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Speech about Speech in Speech about Action

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SPEECH AND ACTION have been a focus of interest for social theorists of a variety of persuasions. From a folk-theoretic perspective, however, it is significant that language itself has the property of allowing its users to speak about speech as well as about other types of action. As a consequence, any narrative text containing instances of reported speech embodies a kind of "theory" about the relationship between speech and action.[1] In a text, the speech that is reported typically has some relationship to other action that is reported, for example, the speech may be about action that has taken place or will take place, it may be a command, it may be a lie, and so on. By studying these relationships, one gains access to what may be termed the "ethnometapragmatic[2] theory" the text embodies, that is, how the relationship between speech and action is conceptualized by the users of the language.

This paper analyzes, from such a folk-theoretic point of view, a single myth, the myth of the "Giant Falcon" of the Shokleng Indians of southern Brazil. I propose, however, that the myth contains more than just an ethnometapragmatic theory. I argue that one of its principal functions is a prescriptive one: the myth actually specifies what the relationship between speech and action ought to be. It is, in effect, a moral tale about speech and action, about the proper orientation of actors to speech.[3]

It is of interest, however, that the myth also deals with the kinds of intellectual and social issues, such as death and reversibility, studied by structuralists working in the tradition of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Indeed, I argue that the present myth can be analyzed on two planes: (1) that of speech about speech in speech about action, and (2) that of intellectual and social issues. Moreover, I try to show that the two planes are interconnected, forming part of a single functional system.

The Text

The following text was recorded in 1975 in the original Shokleng.[4] In 1981, I transcribed and translated it into Portuguese with the help of a native

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Shokleng speaker, whom I taught how to write Shokleng. The division into phrase clusters corresponds with his intuitive division. My own representation here follows Hymes's ethnopoetical technique (cf. 1981). Distinct phrases are identified on the basis of a single intonation contour and set off, usually, by pauses. These are represented by a single line of text in the following transcription. Phrase clusters, which are numbered, are distinguished by longer pauses and by distinct predicating particles in spoken Shokleng. Indentation is used as a device to capture parallelism in the grammatical embeddedness of phrases and phrase groups, in particular, to depict the embedded nature of quoted speech. The translation into English is my own. Punctuation has been added to conform with my understanding of Shokleng.

The Giant Falcon

1. Kuyankən said to his brother Klanmən̨,
"when the falcon,
who has been carrying off men and eating them,
does this to me,
you go up to there to get my bones."

2. So it went,
and he would ascend,
and he would ascend,
and, after a long time,
he said to him,
"when I go up there,
you must go to get my bones,
and when you carry them back,
and descend to here,
then you must put them on a mountainside way over there."

3. The brother listened to him,
and he went to look for his bones.

4. With falcon feathers,
he had stored away,
he covered himself,
and then he tried to ascend;
he flew well,
and then he came back down.
When he came back down,
he told the others,
"the sky's hole is over there;
wait for me tomorrow."

5. So the next day he ascended;
he covered his arms with falcon feathers
and he tried flying;
he said,
"the sky's hole is over there;
wait for me,"
and he ascended;
he ascended;
he was above the dry araucaria pines;
he was above them;

6. Then he entered the hole in the sky;
When he went through the hole in the sky,
their (the giant falcons') paths were like ladders;

7. He went through,
he took off his feathers,
and he went along the path;
he went,
and there was the camp of the man-like falcons.

8. In the camp
there were many houses,
and he looked at them;
he thought,
surely it was for his brother's bones
that the new baskets had been woven;
they were newly woven
and the bones hung inside them.

9. He continued on his way
and the giant falcons looked at him.
As he went along,
he listened to the noise they made;
as he went long,
a woman appeared.

10. She said to him,
"why have you come?"

"I have come to look for the bones
of the man who came up here.
Where are they?"

"They are hanging from the *yayə* tree;
in the newly woven baskets,
that's where they are hanging."

11. Afterwards she said to him,
"kill me,
and when you kill me,
take this water I have brought
and make soup for your husband,
and give it to him,
and eat it together with him."

12. So he listened,
and he killed her;
he killed her,
and he did exactly as she said;
with the water he brought,
he made soup,
and he gave it to his husband;
he looked like her now,
and he did this.

