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BELIEF AND THE LOGIC OF LISU SPIRITS*

De Waal Malefijt writes that, "all religious systems have in common the embodiment of sacred beliefs" (1968: 146). "Culturally held cognitions about the nature of the supernatural are basic to any religious system . . .", she continues (146), perhaps equating belief with culturally held cognitions. "Although the belief in impersonal supernatural powers is not universal, the belief in personified supernatural powers is" (149).

In a section of his book entitled 'Belief', Wallace (1966: 71) writes that beliefs make ritual meaningful. A belief system includes a cosmology and values. A cosmology includes a pantheon, myth, and substantive beliefs. A pantheon is, "a list of the supernatural beings whom the members of the community believe to exist". He presents a list of supernatural beings in which the people of his natal community believe. He notes that only children believe in some of these: the Easter Rabbit, and Santa Claus (72). While not everyone believed in all of the beings on

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the list, there is a minimal list of supernatural beings in which people believed.

Firth (1967: 12) is more careful in his statement that, "Tikopia traditional belief postulated an elaborate spirit world peopled by ghosts. ... spirits of ancestors and a great range of other types of spirits ...". Firth apparently searched for evidence of non-belief when he revisited Tikopia after the people had become Christians. "Belief in the soul as an essential part of the personality ... was still general, and firm. I could discover no evidence of agnosticism or scepticism ..." (368). He interviewed mediums who no longer practised and found that at least one of the few who were still living, "still clearly believed in the existence of spirits ..." (358).

Geertz goes farther and asks, "... just what does 'belief' mean in a religious context?" (1966: 24). The religious perspective differs from the common-sensical because it, "moves beyond the realities of everyday life ..."; from the scientific because it questions everyday life in terms of non-hypothetical truths rather than institutionalized scepticism. Of religion, "rather than detachment, its watchword is commitment; rather than analysis, encounter" (27-28). While art does not engage the question of factuality and manufactures "an air of semblance and illusion", religion, "deepens the concern with fact and seeks to create an aura of utter actuality" (28). Yet Geertz recognizes the problem of the sceptic indicated by Firth. Some people and groups, "seem to wear their religion lightly so far as the secular world goes, while others seem to apply their faith to each occasion ..." (41).

Spiro not only recognized the problem of scepticism but confronted it squarely in his Burmese study by asking people whether they believed in spirits. He found, to his surprise, that almost half the males but none of the women stated some sort of disbelief. Further enquiry led Spiro to conclude that statements of disbelief entailed four kinds of assertions: that spirits do not exist or have no power; that spirits cannot do good, but can do evil; that spirits cannot harm those with good karma or who are good Buddhists; and "... verbal denial of, but actual belief in, their existence and their power" (Spiro 1967: 56). Only two men actually and firmly denied the existence of spirits. Spiro says:

> Despite the varying degrees of disbelief ... all but one of the skeptics ... participate ... in the cultus of ... importants nats [spirits]. This seeming inconsistency is explained on a number of grounds. Some say that since it is customary to propitiate the nats, to refuse to participate would result in public criticism. Others

> say they participate in order to please their 'superstitious' wives. Still others say that if someone in the household were to fall ill, they would be held responsible for having failed to propitiate the nats. These explanations are, I think, genuine for many of the professed skeptics. There are others, however — certainly as many as half — for whom these explanations are patent rationalizations. While claiming to be skeptics, they are obviously believers (1967: 58).

The evidence for the last statement is that in spite of statements to the contrary, these people behave as though they believed in the spirits. The fact that many people denied belief in their own cultural beliefs obviously bothered Spiro, for he attempts to explain away their disbelief. He goes so far as to say that, "... the Burmese conceptions of the nats ... are marked by inconsistency, contradiction, and by what might be called cognitive looseness. It is not at all unusual, for example, for a man to deny — and adduce evidence for his denial — that the nats exist ... and then to recount some incident which presupposes both their existence and their power" (1967: 41). Spiro's strategy is to treat these beliefs as collective phenomena, aspects of Burmese culture, and then ask why Burmese accept them (64). This sweeps away the problem of scepticism. Given the cogency and elegance of Spiro's searching explanations, one wonders why some, if even only two, do not believe in the culturally postulated spirits.

Finally, the question of scepticism seems to drop out when Spiro says, "cultural beliefs persist ... are transmitted from one generation to the next, because social actors believe in them", and, "... the belief in nats, witches, ghosts, and demons is found on all levels of Burmese society, resisting the normally corrosive influences of science, education, Westernization, and so on" (71-72).

