

Changing Agricultural Magic in Southern Illinois : A Systematic Analysis of Folk-Urban Transition

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What happens to a group's folklore when the group's solidarity is weakened? In this article by Passin and Bennett, the superstitions of a group in southern Illinois are examined in terms of the group's becoming increasingly more urban. The hypothesis is that as a rural folk community becomes more urbanized, it also becomes less homogeneous and less well integrated. As the homogeneity of the group decreases, the authors argue, the magical system—in the form of agricultural superstitions—becomes likewise less coherent and less consistent.

The problem, in part, concerns the fate of folklore when function is changed or lost. If the folklore survives, it generally fulfills a function other than that which it originally fulfilled. One reason for the persistence of folklore is that old forms can be used to fit new functions. A sacred American Indian myth may be used as a bedtime story; a song sung by a dissident minority group engaged in a street demonstration can serve as entertainment at a teenage hootenanny, and so on.

In the case of the southern Illinois community examined by Passin and Bennett, it is clear that the superstitions will continue to be known for some time to come. However, knowing them is not the same as believing them, which in turn is not the same as practicing them. Some individuals may believe the superstitions to be true but may be too ashamed to practice them; others may both believe and practice. The present article provides an important contrast with most collections of superstitions in that the latter rarely give any information about belief and practice. The collector does not indicate whether the informant believes the superstition he relates or whether he practices it. Without this kind of informant contextual data, it is virtually impossible to discuss the function of superstitions in a given community, and further, it is equally difficult to see the changes in a folk's attitudes toward its folklore. Yet these attitudes and the historical changes in them can be equally as interesting as the folklore itself.

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In order to generalize the folk-urban continuum it is necessary to conceive it as a transition from greater to lesser homogeneity.¹ With this conception the difference between such transitions in primitive and in modern societies becomes merely one of degree. In this article we propose to examine an hypothesis derived from the field of so-called "primitive" peoples.² It seems to us that if we can demonstrate the validity of the continuum in a modern setting we shall have made some contribution to any elaboration of the entire theory.

Although nowhere quite so explicitly stated as in the work of Redfield, it is generally acknowledged that in the transition of a community from a state of relative social homogeneity to heterogeneity, there are correlative changes in the ideological views of its members. This is, of course, an aspect of the historic development of rational and nonsacred attitudes, which is so well documented for the growth of modern industrial society.³ One important phase of this change is in respect to the complex of beliefs and practices known as magic. This article is concerned with an empirical investigation of the kinds of changes in magic that seem to cohere, or go along with, a community in transition.

Within the conceptual framework of folk-urban theory, the following proposition is relevant to our inquiry: "The lesser the homogeneity of a culture (or the greater the heterogeneity), the lesser the organization (or the greater the disorganization)." From this may be derived the central contention of this study. In somewhat less compressed form, it may be stated that the system of magic prevailing in a homogeneous phase will tend to be more fragmentary, less internally coherent, and more disorganized as the community moves toward lesser homogeneity.

The research from which we have derived our central hypothesis has been done among so-called "primitive" societies. For our part, we shall examine magical changes in a modern rural community that has undergone change. It should be noted that the change from a folk to an urban type is essentially analogous to the change from a self-sufficient to a dependent rural community. The essential analogy lodges in the fact that both are changing from more to less homogeneity.⁴ While the range we have studied does not cover the full length of the ideal-type continuum,⁵ there is a demonstrable difference

¹ The reader will discover the basic ideas of this approach in the work of Robert Redfield, Ferdinand Tönnies, Émile Durkheim, Howard Becker, P. Sorokin.

² Cf. Redfield, *The Folk Society in Yucatan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942).

³ Cf. Richard H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*.

⁴ Cf. the University of Chicago peasant study series, particularly H. Miner, *St. Denis, A French-Canadian Parish* (and Redfield's introduction); and E. H. Spicer, *Pascua, A Yaqui Village*.

⁵ Becker formerly used "ideal type" but now prefers the term "constructed type." The difference, however, seems of little moment here, even though it is important in other contexts.

in respect to homogeneity between the two selected phases. For theoretical purposes this is the crucial factor.

As an incident to this study, the authors entertain the hope that the following purposes may be served: (1) a specific understanding of historical process in southern Illinois; (2) a contribution to folk-urban theory; (3) a concrete demonstration of the feasibility of general "law" in the field of society, whether primitive or modern; (4) a greater *rapprochement* between the disciplines of anthropology and sociology.

