

I Introduction

This monograph is an attempt at an anthropological analysis of a Philippine myth. It is a pioneering and exploratory work, and does not pretend to be the final word on the subject.

Myths are succinct statements by a culture about its core concepts. Myths are symbolic statements, held in the hands of individual narrators, and as such potentially told in as many versions of what the recorder-analyst (it is hard to see how the two could be different persons) must translate into universally comprehensible statements about the culture that produced these myths.

The study of Philippine mythology is still on a level comparable to the collection of bows and arrows in early ethnology. Whatever work has been done beyond collecting, i.e., methodologically acceptable collecting, has been in terms of general classifications and attempts at interpretation inspired by the Propp-Dundes tradition. A reflection of later anthropological advances is hardly detectable.

1. An Exercise in Myth Analysis

This study is an exercise in myth analysis. Such an enterprise is not only of great interest because myths are – to use a mining metaphor – instances of high grade cultural material; it is also a challenge because the extraction of the precious contents from this ore can be done successfully only with the greatest effort and care. As in the treatment of certain types of ore, a good deal of guesswork is involved in the analysis of myths.

Like other instances of human behavior – and mineral ore, for that matter – the empirical form in which myths present themselves is not of a nature that immediately reveals its full meaning or content. To begin with, the text rarely consists of a neat, well rendered sequence of edited sentences, uniformly rendered by the average adult of the community. Rather, as rendered empirically, the myth is never narrated the same way, not even by the same individual. In each narration there may be omissions and changes in the order of events, aside from the presence of standard variants which by now we have come to accept as part of the nature of things. In the case of the myth that is the subject of this study, we have the further difficulty of having to deal with various attempts at syncretisms of two or more myths by the different narrators.

Once the syncretic problem is resolved, the real issue is one of methodology. Myths, like other cultural material, are “imaginative works built out of social materials” (Geertz 1973, 449). The purpose of this study is to give as complete an analysis of two related northern Kalinga creation myths, together, in their syncretic form, referred to as the “Buntuk origin myth,” as my knowledge of the life experiences of the people who tell the myths, and my skills at analysis, permit. This means that I will draw on the social structural, cultural/semantic and ecological contexts of the myth, as well as psychoanalytic theory. The myth seems to demand a certain structuralist approach which I will follow wherever it may (or may not) lead. My basic interests lie, however, with what is generally called the semiotic approach.

The main symbol in the Buntuk origin myth is sexual intercourse. This study shall look at the meanings of those sexual relations which carry great significance in local life. What the myth seems to be all about is a statement about human nature, both ontological and moral, as the Buaya and their neighbors experience it and conceive of it. The work presented here is, therefore, an instance of cultural interpretation, or the comprehensive interpretation – looking into all suggested relationships with the rest of culture – of a single empirical piece of cultural material, a myth.

Whatever theoretical import the present study may have is almost purely accidental. The steps taken will reveal my own level of understanding of what myth analysis is or should be all about. Of course, what one does oneself, and believes to be right, he loves to see confirmed in the practice of others. My own preferences should reveal themselves in the section on review of literature and in various parts of the study. I will neither defend nor refute explicitly certain approaches. Rather, let this analysis speak for itself.

2. Myth Collecting: Its Problems

The texts from which the myth is reconstructed are potentially as numerous as the adult and pre-adult members of the communities whose myth it is. There are no special occasions on which the myth is told; it can be related and heard by all at any time. From an early age, all know about the myth, but many will direct the collector to a few individuals who are generally considered to know the myth better. These individuals, it is generally agreed, can narrate the myth in more detail and with a greater degree of authority (based on acceptance) than others. This respect for certain narrators is partly based on the relative confidence with which they narrate the myth, the relative completeness of the narration, the quality of their prose, the age of the narrator, and other qualities of these persons that make their versions more authoritative

and satisfying to the listeners. Consequently, those versions, or elements in them, that received universal or near-universal rejection were not always retained as worthwhile data, and will not be presented here.

