The Great-anteater in South American Mythology

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SOUTH AMERICAN SEMIOLOGY: A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF THE GREAT-ANTEATER IN SOUTH AMERICAN MYTHOLOGY

by

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ABSTRACT

Throughout this work I refer to the paradox of the Great-anteater. The paradox spoken of is found in the myths and rituals of South America that express the strength of this animal and present it as more powerful than the widely respected and feared jaguar.

I focus this investigation on the information from Curt Nimuendaju's 1942 study of the Sherente. In that information we see the appearance of both creatures, and in that information the respective powers of both are expressed. My aim, in this brief research, is to suggest hypotheses which allow us to interpret the meaning of both the Sherente information as well as other ethnographic material.

I define this research as an exercise in methods of analysis. The approaches most influential to this study have been structuralism and semiology.

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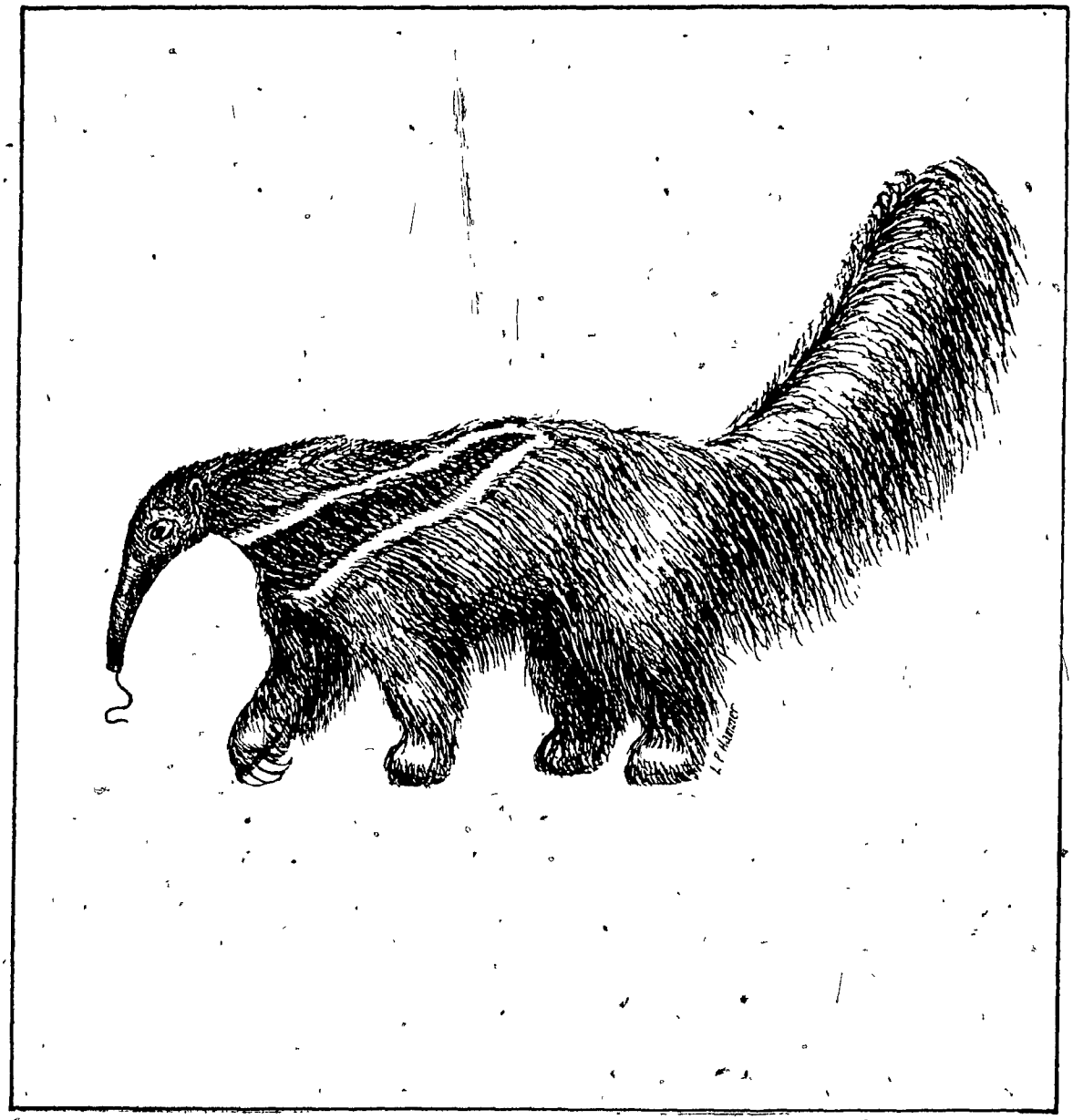
RESUME

Ce travail fait constamment référence au paradoxe du tamanoir. Ce paradoxe est manifeste dans certains mythes et rituels sud-Américains qui relatent la force de cet animal et le présentent comme étant plus puissant que le jaguar tant craint et respecté.

Cette recherche est centrée sur les données ethnographiques Sherente, telles que rapportées par Curt Nimuendaju dans son étude de 1942. Les deux animaux sont mentionnés dans cette étude, et leurs pouvoirs respectifs clairement établis. Le but de ce bref travail est de suggérer certaines hypothèses permettant de comprendre ces données Sherent ainsi qu'un matérial ethnographique plus vaste.

Cette recherche est avant tout un exercice méthodologique. Le structuralisme et la sémiologie sont les courants de pensée qui ont le plus influencé cette recherche.

The Great-anteater



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Preface

The Great-anteater plays a puzzling role within a large set of myths and rituals in the indigenous societies of lowland South America. The general purpose of this study has been to interpret this role. More specifically, and due to the limitations of available ethnographies (as well as those of length), I have chosen to focus this research on one myth and one ceremony from the Central Brazilian Sherente.

In addition to this attempt to carefully circumscribe the subject matter, I have tried to keep the text of this study relatively brief. Therefore, and whenever possible, material not immediately concerned with my central analysis has been segregated to footnotes and appendices.

I believe this investigation fulfils the goals that I stated, some eighteen months ago, in my proposal for this study. I have gained practice in the method of structural analysis, I have suggested interpretations that fill a gap in the ethnological literature, and perhaps most importantly, I have asked questions that may lead to future research.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to my three close friends and mentors, Bernard Arcand, Jérôme Rousseau, and Michael Bisson. Their advice, criticisms, demands, and suggestions have been invaluable.

And finally, for Laurie, I offer a quote from Milton:

"How bad and mad and sad it was, but ah, how sweet."

Of all people, she will understand it best.

Phonetic Note

For the majority of the text, acute and grave accents over a vowel indicate pronunciation as in French usage. The use of umlauts indicates German pronunciation.

The pronunciation of Sherente terms (found primarily in Chapters II and VI) follows a somewhat different orthography.

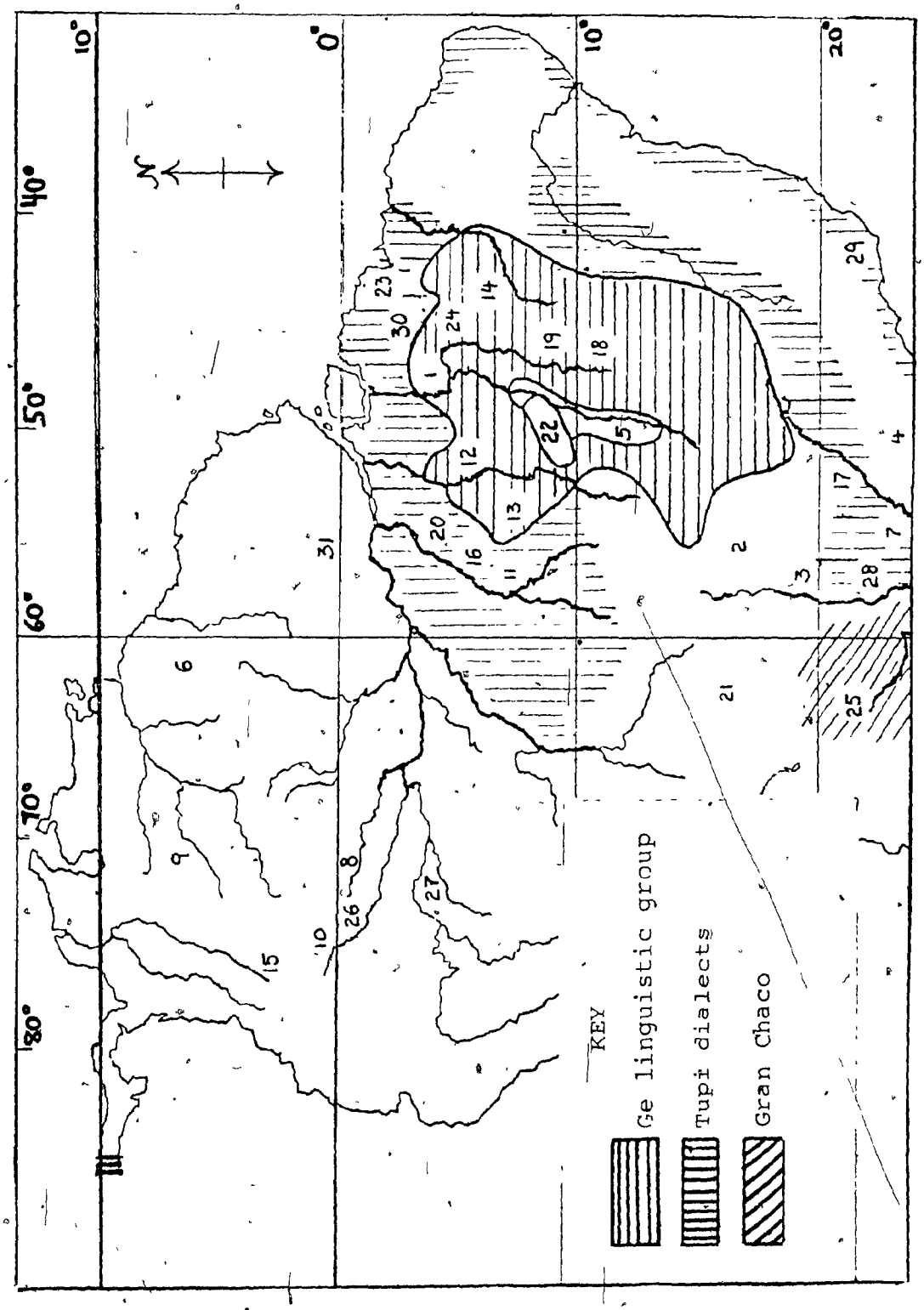
For Sherente terms, the acute accent after a vowel denotes stress; the tilde over a vowel indicates nasalisation, and a short right-turned hook below a vowel designates it as postpalatal. Furthermore:

ẽ	has the sound of the first e in German Ehe
õ	as in German ohne
x	as in German ch in ach
s̩	is equivalent to English sh
c̩	is the Spanish ch

(Nimuendaju 1942:1)

Figure 1 *

Geographical Distribution of Groups Mentioned.



* after Lévi-Strauss 1969:38-39

Alphabetical List of Groups Referred to in Text

(See Figure 1)

1 - Apinaye
2 - Bororo
3 - Caduveo
4 - Câingáng-Coroado
5 - Caraja
6 - Carib
7 - Cayua
8 - Cubeo
9 - Cuiva (also, Sikuani)
10 - Desana
11 - Iranxe
12 - Kamaiura (also, Kuikuru)
13 - Kayapo-Gorotire (also, Kayapo-Kubenkranken)
14 - Kraho
15 - Muisca
16 - Mundurucu
17 - Opaye
18 - Shavante
19 - Sherente
20 - Shipaya
21 - Tacana
22 - Tapirape
23 - Tenetehara
24 - Timbira
25 - Toba (also, Toba-Pilaga)
26 - Tucano
27 - Tucuna
28 - Tupi-Guarani
29 - Tupinamba
30 - Urubu
31 - Waiwai

Chapter I-- INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Ethnographic literature dealing with tropical South America makes frequent reference to the Great-anteater (Myrmecophaga tridactyla, also M. jubata). Whether regarded in mythology as a trickster figure that fools or kills the widely respected jaguar, as a creature whose social and/or sexual status appears paradoxical, or simply as a taxonomical anomaly, there has not been, till now, any attempt to interpret this fairly large corpus of information.

I am interested in symbolic behaviour and my approach to this material may be most broadly defined as semiotic. Sperber's introductory statement to Rethinking Symbolism (1975:x) applies to this study:

> "This work is informed by a view of anthropology that I state briefly without additional justification: human learning abilities are phylogenetically determined and culturally determinant. They are determined in the same way for all members of the species, they do not therefore determine cultural variations but only cultural variability. Cultural variability is at once made possible and constrained by human learning ability. Anthropology has as its object this possibility and these constraints." (Emphasis original)[1]

I would define the following research primarily as an exercise in a methodology. My goal has been to fully understand one myth and the ceremony that is held to commemorate the events of that myth. The myth is from Curt Nimuendaju's study of the Sherente (1942), and it is concerned with the origin of the Great-anteater.

I advise the reader to keep constantly in mind that while my arguments in the following chapters appear to move continually away from the Sherente "data" (I use the term advisedly), it is precisely the same data to which the analyses offered must ultimately apply. It is because neither the myth nor the ceremony exist in a vacuum of meanings that this study must deal with a

number of puzzling issues in the ethnographic material. In order to understand the Sherente myth and ceremony it has been at times necessary to speculate on these issues, and to suggest, if only in passing, the direction of future research.

Influencing this study have been the enterprises labelled as cognitive anthropology and structuralism. Also influential to this work is a particular line within the arguments of semiology (e.g. Barthes 1967, 1973).

A note of caution is necessary here. By referring to these works of Roland Barthes, I place this study somewhat outside the more conventional definition of "a study of signs". In the first chapter of Georges Mounin's Introduction à la Sémiologie (1970), the distinction is made between the analyses (or, de-coding) of sets of signals used expressly for communication (la sémiologie de la communication - the domain of most semiologists, Ibid.: 12-13), and the interpretation of a far wider domain of indices (represented by Barthes' work). Mounin refers to this latter emphasis as the "sémiologie de la signification" (Ibid.:14). I introduce this distinction to make clear that my own study is aligned with this latter, modified, concept of semiology; one that is concerned with the interpretation of the meanings of sets of behaviour.

