

# ANCIENT MYTH AND MODERN LIFE



C.J.A.

## GERALD A. LARUE

*Ancient Myth  
and Modern Life*

Gerald A. Larue

University of Southern California

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## *Preface to the Expanded Edition*

The scholarly research that underlies this book is still valid. What has changed are the "modern" aspects. Some of the issues are still developing, others have been or are in the process of being completed or fulfilled. What is new is the rapid development of neo-fundamentalism, charismatic movements, faith-healers, televangelism, and religious psychics. All draw upon the myths of the ancient past to validate their claims.

In the additions to *Ancient Myth and Modern Man*, I am far more outspoken. My own point of view, my personal evaluations come into prominence. There is reason for this change. The forces that would restrict open and free inquiry have become more vocal and they need to be challenged. In addition, a very important group, The Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion (CSER) has come into being and has held several conferences. Some of the finest scholars in the field of religion have been among the contributors and are members of the group. I have the privilege of being Chairman. Our papers and our public sessions have become more confrontive, and that development is reflected in the additions in the book.

The change in title is vital. When *Ancient Myth and Modern Man* was about to be published, I talked with a number of leaders in the women's movement and was assured that the title was acceptable. I was wrong and so were they! Immediately, I received letters from good friends telling me that the generic "Man" was not acceptable. Hence the new, non-sexist title with which I am most comfortable.

One important stylistic change has been made. Instead of designating time periods with the familiar Christian pattern of A.D. (*anno Domini*: the year of our Lord) or. B.C. (Before Christ), I have, in the additions, employed the newer universal and non-religious symbols of C.E. : The Common Era and BCE : Before the Common Era. The time periods are identical.

The publisher, David Alexander of Centerline Press, has been wonderfully cooperative and I am most grateful to Cassidy J. Alexander for the sketches that illustrate cosmological notions.

Gerald A. Larue  
Emeritus Professor:  
Biblical History & Archaeology  
Adjunct Professor: Gerontology  
University of Southern California  
April, 1988



## Preface

Different approaches to the study of myth have been employed during the past century and a half. Linguists, anthropologists, psychologists, and religionists brought their particular theories to myth, and often what they read into myth was what they discovered in myth. Some sought a primal monomyth or basic myth; others insisted that myths are best understood etiologically, as explanations of why things are the way they are; still others found a link between myth and ritual. Diffusionist theories account for shared features and provide hypotheses to explain the transmission of myths from group to group.

There are dangers of oversimplification in the use of any single approach to the study of mythology and in the search for an underlying theme to unite all mythic expressions.<sup>1</sup> Differences are obscured in the interest of stressing commonality. While diffusionist theories account for certain similarities, individual groups developed their own interpretations of common concepts, and some groups clearly produced their own myths. A brief review of some of the schools of mythological interpretation that have developed during the past 150 years demonstrates the need for caution before accepting the theories of one school over another and underscores the importance of reading the myths themselves, even in translation.

Modern study of ancient myth can be said to have begun with the work of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. In *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812) they defined myths as "stories of the gods," and in *Deutsche Mythologie* (1835) they demonstrated that oral and written traditions were waiting collecting and collating among German peasants and other such groups, if only scholars would set aside their prejudices. Some scholars responded to the challenge. In 1846 William Thoms coined the term *folk-lore* to designate the study of traditions current among "common people."<sup>2</sup> For others the study of myth remained as it had been: the recounting of interesting and fanciful tales of the savage past.

During the last half of the nineteenth century, the conflict between two differing schools—linguistic and anthropological—stirred interest in the

study of myth. Max Müller, employing a linguistic approach, argued that all Aryan myths went back to Sanskrit originals which were solar myths.<sup>3</sup> Before he died in 1900, his considerable writings had read solar mythologies into such diverse hero stories as those of Herakles, Perseus, Theseus, Oedipus, Samson, Beowulf, King Arthur, Cinderella, and Hansel and Gretel. According to Müller, a single plot underlay all myths and fairy tales: the struggle between light and darkness, the sun and the powers of night. The sun hero battled armies, monsters, ogres, and witches and suffered in the nether regions, just as the sun toiled across the heavens opposed by clouds and tempests. The precious gold found at the end of the struggle was golden sunshine. The magic weapons—spears, swords, and arrows—were shafts of darting sunlight. Müller's linguistic associates used fire, rain, snow, and the moon in their interpretations.

