R. Borofsky

Power, authority and disease: a structural analysis

In: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 131 (1975), no: 1, Leiden, 1-33

This PDF-file was downloaded from <http://www.kitlv-journals.nl>

ROBERT BOROFSKY

POWER, AUTHORITY AND DISEASE: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS¹

"Something is rotten in the state of Denmark"
(Marcellus in *Hamlet* I:4:90)

The first explorers and missionaries often looked askance at native conceptions of disease. They seemed illogical, irrational superstitions. Gradually, as the field of anthropology began to develop, attempts were made to better understand these native conceptions. For example, Frazer (1922) formulated cross-cultural laws of magical causation. Clements (1932) sought to explain the diffusion of certain postulated types of causation through conjectural history. To us today, such laws and conjectures seem too facile and simplistic to portray much about conceptions of disease. Instead anthropologists now see that these conceptions are often statements about specific social relations in a culture. Lewis (1971), for instance, notes a relationship between social standing and two types of disease causation, spirit possession and witchcraft. Whiting and Child (1953) find a statistical correlation between certain explanations of illness and certain types of harsh child rearing practices. Turner (1967, 1968, 1969) shows that particular symbols in Ndembu curing ceremonies possess a whole variety of social referents.

But while the general outline of the relationship is known, certain specifics remain vague. This paper examines one such vague area: Why does a culture pick one part of the body rather than another for the locus of disease? Why do the Ga believe that most fatal diseases attack the *kla* and not the *susuma*? Drawing on data from three West African

¹ This paper is an abridged version of a longer essay which includes an analysis of the organization of power in the cosmos as well as the organization of power in the social organization and human body. I am grateful to Nur Yalman, David Maybury-Lewis, Malcolm Willison, and Nancy Schildt for their help and stimulation. This paper owes much to the thought provoking discussions I have had with each one.

cultures, the Nupe, Ga, and Oyo Yoruba, this paper suggests a possible answer.

In brief, the paper examines a relationship between two aspects of a culture — parts of the social organization and parts of the body afflicted by disease. To begin the study we must make two postulates which will facilitate the analysis. The initial one states a continuum exists between what is labelled a general and a particular component. We view the general and the particular components as two polarized extremes mediated by a neutral intermediate component. To be more specific, in the area of social organization, a continuum is postulated to extend from the polity (general component), to the organized descent group (particular component). The relation between the particular and the general is one of a part to a whole. Each descent group is a part of a whole polity. In the domain of the human body, the continuum extends from parts of the body associated with the general populace or polity (general component) to those associated with particular individuals or the particular social component (particular component). The nature of each continuum will become clearer as the ethnographic data are examined.

In postulating the existence of these continua, we do not mean to reify them by giving them an ontological status beyond this analysis. They refer solely to the present study. The continua are a heuristic device for elucidating a certain relationship. Each continuum's components are defined in terms of (a) their innate properties and (b) their affiliations with components of other continua.²

The other postulate assumes that a locus of power exists at some point along each continuum. Power refers to "command over ... another's actions ... [and] command over existing benefits or resources" (Nadel 1957: 115) within each continuum. Implicit in this is that a conflict for power exists among the various components. (Admittedly we may see this conflict only metaphorically expressed among parts of the body.) The component with the greatest amount of power is the locus of power for that continuum. On the social organization continuum it is called the locus of authority; on the body continuum it is called the locus of disease. In analyzing each continuum, we will focus on what

² The components are defined in terms that are similar to, but not identical with, Lévi-Strauss's metaphor and metonymy (1966, cf. also Leach 1970: 45-48). By affiliations we refer to connection in the metonymic sense. Innate properties, however, means not only analogous relations in the metaphoric sense but also an object's actual characteristics as well.

are called key parts — on those parts which possess significant power within each continuum.

We can briefly illustrate these postulates on the continuum of social organization for the Nupe. While a variety of social groupings exists among the Nupe, two stand out as particularly significant — the Nupe Kingdom and the patrilineage (*emi*). Since the kingdom is the polity, it belongs to the general component. The lineage, as indicated in the first postulate, is part of the particular component. But who has the greater power, leaders of the kingdom or leaders of the lineage? As will be discovered, the king and his officials are the dominant power among the Nupe. The general component, therefore, is the locus of power or authority.

But enough has been said. Let us turn to the ethnographic data. For it is only by an analysis of the ethnographic data, that these postulates take on substance.

THE NUPE³

Social Organization: The Nupe live in a low basin by the Niger and Kaduna Rivers in Niger Province of northern Nigeria. While forming several distinct sub-tribes, the Nupe are culturally united by an overall political structure, a belief in the culture-hero Tseode and the supreme sky-god *Soko*, the observation of certain rituals (particularly the *gunnu* ritual), and the organization of ranks, age-sets, kinship, and marriage rules. The Nupe number about 360,000.

According to tradition, Tseode founded the Nupe Kingdom in the fifteenth century by breaking away from the *Ata* of Igala at Idah. The kingdom attained its greatest size in the late 1700's. It came under Fulani control following the Moslem *Jihad* of 1805. This set off a series of palace intrigues and civil wars, with the descendants of a Moslem preacher, Mallam Dendo, finally assuming power around 1850. Today this group still rules the kingdom.

Nupe descent, inheritance of property, and succession to offices are traced patrilineally. Though the ties with maternal kin may aid a person's advancement in the government, they have relatively little importance within the general kinship system. The domestic unit consists of a patrilineal extended family of from one to three generations. Patrilineal kinsmen live in the same compound. The compound

³ This summary is drawn from the following sources: Social Organization — Forde (1955) and Nadel (1942); Body and Disease Concepts — Nadel (1952, 1954). These sources should be consulted for more detailed information.

residentially defines the patrilineage (*emi*). The senior male member of the compound is the head of the patrilineage.

Several compounds constitute a village. The village head-man is responsible for regulating resources and keeping order in the village. The position is either hereditary in one lineage or open to older men of the whole village. The *Etsu* Nupe must confirm all appointments to this office.

The *Etsu* Nupe is the king of Nupe. He holds the highest position within the status hierarchy and directly or indirectly controls all of the Nupe Kingdom. The royal nobility are organized into three patrilineages all stemming from Mallam Dendo. Succession to the throne follows in strict rotation among these three lineages.

Nupe culture consists of three classes. Each person's class rank depends on the status of a few lineage members. While opportunities exist to achieve a higher status within a class, each class is basically a closed group. The highest class is the royal nobility. The class below it consists of office-holding nobility; it includes town elders, war leaders, court slaves, and religious and judicial officials. The third class, which constitutes the main body of the population, is the commoners. A system of patronage exists between the commoners and the nobility of the other two classes. In addition to these classes, a number of craft guilds exist which regulate certain handicrafts and possess a degree of economic power.

Though the village head has some limited judicial power, the *Etsu* Nupe's court possesses the main authority to judge offenses. It can be appealed to in all cases and it has the sole power to sentence a person to death.

In summary, the Nupe are a state with power centralized in the hands of the king. The patrilineage (*emi*), the village, and class constitute some major social groupings within the state.

The Nature of Man: The Nupe view man as consisting of a body and what might be termed three souls (cf. Nadel 1954). The physical body, or *naka*, is identical with what we mean by 'body' — the flesh and blood of a living organism. The *rayi* is the life force which animates the body, which gives it life. It increases with growth and decreases with illness or old age. Since the *rayi* lacks features, such as sex and character, it in no way contributes to a person's individual personality. The *rayi* wanders about when a person dreams. It sees all the things that a person dreams. Another part of man, the 'shadow' (*fifingi*), accompanies the

rayi in its travels. When a person sees another person in a dream, he sees that person's shadow. The shadow represents the dream image of a man. The shadow also refers to shadow as it is used in English — the darkened image of a person created by his body cutting off light rays. The *kuci*, the 'personal or kinship soul', involves that part of the body which is inherited and which represents the continuity of kin. The Nupe believe in reincarnation and assert that it is the *kuci* which is reborn. No one-to-one relationship exists between an ancestor and a descendant; a person's *kuci* may appear in numerous progeny. While the body is considered to be alive as soon as the *rayi* enters the *naka* forming in the mother's womb, the baby is not considered a social being until the *kuci* develops. Though both the *rayi* and the *kuci* go to the realm 'of God' (*nya Soko*) after a person's death, the *kuci* soon returns to earth. It has an existence independent of God's and once created is left to itself. The *rayi*, on the other hand, is absorbed by the realm 'of God' and each time it re-appears on earth it represents a new expression of divine will.

