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The Revival of Myth in a Modern Context: Reflections on an Episode among the Murut of Sabah, East Malaysia

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“This [writing about the North Borneo pagans] I have tried to record, in the hope that it may form the basis of a more detailed study and that someone coming after me may stand on the shoulders of this book and see more than I.” (Rutter 1985 [1929]: 12)

INTRODUCTION

Anthropologists are no different from those people who observe and conceptualize only the facts that they would like or are able to deal with. When we conduct our field research, we usually forget this and are content with collecting the data which we planned to obtain in advance. Other information is usually neglected or treated as if it is irrelevant. It is also true, however, that during or after our fieldwork we are often faced with circumstances when we suddenly become aware of the neglected facts and attempt to synthesize them into a coherent whole. The following is an attempt to conceptualize my personal experience of this during and after my field research among the Murut of Sabah, East Malaysia.

As White and Lindstrom (1989: xiii) point out in their book, World War II has not been a traditional topic of research among anthropologists. Hence, they have opened up a new field of anthropology: indigenous representation of the war. Yet they do not deal with indigenous representations of development in the postwar era. We as field researchers are often confronted with people who talk enthusiastically not only about the war but also about how things have been going after it. The Murut living in the interior of Borneo are an example of this.

During my two years of field research, I was repeatedly asked, among other things, about postwar development in Japan. People saw me as a representative of the Japanese, and they wanted to know the reasons for the recovery and rapid development of Japan's economy after the war. In this context, I unexpectedly encountered a 'modern myth', which explained the secret of the postwar development of Japan. Later, I came to realize that through analyzing it I could come to know how the Murut try to insert new knowledge into the framework of existing knowledge. In other words, it relates to how they reconstruct new

knowledge based on old knowledge. When considered in a wider context, this has relevance to anthropological methodology: how can we deal with the reality of those who are being observed?; Can we get reliable information if we as researchers ask something which elicits only little interest from those interviewed?

In the initial stages of my field research, I limited my inquiries to my original research perspective and accordingly I neglected what my informants actually wanted to talk about: that is, the Murut narratives about the Second World War and the effect of the war on Japan itself. Under what circumstances and situations did I neglect this and later try to re-explore the topic? What relevance does this phenomenon have when we situate it within a wider socio-cultural context?

My objectives in this essay are therefore threefold; to document a Murut 'modern myth', a story about the secret of the development of Japanese society after World War II; to interpret this through comparison with old or traditional Murut myths; and to analyze the whole process of my research from the viewpoint of anthropological methodology¹⁾.

OUTSET

"Tomi (my nickname in the research field), could you gather good stories from the old fellows?" "Good. That's good." "Well, as you are Japanese I have something to ask you. I heard a story about Japan. Is this true?" This was the moment when I first heard the following strange story about the postwar development of Japan. It was around the middle of the second year of my field research among the Tagal Murut of Sabah, East Malaysia²⁾. I began living in a Murut village in October 1988 and conducted field research there for more than two years until November 1990.

The Murut, literally 'Hill People' live mostly in the south-western mountainous interior of Sabah. In the mid-1970s, their population was estimated at about 36,000 (Regis 1989: 416). On linguistic and cultural grounds, the Murut can be divided into two sub-groups: The Timugon or Lowland Murut, and the Tagal or Highland Murut. Although the Tagal Murut live in a remote area of rugged terrain near the border between Malaysian Sabah and Indonesian Kalimantan, they have recently experienced rapid socio-cultural change from outside influences. Yet they are still basically shifting cultivators of hill rice, hunters of wild game and occasional riverine fishermen.

My main objective in the research was to gather empirical data on the so-called traditional social structure and organization of the Tagal Murut and any recent changes. As I have pointed out elsewhere, earlier social anthropologists like Freeman emphasized rather fragmented aspects of Bornean cognatic societies. Against those studies, I proposed a working hypothesis that stressed the existence of complicated but well organized social networks among the Iban of Sarawak³⁾. To gather empirical data which supported my hypothesis was therefore the main objective of my field research when it began in 1988.

As is usual for an ethnographer, however, I also collected various kinds of information during my fieldwork including examples of oral tradition such as myths, fairy tales and legends. I believed at the time that I should collect them in a form which was as traditional or 'authentic' as possible. I went here and there to seek out good stories and storytellers. Accordingly, when I was first told the following story about the postwar development of Japan by a village headman who was neither old enough nor good at narrating old stories, I paid only slight attention to it. I recall thinking "This story is just a kind of rumor. It is not a traditional myth that an anthropologist should record." It was only after hearing it for the second time that I realized its importance and recorded it.

Now, before presenting the story itself, I will trace the history of Murut-Japanese contact and briefly describe the present state of Murut village life so that we can deal with it in a wider context.

THE MURUT AND THE JAPANESE

The first direct mass contact between the Murut and the Japanese occurred during the Second World War. At an early stage in the war, on 1 January 1942, the Japanese Imperial Army invaded Borneo in order to secure its valuable natural resources. Among these oil was highly evaluated. By 19 January 1942, the Japanese army attained suzerainty over the whole of North Borneo (renamed Sabah after independence), Sarawak and Brunei.