The early anthropological school, led by Andrew Lang, attacked the Linguists with scholarly argument and ridicule. Lang's theories rested on anthropological and ethnological research. Following the Grimm brothers' lead, Lang investigated village festivals, agricultural rites, and household beliefs, convinced that he could find in such folklore the archaic survivals of early myths. He was interested in reports from missionaries, travelers, and colonials about "savage myths" and barbaric customs they had observed in remote areas of the world. He was puzzled by the barbarous elements in the myths of the otherwise civilized Greeks. On the basis of anthropological studies by E. B. Tylor, and influenced by the Darwinian theory of biological evolution, which he transferred to anthropology and folklore, Lang understood Greek myths as containing remnants of earlier cultural patterns wherein cannibalism and human sacrifice prevailed. On the basis of a theory of unilinear cultural evolution, he traced stages of development from the simian to the polished sophisticate and predicted that the primitives of his day would be the Victorians of the future.

Shortly afterward, the psychoanalytic school brought its theories to the study of mythology, just as linguists and anthropologists had brought their preformulated hypotheses. Freud's analysis replaced Sanskrit with the unconscious, the conquest of light over dark with the victory of the conscious over the unconscious, and the toiling sun and the dark night with the phallus and the womb.<sup>4</sup> Through psychoanalysis, the hero was identified as a child rebelling against his parents; the hostile parents projected back the child's animosity and exposed him in a chest or ark in the water.<sup>5</sup> Myths, dreams, and fairy tales related a genital saga. The story of Red Riding Hood was interpreted as a tale of women who hate men and sex, the wolf with the living grandmother in his belly revealing pregnancy envy.<sup>6</sup>

Carl Jung and his followers developed a hypothesis of the collective unconscious and archetypal myths.<sup>7</sup> The collective unconscious, which

Jung believed exists in addition to immediate personal consciousness, is the universal, impersonal inheritance of all people which consists of archetypes or forms which can become conscious only on a secondary basis. Jung insisted that the theory rests on an empirical foundation. Although many scholars would admit that there are elements of fact in the hypothesis, it is too inclusive to be acceptable.

There may be some who would still like to make myth the equivalent or the forerunner of philosophy. This argument has been refuted too many times to be dealt with here. Obviously, myth and philosophy can exist in the same cultural milieu.<sup>8</sup> Mythology defined as "stories of the gods" is closer to theology, and what Westerners call "mythology" when they approach beliefs of other peoples is labeled "theology" when they discuss their own belief systems. Obviously, theology is preferable to mythology because one's own beliefs are always superior to those of others—else why retain them?

Some people prefer to think of myth in terms of a world-view—a *Weltanschauung*—because to define myth in terms of divine beings would eliminate certain forms of Buddhism from consideration, as well as certain scientific world-views that are not supernaturalistic. Although mythic thought may be incorporated in a world-view, myth and *Weltanschauung* are not equivalent terms. To eliminate the role of divinities as essential components of myth would result in demythologizing the literature (see below).

Mythological typologies raise too many questions for use in discussions in this book. Kees Bolle has pointed out that distinctions between some categories are blurred.<sup>9</sup> For example, cosmogonic myth treats of cosmic origins, cosmological myth explains the development of qualities or facets of the cosmos, and etiological myth interprets geological formations or the origins of unusual plants. In this book I have not used these detailed distinctions, and I have used *cosmogonic* and *cosmological* as interchangeable terms.

Biblical scholars tend to view Hermann Gunkel as the father of biblical form-criticism.<sup>10</sup> In applying the Grimm brothers' definition to the Old Testament, Gunkel found only truncated or faded myths. Gunkel believed that the Grimms' definition presupposed polytheism, and since Old Testament thought centers in the acts of a single deity, there could be no true myth in the Old Testament.<sup>11</sup> The definition used in this book is more inclusive than Gunkel's (see pp. 4f), embracing monotheism as well as polytheism. Thus it does not protect the Bible from mythological analysis.