In addition to his physical body and three souls, man also possesses a spirit double. The spirit double stays with man from birth until death and may either aid or hinder him. Men possess male spirits and women female spirits. The spirit double determines man's luck and fate but not his morals or character. An evil person may prosper because of a good spirit double and a person's good intentions may be frustrated by an evil spirit double.

Disease Causation: Diseases come from the realm 'of the world' (*nya Yize*). Many of the conditions which precipitate illness originally stem from God's actions, but illnesses occur because of events on earth. An example of such a situation is the male and female 'germs' which cause leprosy and sleeping sickness. In creating man, God gave each person's body (*naka*) a leprosy 'germ'. As long as only one germ exists in the body, the person remains healthy. But when a male and female leprosy germ accidentally combine in the same person, the person falls sick. God created the possibility of leprosy, but he left the actual occurrence of the disease to the whims of the world. A man's spirit double offers a parallel case. God created the spirit doubles, but whether a man gets a good or evil spirit double (and thereby health or sickness) is a matter of chance. Similarly, a man must encounter a nature or animal spirit to be affected by it. God did not plan that a certain person should meet a certain spirit. It is simply an accident. Unfortunately it is not specified how these forces affect the body. Germs and the spirit double

appear to be rooted in the *naka*. But whether these forces affect the *naka*, *rayi*, *kuci*, or shadow is unstated.

Evil individuals can create sickness by the manipulation of certain powerful medicines (*cigbe*). The medicine weakens the *rayi*'s connection with the *naka*. Witches cause sickness and death by eating a person's *rayi* and sometimes his shadow (*fifingi*). If a person is weak or if the witch attacks the person at home, she will feed on his *rayi*. She will keep on eating it until the *naka* wastes away. A witch may attack a person's shadow to weaken his *rayi* if it is too strong. Or the witch, if she eats her prey in council with her fellow witches, may take a person's shadow to the meeting-place and devour it there.

Besides these supernatural causes, Nupe realize that illness may stem from natural causes. Food poisoning, breaking one's leg, or mental deficiency have nothing to do with supernatural forces. The Nupe say about idiocy *èti a gba o* — 'the head is insufficient' (Nadel 1954: 29). It should be noted that the ancestors are not ethically concerned with the living. They in no way pass judgement on the actions of their descendants.

To the Nupe, most diseases of any serious consequence involve a weakening of the *rayi*. The state of the *rayi* is a sign of a person's health. As can be seen, forces may also affect the *naka* and shadow. But these are usually of secondary importance compared to the *rayi*. It should be noted that the one part of the body not related to illness is the *kuci*, the part of the body associated with the ancestors.

An Order in Nupe Culture: Let us see if some pattern to the data exists based on the continua discussed in the initial postulates above. Examining the Nupe on the level of social organization, the patrilineages (*emi*) can be said to represent the key social unit within the particular component. Each patrilineage forms a residential unit and constitutes the basis for tracing inheritance and succession. On a national level, the patrilineage's importance is indicated by the fact that it forms the basis for succession to the throne and for the organization of the royal nobility. At first glance it might seem that the patrilineage is unrelated to the particular component because it involves a set, a whole category, of individuals. But our analysis is not in terms of individual people, but in terms of powerful social groupings within the culture. We are dealing with components on the level of social organization not on the level of individual human beings. Consequently, as indicated in postulate one, it is part of the particular component.

The Nupe Kingdom represents the key social unit within the general component. It is the polity; it unites the various patrilineages, classes, and villages into a whole. Where should the class and the village be placed on the social continuum? Both appear to be general components in that they are larger units than the patrilineage; yet both seem to be particular components in the sense that they are part of the larger general polity. We cannot classify them with either polarized extreme without forcing the relationship. Therefore, we shall classify them as in between, as part of the neutral intermediate component.

Given this polarized opposition between the patrilineages and the kingdom, we may ask which one of the two possesses the greater power in Nupe culture. The answer is obvious. It is the kingdom. The *Etsu* Nupe directly or indirectly controls all of Nupe. This is clearly demonstrated in the judicial system. The patrilineages have little authority to try cases and enforce decisions. The *Etsu* Nupe's court, on the other hand, acts as the supreme court within the polity and possesses the sole authority to sentence a person to death.

In examining the human body, it appears that some parts clearly can be identified with either the particular or the general component. Both the *kuci* and the spirit double appear related to the particular component. The *kuci* is directly associated with the patrilineage in that it represents the continuity of the kin group. It is the part of the human body which is a reincarnation of a patrilineal ancestor. The spirit double is particular to an individual — it belongs to one person and affects that person in a unique way. We can classify the *rayi* as part of the general component. It is a universal life principle; it in no way contributes to a particular individual's personality. The *rayi*'s position in the body is analogous to the *Etsu* Nupe's position in Nupe culture. Both are the ultimate source of power and the giver and taker of life.

The body (*naka*) and the shadow (*jifingi*) are not easily classified with either polarity. The body is possessed by all people but each body is slightly different and particular to an individual. The shadow travels with the *rayi*, part of the general component, but when it is seen in a dream it is a particular person. Neither of these two body parts has any specified or analogous connection with a component on the social organization continuum. Hence we classify them as part of the neutral intermediate component.

In determining the locus of disease, it is important to remember that diseases of any consequence usually cause a weakening of the *rayi*.

A person's health is dependent on the state of his *rayi*. No illness specifically affects the *kuci* or spirit double. Consequently we can say that the *rayi* is the locus of disease.

We may conclude from all this, that the locus of authority in the social organization and the locus of disease in the body are homologous. They both exist within the general component. We may summarize this relationship with the following chart:

NUPE CULTURE	general component	intermediate component	particular component
Social Organization:	kingdom (<i>locus of authority</i>)	class village	patrilineages
Body and Disease:	<i>rayi</i> (<i>locus of disease</i>)	<i>naka</i> 'shadow'	<i>kuci</i> spirit double

Figure 1: An Order in Nupe Culture

Let us see if this relationship holds for other cultures as well.

THE GA ⁴

Social Organization: The Ga live on the coastal plain between Accra and Kpong in Ghana. Neither by tradition nor by present social organization can the Ga be said to constitute a single group. According to tradition, the area was originally inhabited by the Kpesi who lived in extended families in scattered farming settlements. The Kpesi lacked both a centralized government and a strong military organization. Immigrants from neighboring cultures gradually settled in the area in scattered settlements similar to those of the Kpesi. From the late 1600's on, these various settlements were threatened with extinction by slave raiders and Akan soldiers. To protect themselves, the inhabitants of the area formed several towns, or *man*, with organized armies. Though the towns co-operated militarily, they basically constituted independent political units. New waves of immigrants were welcomed by each town as a source of manpower for its army. Today definite differences exist among

⁴ This summary is drawn from the following sources: Social Organization — Field (1937, 1940), Kilson (1967, 1971), and Manoukian (1950); Body and Disease Concepts — Field (1937) and indirectly Jahoda (1961). These sources should be consulted for more detailed information.

the various towns. Consequently, we will focus on one Ga town in particular, Temma, in the following description.⁵

Among the Ga, the cognatic descent group constitutes the basic social unit. It is termed the *we* or house. Though once viewed as a patrilineage, recent research indicates that the *we* is actually a cognatic descent group.⁶ People of the same house frequently live together; public offices of the town are vested in these houses. Every cognatic group has its own god and the god's chief priest is usually also the head of the house. Each house feels a strong sense of corporate responsibility — it seeks to maintain its traditions and punish all acts that bring disgrace to its ancestors.

Ga trace inheritance and descent cognatically with a patrilineal emphasis. This usually means, at least in Temma, that if all things are equal, patrilineal tendencies will predominate with two exceptions. Every child of a man will receive a certain amount of his property, but men will receive more than women. In addition, women's property and offices held by women usually follow the female line. Though succession to office in the town or house involves election by house members, it tends to run patrilineally unless a suitable candidate is unavailable.

