
Oedipus-Type Tales in Oceania

Author(s): William A. Lessa

Source: *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 69, No. 271 (Jan. - Mar., 1956), pp. 63-73

Published by: American Folklore Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/536945>

Accessed: 30/09/2009 15:51

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=illinois> and <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=folk>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of Illinois Press and American Folklore Society are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of American Folklore*.

OEDIPUS-TYPE TALES IN OCEANIA

BY WILLIAM A. LESSA

MY interest in oedipus-type tales derives from a story I collected on Ulithi Atoll which proved on closer inspection to be remarkably akin to the Greek story of Oedipus the King.¹

In the Ulithian story the wife of a chief gives birth prematurely to a son, whom she discards into the sea, and who is found and raised by a man from a small village at the other end of the island. The boy grows up, and in the course of time meets a woman who seduces him. They soon learn through the adoptive father that the woman is his mother, but despite this knowledge they continue their incestuous relationship. The chief, annoyed at his wife's prolonged and puzzling stay at the menstrual house, where she is carrying on the affair, finally insists that she come home. He then notices that she has some scratches on her face and suspects that they have been made by a lover, so he has all the men of the island assemble and submit to an identity test by placing their fingers alongside the scratches. The youth is revealed as the culprit, but when the chief, who does not know he is his son, tries to murder him, the boy kills his father instead. The mother then goes to live with her son in his village.

Having speculated that the resemblance of this story to the Sophoclean tragedy is either 1. fortuitous, 2. the result of a universal psychological situation, or 3. the result of diffusion, I set about trying to discover what I could from a consideration of oedipus-type tales in general. I found that aside from Europe, the Near East, and southern and southeast Asia, the story type seems to occur only in Oceania. Specifically, an examination made of several thousands of stories in connection with a broader survey of Oceanic folklore shows it to be present in twenty-three narratives from the islands of Sumatra,² Java,³ Lombok,⁴ Ulithi,⁵ Truk,⁶ Ponape,⁷ Kusaie,⁸ the Marshalls,⁹ Kapingamarangi,¹⁰ New Guinea,¹¹ and the Marquesas.¹² I am convinced that there are several more occurrences but that most of them would merely turn out to be no more than slightly differing local variants.

In the Aarne-Thompson classification of folktales the oedipus story is labeled Type 931. The essential points are: (A) A prophecy that a youth will (B) kill his father and (C) marry his mother. He is (D) saved from being exposed to die and is (E) reared by another king, (F) the prophecy being fulfilled with tragic consequences.¹³ Of these six motifs I consider prophecy, parricide, and incest as the most essential.

Of the various stories in my collection it should be pointed out that none meet all three of the major criteria or all three of the minor criteria. In fact, only a third of them mention even the combination of parricide and incest. In one case all three of the major criteria are missing! As for the minor motifs, all three are absent in half the stories. Most often lacking from this group of criteria is the motif of the fulfillment of the prophecy, which in view of the fact that usually there is no prophecy to begin with need not surprise us. This, of course, does not mean that in these cases parricide and incest are lacking, for they are often present without having been foretold.

I have taken further liberties with the criteria of the oedipus stories. Not only have I welcomed tales in which both major and minor motifs are deleted with abandon, but I have used very liberal definitions of the motifs themselves. They do not always occur in traditional form. Yet I am sure that I can show elasticity is amply justified. In fact, one of the major goals of this paper is to demonstrate that despite what seem to be serious differences in the tales they are essentially of one type.

One way to indicate the over-all similarity of the tales in the collection would be to describe all of them—obviously impractical. But another way is to give concrete illustrations of various types of tamperings and substitutions and show that in the light of local cultural conditions they are quite reasonable. This is what I now propose to do.

The first type of change is in the *dramatis personae*. In the story from Truk the father is replaced by the mother's brother, a change that would have delighted the late Bronislaw Malinowski, for he had argued that in matrilineal societies having the avunculate the maternal uncle and not the father has the stern repressive role that antagonizes his nephew towards him.¹⁴

In this same story the mother's brother's wife is substituted for the mother. Perhaps this change is understandable if we view it as a way of retaining the wife of the hated man as the object of the incestuous relation.

On Ponape, there is another replacement in the cast of characters. The father's sister replaces the mother.