In recent years some biblical scholars have sought to demythologize the New Testament, to remove outmoded world-views and to discern and preserve the deeper meaning of the Christian scriptures.<sup>12</sup> Such demythologizing operates within a continuing Christian mythological-theological

framework by affirming the reality of the interaction of God with the world and by ascribing unique status to Jesus as Messiah and revealer of the divine will. This approach accepts modern scientific world-views but holds that they are inadequate and do not comprehend the entire reality of the cosmos and of life, which requires recognition of the hidden, undiscerned presence of the deity operating in the world.<sup>13</sup>

To demythologize—completely—is to desacralize or to secularize. Mythic history without claims of what the gods did or did not do becomes secular history. Cosmological myths without divine participants are no more than human projections concerning the nature of the world and the universe, secular statements that may be more or less scientifically accurate. Societal myths without the authority of god figures are secular statements establishing social boundaries. Hero stories without gods are simply hero stories—no more, no less. Myths about death and dying and myths of the end of the age become statements about death and the future when the divinities are removed. Without the gods, the myths are no longer myths.

Can humans live without myths? Of course, if the classical definition established by the brothers Grimm is used. Substitutes are developed: philosophies of life, existential interpretations of life and living, secular humanistic approaches to existence. These nonmythic expressions, while they may embrace many of the same values as mythic statements, recognize these values as originating in human interaction rather than from divine pronouncements. There is no way to determine who accepts a mythological interpretation of life and who is a secularist on the basis of people's behavior in human situations. But this discussion has led to the content of the book, where the issues will be expanded and the power of myth explored.

The best and most accessible source of ancient Near Eastern texts is the third edition of *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (abbreviated *ANET*), edited by James B. Pritchard.<sup>14</sup> Although I follow the general format and occasionally some of the language of *ANET*, my translations are freer but hopefully still true to the ancient sources.

Of course, I am solely responsible for the contents of this book, but many persons have contributed to it: teachers, colleagues, students, and friends. During one exciting summer in Berkeley, Theodor H. Gaster stirred my thinking and expanded horizons in ways that continue to affect me. David Martin, of the School of Public Health of the University of Texas at Houston, and Herman Harvey, Dean of the College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, are friends with whom I have shared experiences, challenging ideas, trust, and unabashed acceptance. Bronwyn Emery, Marilyn Rutgers, Lucinda Simpson, Melinda Woodrich, Robin Wallace



Conerly, Carol Goidich, Ed Ostermeyer, Harriet F. Smith, Judy Simonis, and my sons Gerry and David have loved and shared and helped me grow. Most of all, Gayle E. Shadduck has sustained me during dark moments with loyalty, love, and support and has contributed more than time and typing to the development of the concepts within this book.

David Friedman, Professor of Biblical Studies at the University of Michigan, and Leonard Thompson, Professor of Religion at Lawrence University, read the manuscript in its early stage and offered helpful criticisms and comments. Carolyn Davidson of Prentice-Hall, my production editor, worked with the manuscript in its final stages, becoming in the process a friend and colleague.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For a discussion, see Stith Thompson, "Myth and Folktales," in Thomas A. Debeok, ed., *Myth, A Symposium* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955, 1965), pp. 169-80.

<sup>2</sup>William Thoms, in *The Athenaeum*, 1846, p. 862.

<sup>3</sup>For a concise but inclusive summary, see Richard M. Dorson, "The Eclipse of Solar Mythology," in Debeok, ed., *Myth, A Symposium*, pp. 25-63.

<sup>4</sup>Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955; Basic Books paperback ed., 1965).

<sup>5</sup>Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero and Other Writings* (New York: Vintage, 1959).

<sup>6</sup>Eric Fromm, *The Forgotten Language, An Introduction to the Understanding of Dreams, Fairy Tales and Myths* (New York: Grove Press, 1957; paperback reprint of 1951 ed.).

<sup>7</sup>*The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Bollingen Series XX, Vol. 9, Part 1, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 87-110.

<sup>8</sup>See Henri Frankfort, *Before Philosophy*, Ch. 1 (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1949); Kees W. Bolle, *The Freedom of Man in Myth* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), pp. 28ff.

