

# TRANSFORMATIONS of ETERNITY

On Man and Cosmos in Emberá Thought

By

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Department of Social Anthropology  
University of Göteborg  
Göteborg 1993



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# ABSTRACT

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The book presents a cosmological model derived from a comparative analysis of myth, rite, language, and patterns of daily practice among the Emberá Indians, a lowland society of tropical horticulturalists in northwestern South America. The dissertation argues for the existence of a cosmological structure, arranged through and dependant on an ideological discourse on which individuals draw in their daily routine.

Arranged into four parts, the book presents and analyses specific aspects of Emberá thought in a contextual chain of arguments. Part one is a review of the ethnographic setting and a discussion of the prerequisites for the hypothesis of man as cosmos in Emberá cosmology. Part two examines Emberá concepts of consumption and conception in relation to their ontological beliefs and suggests analogous relationships between smelling, eating, and cutting in Emberá thought. Part three describes the dialectic which directs the confrontation between mind and matter and the way metaphors are used to describe this process. Finally, part four examines and analyses the Emberá notion of creation as sound and discusses the concept of cosmic man in relation to the parametres of time and space. The main argument is that "Emberá thought" is a coherent conceptual system, maintained through a multiplicity of cultural expressions, a number of which are examined and analysed in this book.

Key words: anthropology, religion, South America, Colombia, cosmology, ontology, shamanism, mythology, ritual

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## PREFACE

A quarter of a century has elapsed since I made the acquaintance of the Emberá Indians and their world of rivers, rain and forest. I have met many people during these years, in the academic world, in the field and, not least, in my own family circle, who had supported me in my work. I would like to name just some of the people who have been of consistent help and who have believed in my work since its inception.

Professor S. Henry Wassén, who I first met in 1970 when he was head of the Ethnographical Museum of Göteborg, has followed my research with the greatest of interest, sharing his extensive knowledge of Amerindian culture and Americanistic research. For this, I am deeply grateful. The unbroken research tradition on the Chocó Indians, begun by Professor Erland Nordenskiöld of the same institution and Wassén's teacher, is one of which I am proud to be a part.

I have also had the pleasure of meeting Professor Georg Dahl whose experiences among and knowledge of the Emberá Katío has not yet received the attention it deserves. As a hunter and naturalist, he, perhaps more than any other outsider, was able to enter the complex world of native thought. I am indebted to Professor Magnus Mörner who generously has assisted me in my attempt to interpret complex historical sources and understand the native situation during Spanish rule. My most profound debt, however, is to the people in the Emberá and Wounaan communities in which I lived for longer or shorter periods of time.

This dissertation could not have been completed without the help of Professor Kaj Århem at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Göteborg. From the start four years ago, he saw the relevance of this material to areas outside of Chocó as well. He understood my commitment to the material, as well as the difficulties of creative writing, and let me write at my own pace and in my own way. His advice and criticism of the manuscript have been invaluable. I would also like to thank my friends and colleagues at the Department of Social Anthropology and the Ethnographical Museum of Göteborg for their interest and support. I am also very thankful for Ms. Elizabeth Kella's assistance with language revision and critical reading of the manuscript.

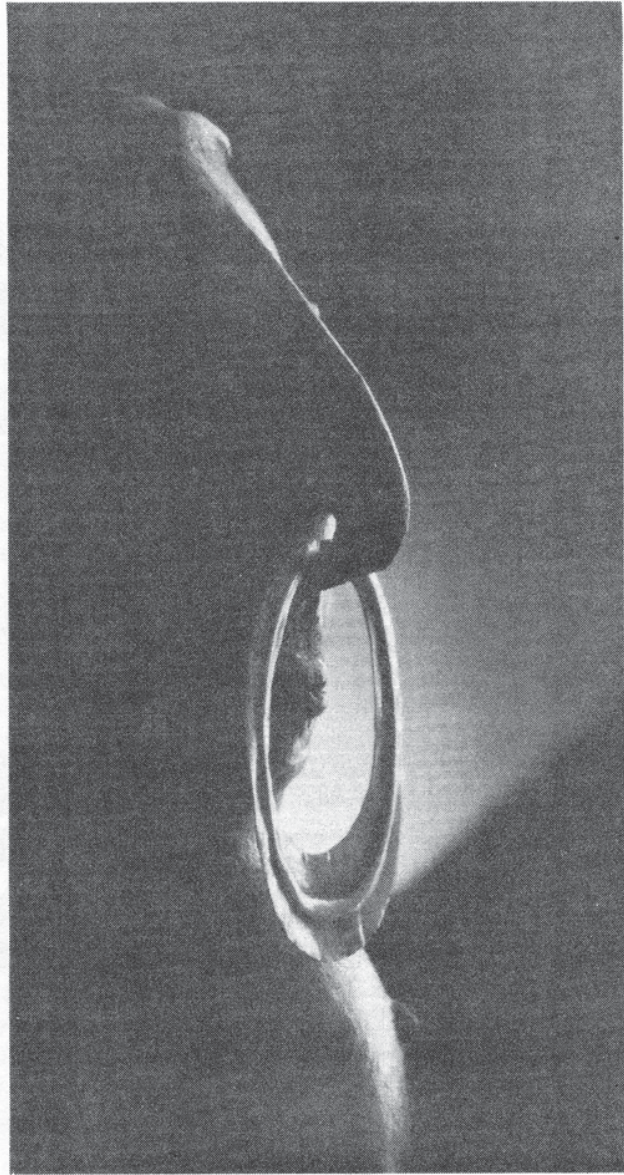
I would like to express my gratitude for the support I received for a part of my field work from the *Rådman och Fru Ernst Collianders Stiftelse*. A generous

grant from the *Torsten och Ragnar Söderbergs Stiftelser* made it possible for me to discuss my work with informants in Chocó during two brief but intense periods in 1990 and 1993. Without the opportunity this grant afforded, I would not have ventured the formulations I set forth in this book.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the members of my family. My aunt, Mrs. Madeleine Mesa, in Medellín and my in-laws in Bogotá provided the warmest hospitality during my visits to Colombia. My mother gave me her continual support and, although she did not live to see this book completed, she never lost faith in my work. My wife, Nohra, and our children, Mikael, Ann-Charlotte and Henrik, have been a constant source of love, warmth and support, even when I seemed to think only of Indians and river-water. No matter what the future holds, these 24 years have come to an end . . . and something new shall begin.

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III. 1. The House of the River Nose. A Precolumbian representation in ceramic and gold. Quimbaya style. Caldas, Colombia (GEM 31.18.92).

## GUIDE TO PRONUNCIATION

The spelling of Emberá words is not phonological, since the dialectal variation is very wide and many words are quoted from sources which do not specify rules of pronunciation. See also comments on pronunciation in the Introduction. These are the approximate phonetic values:

Vowels and consonants usually follow Spanish rules of pronunciation with the following exceptions,

<i>dch</i> ,	a voiced Spanish <i>ch</i> , similar to English "gem"
<i>h, j</i> ,	as in English "help" or Creole Spanish "julio"
<i>k</i> ,	as in Spanish <i>q</i> or English "cat"
<i>kh, q, x</i> ,	uvular plosive, similar to Spanish <i>jota</i> or German <i>ach</i> .
<i>#</i> ,	high central unrounded, as Spanish <i>u</i> but without rounding
<i>w</i> ,	as English <i>w</i> .
<i>z</i> ,	voiced, as in English "zoo"

Nasalization is common but varies considerably between different regions. Unless emphasis is marked by an accent, stress is always on the vowel before the last consonant.

Quotations originally in Spanish, German, or Swedish have been translated into English by this author.

Emberá words are always italicized, local Spanish words usually only the first time they appear in a context. Italics are also used for emphasis.

## INTRODUCTION

As a study of cosmology, this book is about everything. Any attempt to deal with cosmology is an impossible undertaking, however, for the very definition of cosmos implies a comprehensiveness that defies total explanation. At the same time, this is a book about a particular "everything" -- *jomá* -- which is the ontological code for a native people in northwestern South America. *Jomá* is the principle which directs birth and death, existence and extinction. *Jomá* is "the attraction of the opposite fruit" and "the fury of the uterine intention" which finds multiple expressions in native thinking and is fundamental to a philosophy and way of life which is now waning into oblivion. In short, *jomá* stands for cosmos and its dictates are the cosmology of *jomá*, of "everything."

This study presents the concept of *jomá* as a cosmological model derived from a comparative analysis of myth, rite, language, and patterns of daily practice among one specific people, the Emberá Indians of the Chocó Department in northwestern Colombia. When I began to write down my observations, I could not foresee the nature or scope of their significance since my view of Emberá cosmology grew simultaneously with the formulation of my text. Subsequently, I was able to discern contextual lines of native reasoning and my ideas of a cosmological construct slowly began to take shape and guide me in my search. This is not a final product. A published text tends to bear a stamp of completion, but I feel that this work is only the beginning of an ongoing quest for knowledge and understanding. Reconstructing contexts of native thinking and trying to formulate them in words has been an exciting and laborious experience. I hope I can share something of the excitement of this involvement with my readers. This intention has been one of my major concerns in the composition of this work.

## THE BACKGROUND

More than twenty years of familiarity with the Emberá, have made them the obvious choice for my study. In 1969, when I visited the Chocó Department and the Emberá Indians for the first time, my strongest impressions were of their specialised way of living in a strange habitat dominated by river and forest and a

harsh climate of perpetual rain. Having in mind a study of the effects of these ecological conditions on native patterns of settlement and subsistence, I returned in 1971 to live and travel with Emberá families for about seven months. I left the field, however, dissatisfied. I felt I was working in a historical vacuum with only diffuse knowledge of contemporary Emberá culture and society. The Emberá people and their neighbours in the south, the Wounaan<sup>1</sup> Indians, have experienced the western world for more than three hundred years and yet they are regarded as a relatively unaffected people which supposedly only recently have become victims to civilization. In 1974 and 1980 I went back to Colombia for two periods of six months, most of which was spent in colonial archives in Bogotá and Popayán except for a couple of month-long visits with Emberá friends in the Chocó Department. Reading thousands of folios from Spanish and Colombian archives, I immersed myself in the situation of Emberá society during the colonial era.

In 1988 I revisited the Chocó for a project on cultural and historical assessment which had been proposed and outlined by the local native organization, OREWA (Organización Regional Emberá Wounaan). At that time, I met a new awareness of the current situation but also a curiosity for "old" ways of living and for local history, in our terms of the word. One of the strongest impressions from my travels in 1988 was from a trip down the Atrato River on a small balsa raft, accompanied by an Emberá shaman with great knowledge of native traditions and lore. While rushing through the rapids of the headwaters and later gently moving with the current, our voyage became a tour of learning which went beyond acquiring geographical and historical information. During the voyage we discussed points and places in the passing landscape, a conversation, if not confrontation, between the written word of history and the spoken word of memorized tradition. I felt that our trip was full of meaning for my fellow traveller; while I was simply going downriver collecting information, he was travelling in another dimension of time and space which was awakened by our sharing of the "historical" experience embedded in the riverine landscape.

For the past several years I had been reading the books and papers on Chocó history and anthropology that I could get, assisted by the excellent library of the Ethnographical Museum of Göteborg and Erland Nordenskiöld's and Henry Wassén's pioneering work on the Emberá and the Wounaan peoples from the 1920's and onwards. My interest in Emberá culture remained intact though dormant while I engaged in other commitments. My experience in 1988, however, revived my interest in the relationship between man and his environment in Chocó, an interest which finally bore strange and unexpected



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fruit as this book took shape. It took me twenty years to travel the Emberá river of knowledge and another four years to work out its meaning. This book is an attempt to sum up this intellectual journey, to provide a reconstruction of the Emberá world.