13. Then she came to life,
and went next to her husband;
meanwhile he went away,
circling about,
and as he was coming along,
another woman appeared.

14. She said to him,
"why have you come?"

"I have come to look for the bones
of the man who came up here;
where are his bones?"

"By the path,
hanging from the broken *yayə* tree;
they are in the newly woven basket."

15. She said this,
and then she said to him,
"kill me,
and when you kill me,
take the water I have brought,
and say to your husband,
'give me the instrument
for removing thorns from the feet;
I want to remove thorns from my feet.' "

16. And he killed her;
he took the water
and he said to her husband,
"give me the instrument
for removing thorns from my feet.
I want to remove thorns from my feet."

17. He gave it to her,
and she talked
about removing the thorns from her feet.

18. She was pretending to squeeze her foot,
and then he went away;
when he went away,
the woman he had killed came back to life.

19. When she came back to life,
he went away;
he went away;
he was coming along the path,
it is said, until he arrived,
and there were many falcons there,
it is said, large falcons.

20. And it is said that he destroyed the falcons.
He threw a stick at them
and said,
"you will become a *kɔkəŋ*,[5]
and you will eat the jacutinga bird;"
he hit another, it is said,
and said,
"you will become a *yuŋuŋ məŋ*,
and you will eat snakes;"
he hit another,
and said,
"you will become a *təta*,
and you will eat little birds;"
he hit another with a stick,
and he said,
"you will become a *yatəñ* (buzzard),
and you will eat rotten flesh;"
he hit another again,
and, it is said, he said,
"you will become a *kɔkəŋ*,
and you will eat monkeys."
And he finished hitting them.

21. And he descended
with the bones of his brother.

22. Carrying them on his back, it is said,
he spiralled downwards,
until he reached the ground,
and, it is said, he did not do as he was told (by his brother).

23. He returned without doing as he was told;
he put them,
his bones,
his brother's bones,
in the middle of an Araucaria pine forest,
where they (the people) went to gather pine nuts.

24. And when they went to gather pine nuts,
they would see,
and they would tell (the others) about it,
and the children went to see;
and he (the brother) looked like a small child-man.

25. And he died,
and he said,
"you will not see me again."

26. When he (the other brother) learned about this,
he went to him;
he placed him well,
but even so he died.

27. It is for this reason that we die;
it is for this reason that,
when we die, we are not seen again;
it was this death;
however,
had he done it well,
had he put (the bones) away,
then we who die would always come back;
however,
he did not do it well;
and when we die,
we never come back again;
and he said this,
"you will not see me again."

Analysis

There are six principal blocks of reported speech in this narrative, supplemented by references to "doing as one is told." For each of these blocks, I specify in the table below the lines on which the quoted material occurs, the participants in the speech event, the pragmatic mode of the quoted utterance (i.e., statement, question, command), the referential content of the utterance, and the relationship of that content to other action reported in the text.

Table. Reported Speech in the "Giant Falcon" Myth.

Block	*Lines*	*Speaker*	*Hearer*	*Mode*	*Referential Content*	*Relationship to Action*
1	1–2	$Brother_1$	$Brother_2$	Command	$Brother_2$ is instructed to go up to retrieve $brother_1$'s bones after the giant falcon has carried him off. $Brother_2$ is to carry the bones to a remote site on the side of a mountain and place them there.	$Brother_2$ does as instructed on the first account, and, indeed, the myth's principal plot line is related to his retrieval of the bones from the land of the giant falcon. However, on the second account, as the narrator is at pains to point out, $brother_2$ did not do as he was told. He did not place the bones on a site sufficiently remote.
2	4–5	$Brother_2$	Unspecified others	Command	$Brother_2$ points to the location of the hole in the sky and tells the others to wait for him.	In this version, no further reference is made to the action of the others. In other versions, the narrator recounts that the others do indeed wait for $brother_2$ and they watch him as he spirals downwards (line 22). This omission in the present version was undoubtedly an oversight on the narrator's part.

