they may represent concrete as well as more abstract social aspects. I am inclined to interpret this as aspects which seem to be more or less abstract to the anthropologist. The problem in fieldwork is that the significance of a symbol representing the crucial values of a group is often understood by the people themselves at an unconscious level and need not be verbally expressed. This also holds true for colour symbolism. Sometimes colours are used in the more direct way of signals, but especially white, red and black may have considerable significance as representations of what we would call “abstract” notions. Thus the sacrifice of a red cock may be seen by the Ahouan as a ritual action which has a symbolic meaning quite different from a situation where a white cock is sacrificed.

Turner, in his excellent article on Ndembu colour classification (1966), gives us very detailed information about the symbolic meanings of white, black and red. In Ndembu mythology three



rivers originate from God: the white, the red and the black. We are told that "they are related as follows: the main river is white, red is junior and followed by black" (1966:52). Both white and red symbolize power; they have the power of life, which black has not (cf. 1966:70). Referring to these three colours Turner speaks of a colour triad which certainly does not imply equal relations between the parts. "It is the opposition between white and red which dominates the relations of the colour triad" (1966:57, 58). His analysis then differentiates more and more between two dyadic relations, i.e. between white and red on the one hand and between white and black on the other. Then we come to his conclusion that "in abstraction from social and ritual contexts Ndembu think of white and black as the supreme anti-thesis in their scheme of reality, but in action contexts red is regularly paired with white" (1966:64). But who is thinking in abstractions? However useful in analysis a term like "abstraction" may be, it gives little insight in the Ndembu way of thinking, as expressed in their colour symbolism. What does abstraction mean to them: that witchcraft is less "concrete" than the blood of witchcraft itself (cf. 1966:60)?

It is very well understood from Turner's analysis, however, that the opposition between white and red is more important than an opposition between white and black. In terms of social significance this might as well be the case where white and red are "social" colours, symbols of the continuity of social life or its structural breakdown. If one prefers to speak of colour symbolism in terms of abstraction, it is rather their reference to society as a whole which makes white and red colours occur in certain contexts and black in others. Let me explain this for the Ahouan situation.

#### *Some field data*

In Ahouan society we come across colour symbolism in rituals like fetish dancing, marriages or funerals, but also in the context of agricultural sacrifices and of an individual's offering to his ancestors. It is remarkable that in sessions of the village "court" the cola nuts exchanged between the parties by way of debt payments appeared to vary in colour.<sup>4</sup> The offending party had to pay red cola nuts in cases which had something to do with bloodshed or evil-doing. There is the case of several Baoulé who lived in the village territory and came to the chief to tell him that a fetish had been found on the field of one of them. To find the

culprit the Baoulé were asked to sacrifice two cocks, but as there were no fowls at hand, they could give red cola nuts instead. This was to make sure that anybody who was evil-minded and had placed the fetish in the field would die. After that all attendants were sprayed with white talc powder against evil.

White cola nuts, on the other hand, were offered by a boy's family to a girl's family on the announcement of their marriage. White and red cola nuts were furthermore distributed among the participants of a baptism ceremony of a new-born child. The use of white symbolism is also apparent in the aspect of authority. With the Ahouan each village head, and in his turn each family head, has his authority symbolized in the stool (*adja bia*): a low white-washed stool made out of one single piece of wood. During the lifetime of a family head, offerings are made to the stool as a symbol of the unity of the group. As for the closely related Ashanti, Rattray (1923:92) has remarked that "after the death of a wise ruler, if it be desired to perpetuate his or her name and memory, the late owner's 'white' stool is 'smoked' or blackened by smearing all over with soot, mixed with yolk of egg. It then becomes a black stool . . .".

The different occasions in which sacrifices are made may give further evidence of the Ahouan colour symbolism. There are two kinds of sacrifices to be distinguished. First there are sacrifices of an individual character, including those made to the earth and the earth spirits (*assie* and *assiebessin*) to ask for a good harvest, fecundity and protection from harm. Also included are the sacrifices to the ancestor (*wommin*) or to the soul (*kla*). There are also sacrifices of a group character, such as those made to the mountain (*konguia boka*) and to the spiritual elements that are believed to protect the village territory and its inhabitants. Evans-Pritchard (1956:272) likewise distinguishes between sacrifices that are concerned with the moral and physical welfare of the individual and the sacrifices which are chiefly concerned with social relations, changes of social status and the interaction of social groups.

When an Ahouan farmer intends to clear a new swidden to grow his yams and probably also some coffee and cocoa, he sacrifices a white cock, an egg and some mashed yam (*nvutu*) made by his wife. He lays it all on a trunk and says: "Nana earth, and the forest spirits, I want to see my field and the yam I will grow here succeed, I want a long life and good health; if you give me that, I will offer you a cock". It is interesting to notice that farmers who turned Muslim still continue these practices. Rattray

(1923:215) gives a similar account of the sacrifice of mashed yam to the earth. An old woman in the village told me that it was forbidden (*te*) to mix red peppers into half-mashed yam as it is offered to the gods (*amwin*), because “they do not like red peppers, as the living people do”.

There are two other cases of individual sacrifices in which white offerings are made. One refers to a man who had dreamt of his deceased father, who asked him for a chicken in order to help his son in earning good money. The son then sacrificed a white cock and some palm wine to the soul (*wommin*) of his father in front of the door of what was once his father’s sleeping room. The other case refers to a woman who went to the village chief when her son had passed his exams with success, to show her gratitude and to let the promised sacrifice be made to the stool (*adja bia*). Here a white chicken, a sheep and a bottle of gin were said to be offered. White is also important in sacrificial ceremonies of a more social character, such as the establishment of a new village. This is said to take place as follows: the village priest, accompanied by another member of the chief’s family, plants a tree (*nian*, *Bombax buonopozense* P. Beauv.) and kills a white sheep and a chicken to sacrifice to the earth (*assie*) with the words: “Nanan assie, today we have come here, where it is all forest; when we go to sleep here, we will sleep with our wives; there must come no evil over us, here it has become like a village now, which is good and pleasant”. Another time, when a new road was dug in the forest by a big bulldozer, the priest offered a white sheep to the mountain (*boka*) that is considered to protect the village territory, to ask for “good fortune for the machine and those who work on it”. The fetish dancer, when performing in front of her co-villagers, asks the god (*amwin*) for good fortune and good health for the people, while she is dressed in white and powdered all over her breasts and shoulders with kaolin. White dresses are preferred on ceremonial occasions (cf. van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal 1974:16). This visual purity has its counterpart in the taboo on the dancer or the attendants at a sacrifice against having sexual contacts the night before the ceremony takes place. Moreover, women should not be in their menstruation period.

Sometimes, however, the sacrificed fowl is not white but red, as in the case of the judgement of a girl who had run away from her husband and was suspected of having slept with another boy. To put her to the test a red cock was killed. Here we meet a major point in the interpretation of the sacrifices: whether the

priest believed the answer of the girl or not depended on the colour of the testicles of the fowl. The accusation would have been confirmed if the testicles appeared to be dark. The colour of the testicles is also an indication whether or not the sacrifice has been accepted by the ancestor to whom it was offered. If they appear dark, bloodstained, the sacrifice is considered rejected by the ancestor and a second fowl has to be offered. Sacrifices of three-coloured animals deserve special attention. Once a fetish dancing ceremony was held in order to gain the support of the god (*amwin*) against a threatening whooping-cough. All the mothers in the village were asked to offer eggs and spotted chickens. During the same ceremony the fetish dancer ordered the village priest to choose for sacrifice a white-black-and-brown spotted sheep, called *klosede*. It is sometimes said that a white animal can be replaced by a three-coloured one. So maybe a coloured animal was chosen where a white one could have been taken instead to render the *amwin* favourable.

As I got interested in colour symbolism only after the actual fieldwork was over,<sup>5</sup> I am not very well informed about objects and ideas associated with white, black and red. Some remarks can be made, however, about the concept of the soul (*kla*). It is the Ahouan view that all individuals have a soul (*kla*) which is transferred from the father to the child.<sup>6</sup> This *kla* is held to have its dwelling place near, but outside of its owner, for instance in the courtyard near the foot of a tree or in a small earthen shrine, also called *kla*. In many Ahouan courtyards one may find these shrines containing a black earthen pot (*talie*). This *talie* is filled with water, which is said to be necessary to cool the soul when it is exposed to the sun. From time to time an egg is offered to the *kla* and thrown into the water, where it is left to rot. The *kla* or soul is considered to give good health, children and money and to protect against illness.

Once a year a major sacrifice is made to one's *kla* by the time the first new yams are harvested.<sup>7</sup> In one of the villages the second son of the chief, together with his wife, and the village priest and his wife (who was the other woman's sister) went to the Comoë River "because it was there, where their *kla* normally wanders, near the mountain (*boka*) to which the village priest makes the sacrifices". On that occasion the priest offered three chickens, two eggs and one litre of palm wine to their *kla* in order to ask for fertility, good harvests for the coming year, and money.

Although more evidence is needed, these observations do reveal the possible association of ancestors, the soul (*kla*), coolness, shadow, water (?) and black. The lack of more substantial data on the symbolic meanings of water and especially of blood hinders any further hypothesizing at this moment. Two important points can be deduced from Turner (1966:61-63) regarding the symbolic meaning of death, which have theoretical value. Black is connected with life as a normal state of the human being, including death. Besides, black is a symbol of changing status, of life or death of the individual. So black appears as a symbol of discontinuity, but as one that is not dangerous to the group as a whole or to the individual's place in the group. Or, as Turner points out (1966:61), death is a "black-out".

#### *Summary and propositions*

Let us summarize what is found so far. White has been shown to occur in rituals in which an individual is involved rather than a group, as in agricultural sacrifices and in offerings to the soul (*kla*). But white is also apparent in group ceremonies and in sacrifices on behalf of the well-being of the community, as in village settlement and in fetish dancing. The common feature is the continuity of relationships between the members of the group themselves as well as between (the representatives of) the group and the ancestors, gods and spirits. Therefore, relationships between individuals are not considered to break down after a person's death. Here black is opposed to white, symbolizing discontinuity of social relations which does not influence the elementary forms of social organization: a family head may die, but family authority is vested in the stool and another family member will be its representative.

Unlike black, however, red is found in social situations of intentional negative action against other members of society, as in the Baoulé case or in that of the adulterous woman. On the individual level red is mentioned only as a negation, as in the taboo on using red peppers in the offer of white mashed yam. Red then occurs where the continuity of group relations is involved.

So on the individual level we find a dualism between white and black, where the emphasis is on the perpetuation and consolidation of existing social relations between group members as well as between the living people and the ancestors, gods and spirits. It is on the group level that we are confronted with a white/red dualism. Social behaviour which threatens the relationships

between groups of people, like causing intentional death or committing adultery, is represented by red not only as a symbol of discontinuity, but also of possible disruption.<sup>8</sup>

The following diagram depicts the proposed connections between the social context and the colour symbolism:

		SOC.	
		+	-
IND.	+	white	red
	-	black	/

A last remark can be made on the concept of the colour triad, as used by Turner (1966:58). It is true that usually three colours are involved in colour symbolism and that they occur in different combinations. The relative positions of white, red and black in the colour triad, however, are not arbitrary. As a theoretical concept the colour triad is not very helpful, in my view, since it conceals the two fundamental dualistic relationships between white and red on the one hand, and between white and black on the other. Expressed in terms of social structure, we can speak of a white/black dualism as a more metonymical relation, while a white/red dualism can be considered as a more metaphorical relation.

#### NOTES

- 1 van Loopik 1974.
- 2 Although there is some dispute as to whether white and black are chromatic colours, I refer to them as culturally determined colour words.
- 3 Dioula is the language of communication in most of rural Ivory Coast.
- 4 The cola nut is the seed of the cola tree (*Cola nitida* (Vent.) Schott. & Endl.) which is indigenous in West Africa. The fruit contains about 8-10 red or yellowish seeds with a relatively high content of caffeine, because of which the seeds are chewed as a stimulant. Especially in Muslim countries in Africa the cola nut is a highly valued social good. The Ahouan do not seem to attach much value to it, but lately economic interest is growing.
- 5 The fieldwork was carried out as a 'doctoral stage' of Leiden University from May to December 1973, on the topic of the Ahouan's cognition of the environment in the context of their agricultural system.
- 6 The notion of a "soul" transferred from the father to the son is also found in other cultures of the so-called Akan group, as witnessed by Rattray for the Ashanti (1923:46; 1927:154, 155, 318) and by Etienne for the Baoulé (1966:368).

- 7 This little ceremony seems nevertheless comparable to the performance of the Apo ceremony, as described by Rattray (1923:151), of the "washing" of the soul. Turner (1974:107-112) refers to this lustration in terms of white symbolism, representing the purity and the continuity of the community.
- 8 Things may appear not to be as simple as that: red is ambivalent, as in the case of the child's baptism where red and white cola nuts are exchanged. Red nuts are also used as a medicine to let the fontanelle of a baby close quickly. Here, red seems to represent the possibility of discontinuity, or the chance of survival itself. A sociologically sounder explanation may be found in Rattray (1927:61), where he observes that children are regarded as ritually clean, not having any power for either good or evil.

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W.E.A. VAN BEEK

**“EATING LIKE A BLACKSMITH”:  
SYMBOLS IN KAPSIKI ETHNO-ZOOLOGY**

*1. Introduction*

The study of symbols makes it possible to pursue the analysis of a given culture beyond the overt interpretation of its participants. Though not all anthropologists agree on this issue which has been a much debated topic recently (e.g. Turner 1967, Douglas 1972, Firth 1973), we shall try to support this thesis by presenting a symbolic system in which the structuring of the symbols is highly elusive for the participants.

In order to do so, we concentrate on a symbolic system that easily escapes rationalization and reflection, as it is treated as a matter of undisputed fact in daily life: food from animals. The relative position of the symbols towards each other will be examined, in order to detect the affective and semantic dimensions that underlie their symbolic opposition. This approach differs from the “standard” way of analysing symbols in which a small set of symbols pertinent to a specific action is analysed in its various contexts and settings (e.g. Turner 1969, 1975, Douglas 1970, Droogers 1974, Stanner 1960). By concentrating on the “positional meaning”, using one of Turner’s many analytic concepts (Turner 1967), the structure of the whole symbolic field emerges, and this symbolic structure appears to be pertinent to our initial observation. In this way we shall try to demonstrate also that Lévi-Strauss’ observations on totemic systems as systems of symbols (Lévi-Strauss 1960) offer a testable hypothesis, a current issue of debate.

*2. Method*

For the purpose of this paper we shall restrict ourselves to the symbolic properties of the semantic field of animals in its relation to eating, in one particular culture, viz. that of the Kapsiki of the Northern Cameroons.<sup>1</sup> In doing so we heavily rely on the



approach of ethnoscience as a useful and productive way of handling native classification and its corollaries. As a field technique this implied the collection of all native Kapsiki animal names by means of several eliciting techniques, and the use of sorting tests on these names by our informants (Geoghegan 1971; Berlin, Breedlove and Raven 1969). We explored the use, edibility and symbolic properties of all animal types.

### *3. Ethnographic background*

The Kapsiki-Higi tribe lives in the Mandara mountains on the northern border of Nigeria and Cameroon. It consists of a loose conglomerate of autarchic villages, each with its own territory and set of village-specific patrilineal clans. Within each of these villages the virilocal polygynous or nuclear family forms the basic unit of society. This family is fully autonomous: a powerful sense of privacy, permeating all aspects of Kapsiki culture, shields each compound from its neighbours. Interference from other people, including the village chief, never exceeds the level of advice. However, his authority may be bolstered by the respect the Kapsiki have for the person of the office holder.

The Kapsiki cultivate sorghum, corn, sesame and sweet potatoes as staple crops, and peanuts and tobacco for a cash income. Goats, sheep and cattle make up their livestock, but on the whole animal husbandry is less important than agriculture, economically as well as ritually. The Mandara mountains are densely populated, from 30 up to 100 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>, so game is scarce and hunting is not very important. Only hares, birds and some antelopes form some addition to the menu. The annual cycle of cultivation, characterized by a very distinct rhythm of a short rainy season and a protracted dry season, dominates the working pattern, rituals and human interests in general. The daily tasks vary with the season: discussion topics at beerdrinking parties relate to cultivation and its corollaries and almost all communal rituals are calendrical. Thus boys' initiation, first marriage for girls and second burials, all have their own place on the calendar.

This "seasonality" of Kapsiki life is supplemented by their strong notion of privacy. In religion this is apparent in the orientation of the central religious rite which consists of private sacrifice within the family compound.

#### 4. *Blacksmiths and other people*

Within the Kapsiki society one type of differentiation between people is very important. Though several specialists may be discerned (van Beek 1977) by far the most important division is that between blacksmith (*rerhE*)<sup>2</sup> and *melimu* (non blacksmith). *RerhE* is translated here, as is usually done, as “blacksmith”, although only a small proportion of them actually forge iron or cast bronze. *Melimu* indicates everyone else, the common, normal people. As a 5% minority, the blacksmiths form a very distinct social group with caste-like qualities. They are specialists in secular and religious matters *par excellence*, and marry strictly endogamously.

Their central specialization is burial, including everything that goes with it: dancing, music, ritual, grave digging etc. The *rerhE* are ritual intermediaries on many occasions: they perform divination, officiate in sacrifices on behalf of individual *melimu* and serve as medicine-men. This last specialization of healing is economically very important. Most musical instruments are played by *rerhE* only, which provides another substantial source of income. Last but not least they forge iron and cast bronze. Bronze is used mainly for ornamental and ritual purposes, whereas iron tools are the core of their agricultural equipment. The blacksmiths' wives make pottery and have their own medical and medicinal specializations.

On the whole these specializations — all of which are part-time occupations as all *rerhE* cultivate their own fields like everyone else — give them economic privileges. In sharp contrast their social status is clearly inferior. The blacksmiths are despised by the *melimu*; in official matters they have no judicial competence, in political meetings their voice is never heard. “They are like children”, informants state. Formerly, when there was famine, people sold children and *rerhE* as slaves to Fulani merchants. In social functions a smith may be present to provide some background music with his guitar, but his comments are not appreciated and his word is never treated with the respect due to the opinion of an adult man.

Each smith has his own *ndemara*, someone in authority over him, who will conduct negotiations for bride-price and plead in court for him. This *ndemara* is his adult “alter-ego”, for Kapsiki do not consider a blacksmith to be fully grown-up. At the wedding a bride is presented to a friend of her father who will shield her from mistreatment by her husband. For blacksmith-brides

these friends are always *melimu*. Important property such as the smithy is owned by the patriline of the *ndemara* and built and repaired by the whole village. Though only the blacksmith may work in it, it is explicitly not his, as he himself is but one of the "children of the village".

##### 5. "Eating like a blacksmith"

One statement frequently made by *melimu* is that "blacksmiths are dirty". Three reasons may be adduced for this stereotyped observation. The association of the *rerhE* with death pollutes them, their central task being the disposal of the dead. Also according to *melimu*, the *rerhE* do not wash properly. The last and most important reason is that blacksmiths eat "dirty food". On the whole blacksmiths eat anything the *melimu* eat, but the *melimu* never eat food prepared by a *rerhE*.

The main source of dirtiness, however, resides in food-habits: the blacksmiths eat "things", especially animals, not considered edible by the rest of society. *RerhE* eat all kinds of animals never touched by the *melimu*: donkeys, horses, monkeys, snakes, felines and many others. *Melimu* like to say that "the *rerhE* eat anything", but we shall prove that this statement is false and just another stereotyped notion the *melimu* entertain about the *rerhE*. In order to assess the symbolism of these food-customs we have to consider the way in which the Kapsiki perceive their animal kingdom, with respect to this dichotomy *rerhE-melimu*.

There is no general term for "animal" in Kapsiki: all animals fall under the term *wushi* ("things") and are designated as *wushi ta gamba*, things in the bush. The Kapsiki divide animals into seven distinct subgroups, which we shall term "classes":

1. *wushi nyi kedzerhwa le seda* (animals walking on legs),
2. *wushi nyi kedlu* (animals that fly),
3. *wushi nyi kedzerhwa le hwu* (animals that crawl on their belly),
4. *wushi nyi kwa yEmu* (animals in the water),
5. *kwi* ("mice"),
6. *hegi* ("locusts"),
7. *mcili* ("ants").

Correlation of the various species from these classes with their edibility by *rerhE* and *melimu* can be tabled as follows:

<i>class</i>	<i>eaten both by melu and rerhE</i>	<i>eaten by rerhE only</i>	<i>not eaten at all</i>
1. "walkers"	ruminants rodents (exc. mice) porcupine pig chicken  (29 species)	monkeys felines horse camel hyena weasel (24 species)	dog bush dog     (2 species)
2. "fliers"	seed-feeding birds cranes cow-heron coloured toucan cursorial birds  (46 species)	birds of prey fishing birds carrion birds raven black toucan black cow-heron (22 species)	flies bees mosquitoes wasps beetles butterflies dragon-flies bats woodpecker (44 species)
3. "crawlers"	—  (0 species)	water iguana boa water python (5 species)	venomous snakes polypods lizards gecko blind worm (14 species)
4. "water- animals"	fishes hippopotamus  (14 species)	reptiles crawfish (6 species)	amphibians molluscs arthropods (exc. crawfishes) worms leeches (17 species)
5. "mice"	fieldmice housemice mice living in mountains and holes hedgehog (14 species)	flying fox     (1 species)	musquash     (2 species)
6. "locusts"	all locusts except cicadas and non- edible kinds (17 species)	cicadas   (2 species)	scarab non-edible locusts  (6 species)
7. "ants"	—	borer	termites ants

<i>class</i>	<i>eaten both by melu and rerhE</i>	<i>eaten by rerhE only</i>	<i>not eaten at all</i>
	(0 species)	(1 species)	worms spiders fleas caterpillars lice (29 species)
Total	120 species	61 species	114 species

Contrary to the usual ethnoscientific method we had to take recourse to cover terms instead of treating each animal name separately. One normally avoids this because occidental ways of categorizing animals are often not relevant in another cultural context, such as of the Kapsiki. However, the sheer number of 295 species as discerned by the Kapsiki makes this impossible. Moreover our goal of discovering general rules of food-symbolism makes details less relevant.

The *melimu* stereotype "the *rerhE* eat everything" proves to be wrong. About 40% of all animal species discerned by the Kapsiki through a special name, is not eaten at all, neither by *melimu*, nor by the blacksmiths. Only 20% of all species is special *rerhE*-food, and on this category we shall now focus our attention.

Is a logic hidden behind this edibility? What is the symbolic meaning of this division in the food-system? At a first glance it is clear that no hard and fast rules can be given that hold for all classes of animals and by which *rerhE*-food can be quickly discerned from *melimu*-food. But still there is some "system in this madness". The animals in the central column (eaten by *rerhE* only) somehow are clearly different from those in the left and right hand columns. This difference can be demonstrated quite easily in class 4 (water animals), because in this class Kapsiki categorization closely resembles our western taxonomy: fishes – reptiles – amphibians.<sup>3</sup> Here the reptiles form part of the blacksmith menu. Only the hippopotamus and the crawfishes do not fit our categorization; the former species does not live in the mountains of the Kapsiki territory of course, but some may be found in the river valley of the Chari and Benue some 200 km away. Crawfishes live in the wells and ponds of the Kapsiki plateau and are used for divination.

One common denominator which distinguishes the central column from the other two, is the fact that it houses nearly all carnivores. With the exception of the dog, the hedgedog and the

porcupine all carnivores are in the *rerhE*-column: felines, weasel, hyena, snakes etc. Most clearly can this be seen in the case of the birds: all the birds of prey, carrion-eaters and fishing birds are *rerhE*-food. The lefthand column (*melimu*-food) mainly consists of herbivorous animals (ruminants, rodents, seed-feeding birds etc.) whereas the animals that are not eaten at all are neither clearly carnivorous nor herbivorous: they eat insects, earth, blood etc. The case of the woodpecker is very illuminating in this respect: the Kapsiki consider it a wood-eating bird!

Other criteria pertain only to some classes and not to all. In the case of class 1 (“walkers”), the Kapsiki themselves discern between horses and ruminants by pointing to their hoofs: “even hoofs” are food for everyone, “odd ones” for the *rerhE* only. Another feature is that animals such as horses and donkeys are used as beasts of burden and so perform a special task within the economic structure. They are not directly used for productive purposes, but despite their marginality they are very important.

In the class of the “fliers” not only the criterion of carnivorous-herbivorous is relevant, but also that of colour. All non-carnivorous birds associated with blacksmiths are black, whereas the *melu*-birds are multicoloured.

The case of the cicadas deserves special mention. Only those two species among the 25 *hegi* are eaten by the *rerhE*. The cicadas are the true musicians among the locusts. Their Kapsiki-name *rhwEdE* closely resembles that of the one-stringed violin played exclusively by the blacksmiths, *rhwEdErhwEdE*.

Summing up, the main criteria for discerning *rerhE*-animals are:

- carnivorous
- carrion-eating
- black
- special function
- oddness
- musicians

Taken as a whole this reads like a social definition of the blacksmiths themselves. It echoes the way in which they see themselves and others perceive them. Black is the colour of death, black is the garment the blacksmiths wear (dark-blue in fact, which is called black) just like the garment in which people are buried.