The people of this community, as well as neighboring communities, do not seem bothered by the existence of different versions. Similar variations can also be found in the description of the cosmos and in the performance of rituals. Each narrator bases his or her version on the authority of an ancestor, usually a grandparent, from whom the version, as told, is said to have been learned. There is, of course, substantial agreement in all the versions, but some of the differences are quite striking to the outside observer.

Faced with the same problem of myth collecting (and analysis) among the Australian aborigines, Stanner (1966, 84) noted: "There is no univocal version of the Kunmanggur myth; nor, indeed, in my opinion, of any aboriginal myth." Fully aware that the variations are numerous, Stanner mentions such causes and motivations as "forgetfulness, lack of interest, mentality, prejudice and notion of what a questioner wishes to hear, or should be told, ... jealousy, shame, a desire to shine, and an unfathomable malice" (86). In the present case, some narrators, even good narrators, were found to start their narration at any point in the general sequence of the myth, and jump to other episodes as these came into their minds. All these sources of variation, and others similar to them, are common knowledge. A narrator never tells the myth twice in exactly the same manner.

It is the analyst's task, then, to find his way through this maze of variations. He has to make decisions and cannot let them rest on mere intuition or the degree of unarticulated empathy the collector has (or claims to have reached) with the people's mentality. As Stanner (84) noted, "the variations do indeed have inspirations and a logic of their own." He adds that "the complexity of the myth or those elements of human frailty referred to above are not the more important causes of variation," and he focuses on "the dramatic potential" of the myth, which makes it "variably open to development by men of force, intellect and insight," suggesting further that this is part of the process by which mythopoeic thought nurtures and is nurtured" (85). This, however, leaves many questions unanswered.

Stanner, and most others, will agree that a successful analysis should be able to account for all the popularly acceptable variants in a manner that is more sophisticated than superficial knowledge of the culture or a mechanistic approach in the form of some statistical or common denominator formula. Stanner is close to the solution of the problem when he refers to the process of myth making, saying that, "Mythopoeic thought is probably a continuous function of aboriginal mentality, especially of the more gifted and imaginative minds, which are not few" (85). He ends his discourse quite lamely, however: "The

anthropologist is thus under a practical necessity to decide on a version, and under a moral and intellectual duty to decide what is representative. But his decision is also one of art" (86).

We will come closer to a firm basis for such decisions if we can arrive at a better understanding of the process of myth making. The Australian aborigines quite appropriately call it "the dreaming" when they refer to the mythical past as the ground and source of all things. Perhaps an analogy with certain elements in dream-work will permit us to detect a better and more solid ground for the necessary decisions that must be made as we face those variants that go deeper than mere alternatives which are in the nature of common synonyms. It should be rather empiricist to assume that all the variants, just because they are there and have adherents, are expressions of the same level of discourse. They all do have value and importance, as we shall see, but not for what they literally say. In their literal meaning they may actually come close to contradicting each other. Yet, all of them are true.

Since for the sake of 'credibility and factuality' it would be both impossible and irrelevant to collect all the possible variants of the myth, I collected the versions of as many as a dozen middle-aged and old adults. All of these persons were considered by their village mates as more reliable informants. My own growing familiarity with the myth made me progressively confident that I had a fair representation of the major variants. In addition, I consulted two dozen persons more, whom I had come to know as rather knowledgeable about custom and belief, and also about these narrations and their variants.

The collection of this myth was done mainly during two periods of field work, one from October 1964 until December 1966, and the other from July to October 1971. It was further followed up with occasional contacts in the years that followed, and again more intensely from November 1975 until May 1977 through a trained assistant.

That the people under study do not have their scribes who might attempt to streamline their oral traditions has for advantage that their religion is not bookish. Actually, the biblical scribes did not do too well in their selection and editorial work, and had forged what appears to have been a quite varied tradition of oral literature into a single, artificial, official version which by this very nature hampers analysis. When oral literature can be recorded in its multivariate expression, as so many attempts to say the same thing, it is more accessible to analysis.

3. Review of Literature

Many authorities could be cited in support of most of the opinions expressed in this monograph. Such an enterprise would be pedantic and boring. As one reads around a topic or problem, one inevitably

picks up new ideas which are not always annotated. In this section I intend to refer especially to the more striking influences on my thinking, and those authors with whom I am in greater sympathy.

