IS ELEGANCE PROOF?
STRUCTURALISM AND AFRICAN HISTORY[1]

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I

Despite its very visible career in anthropology and folklore, structuralism has been little used by historians of precolonial Africa. Only Ronald Atkinson has applied the method of Lévi-Strauss in the Edmund Leach variant, although a number of historians have attempted to elucidate symbolic meanings by other means.[2] Rather surprisingly as well, given the two decades or so that have elapsed since Lévi-Strauss developed its axioms and analysis, no historian of Africa has ventured to discuss the validity of structuralism for coping with the interpretation of myths of origin or other oral traditions, except in passing. The topic has surfaced only here and there in the never-ending debate about traditions as expressions of the present, or of the past, or of both. Given the influence of structuralism elsewhere, though, it is due time that the approach be discussed for its own sake.

The reticence to do so became especially incongruous when a senior structuralist, Luc de Heusch, began to cover ground that historians had recently trod. In his *Le roi ivre* he discussed at length myths in the kingdoms of southeastern Zaire and adjacent areas.[3] This did prompt publication of two articles about his Luba and Lunda interpretations, but no general assessment of this work *in toto*. Jeffrey Hoover faulted de Heusch's Lunda material but still praised his "provocative ideas" and the method, "which bore some good fruit," while Thomas Reefe prefaced his critique of Luba material by calling the book "stimulating" and sidestepped the issue by noting that "no matter what the final assessment of this book will be by historians..."[4] Others were equally bland in their references to this work, while still refuting de Heusch on specifics.[5] Everyone felt, it seems, that a general assessment was beyond or outside their competence. Yet a general critique would have been of use for de Heusch is one of the oldest and most experienced structuralists in anthropology, perhaps the first disciple of Lévi-Strauss. Trained in Paris, he imbibed the approaches of the Griaule school, the protostructuralism of Georges Dumézil, and the early teaching of the master himself. Of all structuralists he remains the most faithful to the method of Lévi-Strauss.

Inevitably, at some point structuralists would claim that structurally-analyzed myths could uncover "real" history. A vocal advocate of this position is Roy Willis, who was innocent of Dumézil and not well-versed in Lévi-Strauss, but a Leachian, at least when he published his Herskovits lecture.[6] When he published his final analysis of Fipa traditions, however, his conclusions were rather different and his interpretations were no longer strictly structuralist. Now he relied on exegesis, with rather free interpretation of the results, going so far as to claim that his "key myth" can readily be translated into key Marxist concepts![7]

Whatever his claims to structuralist credentials, Willis is not a representative author of this movement, even if he is a symbolic anthropologist of the Mary Douglas vintage. But de Heusch is, and his claims that structuralism contributes to history must be taken seriously. Adumbrated in 1972, his views have crystallized in his *Rois nés d'un coeur de vache*. This volume, the second in a proposed trilogy about Bantu myths and ritual, covers a much larger territory than *Le roi ivre* and holds views no historian can ignore since they deal with "the archeology of Bantu thought." Moreover de Heusch issues a direct challenge to "ethnohistorians" (338-66) that must be met, not only because of the ambiguity of reactions to his earlier work, but perhaps even more because he writes so well and so persuasively--and yet... So, perhaps *nolens volens*, I take up this challenge and broaden it by both examining the book as a paradigm of the method and judging the method by the book.[8]

This *Bovine Womb* is ambitious in scope. An introductory chapter again argues that sacred kingship is a symbolic structure and cannot be explained away by functionalism. Sacred kingship is a lifelong interest of de Heusch, who in a way is a critical continuator of James Frazer of *Golden Bough* fame. Here we are told that myths in "Bantu Africa" encapsulate the symbolic structure of kingship. Then a sequence of chapters making up half of the book examines historical tales as myth and ritual of kingship in Rwanda. This is not really linked to the second half, which itself consists of three blocks. One chapter discusses the Ncwala ritual of the Swazi, a *locus classicus* in anthropology. Two more discuss myths from the Venda and "Karanga," while two more analyze rites of passage, expecially boys' initiations, first among the Thonga and other southeastern African peoples, then comparatively.

As in all works of de Heusch, parentheses, excursuses, and *obiter dicta* abound. They are the major means by which comparative materials from Central Africa (often from *The Drunken King*) are woven into the tapestry. His goals are those of Lévi-Strauss: to show the mythical mind at work. They are also those of Dumézil: to show that contemporary myths reflect at least a common (in this case Bántu) myth of origin (9). Moreover, he builds up a history of events to show that boys' initiation rituals were exported from southeastern Africa to central Africa after 1836 and then spread there (10-11). He claims that a number of institutions, including kingship, obey the laws of structuralist

history in Africa and sets himself off from functionalists and "ethnohistorians" (as well, I might add, from all Marxian thought). Functionalists confuse the symbolic structure of sacred kingship with the empirical developments of the state, which they help shape. This is implicit throughout the book (where Max Gluckman serves as its hero) and has in fact been an axiom in de Heusch's writings at least since 1958 when he wrote *Essais sur le symbolisme de l'inceste royal en Afrique*. As to "ethnohistorians," they are haunted by the chronology of events and remain indifferent to the very "long time spans" ("temps longs," not "longue durée") of structural transformations.

Keeping our goal in mind, I begin by presenting and criticizing structuralism *per se*, then move to the chapters about Rwanda, to see in a concrete fashion how structuralists work. Only then will I turn to the historical claims, the Dumézil face of this Janus figure. There I will start with specific historical claims, examine the grand Bantu hypothesis, and finally reach the discussion of "the archeology of myths." To follow the volume step-by-step would not make sense; the parts are merely connected loosely and the Daedalus of asides would turn any such discussion into confusion confounded.

II

Structuralism

Structuralists strive to uncover the *laws* that regulate the production of human thought, as Lévi-Strauss tried to do in his *Mythologiques*, the inspiration for these "mythes et rites bantous." This is a goal here, but there is a clearer assertion that a Bantu cosmology exists and that there are Ur-Bantu myths associated with sacred kingship. To structuralists generally, myths are narratives whose meanings are veiled. They express a "basic tension" (social or other) and "painful truths" through metaphors. Veiling is essential both because of the pain provoked by the naked truth and because of its awesome majesty. In practice such views of myth have close Freudian affinities.

As a set of operations, structural analysis consists of the following:

(i) set up oppositions between symbols in a text so that *relationship* yields a meaning. The closer the *similarity* between the terms of the opposition--except for the crucial difference--the clearer and the more elegant the meaning. Here the example of phonological opposition has been important: thus a :: b.

(ii) set up equivalences between oppositions drawn from a corpus of mythical texts. thus a :: b and c :: d, written as a:c :: b:d.

(iii) parallels between several results obtained in (ii) yield transformations of mythical meaning; thus at the simplest, where a :: b, we can replace a by c; more often:

a:c :: b:d   as: e:g :: f:h and e:g :: b:d or a:c :: f:h.
  (iv) these operations allow sequences in myths to be ex-
plained by sequences in other myths and allow whole myths to
be seen as equivalents, opposites, or developments of each
other. The notion of *mediating terms* is important here.
thus if a:c :: b:d as e:g :: f:h but a:c ≠ e:g *in part*
as b:d ≠ f:h *in part* then a:c can be split in a':c', which
is less relevant in the relationship and a":c", which is
equal to e:g. Hence e:g, being narrower, is a mediator.
The same applies to b':d' and b":d".

     The end product of real analyses should be the full explan-
ation of a chosen myth and of all the myths within the corpus
to which it belongs. Lévi-Strauss attempted this for all
American Indian myths. During analysis the corpus remains open-
ended and, besides myth, can draw in ritual, art, and all uses
of signs or symbols in a given community and its historical rel-
atives in the widest possible sense. All American Indians are
relatives.

     Finally, it must be stressed that there remains an absolute
freedom of choice in finding and setting up oppositions and
that despite the notation, symbolic logic is not strictly de-
ductive, even after the first pairs are set up. For of neces-
sity every symbol has a number of qualities (shape, time, color,
space, quantity, odor, movement, etc.) anyone of which can serve
as a basis for further oppositions, varying merely in elegance.
     To illustrate these steps, I use some Kuba data.
  (i) fowl: guinea fowl means bird of village : bird of bush
       (ethnographically attested)
 (ii) goat : *mbeem* antelope means horned animal of village,
       horned animal of bush.
       (ethnography supports the pair, but not as strongly as
       (i). hence: fowl : guinea fowl :: goat : *mbeem*
(iii) at the simplest: Antelope (*mbeem*) can be opposed to fowl
       if necessary in a myth.
       more complex: fowl feather : eagle feather :: masks A+B
       means mask C opposing authority in village to authority in|
       society (each pair attested ethnographically).
       then, fowl: guinea fowl :: goat : *mbeem*
            fowl feather : eagle feather :: masks A+B : mask C.
And we have a split of meaning in "fowl," where the feather mat-
ters. A whole host of possibilities now exist. If mask C sports
an eagle feather, there is mere equivalence. If it sports a
fowl feather, it expresses the whole opposition which in the end
will be nature vs. culture but here is in the avatar of superior
versus inferior authority. Should we continue in the arena of
feathers we could wonder what parrot:eagle feather does, or
eagle:owl feathers or a dozen others, all expressed in the eth-
nography and--for these two pairs--also in myth. To shorten
the expose--the parrot feather means illegitimate force and the
owl feather the power (legitimate or not) of witchcraft. But
owl:eagle can also express night:day. If the latter is chosen,
eagle becomes equivalent to fowl (always a rooster!) and guinea
fowl to owl. Guinea fowl is then read as "a weaker sort of witch-

craft" of a "lesser night," for instance the night associated
with the moon, while the owl's night is associated with moon-
less nights. If we relate all of this to kingship, we can say
that kingship is superior legitimate authority, by ordinary coer-
cive means and by the practice of witchcraft, is responsible
for the life-giving qualities of the sun, etc. Some of these
reasonings do occur among the Kuba and some do not.

     Given the above, it is clear that some limiting rules in
using analogies must exist. They are:
     (i) comparison will only involve opposition.
    (ii) no triads or higher order sets are allowed.
   (iii) all equations must be symmetrical and greater "elegance"
         is reason for choosing one term over another.
    (iv) no opposition or transformation is to be used that
         will contradict the "basic tension" uncovered.
     (v) all materials must stem from a single historical whole.

     By rule (i) all relationships between images (e.g., by ex-
tension, by similarity of feature, or by inclusion within a
wider set) must be reduced to oppositions. Rule (ii) reduces
all triads to binary sets as in a:b:c set up A :(b+c) and as a
next step b:c i.e. applying dialectics. Rule (iii) derives from
rules (i) and (ii). Rule (iv) is never stated as such but is
obvious. If one approach does not result in "basic tension,"
different choices must be made in setting up oppositions. Rules
(iii) and (iv) imply that the shortest chain yielding "basic
tensions" is preferable over all others. On rule (v) we already
saw with Amerindians that the single historical whole may be at
the most remote level.

     Apart from the fact that choices are possible in consider-
ing the qualities inherent in any image, the number of choices
is increased by the fact that each opposition involves four
items: two signifiers (images) and two signified (meanings).
Connections to other pairs can be made either through the signi-
fiers or through the signified. Moreover, there is no rule
that limits choices of images in a given myth, for example, to
those that are clearly predominant in the story itself. That
implies that often oppositions are not at all evident in a given
myth. Take the following Kuba story.[9] A king carrying his
metal staff of office met a notable carrying a dead owl for
his supper. The notable had earlier caused the death of the
ruling queen, the king's mother. The king killed him, then,
fearing retribution, hid in a marsh. But his people found him
and knew he was the culprit because owl feathers still stuck to
him. From that day stems the right of kings over life and death,
the prohibition for them to wear this type of staff, and the
prohibition for all against eating owl.

     It is legitimate here to use the feather ranking in Kuba
costume and oppose eagle feather:owl feather and go for a "basic
tension"--that the greatest power of the king is not lawful but
the most repulsive witchcraft. In doing so, we would be close
to some Kuba exegesis. We could go for "divine king source of
fertility and source of doom." We could contrast "wet and dry,"
"day and night," even "man and woman" (queen and king: one killed,

one killer)--any image at all in that tale. Since analysis
starts from any point in an open-ended universe, I can choose
what 'fits,' and discard the rest; only my sense of dramatic
effect, elegance, and creativity will then limit my scope and
hence the outcome. What I might do with this myth is simply not
predictable, not can it be replicated by anyone else or falsi-
fied, only faulted, perhaps on the grounds of 'lesser' elegance.

    Structuralism has often been criticized most effectively
by Nathhorst and there is no need to repeat this.[10] Levi-Strauss
simply does not follow the canons of the hypothetico-deductive
method and it is impossible to connect his analysis definitely
with any human condition except his own particular mind. An
analysis of his first study of myth, the story of Asdiwal led
critics to the conclusion that there is a lack of empirical
evidence about the Tsimshian in Asdiwal, that it abounds in un-
warranted generalizations, shows occasional misrepresentation
of data, expounds blurred theoretical assertions (we don't know
what he asserts about the *data*), and fails to account for the
data.[11]

    Structuralism in any of its classic guises is not valid
science since the results are neither falsifiable nor replicable;
reasoning is by analogy only and aims to convince, not to prove;
and analogical reasoning has nothing deductive about it.[12] In
addition, ethnographic validity is irrelevant for structuralists,
that is,it is not necessary that anybody in that society ever
thought about a myth in the way structuralists do. Finally,
the conception of "the mythical mind" is metaphysical, in fact
Hegelian, in nature. Grand structuralism is simply unacceptable
as anthropology because of disregard for particular cultural
data and unacceptable as scientific pursuit.

