

Thunder, Blood and the Nicknaming
of God's Creatures

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Paul Schebesta (1929 : 87) has described how one night in central Malaya in a forest encampment he awoke during a violent storm to find the Semang, a nomadic Negrito people with whom he was living, terrified and in turmoil. As the thunder crashed overhead a Semang woman agitatedly stabbed at her shin with a piece of bamboo until the blood poured from it. A little of this blood, mixed with rain water, she then sprinkled on the earth; the rest she scattered towards the skies as in a fearful voice she pleaded with the storm to have done.

This sacrificial act, in which blood taken from the leg is offered to a thunder-god in expiation of sin, is, as Rodney Needham, a social anthropologist, has recently (1964) pointed out in a stimulating paper also found among an entirely distinct nomadic people in Borneo, the Penan.

Associated elements include strict taboos against the burning of leeches and the mockery of certain animals, acts which (it is said) bring down the revengeful fury of the thunder-god who in his rage uproots trees and

turns the guilty into stone.

Needham's paper is dedicated to the memory of C.G. Jung and in his attempt to account for the symbolic behaviours common to the Semang and the Penan Needham makes use of some Jungian concepts which are of a transempirical kind. There are certain objects, claims Needham (he instances stone, blood, fire, water and tree), which (p. 147) :

"...make a primordial impress upon the unconscious mind of man as a natural species producing an affective response which is as natural to the organism (to its distinctive brain) as the motor language of bees or the phototropism of marigolds is natural to other realms of life."

These objects, says Needham, are natural symbols.

I do not wish on this occasion to subject Needham's formulations to critical analysis beyond noting that they do virtually nothing to explain the meaning of the symbols and the ritual behaviours with

which they are associated. In lieu of explanation we are merely presented with the assertions that some symbols are natural, primordial and universal.

This explanatory vacuousness would seem to be quite acceptable to Needham for he tells us (p. 147) that when we find natural symbols associated

"we are not confronted with a special problem, for by their very essence this concomitance is what we should expect, or at very least, be perfectly prepared to encounter."

In other words, symbols are simply there, taking the forms that they do, a self-evident part of nature, and the anthropologist's task, it would seem, is no more than to record them in a superficial way. Thus, Needham's statements about natural symbols, expressed though they are in impressive language, end in mere reiteration of what is descriptively known and do nothing to explain why the bizarre ritual beliefs and practices of the Semang and the Penan should take the forms they do.

The principal shortcoming of Needham's approach is his failure to recognize that symbol formation involves the psychological process of projection; that is, in symbol formation an object has meaning projected on to it by one or more human beings. Symbol formation thus follows a course which is the converse of that proposed by Needham.

Objects, as such, do not mystically impress themselves on the human mind, rather they are there in the external world available to have meaning projected on to them by virtue of the varied properties they happen to possess.¹

In this paper I propose to look upon the ritual beliefs and practices of the Semang and other

¹ As Freud notes (1915-16, ii : 153), "a symbolic relation is a comparison of a quite special kind." Thus, it is common for a single object or phenomenon to have a multiplicity of symbolic meanings. For example, fire one of the 'natural symbols' listed by Needham, has been used to symbolize such diverse things as : sexual passion, anger, fertility, hatred, purification, envy, spiritual energy, aggression Cf. Footnote 16.

peoples as parts of projective systems, and my intention will be to interpret symbols wherever this seems warranted. In so doing I shall rely on the general framework of psychoanalytic discovery and theory, but I shall also make extensive use of ethnographic data in a comparative way. This is justifiable, I would contend, when it is realized that we are dealing with projective systems. Despite the great diversity of human cultures all humans belong to the same species and the members of different cultures all share common bodily, emotional and inter-personal experiences. This means that much of what is projected in any culture is based on common human experience, and on this level the symbols of quite separate cultures may be fruitfully compared.

In the ritual behaviour of the Semang and the Penan there is, plainly, rich material for analysis. The questions it gives rise to are many, and Needham at the end of his paper poses two of them. "Why," he asks,

"is the blood taken from the leg?" And what, "to stretch out this cryptic matter to a new extent", did Hamlet mean when he "charged it to Ophelia as an offence in women, that they did 'nickname God's creatures'?"

These are excellently pertinent questions, for the first makes the point that explanations of symbolic behaviour, if they are to be adequate, must be detailed and specific; while the second reminds us that we are dealing with what Needham calls a "comparative issue", and that our explanations might be hoped to have some kind of general applicability to phenomena that are obviously similar. What I want to do is to try to answer these and some related questions.

Schrader (1909 : 33) has classed the thunder clash as a natural phenomenon "which agitates most powerfully the feelings of mankind." Of this there can be no doubt. Indeed, there is comparative evidence that agitation at the thunder clash has been a reaction of members of the human species for many hundreds of

thousands of years. Thus, Jane Goodall (1963 : 301) has described how wild chimpanzees in Tanganyika become highly excited during thunder-storms, charging down slopes, hooting clamorously, slapping the ground, tearing branches off trees and hurling themselves through the air. During one severe thunder-storm, indeed, David Greybeard (one of Miss Goodall's wild chimpanzee companions) became truculent : hooting loudly, he danced about in an agitated state hitting trees and finally Miss Goodall herself.

Miss Goodall (1963 : 289) has also described the calls of chimpanzees.

"One call," she observes, "given in defiance of a possible predator, or when a chimpanzee, for some reason, is angry at the approach of another, can be described as a loud 'wraaaaah'.

This is a single syllable, several times repeated, and is one of the most savage and spine-chilling sounds of the African forest."

The remarkable behaviour of wild chimpanzees during storms requires explanation, and I would propose the ethological hypothesis that the noise of the thunder sufficiently resembles the threatening roar of the chimpanzee species as to produce a state of excitement in the animals hearing it, and to release in them, fearful and aggressive responses.²

This, it will be seen, is a rudimentary form of projective response, and it is likely that human projective beliefs about thunder-storms have been evolved from a similar kind of emotional response in the proto-hominids.

In ancient times (as still among some contemporary peoples) it was widely believed that thunder-storms were manifestations of the revengeful wrath of a god. When Jehovah commanded Moses to climb to the top of Mt. Sinai, there were thunders and lightning on the

²Cf. the behaviour of my neighbour's Samoyed dog whose howling response is released by the distant sound of the siren of the local fire-engine.

mountain (Exodus 20 : 16); and in Psalms (78 : 48-49) and elsewhere we are told how Jehovah "in the fierceness of his anger, wrath and indignation destroyed flocks with his hot thunderbolts," and by thundering upon them would break to pieces his adversaries (I Samuel 2 : 10). Allah, the Koran (13, 1 : 13) tells us, "sends the thunderbolts and smites with them whom he pleases." Adad, the thunder-god of the Assyrians and Hittites (Blinkenberg 1911 : 52), "overwhelmed the regions of the foe, lands and houses alike, by thundering over them and making flames of fire rain down upon them." Zeus, Jupiter, Indra, Thor and a host of other sky-gods were believed to behave in a similar way.³

Again, throughout the world, stones of various kinds (very commonly Neolithic adze-heads) were believed to be the weapons of the sky-god : the shafts

³ Cf. Eliade (1958 : 53) : "Thunder is a weapon of the sky-god in all mythologies."

or bolts which, when enraged, he hurled at his erring human children. Blinkenberg in his monograph The Thunderweapon in Religion and Folklore (1911) has given an historical survey of such beliefs, and, from this and other evidence, it is plain that fear of the "all-dreaded thunderstone" as an instrument of divine wrath has been, for millenia, widespread in human societies.

As late as 1649, Tollius gives some drawings of ordinary stone adzes and records how the naturalists say that they are "generated in the sky by a fulgureous exhalation conglobèd in a cloud by the circumflexed humour." We now know, from the cumulative research of many experimental scientists, that a lightning flash is a "series of electrical processes by which charge is transferred along a channel of high ion density between electric charge centres of opposite sign" (Huschke 1959 : 341), thunder being the sound emitted by rapidly expanding gases along this channel.

In the light of scientific knowledge then, lightning and thunder are seen to be natural phenomena

which commonly occur in the Earth's atmosphere,⁴ but without any kind of causal connection with human affairs or intentions. Thunderbolts, in the sense of stone or other weapons accompanying a lightning flash, are pure phantasy. From this it follows that all of the varied human beliefs attributing thunder-storms to the malefactions of supernatural beings are nothing more than emotionally based phantasies of wholly human origin projected on to an independently occurring natural phenomenon.