Field Methods

In the section on myth collecting, I discussed Stanner (1966). Kenneth S. Goldstein (1964) devoted an entire essay to research methods in mythology, and has a good deal of good advice to give. I may also refer to E. Arsenio Manuel (1975), where he discusses the level of scholarship that has gone into the collection and analysis of oral literature in the Philippines. Manuel has a few studies to recommend, and offers his own solid criteria of scholarship. As I now see, I have not always followed his advice myself, as when he demands a biography of each of the story tellers.

Formalism

As we look back in time, most folkloristic work has been done outside anthropology, by humanists. Inside anthropology, its development was carried by the general theoretical orientation of the time, from Boas's painstaking collection of texts to Levi-Straussian formalism.

During the past half century or more, considerable effort has been made toward a systematic treatment of oral literature, both inside and outside anthropology, as summarized in Dundes (1965). Of particular interest outside the anthropological tradition is Propp (1968; originally written in 1927), who greatly influenced Dundes's (1964) work. These and other scholars attempted to push analysis beyond mere interest in the tracing of geographical origins of tales, or their classification, to a study of their form or structure. In due time they became known as formalists or structuralists. Their interest was to find common structures in folktales, which structures became empty skeletons, consisting of strings of motifs whose meanings became ever more abstract and meaningless as they were stretched to accommodate more and more tales. This reminds us of the fruitless efforts in anthropology to arrive at empirical universals. These humanist scholars, like the anthropologists just referred to, created a monster—a hybrid of empiricism and nationalism. Aside from this, Dundes himself had many good things to say in connection with the study of oral literature. A careful selection from among his numerous articles was published in book form (Dundes 1975). On the whole, it seems that the Propp tradition has exhausted its usefulness for modern myth analysis.

The humanist tradition has largely remained untouched by developments in anthropology. One example of an honest attempt at interdisciplinary contact can be found in Kirk (1970). I can here also

mention in passing that I have profited much from the lectures and writings of Mircea Eliade (mainly 1963 and elaborations in numerous other works) although I cannot agree with his theological bias which unfortunately is also shared by Jensen (1963).

In anthropology, the approaches to myth analysis (and folklore generally) have been mainly of three kinds: psychological, sociological and cultural. The psychological approach draws mainly on psychoanalytic theory; the sociological approach seeks links with the social structure; and the cultural approach studies the ideational or semantic context of the tale. These three analytical systems are, of course, intimately related in every culture, and the three approaches, as identified here for the sake of discussion, are matters of emphasis rather than exclusiveness. The modal personality system, the social structure, and the cultural system (models of reality and related value orientations) are not independent variables to each other, although their analytical distinction facilitates interpretation. Other aspects worthy of investigation for better understanding are, of course, the ecological and historical ones.

Approaches from Psychology: Symbols

From the psychological point of view, most of the help has come from the work and theories of Jung and Freud, especially the latter. Most of the advancement in analysis through the application of psychoanalytic theory has come from Freud's (1938) work on dreams. His followers (e.g., Roheim 1971, 7-8) saw myths (and other religious phenomena) as related to day-dreams. This early insight is of great theoretical importance. In daydreams there is a good deal of conscious control over the ordering of events and the choice of symbols, because an amount of feedback from external reality is being introduced. The most important consequence of this basic fact is that in myth analysis we may shift back and forth between the conscious and unconscious levels (or between "myth-content" and "myth-thought," to paraphrase Freud's terminology) with a certain frequency and confidence, as the analysis demands it. In other words, unlike in dreams generally, the surface structure and the deep structure are intimately interwoven. This is the theoretical formulation of Levi-Strauss's early, intuitive and insightful, but exaggerated, claim that in myths form and content are the same. Yet the same mechanisms of condensation, displacement, fission, etc. are present.