<sup>9</sup>Bolle, *The Freedom of Man in Myth*, pp. 10ff.

<sup>10</sup>Gene M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 4f.

<sup>11</sup>Hermann Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis*, trans. W. H. Carruth (New York: Schocken Books, 1964; first pub. in 1901).

<sup>12</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1958), pp. 18, 35.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>14</sup>James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. with Supplement (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969).

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one

## Concerning Myth

Ancient man and his gods are dead and nearly forgotten, but their influence lingers. Myths—accounts of divine beings and their activities—formulated in the Near East two thousand to five thousand years ago continue to affect and in some degree to structure our individual and collective lives. The long dead give directions for life and living. Present-day attitudes are affected by what people believed thousands of years ago, and most of us are so conditioned to accept our mythic environment that we fail to be aware of it.

We inherit the structure of our society; it is predetermined when we arrive on the human scene. As we grow into it, it continues to develop and change. To some extent, each of us contributes to the form it is taking and will take. What we accept and live by becomes our life-style and contributes to maintaining the status quo. What we refuse or rebel against may produce reactions that tend either to harden the life-set of society or to help develop new societal values. No one fails to make a contribution; no one is uninvolved.

For the most part, the mythic antecedents of what we inherit are lost in the complex patterns of the past. We cannot always know what persons or groups became catalysts of change or stabilizing influences. Historical lines are broken; the lacunae are enormous. Nevertheless, the discovery of ancient literature has enabled us to glimpse some facets of ancient life and to apprehend some insights which, amazingly enough, are very much part of the modern scene. Perhaps we learn only that we are what we have always been throughout time—human. Perhaps we discover that we have inherited attitudes and patterns from those who lived five thousand and more years ago. Some of us may rejoice in this heritage; believing that the societal patterns that have evolved over thousands of years are the “right” ways, norms that have proven themselves through much testing and use. On the other hand, some of us may be irritated that we have been programmed by the past and by those who accept ancient attitudes. We may feel that we are different, that we should be free to express varying life-

styles and attitudes without threatening those who disagree and without experiencing social pressure to conform. We cannot be sure that variable life-styles will be tolerated in the future, or that viable choices will be available, or that individuals and groups will be able to develop new patterns for living.

This book deals with myths that developed in ancient Near Eastern centers of civilization: Egypt and Mesopotamia, and the territories immediately adjacent to them, particularly Israel. From these centers through thousands of years mythic implications have streamed, often in altered form, through Judaism and Christianity into the modern world, impacting, at times subtly, on our lives. If the book appears to emphasize biblical mythology disproportionately, it is because biblical myths have most affected the Western world. The continuum is, therefore, not to be discerned in the mysterious forms of Jungian archetypes, interesting though the Jungian hypothesis may be, but in the dynamic acceptance and promotion of mythic concepts by both church and state.<sup>1</sup>

In this book we will look at the ancient past and at modern man and note patterns of thinking about and responding to life that have been with us for millennia. We will suggest some potential developments and comment on what appears to be happening now and what present events may portend for the future. The tension between stability and flux should become obvious.

Some may argue that Greco-Roman mythology might also be included, for Mediterranean thought has contributed in many ways to the life and attitudes of the Western world. There are reasons for limiting the subject to the ancient Near East. First, there is slender but growing evidence that certain facets of Mediterranean mythic thought originated in Mesopotamia and Egypt. What was borrowed was, of course, transformed as it merged with and was absorbed into the Greco-Roman world, but thematic strains and implications often remained. It is well to remember, as Cyrus Gordon has pointed out, that during the second millennium B.C. there was active interchange of information in the Near Eastern world, and we should not be surprised to discover that from the older and long-established civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt, mythological concepts flowed into the Mediterranean world.<sup>2</sup> To attempt to trace the myths that moved from the ancient Near East into the Mediterranean world, to follow the changes in the myths as they entered new environments and as divinities merged into existing pantheons, is far beyond the scope of this book.<sup>3</sup> Nor will we try to trace the changes that took place, for example, in the Isis myth as it was observed in the Roman world up to about the fourth century A.D. Such discussions would divert us from our intent, which is to consider the impact of ancient Near Eastern myth on modern society.