## THE EMBERA: THE PEOPLE AND THE LAND

The current habitat of the Chocó Indians falls within the wet Pacific lowlands of northwestern Colombia and adjacent regions of southern Panama, roughly between latitude 1 and 8 north and longitude 76 and 80 west. This area covers almost the whole of the Darién Province of southeast Panama, the Chocó Department of western Colombia, and the Esmeraldas Province of northwestern Ecuador, as well as parts of the Colombian Departments of Antioquia, El Valle, Cauca, and Nariño. Groups of Emberá Indians are also found outside the Pacific lowlands. Some inhabit the mountainous borderlands between the mid-eastern part of Chocó and the western portion of the Risaralda Department, as well as the hilly San Jorge and Sinú river basins of northwestern Antioquia and the southern part of the Córdoba Department. The majority of the population of Chocó are descendants of African slaves brought to work the alluvial gold mines during Spanish colonial administration.

The rain-soaked environment of rivers and mud and the monotonous green of the lush tropical forest are the conspicuous features of the Chocó lowlands. A flowing web of rivers and creeks has always been the principal path of approach for the settlement and exploration of the Pacific littoral and the riverine pattern of settlement is still predominant. Two extensive river systems determine Chocó's hydrography, the two main rivers of which share the same headwater area in the mid-eastern Chocó highlands. The Atrato River discharges its waters in the Gulf of Urabá in the Caribbean Sea while the San Juan River runs in the opposite direction to form an extensive delta on Chocó's southern Pacific Coast. The rivers are the "highways" of the Chocó forest; people cultivate, fish, hunt, and live by the river. The river is the paramount route of communication connecting peoples as well as their ideas and sets the frame for social and cultural identity. The river furnishes water, fish, and alluvial sediment which nourishes narrow stretches of cultivated land while undisturbed forest covers the uninhabited hilly lands of the interfluvial areas.

The ethnic group referred to as the Chocó Indians is a lowland people divided into two main groups or "tribes": the Emberá and the Wounaan (Waunana), who

share a similar cultural background but differ linguistically from each other. The language of the Emberá, not yet classified, is usually considered to belong to a distant branch of the Carib linguistic family. The Emberá number in all about 50,000 individuals while the Wounaan are considerably fewer, around 10,000. Political organization is weak or absent among modern Chocó Indians and the household of the extended family constitutes the most important social grouping. The persons of the highest social prestige -- and sometimes also the most feared -- are the religious specialists and "medicine-men," usually referred to as *jaibaná* among the Emberá and *benkiin* among the Wounaan. Despite a long and, at intervals, rather intense contact with the outer world, the Emberá and the Wounaan have maintained their ethnic isolation.

One of my first rash conclusions about Emberá culture was that the myths and oral traditions of this culture lacked the richness and complexity of the abundant material available to anthropologists working in Amazonia. In time I realized that this judgment was based on my own narrow criteria of "richness" and "complexity." Emberá myth contains what is necessary to know. Myths are not fancy fairy-tales invented for amusement but are meant to guide the listener in his quest for knowledge about the world and himself. Today, I am instead impressed by the cogency and logical elegance with which this knowledge is stored and made available through the metaphoric idiom of Emberá myth. It puzzles me, however, how this epistemological structure has been able to survive for so long a time, despite the sustained efforts of zealous agents of western orthodoxy and morality to destroy and wipe out native ways of thinking. The fact that the Emberá and the Wounaan Indians have survived this cultural and physical assault for more than four centuries deserves our attention and respect.

The material culture of the Emberá has nevertheless transformed considerably and the main changes occurred centuries ago. Lately, their ways of living and supporting themselves have also been irreversibly altered. A process of urbanization has begun and the participation of the Emberá in the national social and economic system is growing rapidly.

In their appeal for the rights of cultural integrity, two claims by political representatives of the Emberá and Wounaan peoples stand out: the claim for the right to their ancestral lands and the claim for the right to their own language. These demands, invariably emphasized in political contexts, are also hotly debated in more quotidian contexts. Land and language are the two main templates of Emberá existence and identity. In addition, they have also become important tools for my attempt to unravel native ideas about the relationship between man and cosmos.

## OBJECTIVES, ARGUMENTS AND METHODS

The objective of this book is to present a cosmological "framework" which can be applied to empirical data and contexts of Emberá culture and society. I argue for the existence of a cosmological structure which is arranged through and dependant on an ideological discourse in Emberá culture on which individuals and Emberá intellectuals draw in their daily practice.

Direct questions about "religious" matters are usually met with silence or evasive answers. It is usually difficult to tell whether this lack of response is a sign of ignorance, of the inadequacy of expression, or of a disinclination to share esoteric knowledge with outsiders. As an anthropologist in the field, I felt, however, that these matters are not openly discussed by anyone. After several years of absorbing a variety of "outward" expressions of Emberá reasoning, I feel I can perceive another kind of knowledge hidden behind the metaphoric network which is Emberá "culture." Through the process of writing my interpretation of this impressive philosophy, I have become convinced that this is a system of thought which cannot be expressed in the linear way of words. If this is indeed the case for the Emberá as well, if their essential knowledge cannot be transmitted explicitly from one individual to another, how has this framework of ideas and mental templates been kept intact and how is it communicated?

"Emberá thought" is an intellectual reconstruction which I have based on an interpretation of a multiplicity of Emberá cultural expressions -- myth, ritual and language as well as daily behaviour and codes of conduct. I claim this cosmology to be a coherent conceptual system, maintained through these cultural expressions. Although the shaman is a religious specialist, his role does not separate him from the rest of his society and he cannot be recognized by his physical appearance. Knowledge is not reserved for him alone. As *jaibaná*, however, he has the intellectual capacity to symbolically synthesize and ritually dramatize what others perform in their daily work. The maize beer ritual for the invocation of the "spirits" is staged and performed by the shaman but depends entirely on specialized contributions from each one of his family members, including women and children. Men tell myths but women hold them in trust; the male narrator often directs himself to an elderly woman for assistance in filling in missing details. The same dependence colours all aspects of ordinary life as well.

Knowledge is expressed through actions. Understanding does not exist apart

from daily routine, it is practised through labour. This interdependence is summed up in the native concept of *kabai*; through knowledge of practice follows knowledge of meaning. Myth and ritual do not deal with a world of beyond but explain the purpose of work as much as work substantiates the message of myth and ritual and keeps them alive. Man's lifetime is a practical lesson in cosmology which, in his old age, makes him a representation of the world, *drua*. Human life consists of different "roles," associated with particular categories of knowledge, which are formulated in the prescribed behaviour of "spouses," "fathers," "daughters," "hunters," "potters," "canoe-makers," etc. Knowledge is found in the interconnected aggregate of all these roles, played out between and within individuals. The social arrangement of people's work answers to a cosmological body of overall meaning which cannot be expressed by word, only by deed.

Like any other individual, the shaman identifies himself as *emberá*, as a human being. However, the "true," complete *emberá* is not incarnate in the individual alone but in the social body of the Emberá "family," *mu emberara*, or "my true person." Each person carries out individual assignments but the inherent meanings of these tasks are shared with and affect the entire society. A person's inner nature as a cosmic being is reflected onto those around her or him as "my true person," *mu emberara*. This social organization of meaning informs and upholds what I refer to as the coherent system of "Emberá thought."

As I understand it, Emberá thought is divided into outward and inward categories of knowledge. Outward knowledge is found in the telling of myth, in linguistic expressions or in the external workings of daily life and ritual events which can be observed and experienced with our senses. Inward knowledge is not expressed explicitly; to know is *kabai*, to work out knowledge in a manual way, "by hand," as an individual process of maturation. We can listen to a myth but to partake of its message we need to work out its meaning by ourselves. If I have been able to discern anything of this inward knowledge, then my main challenge is to express it in words so that others can share in its meaning.

The core of Emberá ontology lies in two postulates which are phrased in the mythological discourse: the first says that the fisherman does not get fish if he does not give fish himself, the second discloses that the women in the true world give birth as soon as they have become pregnant. As I will show throughout the book, these are two seemingly insignificant phrases which are the gateway to Emberá thought.

At the beginning of my quest, my initial hypothesis was that the Emberá devise an analogous relationship between the river and the human face, united through a sexual metaphor which describes the human tongue in terms of the

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male sex organ. From this hypothesis rose an amazing world of seemingly paradoxical ideas which slowly assumed the shape of a complex philosophy which this book intends to elucidate in its own, incomplete way.

In Emberá thought, man is identified with the cosmic water snake and his body is the binary cosmos of the riverine underworld and the sky. However, the human body is not a metaphor for cosmos. Man is cosmos. Any categorization of Emberá life into economic, social and religious spheres is devoid of meaning. Whatever man does, makes, or says, is a cosmic act and a "religious" manifestation; whatever is perceived in nature or human society is a reflection of a cosmic mind which man shelters within himself.

As a physical being, man lives on the outside of himself as cosmos. Physical creation is an illusion, however, likened to the dead matter of human excrement; true physical creation is sound manifested through the metaphor of spoken words.

For the Emberá, creation and existence are based and dependant on the vital principle of maize. As rendered in myth, man is maize as are all beings on which he depends as a human agent of cosmic intentions. The maize principle is the pre-condition of life and the cosmic river is the uterine agent which carries it out. As a maize being, man is a maize cannibal who victimizes himself into reiterated genesis through his purposeful behaviour. Maize-eating man is not a multiple being, he reigns supreme because he is cosmos. By definition, there is nothing outside cosmos -- thus, when cosmic man eats maize, cosmos eats itself as mind eats matter. Creation rises from this cosmic war and annihilating attraction between mind and matter, the inevitable and ever-lasting clash between the divine intention and its fulfillment which is creation. In the Emberá precept, "that which eats is eaten," lies the foundation of the dualistic reasoning which brings binary opposition into harmony. The "everything" of the *jomá* concept is "the attraction of the opposite fruit" which brings this cosmic intention to its fruition.

I have chosen to write this book in a literary style which I believe is most suitable to expressing the nuances of Emberá thought and which I hope will facilitate the reader's understanding and appreciation of the material. Nevertheless, I am aware that this text is difficult to penetrate. It forms a tight chain of contexts which cannot be described linearly or understood without considerable effort. The difficulty of reading is not due to the intellectual demands but simply to the fact that the book, like Emberá thought, folds and unfolds onto itself in a maze of simultaneous associations and connections.

My method is simple. I have tried to listen to what the Emberá say and, at the same time, to rid myself of preconceptions and interpretations which are

irrelevant to the Emberá. This is easy to say but has been difficult to do; despite the fact that I realized that the Emberá regard gender in a different way than we do, I repeatedly had to remind myself of this to avoid falling into new traps of interpretation.

For similar reasons, I have not attempted to reduce Emberá thought or restrict my analysis to the confines of an established theoretical framework. However, I have not been able to refrain from commenting occasionally on analogous phenomena in the Americas. Principles of Emberá cosmology sometimes fit amazingly well into corresponding aspects of Aztec religion or of native thought in the western part of South America. The dualistic foundation of Emberá ontology and its resemblances to those of other indigenous societies stimulate further considerations of a common, prehistoric cosmological substratum in the hemisphere (cf. Hornborg 1990).