How does one discover the meaning (or, signification, I use the terms interchangeably) of a phenomenon? To begin with, one must assume the numerous sequences of behaviour (metonyms) that are examined below all contain sets of invariant relations (Lévi-Strauss 1963a:210-211). These minimal and repetitive units are further assumed to be the basis of meaning of the examined ethnographic information (Barthes 1967:47). We begin by decomposing the behavioural chains, or metonyms, into a number of constituent units (Lévi-Strauss 1963b:4). Secondly, we arrange the isolated units into an

abstracted analytical construct (structure), yielding, if we are successful, the positional meaning of not only the specific phenomenon that prompted the analysis, but also elements from other domains which have appeared to be important to the phenomenon's signification (Lévi-Strauss 1966b).

My interests in the interpretations of the meanings of behaviour are appropriate for this sort of study. It became clear in the early stages of my library research, that the kind of thorough ethnographic information needed for the formal analysis of a large number of myths was simply not available in the published ethnographies. The most apparent alternatives included motif-analysis (Wilbert 1974) and either the frequently used search for Jungian archetypes or psycho-analytical interpretations (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971). All these schemas, involving *a priori* categorisations, were unsatisfactory to me. The situation arose, therefore, that forced me to bridge a considerable gap in the South American literature, this being, of course, the differing emphases on form that develop from extremely complete ethnographic observations, and the global interpretations of content that are applied to vastly different ethnographic phenomena.

My final comments here are addressed to the limits of the system. There is a very intuitive element in the necessarily arbitrary selection of the corpus of information that is to be analysed. One tries to select an amount of information broad enough to reveal the many possible aspects of the problem, yet homogeneous enough that the explication of one problem does not raise several more (Barthes 1967:96-98; Lévi-Strauss 1963a:213-229). It is, in my opinion, a line so elusive that the final results may always be tentative, pointing the way to future investigations. I suggest the analyses made here are strong, and that their value comes not only from the greater understanding of the rituals and myths they present, but also in the multiplicity of

parallel issues that are speculated upon as the work proceeds.

NOTES

[1] Sperber's statement is one attempt, out of many, that tries to define the subject (and by implication, a method cf. Wisdom 1972:70) of ethnology. In this brief note I would like to introduce a set of arguments that may serve to define the epistemological perspective of this study.

Considerable laxity exists in the common usage of "ethnographic data". It is critical to this study that we attempt to define carefully just what it is that ethnographic analyses deal with, viz., experiential knowledge, or phenomena. Phenomena, according to this view, must not be seen as merely the reflection of the external world (which is assumed to exist and to be prior to experiential perception), but rather as the dynamic interaction of the world with the observer's prior expectations and knowledge. An observer's cognisance selectively accepts, distorts, and adds to the perceptual stimuli. To this viewpoint, a discourse on, or systemisation of, experiential items alone is inadequate. Our source of knowledge must include theories (or, hypotheses, viz., conceptual systems of formulas dealing with hypothesised but only indirectly knowable aspects of the world) whose status is nonphenomenal (Bunge 1967:153-155). The "data" of our investigations, therefore:

> "... are conceptual objects. We should not regard them as things which are placed, ready made, to our senses or our intellect. These conceptual objects are constructed by both. Data are both the result and raw material of this (cognitive) process." (Ibid.:179)

Thus, we may say that while our experiences are always data, not all of our data are experiential (Kaplan 1964:89; Wisdom 1972:66). It follows that the use of experiential phenomena as the sole criterion of the truth of a theory leads to logically unsolvable problems (see Lakatos 1975:95-ff).

The most obvious problem facing us is how to increase knowledge, that is, how do we form theories that allow us to talk about something other than our initial information?

It must be suggested that the satisfactory assessment of a theory cannot be accomplished merely by comparing it to the corpus of experiential information, but rather, by examining its (the theory's) consistency within a larger set of epistemological criteria. (We may see these criteria as judging the plausibility, or "prior-probability" of an argument using Hypothetico-deductive reasoning. Salmon 1966, 1976) Mario Bunge has discussed criteria of this sort, and I present some of his views here (Bunge 1967:352-354):

A: External Consistency: A theory must be perceived as being compatible with the bulk of well-used and commonly accepted knowledge. The

theory may also be seen as a continuation or logical extension of such knowledge.

B: Inclusiveness: A theory should solve (explain, make intelligible, show necessary relations, etc.) a substantial part of the problem that stimulated its construction.

C: Depth: A theory that involves fundamental or basic mechanisms, according to Bunge, is preferable to "shallow systems" which do not commit themselves to unobservable mechanisms.

D: Originality: A theory that attempts "shocking" (Bunge's usage) constructs, yielding projections which suggest relationships between seemingly unrelated domains, is more valuable than pedestrian systems. (Bunge also speaks of this in terms of "Unifying Power".)

E: Heuristic Power: A new (good) theory should suggest and even guide further research in the same or allied disciplines of study.

Chapter II - THE PARADOX OF THE ANTEATER

Two sets of ethnographic information are introduced in this chapter. First, we will see the Sherente material that forms the core of this research. The second part of this chapter is a collection of statements, from a number of societies, about the Great-anteater.

A - Sherente Material

For over two years Curt Nimuendaju lived in the highlands of Western Brazil among the Sherente, within a culture he described as having been brought to a state of near-collapse by the encroachment of Brazilian settlers. In spite of this new situation, Nimuendaju produced an outstanding ethnography of traditional Sherente society and culture. His account forms the starting point and focus of this investigation. Included here (from his 1942 study) are both the myth that tells of the origin of the Great-anteater (padi) and its disguises, and the description of the Padi Ceremony.

Padi Origin Myth (Nimuendaju 1942:66-67)

> "In a Sherente village there lived an old krieriekmũ [a member of one of the men's associations] with his very aged wife. At the season of maturing burity fruits this couple moved to a brook, erected a hut there, and gathered basketfulls of burity fruits.
>
> After a few days their daughter came to see how they were getting along. She met her parents in the hut and with amazement noted hanging there quantities of the finest kind of burity fibre, obtained by removal of the upper-layer of young leaves. She was also surprised at many fragments of termite nests lying about. The old couple gave all the fruits gathered by them to their daughter, explaining that they were no longer able to eat any hard fruit.
>
> Several days later, when the daughter again came to visit her parents, they were no longer to be seen; instead, not far from

the hut, were lying two anteaters, covered by their tails, on Padi disguises. Round about everything was strewn with lumps of termite nests, and all the termite mounds in the vicinity were broken up. The daughter looked for traces of her parents everywhere, but found only those of the anteaters.

She therefore returned to her husband, telling him that her parents had vanished without a trace and that she had found two unknown animals near the hut.

The man immediately accompanied her to the hut by the spring in order to see what were the facts. The anteaters, scenting their approach, trotted off towards a wooded island, but the man overtook them and clubbed them to death. While his wife was roasting the flesh, he searched the entire vicinity for the old couple, but found nothing except the anteater tracks. The two returned home with the meat and the two masquerade outfits.

At night, the blood of the slain pair was transformed into a large number of anteaters, which came close to the village. The next morning, an old villager conversant with everything, went to the hut by the spring to see whether he could explain the disappearance of the old people. When he got back, he called the daughter's husband and told him the two anteaters he had killed were his parents-in-law, who had turned into those beasts by means of their masquerade. In memory of the event the costumes were to be preserved and occasionally renewed for a Padi festival."

Padi Ceremony (Nimuendaju 1942:68-70)

"After the usual deliberation with the elders and a decision to hold the Padi ceremony, the council appointed four of their own number, two from each moiety, to manufacture the disguises, of which there are always two.

The work is done secretly at a suitable spot in the woods, consuming about two weeks. The very preparation of the above-mentioned fine burity-bast takes over a week and requires patience and care. The outfit consists of a covering of slender conical shape that completely masks the wearer from head to below the knees. The bast fibres are secured in this form by double threads intertwined round about. At the top, the mask terminates in a long tip, the anteater's "snout", from which hangs its "tongue", i.e., a red arara tail feather. Under the snout are a pair of brushlike "ears". The wearer inserts his arms through lateral slits. The lower edge of the fringe is painted red with urucu. Under one arm the masquerader holds a short stick, in the other, a staff to be stamped on the ground.

One of the mummers represents the male, the other, the female.

In addition, the elders manufacture four wabu´, two shorter wabu´-ri´-e, and two longer ones, wabu´-zaure´, consisting each of two reddened wands of burity rachides joined by two transversely inserted plugs. Red bast fringes hang from the tips of the upper plug.

In the meantime, the members of the celebrating society manufacture the zi-ri´-e dance rattles of little Lagenaria fruits attached to handles over 3 m in length. From the end of the handle, projecting beyond the rattle, there is also a pendant of red bast fringe.

When everything is ready, the masqueraders, accompanied by the four wabu´-bearers, enter the village and proceed to the site of the festival.

There, the society membership, armed with the long-handled rattles, stand in two lines corresponding to the moieties [these being the Šiptato and Sdakrã] and the mummers take up position between them, while one wabu´-ri´-e and wabu´-zaure´ pair stands on the east side and the other on the west side of the place. Thus they sing all night.

In the meantime, the members of the society that conducted the previous Padi´ performance disguise themselves as "jaguars" (huku´). For this they use green burity leaves, old mats and steppe (sic) grass, blacken their faces, and paint black spots on their bodies. Holding hunting clubs with enlarged and laterally curved butts, they swarm around the site and try to abduct wantons (dba; sexually available young women). Simultaneously appear two prordo´, one from each moiety, from the membership of the celebrating society. Carrying little ocarinas painted red and black, and made from Lagenaria fruits with glued-on feathers, they go whistling out into the steppe, whence they bring the "jaguars" to the margin of the festival site, and then again depart with them.

In the morning the two mummers zig-zag some distance into the steppe, where they finally lie down "to sleep", the feet of each turned towards the other's.

Two old krieriékmũ, armed with hunting clubs, track them, and as soon as they find them, "kill" them by clubbing the "snouts" of their masquerade. They thereupon remove the mummers' disguises, which are subsequently thrown into the brook together with the wabu´. [Nimuendaju notes: 'Ceremonial implements and decorations are forever thrown into the water after use in order to prolong the former wearer's life.']

Now the dancers leave their long-stemmed rattles and unite with the "jaguars" about 1 km outside the village. The prordo´ go out

to meet them, each with a 10 cm long, reddened bit of the pith from the burity rachis in his hand. At a distance of about 15 paces from the "jaguars", who are ready to leap, they throw the pith towards them and immediately flee back toward the village. The "jaguars" give chase, the Šiptato trying to catch the Sdakrã prordó, and vice-versa. If they succeed in catching the fugitives before they get to the village, they remove all their decoration except the ocarina. In order to run rapidly, the prordó glue strips of pulverised wesuzakno leaves (un-identified), which have a pleasant odor, on their thighs, with almecega resin. They retain the name prordó so long as they live; they also keep the ocarinas which can accordingly be acquired only with great difficulty. This race closes the Padí masquerade."

B - Other Points of Interest

For clarity of exposition we can arbitrarily divide the following ethnographic material into three parts; firstly, general statements about the nature of the anteater; secondly, myths (or paraphrases of them) which deal with the transformation of humans into anteaters; and thirdly, accounts that deal with a contest between the anteater and the jaguar.

We may begin by reviewing a collection of general statements about the Great-anteater.

There is a belief held by the peoples living along the Rio Negro that the Great-anteaters are all females (Roth 1970:369). A similar belief is expressed by the Urubu, as well as other neighbouring Tupinamba (Huxley 1957: 169). In contrast to this view, the Caingang-Coroado believe the all Great-anteaters are dumb old men (Borba 1908:22,25, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1973:133). The sexuality of the anteater also appears to be a matter of concern for the Desana of the Northwest Amazon. According to Reichel-Dolmatoff, the Desana see the anteater as being peculiarly potent by the size of its penis, while simultaneously being regarded as impotent by that animal's lengthy but always

flaccid tongue (1971:198).

Two other beliefs may be mentioned here. In Susnik's account of the Toba (1962:41-42, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1973:357), we are told that if these people come across the droppings of an anteater while hunting, they will immediately change course, on the belief that the creature leads so solitary a life that no other game could possibly be nearby. And finally, from a parenthetical note in Mythologiques II, Lévi-Strauss points to a frequently observed Brazilian belief that the anteater is a "blocked" animal, viz., a creature with no mouth and no anus (1973:65-66).

There are numerous examples of South American myths that deal with humans and animals transforming themselves into one another. Included here are three accounts of such transformations.

The first myth, presented here in its entirety because of its briefness, is from the Kraho.

> "An old woman one day took her grandchildren to gather puca fruit (unidentified). She took her basket and told them to climb the tree. When the children had eaten all the ripe fruit, they started to gather the un-ripe fruit which they threw at their grandmother, in spite of her protests. When the children were scolded they changed into parakeets. The old woman, who had no teeth, remained below, asking herself, "What will become of me; what am I going to do now?" She changed into an anteater and went off to dig up ant-hills. Then she disappeared in the forest." (Shultz 1950:160, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1973:132)

Hissink and Hahn have recorded a Tacana myth (1961:165-176, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1973:346-349) in which a man is punished for his cruelty by being transformed into an anteater; an animal described by the people as one which will "wander aimlessly about the earth, to live without a wife and to engender and bring forth his children alone".

In his studies of the Timbira, Nimuendaju (1946:179-181, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1973:126-127) has recorded a myth which is somewhat reminiscent of the

Sherente's account of the origin of the padi. The final passage of this myth tells of two old grandparents who are walking through the savannah and finally arrive at a mountain. They decide to walk in different directions around the mountain, and plan to meet on the opposite side. Both become ant-eaters, and while the old man is killed by hunters, the old woman waits patiently for her husband to arrive. Eventually she disappears into the forest.

Indigenous accounts of a contest between the Great-anteater and the jaguar form this final section of introductory material.

First, I wish to introduce three remarkably similar (in terms of their content) myths from societies which are geographically distant from one another. These societies, in order of the presentation of their myths, are the Tenetehara, the Carib, and the Cayua. (I refer the reader to the map in the preface of this study.)

Following these mythic variants is a somewhat different myth from the Colombian Cuiva (inhabitants of the Llanos Orientales), as well as another representation of the contest between the anteater and the jaguar.