Second, despite numerous references in Western literature to Greco-Roman themes and despite the distinct contributions of the Greco-Roman world to our civilization, the Mediterranean world has not had the continuing substantial influence of the ancient Near East on Western life-style and thought. Ancient Near Eastern thought continues to affect our society, often in vastly altered form, through Judaism and Christianity, and its effect is actively promoted by synagogue and church. Although New Testament literature was produced in the midst of and was affected by Mediterranean mythology, its mainstream is Hebrew-Jewish and Near Eastern. To attempt to relate Greco-Roman mythology to the New Testament and the Christian church would expand this book far beyond its intended purpose and would perhaps cloud some of the issues and confuse the content. Thus, without denying the significance of Mediterranean mythology, we will not include it here.

Nor will Far Eastern myths be introduced. The area is far too broad and its influence on Western society both recent and limited. In fact, only within the present century has Eastern mythic thought had any broad impact on Western thought and life-style.

Because there are interrelationship of concepts and parallel thought patterns among the nations of the ancient Near East, it should not be assumed that their mythic ideas and implications were necessarily identical. Each nation developed distinct mythic patterns, involving its own gods, life-styles, worship patterns, legal systems, and communal norms. If ideas were borrowed, they were modified to fit new settings. If hymns were borrowed and the names of the gods invoked in the hymn changed, new implications were given to the songs by their very setting in a different culture and a different cultus. For example, the parallels between the hymn to the sun by Akhenaton of Egypt and Psalm 104 may indicate that a Hebrew writer borrowed ideas and perhaps words from the Egyptian composition. In the Hebraic setting and in Hebrew worship, the hymn became something new and different. To borrow ideas and phrases is not necessarily the same as to accept mythic concepts. Each religion was unique, neither better nor worse (if evaluative adjectives are important) than the others. Cultic worship was related to basic human responses to life and living, to the known and the unknown in the cosmos, and to man's need for both physical and psychic survival. Nor does the borrowing of an idea render it less effective or less meaningful. In a new context, the borrowed phrase or image becomes an original expression. Past connotations may linger, but they are altered by their new setting. On the other hand, similarities and parallels suggest that many aspects of mythic thought were common property among the peoples of the ancient Near East: ideas were disseminated, diffused, and melded into the cultures that preserved them.



While it is important to note similarities, it is equally important to be aware of differences. Differences do not make one myth better than another; the responsibility for value judgment rests with individuals, who respond from unique personal backgrounds. Westerners raised in the tradition of monotheism tend not to be attracted to the polytheistic myths of the ancient Near East. Yet our Western culture includes groups that recognize angels and demons, a supreme deity and a devil, and the influence of saints, and some groups' creeds concern a tripartite god—all of which might be interpreted as polytheism or monolatry.<sup>4</sup> Because we insist on a monotheistic mythic statement, however, the idea of monotheism has been broadened for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to include a variety of minor divine or semidivine figures, without impairing the one-god idea.

We are so much a part of our modern mythic environment that we usually fail to perceive it. It has, in a sense, envired us and it has become a projection of the self, just as it has helped to shape the self. We and our mythic environment are one. Only when we alienate ourselves from the mythic strands within and around us are we able to see (and then, perhaps, imperfectly) the shaping influence of ancient myth on our lives. But to stand outside ourselves is difficult. We are prisoners of our time, limited by the pressures of current opinions and communal standards. There is tension between those who feel inhibited by prescribed boundaries and those who feel secure and satisfied living within established norms. Most societies experience a constant shifting and altering of standards, depending on the attitudes of the group in power and the pressure exerted by the dissenting minority. Only in extreme instances and in times of violent revolt are boundaries completely demolished. Perhaps by examining ancient mythic patterns and by realizing their conditioning effect on the individual and society, we will be able to some degree to remove ourselves intellectually from our personal mythic involvement and to become aware of and evaluate our mythic heritage and the mythic tensions present in society and in ourselves.

#### DEFINITION

The word *myth* is, as Henry A. Murray put it, a "chameleonic term."<sup>5</sup> In modern vernacular, myth is often confused with fairy tales, with imaginative or fantastic writings, with that which is not quite real or believable, and even with that which is false. News writers comment on "the myth" of one nation's missile superiority or "the myth" of the death of a national leader who has dropped from public view. *Myth* thereby becomes a dis-

paraging term prompting the dismissal of the reliability of a statement or subject. In this book, myth will be treated differently, our emphasis being the impact of ancient mythic themes in the past and on modern life.