My use of the Emberá language as an analytical tool for interpreting contexts of meaning requires some explanation. Linguistic questions and usage are of great interest to the Emberá who always are eager to read and critically comment on published versions of their oral lore and myths. When two persons from different regions meet, as I have said, linguistic formulations are compared and discussed. The Emberá always understand each other though with difficulty if they come from widely separated areas. On the other hand, the Emberá and the Wounaan are not able to communicate without using Spanish as an intermediary idiom. Dialectal variations are sometimes considerable but pronunciation and intonation also vary within a limited region and even within the speech of the same individual. "Knife" can be pronounced as *neko* only to be heard as *neqo* in the next moment. *Chipurrú*, "red," is sometimes repeated as *dchipurrú*, etc.

My use of the Emberá language as a key to their conceptual world is founded on two interrelated assumptions.

1) Among Emberá speakers there is a conscious semantic exploitation of their sliding scales of variant pronunciations. These variations are grouped in the following categories: *d-r-t*, *b-f-p*, *g-j-k*, *ch-s-ts*, *e-i* and *o-u* (cf. Loewen 1963; Pinto 1974:11-14). As an example, *be*, "maize," is sometimes given as *pe* or *fe* but is also associated with *bi* (stomach) or *pi-chi* (fingernail).

2) The conceptual world of the Emberá is founded on a limited number of monosyllabic basic concepts which also occur as morphemes in composite word formations. These words then acquire a new "outward" meaning which conceals the "inward," contextual essence held in the constituent morphemes. These morphemic constructions may be quite evident such as in *bedé*, "maize house," which is formed from the two separate morphemes, *be* and *de*. Sometimes,

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however, they are more oblique, such as in *domé*, the term for the stairway of the Emberá house with the "hidden" meaning of "river penis," from *do-me*.

By means of these sliding scales of variant pronunciations and semantic manipulation through morphemic compositions, core Emberá concepts multiply into a variety of realisations that may be seen to form "monosyllabic families" of shared basic meaning, as shown, for instance, in the case of the *ko/ku* concept, whose phonetic variants appear as "nose," "fruit," "breast," "war," etc. Another case is the morpheme of *e/i*, which is rendered as "skin," "bark," "lip," or "carrier basket." Scattered and isolated examples of such "linguistic manipulation" does not prove anything, however. Only when they are shown to enter into a contextual semantic whole do they become interesting and useful. My thesis is that the linguistic manipulations performed by the Emberá simultaneously reveal and conceal fundamental cosmological principles and this book is an attempt to demonstrate the creative power and analytical relevance of this line of argument.

## SOURCES

My arguments find support in a variety of sources and my selection of them is related to the character and purpose of the book. I have used material from my own field-work among the Emberá as well as published data compiled by chroniclers, historians, ethnographers, missionaries, naturalists, and travellers. Unpublished documents from colonial archives in Colombia and Spain have been very useful though they deserve more attention than could be given here.

Most of the sources used are those which offer sound primary information suited to my purpose, such as myths or ethnographic data recorded in the field. Myth and oral tradition have been my principal source and inspiration. Collections of myths, especially that of Pardo (1984), await close, textual analysis of content and meaning, which is outside the scope of this book.

A lot has been written and said about the Emberá and Wounaan peoples but monographic studies are few and also difficult to make. Information on cosmological matters, ritual, and shamanism is often included in popular accounts but serious, comprehensive studies are few. Pardo's bibliography (1982) offers the best survey of written information on the Chocó. The most valuable ethnographic sources are those published during the first half of the twentieth century (e.g., Santa Teresa 1924, Nordenskiöld 1928, and Wassén 1935), supplemented by several more recent contributions. The lexicon compiled by Pinto (1974) has been of great use.

Though this is a book about the Emberá, I have sometimes included data of comparative interest from their close neighbours, the Wounaan people, whose culture and beliefs are almost identical to those of the Emberá.

Although the book has almost assumed the form of a cosmological "micropaedia," for obvious reasons, it has been impossible to include as much ethnographic evidence as I would have desired to substantiate my conclusions. My selection of sources and empirical data has been restricted and determined by the need to confirm assumptions convincingly, but with brevity, in order to advance my lines of argument without ethnographic "digressions."

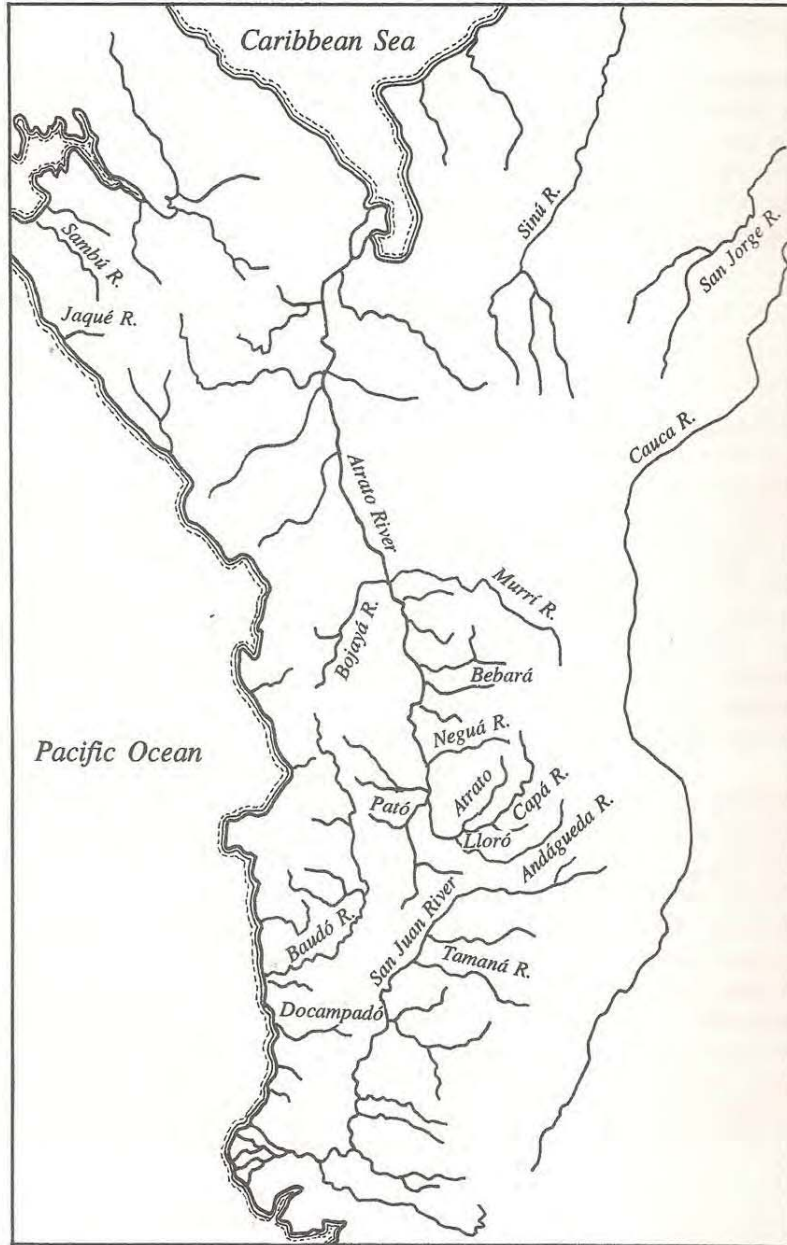
## STRUCTURE OF CONTENTS

This book is composed of 69 chapters arranged into four parts. Each of the many short chapters discusses and concentrates on a specific link in a contextual chain of arguments. Part one is a review of the ethnographic setting and a discussion of the prerequisites for my hypothesis of man as cosmos in Emberá cosmology. Part two examines Emberá concepts of consumption and conception in relation to their ontological beliefs and suggests analogous relationships between smelling, eating, and cutting in Emberá thought. Part three describes the dialectic which directs the confrontation between mind and matter and the way metaphors are used to describe this process. Finally, part four examines and analyses the Emberá notion of creation as sound and discusses the concept of cosmic man in relation to the parametres of time and space.

This book, then, is an attempt to describe and reconstruct the Emberá ontological experience which addresses issues as important to the Emberá as to ourselves -- the meaning of existence. In my efforts to make this "cosmology" comprehensible, I have found it difficult to synthesize within the confines of language lines of thought which continuously fluctuate along contextual spirals of knowledge where the end of one analysis suddenly becomes its own beginning. Finding myself at the very edge of language, my desire to express the ineffable structure of "Emberá thought" is sometimes mirrored in the composition of my text. If my effort to trace and describe Emberá cosmology meets with imperfect success, this in itself will at least show that the transformative power of myth and metaphor is needed -- for the Emberá as well as for ourselves.



# A MATTER OF MIND



III. 2. Map of northwestern Colombia and southern Panama.



III. 3. The House of the River Nose. A traditional *de ará de* round house on the Pató River (Atrato) 1971.



III. 4. The sower and the fisherman with his *ompurú* basket. Bebará River (Atrato) 1972.

# 1

## RITUAL WATER

The native population in the Pacific lowlands of Colombia lives in an environment dominated by water, incessant rains and high humidity throughout the year. Proximity to water and dependence on rivers decide and shape every aspect of people's lives. Still, it is remarkable that so many travellers and outside observers repeatedly stress the strong predilection for the river and its running water among the Emberá and Wounaan Indians, expressed either as a general desire to stay close to the river or as a more specific, conscious exploitation of the magical properties of the river water in different contexts. One of the most important sources on Emberá ritual and religion, Severino de Santa Teresa, points out the "innate predilection for the water" among the Emberá as the main reason for their riverine mode of settlement which, among other things, manifests itself in their daily bathing. "They cannot be without their daily bath and the river is the privy for all their natural needs" (1924:64).

Strangers often cite cleanliness as a characteristic of the Chocó Indians. A remarkable practice is the family's descent to the river in the early morning to take a quick bath at dawn or just before sunrise. One of the pioneers of Chocó anthropology, Erland Nordenskiöld, makes the following remark: "The Indians are extremely early risers. Before sunrise the whole house is astir. Everybody descends to the river to bathe. Even the smallest ones get their morning bath. This is their first bath, then they have another three or four baths during the day and finally, of course, an evening bath. They are a notably clean people. When the Indians return from the forest they always wash their feet" (1928:64).

The first traveller to suggest another reason for this ostentatious cleanliness was another Swedish observer, Carl Greiff, who lived with Emberá families in the 1830's in the region of Cañasgordas in northwestern Antioquia. According to Posada Arango (1872:27), the Swedish mining engineer assigned "the character of a religious ceremony to this custom, comparable to the ablutions of the Orientals; but the distrust and the reservedness of the said race have not permitted him to know what ideas they actually hold about this matter."

Since Greiff made his observation, numerous anthropologists have done

field-work among the Chocó Indians and much has been written about their economic life, society and religion, particularly with reference to shamanistic ritual and paraphernalia. However, despite several recent attempts to analyse cosmological concepts including the role of the river in ritual and myth, man's relation to the river and the water in Emberá thought is still little understood. In the words of Pineda (1986:54), it can only be concluded that "the water is a pleasure and a restorer of strength for the aboriginals; for this reason, if they are ill they bathe so as to heal, if tired so as to recover." Here, I will compile evidence that suggests that water have even greater significance in Emberá thought.