    Yet metaphors are widely used and oppositions often occur
in oral narrative and in its performance. To understand them
in a valid way several criteria must be met and proven from the
ethnographic record, so that replicability and falsifiability
are assured. They are:

   i]   Analogical resoning is demonstrated to be used in the
       culture.
  ii]   Meanings offered for metaphors are *emic*, that is, attested
       by a person or persons in that culture, and the opposition
       must be found in a single text and not constructed.
 iii]   The relationship and its meaning must be shown to express
       a "universal" truth in the culture, that is, a truth hold-
       ing for all contexts there and in the same way.
  iv]   Equivalences, mediations, and transformations must be
       shown to have been made by carriers of that culture.
   v]   Distinctions between symbol and reality must be kept clear.
       An item can merely be a symbol, as the eagle is the king
       of birds and symbolizes kingship. Or the connection is
       real. To the Kuba owls are *real omens* of witchcraft and
       not just metaphors.
  vi]   The precise extent of such reasoning and of the generation
       of symbols must be made clear. Are the data the product

of *one* person's thought (albeit a person of that culture)
or are they *generally* accepted and known?

Reading ethnographies shows that (i) seems universal and is
a property of the human mind in general. But the mind does not
always proceed by opposition.[13] Association by inclusion (par-
tial or total) or by partial similarity (usually of a single
property, including words by which the items are designated) are
prevalent in such reasoning. *Emic* meanings are rarely fully
documented in the ethnographic record. They especially fail in
documenting equivalences and transformation. No Kuba ever, I
think, equated goats and roosters or opposed roosters to *mbeem*
antelopes. The two oppositions--fowl:guinea fowl and goat:*mbeem*--
do not occur in the same contexts and there may be a rule of
closure that forbids generation of a rapprochement here. Third-
ly, no structuralist practice takes context into account as a
condition for establishing the link between image and meaning,
meanings being rarely universal. In one context the Kuba king
is the sun, in another he is the moon. In one context he is
eagle, in another fowl. Precisely because all analyses jump
from one situation to the other or from one text to the other,
this conditional bond between context and meaning is lost. Yet
when one learns to reason by symbols and analogies or when this
is taught in initiation schools or outside it, the rules of con-
text are specified and are crucial in the generational grammar
of symbolism, for symbolism is generated like discourse. The
reason I have not written a symbolic structuralist account of
"Kuba" thought is precisely that such rules are unpredictable
from one's armchair. They must be found by generating sequences
that are declared acceptable or unacceptable. Fourthly, no
structuralist operation of mediation or transformation is based
on what participants in the culture have themselves "transformed"
or "mediated." Fifthly, often no attention is given to the dif-
ference between symbols and reality. To the Kuba the sun *really*
gives life to everything but it is disputed whether the moon
really influences the fertility of women. The rooster *really*
calls the sun each morning, but the rooster is only a metaphor
for the king, or the headman, or social order, as the case may
be, in different context. To Christians the lamb of God is an
image, the man Christ as God is a reality and to blur the dis-
tinction makes it impossible to understand Christianity. Lastly,
metaphors, or a chain of them, can be common knowledge or the
product of individual speculation. It is crucial to know which,
even though structuralists never seem to bother with this ques-
tion.[14] Foreign researchers do not allow for the operation of
metaphysical speculation in "other" communities, denying the
existence of thinkers or philosophers in the ethnographic world
of the "other."
     By all these criteria except the first, structuralist prac-
tice fails. The basic reason is an incredibly arrogant assump-
tion: myth is a veiled narrative that can be decoded only by
foreign researchers, not by locals who have grown up in the cul-
ture studied, think in its language and metaphor, and, as thinkers

and artists, use form and metaphor to create and perform symbolic discourse as oral or visual art. But no, the foreigner (who *must* be an academic) either at home or after a year or two *in situ* knows better. Why? Because he has access to comparative material? Hardly, if you do not believe in a single "mastermind" acting through all cultural expressions for units that may have shared some ancestors many millennia ago or even in a "master-mind" universal to all. Why then? Perhaps because academics have, so they think, mastered a way of thought that is the only access to "truth." If that is so, it is the hypothetico-deduc-tive method. In fact structuralism is in the last resort an ex-pression of a particularly insidious form of ethnocentrism where *etic* ("universally valid--and what the researcher concludes") stands against *emic* ("what the folk studied actually believe") and even in analogic reasoning must be superior and true. This is how Marx can be found in Fipa myth. And to stand accused by a structural anthropologist of *not* being one for refusing to accept such an endeavor certainly is a paradox.[15]

Is structuralism useless? Why has it had such a success? Basically, structuralism is a fine tool for literary criticism, provided one accepts that it deals with the resonances a given reader can *read* into a text *beyond* the intentions of an author. To the student of another culture, however, the method's only use is as a heuristic device in the field. The fieldworker can test his hunches and reasoning (not by direct questions!) by seeking exegesis, by learning the hermeneutical skills current there, and by proposing sequences to see if they are approved or rejected. The fieldworker must *learn* to use analogical reasoning as it is practiced there, he must *learn* distinctions between reality and symbol, he must *learn* the rules of context that close off further deduction or deny equivalences, etc. For the his-torian working with oral narrative or poetry structural analyses can point to *possible* operations of structuring by memory or practices of composition and performance. Having checked his interpretations in this way the historian needs only to present the results: not every step of his heuristic search need be explained, just as he does not present all the red herrings he may have pursued in archives. Structuralist analysis is but a heuristic device and should be used as such.

To give an example of how to analyze a myth, I take the Kuba tale of how Mboom created the world (M 16 in the catalog by de Heusch). I follow the text given by Torday in the exposition but consider all known variants later.[16] Mboom, a paleskinned giant, vomited the heavenly bodies, standing in the primeval water. The sun uncovered land as sandbank. Then Mboom vomited nine animals (variants, perhaps 2x9). A third time he vomited many people and one spirit Lakoyin (not, as Torday has it, a white man). The nine animals vomited the others of their species-- as Kuba rank species. The snakes vomited by the crocodile then vomited the grasshoppers and the iguana. Three persons also vomited. The first, Nyony aNgaan, vomited ants, who built the first anthill as a grave for him, for he died vomiting them. They also fetched the soil on which plants could thrive. Another

person vomited a plant, which vomited all plants, and yet another
vomited only the hawk (*Drunken King*, 156-57).

We have here an orderly notion of creation. Mboom vomits
three times: bodies in the sky, animals, and people. Three is
a good number and three times three is perfect in all circum-
stances among the Kuba. Given this first creation, other beings
are being produced by the ones already created and today's in-
formant clearly had a whole Linnaean-like taxonomy of the world
in mind. He speculated exactly in the same way that Kuba use
genealogies to express relationships among people. Even the
mention of lightning as an animal fits here because all Kuba
hold that lightning really *is* an animal.

We can follow this thinker well enough. There is Mboom,
pale like all nature spirits. Vomiting is creating. A genea-
logical order explains the world. There remain some oddities.
Why the hawk? Why Nyony aNgaan and his death? Why the person
who vomited a plant? Apart from the number three, it almost
looks as though there is material here that does not derive
from the taxonomy. I did not add a tail-end to the myth that
explains how fire came on earth as the result of lightning's
actions. That seems to be a separate epilog.

In comparing versions, it is clear that the general explan-
ation holds. There are quarrels over the distribution of an-
cestors to species, the number of times Mboom vomited (often
just once), etc. And the stories about Nyong aNgaan, the plants,
and the hawk do not always appear. Comparative research turns
up the fact that a similar account of creation by Mboom (but in
what manner?) of three beings is found among the Mbole, a cen-
tral Mongo group in the forest to the north of the Kuba. The
name Nyony also turns up there. So does the isolated hawk.[17]
Nyony aNgaan occurs elsewhere among the Kuba as one-half of a
mysterious Siamese twin that represents Fate. The Kuba emigra-
ted from this area many centuries ago. And this account of cre-
ation by Mboom must be old because among them a number of ani-
mals are named as "*X* of Mboom" even in ordinary language. Fur-
ther comparison shows the story of lightning to be a separate
tale, not directly linked with this myth.

So we can conclude that a notion of a creator Mboom, who
produced (perhaps "vomited"?) a good number (3, 9, 2x9) of be-
ings, existed among the Kuba. Individual speculation among the
Kuba as to the nature of the world and the requirements of per-
formance have led to different interpretations and elaborations
on this theme. But the theme itself may well be very old. Ex-
amination of the variants shows first that this account of cre-
ation is the 'official' one, stamped by the seal of approval
of all the separate councils of the Central Kuba groups. It is
not just an item made up by Torday's informant. But it was not
reported (at least in the 1950s) from the peripheral Kuba groups.
And at least two informants were critical of the story on the
grounds that no one could really know what had happened. This
general acceptance did not prevent further speculation. Indeed
there are other accounts of creation and Mboom himself is some-
times explained as the product of the original chaos (supported

by the linguistic derivation of the term) linked to water and
often seen as a marsh.[18] The account of all known Kuba tradi-
tions shows that several stories of creation competed, although
this was the official one and all are best explained by the known
activities of speculating common among Kuba thinkers.

And at this point our interpretation must stop. We know
what is common in this myth, what is variable, what is added,
and have an inkling about its antiquity. Furthermore, we know
that another myth, that of the creation by Ngaan, is a calque
of this model. We can use the myth when studying Kuba taxonomies
and this may be relevant in analyses of animal symbolism. So
far at least, this interpretation, based at every point on eth-
nography, is replicable and falsifiable. Should I draw conclu-
sions from details--for example, that sun created land by dry-
ing--and link that to, say, the supposedly beneficial effects
of sun vs. rain in the Kuba climate, I would be speculating
without the linking evidence necessary to do so.

                              III

Rwanda

For a number of reasons Rwanda is an excellent case by which
to test in a concrete way what structuralism actually achieves.
Many studies have been done; many texts have been published; de
Heusch has been familiar for decades with the material and the
country; and he devotes five chapters of his book to this topic.
The first two analyze texts drawn from the genre of historical
tales (*ibitéekerezo*). The published text with the liturgy of the
"dynastic code"--an extraordinary body of data, so far unique in
sub-Saharan Africa--is the basis for the next chapter.[19] With
this text we are certain that all the aspects of this sacred king-
ship are known, unlike the situation in most other African cases.
Then de Heusch returns to the myth of Ryangombe, the hero of the
imandwa cult.[20] He closes his remarks with a discussion about
the nature of myths that opposes him to Pierre Smith, a student
of Rwandese oral narrative as art. This book within a book can-
not be discussed in depth here for, as G. Dumézil, so often in-
voked in this volume, put it: "Having neither the time nor the
taste to write the monography that would be necessary to put
things right, I limit myself to a few remarks."[21]

Hence I discuss only the structuralist approach and limit
my argument to points in general. I examine successively the
choices made of data, topics, symbols, and argument (i.e., the
plot and the use of style as part of the argument). I then ex-
amine the whole study as a historian and conclue.

Choices

"We have used the greatest number of sources possible
while avoiding arbitrarily weeding or sorting out or

imposing a hierarchy on the data" (225).

In fact, this is not so for de Heusch has mainly used the collections of *ibitéekerezo* made by Pages, Coupez Kamanzi, and Smith, the latter two of which are text editions.[22] He has not used the approximately ten times larger collection I prepared, nor the accounts in the various works of Alexis Kagame, although some are cited in the bibliography. *Inganji Karinga*, the *textus princeps* for many of these is not listed, nor are a host of scattered sources.[23] While it is true that my collection has not been formally published, it is available in microfilm to any interested party and there is a typed copy on file at the Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale in Tervuren.[24] Indeed while discussing genres with Smith de Heusch does not cite yet another work by Coupez and Kamanzi that covers exactly the same ground, so even all printed works are not included.[25] If he had used my collection the different versions of the Ryangombe tales would have precluded his setting up Myth 46 (200-02) since there is a whole cycle of takes involved here.

Another choice is in fact to determine what a myth is. De Heusch calls a text a myth and gives it a number as well as a title. Myths are summarized in his presentation, so once again there is a choice as to what he retains and what he omits and we never learn what his guiding principles are when he lumps or splits. In practice he usually goes by the printed text, actually those of Coupez/Kamanzi (M 34, 35, 36, 35bis, 37, 38, 40, 36 bis, 36 ter, 44, 46, 47) or, when they lack the tale, Pages (M 38 bis, 39, 41, 42, 44, 45). Smith occurs twice (M 34, 46) and only once (M 46) does de Heusch use multiple variants. Coupez/Kamanzi, however, printed the performances of but a single informant, Gakaníisha so that in effect this man's approach to a large extent conditions the foundations for the analysis of de Heusch. This is not a mere quibble, for it is quite characteristic of de Heusch to give an "explication de texte" drawn from a single major text elsewhere as well. Thus H.A. Junod, *Moeurs et coutumes des Bantous* (Paris, 1936) is the text underlying chapters 10 and 11, Hilda Kuper's various writings about the *ncwala* for chapter 7, and texts from an anthology of Leo Frobenius for chapter 8.