The Jaguar and the Anteater: Variant 1

> "The jaguar and the anteater were arguing which of them could kill the most animals. Anteater said each should show what he had killed and eaten by his excrement. Anteater challenged Jaguar to a contest. They began, and after a time the Jaguar asked Anteater if he was ready to open his eyes. Anteater asked Jaguar to keep his eyes closed a little while longer. While the Jaguar had his eyes closed, Anteater exchanged excreta with him. When the Jaguar opened his eyes he saw a small pile near himself. They looked at Jaguar's pile. 'Oh', said Anteater, 'you evidently eat only ants. Look at my excrement, I eat many animals!' Jaguar went away ashamed and sad. He soon died of shame." (Wagley and Galvão 1949:160)

The Jaguar and the Anteater: Variant 2

"One day Tigre [colloquial Spanish for jaguar] met the Tamanoa (Great Ant-Eater) in the forest and chaffed him about his funny mouth and his clumsy toes. 'Never mind' said Tamanoa, 'even if my mouth is small and my feet clumsy, I can eat at all events meat quite as well as you, and I am certainly as strong as you'. 'Oh, no, indeed you are not!' replied Tigre. Thus they went on arguing. At last, Tamanoa said that he would like to have a peep into his rival's mouth, and when Tigre opened his jaws wide and showed his fangs, told him that he did not think much of them. This annoyed Tigre who then wanted to look inside Tamanoa's mouth, and having done so, exclaimed, 'What! Do you mean to tell me that you can eat meat? I don't believe that you have ever tasted it in your life.' 'You lie!' retorted Tamanoa, 'because it was only this very morning that I finished the deer carcass that you left behind. (Si stercus meum observes) [Latin original] you can see that I ate even more meat than you did.' It was agreed therefore, (ut ambo defecarent instanter), Tamanoa stipulating that while thus engaged both should keep their eyes tightly closed. This was also agreed to, but while occupied in carrying out the conditions of the wager, Tamanoa surreptitiously opened his eyes and silently exchanged (stercus suum) for that of his adversary. 'Open eyes', shouted Ant-Eater, whereupon both turned to see what happened! (Felix tigris animade vertevit stercus suum) and was much puzzled but when he went over to Tamanoa's he had to admit at once that his opponent had eaten meat, and a goodly portion of it that very morning. Tigre was still puzzled over (stercore suo) and said that a similar thing had never happened before -- very likely he must be sick.' 'Sick indeed you are, and weak too,' retorted Tamanoa, 'for though my feet are clumsy from always walking on their outsides, I am much more than a match for you'. Tigre was much angered by this last remark, and the result was that they started fighting. Tigre made a spring forward at the same time Tamanoa ducked his head; the latter, seizing Tigre by the ribs, once his hold was secure, easily crushed him -- and Tigre, 'soon dead'." (Roth 1970:225)

The Jaguar and the Anteater: Variant 3

"The jaguar learned from the grasshopper that the toad and the rabbit had stolen its fire while it was out hunting, and that they had taken it across the river. While the jaguar was weeping at this, an anteater came along, and the jaguar suggested that they should have an excretory competition. The anteater, however, appropriated the excrement containing raw meat and made the jaguar believe that its own excretion consisted of ants. In order to even things out, the jaguar invited the anteater to a

juggling contest, using their eyes removed from the sockets; the anteater's eyes fell back into place, but the jaguar's remained hanging at the top of a tree, and so it became blind.

At the request of the anteater, the macuco bird made the jaguar new eyes out of water, and these allowed it to see in the dark.

Since that time the jaguar only goes out at night. Having lost its fire, it eats its meat raw." (Schaden 1947:110-111, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:190)

A fourth myth, though different from the preceding accounts, also describes a disagreement between these two animals.

"The anteater was walking towards the West, when he met the jaguar, who was walking in the opposite direction. Jaguar said, 'Cousin, I have eaten a caiman which has very aggressive teeth'. 'I understand,' said the anteater, 'and I know how to eat ants'. The jaguar said; 'I get them by jumping on them and tearing them to pieces with my teeth'. 'That is true,' answered the anteater; 'and I grab ant-hills with my claws and I shake them to all sides. I know how to do this'. The two cousins were joking, bragging about their abilities. Then, the anteater pursued his march to the West and the jaguar started to walk to the East. 'Cousin', said the jaguar, 'I shall go East'. 'All right', said the other. But the jaguar turned around and jumped on the back of the anteater: 'Ah! ...' The anteater grabbed the jaguar with its claws. 'Ah! ...', said the jaguar, 'cousin, do not grab me, do not prick your niece'. [Note: the use of this kinship relationship is in the original manuscript.] The anteater had perforated the jaguar's belly and he killed him." (Bernard Arcand: personal communication)

A final representation of the contested superiority between the anteater and the jaguar finds astronomical coding among the Tucuna. Both anteater and jaguar are visualised in two comparatively empty spaces in the Milky Way. As the stars appear shortly after sunset, the jaguar is ascendant over the anteater. Since these relative positions are reversed during the night's rotation of the earth, we see the conflict between these two animals undergoing a predictable change. By dawn, the jaguar has been overcome by the anteater (Lévi-Strauss 1973:135).

NOTES

[1]Unfortunately, there is no elaboration in Nimuendaju's account concerning the two prordo'. The role of these two ceremonial participants will be speculated upon in Chapter VI.

Chapter III - OF BEASTS AND MEN

We have seen the information that poses the question, the material in which the paradox of the Great-anteater appears. Much more must be known about this creature before we can begin to understand its meaning.

I begin this chapter with a summary of zoological and ethological information. Following, is the introduction of additional ethnographic information, as well as a line of enquiry which seems useful to this study.

Despite its possession of a number of fairly unique characteristics, there has been relatively little research on the Great-anteater. There appear to be two reasons for this. The first is the creature's rarity in its native South American habitat. Secondly, and of even greater concern to zoologists, is the great difficulty in maintaining the animal in captivity.

The Great-anteater is a large animal, with the adult body length ranging from 1,20 - 1,50 m, and a tail that may be as long as 60 - 90 cm. The weight of an adult may be as much as 20 - 30 kg (Walker 1964). Most of the animal is covered with coarse, stiff black hair. There is a diagonal dorsal stripe (light-grey in colour) that is present from birth (Hess 1954).

Three anatomical features are of some interest:

Although the Great-anteater is only one species within the taxonomical order Edentata (literally: "without teeth), it is one of the few animals that lacks any dentition (most other Edentates lack only incisors and canines [Walker 1964]). If one were to examine a transverse section of the forward muzzle, one would find an extremely strong bony structure with specialised apertures for the very long tongue (as long as 610 mm) and a highly refined olfactory apparatus (Pocock 1924; McAdam and Way 1967).

We have seen references to the clumsy gait of the anteater. Despite the species label, M. tridactyla possesses four fore-foot digits, one giant claw, two smaller ones, and a very small fourth. These digits may be flexed or distended, and when walking, fold into a hardened ambulatory carpal pad. These pads, rather than the digits, support most of the animal's weight (Pocock 1924).

The sexual characteristics of the male of the species are worth comment. Unlike the vast majority of (land) mammals, the testes of the Giant-anteater are located within the abdominal cavity, situated between the rectum and the urinary bladder (Walker 1964). Regarding the external genitalia of anteaters (as well as sloths), it is necessary to point out the closeness of the penis and anus. Quoting Pocock on this matter: "the penis and anus form (either) a common ano-genital eminence or (are) situated on a common naked area of integument, the edges of which fold over them ... . The penis is always quite short, inconspicuous, and never abdominal; the sexes being difficult to determine without critical examination." (1924:1027)

M. tridactyla is a terrestrial creature, and it appears to be equally adapted to either diurnal or nocturnal behaviour (Walker 1964:482). It is found in a number of local habitats, the forests, near rivers, and, less frequently, in the savannah (Waterton 1879:223). Wherever it is found, it is unquestionably a very rare animal, and it is described as an animal which is usually solitary (Lydekker 1895:211; Walker 1964:485). The life-span of the animal is not known, but according to Crandall (1964:185), it is considered by South Americans to be a very hardy and long-lived species.

The Great-anteater always appears to be in search of food (Hess 1954), be it termites, beetle larvae, or ants. With its fore-claws, nests and ant-hills are torn apart, and with its saliva-coated tongue, escaping insects are

collected. These fore-claws are also used as powerful instruments of defense. Walker points out (1964:485) that this normally timid creature is more than a match for any other creature in the tropical rainforest.

Early explorers of South America occasionally make reference to characteristics of the Great-anteater. We may conclude this brief discussion of the animal with some of these statements. Two accounts mention the putrid odour of cooked anteater meat, and further describe the pieces of boiled flesh as being extremely difficult to eat (Waterton 1879:269; Lydekker 1895:212-213). Regarding the fierceness of the creature, "The Indians have a great dread of coming in contact with the ant-bear, and, after disabling him in the chase, never think of approaching him till he be quite dead" (Waterton 1879:224). And finally, in an interesting comment on dietary habits, Waterton says, "Nor does the ant-bear suffer much from the loss of aliment; and it is a well-known fact that he can go longer without food than, perhaps, any other animal, except the land-tortoise" (Ibid.:223).

Considerably more ethnographic information must be presented here, and we may now begin to look for commonalities within it.

For the purpose of this investigation we regard sequences of behaviour (metonyms, or, syntagms) as deriving their signification from sets of invariant relations. These relationships are assumed to exist both within the behavioural metonyms, as well as between metonyms, i.e., as metaphorical relationships (Barthes 1967:48-61; Lévi-Strauss 1963a:210-224). If the meaning of the Great-anteater cannot stand isolated from other concepts, then we can look to the Sherente padi ceremony and the widespread beliefs and myths that deal with the opposition between the anteater and the jaguar as the logical starting point of our analysis.

Lévi-Strauss has noted that indigenous Brazilian folklore frequently

regards these two animals as the strongest of the environment (1969:190). We may be more specific. Given a competition between the two, it is the anteater who will be victorious. This is an obvious point if we recall the set of mythic variants dealing with the excretory contest between the anteater and the jaguar. A similar point may be seen in the Sherente material. During the earlier hours of the padi ceremony, while the "anteaters" occupy the centre of the association site, the "jaguars" are kept to the periphery of the assembly where they are generally disregarded by the men. It is only after the ritual slaying of the anteater mummers that the jaguars behave more appropriately. For the Sherente, in other words, it appears that the presence of the anteaters somehow protects the men from the jaguars.

This is the paradox that must be explained. What does the anteater signify that makes it more powerful than the jaguar?

In order to answer this question we must discuss the domains which express the contrast between these two animals.

I suggest the information presented thusfar (specifically pp. 9-11) connotes a central uncertainty and ambiguity concerning the sexuality or reproductivity of the Great-anteater. It appears as an animal which lives alone in the forest, an animal which is only male or only female, a contradictory animal which is simultaneously potent and impotent, or as an animal which is the transformation of humans who are (frequently) old.

This concern over the anteater's sexuality may suggest a hypothesis which will introduce a set of domains that can serve to compare the behaviour of the two animals. Arguments have been presented which posit a metaphoric homology between copulation and eating (Leach 1964; Lévi-Strauss 1973:230; Tambiah 1969:423-459). I would extend this argument, within the context of South American ethnology, to include a third type of behaviour, namely, hunting.

I suggest the anteater and the jaguar are "marked" in terms of their opposed behaviour in three, conceptually intersecting, domains. These domains are hunting, eating, and sex.

By demonstrating a conceptual linkage (or, intersection) between these activities we may more fully understand the nature of the proposed opposition between the anteater and the jaguar. Although the arguments on the following two pages may appear fairly tangential to this goal, the implications of the proposed intersection will become clearer in later chapters.

We may investigate this suggested metaphoric set by looking at its three constituent pairs. A commutativity of these three pairs may support the hypothesised intersection.[1]

The first two activities that can be understood as a set are probably the most obvious. I refer to a conceptual intersection of eating and hunting. Such a relationship is stressed in a Kayapo-Gorotire myth of origin (Banner 1957:42-44, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:66, M7[2]), where the autochthonous peoples are simultaneously given food (cooked meat) and hunting weapons. If we recall the myths dealing with the excretory contests between the anteater and the jaguar, we see that one contrast being made is a comparison of their respective diets. (While the stools of the anteater are obviously composed of ants, those of the jaguar give clear evidence of being the remains of a carnivorous diet.) We may interpret another contrast being made, viz., a comparison of the hunting abilities of either creature.

The second set of activities to be discussed are sex and eating. Although the relationships between these activities have been discussed by the three authors mentioned above, further South American information is introduced here.

According to Timbira mythology (Nimuendaju 1946:245, cited in Lévi-

Strauss 1969:166), an association is made between the coitus of a human and the Culture Hero ("Star Woman"), and, the introduction of maize, the dietary staple. A suggested conceptual intersection of eating and sex may also be used to make (partial) sense of the Sherente myth of the anteater's origin. An elderly couple, we will remember, can no longer eat ripe fruit. These elderly people may possibly be more fully described as individuals who can no longer reproduce, or as individuals whose sexuality has lessened with their years (this question of the sexuality of the elderly couple will be returned to in a later chapter). A similar description can be made of the old, toothless woman in the Kraho myth (see above, p. 10), that is to say, as an individual who cannot eat, and, presumably, cannot reproduce.

Thirdly, we see an association of hunting and sex being made in a number of statements from the ethnography of South America.

Indigenous descriptions of hunting as the supreme masculine activity are found from the Northwest Amazon to the near-coastal Tenetehara, and to the peoples of the Argentine Chaco (Wagley and Galvão 1949:56-57; Beals 1961:130, 185). For the Desana, hunting is not simply an exclusively male activity, but rather, is more understandable as one of the visible results of an energy or force that is also responsible for sexual activity (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971: 11-15, 44-55). Finally, and once again to refer to the Sherente padi ceremony, we see the jaguar-mummers, armed with hunting clubs, trying to abduct sexually active (and available, according to Nimuendaju's definition of "wantons" - 1942:63) women.

The point here, however, is not to belabour the corroboration of the hypothesised intersection of these three domains (this may best be accomplished in future research). As I have suggested, the purpose of these arguments has been to open avenues of inquiry which can help us to understand

the contrast between the anteater and the jaguar.

We can begin by reviewing material presented concerning the anteater.

We have seen indigenous descriptions of the anteater where it is portrayed as a poor hunter. If Lévi-Strauss' comment that the Brazilian folklore frequently describes the creature as lacking either mouth or anus (1973:65-66) is correct, we must wonder about the animal's (mythical) ability to eat. Somewhat closer to the information presented thus far, is the animal's demonstration (in the excretory contests) of a comparatively poor diet. And finally, a creature that leads a solitary life, or which is the transformation of old people, is an animal whose sexuality may be regarded as minimal.

I suggest the anteater is marked in terms of these three behaviours. The material denotes the Great-anteater as an animal whose sexuality (or, reproductivity) is minimal, as are both its diet and hunting prowess.