Firth raises the possibility of scepticism; Spiro confronts the fact of scepticism; Geertz raises the question of the meaning of belief; and Needham agonizes over it. Needham had used "belief" to describe observations about Penan, "... that they believed in a supreme god, that they believed that their god was distinguished by certain features ..." (1972: 1). He found that, "that men can be said to believe, without qualification and irrespective of their cultural formation, is an implicit premise in anthropological writings of the most varied kinds ..." (3). He concludes his enquiry into the nature of belief by arguing that it, "... is not a discriminable experience, it does not constitute a natural resemblance among men, and it does not belong to 'the common beha-

viour of mankind' " (188). It follows that when belief is attributed to people, "... it must be entirely unclear what kind of idea or state of mind is being ascribed to them" (188).

I am not persuaded that the ultimate conclusion of the essay, that "human experience ... is incomprehensible" (246), is to be taken in any straightforward way, for it would leave the rest of the essay without motivation. Nor is the infinite regress of mental constructs unique to enquiry about the nature of humanity (222), for it also characterizes the natural sciences (Kuhn 1962). I do not wish to pursue this level of epistemological enquiry further, but to address one aspect of the question of the nature of belief which is suggested by the writings I have cited.

If we can speak of belief, there are two classes of evidence for it: action and speech. We usually assume that people do things for reasons and that we can infer reasons from actions. Hence we might say people perform a ceremony because they believe it will be efficacious for some end. We can test these hypotheses by asking the people what they are doing and why they are doing it. These two classes of evidence can be used to construct statements such as Firth's (1967) on the nature of the ex-medium's belief in spirits, or Spiro's (1967) on Burmese belief in spite of contrary statements.

I agree with Needham that it does not make much sense to try to separate collective representations from individual beliefs for, "there is no point ... in speaking of collective representations, or dogma which are true of a culture as a whole, as 'beliefs' if it is not implied that the individual human beings who compose the social aggregate in question actually and severally believe them. Something that is believed by nobody is not a belief; and if we are to accept that collective representations are believed, we have to be provided with evidence that individuals believe" (6).

The question of belief is important because analysts often assume a straightforward relationship between social system and religion. A denial of the religious beliefs must be evidence for a denial of the society, an incomprehensible dilemma. Leach (1954: 182) says it is, "... clear that the various nats of Kachin religious ideology are, in the last analysis, nothing more than ways of describing the formal relationships that exist between real persons and real groups in ordinary Kachin society". Perhaps this is a rephrasing of Durkheim's original, "... the idea of society is the soul of religion" (Durkheim 1915: 419). If religion provides an analysis of the world which makes it comprehensible and liveable (Geertz 1966; Spiro 1967), or codifies social relations, then it follows

that people must believe its postulates or enter the morass of insanity or social chaos. Hence the notion of belief in the supernatural or superhuman beings postulated by religions follows from the very concepts of the functions of religion. Needham's enquiry into the nature of belief, the very raising of the question, threatens these formulations, for if people do not believe, what of the interpretations of religion which rest on the assumption?

Yet, what happens if our two sources of evidence for statements of people's belief contradict one another? Suppose actions indicate belief, but statements indicate lack of belief, as in Spiro's Burmese instance (1967). Here we have more than a problem of an unconfirmed hypothesis, but what appears to be a self-contradiction. How is it possible both to believe and not to believe? Clearly it is not. Rather than striving to make statements of disbelief groundless or appealing to a notion like cognitive looseness, we might confront the issue and suppose there is something wrong in the phrasing of the question.

As Spiro (1967) points out, there can be multiple motives for similar actions. One might make an offering as an attempt to cure a disease, as a political maneuver, to avoid criticism, to appear "traditional", etc. Aside from the logical demands of a particular theory of religion, there is no need to attribute belief to account for actions. But there is a more important problem when statements contradict one another as in Spiro's example. Here we have both an assertion and its negation, a contradiction. We can assume the person is lying on one or both occasions, is not aware of contradictions, has a high tolerance for contradiction, or we can try to develop an account of the contradiction. The person who utters the contradiction may simply be presenting evidence to support both the affirmation and the denial of an assertion without having any firm conviction on the matter. I think the interesting question is: How is the assertion possible? Where does is come from?

In the northern Thai highlands Lisu frequently interact with spirits. Each village maintains a fenced compound with an altar for its guardian spirit. Many villages maintain compounds and altars for hill spirits. Each household keeps an altar for ancestor and lineage spirits. Villagers address curing ceremonies to various spirits almost daily. Shamans frequently call their spirits down to possess them so fellow villagers can ask about the causes of misfortunes and what to do about them.