Looked at scientifically then, the complex of beliefs about the thunder-storm held by the Semang and others is, in reality, a socially-shared, culturally-transmitted projective system. This is a fundamentally important realization for it means that a scientific explanation of the transempirical symbolic and ritual systems of human societies necessitates the analysis not

⁴ There are about 16,000,000 thunder-storms annually over the surface of the earth (Hagengurth, 1960).

only of their structure and content, but also of the projective processes on which they are based.

It is here that our anthropological and psycho-analytic problems begin. In general, they are nothing less than the interpretation of culture, for, as Freud, Abraham, Schilder and others have realized, much cultural behaviour, if it is to be understood, has to be deciphered - just like a dream.

The first question that faces us is this :
If, in the light of scientific knowledge we can say with certainty that Semang religious concepts (such as that of a threatening sky-god whose voice is the thunder) lack referents in the external non-human universe, what precisely are the referents of these concepts?

Let us begin by glancing at Karei, the thunder-god of the Semang of Malaya. Like many another god he is a vague figure, but some of his characteristics are clear enough. He is of great stature (Schebesta 1929 189) and dwells in the skies. Some describe him as

"radiant like fire" so that should any man come near him he is burnt to death; others say that "his whole body is covered with hair." As the "supreme judge of souls" he knows whenever mortals do wrong (Skeat and Blagden 1906, ii : 177); when they do he becomes angry and in his rage inflicts terrible punishment upon the guilty. His anger is particularly expressed in the violence of tropical storms when his voice is the thunder and the lightning or thunderbolt his lethal weapon.

He also has a wife, Manoid, who while she is less punishing than Karei, is still a highly threatening figure whom the guilty placate by pouring their blood in libation on to the earth where she resides.

The sin which most arouses the ire of Manoid and of Karei is that of incest. Among the Semang, marriage between blood kin, up to the second degree, is forbidden, and there are very severe taboos associated with incest. Older siblings of opposite sex must avoid one another; a father must not sleep too close to his

daughter or a mother to her son; and, under the law of Karei, father-in-law and daughter-in-law or mother-in-law and son-in-law are not allowed under any circumstances to speak to, or to approach one another. Schebesta records (p. 67) that he once asked a Semang; "What would you do if your mother-in-law fell into the water? Would you pull her out?" He replied, "No never! I should let her drown, for I am not allowed to touch her."

Associated with these severe taboos against incest are those against adultery, against intercourse in the camp during the day, and against watching dogs copulating. Other sins against Karei include the mockery of certain animals (especially cats, dogs and monkeys); and, the causing of any hurt to a leech, for example, by burning it or even by laughing at it when it has been hurt. All of these sins are heavily punished by Karei, who is said to have left the earth in anger at the incestuous proclivities of mankind, and so great is his revengeful wrath that it is feared that a sinner's refusal to make atonement to Karei might result in the destruction of the whole world.

Who then are Karei and Manoid? My hypothesis is the obvious one that they are projections of parental figures. There is abundant psycho-analytic evidence for the identification of thunder and lightning with threatening aspects of the father. Wulff (1942) for example, describes the case of a 27 year old male homosexual, from a petit-bourgeois family of the south of Russia. This individual had been terribly punished by his father at seven years of age when he was discovered imitating coitus with the daughter of a neighbour. During analysis he had a dream in which he entered a room where his sister was crying because her father would not let her marry a young man that she loved, and had beaten her because of it. Then (in the dream) the menacing figure of the father appeared. "The patient went into the street, where it was thundering and there was a great noise - and suddenly he was given a box on the ear, so hard that he saw stars before his eyes. At the same time he thought : that was my father."

Again, Richard, the 10 year old boy a narrative of whose analysis has been published by Melanie Klein (1961), identified a thunder-storm breaking over the mountains with the "bad father who attacks and punishes;" his fear of God was based on the phantasy that God would punish with lightning and thunder-storms; and he identified the "poisonous and flooding urine of the omnipotent father" with the rain that fell in storms.

Abraham (1913) notes that in many cases the father is represented by lightning, the lightning representing the punishing or killing power of the father.

Thunder and lightning may also be identified with threatening aspects of the mother. A nice example of this is to be found in a Bushman text dating from 1875. A Bushman boy (Bleek and Lloyd 1911 : 321) describes how at the beginning of a storm he was lying in a hut playing a musical instrument. At this his mother rebuked him but he took no notice of her and went on playing. As the storm swept over, lightning

struck a stone just in front of the hut; at this the mother exclaimed, as if in pain, and told her children that it was all their fault, and, because they "had not been willing to obey her when she rebuked them about a very little thing." And the boy concludes : "I was the one who saw that the rain had intended to kill us, on account of my doings." In this example the lightning is identified with the retaliatory aggression of the angry mother, and we are given a glimpse of the process of projective identification which lies behind the phenomena we are discussing.

A four year old Australian girl (of British descent), who I had under observation some years ago, evinced a violent reaction to the noise of thunder. As the storm approached she would rush hither and thither screaming with fear, and when it reached its peak, her efforts to flee having failed, she would huddle as though petrified under a chair or whatever was at hand. Investigation showed that this response was conditioned by her relationship with her domineering

mother, who was described to me, very accurately, as "a great roarer."

The thunder in some cultures is used by one or other of the parents as a direct intimidation. For example, among the Karo Batak of northern Sumatra it is common for a mother angered at the misbehaviour of her child to threaten him by shouting : "May the thunder crush you!" (Idumpang perkas e kal ko!)⁵

Among the Semang the thunder-god Karei is also identified with parental authority. Thus, one of the commandments of the thunder-god is that the father and the mother may not be addressed in a familiar way. Again, Semang children are threatened with punishment by Karei if they misbehave. Schebesta (p. 96) records, for example, that one evening when the children in a camp were making more noise than usual one of the women called out to them : "If you play like that it's a sin against Karei!"; which means, roughly, says Schebesta, "the thunder will strike you." Immediately

⁵ Personal communication from Dr Masri Singarimbun, Australian National University.

the children were silenced and dispersed. Semang children, it is plain, live in great fear of the terrifyingly aggressive Karei.

Freud, in 1930, remarked (S.E. 21 : 129) that the original severity of the super-ego does not so much represent the severity which has been experienced or anticipated from the parent, but expresses the child's own aggressiveness towards the latter.

This realization was further explored a few years later by Melanie Klein in her paper "The Early Development of Conscience in the Child." In this paper Melanie Klein discusses what she believes to be the central problem in the whole process of super-ego formation. This is the problem of how it comes about that the child creates such phantastic images of its parents as terrifyingly aggressive monsters, images which are so far removed from reality.

The answer, says Melanie Klein (1933 : 268), is to be found in the facts elicited in early analysis:

"In penetrating to the deepest layers of the child's mind and discovering those enormous



quantities of anxiety - those fears of imaginary objects and those terrors of being attacked in all sorts of ways - we also lay bare a corresponding amount of repressed impulses of aggression, and can observe the casual connection which exists between the child's fears and its aggressive tendencies."

What happens in this situation is that the child (in an intra-psychic process of defence) projects its aggressive phantasies and impulses on to external objects (its parents) so that after this externalization has been achieved, aggression seems to be directed against the child from this source.

"This view of the matter," says Melanie Klein, "Makes it...less puzzling to understand why the child should form such monstrous and phantastic images of its parents...he perceives his anxiety arising from his aggressive instincts



as fear of an external object, both because he has made that object their outward goal, and because he has projected them on to it so they seem to be initiated against himself from this quarter."

My hypothesis is that it is an extension of a projective process of this kind that results in gods, such as the thunder-god of the Semang, being imagined to be so threatening and destructive.

Lightning is a natural phenomenon which holds real dangers for humans, as it does for other animals, for if one is, by chance, struck by lightning one may suffer burns or be killed by electric shock. These, without question, are unpleasant and fearful effects, but it is instructive to compare these, the real effects of lightning, with the kinds of hurt which thunder-gods are believed to be able to inflict on erring humans.

Scientifically looked at in this way the thunder-god becomes a kind of projective screen on which

are displayed the aggressive phantasies and impulses of humans - as well as their fears. It is of great interest that the patterns displayed on this screen correspond closely with the facts of infantile and juvenile aggression (both in phantasies and actual behaviour) as these have been revealed by the discoveries of psychoanalysis. This correspondence, I would remark in passing, is of considerable methodological significance, for it follows that the analysis of socially-shared projective systems, such as myths and ritual beliefs, may lead to new light being thrown on aspects of the human psychic apparatus.

I now propose to deal with some selected aspects of the aggression displayed by the thunder-gods of the Semang and others, and particularly with aspects of their oral, urethral and phallic aggression.