We may similarly review statements concerning the jaguar's activities in these three domains.

The concept of the jaguar as the hunter par excellence, is an extremely widespread one in the cultural area of lowland South America. We may look at a few examples. Beals has noted (1961:187) that the Cubeo paint spots on infant males so that they will resemble jaguars, in the belief that the child will grow to be a good hunter. A fear of the jaguar as a hunter of men is seen in beliefs of the Tupi-Guarani, Tupinamba, Mundurucu (Steward and Faron 1959:308, 327, 340), Barama River Caribs of British Guiana (Gillin 1967:159), and the Toba-Pilaga (Métraux 1946:60-64, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:100, M23). According to an etiological myth of the Kayapo-Gorotire, jaguars were the first hunters in the environment (Banner 1957:42-44, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:67, M7). And finally, the set of myths dealing with the excretory

contests between the anteater and the jaguar is partially understandable as a comparison of the animals' hunting abilities. Clearly, in these cases, the jaguar is the hunter of animals.

Secondly, we may look at references of the sexuality of the jaguar. A most explicit association of the jaguar with this domain of behaviour is found among the Desana, where the force or energy (boga) of the creature is identified as a sexual power (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971:50, 53, 77-78, 83).

Much more frequently found are myths that deal with the jaguar entering into sexual unions with humans. Two such myths, from the Tucuna (Nimuendaju 1952:151-152, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:125, M53), and from the Kayapo-Gorotire (Banner 1957:42-44, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:67, M7) tell of a jaguar marrying a human female. The Bororo have similar accounts, and in one, explain the birth of the Culture Heroes by this sexual union (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942:193, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:124, M46). It should be remembered that during the Sherente padi ceremony, "jaguars" try to abduct sexually available women.

Two myths from the Kayapo-Gorotire link the jaguar to eating. In the first, the jaguar is described as the first creature who can cook its food (Banner 1957:42-44, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:67, M7). The second myth from these people contrasts the jaguar to the tortoise who engage themselves in a fasting contest. It is the jaguar who looses this contest, because, according to the myth, it is an animal that cannot go long without eating (Banner 1957: 46, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:174, M100).

And, once again referring back to the variants of the anteater-jaguar contest, we can re-interpret that information as being a comparison of the two animals' different diets.

We see statements concerning the jaguar that describe the creature as the

hunter of the tropical rainforest, as an animal which preys upon and eats the same animals as humans do, and as an animal whose sexuality is displayed by entering into relationships with humans as either the seducer or the seduced.

The jaguar is marked in these three sets of behaviour. I suggest it is a maximal representative of these domains.

But there are wider implications in these statements about the behaviour of the jaguar. As an animal frequently respected for its hunting skills, its agility, its keen senses of sight and smell, the jaguar is often regarded as a rival of, or competitor to, humans. More importantly, there is a frequent identification of humans (specifically shamans) and jaguars (Lévi-Strauss 1969:97-98; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975: passim; Villas Boas 1974:80, 181).

Reichel-Dolmatoff has, at length, discussed the widespread identification of shamans and jaguars. Examples from various South American societies may be presented here. The belief that shamans can transform themselves into jaguars to cause illness in their enemies may be seen among the Muisca (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975:13, 46), the Tucano (Ibid.:76, 100), and the Cuiva (Bernard Arcand: personal communication). A similar identification exists among the Shavante (Maybury-Lewis 1967:227), and the Cubeo (Goldman 1963:258). For the Cubeo, the identification is three-fold. Possessors of "power" (parié) include jaguars, shamans, and warriors.[3] Perhaps the most explicit recognition of this identity comes from the words of a men's song from the Sikuani group of the Guahibo linguistic family.[4] These words, given in Reichel-Dolmatoff's study (1975:47) are as follows: "We are jaguars, we are dancing like jaguars, our arrows are like the jaguar's fangs, we are fierce like the jaguars".

In the same study, Reichel-Dolmatoff discusses an aspect of shamanism that is important here. He describes the widespread belief that:

> "... a shaman can turn into a jaguar at will and that he can use the form of this animal under which he can act as a helper, a protector, or an aggressor. After death, the shaman may turn permanently into a jaguar and can then manifest himself in that form to the living, again in a benevolent or malefic way, as the case may be." (Ibid.:43)
>
> "... the main point [here], is the moral ambivalence of the jaguar image, a theme we shall find again and again, wherever we encounter the jaguar-shaman transformation." (Ibid.:59)

We may discover another significance of the anteater by reviewing a number of beliefs about these shaman-jaguars.

Shavante believe that the usual cause of death in men is sorcery, specifically, the actions of shamans who direct piranha fish, snakes, and jaguars to kill their enemies (Maybury-Lewis 1967:227). For the Cubeo, a clear distinction exists in the effects of possessing "power", parié. Jaguars demonstrate their parié by their ferocity, while shamans frequently use their parié in curing illnesses (Goldman 1963:262-263, 265). A parallel concept of "power" (boga) is expressed in Desana beliefs, where shamans may cure or kill people (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971:50, 52, 133). According to the Desana, the jaguar protects the people of the maloca (the village communal house), and ensures the safety of the hunters of the community (Ibid.:78-79, 100). For these same people, it should be noted, there is a contrasting belief that the anteater is the protector of all the animals of the forest, and in protecting animals, it will try to castrate the hunters of the village (Ibid.:101, 213).[5] A dual potential of shamans is expressed by the Waiwai. For these people of southern Guyana, shamans are of use to the community in curing illnesses, guaranteeing successful hunts, and killing enemies (Fock 1963:16, 104-108, 127). To cure an illness, the shaman may burn tobacco under the hammock of a patient, or in more extreme situations, may invoke the aid of very dangerous "sky spirits" (Kakenau-kworokjam): these being spirits who have existed since

long before the creation of humanity (Ibid.:22, 101, 130). For the Waiwai, the Great-anteater is believed to be one of these "sky spirits", and the one spirit most effective in curing illnesses (Ibid.:128).[6]

In earlier chapters we have seen humans become anteaters, creatures whose display of hunting, eating and sexuality is minimal. In this chapter we have seen the frequent association of shamans with the (ambivalent) power of the jaguar, a creature whose display of behaviour in these same three domains can be described as maximal.

The paradox of the Great-anteater has widened considerably. Humans may become anteaters or they become jaguars. While the power of the shaman-jaguar in South American societies is well known, we have seen that in a contest between the two animals, it is the anteater who will be the victor.

The question at hand thus becomes: what power does the anteater represent that makes it the victor in these situations? Although this is an appropriate question, it is also, at this point in the investigation, misleadingly simple. We have discussed, for both the anteater and the jaguar, sets of different (though conceptually intersecting) domains of behaviour. It is in these domains that we may suggest an inverse relationship between the two animals, and it must be through these same domains that we can talk about the meaning of the relationship that anteaters have to humans.

NOTES

[1]It will be noted that I offer here a very limited amount of corroborating information. I do so because the argument being made is a fairly obvious one, and because it is an argument that has often been (in part) implied by others.

[2]The inclusion of a limited number of myths (those most exemplar of ideas

presented in several places in the text, as well as those which are relatively brief) appears useful to this exercise.

Myths which have been reproduced (and which are indicated by the notational system used in Lévi-Strauss' Mythologiques) are found in Appendix B of this study.

[3]Of some interest is the Cubeo belief that jaguars (that is, transformed humans) always travel in groups (Goldman 1963:262-267). This is, we will remember, in contrast to the solitary nature of the anteater.

[4]The Sikuani are a very small group of nomadic Guahibo, and are probably very similar to the neighbouring Cuiva (Bernard Arcand: personal communication).

[5]Once again we may note the asexuality of the anteater. In the case of this Desana belief, we see the creature attempting to destroy the reproductivity of humans.

[6]In Niels Fock's 1962 study of the Waiwai, there is a description of a dance festival (Shodewika) which ends in an animal-imitation game (179-181). One of the animals imitated is the Great-anteater.

Although certain aspects of these games resemble the Sherente Padi Ceremony, Fock suggests the importance of the Shodewika is in the dancing activities, and not in the animal imitations (181). He further suggests that in these games: "the beasts are merely regarded as hunting targets" (Ibid.).

It is because of this apparent insignificance that I do not deal more thoroughly with the Shodewika festival.

Chapter IV - THE ANTEATER IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN

I suggest that the domains which mark the contrast between the anteater and the jaguar are important because they are the foundation of life as we know it: a life where hunting, eating, and sex occur in a social milieu of alliances, exchange and reciprocity. References to these important domains can be seen in the two sets of etiological myths presented below.

Two points may be raised about the first set (Set A) of myths. According to these accounts, the earliest humans appear to completely lack the characteristics that are so often used in myths to represent the important distinction between human societies and the behaviour of animals. These are descriptions of mythically aboriginal humans who knew nothing about fishing or hunting, people who did not cultivate plants, or people who lacked fire and ate rotten meat. Furthermore, and forming an even greater contrast between the earliest humans and those who tell the myths is a description of a more innocent time when people were always healthy, a time when people were immortal.

Clearly, humanity's beginnings were a period of mixed blessings.

The important objects or knowledge lacking in the earlier accounts are acquired in the second set (Set B) of myths. Here, we see early humans obtaining food (horticultural knowledge), fire, and hunting weapons. Humans are also described as gaining (and/or displaying), for the first time, the knowledge of sexuality. In all cases, the gift received serves to establish the very definition of humanity.

Set A:

From the Kamaiura group of the Xingu River is a myth of origin that tells

of the world's first man, Mavutsinim. Mavutsinim was alone in the world, without a wife or children. He was also immortal. Eventually he married a woman who had been transformed from a tortoise shell into a human. The sexual intercourse between the two, according to the myth, eliminated human immortality (Villas-Boas 1973:53-56). In the same myth, we see human females having sexual relations with jaguars, whose society, at that time, was very much like human society (Ibid.:57, 80). Another myth from these people describes the earliest times for humans. The story describes the world as being perpetually in darkness, with people living around termite-hills, lacking fire and cultivation, and with many people starving because they couldn't get food (Ibid.:88-89). This original lack of fire is seen in another myth from the Xingu area, in a Kuikuru account (Ibid.:105-108); as well as in a number of other myths from Lowland South America.

A Cubeo myth describes the earliest humans as lacking the knowledge of hunting and sexuality. In the remote past, as the account goes, people did not know about hunting, or fishing, nor did they know about copulation (Goldman 1963:52, 255). Kuwai, the Culture Hero, instructed the Cubeo on these practices (Ibid.:52-53). People were immortal until an incestuous act occured between a girl and her brother, an act which doomed all humans to mortal lives (Ibid.:23-247).

Fock has discussed a rather long and involved origin myth of the Waiwai of southern Guyana (1963:39-42). As a result of the sexual union of a female tortoise and a male grasshopper, two eggs were produced which would hatch and become two Culture Heroes. Following the death of the tortoise and the adoption of the two eggs by an old (grandmother) jaguar-woman, the eggs hatched and the boys grew rapidly. Instructed by the old jaguar, the two boys learned how to make and use hunting and fishing implements. At first these

two boys lacked penises. Later, in their sleep, their penises would develop. The two heroes grew tired of their source of food (namely, meat and fish), and their guardian, the jaguar, allowed herself to be burnt. From her ashes grew the dietary staple, bitter manioc. Since these two lads had grown penises, they wished to have wives. One day, while fishing, two anaconda-women were caught, and these became their wives. According to the myth, it was the act of coitus that made the Culture Heroes (and, ultimately, all humans) mortal.

The asexuality of early humans is also described in a Sherente myth recorded by Nimuendaju (1944:186, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:112, M29) Originally there were no women in the world, and men practised homosexuality. Finally, one woman was found in a tree. She was killed and divided between the men, each piece becoming a whole woman. The earliest Urubu men, according to a myth given in Huxley's account (1957·128-129), "were like children" insofar as they were asexual. Furthermore, these earliest men lacked penises.

A Bororo myth about the origin of diseases (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942:220-221, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969.59-60, M5), describes the earliest days of humanity as an era when neither diseases nor death were known. Both were introduced when a gluttonous female ate too much, and her moans became the evils of sickness and human mortality.

Set B:

According to Shavante mythology, the earliest humans had neither maize nor fire. They were, to use their own words, "like animals who could eat only rotten wood" (Maybury-Lewis 1967:285-286); a food which is soft and requires no preparation. In time, parakeets gave humans their knowledge of maize, and jaguars gave their fire (Ibid.).

An association of the jaguar and fire may be seen in a number of myths.

In an account of the Kayapo-Gorotire, there is a description of the jaguar as the original owner of fire and hunting weapons. Later, in the same story, the jaguar adopts a small boy who had been stranded in the top of a tree. Finally, the boy returned to his village with the weapons of hunting and a piece of grilled meat. Eventually, the humans stole the jaguar's fire (Banner 1957 42-44, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:66-67, M7). A remarkably close variant of this myth may be found in a Kayapo-Kubenkranken story. In this account, recorded by Métraux (1960:8-10, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:67-68, M8), humans not only acquire fire from the jaguar, but also the knowledge of spinning cotten from the jaguar's wife. A myth of the origin of fire from the Opayé is predictably similar (Ribeiro 1951.123-124, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:128-129, M56). Jaguar is once again the original owner of fire. An animal trickster, the prea, steals the fire and convinces the jaguar that raw and bloody meat is a better diet than cooked meat. Thus convinced, the jaguar gives the prea both cooking lessons and the knowledge of how to make fire. Humans would soon acquire this same knowledge.

Nimuendaju has recorded a myth from the Apinaye that associates the acquisition of fire by humans with mortality (1939:154-158, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:68-69). As the first two myths in the last paragraph began, this story tells of an early time when people did not have fire, and had to eat meat that had been dried in the sun. Once again, a deserted boy is adopted by a jaguar. The boy misses his parents and returns to his village, having been given some roasted meat by the jaguar and having received instructions "not to respond to the call of the rotten tree", on his homeward trek. Forgetting this instruction, the boy does respond, and the result is the loss of human immortality. Eventually, the jaguar gives his fire to humans.

Such a loss of immortality figures prominently in a number of myths.

The Timbira myth of the origin of cultivated plants tells of an asexual marriage between a man, and the Culture Hero. This Culture Hero, Star Woman, was knowledgeable of many things, and she had given humans the knowledge of cultivation of maize. She would have given humans much more if her husband had not insisted on her acceding to his sexual demands. It is because of this sexual act that Star Woman took her husband to live with her in the sky. This is the cause of human mortality (Nimuendaju 1946:245, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:166).

