CONSTRUCTION SACRIFICE AND KIDNAPPING RUMOR PANICS IN BORNEO

RICHARD ALLEN DRAKE

Michigan State University

This paper analyzes the rumor panics about kidnapping that have been reported by Western observers in Borneo for more than ninety years. This analysis, based on the study of rumor in social psychology, identifies this rumor panic phenomenon as a 'diving rumor' and relates it to the study of folklore. A diving rumor is one that repeatedly erupts and disappears over a long period of time. It is accounted for by the rumor sharing its dominant motif with a well-known legend. The analysis of this Bornean kidnapping rumor panic yields a state government construction sacrifice motif. It is argued that the construction sacrifice is a widespread folklore motif and, as folklore, is related to the construction of an ideology of tribal-state relations. In the context of the sociopolitical stress and cultural conflict marking these relations the rumor panics can be viewed as a sort of ideological warfare. The plausibility of this analysis is supported by an interpretation of the semantics of the rumor. The substantive contents of the rumor are shown to be not only conducive to the construction of an ideology of tribal-state relations, but also, to be expressive of the principles and practices of traditional intertribal relations which were embodied in headhunting.

For more than ninety years Western observers in Borneo have reported a curious rumor panic about headhunting and kidnapping that appears sporadically and spreads from society to society. Terror-stricken communities frequently become paralyzed for days or weeks by the special precautions taken to guard against the threat. This paper tries to account for the susceptibility of the Bornean societies to such rumor scares by demonstrating how they illustrate the typical features of rumor theory in psychology and sociology and how their substantive contents express a symbolic logic reflecting cultural meanings or substantial significance. The remarkable faithfulness or reproduction of the details of the rumors over such a long time is the aspect most likely to catch the interest of the thoughtful observer and an appropriate place to begin the inquiry.

My interest in kidnapping rumor scares grew from having experienced one during anthropological research among the Mualang of the Belitang Hulu River area of Kalimantan Barat in late 1979. The episode is quite representative of the phenomenon generally, and I will recount it in some detail.

About a week before I was to leave, I was sitting and chatting with the villagers of Sungai Mulau[1] after a brief Sunday evening church service on the longhouse veranda. As was typical of these informal meetings, matters of a village-wide concern were brought up for discussion. On his Sunday night,

however, an urgent matter pressed itself upon the usually casual agenda. During the day, much excitement had developed over the rumor of a kidnapping incident (*perampok*, or *penyamun*) in the area. The villagers agreed to post a guard each night to give the alert should anything suspicious develop. The one family living in a field-hut in the jungle and I, living in a similar structure just a few yards from the longhouse, were requested to take up residence in the longhouse for safety.

The rumor was that the government was building a bridge in the subdistrict to the west and required a human body to include in the cement foundation. Villagers said that it had been the practice, at least since the colonial period when the Dutch built bridges, to place a human sacrifice in the concrete to placate the river spirits and thereby contribute to the strength and longevity of the structure. Exactly who was attempting to snatch the body for this purpose was not clear, but the villagers suspected that the culprits were ethnically Madurese or Buginese. In the previous week, there had been an incident at *Sebindang*, just an hour and one-half walk from *Sungai Mulau*: the longhouse floorboards had moved suspiciously near where a pregnant woman was sitting; bodies of pregnant women are thought to be preferred for bridge-strengthening purposes. On another occasion, people in the same longhouse had heard noises and rustling in the dark which they attributed to a *perampok*.

Soon after this longhouse discussion, two missionaries passed through the village. The one who served the local district was chagrined to learn that the Mualang, who have been almost completely converted to Christianity for more than fifteen years, could still be vulnerable to such pagan ideas. The other missionary mentioned that a similar scare had swept through the Melawi River district, where he serves, some months before. He also said that a missionary couple, now in Kalimantan Barat but formerly of Kalimantan Timor, had spoken to him of this kind of thing occurring in Kalimantan Timor. I saw the local missionary couple again the following month in the coastal city of Pontianak. They reported that the atmosphere in the Belitang Hulu had become significantly more tense. People had stopped tapping rubber for fear of being snatched from the rubber gardens and were working in the rice fields only in large groups. The elementary school was closed for lack of students. A few weeks later the emergency collapsed of its own weight without serious incident.