Unlike the British North Borneo government, which located its capital in the east coast city of Sandakan, the Japanese military government divided North Borneo into two divisions (Tokai Shiu [The East Province] and Seikai Shiu [The West Province]) and the whole of Borneo was administered by a military Governor-General based in Kuching, Sarawak. Moreover the Japanese military government deployed a military force of more than 25,000 in North Borneo. One of their main bases was Pensiangan, which was and still is one of the interior centers of the Tagal Murut population. An airstrip was built in Pensiangan and at times two to three thousand Japanese soldiers were stationed there (Leong 1982: 169-176; cf. Evans 1991).

This was the time when the Tagal Murut first had direct contact with the Japanese. During my field research, I sometimes met people in their late 50s or 60s who had had personal contact with the Japanese in those days and still remember a few Japanese words for greetings and commands, popular military songs, etc..

However Japanese rule did not last long. Within four years, by late 1944, Allied bombers started flying over Borneo. Finally on August 15, 1945, the Japanese surrendered and the Pacific War ended. When the war ended, there were still 21,000 Japanese soldiers in North Borneo (Sabah). 6,000 Japanese troops stationed in Pensiangan laid down their weapons in preparation for the march to the coastal town of Beaufort. Thousands were said to have been killed by the Murut (Leong 1982: 178). The Japanese had to march miserably without any

weapons in the front of the Muruts. I myself was told by a Murut that some Murut of other villages attacked and killed those Japanese soldiers after making them drunk with local rice wine.

After the war, there were few opportunities for the Murut to see Japanese in spite of the fact that some Japanese employees of timber companies went far into the interior to inspect the tropical jungle. Almost all the Murut of middle age or younger said I was the first Japanese they had ever seen.

THE PRESENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE MURUT

When I started my field research, most Murut villagers still lived in longhouses although traditional materials had been replaced with modern ones. They cultivated cassava and hill rice with slash and burn agricultural techniques, supplementing their food by hunting wild game and fishing. In short, they still lived a subsistence economy, at least during the period of my field research.

Yet it cannot be denied that their life had changed rapidly because of recent socio-economic changes under the government's development policy, especially the penetration of the monetary system, the logging activities of timber companies and so on. Even ten or so years ago, rivers and small jungle trails served as the only transportation system for the interior Murut. Nowadays, however, complicated networks of wide roads for logging have been constructed even as far as the interior villages, which are within a few kilometers of the border.

Making use of the four-wheel drive cars presented by the surrounding timber companies as a kind of compensation for the damage caused by logging, the Murut have been able to penetrate into jungle where they had never gone before. In addition, the villagers were paid moderate sums of cash for the destruction of their hill rice fields, fruit trees, and so on. As is often the case, timber companies kindly leveled the hill slope and constructed village longhouses or individual houses. Moreover, each village was presented with a generator with free fuel supplied. Regarding material life style, therefore, the Murut had experienced rapid change.

When I began my field research there were still old women who wove rattan to make baskets under kerosene lamps and, at the same time, there were young boys from rich families who watched video programs while drinking Cola cooled in a gas-fueled refrigerator. This was the socio-economic setting of the interior Tagal Murut area during my field research from 1988 to 1990.

Under these circumstances, many modern industrial products, especially those from Japan, had permeated into the interior Murut villages. Nowadays it is common knowledge even among young Murut children that Seiko is one of the best watch producers, Toyota or Datsun the best car companies, and Yamaha or Suzuki the best outboard engine makers and so on. Needless to say, they also know that all of these well-known companies are Japanese.

It is natural then for the Murut to find a contradiction in the above mentioned facts; the Japanese losing the Second World War fled in the front of their eyes; but

nevertheless, Japan recovered from this defeat so much so that its economy developed to produce modern products of good quality and quantity.

STORY ABOUT POSTWAR DEVELOPMENT OF JAPAN

Now, we return to the starting-point of the essay.

When I had finished tape-recording Murut stories from an old informant, the village headman and other villagers invited me to their coffee break. Among them was an Iban bulldozer operator, who had been sent by a timber company to level the slope behind the village in compliance with a village request. We chatted about various topics over cups of coffee and tea. In due course, the village headman turned to me and asked about the truth of the following story regarding the development of Japan after the Second World War⁴).

Before and during the Second World War, the Japanese army were brave and their bodies were as big and as tall as the Chinese. Therefore, they almost succeeded in conquering the whole of Asia including China, the Philippines, Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and so on.

However, Japan lost the War against America because America used a huge bomb and almost all the Japanese were killed.

After the war, the Japanese planned to send some youths to study abroad in America in order to learn high technology. America accepted this with the condition that the one to be sent should not be a boy but a girl. Moreover, she could not return to Japan until she died. Only her remains could be sent back to Japan. Japan agreed and dispatched a little girl to America.

The girl went to America and studied day and night. She learned every aspect of modern technology. She mastered technology on how to make airplanes, cars and outboard engines, etc..

After obtaining all kinds of modern technological knowledge, she swallowed a sheet of paper on which was written the details of modern technology. Then she killed herself by swallowing poison. Keeping her promise, America sent her corpse back to Japan.