"How men lost immortality" is the name of a Caduveo myth we may paraphrase here. Very long ago, the powerful shaman visited the Creator to ask for the immortality of humans. Having put the shaman through a number of ordeals, the Creator finally agreed to grant humans this gift. As the shaman departed, he happened to glance at the Creator's daughter, and in doing so, impregnated her. Seeing this, the Creator decided that the shaman would ultimately die and live in "The Beyond" with the daughter. For this reason, no human may escape death (Ribeiro 1950:157-160, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969. 156).

The loss of immortality is described in a Tenetehara account which tells of the beginning of time when there was one man and one woman. While both these humans lived in sexual innocence, the man was distressed by his ever-erect penis. In time, the woman spoke to the Water-Spirit, who told her how she could, through copulation, make the man's penis soft. The demiurge saw the sexual act between these two individuals and condemned them to a mortal existence (Wagley and Galvão 1949:131, M77).

Finally, we may briefly describe the Shipaya account of how humans lost immortality. At one time, in the distant past, humans were asked if they wished to be immortal. The response was, of course, affirmative. The

demiurge who was offering this gift explicitly instructed the humans to disregard the first two of three canoes that would pass by the village. Nonetheless, the humans embraced as friends themen who appeared in the second canoe. The "men" of that canoe were human-like forms assumed by the power of death. Humans chose death, and that is why they do not live forever (Nimuendaju 1919-1920:385, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969.155).

The main point here is that these accounts represent alternative manners of living and that for either alternative there are both advantages and disadvantages. These myths refer to a transition between the very different life of the mythical ancestors to the kind of world that is known by those who re-tell these stories. By this transition, humans have eliminated the possibility of immortality.

Chapter V - DEATH, LIFE, AND THE TWO ANIMALS

The scope of our inquiry has widened considerably. Before returning to the Sherente paradox however, a number of interpretations can be made about issues that have appeared important to this exercise.

We may begin with a discussion of the quality of the anteater-jaguar opposition.

Lévi-Strauss, in pursuing one aspect of an argument that deals with the introduction of fire, states:

> "In all contexts, the origin of man's loss of immortality is linked with the advent of civilised life, which is thought of as culture whenever the question at issue is the origin of fire." (1969:187)

I introduce this quote not to deal with a hypothesised Nature-Culture opposition, but rather, to suggest the importance of the idea of payment exacted for benefits received. This will become clearer in a moment.

I have suggested the opposition between the jaguar and the anteater is one between sets of behaviour. It is an opposition between one type of behaviour (the jaguar's) that includes hunting, eating good food, and sexuality and, behaviour (the anteater's) that can best be described as the minimal possession of these characteristics. In the broadest possible terms, it is an opposition between two styles of living; one that humans live, and the other which formed their mythical past.

We have seen the earliest humans described as lacking sexuality, good food, and the knowledge of hunting. We have also seen these earliest humans desire precisely those behaviours that they lacked. In acquiring their new style of living, humans relinquished their ability to be immortal. Such was their payment for these received benefits.[1]

We may now more fully understand what is represented by the jaguar. In

terms of the sets of behaviour we have discussed earlier, the jaguar can be seen as possessing exactly the most valued attributes that men use to define themselves with. The jaguar is the hunter of the forest; it hunts and consumes the same animals as humans do, and its strong sexuality is frequently displayed in mythical accounts.

But jaguars do not merely represent this set of three behaviours. They are also creatures which are frequently equated with the powerful shamans of South American societies. More importantly, these jaguars-cum-shamans are regarded in a highly ambivalent manner. The jaguar not only possesses the characteristics or knowledge that is so valuable to humans, but, as we have seen in the etiological accounts, it is often the purveyor of these characteristics. If the human acquisition of this knowledge has involved an exacting price, then it is both appropriate and logical that the jaguar-shamans, as the bearer-of-gifts, should be an ambivalent representative of benevolent and malevolent forces.[2]

To understand the nature of the different powers represented by the Great-anteater and the jaguar has been the goal of this exercise. While this is the subject of the next chapter, I include here a belief from the Colombian Cuiva that may serve as an introduction to my interpretations of the Sherente paradox.

According to the Cuiva, the effects of aging are directly linked to the amount of "stress" that comes from the surrounding environment. In other words, a person who leads a very "hectic" life will create their own stressful environment. Such a person will accordingly age very quickly (Bernard Arcand: personal communication).[3] It is important to note that the Cuiva explicitly describe the jaguar as leading such a "hectic" life. Thus, the power of the jaguar derives from its manner of living (a manner of living that humans

value highly) that creates a stressful environment.

In terms of this Cuiva belief, we may re-interpret the mythic variants of the jaguar-anteater competitions as contests between antithetical manners of living. In those myths jaguars are defeated by an animal which does not create a stressful environment. The latter, the anteater, because of its manner of living, does not age. For the Cuiva therefore, the Great-anteater, a creature representative of a life that lacks hunting, sexuality and good food, must be immortal.

NOTES

[1] In Appendix A of this study (pp. 54-61) I introduce a brief series of arguments that suggests a further applicability of this hypothesis.

[2] For an interesting argument dealing with the mutually influential relationship between forces of generation and decay, I refer the reader to I. Goldman's 1976 article, "Perceptions of Nature and the Structure of Society: the question of Cubeo descent" (Dialectical Anthropology 1(3):287-292).

[3] A remarkably similar theory of aging has been put forward in Dr. Hans Selye's recent book, Stress without Distress (1974, Signet, Scarborough, Ontario).

Chapter VI - ALL ABOUT THE PADI

I suggest, that for the Sherente, the relationship between the Great-anteater and the jaguar is representative of the contrast between prolonged life and shortened life; the contrast between the possiblity of human ammortality and the reality of death.

In earlier chapters of this study we have seen the jaguar as representative of a set of behaviour that humans have used for their self-identification. Yet, from a number of societies, we have also seen accounts where the powerful jaguar is defeated by the anteater; this latter creature signifying a set of behaviour that is sharply contrasted to human self-identification.

The paradox is clear. While the jaguar may be likened to men, the ant-eater defeats the jaguar. Such is the paradox that humans must live with.

In the following pages I will try to demonstrate that humans wish to ally themselves with the manner of living that is represented by the jaguar. But the point of this discussion is that the categories of our world contain, within themselves, attributes of their own oppositions. Thus, it will be seen that humans must deal with their own potential to be like anteaters as well as jaguars. While a number of other oppositional sets will be seen in the Sherente myth and ceremony (for example: savannah and forest, day and night, raw or ripe food and rotten food) I believe the key to understanding this material is in the recognition of the human potential to adopt antithetical manners of living.

The plausibility of these suggestions may be seen by reviewing both the myth and the ceremony. (One may wish to re-read the Sherente material in its entirety, pp. 6-9, before proceeding to the following discussions.)

Padı´ Origin Myth

> "In a Šere´nte village there lived an old krıeri´ekmũ with his very aged wife. At the season of maturing burity fruits this couple moved to a brook, erected a hut there, and gathered basketfuls of burity fruits."

We may first look at the old man's membership in the krıeri´ekmũ association.

The Sherente society has four men's associations. Each association (or, society, I use the terms interchangeably) has a meeting site in the central plaza, between the two localised moieties which form two semi-circular arcs. To the North is the Sdakrã moiety, and to the South, the Šıptato moiety. Each exogamous moiety contains four clans. At the centre of the plaza is the bachelors' hut (warã) (Nimuendaju 1942:17-18).

According to the myth of the origin of the four men's associations, membership was initially based on age. The youngest men of the village became the ake´mhã, somewhat older men became the krara´, and those still older, the annõrowa (Nimuendaju 1942:60). At first, the oldest men of the village did not have their own society. Finally, instructed by a stag in the savannah, the oldest men formed the krieri´ekmũ. The name krieri´ekmũ is translatable as "paty palm spathe" (Ibid.). (According to Lévi-Strauss, the "paty", a species of the Orcus family, is a common savannah palm: 1973:124, 131.)

We may note that although membership in the men's associations is no longer based on age, forms of personal address between adult men still reflects the relative seniority of these societies (Nimuendaju 1942:59-60).

I suggest the membership of the old man in the krieri´ekmũ society is a mark of extreme old age. The mythical couple is old not only because of their advanced years, but also because of their affiliation with the association

that was mythically composed of the village's oldest men.

The Sherente describe the savannah as ro pse-di ("good or pretty and beautiful country"), and they describe the forest as ro waste-di ("bad or disgusting country", Maybury-Lewis 1967:34). This distinction is important because the mythical couple has moved from the village which is situated in the savannah (Nimuendaju 1942:39, 91, 94-95) to a site near water, and although not explicitly stated in Nimuendaju's account, we know from our knowledge of the ecology of the Brazilian Central Plateau that waterways are bordered by gallery forests (Maybury-Lewis 1967:32).

The old man and woman have gone to the forest to collect mature burity fruit. Burity palms (Mauritia flexuosa) grow most frequently in the gallery forests, and they grow best in soils that are too wet to allow the growth of most underbrush (Corner 1966:14, 36; McCurrach 1960:136-137). We know that the fruits of the burity begin to ripen (or, mature) in August. This is approximately the end of the dry season and the beginning of the rainy season (Maybury-Lewis 1967:31, 46).

A departure from the village at this time of year appears to be significant. It is at this time of year that all the men of the village are involved in the "Great Hunt". In the Great Hunt, all the men of the community leave the village to live in various temporary campsites (Nimuendaju 1942:62).[1]

A number of points may be raised concerning the behaviour of this elderly couple. In moving away from the village to a site near a brook, the couple is moving towards an element that the Sherente regard as rejuvenating. This life-giving power of water is mentioned in the account of the Padi Ceremony (see above, p. 8). Furthermore, and in another myth recorded by Nimuendaju (1944:181-182, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:72-73) we may see that the Sherente explicitly associate water with prolonged life. In that same

myth, we also see fire, originally possessed by the jaguar, associated with death.

The importance of this is two-fold. At one level of enquiry, we may suggest a number of oppositions that appear to be implied by the material. These are: savannah and forest, fire and water, and, death and prolonged life. From this material we may also pose further questions about the actions of the old couple.

The behaviour of these two individuals is somewhat perplexing. Their departure from the village is at a fairly untoward time (viz., the man would usually be involved in the Great Hunt -- an activity which would possibly take him to the savannah rather than the forest. See Note #1 for this chapter.) We are also told that they will both gather fruit, an activity that is normally regarded as an exclusively feminine one (Nimuendaju 1942:33).[2]

> "After a few days their daughter came to see how they were getting along. She met her parents in the hut and with amazement noted hanging there quantities of the finest kind of burity fibre, obtained by removal of the upper layer of young leaves. She was also surprised at many fragments of termite nests lying about. The old couple gave all the fruits gathered by them to their daughter, explaining that they were no longer able to eat any hard fruit.
>
> Several days later, when the daughter again came to visit her parents, they were no longer to be seen; instead, not far from the hut, were lying two anteaters, covered by their tails, on Padi disguises. Round about everything was strewn with lumps of termite nests, and all the termite mounds in the vicinity were broken up. The daughter looked for traces of her parents everywhere, but found only those of the anteaters."

On the first visit to her elderly parents, we see the daughter's surprise at seeing fragments of termite nests. This deserves comment.

At the birth of a child, the Sherente mother carefully saves the umbilical cord. When the child is four or five years of age, the mother directs that

child to take its own umbilical cord to the nearby termite nests (Ibid.:39). Neither little boys nor little girls are expected to participate in the social activities of their village at this age. It is only by the sixth year of life that these young males have joined the boys' organisations, and the girls are helping their mothers with cooking and by tending younger siblings (Ibid.:41-46, 56-57).

Nimuendajú does not comment on the significance of this behaviour but it may be suggested that feeding termites one's own umbilical cord, the physical connection between mother and child, is a marker of the end of the link (or, the complete dependency) with the previous generation. If this is so, one must necessarily ask why very young children feed termites and why (as we will see in a moment) very old people apparently eat these same insects.[3]

There is a question here of dietary habits. In previous chapters (see above, pp. 11-13) we have seen the frequent contrast being made between the diets of the anteater and the jaguar. While the fecal remains of the anteater were composed of ants, those of the jaguar were composed of meat.

In a Sherente myth that describes a time before the creation of the socially important men's associations, humans ate ants. After the formation of the associations, there is no mention of humans including ants in their diet (Ibid.:60). We may recall the etiological myths (see above, Chapter IV) that describe the diets of the earliest humans as consisting of similarly "bad", that is (normally) inedible, food.

The plausibility of a culinary opposition in this material may be suggested. Had the old man (in the Pádi origin myth) participated in the Great Hunt, he would have been eating meat. Instead, the elderly couple chose to collect ripe fruit, only to discover that they cannot even eat the fruit they set out to gather.

A question of the diet of the mythical couple becomes central. If they no longer eat meat, and cannot eat ripe fruit, one must wonder if they have begun to eat termites. (Lévi-Strauss points out that termites are often regarded as "rotten" food: 1969:126, 166-167, 191). Thus, the opposition is between ripe fruit (or, meat) and ("rotten") termites, that is, between edible and inedible food.

By the daughter's second visit, her parents have disappeared. Her parents have been transformed into anteaters, although she does not yet realise this. The anteaters have been "created" at the site near the brook, that is, in the forest and near the water. Their creation has been at a source of rejuvenation or of prolonged life. The importance of this will be discussed later.

> "She therefore returned to her husband, telling him that her parents had vanished without leaving a trace and that she had found two odd unknown animals near the hut.
>
> The man immediately accompanied her to the hut by the spring in order to see what were the facts. The anteaters, scenting their approach, trotted off toward a wooded island, but the man overtook them and clubbed them to death. While his wife was roasting the flesh, he searched the entire vicinity for the old couple, but found nothing except anteater tracks. The two returned home with the meat and the two masquerade outfits."

[It should be noted immediately that either Nimuendaju or the translator, R.H. Lowie, have switched from the usage of "brook" to "spring". It is not certain whether this is significant.]

If we regard the normal sexual division of labour as one set of behaviour that differentiates males and females, then the actions of the old man and woman (viz., both gathering fruit and the man abstaining from the Great Hunt) minimises the differences between these elderly people. Such an ambivalency of sexually defined roles is not seen in the behaviour of the younger couple

(the daughter and the son-in-law). Both these younger individuals behave appropriately (and, distinctly), the male by his hunting of the padi~, and the daughter by her roasting of the meat.[4]

> "At night the blood of the slain pair was transformed into a large number of anteaters, which came close to the village."