3	10–11	Brother$_2$ Woman$_1$	Woman$_1$ Brother$_2$	Question/ answer, Command	The woman asks brother$_2$ why he has come and he tells her. He, in turn, asks where his brother's bones are and she tells him. She then instructs him to kill her and to assume her position with respect to her husband, making soup for him.	The man performs the actions as commanded. (This is commented upon by the narrator, who observes that the man did "exactly" as he was told.)
4	14–15, 16	Brother$_2$ Woman$_2$	Woman$_2$ Brother$_2$	Question/ answer, Command	The question-answer sequence of Block 3 is repeated. Then the woman instructs brother$_2$ to kill her. This time she instructs him to request a thorn-remover from her husband, i.e., the quoted material here itself contains a quote, which is a command.	Brother$_2$ performs the actions as commanded, including the instruction concerning what he should say to the woman's husband.
5	20	Brother$_2$	Falcons	Command	Brother$_2$ instructs each falcon as to the specific type it is to become and what it is to eat.	There is no relationship between the content of these commands and other action in the myth. However, the elder men frequently say that it is because of the occurrences described here that falcons, eagles, and hawks are seen today.

Table. Continued.

Block	*Lines*	*Speaker*	*Hearer*	*Mode*	*Referential Content*	*Relationship to Action*
6	25, 27	Brother_1 (child-man)	Onlookers	Prophecy; statement with future reference	Brother_1 states that he will not be seen again.	No subsequent action relates to this. The statement is related rather to the consequence that, when people die, they are not seen again.

This analysis reveals a striking fact about pragmatic mode, namely, that each of the first five blocks contains a command. Evidently, this mode dominates the reported speech of the myth. The quoted speech is only in small measure declarative, so that actors are not conceptualized as using speech simply to relate, in historical fashion, other actions that have already been described. Some question and answer dialogue occurs in Blocks 3 and 4. However, the command mode so dominates the myth that, from the point of view of a folk theory about speech and action, it is safe to conclude that the myth is "about" the relationship of commands or instructions to action.

From this perspective, it is also of interest that the actors are portrayed as following the instructions, or, at least, as making an attempt to follow the instructions. Obviously, the principal plot line unfolds around the attempt by the main character to follow the instructions in Block 1. The two episodes involving women also show the main character as following instructions. Similarly, while in this variant the command of Block 2 is not shown as explicitly being followed, it is in other variants. Finally, as regards the commands of Block 5, the hearer of the myth has tangible evidence from everyday experience that the commands were actually followed. So actors in this myth are shown as following commands, obeying instructions.

A further pattern emerges from studying Blocks 1, 3, and 4. Here we may see that the following of instructions itself has consequences. In the case of the episodes involving women, the hearer of the myth concludes that the woman, in each case, came back to life because the man followed her instructions. Indeed, these two subplots arranged chronologically in the myth, set the pattern for understanding the conclusion—that the failure of the dead to reappear in this world again stems from the failure of the main character to follow instructions carefully. If he had followed the instructions of his brother the way he followed the instructions of the women, then, while people would die, they would always come back to life again.

The role of the episodes surrounding Blocks 3 and 4 can be seen as a model for the overall plot by considering their position within the myth as a whole. These episodes are embedded within the broader action, about halfway through the myth. Moreover, they are medial with respect to the completion of the initial task by brother$_2$. The latter has ascended to the land above the sky, as instructed, but he has not yet retrieved the bones, nor has he attempted to place them on the mountainside. The episodes are thus microcosmic replicas, sketched within the space of a few narrative lines, showing how brother$_2$ heeds the instructions and sees the desirable consequences that follow. The pattern thus becomes graspable to the hearer of the myth as well, and the hearer is able to reason about the broader narrative on the basis of parallels with these episodes. Figure 1 represents schematically the position of the episodes within the broader myth.