This brings us to another change, namely, in the gravity and nature of the act of incest. There seems to be a general tendency to play down the incest motif, which, in some instances, is altogether omitted. Alterations can involve simply a change in personnel, as in the substitution of the uncle's wife or the father's sister for the young man's mother. It should be observed that these sex partners cannot in a matrilineal society such as Truk and Ponape belong to the same clan as the youth, so the act of incest is rendered less fearful, for in most unilinear societies it is strictly forbidden to have relations with a clan mate. In short, the idea of incest is retained but it is attenuated by selecting relatives outside the clan group.

In addition to changes in personnel, the incest motif is minimized in other ways. In two Indonesian stories it is done by having the act of incest merely threatened instead of consummated.¹⁵ Sometimes the motif is so drastically altered as to be almost unrecognizable. For instance, the act that enrages the husband may merely be an un-erotic fingernail scratch on his wife¹⁶ or it may be protracted breast feeding.¹⁷ In the story from Kusaie the mother and son never display amatory interest, but they do unite to do battle against a party led by her husband, who is enraged because she has defied him and brought back to life the son whose skull he had crushed.

I can assign no reason for the wish to minimize the incest motif, except perhaps that in tales told to explain the origin of ruling families it may be felt necessary to play down the gravity of the violation of the taboo. At any rate, where incest is eliminated or minimized, parricide is the major theme of the story. Where incest is the dominant motif, such as in Ulithi and most Indonesian oedipus-type tales, there is no substitution for the mother.

Another common change in Oceanic oedipus-type tales is to be found in respect to the exposure of the child. Again these changes are to be seen as adjustments to local situations and do not vitiate the oedipal character of the tales. For example, in Oceanic

stories the child is never abandoned to die, as was Oedipus in the Greek tragedy, yet all the incidents attendant upon his birth are seen on scrutiny to be mere variants of abandonment in the literal sense.

One variant is to have the father try to kill his son outright at birth instead of having him left to die of exposure. This is what we find in specimens from the Sundas,¹⁸ Truk, Ponape, and Kusaie. Another variant is to have the king remove the child from the scene by ordering his pregnant wife banished from the land because her unborn child has insulted him. Later, to be sure, after the child is born the king's other wife puts the neonate in a box and throws him into a river.¹⁹ Another substitution for abandonment involves a miscarriage or stillbirth. There is no hostility towards the baby; he is merely left by his mother to float in the sea because of her ignorance of his viability or even his very existence.²⁰

I am convinced that the reason why the abandonment motif is so distorted or even absent in most Oceanic tales of the oedipus type is that the idea of prophecy and relentless fate, so important a feature of the Greek and closely allied stories, is absent from all Oceanic specimens except three cognates from Sumatra and Java.²¹ If the near-elimination of the child at birth is not to be motivated by a prediction, then his narrow escape from death must be attributed to other causes, as we shall soon see.

Why is the prophecy motif usually absent in Oceania? Let us observe first of all that when it does occur it is present only in those islands of Malaysia most strongly subject to Hindu influence. We know that Java and Sumatra were centuries ago the seats of powerful Hindu-Buddhistic empires, and were later subjected to Islamic influence. The prophecy element is completely absent where there are no influences from the Indian and Moslem worlds, although the case of Lombok, just east of Bali, illustrates that the presence of either of these influences is not a guarantee that the prophecy motif will necessarily be present in a story.

In my opinion the reason for the absence of the prophecy element is that while divination is a world-wide phenomenon, the idea of relentless fate is not. The concept of fate is what gives the prophecy its special character. Divination is common in the unacculturated islands of the Pacific, yet it does not have the fatalistic quality seen in the systems of supernaturalism of the Indo-European and Semitic-speaking peoples. Therefore the threat to the life of the newborn babe must come from some other source than a desire to thwart fate.

On Kapingamarangi and Ulithi, where the idea of prophecy cannot very well be invoked as a motivation for the near-death of the newborn child, a miscarriage is substituted. This takes away the purposeful threat to the child and substitutes a fortuitous, impersonal one. On Ponape the story-tellers handle the fatalistic aspect of the story by offering no reason at all for the attempt to kill the child. We are simply told that when a certain chieftain departs from his house he leaves orders with his wife that she is to spare the newborn child if it is a girl and to kill it if it is a boy. On Kusaie, the implication seems to be that girls are more desirable than boys, for when the husband leaves his wife to go to the mountains he says that if she should give birth to a boy he will make a hole in the boy's skull so he can drink out his brain, but if the child is a girl then they shall keep her and in time she will become a woman and likewise have children. Only on Truk is a clear-cut explanation for "abandonment," i.e., infanticide, offered without either invoking the idea of fate or hedging with a miscarriage. A chief

orders all the women to kill their newborn babes (male) because he fears that they may grow up to "speak" to his wives. But on most Pacific islands no attempt is made to do something about the prophecy motif. It is simply ignored.