When I began my researches on thunder-gods I was interested to discover that in various parts of the world the stone adze-heads said to be thunderbolts are also called the teeth of the thunder-gods. For

example, the stone adze-heads found beside trophy heads or over fire-places in Kenyah long-houses in Borneo (Hose and McDougall 1912, ii : 11) are believed to be "teeth dropped from the jaw of the thunder-god, Balingo." In north Borneo stone adze-heads are said by the Dusun (Evans 1953 : 33) to be the hurled teeth of thunder-spirits. In Java (Skeat 1912 : 79) celts are called "lightning teeth." Among the Beli of the Sudan (Seligman 1932 : 476) stone adze-heads are called pamu liri, signifying "the teeth of the thunder." As my enquiries continued the orally aggressive and devouring characteristics of the Semang and other thunder-gods were clearly established. For example, among the Ifugao of Luzon (Barton 1955 : 158) the Thunder, when enraged, is said to strike with his teeth. The Behrang Senoi of Malaya (Evans 1923 : 201) sometimes cry to the thunder : "Wok lemoin!" which means "Spirit of the Teeth!" One of the leaders of the rakahasas of Ravana (Nivedita and Coomaraswamy 1918 : 83) was "the deadly Thunder-Tooth". The two goats

that draw the car of Thor are called Teeth-Grinder and Teeth-Gnasher (Schmidt 1931 : 53); the Tlalocs, or storm-gods of the ancient Maya are always depicted with threatening and devouring jaws, and it was on these jaws that sacrificial blood (including blood from the genitals) was wiped (Tozzer 1957, XI : 216); and Karei, the Semang thunder-god, in the shape of an avenging tiger, tears to pieces and devours the guilty (Evans 1937 : 176).

Moreover, beyond these familiar types of oral aggression in which the teeth and jaws are employed, there lies what I shall term sadistic sucking.

We have seen that transgression of the laws of Karei must be expiated with blood. According to Semang beliefs the sacrificial blood of humans ascends to the skies where it forms beautiful red fruits, and the more blood that is offered in sacrifice the richer is the fruit harvest. These fruits (Schebesta 1929 : 220), Karei and the other

gods do not eat in human fashion, instead they suck them. This, I would suggest, is a most significant detail.

We have also seen that the giving of any hurt to a leech or even laughing at one, is believed to bring down the wrath of Karei. In other words, laughing at a leech is equivalent to laughing at Karei himself, and this, I would suggest, is because the leech, a blood-sucking worm, is symbolically identified, unconsciously, with the blood-thirsty Karei,⁶ who sucks out sacrificial human blood from the celestial fruits⁷ where it is stored. Further, both Karei and the leech because of their blood-sucking proclivities are

⁶Consciously, the leech is looked upon (Evans 1937 : 175) as the associate of Karei. (It is also likely that the leech symbolizes aspects of Manoid).

⁷Fruits are common symbols of the mother's breasts (Freud 1900-1901); and it is against the mother's breast that an infant's aggression is first expressed (Klein 1930).

looked on as thoroughly bad objects.⁸

Here we are confronted with the phenomenon of sadistic sucking projected on to a threatening god. Let us then glance at some psychoanalytic assessments of sucking as a rudimentary form of aggression. In 1924, Abraham, in his paper "The Influence of Oral Erotism on Character-Formation," drew attention to the leech-like behaviour of some people which, on analysis, was revealed as a regression from the oral-sadistic to the sucking stage; the behaviour of such individuals, added Abraham, had "an element of cruelty in it" which made them "something like vampires to other people."

Four years later, in her paper 'Early Stages of the Oedipus Complex,' Melanie Klein wrote of the devouring

⁸ It is interesting to note in the projections of Semang religion, evidence of the splitting of parental objects; thus, while Karei, who demands the blood of human beings, is bad, Ta Pedn (described variously as the younger brother or son of Karei) is good and cares for mankind.

desires of the infant and of his wishes to appropriate the contents of the mother's body; and in 1932, in the first edition of The Psycho-Analysis of Children (dedicated to the memory of Karl Abraham), she cited his views of 1924 and stated, on the basis of her own researches (1949 : 185), that the child has :

"certain oral-sadistic phantasies of a quite definite character, seeming to form a link between the oral-sucking and the oral-biting stages, in which he gets possession of the contents of his mother's breasts by sucking and scooping it out. This desire to suck and scoop out, first directed to her breast, soon extends to the inside of her body."

Melanie Klein has also stressed the importance of the oral-sadistic phase in super-ego development. It is significant, therefore, to find that the sucking of human blood is such a basic feature of the behaviour of Karei, the severe authority figure who fiercely

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punishes⁹ any transgression of the traditional taboos of the Semang and especially those concerned with incestuous behaviour.

In The Psycho-Analysis of Children (1949 : 273)

Melanie Klein also notes that "the sadistic tendency most closely allied to oral sadism is urethral sadism." Very interestingly our anthropological materials confirm the close connection between oral and urethral aggression.

The leech as we have seen is hated by the Semang and their antipathy is shared by others. Schebesta, the German ethnologist and a hardened traveller in

⁹ Karei, we have seen, punishes the sinful by devouring them in the shape of a tiger; he also attacks them in the form of a wasp (Schebesta 1929 : 172). It is of interest to compare these projective identifications with those of Abraham's patient (1913 : 228), for whom the buzzing of a wasp (striped like a tiger) represented a tiger's roar which was associated with "the child's dread of the deep, threatening voice of his father when he was angry." Thunder, the Semang say, is caused by Karei "making his voice resound until its fearful echoes fill the forest."

central Malaya describes the leech as a "little monster" worse than the elephant, the tiger and the buffalo put together; "something sickeningly moist and slimy," an "obscene pest." These are strong words and there is a tinge to them which hints that there is something about the leech that is deeply threatening. This threat, I would suggest, is that the leech might enter the body through one of its orifices and consume its insides.

As is often the case there is some ground for this phantasy for leeches have been known to enter the air passages, and even the sinuses (Moore, 1961), from which they cannot escape once they have fed and become distended with blood. The Annamese, according to Cabaton (1908 : 541), believe that there is reason to beware of the leech for "if put into a person's ear, it creeps into the brain, multiplies in it and devours it."

Interestingly, this action of devouring inwardly is also attributed to lightning. Thus, according to

mediaeval beliefs (Wallis 1918 : 370), the thunderbolt was of diabolical origin and eccentric in its workings :

"it would strike the sword in its sheathe,
gold in the purse, and the foot in the shoe,
leaving the respective coverings unharmed; it
would consume a human being internally and
leave the skin unscathed."¹⁰

What then is it that links, in unconscious processes, the devouring of the leech (which as we have seen is identified with the thunder-god, Karei) with that of the thunderbolt, or lightning? My hypothesis is that the linkage lies in the close connection, emphasized by Melanie Klein, between phantasies of oral

¹⁰ Gomes (1911 : 189), a reliable authority, identifies the leech stone (batu lintah) used by Sea Dayak shamans with the thunderbolt. The leech stone is a charm used by shamans (in whose hands it is safe) to suck out sickness from within the body. (I have not myself encountered this identification among the Iban).

and urethral aggression.

The leech, we have seen, is a sanguivorous worm. So far I have been concentrating on its blood-sucking habits, but it is also a worm. As Abraham (1949 : 161) points out the ideas of 'snake' and 'worm' are closely connected in unconscious thought. A worm is also a male sexual symbol¹¹ and a death symbol as well. Dylan Thomas (1952 : 7), in one of his poems, writes of "the fathering worm," and the Lucifer, who in the lowest abyss of Dante's Inferno ceaselessly devours the wicked is described by Virgil, when, with Dante, he passes the centre of the earth at the thigh of Satan, as that "evil worm that pierces through the world." Among the Saora of central India (Elwin 1955 : 49), the leech is referred to as a little man without any bones. The Iban of Borneo¹² believe that one of the

¹¹ Cf. the Silesian folk song, quoted by Freud in his paper 'Dreams in Folklore' (1911), in which the penis appears as a worm.

¹² Data on the Iban in this paper, unless otherwise stated, are from my own researches in Borneo during the years 1949-51 and 1957-58.

animal forms taken by an antu buyu or incubus, a phallic spirit which carnally assaults women, is that of the leech. Again, among the Iban, one of the meanings of dreams in which leeches attack the body is said, by the people themselves, to be spearing by an evil demon.

Melanie Klein (1950 : 186), in her discussion of the close connection between oral and urethral sadism remarks that in analysing both grown-up patients and children she had constantly come across phantasies in which urine was regarded as "a burning, dissolving and corrupting liquid."