A shaman recounted details of his visits with spirits, told of their dress, appearance, and conversation. Everyone had seen shamans possessed by spirits and heard the spirits speak through shamans, had heard

dogs barking at ghosts, horses frightened by ghosts, and listened to shamans' accounts of encounters with spirits (Durrenberger 1975a, 1975b, 1976a).

Some individuals stated they disbelieved in spirits while others were convinced of their existence. When I asked individuals to describe spirits to whom they were making offerings often enough they would say that they had never seen a spirit and could not say whether there really was such a spirit or any spirits at all. This was not a reaction to my questions. I questioned with the assumption that spirits existed. People challenged my facile assumption. Once this scepticism became apparent, I asked why they continued to make sacrifices, ceremonies, and maintain altars if they thought spirits did not or might not exist. People answered that such was their custom, that there is nothing else to do on occasions that call for ceremonies and offerings, and that even though the fact that one has never seen something gives him the right to be sceptical, it does not give him the right to deny its possibility.

Lisu sceptics can ask the question whether spirits exist. This poses the question I wish to address: How is it possible that one can ask whether there are spirits; or, Why is it credible to suggest that there might be spirits? There is a Lisu analysis of the universe, theory of reality, from which one can derive the assertion, "spirits exist". One can propose tests of the hypothesis: Have you ever seen a spirit? What did it look like? etc. Our question, then, is: What are the premises of this theory from which such an hypothesis can be derived?

In the Lisu scheme of things a person acquires power or honor (potency, see Kirsch 1973) to the extent that he distributes wealth to his fellows. The recipients bestow thanks upon him, this thanks confers blessing upon the donor, and the realization of blessing is wealth. Blessing is potential for wealth.

Having wealth is equivalent to a claim that one can honor obligations (sons' brideprice, fines for household members, hospitality, feasts). It is shameful not to. Since one uses his wealth in this way rather than hoarding it, there is not much left for successors to inherit. Wealth must therefore be the product of ones' own productive efforts, not inheritance. Power derives from wealth, wealth from productive capacity.

Blessing is the potential for wealth, wealth is the realization of blessing. We see this equation clearly when someone is sick and cannot work in his fields. In the prayers people repeat that, "This person is sick, he has no blessing". Since he cannot work, he has no blessing. This indicates the equivalence of productive capacities and blessing.

Soul loss is a typical diagnosis of symptoms of general malaise, anorexia, and insomnia. The therapy is one of several soul-calling ceremonies. Inability to work due to ill-defend symptoms is attributed to soul loss. The soul, then, is equivalent to productive capacities of an individual. When a person's soul leaves his body, he is left without blessing just as when he is sick with well defined symptoms (e.g. a pain in the stomach, diarrhea, other maladies that can easily be described). I suggest that a person's soul is equivalent to his productive capacities (see Durrenberger 1975c).

It ought to follow that non-productive people have no souls. When children die, they are buried without ceremony. When adults die, there are ceremonies to separate the soul of the dead from the souls of the living and send the dead person's soul to the land of the dead. Although a child has a soul, without which it could not live, it is an undeveloped soul, and hence does not require the ceremonial treatment of a developed one. Unproductive children then have something less than real souls. This evidence supports the relation of equivalence between soul and productive capacities.

A person's soul is invisible, just as spirits are invisible. It is an occult (unseen) object. I have argued that power is the result of distribution of wealth, that wealth is the realization of individual productive capacities. It should follow that any individual with power would be one with productive capacities and wealth.

Lisu say spirits have power in just the same sense people do. In the prayers to ancestral spirits they often include phrases like, "Before you died you had power, now that you are a spirit, do not lose it". The implication is that if the spirit cannot do that which is expected of it, it will lose power just as a person would. Other spirits are addressed in similar ways: "You have power, who can see everywhere, do anything . . .". If the relations I have described are correct, it should follow that spirits are somehow connected to something with productive power just as souls are connected with people.

Lisu divide the animals of the world into three large categories: water animals, jungle animals, and domestic animals. Underlying this tripartite categorization is a distinction between ecological domains composed of water and those composed of land. A distinction is also made between domesticated and non-domesticated land areas. If an animal or plant is known in both wild and domesticated areas, then it can be called wild or domestic. A banana tree in the forest is wild; the same tree in a village is domestic. If the plant or animal is only known in either its

wild or its domesticated state, then the distinction is not relevant. The distinction has to do just with whether the location is domesticated or not.

Within the category of domesticated lands there are further categories distinguished by whether the land is settled or not. There are guardian spirits for settled lands, and none for unsettled lands. The settled areas are further subdivided into those inhabited by living persons and those occupied by dead persons. There is a guardian spirit for each grave and one for each village. These spirits have precisely the same functions: they take care of the people resident in their domains.