The final kind of major change that we shall consider is the deletion or substitution of the parricidal motif itself. In instances where it is absent there are ample cognates to suggest that it was once an integral part of the story. On Truk a substitute is found in the form of the avunculicide, or the killing of an uncle. Here, as we have seen, the antagonism is between a boy and his mother's brother rather than him and his father.

The idea of parricide should be defined elastically enough not only to include avunculicide but to make it optional whether the youth or his father takes the initiative in expressing the antagonism between them. In the story from New Guinea, there is sexual jealousy between a father and son, and the father eventually kills the son instead of the other way around. In the Trukese story, we have an attempt at nepoticide, for the uncle tries to kill his nephew. On Kapingamarangi, the eventual outlet for sexual jealousy is banishment, a substitute for the killing of the youth. In short, parricide can have four equivalents: avunculicide, filicide, nepoticide, and banishment.

An interesting lesson can be learned from studying the occurrence of these various substitutions and deletions, and that is that within any group of cognates there can be greater differences in the constituent motifs than between widely separated stories that differ in the specific but yet minor details. Thus the Ulithian story is closer to the Sophoclean drama in such essential elements as the *personae* of the triangle, the abandonment, the act of incest, and the act of parricide, than it is to its Trukese cognate, where the mother's brother replaces the father, the mother's brother's wife replaces the mother, an antagonistic scratch on the hand replaces incest, and attempted nepoticide and effected avunculicide replace parricide.

Before leaving the matter of changes and substitutions, it is interesting to note that in one respect at least, there is remarkable consistency in the attribution of "royalty" to the father in the Oceanic tales, as in the Greek stories. These fathers are usually chiefs, but they may even be kings or princes.

Consistency is also to be found with respect to the presence of an adoptive parent of the hero. A foster parent usually appears not only where there is an instance of "abandonment" but also where there is the threat of actual infanticide. Except for the case from Truk, the adoptive parent is always a man. On Truk such a parent is a female moth or bird. In one case, just as in Greece, he is a king.

If the reader has become persuaded that there is a unity in the Oceanic tales under discussion, then an important point has been made, and we can proceed to further considerations.

One cannot help but interpret the significance of Oceanic oedipus-type stories for psychoanalytic theory. Orthodox Freudians are constrained by the dictates of their theoretical position to adhere not only to a pan-oedipus complex but to a pan-oedipus folklore as well.²² On both counts they can be shown to be wrong, for neither situation is universal. Where one is present the other may be absent, and vice-versa.

Let us consider first the alleged ubiquitousness of the complex itself. The newer generation of depth psychologists has shown a tendency to rectify some of the fanciful dogmas of the past, involving as they did such ideas as the primal horde, race memory, group mind, and collective unconscious. Long ago Alfred Adler made a radical de-

parture from Freud in suggesting that the oedipus complex arises in special cases where a child has been so pampered by his mother that he cannot cope with the outside world and so returns to her and takes gratification in dominating her. While his sexual fantasies and desires are directed towards her, they are subordinate to the craving for power over her.²³ Franz Alexander, even though he tends to disparage the new socio-cultural emphasis, says that the oedipus complex is not necessarily universal itself and may even be lacking in cultures other than our own. He thinks the jealousy aspect is the infantile situation which is universally present, and that the child will manifest hostility and aggressiveness against what he considers to be any competitor who arrives on the scene in the long period of his postnatal dependence on parental care.²⁴ Karen Horney minimizes the role of the oedipus complex in neuroses and substitutes "basic anxiety." She stresses the social environment. The oedipus complex, she says, arises not from ultimate biological causes at all but from certain family relationships, and in any case is not ubiquitous.²⁵ Harry Stack Sullivan emphasizes parental roles, asserting that a parent of opposite sex will be turned to by the child because that parent treats it with greater indulgence than does the other.²⁶ Erich Fromm, despite certain limitations involving his Bachofen-like interpretation of oedipus motifs as being symbolic of the struggle between democratic, matriarchal principles and authoritarian, patriarchal ones within a society, keeps in step with the current trend not only by saying the oedipus complex is not universal but that the sex aspect must be removed from it and that the rivalry between father and son is really due to a struggle over authority.²⁷ Abram Kardiner believes that society creates the individual and hence also the oedipus complex; therefore only through comparative sociology can we discover the socio-cultural forces which create it.²⁸