The ritual value of water is unquestionable upon certain occasions; such as during the maize ritual conducted by the shaman or within the ritual context of a girl's first menstruation. At other times, however, it is less evident. For example, it is customary for the Emberá to rinse their mouth after every meal and take a sip of fresh river water that the owner of the house offers from a gourd bowl. This action, seemingly quite natural, nevertheless bears a slight ceremonial undertone, which led me, at least, to make the following note in my fairly laconic diary from 1972: "Kanchidí [my host] put forward a bucket with water and a bowl. Filled the bowl and handed it to Carlos [my native fellow traveller] who rinsed his mouth and washed his hands. Then he put back the bowl close to the bucket. Kanchidí refilled it and gave it to me." This was a trivial gesture and, as it may seem, quite a normal one which, however, I immediately interpreted as a "ceremonial" act. It is perhaps telling that Nordenskiöld (1928:48) also considered this "hygienic" feature among the Chocó worth mentioning: "Both before and after their meal they all wash their hands and when they have eaten they rinse their mouths."

The water of the river is held to have strengthening qualities for those who need to recover from physical exertion. The hunter who returns home with a heavy load on his back after a hard trek in the backwoods, lets his quarry fall on the riverbank in front of the house and goes upriver to take a strengthening bath before entering the house where the women, meanwhile, attend to the meat. The fisherman, on his way home, lets the canoe drift with the current while he plunges into the water for the last time, without his fishing spear. The hunter's refreshing bath is easily understandable but the reason for the fisherman's dip is not self-evident as he has actually been swimming in the water with his spear and diving mask all the time.

If a person feels uneasy or suffers from poor health, he puts his confidence in the river before consulting a shaman, *jaibaná*. To sip the river water and bathe at twilight is said to foster good health (Pardo 1987:38). However, the Emberá are not only attracted to the river water because of its restorative and

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healing properties. The running water has even stronger powers. The woman who has lost her husband's interest tries to win him back by bathing in the river looking downstream (Santa Teresa 1924:87).<sup>1</sup> If the man, despite these measures, wishes to get rid of his wife, he pours an herbal mixture over his head to release himself from the marriage bond.

The significance of the river is particularly marked in connection with the rituals, which encompass the transitional stages of the human life-cycle. As these rituals are no longer performed in their traditional richness and complexity, details of the relevant courses of events and their contextual meanings are poorly known and understood. However, the salient role of the river water in rites of transition is beyond any doubt.

The ritual value of the river water is most evident at the *post natum* measures taken by the young woman who has had her first child. Immediately after the birth, the woman bathes in the river (Otero 1952:116). In 1730, the Franciscan friar Camino observed that the mother, after the delivery of the child, was rinsed copiously with water scooped from the river while her bath in the river had to wait until the following day (Arcila R. 1956:244). Even today, the woman who has had her first baby must adhere to strict rules of conduct before returning to her normal activities. Her body is considered weakened and "open"; with the water from the river she regains her strength and her body resumes its hardness. Severino de Santa Teresa, observing the customs of his intractable proselytes at the mission station of Urabá in the early 1920's, supplies the best description of the measures taken by the young mother:

Upon the fourth day after the birth of the child, the mother takes a bath in the morning with luke-warm water. The following day she has another bath but with rain-water -- it must be remarked that in the places where the Indians live it rains almost daily. Her third bath is taken in the following manner: On the third day in the morning she chews mazamorra (boiled maize) which she deposits in a calabash while crumbling it. When she has filled up the calabash, she goes to the river and sits down on a stone, while pouring the calabash with mazamorra over her head like a shower. The fourth and final bath is taken in the streaming water of the river (1924:89-90).

During the naming ceremony which takes place when a child is approximately one year of age, the mother takes her child, painted black with sap from the *kipará* fruit (*jagua*; *Genipa americana*), to the river where it is submerged deep into the water. Later, the four "god-fathers" carry the child on their back by turns on the house-floor to give it strength. Immediately

afterwards, to regain strength they have passed on to the child, they bathe in the river.

When a girl reaches puberty she is isolated from the rest of the house by a covered partition, she communicates only sporadically with her mother and then only in a low voice. She has to follow a strict diet and bathes with a piece of iron every evening inside her hut. She can only leave the house to relieve herself in the river, and she must then use her private stairway, which has been made for this particular purpose and will be discarded into the river (as will the leaves of her hut), when the period of seclusion is over. Then follows a less strict seclusion during which the girl is rinsed by her mother in the river, with maize gruel as well as with *kipará* sap.

Upon the end of this period of restriction there follows a joyful ceremony and social celebration that is attended by as many relatives and neighbours as possible from the community. The marriageable girl is brought forth from her seclusion and given new vigour by being carried around by her four "god-fathers" who will later run exhausted to the river for a restorative bath. The next day the girl takes a final bath in the river to close the period of transition.

Chocó marriage is contracted without major formalities. Among the Wounaan the relatives usually pour a bucket of river water over the bridal couple as a token of their having become one. This "oneness" is manifest upon the death of one of the spouses. A shaman washes the widow/widower with boiled water after which he/she descends to the riverbank on a special stairway to bathe again. The widower's body is rubbed with stones from the river bed to return to it its "hardness." A third bath is taken in the evening and a final one at dawn the next day. The final bath ends with a combat with a tree to find out how long the surviving spouse's life will be. Back in the house the spouse is showered with cold, boiled water by the shaman and put on a strict diet of boiled plantain and boiled water for a period of time. The transitional stage of the surviving spouse ends with the lighting of a fire on the riverbank, a bath and a final combat with the tree (Pineda 1986:117-118). The dead spouse is showered with luke-warm water and washed. When the family has removed the body, the floor of the house is rinsed with boiled water, the runnels of which should preferably follow the course of the removed body (Santa Teresa 1924:120-123). Among the Emberá of the San Jorge river basin, the relatives pour boiling hot water over a dying person until death ensues (Dahl 1940:77). If someone is suspected of having bewitched the deceased, the face of the corpse is dabbed with water mixed with ashes and left until the next morning. Before burying the body, the ashes are removed from the face of the deceased so that the relatives can



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find out from his face where to find the culprit (Santa Teresa 1924:122). On their way home from the interment of a child, the parents take a purifying bath in the river (Pinto 1978:49).

Sometimes bathing in the river can cause death however. The Emberá in Urabá assert that the parents will die if their son bathes in the middle of the afternoon by submerging his head into the water; only wetting the body will have no consequences (Santa Teresa 1924:131).

During the shaman's consecration of ritual *chicha* maize beer, a ceremony that takes place by night in order to contact the spiritual world for the benefit of a sick patient or for the welfare of the household in general, the water from the river has a manifold utility. The young woman who is to prepare the maize beverage which is the shaman's main means of spiritual contact, bathes first with aromatic water early at dawn and then again at sunrise (Pinto 1978:300). The floor of the house where the ritual is to take place is washed carefully and then rubbed with aromatic herbs. At the beginning of the invocation, the shaman sprinkles aromatic water around his ritual "table," over the small gourds containing the maize beverage and over his head (Vasco 1985:22). Those who participate in the ceremony sprinkle their feet with aromatic water from a pot at the foot of the stairway before touching the floor. If the monotony of the nocturnal invocations makes someone drop off, the shaman calls him back to life by sprinkling holy water over him (Santa Teresa 1924:33). Upon completion of the ritual, everybody descends in a long file to the river to bathe while all the ritual objects of the ceremony are discarded into the water (Cardona 1985:186). When a shaman intends to initiate a younger colleague in the profession, he first bathes in the river and paints his body for the ceremony (Santa Teresa 1924:34).

The importance of the river water emerges in acute situations when, for some reason, *chicha* is not available for the invocations; in that case, water taken from the middle of the river may serve as an adequate substitute (Pardo 1987:39). Water from the river is also used in the *ddepurrudde*, the inauguration of a new house, when water contained in a small model of a canoe is sprinkled on the roof (ibid., 56; Torres de Arauz 1966:50).

## 2

### BY THE RIVERSIDE

If the river is important for the Emberá, the riverside is the crucial borderland where magic finds its most significant expression, both in the world of myth and in the daily lives of humans. The riverside is a meetingplace for humans but also for beings of the hidden world; it is a place where everything is possible and anything can occur for the benefit or misfortune of mankind. The riverside is the scene of many confrontations both in myth and history and its fatal significance is a defiance of the shaman's competence to handle and manipulate the spiritual world.

Daily activities such as laundering, cleaning fish and game, drying raw material for basketry, personal hygiene, canoe making and the children's games take place on the riverbank in front of the house or on a suitable, nearby beach. People also use the river to relieve themselves, generally a social act involving relaxed conversation while squatting in the water. In many ways, the riverside could be considered an outdoor extension of the house, not only as a setting for domestic doings but also for social intercourse. When elders wish to discuss serious matters in peace and quiet they prefer to settle down on the isolated riverbank at some distance from the house. Travelling Indians usually make a stop at the riverside before arriving at the next house where they will put into port for the night; after a refreshing bath, a new, dry loincloth and a moment to touch up their face paint a little, they are prepared to meet the head of the family and explain their presence. If they not are acquainted with one another, the initial conversation will take place on the riverbank below the house, to which the house-owner descends to meet the strangers after his own preparations, a brief invocation to his spiritual Master.

These formal dialogues on the riverbank were also common between the representatives of the Spanish Crown and the local Emberá chiefs during the colonial period. In 1669 the Emberá chief or *cacique*, Don Pedro Tegue, made the first peaceful contact with the Spanish administrator and missionary Antonio de Guzmán on the river below his house (AHNB:CeI 11:964r). The place was afterwards called "Playa del cacique" and, probably

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as a token of its surviving ceremonial significance among modern Emberá, elder informants can still identify the site on the Atrato River. In the intertribal warfare and, later, during the uprisings against the Spanish intruders in the 17th century, Emberá warriors and their leaders used to gather on the riverside near their point of assault to prepare for the fight (AGI:SF 204:817r).

Emberá women prefer to deliver their children down at the river where, as described, many acts of purification and recovery take place during the different stages of life. However, portents and omens also appear on the riverside, attested to by tradition and myth.

The bank of the river is where beings and monsters show themselves to humans and where contact is established with worlds beyond, usually at twilight, just before dawn or after sunset. If someone dares to meet *Antomiá* (*Madre del agua*), the shaman's chief assistant, he should descend to the riverbank at twilight during the shaman's invocations. However, if he does so, he is not allowed to enter the house until the ritual has been completed. The lonely fisherman is more exposed than others to the risk of meeting with beings from the world beyond and becoming the victim of atrocities. This is the fate of the androgynous Karagabí who, while fishing, is fertilized in the foot by a nutria and dies giving birth from his calf to the trickster-like hero, Jerupotouarra.<sup>2</sup>

As humans live by the river, so do the inhabitants of the world beyond and the most skilled shamans are believed to come from the shore of the ocean, seen as a huge river. In myth, communication between humans and beings from the world beyond takes place on the riverside. This is where the vulture man speaks to his human son before his departure; it is also the place where the unfortunate woman is transformed into an *aribada* monster (Wassén 1933:114-115) and where men discover the first women (Wassén 1935:124). On the riverside humans can see Jerupotouarra return from the hidden world of below or discover small children who suddenly appear from nowhere.

The riverside is also the place from which people disappear from this world. In an interesting myth about underworld travelling recorded by Pardo (1984:175-193) on the upper Baudó River, Ventura, the main protagonist, is abducted three times from the riverbank at twilight into the riverine underworld. In a Wounaan myth, the "thirsty" soul of Angel Pastor makes him walk in his sleep down to the riverside where he disappears into the depths of the river (Wassén 1935:118). Another myth, published by Wassén (1935:142), tells about a boy who is induced to walk out into the water until he is entirely engulfed by the sand. The sand of the river is magic in itself, as

are other products close to the river. The sand is a remedy for barren trees. For the Emberá on the San Jorge river, the magic of sand, twigs and water is derived from the crocodile, which, because it sees into the hidden river world, is considered magic. By touching sand, twigs and water, the crocodile transmits some of its magic to these things (Dahl 1940:235-236).