Domesticated areas which are not settled are paths and fields. That these areas are cleared of forest growth makes them domesticated; that they have no guardian spirits indicates they are not thought to be settled. Fields are cleared of growth only after the hill spirit is informed of this action and his approval sought. The ceremony which asks for approval indicates a transformation of the place from forest to something else. The elaborate pains taken to clear all growth from around the site of a newly constructed rest house or path-side bench used for soul-calling ceremonies indicates that paths are considered as cleared and domesticated areas. In the words of the Lisu: "Nobody would like to sit in a place that was jungle". The distinction between fields and paths is that fields are planted whereas paths are not.

The following contrasts underlie a set of categories of ecological areas:

land vs. water
domestic vs. nondomestic
settled vs. unsettled
dead vs. live
planted vs. unplanted.

The following tree diagram indicates the relationship among these criterial features (see Figure 1).

Each path through the tree diagram defines a set of analytic semantic features which defines an ecological category. Each of these categories of the surface of the earth is distinguished according to how it is used, and each is used. People fish in the streams, hunt in the forest, grow crops in the fields, transport crops and goods along the paths. Villages and houses are living places of productive people; graves are the places of the dead. People say a dead person's soul lingers at the grave site at least until it is ceremonially separated from the living. Hence, graves are also a residence for souls at least for a short while and have guardian

spirits, which before the death of the person are said to be the house compound spirit.

Lisu have a spirit for each category of the used or productive ecology. A synthetic feature is a characteristic of the category not central for its definition relative to others but attributed to the category on the basis of knowledge about the world. "Productivity" is a synthetic feature attributed to each of these categories.

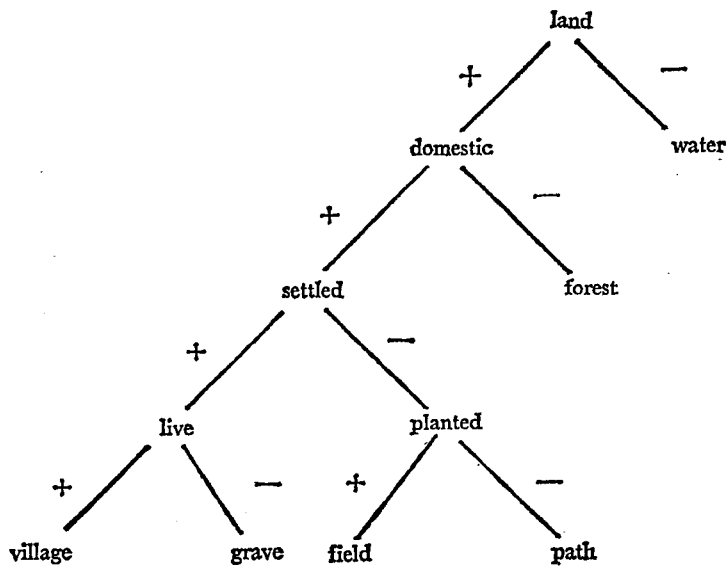

Figure 1.

There is an overlord of the land who is addressed as the Lord and Lady Owner of the Land, Lord and Lady Drinker of the Land, The Greatest Spirit, or The One who Keeps the Jungle Animals and Plants. This spirit is referred to as The Big Land Owner. Offerings to this spirit include packets of tobacco and tea, paper flags and umbrellas, all of which in the past signified royalty or tribute. Animals offered to this spirit are not sacrificed, but turned loose, which is consistent with the idea of a Buddhist king who does not take life.

The water spirit, Lord and Lady of the Stream, is also given flags, an umbrella, and packets of tea and tobacco, but offerings of chickens are killed. There is a set of undefined and malicious jungle spirits who sometimes possess people. They are given no offerings, but are exorcised by shamans. There is a grave guardian spirit who takes care of the occupants of graves; a field spirit; and a path spirit. People say the grave

guardian spirit is the house compound spirit before the death of a person and becomes the grave guardian spirit when the person is buried.

In addition to these spirits, there is a set of spirits of settled, domesticated lands. There are three levels of hill spirits, ranked from major to minor. Each hill has its own hill spirit, and each area has an associated hill spirit. There are three or four great hill spirits which rule larger areas and occupy the highest hills in upland Burma and Thailand. These spirits are given paper flags and umbrellas, packets of tea and tobacco, and they may be given sacrifices. The greatest of them was not given sacrifices in the village I studied. These spirits are invoked in soul-calling ceremonies to search their domains for the lost soul and to help return it. They, like the other spirits, may be offended and cause people to become sick or cause other misfortunes. These spirits are known as The Big One, a title used for provincial governors in the Thai administrative system. They are addressed as The One Who Rules This Territory, Lord and Lady Owner of the Land, or Lord and Lady Drinker of the Land. Each of these spirits rules a more inclusive domain.