The importance of these retrenchments for the interpretation of Oceanic folklore is so self-evident that it would seem redundant to dwell upon the freedom they provide in the modification of the motifs in question. It is lamentable, however, that little effort has been expended by psychoanalysts and anthropologists towards inquiring as to the presence or absence of the oedipus complex in non-Western societies. We, of course, do have Malinowski's classic insistence that at least for the Trobriand Islands there is no mother-son incest longing and no antagonism between father and son, and that the definition of the oedipus complex must be dropped for matrilinear societies and replaced by a more elastic "nuclear family concept," which varies with social factors and provides a place for the antagonism between nephew and uncle.²⁹ Neither ethnographic materials nor Thematic Apperception Tests revealed the presence of the complex on Ulithi Atoll.³⁰ The complex is not reported in a personality study made of the Truk archipelago, where Rorschach and Thematic Apperception Tests were applied.³¹ Nor is it mentioned in a personality study made of the Chamorros and Carolinians on Saipan, in which Rorschach tests, psychiatric interviews, and other approaches were used.³² It is not discussed in a personality study of the Balinese, in which photographic analysis was employed.³³ It is said to be "decidedly not" present in the Marquesas, although the same source mentions it as present among the Tanala of Madagascar.³⁴ It is also described as present on Alor, where the Rorschach, children's drawings, autobiographies, and other approaches were used.³⁵ However, in all fairness to both sides of this question, it should be pointed out that in almost all the cases mentioned, which are limited to Oceania, there was either no conscious effort to look for the complex or else very little is said as to how conclusions regarding it were arrived at. On the other

hand, this may reflect a growing unconcern on the part of the modern investigator towards the complex itself.

We may now briefly examine the old Freudian notion that, since there is a basic impact on culture by the infantile situation, the oedipus-type tale should be found universally. The fact of the matter is that unless, like Róheim and other extremists, we are willing to accept fantastically compounded symbolisms,³⁶ we find such stories limited to a continuous belt extending from Europe to the Near and Middle East and south-eastern Asia, and from there into the islands of the Pacific. It seems to be absent from such vast areas as Africa, China, central Asia, northeastern Asia, North America, South America, and Australia.³⁷

There are those who might take the stand that granted neither the complex nor the tale-type are universal, they at least occur concomitantly. This is not the case. The design for living of a people cannot be said to provide the proper climate for harboring the tale, even though it may have an effect on the particular form it takes. There are many societies in Africa and Asia where the complex has either been declared present or where there is every reason to believe that, on account of the "patriarchal" character of the social organization, it is probably present; yet the story is missing. Conversely, the story exists where the predisposing cultural conditions which make the normal oedipal situation a subject of concern in our own society do not exist. Ulithi is a case in point, and we may proceed to explore the conditions to be found on that atoll.

The child is not raised in a milieu in which attachment to a parent of the opposite sex can become a cardinal problem, for the nuclear family does not exercise the intense inward relationships common in the Euroamerican situation. This is because the nuclear family, consisting by definition of a married man and woman with their children, has a strongly dependent character, being subject to competition from three other kin groups—the extended family, the commensal unit, and the lineage.

Extended families, which consist of related nuclear families domiciled together, are on Ulithi only about one-third as frequent as independent nuclear families, but the latter have attached to them, for purposes of residence, one or more other individuals, e.g., a parent, sibling, cousin, nephew, niece, lineage mate, or other relative of either the husband or wife. Complicating the picture of the nuclear family and detracting from its functions is the fact that its members do not always eat together, even when living under one roof. A commensal unit may be constituted of individuals of several nuclear families. All this reduces and disturbs the family as a system existing in isolation with strong internal interaction. Husband-wife and parent-child relations yield much of their intensity. Further competing with the nuclear family is the lineage. The kinship system is a modification of the "Crow" type, resulting in non-localized groups of lineally related persons who trace their descent matrilineally through a common female ancestor. Every individual belongs to one of the many lineages now extant on the island. Each lineage normally has a head man, a head woman, its own traditional lands, a common cooking hearth, a traditional "house," a canoe shed, and even a set of ancestral ghosts. The individual in Ulithian society carries on much social interaction within this kin group. He calls all the members of generations above him "father" or "mother" and carries on relationships with them which to some extent parallel those with his real parents.