I

In the community of Stringtown, Illinois, and its immediately adjacent area,⁶ the historic process of adaptation to expanding urbanism has involved a change from a folk-like homogeneous community to a heterogeneous "town-country" type.⁷ The limits of this paper do not permit a detailed justification of this view, and the reader must be referred to existing available documentation.⁸ The terminal points of this process, called respectively Old Stringtown and Stringtown 1939,⁹ may be described for the purposes of our analysis as follows: Old Stringtown, the initial historic phase preceding the major onslaught of urbanism, was a (relatively) economically self-sufficient community, sacred in both outlook and social controls, highly integrated, with a marked dominance of primary-group controls, particularly familial. After the shattering historical impact of "moonshining," which served as midwife to the nascent urbanization, Stringtown 1939 became economically dependent upon the wider American economic scene. In association with this fundamental economic transition, the community came to rest more upon impersonal sanctions, the family declined in importance, the church virtually disappeared as an

⁶ The area of southern Illinois as a particularly tradition-rich region has recently been surveyed by folklorist Richard M. Dorson. A selection of its treasures appears as one of the seven regional repertoires of folklore contained in Dorson's excellent anthology of American folklore, *Buying the Wind* (Chicago, 1964). For this sampling of southern Illinois folklore as well as references to key collections, see *Buying the Wind*, pp. 289-414.—ED. NOTE

⁷ This term is taken from J. H. Kolb. Cf., "Family Life and Rural Organization," *Publications of the American Sociological Society*, Vol. 23 (1929), 147.

⁸ The following items are available: Passin, "Culture Change in Southern Illinois," *Rural Sociology* (September 1942); a somewhat more enlarged version in Passin, "Preliminary report of a field survey of culture change in the region of Unionville, Illinois, Summer 1939," SSRC [Social Science Research Council] (1941), mimeo'd; Bennett, Smith, and Passin, "Food and Culture in Southern Illinois," *American Sociological Review* (October 1942); Bennett, "Some Problems of Status and Social Solidarity in a Riverbottoms Community," *Rural Sociology* (forthcoming). [This was published as "Some Problems of Status and Solidarity in a Rural Society," *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 8 (1943), 396-408.—ED. NOTE]

⁹ These materials are based both upon Stringtown and the adjacent area, particularly the bottoms community studied by Mr. Bennett. The use of the name of Stringtown alone in the designation of phases must be understood merely as a literary convenience. It actually refers to the preindustrial phase of the rest of the area as well as of Stringtown.

effective agency of social control, and attitudes were progressively secularized. The verdict of heterogeneity is demonstrable in all phases of the communal life.

If we ignore the specific historic content and concentrate on form, it is apparent that Old Stringtown was similar to what is recognized as the folk, or primitive, society. In respect to content, the specific magical prescriptions are derived from what is evidently an Old English pattern, which was carried to most of the major settlements of this historic-ethnic group.¹⁰ But while this is true even of the present-day remnants of magic, the organization of the items and their articulation in the general way of life of the community seem to depend upon nonhistorical factors. No one has convincingly demonstrated why it is that folk-type societies universally have magical systems. The present authors believe, however, that *given* the presence of magical items in the cultural *repertoire* of a people, under folk conditions they are effective because:¹¹ (1) no alternative beliefs are present to create conflict; (2) the system of beliefs is not subject to inner checks and alterations.¹²

The magical practices under consideration centered around the economic life of the people. These include the appropriate times for planting various crops, the significance of the Zodiac and other celestial phenomena, the determination of weather conditions, the time for the slaughter and care of livestock, and such industrial pursuits as making soap.

It was believed that successful crops required careful observation of traditional "signs." Lettuce and certain other garden crops must be planted on St. Valentine's day, February 14.¹³ Failure to observe this prescription automatically results in a bad crop. Cucumbers must be planted in "dark moon" and by the Zodiacal "twin" sign. Potatoes and corn must be planted in the dark of the moon. Beans should be planted on Good Friday. In general, the principle seems to have been that plants that grow primarily above the

¹⁰ Compare some of the materials presented below with those found in Vance Randolph, *The Ozarks*; Mandel Sherman, *Hollow Folk*; and Harry M. Hyatt, *Folklore from Adams County, Illinois*. Memoirs Alma Egan Hyatt Foundation (New York, 1935).

