

Claude Lévi-Strauss

FROM HONEY  
to ASHES

*By the same author*

STRUCTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

TOTEMISM

THE SAVAGE MIND

THE SCOPE OF ANTHROPOLOGY

THE ELEMENTARY STRUCTURE OF KINSHIP

Introduction to a Science of Mythology (*Mythologies*)

1. THE RAW AND THE COOKED
2. FROM HONEY TO ASHES
3. THE ORIGIN OF TABLE MANNERS
4. THE NAKED MAN

*Introduction to a  
Science of Mythology: 2*

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY  
JOHN AND DOREEN WEIGHTMAN

HARPER & ROW, PUBLISHERS  
NEW YORK, EVANSTON, SAN FRANCISCO

# Contents

TABLE OF SYMBOLS	9
TRANSLATORS' NOTE	10
FOREWORD	13
TOWARDS HARMONY	15
PART ONE THE DRY AND THE DAMP	49
1. The Dialogue Between Honey and Tobacco	51
2. The Arid Beast	70
3. The Story of the Girl Mad About Honey, Her Base Seducer and Her Timid Husband	104
<i>a.</i> In the Chaco	104
<i>b.</i> In the Steppes of Central Brazil	119
PART TWO THE FEAST OF THE FROG	151
1. Variations 1, 2, 3	153
<i>a.</i> First Variation	160
<i>b.</i> Second Variation	166
<i>c.</i> Third Variation	171
2. Variations 4, 5, 6	215
<i>d.</i> Fourth Variation	215
<i>e.</i> Fifth Variation	249
<i>f.</i> Sixth Variation	256
PART THREE SUMMER IN LENT	261
1. Starry Night	263
2. Noises in the Forest	296
3. The Return of the Bird-Nester	334

FROM HONEY TO ASHES. Translated from the French *Du Miel aux Cendres*  
© 1966 by Librairie Plon. English translation copyright © 1973 by Harper &  
Row, Publishers, Inc. and Jonathan Cape Limited. All rights reserved. Printed  
in Great Britain for Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved. No part  
of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without  
written permission except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical  
articles and reviews. For information address Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.,  
10 East 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10022.

FIRST U.S. EDITION

ISBN 06-012389-6

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER: 72-83209

6 CONTENTS

PART FOUR THE INSTRUMENTS OF DARKNESS 359

1. Din and Stench 361

2. The Harmony of the Spheres 423

BIBLIOGRAPHY 477

INDEX OF MYTHS 495

GENERAL INDEX 503

PART FOUR THE INSTRUMENTS OF  
DARKNESS

*Nunc age, naturas aptibus quas Iuppiter ipse  
addidit expeditam, pro qua mercede canoros  
Curretum sonitus crepitantiaque aena securitae  
Dictaeo caeli regem pavore sub antro.*

Virgil, *Georgics*, IV, vv. 149-52

# 1 *Dim and Stench*

NOTICE: THIS MATERIAL MAY BE  
PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT LAW  
TITLE 17, U.S. CODE

The general remarks I have just made must not cause us to lose sight of the problem which brought us back to the Tereno myth about the bird-nester (M44), and which led us to compare it with the Tacana myths on the same theme (M300-M303). It was a question of understanding the recurrence in these myths of a 'tapped-out call', addressed in other myths to the tapir, an animal seducer, but here addressed to honey, a food which is also seductive, but which is replaced in the Tacana myths (although the link can always be discerned) by a devouring animal, the macaw-snake. Were we in need of a comparison outside Tacana mythology to confirm the group's unity, it would be amply supplied by the Tereno myth which combines the three terms: honey, snake and macaw, in order to arrive at the notion of a destructive kind of honey (by the addition of snake meat), leading to the transformation of the female consumer into a devouring jaguar - a devourer, as it happens, of macaws or parrots - and men too, whereas in the Tacana myth, it is the man (a bird-nester) who is in the position of macaw-eater.

This Tereno myth, in which honey is raised to a negative power by the addition of snake meat and functions as a means, sets out to explain the origin of tobacco, which lies on the far side of honey, just as menstrual blood (which the woman uses to poison her husband) lies on the hither side of honey. I have already referred on many occasions to the polar system constituted by tobacco and honey, and I propose to return to it later. As for the contrast between honey and menstrual blood, we have already encountered it in myths which assign variable values to the relationship between the two terms: these values may approximate to each other, when the master of honey is a male character who is not put off by a young girl who is indisposed (M453); they are reversed, while still remaining far removed from each other, at the end of the series of transformations which led us from the character of the girl mad about honey (or about her own body) to the jaguar which was chaste but mad about menstrual blood (M473).

Another link is observable between the Tereno myth and a group of Tacana myths to which I have referred on several occasions (M194-M197). In M197, the daughters of the *iráta* (the 'mclero', an animal master of honey) fed their husbands on a beer into which they mixed their excrement; therefore, like the heroine of the Tereno myth, they behaved as their husbands' poisoners. When he discovered his wife's criminal machinations, the Tereno Indian set off in search of honey, the instrument of his revenge, and he knocked the soles of his sandals together in order to find it more easily. Having similarly become aware of the situation, the Tacana husbands beat their wives, thus causing the little wooden drums they had attached to their wives' backs to sound: *pung*, *pung*, *pung* (M196).<sup>1</sup> On hearing this sound, and in order to prevent them being so ill-used, their father changed the women into macaws:

*poison:*  
M24: menstrual blood || cause (of means) of vengeance || *consequence of vengeance:*  
M197: excrement || result (of means) of vengeance || women changed into macaws  
|| woman changed into (jaguar)  
|| cater of macaws  
|| women changed into macaws

A more direct link exists between menstrual blood, excrement and honey. In M24, the husband gives his wife poisoned honey in exchange, as it were, for the menstrual blood he receives from her; in M197, the cook exchanges (with herself) the excrement she mixed with the beer, for the honey she should normally have used.