But there is much more that makes us wonder how an oedipal tale can appear in such an unoedipal environment as we find on Ulithi. The extremely common practices

of adoption and remarriage further weaken the internal relationships within the nuclear family. Forty-five per cent of all Ulithian babies are adopted, usually before birth, and share in two families—that of their biological parents and that of their adoptive ones. While the biological mother ordinarily nurses and trains the child for the first two years, there is nevertheless much sharing of these duties with the adoptive mother, who usually lives nearby. Both sets of families grant much attention to the child through feeding, fondling, and play. The child cannot maintain the habitual and intense interactions possible in a single family.

As for remarriage, many children are raised in nuclear families that have been re-constituted through divorce, which is very common. Because of divorce and death, the average number of marriages for persons over the age of fifty is almost two and a half. This reduces still more the rhythmic character of interaction within the family. In view of the decentralized nature of the nuclear family, then, there is not much opportunity for the rise of an oedipus problem.

I see that I have already digressed far from the main purpose of this article and do not have space to discuss matters of authority, discipline, and training, but anything I would have to say in this regard would show that the permissiveness present on Ulithi is in direct contrast to the more rigid training which many psychoanalysts hypothesize as being concomitant with the "patriarchate" and predisposive to oedipal problems. I could demonstrate that Ulithian society is closer to the so-called "matriarchal" type than it is to the "patriarchal" one, which some analysts, such as Fromm, say goes hand in hand with the oedipus complex.

Of course, there are many who feel that it is useless to insist upon an intimate connection between the oedipus complex and the oedipus plot. In the last century the naturistic school of folklorists were firmly convinced that the tale symbolizes natural phenomena; and so we find, for instance, that Michel Bréal explains Oedipus as the personification of Light, the chief event in the drama being his struggle with the Sphinx—the storm cloud—and his blinding being the disappearance of the sun at the end of the day.³⁸ Domenico Comparetti sees the drama as a moral tale depicting man's inability to escape his destiny.³⁹ Similarly, the more conservative contemporary folklorists, such as Stith Thompson, insist that the dominant theme of the Sophoclean play is not incest and parricide but prophecy and relentless fate.⁴⁰ Many of the more recent psychoanalytic interpretations depart from Freud's original emphasis and make outstanding revisions and re-evaluations. Otto Rank says the story is an attempt by the hero to retain his immortality through incest and at the same time satisfy society's insistence upon fatherhood.⁴¹ Erich Fromm finds that the drama is a vehicle for expressing not what Freud called the oedipus complex, which is based on incestuous striving, but the conflict between father and son over authority, as well as the conflict between the patriarchal system and the matriarchal order which it defeated.⁴² A. J. Levin, a lawyer well grounded in psychoanalytic doctrine, says that Freud skims over the fact that when Oedipus was three days old his ankles were riveted together and he was hung upside down to die of exposure, and that the real appeal of the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles to the Greeks is its expression of infantile resentment against abandonment, as well as the psychological effects of rejection.⁴³ H. A. van der Sterren finds that the emotions of the positive oedipus complex are not as clearly expressed in the drama as Freud would have us suppose, and that emphasis should be given to the pre-oedipal elements, for Oedipus harbored much enmity towards his mother, Jocasta, who has

some identity with the Sphinx.⁴⁴ George Devereux says that we must credit the Greek poets and dramatists with more psychological acumen than we have so far done, for what they called "Fate" was merely the personification of man's character structure and latent conflicts. The Oedipus stories express the male child's tendency to view his father as a homosexual ogre, and also his desire to exchange roles with the father in this respect. Using materials derived from many Greek sources, most of which he claims have been scotomized, he maintains that the terrible curse uttered against Laius by Pelops was brought about as the result of homosexual rape by the former against Chrysippus, the latter's son, with whom Laius had fallen in love, and that later Oedipus killed his father on the road in a jealous quarrel over this same Chrysippus. Devereux even suggests that Oedipus' cohabitation with Jocasta should be viewed primarily as a homosexual act.⁴⁵

One could cite various other such exegeses, but the point I want to make is simply that a single story can mean all things to all people, and that the Oceanic peoples have as much right as sophisticated Western intellectuals to interpret the oedipus-type tale to fit their own tastes and values. Thus, looking back on the various omissions, tamperings, and changes in emphasis discussed earlier in this article I would say there is nothing puzzling, unfair, or immoral about the way they depart from the central plot.