¹¹ There are several possible reasons why the folk consider magic to be effective. For a concise summary of Edward B. Tylor's discussion of some of these reasons, see Paul Bohannan, *Social Anthropology* (New York, 1963), p. 314.—Ed. NOTE

¹² Cf. Evans-Pritchard's classic account in *Witchcraft Among the Azande* (Oxford, 1937).

¹³ The ensuing description, although referring to a former period, is cast in the present tense for the sake of convenience of exposition. [Parallels for this superstition as well as the others cited in this paper may be found in Wayland Hand's superbly edited two volumes, *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions from North Carolina*, which constitute Volumes 6 and 7 of the *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* (Durham, 1961, 1964). For the general notion that certain vegetables should be planted on February 14th, see Item 8001. For corn and onions in particular, see Items 8127 and 8194. The reader may familiarize himself with this fine compendium of 8569 superstitions by looking up parallels for some of the other superstitions mentioned by Passin and Bennett. Professor Hand also provides an extensive bibliography of collections of American superstitions.—Ed. NOTE]

ground should be seeded in "light moon," the others in "dark moon."¹⁴ Things that grow along a vine should be planted when the signs are in the arms.

The signs are also significant in respect to the care of stock. Hogs should be slaughtered in the dark of the moon when the sign is between the thighs and the knees. Otherwise the meat swells up. To prevent hemorrhage and harmful aftereffects, castration should be performed by the same signs. The same sign determines the time of preserving meat. If it is not observed, the meat will "fry away into grease," the grease will unaccountably disappear, the meat will curl in the frying pan, and it will be difficult to make brown gravy. Stock should be weaned when the sign is in the head, or else "they go to hollerin'." (The same was suggested for human children.)

Soap must be made in the dark of the moon. Planking and house building must occur in the appropriate sign, or the roofing will curl upwards.

The coming weather, an item of extreme importance to farmers, can be predicted from a variety of signs, astral, floral, and faunal. These are sufficiently numerous to fill a small-sized volume and must be omitted here.

The magical prescriptions carry their own sanctions. Failure to comply results in unfortunate consequences, even disaster, for the skeptic or forgetful one. The potency of these underlying sanctions must be taken to indicate the urgent and immediate importance of the magical practices in the life of the people.

At the same time, the farmer carried on what from our vantage point may be designated as more rationalistic practices. What is of crucial significance, however, in determining the role of magic, is that magical and rationalistic agriculture were not practiced disjunctively, side by side as it were, but were both articulated in a consistent body of practice. The unitary practice of agriculture required the observation of both classes of activity, simultaneously and intertwined. To have a successful corn crop, the farmer selected his seed, plowed, planted by the sign, cultivated, and harvested. The sign was not a mere afterthought, even if one dictated by common-sense caution, but rather an integral part of the total agricultural process. In this we are able to observe a phenomenon common in the experience of the student of primitive society.¹⁵

Participation in this system of belief and practice was widespread, and in this fact we again see the mark of the folk society. Virtually everybody accepted the ideas and carried out the prescriptions. The following statements could be duplicated many times over:

My father used the signs all the time. He wouldn't plant nothin' without 'em. He planted his potatoes in the dark of the moon every year of his life.

¹⁴ The principle appears to be based upon sympathetic magic. The "light moon," waxing or increasing of the moon, is construed as a rising or upward movement; the "dark moon," waning or decreasing of the moon, is interpreted as a falling or downward movement. Hence, crops that grow above the ground and must grow *up* are planted in the light of the moon, whereas root crops that grow below the ground and must grow *down* are planted in the dark of the moon.—ED. NOTE

¹⁵ Cf. Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935); Redfield, *op. cit.*

The reason they don't raise no crops worth nothin' now is because they don't use the signs.

It also seemed to be the case that the knowledge and practices of any one person were identical with those of others. There was a large overlapping area of magical knowledge among all members. Of course, some individuals had greater knowledge than others, and were accorded high esteem and consulted. But the central core of the concepts was shared in the minds of all the people and not carried exclusively by specialist practitioners.

The system generated no internal contradictions to plague the individual. Clearly understood, its major tenets of belief and practice interlocked to form a coherent fabric of compelling custom. The beliefs in respect to the properties of the lunar and Zodiacal phases, long hallowed by tradition and unchallenged by any corrosive agent of rationalism in the body politic, supported the practices. The sanction of fear of failure urged people to observe with little question.