As regards participant roles, it should be noted that the myth presents a perfectly symmetrical structure. Brother$_2$ is the recipient of commands in the medial Blocks 3 and 4, just as he is in Block 1. Presumably, of course, he is also

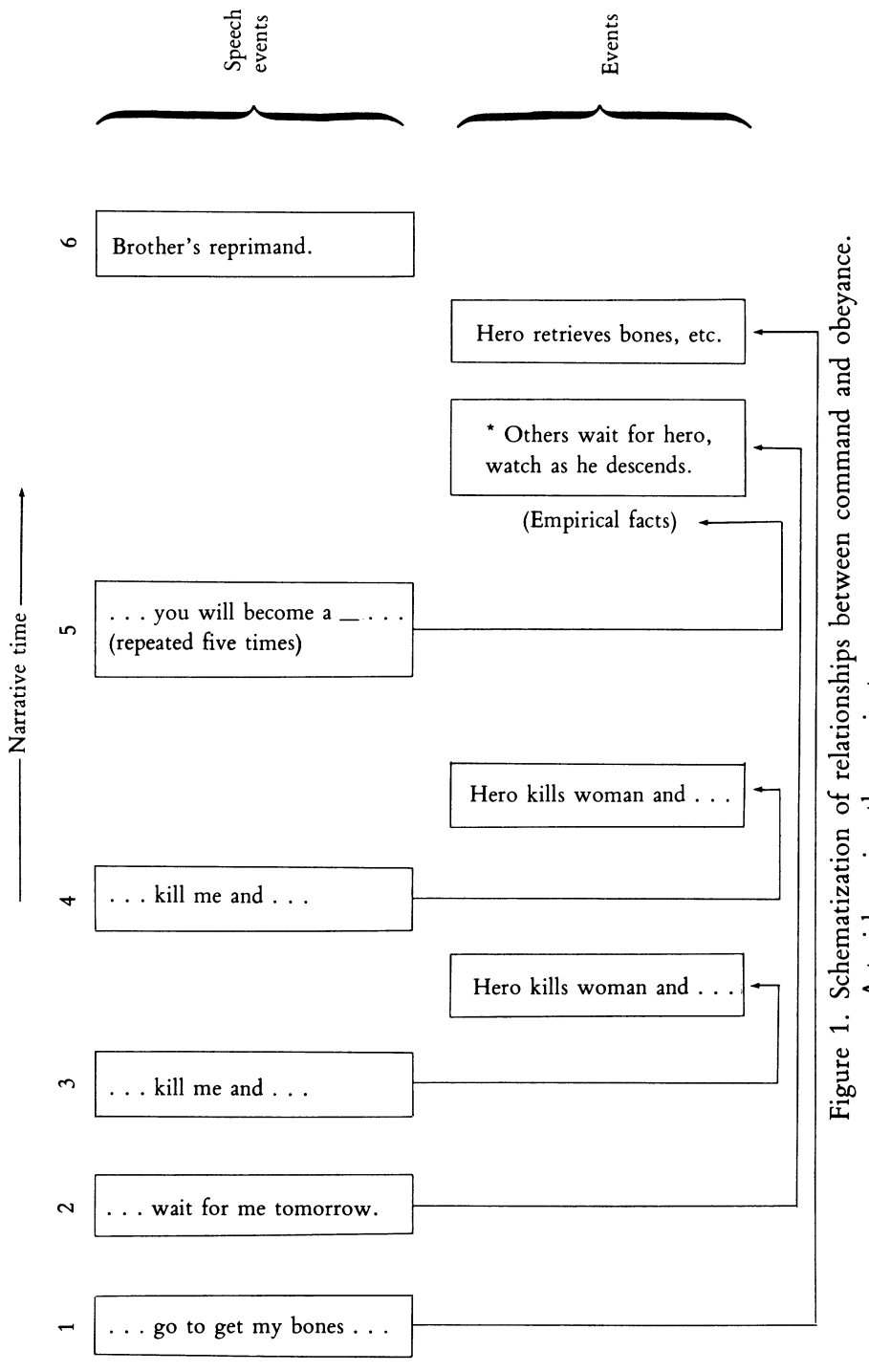

Figure 1. Schematization of relationships between command and obeyance. Asterisk = in other variants.

indirectly one among the recipients of the reprimand in Block 6. The two instances in which he is the issuer of commands, Blocks 2 and 5, symmetrically flank the medial episodes. If the latter episode shows that good consequences follow when the main character executes the commands properly, the former two show that others in fact obey his commands. For Block 2, this is made explicit in other tellings of the myth. For Block 5, this is self-evident, since any hearer of the myth knows that the birds mentioned do in fact exist, and, moreover, that they eat what they are told to eat.