Carrion is a symbol of the goat, sheep or bull slaughtered during the burial rites, the meat of which is reserved explicitly for the *rerhE* officiating in the burial. In many tales, stories and myths this burial goat is equated with carrion and myths of

*rerhE*-origin may refer to it. One of them says that in the beginning there was no *rerhE* in the village. Burials were performed by a pair of brothers, one of whom was musician and housed the guests, while the second brother slaughtered the animals, the meat of which was thrown away. Once the oldest child of the musician was ill during a burial dance and saw that the second brother slaughtered the animal, cooked it and ate it. As soon as that was known throughout the village, people decided that this second son would become *rerhE*, in order to avoid this problem. A few *rerhE* from a distant village were invited to teach this brother the tricks of the trade.

The blacksmiths consider themselves to be the carnivores of the Kapsiki society. This view is supported to some degree by the facts of everyday life. Because of their different food-prescriptions they eat more animal protein than their fellow Kapsiki. Though the bulk of the edible meat comes from the ruminants (cattle, goat, sheep) and the chicken, the other animals in the *rerhE* diet are responsible for quite a few extra animal proteins. Whenever a Kapsiki-*melu* happens to kill an animal that is inedible for him, he gives it to the nearest blacksmith. When horses or donkeys die from famine, drought or sickness, their meat is also for the *rerhE*. Besides that, the burial goats and sheep (the "carrion") do form an important contribution to their diet.

In the village where we did most of our research, a total of 41 blacksmiths' compounds housed 115 adult *rerhE*. In one year about 20 burials of some importance took place which added up to a revenue of about 60 goats per year, making up about 1/4 of the total consumption of goats and sheep by all blacksmiths. A demographic study on the neighbouring Matakam tribe reports that the blacksmiths are better fed than the *melimu* (Podlewski 1960). With the Kapsiki this is also the case, which is attested by the lower incidence of infant mortality among the Kapsiki blacksmiths (the Kapsiki *melimu* have an extraordinarily high infant mortality, Podlewski 1966).

As for the other criteria, the special functions of the blacksmiths are evident. The *rerhE* are specialists whenever a task requires specialization; they form a group of "general specialists". Odd numbers are also closely associated with them. Even numbers dominate the rituals and myths of all *melimu* activities, the numbers 4 and 8 being associated with male activities, the other even numbers with female pursuits. Odd numbers only appear in *rerhE* rituals. The last criterion is clear: the *rerhE* are the musicians among their people.

### Conclusion

The food-customs of *melu* and *rerhE* function as a symbolic field through which the difference between the two castes is expressed. The animal kingdom symbolizes in its internal divisions the perception of the social reality. In defining edibility, the social characteristics of the Kapsiki smith are stressed and symbols of ethno-zoology are used as an expression of those characteristics of human behaviour that segregate groups of fellow-men.

The situation reminds one of Lévi-Strauss' approach to totemism (Lévi-Strauss 1960) in that totemistic food taboos are "good to think with" instead of "good for eating". Though in this Kapsiki case there is not the slightest trace of totemism, the same is true here. In food taboos the distinction *rerhE-melu* is thought. The fact that Lévi-Strauss' observation appears to hold for totemic as well as non-totemic systems, makes his claim that this homology between natural and cultural categories is a fundamental trait of totemism dubious. One would rather state that his approach of interpreting nature in terms of human traits presents a fundamental way of giving meaning to intrinsically meaningless objects, i.e. of symbolizing.

So the blacksmiths eat specifically those animals that most closely resemble them: they eat the "*rerhE* among the beasts". In this light it is hardly surprising that "eating like a blacksmith" is nearly identical with "being a blacksmith". Eating is a social definition of oneself. In myth this is expressed time and again by pointing at diverging food-preferences as the origin of the *rerhE* caste. When someone eats like a blacksmith, he becomes one. People claim that still today this is the way some *melimu* turn into *rerhE* by eating this "non-food". Nevertheless, as far as we have been able to find out, both *rerhE* and *melimu* are unaware of the symbolic dimensions of the way they divide the animal kingdom. As far as they are concerned, *rerhE* food simply is food unsuited for *melimu* without any second thoughts as to the inherent meaning of these food symbols. The absence of any overt reason for non-edibility points in this direction: some things seem so self-evident that no native theorizing is called for; only through a symbolic analysis such as we have tried to perform, the hidden meaning of the system of symbols can be explored.



## NOTES

- 1 Research on the Kapsiki and Higi has been carried out between February 1972 and August 1973, and has been made possible by a grant from the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (Grant W 51-91). The name Kapsiki will be used for both parts of the tribe.
- 2 The notation of Kapsiki terms follows the orthography set up by the alphabetisation programs in the Cameroonian Kapsiki-area.
- 3 In colloquial English reptiles and amphibians merge as classes, as both types of animals (e.g. crocodiles and frogs) live in the water as well as on land. In scientific taxonomy however the distinction is sharp and clear: reptiles are born with lungs from eggs on the land and amphibians are born in the water and have gills instead of lungs during their early stage. The Kapsiki categorization follows this latter taxonomy.

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REIMAR SCHEFOLD

THE EFFICACIOUS SYMBOL<sup>1</sup>

Since Robertson Smith and Durkheim, the question of the *objective* efficacy of symbolic action has been raised time and again. Some have maintained, for instance, that ritual behaviour – considered as a reflection of social organization – is instrumental in organizing, cleansing and consolidating the order it expresses (cf. Douglas 1970:13f.). Other authors have pointed to the possibility of an opposite effect: where participants in symbolic actions experience the symbolic traditional values divergently, all communal persistence in the conventional ways of behaviour may expose latent tensions, thus aggravating nascent social conflict (Geertz 1957).

With the growth of Symbolic Anthropology, next to the question of the objective efficacy of symbolic action, the question of its implicit meanings has been given increasing attention. In this process, a symbolic system came to be seen as more than a mere reflection of social relationships. “Although there is undoubtedly a dialectical relation between the social structure and systems of categories, the latter are not an effect or result of the former: each, at the cost of laborious mutual adjustments, translates certain historical and local modalities of the relations between man and the world, which form their common substratum.” (Lévi-Strauss 1973:214.) The picture emerges of a comprehensive order, appearing in the common manner in which the elements of the different aspects of a culture are arranged. In symbolic action and narrative, certain aspects of this order are emphasized and “dialectically” examined (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1967:23; Turner 1969:129). This provides a key to the understanding of how people think and feel about their social relationships and institutions.

In modern approaches to the study of symbolic activities, it is generally agreed that the behaviour expresses underlying cultural values (cf. La Fontaine 1972:xvii). But, for the participants, this behaviour often has an additional dimension. It is linked with

religious powers. This is true not only for ritual, but also for supernaturally motivated “non-action”, i.e. taboos. Belief in these powers leads participants to expect their symbolic behaviour to have a tangible effect: a positive effect, such as success in hunting, as a consequence of proper conduct; or a negative effect, such as sickness, as a consequence of ritual offences and shortcomings. In contrast to the above-mentioned objective efficacy, I shall call this supernatural potential of symbolic activities “*postulated efficacy*”.

In the present article I wish to demonstrate that, in symbolic analysis, the powers at the root of postulated efficacy deserve special attention. The nature of the particular religious forces with which participants motivate their belief in the positive or negative effect of certain symbolic behaviour is quite specifically interrelated with the meaning of that behaviour. The ideas about these forces reveal the same values as the behaviour itself and therefore can contribute to a better understanding of it. I shall demonstrate this with three examples which represent three different possible ways of conceiving the religious source of postulated efficacy.

### 1. “*Excessive wonderment*” in *Mentawai*

The first example deals with the Sakuddei, a tribal group on Siberut (Mentawai archipelago, Indonesia) among whom I did field-work in 1967-1968 and 1974.<sup>2</sup> The inhabitants of Siberut live in exogamous groups of usually five to ten families, who belong to a common patrilineage and share a large pile-dwelling. Marriage is monogamous. Group and dwelling are called *uma*. *Uma* are situated at fairly wide intervals along riverbeds, separated from each other by short stretches of virgin forest, swiddens and gardens. They rank among the foremost technical and aesthetic achievements of this “proto-Indonesian” population. This fact, however, must not be expressed too ostentatiously, a lesson I learned when, shortly after my arrival on Siberut, I undertook a journey of several days in order to visit and to sketch a few *uma*. My expedition ended with a violent attack of malaria. People explained this attack as a response to my “excessive wonderment” (*kissei*). I had admired the houses and touched and measured them to such an extent that I had, in effect, molested them. The houses, on their part, had consequently wondered at me; they had grown annoyed and had concentrated on me with such intensity that they had finally made me fall ill. A healing ceremony

was then enacted, to reconcile the offended houses.

This assessment of "excessive wonderment" is the extreme form of a general attitude among the people of Mentawai, which finds expression whenever people come into contact with their social or physical environment. In the social sphere, the *uma* is the only functioning political unit. Every *uma* is aware of its membership of one of the clans that are spread over the islands, but clan members in their totality undertake no collective enterprises. People are also linked to neighbouring *uma* in their own valley by a common dialect and by numerous marriage and friendship ties strengthened by the exchange of goods. Here too, however, no fixed pattern of social alliances exists: there is no regional governing body, nor are there common institutions to hold the groups together. Accordingly, all kinds of tensions persist among neighbours, from slight rivalry to downright enmity. One's own *uma* remains the exclusive place where the individual finds support and order. Heavy work is performed by the group as a whole, the yields of individual property are consumed collectively, and in its relations with the outside world — whether friendly, as when raising a brideprice, or hostile, as in carrying out assaults — the *uma* operates as a whole. The *uma* does not have a political leader. Decisions are reached by general consensus. Yet there are occasions when unanimity cannot be attained; and if a decisive issue is at stake, there remains only one solution: the opposition moves out to found its own *uma* somewhere else. The major *uma* ceremonies, performed collectively and with the greatest possible splendour, are an attempt to allay the constant threat of internal dissension and a consequent split; recurrent and strong emphasis on the necessity of remaining tightly-knit and close together shows clearly how disconcerting the possibility of the disintegration of the *uma* is to its members.

Thus there is everywhere a recognizable effort to establish good social relations spontaneously and on an equal footing. Alliances secure the *uma* from outward dangers, ceremonies unite it against dangers from within. There is no power of a higher order, however, to enforce peace. Threat of a fight or of fission is constant, and only discussion and persuasion can smooth over tensions. When such negotiating involves two different groups, members from a third *uma* are often brought in to act as mediators between the two parties.

The way the Mentawaians view their non-human environment displays great similarity to their approach to social relations. With their simple technology, they do not attempt to control

nature, but to communicate with it. They depend on their physical environment just as an *uma* depends on its neighbours; when they ask something of nature, they also attempt to offer something in return. This may be seen in the offerings made to important objects, when they are manufactured or required for use, in the prior requests for the objects' permission and in the careful treatment they receive. It is further apparent in the terms of numerous taboos. During completion of a particular task, people abstain from certain other actions; in this way they indicate to the objects involved how important the activity is, and how highly the co-operation of the objects is valued. Not observing these rules would jeopardize the success of that task, or even endanger the health of the persons concerned (cf. Schefold 1976).

Underlying such communication are ideas about the soul. Like man, animals, plants, objects, phenomena, in short, everything conceivable possesses a soul (*simagere*). These souls can be addressed and are capable of entering into communication with each other. As in social organization, there is no power of a higher order: here, too, there is no supreme authority for man to appeal to; he himself has to contact the souls he wants to communicate with whenever communication is necessary, lest his actions upset good relations. Nevertheless, tensions arise all the time. Man neglects rules of behaviour and then experiences the wrath of his offended "partner": an attempt to accomplish something goes wrong, or the result of an action is injury to oneself or illness. The concept of *bajou* is instrumental in this process. *Bajou* is an impersonal force, emanating from all things with a soul; offending a soul can activate its *bajou* dangerously. In order to restore harmony and to bring an action to its successful end, or, alternatively, to recover health, the offended soul must be placated and its *bajou* "cooled down" (*nenei*). As in social interaction, mediators (*gaut*) are employed, particularly certain sacred plants whose souls can be invoked by man to appease the wrathful partner.

Thus, social conduct, human contact with the natural environment and religious concepts all reveal a common structure. Man inhabits a world of equal partners, whether these be natural or supernatural. He cannot impose his will on them; he must try to co-exist with them in equilibrium and on good terms. Co-existence is achieved through incessant communication and reciprocity.

The taboo against "excessive wonderment" at unfamiliar things

is clearly symbolic of this attitude. Neither persons nor objects should be approached too closely without preparation; one should not come upon them suddenly, otherwise the precarious equilibrium will be endangered. Thus the incident of my immoderate admiration for the *uma* signified more than mere transgression of a specific rule of behaviour regarding houses. The requirement that newcomers should behave inconspicuously in order to allow the souls of house and person time to grow accustomed to each other can be understood only if it is seen in the context of the partner-relations which man must maintain with all that surrounds him. My concrete, incorrect behaviour, however, had an immediate activating effect: the *uma* itself, partner in my action, punished my misconduct.

In Mentawai it is the notion that all phenomena have a soul that makes this effect understandable. The immobile house lives through its soul, through its soul anger is directed at the person who behaves wrongly, and via its soul the house must be placated again if someone whom it has made ill is to be restored to health. During the healing ceremony, therefore, the primary task is to ward off the *bajou* which affected the patient and to "cool down" both house and patient; in other words, the cure is a reconciliation of the partners. Thus some bits of the house (scraps from the leafy roof, splinters from the poles etc.) are placed in a dish together with some water and, with the help of many mediators, are ritually addressed. The mediators are "instrumental symbols" as Turner defines the term (1967:32); through their shape, substance, place of origin and other characteristics they are associated with particular human experiences and are able to promote a corresponding effect. Among the mediator-leaves set in the dish, for example, there are some from a plant known as "the cool one" (*aileleppet*) because it grows in cool marshy hollows, and an incantation is recited to them in order that they shall cool down the house and the patient. The plant's soul now makes contact with the house's soul, embodied by scraps in the dish, and invites it to allow its wrath to cool off. Many additional mediating plants, having analogous characteristics are brought into play, actions are mimed to further clarify for these mediators the meaning of the words addressed to them, and finally, the sick person is rubbed with the contents of the dish and so brought into communication with the cooled-down house.<sup>3</sup>

It is the Mentawaians' conception of the soul, then, which explains the negative effect of "excessive wonderment". The taboo

on such behaviour is a symbolic expression of the basic values of balance and harmony which man must observe in all his activities. Of course these values as such are not restricted to Mentawai. It is well known that they are also fundamental to more complex Indonesian societies, such as Java. There, however, they are related to the notion that man has to conform to a static cosmic hierarchy (cf. Mulder 1978:13-18). In Mentawai, the concept of harmony is different. It is informed by an egalitarian attitude according to which all phenomena are partners and require individual consideration and reciprocation. In our example, this became apparent in the nature of the force that was aroused as the result of improper behaviour: the soul of the house itself punished the violation of the taboo. In this way analysis of forces behind the postulated efficacy contributes to a valid understanding of the symbolism of "excessive wonderment".

## 2. *The milk complex of the Khmir in Tunisia*

I have shown elsewhere (Schefold 1979:94 and 1982) that in the case of Mentawai there exists yet another way of conceiving of the forces that underlie postulated efficacy, again directly connected to the meaning of the particular symbolic action. I shall not repeat this example here but instead describe an analogous case drawn from the Khmir in North Africa. The Khmir, among whom I did fieldwork with students during the spring months of 1974-1976, inhabit densely wooded hillsides in north-west Tunisia — the Khroumirie. They speak a dialect of Arabic. Until the beginning of French colonization towards the close of the last century, they led a relatively independent existence. They dwell in villages of about two hundred inhabitants, who ideally comprise one endogamous patrilinear descent group (*firqa*). Sons are expected to remain resident with their parents, even after marriage, in a joint household. Not until their own sons have matured and attained marriageable age does it really meet with approval for second generation men to detach themselves from the parental household and set up a new one together with their own sons.

Stock-breeding, especially of goats, and cultivation are the principal occupations of the Khmir. In name they are Muslims, but their folk religion deviates markedly from official Islam. Each village worships its own saint, its "marabout", who is said to have arrived there in half-mythical times, usually from



Morocco. His grave lies in the village. In his honour there are regular festivities to procure his influence, rich in blessings, his *baraka*. On these occasions he is often addressed as "Grandfather".

In recent years the economic situation of the Khmir has become increasingly difficult. One of our research topics was concerned with the possibility of improving these conditions by combining stock-breeding with dairy-farming, for at present the Khmir produce milk only for personal consumption. The prospect of commercializing milk production, however, encountered stiff emotional resistance from the start. People said that their animals would not give milk any longer if the milk was for sale. They argued that the milk was a gift from the marabout, and if the Khmir were to sell it, the marabout would withhold his blessing and the udders of their animals would shrivel up. Yet, the Khmir see nothing objectionable in selling grain, which likewise falls under the marabout's blessing. What accounts then for the special attitude to milk? Again the behaviour can be understood only if we make an attempt to recognize the symbolic meaning of what is involved.<sup>4</sup>

In one of the villages lived a young man whose mother had not had enough milk to breast-feed him. He had been nursed by a woman from another household, sharing the breast with that woman's daughter, who was born at the same time. The girl's relation to the boy was that of a classificatory father's brother's daughter, a kinship tie considered preferential among the Khmir for marriage — as it is throughout the Arab world. In this case, nonetheless, people asserted that marriage between the pair was out of the question for they had drunk the same milk and were now like brother and sister.

In the same village a student observed a curious incident. He was in the fields with a group of people when suddenly a large scorpion was discovered. Everybody recoiled with fear, except one man who calmly bent over and picked the creature up in his hand. The scorpion did him no harm. People explained why: shortly after his birth his mother had found a scorpion in the house; she let a few drops of milk from her breast fall on it, which the scorpion drank. Since then the boy and scorpions were like brothers.

Among the constituent family units of each larger household, everything is shared. The milk of goats, sheep and cows is mixed and churned; buttermilk and butter are consumed by all. With other households in the village a patrilinear kinship relation

obtains. People of different households may lead separate lives, but ties remain; a whole system of reciprocal gifts and services which are called *mziaa* emphasizes and guarantees solidarity (cf. Jongmans 1968b). It is regarded as one of the most important *mziaa* occasionally to make a gift of milk to one another (Creyghton 1969:25). In this context, however, another rule governing behaviour obtains. This became apparent when a student took a trip in the company of two men, both of whom had brought along a bottle with milk. One bottle was almost empty; what remained was only enough to fill half a mug. The student was going to pour milk from the other bottle to fill his mug further but the men prevented him from doing this: the milk came from another household with a relationship of its own with the marabout. *Within* a household milk from various animals may be mixed together, but it is improper to mingle the milk from *separate* households.

The marabout, the “grandfather”, is the guardian of the social order. He will punish offences against one’s parents and he will also punish those who offend and insult him. The Khmir trace further instances of illness and misfortune back to careless dealings with evil spirits (*Jnoun*) or to sorcery or witchcraft. Sorcery and witchcraft are regarded as the expression of existing or anticipated tensions within the social order. Blame for either is usually laid at the door of women who have married into the family, for men enjoy posing as custodians of the social order and their conflicts may not be openly expressed. Mutual recriminations, in the aftermath of such conjectured female magic, may culminate in the event most contradictory to Khmir ideals: brothers falling out with each other and separating prematurely. The tensions which erupt in such separations are then frequently given expression by accusing sisters-in-law of practising a form of sorcery which the Khmir regard as the most sinister of all: the *jleb*. The *jleb* is directed at the livestock of the other household and dries up their animals’ udders (cf. Creyghton 1969:30, 60ff., 47).

This set of facts brings us close to understanding what milk means for the Khmir. A mother’s milk nourishes new life, it is vital to the succession of generations. Based on this notion, milk has become a social symbol among the Khmir. A woman’s milk has the power to eliminate social differences. Those who drink from the same milk become brothers and sisters. The milk of domestic animals possesses analogous symbolic significance. Milk within the household constitutes a single entity; the yield from

different animals may be mixed together and is shared among all family members. A household cannot increase in size indefinitely, however: although brothers should be together, at a certain point separation is necessary and therefore acceptable. As a sign of that separation, milk from different households should not be mixed. It retains its unifying power nonetheless and becomes as a *mziaa*-gift a particularly meaningful image of solidarity. The most sensitive phase of the social process is the moment brothers part. If this takes place prematurely or in an atmosphere of acute tension, the women are held to blame. They may be accused of performing a particular kind of sorcery which is again connected with milk: the sorcery causes the udders of the livestock to dry up.

The milk of domestic animals is considered to be a gift from the marabout. Given the circumstances of the Khmir, the donative character of milk is, in fact, quite intelligible. Animals are raised basically for meat, some for home consumption but primarily for sale. The fact that during the rainy season some animals also produce milk, falls so to speak from heaven — it is a token of a special blessing. This indeed may also contribute to an explanation of why the Khmir will bring grain to market, but not milk. The marabout's blessing rests on the crops too, but here the people themselves have contributed far more to the yield with their ploughing, sowing, harvesting and threshing. Thus the human "input" into grain is of a different magnitude from that put into milk. "The blessing on grain is closer to man than the blessing on milk", a Khmir said. Of course there would also be ways to increase the human "input" into milk if one wanted to stimulate the Khmir to sell it. When we discussed the idea of selling cheese manufactured at home, all Khmir interviewed did in fact respond positively. The blessing on cheese apparently would closely resemble that on corn — an example of how crucial it is when drawing up development projects to become familiar with local ways of thinking.

It now becomes self-evident that this direct gift from the marabout may not be sold. Inwardly, within the common descent group, sale of milk would amount to an act which essentially contradicts the symbolic unity of the group. Outwardly, with other groups, no such normative bond exists. Giving milk away to outsiders is permitted, it stresses friendly relations. To *sell* milk to outsiders, however, would be tantamount to doing private business with the very gift from the marabout which symbolizes the community within his domain. Inwardly or out-

wardly, selling would constitute an offence against the established order which its guardian will punish by withdrawing its symbol.

In this example, then, unlike the one from Mentawai, it is not the object of the action itself which causes the postulated effect. It is not the milk that punishes improper behaviour, but the figure installed at a higher level in the order which is symbolized in rules concerning the use of milk. The marabout is responsible for the postulated effect of the symbolic offence.

Again the power that accounts for the efficacy of the behaviour is specifically interrelated with the meaning of the symbol. This becomes evident in considering the social situation of the Khmir. The village community of the Khmir is full of inner tensions. It is exceptional for villagers to perform work in close co-operation or to tackle a social problem together. If, for example, old people have to go begging, only their next of kin are reproached, but not the entire village, even if those who would have been best able to help are fellow-villagers rather than the immediate family. Kinship bonds by themselves are too tenuous to support the weight of a collective sense of responsibility and the population is too numerous for decision-making by consensus to operate. On the other hand, the Khmir manage to secure solidarity without the institution of powerful political leadership; they have only a council of the most influential men (*kebir douar*) who stimulate decisions through their personal prestige. Yet, the way we have interpreted the symbolic significance of milk suggests that people evidently consider the oneness of their village as a central value. This interpretation is confirmed by the source of the postulated efficacy of behaviour with milk. Here, indeed, in the religious sphere, we find that central uniting power which is absent in the political structure: the marabout.

### 3. *The Evil Eye*

How internally fragmented the Khmir village really is can be demonstrated by the significance of yet another symbol, one which can serve at the same time to illustrate a third possible way of conceiving the source of the efficacy of symbols: the notion of the *ain* (literally: eye), the Evil Eye. The *ain* constitutes a kind of negative counterpart to the symbolic implications of milk.

The Khmir say that there are vague external marks which distinguish those who have the Evil Eye: continuous eyebrows,

for example. Only through the effect itself, however, can the identity of the one who has the *ain* be established. If a person looking at a spectacular animate or inanimate<sup>5</sup> phenomenon uses words of praise and shortly afterwards the object of his admiration falls ill, withers away, cracks to pieces or suffers any other kind of damage, people assume that the person who expressed the praise has “done injury with the eye” (*jeraha bel ain*). One cannot blame a person for having the Evil Eye. Anybody can have this predisposition; he should then simply guard against uttering careless words of praise, for “the *ain* runs after the word like a child after its mother”. If he should on occasion forget himself, he may neutralize his own effect by quickly plucking a hair from his eyebrow and tossing it away, not unlike “touching wood” in western society. It is not taken as an insult when someone who has been paying extravagant praise is requested, as a precaution, to pull a hair from his eyebrow. Clearly, the *ain* offers a possible way of explaining the unexpected and gratuitous decline of living beings or things that had appeared particularly strong.<sup>6</sup> For the Khmir, a consequence of the *ain* is embodied in the rule that one should avoid showing off the possession of anything out of the ordinary.