To be killed as one is "running towards a wooded island" is an obvious connotation of water. This is important because, although not explicit in the account, we may presume that the padi~ are killed either in, or at the edge of, water. A re-genesis of life at this site is consistent with the Sherente belief about the rejuvenating effects of water (discussed above).

We may also note that the time of this re-birth is at night.

> "The next morning an old villager conversant with everything went to the hut by the spring to see whether he could explain the disappearance of the old people. When he got back, he called the daughter's husband and told him the two anteaters he had killed were his parents-in-law, who had turned into those beasts by means of their masquerade. In memory of the event the costumes were to be preserved and occasionally renewed for a Padi~ festival."

The myth has described an elderly couple that left their village and, in time, adopted a manner of living that was quite different from normal behaviour. It was this mythical couple that became anteaters; creatures of the forest (and near water), of the night (by reason of the time of the re-birth of the padi~) and creatures that eat inedible (or, rotten) food.

That such a transformation occured to an elderly couple is sufficient cause for the old man to be acutely concerned about the human potential to become like anteaters.[5] Such a concern is periodically reflected in a ceremony that commemorates the events of this myth.

The Padi´ Ceremony

"After the usual deliberation with the elders and a decision to hold the Padi´ ceremony, the council appointed four of their own number, two from each moiety, to manufacture the disguises, of which there are always two. The work is done secretly at a suitable spot in the woods, consuming about two weeks. The very preparation of the above-mentioned fine burity bast takes over a week and requires patience and care The outfit consists of a covering of slender conical shape that completely masks the wearer from head to below the knees. The bast fibres are secured in this form by double threads intertwined round about. At the top the mask terminates in a long tip, the anteater's "snout", from which hangs its "tongue", i.e. a red arara tail feather. Under the snout are a pair of brushlike "ears". The wearer inserts his arms through lateral slits. The lower edge of the fringe is painted red with urucu. Under one arm the masquerader holds a short stick, in the other a staff to be stamped on the ground. One of the mummers represents the male, the other the female.

In addition the elders manufacture four wabu´ -- two shorter, wabu´-ri´e, and two longer ones, wabu´-zaure´ -- consisting each of two reddened wands of burity rachides joined by two transversely inserted plugs. Red bast fringes hang from the tips of the upper plug.

In the meantime the members of the celebrating society manufacture the zi-ri´e, dance rattles of little Lagenaria fruits attached to handles over 3 m in length. From the end of the handle projecting beyond the rattle there is also a pendant of red bast fringe.

When everything is ready, the masqueraders, accompanied by the four wabu´-bearers, enter the village and proceed to the site of the festival. There the society membership, armed with the long-handled rattles, stand in two lines corresponding to the moieties, and the mummers take up positions between them, while one wabu´-ri´e and wabu´-zaure´ pair stands on the east side and the other on the west side of the place. Thus they sing all night."

I have already implied the human potential to be like anteaters is a matter of the greatest concern to old people. It is thus appropriate that the ceremonial costumes are made by old men.

During this nocturnal portion of the ceremony there appears an alliance

between the anteaters and the celebrants. The men of the celebrating society stand in queues facing the padi´ mummers, and in this position they sing all night (unfortunately, we do not know the words of the songs). I suggest this alliance (the nature of which will be discussed later) may be seen in the colouring of the decorations of the celebrants and the padi´.[6]

> "In the meantime the members of the society that conducted the previous Padi´ performance disguise themselves as "jaguars" (huku´). For this they use green burity leaves, old mats, and steppe grass, blacken their faces, and paint black spots on their bodies. Holding hunting clubs with enlarged and laterally curved butts, they swarm about the site and try to abduct wantons. Simultaneously appear two prordo´, one from each moiety, from the membership of the celebrating society. Carrying little ocarinas painted black and red and made from Lagenaria fruits with glued-on feathers, they go whistling out into the steppe, whence they bring the "jaguars" to the margin of the festive site, and then again depart with them."

Two new sets of actors in this drama are introduced. We may begin by discussing the prordo´.

Nimuendaju never defines these two participants, nor does he elaborate on their function in the ceremony. An early impression (i.e., during the night-long festivities) of these two individuals is that they perform the role of "Masters of Ceremony". That is to say, they bring men from another association (now disguised as black-spotted jaguars) from the savannah to the edge of the celebration site. At some (unspecified) time later, both the prordo´ and the jaguars depart from the village.[7]

The behaviour of this second set of actors, the jaguars, deserves comment. Although the jaguars display behaviour we have elsewhere seen clearly associated with them (viz., they are armed with hunting clubs and they try to "abduct" sexually available women - Cf. Chapter III), these creatures are curiously ineffectual at diverting the celebrants' attention away from the

padi´.

Such a lack of concern by the men of the celebrating society, in the presence of armed jaguars, may be suggested to be fairly unusual. The two prordo´, we may note, also appear (at least for a good part of the ceremony) remarkably oblivious to any danger that the jaguars might normally represent.

[The inadequacy of ethnographic information is nowhere more apparent than in my attempt to understand the importance of the ceremonial prordo´. I must therefore ask the reader to regard my interpretations of the role of these two (very puzzling) participants as highly speculative]

> "In the morning the two mummers zigzag some distance into the steppe, where they finally lie down "to sleep", the feet of each turned towards the other's. Two old krieri´ekmũ, armed with hunting-clubs, track them, and as soon as they find them, "kill" them by clubbing the "snouts" of their masquerade. They thereupon remove the mummers' disguises, which subsequently are thrown into the brook together with the wabu´.
>
> Ceremonial implements and decorations are forever thrown into the water after use in order to prolong the former wearer's life."

In the myth that acts as the charter for this ceremony, it was elderly people who became like anteaters, and it was an old man who finally realised what had happened. We have also seen the old men of the village consulted prior to the performance of this ceremony. Old men make the ceremonial outfits and now it is old men who ritually slay the padi´.[8] In other words, it is precisely those individuals who are most concerned about becoming like ant-eaters that kill these creatures.

In moving to the savannah, the two padi´ are moving to the domain that is associated with the jaguars (by reason of the ceremonial place of origin of these creatures). Honoured only the night before, the padi´ become the prey

of hunters during the day.[9]

> "Now the dancers leave their long-stemmed rattles and unite with the "jaguars" about 1 km outside the village. The prordo´ go to meet them, each with a 10 cm long, reddened bit of pith from the burity rachis in his hand."

I suggest the ceremony thus far has represented the possibility of a choice between alternative behaviours. At night, humans were allied with one alternative. During the morning, the alliance changes. By discarding their red-coloured zi-ri´-e dance rattles (I refer the reader to Note #6 of this chapter), the celebrants are making a physical gesture that implies a rejection of what the anteater signifies. We are told that they "unite" (the specific meaning of this term is not clear) with the jaguars in the savannah. The association membership that gave the previous padi´ ceremony have made their decision, and are now the "jaguars" of this drama. Similarly, the celebrants have also made their choice, and now wish to be like the jaguars in the savannah.

Not all the men of this drama have made such a choice however The behaviour of the prordo´ does not suggest, in any way, that they have made a similar decision.

> "At a distance of about 15 paces from the "jaguars", who are ready to leap, they throw the pith towards them and immediately flee back toward the village. The "jaguars" give chase, the šiptato´ trying to catch the sdakrã prordo´, and vice versa. If they succeed in catching the fugitives before they get to the village, they remove all their decoration except the ocarina. In order to run rapidly, the prordo´ glue stripes of pulverized wesuzakno leaves, which have a pleasant odor, on their thighs with almecega rosin. They retain the name Prordo´ so long as they live; they also keep the ocarinas, which can accordingly be acquired only with great difficulty.
>
> This race closes the Padi´ masquerade."

We can interpret this meeting between the jaguars and the prordo' as a confrontation between those (jaguars) who have made a choice (in the previous ceremony) in favour of one manner of living, and, the remaining individuals of the present ceremony (the prordo') who have not made a similar choice.

The choice made (by the celebrants) has been one in favour of the domains of activity represented by the jaguar. It can also be suggested that the choice has been in favour of the socially important behaviour linked to these domains; behaviour that is so important to human self-identification, behaviour that has been chosen and used to pose the distinction between humans and their environment (Cf. Chapter IV).

We see the jaguars (participants who have demonstrated their predatory and sexual prowess) mark the importance of one such social domain, viz., moietal differentiation. Although the prordo' do not wear decorations that indicate their different moietal membership, the jaguars (in chasing the prordo' of the opposite moiety) do distinguish between the two. By their actions, the jaguars re-affirm the human social order in which moietal opposition involves the domains of hunting, eating, and sex.

But making the choice in favour of the manner of living represented by the jaguar (and thus, denying the alternative represented by the anteater) has its price. Here, the price is that of the immediate danger now posed by the jaguar. At the end of the ceremony this danger is recognised and accepted.

The myth of the origin of the padi' may be understood as the presentation of the paradox. It is a statement that describes an alternative manner of living.

We may see, in the mythical couple, two individuals who leave their life

in the village; individuals whose age prevents them from performing the social responsibilities that were once theirs; individuals whose performance in eating and hunting (and, by previous arguments, sexuality) has declined with their advanced years. Such individuals are moving away from the characteristics that have so often been used to differentiate the world that is known, and, the mythical world of humanity's ancestors. These are people who are becoming like anteaters.

The myth also informs us of the power of such a manner of living. The forest confrontation between the two couples (the younger one -- individuals who still belong to the village and who display their knowledge of hunting and cooking, and, the older couple) leads to the slaying of the old people who have become anteaters. But the result of this slaying is a re-birth. By becoming anteaters, the old people in the myth may experience prolonged life.

The ceremony begins with the knowledge that humans can become like anteaters. And it is precisely those elderly individuals who are rightfully the most concerned about this possibility that ritually kill the padi'.

By their actions these old men deny that their ability to hunt (and, again by previous arguments, to eat and to copulate) is like that of the anteater rather than the jaguar. Their actions can be interpreted as an affirmation of the manner of living we have seen adopted by mythical ancestors; an affirmation of the world that is known and valued by humans. The actions of the other celebrants (with the important exception of the prordo', as we have seen) may be similarly understood.

Finally, and in a manner similar to the myth, the ceremony illustrates the power of the anteater. The two individuals that act as the padi' of the ceremony receive the gift of prolonged life.

NOTES

[1] Nimuendaju does not tell us if there is any specific game that is hunted at this time. We may presume the quarry consists of the animals commonly hunted by these central Brazilians, viz., armadilloes, deer, peccaries (Tayussu sp.), and tapir (Tapiridae sp.) (Maybury-Lewis 1967:37-38; Nimuendaju 1942:33, 60, 76).

Nimuendaju also fails to mention where the Great Hunt takes place. It seems likely however, given the relative abundance of game throughout the central Brazilian plateau (Maybury-Lewis 1967:33) as well as the Sherente dislike of the forest (see above, p. 38), that the Great Hunt is an activity that would occur primarily in the savannah.

[2] We must also note that had the man participated in the Great Hunt, the diet of this elderly couple would have included meat.

[3] Although this question is far from central to the present chapter, an interpretation should be offered.

It can be suggested that the termites, having eaten the umbilical cord, themselves become representative of this link between a mother and her child, viz., the link between the previous and present generations. When very old people (who, as we will see later in this chapter, are becoming like anteaters) eat termites, they are in effect destroying this link. In destroying this link they are destroying the reminder of sexual reproduction.

Once again we see the asexuality of the anteater; and we begin to see it as a creature that denies the importance of reproduction.

[4] Another contrast between these two couples can be introduced.

We see the younger couple involved in two domains of behaviour that have been discussed earlier. The man (the son-in-law, a member of the moiety opposite that of the older man) is a hunter, and the young woman is a preparer of food. It seems plausible (as well as consistent with previous arguments) to suggest that this younger couple are individuals whose sexuality is stronger than that of their elders.

[5] There are a number of ways of seeing an ambivalency inherent in old age. Because of their (assumed) nearness to death, we may regard very old people as almost dead, and yet, because of their longevity, these same individuals can simultaneously be seen as being almost immortal.

[6] I have suggested the importance of the use of colours in the ceremony. The reader may wish to refer to the following listings of the colours of ceremonial costumes (or, personal decorations) and artifacts mentioned in the text.

Costumes and/or Ceremonial Objects Described	Predominant Colour
Padi´ (anteaters)	Red (reddened burity fringe and a red arara tail feather)
Wabu´ (ceremonial wands)	Red (reddened burity fringe)
Zi-ri´-e (rattles held by celebrants)	Red (reddened pendant).
Prordo´ (the name of two individuals whose role in the ceremony will later become clearer)	Red and Black (a red and black ocarina, and, as we learn later, reddened burity rachis)
Huku´ (jaguars)	Black (blackened faces and black spots painted on body)

[7] I suggest the role of the prordo´ as the "Masters of Ceremony" (or, mediators) is reflected in the colouring of their decorations.

The prordo´ combine the colouring used by the men of the celebrating society, and the colouring used by the jaguars.

[8] Old men are normally regarded by the Sherente as being the poorest hunters of the community (Nimuendaju 1942:61).

[9] A contrast of day and night, and, jaguars (or hunters, by reason of previous arguments) and anteaters (by reason of the nocturnal re-birth of these creatures in the myth as well as the nocturnal ceremonial honouring of these animals), indicates other oppositions found in Sherente thought. Some of these should be mentioned in passing.

In Sherente belief, communications with the Sun deity (Waptokwa) occur during the day, in the savannah, while the delegates of the Moon (Wairie´) appear at night, in the forest. Waptokwa is associated with the southern moiety (Šiptato), and Wairie´, with the northern Sdakrã (Nimuendaju 1942:81-89).

Chapter VII - CONCLUDING REMARKS

Much of the meaning of the Great-anteater is found in its opposition to the jaguar. As we have seen, the jaguar has been chosen to represent a life that is strongly marked by hunting, eating, and sex, while the anteater represents a very different life that displays these behaviours only minimally.

We have seen that humans can become like either of these two creatures. While the anteater expresses a manner of life close to that of the mythically original ancestors, the jaguar represents the manner of living that was since adopted and which people now enjoy. Both of these opposed manners of living simultaneously possess the virtue of some advantages as well as equally consuming disadvantages.

The Sherente information deals with these opposed manners of living: it deals with them as alternatives that humans must choose between, and it recognises the rewards and costs involved in either.

We see the offer of a life that is represented by the Great-anteater; a manner of living which old people inevitably move towards; a manner of living over which death has no dominion. We also see the costs involved in such a powerful gift as immortality. To achieve prolonged life, one must live minimally like an anteater.