A further choice was already made when de Heusch limited his material to *ibitéekerezo* and the royal genealogy, one apologue (75), and the texts of the royal ritual. He chose not to make use of poetry of any kind or of other literary materials such as proverbs to help him elucidate meanings. Yet the genre of dynastic poetry is directly relevant here, especially because it shows which metaphors and trains of metaphors cluster around various kings and kingship and how imagery is used to structure metaphor.

Yet another choice occurs when de Heusch arbitrarily excludes all historical tales after the reign of Mutára Séemugeshi, claiming that with this king a "historical" period actually begins. While he concedes elsewhere (354) that the distinction between "mythical" and "historical" tales is artificial, he still

maintains this division, invoking the authority of Dumézil, who
had distinguished what was "mythical" in Rome's history (the
first three kings) from that which was historical. Granted,
de Heusch continues, that in societies without writing this is
more difficult to do, nevertheless in Rwanda the mythical fresco
concludes with Ruganzu Ndóori (in fact he actually concludes with
the next reign). He also chooses to exclude several of the
kings, namely those who follow the first king who fell from heaven
and king Gihánga's immediate successors. We do not have much
more than their names (48-49) from the official genealogy.[26]
But these names have meanings and their succession makes clear
that some account about the origin of the world is involved.[27]
In translation we have in succession:

a] "The fallen ones" (*ibimanuka*) or "the path to..." (implied
    Creator)
    Thunder
    The One Who Came Down
    Man
    The Fallen One
    The One from Heaven
    The Hole (probably in the vault of heaven)
    Seed
    Creeping like Vine
    Void
    Prohibition
    Small Root

b] "Kings of the Belt"
    The Creator
    Kanyarwanda Gahima (eponym for Rwanda and ethnic name Hima)
    Yuhi Musindi (eponym of the *abasindi*, the royal descent
      line)
    Who Makes Sprout
    Master of Dew
    Big Boat (or "narrow place containing many people")
    Crowd
    Ndahiro the Flowering
    The Fishing
    Samembe
    Nsoro the Navel, whose secret name is "the Hunter."

       It is not difficult at all to handle a and b as corresponding
parts of a single set as for some names; in the form of a riddle
this works very well. Thus--Who Makes Sprout?--Seed. What does
Master of Dew do?--Creeping like Vine. One the face of it this
is splendid material for the structuralist. Yet de Heusch does
not use these data, no doubt mainly because no texts are associ-
ated with them. For he does use these names that are mentioned
in tales.
       A further choice that seems arbitrary is to deal with the
Rwandan data in splendid isolation. One would expect that he
would compare these tales with other materials from the interla-

custrine areas rather than to compare them first with Luba or
Swazi myths. But he doesn't, even when there are palpable indi-
cations. The finding of the dynastic drum in a milieu of vines
(61) is found in Burundi while the tales about pythons (62, 84)
recall the belief in Burundi of rebirth as a python.[28] Topics
such as the Hunter--or rather the Foreigner--founding a kingdom
are found elsewhere and again in Burundi (Ntare Rushatsi, "the
disheveled"). Even when he deals with Ryangombe, which is the
local metamorphosis of the Cwezi cult, he gives only one compara-
tive myth (214) from Buhaya, but nothing from the voluminous lit-
erature from Uganda or even others from Buhaya. Nor are any
myths from the western   ighbors of Rwanda introduced at all.

Less obvious choices, but choices nevertheless, occur when-
ever comparisons are made. Possibly this may be but the residue
of a much larger number of comparisons from which only those that
led to "results" were included. Still, when one steps outside
Rwanda (as on 220) to compare the succession of the Founder-Hun-
ter-King with the Warrior-Hero-King, it strains one's credulity
that only Rwanda and Luba would count. By extending "Hunter" to
"Foreigner" the succession of the Kuba kings Shyaam and Mboong
aLeeng would fit very well. In fact in any number of cases one
finds ideal figures of a Founder-Stranger and later of a Warrior-
Hero type.

Within the Rwandan corpus certain comparisons are not made
such as one between lizard and toad. The lizard (76) sens urine
in the eye of Lightning, allowing Death to escape. Toad quarrels
with Lightning over a pruning knife (52-53) but they resolve
their argument and in certain versions became blood-brothers.[29]
Smith pointed out that lightning is a fire in the middle of water
and moves fast while Toad to Rwandans also is dry, smoking his
pipe in the water, and cannot move, but is everywhere (in folk-
tales). Toad is the totem for the three clans into which later
kings of Rwanda married. An inverse relationship between Lizard
and Toad would show:

Lizard:	lives in sun (heat)	Toad:	lives in water
	expels water (urine)		expels "fire" (the pipe)
	opposed to Heaven		mediates between Heaven and Earth
	enemy of kings		blood-brother to kings

The mediating aspect is cited by de Heusch (108), who also
equates Lightning and Heaven, which the Rwandese do not do. He
recalls that Lightning is in fact Thunder, the origin of every-
thing but we do not know whether or not Rwandese make this link.
After all, by his standards this could have been included and
the blood-brotherhood could have been linked to the dynastic mar-
riages and to fertility while Lizard, the ally of Death, might
have been linked to some negative figure--enemies of the kings.
Ideally every point of comparison in his Rwandan corpus should
have been made between one myth and all others. De Heusch does
make a great number of comparisons, but achieves only a portion
of all possible comparisons. How then does he choose? I will

return to the question later.

There is also the choice made of oppositions to be stressed.
By their very nature symbols have more than one characteristic.
In any case we find parallelism exploited, rather than strictly
logical oppositions.[30] De Heusch tells us (43) how complicated
in fact simple-looking propositions actually are. There we are
given:

>   Kigwa: born without a celestial umbilical cord.
>   Bwimba: rejects his terrestrial umbilical cord symbolically.
>   Kigwa: his sister falls to earth with him and marries him.
>   Bwimba: his sister lets herself fall from up to down (*sic!*)
>   to join her brother in death.

We understand that Kigwa was born in heaven within a sacri-
ficial cow's heart fed with milk (32); no umbilical cord is men-
tioned at all.[31] We also understand that Bwimba's mother tried
to stop him from going to his death by putting her belt across
the entrance to the compound. He stepped over it, thereby break-
ing the prohibition to do so.[32] De Heusch, like Smith, supposes
that the belt stands for an umbilical cord.[33] So in the first
element of the comparison there is already one substitution
worked in and it is assumed that somehow the absence of an um-
bilical cord and the celestial/terrestrial opposition would be
grasped, however implicit and accidental they are in Kigwa's
tale, where milk and cows are the palpable symbols.

For the second element we understand that Bwimba's sister
Robwé threw herself from a partition unto a royal drum and that
she and her unborn child died (42). But the full text makes
clear that she did this in a rage, so that there would be no
heir to the throne of Gisaka.[34] In falling she broke into two
parts. Everyone in Rwanda knows that a dynastic drum stands for a
particular kingdom, but this was not a dynastic drum. If it had
been, Gisaka's drum would have conquered the sister of the king
of Rwanda just as her husband, the king of Gisaka, had killed
her brother, the king of Rwanda! De Heusch, however, equates
the drum, an ordinary royal drum, with the dynastic one. In do-
ing so, he changes the symbolism of this tale, which is that re-
venge for the brother's death was the death of the king of Gi-
saka's heir. His summary here reverses the meaning of the tale.
Even corrected, though, Robwé had to climb on something to fall,
to throw herself to death on a drum; falling necessarily implies
this. In Kigwa's case not much is made at all of falling.[35] The
text used by de Heusch has Kigwa (alias Sabizeze) tell his brother
Mutuutsi: "Let us go also with our sister, let us leave for
another land." The sister is merely needed for reproduction,
just as they propose to take a rooster and a hen, a ram and a
ewe, a bull and a cow, and a heron (of which only one is men-
tioned). So here the falling is unimportant for Kigwa's sister
and crucial to Bwimba's sister. It is only by ingenious contri-
vance that these sets of similarities and oppositions have been
concocted and they leave the obvious major intentions of either
myth aside. The choice is foisted onto the data.

This one example can suffice to show how every similar proposition advanced in this book requires careful scrutiny and that the relevant data are not always clear from the text. To round this off, Kigwa (46) brought with him the sacrificial animals used in divination (cattle, sheep, poultry), thus intro-ducing the divinatory function of kingship. Bwimba introduced the self-immolation function of kingship by his death. More-over, Kigwa is *born* from an act of sacrifice (the heart of the animal killed) whereas Bwimba *dies* in an act of sacrifice. This last proposition does correspond to the major intent of these myths. The first is elegant but does not fit, for Kigwa not only brought divinatory animals, he also brought the white heron *inyange*. Only by omitting this will the first proposition fit neatly. It is quite arbitrary then to stress this "divinatory" function.

Choices of oppositions can go to greater extremes of arti-ficial manipulation. On pp. 140-43 de Heusch splits Ruganzu Ndoori into Ruganzu A and Ruganzu B for purposes of comparison. On 85 the Luba figure of a python corresponds to a series of complementary representations of the actors Nkongoro (similarity of name), Nsibura, and a python. A tortuous explanation shows how. Obviously with such a method it becomes impossible to have accidental resemblances, not matter what is compared to what. An excess of flexibility kills credibility--to oppose two 'ibility' terms...

Myth in Rwanda: the Argument

Like all books, *Rois nés* revolves around a set of chosen topics and problems. Here they are the structural analysis of a corpus of Rwandan myth with the goal of clarifying their inner meaning. But first, what *is* a myth? Not all tales are myth. The cycle of Kagoro in Rwanda is excluded: it is a novel ("ro-man") while M 47 (207-09) is said to illustrate how mythical thought runs out of breath and turns into a novel (cf. 224). Had de Heusch consulted the versions of his corpus as narrated by Mugina, his remarks would be even more apposite. Mugina is a master teller and his tales range anywhere from two to four hours and sometimes more. What de Heusch calles "romanesque" are in part the effects of a good performer's craft. This is why precisely a comparison of many variants, rather than a single basic "text," would have given a better feeling in each case of what the myth actually 'is.' We also saw that not all historical tales are myth in practice; only those that deal with early kings are.

In his discussion of myth in chapter 6 de Heusch acknow-ledges with Smith that myth is not a genre in Rwandan litera-ture.[36] But he vehemently rejects the idea that structuralism applies to all genres and reveals a mode of thought valid in literature and religion. Rather, he claims, there is something that is not just a tale--an epic tale, a fantastic tale--but a myth. And he calls on Lévi-Strauss (240-41) to settle the issue.

The master assures us first that "almost all" societies distin-
guish between myth and tale--just the kind of flat decree that
rings false. Then we are told that myth has (a) more logical
coherence; (b), is more strictly subjected to religious ortho-
doxy; and (c), is more subject to collective pressure. What
criteria! The first is in the eye of the beholder: what 'works'
is myth. The second makes no sense in African contexts where
oral societies do not stress dogma nearly as much as participa-
tion in common ritual. And how, in any case, are we to measure
all three?

Myth is not a genre. To de Heusch mythical thought lodges
itself preferentially in historical tales, thus unveiling its
own finality: to establish the sacrality of "le pouvoir" (241).
Note that mythical thought is an actor and expresses a position
that is idealistic, quite in line with Lévi-Strauss himself.[37]
Myth proposes a transcendant truth and expresses it first of all
in the major genre where the real destiny of man is at stake:
historical tales (241). In short myths are narratives believed
to be true and purporting to be history. Their goal is to es-
tablish the sacred character of government. In Rwanda myth is
encrusted in dynastic history, be it in its popular or in its
esoteric face (242). And myth is reified as in: "the system-
atic labors of mythical thought" (155). De Heusch is unique
in linking myth to sacred kingship so that where there are no
kingdoms, there can be no myth (234-35). Too bad for the Fang,
Mongo, and Nyanga cited there. In keeping with this view, fan-
tastic legend derives from religious legend (232) and we saw
that "novels" are myths run out of steam.

Within this arena the goal is to show how myth validates
the various functions of Rwandan kingship. These are five: di-
vinatory, self-sacrificial, productive, military (including
magical), and legal (90, 97, 110). Pierre Smith has found two
functions, however: sacred and secular.[38] Such functions are
ideological in the formation of a theory of kingship. Both au-
thors derive this concept from Dumézil, whose crucial insight
(which de Heusch accepts) was to see that all Indo-Europeans
shared the notion of three functions (sovereignty, war, produc-
tion).[39] These are then proto-Indo European for him. De Heusch
split sovereignty into three, but so far unlike Dumézil, he does
not attempt to find them at proto-Bantu levels. He merely con-
cludes (243) that "Bantu myths...convey singularly constant sym-
bolic systems of a cosmological and ideological order." One day
perhaps that "ideology" may be presented to us as the five func-
tions.

It would be wrong to state that the clarification of these
functions is the only goal of the Rwandan study here. Chapter 4
shows how functions are associated with the four cyclical dynas-
tic names (156). Chapter 5 essentially contrasts the ideology
of sacred kingship with mystical counter-kingship (210-13, 220).
The functions are not expounded much in the conclusion to this
part of the book though in fact there is no proper conclusion,
unless it be that Bantu civilizations are unlike west African
ones in being less concerned with the creation of the universe

and more in the adventures of kings (242-43). Readers should
realize that such a situation is typical for structuralist
studies. They are rather like the tapestry of Penelope; they
are never done since one can always find new strands. And so is
the zig-zagging of the argument with its countless interruptions.