The towns, as already noted, were formed in response to military threats from the outside. Internally Temma has little cultural unity and it may be viewed as a confederation of houses. The town forms a

⁵ For example, Kilson (1967, 1971) studying in Accra and Field (1937, 1940) studying in Temma present different conceptions of kinship, the cosmos, parts of the body, and the power of the *Ga Mangtse*. As noted in the following footnote, the difference in kinship probably results from different interpretations of the same data. The other differences seem to stem from Accra's greater contact with the Europeans and from its more frequent wars with non-Ga groups. In the following descriptions we focus on Temma because Field's analysis of body parts and disease (1937: 92-160) is more complete than Kilson's (1971: 62). In a later paper we hope to analyze Kilson's data on Accra in more detail and show how it relates to the general theory presented later in this paper.

⁶ Field (1937, 1940) views Ga kinship and particularly membership in the *we*, or house, as based on patrilineal principles. Yet she includes numerous examples of contradictory tendencies (e.g. 1940: 6, 7, 12, 44-46, and 51-52). More recent study by Kilson (1967, 1971) suggests that Ga kinship is cognatic "with an emphasis on patrilineal affiliation" (1967: 40). According to her, "it is cognatic not only at the level of ideology but at the level of social transaction" (1971: 7). While she admits that her different conclusion may result from studying a different Ga town, we concur with her that the difference probably "relates to changes in conceptual orientations in social anthropology during the decades that intervene between [their] research" (1971: 7).

cohesive whole in that all its segments recognize a common priest as the civil and religious head of the town. He usually worships one of the Kpesi nature dieties as his house god. Originally the priest was the sole "ruler" of the town. But today he shares his power with certain other public officials like the *mangtse*. While the priest still has some control over civil affairs, his power is now mostly restricted to ritual matters. He officiates at public ceremonies, directs prayers to his house god, and acts as the final traditional court of appeals in disputes.

Punishments by the town-wide court are usually not very serious. The offender often only pays compensation. The house rather than the town assumes the responsibility for forcing compliance with court decisions. The ethic of corporate responsibility is strong within each house. People who commit crimes fall prey to the anger of the ancestors, and thereby involve the whole house in their offenses.

In summary, the Ga form a number of separate political units called towns (*man*). The one town examined in detail, Temma, is a loose confederation of cognatic descent groups or houses (*we*).

The Nature of Man: The Ga believe that the human being consists of three entities, the *gbomotso*, the *kla*, and the *susuma*. The *gbomotso* is the physical body, the flesh and blood of man. The *kla* is the life force which animates all living things. If the *kla* leaves the *gbomotso*, the person dies. Like the body, it possesses arms, legs, and organs. The *kla* is associated with the ancestors of a house for it is this portion of the person that is reincarnated in a person's descendants. Boys, for example, often represent the reincarnation of their grandfathers or classificatory grandfathers. Ga perceive no inconsistency in the fact that both a grandfather and a grandson may be alive at the same time. They still possess the same *kla*. Upon death a person gives up his *kla* and becomes an invisible spirit, *sisa*. While the number of *sisa* in the cosmos increases with each death, the amount of *kla* remains relatively constant. In addition to being the life force of a person and the reincarnation of an ancestor, the *kla* also acts as a conscience. It can punish a person for wrong actions. Like most consciences some people have stronger ones than others — the *kla* may punish some people while excusing others for the same crimes.

The *susuma* constitutes a man's personality. A charismatic person possesses a strong *susuma*. The *susuma* has a tendency to leave the body during dreams and wander about. Therefore a person should not be awakened suddenly for his *susuma* might be away and not able to find

its way back to the physical body. A person falls sick if his *susuma* leaves his body for too long a time. While a witch's *susuma* travels about at night, the rest of her body remains on her bed asleep. Sometimes the wishes of a *susuma* are unconscious; a man may not know what his *susuma* desires. In this case, a god must be consulted to discover what it wants. *Susuma* also refers to a shadow as we understand it. — a darkened form produced by the stoppage of light rays.

A person's 'sky family' is mystically related to his *susuma*. Both of them concern the person as an individual. But while the *susuma* is a part of the person's body, the sky family lives up in the heavens. It is the family a person leaves when he is born on earth. It is closer and dearer to a person than all his earthly relatives. Pleasing it leads to prosperity; displeasing it brings on misfortune. When a person walks in his sleep, he is trying to return to his sky family. If a person cries while asleep, it is because his sky family is scolding him.

Finally there is a part of the man which although external to his body still belongs to him. This is the *gbesi*. Ga state that it should walk behind a person. If the *gbesi* gets ahead of him, it will cause the person trouble. It will make him do things he ordinarily would not do, such as be a kleptomaniac. Ga view the actions of an unruly *gbesi* not as a crime but as a sickness. Unruly *gbesi* must be treated by medicine-men. In spite of this power to cause disease, however, no requests are made to the *gbesi* for good luck or for protection against misfortune. The *gbesi* is usually left to itself if it does not cause trouble.

Disease Causation: Just as supernatural powers can bring prosperity, they can also bring disease. A god (*dzemawon*) may cause sickness if he is invoked in a malicious curse or in righteous indignation. The god always obeys the curse far enough to touch the person cursed and make him fall ill. But the god does not kill the person until he has evaluated the case. A person may not have wronged another in the immediate situation but may have committed a sin in the past. The god gathers all the relevant facts together before passing judgement. He will also attack a woman who has defied his call to become his mouthpiece (*woyo*). He may strike her dead or drive her crazy. Similarly, a god may attack a priest who has violated his religious taboos. The god usually affects the person by weakening the *kla*. However in some cases, Field (1937) reports the god may entrap the *susuma* and keep it away from the physical body.

A sorcerer may cause disease through the manipulation of a *won*, a

magical substance (properly translated as 'anything which can work but not be seen', Field 1937: 4). Or a *won* itself may send a disease if a person has violated the taboos surrounding the *won*'s ownership. In both cases, the *won* affects the strength of the person's *kla*. In addition, a sorcerer may directly tie up the victim's *kla* with vines or string. Field states that a sorcerer has the power to call up the victim's *susuma* and impale it on a thorn. If the *susuma*'s heart is injured, the person will die. Such a belief, however, seems to contradict the nature of the *susuma*. It is the *kla* and the *gbomotso* which possess organs, not the *susuma*.

Witches usually cause illness by eating a person's *kla*. Their *susumas* meet at night around a special cooking-pot and they feast on their victims together. Occasionally a witch may hide part of a person's *gbomotso*.

The ancestors also cause disease. In regard to the ancestors, Field affirms that no priest "is half so much afraid of his [god] as a man is of his ancestors . . . No system of 'functional relationships' ever held together a body of custom half so firmly as this one idea — the idea of the everpresent watchful dead and their power to smite or bless the living" (1937: 197). Information is lacking, however, on just what part of the body they affect. We can assume that they probably influence the *kla* since the *kla* and a person's ancestors are closely related.

Names have a powerful effect among the Ga. A person may get a disease just by mentioning it. The specific procedure by which this comes about, however, is not clearly stated.

Parts of the body can themselves cause disease. A *kla* may sulk because it has been poorly fed or mistreated. In such a case, the person feels undernourished and weak. A *kla* with a strong conscience may of its own accord become sick to punish its possessor for his sins. A bad *gbesi* brings on sickness by weakening the *kla*. The *susuma* may fall ill if it resents the actions of certain people — such as a witch trying to force it into becoming a witch. A 'sky family' also may bring about sickness. But Field fails to include exactly how this is done. On a more naturalistic level, the Ga are well aware that the body may malfunction or collapse from exhaustion.

In summary, it appears that various powers can cause disease by influencing one or more parts of the body. Though any one of several parts may be involved, it is most frequently the *kla* which is affected.

An Order in Ga Culture: Turning to the continua again and examining the social organization of the Ga, we can see that the cog-

natic descent groups, or houses (*we*), constitute the key social unit within the particular component. Each house possesses its own god and a strong sense of corporate responsibility. People of the same house frequently live together. In addition, certain public offices are vested in it. As indicated in postulate one, houses are part of the particular component. The town (*man*) represents the key social unit within the general component because it is a confederation of houses. For Temma, it is the largest political unit; the town is the polity.