There is a village guardian spirit which is given paper umbrellas, flags, and offerings. He may cause people misfortunes. This spirit is addressed as The One Who Takes Care of The People. He is referred to as Old Grandfather. The village guardian spirit has an assistant spirit who is addressed as Lord and Lady Drinker of the Land.

Each household has a set of house spirits which includes the ancestors of the household head, and if he has them, lineage spirits. These house spirits are addressed collectively as You Who Rule the Altar.

It is evident that there is some further set of categories of land involved. There are distinct realms: the house, the village, the territory, the realm, the whole of the domesticated and undomesticated lands. The following diagram shows these relationships (see Figure 2).

If we take both classificatory systems into account — categories of ecological areas and divisions of land areas, we can derive the following list of land categories and related spirits:

all land	overlord spirit
water	water spirit
jungle	jungle spirit
domestic land	
realm	senior hill spirit
territory	middle hill spirit
sub-territory	junior hill spirit

village	village guardian spirit
house	house spirits
	house compound spirit
grave	grave guardian spirit
field	field spirit
paths	path spirit

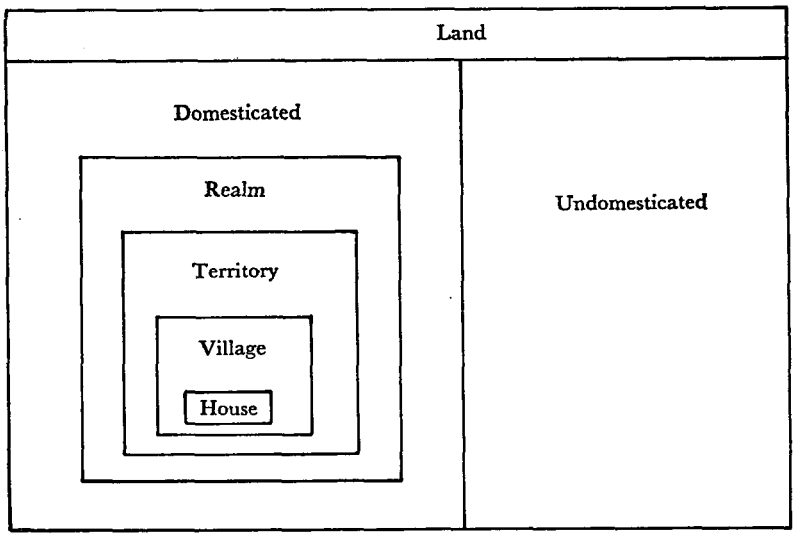

Figure 2.

Each of the ecological categories is productive, or plays a part in production except perhaps grave sites and villages, which are occupied by the productive aspects of humans, souls. The productive aspect of the various categories of domestic land is less evident. Here we must appreciate the more general theories of government in lowland Southeast Asia. Leach (1954) has discussed these. There is a range of rights in a territory. One set entails rulership. Those appointed to rule were known as rulers. Another set is rights of use as opposed to sovereignty. These were given to individuals who lived off the tax revenues or areas. These were known as eaters of territories. In the Lisu case we see a parallel in the distinction between eating and ruling territories, and in the divisions of territories from larger to smaller, from the household up to the realm. The point is that any inhabited area, if it is ruled or eaten, is productive to the ruler or eater who derives his livelihood from the division he rules or eats.

Each political domain is productive, just as each ecological category enters into production. There is, then, a spirit for each. All of these spirits can be offended and can cause people misfortunes as a result. The people can make offerings to these spirits and ask them to withdraw the misfortune. There are other spirits who may be offended and to whom offerings may be directed.

Their connection with productive forces is more straightforward. These spirits are the earth spirit, the stone spirit, the stone spirit's dog, the tree spirit, the sun spirit, and the bellows spirit. In evaluating fields for agricultural use, Lisu, like other swidden agriculturalists, take into account several criteria. One of these is exposure to sunlight; another, growth of trees; a third, soil type. Each of these criteria is important in judging the productivity of the field, so there is a spirit of each criterion. People think the clay content of soil makes it fertile and that it derives from the weathering of stones. There should therefore be a spirit of clay (fertility of soil) and of the stone (which produces the clay). The spirit of the clay is the spirit of the stone spirit's dog (for an explanation of this relationship see Durrenberger 1977a).