Here we are really dealing (as Melanie Klein acknowledges) with the symbolic identification of fire and urine to which Freud first drew attention in his analysis of Dora, and to which he returned over thirty years later in his fascinating essay : 'The Acquisition and Control of Fire.'

The anthropological evidence for this symbolic identification is abundant. There are, for example, myths from India and elsewhere embodying the phantasy that urine can be used instead of oil in lamps, but our present concern is with that heavenly fire of the primitives : lightning.

Here, as might be expected, the same identification is encountered and we can be sure that it is a very ancient human phantasy. An early example of it occurs in Aristophanes's play The Clouds (which dates from 423 B.C.). In this play Aristophanes quite unjustly ridicules Socrates as an iconoclast and a sophist, and when Strepsiades asks the question : "Whence comes then the thunderbolt pray?", Aristophanes puts into Socrates's mouth these words in reply :

When a wind that is dry, being lifted on
high, is suddenly pent into these,
It swells up their skin, like a bladder,
within, by Necessity's changeless decrees

Till, compressed very tight, it bursts them
 outright, and away with an impulse so strong,
 That at last by the force and the swing of
 its course, it takes fire as it wizzes along. ¹³

The Thonga, a Bantu people of southern Africa, believe that lightning is the urine of a monstrous sky bird.¹⁴ This bird (Junod 1962, ii : 313) when a thunder-storm breaks rushes down tearing the bark from trees, burning huts and killing their inhabitants, finally to enter the ground where it deposits its urine, which they say, "caused the flash of lightning".

¹³ Just as lightning is symbolically identified with urine, so thunder is identified with flatus, as has been documented by Abraham (1909) and others. Jones (1949 : 167) has shown that the devil's evil odour was largely associated with his capacity of making thunder.

¹⁴ Thunder and lightning are very widely associated with birds (Cf. Alexander 1964 : 287 seq.). A common symbolic equation is bird = phallus, and, as Freud notes (1910 : 125), "the ancients represented the phallus as having wings." Cf. the winged thunderbolt of Zeus (Harrison 1927 : 23).

"Congealed urine" (which is probably part of a fulgurite formed by lightning then it terminates in certain kinds of dry sandy soil), is one of the principal magical substances of the Thonga.

The Australian aborigines are even more specific in their phantasies. For example, the Wunambal tribe of north-western Australia, say (Lommel 1949 : 160) that one of their gods threw the first flash of lightning by splitting his penis and letting out fire and the flash of lightning. In the Aranda language (Roheim 1945 : 257) the word for lightning is kwatja para, or water penis.

The same phantasy, though in repressed symbolic form, is to be found among the Semang, some of whom say that lightning is the fluid that Karei's dragon¹⁵ spurts

¹⁵ In early Chinese writings (Karlgren, 1930), a dragon was said to be the source of thunder and it was believed that a dragon's saliva might make a woman pregnant.

into the air.

At this juncture let me note that in mythology, fire and lightning are symbolically identified not only with urine and destructiveness but also with semen and fertility. Frazer gives many examples of the kindling of fires to promote fertility. Zeus lay with Aegina in the form of a flame, and the mothers of both Romulus and Servius Tullius were impregnated by a flame. The projection of similar symbolic meaning on to lightning is also very common as, for example, in Indian mythology. Here is an example from the Muria, recorded by Elwin (1949 : 94) :

"Bhimul is man, Earth is woman. When Bhimal is on heat, he tries to approach Earth. But there is no road or path, and he rushes about trying to find the way, he hurls rocks and mountains to and fro, and this makes the thunder. At last he can contain his seed no longer : it spurts out and a thunderbolt falls. From this seed man gets his food.

Unless Bhimul gets on heat there is
no rain or harvest."

Similarly the Hindu god Indra fertilizes by lightning. Among the Sema Naga of Assam (Hutton 1921 : 257) a stone adze-head, which is believed to be a thunderbolt, is regarded as full of fertility, and is kept as a charm to make the crops grow.¹⁶ Similarly, the Jibaro Indians of South America (Karsten 1935 : 383) believe that lightning-stones have the effect of promoting the growth of domestic animals.

The establishment of this symbolic significance of lightning permits explanation of a number of ancient

¹⁶ In contrast, among the Lhota Naga (Mills 1922 : 163), stone adzes, which are regarded as thunderbolts and called 'axes of the gods,' are feared and no Lhota cares to touch one. This is an instructive example of vicissitude in symbol formation, for whereas a thunderbolt stone represents for the Sema Naga the good and creative side of the father-god, the same objects symbolizes for the Lhota Naga his bad and destructive powers.

ritual practices. For example, it enables us to understand, as Onians (1951 : 156) points out, the virtue of Thor's hammer (which was, of course, a thunderbolt), "in the lap of the bride."¹⁷ Again, interpretation of Drudical rituals and beliefs about mistletoe, which were of such concern to Sir James Frazer, becomes possible.

One of the questions which led to Frazer writing his famous 12 volume work was (to use his own words) : "What was the Golden Bough?" This question Frazer was never able fully to answer, although with assiduous and brilliant scholarship he provided all of the materials necessary for analysis.

The "golden bough" is, of course, a sprig of mistletoe (Frazer 1923, ii : 284), and Pliny states, as

¹⁷ Schebesta (1929 : 194) states that Semang shamans, who have a submissive and favoured relationship with Karei, highly value thunderbolt stones, and he relates a revealing story (p. 164) of how when a shaman once picked up one of Karei's thunderbolts and rubbed it with his hands this "caused it to grow larger and larger."

recorded by Frazer, that the Druids worshipped the mistletoe and sacrificed to it because they believed it to have fallen from heaven. Now, the mistletoe that the Druids did worship was the variety, Viscum album, found in the oak, the tree sacred to all of the thunder-gods of the ancient world, Zeus, Jupiter, Thor and the rest, because it was particularly prone to be struck by lightning.¹⁸ Thus, as Frazer (1923, ii : 301) suggests :

"the real reason why the Druids worshipped the mistletoe-bearing oak, above all the other trees in the forest, was the belief that every such oak had not only been struck by lightning but bore among its branches a visible emanation of the celestial fire."

¹⁸ Observations (Warde Fowler 1913 : 318) made annually in the forests of Lippe-Detmold for 17 years, showed that the number of lightning stricken oaks exceed the number of stricken beeches by 60 to 1.

This, however, was as far as Frazer was able to go. Despite the widely known and still persisting sexual connotations of mistletoe and Pliny's report (Natural History, Book XVI : 249-251) of the Druidical belief that mistletoe given in a drink would "impart fertility to any animal that was barren," Frazer was unable to discern the symbolic identification which gave to mistletoe its extraordinary magical properties. In the light of psychoanalytic understanding the answer is plain, the mistletoe like the lightning flash from which it sprang is a symbolic representation of the generative and phallic power of the father-god in the form of semen. This interpretation accounts adequately for both the reputed fertilizing potency of mistletoe, as well as for such mythological events as Balder the Beautiful being pierced and struck dead by having a twig of mistletoe thrown at him.

We have now seen that fire and lightning may be given both urethral and phallic meanings. We have also seen that they have, in some symbolic systems, an

oral significance. This is a realization which has been well expressed by Arlow in his paper on 'Oral Symbolism' (1955 : 69) :

"The imagery of language demonstrates how fire is unconsciously connected symbolically with oral drives. In most languages the word for burning is related to the word for devouring or consuming, and in some languages such as the Hebrew 'to burn up' is identical with 'to eat.' In the English language a fire is fed, is described as possessing tongues which lick, and flames which consume. That most notorious abode of fire, Hell is described as yawning for its victims who must inexorably pass into its mouth or through its jaws."

These remarks of Arlow's are fully substantiated by historical evidence, for in most mediaeval depictions

of Hell, although fire is almost always present, the emphasis is commonly on some form of oral devouring, a typical example being the Hell depicted in Lucas Van Leyden's painting Het Laaste Oordeel, now in De Lakenhal at Leiden.

And here, I would also like to draw attention to a depiction of a markedly phallic devil at the Campo Santo in Pisa. The feature of interest for the present analysis is that not only are sinners being devoured in the devil's jaws and through his navel; they are also being devoured by a fire blazing in the position of his genitals.¹⁹

¹⁹ N.B. also the devouring serpents coiled about the arms of the Campo Santo Devil. Needham (1964 : 139) records that among the Eastern Penan of Borneo certain snakes may not be laughed at for fear of the retribution of the thunder-god, Baléi Liwen. Similarly (Schebesta 1929 : 223), it is a sin against Karei to laugh at the snake ular talong. The snake is one of the symbolic forms commonly taken by thunder-gods; for example, the Tatars (Holmberg 1964 : 445) believed the lightning to be "a fiery snake falling down from heaven," and Seth, the ancient Egyptian thunder-god (Müller, 1964 : 109) was once described as "an obscene snake."

