

The Oedipus Myth and Complex in Oceania with Special Reference to Truk

By

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The purpose of this paper is to consider William Lessa's thesis that there are Oedipus-type (Aarne-Thompson Type 931) tales in Oceania and that their occurrence in these "non-Oedipal" cultures is a result of diffusion from "somewhere in a broad belt from Europe to south Asia."¹ This thesis will be considered specifically in relation to the Trukese narrative discussed by Lessa² and a variant of the same which I collected in Micronesia in 1964. In addition, I will also consider several clan origin myths collected in the same area in 1962-64.

In order to evaluate Lessa's statement concerning non-Oedipal cultures, it is first necessary to consider the Oedipus complex as first conceived by Sigmund Freud and later modified by his successors. I will limit my discussion to those psychoanalysts whose theories concerning the Oedipus myth and complex will help develop the position taken in this paper.

Freud saw the Oedipus complex and its verbal expression, the myth, as a result of a situation which occurred in the primeval past, when the sons of the "Old Man" who preempted all the women of the primal horde rose against him, killed and ate him, and then committed incest with their mothers and sisters. Having satisfied their lusts and their hatred of their father, they were now overcome with guilt; for they had also loved and

1) William Lessa, "Oedipus-Type Tales in Oceania," *Journal of American Folklore*, LXIX (1956), 70-71; *Tales from Ulithi Atoll*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1961, pp. 212-13.

2) *Tales from Ulithi Atoll*, pp. 172-214.

admired him. Out of this grew totemism and its two great taboos: that of killing the totem animal (the father substitute) and that of incest. The two desires that preceded the young men's acts—to kill the father and possess the mother—were suppressed, but by a Lamarkian process these two desires became part of man's inherited mental characteristics. As Freud wrote:

We recoil from the person for whom this primitive wish of our childhood has been fulfilled with all the force of the repression which these wishes have undergone in our minds since childhood. . . . Like Oedipus, we live in ignorance of the desires that offend morality, the desires that nature has forced upon us. . . .³

Therefore, according to this view, where one finds man, he should find the Oedipus complex and its concurrent myth.

Although many of Freud's postulates, such as the primal horde, the precedence in time of the matriarchate over the patriarchate, and the genetic inheritance of guilt complexes, have been discredited by later scientific findings, his general theory concerning the Oedipus complex lives on, although with important modifications. As Patrick Mullahy says:

. . . we wish to conclude our criticism of Freud with a reminder that it is not meant to nor does it invalidate his factual discoveries, observations, and therapeutic techniques. . . . To slight the importance of Freud or his genuinely great contributions because of certain limitations would be an egregious mistake.⁴

Nevertheless, when one wishes to consider a given situation in reference to the Oedipus complex, he is faced with these later interpretations, which usually vary (and often conflict with one another) according to the disciplinary and theoretical approach of the individual interpreter.

If one is reading a report which states that there was or was not evidence of the Oedipus complex within the society studied, he is still faced with the question of what criteria were used to arrive at this conclusion; for often it is not stated just which interpretation of the Oedipus complex the author considers valid.

3) "The Interpretations of Dreams," *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, ed. A. A. Brill, New York: Modern Library, 1938, p. 308.

4) *Oedipus—Myth and Complex*, New York: Hermitage Press, 1948, p. 324.

To Otto Rank, the Oedipus complex and its resultant myth have their origins in the trauma of birth and the later attempts of children to alleviate through fantasy those conflicts engendered in the familial group. As for incest, it is man's attempt to return to the security of the womb. By means of incest one can achieve immortality through rebirth by his mother, and at the same time satisfy society's demand that he become a father.⁵ It can be seen nevertheless that Rank's unorthodox interpretation (by Freudian standards) of the Oedipus complex has, like Freud's, universal implications. However, it is Rank's treatment of the Oedipus myth itself that most concerns this paper. Rank sees this myth as one of many similar tales told about the births and subsequent careers of various heroes—including Sargon, Moses, Karna, Paris, Telephus, Perseus, Gilgamesh, Cyrus, Tristan, Romulus, Hercules, Jesus, Siegfried, and Lohengrin. Rank says:

The standard saga itself may be formulated according to the following outline: The hero is the child of most distinguished parents.... His origin is preceded by difficulties.... During or before the pregnancy, there is a prophecy...cautioning against his birth, and usually threatening danger to the father (or his representative). As a rule, he is surrendered to the water, in a box. He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people.... After he has grown up, he finds his distinguished parents.... He takes his revenge on his father...and is acknowledged.... Finally he achieves rank and honors.⁶

Although Rank stresses the hostility between father and son, he also notes that in reality there are also many cases of competition between brothers, and says that "...as a rule the deepest, generally unconscious root of the dislike of the son for the father, or two brothers for each other, is related to be [the] competition for the tender devotion and love of the mother."⁷

By considering the list of heroes whose lives are to fit Rank's model, it becomes apparent that some free interpretation is needed to make all these narratives conform to Rank's outline. However, Rank's importance to my paper is his broadening of

5) "Forms of Kinship and the Individual's Role," *The Myth of the Hero and Other Writings*, ed. Philip Freund; New York: Vintage Books, 1959, pp. 306-11.

6) *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, p. 65.

7) *Ibid.*, p. 77.

the concept of the myth itself, and the conflicts involved, to include sibling rivalry.

Erich Fromm further departs from Freudian precepts and sees the Oedipus complex not as an inherited incestuous longing but rather as a struggle between father and son over authority, plus a further struggle between patriarchy and matriarchy, in which the latter is defeated. Fromm states:

Individual and anthropological data gathered since Freud formulated his theory, however, have shaken our conviction as to its validity. These data have shown that the Oedipus complex in Freud's sense is not a universal human phenomenon and that the child's rivalry with the father does not occur in cultures without strong patriarchal authority. Furthermore, it has become evident that the tie to the mother is not essentially a sexual tie—in fact that infantile sexuality when not suppressed has as its normal aim auto-erotic satisfactions and sexual contact with other children.⁸

As one can see, Fromm has moved from the Freudian concept of the universality of the Oedipus complex to the point of view held by most cultural anthropologists—that this psychological phenomenon is a product of culture and will be manifest only in those cultures having a particular kind of social organization. One can see this is what Lessa has in mind when he speaks of non-Oedipal cultures.

The last psychoanalytical thesis to be considered is that proposed by Géza Róheim. Although Lessa speaks disparagingly of "Róheim and other extremists,"⁹ I still find Róheim's basic premise concerning man's biological limitations important to the position I wish to take. Admittedly, after stating his thesis, Róheim then proceeds to reduce all myths, dreams, children's play, and other such cultural manifestations to man's reaction to the "primal scene" (i.e., the witnessing by the child of the intercourse of the parents), the threat posed by this sight, and the repressions growing out of it.

As did Freud, Róheim sees the Oedipus complex as universal, but Róheim does not consider the complex as genetically inherited from the past. Rather, he proposes that the Oedipus

8) "The Oedipus Complex and the Oedipus Myth," *The Family: Its Function and Destiny*, ed. Ruth Anshen, New York: Harper, 1949, p. 357.

9) "Oedipus-Type Tales in Oceania," *Journal of American Folklore*, LXIX (1956), p. 68.

complex is tied to a matter of biological limitations. Speaking of his position in relation to cultural anthropologists, Róheim says:

The culturalist school will have nothing to do with a basic unity of mankind, since they assert that Freud based this thesis on two biological hypotheses which have since proved to be either untenable (inheritance of acquired characters) or not valid for mankind (Haeckel's law of recapitulation). But we have another indubitably common trait of mankind, our prolonged infancy and the generally juvenile character of *Homo sapiens* as compared to other animal species.¹⁰

Although man's infancy is prolonged, thus causing a long period of dependency on the mother, man's sexuality comes early in life; and from this grow the conflicts between father and son, and the reaction to, plus the suppression of, the primal scene.¹¹

In emphasizing the universality of the Oedipus complex, Róheim says:

All babies have mouths, and all mothers have nipples...all mothers must divide their love and attention between their offspring and their husbands; hence the "mysterious Oedipus." And it is from the persistence of these elementary experiences of life, from our prolonged infancy, that we fashion the gods called "society" and "culture."¹²

In consideration of the theories just surveyed, whether or not the Oedipus myth and complex exist in Truk and the surrounding cultural areas would depend on just which theory the investigator was pursuing. Certainly using Freud's original postulates one would expect the Oedipal situation to be inclusive. Since Rank's trauma of birth would come to all, it would also follow that his theory would be as universal as is Freud's. As for Róheim, he certainly indicates that manifestations of the Oedipus complex are everywhere, and that many ethnographers either ignore or can not recognize them.¹³

10) *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology*, New York: International Universities Press, 1950, 489.