This rule is even more pertinent because of a large category of persons among whom the *ain* acquires an added dimension: those with envy in their hearts. Everyone is jealous, but he whose “head cannot control his heart” may become asocial through the *ain*. With evil intentions, he may praise a neighbour’s flourishing progeny and not long afterwards one of the neighbour’s children falls ill. There is no proof against him, since he has not practised sorcery with visible means (as with the aforementioned *jleb*). Someone who stands accused will rest his defence on coincidence; he may even have mumbled his words of praise in secret so that those pointing to him will be left without any concrete evidence. The only possible sanction is to avoid keeping company with the suspect.

Thus far the Khmir’s concept of the Evil Eye conforms closely to general beliefs wherever the phenomenon occurs (cf. Maloney 1976:vii). In what follows I will describe certain accompanying ideas which distinguish the symbolic significance of the *ain* for the Khmir in particular. These ideas come into play when villagers with more than average material prosperity are endangered by the *ain*.

The Khmir never tire of asserting that all people in a village are equal, like brothers, and that no one may enrich himself at the

cost of others. Indeed they know no hereditary hierarchy. In theory everyone who grows up in the village enjoys equal opportunity. At the same time however, the Khmir attach great importance to individual achievement. He who attains prosperity is free and independent (*horr*); he does not have to take orders from anybody and so fulfils one of the ideals of this proud people. The Khmir's ancient tribal tradition reveals itself in the appreciation of wealth. They do not feel themselves to be oppressed peasants who must hand over to their lords everything they do not need for their immediate survival and among whom anyone who has accumulated some wealth is suspected of having deprived his neighbours of their share. Instead they see everywhere in their surroundings unexploited potential: a vigorous person, for example, can clear woodland and extend his holdings.<sup>7</sup>

Discussion of the significance of milk, however, has shown that special value is at the same time placed on solidarity among the inhabitants of a village. Pursuit of prosperity is regarded as something positive, but it should not lead to egoistic behaviour and isolating oneself from the others. Jongmans (1968b) has shown that in traditional Khmir ideology it is not wealth in its own right which confers honour and prestige (*horma*) but that wealth makes it possible for a man to acquire honour and prestige by granting his poorer neighbours substantial aid in the form of a *mziaa*-gift (see p. 132), a gift which they can later reciprocate in the form of non-material services. The more such *mziaa* relations a person of means maintains, the more prestige he enjoys.<sup>8</sup>

The Khmir state explicitly that a man is by no means expected to forfeit his position of material advantage through such *mziaa* relations. Showering someone with excessive *mziaa*-gifts is indeed suspect, for it might indicate that the donor wants to reduce the recipient to total dependence. All that is required is for someone prosperous to display sufficient generosity to establish his solidarity. In this way he removes the sting from the feeling of envy which would otherwise invariably arise among poorer fellow-villagers. For in a culture where the notion of fundamental equality of position for all is coupled with the approval of individual achievement, it is obvious that those who lag behind will not accept the advancement of the others as an expression of God's will but rather will look with envy upon everything they have to praise belonging to another. This envious gaze is symbolized by the Evil Eye.

The efficacious force of this variant of the *ain* lies in the fact

that it attacks the value of anything extraordinary that an envious bearer of the Evil Eye has felt compelled to praise. And in this context, the full meaning becomes clear of a Khmir saying: “*Mziaa* shields against the *ain*’s assault”. Antisocial prosperity is consumed by the envious gaze but a prosperous person who also considers the general welfare enjoys a certain measure of security. In the sense of the “objective efficacy” described at the outset of this article, the *ain*, despite its destructive influence, clearly has an order-consolidating function. It represents the penalizing counterpart to *mziaa*: in negative instances the *ain* and in positive instances *mziaa* tone down the inner contradiction of an ideology which attaches value to fundamental equality for all villagers as well as to the struggle for individual achievement. However, for the Khmir’s evaluation of any concrete instance of injury inflicted by the Evil Eye, the symbol’s objective function has minimal influence. Where the *ain* allies itself with an envious heart, it poses a threat to anyone favoured in some way by fortune (as in the example of a family with many children). And this eery aspect also colours the appraisal of cases under discussion here in which the person struck by the Evil Eye actually deserved it by Khmir standards. This general attitude regarding the *ain* has not changed even in the contemporary situation of the Khmir in which the inner tension in their ideology has clearly become intensified. Jongmans (1968b) has pointed out that the continuing spread of impoverishment makes it more and more difficult for the few remaining persons of wealth to satisfy the *mziaa* expectations of the rest. As a consequence of this development, a tendency is becoming apparent to accord prestige (*horma*) also to people who “close their hands” and don’t give *mziaa*. On the other hand, the Khmir claim that in recent years there has been a considerable increase in the frequency of injuries brought about by the *ain*. Here a new discrepancy within the traditional symbolical system becomes apparent as a consequence of economic changes: the *ain* continues to strike people who fail to fulfil their *mziaa* obligations, while for conferring prestige (*horma*), *mziaa* seems to be declining in significance. This development suggests a controversial reinterpretation of symbols of long standing which, as an expression of new social tensions still latent, deserves closer investigation.

We have seen that the *ain* produces an effect only when it has been activated. Parallel with the house in the case of “excessive wonderment” or with the milk, the Evil Eye works only if someone gazes and speaks words of praise. The source of the

effectiveness of the action this time does however not reside in the symbol itself, as in the first example, or in a superimposed higher power, as in the second one. Here the force emanates from certain individuals born with the symbol. Such a person can suppress his power or, after releasing it, can neutralize its effect. If he does not control his heart, however, but allows envy to sway him, he may also make use of his attribute *at will* to the detriment of others.

Envy as such is a universal phenomenon (cf. Foster 1972). Groups showing a discrepancy between inborn status equality and local solidarity on the one hand, and approval of personal achievement on the other, can be found everywhere, too. On Mentawai, for example, each man strives to own as many pigs as possible, for they are a means to the end of honour and prestige. Nonetheless, any form of witchcraft like the Evil Eye is absent. Asocial behaviour is punished either in social terms with isolation (after fission of the *uma*), or, in some instances, with illness, precipitated by non-human supernatural forces. What is then so special about the circumstances of the Khmir that among them feelings of envy become such a personal affair that some "cannot any longer curb their hearts" and may harm others with the Evil Eye? Once again the symbol's significance can be elucidated by the particular source of its efficacy.

In a general survey of the manifestations of the Evil Eye, Gorrison and Arensberg (in Maloney 1976:290) establish that this symbol, originally radiating out from the ancient Mediterranean, is found nowadays almost exclusively in peasant societies characterized by patronage; they associate the symbol therefore with such stratification and with Foster's "image of limited good". In itself it is perfectly plausible that the notion of an absolute limitation of resources under the control of social superiors can exacerbate envious feelings among fellow-villagers.<sup>9</sup> Our example from the Khmir has shown, however, that the combination of these two phenomena alone is insufficient to explain the strong individual response which is implicit in the activation of the Evil Eye. The Khmir neither feel that their resources are limited nor do they live, traditionally, in a typical patronage situation. The crucial difference between their situation and that of people like the Sakuddei on Mentawai seems to me to lie in the target of the Evil Eye, i.e. in the nature of what is possessed. Mentawaians know no specialization of crafts. Therefore the wealth accumulated by a successful individual will primarily consist of a more than average amount of subsistence



goods. Upkeep of this property demands increased labour: he who owns more pigs has to feed more pigs. There are limits, however, to one's own ability to consume and no one would be likely to exert himself to own more than was considered necessary for subsistence unless certain goods acquired value in addition to their use value: through sharing of these goods, one gains prestige. On Mentawai as in the Khroumirie, property confers honour and prestige only once others in the group receive some of it. A man who is able to slaughter many pigs and to host major feasts is praised everywhere. The owner of many pigs who does not organize festivities is not merely asocial, but foolish as well: he has exerted himself to no avail because he deprives himself of the only chance a man has to employ his goods in a sensible way. Others feel wronged and grow annoyed with him. The threat of isolation, however, suffices on the whole to remind him of his own interest; no one finds himself in the position of having to look enviously at wealth where wealth which is not shared has no sense.<sup>10</sup>

In the more complex societies where the Evil Eye occurs, the situation is different. The Khmir, too, consider it worth the effort to amass goods; among them, too, goods have a use value and an added value in the form of the prestige which wealth confers. Here, however, they also have an exchange-value. The goods of one man may be traded for the specialized products of another in order to make life easier. Since no power structures yet exist to impel people to behave "socially" by exacting special levies, a person who thinks exclusively in terms of his own interest may even be tempted to forgo the prestige potential of wealth and instead to realize only the exchange value of his property. Such an attitude is opposed to communal feelings which should assure one's less successful fellows a share in prosperity, but, in contrast to the situation on Mentawai, this attitude is not devoid of sense. Here the danger of selfish exploitation of property to the disadvantage of others constitutes a real possibility. It is in connection with this particular situation that here the efficacy of the symbol stems from the person who carries it. The Evil Eye represents a personal conflict; it arises from the envy of those members of the group deprived of a full share in life. They consume by their glances the property, a share of which they have been denied by the selfishness of another. Of course it would be more desirable if the exhortation to act "socially" suggested by the existence of the symbol were sufficient, without activation: "*mziaa* shields against the *ain*'s assault".<sup>11</sup>

The symbols of a culture refer to cognitive values underlying the order in which human experiences are organized. In the conceptions about the religious powers linked with symbolic behaviour, we have found a key to the recognition of the meaning of such behaviour, and consequently also to a better understanding of the order itself. The episode of "excessive wonderment" on Mentawai illustrated how the offended *uma* could itself exact a penalty for misbehaviour and that this fact elucidated the symbolic content of the rule which had been violated: here the *uma* represented the equal "partner" which every phenomenon in the environment constitutes for the Mentawaians, and with which they must strive to establish harmonious relations in all contacts. The significance of milk among the Khmir as a symbol of a social order in which kinship co-operation is demanded but not enforceable, became evident when we traced its source of efficacy back to the superimposed guardian figure in whom Khmir order is rooted: the marabout or "Grandfather", who punishes asocial use of milk. In our analysis of the Evil Eye, the power exercised by certain envious individuals born with the *ain* pointed towards the internal tensions of a system in which value is accorded to mutual help and to personal achievement equally and in which goods have an exchange-value. Thus the three different sources of postulated efficacy — a power residing in the involved symbol itself, a superimposed guardian figure, or the supernatural force of an individual born with the symbol — appeared each to elucidate the values expressed in the symbolic ways of behaviour.

#### NOTES

- 1 To Dr. P. Geschiere, Prof. M. Schoffeleers, Prof. H.G. Schulte Nordholt and Prof. H. Tennekes, who read and commented on early drafts of this article, I wish to express my appreciation.
- 2 Fieldwork in Mentawai was funded by the Swiss National Foundation.
- 3 The soul concept of the Mentawaians gives a logical explanation of the magic power of instrumental symbols. Recent literature on this topic remains somewhat vague. Turner, in his penetrating analysis of Ndembu symbolism, mentions simply "powers" which can be "awakened" in the symbols to make them "magically efficacious", without any further specification (1969:23ff.; 43). In "Purity and Danger" (1970:109), Douglas seems to deny the very problem when she writes: "The fact that [an Azande] addresses the poison oracle in words does not imply any confusion whatever in his mind between things and persons. It merely means that he is not striving for intellectual consistency and that in this field symbolic action seems appropriate." Leach (1976:29f.) reduces

belief in magical efficacy to a basic “fallacy”: the common characteristic of magical acts is a blurring of the difference between metonymy and metaphor, with the spell functioning as the ambivalent link. Van Baal (1971:258ff.) comes closer to the religious dimension. He, too, places emphasis on the spell which is to activate the power of an instrumental symbol. He regards the magic formula as the result of attempts, answered in revelations through dreams or visions, to discover the right manner and form in which to address the objects concerned. That the objects indeed can be appealed to is, however, taken for granted; it is made possible by a “mysterious surplus” of things. Yet just as with the first three authors mentioned above, one is left with the question whether indeed the participants have not developed some kind of “consistent” images to explain and characterize this “surplus”.

- 4 For the examples which accompany the following argumentation, I am indebted to Mr. F. Duim and Mr. P. Doornbos.
- 5 For an opposite view cf. Teitelbaum in Maloney 1976:64.
- 6 A further possibility of detection was described to me as very risky: the *meddeb* (Koran instructor) may crack open a raw egg and see inside whether his client has been harmed by the Eye. If his finding is positive, he may then pierce the yolk, upon which the possessor of the *ain* goes blind. The person so blinded, however, might also be someone from the intimate surroundings who has cast the *ain* with no evil intention.
- 7 That this situation hardly ever arises any more has not yet had any appreciable effect on the ideology.
- 8 Another aspect of the *mziaa*-gifts which cannot be further explored here consists in the way they may represent a sort of insurance, guaranteeing that when one stumbles into misfortune, others will provide assistance (cf. Bijleveld 1975). The text should demonstrate that this aspect of *mziaa* in itself does not suffice to explain the phenomenon.
- 9 Feelings of envy towards those in higher places may lose their sting through “encapsulation” within a hereditary hierarchical class status which lies beyond one’s own reach, as Foster (1972:185; cf. also Pocock 1973:28) has clearly shown. Indeed, as is evident in Maloney’s *Reader* (1976), the Evil Eye strikes mainly one’s equals, that is people against whom one can measure one’s own lot.
- 10 There are some exceptions to this general rule, such as the possibility of acquiring trade goods, but compared to the situation of the Khmir they are of marginal significance.
- 11 In the preceding paragraphs I have confined myself to discussing the Evil Eye exercised against property. It does not seem to me unlikely that other forms of applying the *ain* are derivative from this one. The culture area in which the practice occurs and the fact that in a society such as Mentawai corresponding notions are missing, even for the non-proprietary spheres where the *ain* can make itself felt, e.g. abundance of children, could be an argument in favour of such a view.

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J.D.M. PLATENKAMP

## "THE COD AND THE CORN DON'T MIX"

This article presents a system of animal classification, based on a taboo on animal names in a Scottish fishing community. It concerns the prohibition on uttering a specific set of words in certain circumstances, and certain forms of name alteration.<sup>1</sup>

The community has about 1600 inhabitants, circa 280 of whom are considered by non-fisherpeople to belong to the fishing group. In contrast to most of the other fishing villages along this coast the community has a heterogeneous population in terms of its professional activity.

Members of the fishing group consciously divide the population into three main categories: "fishermen", "farmers" and "townsmen". It is not just the professional activity, however, that functions as the distinguishing criterion but the kind of profession combined with the place of residence, since the "townsmen" represent a conglomerate of different professions; besides that, some farming families that live within the village territorium, nevertheless are not considered to belong to the "townsmen". Furthermore it is important to notice that members of the fishing families who are not involved in fishing activities still consider themselves as fisherpeople and are classified that way by the non-fisherpeople in the community. This points to the subcultural character of the fisherpeople as a group.<sup>2</sup> In addition to that, fishermen are credited by non-fisherpeople with pronounced qualities, especially concerning cognition: "Fishermen think in terms of the sea"; "Fishermen seek the more emotional forms of faith" (than the ones expressed in the institutionalised churches); "Fishermen's children are less intelligent".

Therefore the author thinks that the present analysis, although based upon data collected among the fisherpeople in one community, could be fruitfully applied to the fishergroups living elsewhere along this coast. In this connection the point should be stressed that in the author's opinion it is of minor importance

whether or not attention to the prohibition rules is still being paid on all vessels. A quantification in this sense would not add any information relevant to the structural analysis we have in mind (cf. Leach 1976:5ff.).

The following words are subject to a *taboo*, i.e. a prohibition on their utterance on board a fishing vessel at sea: pig, rabbit, cat, cow and salmon.<sup>3</sup> The taboo on the word "salmon" is taken into account on board of ships that do not fish for salmon only.

A first binary division emerges from the situational condition: the taboo is only operative at sea. All informants definitely stated that on land the words can be uttered without any restriction. This leads us to the conclusion that to fishermen the concepts SEA versus LAND constitute the frames of reference in which certain elements are classified: these concepts are mutually exclusive categories. Therefore we introduce as fundamental relation the opposition between the two categories SEA and LAND:

*Diagram 1.* SEA  $\longleftrightarrow$  LAND

The concept SEA is not equivalent to the concept "water". Given the opposition between SEA and LAND, the element freshwater could hardly be classified in the category SEA; thus freshwater has to be ordered according to its topographical occurrence: as LAND. Likewise activities connected with freshwater, like sports fishing for salmon and trout, are associated with the concept LAND, the importance of which will be discussed below.

The words "pig", "rabbit", "cat", "cow" and "salmon" have in common their reference to animal species. Within the English cognitive system animals are classified in three categories, according to the element in which they move:

1. Fish: water.
2. Birds: air.
3. Beasts: land.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to the category Fish we assume again that the restriction derived from the opposition between SEA and LAND classifies fish in the sea. Four terms of the series can easily be ordered in one category: pig, rabbit, cat and cow belong to the category "beasts". Moreover, the group "beasts" is exclusively associated with the element Land. Land, however, also represents one of the terms of the oppositional relation between SEA and LAND.

Thus four words, the utterance of which is prohibited at sea, derive their meaning from their classification in the category LAND. The salmon, however, cannot be ordered in one of these categories exclusively. This fish swims both in salt water, i.e. the sea, and freshwater, i.e. on land. We will return to this problem below.

The fundamental opposition between SEA and LAND is being confirmed by the selection of the tabooed words. The question arises why these four words are selected, and not more and/or different terms.<sup>5</sup> A further accentuation of the associations that determine the semantic content of the categories, may provide an answer.

In the introduction it was mentioned that members of the local population who don't belong to the fishergroup, were distinguished by the latter in two groups:

"townsmen": living in the same village, and not involved in farming;

"farmers": most living in the near surroundings of the village and involved in farming.

A retired fisherman stated that in the past there was a strict division between townspeople and fishermen; there were no contacts between them. Between farmers and fishermen there was also a distinction, but the similarities were significant. These similarities were described by him in referring to the so-called "crofters": villagers working both as small farmer and fisherman, which lasted until late 19th century, and on occasion even in the period 1920-1949.

However, when informants were confronted with farming as an alternative economic activity (in case of a not quite hypothetical decrease in income in fisheries), this was rejected as being completely unacceptable. At a first glance this seems to be contradictory information. On the one hand it is stated that the distinction between fishermen and townsmen was, at least in the past, a more articulated one than the one between fishermen and farmers. On the other hand farming as alternative economic activity is evaluated in an extremely negative way.

A confrontation of this information, however, with the basic opposition between SEA and LAND, and an attempt to classify the groups in question in these categories, reveals the following. The statement: "the similarities between fishermen and farmers are greater" means that, apart from the nature of these similarities, the differences between farmers and fishermen are less



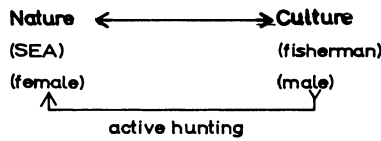




Culture. The relationship between the natural sea, including the wild fish, and the cultural fisherman is oppositional.

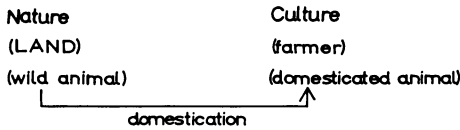
Moreover, we have seen that SEA has a female association attached to it. The cultural fisherman at sea is a male per definition; up to the present day women are not allowed on board the fishing boat. These qualities can be demonstrated in the following way:

Diagram 4.



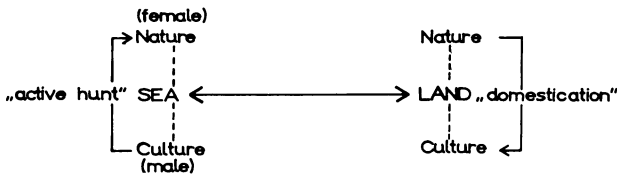
The relationship which the farmer, however, maintains with animals means domestication: those animals which are economically exploited by the farmer are considered as “domesticated animals”; whereas by fishermen “fish” is classified as being of Nature, domesticated animals can only be classified as Culture. The economic relationship between farmer and land is therefore the inverse of the one between fisherman and sea:

Diagram 5.



When we correlate the diagrams 4 and 5:

Diagram 6.



In this diagram the category Culture/SEA represents the male fisherman, hunting for the wild fish at sea. From this representation the category derives its exclusive male association. A traditional activity of the fisherman’s wife, however, is exclusively located on land: curing and selling (“cadging”) the fish. This traditional role can be considered to complement that of the

male fisherman in socio-economic terms, but in structural terms it is an oppositional one.

When we classify the curing of the fish by the fisherwife (i.e. its transformation from the natural to the cultural condition) in the Culture/LAND category, we notice that the opposition male versus female is a relation analogous to the opposition SEA versus LAND, where it concerns both cultural categories. Distinguished from this relation there is another opposition male versus female: the cultural fisherman versus the natural female sea.

The content of the Culture/LAND category is a more complex one, however. Let us recall the economic activities as practised at sea and on land. The relation between cultural fisherman and natural sea is realized by active hunting and takes place at sea exclusively. The curing of the fish from its natural to a cultural condition transforms it not only from nature to culture, but also from SEA to LAND, and thus becomes classified in the Culture/LAND category.

The relation between farmer and land is an inversion of the sea-hunt, in that barnyard animals are already domesticated and thus also classified in the Culture/LAND category. Furthermore we saw that there is a female association attached to this category. Now the verbal taboo on especially the words "rabbit" and "cat" becomes clear. They represent the elements among the wild animals which are transformed from nature to culture in a way that does not correspond with the transformation of the wild, raw fish. Furthermore they are associated with strong female sexual connotations and thus conflicting at sea with the pre-eminent natural female-ness: the sea itself.

The question has not been answered, however, whether male or female associations form the distinctive features that operate to discriminate among the different categories within the cognitive system. A further analysis of the transformation rules governing the system of taboo and name alteration, might provide an answer.

*Curing the fish: a colour code*

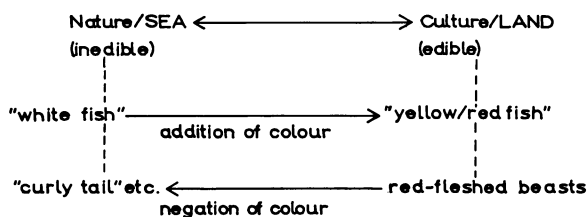
"Making them yellow" is the expression that refers to the process by which the raw white fish is smoked and preserved. Some of the products of these processes are similarly denoted.<sup>7</sup> When we equate the colour white with "absence of colour", we notice that, wherever a colour is mentioned, the colour is added with respect to the species in its natural raw condition. Expressed in

terms of diagram 6: the transition of elements from the Nature/SEA category to the Culture/LAND category is accompanied by an addition of colour.

Animals in the category “Beasts”, by domestication classified in the Culture/LAND category, are distinguished from the “wild” fish in the Nature/SEA category by the colour of the flesh: beasts are red-fleshed, fish is white-fleshed. The fact that the preservation of animals from the white-fleshed category, i.e. fish, and thus classifying them into the red-fleshed category, i.e. beasts, is accompanied by an addition of colour, points towards the distinctiveness of this colour aspect. Let us examine the relationship in its inverse form. We saw that two of the five selected taboo-words have strong female sexual connotations, while two others are associated pre-eminently with the farmer. What they all have in common, however, is their classification as “red-fleshed beast”. If on board a vessel one has to refer to one of the species and the actual name is subject to a taboo, one uses euphemisms. Three forms of these are known to the author: rabbit becomes “fluffy tail” or “the four-footed animal” and pig becomes “curly tail”.

On the one hand in these cases the species is nominated metonymically, referring to those parts which are considered inedible;<sup>8</sup> on the other hand the “red-fleshed”-associations are implicitly eliminated: the animal is made colourless. We present the name alteration of fish and animals in diagram form:

*Diagram 7.*



Given this information concerning the function of colours within this classificatory system we can now analyse the anomalous position of the salmon.

*“The Salmon Ain’t No Fish”*

This significant statement made by an informant indicates the anomaly, represented by this species in the classificatory system. In a twofold sense the salmon does not conform to the qualities

that define the "fish-in-the-sea" category.

First, the salmon does not swim in the sea exclusively: "the mature salmon lives in the sea. It is hatched however in fresh water and stays in the river for some time afterwards, returning there again for spawning . . . The young hatch in the spring in May, continuing to live in the same stream or river for one to five years . . . After this period they become silvery and drift down to the sea . . . Thanks to the abundant food, consisting mostly of herrings, fishes of the genus *Ammodytes*, molluscs etc. and their extraordinary voracity they grow very quickly in the sea . . . When hunting for food they undertake long journeys, often travelling as far as 150 miles in 16 days" (Holcik 1968:22).

When again we classify fresh water as LAND, the analogy with the activities of the fisherman on land and at sea is striking. But apart from the fact that the salmon cannot be classified as sea-fish exclusively, the ambiguity of its position is even more strengthened: contrary to all local species, the salmon is red-fleshed instead of white-fleshed. Besides that, the hunting relationship the fishermen maintain with the wild fish at sea cannot be applied to the salmon. The Scottish fisherman is not allowed to hunt for salmon, unless he has rented fishing grounds, i.e. a piece of coast on which nets are placed at right angles. In these nets the salmon gets entangled when it tries to find the mouth of the rivers, i.e. the land.<sup>9</sup>

The characteristics that determine the semantic content of the category Nature/SEA were, i.a.:

1. wild fish that is hunted for,
2. the species are white-fleshed.