Within the myth, the participant role of "issuer of commands" is associated with wisdom, just as, I argue below, it is in Shokleng society. The issuers of the principal commands, brother$_1$ and the two women, are not themselves recipients of commands, in contrast with brother$_2$. Moreover, their commands, while at the time enigmatic, prove to have demonstrated superior understanding, understanding that transcends that of the normal person, including hearers of the myth. By the end, one appreciates that these figures knew all along why they were saying what they were saying.

To sum up the structure formed by the distribution of participant roles, in Blocks 1 and 6 (which pertain to the principal matrix of the narrative) the manifestly wise brother$_1$ issues, respectively, his instructions and his reprimand. Brother$_2$ is the recipient. In Blocks 3 and 4, which constitute microcosmic replicas of the whole, the two women issue commands, and brother$_2$ is again the recipient. In these cases, brother$_2$ seems to be less experienced, to possess less wisdom, and in this regard he is like the hearer of the myth. Finally, Blocks 2 and 5 show brother$_2$ as himself in the role of issuer of commands, and here it is seen that his commands are in fact obeyed.

Variants

My present corpus includes five variants of this myth, collected over a seven-year period, from 1975 to 1982. Of these variants, three are in Shokleng and two in Portuguese. What is significant for present purposes is that, from the point of view of reported speech, these variants present an identical structure. Each instance of reported speech occurs in all of the variants, and, in each case, that speech bears the same relationship to actions in the text. The speakers and hearers are, of course, the same in each case. Moreover, judging from the Shokleng variants, an attempt has been made by the narrators to learn the quoted speech verbatim, something that does not seem to be the case with respect to the simple descriptions of action. This suggests that reported speech forms an important part of the invariant structure of the myth.

As a rule, differences between variants do not concern reported speech. For the most part, the differences amount to amplifications or condensations of descriptions of events. Thus, in one variant, it is mentioned that when the hero strikes each giant falcon with his stick, the falcon "shatters" into innumerable small pieces, each piece representing an individual bird of the species into which the falcon was transformed. Similarly, there is reference to the fact

that the women brother$_2$ kills were "old." Only one difference is relevant to the problem of reported speech: in the other variants, without exception, the people do indeed wait for brother$_2$ to descend, as was instructed in Block 2. From the point of view of reported speech, therefore, there is a single structure underlying the different variants.

Interpretation

I propose that the Giant Falcon myth can be interpreted on two planes, and that it is simultaneously a myth about (1) the problem of death and its irreversibility, and (2) instructions and the following of instructions. Moreover, I wish to argue that the two planes are interconnected, and that the myth actually marshalls the problem of irreversibility to make a pragmatic point about the following of commands.

From the point of view of Shokleng culture, the central role of death in this myth makes perfect sense. I argue elsewhere (Urban 1978, 1982) that the principal life-cyclic ceremonies in Shokleng society center upon death. Shokleng even subscribe to a belief that children who die are reborn: the next child born to a mother is thought to have the same spirit as the one who just died. However, adults who die make no reappearance; they go off to the land of the dead, never to appear again in this world. So the issue of death as "reversible" or "irreversible" is one already present in the general belief system. The focus of this myth is thus consonant with an emphasis in broader Shokleng culture.

On another plane, however, the myth may be said to be about the relationship between speech and action, and, specifically, about the proper orientation of actors to commands and instructions. One infers from the global picture that commands are to be obeyed. Although an actor may not know the reasons, he should nevertheless follow a set of instructions carefully. If instructions are meticulously followed, everything works out for the best in the end. If the instructions are not followed, undesirable consequences ensue.

This interpretation seems, upon reflection, to be shared by the narrator of the myth himself. For the narrator, while he does recount the events, also interprets them for his audience. Thus, in line 12, the narrator relates that the hero "did exactly as she said." Here he makes obvious what the hearer would otherwise have to infer, namely, that the hero obeyed the commands. Similarly, in line 22, the narrator points out that the hero "did not do as he was told." He emphasizes this by means of repetition in line 23 saying that the hero "returned without doing as he was told." The narrator himself thus seems to suggest that at the heart of this myth is the issue of following instructions.