11) *Ibid.*, p. 490-91.

12) "Society and the Individual," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, IX (1940), 545.

13) "The Anthropological Evidence and the Oedipus Complex," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, XXI (1952), 537, 542.

On the other hand, if one looks at Trukese culture with Fromm's theory in mind, he can hardly expect to find the classic Oedipus complex. Outside of clan exogamy and an incest taboo pertaining to known blood relatives on the father's side, the attitude toward sex is not repressive. The society is matrilineal and largely matrilocal, the father is not an authoritarian figure,¹⁴ and the mother's attitude toward the child is termed "inconsistent." As Thomas Gladwin says, "...Trukese children do not have an opportunity to identify with any stable and consistent adult figure."¹⁵ In their interpretations of dreams, autobiographies, Rorschack and Thematic Apperception Tests, neither Gladwin nor Sarason makes any mention of the existence among the Trukese of the classical Oedipus complex.

In his preliminary study of the Oedipus myth and complex in Oceania, Lessa flatly states that:

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.... 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.¹⁶

Lessa reports that the Oedipus complex is not present on Ulithi Atoll (which is about 500 miles northwest of Truk). He accounts for its absence by citing the extended matrilineal family with its fewer opportunities for "intense inward relationships common in the Euroamerican situation."¹⁷ He goes on to cite the negative results concerning the existence of the Oedipus complex in Oceanic areas, among which he includes Truk, Saipan, the Marquesas, New Guinea, Java, and Sumatra. He then shows that in spite of non-Oedipal cultures, there are Oedipus-type tales in Micronesia, the Marquesas, New Guinea, Indonesia, and from thence to the Asian mainland. His conclusion is that this

14) George P. Murdock and Ward H. Goodenough, "Social Organization of Truk," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, III (1947), 331-333.

15) Thomas Gladwin and Seymour B. Sarason, *Truk: Man in Paradise*, New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation, 1953, p. 240.

16) "Oedipus-Type Tales in Oceania," *Journal of American Folklore*, LXIX (1956), 71.

17) *Ibid.*, 68.

is a result of diffusion.

As I inspect Lessa's variants, I feel that the granting of his thesis depends too much on one's willingness to accept substitutions at various points in the narratives. Lessa begins by listing as the most essential motifs those of prophecy, parricide, and incest. He gives as the minor motifs (1) the hero is saved from being exposed, (2) he is reared by another king, (3) the prophecy is fulfilled. After pointing out that none of his stories meet all these criteria, and that only a third of them meet the qualifications of parricide and incest, Lessa goes on to say:

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 I can show elasticity is amply justified.¹⁸

A résumé of the Trukese version cited by Lessa will show just how much "elasticity" is necessary:

A chief with many wives rules that all male children are to be killed at birth to prevent their "speaking" to his wives. His sister gives birth and turns the child over to a bird to be brought up. The son later comes out to take part in a model canoe race. One of the chief's wives becomes interested in him, approaches, and is scratched in a tussle over the canoe. The chief sees the scratch and calls in the men to see whose finger-nails will fit it. The nephew's do. The chief tries several times to have the youth killed. Rasim, god of the Rainbow, saves the boy the last time and gives him a magical canoe to return home in. The youth gets the chief to sail the canoe, and then he causes the canoe to disintegrate and drown the chief.¹⁹

The version I collected differs somewhat. The mother leaves home and brings up her own son; it is the chief's daughter who gets scratched; and the chief finally attacks the nephew, who during the fight indicates symbolically three times that he is of the chief's lineage. The chief continues to fight; the nephew slays him; and becomes chief himself.²⁰

Lessa considers this narrative to be a folktale, but my in-

18) *Ibid.*, 64.

19) *Tales from Ulithi Atoll*, pp. 174-76.

