Genre and Function in Eastern Carolinian Narrative[1]

By
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An anthropologist once wrote that considerably more information existed on the peoples of Micronesia than had diffused to American anthropologists.[2] A great deal of water has flowed under the ethnographic bridge since this judgment was handed down; extensive studies of Micronesia have been made; and several Micronesian societies are now firmly ensconced in that apex of the scientific approach to the cross-cultural study of man, the Human Relations Area Files.

Still, one feels justified in pointing out that, as is often the case with the process of diffusion, the spread of information about Micronesians has been decidedly selective, having been strained through the filter of the theoretical interests of post-World War II ethnography. The end result has been (and I confess special interests) that the esthetic aspect of many Micronesian cultures has received short shrift. Of course, one needs be pragmatic and not expect reports on facets of culture long since passed from the ethnographic scene or living on in greatly attenuated form, all the result of time and culture contact. In nineteenth century Micronesia, American whalers were followed by multi-national traders; Japanese fisheries, mines, and sugar plantations flourished and

1. Much of this material has been covered extensively in my dissertation ("A Study of the Cultural, Historical, and Acculturative Factors Influencing the Repertoires of Two Trukese Informants," Indiana Univ., 1967) and there related specifically to my informants' repertoires.

2. John Useem, "Applied Anthropology in Micronesia," *Applied Anthropology*, VI, No. 4 (1947), 1.

then became casualties of World War II; in these busy years, the Spanish, Germans, and Japanese each had their day in the Micronesian sun, to be followed by the United States, which now holds sway in most of Micronesia under the rubric of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

During these hundred or so years of sustained contact, it is to be anticipated that the triple forces of economics, politics, and religion have greatly modified or pushed into the memories of the old many once vital aspects of Micronesian cultures; and many of the esthetic components of the Micronesian way of life are to be counted today among the victims of change.

Nevertheless, much remains despite the erosion and modification of belief and function. Many Micronesian societies have endured the stormy years of culture contact, still holding fast to their time-honored subsistence economies and social structures that made possible their ways of life on those specks of sand and rock; and allied to social structure and technology is the store of narratives that explained, validated, preserved, and made enjoyable the nature of things. And it is in this area of oral literature that the contemporary ethnographic record is at times deficient. True, Ulithi Atoll has its William Lessa and Ifaluk Atoll its Edwin Burrows,[3] both of whom have devoted complete works to the narrative and songs of their chosen societies. However, other American ethnographers have been considerably more frugal, content to work some limited narrative material into their opuses, if at all. A few have presented small corpuses of tales in journal articles;[4] fewer still have attempted to organize this material in meaningful native categories.[5]

Not many Micronesian groups have received more attention from American anthropologists than that awarded the Trukese, those inhabitants of the Eastern Caroline Islands referred to today

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3. William Lessa, *Tales from Ulithi Atoll* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. Calif. Press, 1961); Edwin Burrows, *Flower in My Ear* (Seattle: Univ. of Wash. Press, 1963).

4. For example, Melford Spiro, "Some Ifaluk Myths and Folktales," *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE*, LXIV (1951), 289-302; Samuel Elbert, "Uta-matua and Other Tales of Kapingamarangi," *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE*, LXII (1949), 240-46; Kenneth Emory "Myths and Tales from Kapingamarangi," *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE*, LXII (1949), 230-39.

5. William Davenport, "Marshallese Folklore Types," *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE*, LXVI, (1953), 219-37; Thomas Blackburn, "Some Examples of Ponapean Folklore," *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE*, LXXX (1967), 247-254.

as Truk District, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands; yet nowhere in contemporary Micronesian ethnography is it any more apparent that the holistic approach to a culture has been weighted in the favor of current theoretical interests. This is ironical when viewed from a folkloristic perspective, since both the Truk Islands and the neighboring island of Ponape have been the subjects of several studies by John Fischer, who collected extensively during his four years as an anthropologist working for United States Trust Territory authorities. However, as a sample of his titles suggests,[6] Fischer's interests lie not so much in the tales themselves as in the direction of possible correlations of social structure, psychology, linguistics, and selected narratives. To point this up, the actual number of Trukese tales presented in Fischer's doctoral dissertation is five, which are compared to five cognate Ponapean tales, although it is apparent from William Lessa's comparative notes in *Tales from Ulithi Atoll* that Fischer's field notes (on file at Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawaii) contain large numbers of Trukese and Ponapean narratives.