Receiving her body, the Japanese cut open her abdomen and took out the swallowed piece of paper on which all kinds of high technology were recorded. Indeed, the girl had been sent on a secret mission to steal high technology from America. In this way the Japanese successfully obtained high technology from America.

Then the Japanese learned to develop it in order to produce various kinds of goods such as cars, outboard engines, etc.. Nowadays, as you know, Japan has developed so much in comparison with the rest of the world.

This is why Japan has developed so much as you can now see.

According to the village headman who narrated this story, he had heard it from a government official when he attended a seminar held in the capital city of Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, a few years before. After describing his experiences in the capital

at that time, he asked me whether the story was true or not.

Just as I was about to open my mouth, the Iban bulldozer operator added his personal comment, "I have heard it, too." Then he and my Murut friends waited for my words as a reaction from the Japanese.

Of course, I, as a Japanese emphatically denied the story.

The reaction of the bulldozer operator towards my comment was surprising, however. He wondered why the Japanese themselves did not know the facts although the story was so famous that it had been mentioned even in a school textbook in Malaysia. Then he and the other Muruts present concluded that the fact has been concealed from the Japanese because it was terribly shameful for them.

I did not attempt to deny it any more. Nor did I know which person, I or the young Iban bulldozer operator, was believed by the village headman and other Murut friends. I can only say that the young Iban could manipulate the highly admired technology of a bulldozer, while I could neither drive a car nor repair an outboard engine, which were necessary abilities for a respected man among the Murut.

After the event, I talked about it with my Murut research assistant, who was the second son of the above mentioned village headman. To my surprise, he acknowledged that he himself had also heard the story before and somehow had believed in its truth until I denied it.

Taking all possible contexts into consideration, the story might be about the four little girls dispatched by the Japanese government to study abroad in America in the early Meiji era. The youngest among them was Miss Umeko Tsuda, who was dispatched at the age of only eight years. She later came back to Japan to become a famous educationist and in 1900 established one of the earliest women's colleges in Japan (Now known as Tsuda University in Tokyo). It seems that the lecturer at the seminar which the village headman attended referred to these Japanese girls in order to enlighten local elders such as the village headmen.

But why has this historical event changed into such a peculiar and dramatic story, that after the Second World War, a little Japanese girl was sent to the USA to steal high technology, that she committed suicide and that her body was sent back to Japan and cut open, etc.?

One reason might be that the village headman could not fully understand the Malay spoken at the seminar. The Tagal Murut of the interior, especially the older generation like the village headman, ordinarily speak their own language, Murut. Therefore, he may have understood only part of the speech delivered in 'formal' Malay. Using only the parts he understood, the village headman may have tried to reconstruct a meaningful whole. As a result, the real story may have been distorted.

Yet some questions still remain: why should a girl be sent instead of a boy? Why did she swallow the paper before committing suicide? Why was her abdomen cut open after her corpse was sent back to Japan? There should be more

explanation for these aspects, I thought. Then I turned to the traditional Murut myths, which I first thought had no relationship with this curious story, in order to try to understand them.

MURUT MYTH

The following three myths seem to have a strong relationship with the story⁵).

The Great Flood and the Origin of the Murut

Only a pair of siblings, a brother and sister, survived. The whole world was flooded.

There was a timakon tree heavily bearing fruit and the brother and sister scaled it. While the two of them ate the timakon fruits, they plucked a fruit and threw it down to the earth to see whether the earth was dry already. While they continued to eat the fruits, they threw them down to earth as well.

When the timakon fruits did not float any more, they were sure that the earth had become sufficiently dry.

"Let's go down," they said and they went down to earth.

But they did not have fire. The brother said to the sister, "Sister, you wait. I will look for a squirrel." The brother took his blowpipe and went out. He searched and searched. He suddenly noticed some squirrels having sexual intercourse and shot at them. One squirrel was hit and fell down to earth.

The brother brought it back. They burnt its fur, cut its meat and cooked it.

After eating, the brother spoke. "Sister," he said, "The animals were having sexual intercourse." "How did they do it, Brother?" "Well, let's do as they did." Then they did the same thing as the squirrels did and began to have sexual intercourse. "Only you, Brother." The sister laid herself down on the ground and they further had sexual intercourse. After that the two of them had sexual intercourse so passionately that the sister became pregnant.

The sister became pregnant and gave birth to a dog. They took care of it and the dog grew up.

The dog went here and there. When the dog went near a polor tree, the dog barked at it. The brother ran to see. When he arrived at the place, he saw the dog scratching the trunk of the polor tree. The brother collected the young bark of the tree. Then the dog went on.

When the dog came to a natu (wild taro), the dog bit into it. The brother took its pith and dried it under the sun. The dog also carried lulub with his mouth under the sun.

Then the dog bit into bamboo trees. "What can I do with this?" asked the brother. The dog bit the end of the bamboo. The brother cut it and dried it out.

When the bamboo was completely dried up they scraped it. But it never ignited. (The dog showed how to ignite it.) "Oh, like this," said the brother. "I wondered how to make fire and now I have got it." At last, they obtained fire. From then on, whenever they hunted game, they cooked it with fire and ate it.

The couple later gave birth to a boy and a girl. They sent them to one river area after another. It was the only work they did day after day. They gave birth to many children and sent them to various places. In due course they multiplied in this world as you can now see.