Supriya Bhar (1980:26-8) describes a similar rumor panic that he experienced in a Simunul Bajau village in Sandakan on the north coast of Borneo in 1979 and details other scares in the area as long ago as 1910.

Geddes (1954:22-3) documented similar rumors among the Land Dayak during his fieldwork in the Sadong River area from 1949 to 1951. Later anthropologists have also noted the kidnapping or headhunter rumor scares during their fieldwork. Anna Tsing (1985) reports experiences of headhunter scares during her fieldwork in 1981, in the Meratus Mountains of Kalimantan Selatan. The rumors warned that heads were being taken to improve the performance of malfunctioning equipment at the oil fields of Pertamina, the state-owned oil company. Similar rumor scares had spread here previously concerning the construction of a hydro electric dam and a bridge. Further examples are cited by Metcalf (1982:129) among the Berawan, and H. and P. Whittier among the Kenyah (pers. comm.).[2] Haddon's account of a rumor-

squelching expedition he undertook with Sarawak Government officer Charles Hose into the Upper Tinjar River area in February 1899 demonstrates that such rumors have great historical depth. Officer Hose feared some loss of life such as had accompanied the headhunter scares of five years earlier! To illustrate how little the rumors have changed in this ninety year span, I shall quote Haddon (1932:173-5) at length:

> During the greater part of the year 1894 a remarkable and widely distributed panic spread over Sarawak, and all the races of the Raj, Chinese, Malays, Sea Dayaks (Iban), and various inland tribes were alike affected ... a rumor all through the country that the Rajah was anxious to obtain a number of human heads to lay in the foundations of the new high-level reservoir at the waterworks at Kuching, and that men were sent out at night to procure them...
>
> Many Sarawak natives went so far as to assert that they had met with the head-hunters among the villages. Great anxiety was caused amongst all classes; at one time numbers of people left their isolated houses and crowded into the bazaars...
>
> Evilly disposed persons were not slack in utilizing this *penyamun*, or 'robber', scare for their own nefarious purposes, and numerous murders were perpetrated, pleading that they thought the victims were prowling round for heads.
>
> Trade was at a standstill, and everybody was miserable.

Doubtless, all the governments of Borneo have wanted to suppress rumor panics as a danger to public safety. The rumors and their attendant panics have been taken so seriously by the Malaysian government that it has recently made the spread of such rumors an offense punishable by a heavy fine (Rosnow 1980:585). The tribal peoples themselves have been much dismayed by the troublesome spread of false head-hunter rumors in the past. Heppell (1975:138) mentions the case of a village putting a curse on a person who lied about enemies being in the neighborhood and thus putting the longhouse to great inconvenience.

The interpretation of the meaning of the rumors below will seem rather straightforward when placed in their sociocultural context. What is less obvious is the complexity of understanding rumor because it necessarily involves the analyst in several levels of causation. On the psychological level rumor can express unarticulated feelings, rationalize those feelings to oneself and others, and provide meaning for uncomfortably ambiguous circumstances. On the sociological level rumor can be a political problem of the disruption of ordinary routine social life and an instrument for the formulation of ideology. I hope to demonstrate that there is also an anthropological level of analysis, by pointing out the symbolic significance of the rumors as expressive figures of widely-held feelings that draw on a 'multiplicity of referential connections' (Geertz 1973:213) in the cultures involved.

This Borneo rumor is of the type classified as a 'diving' rumor: one that appears and disappears repeatedly over a long time. This aspect is probably explained in terms of links between the rumor and folklore. The Bornean kidnapping rumor contains a motif of blood sacrifice required for appeasing the spirits to facilitate state government public works projects. Construction sacrifice is a widespread folklore motif and, as folklore, is related here to the construction

of an ideology of tribal-state relations. Certain aspects of the spreading of rumor are parallel to the formative mechanisms of ideology, when ideology is taken in the wider sense of a map of 'problematic social reality' (Geertz 1973:220). The rumor is part of an ideological warfare taking place in a context of sociopolitical stress and cultural conflict.