Here then we have a graphic condensation of oral and phallic aggression,²⁰ and in the light of this and the other evidence I have presented, it will be seen that it is understandable that the Semang god of thunder and lightning should be identified with a devouring worm.

There is one further aspect of the leech that deserves mention. Among the Iban of Borneo leech dreams are quite common and especially among men, and significantly the part of the body usually attacked is the leg. Such dreams are looked on as very bad, and cause great anxiety. Daga, for example, in a dream experienced on the morning of 15th. March, 1950,

²⁰ MacLean (1963 : 16) has discussed the neuro-physiological and behavioural evidence which supports "psychiatric findings that the acts of mastering, devouring and procreating seem to be inextricably tied to one another." Especially significant is the evidence, based on electrical stimulation of the brains of primates and other animals, which relates this convergence of sexual, oral and dominance behaviour to the proximity and inter-action of the amygdala and septum in the limbic system of the brain.

pulled a leech off his ankle and much blood spurted from the hole left by the leech; at this point Daga (a man then of about 32 years of age) cried out in his dream and awoke in terror. This I would interpret as a castration dream and it is significant that in other mythologies the leech has a comparable symbolic meaning.

For example, one myth from a central Indian people called the Juang (Elwin 1949 : 265) says that women first got their genitals when the creation god pulled away the flesh from between their legs. This flesh the god threw into a stream where it became a leech. Again, there are a number of myths (Elwin 1949 : 175) tracing the origin of leeches to menstrual blood.

Equally, the lightning, the weapon of the thunder-god, has a castrating aspect. This is seen in the Semang belief that the thunder-god, Karei, when unappeased by the shedding of a sinner's blood, uproots

trees²¹ in his anger, this being preliminary to an attack on the sinner's body. A similar belief is held by the Eastern Penan of Borneo (Needham 1964 : 144), and, among the Ngaju, also of Borneo (Scharer 1963 : 99), a man who offends the thunder-god Nyaro, particularly by incestuous behaviour, is attacked by the vengeful godhead and "dies like a tall tree in the forest cracked by the storm."

The projection of envious retaliation on to the father-god is also seen in a famous passage from Heradotus, in which Artabanus, the adviser of the Persian monarch Xerxes, describes how the Deity loves to truncate, with his thunderbolt, all those things

²¹ The symbolic equation, tearing out of a tree = castration, has been well established by psycho-analytic research (cf. Freud 1916-17). The uprooting of trees will have the same unconscious significance in Borneo and other lands where the tree is a phallic symbol; cf., for example, the phrase : batang pinang, pun balut lumut (Areca palm trunk, with its base wrapped around with moss), which is overtly symbolic of the penis among the Iban.

that rise too high, for he permits none but himself to entertain grand ideas.

I have not the space to discuss the other modes of aggression characteristic of Karei, however, enough evidence has, I think, been presented to show that the father-god of the Semang is a threatening and terrifyingly aggressive super-ego figure.

Let us now consider how the Semang (and others like them) mediate with their severe super-egos, and especially in times of great threat (as during a thunderstorm), when they are impelled to perform the most primitive of all sacrificial acts : the redirection of aggression on to the self.

In approaching this subject especial attention needs to be given to the ambivalence of the Semang towards Karei. But the ambivalence in question is not so much the ambivalence between love and hate as that between fear and aggression. This ambivalence between the impulse to attack (and overcome) and the impulse to

flee (or submit) is one of the most fundamental in animal nature, for it is basic to all dominance relationships, whether within the family or within other social groups.

To the Semang, Karei is a predominantly bad object. At the same time he is an extremely aggressive figure, and this fact, as we have seen, once its projective nature is realized, can be taken as an indication of the kind of aggression which Semang infants and children feel (and entertain in phantasy) towards the parents who frustrate and dominate them.²²

But this impulsive aggression is also accompanied by impulsive fear. Schebesta has described how the

²² Schebesta (1929 : 214), in fact, describes the "defiance and contrariness" with which children react to parental domination and scolding. He also records the responses of two small boys to being teased (i.e. by Schebesta himself). One, with blazing eyes, tried to hit him with a piece of wood and then to pinch him on the arm before running away, while the other, "pushing his head forward like a maddened bull," dashed at Schebesta, shouting : I'll punch you!"

Semang, during a thunder-storm, cower in their forest shelters, mute and with lowered heads, in states of abject fear. In other words, they are 'scared stiff,' and I would suppose that the belief that the thunder-god turns the guilty into stone is, in part, a projection of the catatonoid fear reaction which some Semang must occasionally experience.²³

Let us now then examine the ways in which aggressive and fearful impulses determine the behaviour of the Semang when they find themselves threatened by a thunder-storm, which is the wrath of their hated and feared father-god, Karei, and of his spouse, Manoid.

The reactions of the Semang can be divided into two distinct phases :

(i) When the thunder (which is the voice of Karei) is first heard, but in the distance, they become

²³ Cf. Stern (1951) who has described as part of the catatonoid reaction the feeling of "becoming rigid like stone."

annoyed and behave towards it with a slight but definite show of aggression. Thus, women will blow through their teeth at the storm with a hissing sound, or shout angrily to it to abate, while others (Evans 1923 : 201) burn evil-smelling rubbish or climb down from their houses and strike their working knives into the earth. (where Manoid dwells) .

(ii) If the storm continues to approach, however, these aggressive responses towards Karei and his wife are rapidly superseded by fear, and when, as often happens,²⁴ the thunder detonates directly overhead while the lightning flashes and rain and wind lash the forest, the Semang, in terror, stab at their legs, and throwing their blood to Manoid and Karei confess their guilt and plead for deliverance.

In this behaviour there is a strong element of placation, but the notion of placation does not entirely

²⁴ In Malaya (Watts 1955 : 46) there are thunder-storms on an average of about 200 days per year.

account for the form the behaviour takes. A fuller explanation is available, I would suggest, when recognition is given to the process in which aggression felt against a hated, bad object (i.e. Karei) is, when in conflict with the even greater fear felt towards this object, redirected on to the self.

This, I would emphasize is a process of fundamental significance for the understanding of some forms of human behaviour.²⁵ The basic ingredients, dominance, aggression and fear, are very old phylogenetically, and the redirection of aggression on to the self may be freely observed in infra-human primates in situations of stress, as, for example, among caged macaques and baboons.²⁶

²⁵ Cf. Albert C. Cain, "The Presuperego 'Turning-Inward' of Aggression," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 30 : 171 - 208, 1951.

²⁶ The following account is based on my own researches, during 1963-64, on the behaviour of macaques and baboons in the collection of the Zoological Society of London.

In many of these species there is a marked sexual dimorphism, and in the caged state the male often comes to assert an inordinate dominance over the female. When this dominance is exercised, the female, in many cases, reacts by biting her own limbs and contorting her body in a stereotyped way. In so doing she is redirecting on to herself an attack which has the dominant male as its true object but which is thwarted and redirected out of fear of reprisal. This interpretation can be substantiated by the experimental procedure of raising the female's frustration until her attack drive becomes so activated that her fear is superseded and she suddenly unleashes an all-out attack on the male.²⁷

²⁷ Such manic attack do also occur in humans, but much more frequently the aggression felt towards external objects is contained intra-psychically and directed against the self as in depressive and melancholic states and in suicide. Cf. Denis Hill, "Aggression and Mental Illness," 1964.

I am not, let me add, suggesting that the Semang, when they let their own blood, are always acting impulsively in states of intense emotion, for the evidence indicates that, in general, their self-sacrificial behaviour has become ritualized (i.e. as a cultural response). At the same time there can be no doubting the genuineness of their emotions towards Karei in extreme situations,²⁸ and my hypothesis is that their ritualized response has arisen from the redirection of aggression on to the self that occurs in extreme situations, whether in fact or in phantasy.

The letting of blood from one of the limbs of the body is not the only type of self-sacrificial response when believers are confronted with the wrath of their thunder-god. Needham (1964 : 138) has described how, among the Eastern Penan of Borneo, hair taken

²⁸ Evans (1923 : 200) records the case of a Sakai headman who, in making a blood offering during a violent thunder-storm, "wounded himself so badly that he had to be carried home by his companions."

from the head is burnt and then offered to Baléi Liwen. Similar forms of behaviour have been reported for the Sakai and the Senoi of Malaya (Evans 1923 : 202) among whom head hair, which has been burnt or beaten with a knife, is proffered in hope of averting violent thunder-storms.