The Origin of Crops

Once there was a couple, brother and sister, living in a place. They slashed and burnt their field but there was no crop they could plant. No crop was to be found there. They were very embarrassed because they could not obtain food.

One day, the brother dreamt. "If you live like this every day, you two will never be able to obtain any crop for planting," it is said in his dream. "Now bring your sister to the center of your field and kill her," said his dream. The brother was in a great dilemma because his dream asked him kill his own sister. "If you kill your sister, you are sure to obtain every crop you need," further said his dream. After that he pondered and pondered what to do because he was not brave enough to kill his own sister. Otherwise, however, there would be no crops.

One day, the brother said to his sister. "Sister, let's go to the center of our field." "All right," replied the sister.

They two went out and arrived at the center of their field. In their field, there was no crop at all. "Sister, please hunt for my lice," said the brother. "Please hunt for my lice," said the brother again. The sister hunted and hunted for her brother's lice [in his hair; according to the informant's gesture] in the center of the field. The brother still thought and thought about how the dream had ordered him to kill his sister. If he does not kill her, no crops can be obtained. The dream ordered him to kill her so that he could obtain crops.

Thinking and thinking in this way, at last, he made up his mind to kill his sister. While his sister was hunting his lice, the brother grabbed his knife and took it out. Then he stabbed his sister to death. Immediately he went back home.

After returning to his home, he could only cry and cry. His dream had said that only after seven days could he go to see his field. The brother slept and slept for seven days. The dream had promised, "If you kill your sister you should not go to your field for seven days. You can go to see your field only after seven days. Then every kind of crop like corn, tobacco, cassava, taro and rice will be there because every crop is inside the body of your sister." Accordingly, he slept seven days.

After seven days the brother woke up and immediately went toward his field. When he arrived, he saw there every crop; cassava, rice, sweet potato, taro, corn and tobacco, was there in his field. All the parts of his sister's body had transformed into crops. Her hair had changed into the hair of the corn, her teeth into the corn itself, her blood into rice, her arms into cassava, her nose into sweet potato, taro and so on. Only then was the brother himself able to obtain food.

In this way, we human beings in this world obtained various kinds of food.

Lost Knowledge

Long, long ago, there were seven brothers.

One day, they set out to find the place of the god Mangun. When they climbed up the top of a mountain, they added one piece of pole to another in order to make a ladder. They added poles, one after another. They wished to reach the sky so that they could see the place of the god. When they had almost come up to the sky, the god destroyed the ladder made of poles.

"Now," said the god, "You cannot reach my place." "You live on the earth and that is the place where you make your living. However I will give you a letter. Swim to the sea. Swim across to the other side," he said. "Your letters are all the same," said he. "If you

swim across to the other side, open them and look," he said. "All right," said the seven brothers. Four brothers remained behind and did not swim. The other three brothers started swimming simultaneously. The Malay brother put the letter into his Malay cap, the Chinese bit it between his teeth and the Murut inserted it into his loincloth.

They swam. Swam, swam and at last they reached the other side. Then they took out their letters written by the god. They opened them and compared them. When the Malay brother looked at his letter, the writing remained intact and was not wet. When the Chinese opened the god's letter, there was still writing but it was wet. (Therefore, the Chinese characters are so difficult to read; later explanation from the informant.) When the Murut opened his letter, it was wet and the writing was washed away.

According to our old story, this is the reason why the Murut have never had writing since then.

INTERPRETATION

Comparing the curious story about the secret behind the postwar development of Japan with the above three myths, we can easily point out the following common motifs or structural similarities.

First, the structural feature of restoration after a catastrophe is striking. In the creation myth, only a pair of human beings, a brother and sister, survived the disastrous flood and later they re-obtained lost culture forms like fire with the help of their offspring, a dog. In the story about the secret of Japan's postwar development, although almost all of the Japanese were said to have been killed by a big bomb, i.e. the atomic bomb, at the end of war, Japan was restored through the sacrifice of a young girl. In both stories, the survivors assure the role of reviver or reproducer of their people and culture.

Second, we can recognize the common motif that technological or agricultural products originate from the dead body of a girl who committed suicide or was killed. While various types of crops were generated from the body of the slain sister in the myth of 'The Origin of Crops', modern goods like cars were initially produced through the sacrifice of a little girl who was forced to commit suicide in the story about the postwar development of Japan.

Also there is a common theme that knowledge is conveyed in terms of letters or writing. In the traditional myth of 'Lost Knowledge', the Murut lost their knowledge because they lost the writing in their letter from the god *Mangun*. As opposed to this, in the modern story, the Japanese obtained their high technology through the vehicle of writing on paper swallowed by a little girl. In both stories, writing is used as a symbol for knowledge.

Thus, the structural similarities and common motives between the traditional myths and the story regarding the postwar development of Japan are so clear that we can consider the latter as a revival of the former. In other words, we can take the seemingly curious Murut story about Japan as a 'modern myth' in a modern context, based on the characteristics of traditional myths.