The English term *myth* is derived from the Greek *muthos*, meaning "word" or "speech," "the thing spoken," "the tale told"—perhaps any information transmitted verbally including both truth and falsehood. Ancient myths deal primarily with the activities of one or more divine beings—gods, goddesses, and other superhuman beings—and their relationships with one another, with humans and other earth creatures, and with the cosmos. At first, myths were transmitted orally, but the ancient myths that we know now were preserved in written form. Thus, we could define myth as a literary vehicle or kind of literature involving divine beings. Such a definition embraces systems belief from monotheism to polytheism, from animism to demonology. It is not limited to what gods and goddesses do in their own realms, but also embraces what they do in the world of men. However, we need more than a simple definition to understand the nature of myth.

#### MYTHIC BEGINNINGS

Any comment on the origin of myths is conjectural. Some sources are at least 4,000 years old, and because these ancient documents display sophistication, maturity of observation, reflection, insight, and organization, we can surmise that behind the written forms lie long periods of oral tradition. The written documents contain allusions to mythic themes concerning which we have no information and which in the records seem to be in the process of being discarded. Therefore, we must conclude that before the third millennium B.C., man had been involved in mythopoeic thought and that he possessed myths that are not now known to us.

Within a given culture, variations in mythic interpretations indicate that although a myth once recorded in written form might tend to resist alteration, nevertheless a process of continuing interpretation was at work through the centuries. New insights, experiences, and sociopolitical developments called for reinterpretation of old concepts. Nor did there seem to be any resistance to recognizing simultaneously several mythic interpretations of one theme. Today, scientists hold differing theories of cosmological origin, and Christians and Jews accept the existence of varying patterns of worship and belief in different denominations. That variant myths could coexist in a culture warns against treating myths as fixed creedal statements, even though at times a myth might embody such a statement. Myths were believed and they were meant to be believed. They were

accepted as a reasonable and authoritative explanation of why the world is as it is.

Part of our intention in this book is to discern—almost intuitively, at times—what myths conveyed to those who recited or listened to them or participated in or observed the dramatic presentation of the myths. How did the myth itself and the issues it touched (often only by implication) affect society and the individual? What did it say about the cosmos and man's place within it? And how do the myth and mythic implications affect Western society?

Of course, such an inquiry presents basic problems. We have no way of knowing how ancient man (or modern man) internalized myths. Unstructured discussions with individuals and groups concerning the implications for the individual of modern mythic themes have revealed a variety of responses. Even within an established group, such as a family, a Sunday school class, or a neighborhood, a given myth has different implications for each individual. Such an observation warns against generalizations; everyone did not and does not react alike to mythic concepts. For example, in ancient Egypt, the pharaoh was mythically defined as a god. The stability of the government rested in part on general acknowledgment of this concept. But some Egyptians did not believe that the pharaoh was divine and did not hesitate to plot mischief against him. Thus, we can say only that certain Egyptian myths proclaimed the divinity of the monarch and that most people appear to have accepted the teaching.

Another problem is that we have only the written texts that were in ancient times recorded by an elite, literate priesthood. The average man could not read or write and did not have access to the sacred library. We suppose, therefore, that minstrels and local storytellers memorized what they could not read and sang and recited the accounts in villages throughout the land. We have no way of knowing how individuals responded to the noncultic presentation of the myths, nor can we know what effect the myths may have had on life in families and local communities. Perhaps we can draw an analogy with the illiterate, seminomadic Arabs and Bedouin who quote passages from the Quran and know numerous anecdotal teaching stories about the patriarchs that are not found in the Quran. These people do not always have a local storyteller, but listen instead to transistorized portable battery radios broadcasting cultic interpretations from Cairo and other religious centers, and discuss what they have heard around campfires in the evening. Some have made pilgrimages to holy places. The oral tradition, whether shared by tribal members or acquired by radio, plays an important role in informing nonreaders about Muslim belief and culture.