In preliminary interpretation of these behaviours it can be said that we are dealing with a supplicatory act²⁹ in which a valued part of the self is cut off and offered to a feared father-figure. This, however, leaves unexplained why it is that hair should be so offered. An answer that would satisfy some is that the hair is a convenient part of the body which can easily be sacrificed without hurt. This we may admit as part of the answer, but it is not an answer which deals in any way with the possible symbolic

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Robertson Smith (1914 : 321) notes that the Syriac word ethkashshaph, 'to make supplication,' means, literally, 'to cut oneself.'

significance of the act. To interpret this aspect of the behaviours in question we must concern ourselves with the symbolic significance of hair, and especially the hair that grows on the head. On this subject there is much comparative as well as psychoanalytic evidence.³⁰

Onians, in his scholarly book The Origins of European Thought, has shown (p. 109 seq.) that in the ancient world the head was looked upon as a source of generation, as carrying the seed, a portion of the cerebro-spinal fluid, which was the very stuff of life. Directly related to this belief is the notion that the hair which issues from the head is connected with its generative power, and, in symbolic terms, is an extension or an outcrop of the seed that it contains,

³⁰ Much of what follows will be more than familiar to the psychoanalytically informed; I would ask them to realize that I am also addressing anthropological and other readers in whom I can assume no conversance with the psychoanalytical evidence on the topics under discussion.

Thus, Aristotle, in his Problemata (876a 23) writes :

"The head seems to be the fountain-head
of liquid, wherefore also its growth of
hair on account of its abundant liquid."

In the Jewish Kabbalah (Onians 1951 : 234),
where the liquid in the divine head is the vehicle of
life,

"each hair is said to be the breaking of
the hidden fountains issuing from the
concealed brain."

In the ancient world, as Onians notes
(p. 232),

"Hairy men were believed to have the strongest
sexual bent,³¹ and loss of hair, baldness,
was believed to be dependent on the loss
of seed."

³¹Karei, the thunder-god of the Semang, is said by
some (Schebesta 1929 : 188) to be extremely hairy.

These notions are apparent, for example, in Aristotle's ponderings (Problemata 893b : 25) over why it is that eunuchs do not become bald :

"Is it," he writes, "because they have a large amount of brain matter? Now this is the result of their not having sexual intercourse with women; for the semen passes from the brain through the spine. For this reason too bulls which have been castrated appear to have large horns after castration."

From such symbolic identifications, conscious or unconscious, has arisen the widespread phantasy, as in the case of Samson, that strength and potency reside in the hair. As Karsten (1923 : 87) remarks, the idea that the

"vital power of a person is concentrated in his head, and particularly in his hair, seems to be common to all the lower peoples

in the whole world and gives the explanation not only of a number of peculiar hair customs but first of all of the practice existing among some savage tribes, of taking the scalps of slain enemies or preparing their heads as 'trophies'"

For example, the trophy heads (antu pala) prized by the Iban are believed to procure fertility and, in ritual invocations such heads are described as being full of seed and the hair from them is highly valued.

Given these identifications it becomes possible to interpret one of the common meanings of having the hair cut off, especially at the behest of, or to placate, dominant authority.

Onians (p. 234) notes that the Nazirite's offering of his hair to Jehovah (Numbers VI : 2-21) may perhaps be explained as an offering of the life-substance from within the head. In psychoanalytic terms the making of such an offering is a form of symbolic castration.

There is much clinical evidence that the cutting off of hair may have this unconscious meaning. Simmel (1925 : 454), for example, has described the case of his son, aged $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, who was playfully threatened with castration with scissors by the surgeon who had circumscised him. The child who had stood the operation without apparent alarm, became terrified at this playful threat. A year later he related his visit to the surgeon in great detail, but substituted 'haircut' in place of the castration threat. Again, one of Berg's patients (1951 : 11) is recorded to have said :

"Short hair is in the nature of a castration
It is part of discipline. In the army hair
is cut short, and the same in prisons. Monks
used to shave their hair completely."³²

Needham records how sacrificial hair is described, in Penan invocations, as being applied to the

³²For additional examples see Menninger (1932 : 243 seq.); cf. also Eder (1925 : 325 seq.).

genitals of Balei Liwen, the thunder-god. Thus part of the invocation that accompanies the cutting, burning and offering of hair, runs :

"Here is hair (of the head) that we give
to you, Baléi Liwen,
Apply it to the genitals."

That the thunder-god is required to apply the sacrificial hair to his genitals is evidence of decisive importance, for it is an expression of the symbolic identification of the hair with those parts, from which it follows that one of the unconscious meanings of cutting off hair is castrative. Such sacrificial acts are performed because the feared father-figure, of which the god is a projection, is experienced as demanding them, and they are offered to forestall any attack on his part. It follows, I would argue, that what is unconsciously feared is a

comparable kind of attack.³³

We now come to Needham's question : Why - when the Semang and Penan sacrifice to their thunder-gods-is blood taken from the leg?³⁴ To find an answer to this very specific question we must, obviously, concern ourselves with the symbolic significance of the leg.

³³ An interesting confirmation of this interpretation is to be found in a report of Evans (1923 : 202), for the Sakai, that should anyone break off the tail of a lizard each person present cuts off a piece of his hair, burns it in a fire, and offers the ashes to the thunder-god with the words : "Don't any more!" Here the unconscious basis of the two symbolic behaviours is clear.

³⁴ Needham (1964 : 148) also asks why it is that "only the Semang and Penan" practice blood sacrifice to a thunder-god. An adequate answer to this question would involve discussion of vicissitudes in symbol formation and ritualized acting-out (cf. Footnote 16), but it may be noted that several other peoples in the same region (Evans 1923 and 1937) follow the same practice (e.g. the Sakai, the Senoi and the Malays). Again, comparable sacrificial behaviour towards thunder-gods has been reported from other parts of the world; for example, in ancient Greece (Frazer 1929 : 45), in the central provinces of India (Crooke 1926 : 75) and among the ancient Maya (Tozzer 1957, XI : 211).

Let me approach this problem by reporting the case of Brian, a 5 year old boy, of Canberra, Australia, whose behaviour I observed some years ago. On 27th. October, 1961, as we were sitting together, Brian spontaneously remarked to me in a matter-of-fact tone of voice, as he pointed to a nearby eucalyptus : "There's a crocodile up in that tree." Looking up to where he was pointing, I replied : "Is there? What's he going to do?" "He's going to bite me," said Brian, with some anxiety. "Oh, is he," I replied, "whereabouts?" "Here," answered Brian, and for a moment his hand hovered over his genitals, before coming to rest on the inner part of his right thigh.

Here, we have a clear example of displacement behaviour, and the anxiety, which Brian felt was, in psychoanalytic terms, castration anxiety. For our present purposes the significant aspect of Brian's behaviour is that the phantasied attack was displaced from his genitals on to his leg. From this we are able

to derive the symbolic equation : leg = genitals.

Abraham (1913) has discussed a comparable case in which a 9 year old girl had the phantasy of a snake (representing her father) trying to bite her on the leg; and, having investigated the case, Abraham made the interpretation that the child "named her leg in place of her genitals, in the same way as a stork is said to bite a woman's leg."

The equation leg = genitals has been well established by much other psychoanalytic research.³⁵ Anna Freud (1961 : 106), for example, has recorded the case of a 10 year old boy in whose phantasies the foot was equated with the penis, and Melitta Sperling, in her account of the analysis of a case of recurrent ulcer of the leg (1949 : 405), has written :

"The choice of the leg as a representation of the penis in the unconscious is a rather common phenomenon in neurotic women, especially those with exhibitionistic tendencies."

³⁵ Cf. also such independent researches as those of W.E. Block and P.A. Ventur, as reported in "A Study of the Psychoanalytic Concept of Castration Anxiety in Symbolically Castrated Amputees," Psychiatric Quarterly, 37 : 518-526, 1963.

Freud (1915 : 200) cites several cases in which a young man's foot "symbolized the penis;" and Abraham (1910) describes the case of a 22 year old student in whose dreams "the foot replaced the penis."