Consequently, the analysis of the story about the postwar development of

Japan in terms of traditional myths leads us to an understanding of the way new knowledge is constructed in Murut society. Thus this seemingly peculiar story, which I initially tried to exclude from my 'genuine' ethnographical field research, has now emerged as a key text which illustrates modern anthropological issues conceived with ethno-knowledge and ethno-history: How do others integrate new knowledge into their existing body of knowledge using their own logic and equally how do we do the same?

REFLECTION

The above is my initial analysis of the Muruts' curious story about the postwar development of Japan. I 'encountered' this exotic story by chance and later was able to 'interpret' it as a revival of traditional myths and an indigenous people's attempt to reconstruct their subjective history. I presented my interpretation of it to both academic and also general audiences and received a positive reaction⁶.

Basically, I have been confident until now that my initial analysis of the story was not inaccurate. If one of the main objectives of ethnographic field research is to rethink the ethnographer's logic through an attempt to understand the logic of the observed society, then I might have been able to clarify areas where we share a common way of thinking; i.e. the reintegration of new knowledge or experiences using the stock of ready-made knowledge such as myths. Just as we interpret the modern world in terms of a modern version of diffusionism, i.e. globalization (cf. Eriksen 1995: 4), so too the Murut create modern versions of mythical ways of thinking. Yet I cannot conceal my ambivalence: Does this represent the Tagal Murut way of thinking in general? Do they really think about the matter as I have analyzed it?

As Eriksen pointed out, we anthropologists involuntarily take on the role of the clown when we are in the field (Eriksen 1995: 14-15). In this sense, there is a possibility that the village headman was joking with me. However by that time I had been there long enough, more than a year, to be regarded as more or less 'normal' by the villagers. Besides, as my research assistant, the second son of the village headman, himself confessed to me later, he and other villagers had taken the curious story to be at least partly true.

If we consider the circumstances under which the story was narrated, some particular aspects of the social setting are relevant. Present were the village headman who narrated the story, some other Murut villagers, an Iban bulldozer operator and myself. I was the Japanese whom the interior Murut could rarely see and I was, at that time, a collector of oral traditions who eagerly sought to hear their 'traditional stories'. Though the story was not traditional, the village headman told the story to entertain me as a 'prestigious' guest. I was 'prestigious' because I was the only highly educated person present who could speak, read and write Murut, Malay, English and Japanese. Moreover, I carried 'letters' (research permissions) from the Malaysian federal government and the Sabah state

government which qualified me to stay in the region and interview them. To the Murut all these meant that I was a kind of man who should be respected and entertained.

To talk in the presence of outsiders such as myself and the Iban bulldozer operator is to demonstrate power and show bravery, too. In a sense, as a representative of the village, the headman tried to entertain us and, at the same, reconfirm his prestigious status by doing so. Although his Malay was broken, he showed that he was brave enough to converse with an outsider and thus again access to information or knowledge from the outside world. This process would strengthen his representative power.

In this context, what was important was not the content of the conversation but the fact that the village headman and two outsiders, in this case a Japanese and an Iban, had a dialogue. This was revealed by the fact that after the conversation about the mysterious story, the matter was never referred to again. It was only I who was too excited to restrain myself from making an issue over the resemblance between the story and the myths. In short, the story itself seemed to be not so important to the Murut as it was to me. Yet as an anthropologist I focused on it and tried to explain it rationally. Why do we anthropologists focus on these minor features of culture which the people observed would not make an issue of themselves?

One of the main reasons seems to be that we are always looking for phenomena which can be presented as 'new' or 'conspicuous' research findings: We are trained to seek rational causes for peculiar 'facts' which we 'discover'. Although I heard the peculiar story about the postwar development of Japan by chance, it was no accident that I related it to traditional myths thereafter and presented it as the revival of a myth. To tell the truth, I finally analyzed the story in relation to these myths only when I was preparing my presentation for an academic conference. Before that, I had only vaguely thought about it. I, as a 'job hunting' postdoctoral researcher, had to demonstrate my research ability to the academy with an 'interesting' presentation at a conference. As I mentioned earlier, I later reproduced part of the presentation in a essay. In this case, I as a member of the museum, I had to write an 'interesting' story for a general audience⁷).

In my analysis of the 'modern myth', I retained only a selection of myths. I have never analyzed why I related some myths and not others. From the very beginning therefore, I excluded other possible alternative connections. In addition, I never attempted to collect other possible narratives about the postwar development of Japan, although I recognized that the story was meaningful. In short, even after I thought I could observe and consider in retrospect what I had not observed and considered initially, I could still observe and consider them later within the academic process.

Another problem is the socio-cultural relevance of what we represent to our academic or general audiences. Why did I select one particular episode instead of another? From the viewpoint of social reality among the Murut, I should have

focused instead on, for example, the Gulf War which had just started at the end of my field research. Some of the Murut young 'intelligentsia' or 'bourgeois' used to talk about it with me day and night. One of them wanted to know the likely outcome of the war because he expected a rapid increase in the price of oil and a good profit from it. He was, in the literal sense of the word, an 'indigenous entrepreneur' in the Borneo tropical jungle.

Others liked to talk with me about the problems arising from economic development such as logging activities and the resultant compensation negotiations between the villagers and the companies. I usually heard about these by myself but consciously avoided touching on them so that I would not be involved in any kind of 'sensitive issue'. These problems and associated episodes were much more important to the interior Murut than the story about the war and the postwar development of Japan. Yet I have never analyzed them so far.