Consequently, however obscure the episode of the 'tapped-out' call may still appear, its presence in the Tereno myth, which is corroborated by other myths, does not seem to be explicable by exceptional or fortuitous causes. Nor would it seem to be explicable as a relic of some technical device (making a noise to drive off the swarm) or magical practice (anticipatory, imitation of the sound of the honey gatherer's axe after he has located the swarm), since such interpretations, having no ethnographical foundation, are inapplicable to the 'tapped-out call' as we have found it described by the Tacana, in a mythic context which has undergone transformation.

If the honey-gatherer's gesture of knocking his sandals together cannot be explained by accidental causes, nor by some technical or magical purpose directly linked with his search, what place can the use of an improvised instrument of noise have in the myth? In an attempt to solve this problem, which does not merely involve an ap-

<sup>1</sup> The *Kahna* of Guiana also use the skin of the *iráta* to cover small-sized drums (Aht-brinck, under 'arza').

parently insignificant detail in a very short myth, but also raises by implication the whole question of the theory of calls and, beyond that, the theory of the whole system of musical instruments, I propose to introduce two myths belonging to the Tucuna Indians who live on the banks of the Solimões river, between 67-70° longitude west, and whose dialect is now classed with that spoken by the more northerly Tucano:

*M198. Tucuna. 'The family which was changed into jaguars'*

An elderly man and his wife set off, along with other men, for an unknown destination, perhaps for the other world. The old man taught his companions how to shoot an arrow at the trunk of a *tururi* tree. No sooner had the arrow touched the tree than a layer of bark came away from the entire length of the trunk. Each person chose a piece of bark, and, after hammering it out to make it bigger, painted black spots on it to look like the jaguar's markings, and put it on. Having thus transformed themselves into jaguars, the hunters roamed the forest massacring and eating Indians. But others discovered their secret and resolved to exterminate them. They killed the old man while he was attacking them, disguised as a jaguar. His wife heard them utter the murderer's name. Disguised as a jaguar, she ran after him and tore him to pieces.

The old woman's son had two children. One day the old woman accompanied her son and other hunters to a place where *envieira* trees grew. These are fruit-bearing trees on which toucans feed. Each hunter chose a tree and climbed up it in order to kill the birds with his blow-pipe. Suddenly, the old woman appeared in the shape of a jaguar and devoured the dead birds which had fallen at the foot of the tree up which her son had climbed. After she had gone, the man came down and picked up the remaining birds. He then tried to climb back up the tree, but a thorn got caught in his foot and he bent down to remove it. At that moment the old woman leapt on his neck and killed him. She took out his liver, wrapped it in some leaves and took it back to her grandsons, claiming that it was a tree fungus. The children, however, who had become suspicious because of their father's absence, looked in the pot and recognized a human liver. They followed their grandmother into the forest, saw her change into a jaguar and devour their father's corpse. One of the boys plunged a spear, the tip of which was made from a wild pig's tooth, into the ogress's anus. She fled, and the children buried their father's remains in an *armadillo's* burrow.

They had already returned to their house when the old woman arrived, moaning. On their feigning concern, she explained that she had hurt herself when she fell on a tree stump in the plantation. The children, however, examined the wound and saw that it had been caused by the spear. They lit a big fire behind the house and found a hollow trunk of an *ambaúva* tree, one end of which they split lengthwise so that the two wooden tongues banged noisily against each other when they threw the trunk onto the ground. They thus caused such a terrible din that the old woman came out of the house, enraged that so much noise should be made in the vicinity of a sick person. They at once seized hold of her and threw her into the fire where she was burnt alive (Nim. 13, pp. 147-8).

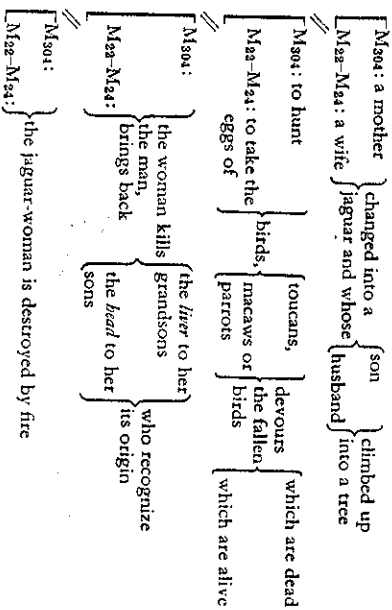
Before analysing this myth, I shall give a few explanations of a botanical and ethnographical nature. Three kinds of tree are mentioned in Msa: tururi, *envieira* and *ambaúva*. The first name, which does not correspond to any clearly defined species, refers to 'several species of *Ficus* and *artocarpus*' (Spruce 1, p. 28); the inner layer of bark is used for making clothes and receptacles. *Envieira* (*envira*, *embira*) probably refers to the *Xylophia*, the fibrous bark of which is used in the making of mooring ropes, splices and shoulder-belts, and which produces aromatic seeds of which the toucans are very fond, according to the myth, and which the Kalina of Guiana use to make necklaces (Ahbrinck, under 'eneka', 4, §c). The *ambaúva* or *embaúba*, which means literally 'non-tree' (Stradelli 1, under 'embayua'), or as French foresters would say *faux-bois*,<sup>2</sup> is a *Ceropia*. The Tupi name covers several species of which the most often quoted is *Ceropia pelata*, the drum tree (Whiffen, pp. 134, n. 3; 141, n. 5), thus called because its naturally hollow trunk lends itself to the making of drums, as well as dance sticks and horns (Roth 2, p. 465). Finally, the fibrous bark of the *Ceropia* makes stout ropes (Stradelli, *loc. cit.*).