The riverside below the dwelling is an integrated sector of the local habitat. Its function as the "port" and entrance to the house is demonstrated when strangers carefully approach the dwelling and respectfully leave everything in the canoe to climb the slope empty-handed and slowly ascend the stairway of the house. The port is said to be guarded by the *Antomiá* of the local shaman (Pardo 1987:24). On the other hand, during the shaman's nocturnal invocations in the house, the "port" must not be approached by anyone. The consequences of breaking this prohibition are described in the myth about the children who, while playing on the river bank during the shaman's ritual, observed two mating tortoises, the result of which was fatal to the course of the cosmic river that originally had run in both directions at the same time.

The riverbank must be bridged in ritual situations to establish a direct contact between the house and the river. This bridging is symbolically indicated by the hanging string of *joropo* (*Carludovica palmata* R. & P.) leaf decorations which connects the shaman's "table" to the river without touching the ground. The necessity of avoiding the dangerous riverside is expressed more dramatically in the myth about the wise man who fixed a flexible pole into the river sand and tightened its tip to the house floor. When danger arose, he released the pole and thus flew directly into the safety of the river (Wassén 1933:108; 1935:138). As previously mentioned, materials that have been used during rituals are also thrown directly into the river, as are the magical ingredients used by the shaman to cure his patient. Likewise, the remains of cleaned fish and even the water used for rinsing the fish pot must be thrown into the river, not on the ground below the house, in contrast to other kinds of garbage that are heaped below the kitchen (Santa Teresa 1924:129).

The usual way between the house and the river -- a stairway and path down the slope -- must not be used in "abnormal" situations, i.e. during transitional stages. A corpse should be lifted down directly to the ground without touching the stairway and a widower must jump, together with the officiating shaman, from the floor the same way (Nociones 1929:83). Likewise, the menstruating girl must use her own private stairway and a new, clean path down to the river.

There is also a marked contradiction between the house and the

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surrounding forest, dictated by the riverine context. The hunter who comes from the forest should bathe in the river before approaching the house or the riverside nearby, particularly in ritual situations (Dahl 1940:42). Firewood is left in the canoe where someone fetches it in the house; the man picks up the heavy logs but takes a bath first. Finally, mourners returning from a burial in the forest wash the canoe and jump into the river before entering the house (ibid., 78).

The wealth of ethnographic evidence indicates that the riverside has a decisive role in Emberá thought. Using evidence from myth, ritual, and linguistic usage, I intend to demonstrate that the Emberá live in intimate relationship with the river and identify themselves with its waters. The river world and its strange beings represent an instructive image of ontological reasoning which the Emberá still adhere to in their daily practice.

### 3

## STAIRWAY FROM BEYOND

As directed by the *jaibaná* shaman, man's ritual evocation of or participation in worlds beyond our own is closely associated with the Emberá dwelling. The house is situated near the river, the edge of which constitutes the crucial borderline between one cosmological domain and the other. Under certain circumstances, the pivotal relationship between house and river appears to subject humans to a series of restrictions which must be respected in order not to jeopardize the welfare of the inhabitants or their relationship to the river and the world beyond. As I have shown, such rules of conduct manifest themselves during the critical transitional periods in man's life cycle or in his natural surroundings.

The riverside is the uniting link between the house and the river but sometimes this relationship is violated or influenced, as temporary and cyclical restrictions on human behaviour reveal. In the closed space of the dwelling there are obviously two decisive points to consider: the path leading to the river and the ladder-like stairway at the entrance of the house. If the ground, which surrounds the house, is regarded as an extension of the domestic space, the menstruating girl should be able to move freely outside the house-floor, yet it is understood that she must not touch the stairway or the ground near by. On the other hand, the girl has access to the river and riverbank below the house. The ground below the house seems to be associated with the realm of the forest. In support of this observation is the Emberá notion that the path between the house and the river, specifically made for the menstruating girl, must be free of twigs and leaves. Sometimes adding logs to the path upon which the girl should tread when she leaves her partitioned space (Loteró Villa 1977:54) emphasizes this separation from the dangerous influence of the forest.

The general link between the house and the river's edge is thus narrowed to the stairway of the house and the path leading to the river. Yet it is strange that neither the menstruating girl nor the widower are allowed to use the usual path and stairway when they are allowed to share the riverbank and the house floor with their relatives. The stairway and the connected path seem to

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share an essential meaning which is highlighted by the prohibition against a menstruating girl or a widower using them. Evidently, the stairway is not to be regarded as a mere architectural detail of the dwelling; it is also endowed with properties to which neither a menstruating girl, in her delicate situation should be exposed, nor a deceased person and his surviving relatives. Only when the bonds between them are once and for all dissolved may the relatives use the stairway. A closer look at the ethnography of the stairway of the Emberá dwelling will provide us with some clues to its large significance.

The traditional type of stairway in the form of a notched log of wood still dominates among the Emberá and the Wounaan, though the Wounaan are gradually replacing it with the western type of step-ladder. The slow but growing change from a dispersed pattern of settlement to small-scale urbanization that began in the 1980s has led to changes both in architectural fashion and construction material, including the design and manufacture of the stairway. The traditional notched log consists of a tree trunk, 20-30 cm in diameter, which is often from the balsa tree though other tree species are also quite common. A series of horizontal, parallel notches are carved for steps and the log is leant against the edge of the house floor to make it stand sturdily. The length of the log is adjusted to the level of the floor; generally, the upper end of the stairway terminates ca. half a metre above floor level, making it a popular climbing pole and seat for children. The placement of the stairway in relation to the rest of the house does not follow any fixed pattern but it is always placed at the point closest to the river.

Most stairways are of a very modest manufacture and are replaced only when they have become so worn and tricky to use that they no longer serve their purpose. In all regions inhabited by Emberá or Wounaan communities, however, examples of stairways can be found that have the upper end carved into a humanlike head, sometimes with zoomorphic features.<sup>3</sup> Cardona (1985:62) suggests that these anthropomorphic traits represent "some protective spirit" among the Emberá in the Sinú area, although he does not give any further reason for this assumption.

If the house is abandoned for a longer period of time, the owner to show visitors that the house is "locked" overturns the log. This measure is always respected by passers-by that would rather continue their journey in the dark than spend the night in an abandoned house. During the shaman's invocations in the house, the stairway is turned around to prevent dogs from entering as no domestic animals are allowed to ruin the ritual by entering the house.

Certain preventive measures in relation to the stairway indicate that it does bear magical qualities. For fear of the deceased, the relatives place bunches of magical *moindu* leaves, one bunch in each corner of the house or, at least, in front of the stairway (Nociones 1929:83). Among the Wounaan in southern Chocó, the skull of a tortoise, called *bache* in Spanish (*Chelydra serpentina acutirostris*), is tied to the house post closest to the stairway, which Reichel-Dolmatoff interprets as a measure for good luck in hunting (1960:143).

As to the raw material used, balsa is easy to work but is rapidly worn out and the log must soon be replaced. Myth tells us that balsa is used because it stands for the life essence of man and his capacity to undergo metamorphosis. The magical character of the notched log suggests that it represents an external element attached to the house, something coming "from without" the river rather than "from within" the house. The people in the house are unquestionably reliant on the force and energy, which the river supplies, a dependence which ties man to the riverine domain. The stairway and the path cleared by man to bridge the earthly space between the dwelling and the river express a channel of affinity between man and water, an elemental force which is at once the requirement for life and fatal to people who find themselves in a crucial moment of transition in life. At such transitions, the notched log becomes a tangible manifestation of the river's transmission of energy and fecundity to the abode of mankind in this world. This intrinsic nature of the stairway of the traditional dwelling is also revealed and confirmed through its Emberá name, *domé*.

The Emberá term, *domé*, may be considered as *do-mé*. It is thus thought of as "river penis," from *do* (river) and *me* (penis). The *domé* stairway then becomes a telling metaphor for the transmission of energy between the river and the Emberá dwelling which is profusely described and alluded to in myth and rite. The idea of an anthropomorphization of the river in Emberá thought motivates an examination of the relationship between the river and man himself.



# 4

## FACING THE RIVER

The importance of the riverside is matched by that of another sector of the Emberá habitat: the headwaters and source of the river. The intrinsic nature of the one area is impossible to perceive without considering the cultural relevance of the other for, as I will show, in cosmological terms they are intimately intertwined.

The Emberá generally prefer to live on the upper course of the rivers in the Chocó forest. While most young men nowadays move downriver to settle in recently established villages, old people do not willingly abandon their traditional homes and refuge close to the source of the rivers.

The world of humans is said to originate in the source of the river (Isaza Bravo 1987:121) and, in myth, both gods and people live at and roam the headwaters. The mythical descendants of Karagabí, the creator, settle there while Karagabí himself ascends to his celestial abode on a crystal ladder placed at the headwaters of the Atrato River (Nociones 1929:98; Pinto 1978:169). The Wounaan creator of the human world, Ewandama, is also found at the source of the river, as are *Betenabe*, the Mother of Fish (Cardona 1985:32-33), and *dojurá*, the mythical people of the river world (Vasco 1985:116). The Emberá of the upper San Juan River place their three ancestral and divine ladies, made of gold and yet alive, on the shore of a small lake on top of the Torrá mountain, where they busily comb their indescribably beautiful hair (Broberg 1924).

In the mythical discourse there is usually a house upriver where contenders metamorphose to face another reality beyond human comprehension. The *cimarrones*, described as reserved, nomadic Emberá people of a timeless and mythical existence, are still said to roam the headwaters of some affluents on the right bank of the upper Atrato and in the upper Baudó basin.

Water from the headwaters has the power to destroy or heal in sorcery and shamanistic practice (Kane 1986:379). Similarly, stones and hills at the headwaters are sacred, powerful landmarks in the mythical habitat.

Going upriver is going the correct and proper way for the Emberá traveller. Native thought decrees that fishing should take place upriver (Santa Teresa

1924:128) and the mythical hunter often finds his game there. In fact, the Emberá expression for "upriver," *do uara*, indicates that it is considered to be the "true way," *o-ará*, for man.

Certain linguistic connotations of the river terminology corroborate an intimate association between man and the river in Emberá thought. The prominent role of the riverside and the headwaters in native ritual and myth is intriguing with reference to the etymology of the terms for these two domains of the Emberá habitat.

"Riverside" is expressed as *dokidá*, the literal meaning of which has been noticed by many scholars who have not, however, reflected upon its symbolic significance. *Dokidá* is composed of *do* ("river") and *kidá* ("teeth"), which renders its literal meaning as "the teeth of the river." Correspondingly, "river source" is *dokum* or *dokembú*. Both terms signify "the nose of river" from *do* and *kum/kembú*, "nose." I will explore the contextual significance of these terms in detail throughout this book.

From its headwater "nose" and along its riverside "teeth," the river ends up in what is graphically described as a "mouth," in English as well as in Spanish (*boca*). However, the debouching of the river constitutes a concept the interpretation of, which is actually far from self-evident in the case of the Emberá. I would go so far as to maintain that the Emberá counterpart of debouchment has been misconstrued so far, judging from the references to this concept in the existing lexicons of the Emberá language. Pinto, among others, gives *dotae* or *doitae* as the Emberá expression for "river mouth" (1978:259), sometimes also pronounced as *totai* (Isaza Bravo 1987:121).