The topic of rumor has received little attention in the anthropological literature. Firth's view of it as 'false news' (Firth 1956) has failed to generate a distinctive anthropological contribution to the subject. Considered as incipient or errant news, rumor is typically too commonplace, spontaneous and ephemeral to command much theoretical attention from fieldworkers. However, a rumor as faithfully replicated for as long as the Bornean kidnapping rumor clearly demonstrates more than a news dimension. It is a story that is good-to-tell but is too telling to be good. Getting at the good-to-tell aspect entails not only the psychology of rumor process and the sociology of panic response, but also the anthropological analysis of the sociocultural context.

The definitive study of rumor has long been Allport and Postman's *The Psychology of Rumor* (1965). This work reflected a heightened interest in the topic during World War II when rumor became an important factor in the maintenance of morale. The extraordinary secrecy of government agencies and constraints on news organizations from publishing news were fertile soil for the growth and spread of rumor. From their study of war-time rumor, Allport and Postman were able to postulate a 'basic law of rumor' according to which the intensity of rumor is directly related to the importance of the subject for individuals and the degree of ambiguity of the evidence for the subject at issue. Their research focused on the cognitive aspects of the rumor transmission process. They identified the processes of leveling, sharpening, and motivated assimilation of the substantive contents of a rumor as 'the basic psychology of rumor', that is, the basic distortion processes of rumor-spread reflecting 'the rumor agent's effort after meaning'[3] (1965:137). Leveling means a reduction in the number of details contained in the rumor, and sharpening refers to the emphasis of one or two aspects of the rumor so that it has an interest-catching focus. Motivated assimilation is essentially psychological projection and largely accounts for the alteration in meaning caused by the other two processes. Rumor spread is a serial interpretation phenomenon. Its contents become, in repeated renderings, 'tailored to fit the preconceptions, expectations, and acceptable interpretations of the people who heard the rumor and passed along what they understood it to mean' (Watson 1966:279). Leveling, sharpening, and assimilation can be viewed as rhetorical devices that can expose for the analyst the meanings being projected in the text-building process. The episodes of the Borneo rumor panic described above illustrate clearly, in the fidelity of details in their replications, the leveling and sharpening processes. The assimilative aspects of the shaping of the rumor constitutes much of the argument that is to follow.

Rumor in sociological literature has an ambiguous status. In some treatments, it is considered a category of behavior in its own right; in others, it is handled as a belief or communication process accompanying certain types of uninstitutionalized social behavior designated as 'collective behavior'. This catch-all category containing such diverse occurrences as panics, crazes, hostile

outbursts, crowds, and social movements was organized into the Parsonian social action theory framework by Smelser in his influential *The Theory of Collective Behavior* (1962). According to functionalist theory, these phenomena are reactions to 'social strain' taking some form of social mobilization. Smelser's emphasis on social mobilization resulted in his treatment favoring the panic[4] aspect and reducing the rumor aspect to the status of hysterical belief. While I resist such an emphasis in the case at hand, attention to panic does bring out one important element. In the days of endemic headhunting, the threat of enemy attack was probably met with a conventional anticipatory raid response resembling what I have described above as 'panic' for the Sungai Mulau villagers. Experience has provided the villagers with a model of response which they reflexively put into play and, at the same time, with a 'perceptual hypersensitivity', as Quarantelli has phrased it (1954:275):

> One of the most contributory conditions [of panic] is the existence of a social group predefinition of a crisis as one that is likely to eventuate in panic flight.

Ideally one would apply the sociology of knowledge theoretical framework to the investigation of the social context of rumor. Rumor is a rudimentary form of the social construction of reality, an approach taken by Tamotsu Shibutani in his *Improvised News* (1966). Unfortunately, the data available are not adequate for a careful analysis of rumor process and so we are forced to attend to the functional relationships between rumor and social strain. It is widely acknowledged that rumors flourish in conditions of social unrest. Consistent with the psychological perspective on rumor, sociology offers generalizations about rumor involving essentially the same features: generalized social anxiety; an ambitious event; the projection of anxiety onto the interpretation of that event; and the spread of that interpretation on the basis of heightened interest (Smelser 1962:84-94).

Admittedly it has been the panic aspect that has been of greatest interest to Western observers because the fear has seemed to them so improbable. My view is, however, that the expressive content of the rumor is decisive for the understanding of its perennial plausibility. Because we now have available several episodes, it is possible to analyze the meaning in sociocultural context.