The myth therefore introduces a triple pattern of trees, all used to make clothes and utensils from bark, and one of which, since it is hollowed out by nature, also supplies the raw material for several musical instruments. Now the Tucuna, who make the cylinder of their (skin) drums from *embaúba* wood (Nim. 13, p. 43), closely associate music and the masks of pounded bark, which play an important part in their festive celebrations, and the making of which they have carried

<sup>2</sup> TRANSLATORS' NOTE: Linte's dictionary defines *faux bois* as branches which do not produce fruit and cannot be used for ornament. The term implies trees without any commercial value.

to a high degree of excellence. We may already suppose that Msa: possess a special problem (but one which for the time being remains obscure) in connection with the making of bark masks and costumes. This aspect becomes more obvious when it is recalled that, at the end of the celebrations, the visitors, who had been disguised in tunics made from the bark of the tururi tree, and decorated with fringes made from the tururi or *envira* (*envieira*) tree which almost reached the ground, handed these tunics over to their hosts in exchange for gifts of smoked meat (Nim. 13, p. 84). Now, in the myth too, the fact of wearing a bark tunic which turns him into a jaguar puts the hunter into the position of an acquirer of meat: human, not animal, meat, of course; but the bark, which provides the raw material for the tunic, belongs also to a category which is exceptional in its own way, since it was obtained by magical means, that is, was 'hunted' and not torn from the tree, and was immediately available in the form of long strips, instead of having to be laboriously peeled off the trunk (Nim. 13, p. 81).

Making allowances for the geographical distance, the regular pattern of the transformations which make it possible to move from the Tucuna myth to the Chaco myths (Mz:—Mz4) about the origin of the jaguar and tobacco is quite striking:



In order to interpret correctly the episode in Msa:, in which the hero, whose foot has been pierced by a thorn, is killed by the jaguar while trying to remove the cause of the trouble, it must be recalled that, in Mz4, which belongs to the same group as Mz:—Mz4, the ogress turned jaguar perishes on a tree-trunk which bristles with thorn-like spears

(they are changed back into thorns in Maja, just as the ogress in Maja dies as a result of ingesting *strong* (*stinging*) honey, which makes her itch all over). It is also worth noting that, while the heroine of Maja poisons her husband with menstrual blood, the heroine of Maja brings back their father's liver to her grandsons. South American Indians

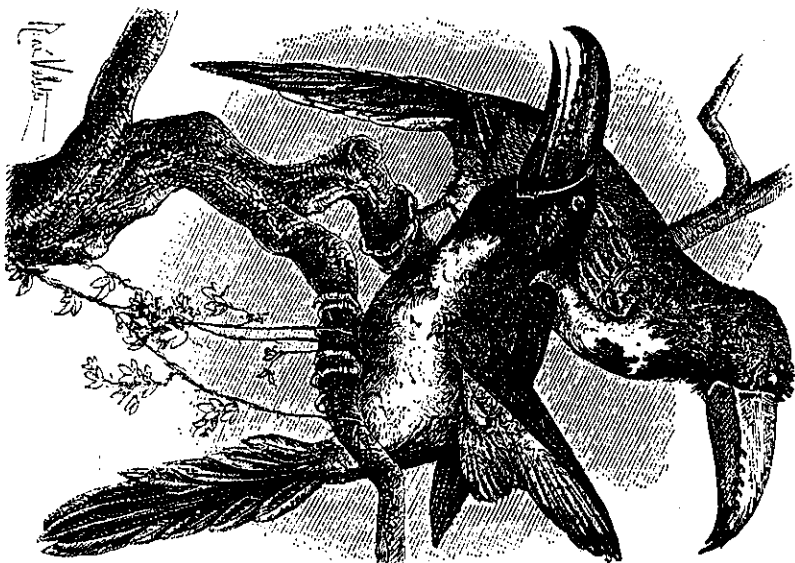


Figure 16. Toucans. (A drawing by Valette, after Crevaux, *loc. cit.*, p. 82.)

believe that the liver is an organ formed from coagulated blood and that, in women, it acts as a reservoir for menstrual blood.

In order to arrive at a satisfactory interpretation of the other transformations, it would be essential to elucidate the semantic position of toucans. This is no easy undertaking because the birds appear very

infrequently in the myths. I shall do no more than suggest a theory, without claiming that it can be definitively established.

Several species of the *Rhamphastos* family are referred to as toucans. Their chief characteristic is an enormous beak which is, at the same time, very light in weight because it is porous under its horny tegument. Toucans prefer to hop from branch to branch rather than fly. Their feathers are almost entirely black, except over the breast where they are brilliantly coloured, and consequently much sought after for the purposes of ornamentation. These feathers have been prized by others besides the Indians; the ceremonial coat which belonged to Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil, and which can still be admired in the Rio de Janeiro museum, is made from the yellow, silky feathers of the toucan.

The ornamental use of feathers suggests a comparison between the toucan and the parrot and the macaw, but it is in partial contrast to the latter birds in respect of diet. The psittacidae are fruit-eating, the toucan is omnivorous and eats indiscriminately fruit, seeds and small animals, such as rodents and birds. Maja mentions that the toucan is particularly fond of aromatic seeds. The fact that in German it is called: *Pefferfresser*, 'pepper-eater', is less surprising than *Ihering* (under 'tucano') is inclined to believe, especially since Thevet (Vol. II, p. 939a, b) refers to the toucan as a 'pepper-eater', which propagates pimentoes through the seeds in its droppings.

So far, within the range of bird species, we have consistently met with a major contrast between the psittacidae and the aquilinae (true eagles do not exist in South America). The preceding remarks about the toucan suggests that it occupies an intermediary position between these two polar terms: it can be carnivorous, like birds of prey, and part of its body is covered with feathers as brightly coloured as those of the parrot.<sup>3</sup> But it is obviously the subsidiary opposition between macaws and toucans which should occupy our attention, since it is the only one which plays a part in the group of myths we are studying. In this con-

<sup>3</sup> In support of this statement, I can quote an extract from the Vapitiana myth about the origin of death (Majas). The toucan was the demitige's pet bird and, when its master's son died, it wept so much that its plumage lost its colour: 'Has not the grief of years and the rivers of tears which he has shed dissolved some of the gaudy colours of orange and black, red and green, and left a ring of faded blue round each eye the width of the nail of a small finger?' (*Ogitivé*, p. 69). In respect of its plumage, the toucan thus appears as a faded parrot.