From the point of view of the folklorist, a further limitation of Fischer's approach to Trukese narratives is his apparent reluctance to come to grips with that first of the scientific approach to folklore, the matter of classification, of establishing genre in native terms.

This brings one full circle to the fact that considerable information on Micronesia, material long antedating the American era, has not diffused to the average American anthropologist and hence is not readily available to the student who would like to see all of these cultures, including their folklore. Nonetheless, the pre-World War II record is full: censuses, descriptive ethnology, collections of tales—even a presentation of Trukese genres—are present for the persevering student who can secure the books and read the German texts.[7]

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6. "Folktales, Social Structure, and Environment in Two Polynesian Outliers," *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, LXVII (1958), 11-36; "Language and Folktale in Truk and Ponape: A Study in Cultural Integration," Diss., Harvard, 1954; "The Position of Men and Women in Truk and Ponape: A Comparative Analysis of Kinship Terminology and Folktales," *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE*, LXIX (1956), 55-62.

7. For Truk one can list, with no attempt at completeness, these important German sources: Johann S. Kubary, "Ueber die Industrie und den Handel der Ruk-Insulaner," *Ethnographische Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Karolinen Archipels* (Leiden: Trap, 1895); Augustin Krämer, *Truk*, Vol. V of *Ergebnisse der Südsee-Expedition 1908-10* (Hamburg: Friederichsen, DeGruyter, 1932); Laurentius

Lest it seem as if I am constructing a straw man to demolish at my leisure, it becomes advisable at this point to interject the opinions of others perhaps less subjectively interested in the relationship of folklore studies to anthropology than I. William Bascom has several times over reiterated the importance of including a culture's folklore in any attempt to delineate that culture, saying:

> Such studies, which we speak of as ethnographies, can give only an incomplete description if they do not also include the folktales, legends, myths, riddles, proverbs, and other forms of folklore employed by the people. . . . Although some anthropologists, for one reason or another, devote little attention to folklore, it is obvious that any ethnographic study which does not consider folklore can be only a partial and incomplete description of the culture as a whole.[8]

Explicit in the above is the necessity for presenting a classificatory system which would enable one to make a scientific presentation of a culture's lore. In a later publication, Bascom is again explicit as to what form such a system should assume, that these should be categories as recognized by the people themselves and that the attitudes of the people toward these categories not be overlooked.[9] To the student of narrative forms, all of this is not new, having been stressed by Bronislaw Malinowski in his classic article, "Myth in Primitive Psychology."[10] Still, this ideal stands in stark contrast to the reality that only too often folkloristic material remains forever in the ethnographer's field notes, without ever being arranged and presented as an important part of the society from whence it was plucked.

It was somewhat this state of affairs that I found when I first formulated my project for collecting folklore from young Trukese socialized within the context of the American administration of Truk. Since it was part of my plans to use the narrative collected to check on the knowledge of and extent of belief in such material by young and relatively acculturated Trukese males who in the

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Bollig, *Die Bewohner der Truk-Inseln, Anthropos Ethnologische Bibliothek*, Vol. III, No. 1 (Münster, i.W.: Aschendorf, 1927); and Hans Damm and Ernst Sarfert, *Inseln um Truk*, Vol. VI of *Ergebnisse der Südsee-Expedition 1908-10* (Hamburg: Friederichsen, DeGruyter, 1935).

8. "Folklore and Anthropology," *The Study of Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 26.

9. "Four Functions of Folklore," *The Study of Folklore*, p. 281.

10. *Magic, Science and Religion and Others Essays* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1948), pp. 93-148.

near future would be the leaders of Trukese society, the matter of genre was of the essence; for not only do genres enable the collector to categorize his materials, but more important, genres couched in terms acceptable to the informants and taking into full consideration the functions of this narrative material can also aid in ascertaining the attitudes of individual informants in relation to their repertoires. An informant whose faith in the myths of his people is ebbing will often qualify his stories, even present them as non-sacred legends or folktales if indeed he can recount them at all.