This interpretation appears again in the concluding line of the myth, though here it is less overt and more closely tied to the problem of death. The narrator tells the audience that brother$_2$ did not follow the instructions. The irreversibility of death is explained by this fact. Simultaneously, since the irrever-

sibility of death is an undesirable consequence, the hearer concludes that the main character was remiss in not following the instructions.

I propose that this interpretation makes sense of two otherwise enigmatic episodes, specifically, the two episodes involving women. These episodes are enigmatic from the point of view of Shokleng social organization, since, while it is not clear why the hero should kill these women, it is especially baffling that he assumes their position. One narrator actually remarked that he did not understand these episodes, and he seemed to be referring specifically to the man taking on the appearance of a woman.

It should be noted that the content of these commands does make some sense, since Shokleng social life is organized around what may be termed the "principle of replacement," that is, the idea that the living should take over the roles of the dead and thereby perpetuate the presence of the latter in this world. In the myth, the hero plays the role of the dead women, carrying their water, making soup, asking for a thorn-remover. This is consonant with the general principle of replacement.

What is enigmatic to the Shokleng mind is how a man could replace a woman. So sharply are the sex roles distinguished in Shokleng society that this occurrence seems puzzling and even bizarre. It is precisely this bizarreness, I claim, that the interpretation concerning commands helps us to understand. For the point of these episodes, according to that interpretation, is to show that commands should be followed, despite the fact that they seem nonsensical at the time. Why should a man play a woman's role? In terms of the Shokleng way of thinking, this makes no sense. Consequently, the hearer of the myth, putting himself in the position of brother$_2$, cannot foresee the consequences of obeying such a command. The results, however, demonstrate that it was correct for brother$_2$ to obey the command anyway. For the myth to make this point forcefully, it is necessary that the command itself contain an inherently absurd proposition.

That the myth is more about following commands than about replacement can be seen by examining other commands in the myth. While the command in Block 1 is the focus of the problem of reversibility and irreversibility of death, the content of that command has little to do with brother$_2$ taking on the role of brother$_1$. This is also true of the command in Block 2.

Still, the problem of the reversibility versus irreversibility of death as a transformation is one that is present throughout the myth. Initially, death is shown as a reversible transformation, and this is the lesson of the episodes involving women. By the end of the myth, death has become an irreversible transformation. What is more, the transformation from a state of reversibility to a state of irreversibility is itself irreversible. It is in this light that the episode surrounding Block 5 makes sense. The hero hits, and, one supposes, "kills" each of the giant falcons. The transformation is irreversible and the giant falcons are no more. However, each of the giant falcons as an individual entity is replaced by a whole species, containing a potentially infinite number of individuals. This transformation is analogous to the transformation in death itself. When

death becomes irreversible, it is nevertheless the case that, because of social "replacement," something of the dead individual is carried on in this world.

Reversibility/irreversibility is an intellectual problem on which the myth plays, as if in the myth the Shokleng mind were answering a question about reality. From a pragmatic point of view, however, this problem is put to use on the other plane of interpretation. Since irreversibility is viewed as an undesirable outcome, it is clear that brother$_2$ should have followed the initial instructions more methodically. His failure to do so brought about irreversibility. To any hearer of the myth, the pragmatic interpretation is obvious, albeit not necessarily conscious: one should make every effort to obey the commands of those who have wisdom.

The intellectual issues underlying the Shokleng myth are reflected in the widespread "Orpheus" tradition, whose North American distribution has been charted by Åke Hultkrantz (1957). Hultkrantz mentions that the differentiating features of this tradition are: (1) "that the living person tries to bring the deceased back with him to the land of the living," and (2) "that the living person is a close relative or friend of the deceased." In many cases, certainly in the ancient Greek tradition, the question of return and failure to return is connected with the pragmatic level of obeying and failing to obey commands. However, it would appear that the pragmatic level is in some measure separable.