In Guiana, the small toucan seems to be subject to a taboo comparable to the one relating to opossum meat among the Ge (K.C., p. 169): according to the Kalina, anyone who eats the flesh of this bird will die 'while still in full beauty', or as we would say, in the prime of life (Ahhbinck, under 'Kuyakén').

nction, the toucan's fondness for the aromatic seeds of the envicia tree would seem to be the relevant feature in *Mso4*.

One of the myths about the origin of honey, which we studied at the beginning of this book, describes the adventures of an Indian, who was also attacked by jaguars while robbing the nests of macaws, which feed on flowers containing sweet nectar (*M189*). Now, we know of a myth in which the toucan plays a leading role, most probably after it has been given an exaggeratedly large beak as a punishment for greediness (*Métraux 2*, p. 178, n. 1). In this particular myth (*Mso5b*), a honey-gatherer, thanks to the toucan's advice, succeeds in killing the demiurge *Anatumpa* (by lighting a fire on the back of his neck), who had offered all the honey-gatherers as food to *Dyori*, the ogre (*Norden-skiöld 1*, p. 286). So, while in *M188-M189* jaguars are changed into honey-gatherers, in *Mso5b* a honey-gatherer is changed into a jaguar (which also attacks its opponents' necks). At the same time, the macaws which are being hunted are changed into a helpful toucan, a transformation which could perhaps be explained by the respective association of the macaw with sweet food and of the toucan with highly flavoured food. All the terms in *Mso4* would thus reproduce those used in *M22-M24*, but would give them greater emphasis.

These remarks would be of little interest if they did not help to throw light on other aspects of the problem. In the table on p. 361 I compared only the central parts of the myths, leaving out the beginning of *Mso4*, which dealt with the origin of the ability to be transformed into a jaguar, and the end of *M22-M24* (*M22* does not contain this episode) which dealt with the origin of tobacco. Now, in these last myths, tobacco comes into existence through the jaguar, just as in *Mso4* the jaguar comes into existence, as it were, through the invention of the bark tunics. The wearing of bark tunics and the absorption of tobacco are two ways of entering into communication with the supernatural world. The misuse of one of these methods brings about a woman's death by burning in *Mso4*. The death of a woman by burning causes the appearance of the other method in *M22-M24*, but, according to *M24* (cf. also *M27*), initially as a misuse: the first men to possess tobacco wanted to smoke in isolation, that is, without sharing with others, or without trying to communicate with the spirits.

Whereas tobacco smoke sends out a courteous invitation to kindly spirits, according to another Tucuna myth (*M188*), which will be studied later, it was thanks to the asphyxiating smoke of the pimento that men were able to exterminate a race of evil, cannibalistic spirits and examine

them at leisure. The bark tunics which have been made since then were modelled on the appearance of these spirits and make it possible for men to embody them. The initiation ceremony for young girls, at which the visitors arrive in disguise and pretend to attack and destroy their hosts' houses, symbolizes a fight waged by humans to protect the young adolescent girl from the spirits which threaten her during this critical period of her life (*Nim. 13*, pp. 74, 89). It is clear, then, which path we have to follow if we are to re-establish a complete correspondence between the Tucuna myth (*Mso4*) and the Chaco myths about the origin of tobacco. Pimento smoke is the opposite of tobacco smoke, but since it was, in a sense, given to the supernatural spirits in exchange for bark tunics (since these were obtained thanks to the application of pimento smoke), it also represents them in reverse, and the mystic use of bark tunics is therefore, ideologically speaking, on a par with the use of tobacco.

There still remains the problem of the recurrence, which is less surprising than it first appeared, of a noise-making instrument of the clapper type in *M24* and in *Mso4*. The instrument in *M24* was a make-shift device used for locating honey, which in turn is the instrument of the ogress's successive metamorphoses, culminating in her death by burning. The noise-maker in *Mso4* leads the ogress straight to the same fire. But in this case we are dealing with a real instrument, although it has no equivalent in Tucuna organology – in spite of the fact that the latter is one of the most varied in South America – and one which belongs to a type so rare in this part of the world that *Izlikowitz's* classic work (pp. 8–9), under the heading 'clappers' – 'pieces of wood banged one against the other', gives only two references, one of which is doubtful, while the other refers to the imitation of a bird call. It would seem, then, that the Tucuna myth is referring to an imaginary instrument, the making of which it describes very carefully.<sup>4</sup>

The instrument nevertheless exists, if not among the Tucuna, at least among the Bororo, where it has exactly the same shape, although they make it from bamboo and not from the hollow trunk of the *embuba* tree. In the Bororo dialect, the instrument is called *parabára*, a term which also denotes a kind of small white goose, because, according to *EB* (Vol. I, pp. 877–8), of the resemblance between the cry of the bird and the rattle of the bamboo canes. This is not a convincing explanation, because the popular name of *Dendrocygna viduata*, *ireté*, is

<sup>4</sup> An instrument of the same type, but which is used as a catapult, has been reported among the Tucuna, the Aparai, the Toba and the Sherente (*Nim. 13*, p. 125, n. 23).

also interpreted as being an onomatopoeic term, although the comparison of this bird's cry with a whistle (Ihering, under 'ireré') does not make it sound much like a series of dry rattling noises.

There is some doubt, too, about the place and function of the parabára in Bororo ritual. According to Colbacchini (2, pp. 99-100; 3, pp. 140-41), these instruments, which are made from bamboo poles split longitudinally over a length of thirty to fifty centimetres and which, when shaken, produce sounds which are differently pitched according to the size of the cut, are used at the investiture ceremony for the new chief, which always coincides with funeral rites. The new chief is an incarnation of the hero, Parabára, the inventor of instruments of the same name, and he sits down on the grave while dancers of both sexes make a circle round him, shaking the bamboo poles which they finally lay on the grave. The parabára figures among the gifts presented to the new chief (who always comes from the Cera moiety) by members of the other, Tugaré, moiety.