20) Informant: Kikuo Kanemoto, male, age 21, Tol Island, Truk Atoll. Collected 1964.

formant said it was referred to on his island as *uruwo* (literally: "tell-source"²¹) a story which relates history, in this case, clan history; whereas for "made-up" stories, my informant would use the term *tuttunnap* (story or fable).²²

It seems to me that to squeeze the above narrative into the Aarne-Thompson Tale Type 931 (Oedipus tale) is to create another myth about myth, for I feel there are too many differences to be easily explained away. I am willing to accept Lessa's statement concerning the substitution of uncle for father. Lessa says:

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.²³

However, one is still left with two more essential criteria to meet. There is no prophecy, and the incest element is certainly weak. The chief's not wishing anyone "to speak" to his wives does have its sexual connotations, for "to speak" is a euphemism for "to have intercourse with,"²⁴ but this element does not loom large in the story, other than as an explanation for the chief's ordering the male children killed. The same must be said for the boy's contact with the chief's wife.

Then what one actually has is the hero is saved from death, reared by an animal, returns to be victorious, and kills his uncle.

In view of the above, I feel that Lessa's attempt to interpret this Trukese narrative as a variant of a tale diffused from somewhere between Europe and south Asia is not very convincing. It would seem to me that the crux of the story is not prophecy, parricide, and incest; but rather the matter of intergenerational rivalry.

In a more extensive treatment of the same material, Lessa discusses Rank's *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, and says:

21) Samuel Elbert, *Trukese-English and English-Trukese Dictionary*, Pearl Harbor: Navy Printing Office, 1947, p. 222.

22) *Ibid.*, p. 216.

23) "Oedipus-Type Tales in Oceania," *Journal of American Folklore*, LXIX (1956), 64.

24) Marc Swartz, "Sexuality and Aggression on Romonum, Truk," *American Anthropologist*, LX (1958), 476.

Disregarding this author's psychoanalytic explanations, which are complicated and questionable, it is nevertheless obvious in myths from the Babylonians, Egyptians, Hebrews, Indians, Iranians, Greeks, Romans, and Teutons, as well as other peoples, there are striking similarities in the circumstances attending the birth and early life of famous heroes, Oedipus included. . . . Apparently, for almost five thousand years there has been a tradition of heroes who are abandoned at birth, only to be saved and become kings.²⁵

Although Lessa sticks to his thesis that the presence of Oedipal tales in what he terms a non-Oedipal situation is a result of diffusion, his relating these tales to Rank's broader concept brings him closer to what seems to me to be a more satisfactory approach to certain widely spread mythic themes, that of Clyde Kluckhohn.

Kluckhohn, speaking of Lessa's criticism of Róheim's thesis concerning Oedipal patterns in Australia, says:

Róheim's case for Oedipal pattern in the myths of Australian aborigines, Yurok, Navaho, and others does indeed involve too much reliance upon "unconscious ideas" and "real motifs." And yet, in my opinion, something remains that cannot be altogether explained away. Lessa asserts flatly that Oedipal tales are absent from Africa, but they are found among the Shilluk. . . ; and the Lamba (central Bantu) have a story of a son killing his father, in which there is a fairly overt motif of sexual rivalry for the mother.²⁶

In referring to recurrent themes in myths, Kluckhohn says:

. . . their persistence cannot be understood except on the hypothesis that these images have a special congeniality for the human mind as a consequence of the relations of children to their parents and other childhood experiences which are universal rather than culture-bound.²⁷

Melville and Frances Herskovits also make some pertinent suggestions in reference to the Oedipus theme. They state the necessity for expanding the traditional Freudian approach with its emphasis on the hostility of the son to the father, to include the hostility of the father towards his son who may supplant him. They feel that this is a part of a broader phenomenon of

25) *Tales from Ulithi Atoll*, pp. 210-12.

26) "Recurrent Themes in Myths and Mythmaking," *Myth and Mythmaking*, ed. Henry A. Murray, New York: George Braziller, 1960, pp. 54-55.