In turning to the works of my American predecessors in Truk, I found that other than John Fischer, American anthropologists had chosen to cultivate their particular theoretical fields and had left Trukese narratives largely in abeyance. Dealing specifically with Fischer and his most extensive work in folklore and culture, his doctoral dissertation, one finds much important material of a general nature but little evidence that the presentation of definitive categories was of great concern, this in spite of the fact that Fischer is obviously cognizant of Trukese genre and of the difficulties inherent in the establishment of folktale categories. In his article, "The Sociopsychological Analysis of the Folktale," Fischer simply plays down the issue of classification and says:

> The internal analysis of the texts presents the same problems regardless of the kind of folktale, for instance; and the use of folktale content for inferences about culture contact and genetic relationships is little affected by the kind of folktale in which a particular motif is found.[11]

All this is no doubt true for Fischer' purposes, but for one who wished to take into consideration the informants' attitudes toward the material contained in their repertoires, the next move was obvious. It was necessary to emulate Katharine Luomala's example, who when writing her definitive article, "Micronesian Mythology,"[12] found it necessary to draw heavily at times on pre-World War I German ethnographies. At times Luomala had recourse to Roland Dixon's work on Oceanic mythology,[13] while Dixon in turn had leaned wholly for his Trukese material on Max

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11. *Current Anthropology*, IV (1963), 236.

12. *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, Vol. II, 717-22, ed. Maria Leach (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1949-50).

13. *Oceanic*, Vol. IX of *The Mythology of All Races*, ed. Louis Gray (Boston: M. Jones, 1916), pp. 245-63.

Girschner's "Die Karolineninsel Namoluk und ihre Bewohner."[14] Unfortunately for Dixon's coverage of the subject, the two extensive volumes by Krämer, Damm and Sarfert, based on work done in 1908–10, were to lie in manuscript for nearly two decades; and Laurentius Bollig's *Die Bewohner der Truk-Inseln* was fourteen years attaining to print.

However, Luomala was more fortunate, for she was not denied access to Bollig's seminal work, and from this she presented Bollig's three-fold division of Trukese narrative: *uruo*—narratives of the origins of clans, land claims, and of ancient chiefs, known only to magical experts; *dudunap*—much loved fireside tales, often didactic; and *umes*—noodle tales told about certain groups.[15]

Although forty years have passed since Bollig presented his arrangement of Trukese narrative, and during these years most of the important studies of Trukese culture have been published, no one has utilized or improved on Bollig's approach. The general practice has been to speak of Trukese tales as if there were only two very broad genres. The German ethnographers Damm and Sarfert made a simple division of belief versus unbelief, which is of little use in bringing more than a general order to Trukese narrative.[16] Nor does John Fischer's sacred-profane dichotomy[17] or his later distinction of truth-fiction[18] provide any more precise guidelines.

It is with relief that one turns to Samuel Elbert's *Trukese-English Dictionary* and discovers there an impressive array of narrative terms. Here one finds Bollig's *uruwo* (legend or history), *kapasen fönü* (legend of old times), *porausen nòm* (story of old times), and *tuttunnap* (legend, story, fable). Elbert even has Bollig's term *umwes*, but does not present it as a numbskull tale. He simply gives its literal meaning of "crazy, foolish, or silly."[19]

Still, if one seeks in Elbert's dictionary a clear-cut presentation of genres, he is courting disappointment; for it becomes apparent that although Elbert elicited the terms, he did not attempt to make

14. *Baessler-Archiv* (Leipzig), II, III, (1912, 1913), 123-215, 165-90.

15. *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, p. 721.

16. *Inseln um Truk*, p. 217.

17. "Language and Folktale in Truk and Ponape," p. 42.

18. *The Eastern Carolines* (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1957), pp. 200-01.

19. *Trukese-English Dictionary* (Pearl Harbor, Hawaii: Navy Printing Office, 1947), pp. 222, 85, 171, 216, 219.

any basic distinctions. This becomes only too obvious when as synonyms for "legend" Elbert simply regurgitates all of his narrative terms: *uruwo, kapasen fönü, porausen nòm,* and *tuttunnap.*[20]

Nevertheless, Elbert's profusion of terms allied to Bollig's tripartite classification provided the solution to the conundrum raised when I tried to approach my informants and their lore with the simple, twofold classification favored by most students of Trukese culture. I found that my storytellers would present tales considered true but not sacred; hence they were not willing to call them *uruwo;* however, since the stories were believed, the same informants would balk at terming them *tuttunnap,* with its fictional connotations. The resolution, at least with reference to my informants, was to add one more Trukese category to Bollig's three, that of *porausen nòm,* which to my informants signified a true but non-sacred narrative. This then was the manner in which I arranged my collection.