The *Enriolpétia Bororo* states clearly that the celebration of the parabára rite is a privilege enjoyed by the Apiboré clan belonging to the Tugaré moiety. The individuals officiating at the ceremony, who personify the parabára Spirits, enter the village at the west side, each one holding in both hands a long, split bamboo cane; they move in the direction of the grave, walk round it several times, and then sit down, while the leader of the ritual, who is called Parabára Eimejetera (and who is not a village chief in process of being enthroned, as was indicated in the previous sources), announces his arrival to the members of both moieties, to the accompaniment of the crackling sound of the bamboos. When he has finished, the others lay the bamboos on the grave and go away (*EB*, Vol. I, under 'aroe-etawujedú', p. 159).

Since the *Enriolpétia* does not mention the parabára in connection with the investiture of chiefs, it is probable that, because this ritual had to be performed at the same time as a funeral ceremony, the Salesian Fathers first of all thought they should associate with the one what rightfully belonged to the other. A funeral ceremony, unaccompanied by an investiture, has been observed and photographed in a village on the Rio São Lourenço (not the village in which I stayed thirty years ago, but in the same area, which is a long way from the region controlled by the missions). About a fortnight after the temporary burial on the main plaza of the village, dancers attired in ceremonial dress and personifying mythical beings inspected the corpse to see if the decomposition of the flesh had reached a sufficiently advanced stage. Several

times they reached a negative conclusion, which is a necessary procedure if the ceremonies are to follow their proper course. One of the dancers, whose body was smeared with white clay, ran round the grave calling to the soul of the dead man to come out. Meanwhile, other men shook split bamboo canes, which made dry rattling noises (Kozák, p. 45).<sup>5</sup>

It is probable that the dancer smeared with clay personified the aigé, a frightening-looking aquatic monster, whose cry is imitated by the bull-roarers. If, as the source suggests, the object of his dance was indeed to invite the dead man's soul to leave the grave, hence the village, in order to follow the mythic beings into the world beyond, the rattling of the parabára could hasten or saluate this disjunction, which is also (according to the point of view one adopts) a conjunction. I shall not attempt to go any further in the interpretation of Bororo ritual, since the second volume of the *Enriolpétia Bororo*, which may perhaps include a hitherto unknown myth about the origin of the parabára, has not yet appeared. I merely note that, according to information given to Nordenskiöld, the Yanaygua of Bolivia use an instrument of the clapper type in certain ceremonies (Izolkowitz, p. 8). The Tereno of the southern part of the Maro Grosso also have a dance which involves knocking together sticks (*bate pau* in Portuguese), but its meaning is unknown (Altenfelder Silva, pp. 367-9). A festive ceremony performed by the Kayapo-Gorotité, and which they refer to as *men uémoro*, but which is also called *bate pau* by the neighbouring peasants, has been observed recently. The young men form a file two deep and move round in a ring, knocking together sticks about fifty centimetres long. The dance lasts all night, and ends with their copulating with a very young woman, who is 'mistress of the feast' and who has inherited this duty through the women on the paternal side of her

<sup>5</sup> Like the Bororo, several small tribes of southern California have an extremely complex burial ritual, the purpose of which is to prevent the deceased coming back among the living. It includes two dances, called respectively 'twirling' and 'to extinguish the fires'. During the latter, the shamans stamp out the flames with their feet and hands, and in both dances they knock sticks together (Waterman, pp. 309, 327-8 and Pl. 26, 27; Spiet 1, pp. 321-2).

Now California is without any doubt the area in which instruments of the parabára type are most prevalent; they are found in the Yokuts in the south as far north as the Klamath, who live in the state of Oregon (Spiet 2, p. 89). The parabára is referred to as a 'clap rattle', or a 'split rattle' by American ethnographers, and its presence has also been recorded among the Pomo (Loeb, p. 189), the Yuki and the Malidú (Kroeber, pp. 149, 419 and Pl. 67). The Nomlaki (Goldschmidt, pp. 367-8) make it from elder-wood, which can play the part of the bamboo in temperate regions. Kroeber (pp. 823, 862) declares the instrument to be typical of central California, where it is supposed to be used only for dances and never for puberty rites or shamanistic ceremonies. Among the Klamath, who may have taken it over from the tribes along the river Pit farther south, its use is probably limited to the 'ghost dance', a messianic cult which appeared about 1870 (Spiet 2, *loc. cit.*).

family: she inherits it from one of her father's sisters and passes it on to a daughter of one of her brothers. It stands to reason that this woman cannot claim to be a virgin. Therefore, in accordance with the Kayapo custom, she is only entitled to a second-class marriage. Yet the rite of *bate pan* is performed at those rare and much sought after marriages in which the bride, who is still under the age of puberty, is officially a virgin (Diniz, pp. 26-7). It is possible that the southern Guarani used the same type of noise-making instruments in their rites, since the Mbaya describe an important divinity as holding two sticks, one in each hand and shaking them and knocking them together. Schaden (5, pp. 191-2), who gives the information, suggests that the two crossed sticks are perhaps the origin of the famous Guarani cross, which made such a powerful impression on the old missionaries.

The Uiroro believe that, when they stamp with their feet, they are establishing contact with their chthonian forefathers, who came up to the earth's surface in order to watch the feasts given in their honour, and which they themselves celebrate with 'real' words, whereas men speak by means of musical instruments (Preuss 1, p. 126). A Mataco myth (M96) relates that, after the fire which destroyed the earth, a small bird, tapatson, beat its drum near the burnt branch of a zapallo (*acurbita* sp.) tree, as the Indians do when the algaroba (*Prosopis* sp.) ripens. The trunk started to grow and became a fine leafy tree which offered the protection of its shade to the new race of men (Métraux 3, p. 10; 5, p. 33).