27) *Ibid.*, p. 49.

intergenerational rivalry which begins in infancy in competition for the attention of the mother. They say:

This rivalry sets up patterns of reaction that throughout life give rise to attitudes held toward the sibling or sibling substitutes. . . . In myth, if the psychological interpretation is to be granted validity, we must posit that the threat to the father or father-surrogate is to be seen as a projection of the infantile experience of sibling hostility upon the son.²⁸

At this point one sees that there are two conflicting points of view concerning the Oedipus complex, with psychoanalysts like Róheim and Rank asserting on the one hand that it is universal and psychologically determined, and such people as Lessa and Fromm stating on the other that it is culturally determined. However, these opposing points of view have a tendency to shade into each other at certain points. Although Lessa cannot accept Rank's treatment of the complex, he can agree with Rank's treatment of the myth itself; for it can be worked into Lessa's case for diffusion.

The Herskovitises, too, while holding for the cultural interpretation, propose a wider framework, not only of the myth but also of the conflicts which give rise to such narratives. Kluckhohn also favors the extension of the framework of the myth and the complex; and while not accepting Róheim's interpretations of myths, Kluckhohn still feels that "something remains that cannot be explained away" in Róheim's approach.²⁹

My position is this: There is indeed something which cannot be explained away in Róheim's thesis, and it is his pointing up of man's biological limitations, which must occur in all cultures. No matter what culture man is born in, he still falls within some type of family in which the mother looms as the most important figure in his early years because of man's long period of physical immaturity. Since there are usually more than one child, at least one husband, and in matrilineal societies, one or more brothers, all asking for attention according to their cultural and biological deserts, situations of interfamily tension and rivalry will be universal, not because of culture, which will dictate what direction these rivalries will take, but because of the inescapable

28) *Dahomean Narrative*, Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1958, pp. 94-5.

29) Kluckhohn, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

fact that mothers have children, husbands, and male siblings, with all the resultant rivalries that will ensue. The recurrent themes which occur in narratives which verbalize these conflicts are a result of a transcultural factor, that of human nature. I feel that Róheim's position as presented by David Bidney adequately explains this factor:

Human nature may be said to condition certain tendencies to formulate potentially universal symbols and to become involved in emotional conflict under the stress of family relations. The cultural symbols and institutions which are so conditioned by human nature may in turn affect the personality of the individual, but it must not be forgotten that behind culture lies the human nature which originated the process. The human unconscious, notwithstanding cultural diversity and cultural conditioning, involves mechanisms of reaction and symbols of expression which are potentially universal and hence transcultural.³⁰

While I am not prepared to reduce all culture to these propositions, I feel that it is a much more satisfactory explanation for those myths revolving around family strife than is diffusion or strictly cultural determinants.

Having established my point of view that certain recurrent elements in oral narratives are a result of human nature and biological limitations and that the expression of these themes is shaped by the cultures involved, I will now turn to specific Trukese narratives which relate family conflicts and to those elements of Trukese social organization which I feel have given these narratives their particular expression.

The Trukese have a carefully observed system controlling use of harsh language, use of "fight" talk, the granting or refusing of requests, avoidance, crawling in the presence of others, and special greetings. Non-kinsmen must observe all these categories when dealing with high chiefs and *itang* (a kind of magician, orator, and repository of sacred lore and skills). A father must observe all but the last category in reference to his daughter, but she need observe none of these to him. The father must observe the first three in dealing with his son, but the son does not have to reciprocate.

Sons and daughters need not observe these restrictions, in reference to the mother, nor does the mother observe any in rela-

30) *Theoretical Anthropology*, New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1953, p. 7.

tion to the daughter. However, the mother must avoid the first with her son.

The brother need observe none of these categories concerning his sisters; he must observe the first two in relation to a younger brother, and the first four in relation to an older brother.

The sister observes the first two in relation to a younger sister, the first four in relation to an older sister, and the first five in relation to an older brother.³¹

Thus the pattern emerges that the father is inferior to his children on the status scale, as is the mother to a lesser degree.

The pattern becomes even more complicated among the siblings, with the male more prestigious than the female, and with the oldest brother being the most important. As Goodenough says:

Younger siblings must obey and respect their older siblings of the same sex. Nor is this obedience and respect a matter of theory only. It is strictly observed in practice, and anyone failing in this is severely censured. Similarly sisters must obey and respect their brothers regardless of their relative age in years, provided only the brothers are past the age of puberty.³²

It is the oldest brother who manages the affairs and property of the group made up of siblings having the same mother. Likewise, in the lineage, it is the oldest male who wields the authority and responsibility.³³

It is this authoritative figure of this maternal uncle, called *mwānichi*, i.e., "senior man" (as is the oldest brother), who is the antagonist in the narrative discussed by Lessa. However, in my collection I have found that this nephew vs. maternal uncle theme usually plays a supporting role to a much more common theme, that of sister and sister-in-law conflict.