Because these qualities cannot be applied to the salmon, this fish cannot be classified in this category in a logically consistent way. Neither, however, can the salmon be classified in one of the two Culture categories. At sea the fisherman represents the category SEA/Culture, while transformed fish and domesticated animals constitute the category LAND/Culture.

We have seen how the preservation of the fish and its transition from Nature/SEA to the Culture/LAND category was marked by an addition of colour. The inverse classification operates in the case of the salmon. On land the word may be uttered without any restriction, like the other four words. These four are classified in the Culture/LAND category, unlike the salmon, which must be placed in the Nature/LAND category.<sup>10</sup> At sea, however, the species contaminates the "wild/white"-associations of the Nature/SEA category and the word "salmon" is subject to *taboo*.

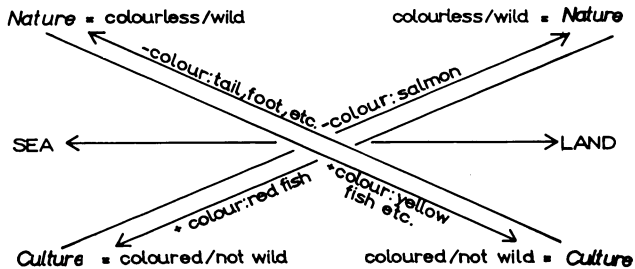
Again the discrimination between the LAND- and SEA-categories is confirmed.

At a different level, however, a contamination also needs to be prevented. This emerges when we examine the word that is being used to refer to the species at sea: “red fish”. When we apply the rules of colour alteration on this form we see that the salmon at sea is being transposed from the Nature/LAND category to the Culture/SEA category, articulating its domestication, i.e. its non-wildness. In this case we find a double inversion in the classification of the salmon:

- with regard to the white fish in denying its wildness;
- with regard to the beasts in emphasizing its red-fleshedness at sea.

Apparently the examples of name alteration given above are not coincidental. On the contrary, *they represent a system of transformation rules in which colour operates as the distinctive feature to distinguish Culture-categories from Nature-categories.* These transformation rules offer us the qualities of the category Culture/SEA as: red-coloured and not wild, and of the category Nature/LAND as: colourless and wild, as presented in diagram 8.

Diagram 8.



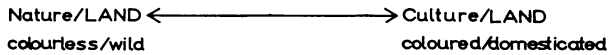
In speaking about the salmon one is confronted with another form of name alteration. Male and female salmon may easily be visually discriminated: “. . . the fishes of the first wave spawn in the autumn of the year of their arrival, while the second group, including most females, spend the winter in the river to spawn in spring . . . Many of them, particularly the males, die immediately after spawning” (Holcik 1968:22).

We have seen that the fisherman, speaking of “red fish” at sea, expresses a double opposition: to the white wild fish at sea and to the red domesticated beasts on land; furthermore the species is

thus classified in the Culture/SEA category. We also noted that an exclusively male association is attached to this category, i.e. the male cultural fisherman. This excludes the possibility of speaking of "female red fish" in referring to the female salmon. To avoid these inconsistencies two completely different words are introduced to denote male and female salmon: "cock" and "hen". These strange metaphors refer indirectly to the ambivalent position of the chicken in this classificatory system.

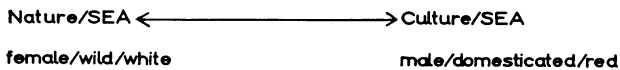
In this system the fisherman is able to define the relationship that the farmer maintains with the animals on land as domestication. All animals on land are thus in principle classified in two mutually exclusive categories:

*Diagram 9.*



The chicken, however, moves through both categories. As barnyard animal it belongs to the domesticated animals, as a species it is white-fleshed. On the same oppositional axis the salmon represents a perfect inversion: though being red-fleshed the salmon is not domesticated. The chicken lends its identity to male and female salmon, in that way expressing the ambivalent position that both species represent in the classificatory system. When we look at diagram 10:

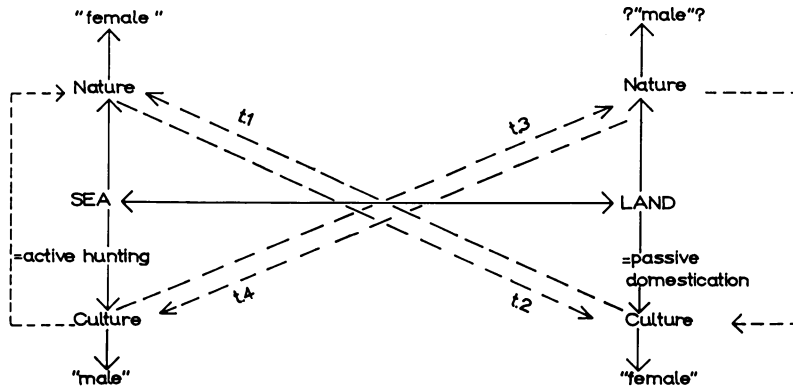
*Diagram 10.*



we find that male associations are attached to the salmon, since it is classified in the Culture/LAND category (possibly as a consequence of the above-mentioned analogy with the fisherman himself). To "hen" as opposed to "cock" white associations are given, being one of the characteristics of the female Nature/SEA category, in which "hen" as female salmon can be classified to avoid conflicting associations with the maleness of the Culture/SEA category.

To conclude this artikel I present diagram 11, in which the diagrams 4 to 10 are integrated.

Diagram 11.



*Nature*: colourless/white; wild/not domesticated

*Culture*: coloured/red; domesticated/not wild

*Transformation rules:*

t 1: curly tail/four-footed animal

t 3: salmon

Both transform from Culture to Nature by means of

- *taboo*
- implicit negation of colour

t 2: pig, rabbit, cat, cow

t 4: red fish

Both transform from Nature to Culture by means of

- addition of colour.

NOTES

- 1 The data form part of the information gathered by Mr. H. Molenaar and the author during a short fieldwork among the fisherpeople of Portsoy, on the North-east coast of Scotland in Spring 1975.
- 2 The marriage data in collected genealogies confirm this statement; on the one hand there is a strong endogamous tendency within the fishergroup, on the other hand there are many alliances between the members of different fishergroups along the coast. Marriages between "fishermen" and "townsmen" were seldom recorded, no more than those between "fishermen" and "farmers", the significance of which emerges from the local expression that formulates this rule and that is used as the title for this article: "the cod and the corn don't mix".
- 3 Also the word "minister" was mentioned in this context. It is not clear to the author, however, whether the word itself is subject to *taboo*, or if



it is merely the minister himself who is not allowed on board a fishing vessel. Besides, the word is obviously different from the animal names in the series, and therefore it is left unexamined.

- 4 E. Leach defines "beasts" as "four-legged mammals living on land" (Leach 1972:51).
- 5 It is quite likely that in the past more words were included in the tabooed series. In that case the series presented here should be regarded as left-overs, which emphasizes their importance.
- 6 One refers also to a fishing boat as "she"; a preliminary analysis, however, of the names of the boats, recorded in two neighbouring harbours, did not show an exclusively female connotation.
- 7 For example: "yellow fish", "red herring" etc.
- 8 Probably also an association of impurity is attached to these parts.
- 9 E. Leach confirms this anomaly in another respect: ". . . in England the only fish subject to killing and eating restrictions is the salmon".
- 10 It is remarkable in this context that the skipper of the boat fishing for salmon is called "foreman".

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A. DE RUIJTER

LÉVI-STRAUSS AND SYMBOLIC ANTHROPOLOGY<sup>1</sup>*Introduction*

Lévi-Strauss's contribution to the development of symbolic anthropology has been fundamental. From the very start he described culture as a system of codes by means of which man communicates. All human forms of social activity — it does not matter which: kinship, classification, mythology, food, art or fashion — are codes or systems of codes in a formal sense. Particularly his inaugural lecture delivered on the occasion of his acceptance of the Chair of Social Anthropology at the *Collège de France* again strongly emphasized this concept of culture. He then described cultural anthropology as a branch of semiology, the science of systems of signs, which implies that facts or objects as such do not exist. Facts are always connected with ideas and therefore they become signs (Lévi-Strauss 1973a:20). In this sense each material object is also a sign which acquires meaning through its place in a larger whole.

Lévi Strauss's definition of cultural anthropology as a branch of semiology is not his only contribution to a symbolic-anthropological perspective. We are also indebted to him for important substantial and methodological studies, notably *Le Totémisme Aujourd'hui* and *La Pensée Sauvage*, both of which appeared in 1962.<sup>2</sup> Lévi-Strauss's thesis of *Le Totémisme Aujourd'hui*, that the important role of natural species in classification is not due to the fact that they are "good to eat", which was the functionalist point of view, but to the fact that they are "good to think with", stimulated further research into the characteristics of these species.<sup>3</sup> It became clear that certain species of animals and plants, or combinations or oppositions of species, occur more often or more rarely in systems of classification than could be expected in the case of a random distribution. This fact has thrown new light on the manner in which people associate all kinds of elements from their environment with each other and

thus shape the world in which they live, as well as on the criteria which they use when they do this. Thus it appears that in symbolic classifications an important place is given to species, the characteristics of which can express all kinds of opposition and at the same time mediate between these oppositions or contain them. Perhaps this can again be seen as a confirmation of Lévi-Strauss's thesis that analogy and contrast form a dominant principle for creating order. This can also be formulated as the law of reciprocity and bipolarity.

His idea that these symbolic classifications are expressions of a *logique du concret*, propounded in *La Pensée Sauvage*, has also given rise to new insights. This *logique du concret* is not based on formal contrasts between abstractly defined entities, which characterize the logic of modern scientific thought, but uses polyvalent observable characteristics which are tied to concrete contexts. Lévi-Strauss demonstrates this convincingly in his treatment of totemism. Totemism is not a mystical tie between man and a natural species through which he becomes part of the animal and vegetable kingdom, but a *modus operandi* by means of which a society shapes its division into sub-groups with reference to similarities and differences between species and specimens which can be observed in nature. Man has learned to use the diversity of species and specimens as conceptual support for social differentiation (Lévi-Strauss 1962a:145). So, classifications are primarily codes to transmit information. Classified objects are not mere objects, they are messages (Lévi-Strauss 1962b:101).

Apart from indicating characteristics of classifications Lévi-Strauss has also given some general rules for the discovery of principles on which the ordering of symbolic data is based. First of all one has to keep in mind that objects and phenomena never have symbolic value of themselves, but only in so far as they are opposed to at least one other object or phenomenon.<sup>4</sup> Because they form parts of systems phenomena have to be explained by reference to their interrelations. Relations are the only object of analysis of science. The next point is that an element cannot be explained by reference to a single domain of interpretation, but to a set of codes. So any element always has several meanings. Which meaning is being activated at a certain point of time depends on the specific context of that particular moment. Moreover, not all elements of a culture, or even of a sub-classification, are related to each other through the same system of rules. Contained within the total system there are what one might call different local systems of logic (Lévi-Strauss

1962b:213). So it is necessary to discover how all these local systems of logic are related amongst themselves; in other words what their rules of transformation are. When this has been accomplished it becomes possible to describe the dominant regulating features of a culture, for this is synonymous with the total system of systems of classification, an *ordre des ordres*.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the most essential rule is to reduce the different orders or classifications to laws of thought, or in any case to attempt to find a link between these orders and laws of thought. Lévi-Strauss maintains that classifications are an expression of the human mind (Lévi-Strauss 1958b:81). This mind always obeys the same laws and therefore a similar basic pattern can be discovered everywhere. This postulated “cognitive unity of mankind” justifies the comparison of different cultures.

So, the basic problem for Lévi-Strauss is not “*what* do symbols mean”, but “*how* do they mean” (Sperber 1975:51). Through an analysis of collective representations – ideas and classifications common to the members of a group – Lévi-Strauss aims at revealing another and more important object than consciousness itself to the human conscience, namely the unconscious structure of thought: the whole of mechanisms and conditions which determines the working of consciousness (Lévi-Strauss 1971:563). Lévi-Strauss claims that man’s way of thinking can be known through an analysis of *la pensée*, consisting of systems of kinship, styles of art, systems of classifications, myths and so on. So, through the comparison of products of culture Lévi-Strauss tries to discover unconscious processes of thought.

Through this framework of explanation Lévi-Strauss offers symbolic anthropology the opportunity to liberate itself from the heritage of Durkheim in which culture – i.e. collective representations – is a derivative of social structure. It is evident that there is no room for sociological determinism from a point of view which sees culture as a symbolic system which contains all aspects of human existence.

Nevertheless Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism is not without certain problematic aspects. First of all I would like to mention the broad and not quite consistent character of his methodology and more specifically the difference between conscious and unconscious models, which has not been sufficiently elaborated by Lévi-Strauss. Next I draw attention to the danger that Lévi-Strauss’s increasing preoccupation with laws of thought leaves very little if any room for a central question in symbolic anthropology: what do symbols mean?

*Conscious and unconscious models*

The discovery of the structure of the human mind is the ultimate aim of Lévi-Strauss's examination of symbolic systems. This aim is connected with his conception of reality. According to Lévi-Strauss, one can reduce the empirical sociocultural institutions to a limited number of structures or arrangements: patterns of relationships between a number of determinants or variables. These arrangements are expressions of a still more limited number of principles of thought.

So, according to Lévi-Strauss, reality consists of different levels. Although he sometimes gives the impression that there are several levels (e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1973a:30), he mostly uses a dichotomy: the level of the appearance or concrete reality, consisting of empirical facts, and the level of the real reality, consisting of structures. These two levels may stand in a dialectical relationship in which the concrete reality remodels or hides the real reality. In science one has to uncover this hidden reality because this moulds and governs the empirical reality.<sup>6</sup>

To get to know this real reality one has to develop models which can be manipulated. Models are theoretical diagrams which the investigator uses to reorganize data which otherwise would not show their hidden properties (Lévi-Strauss 1973b:96). The models explain the observed phenomena by showing the relationship between these phenomena and invisible principles or determinants. These models are formalized representations of structures (Lévi-Strauss 1958c:311, see also Nutini 1970:84, note 2). In this sense Lévi-Strauss sees models as reality: "In my mind models are reality and I would even say that they are the only reality" (Lévi-Strauss 1953:115). Lévi-Strauss's purpose then, is to construct models which are not only useful aids but approximations of the real reality.

In short, in order to detect the structure of the human mind the investigator has to experiment so as to discover whether behind the truth of fact there is a truth of reason (Lévi-Strauss 1973a:31). As it is not possible to experiment with socio-cultural institutions the investigator has to construct models, which keep the characteristics of the institutions but which can be manipulated and controlled. Essentially, the structuralist method is mental experimenting guided by deductive reasoning by means of meta-empirical models. Hence, Lévi-Strauss's statement that it is the generalization which justifies the comparison and not the other way around (Lévi Strauss 1958a:28).

It is clear that models are fundamental to the process of explanation. For symbolic anthropology specifically his distinction between conscious and unconscious models is also relevant. When an anthropologist tries to describe a certain culture it may happen that his informants may or may not be conscious of the interrelationships which exist between certain phenomena. If the informants themselves have made a model which systematically interrelates a number of features of their culture, the anthropologist has to take into account not only the raw phenomena but also these "home-made" models, when he tries to construct a model of that culture (Lévi-Strauss 1958c:309). Conscious models – sometimes also called participants' models – exist as norms in the collective consciousness of a group of people. It is possible that different models of this kind co-exist at the same time. Generally speaking they are unsatisfactory models as they are not intended to explain phenomena but to perpetuate them (Lévi-Strauss 1958c:308). These conscious indigenous models are a screen behind which the real reality remains hidden. As a consequence "the more obvious structural organization is, the more difficult it becomes to reach it because of the inaccurate conscious models lying across the path which leads to it" (Lévi-Strauss 1958c:309). Yet the anthropologist cannot dispense with these models for two reasons. Firstly, these models might prove to be accurate or at least to provide some insight into the structure of the phenomena, because after all each culture has its own theoreticians, whose contributions deserve the same attention as those of the anthropologist. Secondly, even if the models are biased or erroneous the very bias and type of error are a part of the facts under study. It is even probable that they rank among the most significant data (Lévi-Strauss 1958c:309).

So, Lévi-Strauss's attitude towards conscious models is ambiguous. On the one hand, he is of the opinion that this type of models is troublesome and dangerous: they mask the real reality. On the other hand, he states that they are revealing, for precisely because of their distortions they can afford insight into the reality. In other words, conscious models may be a path along which the anthropologist penetrates towards the more fundamental unconscious model.<sup>7</sup>

The crucial question of course concerns the validity of this unconscious model. How and when can the anthropologist be sure that he has reached the level of the real reality? In my opinion, Lévi-Strauss passes by this problem too easily. He believes that the same basic rules determine the thought of the anthropologist as

well as that of the people he studies. Consequently, both categories of thought are the same in the final analysis. He forcefully propounds this point of view in the *Ouverture of Le Cru et le Cuit*: "For if the final aim of anthropology is to contribute to a better knowledge of objectified thought and its mechanisms, it is in the last resort immaterial whether in the book the thought processes of the South American Indians take place through the medium of my thought or whether mine take place through the medium of theirs" (Lévi-Strauss 1964:21). However, when Lévi-Strauss adopts this kind of argument he changes his ultimate aim – to show that human thought is determined by certain principles – into an unassailable starting-point.

Again, another statement of Lévi-Strauss, which reminds one very much of phenomenological philosophy, that structuralism is able to make one conscious of "profound and organic truths" because the mind feels it is truly communicating with the body (Lévi-Strauss 1971:619, see also Rossi 1972:784-787), is not very helpful in our search for an explicit methodology.<sup>8</sup> The same applies to his talking about an intuitive notion of the merging of "body, mind, society" (Lévi-Strauss 1973a:15), as well as to his characterization of structuralism as an attempt to reveal approximately implicit and unconscious knowledge imprinted in *l'architecture de l'esprit*, which regulates human action but which man cannot explicate completely (Lévi-Strauss 1964:346, 1966:407).<sup>9</sup> All this implies that one has to rely on intuition as an ultimate criterion of validity. The problem, however, of relying on intuition is that the experiences of different anthropologists are not necessarily the same: an external "objective" criterion is lacking.

Moreover, Lévi-Strauss's idea that the anthropologist's model emanates from the nature of his data, that the anthropologist himself is a passive mediator, "the locus through which the myths pass" (Lévi-Strauss 1967:5), is very much debatable. Methodologically, it is better to consider the unconscious model not yet as a record or conscious "approximation of unavoidable unconscious truths" (Lévi-Strauss 1964:26), but quite simply as nothing but the model of the anthropologist himself that needs validation. In this context, it is important to take into account the fact that the anthropologist's model results from interaction between the researcher and his subjects during which both parties mutually influence each other. So, it is always a construction. The same is also true of the participants' model. This is not a datum, but the result of a process of selection and interpretation

between the anthropologist and his informants who are engaged in a continuing dialogue. The models of the participants and the anthropologist then, are two parts of the same process of construction.

In view of this process of construction it becomes necessary to acquire precise knowledge of the context of research which for that matter is continually being redefined by both parties during the research in order to be able to assess the validity of the participants' model and that of the anthropologist. Now, this is a real problem because generally speaking Lévi-Strauss has not given specific detailed rules which should govern the collection and analysis of basic empirical material. As a result it is not clear how his models relate to empirical reality and this in its turn impedes an adequate application of a structuralist argumentation with regard to systems of symbols.

### *Structure and meaning*

Lévi-Strauss's most basic notion is that man is part of nature. So, the ultimate explanation of his thought and action can be found in man's nature, especially in the structure and activities of the human mind. Exactly because the human mind is subject to natural laws, exchange — the universal source of social life — and signification can exist. Because of this tie with nature symbolism, exchange and signification are necessarily interconnected in an indissoluble way (see Simonis 1974:374).

This point of view was already present from the very beginning in the work of Lévi-Strauss but in his *Mythologiques* it was pushed relentlessly to its logical conclusion. It led to the discovery of a new meaning behind cultural phenomena. Culture, viewed as a system through which man makes sense of his social and natural environment, becomes the realization of a possibility inherent in nature itself. Only because man's signification is subject to natural laws — whether or not of a physical-chemical nature — is intercultural communication possible at all. It contains a recognition of the cognitive unity of mankind. The principles of thought which are grounded in human nature form the ultimate base of socio-cultural systems, because at the level of the unconscious alone can objectivity and subjectivity meet each other, and is it possible to find true objectivity (Lévi-Strauss 1971:614). In other words, Lévi-Strauss's structuralism is an unconditional surrender to an unconsciously active rationality which is rooted in nature. This surrender, however, of necessity



entails certain consequences.

First of all, his argument stressing the importance of the system of constraints rooted in the human mind leads to a strong emphasis on the functioning of this human mind in his research. Questions concerning who, what and why are largely irrelevant, as the conscious concrete manifestations of culture may be reduced to the efficacy of laws of thought. In other words, these cultural manifestations possess a derived meaning: they are always reducible (e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1955:445). This degradation of man to a mere concomitant of a natural phenomenon, subject to unalterable laws, leads to a reductionism which not only leaves many basic questions in anthropology unanswered, but even fails to ask them. For example, Lévi-Strauss's structuralism in its present form does not enable us even to attempt to answer the question why people believe myths to be important and why myths always relate impossibilities. Van Baal (1977:344) is of the opinion that the latter characteristic is of crucial importance: the real nature of myth is the explanation of the existing order of things to another, mythical order, which ridicules our everyday common sense. In order to explain this characteristic it becomes necessary to take into account man as a subject who consciously experiments with images and who experiences existentially that his world is imbued with intention (van Baal 1977:212).

Again, by making the unconscious his central occupation Lévi-Strauss fails to ask why and when man thinks as a *bricoleur* and why "primitive cultures" in comparison with modern complex cultures are more predominantly characterized by this manner of thought. In order to be able to put this question Lévi-Strauss would have had to take into account the influence of the conscious aspects of culture which are manifest in, among other things, value-orientations.

As a consequence of Lévi-Strauss's search for "ultimate" explanations specific features, which distinguish different groups and mark "fields of ethnological study" (J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong 1935), are pushed into the background. His unshakable conviction that the ultimate explanation can be found in innate causes leads to the neglect of these intermediate variables, characteristic of specific times and places. Phenomena are being treated increasingly in isolation from their total context. For example, with regard to myths he ignores the relationship between myth and ritual, probably the most important point of contact between superstructure and infrastructure (e.g. Yalman 1967:87). The more Lévi-Strauss's analyses of myths become

comparative, the more he abstracts from their context. In *La Geste d'Asdiwal* (1958d) he still tries to connect various different aspects of culture with each other, but in his *Mythologiques* this attempt at tracing such interrelationships is already much less complete and of a more general nature. The only factor from the context to which he pays much attention in this work is of an ecological nature. One has only to bring to mind his analysis of the characteristics of various animal and vegetable species, as well as his *Bestiaire* at the end of *Le Cru et le Cuit*. This neglect of the social and ritual context in which myths function causes the loss of a good deal of their meaning. Ritual not only provides the key for the symbolism present in the myths (Maybury-Lewis 1970:57), but ritual also emphasizes the emotional and social functions of myths. Myths are not only a system of cognitive classifications which aim at ordering the universe: they are also – and perhaps even primarily – a means to canalize and to restrain such feelings as hatred, fear, sorrow and affection (Turner 1969:42-43, Fortes 1967:8-9, Leach 1970:128). Ritual also contributes to the wealth of mythical systems “by drawing upon tangible signs which derive their meaning and currency from the words of articulated language, the primary constituent of myth” (de Heusch 1975:371).

In short, the emphasis on the syntactic structure of myth often results in semantic impoverishment, in the disappearance of the contextual richness and distinctive meaning of a given myth. This trend has been intensified as a result of Lévi-Strauss's rewriting of the myths which are used in his *Mythologiques*. He uses especially those aspects of myths which lend themselves to the construction of oppositions. Lévi-Strauss leaves out certain parts which he considers to be irrelevant, while certain other parts which he does select, are at times phrased in such a way that oppositions are created between his different versions of the same myth, whereas in fact only differences may be detected in the originals (e.g. Burridge 1967, Douglas 1967, Kirk 1971, Leach 1970, Makarius 1974, Maybury-Lewis 1970, Munz 1970, Oppitz 1975). This is even more striking when we remember that Lévi-Strauss himself emphasizes the necessity of an extremely detailed analysis of the text of a myth, as the plot, the actual words used and the associations invoked are of great importance for decoding its message. He demonstrates this at length in *La Pensée Sauvage* when he analyses the eagle-hunt of the Hidatsa (1962b:67-72). His argument depends wholly on the determination of the identity of the concept “bear”. It is not clear immediately whether this con-

cept refers to the little black bear or to the *carcajou*, a representative of the family of weasels or mustelidae.