Detailed prescriptions of the various elements by older informants are clear-cut and consistent. Their descriptions evince a high degree of detailed similarity with each other and point to the former wide diffusion and coherence of the pattern. Particularly noteworthy in this connection is the sharpness and clarity of the causal explanations.

I tell you, if you take a board and lay it down on the ground in the dark of the moon, and lay another right next to it in the light of the moon, and wait a while, you'll find the grass under the one you put down in the light all long and green, while the grass under the one you put down in the dark will be dead. That's because the one you put down in the light don't press so tight to the ground. That's what's behind it.

The cause—that it doesn't press so tightly to the ground—is analogically applied to plants seeded in the light of the moon: ears of corn will remain upright on the stalk and not hang down towards the ground. This is undesirable since the ears are difficult to reach during shucking. Likewise, planks cut in the light of the moon will curl upwards; and hog meat slaughtered in light moon will curl upwards in the frying pan.

It is important to note that observance alone could not guarantee success, but transgression could assure failure. Thus failure, in despite of observance, could be explained by many factors within or without the system. Poor rational judgment could prejudice the outcome unfavorably; only abiding by all of the rules, rational *and* magical, could bring about success with the benevolent intervention of Nature. Once having accepted the system, it could not be destroyed from within, as Evans-Pritchard has shown so admirably for the Azande.¹⁶ If, for example, a man planted his cabbage with due regard for the signs, and yet reaped failure, then perhaps some menstruating woman chanced in the vicinity of his cabbage patch (this would harm the cabbage), or he was not careful of some particular, or else Nature was simply capricious.

¹⁶ Evans-Pritchard, *op. cit.*

Neglect of the magical prescriptions automatically meant failure; observance did not eliminate all risk from the agricultural enterprise, it only reduced it.

What is relevant for the hypothesis under analysis, then, is that in the Old Stringtown phase, the system of interlocking belief, sanction, and practice was (1) total, not fragmentary; (2) internally consistent; (3) organized; (4) closely articulated within the wider system of agricultural and economic activity; (5) shared by all members of the culture alike; and (6) within the minds of the people constituted an identical content pattern. In short, it was a folk-type magical system.

II

With the post-World War I agricultural depression, Stringtown was drawn into the economic vortex of the wider American economy. How this happened in a concrete historical sense cannot be explained here for lack of space; some explanation is provided in earlier reports.¹⁷ Since we are concerned with the consequences of the transition, it suffices our purpose merely to record the historical fact. The loss of economic self-sufficiency entailed far-reaching consequences for the society and a drift towards heterogeneity that goes on unabated today.

It is clear that the initial impact of urbanism involved the subsistence economic system; with the result that beliefs and attitudes accommodated to that system were among the first to break down and adapt to new conditions, or at least to show some perceptible effects of that widening of cultural horizon incident to the process of urbanization. Some of the specific factors instrumental in bringing about the new situation may be isolated for examination.

One of the most prominent consequences of the introduction of a cash crop economy was the concurrent need for more rational and efficient agriculture. Failures have immediate monetary consequences, and the rising money needs place a premium on success. The individual must pay attention to scientific practices and not let tradition interfere with sound practice. This imperious need makes the individual accessible to extrasystemic ideas. Thus people began to devote time to the study of catalogues, extension bulletins, and farm bureau publications, all of which provide an entering wedge for the differentiation of initially homogeneous beliefs and practices.

Furthermore, speed and precision in the planting of cash crops in order to make use of the limited farm labor supply became necessary, and individuals could not always observe the signs even if they wanted to. If the equipment (possibly borrowed) and the farm labor were available, the farmer had to put in his corn, whether the sign was traditionally propitious or not, or else court complete disaster. There is considerable evidence to show that this

¹⁷ Passin, *op. cit.*

lack of accord between traditional prescription and utilitarian need caused great conflict and stress for individuals until they were able to rationalize it in some way.

With the general opening up of the community to urban influences and the increasing differentiation which followed, people began to accept secular and rational modes of thought from the urban models along with other urban values. On the one hand, the internal processes of heterogenization favored rational thought; on the other hand, acceptance of urban values supported the internal development.

The school occupies an interesting place in this course of events. Despite its rational curriculum, it was not the efficient cause of the change. Indeed, careful perusal of school records shows that there have been no major curricular innovations in perhaps fifty years. Rather the school was itself affected by the increasing secular and rational emphasis. For the school to be effective as a rational influence, the total state of the community had to change first.