Like the variants of a well-known myth or folktale, the individual episodes can be compared for their perduring elements and motifs. There are five elements in the Bornean kidnapping rumor panics: 1. Kidnapping (or head-hunting), 2. Construction sacrifice, 3. State government perpetrators, 4. Feared (despised) strangers as instruments, and 5. Dayak (or, more widely, folk) victims.

These elements are combined to form a very credible rumor on the basis of cultural logic for two reasons. First, headhunting was a predominant fact of life in Borneo until its suppression by state governments in the late nineteenth century. In such a context, rumor and attendant panics were no doubt commonplace (see for example, Furness 1902:72) and had great survival value. Even today, anthropologists continue to report the fear of headhunting (Appell-Warren 1983).

Second, construction sacrifice has been a widespread religious practice around the world and has been pervasive in Bornean societies. Soliciting favor

from the appropriate spirits for an ambitious undertaking has the logic that the quality of the sacrifice must fit the importance and scale of the project. An important project requires a highly significant sacrifice, and human sacrifice is the most significant of all.[5] Hose and McDougall reported such sacrifices in their *Pagan Tribes of Borneo* (1912:105-6):

> In building a new house it is customary among all these tribes to put a fowl into the hole dug to receive the first of the piles that are to support the house, and to allow the end of the pile to fall upon the fowl so as to kill it. The Kenyahs admit that formerly a girl was usually killed in this way, and there is every reason to believe that in all cases a human victim was formerly the rule, and that the fowl is merely a substitute.

Haddon (1932:173-4) also mentioned the practice in his treatment of the Bornean rumors:

> Similar stories (of construction sacrifice) with accompanying panics have occurred elsewhere in the East during the execution of large public works; as for example in Singapore, when the cathedral was built. Professor E.P. Evans states that as the Siberian railway approached the northern boundaries of the Chinese Empire and surveys were made for its extension through Manchuria to the sea, great excitement was produced in Pekin by the rumor that the Russian minister had applied to the Empress of China for two thousand children to be buried in the roadbed under the rails in order to strengthen it. He also informs us that some years ago, in rebuilding a large bridge which had been swept away several times by inundations in the Yarkand, eight children, purchased from poor people at a high price, were immured alive in the foundations. As the new bridge was firmly constructed out of excellent materials, it has hitherto withstood the force of the strongest floods, a result which the Chinese attribute, not to the solid masonary, but to the propitiation of the river god by the offering of infants.

Construction sacrifice is not limited to the East. Eliade (1970:180) has found that

> The motif of a construction whose completion demands a human sacrifice is documented in Scandinavia and among the Finns, the Letts, and the Estonians, among the Russians and the Ukrainians, among the Germans, in France, in England, in Spain.

It is clear that construction sacrifice is a very widespread religious practice and folklore motif, a variation on 'death as the giver of life mythology' (Campbell 1972:41), a near-archetypal logic.

While these elements of the kidnapping rumor have their credence in traditional practices of Bornean societies, the construction sacrifice element is plainly a folklore motif of Eurasian scope and it is the folklore motif that holds the most promise for anthropological analysis. At several points rumor theory has asserted a relationship between rumor and legend. Allport and Postman accept LaPiere and Farnsworth's proposition that 'a legend is a rumor that has become part of the verbal heritage of a people' (cited in Allport and Postman 1965:163). They theorize that the psychological processes operating in rumor account for the shaping of legends as well, as can be demonstrated by the study

of legends of national heroes. For a rumor to evolve into a legend, it must be relevant to issues 'that are of importance to successive generations', speak to universal aspects of human character, and 'embody undying states of mind' (1965:163-4). The proposition that rumor can evolve into legend has some acceptance in folkloristics as well (Brunvand 1978:106; Mullen 1972).

Indeed, the relationship between rumor and legend can be more complex than evolution. Mullen has demonstrated in his work how rumors and legends generate and reinforce each other as forms of credibility. An example is how the widely reported legend of 'the hook', as collected in Indiana, has been associated with the rumor of the escape of a mental patient with a mechanical hand from the Logansport State Hospital (Degh 1968:97-8). The rumor and the legend employ the same motif and give credence to each other. Such a relationship helps explain the 'diving-rumor' phenomenon: a single motif, the construction sacrifice, shifts credence from rumor to legend and back again over time.