Given this view of myth, how does de Heusch choose particu-
lar symbols or topics rather than others? Obviously, anything
that is a symbolic expression of kingship, such as the dynastic
drum, is to be inlcuded. But it does not take long to discover
that the features dear to Lévi-Strauss in *Mythologiques* are also
present in both *The Drunken King* and here. The raw and the cooked,
the honey and tobacco, noise and silence--to mention only a few
colorful and obvious ones. Some, such as silence and noise are
justified in part by the rules about beating drums and the use
of rattles in liturgy. Honey and tobacco, however, are much
less evident and presumably would not have been noticed were it
not for Lévi-Strauss. Just as the "functions" derive from Du-
mezil, at least one, and probably more, topics also derive from
him--for instance, one-eyed and one-armed men (75-80). A direct
parallel is drawn here between Indo-European heroes, whose strength
is multiplied when they lose an eye, and an episode in the story
of Ruganzu Ndoori. He is of the stripe of Odin or Horatius
Cocles but we are not told how to account for this surprising
resemblance. Again without effort I can think of a Kuba parallel
where the warrior king Mboong aLeeng was wounded in the eye and
died as Ruganzu did, though we have no increased strength here.

A full listing of the topics pursued, let alone a full dis-
cussion, would take us too far. Suffice it to say that they are
neither all the possible ones in his *corpus*, nor are they all
tailored simply to carry an argument forward. They are an amal-
gam familiar from earlier work on sacred kingship; from earlier
structuralist writings, including De Heusch's own; from a few
Dumezil topics; and even a few from the dominant oppositions
made within tales of the present corpus. In this very real sense
this book continues the discourse of Lévi-Strauss and of *The
Drunken King*.

The discussion about Rwandan myth is hard to summarize. At
times there seems to be no overall argument at all. Chapters 2
and 3 comment on the corpus of myth, chapter 4 comments on the
royal ritual, chapter 5 deals with Ryangombe (not a king), and
chapter 6 is an interlude to argue with Smith. The main discus-
sion in chapter two turns on the matrimonial code of the dynasty
and its divinatory and sacrificial functions. The next chapter
develops all the functions and returns to matrimonial questions
but it is impossible to discern why this point or that one pre-
cedes or follows others; even de Heusch is aware of the confus-
ion he creates (86). All these symbolic themes chase each other
endlessly, crossing and criss-crossing like elements in a fugue--
but an open ended fugue, there are no organ points. In his frus-
tration the critic suspects that without clear conclusions there
can be no clear argument. What does this mythical corpus actually
reveal when decoded: the functions of kingship? Is all the rest
just "noise"? But even such functions do not lead us far beyond

the paradigmatic ideals of different kingships succeeding each
other in a set cycle. D'Hertefelt and Coupez' publication of the
royal ritual and their annotations already achieved that. Is
there more here? Perhaps, but I only find chips: provocative
explanations of details strewn about haphazardly. But alas, the
more provocative, the more contrived, the less convincing.

The invocation of the technique of transformation in all of
this becomes a true *deus ex machina,* even when it looks simple.
Thus (88) the Renge story of the construction of a tower to reach
heaven and its collapse--the tower of Babel motif--well-known
from central Africa is said to be the transformation of the image
of the rainbow.[40] No trace of rainbow in these tales...but wait!
In one version the fall of the Renge was due to a Mashirá, mas-
ter of the rain. "Hence the myth of the Renge is but a variant--
probably a very old one--of a cosmogonic myth widespread in Cen-
tral Africa" (88). We must turn to 74 *The Drunken King* to explain
how that transformation actually occurs. It rests on the parallel
between the Tower of Babel story and the fate of one or two signal
drummers remaining high in a tree to warn the Luba hero-king
Kalala Ilunga. In some variants they die. Kalala was later to
return and kill Nkongolo, the first Luban king, whose name means
"rainbow." Now we have a connection:

(a) immortality - cosmic tower (tower of Babel myth)
     dry season lasts - rainbow, tree/tower (Luba imperial myth)
(b) death introduced - tower destroyed (tower of Babel myth)
     dialectic of the seasons - rainbow beheaded (Luba imper-
        ial myth).

There are you--rainbow *is* tower. The sequence of assumed
equivalences in a number of myths become a tower of suppositions
themselves. Devil's advocates might turn to M 56 (329-30); no
tower but a tree in the original) where

(b) death introduced - tower grows (Shona myth)

which contradicts the above. But de Heusch stands ready (367):
"Once more Karanga and Luba myths stand in a relationship of
transformation" as an inversion parallel to other inversions such
as a transformation cited on 364-65. Every time the word "trans-
formation" crops up in this work (e.g. 70-71; 335) similar ice-
bergs of arguments are used. This, of course, makes any falsifi-
cation impossible. Two items are either parallel or they are
not. If parallel, they are either the "same" or "contradictory."
If the latter an inversion has occurred and they are still the
"same"; if not parallel, they are not compared and irrelevant.

Manner of presentation is always important, especially for
de Heusch, because the style of expression plays a heavy role in
attempting to convince the reader. Thus his range of expressions
to denote "of course," "obviously," or "no doubt" is far richer
than usual. Without being exhaustive, the following struck my
eye: the austere "assurément" (295, 422, 450) or "il est évident"
(328) or "évidemment" (330); the assertive "on ne peut douter"

(85, 327) or "il n'est pas douteux" (240); the inventive "tout
se passe comme si" (26, 85, 322, 350, 455, 459); the reasonable
"selon toute vraisemblance" (30); the persuasive "il est aisé
de comprendre" (33),"nous avons quelque raison de croire" (38),
"tout porte à croire" (313, 470), "il est clair que" (385), or
"on ne peut s'empêcher de" (305, 350). Other variants are "il
ne fait pas de doute" (263) and "on ne peut douter" (85, 301).
"L'on comprend aisément" (306) is positive and "on n'échappe pas
à la conclusion que" (335) fatalistic. The "admettons" (294)
is very nice since it claims that the Swazi and Rwanda share a
close historical kinship. Such formulas, taking the place of
real argument, merely avoid proof. They recall the jingle

> "O, let us never, never doubt
> what nobody is sure about."[41]

Apart from this technique, authorities are called on in de-
bate with other scholars or just so, as the references in the
index to Lévi-Strauss and Dumézil testify. At last, quite ele-
gant, ploy is to state that, in effect, "I am the first to agree
about x, but nevertheless, x is so." Who can be faulted on such
dialectics. Thus on 236: "It would be foolhardy to reconstruct
a history of oral literature on purely conjectural bases. Never-
theless..." or (219): "This structural kinship certainly poses
a historical problem. We do not pretend to solve it. Never-
theless, two observations..." We learn that ritual is not just
an illustration of myth but...(8, 155); that a simple opposition
of myth and tale is out of the question, but... (240); that all
historical tales are myth, but...(354).

The rules of method and validity

Validity must start with the quality of the sources and the
assumptions made about the pertinent historical framework. And
that is validity not only for a historian, but for all. De
Heusch does not worry about the canons of method. He takes his
texts, invents titles for them, summarizes them for citation,
and references them to publications without citing the name of
the performers who told them or telling us whether the texts were
put on tape or retold by the narrator (as in Pagès). He is not
concerned with the precise place of recording or the precise or-
igin of the performer and does not distinguish what comes from
northwest Rwanda near lake Kivu (much in Pagès), what stems from
south-central Rwanda (e.g. Gakanyiisha), or northeast central
Rwanda (much in Kagame), etc. No date or recording, no circum-
stances of performance worry him. He shows in the Rwanda section
a minimal concern for literary genre, but not elsewhere. He does
not think of questions specific to the dynastic genealogy as
opposed to historical legend or to the ritual esoteric text and
he does not care about dynastic poetry, despite its value in
showing how Rwandans have read symbols and symbolic chains into
their own historical tales. The notion of text is reduced to the

choice of a single variant, all variants being on a single plane,
rather than dealing with all variants since they are, after all,
part of the same myth. Indeed by axiom all tales are part of a
single myth. He could have worried about the question of whether
all variants had been recorded or not, but he does not. He
asserts that A is a "popular" version and B is an "esoteric"
version, but he never probes the meaning of these terms. We
know that certain tales such as those about Ruganzu are much
more widespread and frequent than others, even though these
others are still "popular," and that esoteric material only
rarely comes in the shape of *ibitéekerezo*, and more often as
short comments about popular tales. Although myths are to be
the symbolic structure of kingship, de Heusch does not bother
with their practical uses. Ndahiro *may* have succumbed to a Hutu
revolt, but this is only one version, from the early 1950s when
tensions ran very high. Is this detail in other variants? How
do myths legitimize concrete social situations? How do they
change as these change? Who quotes what in their defense? These
questions are never posed and hence never answered. Instead,
de Heusch stide-steps them and goes faster.

The historical background sketched or assumed by de Heusch

A search for the relevant information, even if limited to
publications, takes time and a thorough study takes many years.
De Heusch pays the penalty for his shortcuts and so does the
reader, who has to work very hard if he wants to use the
book. Even in the case of Rwanda, with which de Heusch is so
familiar, the reader must beware. He must always consult the
original texts, rather than de Heusch's summaries. He must read
all the published data on literary genres, he must track down
the original authors and, where useful, their biographies, which
sometimes reveal quite a bit of bias. In short the research is
left to the reader, before he can reach an opinion as to the
validity of any point made by the author, or, taking it back a
step, the validity of any of the data used in making points.

The reader would like to know to what extent the "meanings"
elicited are those of de Heusch alone and to what extent the
Rwandans had already found these. *Rois nés* almost never tells
him. Anyone familiar with Rwanda who has the d'Hertefelt and
Coupez volume at hand can do this to a certain extent. Beyond
that, the question can only be resolved by research. Moreover,
if all the *ibitéekerezo* are a seamless web of myth, all of the
tales concerning later kings must be drawn into the study. So
the Rwanda chapters of this volume are at best a workbook.

The historical background sketched or assumed by de Heusch
on the whole betrays a static view of the past. The introduc-
tory sketch of a traditional Rwanda (29-31) is an example. So-
cial categories and institutions alike are frozen in an indefi-
nite past, although we are told--but on what authority?--that
the Tutsi were there in the thirteenth century. Clientship con-
tracts have been unchanging for ages. Clans and lineages and
ethnic groups are perennial entities, never changing in composi-
tion, structure, and yes, functions, even if the Rwanda state
developed in the same milieu.[42] In fact, none of this can be
assumed.

For de Heusch political history and a history of ideas per-
form on an unchanging stage. There are no allowances for a his-
tory of institutions, a social history, a history of production,
demography, etc. We are told for example that among the Swazi
"clan organization better resisted the installation of a central
power backed by a strong military organization based on age
classes than in Rwanda" (244). That assumes that Swazi "clans"
(whatever they might be...) have always been equal to themselves,
like rocks overrun or not by the foaming sea of the state.
Neither the creation of the state nor of the age classes altered
them. One would rather assume the contrary. The most fatal
assumption is the unquestioning allegiance to the dichotomy
state/"lineage" society, so that myths worthy of the name occur
only in states. The dichotomy is false so that anything based
on it is false.

But the strangest of de Heusch's assumptions is in the mat-
ter of regicide and long or short life. As kingship is regula-
ted by a symbolic structure, regicide must exist (161-65), even
if it does not happen to be mentioned in the royal rituals. And
bearers of certain dynastic names *must* be short-lived. He ad-
mits coincidence (164) when the symbolic characteristics for
a given dynastic name (an eclipse, an early death) occurred in
1896 as they supposedly had before, in *ca.* 1792. "*But,*" he goes
on, and ends by arguing that *anyone* with that name must die
early under the sign of a solar eclipse, real or imaginary. He
admits historical accident (162) but in effect sees regicide
being used as a means to conform to symbolic expectations: short
reign/long reign. The point is capital. If kingship is subject
to the laws of "a structural history," it should be real, it
should have an impact on real events. And being king means to
play out a ritual career that unfolds like a minuet.

Specific historical sketches such as the one accounting
for the Bantu-speakers of southeastern Africa (306) suffer from
insufficient information. In this case a few pages in an already-
outdated anthropological study suffice. There is no reference
to recent archeological evidence or to historical studies in
the area. So here are "Hottentot" and "Bushmen" followed by
Sotho and Tswana, followed in turn by a double-pronged invasion
of Nguni and Karanga (Lovedu and Venda), who were both carriers
of sacred kingship. The ethnic groups are mentioned as if they
were fully constituted since the dawn of time. The succession
of migratory movements does not accord with archeological data
at all. Sacred kingship is apparently an unchanging jewel, a
package that belongs to the two last prongs but not to earlier
ones. No reader should accept this, but should turn to one or
more recent archeological accounts.[43] Sacred kingship most likely
developed at K2 and fully at Mapungubwe, perhaps since the on-
set of our millennium. Given known later interactions in the
Limpopo river basin, both north and south, from the seventeenth
century, one cannot assume, as de Heusch does, that Venda and
Karanga myths can be simply compared in order to unveil some-
thing like a "proto-myth," an assumption of chapter 8.

In the same example one can see the absence of chronologi-
cal rigor. We are told that the symbolism of kingship among
the Swazi, Venda, and Lovedu developed more or less at the
same time in southeastern Africa. With regard to the known
history of these peoples that "more or less at the same time"
starts *ca.* 1000 A.D. at the Limpopo and in eighteenth century
among the Swazi (244)!

Some might say: after all, de Heusch is not a historian
and some indulgence is in order here. But it is not. This
topic presupposes historical situations and hence that aspect
should have been researched thoroughly. As noted, the general
points made about validity of data apply to all.