One can only escape from this impoverishing reductionism if attention is not only paid to the grammar of thought but also to conscious action (see e.g. Ricoeur 1967:808). Various levels of human existence have to be taken into account. Apart from unconscious structures of thought there is also conscious signification. Although this latter process is made possible by universal structures of thought, its concrete content cannot be explained completely by reference to such general structures. Lévi-Strauss recognizes this fact in theory: he points out that each structure conceived as a basic pattern of elements is always the outcome of on the one hand principles of thought and on the other technological and socio-historical influences. As a result he maintains that it is wrong to separate form and content from each other. Form and content are complementary and together they form one structure: a sensory as well as an intellectual unity (Lévi-Strauss 1973b:139). Yet in practice Lévi-Strauss limits himself during his research increasingly to the former part of the equation. It receives all of his attention and he attributes most explanatory potential to it. After all, Lévi-Strauss characterizes structuralism as a psycho-logic which functions within the framework of a socio-logic (Lévi-Strauss 1962b:75). This socio-logic, however, does not condition processes of thought, only its expressions, its products, which accounts for the fact that concrete classifications differ in spite of the universal structure of thought. The conclusion which has to be drawn is therefore that Lévi-Strauss's structuralism is increasingly the "negation of all anthropology" (Simonis 1968:344, see also e.g. Scholte 1979). In the light of the foregoing characterization I would like to plead for a return to the pre-*Mythologiques* phase of structuralism. For in that period a double aim still appeared to full advantage in the actual research process: on the one hand the description and uncovering of various patterns of socio-cultural phenomena and on the other hand the demonstration that these systems of signification are expressions of the human mind adapted to specific environments.<sup>10</sup> In my opinion this twofold task can only be fulfilled adequately if research is directed towards a comparison of concrete institutions and beliefs. In that case it is necessary not to limit oneself to the study of isolated institutions such as kinship or myth, but also — if not mainly — to pay attention to the relationships between these institutions. Only if myths, classifications, systems of kinship, forms of art

*etcetera* are viewed in a wider socio-cultural and economic-political context does it become possible to make connections between the *ordre vécu* and the *ordre conçu*. Especially ritual should receive most attention because of the strategic position which it occupies. For the distribution of roles in rituals allows one to perceive alternative social arrangements. The presentation of a myth in its ritual performance is a reflection as well as a criticism of the existing order of things. Such a holistic approach warrants a fair chance that the context which determines the specific cultural meaning of e.g. a myth is not lost sight of. Justice is done to the flexibility and polyvalence of symbols and classifications when these are viewed in connection with the place which the myth or classification occupies in the total cultural system. The study of this whole offers more possibilities to map out similarities and differences, in other words relations which can be seen as transformations, between the various institutions. It is heartening that in *La Voie des Masques* (1975) Lévi-Strauss himself has started to pay again more attention to the context, especially the cultural-historical dimensions, of certain cultural objects within a clearly demarcated "field of ethnological studies".

#### NOTES

- 1 I am much indebted to Jan de Wolf for his English translation.
- 2 Of obvious interest in this context are also two articles published in 1949: "L'Efficacité Symbolique" and "Le Sorcier et sa Magie".
- 3 F. Barth does not agree with this point of view. He points out that the Baktaman (New Guinea) do not experience categories derived from nature as good tools to think with, but as very mysterious vehicles of thought (Barth 1975:85). However, I wonder whether this is a real opposition: mysteries do possess only vaguely indicated meanings which allow, because of this very vagueness, a wealth of connotations and which are therefore able to form many associations.
- 4 It is obvious that for Lévi-Strauss differences or oppositions between the elements of a system are important: "it is not the resemblances, but the differences which resemble each other" (Lévi-Strauss 1962a:111; 1964:97). He even states that resemblance is to be regarded as an instance of difference tending towards zero (Lévi-Strauss 1971:32). A splendid example is his presentation of the moiety-system of the Darling River tribes in New South Wales, which is based on Radcliffe-Brown's account. This moiety-system is characterized by two totems: crow and eaglehawk. This does not signify the identity of the one moiety with crow and the other with eaglehawk, but it shows that the moieties differ from each other in the same way as both animal species. Eaglehawk and crow are both carnivorous, but eaglehawk hunts a living prey and follows

people when hunting, whereas crow chooses a dead prey and visits people in their camp. An important resemblance — both species are carnivorous — and a basic difference — eaglehawk hunts a living prey, crow eats a dead one — have made it possible that both animals serve as symbols of both tribal halves. These tribal halves are similar to and different from each other in the same way as both totem animals. For the one moiety is the active, belligerent part and associated with eaglehawk, while the other moiety is the party which remains at home and which is associated with crow (Lévi-Strauss 1962a:120).

- 5 Lévi-Strauss himself, however, believes that this will be the task of the anthropology of the twenty-first century, not so much because of the required complicated mechanical processing of the information, but especially because a great number of problems have to be solved beforehand. First of all the anthropologist knows the principles on which classifications are based only very partially because of the general character of most of the ethnographic data which are at his disposal. Next these systems of classification have a polyvalent character: they are based on different forms of connections. Finally these classifications are subject to situational shifts. Classifications are not only categories of thought, but also categories of experience (Lévi-Strauss 1962b:81-99).
- 6 A rather simple example of the way in which the real reality regulates and determines the concrete reality, Lévi-Strauss gives in his reaction to an article by Marbury-Lewis. In this reaction Lévi-Strauss draws an analogy with the jigsaw puzzle. When the pieces of the puzzle are sawn automatically into different shapes by a mechanical saw, the movements of which are changed regularly by a cam-shaft, the structure of the puzzle cannot be found at the empirical level, but at that of the mathematical formula which expresses the size of the shafts and their speed of rotation, something very far removed from the puzzle as it presents itself to the player, although this explains the puzzle in the only intelligible way (Lévi-Strauss 1973c-99).
- 7 Important in this context is the subdivision made by P.E. de Josselin de Jong of the participants' view of their culture into three categories: (a) the rendering of the actual situation by the participants, (b) the rendering of the ideal situation by the participants and (c) the rendering of the structural principles which play a role according to the participants. His thesis is that by taking into account similarities and differences between the "models" of participants and observers a more valid description can be given and a more adequate analysis can be made (de Josselin de Jong 1977:231-252; see also Pouwer 1974).
- 8 In this connection Lévi-Strauss's remark about the relationship between music and mythology is relevant: "Music and mythology bring man face to face with potential objects of which only the shadows are actualized, with conscious approximations of inevitably unconscious truths" (Lévi-Strauss 1964:26).
- 9 Exactly on the basis of this characterization Sperber (1975:xi) concludes that interpretation of symbols does not mean decoding but improvisation on the basis of implicit knowledge and in obedience to unconscious rules. In this connection he refers to the cosmology of the Dorze of Ethiopia, who divide the total universe into cold—warm and into senior—junior. Sperber (1975:59) states that he has internalized these principles

of classification of the Dorze in an intuitive fashion, because he applies these principles in the way the Dorze do, but is unable to make them explicit.

- 10 By the way, only by taking into account this twofold aim one can remove the apparent contradiction in Lévi-Strauss's description of myth. For on the one hand he defines myth as a problem-oriented story, in which man engages in a dialogue with his environment aiming at explicating all kinds of problems. On the other hand, he describes myth as a reflection of myth itself: myths think themselves and so they stand isolated from the everyday sociocultural reality. They present a picture of the world which is already contained in the architecture of the mind (Lévi-Strauss 1964:346). In the former instance Lévi-Strauss has in mind the level of the message or semantics, in the latter case the level of the structure or grammar.

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P.E. DE JOSSELIN DE JONG

## DEDUCTIVE ANTHROPOLOGY AND MINANGKABAU

Generalization is not based on comparison,  
but *vice versa*.

C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*.

The Minangkabau enjoy the privilege of playing a large part in anthropological literature: not only has a considerable number of monographs been devoted to them, but their society — and in particular their social organization — is frequently cited in studies of a wider and more general scope. A few recent examples may be mentioned.

Louis Berthe (1970) makes a distinction between a central and a peripheral group of Indonesian societies on the grounds of clearly specified criteria. He refers to Minangkabau as typically belonging to the second group.

P.E. de Josselin de Jong (1975b, 1980) wishes to demonstrate that Minangkabau society is less exceptional than it is often held to be, and that its social organization is better understood as one variant of a Sumatran pattern. David S. Moyer (1976) is engaged in developing this approach.

The comprehensive volume *Matrilineal Kinship* (1961), edited by David Schneider and Kathleen Gough, contains a chapter on “Cross-cultural comparisons” by D. Aberle, who also uses Minangkabau data. In Schneider’s introductory chapter, “The distinctive features of matrilineal descent groups”, nine such features are presented. I shall return to this presently.

In 1969, *Man in Africa* appears, edited by Mary Douglas and Phyllis Kaberry. Mary Douglas’s own contribution to the volume, under the title “Is matriliney doomed in Africa?”, explicitly carries forward the argument of Schneider’s 1961 article, as Douglas now considers which “distinctive features” have a favourable and which an adverse effect on the survival of the matrilineal form of kinship. In my present contribution I shall confront Schneider’s and Douglas’s articles with Minangkabau material.

One of the things that makes these two publications interesting is the procedure adopted by both authors. They do not start out from ethnographic data on specific matrilineal societies in order to build up, inductively, a model of matrilineality as such, but

they move in the opposite direction. Their starting point is the matrilineal model in its most general, unspecific form. From that model they arrive at the distinctive features by a process of deduction. That is to say that these features are the characteristics of a *logically consistent* matrilineality.

In passing I may remark that this procedure is by no means novel: sixty years ago, Sidney Hartland had also characterized a consistently applied matrilineal system by means of eight features (Hartland 1921:32-37). Although two of Hartland's French colleagues soon afterwards remarked that "these characteristics . . . are theoretical, and one does not encounter them in a pure form in any matrilineal clan" (Moret et Davy 1923:49), it is worth noting that all eight "characteristics" are actually observable in Minangkabau society. We shall now investigate whether the same can be said of Schneider's "distinctive features".

To prevent misunderstanding, I should state that it is my intention to consider to what extent Minangkabau data agree with the nine characteristics one can logically expect to find in a consistently applied matrilineal system. By doing so, I hope to discover to what extent Minangkabau social organization is consistently, or even extremely, matrilineal. In other words, it is my intention to subject Minangkabau society to the test of Schneider's model, and not the reverse. I am now assuming that the nine "distinctive features" have been devised by an adequate process of anthropo-logical reasoning, so that they are fit to be used as an instrument in such a test.

It is clear that a different reaction to Schneider's article is also possible; one could critically examine the distinctive features themselves by using anthropological theory and/or one or more case studies of the kind we are now going to carry out. One *could* do this; it is not my aim in this article.

We shall now summarize the nine features one by one, and enquire whether each feature is to be observed in Minangkabau.

(1) In a patrilineal clan the line of authority coincides with the line of descent; in a matrilineal clan this is not the case (as the descent line is in the female line, but authority is vested in males). Therefore a patrilineal clan can relinquish its female members when they are married (and often does so), but a matrilineal clan maintains its hold over its female and its male members. For what would happen if the matrilineal clan relinquished its hold over its men?

(a) The men would be "assimilated into" (*sic*) their wives'

groups, thus becoming eligible for a position of authority in *these* groups. This would be an essentially unstable situation. Or:

(b) they could form nuclear families with their wives and children, thereby loosening the ties with their matrigroup and thus weakening that group. Or, as a third possibility:

(c) they would become clanless, hence second-rate, members of society. In that quality they would be a potential threat to society (as all second-rate citizens are), unless they were “drained from society”. All three alternatives would lead to an unstable situation and therefore tend to undermine the social system as a whole.

My comment is that all three situations actually occur in Minangkabau:

(a) is not frequent, but has been observed. An in-marrying man can even acquire a position of some authority, as deputy *tungganai* in his wife’s *rumah gadang* or extended-family house (Korn 1941:305-310).

(b) Taking up residence in single-family houses is very common, although one should not underrate the *rumah gadang* as the residential unit (see e.g. the information in Harsja Bachtiar 1967:358, Nur Anas Zaidan 1974:12, Rukasah 1957:12, 13). This type of residence also increases the autonomy of the nuclear family in other respects.

(c) Men are “drained from society” in great numbers by emigration (*merantau*). We shall return to this presently.

(2) The relationship between brother and sister is tense. On the one hand the brother has to keep a watchful eye on his sister’s relationship with young men, among whom there might be marriage candidates (a fact of prime importance for the perpetuation of the matrigroup). On the other, there is a strong taboo on “sexual interest between brother and sister”, who remain members of the same clan (in accordance with feature nr. 1), and thus also remain in close contact with each other.

For Minangkabau, information on this item is insufficient. We know that a young woman is under the close supervision of her male relatives, and that this supervision is felt to be irksome (Mitchell 1969); but her father and her mother’s-brothers are more directly concerned than her brothers.

(3) The matriclan has to be perpetuated, and for this purpose it needs “biological fathers”; it need not, however, confer the status of “social fathers” on them. In other words, the matrigroup does not require the statuses of husband and father.

This is precisely the remark that many Minangkabau, semi-

seriously, make about their own society, even giving it as one of the reasons for male emigration. Nevertheless it should be noted that the father's role is actually far from negligible: for more than a century it has been usual for a man to bypass the rules of customary law and to make use of Islamic law's recognition of the gift (*hibah*) in order to make gifts to his son (Prins 1948:27, 36, 38). It is general practice for a father to pay his children's school fees (de Josselin de Jong 1980:117, 118); nor is the association between father and children limited to such material benefits.

Taufik Abdullah (1972:196) has pointed out that, while a young man's *status* is largely determined by his mother's-brother's, his *behaviour* is determined, or at least strongly influenced, by his father (the son of a religious teacher, for example, is expected to lead a pious life). At a more general level it is important that an undeniably matrilineal society as Minangkabau does recognize a patrilineal principle (*bako*; de Josselin de Jong 1975b:17, 1980:224, 225).

(4) It follows from item 3 that there is no institutional need for a strong tie between husband and wife. A strong, durable marriage bond could even be harmful for the relationships within the matriclan.

This "distinctive feature" does apply to Minangkabau, although not in an extreme form. The percentage of divorced women in West Sumatra (i.e. Minangkabau) was 14.2%, as against 6.9% for Sumatra as a whole and 8.4% for Java (*Volkstelling 1930-IV*:54; the recent *Sensus Penduduk* gives no information on this point). Korn (1942:318) remarks that it is also the social participants' own point of view that a married woman remains more closely associated with her natal clan's house and land than with her husband.

(5) There is always the risk of strain and tension with respect to each other among the in-marrying men. Like feature 2, this is a feature which concerns un-institutionalized behaviour and sentiments – and on such matters data regarding Minangkabau are very scarce. What information we have tends to show that feature 5 does not apply to Minangkabau. Quarrels appear to be more frequent among sisters (Mitchell 1969:127, Muhamad Radjab 1969:29), at least if they are co-residents in a *rumah gadang*, and do not often arise among the sisters' husbands. Information I was given in the field (March 1973) was to the effect that these men try to achieve mutual co-operation. This has also been recorded for the Minangkabau of the Malaysian state of Negri Sembilan

(Nordin Selat 1970:107): the in-marrying males are aware of the fact that they are *seresam*, i.e. "in the same position", with respect to each other, and they act accordingly.

(6) Children do not leave their mother's group. I cannot add any comment on this feature, as I do not see that it adds anything to feature number 1, which we have already discussed.

(7) The bond between father and child is weak, for else it would come into competition with authority in the child's matrigroup. There are two aspects to this bond, viz. authority and affection. As regards authority, Schneider had already remarked sub (4) that an antagonism can be expected between a woman's brother and her husband, because both men try to "maximize" their authority. Now the same two persons tend to come into conflict with each other over their authority with respect to the young man who is the sister's-son of the first, the son of the second. Concerning the affective aspect, Schneider retains the opinion of his earlier publication (Homans and Schneider 1955:27): in a matrilineal society a child is under the "jural authority" of his mother's-brother, so that it will turn to its father for affectionate indulgence. This leads to tension between the father and the mother's-brother, who see themselves as each other's rival.

On the first conflict it is to be noted that a rivalry between two men who are trying to "maximize" their authority is completely un-Minangkabau. In this society one would be more justified if one used the term "minimalizing": it is a problem for the Minangkabau male that he has to assume responsibility for the persons and the goods of his own matrigroup and in his wife's. Emigration, which we already had to mention more than once as a cultural element of great importance, appears once more in this context, namely as a means by which he can avoid the burden of this double responsibility.

On the matter of affection the case is less clear, for the reasons we already mentioned when discussing features (2) and (5). There is certainly a strong emotional bond between a father and his children when they are young: they go walking and fishing, and visit the *surau* together. An observation by Umar Junus (1964:302) is in accordance with the views of Homans and Schneider: the relation between a child and its father is one of relaxed comradeship, in contrast to the more formal attitude of respect towards its mother's-brother. I do not know, however, whether this ever leads to conflict or tension between these two older men. It does not seem likely, in view of the fact that, at

any rate for the older *boys*, other “networks” become more important than the kinship ties: those with their age-mates in the village, the Koran classes and other educational establishments, and later, when they have reached adolescence, *merantau* and all this involves. This has been described in a fascinating and lively manner in one of the most attractive works of Indonesian literature I know: *Semasa ketjil di kampung*, the autobiography of Muhamad Radjab (1950:21, 207). We are much less well informed on the life of the Minangkabau girl.

(8) It is more difficult for an individual to leave his matrilineal than his patrilineal group. Schneider subdivides this feature into six possible situations of fission and segmentation, but feature (8) is rather to be seen as an elaboration of the theme of the dominant feature, number (1), so that we need not go into further details on this point. The same applies to the last distinctive feature:

(9) Small, isolated matrigroups are very rare. This is a general statement which, as such, is not directly relevant to my present article.

Our discussion so far has demonstrated that Minangkabau society only conforms very imperfectly to the characteristics Schneider drew up of a consistent matrilineal system. This is all the more remarkable as Minangkabau often appears in anthropological literature as a specimen of matrilineality in an unusually “pure” or consistent form. We observed this at the beginning of the present contribution, which referred to Moret and Davy’s reaction to Sidney Hartland. I need only give two more recent references. Lévi-Strauss (1949:149) cites Minangkabau as one of the very rare examples of a “matrilineal harmonic regime”, and Robin Fox (1967:101) says, of the same society, that it comes closest to “the classic case”, viz. the Nayar of southern India.

Here obviously lies a most remarkable problem, and there is every reason to pursue this inquiry. We shall do so by turning to the article by Mary Douglas (1969), that explicitly infers to Schneider’s publication.

Her argument can be summarized as follows. There have always been prophets of doom who predicted that matrilineal societies were unlikely to preserve their institutions in a modern situation, because the extended family always hampers the individual who tries to achieve worldly success: it is a “drag on effort”. Now Schneider has shown that the extended family in its matrilineal form is, as it were, even more “extended” than the patrilineal

type, as it retains *all* its members.

Douglas's response is that this extended character of the matrilineal descent group need not always be an impediment: in an expanding economy it can be an advantage, as the group's members can benefit by the assistance they can render each other. "It is not true that in all kinds of modern business the extended family basis has been a drag" (1969:133), and as an example she mentions the very "extended" family of bankers, Rothschild. The extended family, and the matrilineal version in particular, *is* a disadvantage in a stagnant or declining economy.

Douglas continues by giving her own description of the characteristics of matrilineal societies. Not all the eight characteristics she singles out as basic can be equated with Schneider's nine "distinctive features". For the sake of clarity I shall now present Douglas's characterization not by listing the eight basic features she presents, but, using her material, I shall characterize matrilineality by means of four fundamental problems that confront societies of this type.

(1) Matrilineality is disadvantageous in a stagnant economy. The matrigroup does not relinquish any of its members, and in a society where agriculture is the only or the principal source of subsistence, this leads to population pressure on the land.

(2) Within the matrigroup conflicts arise, such as those described by Schneider as features (4) and (7). These conflicts arise out of attempts by every male and by his wife's brother to "maximize authority" in their family of procreation as well as in their family of orientation.

(3) Difficulties arise if the matrigroup relinquishes its males or if the latter wish to leave the group. This point is the name as Schneider's feature (1).

(4) The status of a child is determined exclusively by its matrigroup, *in casu* by his mother. The male, as father, is redundant. This comes very close to Schneider's (3). One could re-phrase this point as follows, in order to state the problem more precisely: much "achievement" is demanded of the individual male (for example: the quarrels among sisters, mentioned earlier in this essay in our discussion of Schneider's feature nr. (5), often have their origin in the question, whose husband has the most visible achievement to his credit) but there is no "ascribed status" for the male as such.

It will now become apparent that Minangkabau has devised *solutions* to and *compromises* within all four problems. That is to say that Minangkabau society fits no better into Douglas's deduc-

tively constructed model than into Schneider's. We shall, finally, try to demonstrate this once more point by point.

(1) Schneider pays little and Douglas no attention to emigration. This removes the population pressure from Minangkabau (and moves it to the immigration centres, the large cities in Java and elsewhere). For Minangkabau, the economic problem is not primarily *in* agriculture, but rather lies in the fact that the Province of West Sumatra has few means of livelihood to offer besides agriculture. For Douglas's first problem, however, Minangkabau has an available solution.

(2) For Minangkabau, this problem, devised by deductive anthropology, is only apparent. It is also the opinion of social participants themselves that it is not the man's concern to maximize his authority in both his families, with all the conflicts that would arise out of such behaviour. The difficulties he has to face are caused by his double responsibility toward these families. The difficulties can become so oppressive that he seeks means to escape from them, either by emigrating or by marrying into a landless family, so that he is at least absolved from the duty of working on that family's land (Cordonnier 1972:10).

In a pre-war study by an observer, V.E. Korn, who was ahead of most of his contemporaries in the attention he gave to the participants' view and to un-institutionalized behaviour, a *solution* is recorded instead of an escape: the male has authority in his own house, and enjoys not authority but respect in his wife's (Korn 1941:108). It would be desirable to have present-day information on this point.

(3) Minangkabau duolocality could be seen as a *compromise*: the married man who spends most of the day within the confines of his own matrilineage, and the evening and night in his wife's natal house, is partly retained and partly relinquished by his own descent group. However, I am more inclined to consider this problem, too, as only apparent, as we argued in the context of feature (1) in Schneider's publication.

(4) The concept of *beko* (referring not only to one's father's matrigroup, but also to the patrilineal principle) is to be considered as a *solution*, as it does justice to the male principle (see e.g. de Josselin de Jong 1975a:17). The gift (*hibah*) bestowed on the son by his father can also be seen as a solution; we need not dwell on this subject, as *bako* and *hibah* were both mentioned in connection with feature (3) in the article by Schneider.



This brings us to the conclusion of our experiment which was undertaken to ascertain to what extent Minangkabau, often cited as an extremely matrilineal society, conforms to a model of consistent matrilineality drawn up by a process of deductive reasoning. The first part of the experiment showed that Minangkabau has only few of the nine "distinctive features" of Schneider; the second part, that Minangkabau has found a solution or a compromise to meet with each of the four problems I formulated on the basis of a publication by Mary Douglas. In that part especially, two cultural elements had to be considered repeatedly: Islam and emigration.

It would be stressing the obvious to remark on their importance, but it is worth while to observe that, in the rapid investigation we have just completed, Islam and *merantau* proved to occupy an unexpectedly central and integrated position in Minangkabau society.

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A. VAN LOOPIK

## SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN MANGILI

A SECONDARY ANALYSIS  
ON THE BASIS OF STRUCTURAL PRINCIPLES*1. Introduction*

The article "In connection with the weir in Mangili" by Onvlee (1949), which forms the starting point of the present effort, is set up as a "short communication" from someone in the field. In it the author tells us about a weir in the district of Mangili (Isle of Sumba, Indonesia), that is about to be replaced by a modern dam.

This contribution of 1949 is considered as a classic example of the so called "Leidse School", which preceded French structuralism. Less concerned with theory as such, the authors of this school made it a point to try to understand the societies in which they worked by means of striking patterns of thought. They showed how different phenomena from different fields, economic, sociological or religious, were related to each other in a definable way, were part of a general pattern, and so could be made to shed light *on each other*.

The present effort tries to establish a link to modern structural theory. This is done by making explicit use of so called structural principles, which are implicit in the contribution of Onvlee. The point made in Onvlee's article is that the rather striking configuration of the irrigation works is connected with Mangili social organization. My thesis concerns this social organization as such. I try to show that phenomena that can be situated on a symbolical level — the configuration of the irrigation works — and phenomena of a more sociological character — dualism in Indonesian social organization — may be related to a single hypothesis which itself is concerned with that most fundamental level, the structure of thought.