Modern advance in the understanding of the diverse processes of symbol formation (i.e., of "true" symbols, or symbols in the psychoanalytic sense) beyond the simple repression theory (Jones 1961)

are summarized in Donadeo (1974). His report on a discussion of a group of experts concludes:

Symbols, in the psychoanalytic sense, do not have a primary communicative function, and though communication is a later linguistic derivative, symbols are not designed to communicate the unconscious component of the symbol, but rather result in the opposite. (Donadeo 1974, 101)

But as mentioned earlier, because of the strong resemblance between myths and daydreams, this notion needs to be qualified when symbol analysis in myths (and, by extension, other cultural material) is concerned. The community exercises a certain amount of control over myth symbols and their content, so the community is generally – though not deeply and not always – more aware of the symbols’ meanings.

Contemporary psychoanalytic theory still sustains the original notion that “early childhood experiences and individual reactions to them are the determining sources of symbolism” (Donadeo 1974, 84), with the qualification that “these early experiences are continuously being filtered through a progressively developing and maturing ego” (87). These primary ideas of life, according to Jones, pertain to the bodily self (any part of it), the family (especially nuclear family relations), birth (giving birth, begetting, being born), death (death of others; permanent absence), and love (sexuality as treated in Freud’s theory of sex). Jones further adds: “The field of sexual symbolism is an astoundingly rich and varied one, and the vast majority of all symbols belong to this category” (Jones 1961, 103).

Percy Cohen (1969) summarizes these “elementary facts of life” into: incest (its dangers and attractions); infantile sexual curiosity (often linking sexuality with aggression, and confusing different bodily functions); the process of physical and psychological incorporation and expulsion; the fear of abandonment and destruction; yearning for admission and readmission; and rivalry between parent and child, and between siblings.

These primary ideas are astoundingly few and are enumerated here because most if not all will turn up in the analysis. None of them were “found” in the myth because Jones and Cohen say they should be there; actually, I had forgotten about this passage in Jones, and Cohen’s article did not come to my attention until the analysis was already well advanced.

The first clue as to the psychoanalytic content of the myth was given me by Terence Turner during a conversation in 1969. His analysis of the Oedipus myth (T. Turner 1970) is interesting mainly for two reasons: first, his critique of Levi-Strauss’s analysis of the same myth, which I will discuss later; and, second, his reference to layers of meanings

in myths. As far as I know, he was the first person to call our attention to the social-structural (kinship and polity) meaning of the myth. The meaning of myths, he points out, is not exhausted by discovering their psychoanalytic content. The symbols in myths, like symbols in other forms of expressive culture, are over-determined, i.e., various meanings are condensed in a single symbol. They have social structural (notably political) referents even though the images by which they are expressed may come from relations in the nuclear family as well as the ecology. A good example of political overtones may be found in the Oedipus tale.

This makes the study of the larger social system, the cultural semantics, and knowledge about the society's natural environment and history, inevitable. Then, also, sheer intuitive guesswork will be avoided and the claim to scientific work sustained. The interpretation of a myth must be anchored, not in some logic thought up by the analyst, but in the knowledge of the total experience of the community whose cultural product it is. A myth needs to be analyzed in its ethnographic context. (Hence, the limited value of collections of tales as such.)

Continuing the discussion of the properties of symbols, they not only have the multiple referents referred to above, either conscious or unconscious, but they can further be distinguished according to the idiosyncratic, parochial (culture-specific) or universal nature of the ideas they represent. In myths, idiosyncratic content is assumed to be absent, since it is the community that owns and sanctions the myth, and therefore approves of its content. Whatever variants there are, are still accepted by the collector for the very reason that they are held by sections of the community, and not by individuals.

Jones (1961, 102) stressed that where the number of symbols is potentially infinite, the ideas (excluding scientific ones, of course) they convey are quite limited in number. We probably may postulate further, with Jones, that the majority (three- fourths?) of these are the same all over the world, i.e., universal. How else, we may reason, could communication between cultures and translation be possible?

Anthropologists have always trained their attention to the detection of these universal and culture-specific ideas. However, they have usually limited themselves to the conscious content of symbols (including those in oral literature). This is best illustrated in the otherwise excellent work of Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz. It should by now be obvious that to limit oneself to the conscious content of symbols is to come home with less than the whole story. While analysis of the phenomenological variety can do a quite effective job in the cultural interpretation of social interaction, this same approach cannot get us very far in the interpretation of mythologies, cosmologies and ritual behavior (see Levi-Strauss 1963b and 1963c), and similarly limits our insight, we may assume, into all other forms of expressive culture.