In this sense, too, the things that I observed and analyzed were limited by my preconceptions. Other things were there but I neglected them on the grounds that they were neither relevant to me nor to the Murut. Although without any prior intention, to the Japanese academia and to the public I have just represented a 'modern myth' as an exotic episode, an example of the revival of traditional mythology of the Murut. In the worst case, this could awaken or reconfirm impressions of the 'wildness', 'savageness', 'backwardness' and so on, of the indigenous people of Borneo⁸). Put differently, it is not the Murut but I as an anthropologist who have revived the 'modern myth' of the Murut in a modern context.

EPILOGUE

When I started my field research among the Murut, I naively assumed that I could observe and analyze empirical data as ethnographical fact, irrespective of the intense critique of this process in recent anthropological writing (e.g. Marcus and Fischer 1986). As a matter of fact, I analyzed and interpreted the seemingly curious story about the postwar development of Japan as a 'modern myth' based on traditional ones. In doing so, I thought I could understand one of our typical ways of interpreting the emic world among the Murut.

In retrospect, however, it has been clarified that it was I myself who reconstructed the emic world, within the specific context of Japanese anthropology. What is certain is that a few Murut individuals narrated a peculiar story about the postwar development of Japan and that it had some connection with traditional myths. However, it was not the Murut themselves but I who interpreted and represented it as a 'revival of myth' or as a 'modern myth'. The process of narrating the story and selecting it for 'academic' analysis cannot be interpreted without understanding my own *raison d'être*. Eriksen pointed out that 'anthropological studies tend to be persuasive rather than convincing', 'evoke more than they describe', and are 'shaped by the author's bias, not by the studied society'

(Eriksen 1995: 24).

Thus we come back to the starting point of anthropological field methodology. How can we as anthropologists effectively represent the socio-cultural reality not of the observer but of the observed? How can we effectively use both etic and emic approaches in our analysis? The answer may lie in the steady attempt to do so by each anthropologist.

NOTES

- 1) Part of this essay was first presented at the 46th Joint Annual Conference of the Japanese Society of Anthropology and the Japanese Society of Ethnology held at Osaka University on 10 July 1993. Part of the presentation was then reproduced as my short essay 'Yomigaeru Shinwa' (The Revival of Myth) in 1994 (Uesugi 1994).
- 2) I greatly appreciate the academic help and advice of Dr. Mohammed Yusoff Ismail and Prof. Shamsul Amri Baharuddin of the National University of Malaysia, Ms. Patricia Regis, then director of the Sabah Museum, and Prof. Masaru Miyamoto of Chuo University during my field research. Needless to say, my thanks also go to my Murut friends, who warmly welcomed me to stay among them and ask endless questions. Among others, I owe much to my Murut research assistant Mr. Talanon Anangau, who painstakingly assisted me to tape-record Murut stories, transcribe them and translate them into Malay.
- 3) Regarding my review of the social anthropological studies of Bornean cognatic societies and some of my research findings about Murut social organization and structure, see Uesugi (1988, 1995).
- 4) The Malay text is given in the Appendix. Initially the story was narrated in the Murut language by the headman. At that time, however, as I considered it to be unimportant, I did not record it. On the next occasion when it was narrated in Malay to an Iban visitor and myself, I was able to take notes about it and later recorded the complete Malay text as shown in the Appendix with the help of my Murut research assistant.
- 5) The Murut texts for each myth are shown in the Appendix. As there is still no standard orthography for Murut language, I use apostrophe (') in the Murut texts in order to symbolize the glottal stop.
- 6) See Note 1. Regarding my short essay, within a month after it was published I was encouraged to continue my study by at least two leading Japanese anthropologists and also interviewed by a television reporter.
- 7) See Note 1.
- 8) Linklater (1990) also vividly describes the strong demand for 'exoticism' and 'primitiveness' as central features in Western interest in the Iban of Sarawak. He expressed this when he was involved in Time Life's unsuccessful book project, 'Wild People of the Earth'.

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APPENDIX

Alasan Kemajuan Jepun

(Informant: Mr. Anangau Mansat, Kg. Selungai)

Sebelum dan semasa Perang Dunia Kedua, orang Jepun memang berani. Badannya juga tinggi dan gemuk seperti orang Cina. Jadi mereka hampir berjaya menjaja seluruh negara-negara Asia seperti Cina, Filipina, Malaysia, Brunei dan sebagainya. Tetapi, akhirnya, orang Jepun kalah dengan Amerika Syarikat kerana Amerika Syarikat pakai bom yang terbesar. Kemudian hampir semua orang Jepun telah meninggal dunia.

Selepas Perang Dunia Kedua, orang Jepun merancang menghantar belajar seorang pemuda ke Amerika Syarikat supaya dapat teknologi yang tinggi. Orang Amerika Syarikat bersetuju dengan rancangan itu, tetapi ada sebuah syarat iaitu orang yang dihantar ke Amerika Syarikat itu bukan lelaki tetapi mestilah perempuan, dan perempuan tersebut tidak boleh balik ke Jepun kecuali dia mati dan kalau perempuan itu mati, mayatnya tetap dikembalikan ke Jepun. Orang Jepun bersetuju dan menghantar seorang perempuan ke Amerika Syarikat.