Onvlee tells us: "This weir and this mode of irrigation stood in a vital relationship to the society whose interests they served and whose lifeways they helped to make possible. A closer study of both will unavoidably bring us into contact with the organiza-

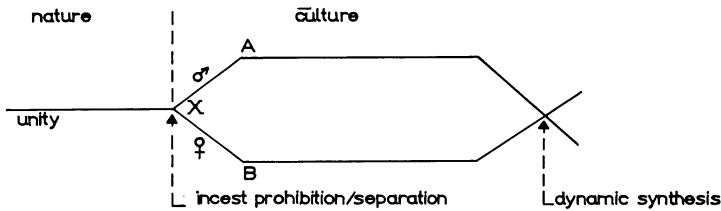
tion of this society and will suggest what are the roots of its existence." A promise which is more than fulfilled in the article of 1949.

We are told that from the dam in the Great River a single, fairly wide conduit leads up to a certain point "Pabari Londa" (place where the conduit is divided), where it is indeed divided into two main branches – the male conduit – "because it lies higher", by name of *Watu Bulu*, and the female conduit – "because it lies lower" – by name of *Maru*. The conduits are so constructed that in order to reach the Maru *sawah* (ricefield) complex, the Maru conduit has to cross the Watu Bulu conduit twice: once the conduit itself and once a branch of it. Each time the female conduit goes over the male conduit by way of *aqueducts* which lie quite close to each other in a small wooded area. These aqueducts are called the Lord and the Lady; the female aqueduct is made of the durable *kahi* wood, the male of the much softer *lontar*. Most of Onvlee's article is taken up by a careful account of how the renewal of the female aqueduct follows closely, "like a shadow", the way in which a prospective *wife* for the clan (*kabisu*) Maru is obtained.

My aim here is to show that the "suggestion of the roots of its existence" given by Onvlee can be further developed. That behind the dualistic interplay of the male and female principles of *muni* and *kawini* one may postulate a form of operation of the symmetric and asymmetric structural principles. These principles are basic to the Dutch notions of "échange restreint" and "échange généralisé" – symmetric connubium and asymmetric connubium.

The idea of a form of operation of structural principles presupposes a more fundamental level on which these principles are defined – the structure, of which any given "form" of operation would be a "transformation". The representation of this structure would be the model with the greater explanatory power. It is my opinion that, with respect to material of the kind we are dealing with here, this structure is elaborated in the work of Lévi-Strauss concerning elementary kinship structures (Lévi Strauss 1967b). Well aware of the risk implied in drawing conclusions from Lévi-Strauss' train of thought that as such are nowhere proposed by this author himself, I would like to condense my personal interpretations into the following model (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1.



Unity reigns in the field of nature through the absence of *symbolization*. There are no groups, as they belong to society, but only “hordes”, amorphous aggregates of beings, whose behaviour follows the operations of a biological mechanism without the use of a symbolic sign system. Properly speaking there exist no men and women, only males and females, no sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers; though there does exist an awareness of *own and other*, as can be demonstrated from many ethnological studies.

A strategic change is made at point X where the own-other opposition is elevated to the level of symbolization and translated into a *sociological* opposition through the implication of “exchange”. A set of females is set apart and is *classified* as own women, sisters and mothers, and as such forbidden as spouses. The own group is transformed into a sociological one, evoking its necessary counterpart: the other group, whose women become the classified spouses in exchange for the own sisters.

The unity of nature is destroyed by the incest prohibition and so society is created by way of *separation*. Creating Woman (sister, wife, mother) the incest prohibition creates Man (brother, husband, father). Creating group A it creates B, which as A and B are *signs* in a system which can be called society. All these only exist in *culture*.

Two being the sufficient number of groups in society, the relationship necessarily becomes one of *symmetry*. The model can still be visualized on a two-dimensional plane. At this point one can say that the model that is realized in the transaction of intermarriage between A and B (dynamic synthesis), is operated through the symmetric structural principle.

Seen from another angle, the progression from one to two can be looked upon as a qualitative increase in exogamy. One might ask whether and how a further increase is possible. The answer is given in the situation that one no longer gives one’s women (or

men) to the same group from which one receives them. The necessary number of matrimonial classes now becomes three. At the same time that we leave the even number, inequality is introduced, and asymmetry – which only can be visualized when the model becomes 3-dimensional. So the increase in exogamy is accompanied by a progression of 1-2-3, and the operation of the symmetric and asymmetric structural principles. These two principles are in opposition. This means that on the structural level they are always both given, deriving from the fact that they define each other as A and non-A.

This opposition generates a tension which is relational and which therefore cannot be solved in absolute terms. Each society, whatever its level of social organization, faces this existential problem. Here it is posed in formal terms, even making use of the relations that obtain between the initial numbers. It may be pointed out that a use of numbers to qualify relations is anything but rare in the societies with which we are concerned here.

But western society also shows an eternal struggle between odds and evens, man and woman, *homo equalis* and *homo hierarchicus*.

## 2. An irrigation work and a myth from the Javanese shadow play theatre

The map of the irrigation system that can be drawn up after Onvlee's description closely resembles the model of Fig. 1, so much, that it may be suspected that it has suggested this model, as actually is the case. As I take the position of Pouwer, that a model by definition never is part of the data, and that there is no difference between a paradigm extracted from the data and a model superimposed on the data, I feel justified to apply the model of Fig. 1 to analyse the same material from which this model has been derived (Pouwer 1974).

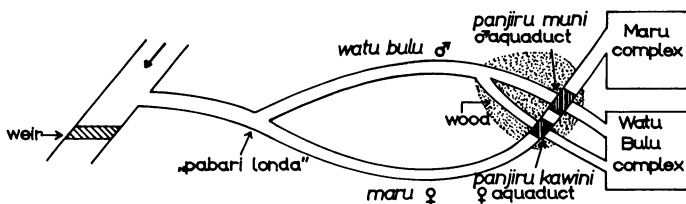


Fig. 2. Schematic map of the irrigation system of Mangili, after the description given in the introduction.

The fact that immediately attracted my attention after I had drawn the map of Fig. 2 was the explicit way in which the male and the female conduits were created by *dividing* the main conduit, almost as if it were with the purpose of bringing them together again. Small points such as the male conduit being male as it lies geographically “superior” to the female conduit, but the latter going “over” the former; the fact that the female aqueduct was constructed of superior wood, all these points suggested a way in which Onvlee’s interpretation of duality – with which I agreed – might be further developed. These facts reminded me of fundamental problems of so-called dual organizations, as treated in Lévi-Strauss’ celebrated article (1956) which makes use of Indonesian material.

The peculiar form of dividing and subsequent joining in an incestuous marriage – the partners were one originally – reminded me of an analysis by Rassers of a variant of a myth connected with the Javanese shadow play theatre, the episode called “Sri Sedana” (Rassers 1959:10-23). Summary of the episode “Sri Sedana”: In the beginning of time the ruler of the first Javanese state, Sri Mahapunggung, has two children, a boy called Sri Sedana and his elder sister Dewi Sri. (The ruler’s three wives, according to Rassers, play no role of importance.) When the tale starts, Sri Sedana is in the woods, when he is urged to return he refuses to go as he does not want “to postpone the marriage of my sister”. The latter is sought in marriage by a foreign ruler who appears under a negative aspect. His envoy is a giant with demonlike features (a *buta*). Though put under pressure to accept, Dewi Sri refuses, “unless he has the good manners of my brother Sri Sedana”. She flees into the woods, pursued by the envoy. She is made welcome among farmers but the giant appears, a battle starts and she flees again, now to her brother as she is told to do by the god Nerada. Brother and sister begin to organize an empire. But again the suit of the foreign ruler is pressed, now with Sedana, who refuses to hand over his sister. A battle with the giants’ army ensues, a battle which appears to be exactly balanced. The intervention of Nerada together with four other gods, among whom Bayu, the god of winds, brings victory to Sedana. Bayu conjures up a tempest which sweeps the enemy away. Nerada now commands Dewi Sri to marry, but she refuses to marry anyone “who does not resemble my brother, my brother Sedana”. The latter likewise refuses to marry any one who does not resemble his sister. So Nerada draws the logical conclusion and proposes to join brother

and sister in marriage to each other. But from this apparent incest the chief actors (or, as Rassers suspects, the manuscript's copyist) recoil. The problem is temporarily solved by transporting Sedana to the other side of the sea. In another *lakon*, Dewi Sri, the ricegoddess, appears married to Vishnu, whom Rassers thinks might be Sedana.

According to Rassers' analysis, which is placed in the wider context of his study of the Javanese classificatory system, Dewi Sri and Sri Sedana should be considered the representatives of the left and the right hand phratries respectively. The episode tells us of their origin, of their initiation and of their destiny. Their origin is one of mystic unity. Sri Mahapunggung, the first ruler of the first empire is alone – his wives and other possible relations remain indistinct. The division has its origin in him – he has two children, a boy and a girl. When the tale starts, the initiation of the former is already in train: he is "in the woods", a well-known Indonesian place for mystic separation. Initiation is seen here as a rite of separation; see also Ras 1973.

The initiation of the girl starts with her flight into the jungle and the first battle. The second battle, which is exactly balanced, for here the two phratries form the hostile parties, is the culmination of Sedana's initiation. The destiny that was foreseen from the beginning, the marriage that would be postponed by a premature return from the woods of Sedana, is the incestuous reunification of the two ancestors. This marriage forms the dynamic synthesis of the female phratry, which is negative and the elder, and the male phratry, which is positive and the younger one.

The following model can be construed:

*Fig. 3.*

nature	culture	
unity	separation	synthesis
Sri Mahapunggung	incest prohibition	incestuous marriage

Several problems also present in the Mangili irrigation works are treated here. The first is that the necessarily symmetric nature of the relationship between two groups is realized through a kind of dialectic interplay with the asymmetric principle. Of the two groups, the left and female phratry is the negative one. Not the "bad one", to say this we would make the error of mythemolo-



gical thinking, but the "losing side". As such the left hand phratry is at the same time the elder one, a powerful category throughout the Indonesian field of ethnological study. The second problem is the loss of exogamy on the level of society because of the dual character of the internal social differentiation.

An application of the model of Fig. 3 to the representation of Fig. 2 discovers a structure that as such has been represented in the formal model of Fig. 1. Before we continue with a discussion of the sociological implications that follow when we read Fig. 2 with the sociological theory represented in Fig. 1 in mind, remembering the thesis that the irrigation work as such is narrowly connected with Mangili social organization, it is necessary to give account of the theory which justifies us in relating isolated phenomena as a myth from one island and an irrigation system from another.

This is the theory that has as its basic concept that of the ethnological field of study (*ethnologisch studieveld*). This concept was introduced by the man who together with W.H. Rassers formed the centre of the beforementioned "Leidse School", J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong, in his inaugural address "De Maleische Archipel als Ethnologisch Studieveld", 1935. He suggested that the area of insular Southeast Asia, roughly speaking modern Indonesia without Irian and Malaysia, was characterized by a certain fundamental unity on different levels, as geography, language, ethnology and culture. This made it imperative that phenomena within this area should be studied with the fact of this unity in mind, and not as cultural isolates. In the course of time the concept of *ethnologisch studieveld* has come to mean more and more an idea with more narrowly structural implications, though it must be added that this is more implicit in the practice of the students that worked in the tradition of the "Leidsche School", than that it ever has been stated in so many words. The interpretation of the concept that I give here is only personal, showing the influence of the methodological thinking of Lévi-Strauss and Pouver.

The unity that characterizes an ethnological field of study is situated on a deeper level than that of empirical phenomena. Empirical relationships that can be found form only the beginning and not the end of scientific activity (cf. Pouver 1974:244). This activity seeks to place each "fact" in a greater whole, thereby transforming the fact itself. Reason for this is the idea that the world of man is one of *significations*, which as such cannot

be established directly and in isolation. An ethnological field of study indicates the boundaries of an area in which significations realize themselves as *transformations* of each other. These transformations are bound to laws that derive from underlying systems. These systems are determined by principles of form, or *structural principles* (cf. Pouwer 1974:241; Lévi-Strauss 1958:150). These structural principles are basic to the human mind and give culture its unity and comprehensibility. The structural principles give the opportunity to *order* a given material by means of logical operations. This process of ordering is a constant activity of the mind and so of culture, a process that after a first operation on “primal material” that can only be thought of in the form of an unprovable hypothesis (as in the introduction), continues to operate upon the products of this first and later operations. This process of ordering has its proper determinant in the sense that all changes proceed from prior orders. This gives each cultural system its individuality and makes it keep this, as this system is determined by the *relative position* and *relative weight* of given structural principles within this system, which configuration itself can again be seen as an “order” (see Pouwer 1974:243; Lévi-Strauss 1958:347).

An ethnological field of study can be seen as an area inside which individual cultures can be considered as “orders”, that by way of transformations can be reconnected to an underlying “order of orders” which gives the ethnological field of study its unity and individuality. An individuality on a different level than that of the cultures that can be subsumed under the ethnological field, but structurally homologous with it.

My argument is that both the myth and the irrigation works derive from a common structure, common on the level of the ethnological field of study. Each can be seen as a realization, a transformation on the level of empirical fact, of this structure. The factual material is different, the structure is the same. The myth and the irrigation works can as well be considered to be “models” as the representation of Fig. 1. All can be seen as members of the same set or family. In so far as each model is modelled with different factual material, the one can shed light on the other, because of it being in some sense different, a process which is legitimate on the basis of it being in another sense the same. So doing we bring the problem of comparison to a different level, making use of differences instead of abstracting from them. It must be kept in mind, however, that we do not abstract any less than people who work with non-structural

methods, the difference is that we abstract from *substance*, with the purpose of redeeming it again in the final analysis, which is not easy to do with *form*, that once abstracted from remains lost.

One might say that the substance of the irrigation works is its function, while its form contains a message of a structural nature. The myth contains two messages, the one "obvious", the other a covert statement about structure. The model of Fig. 1 forms a "compressed simile" of the theory concerning the complex of incest prohibition and connubial systems, the function of which, according to Lévi-Strauss, we know to be the definition and distribution of marriage partners. The sameness of form of this model with the representation of the irrigation works, in the framework of this study a real surprise, is seen as anything but a coincidence, considering the relevance of alliance theory for the phenomena found in the Indonesian field of ethnological study (reserving the criticism of J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong in his essay on "Lévi-Strauss's Theory on Kinship and Marriage" of 1952, see also below).

### 3. *Fourfold classification as a development of dual structure*

The "models" of Fig. 1, 2 and 3 share a characteristic feature, it is what has been called here, the "dynamic synthesis" of two quantities that have a common origin. The thesis and antithesis have here a time relationship that is not diachronic, but synchronic. One might say that this thesis and antithesis own their very existence to the synthesis that is their destiny. This synthesis has been labelled dynamic because it has the character of transaction. The synchronic structure of the whole system in which thesis, antithesis and synthesis define each other is only realized in the diachronic dynamic *process* of exchange. The A and B of Fig. 1, Maru and Watu Bulu of Fig. 2 and Sri Sedana and Dewi Sri of Fig. 3 are dual pairs that "come together". The transaction of marriage is fundamental to the *nexus* in which this coming together takes place in each case. We have already seen that this *nexus* expresses the fundamental contradiction of each society that it calls for the principle of exogamy to rule each transaction, but in the final analysis is endogamy producing, as the values that are exchanged are defined within the differentiated whole of society in its global sense.

The basis of the differentiation is a dual opposition, in its most fundamental form perhaps the "moi et autrui" that precedes every transaction. We have already seen that even a dual opposi-

tion on the level of signification may be ruled not by one but by two structural principles. Indeed, we have argued that on the level of signification the one principle, if manifest, supposes the other, at least in a latent sense. We have further argued that it is possible to conceive of a dual opposition that is governed by a combination of the symmetric and asymmetric principles, which combination confirms a degree of individuality on the “order” that is characterized by it.

It follows that the initial dual structure of transaction may be developed into types of exchange that differ as to the degree of symmetry, and, in the case of marriage, exogamy (see introduction). It needs to be stressed that if we conceive of these systems in a strictly synchronic sense, as we do here, these considerations need not involve speculations about an initial exchange situation in a historical sense. The different types of exchange retain a “dual” character in that they are transactions across a borderline, a line of demarcation that itself may be seen as a creation of the system in which the transaction is defined — and the transacting parties! The signification precedes the signified.

The types of exchange we operate with here are derived from van Wouden rather than from Lévi-Strauss, as the types of connubium that are differentiated to the degree of symmetry are more congruent with the ideas we want to propose concerning Mangili social organization than the *échange restreint* and *échange généralisé* of the latter. It must be stressed, however, that this is just a matter of a convenient terminology which underlines the very aspects of alliance theory we want to refer to here. *Symmetric connubium* means sister exchange, Father’s Sister’s Daughter (FaSiDa) and Mother’s Brother’s Daughter are the same person. When we discriminate between MoBrDa and FaSiDa we get Asymmetric, or Circulating Connubium with the former, and Half-Symmetric, or Alternating Connubium with the latter (van Wouden 1968). When we use the model of Fig. 1 as the “grid” with which to transform the material of Mangili social organization, a number of preliminary propositions emerge which are as follows:

1. The apparent dual character of Mangili social organization can be substantiated when we think of the patrilineal clans Maru and Watu Bulu as representing patrilineal phratries.
2. The dual character of this society is governed by a combination of the asymmetric and symmetric principles as set forth above.

3. The special form this combination takes in the Mangili case is the re-establishing of symmetry through exclusive cross cousin marriage with four matrimonial classes.

The last statement touches on a fundamental problem discussed by Lévi-Strauss in the abovementioned article "Les organisations dualistes existent-elles?" How do we explain the apparent dual character of Indonesian society in general, knowing from ethnography that the simple symmetry-producing model of *échange restreint* is rarely found? Lévi-Strauss' reasoning takes the form of a discussion of the relation between the asymmetric and symmetric principles, in his words: the concentric and diametrical principles, but there remain, I believe, enough differences not to make the present effort fully in vain.

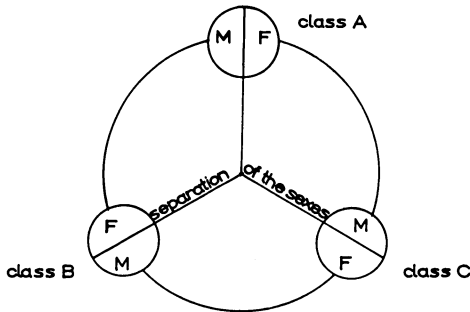
Before we discuss these differences it is necessary to go into the points raised by the third proposition, the two other being sufficiently clear, I hope, from the argument presented so far. Though he never uses the word phratry, Onvlee makes it clear that there actually exist two groupings of clans. The conduits irrigate the Maru and Watu Bulu ricefield complexes in which various other clans (*kabisu*) have their fields. The fields of these other clans are said to have been given "in loan" to them by either Maru or Watu Bulu. When speaking of the ceremonial that surrounds the renewal of the female aquaduct he mentions the occasion of "eating poison" when the clans which are "connected with Maru" come together to bind themselves to join the operation of "obtaining a wife for Maru".

The coming together of these two phratries, as I venture to call them, in a transactional system with four classes, so that the asymmetry that is self evident for any non-symmetric conubium is neutralized by the emergence of a dual structure, is proposed by me on the evidence of a fourfold classification from Onvlee's article. He tells us that the totality of the Mangili population is designated by non-Mangili by the names of the so-called Mangu Tanangu — "the proprietors of the soil — the Mother, the Lord of streams — the Father". The expression that is used is: "Here come Maru/Watu Bulu/Matolangu/Wanggi Rara". Matolangu is the clan connected with Watu Bulu. Wanggi Rara is the clan of descendants of the original owners of the land, before the present Mangili people settled there. These settlers already were fourfold. For beside Watu Bulu/Matolangu there appears a Maru that is double: Maru "Big House" and Maru "In Between". The new fourfold classification is thus created by merging the two Maru and adding Wanggi Rara, "because they know the way

of land and people, the rule of the river and its mouth". Although Wanggi Rara has lost this special position, it still remains in the designation of the totality of the Mangili people.

I hold that Maru 1/Maru 2/Watu Bulu/Matolangu can be seen as representing a system of four groups A/B/C/D between which exists a connubium of the circulating type or the alternating type. The way in which these four matrimonial classes come together in a dual structure brings us to the problem of duality. Let us first consider Lévi-Strauss' model (quotations are from the English translation of *Anthropologie Structurale*; Lévi-Strauss 1967a).

Fig. 4.



In the words of Lévi-Strauss: "Once the conditions are met — that is, a minimum of three classes — the principle of a dualist dichotomy appears, based upon the opposition between male and female. That this opposition, inherent to the system, has provided Indonesia with the model upon which it has built its dual organizations, stems, in our opinion, from the fact that the Indonesian moieties are always conceived of as being one male, the other female. The Indonesians do not seem to have been troubled by the presence of moieties which, theoretically, may be either male or female, although each one comprises an approximately equal number of male and female members". The last observation leads on to a discussion of the Miwok, who in a comparable situation invoke the following myth: "Coyote girl and her husband told each other they would have four children, two girls and two boys . . . Coyote named one of the male children Tunuka and one of the female children Kikua. The other male child he named Kikua and the other female Tunuka. Coyote thus made the moieties and gave people their first names". Lévi-Strauss observes: "The original couple is not enough and by a

true mythological sleight of hand it is necessary to postulate *four original classes* (in other words, an implicit division of each moiety into male and female) so that the moieties will not reflect (among other things), a sexual dichotomy, as in Indonesia where this is accepted although it contradicts the empirical situation” (italics mine).

Leaving this for the moment, let us turn to the model proper. Doing so I observe that it does not so much reflect a moiety opposition as the fact of the incest prohibition, which divides society into brothers and sisters and obliges each man to give up his sister to another man. This model is valid for any society with elementary kinship structures, in other words: where Lévi-Strauss’ “atom of kinship” applies (see Lévi-Strauss 1958, ch. III and 1973, ch. VII), and so does not well discriminate between different elementary structures. This can be shown by just leaving out class C in Fig. 4: we are then back with symmetric connubium, for which the model is equally valid.

Concerning the thesis that Indonesian dual organizations stem from the separation of men and women since “Indonesian moieties are always conceived of as being one male, the other female”, I observe that it is not really the dual organization itself, but rather the characterization of the relationship between the moieties which stems from the separation of men and women. But one might as well say that the relations between men and women in Indonesia stem from their special type of dual organization, both being ruled by the same combination of the symmetric and asymmetric principles. Further I would hold that the characterization of moieties versus each other as male and female is based on signs in a system which have meaning only within this system. So I see no problem whatsoever concerning the fact that moieties thus characterized are made up of men and women.

The fact that by subtracting one class in Fig. 4 we are back with symmetric connubium is interesting because this model can produce a fourfold structure from a dual structure:

Fig. 5.

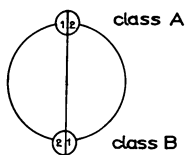
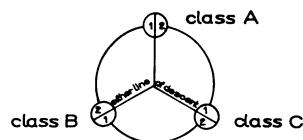


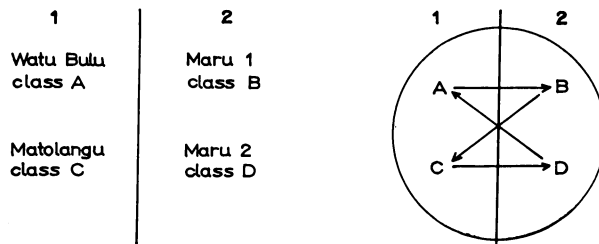
Fig. 6.



In Fig. 5, the division of classes A and B is not one of males and females, but a division made when *the other line of descent* is taken into account. When A and B are transmitted through the patriline, 1 and 2 go by the matriline and vice versa. We touch here upon the sensitive issue of Lévi-Strauss' position on double descent, which he only recognizes in case of symmetric connubium, fulfilling an integrative function, which in the case of non-symmetric connubium is taken up by this form of social organization itself, in its role of "generalized exchange". I do not feel competent to add to the criticism expressed by de Josselin de Jong in his essay of 1952 (see above), the more so as in the limited scope of this article double descent is not central to the analysis, apart from a rather speculative hypothesis concerning the genesis of the proposed model of a *unilineal* four class system. When we add another class to the model of Fig. 5 we have a non-symmetric connubium, in which exchange is defined according to an odd number of classes A, B, C, in other words: a ternary structure, in which the notion of duality can be redeemed only by means of subdivision of the classes through the other line, which results in a dichotomy of society *which has nothing to do with exchange*. In Fig. 6, as in the model of Lévi-Strauss, the triskelion does not stand for "a line of demarcation" in the sense we have used above.

This line of demarcation, the borderline across which exchange takes place in every incidental transaction, reappears in a model which treats of a system with *four* classes, instead of the three that are the necessary and sufficient condition of non-symmetric connubium: a system of four classes A, B, C, D between which the exchanged values (women and men) either *circulate* or *alternate*, depending on the question whether MoBrDa- or FaSiDa-marriage constitutes the rule.

Fig. 7.





In this model A, B, C, D are grouped in such a way that a division appears (1 and 2) which constitutes the fundamental division of society as expressed in the structure of the irrigation works. Maru and Watu Bulu stand for the two halves which come together in every marriage transaction, exactly as the two *conduits* Maru and Watu Bulu come together in the small wooded area where the two *aqueducts*, the Lord and the Lady, by way of which this operation is realized, are united in marriage. A marriage that is renewed each time the female aqueduct must be substituted, and so expresses the fixed exchange situation between the two halves of society.