A striking example is furnished by a myth from the Coos Indians of Oregon, "The Revenge against the Sky People," which has recently been investigated by J. Ramsey (1977, 1983:76–95). Indeed, this tale is a transformation of the "Seal and Her Younger Brother Lived There," which was the focus of Hymes's original analysis (1968, 1981:274–308). In the Coos variant, a man goes up to the sky to bring back his brother, who has been killed and carried off by the people from above. As in the Shokleng myth, the protagonist takes on the role of an old woman after killing her, and, in his disguise, attempts to fool the old woman's husband. Dramatic tension builds around the question of his ability to carry out this imitation successfully. In the end he does succeed and manages to bring his brother back to life upon his return to this world.

From the point of view of reported speech, a key point of interest is that the Oregon variant, while so similar in terms of the overall action sequence, does not intertwine with the pragmatic meaning of command-obeyance. Here the metapragmatic lesson itself seems to be a variant. The central metapragmatic issue concerns the concrete acting out of behavior patterns that are verbally described. The hero knows how the old woman behaves, and consequently how he himself should behave, only through her verbal responses to his questions. He has no opportunity actually to observe her conduct. The metapragmatic lesson of this myth would thus seem to be the following: if you can learn how to behave properly through questioning, and if you can actually instantiate what you have learned verbally in concrete behavior, then desirable consequences will follow.

Pragmatics and Metapragmatics

I have suggested that the Shokleng myth is simultaneously a metapragmatic and a pragmatic device, serving to (1) encode a vision of the relationship between speech and social action, but also (2) to prescribe that relationship normatively to those who listen to it. Specifically, the myth suggests that commands ought to be obeyed, that instructions ought to be followed. In this light, it is of interest to consider the relationship between this mythological vision and the actual use of commands and instructions in Shokleng society.

Importantly, Shokleng society is not an authoritarian society, and commands and instructions are not obeyed because of the threat of force. Instead, the society is organized factionally, with chiefs ruling by influence, persuasion, and example. However, it is correct to say that the society is run by its mature men, and that, among them, the elders are considered to have wisdom. It is they who play the role of counselors, and they are in a position to tell the younger men how to behave, even to issue instructions and commands. However, their "authority," that is, the probability that their commands and instructions will be obeyed, rests upon the perception by others that they have wisdom or superior knowledge, that they are the bearers of culture.

In this context, the myth may be seen as a device for reinforcing the position of the elders. The myth provides, in the absence of threats of force, part of the grounds on which the authority of the elders rests. For the myth suggests that if instructions are obeyed, the world will run smoothly, things will work out for the best, a desirable order will reign in the world. Instructions issued by elders are the blueprints for successful adaptation to an uncertain world. Moreover, the myth actually contains an implicit threat: if instructions are not followed, dark consequences will ensue. The hearer is left with the menace of unforeseen ills.

In this regard, it is of interest that the myth itself, like other *nɛn či* ("old things"), is the property of the elders. It is told around the fire exclusively by the eldest stratum of men, that is, those who in real life are in fact the givers of instructions. Young men would never think of telling this myth, and they always defer to their elders. Simultaneously, knowledge of the myth itself is part of the wisdom on which the authority of the elders rests. So it is important that the myth does deal with intellectual issues, with death and its reversibility, with the origin of certain forms of animal life, and so forth. Dealing with such intellectual issues is part of the outward evidence of wisdom, of that kind of superior knowledge that allows one to issue commands and instructions, and that gives others the confidence to follow those instructions unquestioningly.

So the myth, as a pragmatic device, fits neatly into an ongoing social system in which elder men issue commands to younger men and yet have no "power," in the sense of force, to back them up. The myth simultaneously encodes a vision in which commands are in fact obeyed and normatively prescribes that vision for its hearers. It also makes use of the intellectual issues

of reversibility and irreversibility of death, and of replacement, in two ways: (1) within the myth itself, as a way of showing why commands ought to be obeyed, and (2) within the real world, as a way of showing that the myth-tellers themselves have superior knowledge.

Conclusion

The functional properties isolated here are empirical properties, insofar as they pertain to a specific myth. Some preliminary investigation, however, suggests that other Shokleng myths conform in considerable measure to the patterns described for this myth. These myths can be analyzed on two planes: (1) a plane of intellectual and social issues, such as death and replacement, and (2) a plane of language use. The two planes are typically interconnected, and, moreover, the myth often has as a pragmatic implication the prescription of some pattern of language usage.