Uruwo ("tell-source")

On this genre there is no disagreement. These are narratives which tell of the origins of food plants, of the antecedents of clans and their migrations, of the origins of magic, medicine, and navigational lore. This material must be learned and related exactly, and sometimes it is chanted in an esoteric jargon called *itang.*

Uruwo are invested with belief and sacredness, and the one who knows the *uruwo* of his clan is looked up to as a man of considerable prestige. This knowledge is rated as valuable property, and a man's children and his sister's children have a claim on it. Hence, a man who gives away such knowledge comes into the disfavor of his relatives. John Fischer even reports it is believed that promiscuous telling of *uruwo* to such outsiders as anthropologists can result in the death of the donor.[21] I was informed that such was the power of this valued lore that it was dangerous for women and children to be in the close vicinity when *uruwo* was being related and that blindness could well result from an unauthorized or unskillful person's attempting to recite *uruwo.* However, he who can in the heat of debate or in the midst of oratory call to his aid recognized *uruwo* can clothe his cause with

20. *Ibid.,* p. 281.

21. "Language and Folktale in Truk and Ponape," p. 52.

the garb of that final authority lent by tradition and at the same time present himself as a man of erudition. That many of these *uruwo* also have entertainment value is evidenced by the fact that in more generalized forms they show up in numbers in the repertoires of storytellers, sometimes still invested with belief and at other times simply functioning as fictional narratives.

Porausen nòm ("story of old times")

It is with this category that my informants varied most from Bollig's earlier description of genre, for Bollig was quite explicit that the Trukese included both true and fictional tales under the term *tuttunnap* (". . . . die man mit unseren Sagen und Märchen vergleichen kann").[22] However, it seems obvious in Augustin Krämer's titling of several of his tales that at least some of his informants were separating the true from the fictional in a manner akin to my more acculturated informants of contemporary Truk (e.g. "Geschichte von der Kampfgemeinschaft *poraus en metau;*" "Geschichte von Ónauguf (Poraus en O.)").[23]

Like the *uruwo,* the *porausen nòm* is invested with belief, but not with sacredness; and unlike the *uruwo,* my informants told *porausen nòm* willingly. Nor are these tales considered as property, although they can, like *uruwo,* serve to validate some clan's or lineage's claim to land or knowledge. *Porausen nòm* can be etiological, or they can simply be history. Some *porausen nòm* are definitely generalized *uruwo* which have lost prestige, for certain stories are recognized by informants as being, or having once been, part of the sacred narrative of some particular clan.[24] However, my informants did not seem to feel it was improper to relate what might be called desacralized *uruwo,* or even to voice some skepticism about some of the material.

There is no set time for the telling of *porausen nöm.* They, like the *uruwo,* are told when an occasion needing verification or explanation arises. An informant heard one story from a man who presented it as proof of the efficacy of his clan's magic, while another was told to him to explain the peculiarities of an expanse of sand.[25] When such an occasion arises, usually the most reputable

22. *Die Bewohner der Truk-Inseln,* p. 233.
23. *Truk,* pp. 356, 364.
24. Mitchell, "A Study of the Repertoires," Vol. II, p. 319.
25. *Ibid.,* pp. 333, 328.

member of the group will deliver the story; and the others will listen. Even if the narrator errs, he probably will not be corrected by his inferiors. If, however, the narrator has equals or superiors in the group, he will be subject to contradiction or correction, which he may or may not take in good grace, often depending on the statuses of the individuals concerned.

In 1964, I collected a navigation legend from a young man from Pulap Atoll, who had been chosen by those present to relate the tale because of his fluency in English. Nevertheless, the older men broke in so often to set the narrator straight that the resultant tape is almost bedlam. Another informant had so little status in the group and was so sensitive to criticism that he would contribute tales only in private sessions. I have also had Trukese come to me in private after a recording session to present to me the "correct" version of a story, although this purist would have sat through the earlier telling and recording of the material and had indicated no signs of disagreement.

Tuttunnap ("story")

With these, belief is not necessary, and most of the tales are recognized as fictional. However, here again as with *porausen nöm*, one will find upon questioning that some *tuttunnap* are known to be derived from the *uruwo* of some other clan. Under the heading *tuttunnap* one finds several subdivisions (these are not Trukese distinctions) made necessary by function, the status scale, and the scale of sexual distance. I have arranged these subdivisions so as to start with those *tuttunnap* which are serious in nature and to progress to the least valued.