Perempuan itu pergi belajar ke Amerika syarikat dan belajar semua teknologi moden dengan rajin setiap hari dan malam. Dia dapat ilu macam mana bikin kapal terbang, kereta, enjin bot dan sebagainya. Setelah dapat semua ilu, dia makan sekeping kertas yang ditulis teknologi moden dan juga makan racun dan mati. Mayatnya itu dihantar balik ke Jepun mengikut perjanjian antara Jepun dengan Amerika Syarikat.

Selepas mayat perempuan itu sampai di Jepun, orang Jepun potong perutnya dan ambil kertas yang ditulis semua teknologi tinggi tersebut. Sebenarnya perempuan itu ada tugas rasia bahawa mencuri teknologi tinggi dari Amerika Syarikat. Tentu sahaja orang Jepun dapat teknologi yang tinggi dari Amerika Syarikat.

Kemudian orang Jepun pakai dan membaiki teknologi itu dan bikin perbagai hasil seperti kereta, bot enjin dan sebagainya. Tahulah kamu, Negara Jepun sangat memaju di dunia ini macam sekarang.

Ini lah sebab Negara Jepun sangat memaju sekarang.

Ulit nu Losob

(Informant: Mr. Lakaran Onsokoi, Kg. Sikait)

Ahaka' hiatu ilo yak ruo naayag. Tana' tu nopongo' nasakob nu losob.

Rondo' hitu timakon nangawas. Sikot niilo ruo ahaka'. Angkan-angkan ilo ruo ahaka' ra timakon am upu-upu ilo. Bobol-bobol ra tana' aparisa' ilo ra kakatahan nu tana'. Akan-akan ra timakon, bobol-bobol tukiir nu orou, tukiir nu orou.

Ali kakotoh bahu tana' ili. Sol kanilo ra hili, kaa singkar nu timakon. Kinumotoh no bahu tana' tu.

"Tumu'un to no," kono. Tu'un ilo bahu.

Ilo kaando' apui. Ali ka luat nu buayoi. "Ali', sino ko am akibasing au po," kono. Kot kono ra sapuk am lakou. Lakou io ra hino am lakou-lakou. Solong kono ra kaitan tu, ampa'a ilo. Ampa'a kaitan. Pit! Sapuko' no. Sapuko' nu buayoi tu am karatu.

Uli' tunui niilo kaitan tu, umoto' am ansako'. Nopongo' ilo nahinakan.

Pahahayam bahu buayoi tu. "Ali', kium hitili nampa'a ilo," kono. "Koson pinakuan no, Aka'?" am kinumambol akindu ilo. "Ba, timiluan ito halan, Ali'," "Okou yakkon,

Aka'!" kono ra pinakan. Langan ralaa tu. Pak! Pakindu ilo bahu. Hino kasiputi' ilo bahu. Hino yak karaja niilo. Kindu, pakindu suku ilo nahali.

Pahali ilo, pahanak ralaa tu uku. Bayaho' ilo uku tu am kaayo' uku tu.

Lakou nu uku hitu po polor am aung, aungi nu uku. Simbul nu buayoi tu am oyo' ialii'-ilai' no. "Uhhh," kono nu uku tu. Kayuson-kayunon no lulub nu polor. Nit! Kungkuro' nu buayoi. Lakou po nu uku tu.

Hitu po natu am aung. Hitu po pinasa' nu asi nu natu tu. Hiut inaunga'an no tu. Pandiri kuato' am alapo' nu buayoi tu bahu. Sanggapo' nu uku lulub tu. Oyo' posindapo' ra orou katuuhu-katuuhu bahu lulub. Sanggapo' nu uku tu am aung ra insilan pisang nu pinggan.

Sanggapo' nu uku tu am oyo' no po aungi' sumbiling. "Koson pakuan?" Katupo' nu uku tu. Katupo' sampayung. Pok! Lampari' nu buayoi tu am koloto'. Sool! Tuuhu', kansak.

Pipiki' niilo kaa piat. "Oh, hitu io kua tupo," nu buayoi. "Koson pakuan ra hitu?" am hino bahu. Apui niilo bahu. Akalap ilo ra kium asuang bahu, ilo angansakon ahinakan.

Pahanak ulun rondo' ruandu', rondo' ungkuyon. Naapo no payato', patiri' ra rondo' ka sungoi hino. Karaja niilo sua-sua bahu. Ahaka' hiatu, ahaka' ilo asuang bahu. Ulun ra tana' tili bahu am hili bahu rayol nu ulun ra tana' tili am suku riitaka raino.

Ulit nu Nakaundut ra Tatanom

(Informant: Mr. Tingkalur Antur, Kg. Balantos)

Sino hitu ruo ahaka' namahun. Antangumoh ilo, sunsulini niilo kaando' tatanom. Atu-atu tatanom kaando' am alarau huang niilo. Kanon apahon alap.