This myth brings us extraordinarily close to M<sub>24</sub>, in which the knocking together of the sandals was intended to hasten the conjunction of the hero and another wild 'fruit': honey. In Tacana mythology, another bird, the woodpecker - whom we know to be a master of honey - taps with its beak on a woman's earthenware pot in order to guide her husband who has lost his way (M<sub>507</sub>; H.-H., pp. 72-4; cf. also the Uiroro myth in Preuss 1, pp. 304-14). In M<sub>194</sub>-M<sub>195</sub>, the same conjunctive role is played by the woodpecker, whether he brings a husband back to his wife or helps the divine brothers to return to the supernatural world. It would be interesting to compare more closely the conjunctive function of the tapping in M<sub>507</sub> with that fulfilled in the Guarani creation myth (M<sub>508</sub>) by the crackling of seeds as they burst in the fire with an explosive force capable of transporting the younger of the divine brothers to the other side of the water where his elder brother already is (Cadogan 4, p. 79; Borba, p. 67). I shall merely draw attention to the problem, and to the triple reversal of the same

theme among the Bororo (M<sub>46</sub>): brothers are blinded by the noisy explosion of their grandmother's bones which have been thrown into the fire, and recover their sight in water (*tsji:lewi*; *animal/vegetable*; *in the water/over the water*; Kalapalo variant (M<sub>17</sub>): the two brothers are respectively sun and moon, and the younger, having had his nose torn off by one of his grandmother's bones which shot out of the fire 'where they danced and made a clicking noise', decided to go up into the sky; cf. RC, pp. 123, 171). To be complete, the study of this theme should include references to North American sources, such as the Zuni myth about the winter ritual in which men regain possession of game which has been stolen by ravens thanks to the noisy explosion of a handful of salt that has been thrown into the fire (M<sub>509</sub>; Bunzel, p. 928).<sup>6</sup>

So a series of discontinuous noises, which take a great variety of forms, such as tapping or drumming, the knocking together of pieces of wood, the crackling of objects in fire, or the rattling of split poles, play an obscure part in ritual and in mythic narratives. The Tucuna, one of whose myths put me on the track of the Bororo parabata, although the Tucuna themselves are unacquainted with this instrument, knock sticks together in one set of circumstances at least. It is well known that these Indians attach great importance to the puberty rites for girls. As soon as a girl detects signs of her first period, she takes off all her ornaments, hangs them in an obvious place on the posts of her hut and goes off to hide in a nearby bush. When her mother arrives, she sees the ornaments, realizes what has happened and sets off to look for her daughter. The latter replies to her mother's calls by striking two pieces of dry wood together. The mother then loses no time in erecting a partition around the young girl's bed and takes her there after nightfall. From that moment the girl remains in seclusion for two or three months without being seen or heard by anyone except her mother and her paternal aunts (Nlin. 13, pp. 73-4).

This reference to the Tucuna provides a suitable opportunity for introducing another myth which is essential for any further discussion of M<sub>504</sub>:

*M<sub>504</sub>. Tucuna. 'The jaguar who ate children'*

Peti, the jaguar, had been killing children for a long time. Every time he heard a child crying because it had been left alone by its parents,

<sup>6</sup> The Timbira have a dance accompanied by handclapping which is intended to keep away the harvest parasites (Nlin. 8, p. 62). The Pawnee women of the Upper Missouri used to beat the water noisily with their feet at the time of planting and harvesting beans (Welfish, p. 248).

the animal assumed the form of the mother, carried the little one off and said to it: 'Press your nose against my anus!' He then killed his victim with an emission of intestinal gas, after which he ate it. Dyai, the demijure, decided to assume the form of a child. Armed with his sling, he sat down at the edge of a path and started to cry. Peti arrived on the scene, put him on his back and ordered him to press his nose against his anus. Dyai, however, was careful to turn his face away. The jaguar went on breaking wind, but to no purpose. Every time he broke wind, he ran faster. Some people he met asked him where he was taking 'our father' (the demijure). Realizing whom he was carrying on his back, Peti asked Dyai to get down, but the latter refused. The animal went on his way and, passing through a cave, reached the other world. All the time he kept begging Dyai to go away.

The jaguar was ordered by the demijure to return to the place where they had met. Here there was a *mutirapiranga* tree, the trunk of which had a hole with very smooth sides pierced through it. Dyai forced the jaguar's fore-legs into the hole and secured them firmly. Grasping his dance stick, a hollow bamboo cane, with his hind legs which stuck out on the other side, the animal started to sing. He called on the bat to come and wipe his bottom. Other demons, also members of the jaguar clan, came running up to him in turn and gave him food. Today, you can still sometimes hear the din they make at the place called *naiméki*, in a small patch of secondary forest near an old plantation... (Nim. 13, p. 132).

This myth adds a fourth tree, the *mutirapiranga* or *myra-piranga*, literally, 'red wood' tree, to the botanical trio mentioned in *Msoa*. This tree, which belongs to the leguminous family and the *Catalpa* species, is none other than the famous '*vois de brasis*' from which Brazil got its name. Being very hard and fine-grained, it can be used for many purposes. The Tucuna combine it with bone to make drumsticks (Nim. 13, p. 43). The Tucuna skin-drum is certainly of European origin, and another musical instrument appears in the myth, where it forms a counterpart to the split hollow trunk in *Msoa*: this is the dance stick, *ba:ma*, the use of which is confined to the jaguar clan and perhaps a few other clans; it is a long bamboo cane (*Gadua siperba*) which may measure up to three metres. The upper extremity is split to form a groove roughly thirty centimetres long, which represents an alligator's jaw with or without teeth according to whether the instrument is said

to be 'male' or 'female'. Below the jaw is a tiny demon's mask, and shell-rattles and ornaments made of falcon's feathers are fastened all the way down the cane. These instruments are always found in pairs, one male, one female. The players face each other and strike the ground at an oblique angle while crossing their bamboo canes. Since the inner dividing membranes have not been removed, the sound produced is very weak (Nim. 13, p. 45)?