I. Didactic Tales

These *tuttunnap* are considered high in instructional value; and although my informants' assigning of tales to this subcategory seemed at times highly arbitrary, the informants had no trouble at all in conceptualizing the cultural vice or virtue contained in each story so designated. There were some interesting variations included in these moralistic stories: a tale which the informant recognized as the *uruwo* of another island; an old myth of the pagan gods; an animal tale; and an obvious redaction of a European Märchen.[26]

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 397, 420, 427, 583.

These stories, like *uruwo* and *porausen nòm*, are usually told when the occasion arises, in this case where conditions indicate that individuals or groups are in need of criticism or instruction. In such situations, the Trukese prefer the indirect approach, a method to which the folktale is admirably suited. In some instances, the critic might well content himself with an allusion to a well-known tale, trusting to his audience's familiarity with the plot for putting his point across.

Although these tales are told at specific times to point up the dangers of such human weaknesses as disobedience and haughtiness, or to stress such cultural necessities as sibling solidarity and filial respect, this does not prevent such narratives from also being told as bedtime stories. After relating the sad and romantic story of a son who followed his heart and not his parents' advice and married unwisely, an informant said:

> And again this is a lesson to us, as the parents tell us not to marry somewhere else beside our own particular locality, where we could enjoy the people and enjoy everything we have in our own locality; but to marry a stranger or to marry in a strange place . . . puts us in a difficult position [in which] we could suffer a pretty hard consequences.

He then went on to relate that his grandmother told him this tale long ago as a bedtime story and that he had considered it a very sad story. However, the lesson inherent in the tale became clear to him only after he too had contracted an unwise marriage against his father's wishes, whereupon his father had once more recited the old tale as a warning (which the informant did not heed).

II. Entertaining Tales

This sub-genre includes the great majority of my entire collection. These tales are high in humor, and include animal stories, ghost stories, trickster tales, and accounts of ghost-defeating heroes. Again, the fluidity of Trukese genres and the importance of the attitude of the teller toward his material are shown by the fact that in this sub-category are also found the *uruwo* of clans not directly related to the informant and portions of the old mythology. Here, too, are encountered many wide-spread tales and motifs shown by William Lessa to be widely distributed in the Pacific area, such as, "The Deserted Woman and Her Ogre-Killing Son," Motif

R231 "Obstacle Flight—Atlanta Type," and Motif D361.1. "Swan Maiden."[27]

One finds great variety in this category because of its multitudinal functions. Here are included the bedtime stories told children, the stories which children tell each other, and many of the stories told in the men's house, again usually in the evening. Although there seem to be no formal objections to the telling of believed narratives at these times, the most of the tales told are treated as fictional.

My informants indicated that it is very often the old who tell the bedtime stories to the children; and this might well be explained by the fact that as Trukese become older and more restricted in their activities, they are often relegated to the task of keeping an eye on the small children. And, too, there is always the situation that Trukese grandparents, like their counterparts the world over, frequently dote on their grandchildren. The fact that the old do tell many of the bedtime stories might also account in part for the belief that if one tells such stories during the daytime, premature aging will be the result. Similar attitudes were recorded by Fischer, to the effect that if one told secular tales during the day, his associates would leave him and that the same effect would be caused by the telling of too many such tales, even at night.[28]

Tales high in amusement value are also told on those nights of the full moon, when malevolent ghosts do not wander, and consequently Trukese do. The young go to the beaches and play games, while their elders visit about; and during these activities, a good storyteller will often regale his associates with a story. Another evening occasion for narration, one that is declining in the face of acculturation, is the storytelling session in the men's houses. On those more traditional islands where the men's house is still part of the cultural scene, the men continue to entertain each other with tales; but on the heavily acculturated islands, the men's house has joined the ranks of abandonned practices.

Although the Trukese enjoy a good tale, they do not value this light entertainment highly; and when one starts to collect, it takes time to convince informants that one will gladly listen to

27. Lessa, *Tales from Ulithi Atoll*, pp. 220, 120, 403; Mitchell, "A Study of the Repertoires," Vol. II, pp. 443, 623, 638.

28. "Language and Folktale in Truk and Ponape," p. 45.

and record such frivolous material as bedtime stories. Common questions which arise are just what use could such silly material be and why would a college-educated man come clear to Truk just to waste his time listening to such unimportant stories. Conversely, one does not need to apologize for an interest in *uruwo* and *porausen nòm*, since every Trukese clearly recognizes them as worthy of notice.