The author's indifference to history harms him. He sees
its results as a set of absolute truths or at least he is indif-
ferent to their reliability. A good example is his kinglist of
Rwanda (48-49) that he copies from an article of Smith published
in 1970 that itself derived from earlier sources, dating from
1959 and 1962.[44] Since then Rennie and Van Noten have contri-
buted to this problem.[45] The latter's archeological results,
unlike the speculations of Rennie, lead to serious reservations
as to the existing chronologies, even for relatively recent
times.

More surprisingly, de Heusch acts as if the history and
myth that derived from the same body of tales have no connec-
tion whatever. This is unfortunate because he does not examine
the type of connection historians have proposed, namely, the
crucial role of metaphor-clichés.[46] That view holds that a cer-
tain metaphor always implies an identical reality. Lunda mar-
riage in history is the subjection of the group called the "wife"
by the group of the "husband." De Heusch merely accepts the
interpretations for some clichés in one place (95, 97), rejects
them elsewhere (164), and adds that such an interpretation is
insufficient because one must show how the metaphor chosen fits
into the whole symbolic structure in which it is embedded (97).
For him mythical thought works systematically (155) and is a
reified mastermind. This is evident when he argues that a cer-
tain king implemented cyclical kingship and its symbolic para-
digms after long "premeditated labor" (154). This is pure Hegel-
ianism.

In practice, little attention is given to such metaphors.
The most telling case is his failure to compare M 39 (66) and
M 36bis (91-93) as well as M 36ter (98-99). (The "bis" and "ter,"
by the way, to not refer to variants but to different tales al-
together). All these cases involve foreign mothers of kings.
Should we accept that a foreign mother means a foreign dynastic
takeover? If so, taking other signs of foreign involvement into
account, the history of early Rwanda is transformed as the meta-
phor plays a role in tales about Ruganzu Bwimba, Kigeri Mukobán-
ya, Mibáumbwe Mutabaazi, Yuhi Gahimá, and Ruganzu Ndóori. In
this scenario we see a tiny Rwandan chiefdom, first defeated by
Gisaka, then taken over by a Bugeseran line, then devasted by
a Nyoro invasion, but succeeding in a partial conquest of Nduga,
only to lose the old Rwanda. Then follows a takeover by a new

line in the old Rwanda, followed by strife between Nduga and
old Rwanda (151), then a takeover of Nduga by a prince from near
lake Kivu (66), ending with the conquest and unification by
Ndoori of both old Rwanda and Nduga, and no more foreign marriages
after that. Rwanda is but a principality tossed about between
stronger neighbors, without any dynastic continuity and certainly
without a unique and highly-developed politico-symbolic structure
different from others around it.

But de Heusch does not compare. He does not see this meta-
phor, even though he discusses the "matrimonial code" extensively
(43-45, 66-68, 91-93, 98-109, 132-34, 148-51). Had he connected
the kinglist and substantive history with his research, he could
not have missed such a prominent and often repeated metaphor.
It should be noted, though, that perhaps this metaphor need not
always imply a foreign takeover and Miller's implicit axiom that
such figures *always* carry the same meaning mechanically cannot be
upheld. Here de Heusch is right, just as he is when he asks for
eventual links between such metaphors and wider symbolic coher-
ence, if that is present.

So, paradoxically de Heusch is far too trusting about Rwan-
dan history. This flows from his lack of interest in history,
mesmerized as he is by the continuities in the working of the
mythical mind. On occasion this mania leads to extreme state-
ments as in: "The sacrifice of Bwimba forces history, which he
inaugurates, to acquire meaning in the matrix of the myth of
origin." (47). Even the context (46-50) does not throw any light
on the enigma. Nor can I.

"Explication de texte": an Artist Comments on this Oeuvre

The tales from Rwanda in the corpus created by de Heusch
have become his own text. He has chosen his text and interpreted
it by choosing his own images, oppositions, and transformations
by almost free association. His interpretations are not bound
by ethnography, nor does he care whether Rwandans see this point
or that one. No wonder that he complains about the airy scepti-
cism of an "almost Voltairian" Tutsi aristocracy (242). The
structuralist manner,and he is a paragon in its use, chooses so
much so arbitrarily that no results can ever be replicated or
falsified and thereby validated.

This is all too similar to the effusions of European art
critics reading their own notions into classical African art.
Such critics have appropriated for their own culture what comes
from a foreign environment and treat such works of art as if con-
temporary European artists had fashioned them. Structuralism is
in part literary critique. De Heusch tells us what he can read
in his text. He has appropriated the materials. This study,
supposedly about Rwanda, is a text created by de Heusch and in-
terpreted by him. He is the mastermind at work. His is the de-
lusion when he attributes the entrancing parallels he creates
to a Hegelian *Geist* out there, not recognizing his own image. But,
unlike with art critics, the work discussed here is a work of art

created by the critic. For, wherever there is form and metaphor
there is art.[47] The tales, even as recorded, were Rwandan art
but, being built up into a text, de Heusch has lifted them from
their ethnographic bedrock. He has chosen pieces from an art
work and used them for his own creation.

The reader very much needs to keep this in mind, lest he
remain as puzzled as the gentle critics of *The Drunken King* have
been. Attracted and entranced, they have ascribed their fascina-
tion to some scholarly virtue. They did not realize that these
are the virtues of art. Structural analysis sets up its own
prose poetry from the debris of tales that are true art in their
own context, then imposes a new form (its own rules) on the meta-
phors chosen, thereby creating a new art.

Any Rwandan, any student of Rwanda, reading this book soon
realizes there must be a veil here. The veil is in the pretense
that this is about Rwanda rather than using Rwanda simply as a
setting. The deception lies in presenting this contemporary work
of art as a study of symbolic ethnography. Not that it is useless
to ethnographers--by unraveling this tapestry and by fitting each
thread into its own cloth, perspective can be gained. Some of
the rapprochements suggested may well be fruitful for further
inquiry in the field itself. Some may uncover genuine Rwandan
metaphors and others may show effects of mnemonic structuring.
Most parallels, however, and all transformations will remain as
the vision of a gifted and inspired artist.

IV

Rites of Passage and History

Chapters 10 and 11 discuss rites of passage, mainly among the
Thonga, especially boys' initiation rituals, and move on to link
these institutions in southeastern Africa to their counterparts
of the southern savanna of central Africa, claiming that the lat-
ter were imported there by the Kololo.

Chapter 10, the most cohesive in the book, uses Junrod's
account to develop the oppositions in ritual of "hot and cool" or
"the raw and the cooked" and claims that by itself this constitutes
a cosmology.[48] Yet it is not free from the typical characteris-
tics of structuralism that have been described above. Chapter
11 shows them in a form even more exaggerated, as the Rwandan
material did, because the comparisons roam further afield. Jun-
od is de Heusch's "text," freely interpreted; the topics are fam-
iliar from Lévi-Strauss; the typical formulas of style abound;
the comparative material is not really thorough; and the cita-
tions are often defective--one (428) is quite corrupt.[49] The
textual quote there is part of an original Thonga text of which
the following lines are paraphrased earlier on (421-22), while
the last line of the Thonga text is given as an interpretation
of Junod that elephant represents the wealth that will accrue from
the sale of his tusks.[50]

But the historical hypothesis is novel and requires discus-

sion. First, it is said that boys' initiation rituals are an-
cient among the Sotho-Tswana and have been borrowed from them
by the Thonga and Venda. This is supported in a page (416-417),
citing Junod and Stayt but without listing their evidence, let
alone further data.[51] The assertion of both these authors that
the Lemba introduced the rites some time before the nineteenth
century is airily rejected. The Lemba are characterized as "a
mysterious Bantu people." Not so, and thanks to Beach there is
no more doubt that they were Muslim Shona who arrived as refugees
south of the Limpopo from the seventeenth century.[52] As Muslims
they certainly circumcised their boys, which neither Venda nor
Thonga did. They may well have introduced this practice, even
among the Sotho-Tswana. The latter, however, probably had de-
veloped initiation rituals on their own. The Shona have none,
so the Lemba probably did not have any.

The Thonga and Venda borrowed their ritual from Sotho groups
(probably Pedi first) as Junod claimed, showing how the eastern-
most Thonga of the Spelonken area were initiated in Pedi camps,
although his evidence was tenuous.[53] Other data from the Zout-
pansberg area, where Tsonga came as hunters for the Boers and
mixed with southern Venda in the 1860s, throws some light on the
question. Makhado, a Venda noble, overthrew a chieftaincy in
1864 with the backing of both Venda commoners and Tsonga, who
had been initiated with him at a time when it was against all
established usage for Venda noblemen to be initiated at all.[54]
Clearly, in the troubled years of the *Mfecane*, initiations lead-
ing to regimentation were highly important all over the area
and a spread to both Thonga and Venda is likely. A diligent his-
torian will certainly throw more light on this question; the point
is that de Heusch should have given us solid evidence. He did
not because the matter seemed unimportant.

Nor does he dwell on the fact that the extant descriptions
stem mainly from Thonga camps, with only the tiniest wisp about
Pedi practices. Core rituals and teaching among the Sotho and
Tswana still remain secret today and unknown to academics. So
the derived Thonga and Venda data have to stand in for the orig-
inals, and doing so requires a defense. One must show that the
Thonga rites are typical for the Sotho-Tswana in general. "Typ-
ical" involves further problems. Even in a single community there
will be variability in performance between one initiation and the
next since these were not unchanging liturgies. What was the vari-
ability in a given community? What was "typical" when, and for
whom? The reader will notice obvious differences in the reports
about different occasions. Furthermore, it is evident--and Junod
was aware of it--that even the Thonga data are quite fragmentary,
and Junod was much more tentative and reserved in his interpreta-
tions than de Heusch would be (428, 432). De Heusch does not in
fact succeed in giving a comprehensive view of the main meaning
of the rituals and tells us nothing about the teaching in such
schools. The Sotho-Tswana cosmology remains a secret so his
parallels with central African initiation rituals remain valueless--
he is forced to read central African meanings into fragmentary

southeast African data.

But these parallels are the spark (450) which pushes him to claim that circumcision rituals of the type called *mukanda* in central Africa were introduced there by the Kololo (464-73). Before *ca.* 1840 masked performances existed in central Angola and were associated with chieftaincy, not initiation (473-76). De Heusch feels that there should be a connection in any case because his map of initiation rituals in the Bantu world (map 5 and 465), after excluding initiation among the Lega, left only one block of collective initiation, the *mukanda* block. For him indeed proof of the recency of the diffusion was the use of the single term *mukanda* everywhere (472) to designate it.

The hypothesis fails. Central African *mukanda* rituals are not derived from southeast African models. A glance at the map by Baumann shows that there were more complexes of boys' initiation than de Heusch allows for.[55] Apart from the disputed cases of Mozambique and southern Tanzania (465: individual only? collective?) the Lega case is only a small part of a distribution that includes the whole of Maniema up to and beyond Kisangani, a complex as "Bantu" as any other. Other complexes among Bantu speakers occur in Gabon south of the Ogowe river and in south-central Cameroun among the Fang, Beti, and Bulu. So there are not only two complexes, but many.

Secondly, we have direct evidence contradicting de Heusch's supposed date of diffusion *ca.* 1840. It concerns the eastern Kongo *nzo longo*, which de Heusch believes to be derived from the Yaka *mukanda*, where Lunda influence is quite strong. Nevertheless *nzo longo* is described without being so named by Buenaventura de Corella in his short relation of pagan rites written before August of 1649.[56] He tells use about *nzo acuzea*, "the house of circumcision." He stresses the collective character of the initiation and the role of fire in the lodge and claims that initiation was necessary before marriage. And a dictionary from the period has *longo* meaning "marriage." Its geographical distribution then, was similar to what it was in about 1900, existing both in the area of the mission of Inkusu and among the neighboring Zombo.[57] Circumcision itself was widespread among the Kongo. The Carmelites, mentioned it in 1584 and Lopes speaks of it in a Loango context, and again when he described the Tio.[58] This does not imply either collective circumcision nor an initiation school. Indeed we are not quite certain from these sources that circumcision was universal in all parts of the Kongo, only that it was more widespread than just at Inkusu and among the Zombo.

The link between initiation rituals and masked performances is minimized by de Heusch. Conversely, De Sousberghe held it to be essential and claimed that Pende tradition holds that they learned the rituals from people on the right bank of the Upper Kwango, presumably in the seventeenth century.[59] Such claims warrant further examination, even if we do know that the Pende actually moved from that area. Still, the distribution of *mukanda* rituals would favor an origin in Angola and certainly must date well before 1649 if the eastern Kongo had borrowed the "movement" from their neighbors in the Kwango valley by then as is the

usual claim. De Heusch rightly excludes a Ruund origin (467) be-
cause the complex does not exist in the heart of the Luba empire
pace White and Papstein. But the latter does show that the cus-
tom spread from a north-central Angolan area where Cokwe, Lucha-
zi, Mbunda, and Ndembu lived in close proximity. He postulates
a century for this, from *ca*. 1525 to *ca*. 1625. Moreover it is
probably significant that *mukanda* is not specifically mentioned
in Luvale tradition until the early nineteenth century.[60] Note,
however, that the Kuba claim to have it by the 1650s and to have
borrowed it from the Kete, who had it from the Pende.