I have already put together, in a single group, the *Tembé-Tenete-hara* myths about the origin of honey (the honey festival) (*Mtsa-Mtsa*), the Chaco myths about the origin of tobacco (*Msa-Msa*, *Msa6*) and the myth explaining the origin of bark tunics (*Msa*), which reverses the true origin myth, as will be seen later). This operation was the result of a triple transformation:

- (a) jaguars: peace-loving ⇒ aggressive  
 (b) birds: macaws, parrots, parakeets ⇒ toucans  
 (c) bird food: sweet flowers ⇒ aromatic seeds

The transformational relationship which we are about to note between *Msoa* and *Msa* makes it possible, without further explanation, to strengthen the link uniting the Chaco and Tucuna myths. For if, as is already obvious, the musical instrument in *Mso* is a transformation of the one in *Msa*, they both refer back to the hollow trunk (transformed into an empty ditch in *Msa*), which in *Msa*, *Msa* acts as a place of refuge for the victims of the cannibalistic jaguar and which causes the latter's death. This can be expressed as the following transformation:

*Msa*, *Msa6*                      *Msoa*                      *Mso*  
 (hollow tree) ⇒ (split trunk) ⇒ (hollow bamboo)

This group of transformations is homogeneous as regards musical instruments: the split trunk and the hollow bamboo are both instruments of noise, and I have confirmed in another context that, in the Chaco myths, homology exists between the hollow trunk, the trough for making mead and the drum (pp. 107-8). I shall return to this aspect.

<sup>7</sup> Very faint too, no doubt, is the noise, compared to a 'muffled roar', made by the Bororo when they beat the ground with rolls of matting in order to tell their wives and children that the aquatic monsters, *aigé*, have gone, and that they can safely come out of the huts where they are hiding. It should be noted that the actors personifying the *aigé* try to knock down the boys who are in process of being initiated and the latter are held up by their sponsors and masculine relatives, because if they fell this would be a very bad omen (*EB*, Vol. I, pp. 661-2). This episode would seem to be an almost literal transposition of certain details of the Tucuna initiation ceremony for girls (Nim. 13, pp. 88-9).

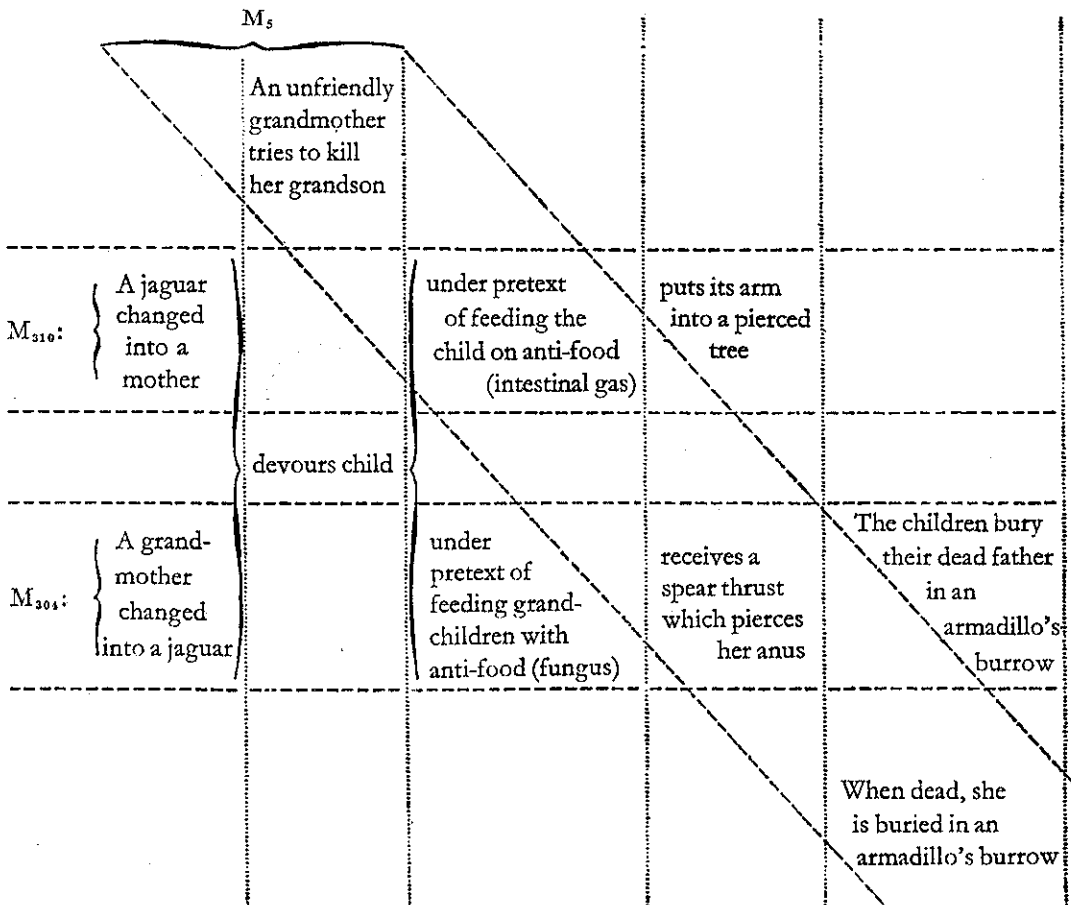
Let us now superimpose  $M_{504}$  and  $M_{510}$  one upon the other. At first glance a complex network of relationships appears: for while the syntagmatic sequences of both myths are reproduced in the usual way through certain transformations, they create at one point at which they meet a paradigmatic set which is equivalent to part of the syntagmatic sequence of a Bororo myth ( $M_5$ ) which, as I showed at the very beginning of the previous volume, is a transformation of the key myth ( $M_1$ ). It is as if my inquiry were following a spiral pattern and, after reverting to its starting-point, were now momentarily resuming its forward movement by inflecting its curve along a previous course (see table opposite).