Despite these linguistic references, however, the Emberá lack expressions for "river mouth" in the usual sense of the word, i.e. as a term for the point where the river completes its course by discharging its waters into a major pool or body of water, a lake or the sea. I hold that such a concept of "river mouth" (point of the river's debouching) neither fits into the principles of Emberá cosmology nor into their traditional conception of the mythical origin of the rivers.

*Dotae* is composed of *do-tae* which can be interpreted as "river junction," i.e. two rivers which meet in one. We have a similar word formation in the word for "mouth," *i-tae*, which really means "junction of lips." Another case, which parallels the *dotae* gloss, is *o-tae*, which is the common expression for "fork in the road."

An alternative expression given for this assumed "river mouth" is *doitae*, which seems to be identical to the almost homonymous *dotae*, interpreted above as "confluence of rivers." However, the similarity between these two terms is limited to the context of *do* (river). The composite *do-itae* is

certainly not a synonym for *dotae*; instead, its meaning is actually "river mouth" though not, as concluded above, in the usual sense of the word. The literal meaning of "the mouth of the river" that the Emberá confer upon *doitae* bears a comprehensive, esoteric significance which requires detailed explication. Furthermore, this concept is deeply rooted in the Emberá conception of the universe. In cosmological terms, the Emberá River does have a "mouth" as much as it has a "nose" and "teeth."

The overwhelming importance of the headwaters and the riverside, coupled with their anthropomorphized denominations, is conspicuously paralleled by endeavour to emphasize the nose and teeth in the human face through technical and artistic means as well as by the prominent role the Emberá ascribe to these facial organs in myth, ritual and magical beliefs.

Among the ideals of beauty, the Emberá would probably pick out the shape of the "full-sized" nose and a straight nasal bridge as most aesthetically pleasing, not to say most necessary. Mothers are keen on remodeling and adjusting the cheeks and noses of their new-born babies to give them a shapely face and, above all, to prevent children from becoming snub-nosed: "When an Indian woman gives birth, they place a hearth of fire for her nearby to heat her hands and knead the cheeks and nose of the child so as to compose its face and see to it that it will not become flat-nosed" (Loteró Villa 1977:60). The Emberá delight in telling stories and jokes where the main theme is mutilated or physically handicapped human beings; their black neighbours downriver often receive the brunt of this kind of humour. To become *mochó* (the local Spanish word for "maimed") is, correspondingly, a cruel fate for any individual.

The straight and profiled nose is also a characteristic feature in all three-dimensional reproductions of the face on anthropomorphic clay vessels for *chicha* preparation and consumption as well as on wooden artifacts such as shamanistic staffs or ritual figures that accompany healing ceremonies.

In myth human-like beings roam the riverine underworld with noses that have been mutilated or have rotted away. The Emberá in Baudó relate the story of the son of a shaman who is brought back to life by magical means, but the tip of his nose rots away, leaving him with open nostrils. The myth explicitly makes clear that this physical deformity constitutes the inevitable gate to his ruin and final death (Pardo 1984:197). In a tale of *Baa*, the thunder, this motif reappears.

The Emberá usually have remarkably sound teeth and seem to take care to keep them in good condition. Their habit of chewing the *kidabe* fruit (*Manettia reclinata* L.) gives them blackened teeth which is said to protect

against dental decay. Nowadays many people, mostly men, can be seen with glittering gold fillings in their teeth, perhaps more meant as a sign of wealth than of necessary dental treatment. Nevertheless, there might be other inducements behind this accentuation of the teeth than those of simple vanity or aesthetics.

In the field of art and production of artifacts, the teeth do not play the same prominent role as the nose. The mouth is generally portrayed closed in a straight line and the teeth are not shown at all. There are, however, exceptions to this rule on a category of clay vessels used for *chicha* beer, where the teeth are distinctly marked in the three-dimensional anthropomorphic face of the pot.

An overview of Emberá rituals and magical beliefs shows that the teeth make up a component of the human body that becomes particularly exposed during critical periods of transition, be it a woman having her first baby, a girl having her first menstruation or a spouse in mourning. Having passed the ritual or crucial period, the person concerned must see to it that his or her teeth regain their strength and hardness by means of a stipulated series of recuperative measures. The magical nature of the teeth is also demonstrated by their function in the public trial, part of the puberty ceremonies the young woman must pass to prove her virginity.

In the mythical tale of Séver, the principal son of Karagabí, and of his heroic deeds in the war against the Kuna Indians, the victorious hero returns home in triumph with his most valuable war-trophy, the teeth of his slain enemies (Santa Teresa 1924:15). This act and its clear symbolical value has its historical analogue in the documented fervour with which the Emberá of the 17th century endeavoured to provide themselves with the teeth of their slain enemies. This was the gruesome fate of the Spanish commander, Martín Bueno, and his troops who were ambushed by the Emberá in 1639 on the upper Atrato. All the dead Spaniards and their allies were beheaded by the Indians and their teeth extracted (Isacsson 1974:460).

The teeth from the slain enemies were a highly coveted trophy, which could even cause controversies at the subsequent sharing of the "booty." During the punitive Spanish military actions which followed the annihilation of the Martín Bueno expedition in 1639, the Emberá war leaders spent as much time planning new ambushes as they did quarrelling about the right to the teeth of their still living and blissfully ignorant victims. The dreadful Ucumiá from the Tatamá Province, who had been one of the main leaders in the attack on Martín Bueno, participated in the war meeting held with representatives from local Emberá groups that preceded the ambush on the punitive troops of Juan Antonio Pereira de Farias in 1640. Ucumiá declared

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to the other leaders that he reserved the right to the teeth of the Spanish commander for himself but his claim was contested by another chief, Gasparbirá, who said the right was his, since Ucumiá already had an abundance of teeth from earlier successful ambushes. By the irony of fate, however, Ucumiá became a victim himself of the aggressions; during an attack on another Spanish force led by Captain Mateo de Cifuentes in 1640, Ucumiá happened to receive a tremendous blow with a machete on his jaw "which knocked out his teeth." The toothless Ucumiá became enraged and took immediate revenge by putting his female prisoners to death. Although the injury in itself was relatively harmless, it was considered so serious that the wretched Ucumiá wanted to kill himself (AHNB:CeI 68:534r,543r). I feel it is clear that the violence displayed by this experienced war leader was not in response to physical pain but to the fatal blow to his position in the native society, which the loss of his teeth entailed.

# 5

## THE PAINTED FACE

Men, women and children among the Emberá and Wounaan usually decorate their bodies with painted patterns. The painting signifies much more than a plain decoration of the skin, however. Above all, it constitutes a necessary complement to the identity of the individual as a complete member of society. The Emberá/Katío in Urabá state that they do not paint their bodies. Instead, they "dress" themselves with their body painting (Santa Teresa 1924:71). Adolescents who wish to impress those around them are eager to paint their faces on every occasion, particularly when visiting relatives or friends in the neighbourhood. Others reserve body painting for ritual contexts, in connection with rites of transition, maize rituals or healing ceremonies, visits to distant relatives and participation in harvest labour, house construction and other communal undertakings which are generally followed by drinking-bouts.

Two kinds of vegetable dyes are used for face painting. The most common and in many regions the only one used, is a juice extracted from the fruit of the *jagua* tree, called *kipará* by the Emberá. The juice of the jagua fruit is almost transparent when applied to the skin but darkens afterwards to a bluish-black covering hue that disappears only with time and wear. The jagua tree grows wild but is also raised locally. The fruit is peeled and the pulp is pressed. The juice is strained through a piece of cloth, after which it is mixed with finely ground ashes from the balsa tree or another kind of wood to obtain the finished product. Jagua is said to have a repellent effect against mosquitoes and other insects. Both the Emberá and the Wounaan have reported it to be used as a remedy for skin irritation (Cardona 1987:26; Wassén 1935:74).

Above all, the dye of the jagua is utilized for decorating the human body, occasionally the face but more often the limbs and torso. Among the Wounaan, a new-born baby is covered with bluish-black jagua over its whole body, five days after its birth (Wassén 1935:74). Adults paint their entire bodies in a similar fashion on certain occasions. In such cases the body is painted with the palm of the hand as hands and arms should also be

blackened. When elaborating thin line patterns, the painter uses small wooden sticks. Small, three- or four-toothed forks of *guadua* (*Bambusa arundinacea* Willd.) are used to draw parallel lines while more intricate patterns are reproduced with rollers or printing stamps.

The second most important dye used for body painting is obtained from the seeds of the *achiote* or *bija* fruit (*Bixa orellana*), which the Emberá call *kanchí*. The seeds are soaked in water and rubbed with the fingers. The juice sinks as a sediment which is then separated from the water. The dye is dried in the sun and mixed with fat from deer or bear (Cardona 1985:78), after which it is kept in a small container made from a fruit shell, a beak, or the like. The Emberá in the Sinú and San Jorge used to wear these *kanchí* containers hanging in a string around the neck (Santa Teresa 1924:71). The bright, light red of the achiote is principally used for face painting, either alone or together with jagua, sometimes as thin parallel lines of each dye, applied with thin wooden pegs (Wassén 1935:72-73). The relatively laborious manufacture of the achiote dye has resulted in its being replaced by modern lipsticks acquired in the nearest village shop.

Face painting patterns and styles among the modern Emberá and Wounaan population vary considerably within a limited region or even a small community. Design and directions on how and when to paint are to some extent dependant on the instructions and personal taste of the local shaman as well as on the ritual or social contexts implied. Certain regional differences among Emberá-speaking Indians can be established, for instance, between those living on the western affluents of middle Atrato and the Chamí/Emberá living on the upper Andágueda of the Choco/Risaralda borderlands. Among the former, the bluish-black jagua is dominant in face painting, especially on the chin, while the Emberá on the Andágueda prefer more detailed patterns on the cheeks, the nose and around the mouth, combining jagua black with achiote red. In both areas the custom of painting the face has survived more among the women than the men (Ulloa 1992). Patterns and styles in the face paintings of the Emberá of northwestern Antioquia and southern Córdoba are similar to those of the Chamí of Chocó/Risaralda borderland though they were more detailed, at least until 50 years ago, than those of the Emberá living in the department of Chocó. Severino de Santa Teresa's description of the face paintings among the Katío/Emberá from the 1920s, is quite detailed: "Then they draw a black line of jagua from the forehead to the tip of the nose. From that line they divide horizontally other lines across the cheekbones and cheeks. On their chin they fashion small vertical lines like a goatee. From these lines other horizontal

ones meet with those of the cheeks. Over the upper lip they print some small lines imitating a moustache. Between one line and another they intercalate with skill some black dots, and the whole looks like an exquisite embroidery" (Santa Teresa 1924:71-72). The same type of pattern seems also to have been common among the Emberá/Katío of the San Jorge river basin (Dahl 1940).

Despite considerable regional variations, the patterns can easily be grouped into a few categories. Most patterns are concentrated to the lower half of the face and, more particularly, the part comprising the nose, mouth and chin. The location of the patterns follows a strict line of demarcation between different parts of the face which in turn defines the categories. The first category is defined by a horizontal line at the level of the upper lip and slightly above the corner of the mouth. This zone is mainly covered with plain jagua painting or a field of parallel horizontal and/or vertical lines. The second category is a section demarcated by the upper edge of the upper lip and the nasal cavities, usually marked out through parallel vertical lines, zigzag patterns or right-angled rows of dots. A third distinct category emphasizes the mouth through a dotted row around the lips. Finally, a rectangular field on the chin running from the lower lip to the point of the chin constitutes the fourth category, often designed as a blank or sometimes patterned part within the covered field of the first category. Alternatively, this field below the chin is marked through lines of different designs. Other characteristic and frequent features include a vertical line running along the nose from the root of the nose to its tip, patterns of different designs on the cheeks, either isolated or related to the section around the mouth and/or originating from the nose, as well as lines connected to the eyebrows.