This exhausts the major part of the spirits that Lisu can offend and which can visit misfortune on them. There are several others such as the whirlwind spirit, the spirit of the bitter-fleshed porcupine burrow, and the spirit of the termite hill who do not fit this paradigm in a straightforward way. There are other spirits in the Lisu pantheon, but they cannot be offended (see Durrenberger 1971). Some of them cause misfortunes, some of them do not; but the important point is, whatever they do, it is not because they have been offended. To this point I have argued that anything with productive capacity, whether a human being or a political division, has a spirit. If we accept the idea that the productive capacity of anything is some kind of occult (unseen) force, then it follows that there should be spirits of things with productive forces. The human soul is simply one kind of such spirit.

Following this logic, souls should become spirits. When a person dies, his soul is directed to the land of the dead where it is instructed to join its ancestors. It is installed on descendants' altars as "mother", "father", "grandmother", or "grandfather". After three generations, it joins the ancestor spirits on their altar as "great-grandfather", most junior of the ancestor spirits. This adds confirmation to the idea that souls are a class of spirits (Durrenberger 1975c).

Souls and spirits of productive capacities ought to have the same characteristics. Lisu say that one cause of illness or other misfortune is

to have offended a spirit. If diagnosis indicates this, the victim of the spirit's actions can offer a sacrifice in order to cause the spirit to relent. It should follow that humans act in the same way, and indeed they do, with one important difference — humans can be seen whereas spirits cannot.

If a person or one of his dependents does something damaging or offensive to another, he should approach the damaged individual with liquor and apologize for the action. Then the two can negotiate with each other until they arrive at a mutually acceptable compensation for the damages.

Bringing liquor is an admission of guilt. In many cases the offending party does not so readily admit his guilt. In such cases, he must be persuaded to admit guilt before negotiations as to compensation can begin (see Durrenberger 1976b). If the offending party does not admit guilt or if no agreement as to compensation can be reached, the case can be dropped to become a source of smouldering long-term ill feelings, one party can approach the lowland Thai authorities with a complaint, or the damaged party may have recourse to self-help. Thus, damaging the offending individual or his property is a final recourse if no other satisfaction can be had. Lisu are well aware of the deleterious effects of unchecked self-help and feud. Indeed, this is often used as an argument for reaching some kind of settlement. If one person offends another, one party can approach the other, they can discuss the matter, and either agree or not. Because the two parties are visible to each other there can be procedures for dealing with disputes.

Now let us relate these ideas about offense and the premise that there is an occult force for every productive category, each productive force has power, that one such force is a human being with a soul, that other such powers are the various spirits I have discussed. If a person or his property is damaged it can be for one of two reasons: either there has been some mechanical malfunction (the blood has become cool, therefore too thick, and thus painful) or some intelligent entity has caused the event (see Durrenberger 1977b). If it is logically possible that there might be unseen powerful entities in the universe, it should be possible to offend them just as one can offend a person. People cannot directly confront spirits.

Spirits, unlike people, cannot communicate directly with people, but only answer their questions directed through shamanistic seances or oracles. Spirits cannot therefore inform a person of an offense and demand compensation prior to taking the recourse of self-help. The

spirit has only one recourse, the final one of self-help, inflicting some damage on the offending person. Of course, the human being becomes aware of his offense when this extreme sanction has been taken. Only then can he admit culpability by apoligizing to the spirit and presenting it appropriate compensation. Lisu describe the apology of a person to another person and the apology of a person to a spirit by the same word.

If a person is sick, his crops failing, or his livestock ailing, it does not automatically follow that some spirit is causing the misfortune, but from the cosmological premises that I have outlined, it makes sense to reason that a spirit might be causing the misfortunes. There are two ways to find out whether the misfortune is of natural or spiritual origin. One is to somehow contact the spirits and ask them whether one of their number has been offended, if so, in what way, and what it requires in compensation. To do this one can consult a shaman who becomes possessed by various of his lineage spirits. The sufferer can then directly ask these spirits whether they can inform him whether any spirit is responsible. Spirits can also be contacted by various diagnostic oracles. The second method is experimental. This method is the only ultimately reliable one since spirits, like people, can be capricious, lie, and be mistaken. Information gathered from spirits through a shamanistic seance or oracle is often used as a guide to action but rarely taken as proof. The proof is in the results. If one makes the indicated ceremony or ceremonies and the misfortune continues, then either the offering was directed to the wrong spirit or no spirit was responsible. If one tries mechanical remedies for a naturally caused misfortune to no avail, then it follows that some spirit must be the cause. People often have recourse to both systems of therapy, since either kind of causality may be at work in any given instance. One can only make a definitive statement as to causality after the misfortune has ceased and then only in retrospect (see Durrenberger 1976c, 1977).