It must be added that every marriage transaction, or, for that matter, every exchange in general, expresses a fundamental dualism, and a bipartition of society, be it in males and females, (Lévi-Strauss' triskelion of Fig. 4) or giving and receiving parties in a system with an odd number of classes (Fig. 6, but here the triskelion has nothing to do with this matter). Only when the exchanging parties group themselves in an even number, at least on the cognitive level, can the dualistic exchange situation also reflect a transactional bipartition of society in general. Any four clans (*kabisu*) may maintain such a quadripartite connubium: automatically two of them then "belong" to the Maru side, and two to the Watu Bulu side of society.

A slight alteration of Fig. 7 would make *sections* of Maru 1 and 2, Watu Bulu and Matolangu, instead of the actual patrilineal clans. This would involve symmetric connubium, which brings us to a hypothesis of the genesis of the proposed model, which we want to consider for reasons that have to do with the concept of transformation, not because we want to speculate about actual historical occurrences, however plausible nonetheless some of these hypothetical situations as put forward by Rassers may appear. (It might be interesting to relate the support that the structurally based "speculations" of Rassers appear to receive from such a scholarly historical study as "Java in the fourteenth century" by Pigeaud, as remarked upon by de Josselin de Jong, to the view of Lévi-Strauss of structural anthropology as one face of a twofaced Janus whose other face is history (de Josselin de Jong 1972).

When we recall the model of Fig. 1, the following transformations would lead to the proposed dual organization of Mangili society, based upon a four class system:

Fig. 8.



Describing the transformations in diachronical terms: the incest prohibition creates two groups who maintain symmetric connubium. When double descent is taken into account four sections appear, which “freeze” into four classes with non-symmetric connubium in a unilineal system. Deriving duality from a quadripartite division based on double descent to my mind agrees nicely with the Miwok myth cited above.

Apart from the difference in function, related to the question of integration of society, between symmetric connubium and non-symmetric connubium, there is the aspect of degree of equality, and the sort of equality, which needs to be taken into account when one considers these systems within the context of a field of transformations.

The conception of the male-female opposition as one of marked difference that has a creative function on the level of classification throughout the Indonesian field of ethnological study (compare Lévi-Strauss’ remark), does not well agree with the idea of simple one-to-one equality which is the result of the symmetric structural principle exemplified in symmetric connubium. This principle, on the other hand, might be seen as the dominant principle in modern western society, which indeed strives to diminish sexual role differentiation.

The peculiar configuration of the irrigation works has, as we have pointed out above, something to do with how the problem of equality in this field of ethnological study is solved according to the “relative weight and position of a principle in a given configuration” (Pouwer 1974). In other words: according to the combination of the symmetric with the asymmetric principle, which results in a form of non-symmetric equality.

Fig. 9.



For western man type a is familiar and he has the tendency to generalize it in his theories (cf. Dumont 1972). Type b on the other hand is much more discernable in phenomena described by

de Josselin de Jong in an article (1972) concerning the discoveries of older Dutch ethnologists in the Indonesian field.

To end this essay in which we have tried to demonstrate how phenomena from the symbolical level and from the level of social organization can be related to each other when we take into account considerations that belong to the supposed underlying structural level, I would like to refer to material from a different part of the Indonesian field of ethnological study.

The Minangkabau on the isle of Sumatra recognize two ancestors, each of whom has given rise to two kin groupings. Between Koto and Piliang on the one hand, and Bodi and Tjaniago on the other, exists a relation of hostile friendship (P.E. de Josselin de Jong 1951). Apart from this quadripartite division of four *suku* in their original sense, there exist a number of about 96 *kampueng*, which among other names also carry those of Bodi, Tjaniago, Koto and Piliang. I am not too rash I hope when I equate these matriclans with the *kabisu* mentioned by Onvlee of which there also exist an indeterminate number, anyhow more than the four mentioned by name.

The fundamental territorial unit is the *nagari*, consisting of village, fields and surrounding uncultivated area. A requirement for every *nagari* to be recognized as such is the representation in the village of "the four *suku*". This is a new quadripartite division in which the *suku* are named after the number of *kampueng* that are united in them. The old dual division in Bodi-Tjaniago and Koto-Piliang is found on a higher level as every *nagari* is considered to adhere to the *adat* (system of customary rules) of either Koto-Piliang or Bodi-Tjaniago. It is fascinating to see how in this context of phratry dualism, non-symmetric connubium (de Josselin de Jong: circulating connubium) and quadripartite division we find the thesis of the special relation between the symmetric and the asymmetric principles illustrated in a number of oppositions:

*Fig. 10.*

<i>Koto Piliang</i>	<i>Bodi Tjaniago</i>
secular power	the area over which power is exercised
kingship	republican
Islam law	adat
revenge	conciliation
hierarchic	egalitarian
automatic succession	discussion and election

Apart from this the principle of competitive opposition, resulting in what we have called a situation of non-symmetric equality, may be recognized in two instances given by de Josselin de Jong to illustrate the thesis of phratry dualism in Minangkabau. These examples are connected, not surprisingly, through echoes that can be found in both of them, of that supreme form of competitive opposition: *the potlatch*.

One of the ceremonials that surround a marriage consists of an enumeration by the bridereceivers of the tremendous gifts they are going to make to the bridegivers. This with an eloquence that is considered rare for Minangkabau. The fact that these gifts in practice are substituted by insignificant amounts of money only underlines the non-symmetric character of the equality achieved.

The second example concerns a mock-battle between two parties of the *nagari* who represent the *kampung* – the village area, and the *bukit*, the surrounding hill district. This battle is decided by the amount of fireworks both parties are able to produce. The latter example is interesting because of another aspect it presents: the concentric opposition of *kampung* and *bukit*, a form of opposition that Lévi-Strauss uses in the sense we have given to asymmetric opposition.

I have quoted this material from the study of de Josselin de Jong to stress the concept of the ethnological field of study which is central to the methodology applied in this effort. I hope that one will be able to recognize in the limited material presented phenomena that are very similar to those we have dealt with above. If so, this would make it more acceptable that the unity of which both Minangkabau and Mangili society partake, a unity on the levels of geography, language and ethnology, may be caused by an underlying “ordre des ordres”. This order of orders would constitute an ethnological field of study taken in a structural sense, which makes it possible, as we have tried to do in this study, to make comparison on the structural level, comparing *form*, not *content*, by making use of models as the vehicles of comparison.

One of these models is built by the participants themselves in the form of an irrigation works. If one conceives of anthropology as “a science of models”, this would make of the Mangili people anthropologists “par excellence”. The originator of the concept of models probably would be the last to object to such a title for a people of whom Onvlee tells us that they characterize the relations between families in bride exchange, who are to each other as *jera* to *ana kawini*, as bridegiver to bridgetaker, by saying

that what constantly goes to and fro between them is *na mamina na matana*: that which is *raw* and which is *cooked*.

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L.D. MEIJERS and J. TENNEKES

**SPIRIT AND MATTER  
IN THE COSMOLOGY OF CHASSIDIC JUDAISM<sup>1</sup>***Introduction*

When Durkheim, in his well-known studies concerning the collective representations of primitive cultures, raised questions about the relations between social structure and cosmology, anthropologists were hardly able to react adequately. Theory was still in its infancy; indeed ethnographic information on the subject was almost absent. Since then, it is true, a great quantity of ethnographic monographs has appeared, but the theoretical reflection, at least the kind that originated in the Anglo-Saxon world, was strongly functionalist in character and accordingly left an important part of Durkheim's theories unused. However, the last few years, mainly under the influence of Lévi-Strauss's work, anthropologists became again strongly interested in Durkheim's opinions. As one of the most fervent protagonists of durkheimian thought, Mary Douglas appeared on the scene. In several publications (1970, 1973, 1975) she demonstrates that a re-evaluation of Durkheim's theories opens up new and surprising horizons. A central theme in these publications is the idea that the symbolic order, as it appears in religious symbols, cosmological systems, ideas about supernatural powers and dangers, purity and impurity, and as visibly and concretely presented in rituals, is not only functionally connected with the social structure; it can be seen also as an expression of the system of social relations. The social order above all provides the code for understanding the symbolic order. Thus, for Douglas the social order is the key to the analysis of the symbolic order.

This essay is an attempt to assess some of Douglas's ideas. It does so with data from Chassidism, one of the most important currents within orthodox Judaism. For a better understanding and appreciation the article starts with a short introduction into Douglas's ideas about the subject. Part Two describes the cosmology of the Chassidic Jews. The article concludes with an evaluation.

*1. The thesis of Mary Douglas*

In one of her most ambitious studies, *Natural Symbols, Exploration in Cosmology* (1973), Mary Douglas puts forward theoretical ideas about the nature of the relationship between cosmology and social structure. By natural symbols are meant the symbols as provided by the human body and its physical functions (1973:12). Precisely with regard to these symbols it is of importance to note that they can only be understood when related to the social order. The human body should be seen as an image of society. The way in which man stands in society will thus be reflected in the way in which he treats his own body. That body is in a sense the microcosm of society. Theorizing along these lines, Douglas concludes that "bodily control is an expression of social control" and vice versa (idem:399). The empirical facts she provides in her study are meant to illustrate this thesis. However, in the final chapter she takes one more step and tries to make acceptable that even ideas about the relation spirit/matter, soul/body and God/man can be seen as "condensed statements about the relation of the individual to society" (idem:194). Her argument is approximately as follows: The relationship to one's own body is often verbalized in terms of soul/body or (more abstractly) spirit/matter. When a certain individual, or the group he belongs to, becomes alienated from "the wider society", then that situation will find its symbolic expression in an alienation from the body. The claims of the body will not be highly credited any more, "the body is despised and disregarded". It is obvious that at the same time consciousness is conceptually separated from its vehicles and accorded independent honour, so that "the dichotomy of spirit and matter becomes an insistent theme" (idem:194).

The observation in itself, that in a certain culture the distinction spirit/matter plays a role in some form or another, is according to Douglas not yet necessarily a reason to assume a social situation characterized by alienation. When looking for the possible connections between a condition of alienation from the wider society and a philosophical formulation of the spirit/matter relationship, one has to keep in mind the entire cultural and historical situation.

The fact that a distinction is being made between spirit and matter is less important than *the role* that dichotomy plays and *the degree* in which spirit and matter are being contrasted. Therefore Douglas is specially interested in philosophical and theologi-

cal controversies concerning the relationship spirit/matter, that is differences of opinion about the exact relation between them. Her examples centre mainly around the relation between gods and men, because in her view ideas and differences of opinion on that point provide an “index” of the way in which spirit and matter are categorized. For some people the categories are very distinct and it is blasphemous to mix them, for others the mixing of Divine and human is right and “normal” (p. 18). As an example of such a controversy she mentions the one between Arians and Catholics around the incarnation (the question of the hypostatic union of Divinity and humanity in Christ). According to Douglas the Arians expressed their alienation from the surrounding society and their fight for release from the oppressive bonds that society imposed in a theological idiom in which the possibility that God becomes human is denied. At first sight such a controversy seems to be introduced fairly arbitrarily. But Douglas suggests: “that they only become relevant as metaphors, when the relation of an alienated sub-group to the social whole becomes an acute political issue. The body or the flesh in these theological controversies represents the wider society; mind and spirit represent the individual identified with the sub-group concerned . . . To insist on *the superiority of spiritual over material elements* is to insist on the liberties of the individual and to imply a political programme to free him from unwelcome constraints. In the contrary view, to declare *that spirit works through matter*, that spiritual values are made effective through material acts, that body and mind are intimately united, any emphasis on the necessity to mingle spirit and matter implies that the individual is by nature subordinate to society and finds his freedom within its forms. This view is prepared to sacralize flesh, while their opponents count it as blasphemy to teach the physical union of godhead and manhood” (p. 196, Italics ours).

It is obvious that this thesis raises numerous questions: Is it right to present the opposition God/man as a variant of spirit/matter? Does the idea of the superiority of spiritual over material elements exclude the thought that spirit works through matter? What is exactly meant by “alienation from the wider society”? When is one alienated and from what? About these questions a great deal could be said in the context that Douglas chose for herself, namely the history of Christianity. In this article, however, we will see what can be done with Douglas’s thesis within a religious tradition that is related to Christianity on the one hand, but on the other clearly differs from it, namely orthodox



Judaism. Therefore we shall mainly direct our attention to a theological controversy in which the relationship between spirit/matter, soul/body and God/world played an important part, namely the conflict that arose between Chassidim and Mithnagdim in 18th century Eastern Europe.

An analysis of the Chassidic message, and of the differences of opinion that the rise of Chassidism evoked within the Jewish society, is especially relevant for an evaluation of Douglas's ideas about the connection between social structure and cosmology, because the social situation in which the relating theological controversy arose was singularly complicated. Chassidism could be described as a movement that wanted to end a situation of "alienation" within a society that as a whole was more or less chronically "alienated" from a Christian society to which it was tied down in a political and economical sense on the one hand, but with which it had no relation in the religious sphere on the other. A situation that perhaps can be considered as an example of twofold alienation.

## *2. The cosmology of Chassidic Judaism*

### *a. The rise of Chassidism*

Chassidism originated in 18th century Eastern Europe. The conditions the Jews lived in at that time were far from enviable. Pogroms and wars had taken their toll in the form of thousands of victims and they had brought great social and economic misery. The messianistic movement of Sabbatai Zvi (1626-1676), who had aroused the enthusiasm of great masses and given hope for redemption from all suffering, had collapsed after the founder's conversion to Islam, leaving a considerable part of the Jewish community behind him in great mental confusion. But even apart from these circumstances, life was hardly satisfactory to a great many Jews. At that time the Jewish community consisted more or less of two different "classes". The leading class – a fairly small minority – consisted of the scholars: people who dedicated their whole life to the study of the *Torah* and in such a way led a life as should be ideally lived by every Jew. Often enough these scholars regarded with contempt the so-called "unlettered" – those who either for economic reasons or through lack of intellectual capacity, were forced to occupy themselves with other things than spiritual matters, knowing only the essentials of the Jewish worldview and trying to keep as well as

possible the numerous commandments of which only the scholars knew the precise meaning.<sup>2</sup>

It is against this background that we have to interpret the Chassidic movement, initiated by "The Master of the Good Name" (*Baal Shem Tov*, often abbreviated as "Besht", 1698-1760). His teachings aimed at bringing about a religious revival under the unlettered masses. He spoke directly to the masses in a language they understood and taught them what may be called "practical piety". He showed a road along which *all* Jews could travel safely. The contents of the Chassidic message was, however, entirely in line with the Jewish tradition. Its source of inspiration came from Kabbalistic thinking as summarized in the *Zohar* ("The Book of Splendour", one of the classics on Jewish mysticism) and elaborated by Rabbi Yitscnak Luria (1514-1572).<sup>3</sup>

Contrary to what is often assumed: "Chassidism was no revolutionary movement. It neither wished to free the people from the legalistic bonds of Rabbinism, which in fact it sought to enforce with even greater rigour, nor did it introduce any new fundamental ideas into Judaism. Its twin parents were Rabbinism and Kabbalah, and it is in these progenitors that is to be found all that Chassidism thought and taught. *The important contribution of Chassidism lay rather in the emphasis it gave to certain ideas, whilst relegating others to the background*" (Epstein 1959:270, italics ours).

The Baal Shem Tov wanted God to be more known. Through his teachings he made accessible to everybody the knowledge and experience about God that hitherto had been regarded as the privilege of Kabbalistic specialists. However, according to Scholem it would be "quite wrong to regard as the original and novel contribution of Chassidism the fact that it popularized the Kabbalistic ideas of a mystical life with God and in God" (1961:339). Long before the Besht's appearance attempts had been made in that direction without producing anything like a revival movement. This raises the question why precisely the Chassidic doctrine attracted such large numbers to Kabbalistic mysticism. In our opinion two factors play a central role here, namely the emphasis placed on emotion and the introduction of a new type of spiritual leadership.

Concerning the first of these two factors, the road to mystical experience of God was no longer only that of prolonged and intensive study. Rather it was to be that of "prayer recited with exalted joy and in a state of ecstatic fervour (*Hithlahavuth*) in which man forgets himself and all his surroundings and concentrates all his thoughts and feelings on union with God" (Epstein

1959:272). What was relevant to prayer, could equally well be applied to the keeping of the commandments. Here again Chassidism emphasizes the emotional side of fulfilling one's religious obligations. To serve God with joy became a central theme in Chassidism (Schochet 1961:73-76; Dubnov 1931:98-99). That is why asceticism, as practised in the Kabbalistic tradition, was rejected.

Rabinowicz summarises the Besht's philosophy thus: "This immediate, this worldly joy is the true reward, the greatest reward, for the performance of the good deed or fulfillment of a commandment (*mitzwah*). Rewards to be received in the world to come are incidental, for a *mitzwah* should be performed for its own sake. Tears of joy are permitted and are even desirable. But a man should subdue sadness and raise himself to the higher realms of joy. Should a man err, he is urged not to brood over his transgression, lest he sinks further into a morass of melancholy. He should demonstrate the sincerity of his repentance by returning instantly, and with renewed ardour, to the services of God" (Rabinowicz 1970:36).<sup>4</sup>

This new way of life could strike such deep roots because it was personified in a very special type of religious leader. The Chassidic groups that arose everywhere in Eastern Europe after the Baal Shem Tov's appearance were no longer primarily under the spiritual guidance of the scholars, but under that of a *Rebbe*, a mystic, who was commonly regarded by his followers as a *Zaddik* – a perfectly righteous man. Thus the basis for religious leadership had shifted from learning to personal charisma. In the person of their Rebbe the Chassidic communities had a leader who put into practice the new way of life. The greatest example and living source of inspiration was immediately at hand. One could turn to him with all the problems existing in life, both religious and profane, intellectual and practical, because to him no problem was too big or too small. Without this very personal and charismatic leadership of the Rebbe, the growth of Chassidism is inconceivable. Rightly Scholem says: "Briefly, the originality of Chassidism lies in the fact that mystics who had attained their spiritual aim turned to the people with their mystical knowledge . . . and, instead of cherishing as a mystery the most personal of all experiences, undertook to teach its secret to all men of good will" (Scholem 1961:342).

It was only to be expected that the Chassidic movement would meet with strong resistance, as it undermined the values that justified the position of the cultural elite. The opponents of

Chassidism (known as *Mithnagdim*) perceived the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov as a threat to organized Jewish life and its intellectual discipline, as maintained and fostered by the study of *Torah* (Epstein 1959:280). They particularly feared a disdain for the value of scholarship. Their bitter opposition resulted in a conflict which ran very high during several decades. But although the Mithnagdim commanded strong positions of power and authority within the Jewish community, Chassidism quickly gained influence (Schochet 1974:188-191; Dubnow 1931:22) and became an integral part of life in the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe (cf. Zborowski and Herzog 1969).

It remains to this moment one of the more prominent and vital elements in Jewish orthodoxy, though its centre of gravity has been moved to the United States and Israel since the last world war. The antithesis between Chassidim and Mithnagdim has lost much of its sharpness since 18th century, but is still alive.

*b. The Chassidic view of man and his world*<sup>5</sup>

*Correct behaviour*

The Chassidic life is permeated with the twofold precept: "Turn from evil and do good" (Psalms 34:15). The most concise answer to the question what precisely constitutes good and evil, runs like this: Good is what is in keeping with the *Torah* and bad is what is not in keeping with it. The doing of *Mitswoth* (plural of *Mitswah*), keeping to the 613 commandments of the *Torah*, is no mean task, but this for the Chassid is only the beginning, because God wants to be served with joy.

As not everyone is always joyous by nature, the achievement of this joyful state is seen as a conscious act. People especially try to arouse it during prayer. Though sadness is not bad, as such, it can easily result in evil acts.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, sadness and evil are considered as more or less identical.

In another sense as well, a strong intentional dimension is given to the opposition good/bad. For the point is that not only acting and talking but also thinking are subsumed under this precept. If one wants to depart from evil and do good, then it should not only be realized in one's deeds and words, but also in one's thinking, as thinking is the basis of both speaking and doing. The ideal to which man has to aspire is a situation in which he has suppressed each inclination to evil or even transformed it into good. Not only is he supposed to reject an improper thought immediately; those thoughts should not arise at all. However, this ideal is

not attained by everybody. Only the *Zaddikim* (the perfectly righteous), who possess a specially endowed soul, can reach that state.

It is not easy to give an conclusive definition of what is understood by "evil". In any case it can be maintained that evil is defined not only as not keeping the commandments, but is also associated with the desire for bodily pleasures and in general the yielding to physical desires. True, the body should be given what it needs (food, drink, clothes, sexual satisfaction etc.), if only those pleasures are not an end in itself, but instruments to the one and only aim: to provide an abode for God on earth.

Serving God with joy, keeping the *Torah*, living with self-control, soberly, modestly and chastely is something one should be attentive to all day long. Therefore good behaviour implies a diligent use of the time allotted by God to man. This way of life forms a sharp contrast with *Batteln*, i.e.: wasting one's time. Apart from the numerous rituals in the synagogue and at home, *Lernen*, (the study of *Torah*) is the most meaningful way of using one's time. Besides, working for one's daily bread is also positively estimated. The man who undertakes this task and therefore does what is wise, differs fundamentally from him who wastes his time, does not take his task seriously and follows his own desires.

#### *The structure of the cosmos*

Why do the Chassidim interpret the *Torah* in the above mentioned terms? That question can only be answered against the background of their views on the structure of the cosmos. Good conduct means intelligent conduct because it corresponds with the structure of the cosmos and man's place in it. Only a fool, someone who does not know how things really are, will act badly, because a fool will act against his own interest and destiny.

The first element in this world view to be clarified is the relation between God and His creation. God Himself is eternal, infinite and unknown. He manifests Himself only through His works, His radiances as they manifest themselves both in the material and spiritual dimensions of created reality. The question, how the infinite, unknown God can create a finite world and within it, let Himself be known, is in principle answered by the idea of *Zimzum* (contraction) and the joint conception of the *Sefiroth*. According to the Chassidic conception, God, Who is infinite, has to contract in order to make room for the finite creation. That thought coming from Rabbi Yitschak

Luria is formulated as follows by Schochet: “The first act in the creative process was to bring about a primordial space where a finite world could have a place. This primordial space (*halal*) was brought about by a self-contraction or withdrawal of God into Himself, as it were: the omnipresent, infinite light of God was withdrawn into and contracted or concentrated within Himself. It was screened, dimmed and hidden; and where it was thus dimmed, primordial space came about. The intense radiation of the infinite light now would no longer consume and nullify the “contents” of the primordial space” (Schochet 1968:22). So, in reality the Chassidic idea of *Zimzum* does not refer to God Himself but to His Radiance, i.e. the infinite light. The ten *Sefiroth* play a central role in the subsequent act of creation as “paradigma of divine life” (Scholem 1961:215). They can first of all be considered characteristics or attributes of God (e.g. wisdom, understanding, knowledge etc.). As such they make it possible to think about God. As man has been created after God’s Image, the ten *Sefiroth* can also be found in man’s biological and psychological structure. However, not only man, but the whole universe in all its levels derives its structure from these *Sefiroth*. Therefore it can be maintained that the *Sefiroth* make it possible to think not only about God, but also about mankind and the world.

It is man’s mission to help restore creation to its original harmony. It would take us too far to go into the Chassidic ideas about the creation and Adam’s transgression. In this context it is sufficient to know that according to the Chassidim something happened at the time of the world’s creation: Divine sparks got scattered through the whole creation and the harmonious balance was disturbed. This event is known as the “breaking of the vessels”. Adam had the task to take part in the restoration of that harmony: “if Adam had not fallen into sin on the sixth day, the final redemption would have been brought about on the Sabbath by his prayers and spiritual actions. The Eternal Sabbath would have come and ‘everything would have returned to its original roots’. Instead, Adam’s fall again destroyed the harmony” (Scholem 1961:275). Now it is man’s destiny to act in such a way that the Divine order will be restored. In this, the *Torah* is to show him the way.

Man can take part in this process of restoration because his soul is “truly a part of God above” (Tanya, Ch. 2). Before man’s soul descends on earth, it is near God’s Throne and shares in Divinity. This is called “eating”. The bread that is eaten is *verschämter Brot*, bread that has not been laboured for. However, God has

mercy on the soul and puts it on earth to earn its own bread. Nevertheless the soul can only do something on earth, when given a body. Without matter the soul can do nothing in this world. Once on earth as a human being made of flesh and blood, man will use each single moment well, if wise and aware of his destination.

Clearly, in this theory a very central place has been given to human behaviour in all its aspects (thought, speech, acting). The destiny of the cosmos depends upon man. His behaviour has direct consequences for the whole creation. This becomes clear for instance in the widespread notion that the moment all Jews completely observe a Sabbath twice, the Messianic era shall have dawned.

Once one is fully aware of this most extensive task man is destined for, it is hardly surprising that the Chassidim believe that normally one life is insufficient for a soul to fulfill this task. Therefore reincarnation is an important subject in the Chassidic world view. In a subsequent life the soul can perform those things it was unable to accomplish before. Moreover in a life to come penance can be done for the mistakes of a past life and the fruits of good deeds done in a former life can be enjoyed.