Sino hitu inupi nu buayoi. "Hino po, akau ruo tukiir antangumoh kaando' kanon tonomon muyun," kono. "Kono po hino, ibiton mu pahaka' mu ruandu' hino ra tanga' nu umoh am tobokon mu," kono. Pahaka' no ungkuyon hitu alarau huang no ra boborok no hitu. "Pinatoi mu po boborok mu tu, siung-siung nu tatanom-tatanom sino noyo," kono nu inupi no. Huang-huang iso amahuang. Kaa halan aka' atas iso amatoi ra boborok no tu. Boboroknga hino pongkotob ra pusor. Ali hino kanon kaando' am hino poyo bahu.

Rondo' hili ka orou, "Ali', muoi to ra tanga' nu umoh. Oyo' to. Ilai' umoh to," kono. "Yuu," kono nu boborok no tu, boborok no ruandu'.

Pambaya' ilo ruo ahaka'. Bol ra tanga' nu umoh niilo. Tanga' nu umoh niilo hitu kaando' kapiro atu-atu tatanom. "Ali', ilai' kutu ku," kono nu buayoi tu. "Younga, ilai' kutu ku," kono. Ilai' nu boborok, pahaka' no ruandu' tu kutu no ra tanga' nu umoh niilo. Ilai' no kutu no tu. Huang-huang iso amahuang onobok ra boborok no tu. Kaa tobokon no, kaando' kanon no. Inupi no tu, "Rorok-rorok apapatoi ra boborok no tu. Apatobok ra ralaa."

Kono hino bahu. Kasuku bahu huang no. Nasuku huang no. Ilai' no boborok no tu hilong ra kutu am alapo' no sisipan sinangawan. Pok! Toboko' boborok no, ali' no, pahaka' no ruandu' hitu. Sol! Inatoi boborok no am buayoi tu inuli' ra pahun.

Tangi' no nantangi'. Ra rahuon nu inupi no tu, tulu orou bahu ilain umoh niilo tu. Tulu orou bolong no bahu, bolong, bolong, bolong. Inupi no hitu, "Tobokon mu po boborok mu tu, tulu orou mu kaa lumihat ra umoh muyun tu. Am katulu ra orou bahu ko lumuat ilain mu umoh muyun tu. Siung-siung nu tatanom, ralai, sigup, ilu'ui, kasou, uli', bilor, siung no sino ra hino. Kono siung-siung nu kanon sino ra pahaka' mu ruandu' tu,"

kono nu inupi no tu. Yuu bolong buayoi tu suku tulu orou.

Karat iso ra katuluan. Iilai' bahu, ilai' no umoh niilo tu bahu. Siung-siung nu tatanom am kanon ilu'ui, bilor, uli', kasou, dalai, sigup sino noyo. Inan nali inangun ra kanon. Abuk nu rala' ili inangun no ra huhut nu ralai, ripon no dalai, lumbak no bilor, longon no totohok nu ilu'ui, arung no uli' am kasou am hino-hino po. Bahu kono buayoi ili nakalap ra kanon. Kono raino bahu nakalap ilo ra kanon.

Hitunga ra kono itaka ulun nu tana' suku raino atu-atu yak kanon suku ra anak sulut.

Ulit-ulit kono ra Ulun Murut kaa nakaundut ra Babatik (Informant: Mr. Nauyaban Baruyon, Kg. Sumintobol)

Paat nu asol ra lair, okondo' ulit-ulit nu tulu sangaka'.

Paat nu orou hili, ilo ahuyu-huyum ra intok nu Mangun. Siung-siung niilo inuoi ra tampak nu olot am anumbuk ilo ra tataun am ambaal ra tukar. Tutumbukin niilo tataun. Pasukuon niilo halan ra limbowon muoi ahilong ra intokon (ayanan) nu Mangun. Ilo halan sumuku ra limbowon, unduton nu Mangun. Sasayo' tataun binaal niilo ra tukar.

"Raino," kono nu Mangun, "Akau kaando' unduton muyun ra intok ku," kono nu Mangun. "Akau naayag ra tana', am hino yak pahuyuman muyun ra bayag muyun. Ali hino taakin ku akau saumi babatik, am muoi ka ansarui ra luab, rumapit ka ra sandipag," kono, "Batik nu surat muyun hino ohondo' yak," kono. "Sumuku ka ra sandipag bingkalon muyun am ilai'," kono. "Yau," kono nu tulu ngaulun hiano, am apat ngaulun inayan, kaa inaya' nansarui. Pusinggau no talu ngaulun hiano nansarui. Ulun Melayu surat no pinasisip no ra songkok no. Ulun Cina surat no kinatup no. Am ulun Murut surat no pinasisip no ra abag no.

Nansarui no ilo, sarui-sarui suku ilo ra sandipag. Am unduto' niilo surat binatikan nu Mangun tu, bingkalo', pohondoo'. Ilai' nu Melayu, surat no tu sino po am batik no kaa nalu'u. Bingkalo' nu Cina, surat binatikan nu Mangun hitu poyo, am sino po batik no. Ali hino nalu'u kaborok. Batik nu surat no tu napayat. Am bingkalo' nu ulun Murut hitu, surat no tu poyo. Ilai' no kaando' bahu batik no. Nopongo' nalu'u nu sungoi am napampas no batik no.

Paat nu orou hitu, maya' ra randalom nu ulit-ulit hili poyo, hinonga lakou no ulun Murut kaando' babatik.