III. Obscene Tales

Obscenity, both in speech and narrative, is governed by rules of sexual propriety and the status scale, which quite effectively bar the telling of obscene jokes in most groups, especially if both sexes are represented. Males should not indulge in lascivious language in the presence of women, and must not in the company of those females with whom any form of sexuality is forbidden. This does not mean that a youth will not make risqué allusions in the presence of females with whom he may have sexual relationships. It does mean, however, that he must be circumspect or incur the wrath of the girls' relatives.

One must refrain from this kind of humor in his wife's presence if others are in the near vicinity; although one is permitted such levity with a brother's wife or his wife's sister, since neither category falls within the compass of forbidden sexuality. As in many cultures, the Trukese male has special joking privileges with his sisters-in-law; and for that matter, they are potential sexual partners if those concerned have no objections. However, one should not tell obscene tales when such respected individuals as older brothers, wives' brothers, chiefs, and like prominent persons are in the group.

In view of all this, these tales are most freely told among young and not too closely related males. The men's house is a hotbed of this kind of yarn, and these were the tales that I most often heard Trukese students telling each other, nor were they slow in picking up and passing on such American obscene stories as appealed to them.

It is quite obvious to the collector that a major function of obscene folktales is to provide humor through the ludicrous and irreverent treatment of many of a society's mores. Some would even say that such tales provide a kind of psychological safety valve for pressures that build up under more restricted circumstances, with the obscene joke allowing a culturally sanctioned method of

"letting off steam." Be as it may, there is little doubt that such humor also instructs, for better or worse, maturing adolescents in reference to sexual matters.

In addition to these more overt functions, it seems to me that Trukese obscene humor also has about it definitely aggressive connotations. Certain well-known tales use as the butt of their joke women from particular islands;[29] and although such stories are objects of great mirth to inhabitants of other islands, the women of the islands concerned are highly embarrassed, while their fathers, brothers, husbands, and lovers are highly incensed at such public and salacious humor obtained at their women's expense. And to be more explicit, some informants have told me that certain tales, or allusions to the same, are sometimes used to provoke certain groups of males, or individuals, to anger or even to action.

Umwes ("silly, troubled, foolish")

This genre, although presented by Bollig in 1927, was apparently missed entirely by John Fischer in his extensive collecting. However, as Katharine Luomala shows in her recent article "Numskull Clans and Tales," stories of whole groups of simpletons are a wide-spread cultural phenomenon, to which the Trukese are no exception.[30] In his short discussion of numbskull tales, Bollig gives six such anecdotes and illustrates that they are used to criticize in an indirect way someone who has proclivities to like senseless actions. Bollig also specified that there were three definite villages where such silly behavior was localized.[31] I found my informants to be essentially in agreement with Bollig's report: that in these villages were to be found people of incredible naiveté and that allusions to such numbskull tales was a good-natured way to chide someone for unthinking behavior.

To speak generally of Trukese genres, one can encounter some degree of difficulty in attempting to fit the several variants of some one tale to a particular genre, for one finds that individual informants assign different values and functions to the same tale. Although informants from several clans and islands may well fail to reach a consensus on certain stories, the situation becomes much less fluid when one deals with fellow clan members from one certain

29. Mitchell, "A Study of the Repertoires," pp. 642-46.
30. *JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE*, LXXIX (1966), 157-94.
31. *Die Bewohner der Truk-Inseln*, pp. 238-39.

locality. In this case, the situation seems to be this: those narratives which pertain to one's own clan are believed and accorded high respect; those of one's father's clan (the Trukese are matrilineal) or some other neighboring clan, especially if that clan is powerful, with much knowledge of magic, are also accorded a measure of belief and respect. As the events related become located at a considerable distance or are connected with some minor clan, belief begins to wane; and the narrator will deliver as an entertaining tale a narrative which he knows to be sacred to some other group.

With this summation, I conclude a preliminary presentation of Trukese genre, a formulation that has functioned well in allowing me to ascertain just what the material I had collected meant to the individual informants, most of whom were in their mid-twenties or early thirties. It is an approach which I hope to expand in the near future, in an attempt to probe deeper into Trukese conceptions of major and minor types of folklore. In addition, I plan to work again with my former informants, most of whom have been back in Truk for several years, in order to discover whether or not their waning faith in many areas has received new fuel from their being once more immersed in the Trukese way of life, and whether or not this in turn would cause them to reassign tales from the fictional to the believed, or whether the erosion of belief is a largely irreversible process.

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