Still in connection with the property of multivocality of symbols, V. Turner (1965, 86-87; 1971, 9-12) points out two distinct levels of reference in symbols, one ideational (“normative,” “cognitive-ideological”) and the other cathectic (“orectic,” “physiological”). We could also refer to these properties of symbols as their cue (ideas) and drive (evocative) properties. On the cathectic side, symbols satisfy deep emotions and drives. But symbols are quite arbitrary, so that we do not always know which drives are involved in the cathexis of a symbol. Yet, we have to know this if we are to understand its meaning for the person, which may be unconscious. For example, a political or religious symbol could be cathected by a sex drive.

Another consequence of the fact that symbols can have multiple connotations and denotations is that these multiple meanings may reinforce as well as contradict each other. Hence, the notion of polarity in symbols. For example, fire (or the color red) may in one context mean warmth and vitality, in another destructive passion. Both meanings may apply simultaneously on different levels, in a single instance.

Turner further suggests that symbols lose their impact when the bond between the affective and cognitive poles is broken for whatever historical reason. In northern Kalinga, for example, the color wine-red (*alimit*) is shunned nowadays. This is directly related to the discontinuance of headhunting and its ideology. Psychoanalytic theory would probably want to relate it to different childhood experiences, which I did not investigate. What is important to remember here is that not all drives and emotions are instinctual. Some are learned. The cultural imperative and the emotional desire or need to kill has fast been waning in northern Kalinga.

In sum, as far as its relevance to myth analysis is concerned, psychoanalytic theory is in agreement on several points (see Donadeo 1974, 99-101):

1. That symbols have strong affective charges derived from their unconscious and instinctual sources;
2. That symbols present an intense resistance against becoming conscious; they are not designed to communicate the unconscious component of the symbol, but rather result in the opposite (with this qualification: that in mythology there is more feedback between their conscious and unconscious contents, or, more consciousness of their contents);
3. That early childhood experiences and individual reactions to them are the determining sources of symbolism; and that these primary ideas retain their importance in the unconscious throughout life (keeping in mind that for myths this applies only to common experiences);

4. That symbol formation begins with memory traces of sensations, objects, and experiences of frustration and/or gratification, and includes the blocking of need tensions (e.g., hunger), the advent of conflict, the institution of repression in the perceptual sphere and alterations of consciousness, sensory deprivations as well as overstimulation of the sensory apparatus, and the concomitant development of ego functions;

5. That symbolism is a process spanning the full range of developing ego structure and functions, from rudiments of organization of perceptions in earliest life to the highest levels of abstraction and secondary processes. It is a continuum with symbols acquiring ever new and different additional meanings at each succeeding stage and level of development of personality and character. (Again, this needs to be modified in terms of common community experiences, and not of idiosyncratic ones.)

Sociological and Cultural Theories

Sociological theories of myth have tended to see them, as well as other cultural material, as reflections of the social structure. A good example of this is John Middleton's *Lughara Religion* (1960). As such they then serve to sustain this reality. They are viewed, for example, by Leach (1965, 14) as "symbolic statements of the social order." An early leader in the tradition of cultural interpretation was Malinowski: "Myth fulfills in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth ... is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom" (1948, 101). Much of this was inspired by the late Durkheim: "...the mythology of the group is the system of beliefs common to this group. The traditions whose memory it perpetuates express the way in which society represents man and the world; it is a moral system and a cosmology as well as a history. . . . a man is sure of his faith when he sees to how distant a past it goes back and what great things it has inspired" (1961, 419-420).

Durkheim was reacting to the early intellectualist tradition in anthropology which, indeed, presented a very shallow explanation for myth content and myth function. Frazer and Taylor, for example, saw in myth explanations of social realities or natural phenomena, but presented them mainly through the process of introspection. As theories of myth, they were cultural theories, but of an intellectualist slant. (Modern cultural interpretation of myth is mostly in the hands of structuralists, to whom I must return later.) Another cultural theory, of more recent date, is the view of Cassirer (1961) that myth-making is some kind of irrational activity of the mind (unlike science and

philosophy, which are disciplines), and must be treated as such. This view has little to contribute to our contemporary efforts at understanding myths.