Although humans can never totally reject this alternative, they may eternally display their preference. Their preference is one in favour of hunting, eating, and sex, and it is the acknowledgement of moietal differences and reciprocity. It is, in other words, a preference in favour of all the elements of a social order that humans cherish. It is a manner of living that is expressed by the younger couple in the myth, and it is the one the padi celebrants choose to continue by killing the anteaters and uniting with the

jaguars.

As we have seen, the adoption of this valued social life was made in the mythically primordial past. Costs were involved then, as they are now. Because of their preference, the men of the ceremony must acknowledge the danger of the jaguar. The cost of the preferred manner of living continues to be the fact of human mortality.

The paradox of the Great-anteater arises from the contradictions inherent in human self-identification. There can be no resolution to this paradox, for as long as the human manner of living contains the potential to be like both creatures, the opposition between the two will exist. The conflict between the possibility of human immortality and the reality of death must therefore be seen as eternal.

An added dimension to this eternal paradox is found in the Sherente material. For the Sherente, these opposed ways of being are associated with two ages of human life.

The mythical old people are forced into a manner of living that is opposed to normal behaviour. In killing the two padi´, the young people in that same myth attempt to deny the human potential to adopt this alternative form of life.

But the slaying of the anteaters does not resolve the paradox of the two possible modes of life, and the padi´ ceremony attempts to re-assert the dominance of one manner of living over another.

In the ceremony it is old men, precisely those who are already moving towards the manner of life represented by the padi´, that kill these creatures. These old men are making the statement that the manner of life represented by the jaguar is the one most appropriate for society.

It is in this way that the Sherente material can be construed as a tenuous victory of the young over the aged, of one manner of living over another. But it must also be understood as the acknowledgement of the ultimate defeat of humanity, for it is the Great-anteater who will win in the end.

Appendix A - THE AMBIVALENCE OF GIFTS

I wish to introduce a series of arguments that suggests a wider applicability of the proposed ambivalency of highly valued gifts that have been received by humans.

I include this information in an appendix because a good deal of the following analyses are extracted from Lévi-Strauss' Mythologiques II (1973). Furthermore, since Lévi-Strauss' arguments are notably less circumscribed than my own, the textual inclusion of these pages would have introduced far too many new elements than could have been adequately dealt with. I would hope that these lines of analysis would be more thoroughly pursued in future South American research.

Four myths are presented here. Together, these myths form an analytic set which serves to introduce the usefulness of the suggested hypothesis in understanding a number of (seemingly) distinct domains. (Note I continue to use the myth numbering system employed in Lévi-Strauss' Mythologiques.)

M191 - "The Origin of Tobacco" (Iranxe)

> "A man had behaved badly towards another man, who was determined to take his revenge. Using a fruit-gathering expedition as a pretext, the latter got his enemy to climb a tree, and there he left him, after removing the pole that had been used to make the ascent.
>
> The prisoner, who was starving, thirsty, and emaciated, caught sight of a monkey and called to it for help; the monkey agreed to bring him some water, but claimed to be too weak to help him get down. A thin, foul smelling urubu (vulture) succeeded in rescuing him and then took him back to its home. It was the master of tobacco, of which it possessed two kinds, one good and the other poisonous. It presented them to its protege so that he could learn to smoke the former, and use the latter as a means of revenge.
>
> When the hero returned to the village, he gave the bad tobacco

to his persecutor, who was seized with a fit of giddiness and changed into an anteater. The hero went after him and, having come upon him unawares in broad daylight when he was asleep, killed him. He invited his benefactor, the urubu, to eat its fill of the decayed corpse." (Moura 1960:52-53, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1973:61)

M26 - "The Origin of Tobacco" (Bororo)

"The men were returning from the hunt, and, as is customary, they whistled to their wives to come to meet them and help them to transport the game.

It so happened that a woman called Aturuaroddo, picked up a piece of a boa that her husband had killed; the blood coming from the snake's flesh penetrated into her and fertilised her.

While still in the womb, the "son of the blood" conversed with his mother and suggested that he should help her to gather wild fruit. He emerged in the form of a snake, climbed a tree, picked the fruit, and threw it down for his mother to collect. She tried to run away from him, but he caught up with her and returned to the shelter of the womb.

The woman was horrified and confided in her elder brothers who organised an ambush. As soon as the snake emerged and climbed the tree, the mother ran away; when he came down to go after her, the brothers killed him.

The body was burned on a woodpile, and from the ashes sprouted the urucu bush, the resin tree, tobacco, maize and cotton." (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969: 103-104).

M27 - "The Origin of Tobacco" (Bororo)

"Fishermen had settled themselves at the water's edge to grill their fish. One of them, with his knife, slit open the belly of a huddoge (un-identified), and discovered tobacco inside.

He hid the fish and smoked only at night, without telling his companions. The latter smelled the aroma and caught him at it. He then decided to share the tobacco with them. But the Indians swallowed the smoke instead of blowing it out. "That is not the way to smoke," said the supernatural spirit who appeared in the guise of a vampire. "First, puff, saying

'Grandfather, receive the smoke and keep evil away from me', otherwise you will be punished because the tobacco belongs to me". The Indians did not obey; therefore, by the following morning they had become almost blind and had been changed into ariranhas (the usual name for the giant-otter: Pteroneura brasiliensis, but often refering to the common otter). This is why these animals have such small eyes." (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942:211-212, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:104-105)

M1 - "The Macaws and Their Nest" (Bororo)

'"In olden times the women used to go into the forest to gather the palms used in the making of ba. These were penis sheaths which were presented to adolescents at their initiation ceremony. One youth secretly followed his mother, caught her unawares, and raped her.

When the woman returned from the forest, her husband noticed feathers caught in her bark-cloth, which were similar to those worn by youths as an adornment. Suspecting that something untoward had occurred, he decreed that a dance would take place in order to find out which youth was wearing such an adornment. But to his amazement, he discovered that his son was the only one. The man ordered another dance, with the same results.

Convinced now of his misfortune and anxious to avenge himself, he sent his son to the 'nest' of souls, with instructions to bring back the great dance rattle (bapo), which he coveted. The young man consulted his grandmother who revealed to him the mortal danger that such an undertaking involved; she advised him to obtain the help of the hummingbird.

When the hero, accompanied by the hummingbird, reached the aquatic region of souls, he waited on the shore, while the hummingbird deftly stole the rattle by cutting the short cord from which it was hanging. The instrument fell into the water, making a loud noise - jo! Alerted by this noise, the souls fired arrows from their bows. But the hummingbird flew so fast that he reached the shore safe and sound with the stolen rattle.

The father then ordered his son to fetch the small rattle belonging to the souls; and the same episode was repeated, with the same details, only this time the helpful animal was the quick-flying juriti (Leptoptila sp., a kind of dove). During a third expedition, the young man stole some buttore; these are jingling bells made from the hoofs of the caititu (a type of small, wild pig), which are strung on a piece of rope and worn as anklets. He was helped by a large grasshopper, which flew more slowly than the birds, so that the arrows pierced it several times, but did not kill it.

Furious at the foiling of his plans, the father invited his son to come with him to capture the macaws, which were nesting in the face of a cliff. The grandmother did not know how to ward off this fresh danger, but gave her grandson a magic wand to which he could cling if he happened to fall.

The two men arrived at the foot of the rock, the father erected a long pole and ordered his son to climb it. The latter had hardly reached the nests when the father knocked the pole down, the boy only just had time to thrust his wand into a crevice. He remained suspended in the void, crying for help, while the father went off.

Our hero noticed a creeper within reach of his hand, he grasped hold of it and with difficulty dragged himself to the top of the rock. After a rest he set out to look for food, made a bow and arrow out of branches, and hunted the lizards which abounded on the plateau. He killed a lot of them and hooked the surplus ones to his belt and to the strips of cotton wrapped round his legs and ankles. But the dead lizards went bad and gave off such a vile smell that the hero fainted. The vultures fell upon him, devoured first of all the lizards, and then attacked the body of the unfortunate youth, beginning with the buttocks. Pain restored him to consciousness, and the hero drove off his attackers, which, however, had completely gnawed away his hindquarters. Having eaten their fill, the birds were prepared to save his life; taking hold of his belt, and the strips of cotton round his arms and legs with their beaks, they lifted him into the air and deposited him gently at the foot of the mountain.

The hero regained consciousness 'as if he were awakening from a dream'. He was hungry and ate wild fruits but noticed that since he had no rectum, he was unable to retain the food, which passed through his body without even being digested. The youth was at first nonplussed and then remembered a tale told to him by his grandmother, in which the hero solved the same problem by moulding for himself an artificial behind out of dough made from pounded tubers.

After making his body whole again by this means, and eating his fill, he returned to his village, only to find that it had been abandoned. He wandered around for a long time looking for his family. One day he spotted foot and stick marks, which he recognised as being those of his grandmother. He followed the tracks but, being anxious not to reveal his presence, he took on the appearance of a lizard, whose antics fascinated the old woman and her other grandson, the hero's younger brother. Finally, after a long interval, he decided to reveal himself to them.

On that particular night there was a violent wind, accompanied

> by a thunderstorm which put out all the fires in the village except the grandmother's. Next morning, everybody came and asked her for hot embers, in particular, the second wife of the father who had tried to kill his son. She recognised her step-son, who was supposed to be dead, and ran off to warn her husband. As if there was nothing wrong, the latter picked up his ceremonial rattle and welcomed his son with the songs of greeting for returned travellers.
>
> However, the hero was full of thoughts of revenge. One day, while he was walking in the forest with his little brother, he broke off a branch of the api tree, which was shaped like a deer's antler. The child, acting on his elder brother's instructions, then managed to make the father promise to order a collective hunt; in the guise of a mea, a small rodent, he secretly kept watch to discover where their father was lying in wait for the game. The hero then donned false antlers, changed into a deer, and rushed at his father with such ferocity that he impaled him on the horns. Without stopping, he galloped toward a lake, into which he dropped his victim, who was immediately devoured by the Buiogoe spirits who are carnivourous fish. All that remained after the gruesome feast were the bare bones which lay on the bottom of the lake, and the lungs which floated on the surface in the form of aquatic plants, whose leaves, it is said, resemble lungs.
>
> When he returned to the village, the hero took his revenge on his father's wives, one of whom was his own mother." (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942.224-229, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:35-37)

We can begin by discussing some of the characteristics of the first myth (M191).

According to Lévi-Strauss (1973:62), the informant who presented the account in dialectal Portuguese began with: "Um homen fēz desonestidade, o outro fico furioso ...". Lévi-Strauss comments:

> "...[this]... clearly seems to refer to some kind of sexual misdemeanor, since the normal meaning of the word 'desonestidade' in the inland districts of Brazil implies some act contrary to the rules of decency." (Ibid.)

In other words, the hero, having first committed some sexual impropriety, later becomes the individual who is responsible for the human acquisition of tobacco.

Considerable research has been done on the significance of tobacco in South American beliefs. The point here is not, in any way, to summarise such work, but simply to introduce specific aspects of analyses which appear to be immediately relevant to this discussion.

Tobacco is frequently referred to in beliefs and myths as a type of food. Two examples are introduced here. For the Bororo, the act of smoking a cigar is expressed by saying: 'okwage mea-gi'. Literally translated, this is "eating a cigar". The cigar itself, for these people, is referred to simply as ke: food (Colbacchini 1925:122, N.4, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1973:59). A similar connotation is found in a Mundurucu myth, where a man is terribly angered by the ignorance of a young boy who doesn't realise that a cigarette is a food for men (Murphy 1958:108, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1973.59).

It is important to note the existence of a variety of indigenous methods of consuming tobacco. While most frequently smoked in cigars or cigarettes (or, less often in Pre-Columbian times, in pipes), tobacco is also used as snuff, or drunk in a thick syrup that is obtained by boiling liquid in which the leaves have been allowed to steep (Lévi-Strauss 1973:60). (It may be recorded in passing, that tobacco smoke has a stimulating effect, whereas the liquid method of consumption acts as a CNS depressant and an emetic. Ibid.: 67-68)

The existence of 'good' and 'bad' tobacco may be seen in the two Bororo myths (M26, M27). In M26, we see the origin of good tobacco linked with fire, viz., arising from the ashes of an animal. Bad tobacco, on the other hand, is associated with water because it was first discovered in the belly of a fish (Ibid.:61). In both M191 and M27, the consumption of bad tobacco leads to humans being transformed into animals: the Bororo myth (M27) becoming blind otters (in a Trumai myth, the original otters were described as animals

without anuses [Murphy and Quain 1955:74, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1973:203]), and the hero's enemy in the Iranxe myth (M191) becoming an anteater (recall the description of the anteater as a 'blocked' animal, p. 10).

A comparison of this set of myths can be offered. We may begin by describing the more obvious and explicit elements evident in these accounts. By performing a sexual misdemeanor, the behaviour of the hero of M1 resembles that of the Iranxe hero (M191). We see, in M1, the hero becoming the dispenser of tobacco. In both myths, therefore, the hero becomes the 'master' of some artifact or knowledge, and in doing so, also introduces a power which is destructive.

Sets of homologous oppositions that are extractable from these myths have been notationally described by Lévi-Strauss (1973:66). These sets of relationships include: good tobacco [(+) tobacco], bad tobacco [(-) tobacco], fire [(+)], and water [(-)]. The myths, and their relational correspondences are summarised:

Iranxe M191 [tobacco(+): tobacco(-)] :: Bororo M1 [fire(+) water(-)] :: Bororo M26-27 [tobacco(+): tobacco(-)].

The importance of this analytical set may be offered.

In the first and fourth myth (M191, M1), we see the introduction (or, re-introduction) of valuable 'things' to humans (tobacco and fire). Accompanying these receipts are hazardous forces (poisonous tobacco and severe rainstorms). As the reader will have noted, both these accounts deal at length with the negative consequences of the receipts, and only minimally discuss the benefits.

I suggest my line of interpretation (seen in Chapter V of the text) is applicable here. In both these myths, men who have already displayed some

aspect of sexuality (if albeit, indelicately), acquire further advantages for the rest of humanity. They receive fire and they receive tobacco. These acquisitions involve the acceptance of having life endangered by these very gifts. Humanity is once again seen as the recipient of advantages whose antithetical properties benefit and enrich the manner of living, while simultaneously being both dangerous and ultimately lethal.

Appendix B - MYTHS REFERRED TO IN TEXT

M5 - "The Origin of Diseases" (Bororo)

"In the days when diseases were still unknown and human beings were unacquainted with suffering, an adolescent boy obstinately refused to frequent the men's house and remained shut up in the family hut.