The same symbolic equation is also to be found in various mythological and linguistic sources, for, as Freud (1905 : 155) notes, the foot is "an age-old sexual symbol." In ancient Egypt (Clark 1959 : 129), the annual innundation was believed to come from the thigh of Osiris and relics of his thigh were kept in several temples. In Hindu mythology (Dowson 1950 : 108), the sacred Ganges is represented as flowing from the toe of Vishnu.³⁶ Dionysus was born from the thigh of Zeus. The ancient Hebrews spoke of the thighs as sources of procreation (Onians 1951 : 183). Euripides refers to the 'knees' as 'generative members'

³⁶ Cf. Onians (1951 : 230) ref. the ancient world; "it is clear that rivers were regarded as generative powers and givers of seed."

and for the Assyrians and Babylonians (Onians 1951 : 176), of race and language quite unrelated to the Greeks and the Romans, the word birku, signified either the knee or the male organ of generation. Among the Iban of Borneo castration dreams may take the form of injury to the thigh or lower part of the leg.³⁷

The symbolic equation leg = genitals is also manifested in the belief of the Penan that the thunder-god, Baléi Liwen, applies human blood, drawn from the leg, to his genitals (Needham 1964 : 144). In other words, as in the case of sacrificial hair, this substance and the part of the body from which it has come, the leg, are identified with the genitals. We may thus attribute to the behaviour of letting blood from the leg, when threatened by the wrath of Baléi Liwen, the same general symbolic significance as the offering of hair taken from the head.

³⁷Cf. the mediaeval belief (Wallis 1918 : 370) that lightning, which was diabolical in its origin, would destroy the foot in its shoe.

It would also be my hypothesis that the same conclusions are likely to hold for the comparable behaviours of the Semang towards Karei, who, as we have seen, is a punishing god, with castrative aspects to his attacks on mankind, whose onslaughts are chiefly directed against improper sexual behaviour, especially of an incestuous kind.³⁸

As a final illustration of leg symbolism let me quote a revealing story, based on comparable unconscious identifications, recently reported (Krisher, 1965) as being current in Djakarta. It concerns the occasion when President Sukarno, the 'father' of the Indonesian people, appeared on the

³⁸ These conclusions hold, I would argue, even though the self-sacrificial letting of blood from the leg is also performed by Semang women. Cf. ancient Greece (Frazer 1929 : 45) where menstruous rags were used to drive away thunder storms. Also relevant is Klein's comment (1949 : 244) : "The girl being more subordinated to her introjected father is more at the mercy of his powers for good or evil than is the boy in relation to his super-ego."

porch of one of his palaces for a press conference turned out in an impeccably cut, sky-blue marshal's uniform. When a correspondent finally summoned up the nerve to ask about the lack of foot-gear, Sukarno stared haughtily for a moment and then said : "I am discharging electricity!" And with that, he pointed to the sky, whereupon an enormous bolt of lightning split the firmament.³⁹

I now turn to the topics of mockery and the nicknaming of God's creatures. We have already seen that the wrath of Karei is aroused by the mockery of certain animals, and that among the taboos he imposes is that against watching dogs copulating. These actions, it is believed, will bring calamity not only to the individual but on the community as a whole. Here, it will be noted, we are still in the realm of interdicted sexuality but what is remarkable is the great severity of the punishment which the father-god inflicts for what,

³⁹ Haddon (1901 : 368) records that among the Sebob of Borneo, a stone adze-head or thunderbolt was said to be the toe-nail of Balingo, the thunder-god.

in themselves, are innocuous enough acts. Indeed, the punishment is on a par with that inflicted for incestuous behaviour or filial disrespect, and it is reasonable to ask if the animals concerned may not be symbolic of the parents, especially in their sexual aspects. This then is my hypothesis.

When the myths of the Malaysian peoples having these taboos against the mockery of animals are examined, the incidents believed to have resulted in disaster divide into two classes :

(i) In the first class the animals laughed at are either symbolically phallic (for example, snakes, leeches, lizards, frogs or jumping fish),⁴⁰ or they are animals, such as the cat, dog or monkey, looked upon as lecherous because of their overt sexuality,

⁴⁰ Refs. : John (1862, i : 229); Schebesta (1929 : 223); Evans (1953 : 146); Gomes (1911 : 206). An Iban term for the penis is anak remaung, or little frog. Among the Sema Naga (Hutton 1921 : 256) stone adze-heads or lightning stones are called toad axes.

which have been ironically dressed in finery and either equipped with a sword or had a burning brand or something similar tied to their tails.⁴¹

(ii) In the second class, the animals (again cats, dogs or monkeys) are joined in mock-marriage or made to fight with one another.⁴²

The first class of actions I would interpret as being symbolically equivalent to mockery of the parental genital, and the second as mockery of the envied sexual behaviour of the parents.

Mockery, it is important to realize, is a highly aggressive act, and therefore dangerous inasmuch as it is likely to provoke retaliation. This is seen in the dictum of Guazzo (1574) that

"it is a perilous thing to mock and scoffe

⁴¹Evans (1923 : 203); Gomes (1911 : 205 seq.). Cf. Freud (1910 : 85), "a tail...is one of the most familiar symbols and substitutive expressions for the male organ;" ref. sword symbolism cf. Freud (1901 : 197).

⁴²Fighting is a common symbolic equivalent for the act of coition; cf. Freud (1916-1917, XVI : 318).

at others, and, as the saying is, to anger a waspe."

Again, in Proverbs (30 : 17), the young are warned that

"the eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out and the young eagles shall eat it."

In these severe taboos against mockery we are given a glimpse of the repressed aggression of children against their parents, and I would also argue that behind this aggression lies envy, for when humans mock at the fine possessions or superior capabilities of others, they are also revealing an envious wish to take those possessions and capabilities for themselves.

This brings us to the second of Needham's

questions:⁴³ What did Hamlet mean when he charged it to Ophelia as a offence in women that they do nickname God's creatures.

First, let me note that nicknaming, like mockery, is essentially aggressive. "A nickname," says Hazlitt (1819), "is the hardest stone that the devil can throw at a man;" and he relates (1830) that he once knew an admiral who had got the name 'Dirty Dick' among the sailors, and who, on being congratulated on obtaining some desperate victory, said only : "I hope they'll call me Dirty Dick no more."

In my interpretation of the interdicted mockery of the Semang, I identified as prominent among

⁴³ It is fitting that at the conclusion of a paper devoted to "the investigation of problems posed by a practice common to the Semang of Malaya and the Penan of Borneo" Needham should have instanced the behaviour of Hamlet. Cf. Hazlitt's words (1817) : "Hamlet is a name; his speeches and sayings but the idle coinage of the poet's brain. What then are they not real? They are as real as our own thoughts."

the mocked at objects, symbolic representations of the paternal genital, and argued that this mockery was basically associated with envy. I would now like to direct attention to another mode of mockery of the male genital, namely mockery by females, which is associated with penis envy.

This is well-known phenomenon psycho-analytically. Fenichel (1953 : 156), for example, has described the case of a woman with acute penis envy

"whose whole life stood under the rule of the castration complex and who made men the objects of her scorn....But not only men; the penis in particular too, she found it grotesque she had to laugh at it when she saw it, and when she thought that men were proud of that."

Penis envy is a widespread phenomenon ethnographically, a notable instance being the socially - shared belief in the inyoka or snake said to inhabit the

genitals of women among the South-Eastern Cape Bantu, and which Laubscher (1937 : 24) has interpreted as a "compensating reaction for penis envy." Again, Elwin (1949 : 395) has recorded from Middle India the myth of Bodrahin, the daughter of the Raja of Chandagarh, whose umbilical stump, measuring seven and a quarter cutits in length, is used both to split open the heads of hated males and to impregnate her handmaidens. As a further example I shall briefly describe some of the manifestations of penis envy among the Iban of Borneo.

It is a not uncommon thing to see an Iban mother fondling, in an admiring way, the penis of her infant son. This is erotically stimulating to the child, but it is also, I would suggest, threatening, for to look on an object not one's own with intense longing, is also, in most cases, to envy its possessor. This is seen when a mother and young son quarrel, as they often do. Then, the boy, enraged, will shout at his mother

(as in a case observed on 31st. July, 1950) : "Your vulva! Your vulva!" And the mother, also angry, but partly in mockery, will retort : "Your stiff penis! Your testicles!"

Or, to give another example (observed on 16th. November, 1949) : A small boy, having quarrelled with his mother is lying in the gallery of the long-house, with an electric torch in his hands and crying. His mother brings out some rice beer for a visitor, and, as she passes her son, she bends down and tweaks his penis; enraged, the child flings the torch with all his might and hits his mother full in the back. A more regressive reaction (observed on 16th. March, 1950) was that of Dengo, a 5 year old boy who, after being teased for some time in public by his mother with repeated pullings of his penis, suddenly broke down, and flinging himself on her lap, impulsively bit at her skirt immediately over her genitals.