Not all souls depart from the same starting-point. They are "truly a part of God above" and as such they are all equal. Still, a difference is made between high and low souls. The distinction lies in the experiences of the soul in one of the four worlds on his way to incarnation. The three highest worlds, *Atziluth*, *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*, are purely spiritual. The fourth, *Asiya*, is both spiritual and material and identical with this world. A *Zaddik* always has a soul that, before being incarnated, dwelt in one of the higher worlds. Nowadays the souls of most ordinary people, however, descend mostly from (the spiritual part of) *Asiya*. Their capacity to perfection is therefore of a different order than that of people with a higher soul.

It is worthwhile to have a closer look at the way in which the four different worlds are respectively placed. In the first place they are differentiated as *spiritual* (*Atziluth*, *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*) and (partly) *material* (*Asiya*). In the second place *Atziluth* is defined as "near to God". The word *Atziluth* comes from a word *Aytsel*, meaning "near". *Atziluth* has been taken from Divinity itself and knows no creations. Sometimes it is compared to a flame which can light something else without diminishing. The other worlds are, as it were, further removed from God. In *Beriah*

the creation starts with the existence of the angels, be it that they are angels of a higher category than those of *Yetzirah*. The *Yetzirah* angels are again higher than those of *Asiya*. In the third place the worlds are classified in relation to each other in terms of *good* and *evil*. *Atziluth* is only good, *Yetzirah* is half good and half evil, while most of the spiritual part of *Asiya* is evil. Finally a distinction is made between on the one hand *Beriah* and *Yetzirah*, where good exists apart from evil, and on the other *Asiya*, where good and evil exist in a mixed form.

In Chassidic thought a tension clearly exists between God's Transcendence and His Immanence. For on the one hand, God exists entirely apart from His creation, on the other He is present in His creation. It is also remarkable that the Chassidim, facing this dilemma, use a category of entities that do not really belong to the created reality (the human soul and the other entities found in *Atziluth*). Therefore they are on the one hand described as "truly a part of God above" or as "Divinity", but on the other it is emphasized that they are not really identical with God Himself (they are "near God", they find themselves "in front of God's Throne" and "share Divinity").<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it strikes one that the four worlds are placed in relation to each other in terms of near God/far from God, good/evil and spirit/matter, but nearly always in a relative sense. Even *Asiya* is not wholly material, evil, and without God's Presence. The Chassidim avoid thinking in absolute oppositions and prefer to put these distinctions in a continuum. Finally, it is relevant to observe that the contrast God/creation cannot be put under any common denominator. God is not "above" and not "Spirit". He is good but the creation is not bad.

#### *Some basic oppositions*

The concepts good/evil and spirit/matter call for further elaboration as these two oppositions appear to be the most fundamental structuring principles of Chassidic cosmological thought.

Though we used the opposition good/evil in our analysis of the Chassidic ideas about correct behaviour, we have to realize that that opposition has different characteristics when used in connection with the cosmological view. As far as behaviour is concerned, good and evil are antitheses in all respects, whilst the characteristic of cosmological evil is that there is some hidden good in it. It is not a useless category, or, worse, running counter to God's Will, but is created by God Himself. Cosmological evil exists, because so it came up in His Will. It can appear, for in-



stance, in the suffering that man is confronted with during his lifetime. However, this evil is not disconnected from behaviour because it may be a temptation to evil acts: Suffering easily engenders sadness and may bring about insufficient motivation to fulfill the task man has to complete during his lifetime. So evil can engender evil behaviour. But if man confronts this in the proper way and does not give in to temptation, then the hidden good in evil is revealed.

In a certain sense good and evil are present in man in the shape of an inclination to good and an inclination to evil. Here as well the *inclination* to evil should not be identified with evil. The tendency towards evil only becomes evil, when one gives in.<sup>8</sup> He who resists that inclination and acts well, uses evil according to God's intention. So evil is a means to an ultimate end: the restoration of the original harmony. It has been created with a good intention. Hence evil can be seen as concealed good.<sup>9</sup>

The opposition spirit/matter is of a different nature. Never can spirit and matter be placed under the same denominator (except that they are two dimensions of the one creation).

It is impossible to get the right view on the dichotomy spirit/matter and its function in the Chassidic philosophy of life, if it is not related to the idea that the world exists in order to give man the possibility of doing *Mitswoth*. From such a perspective, contempt for material things is out of the question. On the contrary, *Asiya*, the (partly material) world of the deed, is the world that ultimately counts. The other (spiritual) worlds may be higher and nearer to God, they are nevertheless only phases in the act of creation that finds its peak in the creation of a (partly) material world. The reason why the Chassidim attach so much value to matter can be found in their idea that Divine sparks are hidden in the material world.<sup>10</sup> By handling matter properly, the original state of affairs is reached; good and evil are separated from each other; matter is transformed to a higher level and the Divine sparks are brought back to their origin.

If we want to define more precisely the contents of the dichotomy spirit/matter, the most adequate interpretation is perhaps that spirit has a *structuring* function in relation to matter, for the basic structure of matter can only be discerned when the material world is related to the spiritual reality. That principle is for instance affirmed in the idea that there are various spiritual worlds like intermediate phases to *Asiya*.

Therefore the spiritual reality can be characterized as a logical premise to the material. God creates matter through spirit. Some-

thing similar can be observed regarding man's physical structure. The body (in its biological and psychological appearance) has been made out of dust (i.e.: matter), but the form is a reflection of the ten *Sefiroth*. Therefore, the structure of the body originated from a spiritual principle.

In this line of thought lies the concept of the *Klipoth* (shells), a conception derived from the Kabbalah, that occupies a central place in the Chassidic view of the spiritual structure of both the creation and of man who has to undertake his task in that creation. These *Klipoth* are seen as the spiritual sources of all evil and impurity in creation. The Chassidim distinguish four of these shells. They are indicated with the term "the other side" (i.e. of Holiness). Together they form the origin of all evil and impurity. A distinction must however be made between the three outer *Klipoth* and the fourth, the inner *Klipah*. For the outer ones only produce evil and impurity. The fourth *Klipah* is called the translucent *Klipah* because in contrast to the three dark outer ones it glows with something good. It is therefore described as "somewhat good, but mainly bad". This *Klipah* is the spiritual origin of, for instance, the inclination to evil, but also of those tendencies that engender actions which, though not intrinsically good, in any case are not bad either. An example is pity, that can induce a person to help somebody else in order to free himself from the unpleasant feeling created by the other person's wretched state of affairs.

This conception of the four *Klipoth* is a key to a better understanding of man's nature. From the preceding pages it can be seen that the opposition soul/body is very important in Chassidic cosmology. However, this opposition is more complicated than we have suggested so far. As a matter of fact the so-called "Divine" or "holy soul" is meant, whenever the term "soul" is being discussed. But man is also born with a "natural soul" (or "animal soul"), necessary for the bodily functions. The inclination to good is related to the holy soul; the inclination to evil to the natural soul, bearing in mind that the natural soul contains some good elements as well. The relationship between both souls is complicated. On the one hand the holy soul needs the natural soul, because it can only influence the body through the latter. On the other a definite hierarchy presents itself – or in any case should be there. Therefore the holy soul is sometimes compared to the man on horseback, who has to ride his horse – the natural soul – and may be taken by that horse to places he would be unable to reach by himself. Thus it becomes apparent that the

opposition soul-body is not identical with that between spirit and matter. Firstly because the holy soul is beyond the opposition spirit/matter: as “truly a part of God above” it has not been created in the proper sense of being created from nothing. Secondly the body is not exclusively matter, because in its natural soul it has a spiritual component as well. The (holy) soul is the exponent of purposeful, intelligent and good behaviour, aiming to cultivate matter in such a way that it can be brought to its spiritual destination: that is, attaining the place in keeping with its spiritual origin and the invisible hidden spiritual structure of the cosmos. In this endeavour the body is both instrument and object. The rules relevant for handling the material, count as well for the use of one’s own body. If one wants to use it according to its destination, its spiritual structure must not be lost sight of.

Clearly, any contempt for both the material world and the body would be out of place, because matter as an instrument to gaining man’s ultimate destiny is indispensable. The *Torah* teaches that one is supposed to help if one sees that the enemy’s donkey is succumbing under its burden. The word for donkey is *Chamor*. If differently pronounced, it is *Chomer*, meaning matter. In Chassidic circles it is assumed that donkey stands for body and enemy for the inclination to evil. The text is then read as an instruction enabling the body to fulfill the task the holy soul gives it. To that end all bodily functions must be at the soul’s service. Therefore exaggerated fasting and sexual abstinence are strongly opposed.

Bringing things material to their destination means putting them in their proper place, ruling over and controlling them. Each independent manifestation of natural passions and inclinations not governed by the holy soul must be systematically avoided. That is why the Chassidim emphasize the intentional dimension of behaviour and the suppression and control of evil inclinations. Behaviour that is guided by natural passions and emotions stems from a misjudgment of the destination of matter – being a means to an end. It is therefore to be condemned.

### *c. Chassidim and Mithnagdim*

In which respect does the Chassidic worldview differ from that of Mithnagdim? As was said in the introduction, Chassidism did not provide fundamentally new ideas. Scholem rightly says: “No element of Chassidic thought is entirely new, while at the same time everything has somehow been changed” (1961:340). The

cosmology of the Chassidim, as outlined above, is therefore only different in detail from the worldview held by orthodox Judaism outside the Chassidic movement. The theological controversy that had its basis in the confrontation of Chassidim and Mithnagdim is one about details.

The most disputed point was the relation between God and the material world. What irritated the Mithnagdim most was not so much a new doctrine, “but rather the primitive enthusiasm with which it was expounded and the truly pantheistic exhilaration evoked by the belief, that God surrounds everything and pervades everything” (Scholem 1961:347-348).<sup>12</sup> For the principal opponent of the Chassidic movement, Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon, an ardent Kabbalist, known as the Gaon of Wilna (1720-1797), the way in which the Chassidim experienced and expressed their belief, was sufficient reason to accuse the new sect of blasphemy, because they would see God “as residing in material things” (Rabinowicz 1970:59). Against this accusation of pantheism, the Chassidim in turn accused the Gaon of having misunderstood Luria’s idea of *Zimzum*. They were of the opinion that through a misplaced interpretation the Gaon had arrived at the wrong idea of an absolute Transcendence of God and assumed “a real abyss between God and creation” (Scholem 1961:348). It takes us too far to specify the details of this controversy about the interpretation of Luria’s cosmology. Within the scope of this essay it is sufficient to know that, even more than their adversaries, the Chassidim were inclined to stress God’s Immanence.

This preoccupation with God’s Omnipresence also had its effect upon the views they held on the relationship between spirit and matter. For the Chassid matter is the deepest concealment of Divinity. It is his task to cause the Divine sparks, that lie hidden in that matter, to ascend so that they become united with the Infinite Light. That explains why Chassidism stresses the merit in serving God also by means of material things: “even gross matter can serve as a vehicle of Divine worship. Just as there is a significance in spiritual matters – in the *Torah*, prayers and the performance of precepts – in that they serve to elevate the fallen sparks, so there is the same significance in earthly things – eating, drinking, and all kinds of work”. (Horodetsky, cited by Epstein 1959:273). This greater appreciation for every-day work naturally contributed to increase the appeal Chassidism had for those who were unable to dedicate their whole life to the study of *Torah*. Still, the greater attention paid to the material things

did not imply that Chassidism ascribed a positive virtue to the physical enjoyments of life, as Epstein puts it (Epstein 1959:272). Matter remains only a means to an end.

Just how subtle the differences between Chassidim and Mithnagdim were, appears from the Chassidic ideas of asceticism. In the mystic tradition of the Kabbala, asceticism was in high esteem. The purpose of this asceticism was to strengthen the hold of the soul on the body and on the body's actual behaviour. This effect had to be achieved by weakening the body. The Baal Shem Tov, however, was of the opinion that the body had to be strong, because otherwise it would not be able to serve as a vehicle for the soul to fulfill its task properly (cf. Rabinowicz 1970:35). This strengthening of the body should happen in the proper way, namely through *Iskaffia*, that is to say, it has to be done without enjoyment for the sake of enjoyment itself: food, drink, sexual intercourse etc. had to remain what they should be, that is means to an end and never end in itself.

### *3. Chassidim, Mithnagdim and the Douglas thesis*

From the preceding pages it has become clear that a proper evaluation of Douglas's general thesis can be given only if the specific contents of Jewish religious thought is taken into account. To begin with, the basic controversy between Chassidim and their opponents was not the relationship of God and man (as was the case between Catholics and Arians about incarnation) but of God and the world. Secondly, the dichotomy God/world is not a variant of spirit/matter (as Douglas seems to imply), since in orthodox Judaism God is neither spirit nor matter. Finally, the thesis of the superiority of spirit over matter is not incompatible with the assertion that spirit works through matter (which Douglas seems to deny). Rather the controversy discussed in this article is about differences in the emphasis laid on the superiority of the spiritual over the material.

For the sake of the present argument the development of the controversy can be summarized as follows. Within a religious system based on the oppositions of God/world and spirit/matter a theological controversy existed. Each of the opposing groups of Chassidim and Mithnagdim emphasized the real presence of God in this world, and the necessity of using the material only as a means to a spiritual end. The conflict that emerged was about theological details. When focusing on the societal context, it appears to be no accident that a movement which channelled the

feelings of alienation of the masses of ordinary Jews strongly emphasized God's Immanence and the value of matter and body.

This state of affairs seems to contradict Douglas's thesis. Nevertheless, the empirical facts are far from surprising. For the Baal Shem Tov, aiming at a religious revival and resisting the contempt of his fellow-scholars towards the unlearned, could hardly be expected to preach a message stressing the superiority of the spiritual. At best, that would have been attractive to mystics aiming at spiritual perfection. Chassidism, however, offered a perspective that was attuned to the material and spiritual opportunities of the unlettered masses. The road pointed out by the Baal Shem Tov had to be accessible to everyone, and consequently contrasted strongly with the extremely narrow and difficult road of God-knowledge and spiritual perfection which scholars had propagated up till then. Therefore, it was obvious that in the Chassidic cosmology things material would receive a certain rehabilitation.

But also within the context of Douglas's thesis justice can be done to these ideas up to a certain point. To that effect the social position of the scholars and the unlearned – and indeed of the entire Jewish community – must be examined in the context of the wider society.

In 18th century Eastern Europe the relations of the Jews with the outside world were mainly economic and administrative (cf. Dubnow 1927:342-357; 1928:104-111). Social and cultural contacts were minimal.<sup>13</sup> It is therefore the more striking that in the Jewish sub-society the elite consisted of people who were inactive in the economic field. Put differently, those with the most *central* place in the Jewish community occupied the most *marginal* position in the surrounding society. For the unlettered masses the opposite was true. For economic reasons they were compelled to articulate with the surrounding society. Therefore, they had to make themselves familiar with that society and its rules. Although they *felt* just as little at home in that wider society as the scholars, they *were* more at home with it. The ideal of continuous study of the *Torah* and asceticism, propagated by the scholars, was unattainable to them, however. Just because their place in the surrounding society was less marginal than that of their spiritual leaders, they took up a second-rate position within their own community. Thus, the theological controversy between Chassidim and Mithnagdim can be seen as an expression of the tensions between the social categories within the Jewish sub-society which resulted from their differential positions vis-

à-vis the wider society. The Mithnagdim were the exponents of the traditional religious elite; they derived their position up to a certain point from their maximal alienation from the surrounding society. The Chassidic leaders, on the other hand, were the defenders of those who in their own group occupied an inferior position, simply because they could not afford such a degree of alienation.

If we analyze the theological positions of Mithnagdim and Chassidim from this point of view, it can be maintained that the arguments used for disqualifying the opponent ideologically were a reflection of the relationship with the surrounding society. For the attitude of the Chassidim towards the relationship transcendence/immanence, spirit/matter and soul/body, corresponded clearly with the lower degree of alienation which was so characteristic for the social position of the majority of the Jews.

This interpretation evokes questions and cannot be seen as an unambiguous confirmation of Douglas's theory. Why, for example, should the alienation of the wider society clearly be reflected in the theological positions of Chassidim and Mithnagdim, whereas the alienation in relation to one's own society is not expressed in their view-point about the relation spirit/matter? One of the reasons for this paradox might be the ambiguity of the expression "alienation from the wider society". A "twofold alienation" was referred to in the preceding pages. But it is obvious that the unlettered Jews' alienation from their own sub-society differed entirely from that of the Jewish community as a whole with respect to the Christian wider society. In fact these are two completely different phenomena, and there is every reason to ask whether the concepts introduced by Douglas can be used for the complex social situation analyzed in this article. To that effect one should clarify the meaning of alienation, and also what one can be alienated from.

Although more theoretical reflection is beyond the scope of this article, some preliminary remarks can be made. One could argue that the body symbolizes not so much the society as a whole, but more specifically those relations in society which are basic to the physical existence of that society: in short, the socio-economic system. Alienation of the body occurs only when a person, or the group to which he belongs, has been alienated from that specific segment of society. So alienation is a situation in which one is dependent for one's physical existence upon a socio-economic system in which one does not occupy a fixed and legitimate place. Thus defined, there was no alienation *within* the

Jewish society. Rather, the Jews as a whole were alienated from a wider society. They had their own social and religious life but their existence depended upon the position granted to them in the socio-economic system of the wider society. They knew themselves at the mercy of this society and felt "in exile".

This interpretation is, in our opinion, satisfactory, for it clarifies why a conflict which did not originate from a situation of alienation, was symbolically expressed in a theological controversy in which the dichotomy spirit/matter played such an important part. First of all it is no wonder that in the conflict between Chassidim and Mithnagdim the dichotomy spirit/matter came up for discussion, because that dichotomy was anyhow an "insistant theme" within the religious worldview of Jewish orthodoxy. This fact can be seen as an expression of the chronic alienation of the Jewish minority.<sup>14</sup> In the second place, it can be maintained that the controversy between Mithnagdim and Chassidim, though in itself not an expression of alienation, cannot be separated from the state of alienation of the entire Jewish group. For the social basis of this controversy can be found in the different social positions of the scholars and the unlearned. This difference appeared to be related directly to the degree of integration in the socio-economic system of the wider society. We saw how the scholars derived their position from their lesser participation in the socio-economic life of the surrounding society. Indeed, they were more alienated from society than the illiterate. This alienation was theologically expressed by the fact that the Mithnagdim as exponents of the scholar-class were inclined to stress spiritual superiority, while the Chassidim as defenders of the unlettered masses emphasized the value of matter — without denying, however, the superiority of the spiritual.

Of course, this interpretation is but an ad hoc hypothesis designed to adapt Douglas's thesis to a very specific situation. To demonstrate the value of this thesis more convincingly we need a further elaboration of the theoretical concepts, and more empirical studies about similar theological and philosophical controversies. We have to bear in mind that the durkheimian approach as put forward by Douglas is only one of the various possible ways in which such conflicts can be interpreted, and not necessarily the best one. A fruitful debate on the heuristic value of Douglas's ideas, however, requires applications in the field of anthropological research. We hope this article will prove to be a modest but useful contribution to that debate.



## NOTES

- 1 We wish to thank Dr. M.M.G. Bax, Dr. P.L. Geschiere, Dr. R. Schefold, Prof. J.M. Schoffeleers and Mr. A.D. Willemier Westra for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article. Grateful acknowledgement is also made to Rabbi Ing. I. Vorst and Rabbi J. Friedrich for their commentary on our rendering of the Chassidic worldview.
- 2 The contempt the illiterate experienced from the scholars is described by Schneersohn (1956:40-42). In this context Dubnow (1931:63) makes it clear how very unpleasant life was made for ordinary Jews, quoting from pre-Chassidic literature numerous passages about the punishments a sinner could get in the hereafter.
- 3 By Kabbalah is meant the mystic trend within Judaism that culminated in medieval Spain and 16th century Palestine. Mysticism within Judaism was anything but a marginal phenomenon. Hence Epstein can say of the Zohar that it has exercised, after the Talmud, "the profoundest influence in Judaism" (1959:234).
- 4 The Baal Shem Tov had once been asked: "what is the essence of the divine service? Aforetimes the pious fasted from one Sabbath unto the next, and you have abolished that. You have said that he who fasts is a sinner who ultimately will have to stand in judgement". And he answered: "In my view everyone should bring himself into a state of love of G-d, love of Israel, and love of Torah; and there is no need for mortifications" (Schochet 1974:77-78).
- 5 As Douglas's ideas will be tested in the historical situation of 18th century Eastern-European Judaism, this part aims to be an analysis of theological thought as it was to be found at that time in the Chassidic movement. Nevertheless a certain part of the material dates from research done among modern Chassidic groups, especially the Reb Arrelech Chassidim in Jerusalem (cf. Meijers 1977 and 1979). We do not think this is an inconvenience. Certainly, there are differences between modern Chassidism and Chassidism as it was founded by the Baal Shem Tov, as well as between the different Chassidic groups that exist now; but those differences are irrelevant in the context of the very condensed rendering to which we have to confine ourselves here.
- 6 "One of the Chassidic apophthegms would read that sadness and despondency are no sin in and by themselves, yet what they can cause and bring about — even the gravest sins could not do that..." (Schochet 1961:73).
- 7 "Paradoxical though it seems — and the paradox is explained by means of the Lurianic doctrine of *Tzimtzum* — the finite has been endowed with an infinite or transcendental quality. In man it is the Divine soul which partakes in a real way of the nature of God. In nature, too, there are two sources of being: the immanent and transcendental, of which the latter constitutes true reality, whereby man can rise above his natural limitations and establish communication with G-d" (Mindel 1974:11).
- 8 Rabbi Schneur Zalman defines the *Yetzer hara* (the inclination to evil) as a power stemming from the affections (*Middot*) of the animal soul, and like the latter is not essentially evil but rather a neutral driving force; hence it leads itself to sublimation (Mindel 1974:45).
- 9 "Actually the 'evil' is also good, only it is the lowest stage of the perfect

- good . . . When good is being done, then the evil becomes also good. But when, G-d forbid, sin has been committed, then it becomes real evil" (quotation from Tsavaath Rivash in Schochet 1961:140).
- 10 "Es ist ein wichtiges Prinzip dass in allem, was es in der Welt gibt, heilige Funken enthalten sind, sogar in Holz und Stein, und auch in allen menschlichen Handlungen, selbst in der Sünde . . . Wenn der Mensch Busze tut, dann trägt er die Funken, die in der von ihm begangenen Sünde eingeschlossen sind, zu der höheren Welt empor" (Dubnow 1931:100).
  - 11 "The cosmic order of the unholy, or 'other side', likewise comprises four main categories or levels, in an inverted order to the Four Worlds on the side of holiness. They are known as the four *klipot*, of which the last three are called 'completely unholy', while one is called the 'translucent *klipah*', which is predominantly unholy but contains a measure of holiness. It is the transition category between the holy and unholy side, and it is the spiritual counterpart of our physical world" (Mindel 1974:83).
  - 12 Schochet enters more fully into the accusations of pantheism. He explains that the Besht's teachings are fundamentally different from those of Spinoza in which God is limited by the laws of nature. According to him Chassidism starts from "a Panentheism, proclaiming the Solitude of God and dissolving the self-existence of the Universe, the self-existence of Nature" (Schochet 1961:79).
  - 13 This situation was continued in the 19th and 20th century up till the Second World War. Zborowski and Herzog characterize the culture of the *Shtetl* (the small-town Jewish community in Eastern Europe) as follows: "The themes which had characterized the Ashkenasi community of Western Europe continued to develop: isolation from the non-Jewish world and complete penetration of religious precept and practice into every detail of daily life . . . Whether among Poles or Russians, Lithuanians or Hungarians, the Jews retained their ways and their language – responding to the environment, assimilating much of it, integrating it into their way of life, yet keeping the core of their own tradition intact. They spoke Jiddish, wrote and read Hebrew, bargained in broken Polish or Ukrainian." (Zborowski and Herzog 1969:34).
  - 14 Obviously, the dichotomy between spirit and matter plays a much more central role in Jewish religious thought than in Christian theology. At this point orthodox Judaism clearly distinguishes itself from the different variants of "orthodox" Christianity. But it is necessary to distinguish definitely between the *role* this dichotomy plays in theological thinking and the *contents* that is given to it. If we look at the nature of the relation between spirit and matter then it strikes one that Chassidism no less than Christianity starts from the "necessity to mingle spirit and matter". Where the relationship God/world or God/man is concerned, the Chassidic view goes even much further than both the (ecumenical) dogma of incarnation – in *each* person lives the holy soul as "truly a part of God above" – and the (Roman-Catholic) dogma of transsubstantiation – in the *whole* material world Divine sparks are present. The ideas about God's Immanence as developed in Judaism would undoubtedly have been rejected as blasphemous in the Christian societies in which the Jews lived . . . if they had been taken notice of. However, they were not noticed, because Jews and Christians, though living within the same society, lived in different religious symbolic universes.

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