Consequently, according to the standpoint we take, either  $M_{504}$  is linked to  $M_{510}$ , or each one is linked separately to  $M_5$ ; or the three myths are all interlinked. If we ventured to form the Chaco myths about the origin of the jaguar and (or) tobacco into one 'archimyth' (just as linguists talk of 'archi-phonemes'), we would obtain another series parallel to the previous series:

a wife and mother changed into a jaguar	devourer of husband and children	poisoner of her husband with menstrual blood	perishes in a ditch or in a hollow tree-trunk bristling with spears (or is held prisoner by its claws which have become embedded in the tree)
---	--	--	---

So we come back to the problem, already discussed, of the mutual reversibility of a syntagmatic sequence formed by a single group, and a syntagmatic set obtained by cutting a vertical section through the superimposed syntagmatic sequences of several myths, interlinked by transformational relationships. In the present instance, however, we can at least catch a glimpse of the semantic basis of a phenomenon only the formal aspect of which has so far been examined.

It will be remembered that  $M_5$ , whose syntagmatic sequence would seem here to cut across that of other myths, explains the origin of diseases which, in a maleficent and negative sense, ensure the transition from life to death, and establish a conjunction between life here below and life in the world beyond. This is clearly the meaning of the other myths, for tobacco fulfils a similar function in a beneficent and positive sense, as does also in  $M_{510}$  the use of the dance stick (the reference may even be to its origin), a fact which can be verified in the Tucuna ritual since, in this instance, we are dealing with a real instrument. The imaginary instrument in  $M_{504}$  (but which actually has a real place in American organology) fulfils a reverse function, that is,



it is disjunctive, not conjunctive. Nevertheless this function, like the other one, is beneficent and positive. It is not exercised against demons, who have been put to the service of man, thanks to the bark tunics which imitate their physical appearance, as in the ritual, or – according to Miao – against a demon who is effectively caught in a tree-trunk which grips his wrists as in manacles; it is exercised against demons who, through an excessive use of trees with bark, have got completely out of hand; they are not semblances of demons conjured up by men, but men changed into real demons.

We have, then, at our disposal a fairly solid basis for extending the comparison beyond the central zone formed by the three myths *Ms. Msoa* and *Miao*, and for attempting to incorporate certain aspects, peculiar to other myths whose position at first sight appears marginal. Let us look first of all at the opening episode of the crying baby in *Miao*, since we are well acquainted with this small personage. Already, in connection with other incidents, I have made considerable progress towards understanding the part he plays, and so the reader will perhaps more readily forgive me if I indulge in a rapid excursion into a more remote region of mythology, where the character of the whimpeter is more clearly discernible, because he plays a leading role there. I shall not try to justify my action, and I admit that it is irreconcilable with a sound use of structural method. I will even refrain from using as an argument, in this very special case, my deep conviction that Japanese mythology and American mythology, each in its own way, are using sources which go right back to paleolithic times and which were once the common heritage of Asiatic groups later disseminated throughout the Far East and the New World. Without putting forward any such hypothesis, which would in any case be unverifiable in the present state of knowledge, I shall merely plead extenuating circumstances: only very rarely do I allow myself this kind of digression and, when I do, the apparent divergence is meant to act as a short cut for the establishment of a point which could have been made by a different method, but a much slower and more laborious one, and one more exhausting for the reader.

*Man. Japan. 'The crying "baby"'*

After the death of his wife and sister Izanami, the god Izanagi divided the world between his three children. To his daughter

Amaterasu, the sun, who had been born from his left eye, he gave the sky. To his son, Tsuki-yomi, the moon, who had been born from his right eye, he gave the ocean. And to his other son Sosa-no-wo, who had been born from his nasal mucus, he gave the earth.

At this time Sosa-no-wo was in the prime of life, and had grown a beard eight hands long. Yet he neglected his duties as master of the earth, and spent his time weeping, wailing and fuming with rage. He explained to his anxious father that he was crying because he wanted to follow his mother to the Nether Land. So Izanagi was filled with detestation of his son and drove him away.

For he himself had tried to see his dead wife again, and he knew that she was just a swollen and festering corpse, and that eight kinds of Thunder Gods rested on her: one each on her head, chest, stomach, back, buttocks, hands, feet and vagina ...

Before departing to the other world, Sosa-no-wo obtained his father's permission to say good-bye to his sister Amaterasu in the sky. But once he got there, he lost no time in defiling the rice-plantations, and Amaterasu was so shocked that she decided to shut herself up in a cave and deprive the world of her light. As a punishment for his misdeeds, her brother was banished for ever to the other world, which he reached after many trials and tribulations (Aston, Vol. I, pp. 14–59).

It would be interesting to compare this concentrated fragment of a fairly lengthy myth with certain South American tales;<sup>8</sup>

*Mesa. Amazonia. 'The crying baby'*

Ywaruna, the black jaguar, had married a woman whose one thought was to seduce her husband's brothers. This vexed the latter, who killed her, and since she was pregnant they opened up the corpse, whence emerged a little boy who leapt into the water.

He was captured with some difficulty, but never stopped crying and howling 'like a newly born baby'. All the animals were summoned to amuse him, but the little owl was the only one able to soothe him by revealing to him the mystery of his birth. From then on, the child's one thought was to avenge his mother. He killed all the jaguars one after the other, then rose into the sky where he became the rainbow. It is because the sleeping humans did not hear

<sup>8</sup> And North American ones, too; e.g. the following passage in a myth belonging to the *Dené Hare*, which will be referred to again in the next volume: 'From his union with his sister, Kutyran (the demigod) had a son who sulked and cried all the time' (Petitot, p. 145).