     To sum up, by the mid-seventeenth century *mukanda* existed
among the eastern Kongo and was claimed by the Kuba as well. It
did not yet exist on the Upper Zambezi but the Pende claimed
that it did exist *ca*. 1600 on the Upper Kwango. Certainly the
whole complex is fairly old, whatever a more in-depth study might
reveal about its probable point of origin.

     The argument that the maintenance of a single term to denote
initiation indicates a recent spread is not as safe as it may
look. *Mukanda* means skin.[61] The meaning "foreskin" derives
from this just as in the kingdom of Kongo "paper, book, letter"
also derived from this meaning by 1650 at the latest.[62] The
distribution shows that no such initiation complex existed in the
area before this ritual spread and that the spread itself may
have been fairly rapid. The case is similar to the use of the
term *makaya* "leaves" for "tobacco" as opposed to various terms
used for "manioc." Both these plants were introduced at the same
time, but "manioc" replaced existing yams and hence its terminol-
ogy varied more, while "tobacco" was brand new.

     What then of the similarities between *mukanda* initiations
and those of southeast Africa? Insofar as they are not contrived
by de Heusch, they all have to be explained as fundamental re-
semblance in rites of passage and as similarities due to indirect
contact such as has been going on for many centuries between the
different parts of Africa.

     A last remark is in order. De Heusch relies on Ellenberger
(1919!) for his specific evidence about the Kololo. This will
not do. Once again, he should have consulted the whole body of
literature about the question. It is, once again, an inadmissable
shortcut through sources and historiography.

                                  V

A Grand Hypothesis: Proto-Bantu Mythology

     "So many coincidences,--which correspond to the same
     structural schema--encourage us to advance the follow-
     ing hypothesis: Among the undivided proto-Bantu lin-
     guistic community, there must have existed a myth of
     origin from which the Kuba on the one hand and the Kar-
     anga-Venda on the other elaborated their original con-
     ception of kingship along different historical paths.
     The persistence of the sun king, who controls lightning

and rain with the agreement of a snake nature spirit,
assimilated to the supreme Being among the Lunda, could
not simply be the product of sheer convergence" (363;
cf. 10, 368-69).

The grand hypothesis results from a comparison between the
shortest myth reported here (M 51) and the Kuba myth (M 16)
which has been presented before. M 51 is Venda and states that
originally "men and all creation were held in the belly of a
python, who vomited them" (307). Chapter 8 opens with this and
the python stays with us for two chapters until the "provisional
conclusions" (368), where it is rephrased as follows: "We be-
gan by postulating not without hesitation, the existence of a
common Bantu myth, in which the world is created by expectora-
tion (vomiting or the production of words): the demiurge is an
aquatic python. He was perhaps androgynous." Mboom, who for
the Kuba is a spirit associated with the sky and anthropomorphic,
thereby becomes an aquatic androgynous python...
    Dumézil provided the model for this hypothesis. A classi-
cal scholar interested in comparative religion since the 1920s,
he first adumbrated his theory about the three functions of
Indo-European kingship in 1938, holding that Indo-European myth-
ology basically was maintained in all the cultures that developed
from Proto-Indo-European roots.[63] He spent his life developing
this thesis and reconstructing Proto-Indo-European mythology.
His industry has been remarkable and he has left no potential
source unexamined. His citations are careful. His method was
structuralist well before Lévi-Strauss but in the vein of Propp,
whose work he seems not to have know, although in time his pre-
sentation of diagrams may have borrowed from structuralism *à la*
Lévi-Strauss. His reception has been lukewarm on the whole; most
scholars feel that he has been too speculative to be convincing,
primarily because of the nature of his materials. How do you
actually "prove" that parallels in reflexive mythologies must
actually show proto-mythology. After all, narrative material or
ritual is not unconscious linguistic data.
    De Heusch has been the only structuralist of the Lévi-Straus-
sian persuasion who has been impressed by Dumézil and this ever
since his *Le Rwanda et la civilisation interlacustre. Etudes
d'anthropologie historique et structurale.*[64] In time the influ-
ence has grown. Early on in *Rois nês* he states (7) that, "While
remaining faithful to the program set by Lévi-Strauss for the
American domain, our own course meets more and more clearly that
of G. Dumézil, who commands attention by his magisterial study
of the archaic Indo-European societies." (See also 7, 77, 79,
155, 338, 355). On 355-56 he claims that Dumézil "has demonstra-
ted that the fundamental religious ideology of the Indo-European
societies has remained unchanged over two or three thousand years
despite the various transformations to which it has been subjec-
ted...after the bursting of the initial linguistic community."
And thus he attempted to emulate his endeavor, but for the Bantu-
speaking world.
    The full argument developed on 368-71 aims at equating the

Venda and Kuba myths by claiming that in both cases it may appear
that the celestial nature spirit (Raluvhumba and Mboom) are pre-
eminent though in fact they must be installed by the spirit of
the waters. A variant of the Mboom myth has Mboom being created
by the primordial marsh. To me, though, this may be a different
myth, the product of speculation about the origin or origins and
an attempt to fit several origin myths together. In the next
paragraph the solar character of Venda and Kuba kingship is
stressed because the creator figure is automatically equated
with a king. Kingship, however, is lunar among the Luba and
Karanga and solilunar among the Lunda. The geographic distribu-
tion convinces him that the solar form is older, even though in
a typical reservation (370) he begins by asserting that the
question of what is oldest makes no sense to the structuralist,
"while historians could object that the answer is beyond us,
unverifiable." Nevertheless, on we go. The archeological find-
ings at Sanga in Shaba are linked to the now-discredited second
dispersal of the Bantu according to Guthrie and de Heusch con-
cludes that the lunar and Venusian variant is a well-preserved
variant of the proto-Bantu cosmogonic myth that elsewhere has
been the ideological substratum of a solar kingship. Does this
mean that the lunar variant is younger? Equally old? Neither?
A neat ambiguity prevents us from concluding, even though the
Kuba/Venda form is labeled "ancient" on the next page. The sug-
gestion follows that the lunar variant is East African, without
citation of Schebesta's 1926 article that is listed in his bib-
liography.[65]

    What are the implications of such a hypothesis? It pre-
sumes a single Proto-Bantu linguistic community, something that
is no longer accepted without further specification by linguists.[66]
It claims not only that a myth of origin survived from three to
perhaps five thousand years, but that we can find out just what
this myth was. It does so on the basis of rejecting convergence
as an explanation and ignoring borrowing. But convergence is a
strong possibility. After all, people do speculate about the
origin of mankind and nature and probably have done so ever since
mankind has been self-conscious. A creator is either seen as
anthropomorphic or not, most often the former. The act of cre-
ation must be an emanation of such a person, as in the Book of
Genesis. Expectorating or self-creation is not uncommon. In
Ancient Egypt one myth has Ra (the sun!) create the world by
spitting, rather close to vomiting.[67] Baumann thought that this
myth was actually closest to the Kuba version and, *horresco ref-
erens*, I must agree that it is closer than the Venda myth.[68] As
for an aquatic chaotic milieu, sea, or marsh, should we not also
take into account the many myths of origin that mention them,
from Sumer, the Indian Ur-ocean, the southeast African primordial
marsh to the Inca version of lake Titicaca, and many Polynesian
accounts?[69] In central and eastern Polynesia we find an earth
mother and sky father as in Egypt and the Arawa Maori even have
the equivalent of the Egyptian Shu, separating sky and land.
Convergence must be accepted in such matters as the strongest
possibility. De Heusch did not consult Baumann's work on Africa

in this regard. As early as 1933 it was known that the Yoruba,
Bini, and Baule visualized a primordial sea, or that many Afri-
can thinkers in various places speculated about a wet chaos with
rocks soft enough to retain the first footprints.[70] These in-
clude Venda (M 51:307) and many southeast and central African
groups. Why, then, should this Kamba, Nyanja, Yao, Makwa, Bemba,
Lunda, Thonga, Tswana, and Sotho tale not be a better candidate
for an Ur-Bantu myth? Of course the Fulani of Futa Jalon, the
Dakka of northern Cameroun, the Baule, Mosi, Bini, Bassari, and
Wute share this perception and make this difficult to accept.
Now, in this case convergence may not be the answer to such
specific imagery but given the widespread exchange of folklore
motifs, borrowing is.

       Why should these creators be linked to kingship? Do peoples
without formal kingship really not have myths of origin? Why
should solar kings (if that concept be true) stressing heat and
dryness as beneficial not be found in wet environments such as
that of the Kuba (but *not* the Venda) and lunar kingship with its
stress on beneficial wetness in environments where droughts are
a problem? This is a plausible argument, and one often invoked
by de Heusch (see index *sub* "sécheresse"). It is easily faulted,
however, (e.g., the Venda environment is quite susceptible to
droughts) and means little. There is no ethnographic evidence
to equate symbolism of kingship with speculation about the crea-
tion of the world. The first is a metaphor, not "real," whereas
the second is a search for the "real." Only when a heavenly
symbol for kingship, such as the sun, becomes "real"--as happened
at times in ancient Egypt--can it be tied directly to a myth of
origin. Among the Kuba, kingship begins with Woot, who may be
the first man, but was not the Creator.

       Still arguing about the speculative activities of mankind,
it probably is rare in a given oral culture that all agreed on
one invariant myth of creation. The existence of different
speculations is more likely. Why then privilege one to the ex-
clusion of all others? Why trace that one back to an Ur-Bantu
environment as if it were the only myth, held by all at so early
a date? Is it not more common for myths of origin to be multiple,
competing, compromising, conflicting? The Kuba do not differ in
this from the Sumerians, or the ancient Egyptians, or the Greeks,
or the Chinese or Japanese. And if we are to be told that such
reasoning would never have allowed Dumézil to reach his conclu-
sions (338) we might retort that he is not *our* household deity
or that his quest dealt with the conception of functions or as-
pects of kingship and that we tend to believe him when he is
most detailed and aligns not just two but almost all branches of
the Indo-European family to convince us, rare though such passages
may be.

       But is there really a congruence between the Kuba and Venda
myths to begin with? Might it not just be a figment of the an-
alyst's mind? I believe that it is in fact a kind of mirage. For
this we must turn back to the reasoning in chapters 8 and 9. The
elliptic Venda myth is more complex than we stated. In the be-
ginning all was water with the python in it. He vomits nine crea-

tures that leave their tracks on the soft rock. When they died
these spirits became the heavenly bodies and the sun and the
moon were the first rulers. In a second world they produced
twins, who were of different gender and procreated among them-
selves and from whom mankind stems (307).[71]

Apart from the vomiting this looks rather different from
M 16, the Kuba myth presented in our first section. How then
do we go from one to the other? In chapter 8 de Heusch attempts
to establish a relationship between the Venda myth and myths
attributed to ancient Zimbabwe. Venda and Shona myths are seen
as transformations of each other. They tell of kings associated
with water and aquatic beings (python or spirit) as well as with
heaven and its denizens (Raluvhumba and Mwari). Kings mediate
between the two and thus regulate the seasons. In Zimbabwe they
were associated with the moon and their reigns were short (the
moon dies), with implied regicide. Among the Venda, on the
other hand, they were associated with the sun and their rules
were long, at the expense, however, of their own fertility. All
is not explained by this, though, for de Heusch states that "for
mysterious reasons, their successors [of the solar kings of Zim-
babwe] are lunar kings, holders of Venusian fire" (326). One
of the conclusions of this chapter reads: "Once more, one veri-
fies [sic] that historical legends have little to do with events,
even if the latter jostle their texture" (327). But the reader
should know that this applies to stories cited about *mhondoro*
spirits, tales about unspecified kings, princesses and queens,
and tales about the origin of later kingship. Even so, we may
not quite agree that events do not leave any trace except for
minor details. After all, kingships were at one time established.
So were the cults of spirits and the tales explain why such events
occurred. They are apologues.

The Shona myths de Heusch uses stem from an anthology of
Frobenius' writings as translated into English, a foundation so
thin that we must not be surprised when it cracks.[72] What de
Heusch takes to be the foundation myth of Great Zimbabwe relates
to the establishment of the chiefs of Maungwe and in Manyika
where Frobenius gathered his data. This whole chapter must be
read with Beach's work in hand.[73] Not only will the historical
background become clearer and confusions between totem names
and names of descent lines be clarified, but one finds that many
other versions of the myths cited were recorded during the colon-
ial period. Having the anthology at hand makes clear that once
more de Heusch has provided titles and in one case (366-67: Runde)
conflated two variants of one tale. For M 56 (329) the new title
"The Tower and the Morning Star" mentions a non-existent tower,
so that his comments about the tower of Babel (330, 367-68) are
not apposite. The summary there leaves out some motifs ("mats")
and almost an entire episode (the queen verifying her daughters'
virginity). Nor are the "ancestors" found in the summary.[74] In
fact it is odd that de Heusch dwells on the tower motif when both
the anthill as grave motif (see Nyony aNgaan in the Kuba myth)
and the cosmic tree are present here and widely dispersed in
Africa and beyond, at least for the tree. A reference to Zimbabwe

as "those mysterious ruins, without an equivalent in the Bantu
world" (312) is unforgivable. In short we find all the familiar
shortcomings of structuralist analysis here.