So far I have argued that if something is productive, it has power; if something has power, there is a spirit of that thing. If there is a spirit of something, it can be offended. If some entity is offended, it may have recourse to self-help if no accommodation can be reached. People can negotiate with each other but they cannot directly negotiate with unseen spirits in the same way, so spirits have recourse to self-help. To prevent an offended entity from having continued recourse to self-help, one apologizes to it and compensates it for the damages done. It is thus logically plausible to argue that spirits may be the cause of misfortunes irrespective of any credulence in their existence. Thus one can at the

same time hold to scepticism and make offerings to spirits in response to misfortunes.

The final question we can ask is why it should be possible to offend an entity with power. What constitutes an offense and why are entities with power offendable?

Although a central aspect of power is wealth or productive capacity, power must be justified by the person who would have it attributed to him. One can reasonably claim power if one lives up to the expectations of others. The converse of power is shame. If a person says he can do something and someone else challenges him to do it, and he cannot, he is shamed. If one cannot offer hospitality to guests, he is shamed. If one cannot offer a proper bride price for one's son's wife, cannot pay the fines incurred by one's dependents, one gets shame. One increases power by meeting these demands of others as grandly as possible and by giving feasts. Spirits must also do what is expected of them. Lineage spirits must take care of the members of their households lest they lose their power. When people invoke these spirits they remind them of this by saying, "When you were a person you had power, now that you are a spirit do not lose it". In one case of a protracted illness of a shaman's wife, the shaman was possessed by his lineage spirits in order of their power. One of the senior spirits chastised the more junior ones saying that it had become ashamed since they were not looking after the people, that the spirits of other households took care of their people (Durrenberger 1971). So the idea that power can be lost by not meeting the expectations of others extends to spirits as well as people.

Meeting the expectations of others involves both rights and duties. If one does not perform one's duties, he is shamed; if one's rights are transgressed, he is shamed. This is quite clear in marriage negotiations. One part of the negotiations is devoted to discussing any transgressions of the groom. Is he marrying a younger sister while there is an unmarried older sister? If so, he must wash the face of the older sister by paying a fine. It is her right to be married first. While courting the bride, did he enter the bride's father's house? If so, he must wash the face of the girl's father for this infringement. These compensations restore lost power to the offended person by giving him wealth, the source of power. Any being with power can lose that power through its actions or the actions of others. If the shame is the result of actions of others, it can demand compensation, and ultimately have recourse to self-help.

If something is productive, it has power; if it has power, there is a

spirit of the thing; if it has power, it can be offended and compensated. Since wealth is the source of power, compensation must be in the form of wealth. These statements follow from a set of assumptions:

that power flows from wealth

that wealth is the result of productivity

that power can be lost and reinstated by presentations of wealth.

That certain spirits can cause disease and misfortune and that people can cause them to relent by presenting them with offerings follows from these assumptions about social relations quite irrespective of any belief in spirits per se. One can thus argue that it is quite reasonable to suppose that an offering to a spirit will correct a misfortune without having to admit a belief in spirits based on experiential evidence.

Sperber (1975: 57) asks, "... what guarantees that the structure outlined accounts for the properties of the object and does not derive simply from the systemizing gaze of the analyst?" He argues that the analysis gains credibility if it accounts for observations not initially addressed and leads one to find unnoticed relationships. This is the general criterion of parsimony applied to all scientific theories. Kirsch's (1973) and Leach's (1954) analyses confirm the general importance of the idea of potency or productivity. Separate analyses of Lisu law (Durrenberger 1976b); statistical economic data (Durrenberger 1976d); politics (Durrenberger, forthcoming); curing (Durrenberger 1971; 1976c; 1977b); and even folk tales (Durrenberger 1977a; 1978) indicate the centrality of these ideas in several different areas. Further, an analysis of the Lisu dualistic classification system and its logic corroborates this analysis (Durrenberger 1971; 1975c; 1978).

I argue that Lisu hold certain ideas about social relations to be axiomatic. Certain other ideas follow from these, thus making statements about spirits reasonable, but not requiring confirmation of belief. There is, then, a difference between what one knows from personal experience, and what one reasons might be. Thus both sceptics and believers can and do make the same kinds of offerings in similar situations.

Several general conclusions follow from this analysis. One is that there is no taxonomy (in the "ethnoscience" sense) of spirits. Thus the attempt to develop such a taxonomy is misdirected, as Van Esterik (1978) points out for the work of Brown *et al.* (1976), who attempted to construct a taxonomy of Thai spirits. Indeed, the general Durkheimian notion of supernatural beings as more or less direct epiphenomena of social organization would suggest that there should be no independent taxonomy of spirits. This analysis also indicates that there is no particular mapping

from the realities of the Lisu social system to their spirits *contra* Durkheim and Leach.