The decline of the church contributed to the secularizing tendency by virtue of the elimination of sacred ways of thought from the minds of most inhabitants. Reciprocally, of course, its decline too was affected by the general change.

Finally, the appearance on the scene of alternate and competing systems of thought and behavior, fostered by urban values, hastened the destruction of the older system.

With this situation, what can be predicated of the character of the changes from our initial hypothesis? Verification of the hypothesis requires that the change be demonstrably in the direction of decrease of the degree of coherence, or integration of the beliefs. The concrete meaning of this idea will emerge in the course of the analysis.

All evidence goes to show that there has been a catastrophic decline in the total number of persons who believe in the magic. This is of fundamental importance, for now instead of a community of believers, we find a community in which full believers and unbelievers are sharply distinguished, and all the intermediate stages are discernible. Where formerly everybody, except a few perennial scoffers, accepted the beliefs implicitly, nowadays only a small band of oldsters or conservatives hold these ideas in their entirety, and they are subject to constant sniping and rational attack. They must now defend themselves for believing what was once taken for granted in the mental fabric of the culture. An oldster laments:

Nowadays when you ask `em if they plant by the signs, they git smart and say things. If you say, "Do you plant in the dark of the moon?" they will say, "No, I plant in the ground!" all sech smart remarks ez that.¹⁸

¹⁸ Even this witticism is traditional. See Alan Dundes, "Brown County Superstitions," *Midwest Folklore*, Vol. 11 (1961), 51.—Ed. Note

Most people reported that their parents observed the signs, although they themselves might not do so.

No. I don't have no special signs for sowin'. My people did, the old folks.

Thus a survey of present practices would show that some people believe and some don't; that some practice and some don't.

The body of beliefs is not shared in common. By contrast with the former relatively even diffusion of the ideas throughout the general populace, at present there are wide differences among individuals with respect both to what they know and what they believe. Thus, as pointed out above, some frankly disbelieve. But of those who believe, different persons believe different things. The items of belief have become fragmentary and scattered irregularly among the people. Some persons understand gardening magic, or even the prescriptions about cucumbers as against beans; some believe only the live-stock injunctions. Since the evidence for this view would be excessively lengthy, the following comparison of some of the beliefs of two neighboring families will illustrate the drift of these remarks:

<i>Crop</i>	SIGN	
	<i>Family A</i>	<i>Family B</i>
carrots	dark moon	no sign
black-eyed peas	no sign	arms
crowder peas	no sign	head
turnips	head	no sign
pole beans	no sign	arms

A thoroughly documented comparison would be even more striking.

Actual knowledge varies considerably. Some persons know one set of signs, others another set. A person may know of the existence of a sign, but will not know what it is. He then may or may not refer for illumination to some better informed person, the Ladies Birthday Almanac, or some Zodiacal register. An old woman reported:

I told my son when to plant his cucumbers. He said he didn't know when to plant 'em, so I looked it up in the Almanac and told him.

Our detailed analysis of what was believed currently in the community revealed a further striking phenomenon. The beliefs entertained are not only partial and fragmentary, but they are often actually contradictory and inconsistent. In this we can see the breakdown of the inner consistency and coherence of the system.

It will be recalled that in the older situation, beliefs were well integrated, that they did not contradict each other. At the present time, every fundamental element in the system is subject to conflicting interpretations. In the words of one perplexed farmer:

The trouble with the signs is that no two fellers will say the same thing. My daddy-in-law says there's two weeks of dark of the moon to plant in,

but my own daddy says there's only two days. A couple fellers over here both said the dark of the moon come at different times, and both planted their potatoes by their own signs—and both of 'em raised good potatoes! That's the trouble with them signs.

Even persons who feel that lunar phases are important are not quite sure of their exact occurrence. In 1939 the confusion generated a serious community-wide controversy which was partially adjudicated by a letter to the *Prairie Farmer*! Some people believe that the lunar phases divide the month into equal periods of light and dark moon. Others hold with equal conviction that "dark moon is just when it's a little sliver, just beginnin' to full up. Now the light of the moon is when it's in its last quarter, full and bright." Still others hold to the conception of one or at most two days for the proper celestial conditions.

The same confusion is manifest in respect to the Zodiacal signs, although not to the same extreme degree. But there is much conflict over when the sign is in the arms, or the head, or the thighs.