Adult women in Iban society are, virtually without exception, envious of males, and the mockery of

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Adult women in Iban society are, virtually without exception, envious of males, and the mockery of

males, and particularly the male genital is one of their favourite pastimes. One of the forms which this mockery takes is for two women to share a nickname (emprian) which they regularly use in addressing one another in a bantering tone of voice. It is always a nickname directed at males, and usually at the male genital. For example,

- (i) ribok tangan batang : damaged tree trunk
(a jeering reference to a male organ with a palang or penis pin, a phallic ornament affected by Iban braves);
- (ii) kring enda lama : stiff but not for long;
- (iii) ringat enda makai : enraged if it does not eat;
- (iv) udun bepala lasu : bald-headed fish;
- (v) enda tau di tegu : that which must not be touched.

Again, during head-hunting rituals which are occasions for the celebration of the preoccupations and the narcissism of men, bands of women, as comically dressed transvestites, complete with grotesquely

ornamented phalli, for hours on end chant songs in which they mock male pretensions and denigrate the male genital.

For example :

Bald-headed fish,
Fish with one tail,
Throttle and beat this thing
Which, like a child,
Takes out it's father
For nocturnal walks.

The men, needless to say, do not find the jests of their womenfolk amusing, they are joking about far too serious a matter, and the experience too closely resembles the events of their childhood. Threatened and anxious the men become incensed and retaliate by bellowing out chants critical of women which lack wit and leave nothing to the imagination.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ On one occasion, at Rumah Rabong in the Kapit District, when a woman, at the height of these festivities, cut her foot on a ceremonial sword which had fallen from the scabbard she was wearing, this was interpreted by some of the men present as a retaliatory gesture by the familiar spirit of a renowned head-hunter, Temenggong Koh, who was among the guests; his familiar spirit, a serpent (antu nabau) had become, they said, incensed at the mockery of women, a nice example of symbolic displacement.

With this brief glance at a relevant aspect of the psycho-dynamics of sexual nicknaming, let us turn to Hamlet and Ophelia. Shakespeare's play, as Ernest Jones has shown in his book Hamlet and Oedipus, is basically concerned with the psychology of the oedipus situation. A principal feature of this is Hamlet's emotional reaction to the Queen, his mother's, adultery and incest.

"The underlying theme," Jones writes (1949 :86), "relates ultimately to the splitting of the mother image, which the infantile unconscious effects, into two opposite pictures : one of a virginal Madonna, an inaccessible saint towards whom all sensual approaches are unthinkable, and the other of a sensual creature accessible to everyone."

There is also, in the play, evidence of Hamlet's repressed aggressive impulses towards his mother. For example, in Act III, when he decides to go to his

mother's bed-chamber, Hamlet utters the words (3.2.397);

"O heart, lose not they nature, let not ever

The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:

Let me be cruel not unnatural.

I will speak daggers to her, but use none."

Here the reference is to the fact that Nero, is reputed both to have slept with his mother, Agrippina, and, later, to have murdered her.⁴⁵ In other words, the soul of Nero, by which Hamlet, for an awful moment is tempted, is that of the incestuous matricide.

Hamlet in the early part of the play manages to contain his revulsion and anger at his mother's rank sexuality, but only at the expense of displacing this revulsion and anger on to the fair Ophelia.⁴⁶ Thus, from Act II onwards, Hamlet treats Ophelia as though she

⁴⁵ Cf. King John (5. 2. 152) :
 "You bloody Neroes, ripping up the womb
 Of your dear mother England..."

⁴⁶ Hamlet's words (3.1.115) to Ophelia : "I did love you once" may be interpreted as referring to the time before his mother incestuously married his uncle, Claudius.

were a harlot; her prattling old father Polonius he calls a "fishmonger," which in the language of the Elizabethans, means a pander or bawd; and, in Act III, distraught, he lashes her with the words it is our concern to try to interpret (3. 1. 141) :

Hamlet. "...get thee to a nunnery, go, farewell....

(he paces to and fro) Or if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them : to a nunnery, go, and quickly too, farewell."

(he rushes out)

Ophelia. O heavenly powers, restore him!

Hamlet. (once more returning). I have heard of your paintings too, well enough. God hath given you one face and you make yourselves another, you jig, you amble, and you lisp, you nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance; go to, I'll no more on't, it hath made me mad. I say we will have

no mo marriage - those that are married
 already, all but one, shall live, the rest
 shall keep as they are : to a nunnery, go."

With some of these words there is no difficulty.

The 'monsters' that women like Ophelia make of men are
 horned monsters or cuckolds, and the 'nunnery' to which
 Hamlet tells her to go is, in the cant language of
 Shakespeare's day, a brothel⁴⁷ (Wilson 1934 : 193).

Again, the paintings mentioned by Hamlet are not
 Ophelia's water-colours, but the lascivious embellish-
 ment of her face.⁴⁸

These allusions establish very plainly Hamlet's
 intentions : he is attacking the wanton sexuality of

⁴⁷ For example, in an early German version of Hamlet
 (Furness 1963, ii : 121), there is a reference to
 "a nunnery where two pairs of slippers lie at the
 bedside." Cf. also John Fletcher, The Mad Lover (4.2) :
 "There's an old Nunnerie at hand. What's that?
 A bawdy-house."

⁴⁸ Cf. Hamlet (3. 1. 51), the words of Claudius :
 "The harlot's cheek, beautified with plast'ring art."

women, and especially his mother,⁴⁹ in the shape of Ophelia. His next words are these : "you jig, you amble and you lisp." Jigging which means dancing, and ambling which is a form of riding, have obvious sexual connotations;⁵⁰ and it is significant that in the bad quarto of 1603, Hamlet is made to say to Ophelia : "you fig, you amble and your lisp," fig, being a common Elizabethan obscenity, meaning to fornicate, derived from the Italian fico (Partridge 1947 : 112).

Finally, we come to the words "you nickname God's creatures," which have puzzled Dr Needham as they have many Shakesperian scholars.

Clearly, the words are a reproach against the behaviour of women, including Hamlet's mother, and,

⁴⁹ Cf. Hamlet's feelings about marriage (i.e. the incestuous marriage of his mother), as expressed towards the end of his outburst against Ophelia.

⁵⁰ Freud (1916-17) notes that rhythmical activities such as dancing and riding are symbolic of sexual intercourse, and this is confirmed in Partridge (1951).

from the context, of a sexual kind. The great Shakespearian scholar, Dover Wilson, has put forward the view (Wilson 1934 : 194) that Hamlet was alluding to indecent names given to fruit and vegetables, and he cites, following Dowden, the following passage from Romeo and Juliet (2. 1. 34) :

"Now will he sit under a medlar tree,
And wish his mistress were that kind of fruit
As maids call medlars when they laugh alone."

Now, as Partridge (1947 : 153) documents, the term medlar, in Shakespeare, means the femal pudend.⁵¹ So, if Dover Wilson is to be believed, Hamlet is holding it an offence in women that they mock their own genitals.

This is a most interesting defensive denial and the exact reverse of the truth. What really concerns

⁵¹As Partridge (1947 : 153) notes, there is probably here a pun on 'meddle'. Cf. Coriolanus (4. 5. 43) : "Ay, 'tis an honest service than to meddle with thy mistress."

Hamlet, as it concerns Iban sons and 'princes,' is that women, including mothers, are wont to nickname and jeer at, not their own genitals, but those of the males whom they envy.

Confirmation of this interpretation is to be found in another of Shakespeare's plays, written at about the same time as Hamlet, the comedy As You Like It. The passage in question occurs in Act IV, at the point where the sardonic Jaques encounters a party of lords returning from a deer-hunt, which has ended in a kill. They are elated at their success, and Jaques, delighting as ever to foster human folly, eggs them on to the top of their bent. In this he succeeds, and the slayer of the stag, wearing its pelt and horns as the insignia of victory, and riding on the shoulders of his companions, is bourne in triumph, like a Roman conqueror, to the Duke's presence.

It is a droll scene of masculine vanity, and as the elated hunters go on their way, they sing, at

Jaques's urging, these vainglorious words (4. 2. 14) :

"Take thou no scorn to wear the horn,

It was a crest ere thou wast born,

Thy father's father wore it,

And thy father bore it,

The horn, the horn, the lusty horn,

Is not a thing to laugh to scorn."

I have but one word to add. The word scorn (Patridge 1958 : 595) comes from the Old French escorner, with the meaning : "To deprive of horns, hence to despoil, hence to mock...." With this our search is at an end, as also is this paper.

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