In this review of the main types of theory of myth, the psychological, the sociological and cultural, I have concentrated mostly on the first for the simple reason that it is the least popular among anthropologists. What is actually needed is a comprehensive approach that does not leave out any of these, for they are not exclusive of each other but complementary, as long as their positive contributions to the interpretation of myth material are retained as bases for future work. In existing analyses, when one of these approaches is stressed, the others are not entirely neglected, so that they tend to appear together whatever the scholar's particular bent.

The Structure of the Tale

The modern study of myths has also been inspired by advances in linguistics, notably de Saussure's (1959, 13 and *passim*) distinction between *langue* (language) and *parole* (speech), or language as a set of rules on the one hand which regulate speech on the other. Applied to myths, analysts have come to distinguish between the synchronic (paradigmatic, *langue*) aspect of a myth text and its diachronic (syntagmatic, *parole*) aspect; in other words, a distinction between the story (the syntagm) and the ideas (the paradigm) that govern it. In his classic analysis of the Oedipus myth, Levi-Strauss (1963a) attempts to demonstrate that the diachronic aspect or the sequence of events is of no significance in myth analysis. T. Turner (1970, 26-32; see also Carroll 1978) has produced a brilliant critique of this analysis, and in effect shows how Levi-Strauss let himself be led by his extreme intellectualism. Where Propp neglected the paradigmatic aspect, Levi-Strauss neglects the syntagmatic.

The paradigmatic aspect of a myth—which remains the more important one—will be better understood if the syntagmatic aspect is taken into account. To neglect the latter completely is to court lapses into formalism and introspection. As T. Turner (1970) claims, the paradigmatic content is constant throughout the myth, and it is that constant of givens against which the story evolves in its consecutive episodes. On the other hand, Freilich's (1975) notion that the meaning of symbols changes during the course of a myth narrative does not seem to be validated (De Raedt 1976). Instead, the meaning of the symbols, and their relations (or the paradigmatic structure), progressively reveals itself in the course of the story's development.

The sequence of episodes in the narrative is not diachronic in the sense of historical time. Myths are structured, and lead to inevitable results, while history is more of a random process in the sense that both

past and current events do not lead to an inevitable future. Myths are about events set in a diachronic sequence, but they describe this unique sequence of past events in terms of a synchronic model that is valid for all time. The unchangeable synchrony and the structuredness of the diachrony exhibit two important differences between myth and history.

Since Levi-Strauss is the dominant figure in contemporary myth analysis, a few further comments about his approach may be in order. One general critique is that he never put his methodology into a single coherent statement. Critics further generally agree that there is a lot of ambiguity in his method, that he does not follow his own advice consistently, and that all too often the results of his analysis are impossible to verify. More specific observations can be found in a literature that by now is almost impossible to keep track of. The avalanche started in the late sixties after a long and wary silence. See, for example, Leach (1967), Geertz (1967), and Hayes and Hayes (1970). Nathhorst (1970) gives a generally penetrating critique of Propp, Dundes, Levi-Strauss and Leach, but makes the surprising claim (44, 51) that people should be conscious of the entire meaning of their myths. Also worth noting, and available to me, are the sharp critique of Raoul and Laura Makarius (1973), and the more even-handed volume edited by Rossi (1974). Boon (1972) wrote in support of Levi-Strauss and structuralism, while Sperber (1975) gives a more comprehensive study of symbolism. General introductions to structuralism are Lane's (1971) reader, and the more recent digests by Pettit (1975) and Leach (1976).

The Functions of Myth

Under the influence of functionalism, we read about "functions" of myths. The functions of myth could again be classified according to the three main approaches in analysis: the psychological, the sociological and the cultural. Again these three occur simultaneously in the work of single authors, with various emphases. In the past, the cultural functions have often been referred to in either psychological or sociological terms. Culture as an analytical system was late in emerging in anthropology and the other social sciences.