    De Heusch builds up a congruence between Venda and Kuba
myth in chapter 9. The Venda python is first compared to the
rainbow snake of the Yombe of Lower Zaire and (334) a detail in
Venda belief is actually explained by a detail in the Yombe tale.
The Venda believe that a rainbow fish accompanies the python,
while the Yombe rainbow once appeared as an eel or a catfish.
Because the Yombe rainbow snake is now a "fish" now a rainbow
snake, but also thought of on occasion as a python, the Venda
catfish *must* be a double of the python there. Once again, "we
cannot doubt that Mbumba and the Venda python are fundamentally
kin," (335) for the name for the rainbow snake among the Yombe
is Mbumba. This first comparison already convinces de Heusch
that southern and central African myths must have a common source
(335). Having then linked pythons among the Venda, Zulu, and
Swazi and recalled earlier discussions of rainbow snakes in Cen-
tral Africa (*The Drunken King*) and having gone through an aside
comparing the Luba Nkongolo (king and rainbow) with the Zulu
princess of rainbows (Inkosazana), the stage is set for a dis-
cussion of "the primordial snake in the Bantu world" (342).

    This begins by asserting that the Venda myth is an old
version of "*the* Bantu cosmogenesis" (343, emphasis added) be-
cause its subject matter also occurs in the Kuba myth. The link
is the equation of Mbumba, the Yombe name, with the Kuba name
Mboom (344), at which point we are told that "Vansina does not
hesitate to bring them together." The footnote supporting this--
slightly incorrect as happens in this book--refers to 324n16 of
The Children of Woot, which reads: "It is not impossible that
Mboom/Mbomba has a relation with the Kongo spirit Mbumba..."
And I thought I was being cautious! The truth is that we still
do not know whether there is such a relationship because the
distribution is interrupted, because the vowel openings do not
allow certainty, and because the Kongo tones are unknown, but
an equation is, as I said, not impossible. Even if the name
agreed, though, the major contents of the concepts need not. I
recently argued that Mboom/Mbomba may well have been a term for
a nature spirit/ogre, perhaps an ogre even earlier in the Mongo
world before he came to be cast as a creator God.[75] Names cannot
simply be equated with concepts." De Heusch's *schema:* "Mbumba=
Mboom; therefore: a rainbowsnake=a pale skinned spirit" will not
do. Mbumba, by the way, is a major spirit, whose rainbowsnake
and occasional python shapes are not his most ordinary appear-
ance. The epithet further given to Mboom in the passage where
the 'equivalence' with Yombe occurs, "primordial aquatic spirit,"
is simply wrong, even though Mboom did create by vomiting into
the primeval water.

    Once the link is forged, the formal Venda/Kuba comparison
ineluctably follows (346):

Kuba   Venda

   (i) Mboom   python
  (ii) vomits celestial bodies   vomits nine celestial bodies
 (iii) water, land, sky created   water, land, sky created
  (iv) dualism: Mboom = heaven   dualism: Raluvhumba = heaven
               Ngaan = water   python = water
       but: Ngaan = feared   but Raluvhumba = feared
        (fear of tornado)   (fear of drought)
       inversion due to difference of climate between the two
         areas

From there we jump to 363, as the intermediate pages are but an-
other excursus, and we find

   (v) crocodile linked to king   crocodile linked to king

From this the grand conclusion follows.
      The appearance of Ngaan in this comparison derives from Kuba
data used by de Heusch to conclude that "everything happens as
if the primordial snake, which is subsumed by the very name of
Mboom, has become double." The formula to convince plus the
Mboom/Mbumba hypothesis, and the claim (never explicit) that the
content of the concept was "a snake" as well as the indefensible
assertion that Mboom is now double are now all in a single sen-
tence (363). The Kuba data only make clear that Mboom rules in
heaven, Ngaan in the water, Woot upstream, and Mweel downstream,
and, in another myth, that Mboom created the nine or eighteen
"good things" and Ngaan the same number of "bad things." The
association of a crocodile with the Kuba king is correct, however,
and there is a link to the cult of Ngaan, although the crocodile
is one of the children of Mboom.
      Of the similarities (i) is rejected; (iv) does not appear
in the Venda or the Kuba myth at all, the Kuba connection being
quite indirect; (ii) and (v) are acceptable; while (iii) stands
in error. The Kuba sequence--water, sky, land--differs from that
of the Venda--water, soft land, sky.
      (ii) and (v) remain but (v) is not part of the myth of
creation at all. The similarity in (ii) is the product of funda-
mental convergence; any account of the universe has to include
the celestial bodies. For vomiting or expectoration, convergence
is also likely. As to (v), a form of fundamental convergence is
also involved. Wherever there are crocodiles, they have struck
the imagination. They are the predators of the rivers as leopards
and lions are on land and eagles in the sky. So crocodiles are
readily linked to kingship as symbols. Moreover, the correspon-
dence between Kuba, Venda, and Shona are not close.

   Kuba

     first king rises on a miraculous crocodile
     crocodile scales are part of the major royal charm *inam*

Venda

> candidate king must swallow a stone from a crocodile
> king protected by desiccated crocodile charm

Shona

> crocodile along with eagle on sculpture of Great Zimbabwe

If de Heusch wants to show unusual similarity, he must prove that it is exceptional and, moreover, that there is a link with the myth of origin. Short of this there is no point in spending time dealing with crocodiles in other cultures, African or elsewhere, or discussing their relationship, through ritual, art or otherwise, to kingship, nor even about their equivalence with dragons in Asia.[76] There are no grounds for the grand hypothesis. In its regard de Heusch addresses two, presumably rhetorical, questions to me (355). How does one explain that so many Bantu-speaking people of southern Africa claim, like the Kuba, that humanity emerged from a primordial marsh? The most likely explanation is convergence. And why would the Venda attribute the vomiting of the world to a python, so strangely similar to the Kuba Ngaan? The answer is that the similarity is spurious; De Heusch devised it.

VI

"The Archeology of Bantu Thought"

Part of chapter 10, devoted to the Kuba, is a polemic with me. First, de Heusch gathers data about the spirit Ngaan, the counterpart of Mboom. Then (347ff) he discusses the notion of twinship in Kuba myth and practice while stressing the obvious dualism that exists in Kuba practice and thought. He raises questions of importance to all historians. If, he says, my account of the selection processes in oral tradition is correct, we must re-examine the foundations themselves of "la pensée sauvage" (354), and re-evaluate the boundary between myth and history. He complains that my positivistic reductionism (a contretemps over the origin in a "marsh") actually makes every comparative inquiry impossible by imprisoning the historian of religion in a cell of particularistic history. And it is interdependent with the functionalist perspective (355). He would rather follow Dumézil and by doing so, he sees the possibility for "an archeology of Bantu thought" (356).

Taking the questions in reverse order of importance, we can start with the second, barring for now specific assertions about the Kuba this and the Kuba that. When Dumézil claimed that fundamental religious ideology remained unchanged, he stresses similarities at the expense of change, which was eliminated as mere "transformation." But, similarly, we can argue that nothing has changed very much in fundamental political organization since ancient times as kings are transformed into republican leaders,

emperors, absolute monarchs, constitutional monarchs, or figure-
head presidents. Have we not done away with most of the past
reality of political history? It is perfectly possible for Indo-
European notions to have survived the millennia and Dumezil de-
ploys a rich battery of specific arguments based on philology
and on the role actors play in myths (as Propp did before him)
and so tried to prove that notions, indeed structures, have sur-
vived. He often lacks conviction in the final analysis because
so much speculation remains to which any number of alternative
explanations would fit equally well. Because of his exiguous
data and long time-spans, he can achieve at best a low level of
probability. That is *not* to deny that there are long-term trends
in religion. Apart from Christianity or the other monotheistic
religions, one can invoke the run of ancient Egyptian religion
over better than three thousand years. But these are religions
using "books." Would that remain true if dogma mattered less
and participation in ritual more? Who knows?

Withal, even if it were possible, we cannot expect any myth
gathered in the last century or two to be "the" common Bantu
myth of origin. There must have been several even at the "be-
ginning." And then the spread of the Bantu speakers, their in-
corporation of unknown but large numbers of other peoples, and
their movements in so many natural and human environments make
it certain that we would not be able to recognize reflexes of
common Bantu "thought" if we met them head-on. Nor can we for-
get the immense amount of borrowing back and forth that has been
going on among Bantu speakers during their entire history. Here
the linguistic evidence of convergence is overwhelming. Unlike
language, myth is a discourse, much more complex and variable
than linguistic form and hence ultimately less traceable by com-
parative methods similar to those used in linguistics. That re-
mains as true for the Indo-European world as for any other.
Very careful work can yield bits of meaning, not much more than
what etymological study can uncover.

Dumézil remains particularistic by de Heusch's standard. He
is, after all,in the thrall of Indo-European cultures. Even
Lévi-Strauss was bound to the Americas (or, in an earlier study,
to southeast Asia) and so is de Heusch to Bantu-speaking Africa.
A no-holds-barred comparative method can only be used to demon-
strate some property of condition common to all humans but, as
these illustrious examples show, their limitations are certainly
not linked to functionalism.

I agree with de Heusch that we must re-examine the founda-
tions of thought—which is not just "pensée sauvage." Yes, oral
tradition selects and structures, but oral tradition is not a
reified Spirit. What selects are human minds and as they select
in the same fashion, selection has something to do with the func-
tioning human brain. So when we find evidence for structuralizing
we must look for the memorizing process of the mind. Memory is
a process that recreates. Because it is action it cannot be dis-
tinguished from creation itself—that is the operation of the
mind in general—as is increasingly recognized.[77]
There is a way to find "the laws of the mind." It consists

of comparing the properties of what appears to "distort" memories
in the generation of both symbols and thought. Hypotheses about
what happens can then be linked to what we know about the struc-
ture and the operation of the brain, from perception to reason-
ing by logic or analogy to self analysis. It is a program that
could succeed in another century, perhaps sooner. Levi-Strauss
did not show how savages think. He only showed what happens to
his own thought when he acts "as if" he were a Bororo, a Nambik-
wara, or a Kwakiutl.

All history as reconstruction of the past is of course myth-
ical.[78] Myths are held to be "true." De Heusch is to be faulted
for not using *all* the traditions about the past, however recent
that past, and considering them myth. But, conversely, histori-
cal accounts reflect the past. The well-known problem is to find
exactly *how* a set of data reflects the past as well as how it
expresses the present. The succeeding problem, then, is how to
reconstruct the past most objectively, and in doing so create a
new myth. Not because the account is not true, but because it
will be held to be true.

Positivistic reductionism? Two -isms at once! De Heusch's
stems from his ire at suggestions that Kuba cosmogony might re-
call the great marshes of the Ruki, where Kuba ancestors may once
have lived and to link their dualism of Mboom and Ngaan to a dual-
ism of fishermen and landlubbers, as is common in those area.
I had argued "may even go back" and "one can even argue", meaning
that it is something that can be thought of, just as Venda value
rain because of droughts and Kuba the dry weather because of tor-
nadoes.[79] I no longer believe that this is still possible for the
Mboom/Ngaan opposition but it is still not impossible with regard
to the Ruki.[80] But it can never be *proven* and I would certainly
not reduce a whole cosmogony to it. It is one thing to recognize
the possible influence of the environment, another to reduce myths
to that. Does de Heusch reduce his Common Bantu myth to a dualism
between dry and wet seasons?

Reductionism in these matters would be a sort of functional-
ism, for where that particular -ism errs is not in its assumptions
about functions but in the reduction of an explanation merely to
function and to assume that functions, which are no less the pro-
duct of the mind of the researcher, are in fact entities "out
there." Only concrete ethnographic evidence of items in actual
action in actual circumstances can prove functioning. However,
once a function, say of a Kuba myth, has been ascertained in that
way, it does not by itself *explain* a myth since alternative myths
might have done just as well. Function merely places a feature
in its social and natural setting.

A discussion of the interpretation de Heusch gives to specif-
ic Kuba data (344-62) could be very long. It seems to me that it
would have been natural for de Heusch to ask me for data or com-
ments as he was writing this, rather than to discuss other matters
when we met and artificially open a dialogue now. Meanwhile, I
have attempted to disentangle the questions raised by the several
creators in Kuba myth.[81] The oldest creator historically is Mboom,
who is also the oldest creator figure in the Mongo world. The cult

for Ngaan arose later and was linked to political ideology and ritual, but began to be downplayed as early as the seventeenth century, when the concept of Ncyeem was introduced. Later, royal ritual developed and focused more and more on the king as nature-spirit. The dualism of Mboom and Ngaan pictured as "very ancient" by de Heusch may have begun in the sixteenth century. The earliest glimpse we can trace back of the Mboom figure shows a half-person figure, rather like ogres are visualized in the Mongo world.

In a passage about the Siamese twins Kop aNgaan and Nyony aNgaan, de Heusch rhetorically exclaims: "It obviously is not in the equatorial forest that such a strange creature can be met." (335) Ironically, it is precisely there, among the Mbole, that we encounter these names. Nkofi is an alternate name for the creator and in the same area Nyonyi personifies death or sickness.[82] *Nyonyi aNkofi* is an expression meaning "death caused by God."[83] Moreover, among the same Mbole we find the closest-known equivalent to the Kuba myth. Moma (Mboom) has three children--the sun, the moon, and man. They are punished by death for disobedience. One resuscitates every morning, one dies for a mere three days, and one dies for good.[84] No wonder that Nyony a Ngaan in the myth recorded by Torday dealt with the origin of Death! Perhaps there are no twins in the mythology of the forest-dwellers but there is a mythology and we must first compare Kuba mythology with the Mongo area because the Kuba stem from there. Between Mbole and Kuba, however fragmentary our state of knowledge, we can at least say that the name for the creator and the conception of creation as a genealogy "with children of Mboom" are identical, which is far, far more than for the Kuba and Egyptian or Venda myths de Heusch cites.