Another similarity between rumor and legend lies in their truth status. Although they may be false literally, they may be true figuratively, especially metaphorically: 'the type of discourse represented in both legends and rumors often has a hidden mode of signification' (Allport and Postman 1965:167). Jung (1959) maintained that U.F.O. legends express anxiety about the threat of atomic warfare and excitement at the prospects of space travel. Rumors of wartime 'emergencies' typically communicate disappointment with secrecy and justification for disgust with the stereotyped enemy. As Allport and Postman put it (1965:169): 'rumors and legends are high in **expressive** content' (their emphasis).

These examples of rumor and legend providing meaning for unaccustomed or uncategorizable predicaments implicate them in the relationship of credence to credo. Under conditions of social stress and cultural dissonance, such concrete expressions of conventional wisdom may be employed in the construction of a new interpretation of the sociocultural context (cf. Shibutani 1966:17; Smelser 1962:82), a reformulation of ideology. It is an 'effort after meaning', to again use Bartlett's phrase. Moreover, ideology in its simple and clear-cut expressive style tending to exaggeration and caricature appears to be employing the same formative mechanisms to achieve the 'cognitive power of distortion' (Geertz 1973:207) as rumor.

Here ideology and rumor coincide functionally, and this coincidence has great promise for understanding rumor from an anthropological perspective. The relationship is illustrated by the familiar trial balloon rumor floated by administrators to test how a particular change in policy might weather the 'ideological waters' of their organization - test volleys in the ideological warfare between the administrators and the administered. The argument of this analysis of the Bornean kidnapping rumor panics turns on the proposition of ideological warfare. To develop the point we must return to the details of the rumor panic.

The main motif of the rumor is 'construction sacrifice' and the narrative elements repeatedly depict the Dayaks (or 'folk') as victims of state government needs. In fact the long history of Dayak relations with state societies is sufficient basis for this defensive, prejudicial stereotype. There has been a longstanding political context of brooding resentment about the loss of tribal sovereignty

(Drake 1982:23-31). The tribe-state relationship is not just structural strain consisting of anxiety about prerogatives and confusion about intentions, but rather, injustice, distrust, and suspicion as ideological representations of the state intrusions handed down through the generations, from the tributary economic exploitation by Malay rajadoms, through the sporadic suppressions by Dutch colonialism, to the nation-building efforts of modern states.

Among the Mualang this resentment gave rise to a 'nativistic movement' in the 1920s, suppressed by colonial authorities only after the incarceration of two Mualang leaders in Java (Dunselman 1955:144-5). This sociocultural stress is typical of situations calling forth not only ideological reformulation, but also rumor. Rumors are ideal vehicles for the expression of intense sentiments in circumstances of ideological conflict. Rumor can resolve situational ambiguity temporarily, as ideology does in a more extended manner. The supposed threat in a rumor panic is 'something that can be labeled, localized in space, and therefore potentially can be escaped from' (Quarantelli, cited in Smelser 1962:91). Similarly, Dundes (1980:33-61) has shown how folklore can be a vehicle for the projection of widely-shared feelings onto cultural meanings systems. It is commonly acknowledged that in a rumor or folktale people can sometimes say things that are otherwise unacceptable. It is in this capacity that rumor can be the test of an idea in the public domain. If it works it channels emotions into generalized beliefs.

Anti-authoritarian rumors are an extremely common form. That rumors can be weapons of ideological warfare was well appreciated in ancient Roman times (Allport and Postman 1965:159):

> The emperors of ancient Rome were plagued by rumor - so much so that they appointed public rumor wardens (*delatores* they were called) whose duty it was to mingle with the population and to report what they heard back to the imperial palace. The stories of the day were considered a good barometer of popular feeling. If necessary, the *delatores* could launch a counter offensive with rumors of their own.

For folklore more widely, Yolen (1982:294-5) in her treatment of the Cinderella tale, points out how Marxists have sometimes taken the view

> that folklore is the weapon of class conflict and that the folk ... uses folklore to express resentment of capitalist society. And, moreover, if the folklore doesn't properly demonstrate the "correct" ideological view, it is perfectly appropriate ... to change that folklore to bring it into (party) line.

Further examples of people putting rumor and legend to their own ideological purposes are the anti-Catholic legends and rumors about the draining of ponds near Catholic convents revealing large collections of bones of babies, or the bones of babies being found in large numbers in tunnels connecting nun's convents with nearby monasteries (Blavatsky 1950, vol.2:58). Perhaps better known is the 'wandering Jew' legend that has endured among Christians for more than 450 years (Hasan-Rokem and Dundes 1986).