How then are we to account for the presence of oedipus-type stories in non-oedipal societies? I believe that at least for most cases the answer lies clearly in diffusion. The fact of the matter is that the stories in my collection nearly always occur in contiguous areas and often bear striking resemblances to one another, sometimes in specific details not connected with either the major or the minor motifs. In fact, I could show that the twenty-three stories from Oceania are definitely reducible to but seven or eight. Thus, the Ulithi, Truk, and Kapingamarangi tales are all very similar in general outline as well as in some highly specific details. The three stories from Ponape form a definite group of cognates of their own. The Kusaie story is generally independent of the Ponapean group but contains a specifically similar introduction that makes us wonder if it is not linked to them. The Marshallese tale seems independent. Of the thirteen Malaysian stories, all are reducible to two groups of cognates. In the first group, a king learns from a diviner that the son which his wife is about to bear will slay him and win his kingdom. To prevent a fulfillment of the prophecy the king orders the baby put into a box and abandoned, but the baby is found and is raised by another king. The boy grows up and lives to kill his father and rule in his stead. In the second group, a girl has intercourse with a dog and becomes pregnant. She bears a son, who kills his father, the dog. The son marries or tries to marry his mother. The single Melanesian specimen seems unrelated specifically to any others from Oceania. The lone specimen from Polynesia is a weak one and comes from the Marquesas, thus making it the easternmost of all Oceanic examples.

I do not wish to imply that the above evidence shows that seven or eight separate stories diffused throughout the Pacific. I merely point out that it is possible on a simple level to demonstrate that a group of stories can be reduced to one third their number. It is not at all unlikely that these stories all had a single prototype and that the tales which have been derived from it have become too altered by retelling to be recognizable as cognates.

My conclusion is that, while it is possible that an original oedipus story arose in the remote past, in connection with an oedipal situation in a "patriarchal" type of society

somewhere in a broad belt from Europe to south Asia, one cannot say that wherever such stories are found they offer proof of the underlying presence of an oedipus situation, or that wherever the complex occurs the story will arise out of it. The oedipal situation is one that is culturally determined and culturally modified and is not the result of instinct, racial memory, or engrams of the past. It is not universal, for there are many social systems not conducive to its development. Therefore, it is hardly to be expected that the oedipus-type tale would be universal. In fact, within Oceania it is surprisingly sparse. There is good evidence to show that, at least in this area, the presence of the tale type is mostly the result of diffusion and not of some psychological mechanism inspiring people independently to create it. As the story diffused it lost its original oedipal implications and became altered for use either as an explanatory myth or an interesting yarn. There is no evidence that Oceanic peoples attach much importance to the story. True, in the Sundas one group of cognates takes the form of an origin myth, but it is always told about some group of people other than that of the storytellers.

NOTES

¹ This article is an extension of a paper given before the American Folklore Society in New York, December, 1954, and represents a preliminary version of a detailed study to be published in the University of California monograph series, *Folklore Studies*. The author wishes to acknowledge the research assistance of Gerda Herritt and Hal Eberhart.

² Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, *The Achehnese*, trans. A. W. S. O'Sullivan (Leyden, 1906), I, 20, which deals with an Acheh version; Anonymous, "Legenden van Djambi," *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indië*, VIII (1845), 34-43, which deals with a Djambi version, the highlights of which are summarized by Ph. S. van Ronkel, "Catalogus der Maleische Handschriften van het Kon. Instituut voor de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Ned.-Indië," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië*, LX (1908), 211.

³ Tammo J. Bezemer, *Javaansche en Maleische Fabelen en Legenden* (Amsterdam, 1903), pp. 173-188, and *Volksdichtung aus Indonesien: Sagen, Tierfabeln und Märchen* (The Hague, 1904), pp. 97-100; Hendrik H. Juynboll, *Supplement op den Catalogus van de Sundaneesche Handschriften en Catalogus van de Balineesche en Sasaksche Handschriften der Leidsche Universiteits-Bibliotheek* (Leyden, 1912), pp. 25, 54; J. Knebel, "De Kalang-legende, volgens Tegalsche lezing, uit het Javaansch," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, XXXVII (1894), 489-505; Jos. Meijboom-Italiaander, *Javaansche Sagen, Mythen en Legenden* (Zutphen, 1924), pp. 48-61; Winter, "Oorsprong van het zoogenaamde Kalangs-Volk," *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Indië*, II, Part 2 (1839), 578-588.