In the polarity between the houses and the town, we can see that the locus of authority resides mainly with the houses. The town was formed in response to military threats from the outside and possesses an artificial unity. This comes out clearly in the judicial system. While a court exists for the whole town, it rarely inflicts serious punishments. The houses, rather than the town, assume responsibility for enforcing court decisions. The major punishment for a crime comes from the houses' ancestors.

Certain parts of the body can be identified with the particular component. The *susuma* and 'sky-family' belong to a particular individual; they give that person a unique character and fate. The *kla* at first glance may seem closely allied with the general component in that it is a life force possessed by many people. But it is a life force possessed by a particular type of people, those belonging to a specific house. It is the reincarnation of a person's ancestors. It both symbolizes and creates the continuity of the house. Hence, the *kla*, too, clearly belongs with the particular component because of its association with the house. The *kla*, it should be noted, is the main part of the body affected by disease.

This leaves the *gbomotso* and the *gbesi*. The *gbomotso*, or physical body, possesses characteristics of both a general and a particular nature. All people have a *gbomotso* of the same general type; but each *gbomotso* is slightly different and particular to an individual. The *gbesi* is puzzling. Its description leaves us unclear as to the degree of particular versus general characteristics that it possesses. It seems safest to classify both the *gbomotso* and the *gbesi* as part of the intermediate component between the two polar extremes of particular and group.

What represents the general component within the body? There appears to be none. In order not to force the relationship, in order not to give the analysis an artificial symmetry, we will leave the general component blank.

We can conclude from our analysis of the Ga, that the locus of

authority in the social organization is the same as the locus of disease in the body, that is, they are both part of the particular component. We may summarize this relationship with the following chart.

GA CULTURE	general component	intermediate component	particular component
Social Organization:	town		houses (<i>locus of authority</i>)
Body and Disease:		<i>gbomotso</i> <i>gbesi</i>	<i>susuma</i> 'sky family' <i>kla</i> (<i>locus of disease</i>)

Figure 2: An Order in Ga Culture

THE OYO YORUBA ⁷

Social Organization: The Yoruba occupy southwestern Nigeria and eastern Dahomey. They number over three million people. According to tradition, the Yoruba originated in the town of Ife and today the *Oni* of Ife is generally regarded as the religious leader of all the Yoruba. At one time the *Alafin*, or 'chief', of Oyo ruled over most of the Yoruba. But during the nineteenth century, under pressure of internal wars and a Fulani invasion from the north, the chiefdom broke up into several politically independent chiefdoms. Today wide variation exists in the social organization of different chiefdoms. This section will, therefore, only deal with one of the chiefdoms — the Oyo Yoruba.

The general living unit among the Oyo Yoruba consists of a patrilineal extended family (*ile*). Several families form a compound (*agbole*) and usually constitute a segment of a patrilineage. Control of the compound is invested in the oldest male member. The patrilineage (*idile*) occupies several compounds scattered throughout the town. It constitutes the group within which inheritance and succession are traced.

⁷ This summary is drawn from the following sources: Social Organization — Bascom (1944, 1969b), Forde (1951), Lloyd (1954, 1960, 1968), and Morton-Williams (1952, 1960a, 1964, 1967, 1968, 1969); Body and Disease Concepts — Bascom (1960, 1969a), Leighton *et al* (1963), Margetts (1965), Morton-Williams (1960b, 1964) and Prince (1960, 1961a, 1961b, 1964). These sources should be consulted for more detailed information.

The state is hierarchically structured. The organization of the capital city represents the organization of the state. Each town outside the capital is organized in a similar fashion to it and the chief of the town is under the authority of the *Alafin* in Oyo in respect to taxes, certain judicial cases, external affairs, and the running of the army.

The *Alafin* of Oyo possesses significant ritual and political power. As a descendant of the founder of the Yoruba nation, he is regarded as the sacred chief of state. He is 'Owner of the World and of Life' (*Alayeluwa*) and is asserted "to have had the power of life and death over his subjects" (Morton-Williams 1960a: 364). The *Alafin* rarely appears in public. He leaves his private quarters only three times a year and then he is heavily veiled. He is elected by the *Oyo Mesi*, or 'council of state', from within the royal patrilineage. Succession to office is rarely based solely on primogeniture; a variety of other factors, such as ability, are important.

But the *Alafin* does not have a monopoly on power. "The political system placed the king in structural opposition to a Council of State [*Oyo Mesi*] recruited from several of the large and powerful non-royal patrilineages of Oyo. That structure was supported by impressive ritual sanctions" (Morton-Williams 1969: 91). The *Alafin* presides over the *Oyo Mesi* but cannot act without its authority. While the *Alafin* has the power to declare war, it is the *Oyo Mesi* that raises the fighting contingents and directs the army in battle. The *Oyo Mesi* possesses the power to check a tyrannical or unpopular *Alafin* by unanimously demanding his suicide. Though the last suicide was *circa* 1820, the threat of such a demand cautions the *Alafin* against abuse of his powers. The balance of power is expressed by the *Oyo* in a metaphor. The *Alafin* is referred to as the celestial chief; the head of the *Oyo Mesi* is called the terrestrial chief.

The balance of power is reinforced by the ritual sanctions of the *Ogboni* Cult, a secret society. It is through the *Ogboni* Cult that the *Alafin* yearly determines whether he has supernatural sanction for his rule. Members of the cult sanction all important decisions of the *Oyo Mesi* and a new *Alafin* cannot be properly installed without their help. The highest ritual offices in the *Ogboni* Cult are vested in certain lineages though the individual chosen must be acceptable to the *Alafin*.

Minor disputes within the compound are settled by the head of the compound. Certain cases may be appealed to the town council and subsequently to the *Oyo Mesi*. Contradictory data exist on how major crimes are handled. Forde (1951), citing two earlier authors, indicates

that they are dealt with by the *Oyo Mesi* which could, with the *Alafin's* approval, impose the death penalty (cf. also Lloyd 1960). Morton-Williams (1960a, 1967) states that the *Ogboni* Cult possesses judicial authority whenever blood is shed. However, in one article, he states one of the *Alafin's* eunuchs handled cases of bloodshed (cf. 1967: 62 for the apparent contradiction). Whatever the exact manner for handling major crimes, it seems quite reasonable to assume that the balance of power, which all authors agree exists, would also pervade the judicial system.

The Nature of Man: To the Oyo Yoruba, man consists of a body and three souls (Bascom 1960). *Ara* refers to the flesh and blood of the physical body. The three souls, the *emi*, *ojiji*, and *eleda*, dwell within it. The *emi*, or 'breath', is the life force which animates the *ara*. It gives man life and the desire to work. The *emi* is believed to reside in the chest and lungs of the body. Like breath, it can be felt and heard but it cannot be seen. By regularly eating food, a person sustains his *emi*. The *ojiji*, or 'shadow', has comparatively little function in life. It simply follows the *ara* about wherever it goes. It possesses no substance and needs no nourishment. While the *ara* lies asleep, the shadow may travel to distant lands in dreams. It brings back to its possessor knowledge of its travels. Oyo Yoruba believe that if the shadow fails to return, a person must eventually die. When a person leaves heaven to be born on earth, he has an appointed day when he must return to heaven. The person can in no way lengthen his life in the world. But witches, magic, and deities can, however, cut his life short. In this case, the shadow (and perhaps the *emi*) persists in the form of a ghost and roams about the world until the appointed day of return. Though a ghost may cause harm to the living, he generally prefers to leave them alone.

Oyo Yoruba often view the *eleda* (or *olori*), a person's 'ancestral guardian soul', as the most important of the three human souls. It resides in the head and is connected with reincarnation and a person's destiny. The *eleda* carries with it the connotation of creation. In fact, sometimes it is confused with the supreme god (*Oldumare*) who creates life in man. This may be because the *eleda* represents the part of an individual that is reincarnated. Since an individual is usually reborn into his own lineage, the 'ancestral guardian soul' is most frequently that of a patrilineal ancestor. A single *eleda*, though, may be reincarnated in more than one person at the same time — such as in a father and a son.