Irritated by this behaviour, his grandmother came every night while he was asleep and, crouching over (him) her grandson's face, poisoned him by emissions of intestinal gas. The boy heard the noises and smelled the stench, but did not understand where it was coming from. Having become sick, emaciated and suspicious, he feigned sleep and finally discovered the old woman's trick. He killed her with a sharp-pointed arrow which he plunged so deeply into her anus that the intestines spurted out.

With the help of armadillos -- okwaru, ennokuri, gerego, and bokodori -- he secretly dug a grave in which he buried the body, just where the old woman used to sleep, and covered the newly dug earth with a mat.

That same day the Indians organised an expedition to "poison" fish and so obtained food for their dinner. The day after the murder the women returned to the fishing ground in order to gather the remaining dead fish. Before leaving, Birimoddo's sister wanted to put her young son in the grandmother's care. the grandmother did not answer her call and for good reason. So she set her child on the branch of a tree and told him to wait there until she came back. The child, having been left alone, changed into an anthill.

The river was full of dead fish, but instead of making several trips back and forth in order to transport them as her companions did, she ate them voraciously. Her stomach started to swell, and she began to feel acute pains.

So she moaned, and as she uttered her moans, diseases were released from her body: all the diseases, with which she infected the village, sowed death among men. This is how diseases originated.

The guilty woman's two brothers, who were called Birimoddo and Kaboreu, decided to kill her with spikes. One cut off her head and threw it into a lake to the east; the other cut off her legs and threw them into a lake to the west. And both drove their spikes into the ground."

M7 - "The Origin of Fire" (Kayapo-Gorotire)

"Noticing that a pair of macaws had built their nest on top of a steep rock, an Indian took his young brother-in-law Batoque, with him to help him to capture the nestlings. He made Batoque climb up an improvised ladder; but when the boy got to the top, he said that he could find only two eggs. His brother-in-law insisted that he should take them, but as the eggs fell down, they changed into stones which hurt the older man's hand. This made him furious, with the result that he dismantled the ladder and went away, not realising that the birds were enchanted.

Batoque remained caught on top of the rock for several days. He grew thin; hunger and thirst obliged him to eat his own excrement. Eventually he noticed a spotted jaguar carrying a bow and arrow and all kinds of game. He would have liked to cry out to it for help, but fear kept him silent.

The jaguar saw the hero's shadow on the ground, and, after trying in vain to catch it, looked up, asked what had happened, repaired the ladder, and invited Batoque to come down. The latter was afraid and hesitated a long time; in the end he made up his mind, and the jaguar, in friendly fashion, suggested that if he would sit astride its back, it would take him to its home to have a meal of grilled meat. But the young man did not understand the meaning of the word "grilled" because in those days, the Indians were unacquainted with fire and ate their meat raw.

At the jaguar's home the hero saw a big jatoba trunk burning; beside it was a pile of stones such as the Indians now use to build their earth ovens. He ate his first meal of cooked meat.

But the jaguar's wife, who was an Indian, disliked the young man and referred to him as me-on-kra-tum "foreign, or abandoned son"; in spite of this, the jaguar, being childless, decided to adopt him.

Every day the jaguar went off to hunt, leaving the adopted son with the wife whose aversion for him steadily increased; she gave him only old wizened pieces of meat to eat, and leaves. When the boy complained, she scratched his face, and the poor child had to take refuge in the forest.

The jaguar scolded his wife, but in vain. One day it gave Batoque a brand new bow and some arrows, taught him how to use them, and advised him to use them against the woman, should the need arise. Batoque killed her by shooting an arrow into her breast. He fled in terror, taking with him the

weapons and a piece of grilled meat.

He reached his village in the middle of the night, groped his way to his mother's bed, and had some difficulty in making (her believe) his identity known (because he was thought to be dead). He told his tale and shared the meat. The Indians decided to get possession of the fire.

When they arrived at the jaguar's home, there was no one there; and since the wife was dead, the game caught the day before had not been cooked. The Indians roasted it, and took away the fire. For the very first time it was possible to have light in the village at night, to eat cooked meat, and to warm oneself at a hearth.

But the jaguar, incensed by the ingratitude of his adopted son, who had stolen "fire and the secret of the bow and arrow", was to remain full of hatred for all living creatures, especially human beings. Now only the reflection of fire could be seen in its eyes. It used its fangs for hunting and ate its meat raw, having solemnly renounced grilled meat."

M8 - "The Origin of Fire" (Kayapo-Kubenkranken)

"Formerly, men did not know how to make fire. When they killed game, they cut the flesh into thin strips, which they laid out on stones to dry in the sun. They also ate rotten meat.

One day a man noticed two macaws coming out of a hole in a cliff. To get at their nest, he made his brother-in-law (his wife's brother) climb a tree trunk in which he had cut foot holds. But there were nothing but round stones in the nest. An argument ensued, degenerating into a quarrel, which ended as the previous version. In this case, however, it seems that the lad, annoyed by this brother-in-law's taunts, threw the stones deliberately and wounded him.

In response to his wife's anxious inquiries, the man said the boy must have got lost, and to allay suspicion, he pretended to go and look for him. Meanwhile, suffering extreme hunger and thirst, the hero was reduced to eating his excrement and drinking his urine. He was nothing but skin and bone when a jaguar came along carrying a caititu pig on his shoulders; the animal noticed the boy's shadow and tried to catch it. On each occasion the hero moved back and forth and the shadow disappeared. 'The jaguar looked all round, then covering its mouth, looked up and saw the lad on the rock'. They entered into conversation.

Explanations and discussions took place as in the preceding version. The hero was too frightened to sit directly on the jaguar but agreed to bestride the caititu, which the latter was carrying on his back. They reached the jaguar's home, where his wife was busy spinning. She reproached her husband, saying 'you've brought home another's son'. Unperturbed, the jaguar announced that he was going to adopt the boy as his companion, and intended to feed him and fatten him up.

But the jaguar's wife refused to give the lad any tapir meat and allowed him only venison and threatened to scratch him at the slightest opportunity. Acting on the jaguar's advice, the boy killed the woman with the bow and arrow given to him by his protector.

He went off with the jaguar's belongings; the spun cotten, the meat and the burning ash. When he reached his village, he made himself known first to his sister, then to his mother.

He was summoned to the ngobe, 'Men's house', where he related his adventures. The Indians decided to change themselves into animals to take possession of the fire: the tapir would carry the trunk, the yao bird would put out the burning ash that

might be dropped on the way, while the deer would take charge of the meat, and the peccary of the spun cotten. The expedition was a success, and the men shared the fire between them."

M23 - "The Origin of Tobacco" (Toba-Pilaga)

"One day a woman and her husband went to catch parakeets (Myopsitta monachus). The man climbed a tree containing several nests and threw down thirty or so fledglings to his wife. He noticed that she gobbled them up. Seized with fear, he caught hold of a larger bird and, as he threw it down, called out, 'Here comes a fledgling, but look out, it can fly!'

The woman ran after the bird, and the man took advantage of the situation to climb down and run away: he was afraid she might eat him, too. But his wife went after him, caught up with him, and killed him. Then she cut off his head, which she put into a bag, and feasted on the rest of the body until her stomach was full.

She had scarcely returned to the village when she felt thirsty. Before going to the drinking pool, which was some distance away, she forbade her five children to touch the bag. But the youngest immediately looked inside and called the others who recognised their father. The whole village was now informed, and everybody took fright and ran away, except the children. When the mother, on her return, was surprised to think the village empty, they explained that the villagers had left after insulting them, having fled through shame at their own spitefulness.

The woman was indignant and, wishing to avenge her children, went after the villagers. She caught up with them, killed a number of them, and devoured the bodies there and then. The same process was repeated several times. Terrified by these bloody comings and goings, the children wanted to escape. 'Do not run away', said the mother, 'lest I eat you, too'. The children implored her. 'No, don't be afraid', she replied. No one was able to kill her, and the rumor soon spread that she was a jaguar-woman.

The children secretly dug a pit, which they covered with branches. They took flight when their mother announced to them that their turn had now come to be eaten. She rushed after them and feel into the trap. The children went to ask for help from Carancho (the Culture Hero, a species of falcon, Polyborus plancus, simultaneously a bird of prey and a carrion-eater), who advised them to hollow out a tree trunk (Chorisia insignis) and hide inside with him. The jaguar-woman tried to eat the tree with her claws, but they remained caught in the wood, so that Carancho was able to come out and kill her. Her corpse was burned on a woodpile. Four or five days later a plant sprouted up from the ashes. This was the first appearance of tobacco."

M29 - "The Origin of Women" (Sherente)

"In the beginning there were no women, and men practiced homosexuality. One of them became pregnant but was unable to give birth and died.

Once several men, reaching a spring, saw in it the reflection of a woman who was sitting high up in the branches of a tree. For two days they tried to catch the reflection. At last one of them looked up and spied the woman; they brought her down, but since each wanted to have her, they cut her into little pieces which were shared out. Each man wrapped his piece in a leaf and put the bundle in the grass wall of his hut (which is where things to be kept are normally put). Then they all went hunting.

On their way back they sent ahead a messenger who discovered that the pieces had all changed into women. The puma (Felis concolor), who had been given a piece from the chest, found himself with a very pretty wife; the semema (Cariama cristata, Microdactylus cristatus), who had twisted his slice too tight, found himself with a very lean woman. But each man now had a wife; and when they went hunting, they took their wives along."

M46 - "The Jaguar's Wife" (Bororo)

"In exchange for being allowed to escape with his life, an Indian had to agree to give his daughter to the jaguar. When she became pregnant and was almost ready to give birth, the jaguar warned her on no account to laugh, and then left to go hunting. Shortly afterward the young woman heard the unpleasant, ridiculous voice of a fat grub, which was trying to provoke her into merriment. The woman managed not to laugh, but in spite of herself she smiled. She was immediately seized with terrible pains and died. The jaguar returned in time to carry out a Caesarian operation with his claws. He thus brought forth twins, who later became the culture heroes, Bakororo and Itubore."

M53 - "The Jaguar's Son-in-Law" (Tucuna)

"A hunter lost his way and found himself at the jaguar's house. The jaguar's daughters invited him in after explaining that the monkey he had been pursuing was their pet. When the jaguar came home and smelled human flesh, his wife hid the hunter in the loft. The jaguar had brought back a caititu for dinner. After the terror-stricken man had been introduced to him and licked from head to foot, the jaguar took off his skin, assumed human form, and chatted familiarly with his guest while they waited for dinner.

Meanwhile the jaguar's wife secretly warned the hunter that the meat would be highly seasoned, and that when he came to eat it, he should show no sign of being put out by this. Although the food was very peppery, the man succeeded in hiding his discomfort, although not without difficulty. The jaguar was delighted, congratulated him, and set him on the road leading back to his village.

But the hunter went astray, returned to the jaguar's house, and the jaguar showed him another road; he again got lost and came back. The jaguar's daughters suggested marriage; the man accepted, and the jaguar gave his consent.

One day, a long time afterward, he went back to visit his family. His mother noticed that he had become wild and that his body was beginning to be covered with spots like the jaguar's hide. She painted him all over with powdered charcoal. He ran off into the forest where his human wives looked for him in vain. He was never seen again."

M56 - "The Origin of Fire" (Opaye)

"Formerly the jaguar's mother was the mistress of fire. The animals plotted together to steal a firebrand from her The armadillo was the first to try· he went into the old woman's hut, asked if he could warm himself because he was feeling cold, and was given permission to do so. He tickled the old woman under the arms to send her to sleep, and when he felt her muscles relax, he seized a burning brand and ran off. But the woman woke up and whistled a signal to her son, the jaguar, who caught up with the armadillo and took back the firebrand.

The agouti, then the tapir, the capuchin monkey, and the howler monkey -- in short, all the animals -- were equally unfortunate. It was left to that insignificant animal, the prea, to succeed where the others had failed.

The prea adopted a different method. When he arrived at the jaguar's hut, he did not mince his words 'Good day, grandmother, how are you? I have come to fetch fire.' Whereupon he seized a burning brand, hung it around his neck, and went off.

Having been alerted by his mother's whistle, the jaguar tried to intercept the prea, but the latter managed to avoid him The jaguar went in pursuit, but the prea had several days lead. The jaguar eventually caught up with him on the far bank of the Parana. 'Let us talk', said the prea to the jaguar. 'Now that you have lost possession of the fire, you will have to find some other means of subsistence.' Meanwhile the firebrand went on burning, 'thus becoming so much the lighter to carry'.

The prea is a trickster. He was so even at that time, and tricked the jaguar by telling him that there was no healthier food than raw, bloody flesh. 'All right', said the jaguar. 'Let me try it', and he hit out with his paw at the prea's muzzle, shortening it to the length at which it has remained. Finally, having been persuaded by the prea that there are other kinds of prey (which means that the prea is responsible for the danger that the jaguar represents for man), the jaguar gave him a lesson in cooking. 'If you are in a hurry, light a fire, put the meat on a spit, and grill it; if you have time, cook it in an oven that has been hollowed out in the ground and previously heated; put foliage around the meat to protect, and earth and hot ashes on top.' While he was giving these explanations, the firebrand finally burned out.

The jaguar then taught the prea how to make fire by rotating sticks, and the prea went all over the place, lighting fires everywhere. The fire spread even to his own village, where his

father and the other inhabitants gave him a triumphal welcome. The charred remains of the fires lit by the prea can still be seen in the bush."

M77 - "How Men Lost Immortality" (Tenetehara)

"The first man, created by the demiurge, lived in innocence, although his penis was always in a state of erection. He tried in vain to induce detumescence by sprinkling it with a manioc beverage. The first woman, having been instructed by the water spirit (who had been subsequently castrated and killed by her husband), taught the man how to soften his penis through copulation. When the demiurge saw the limp penis, he became angry and said: 'Henceforth your penis will be soft, you will make children, and then you will die: later when your child grows, he will make another child, and in turn he will die.'"

M100 - "The Jaguar and the Tortoise" (Kayapo-Gorotire)

"The jaguar despised the tortoise because it was slow and had a feeble voice. The tortoise challenged the jaguar. let each of them in turn be shut up in a hole, to see which would hold out longer. Without air, water or food, the tortoise held out for several days. The the jaguar submitted to the ordeal, but as the days passed, its voice grew weaker and weaker. When the tortoise unblocked the hole, the jaguar was dead, there was only a swarm of flies hovering over its remains."

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