Finally, the lack of coherence affects the very meaning of the signs. Compare the following prescriptions of three different individuals:

Crop	SIGN		
	A	B	C
carrots	dark moon	head	none
potatoes	dark moon	arms	legs
garden peas	full moon	head	arms
beets	dark moon	head	none
cabbage	head	heart	head
lettuce	light moon	head	Feb. 14

It is also to be observed that the various practices still known or followed stand unsupported by the rich causal system of explanations which was so important in early days. People are no longer sure of the causes of the phenomena. While the explanation of the board is freely resorted to, it is significant that a directly opposite account is given as frequently as the one described.¹⁹ Many will frankly admit that they are not sure whether the

¹⁹ Sometimes there may be logical consistency behind apparent contradiction. For example, whereas there is agreement concerning the general effect of laying a fence in the dark of the moon, there is disagreement concerning the extent of the effect and consequently the practice to be followed. One of my informants in rural Indiana recommended setting fence posts in the *dark of the moon* so that they would stay in. On the other hand, there are superstitions reported elsewhere urging that fences be laid in the *light of the moon*, because if laid in the dark of the moon, the fences would sink into the ground and rot. The principle of downward movement associated with the dark of the moon is consistent, but the amount of movement is a critical variable. See Dundes, *ibid.* It is well to remember that the association of both good and bad luck with the same sign is not at all unusual as Ernest Jones explained. Moreover, the existence of alternate, variant forms of a superstition for the same act, e.g., planting a particular crop, is not necessarily a sign of the disintegration of a folk's belief system. Consistency is one of the analyst's favorite criteria; it is not often one of importance for the folk. However, the mixed emotions and attitudes of Passin and Bennett's informants toward the superstitions strongly support the disintegration hypothesis.—ED. NOTE

grass is supposed to flourish or to die under the board in dark moon. Thus the individual who may be inclined to continue his observation of the signs will not know exactly why he anticipates certain results, nor, indeed, why he even bothers except for reasons of vague, traditional sentiment.

In current agricultural practice, the observation of sign and phase has become incidental to the main body of common-sense pursuits. The folk beliefs are no longer a necessary part of the procedure; magical and "rational" are disjunct. By this is meant the fact that in the minds of the people the two elements in the historic tradition that had once been fused in a dynamically unified pattern now form separate categories. The separation is continually indicated by doubters in the epithets of "old fogy ideas," "nigger ideas," and "superstitions"; by adherents, in the recognition that the special beliefs under consideration are singled out for scorn by others.

That most adult persons were reared in primary groups that inculcated these beliefs is a source of considerable conflict. Many feel uneasy in compliance; and many feel equally uneasy about noncompliance. People tend to be very defensive about the signs.

Well, I'm sorta foolish about 'em myself. . . I think there's somethin' to 'em all right (very halting and embarrassed).

A middle-aged woman complained that her mother-in-law "makes fun of me because I can't tell the signs at my age." And yet this same mother-in-law said to one of the field staff, "I guess I'm jes' full of that sign foolishness. I don't know what good it is." A dialogue between husband and wife sets this off in fine relief:

H: (to interviewer) It's mostly niggers have these superstitions. I don't plant by no signs. I plant when the ground's ready.

W: Why, C., how can you say that? You fussin' aroun' here tryin' to get your potatoes in by the right sign! You know you always plant your potatoes in the sign.

H: (very embarrassed) Oh quiet! I don't!

W: (to interviewer) Now, don't you believe him.

The present state of affairs in regard to magic can be characterized further by the following considerations. Whereas formerly the system was maintained by its own internal sanctions and by traditional continuity from generation to generation, these are no longer accepted as adequate to still the pangs of doubt. All feel the desirability of submission to some rational, experimental test, however widely the anticipations of outcome may vary. This fact gives the current explanations about the board in dark moon a new significance: it is conceived as an experimental test. The following is an example of the current mood:

You know, what a feller ought to do is to set down ever' time he went by the sign. It wouldn't cost him nothin' to do that. Then a feller could trace it up—speriment like. You could try out the sign an' test it an' then you'd really know. If I was to git a farm again that's what I'd do. (He had lost

his farm during the 1937 flood.—*The Authors.*) Now, I got a good crop of potatoes one year, so I traced 'em up when I planted 'em an' it was in the new moon—that's the dark moon. I remembered that the year before I planted 'em in the light moon, an' I got just as good a crop.