Many Oyo Yoruba believe that two 'ancestral guardian souls' exist, one in heaven and one on earth. Some state that the earthly and heavenly *eleda* make a heavenly contract before a person is born as to the person's destiny, personality, and life span on earth. Others believe that the supreme god (*Oldumare*) makes the heavenly contract with the earthly *eleda*. But whichever the case, the heavenly *eleda* is involved in making sure the terms of the contract are carried out. As long as a person has the heavenly *eleda*'s support, he will enjoy health and prosperity. "Some individuals know charms or medicines to harm or kill a person by 'poisoning' his ancestral guardian soul, but as long as it remains well he himself cannot get sick" (Bascom 1960: 406).

Disease Causation: Disease may be caused by supernatural powers in any of the three cosmic realms — the sky, the physical earth, or the inhabitable world. In the sky, both minor gods (*orisa*) and heavenly *eledas* cause sickness in men. Prince notes that *Sopono*, the god of smallpox, attacks men for a variety of reasons.

(1) *Sopono* may be a man's ... deity, and *Sopono* may attack him because he has neglected to become a *Sopono* cult member or failed to sacrifice to him appropriately. (2) Other neglected ... deities may send *Sopono* to a man to avenge themselves. (3) The witches may send *Sopono* to damage a man. (4) Finally a man may simply have been injudicious enough to walk in the sun at midday when *Sopono* characteristically walks about (1961a: 284).

Either a minor god or a spirit (*irumole*), acting on a minor god's orders, actually sends the disease. It moves "with the breeze; when the breeze blows on [a person, the disease] will enter body; it is like standing by a flame — it goes right through his skin all over his body" (Prince 1964: 96). It heats up his blood and his brain. Though data on heavenly *eleda* are ambiguous, it appears that they make sure a man fulfills his heavenly contract. If a man fails to live up to his contract, the heavenly *eleda* may affect the man's *emi* or *eleda*, send a spirit to attack him, or simply withdraw heavenly protection thus making the man susceptible to disease.

In the realm of the earth, an ancestor causes sickness among his patrilineal descendants if they neglect to sacrifice to him or show impiety. An ancestor is especially affronted by offenses committed against fellow kinsmen. While the specifics of how he actually creates the disorder are unclear, it seems reasonable to assume that he manipulates the *eleda* in some way. The earth goddess (*Onile*) may send

sickness if people neglect her cult. Spirits under her control blow a disease into the offender's body. If a man meets forest or tree spirits late at night he may fall ill. But exactly how this occurs is unclear.

Within the inhabitable world, witches kill people by eating their *ara*. The Oyo-Yoruba believe that witchcraft is the most frequent cause of death (Morton-Williams 1960b). The witch "pecks its victim's head or neck and sucks out his blood" (Prince 1961b: 797-798). Bascom (1960: 402) notes that people "credited witches with eating the bodies . . . of their victims, but maintained they did nothing to the breath or other souls." However it does appear that witches may on occasion imprison a person's shadow.

In addition to supernatural causes, several natural causes for diseases exist. Certain diseases may be "attributed to faulty diet, small insects or worms, black blood or watery blood, bad odors (as of feces or decaying flesh), hemp smoking and other toxins, or hereditary factors" (Prince 1964: 89). It is believed that two types of worms exist in the *ara* — good and bad ones. The good worms aid digestion; the bad worms cause sickness and death. When a spirit heats up the *ara*'s blood, all the worms are driven into the brain and may cause madness.

In summary, it appears that most diseases affect the *ara*, the physical body. An almost even balance of power seems to exist between the *emi* and the *eleda*. Both parts of the body appear to be powerful, but neither seems to clearly dominate the other in terms of influence on disease. The *emi* is the life force that animates people. Yet it is the *eleda* that connotes creation. The death of the *emi* means the person's death, but it is the heavenly *eleda* which protects the person against such a fate.

An Order in Oyo Yoruba Culture: Let us return once more to the initial continua. Examining the Oyo Yoruba social organization, it appears that the patrilineages (*idile*) represent the key social unit within the particular component and the chiefdom the key social unit within the general component. The patrilineages constitute the unit within which the Oyo trace inheritance and succession. Their importance is emphasized by the fact that certain public offices, such as membership in the *Oyo Mesi* and the *Ogboni* Cult, are vested in them. The chiefdom constitutes the Oyo Yoruba's largest political unit. The *Alafin*, or chief, is the sacred head of state with clear ritual and political powers.

The locus of authority seems to be fairly balanced between the patrilineages, represented by the *Oyo Mesi* (and indirectly by the *Ogboni*

Cult), and the chiefdom, represented by the *Alafin*. The *Alafin* presides over the *Oyo Mesi*, but he cannot act without its authority. He can declare war, but he does not direct the army in battle. While it is unclear how this balance gets expressed in the judicial system — who has control of which major crimes — it seems reasonable to assume that such a balance of power does exist. (All authors agree that it pervades the rest of the political system.)

Certain parts of the body can be associated with the particular or general component. The *eleda* is clearly connected with the particular component through its tie with the patrilineage. It constitutes the reincarnation of a patrilineal ancestor. In addition, it refers to a particular individual's destiny as formulated in the heavenly contract. The *emi* is associated with the general component. The *emi* is a universal life principle which in no way contributes to a particular group or individual's personality. Like the *Alafin* it is the "owner of life".

As before, some parts of the body do not clearly fit with either polar component. The physical body (*ara*) cannot be readily identified with either the general or the particular component. The same general type of *ara* is possessed by everyone, but each *ara* is slightly different and particular to an individual. It is best viewed as part of the intermediate component. The shadow (*ojiji*) might tentatively be classed with the general component because of its association with the *emi*. However, this is the part of the individual, of a particular person, which is seen between his death and his return to heaven. Thus, because it seems unclear, we will place it as part of the intermediate component with the reservation that the classification does not seem wholly satisfactory.

From the above analysis it seems clear that most diseases attack the body. But perhaps our data is biased. Prince, upon whom we relied most heavily, is a medical doctor and might be expected to naturally focus on the physical body. Yet, when we look at the "balance of power" between the *emi* and the *eleda*, the focus on the *ara* seems quite reasonable. Being associated with neither polarity, the *ara* typifies this balance of power — it signifies that neither polarity totally dominates in the control of disease.

It seems appropriate to conclude that the Oyo Yoruba follow the same basic pattern as the Nupe and the Ga. That is, the locus of authority in the social organization is the same as the locus of disease in the body. But in this case, rather than belonging to either end of the continuum, they both are located within the intermediate component. We may summarize this relationship with the following chart.

OYO YORUBA CULTURE	general component	intermediate component	particular component
Social Organization:	chiefdom	(<i>locus of authority</i>)	patrilineages
Body and Disease:	<i>emi</i>	'shadow' <i>ara</i> (<i>locus of disease</i>)	<i>eleda</i>

Figure 3: An Order in Oyo Yoruba Culture

AN ORDER OF ORDERS

Thesis: Our examination of the Nupe, Ga, and Oyo Yoruba, indicates that a relationship is discernable in each of these cultures. In each culture, the locus of authority resides along the same component as the locus of disease. This relationship in each culture we have termed an order.

The order in each culture, however, does not exist independently of the orders in the other two cultures. Rather they all fit into a larger pattern. They themselves have an order to them or what we might call "an order of orders" (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1963a: 312). Though each culture varies in its loci of power, the structure or order is the same. Hence we can see that the order in one culture represents a simple transformation of the order in another culture. The Ga's loci of power represent an inversion of the Nupe's loci of power. The following chart summarizes this order of orders. (See Fig. 4 p. 21.)

From this order of orders we conclude that in the three cultures studied a direct relation exists between the organization of power in the social organization (authority) and the organization of power in the human body (disease concepts). While we suspect that the relationship is far broader than these three cultures, we presently make no claims as to the specific form it will take in another culture. We do not assert that the general-particular continuum is applicable to all cultures throughout the world. Far more analysis is necessary to specify the exact cross-cultural nature of the relationship.