Geertz urges us to, "... put aside at once the tone of the village atheist and that of the village preacher... so that the social and psychological implications of particular religious beliefs can emerge in a clear and neutral light" (Geertz 1966: 39). Here I have taken the fact that there are "village atheists and village preachers" as an aspect of the phenomena to understand. As Needham points out, how can we speak of a belief that people do not believe? What happens to the status of notions like "the really real", "models of" and "models for"? Are these aspects of a possibly unbelieved collective representation?

How can we conceive of these aspects of religion in a larger framework? Spiro argues a child is, "more or less an affective and cognitive *tabula rasa*", that it is impressionable, with an underdeveloped ego, that affect has great impact, verbal symbolism is underdeveloped, the intellect is not yet developed, and the boundary between fantasy and reality is fluid. Through interaction with adults, the child develops hypotheses and expectations about his social situation. This provides the basis for a long-lasting perceptual set through which he views the world. When the historically given cultural fantasy system, as Spiro terms religion, is isomorphic with individuals' privately structured fantasy systems (given by early experiences), then the private system projected into the cultural system provides the experiential basis for the conviction that religious beliefs are true. Private psychological experience provides the need to believe something; the culturally received ideas provide something to believe. When the two match, there can be belief based on private experience and confirmed by experience (Spiro 1967: 72). Much of Spiro's psycho-analytical argumentation seems reasonable if not demonstrable.

Spiro discusses Lévi-Strauss and concludes that, "... to know that mythical themes exhibit a binary oppositional structure is not to know enough, and to argue that totems exist because they are good for thinking is not good enough" (1967: 7). I agree. I also suggest that to say that the contents of religious ideologies are historically given is not enough. I think the weakest part of Spiro's argument is the notion of historically given cultural content, for he must deal with the question of why ideas about superhuman beings vary from place to place given universal predilections to develop such notions in childhood. I think a stronger argument could be made if we could argue that the "cultural content", like the psychological predilection, must be re-created in each generation. This, of course, still leaves aside the question of how to treat disbelief if

the necessity to project and displace anxiety and hostility is universal (Spiro 1967: 80, note 5), but I leave this as a problem for the more psychoanalytically oriented.

I have argued that it is reasonable for Lisu to posit the existence of spirits because this assertion follows from a logic whose axioms inform social and political interaction. The possible existence of the pantheon is thus an extension of this logic.

Sperber suggests that categories are characterized by semantic entries which specify their analytic relationships with other categories and encyclopaedic entries which enumerate synthetic knowledge about the categorized objects (Sperber 1975: 108). Analytic features define categories relative to others. Synthetic features are attributed to the categories on the basis of knowledge. Information is categorized according to analytic features and then synthetic attributes are assigned to categories to make the information intelligible or assimilable. Analytic and synthetic statements are related by auxiliary statements. If the information cannot be categorized with the analytic features or if synthetic attributes cannot be related to analytic descriptions with auxiliary statements, then the information cannot be comprehended or assimilated. In this case, the concept itself can become a representation, bracketed or put in quotes to mark it from synthetic knowledge. Then there is a search for ways to either categorize the information or to relate the categorization to synthetic knowledge. Sperber calls this search "evocation" (Sperber 1975: 112; 120-121; 141). Thus, he states that, "... symbolic knowledge is neither about semantically understood categories [analytically characterized categories], nor about the world, but about encyclopaedic entries of categories" (Sperber 1975: 108). Symbolic knowledge is about attributed synthetic features of categories.

I suggest this is the situation for Lisu spirits. The attributive synthetic feature "productivity" characterizes a number of analytically distinct categories of different sorts which have little else in common with one another either analytically or synthetically. Since potency or productivity is a central axiom of social life, it becomes itself focal, in Sperber's terms, there is an attempt to conceptualize potency or productivity which leads to its being taken as a representation and bracketed as "spirit".

A synthetic attributive feature of categories is itself taken as a category and given a label, given an epistemological status. As with all epistemological categories the category can enter the calculus of validation (Sperber 1975: 112) or the logic of verification. One can ask questions about the category, test assertions about it, create exegeses about it,

employ it in a rhetoric of justification for actions motivated by a wide range of interests, or believe it, or not, as one's experience indicates. The very system which attributes productivity to certain analytic categories, and the possibility of making a synthetic feature a category, makes possible the supposition that spirits might exist.

I suggest, then, the general view of religion that takes its premises to the theorems of the axioms of social, political, and economic action; logical consequences of other logics. Religion is, in this sense, epiphenomenal, but not epiphenomenal of the organization of social groups as Durkheim and Leach would have it, rather of the logic which underlies this organization.

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