Whatever the outcome of the particular experiment cited or proposed, it is clear that tradition is no longer enough; reason also must be satisfied.

Thus, in general contrast to the condition of magical belief in Old Stringtown, the present system is: (1) fragmentary; (2) internally contradictory; (3) relatively disorganized; (4) disassociated from other aspects of the culture; (5) unequally distributed among the people; and (6) forming no consistently accepted content pattern. It is a relatively secularized magical system.

III

The qualification "relatively" indicates the limitation suggested earlier in the paper. It would be very misleading to leave the impression of complete disintegration of magic in the community. The empirical case of Stringtown covers but a limited segment of the logically possible continuum. In its earlier phase it was only *relatively* homogeneous; at present it is only *relatively* heterogeneous. The course of subsequent historical development and the impact of the war in accelerating external contact and dependence may extend the process even further and present us with an even more heterogeneous picture.

But at present there are islands of homogeneity within the general disorganization. These result from the dual processes of (1) persistence of older elements for a variety of reasons, and (2) the adaptation of old elements to the new conditions—an important phase of cultural creativity. In respect to the latter, genuinely novel elements may develop in accommodation to the new cultural conditions.

These "foci of folkness" may be ranged in three categories: (1) the persistence of the old, (2) the conflict area, and (3) the new, emergent pattern.

1. It is not in magic alone that the older pattern has persistence-power, but rather in the whole social structure. Indeed, it is here proposed that the persistence of the earlier magic is associated with the partial carry-over of the earlier social categories into the urbanized stage. The point cannot be documented here at length,²⁰ but exhaustive analysis of the area has demonstrated a division, amounting to a dual status system, between those most affected by the economic changes and those least affected. Among the latter group, some of the older sanctions, motivations, and attitudes still form a system in terms of which people order their lives. They have been designated as conservative, well-to-do, religious farmers.²¹ The others, by way of contrast, are

²⁰ The reader is here referred to the discussion of this subject in Passin, *op. cit.*, especially the SSRC version.

²¹ Passin, *op. cit.*

irreligious sharecroppers. It is primarily among the conservative group, those participating in a semblance of the older system and who find their satisfactions therein, that most systematic belief in magic is found.

In the main the distinction, in a superficial statistical sense, is between the old and the young. The "old folks" in general are more folklike, more conservative; and the young are more eager for and accessible to urbanization, to the currents of change flowing in from the outside. But it is no simple function of chronological age that we are concerned with here, for underlying this perennial youth-age disagreement is a basic divergence in orientation between persons who direct their life course within the traditional confines and those who seek elsewhere for their satisfactions. This divergence runs like a red thread throughout the whole area. By way of confirmation of this judgment, we may point out that sons of the conservative families tend to accept much of the world-view of their parents, while older persons who have been dislocated by the impact of urbanism (usually economically) are much more urbanized in their outlook. The surest, most confident and competent assertions on magic come from the "conservative" group. It is often stated in the form that "my father did it; it's good enough for me." And conversely, the greatest doubt, uncertainty, and disbelief come from the urbanized sector.²²

As long as there is still some basis for the old mode of life, we may expect the older system of magic to persist. It may be pointed out that this very phenomenon is a further confirmation of the hypothesis under consideration. It is found that even within the contemporaneous community, the areas of relative homogeneity (certainly less than in Old Stringtown) and of relative heterogeneity show the same systematic difference in regard to magic.

2. The area of conflict here concerns primarily what Frazer²³ and Malinowski²⁴ have called the "aleatory" element, the element of risk or luck which attends human endeavor. Many persons are torn between their rational doubt and the traditional impulsions which they acquired in their younger days. While they may feel the need for experimental evidence, they hesitate to accept a negative result as conclusive. They seem to fear to take the risk of noncompliance.

I don't know whether plantin' by the sign makes any difference, but we think it might. Of course, sometimes when we plant by the sign it don't have no good luck either.

There is a residual apprehension, a fear of risking the possibility of a poor crop or some other disaster by not observing the sign.

I dehorn cattle when the sign is in the thighs. I've heard of 'em bleedin' to death—hogs and cows both—if you don't do it by the signs. None of mine

²² This is, of course, excluding such special cases as college graduates, whatever their origins.

²³ James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*.