Without going into detail, I point out that there are several errors for 347-53 and 358-62, of the kind already mentioned. The most common error is to extend analogies beyond what Kuba data indicate and to ignore the very real existence of boundaries in Kuba thought. For instance, the king is sometimes named Kop aNgaan when his role as Fate is underlined. He will then roar as a leopard. But this does not mean that the *muyesh*, the king's spokesman, can be identified with Nyony aNgaan (as on 348). The relationship between king and *muyesh* belongs to a different universe of discourse. If we fail to pay attention to boundaries, the king becomes the sun and the moon at the same time, and yet the sun as opposed to the moon, etc. Contradictions abound in Kuba imagery once the universe where they are applicable is ignored. The whole table about "twinship and kingship" (361) is marred by this, leaving aside the confusion between "twins" and dualism. In it artificial junctions are made, actually-occurring pairs are severed or forgotten, and whole levels are ignored. But it would not be useful to present another and different table for the proof of the pudding is that doing so would not alter de Heusch's conclusions about twinship on the next page at all. That both validates and indicts the whole method. This observation permits us to conclude that there never can be a successful structuralist approach to historical reconstruction.

NOTES

1. A review of Luc de Heusch, *Rois nés d'un coeur de vache* (Paris, 1982).
2. Atkinson, "The Traditions of the Early Kings of Buganda: Myth, History and Structural Analysis," *HA*, 2 (1975), 17-58. See also various contributions in J.C. Miller, ed., *The African Past Speaks* (Folkestone, 1980).
3. (Paris, 1972). A translation has just been published: *The Drunken King* (Bloomington, 1982). Citations are to this edition.
4. J.J. Hoover, "*Mythe et remous historique:* A Lunda Response to De Heusch," *HA*, 5 (1978), 71; T.Q. Reefe, "Traditions of Genesis and the Luba Diaspora," *HA*, 4 (1977), 184.
5. E.g., John Yoder, "The Historical Study of a Kanyok Genesis Myth: The Tale of Citend a Mfumu" in Miller, *The African Past Speaks*, 82; Robert Schecter, "A Propos the Drunken King: Cosmology and History" in ibid., 108-13; and Randall M. Packard, "The Study of Historical Process in African Traditions of Genesis: The Bashu Myth of Muhiyi" in ibid., 157.
6. R.G. Willis, *On Historical Reconstruction from Oral-Traditional Sources: A Structuralist Approach* (Evanston, 1976);
7. idem., *A State in the Making: Myth, History, and Social Transformation in Pre-Colonial Ufipa* (Bloomington, 1981), 37.
8. I am much loath to undertake this; we have been friends for thirty years. Yet exercises of the kind of *Rois nés* leads to great waste of intellectual effort. This constrains me to undertake this critique, not so much of *Rois nés* but of the structuralist 'method' in general.
9. René Cornet, *Art royal kuba* (Milan, 1982), 29, 308-309. Cf. Vansina, *Geschiedenis van de Kuba* (Tervuren, 1962), 118-19, 291.
10. Bertel Nathhorst, *Formal or Structural Studies of Traditional Tales; the Usefulness of Some Methodological Proposals Advanced by Vladimir Propp, Alan Dundes, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Edmund Leach* (Stockholm, 1969).
11. Esp. L.L. Thomas, J.Z. Kronenfeld, and D.B. Kronenfeld, "Asdiwal Crumbles: A Critique of Lévi-Straussian Myth Analysis," *American Ethnologist*, 13 (1976), 147-73.
12. Africanist anthropologists who aspire to be structuralists follow either Lévi-Strauss or Leach. T.O. Beidelman is not a strict structuralist because of his care to document his ethnographic data and his different goals. Structuralism must not be confused with all symbolic anthropology.
13. Alain Lieury, *La mémoire: résultats et théories* (Brussels, 1975), 48-52. Besides oppositions, similarities, superordination or subordination, and co-ocurrence are the mental mechanisms of association.
14. The classic case is that of the Dogon. Marcel Griaule, *Dieu d'eau* (Paris, 1948) was based entirely on the views of

Ogotemelli but we will never know how far these have since
become standard among the Dogon, perhaps driving out others;
nor exactly to what extent earlier studies by the Griaule
team were based on cosmological conceptions of other in-
formants.

15. R.W. Willis, "The Literalist Fallacy and the Problem of
Oral Tradition," *Social Analysis*, 2 (1980), 28-33. Willis
badly confuses symbolic analysis with structural analysis.

16. Emil Torday and M.A. Joyce, *Notes ethnographiques sur les
peuples communément appelés Bakuba, ainsi que sur les peu-
plades apparentées-Les Bushongo* (Brussels, 1910), 20. Van-
sina, *Geschiedenis*, 81. Fifteen other variants are known.

17. G. Hulstaert, "Le Dieu des Mongo," *Anthropos*, 219-20, 223-
24, 227. Note that the Yongo are a Mbole subgroup.

18. Vansina, *The Children of Woot* (Madison, 1978), 29-34.

19. Marcel D'Hertefelt and André Coupez, *La royauté sacrée de
l'ancien Rwanda* (Tervuren, 1964).

20. Discussed in his *Le Rwanda et la civilisation interacustre*
(Brussels, 1966), 158-363 *passim*.

21. Dumézil, *Les dieux souverains des indo-européens* (Paris,
1977), 252.

22. André Coupez and Th. Kamanzi, *Récits historiques rwanda
dans la version de C. Gakaniisha* (Tervuren, 1962); Albert
Pagès, *Un royaume hamite au centre de l'Afrique* (Brussels,
1933); Pierre Smith, *Le récit populaire au Rwanda* (Paris,
1975).

23. Alexis Kagame, *Inganji Karinga I* (2d. ed.: Kabgayi, 1959).

24. Vansina, *Ibitéekerezo* (Center for Research Libraries, Chi-
cago), six reels, Cat. No. MF-2739.

25. Coupez, Kamanzi, *Littérature de cour au Rwanda* (Oxford,
1970). The volume is cited in his bibliography, however.

26. Kagame, *La notion de génération appliquée à la généalogie
dynastique et à l'histoire du Rwanda des Xè-XIè siècles à
nos jours* (Brussels, 1959), 14-27, 80-86, discusses this
source, called *ubucurabwenge*, ("Smithing intelligence").
His version is apparently the only one recorded. He fully
published it in his *Inganji Karinga*, 93-99, but without
commentary as to the circumstances of dictation or his
actual source.

27. The names are best explained by P. Smith, "La forge de
l'intelligence," *Homme*, 10 (1970), 11-15.

28. Vansina, *La légende du passé: traditions orales du Burundi*
(Tervuren, 1972), 73. See also ibid., 55-68, 102 for a
very general motif called *fanany*. Cf. Hermann Baumann,
Die Völker Afrikas und ihre Traditionellen Kulturen (Wies-
baden, 1975), 1: 625-26.

29. Smith, *Récit populaire*, 52-53; A. Lestrade, *Notes d'ethno-
graphie du Rwanda* (Rervuren, 1972), 61-67.

30. A point made by Hoover, "Mythe," 67. Thus "sun" as opposed
to "rain" or "clouds" is as valid as sun opposed to "moon"
and hence neither is a strictly *logical* deduction from "sun,"
being neither sufficient nor necessary.

31. "Cow" in the sense of a head of cattle without gender indi-

cation. Cf. Coupez/Kamanzi, *Récits historiques*, 60.

32. Ibid., 98-99.
33. Smith, "Forge," 17.
34. Coupez/Kamanzi, *Récits historiques*, 102-03, lines 79ff.
35. Ibid., 62-63, lines 11ff.
36. Smith, *Récit populaire*, 114ff.
37. Nathhorst, *Formal or Structural Studies*, 58-59.
38. Smith, "Forge," 15.
39. Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna* (Paris, 1948), esp. 13-16. Cf. Dumézil, *Les dieux souverains*, 9-15.
40. Baumann, *Schöpfung und Urzeit des Menschen im Mythus der Afrikanischen Völker* (2d. ed.: Berlin, 1936) 2: 256-260. Although much more is known today, some west African cases were known even then.
41. Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints* (Chicago, 1981), 81.
42. David Newbury, "The Clans of Rwanda: An Historical Hypothesis," *Africa*, 50 (1980), 389-403, shows how damaging this can be and how unrealistic it is.
43. E.g., T.N. Huffman, "Archaeology and Ethnohistory of the African Iron Age," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 11 (1982), 133-50.
44. Smith, "Forge," 6, following Kagame, *Notion*, 87; Vansina, *L'évolution du royaume rwanda dès origines à 1900* (Brussels, 1962), 25.
45. J.K. Rennie, "The Pre-Colonial History of Rwanda: A Reinterpretation," *Transafrican Journal of History*, 2 (1972), 11-53; Francis Van Noten, *Les tombes du roi Cyirima Rujugira et de la reine mère Nyirayuhi Kanjogera* (Tervuren, 1972).
46. Miller, "Listening for the African Past" in Miller, *African Past Speaks*, 24-34.
47. Robert L. Layton, *The Anthropology of Art* (New York, 1981), 4-5.
48. Henri A. Junod, *Moeurs et coutumes des Bantous: la vie d'une tribu sud-africaine* (Paris, 1936).
49. Baumann, *Schöpfung und Urzeit*, 268-72 gives the Africa-wide distribution of the chameleon as bringer of death, which is the theme (408-09) of de Heusch, who limits himself to Rwanda, Thonga, Venda, and Zulu (228).
50. Junod, *Moeurs*, 85-86. The last line of the French translation was detached in error from the preceding text, explaining the confusion of de Heusch. But the original Thonga had no such error and even a cursory comparison of original and translation shows it.
51. Hugh A. Stayt, *The Bavenda* (London, 1968).
52. David N. Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe* (London, 1980), 107-08.
53. Junod, *Moeurs*, 74.
54. R. Wagner, "Zoutpansberg: The Dynamics of a Hunting Frontier, 1848-67" in Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore, eds., *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London, 1980), 335-36. The initiation rituals were then very new among the Venda.
55. Baumann, *Völker Afrikas*, 596.

56. Louis Jadin, *L'ancien Congo et l'Angola, 1639-1655* (2 vols.: Brussels, 1975), 2: 1151-65, esp. 1152.

57. Ibid., 1164. A second account by Bonaventura d'Alessano is found on 1172 (Original in A. Brásio, *Monumenta Missionaria Africana* (Lisbon, 1965), 10: 395-400.

58. In Brásio, *Monumenta*, 4: 399; Willy Bal, *Description du royaume de Congo et des Contrées environantes* (Louvain, 1965), 31, 34.

59. Luc de Sousberghe, *L'art Pende* (Brussels, 1959), 6-7.

60. Robert J. Papstein, "The Upper Zembezi: A History of the Luvale People, 1000-1900," (Ph.D., UCLA, 1978), 174-79.

61. Malcolm Guthrie, *Comparative Bantu* (Farnham, 1970), 3: 265, CS 1002 ("letter"), 1003 ("skin"), 1004 ("strap").

62. Joseph Van Wing, C. Penders, *Le plus ancien dictionnaire bantu* (Louvain, 1928), 206.

63. Dumézil, *Les dieux souverains*, 9-15, for his own estimate of his work.

64. (Brussels, 1966).

65. Paul Schebesta, "Die Zimbabwe-Kultur in Afrika," *Anthropos*, 21 (1926), 484-545. De Heusch rejects *Kulturkreislehre* in general, but not in this instance.

66. Patrick Bennett and Jan Sterk, "South Central Niger-Congo: A Reclassification," *Studies in African Linguistics*, 8 (1977), 241-73 and Kay Williamson, "The Benue-Congo Languages and Ijo," *Current Trends in Linguistics*, 7 (1971), 245-306.

67. Adolf Erman, *Die Religion der Aegypter* (Berlin, 1934), 62, 90 (Atum spit the Gods Shu and Tefnet. "To spit" is linked to the folk etymology for Shu). See also Edmond Drioton and Jacques Vandier, *L'Egypte* (Paris, 1952), 81, and Vandier, *La religion égyptienne* (Paris, 1949), 33. All authors make clear that this is but one cosmology, backed by the priests of Heliopolis. It was not the oldest one reported.

68. Baumann, *Schöpfung und Urzeit*, 190.

69. Roslyn Poignant, *Oceanic Mythology* (London, 1967), 29.

70. Baumann, *Schöpfung und Urzeit*, 186, 189.

71. The importance of twins in Africa need not be stressed. Twins as a means to propagate the human race occur elsewhere in Africa, as among the Fang or the Ziba.

72. Eike Haberland, ed., *Leo Frobenius, 1873-1973* (Wiesbaden, 1973), 192-221. The originals are from Frobenius *Erythräa: Länder und Zeiten des heiligen Königsmordes* (Berlin, 1931), 114-244. The data come from his 1928/1930 trip. Anyone using Frobenius is well-advised to check his published texts against his own notebooks, preserved at the Institute in Frankfort that bears his name.

73. Beach, *Shona and Zimbabwe*.

74. Haberland, *Leo Frobenius*, 209-11.

75. Vansina, "The History of God Among the Kuba," *Africa* [Rome], 38 (1983).

76. Among the iconographic ancestors of St. George and the Dragon must be reckoned a fourth-century relief showing Horus killing a crocodile, perhaps the former god Sebk. See Pierre du Bourguet, *L'art copte* (Paris, 1968), 78. And