To sum up, through their painted designs the Emberá emphasize certain parts of the face *as well as* the relations between these parts. The patterns are concentrated to the nose and mouth, respectively (categories 1 and 3), while other patterns bring these parts together or define their role in a wider context (categories 2 and 4).



# 6

## THE GOLDEN HEAD

Apart from their painted patterns, the Emberá make use of a variety of ornaments to elucidate the riverine morphology of their face and body. Even though the women also bear necklaces and bracelets, it is the men who take pride in decorating their bodies with ornaments of different sorts. Some of these are meant for daily use while others are only worn during rites or in festive and social contexts. Each part of the human body displays its own kind of ornaments. Both sexes wear necklaces of various materials around their necks; necklaces of animal teeth and birds' bills are usually given to the children, necklaces with pieces of mother-of-pearl or cold-hammered silver are worn by youths and adult men and necklaces of glass beads, shells, seeds etc. are worn by both sexes. Men's chests and shoulders are covered with thick, crossed layers of thousands of white, red, yellow and blue glass beads, while their loins are dressed in another but wider layer of the same glass beads. Small boys only wear beaded strings around the shin below the knee while adult men bear broad bracelets of cold-hammered silver around their wrists. On the head the Emberá used to wear ornaments of silver, bands of glass beads, bonnets of bark cloth, garlands of fragrant flowers and herbs, and a sort of basket-woven crown with "feathers" of balsa wood, painted with a pattern in jagua. This headwear is or was only used for particular rites and gatherings of a ceremonial character and then exclusively by the officiating shaman and other men and youths. In exceptional cases, some of these types of headwear can also be borne by women.

Facial ornaments are intended for the ears, the lower lip and the nose. During the last fifty years most of the facial ornaments traditionally worn by men have disappeared completely from among the Emberá and the Wounaan; occasionally men can be seen with at most a thin, silver ring in their ears while the women still decorate themselves profusely with dangling earrings of silver-like metal. Lip ornaments of precious metals are only mentioned in archival documents from the 17th century while nose ornaments existed sporadically in a few isolated regions of central Chocó until some 70 years ago.

Not counting fragrant flowers and aphrodisiac herbs which are often tucked onto the head close to the ears, ornaments meant for the ears are mainly of two kinds, either designed as a pendant or as a mushroom-like cylinder. Until recently, both the Emberá and the Wounaan wore pairs of ear pendants made from cold-beaten silver from old coins or just plain, light metal. They usually consisted of 1-4 thin, crescent-shaped, interlinked laminae, each fitted with a number of small, rectangular plates. This kind of pendant was generally fixed to the ear in a ring around the other type of ear ornament which consisted of a slender cylinder of wood, widened to a half-spherical button at one end which was often covered with a thin, silver plate. The wooden cylinders, equipped with a string at the thinner end, were put into the perforated ear lobes and stretched tight against the back of the head by tying the two strings together. Sometimes these silver-plated cylinders were replaced by small feather staffs or a single feather stuck into the perforated ear lobe.

Lip ornaments are not mentioned at all from among the Emberá or the Wounaan during the last centuries. Nonetheless, independent Spanish colonial sources testify to the fact that lip ornaments of precious metals were worn by the Emberá as well as by Wounaan-speaking Indians until the middle of the 17th century. Just after the foundation of the mining village of San Francisco de Nóvita on the Tamaná River, an affluent of the San Juan, the Spanish settlers in 1601 were contacted by Emberá-speaking Indians from the "province" of Zirambidá, situated to the west of the San Juan. The Spanish captain, Vasco Mendoza y Silva, commented in his report from 1605 that: "nine of them arrived in a canoe with an Indian who appeared to be a headman, all of them well-disposed and with handsome faces and perforated lips, noses and ears, token of a rich people" (HDCh 1954:88). As early as 1593, during the expedition of Captain Cristóbal García along the San Juan River, Indians, probably Wounaan or Zirambidá, were reported "with pleasant faces and bodies decorated with pieces of jewellery of gold which they wear set into their noses and lips of their faces" (ibid., 97). The historian and friar Pedro Simón mentions the same episode in his chronicle from the beginning of the 17th century, describing the Indians as "all of them naked with nice pieces of jewellery of gold in their ears and noses, and made into some hairs of beard of the same, which were four or six long plates hanging from the lower lip" (Simón 1892(V):156). In his *Descripción de la tierra* from 1596, Melchior de Salazar comments:

The bank of this river from one side to the other is inhabited and populated by some Indians called Noanamas. They are a people of nice disposition and with fine

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faces. Both men and women usually wear their nostrils perforated and in these some pear-shaped adornments of pure gold. They have the cartilage of their nose perforated and from this hangs a ring of gold which they call *caracuri*. They wear the lower lip perforated with four holes and in this set some strips of gold six or seven fingers long by way of a beard. They have their ears perforated and in these some ear pendants of gold thick as a goose quill. They wear some patens on their chest surrounded by many seashells of those which produce the pearls (Romoli 1977:29).

The first peaceful contacts at the end of the 17th century were made with these southern groups of Emberá-speaking Indians from the "province" of Poyá on the upper Tamaná River, as well as with Wounaan groups on the middle San Juan and the Emberá-speaking *Zirambirá* to the west of this same river. There is no doubt, however, that the Emberá Indians of the core area around the upper San Juan (the "province" of Tatamá) and the upper Atrato River (the "province" of Citarabirá), at that time still hostile and isolated, were wearing the same types of golden lip ornaments as their fellow tribesmen in the south. In 1669, when the first peaceful contacts were established with these Emberá groups, a meeting was held with representatives from the three principal "provinces," Citará, Tatamá and Noanama. All the chiefs present at the gathering wore lip ornaments of gold which consisted of four thin golden pins, about 15-20 centimetres long, hanging from the lower lip. The Spanish document gives an exhaustive description of the Indians' appearance and behaviour before the Spaniards and is the most detailed report available on how the Emberá and their native neighbours looked during the initial period of contact with Europeans. The Indians acted here to meet the representatives of the Spanish Crown and discuss with them how the evangelization and the administrative organization of the Tatamá and Citará Provinces were to be carried out. The main reason for the Indians' abrupt change of attitude towards the Spaniards was the threat they felt from their native enemies, superior in number, to the west of the Atrato River; by offering the Spanish admittance to their area they hoped for military assistance. The description of the golden ornaments that the native chiefs were wearing at that moment is a valuable source of information because their painting, ornaments and behaviour immediately identified the Indians as *Emberá*. Although the exhibition of body painting, facial ornaments, plumage and dress combined with self-assured physical bearing may have been lost on the Spaniards, it definitely strengthened and distinguished the identity of each local native society which here acted as a unity before a superior enemy, the agents of the Spanish Church and Crown.

Captain Francisco de Quevedo from Popayán, who had arrived in Chocó in 1669 to "reduce" the native population into villages and organize tax enforcement, was on his way down the Tamaná River to meet the Wounaan chiefs on the San Juan on May 13 of the same year when he met some Indian messengers. He described this encounter as follows:

Round about three in the afternoon the said day four Indians appeared to receive me very satisfied, they were citaraes, tatamaes and noanamas and they told me how their chiefs and leaders were waiting for me downriver and from there to where they were waiting there were Indians everywhere it was probably like a league of land, they wanted to carry me and I did not allow it.

All the Indians very handsome in their fashion with a half-moon of gold hanging from their noses which covers their mouth, and over each nostril of the nose a round button of gold. From the lower lips of the mouth four thin pins of gold a little less than a span long and in each ear, five arches one of gold and the others of silver, for all this they have got holes pierced in the said parts, with a couple of large crossed bands of innumerable beads which reach below their waist, one in one shoulder, another in the other, some small hats put on of wood, its crown a hoop, like a strainer, and without top in its crown and the brim about two fingers broad with red feathers as well as of other colours from birds of this land; in their waist a belt of beads and a loincloth which they make from the bark of a tree they call damajagua; so that hanging from this belt in front and behind, they cover their genital parts; they also wear bracelets of beads like women and dyed with bija (AGI:Quito 67:5).

After this and other similar encounters at the end of the 1660s followed a turbulent period of repeated Spanish attempts to concentrate the dispersed population into villages with the assistance of a native administration of Indian chiefs. Then followed a period of intensive missionary activities supported by harsh and relatively effective Spanish control of the native population. By as early as the middle of the 18th century almost all Indians had been baptized and bore family names of Spanish origin. Spanish customs had begun to affect Emberá "traditional" culture and social life and, not least, different sets of values began to influence indigenous views of the body and soul. As a consequence, within a few decades, the missionaries managed more or less to wipe out the "barbarian" habit of decorating the human face with lip and nose ornaments.

In contrast to the lip ornaments of gold which evidently went out of general use very early -- I have not found any archival reference to them later than that of 1669 -- nose ornaments were still worn in remote areas in our times. But as nose ornaments are only occasionally mentioned in Spanish

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colonial sources, their use was probably restricted to isolated and remote tracts and very likely unknown to the Church and zealous missionaries for reasons that will be evident in the forthcoming analysis.

Sources from the 16th and 17th centuries mention two kinds of nose ornaments. One is a pair of "round buttons of gold" or "pear-shaped ornaments of gold" that were worn in or over the nostrils and which evidently fell into disuse very early. The other type of nose ornament is shaped as a round disk or ring of gold fixed to the septum of the nose. To my knowledge, the only ethnographer who has documented a fairly recent use of this particular type of nose "ring" among the Emberá and the Wounaan is Erland Nordenskiöld. His expedition to the Darién and Chocó Coast in 1927 had as its destination the upper Docampadó River and the adjacent Docordó River, a tributary of the San Juan. Here, in the borderland between two Chocó peoples, Nordenskiöld met with elder Emberá and Wounaan men who still wore nose ornaments, not of gold but of silver. Nordenskiöld himself comments that nose ornaments had earlier been common among the Chocó Indians but, at the time of his visit, most elder men had removed their nose disks, leaving their perforated septum as a visible sign of a dying, ancient habit. Sélimo Huacoriso, the famous Emberá shaman and informant to the Swedish ethnographer, was born on the Docampadó and had his own septum perforated but explained that the nose ornament had since long fallen into disuse on the Sambú River where he lived at the time of the Nordenskiöld expedition in 1927. Nordenskiöld's own field notes say that nose ornaments were "general on the Pasutó and Docordó" (Field notes 1927). In his diary notes he adds that the nose ornament is only worn by men; women never have the septum of their nose perforated as among the Kuna. Arbin, who visited the Emberá on the Sambú River in 1933, probably quotes from Nordenskiöld when he says that nose ornaments were only used on the Docordó River in Chocó, a river he never visited himself. He also imparts an interesting piece of information, however, that the Indian boys have their septum perforated when they are 2-4 years of age, sometimes later (Arbin 1950:85).