A Self-Critique: As is obvious from this analysis, we believe that the "emperor's new clothes" — Lévi-Strauss's analyses of symbolic classifi-

	general component	intermediate component	particular component
NUPE Social Organization:	kingdom (<i>locus of authority</i>)	class village	patrilineages
Body and Disease:	<i>rayi</i> (<i>locus of disease</i>)	<i>naka</i> 'shadow'	<i>kuci</i> spirit double
GA Social Organization:	town		houses (<i>locus of authority</i>)
Body and Disease:		<i>gbomotso</i> <i>gbesi</i>	<i>susuma</i> 'sky family' <i>kla</i> (<i>locus of disease</i>)
OYO YORUBA Social Organization:	chiefdom	(<i>locus of authority</i>)	patrilineages
Body and Disease:	<i>emi</i>	'shadow' <i>ara</i> (<i>locus of disease</i>)	<i>eleda</i>

Figure 4: An Order of Orders

cation and myth (1963a, 1963b, 1966, 1969, Leach 1967) — are not simply a figment of the imagination. They have a real substance to them. Yet we realize that the structural approach is not above reproach.

Some anthropologists might criticize this analysis for being too organized. They might say, and we would agree, that culture is never really so orderly as it is portrayed here. Our reply is three-fold. First, the analysis is really a simplification of a simplification. That is to say, it is based upon ethnographies which in turn are simplifications of actual behavioral tendencies. It is important to realize that one is dealing with "idealized models" of the body, disease, and social organization based on abstractions from the anthropologist's data. As Leach (1954, 1961), as well as many others, notes, actual everyday experiences and the models of these experiences are not always congruent. In summarizing these idealized models, we only focused on a few salient points. Obviously, there is much more to each culture than has been noted. All

we can say is we tried not to distort the anthropological analyses themselves.

In addition, there appears to be a sociological reason for the orderly patterning in the analysis. Horton (1960) notes that religion tends to be more ordered and stereotyped than other aspects of a culture. In normal human-human interaction, people constantly must be flexible because they have to take into account the variation in other people's behavior. However, in human-god interaction the immediate need to modify one's behavior is less. God's reactions are only known indirectly, through one's observations at a later date or through someone else's interpretation.

"In all this there is no equivalent to the need for moment-to-moment modification of ego's action in the light of alter's reaction; and in the absence of such pressures toward flexibility, stereotyping of action would seem inevitable" (Horton 1960:208).

A psychological factor also contributes to the simplicity of the analysis. De Soto (1960), in a study of how people learn social structures, states that people organize interaction among people into definite patterns or schemata. Interestingly enough, this patterning is clearest in dominant hierarchies, where one person is trying to influence another.

"Influences" might be said to tap or arouse people's ordering schema. This ordering schema [quite conceivably is] the residue ... of countless experiences with social and non-social orderings in the world ... it may be that the expectation of an ordering tends to produce an ordering (De Soto 1960:420).

So, independent of our own efforts at simplification, there are other factors, both sociological and psychological, which simplify how the known is perceived and how the unknown is structured.

Another criticism that might be raised is whether all the references to continua, components, and loci of power are necessary in the analysis. Doesn't it seem like an overly elaborate way of organizing the data? Could not one just say that parts of the body are associated with certain social groupings? We could have done this, but if we had, we would have missed certain relationships in the analysis. How could one have explained the *rayi's* connection with the *Etsu Nupe*? How could one have seen the balance of power among the various parts of the body for the Oyo Yoruba?

Finally it might be suggested that the analysis is too vague. Some might see the simplicity of the descriptions as a way of avoiding precise testing of the thesis — the conditions for disproving the thesis are not explicit. But this criticism ignores the fact that ethnographic details are

readily available and that specific references to them are included in the footnotes. The simplicity is for clarity in presentation not for obfuscation of analysis. As noted in the final section of the paper, the general-particular analysis does not work in all cultures throughout the world. Nor would it work here if, for example, the Nupe *rayi* had traits particular to a specific lineage or was not the locus of disease. The simplicity of the analysis does not mean it lacks precision.

Exploring the Thesis: We can put this structural analysis into perspective by seeing how it relates to other material on disease collected by different methods. The fact that certain other material corroborates the body-state homology lends support to our thesis.

Marcellus's statement in *Hamlet* (I: 4:90) that "something is rotten in the state of Denmark" brings to mind that an homology between the body and the state is fairly well developed in the English Language. We often refer to the state as a political body with various political organs. This homology is not just a recent fad or phenomenon; as the Shakespearean pun indicates, it has a long history. The Oxford English Dictionary (Murray *et al* 1933: 964) contains a variety of citations which see the state and body as homologous. For example,

1570 ... Beneficial Causes ... to insue to the Body of this Common Wealth ...
1593 ... A law is the deed of the body politic ... 1782 ... All conduct extensively injurious to individuals, is injurious to the body politic.

Johnson's phrase "a body languishing in disease" (quoted in Murray *et al* 1933: 963) might equally apply to the state as well as the physical body.⁸

Our thesis also fits with Whiting and Child's (1953) study of child training and disease. Initially the two studies might seem antithetical — they study two different aspects of disease in two different ways. But the answers obtained from the two studies are complementary. Using material from the Human Relations Area Files, Whiting and

⁸ Seeing the homology in our own culture might help clarify the question of "psychological reality" (cf. Wallace and Atkins 1960) that often crops up with structural analyses. In very simple terms, this is our analysis, our abstraction from the data. However, many people in our culture could see that such an homology exists in our language, though admittedly they are usually not aware of it. (That we do not think of the homology in terms of continua, components, and loci of power is important. But it is not relevant to the immediate issue of the "psychological reality" of the homology.)

Child discovered a relationship between certain types of severe child training and certain explanations of illness.

The severity of weaning . . . was strongly related to "oral explanations of illness". Such oral explanations include the belief that sickness is caused by eating or drinking magically poisoned food or by verbal spells and incantations of sorcerers. The severity of aggression training . . . was related to explanations of illness involving aggression . . . The severity of independence training was shown to be related to dependence explanations of illness, a measure which includes the belief that illness could be caused by "soul stealing" or by "spirit possession" (Whiting 1961: 367).

As we interpret Whiting and Child, they are saying that in certain areas, children's anxiety ridden perceptions of reality are carried over into their adult perceptions of reality. If a child has anxiety satisfying his oral needs, he will often have anxiety as an adult satisfying his oral needs. Such anxiety in adult life is manifested in his fears of certain dangers, such as in possible causes of disease. In brief, they are discussing the way child training affects *how* disease is seen to occur.

There is no reason to assume that only one explanation exists for conceptions of disease. By focusing on two aspects of the same phenomenon, we gain a better understanding. Whiting and Child focus on how an individual's perception of reality affects *how* disease occurs. We focus on how the organization of the political structure relates to *where* disease occurs. The two approaches — one psychological, one sociological — together give us a greater insight into conceptions of disease.

Our thesis corroborates the notion developed by many anthropologists that conceptions of disease buttress the social order. According to various analyses (cf. Fabrega 1972 and Scotch 1963) conceptions of disease act as a tool for social control; moral violations bring sickness. Among the Ga, for example, the ancestors punish criminal offenses with illness. To use Geertz's (1966) terminology, disease concepts help make a model *for* reality become a model *of* reality through the use of biological sanctions. While dealing on a more metaphysical plane, the homology fits right into this pattern. Oversimplifying it somewhat, the homology indicates that an attack on the social order (locus of authority) is also an attack on the body (locus of disease). In some metaphorical way, an attack on the power structure at one level means an attack on it at another level. (This occurs even in cultures, such as the Nupe, where the cosmos is viewed as amoral, where the supernatural powers do not punish moral offenses.)

This helps one realize that an implicit notion of disease exists in the

body-state homology. Disease is an attack on the established power structure within the body. Few anthropologists have analyzed disease in terms of power. While Glick (1967) does focus on the relation of power to disease, he deals mainly with powers attacking the body. If we view disease as an attack on the body's power structure, the way is open to far broader analyses of disease and the social order. One can study how power is organized in various areas of a culture — such as in the cosmos, body, and social organization. We can determine the ways in which “the power in the universe is . . . hitched to society” (Douglas 1966: 136).

STRUCTURING THE UNKNOWN

Throughout this discussion we have tried to be cautious about our conclusions from the data. A relationship in three cultures does not make a theory. We have not really attempted to determine the why or wherefore of the body-state homology. But now it seems appropriate to examine some *possible factors* concerning why the homology occurs and whether it may exist in other cultures as well.