⁴ J. C. van Eerde, "De Kalangslegende op Lombok," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, XLV (1902), 36-39, 43-45, 46-47.

⁵ Author's unpublished field notes from Ulithi Atoll.

⁶ John L. Fischer, unpublished field notes from Truk, MS in Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, pp. 1011-23. I wish here to acknowledge Fischer's great generosity in letting me make full use of his rich data.

⁷ John L. Fischer, unpublished field notes from Ponape, MS in Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, pp. 1043-46; Paul Hambruch, *Ponape: Die Ruinen; Ponapegeschichten, in Ergebnisse der Südsee Expedition 1908-1910*, ed. Georg Thilenius, II, B, VII, 3 (Hamburg, 1936) pp. 321-324, 325-330.

⁸ Ernst G. Sarfert, *Kusae*, in *Ergebnisse der Südsee Expedition 1908-1910*, ed. Georg Thilenius, II, B, IV, 2 (Hamburg, 1920), pp. 438-439.

⁹ August Erdland, *Die Marshall-Insulaner; Leben und Sitte, Sinn und Religion eines Südsee-Volkes* (Münster i. W., 1914), p. 258.

¹⁰ Samuel H. Elbert, *Grammar and Comparative Study of the Language of Kapingamarangi; Texts and Word Lists*, mimeo. (Washington, 1948), pp. 112-115. A briefer version appears in the same author's, "Uta-matua and Other Tales of Kapingamarangi," *JAF*, LXII (1949), 245.

¹¹ Francis E. Williams, *Papuans of the Trans-Fly* (Oxford, 1936), pp. 312-314.

¹² Samuel H. Elbert, "Marquesan Legends," unpublished MS in Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, pp. 325-327.

¹³ Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (New York, 1946) p. 141.

¹⁴ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (London, 1927), pp. 9-11, 13, 44-47, 79, 120-121, 258-259, and *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia* (New York, 1929), I, 6-8, 18, 20-21.

¹⁵ Bezemer, *Volksdichtung*, pp. 97-100; Juynboll, p. 54.

¹⁶ Fischer, Truk MS, pp. 1011-23.

¹⁷ Erdland, p. 258.

¹⁸ Bezemer, *Fabelen*, pp. 173-188; Meijboom-Italiaander, pp. 48-61.

¹⁹ Juynboll, p. 25.

²⁰ Elbert, *Grammar*, p. 112.

²¹ Anonymous, pp. 34-43; Bezemer, *Fabelen*, pp. 173-188; Meijboom-Italiaander, pp. 48-61.

²² Cf. Géza Róheim, "The Anthropological Evidence and the Oedipus Complex," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, XXI (1952), 537-542, where the author denies that it is possible for infants and children raised in a culture which inhibits sexual activity not to develop an oedipus complex.

²³ Alfred Adler, *Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind*, trans. John Linton and Richard Vaughan (London, 1938), pp. 21, 51, 213-214.

²⁴ Franz Alexander, "Psychoanalysis Revised," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* IX (1940), 1-36; *Our Age of Unreason: A Study of Irrational Forces in Social Life* (Philadelphia, 1942), pp. 230-232.

²⁵ Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (New York, 1937), pp. 20, 83-84, 160-161, 285; *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (New York, 1939), pp. 12-13, 79-87.

²⁶ Personal communication from Harry Stack Sullivan to Patrick Mullahy, in the latter's *Oedipus: Myth and Complex* (New York, 1948), p. 315.

²⁷ Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (New York, 1947), p. 157; "The Oedipus Complex and the Oedipus Myth," in *The Family: Its Function and Destiny*, ed. Ruth Nanda Anshen, The Science of Culture Series, V (New York, 1948), pp. 334-358.

²⁸ Abram Kardiner, *The Individual and His Society: The Psychodynamics of Primitive Social Organization* (New York, 1939), pp. 67, 99-100, 133, 246, 383-389, 479-481, 485.

²⁹ Malinowski, *Sex and Repression*, pp. 4, 5-7, 14-15, 75, 80-82, 100, 137, 142, *et passim*.