²⁴ B. Malinowski, *The Myth in Primitive Psychology*.

ever did that, but I watch it careful. . . . Yes, I've done it out of the sign an' nothin' happened, but I like to watch it careful. I generally do it by the sign.

This fear of risk also tends to inhibit a complete secularization of agricultural practice.

There is one further aspect of the intermediate conflict area which seems to be achieving a satisfactory solution. The planting of gardens is still more subject to the observance of signs than is the planting of cash crops. Corn, bean, and hay crops are almost entirely free from magical control. The reason seems to be that the latter group is more dependent upon rational considerations—labor supply, rainfall, etc.—while garden crops do not require a precise schedule. The same holds true for the care of livestock. In both of these, the signs are more frequently followed than in the case of the large cash crops. In this way, both traditional motives and economic expediency are partially satisfied.

3. The adjustment to the rational atmosphere is, however, taking somewhat different lines. One is by way of using the signs "when possible."

Yeah, I plant by the signs, but the season don't always let me.

Well, I plant corn by the dark of the moon. That is, I try to do it, but sometimes the season interferes. The water might stay up late, or somethin' like that. . . . I like to plant by the signs if I can. All of us aroun' here try to use 'em if the season don't interfere.

The most significant re-adaptation, however, is in the reduction of the importance of the sign so that it becomes only one among a number of other important elements. We have here virtually the basis for a new magical theory. The sign is important, but so are the rain, the condition of the soil, the season, the temperature, etc. The following is a characteristic explanation in these terms:

Well. . . the way I think is that the season and the sign ain't got nothin' to do with each other. I guess the crop really depends more on the rain—that's what we call the season—it's really more important. I prefer to stay on that, anyway. What a feller ought to be able to do is plant by the sign and not have to worry about the season, but the rain won't let you do that. If you could plant just by the sign there wouldn't be no risk—just wait for the sign an' then put the crop in. But the rain interferes. See, if you had the same rain ever' year, you could fergit about it an' plant by the sign. You know that would work in these here countries where they got. . . . giration (irrigation—*The Authors*). You could use nothin' but the sign 'cause you'd always have the same amount of water.

The final discernible mode of adaptation is a strictly individual one. Certain deviant personalities, "queer" in the conception of their neighbors, deliberately seek to cultivate past and exotic values, and by way of compensation for their present unadjustment, become extraordinary repositories of magical cult, even adding to the stock of traditional magical content by bringing in ideas from books and other sources. One such person—a descendant of one of the impoverished early settler families, who is feared by people because

of his unpredictable "queerness," is reputed to know more about the signs than anybody else in the area. He is occasionally consulted when special magical information is required.

It is clear, then, that some of these magical attitudes never completely disappear. They constitute residues in the culture that are never completely eradicated as a result of urbanization. Resistant and reintegrating tendencies are fostered in part by rationalizations, pseudo-experimentalism, the persistence of earlier social configurations and their associated attitudes, and even by special individuals whose compensatory psychic needs drive them to keep in touch with the past.

Conclusions

1. The proposition that change from isolation and homogeneity to mobility and heterogeneity entails predictable consequences in terms of such processes as disorganization, secularization, and disintegration was tested. Magical beliefs and practices were specifically chosen for demonstration.

2. The hypothesis, although based upon results obtained among peoples outside of the Western culture-historical tradition, has reference not to concrete historic entities as such, but to type-situations. It is therefore applicable wherever the heuristic conditions which will satisfy its proposed variables may be found.

3. These may be found in three general types of situations: (a) in a comparison of two or more societies that come from discrete historical traditions, where differences in respect to isolation and homogeneity can be shown; (b) among two or more societies within an historically continuous culture-area, but where differentials in the historic process have brought about type-differences in the isolation-homogeneity range, as in Redfield's study; and (c) in the historic course of change in a given society, where the change has been in the direction of the mobile heterogeneous pole. Our study exemplifies this latter type.

4. The historic course of change in the Stringtown area has been from relative isolation and homogeneity to relative external contact and heterogeneity, as a consequence of economic changes.

5. Within this context, it was expected that detailed study of the system of magic, or of any other institution, would demonstrate a systematic change in the direction of secularization, rationalization, and disorganization.

6. The empirical course of magical change seems a fairly good fit to theoretical expectancy.

7. It was also found that reintegration occurred at precisely those points where some equilibrium was being achieved within the changing culture, whether as persistence or re-adaptation of entirely new elements.