One myth, for instance, "The Origin of Honey," a translation of one version of which has already been published (Urban 1981:326–327), deals, on the language use plane, not with commands, but rather with reports of the speaker's own prior actions. It concerns specifically the actor's orientation to such language use with respect to truth and falsity. On a social plane, the myth focuses on the issue of sharing.

The myth is segmentable into two principal parts. In the first part, the dominant theme is that of finding and piercing the hive. This is attempted by birds of a number of different species. Each bird, after endeavoring to locate the hive, returns to the group and reports on its actions,[6] that is, on whether or not it found the hive. Since the narrator reports both the bird's actions and its speech about those actions, the hearer can readily judge the truth or falsity of the reported statements. In this case, all of the statements are true. If the first part deals with truth, however, the second part deals with falsity. Here Hummingbird, to whom others had neglected to give honey, retaliates by concealing water from them. On the social plane, this is made to seem just, and one understands that the other birds ought to have shared the honey. On the plane of language use, however, it is of interest that when Hummingbird is asked about the water, he lies. Moreover, the lie is immediately apparent to any hearer of this myth.[7]

In this version, the condemnation of Hummingbird's lie is not evident. However, it is evident in other versions, where the concluding sentence is unpacked. The hearer is made to understand that the myth accounts for why hummingbirds today must incessantly dart about from flower to flower. The hummingbirds are actually in perpetual search of water, licking what little they can get from each flower. This is punishment for the actions described in the myth.

If the patterns described here are empirical patterns, restricted to a portion of the Shokleng mythological corpus, there are nevertheless theoretical reasons

for suspecting that they might, mutatis mutandis, prove more general. As multifunctional devices, myths need not have maintenance of the status quo as their principal function. However, insofar as a myth contains instances of reported speech, it necessarily also encodes a vision of language use, of how speech is embedded in social action and of how it relates to nonlinguistic actions. Such an "ethnometapragmatic" vision is open to scrutiny by any observer. If it is open to such scrutiny, however, it is also accessible for manipulation by the myth-tellers themselves, who can shape the metapragmatic image embedded in the text to suit their own purposes. Consequently, insofar as the myth-tellers have the maintenance of the status quo among their goals, there is a natural tendency for myths to take on the design characteristics of a pragmatic device used for prescribing relationships between speech and action. It remains to be seen whether this same function plays such a dominant role in other cultures as well, influencing the structure of myth texts and perhaps even the content of the myths themselves.

Notes

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[1] The history of research on reported speech can be traced back to Bakhtin (1973a, 1973b) and through Matejka and Pomorska (1971), or, in the Americanist tradition, to Sapir (1915) and through Hymes (1979) and Silverstein (1980). The present work, however, has grown specifically out of a seminar on reported speech at the Center for Psychosocial Studies in Chicago in March of 1983. My interest in this topic was also kindled by a paper given by Richard Bauman, entitled "Reported Speech as Esthetic Focus in Narrative" (1983).

[2] The term "metapragmatic" is from Silverstein (1976).

[3] For a related view of myth as normative or prescriptive, see Hymes (1968).

[4] This text was taped at a time when I was not yet fluent enough in Shokleng to understand it. I elicited the text, together with a number of others, in part for purposes of linguistic analysis. There were, however, other Shokleng speakers present at the time of narration, and they, presumably, formed the primary audience for this performance. The narration took place in my house, which was located in the middle of the Shokleng settlement.

[5] This and the following are types of "birds of prey." The generic term in Shokleng is *yuŋuŋ*, and it is this term I have translated as "falcon."

[6] It should be noted that the pattern described here, of individuals going out and then returning to report to the group, is a common pattern in Shokleng society, where the hunters, after a prolonged stay in the forest, return to recount their exploits before the men's council.

[7] This summary interpretation by no means represents an exhaustive analysis of the reported speech in this narrative. However, I believe that it does capture the principal pragmatic lesson—that one should tell the truth in reporting one's actions.

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