³⁰ William A. Lessa and Marvin Spiegelman, "Ulithian Personality as Seen through Ethnological Materials and Thematic Test Analysis," *University of California Publications in Culture and Society*, II (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1954), pp. 243-301.

³¹ Thomas Gladwin and Seymour B. Sarason, *Truk: Man in Paradise*, Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, No. 20 (New York, 1953).

³² Alice Joseph and Veronica Murray, *Chamorro and Carolinians of Saipan* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951).

³³ Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead, *Balinese Character*, Special Publications of the New York Academy of Science, Vol. II (New York, 1942).

³⁴ Kardiner, pp. 246, 302, 349, 410.

³⁵ Cora Du Bois, *The People of Alor: A Social-Psychological Study of an East Indian Island* (Minneapolis, 1944).

³⁶ Róheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology* (New York, 1950), pp. 175-192; *The Riddle of the Sphinx*, trans. R. Money-Kyrle (London, 1934), *passim*. While Róheim does not actually claim to have oedipus-type stories among primitive peoples, he discovers the presence of oedipal elements in the folktales of such peoples as the Australians, Melanesians, Alorese, Marquesans, Yurok, and Navaho. This he does by recourse to a point of view which makes him look for and accept "unconscious ideas," and "real motifs." Thus (*Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, IX [1940] p. 542) he takes Malinowski to task for not recognizing the following story, which appears in the latter's *Sexual Life of Savages* (pp. 411-412), as being an oedipus tale: a man named Momovalva has intercourse with his daughter, and the girl commits suicide by persuading a shark to eat her up. He then kills his wife by coitus, and finally cuts off his own penis and dies. Róheim (*ibid.*) offers the following,

too, as an example from Malinowski (pp. 405-408) that has been overlooked: a woman has five sons and five clitorises. Every time the stingaree comes to have intercourse with her, he cuts off one clitoris, and each time one of four sons who try to fight the monster runs away. Finally the youngest son rescues the last clitoris from destruction by spearing and cudgeling the stingaree to death. An extremist, Róheim believes that the primal horde posited by Freud did really exist in the past as an archaic form of human social organization, but "myths of the Primal Horde type may be based not on the unconscious memory of primeval tragedies but may be actual narratives of events in human times." In short, the primal horde is still with us in the ethnological present, and in substantiation of this Róheim offers some seeming instances of it in Central Australia ("The Primal Horde and Incest in Central Australia," *Journal of Criminal Psychopathology*, III (1942), 454-460.) His documentation and interpretations are questionable.

³⁷ While I am not prepared to document my sources, I have found authorities who claim that oedipus-type stories are to be found in England, France, Finland, Lapland, Lithuania, Hungary, Roumania, Russia, the Ukraine, Albania, Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, and India.

³⁸ Michel Bréal, *Mélanges de Mythologie et de Linguistique* (Paris, 1877), pp. 163-185.

³⁹ Domenico Comparetti, *Edipo e la Mitologia Comparata* (Pisa, 1867).

⁴⁰ In a letter to the author from Stith Thompson of Indiana University, 31 October 1952, there is this declaration of his viewpoint: "Certainly the Oedipus story of Sophocles involves only quite accidental events and, so far as I can see, has no bearing whatsoever upon the so-called 'Oedipus complex.' The only enmity Oedipus has is toward an unknown man who tries to drive him off the road. From the Greek point of view, the fact that this man happened to be Oedipus' father came entirely from the workings of Fate and not from any psychological law. The same is exactly true of the unwitting marriage with his mother." See also Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, V (Bloomington, 1935), 46-47, for a description of motifs M343 and M344.

⁴¹ Otto Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* (New York, 1929); *Modern Education*, trans. Mabel E. Moxon (New York, 1932).

⁴² Fromm, *Man for Himself*. . . (Above, note 27.)

⁴³ A. J. Levin, "The Oedipus Complex in History and Psychiatry: A New Interpretation," *Psychiatry*, XI (1948), 285-289.

⁴⁴ H. A. van der Sterren, "The 'King Oedipus' of Sophocles," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, XXXIII (1952), 343-350.

⁴⁵ George Devereux, "Why Oedipus Killed Laius: A Note on the Complementary Oedipus Complex in Greek Drama," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, XXXIV (1953), 132-141.

University of California
Los Angeles, California