The Unknown: Why does the organization of power in the body (disease concepts) relate to the organization of power in the social organization (authority)? It seems unlikely that we can answer this question by looking solely at disease concepts; it is reasonable to assume that they are part of some larger cultural process. But what? Malinowski notes that myth functions in a similar manner to disease concepts.

Myth serves principally to establish a sociological charter . . . Myth, as a statement of primeval reality which still lives in present-day life, . . . supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values [and] a sociological order . . . The function of myth, briefly, is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events (1954: 144-146).

What do myths and disease concepts have in common? In a sense they both deal with the unknown. To the present members of a culture, myth provides information about a tradition they themselves have not experienced. It provides them with a sense of history when no written records exist. Numerous anthropologists have indicated that, while myth may have a factual basis, it overrides this factual basis whenever it conflicts with the present values or the social organization (e.g. Beattie 1960). So myth deals with the unknown of the past, with what is historically beyond the experiences of the present culture.

Disease concepts deal with the biological unknown. This is not to say that people in many cultures are not keenly aware of certain causal relationships between incidents and disease symptoms. Nor does this imply that their views of disease are "unscientific". Rather it means that the people lack the necessary medical technology and accumulated medical knowledge to determine the exact relationship between certain germs and certain maladies. Medical professionals in our own culture, when they offer explanations and cures for cancer, are frequently speculating about the biological unknown.

Myth and disease, consequently, both deal with the unknown. This is the reason, we believe, that they play a major role in supporting the social organization.

Power and the Unknown: As Edmund Burke recognized: "The use of force is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment; but it does not remove the necessity for subduing again; and a nation is not governed which has to be perpetually conquered" (quoted in Lenski 1966: 51). Though force may be the most effective means for seizing power, it is not the most effective means of retaining and exploiting a position of power. One has "to make increasing use of other techniques and instruments of control, and to allow force to recede into the background to be used only when other techniques fail" (Lenski 1966: 51).

From these remarks, we can see what might be an underlying social dynamic in how the unknown is organized. Since the unknown is beyond people's immediate experiences, it provides an arena for political manipulation. Parts of the unknown — the past, disease concepts — are mobilized to strengthen the present power structure, to act as instruments of social control.

This is especially true in conflicts that question the very loci and distribution of power. Unlike conflicts over the administration of an established social structure, these question the very fabric of the social order. Parties involved in these types of conflict justify their claims to power by presenting their own view of society. Each seeks to ground itself in a world view that supports its claims and weakens its enemies' claims to power. Since they can readily manipulate the unknown, the organization of the unknown plays a crucial part in these conflicting claims. It becomes a political tool in a power play. Revolutionaries, for example, who want to change the locus of power from the "establishment" to the "masses" justify their struggle in terms of a new world view — in terms of certain beliefs about the social order and myths

about the past which support their claims to power. If one group in the conflict becomes dominant, its conception of power and the unknown gradually becomes dominant. The process is not immediate and direct; rather it is very gradual and subtle. Usually the other group does not lose all of its power; even dictators have limits on their ability to dominate others. The group's beliefs often remain though they now play a subordinate role.

Even in cultures where no overt conflict over the locus of power exists, the same basic issue occurs. It becomes a question of the proper limits of power for certain loci. In this case the organization of the unknown usually reflects the set of checks and balances on power worked out by different groups. The organization of power in the unknown represents the current power alignments, the *status quo*.⁹ But the unknown can always be mobilized by a particular group that seeks to increase its share or decrease another's share of political power. As Douglas notes, "political power is usually held precariously and primitive rulers are no exception" (1966: 13).

In certain cultures, the general-particular continuum is a simplistic but accurate way for viewing conflicts over the locus of power. It helps conceptualize certain basic conflicts which may exist between politics and organized descent groups. When the descent groups and politics involve large numbers of people within well organized groups with established leadership and property and endure through time, they form the *foundation* for two distinct bases of power. Among the Nupe, Ga, and Oyo Yoruba, the politics and descent groups *actually constitute* such bases of power. We have analyzed their conflicts over power in terms of the relation between a whole (general component) and its parts (particular component).

Cognition and the Unknown: A complementary process to this "power politics" exists on a more individual, psychological level. The organization of the unknown seems to be cognitively based on the organization of the known. Social conflicts over power, perceptions of

⁹ As noted, conflicts over the administration of power within a clearly defined social structure are not dealt with here. When the parties involved agree on the power structure, they basically all share the same view of power in the unknown. Conflicts over power then mobilize the current organization of the unknown as a reference point, as a set of standards by which to evaluate the worth of various parties. The American Democratic Party, for example, criticizes the Republican President for his abuse of certain "American values" based on spiritual and mythical precedents of the past.

human bodily processes, observations of nature (the known) all seem to provide the framework within which the unknown is structured and analyzed.

The individual learns to know his world through the data that comes to him by way of his sense organs, but what he perceives depends also on what he brings along with him from his past experiences and what his present needs and wishes are as he faces the world (Hilgard 1962: 186).

In the case of the unknown, the individual perceives a minimum of actual stimuli. Unlike an object in the physical world, he has few visual cues or other sensations to go on. Hence his past perceptions and experiences play a major role in structuring and interpreting the unknown. The organization of the known, in brief, forms the basis for the organization of the unknown.

To a certain degree the organization of the unknown reflects actual experiences which occur in the cultural and natural world — such as in the social organization and in the body. In terms of social experiences, a variety of anthropologists have pointed out (cf. Durkheim 1965, Durkheim and Mauss 1963, Leach 1954) an individual's assertion of certain religious beliefs is often a statement about the social order. "Religion can be looked upon as an extension of the field of people's social relationships beyond the confines of purely human society" (Horton 1960: 211). In terms of the body, both Turner (1967) and Douglas (1966, 1970) stress the role of bodily experiences in formulating cosmologies. Turner, for instance, suggests that certain bodily fluids such as blood, milk, and semen may be the vehicle for expressing particular supernatural powers.¹⁰

The unknown, however, is more than simply a cognitive reflection of certain known phenomena.¹¹ Its organization depends on the interaction of a variety of factors; a complex feedback process is involved. Douglas notes:

¹⁰ Douglas (1970: 70 *et al*) states that the human body is always viewed as the image of society. While hesitant to accept too broad a generalization, our study certainly lends support to her thesis that the body is a "natural symbol" of society.

¹¹ Though not really developed in this paper, the unknown can also be used in an attempt to overcome the known. Problems such as death, illness, misfortune, and infertility are explained away by myth and ritual. "The repetitions and prevarications of [myth and ritual] ... so fog the issue that irresolvable logical inconsistencies are lost sight of even when they are openly expressed" (Leach 1970: 58). Lévi-Strauss (in Leach 1967) in myth and Yalman (1964) in ritual provide clear illustrations of how this occurs.

The social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived. The physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society. There is a continual exchange of meanings between the two kinds of bodily experience so that each reinforces the categories of the other. As a result of this interaction the body itself is a highly restricted medium of expression (1970: 65).

The same symbol may mean different things in different contexts (cf. Freud 1938, Turner 1967). Individual needs affect perceptions of reality and different power groups interpret reality differently. De Soto's (1960) study (as well as many other studies in the psychology of perception) suggests that we oversimplify "reality" (the known) in the process of perceiving it. As Hochberg recognizes, "our nervous systems organize the perceived world in whatever way will keep changes and differences to a minimum" (1964: 87).

The general-particular continuum facilitates the analysis of how certain aspects of the known influence the unknown. It clarifies certain metaphoric and metonymic relationships (cf. footnote 2) that exist between the two.

Elementary Structures For Thought: Turning finally to the breadth of the body-state homology and applying the general-particular continua to certain other cultures, such as Medieval European, Modern American, Sinhalese or Hawaiian culture, we notice the analyses seem very confused. The continua fail to organize the data into significant patterns. They do not clarify basic conflicts over the locus of power within these cultures.

But it turns out that certain other continua may organize the material into a pattern similar to the one in this study. Why will it work with one continuum and not with another? The answer is that various cultures are widely dissimilar in the way authority is organized. No single continuum can conceptualize the power relations in all human cultures. Yet interestingly enough, the various continua studied seem to express conflicts that exist in every culture. The same conflicts appear to exist in every culture independent of whether or not they play a major role in the organization of authority. These conflicts almost seem to be an "innate" part of culture.