The argument here is that the kidnapping rumor of Borneo is a story good-to-tell because it expresses intense feelings about tribal-state relations and

that it is an aspect of the formulation of a Dayak anti-state ideology in the Geertzian sense. For the Dayak peoples in particular, the rumor motif and its associated elements resonate stereotypes of suspicious outsiders and dreaded state policies. These are elements of a nativistically-flavored self-definition and a shoring up of cultural identity.

This Geertzian sense of ideology is, of course, a 'strain theory', but it is a cultural strain theory and so has a decided advantage over social strain theory or psychological strain theory when it comes to giving an account of the substantive contents of a rumor. Working backward from a particular rumor, it is not terribly convincing to point out how it, among an almost infinite number possible, could function to redress a social disequilibrium, or how it might project emotional anxiety about some particular ambiguous but important circumstance. For an argument about the substantive contents of a cultural representation such as this rumor, we feel nearer the causal trail when we can demonstrate how the motif of the rumor expressively complements predominant symbolic structures of the sociocultural system in its 'steady-state' (Douglas 1973:25).

Geertz has suggested that one of the modes of formulating ideological meaning might be the employment of figurative language mechanisms such as metaphor (1973:210-13).[6] Similarly, Allport and Postman have argued for the 'metaphorical significance of rumor and legend' (1965:166). Could not the construction sacrifice motif be a metaphor of tribe-state relations, a symbolic means of expressing the persecution aspect of anti-state ideology? The argument hangs on the relationship between the practices of construction sacrifice and headhunting.

Colonial governments found headhunting sufficiently repugnant to justify its forced suppression. Headhunting was not, however, a superficial cultural trait. It was a predominant practice of hinterland political life. Headhunting was the Dayaks' particular form of interethnic (i.e., intertribal) relations. Even more, headhunting was a central tenet of the Dayak world view and a major principle of their traditional metaphysics. Their loss of political autonomy coincided with the loss of their traditional means of securing horticultural success, female fecundity, good health, and general prosperity by taking enemy heads for the gratification of their beneficent spirits. The battle over tribal sovereignty was largely waged over the suppression of headhunting. It is understandable that the forced suppression of this pivotal feature of their sociocultural order could take expression as public paranoia in headhunting scares. The simultaneous experiences with conscription into corvee labour projects or road-building and bridge-construction to consolidate colonial power further link headhunting, construction sacrifice, and state power intrusion.[7] The headhunting motif became a figure for expressing interethnic relations stress. It continues to have great power to transform 'sentiment into significance' (Geertz 1973:207). Since state-level society does not hunt heads, but builds roads and bridges instead, the motif easily transposes to kidnapping for construction sacrifice. The symbolic logic here is impeccable. Douglas has pointed out in her treatment of the body as a source of 'natural symbols' that Mauss before her had taken the position that 'the body is always treated as an image of society' (Douglas 1973:98).

NOTES

1. 'Sungai Mulau' is a pseudonym. This village lies in the heart of the Mualang Hulu area on a tributary of the Belitang River, as can be seen on the map above. From the village it is a six hour walk to the Kecamatan offices at Balai Sepuak. There are some minor language and cultural differences between the Mualang Hulu who inhabit the middle and upper reaches of the Belitang River and the Mualang Hilir who inhabit the watershed of the Ayak River. The Mualang are one of the Ibanic peoples of the middle Kapuas River region and share with them a slash-and-burn horticulture and the cultivation of rubber for a cash crop. My research was an analysis of the economic life of this village. It was funded in part by a grant from the National Science Foundation (BNS 76-19016) and sponsored in Indonesia by the Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia, for which I express my appreciation.

2. Most recently Professor Karl Hutterer experienced this rumor panic among the Punan in Sarawak in a brief visit in 1987 (pers. comm.).

3. The expression 'effort after meaning' was a concept employed by Bartlett in his earlier studies of memory in reporting (1932) and these three distortion processes agree very closely with Bartlett's findings.

4. The case at hand fits the panic category rather poorly because panic is thought to involve 'social decomposition' and, often, self-defeating behavior in flight (Turner 1964:409). 'Scare' would be a better term but it lacks technical status and so I must argue for its likeness to panic in several aspects.