This is to be expected, for marriage does not change the relationship of sibling to sibling. The brother is still responsible for his sister; she must maintain respect toward him, and in addition, accord a great deal of respect to his wife. The narratives (often clan "history") run much like the following

31) Ward H. Goodenough, *Property, Kin, and Community on Truk*, New Haven: Yale Dept. of Anthropology, 1951, pp. 111-14.

32) *Ibid.*, p. 31.

33) *Ibid.*, p. 74.

summary:

A dying chief reminds his only son of his responsibilities to his sister and of the necessity for the son to marry a "home island" girl who would be good to the sister. After his father's death, the son marries a girl from another island. The jealous wife manages through deceit to have her husband exile his sister. On a remote islet the girl bears two sons to a god (Olofat, a trickster and cultural hero of sorts). The sons return; their uncle tries to kill them, even enlisting the aid of Rainbow, Olofat's brother; but to no avail. The nephews win out; the sister is reinstated; and Olofat becomes patron of the island instead of Rainbow. The uncle is neither harmed nor displaced.³⁴

However, by far the most common narratives of family strife refer to conflict between brothers. Sometimes the strife is open, as in European tales, with the older and younger brothers competing in some particular situation.³⁵ Often these are trickster stories in which some obscene joke is played on the older brother.³⁶ However, many times these narratives refer to events in the clan's past, as does the following summary:

Kapera (Sea Crab) bore two sons. She placed one in the east and one in the west of a complex of coral atolls (Puluwat), where they grew up, not knowing each other. One day while pursuing the same whale, they met, argued over whose whale it was, and fought. The battle lasted several days and caused great typhoons. Kapera crawled to them and said to the older son, "Son, this is your rightful brother," and to the younger, "Son, obey your older brother." Upon this, the fight ceased; the younger apologized to the elder and gave up the whole whale. Nevertheless, the older brother shared the catch but kept for himself the more prestigious portion, that of the head end.³⁷

I feel that my collection provides ample evidence that Trukese narratives bear out the contentions that every culture can be expected to have narratives pertaining to family stresses, and that the nature of these struggles—father vs. son, nephew vs. uncle, son vs. son, or sister vs. sister-in-law—is dependent upon the social organization of the culture concerned.

34) Roger E. Mitchell, "A Study of the Cultural, Historical, and Acculturative Factors Influencing the Repertoires of Two Trukese Informants," diss., Indiana Univ., 1967, pp. 413-19.

35) *Ibid.*, pp. 449-54, 573-82; 616-22.

36) *Ibid.*, pp. 651-55; 656-58.

37) *Ibid.*, pp. 397-405.

In conclusion, I take this position: Truk is indeed a non-Oedipal society from the classical Freudian point of view. However, I feel this approach is narrow and ethnocentric. I accept the thesis that the Oedipus complex is just one facet of the many rivalries engendered by the family organization necessitated by human biological limitations and that the universality of the themes expressing these rivalries is a result of similarities in psychological response. As Kluckhohn says:

...the mere recurrence of certain motifs in varied areas separated geographically and historically tells us something about the human psyche. It suggests that the interaction of a certain kind of biological apparatus in a certain kind of physical world with some inevitables of the human condition (the helplessness of infants, two parents of different sex, etc.) bring about some regularities in the formation of imaginative productions, of powerful images.³⁸

There is no need to attempt to explain away the very real differences that one finds in the narratives of one culture as compared to another, in order to make them fit extreme theories of diffusion and psychoanalysis. When particular narratives or elements thereof can be shown to have diffused or to illustrate a psychological phenomenon, let them be recognized. However, I feel one always should remember Tylor's statement in regard to nature myths:

Nature-myth demands indeed a recognition of its vast importance in the legendary lore of mankind, but only so far as its claim is backed by strong and legitimate evidence.³⁹

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38) Kluckhohn, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

39) Edward Burnett Tylor, *The Origins of Culture*, New York: Harper & Row, 1958, p. 318.

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