Could these conflicts, which the continua clarify, be part of the psychic unity of mankind? We do not believe so. These conflicts do not seem to be based on any psychic universals (though the perceptual structuring of the unknown may well be). Rather we suspect that they are based on the cultural unity of human groups. All groups of humans

have certain conflicts that arise from men living with other men — conflicts over the rights of particular versus general interests, natural versus cultural needs, sacred versus secular orientations, etc. Because they all share a common culture — at the most basic level — they all share certain types of conflicts. But because of variation in cultural organization — at a higher level — the conflicts will develop and be elaborated in various ways. One type of conflict will get emphasized more in one culture and a different type in another culture.¹²

The anthropologist can use various continua to analyze these conflicts. He can see which conflicts play a major role in the social organization and determine how these conflicts are perceived and handled within a culture. The continua are, thus, analytical tools for clarifying basic power conflicts over the loci of power in a variety of cultures.

Such an approach raises as many questions as it answers. What are the continua? Could Lévi-Strauss's nature-culture polarity explicate certain cultures and only be marginally helpful in others (cf. Douglas in Leach 1967)? To what "type" of cultures does each continuum apply? How do the continua work? How do they relate to other areas of the known and unknown? But enough. These questions bring us far beyond the scope of the present study. For a proper answer to these questions, far more ethnographic data must be presented. A poorly developed analysis proves little. For now, the analysis must end here.

Dept. of Anthropology, University of Hawaii

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bascom, W.
 1944 *The sociological role of the Yoruba cult group*. American Anthropological Memoir 63.
 1960 Yoruba concepts of the soul. In *Men and cultures*, A. Wallace, ed., pp. 401-410. Philadelphia.
 1969a *Ifa divination*. Bloomington, Indiana.
 1969b *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria*. New York.
- Bastian, A.
 1895 *Ethnische elementargedanken in der lehre vom menschen*. Berlin.
- Beattie, J.
 1960 *Bunyoro, An African kingdom*. New York.

¹² In much modified form these ideas are similar to Bastian's (1895) concept of *Elementargedanken*. Certain basic ideas exist among men and they take different forms in different cultures. However, here the ideas (the continua) are the anthropologist's abstractions of conflicts within cultures rather than being part of the cultures themselves.

- Clements, F.
1932 Primitive concepts of disease. *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 32: 185-252.
- De Soto, C.
1960 Learning a social structure. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 60: 417-421.
- Douglas, M.
1966 *Purity and danger*. London.
1970 *Natural symbols*. London.
- Durkheim, E.
1965 *The elementary forms of the religious life*. New York.
- Durkheim, E. and M. Mauss.
1963 *Primitive classification*. Chicago.
- Fabrega, H.
1972 Medical anthropology. In *Biennial review of anthropology*, 1971, B. Siegel, ed., pp. 167-229. Stanford, California.
- Field, M.
1937 *Religion and medicine among the Ga people*. London.
1940 *Social organization of the Ga people*. London.
- Forde, D.
1951 *The Yoruba-speaking peoples of south-western Nigeria*. London.
1955 The Nupe. In *Peoples of the Niger-Benue confluence*, pp. 17-52. London.
- Frazer, J.
1922 *The golden bough*. New York.
- Freud, S.
1938 The interpretation of dreams. In *Basic writings of Sigmund Freud*, A. Brill, trans. and ed., pp. 181-549. New York.
- Geertz, C.
1966 Religion as a cultural system. In *Anthropological approaches to the study of religion*, M. Banton, ed., pp. 1-46. New York.
- Glick, L.
1967 Medicine as an ethnographic category: The Gimi of the New Guinea Highlands. *Ethnology* VI: 31-56.
- Hilgard, E.
1962 *Introduction to psychology*. Third edition. New York.
- Hochberg, J.
1964 *Perception*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.
- Horton, R.
1960 A definition of religion and its uses. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 90: 201-226.
- Jahoda, G.
1961 Traditional healers and other institutions concerned with illness in Ghana. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 7: 245-268.
- Kilson, M.
1967 Urban tribesmen: social continuity and change among the Ga in Accra, Ghana. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University.

Kilson, M.

- 1971 *Kpele Lala: Ga religious songs and symbols*. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Leach, E.

- 1954 *Political systems of highland Burma*. Boston.
1961 *Pul Eliya. A village in Ceylon*. Cambridge, England.
1970 *Claude Lévi-Strauss*. New York.

Leach, E., ed.

- 1967 *The structural study of myth and totemism*. London.

Leighton, A. et al.

- 1963 *Psychiatric disorder among the Yoruba*. Ithaca, New York.

Lenski, G.

- 1966 *Power and privilege. A theory of social stratification*. New York.

Lévi-Strauss, C.

- 1963a *Structural anthropology*. New York.
1963b *Totemism*. Boston.
1966 *The savage mind*. Chicago.
1969 *The raw and the cooked*. New York.

Lewis, I.

- 1971 *Ecstatic religion*. Harmondsworth, England.

Lloyd, P.

- 1954 The traditional political system of the Yoruba. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 10: 366-384.
1960 Sacred kingship and government among the Yoruba. *Africa XXX*: 221-237.
1968 Conflict theory and Yoruba kingdoms. In *History and social anthropology*, I. Lewis, ed., pp. 25-61. London.

Malinowski, B.

- 1954 *Magic, science and religion*. New York.

Manoukian, M.

- 1950 The Ga and Adangme peoples. In *Akan and Ga-Adangme peoples*, pp. 66-110. London.

Margetts, E.

- 1965 Traditional Yoruba healers. *Man* 65: 115-118.

Morton-Williams, P.

- 1952 The Antinga cult among the south-western Yoruba. In *Proceedings of the first annual conference of the West African institute of social and economic research*, pp. 43-49. Ibadan, Nigeria.
1960a The Yoruba Ogboni cult in Oyo. *Africa XXX*: 362-374.
1960b Yoruba responses to the fear of death. *Africa XXX*: 34-40.
1964 An outline of the cosmology and cult organization of the Oyo Yoruba. *Africa XXXIV*: 243-261.
1967 The Yoruba kingdom of Oyo. In *West African kingdoms in the nineteenth century*, D. Forde and P. Kaberry, eds., pp. 36-69. London.

Morton-Williams, P.

1968 The Fulani penetration into Nupe and Yoruba in the nineteenth century. In *History and social anthropology*, I. Lewis, ed., pp. 1-24. London.

1969 The influence of habitat and trade on the politics of Oyo and Ashanti. In *Man in Africa*, M. Douglas and P. Kaberry, eds., pp. 80-99. London.

Murray, J., H. Bradley, W. Craigie, and C. Onions, eds.

1933 *Oxford English dictionary*. Oxford.

Nadel, S. F.

1942 *A black Byzantium*. London.

1952 Witchcraft in four African societies: an essay in comparison. *American Anthropologist* 54: 18-29.

1954 *Nupe religion*. London.

1957 *The theory of social structure*. New York.

Prince, R.

1960 Curse, invocation and mental health among the Yoruba. *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal* 5: 65-79.

1961a Some notes on Yoruba native doctors and their management of mental illness. In *Proceedings of the first pan-African psychiatric conference*, A. Lambo, ed. Ibadan, Nigeria.

1961b The Yoruba image of the witch. *Journal of Mental Science* 107: 795-805.

1964 Indigenous Yoruba psychiatry. In *Magic, faith, and healing*, A. Kiev, ed., pp. 84-120. New York.

Scotch, N.

1963 Medical anthropology. In *Biennial review of anthropology*, B. Siegel, ed., pp. 30-68. Stanford, California.

Turner, V.

1967 *The forest of symbols*. Ithaca, New York.

1968 *The drums of affliction*. Oxford.

1969 *The ritual process*. Chicago.

Wallace, A. and J. Atkins.

1960 The meaning of kinship terms. *American Anthropologist* 62: 58-80.

Whiting, J.

1961 Socialization process and personality. In *Psychological anthropology*, F. Hsu, ed., pp. 355-380. Homewood, Illinois.

Whiting, J. and I. Child.

1953 *Childhood training and personality*. New Haven, Connecticut.

Yalman, N.

1964 The structure of Sinhalese healing rituals. *Journal of Asian Studies* 23: 115-150.