Purely psychological functions are either affective or conative. (The cognitive function coincides with the cultural.) Among the affective functions most commonly mentioned are wish fulfillment (Freud), catharsis (e.g., of fear), and an outlet for anti-social wishes and emotions. Among the conative functions we read about the individual's use of a myth to persuade others about the desirability or appropriateness of a particular course of action (Malinowski), or a narrator's telling of a tale to ingratiate himself with an audience.

In social anthropology, functionalism (Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown) has seen the main function of myth in overcoming divisive tendencies

in society. Myth, like ritual, is seen as strengthening solidarity and cohesion.

On the cognitive or cultural level, psychologists see myth as stimulating the maturation of personality by providing the hearer more knowledge about himself and his relation to his social and natural environment. Sociologists see myths as inducing the individual to accept social restrictions and obligations (e.g., Malinowski 1948, 146). Students of culture in the more restricted sense of a system of ideas see myths as addressing themselves to the problems of meaning (see Geertz 1966, 12-24).

“Symbolic narratives, in short, represent cultural models for coping with typical patterns of subjective stress involved in the orientation of individuals to problematic situations in their social and cultural orders” (T. Turner 1970, 35-36).

The Interpretation of Symbols

Myths are symbolic statements in the fullest sense. They are replete with “true” symbols (in the psychoanalytic sense). The first objective in the treatment of myth is, of course, interpretation or analysis. The most formal statement as to what goes into the interpretation of symbols has come from V. Turner (1964; 1965; 1971), with application to ritual. However, Turner hardly touches upon psychoanalytic content or the unconscious as essential material for the purpose of interpretation. Geertz (1972), writing for a *Daedalus* issue entitled “Myth, Symbol and Culture,” analyzes a secular ritual, cockfighting. Early in the article he makes extensive reference to the sexual symbolism of Balinese fighting cocks, but the real analysis of the cockfight is cultural, and is set in a socio-cultural context. In his words: “The cocks may be surrogates for their owners’ personalities, animal mirrors of psychic form, but the cockfight is – or more exactly, deliberately is made to be – a simulation of the social matrix . . . in which its devotees live. And as prestige . . . is perhaps the central driving force in the society, so also . . . is it of the cockfight” (18-19).

In this single paragraph, Geertz moves from the psychological to the social structural, and on to the cultural. His main interest remains the latter, “social semantics” (26). He states: “Attending cockfights and participating in them is, for the Balinese, a kind of sentimental education. What he learns there is what his culture’s ethos and his private sensibility (or, anyway, certain aspects of them) look like when spelled out internally in a collective text” (27).

My interpretation of the Buntuk origin myth demanded the constant fusion of psychological social-structural and cultural material. If anything, the psychological was not given due attention in both research and analysis – due to incompetence. This sort of limitation in

anthropology is generally accepted by the profession and was discussed at length in Gluckman (1964).

Based on my own experience with the Buntuk myth, an adequate analysis of myth material makes the following data extremely useful if not indispensable:

1. The collection of all the variants.
2. The people's own comments on the text. Of special usefulness are the associations informants make during these discussions. These associations, as in psychotherapy, often come spontaneously, and so, we must allow enough time to let them occur. For example, during a conversation with a middle-aged, widowed woman in the neighborhood, I expressed my puzzlement why women should not eat beef. She shot back immediately: "Have you not seen cows running with their tails up in the air?" The phallic symbolism, which I had suspected to be the orectic basis for the prohibition of most tabooed foods (none of which are from the plant world) was confirmed. The spontaneous outburst made it all the more true.
3. A judicious application of the principles of universal symbolism in the psychoanalytic sense. The average anthropologist (like myself) is not capable of gathering psychoanalytic data that are culture-specific.
4. Other myths and oral literature dealing with related topics.
5. Other expressive culture, notably ritual and cosmology.
6. Ultimately, a deep grounding in the social and cultural context of the myth, i.e., the social structure, the semantic fields related to the myth's content, specifics of the people's customs when related to the myth (e.g., details about fishing methods, notions about certain taboos). Since the myth does not of itself suggest which knowledge about the community and customs, and general ecology is relevant, myth analysis (like other anthropological analysis) can come only after a long period of exposure.