5. I owe this point of emphasis to both Professor Robert McKinley and Dr. Michael Culalane, for which I am grateful.

6. Tsing's paper asserts essentially this same relationship between the contents of the rumors and tribal perceptions of state power. However, her treatment of the relationship is quite different. She characterizes the rumors as 'parables of uneven development' and shows how local Meratus leaders appropriate this representation of state power for their own political ends.

7. Dr. Ruth Barnes and Professor Robert Barnes reminded me of this point in our discussion at the Asian Studies Center at the University of Michigan where I read the first draft of this paper. I am grateful for the many useful comments I received on this paper at their 'brown bag' lunch forum.

REFERENCES

ALLPORT, G. and L.J. POSTMAN. 1965 (1947). *The Psychology of Rumor*. New York: Russell and Russell.

APPELL-WARREN, L. 1983. Play, the Development of *Kakada* and Social Change Among the Bulusu of East Kalimantan. Paper presented at the 82nd Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association. November 17, 1983, Chicago.

BARTLETT, F. 1932. *Remembering; A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BHAR, S. 1980. A Headhunter Scare in a Simunul Bajau Village in Sandakan, 1979. *Borneo Research Bulletin* 12:26-8.

BLAVATSKY, H.P. 1950. *Isis Unveiled: A Master Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*. 2 vols. Covina California: Theosophical University Press.

BRUNVAND, J. 1978. *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction*. New York: W.W. Norton.

CAMPBELL, J. 1972. *Myths to Live By*. New York: Bantam Books.

DEGH, L. 1968. The Hook. *Indiana Folklore* 1:92-100.

DOUGLAS, M. 1973. *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. New York: Vintage Books.

DRAKE, R. 1982. The Material Provisioning of Mualang Society in Hinterland Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University.

DUNDES, A. 1980. *Interpreting Folklore*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

DUNSELMAN, D. 1955. *Kana Sera, Zang der Zwangerschap*. Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde, No. 17. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff.

ELIADE, M. 1970. *Zalmoxis: The Vanishing God*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

FIRTH, R. 1956. Rumor in a Primitive Society. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 53:122-32.

FURNESS, W. 1902. *The Home-Life of Borneo Head-Hunters: Its Festivals and Folklore*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott.

GEDDES, W. 1954. *The Land Dayaks of Sarawak*. Colonial Research Studies No. 14. London:Her Majesty's Stationary Office.

GEERTZ, C. 1973 (1964). Ideology as a Cultural System. In C. Geertz *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

HADDON, A. 1932 (1901). *Head-Hunters: Black, White and Brown*. London: Watts.

HASAN-ROKEM, G. and A. DUNDES (eds.) 1986. *The Wandering Jew: Essays in the Interpretation of a Christian Legend*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

HEPPELL, M. 1975. Iban Social Control: The Infant and the Adult. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Australian National University.

HOSE, C. and W. McDOUGALL. 1912. *The Pagan Tribes of Borneo*. 2 vols. London: MacMillan.

JUNG, C. 1959. *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.

METCALF, P. 1982. *A Borneo Journey into Death: Berawan Eschatology from its Rituals*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

MULLEN, P. 1972. Modern Legend and Rumor Theory. *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 9:95-109.

QUARANTELLI, E. 1954-5. The Nature and Conditions of Panic. *American Journal of Sociology* 60: 268-75.

ROSNOW, R. 1980. Psychology of Rumor Reconsidered. *Psychological Bulletin* 87:578-91.

SHIBUTANI, T. 1966. *Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor*. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co.

SMELSER, N. 1962. *Theory of Collective Behavior*. New York: The Free Press.

TSING, A. 1985. Government Headhunters and Cosmic Cuisine: Meratus Stories of the State and Local Politics. Paper read at the 1985 annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C.

TURNER, R. 1964. Collective Behavior. In R. Faris (ed.) *Handbook of Modern Sociology*, pp. 382-425. Chicago: Rand McNally.

WATSON, G. 1966. *Social Psychology: Issues and Insights*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott.

YOLEN, J. 1982. America's Cinderella. In A. Dundes (ed.) *Cinderella: A Folklore Casebook*. New York: Garland.