It is not by sheer accident that the practice of wearing nose ornaments survived longest precisely in the region of the upper Docampadó and Docordó Rivers. I can see two main reasons for this. During the 20th century the upper courses of these rivers have remained in one of the most isolated regions in Chocó occupied by aboriginal settlements. The isolation of the area was probably due to the fact that the western lowland between the Pacific coast and the San Juan River is poor in gold and was therefore of

only peripheral interest to the Spanish Crown and later to the national state. The intense mining activities and colonial administrative reorganization of the Emberá and Wounaan on the San Juan proper and its eastern affluents had but a secondary effect on the tribesmen in the west. Most likely, many Indian refugees, *cimarrones*, fled the mining area and the colonial villages to seek protection in isolated rivers like Docampadó and neighbouring coastal rivers to the west during the colonial period. Missionary activities were almost non-existent in this region until the early 20th century, which left the native population more free to express and retain distinctive cultural features, exemplified in the use of the nose ornament, than their fellow tribesmen in the rest of the province.

The use of the nose ornament on the Docampadó and its environs up to recent times is also explained by the fact that this is the borderland of the Wounaan and Emberá territories and, above all, a region where the two peoples intermingle and intermarry to some extent, as witnessed by Nordenskiöld in 1927 (1928:129). In such a situation the distinctive ethnic character of each people is accentuated through different cultural means; a principal one for the Chocó lies in the message of the decorated body, with a focus on the human face and its embellishments.

The type of nose ornament that was documented by Nordenskiöld in 1927 consisted of a round and slightly cone-shaped thin lamina of beaten silver with a diameter of 22-25 mm. One ornament had a punched pattern of a dotted line following the outer edge of the convex lamina; in another specimen, the dotted pattern followed in a circle below the hole adjusted for the septum of the nose. Though of silver instead of gold, the shape of these two ornaments seems to agree with those from 1669, described as "half-moons" by the Spanish witness. Another detail of great interest for the interpretation of the symbolical function of the ornaments is contained in the observations made by these separate sources on the nose ornaments' covering the upper lip. The position of the round lamina is described by Nordenskiöld as "a small silver ornament hanging upon the lip" (1928:149) or, as expressed by the Spanish captain in 1669, "*que les tapa la boca*." I will argue below that this small piece of information is crucial for understanding the nature of man in native thought and his position in the Emberá cosmos.

# 7

## THE HOUSE OF THE NOSE

Spanish sources from the Conquest era testify to the common use of nose ornaments among the native societies in western Colombia, a custom that is confirmed by numerous archaeological finds in the same area. Nose ornaments in the shape of "rings," "half moons" or "disks" have been found throughout the area with definite local traditions in material and form. The most common and well-known artistic styles are those of the Sinú, Quimbaya and Calima regions.

The nose ornament of the Emberá was, of course, not borne or regarded as a mere decoration of the human body. Its material, originally gold and later silver, as well as its form and the way the ornament was worn, conveyed a message to the bearer and to those around him which united them as members of a common universe. The signification of the nose ornament is to be sought in the Emberá conception of the human face which they emphasize through different cultural means of expression.

We have already established the dominant role that the river bank and the headwaters have in ritual life and daily magic as well as in Emberá mythology. The significance of the fact that these two river concepts bear names that refer to the human body, the "river tooth" and the "river nose," respectively, can only be understood in relation to the importance of the connection between mouth and nose that is expressed through the painting and decoration of the Emberá face. The main function of the nose ornament, hanging from the septum and covering the upper lip (and, earlier, the whole mouth) is precisely to demonstrate this crucial relationship between nose and mouth. The nature of this relationship and its connection to man himself are not revealed by a mere interpretation of each component but are actually given through the presence of the nose ornament and constitute the main purpose for wearing it. If not revealed immediately through its shape and design, the Emberá demonstrate the true meaning of the nose ornament by the term assigned to it. The nose disk is called *kumbedé* which I interpret as "the maize house of the nose," from *kum-be-dé*. As a matter of fact, the conical form and punctuated border of the nose disk bears a striking

resemblance to the roof of the Emberá house.

Besides its evident likeness to the Emberá dwelling, by referring to the thin metal disk as "the house of the nose," the Emberá intend to stress the importance of man's proximity to the headwaters of the river. The headwaters are the ideal location for dwellings. Although the Emberá express a general wish to settle in the headwater area of a river, this ideal is impossible to realize because, as I will show, the concept of *dokembú*, the "river nose," has a far more fundamental significance for the Emberá than the usual denotation of "headwaters" suggests. Consequently, what is impossible to demonstrate in practice, the Emberá show instead metaphorically by wearing an ornament, reminiscent of a house roof, attached to their nose. Hence, the peculiar term *kumbedé* is quite accurate; the ornament is indeed "the house of the nose," but the ultimate meaning of the term, "the house of the *river* nose," makes explicit the underlying world view of the Emberá.

If the teeth correspond to the banks of the river and the mouth is the river itself, the lips seem to represent the vegetation that covers the terrain close and parallel to the river course. The Emberá term for "lip" is *i* (cf. *i-tae*, "mouth," literally "junction of lips") which probably appears in the word for "vegetation," *oi*, literally "the lip of the way." The terrain and vegetation that surrounds the dwelling and intervenes between it and the river is imbued with an impure character that finds expression during periods of transition and the shaman's rituals in the house. The danger it brings is avoided through ritual measures, as earlier described. The human lips carry this same impurity in the metaphorical relation established between the nose and the teeth in the face. Their impure qualities explain the habit of wearing the nose ornament to cover the upper lip, thereby establishing a direct relation between the nose and the mouth, particularly the tip of the tongue. The nature of the impurity that characterizes the vegetation (or the human lips) will be analysed later.

The necessity for man to maintain regular contact with the source-stream has to be combined with a prescribed human presence on the riverside, as I explained in the last chapter. This ideal of a double spatial relationship to the river, manifested in the prescribed location of the dwelling, is fulfilled in real life, but only half-way, by constructing the house close to the river. The rest of the prescribed order is complied with by using the *kumbedé* disk as a metaphor for the Emberá house properly placed at the headwaters. However, the main function of the nose disk and the beauty of its design lies in its capacity to explicitly demonstrate the dual nature of man's spatial relationship to the river: the house is attached to the headwaters (the human



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nose) and yet, at the same time, it touches the riverside (the teeth) by overlapping the "impure" forest (the upper lip).

The Emberá habitat reproduced in man's face as the *kumbedé* nose disk connecting the river's nose with its teeth while bridging the intermediate shoreline vegetation of its "lips" appears to lack one important connective detail, the stairway of the house. I have already pointed out the overall importance that unites the headwaters as the river's "nose" with the riverside as its "teeth" and proposed that the inherent meaning of the *domé* stairway as the river's "penis" suggests a deeper relationship between man and the river than that of a sheer visible, horizontal perspective that directs our interpretation of the ritual context of the shoreline. Interpreted as the "river's penis," the stairway which leads into the human dwelling establishes a link between the river and the house which in cosmological terms also links the riverside with the headwaters of the river. This conclusion is based upon the explicit Emberá assertion that their house should ideally be situated in the headwaters or the river's "nose." The *domé* stairway does more than merely convey people and goods between the river and the house; its esoteric nature manifests itself in ritual time.

It is, in fact, possible to identify the riverborn stairway in man's riverine face. The apparent connection between the nose and the teeth in the human face and the anthropomorphic terminology for the river suggest that the tip of the tongue is recognized as a metaphor for the stairway of the dwelling which rises through the river mouth of man. The tip of the tongue touches the edge of the nose disk as the stairway is placed leaning against the edge of the house. But for the Emberá, the tongue is more than an animated stairway in man's riverine face, it also shares the essential nature of the *domé* stairway.

The Emberá gloss for "tongue," *kiramé*, actually confirms such analogous qualities, as *kiramé* stands for *kira* ("face") and *me* ("penis") which renders the human tongue as "the penis of the face." With this, it is assumed that the symbolical role bestowed upon the house stairway is identical to that of the human tongue. Actually, two synonyms for the *domé* stairway confirm its relationship with the human tongue. Besides being referred to as *domé*, the stairway is also called *dométa* or *jerameta*; as *dométa* it is regarded as "seed (*ta*) of *domé*" while *jerameta* explicitly equates the stairway with the *kiramé* tongue as "seed of *jerame*" (*kiramé*). This seemingly strange metaphorical analogue between tongue and stairway suggests a specific cosmological message in Emberá thought that will be examined in the following chapters. So far, in this tentative reconstruction of the anthropomorphic river, I

conclude that *do-mé* becomes *kira-me*, i.e. a specific phenomenon related to the river is the same phenomenon related to the human face.

It can then be assumed that the Emberá use the human face to conceptualize the river morphology but, more importantly, by doing so they also express man's specific double spatial relationship to the river. Summing up, the wearing of the nose ornament actually conveys a fourfold cosmological message. It makes clear (1) that the nose ornament, through its shape and design, is a representation of the real Emberá house, (2) that the traditional Emberá dwelling is (or, at least, should be) situated at the headwaters of the river in the same way the ornament is attached to the septum of the nose, (3) that there should be a connection between this imaginary but ideal location at the headwaters, on the one hand, and the riverside where the dwelling actually stands, on the other, as can be deduced from the position of the nose disk reaching down to the teeth in the mouth, and (4) that the Emberá dwelling, through its connection with the *domé* stairway, participates in a wider cosmological context indicated by the sexual terminology that associates the *kiramé/domé* categories. In order to understand this context, the essential nature of the river as conceptualized in Emberá thought needs to be sought for and identified.

## 8

### REPTILES AND RIVERINE MONSTERS

The native conception of the river as a transformable being, which through its multiple manifestations and variable guises threatens or exerts an ominous influence on the lives and actions of human beings in its vicinity, is vividly described in myth. A variety of beings, either friendly or fatal to man, reside in the river and the shaman is the only one who can cope with them through his knowledge and ability to communicate with the spirit world. In any Chocó river, the fisherman or the canoeist promptly points out the dangerous spots in the river which, by tradition, should be avoided when fishing and bathing or all together during the critical hours of the day and night and during transitional periods of the life cycle when humans are exposed to the anger of the water beings. The myths relate the fate of humans of the past, of ancestors who were subjected to the wrath of the river as a consequence of their inappropriate behaviour or their disobedience of given rules.

The myths graphically describe the metamorphosis of the river into a huge mouth that devours humans into the underworld of the river but the myths also tell about the benign inhabitants of below who assist the humans and guide them along the waterways that connect our world with theirs. The visible river from which people earn their livelihoods and near which they make their abodes is for the Emberá ocular evidence of the once established and still unbroken contact with the aquatic underworld; fishermen or playing children on the beach run the risk of being spirited away by the ever-present water monsters of the world below, as witnessed by the myths.

The riverine underworld is not only the abode of the humanlike beings and mythic relatives of the Emberá of this world. Among the numerous mythical monsters and beasts that haunt man from the imaginary world in the depths of the rivers, three main categories of beings stand out. The most important of these and one of the most dreaded is *Antomiá*, generally described as Master or Mother of the Water (*Madre del agua*), either with male or female attributes but sometimes appearing as a pair. *Antomiá* usually has anthropomorphic features, often appears as a child, but its face and abundant

hair are said to resemble those of the sloth, especially when it is seen streaming through the water. It is the principal assistant of the shaman but can at the same time be his deadly enemy if directed by another hostile shaman. The *Antomiá* of a shaman constitutes his tutelary genius (*patrón* in Spanish) or master, though in the local Spanish of the non-indigenous population in Chocó it is usually described as the "devil" (*diablo*). Any person who dares to remain on the beach of the river when the shaman is communicating with *Antomiá* runs the risk of being devoured as the Master rises through its cosmic aquatic opening. There is a great variety of *Antomiás* and their own master is said to be an underwater being called *dojurá* (Pardo 1987:24). The myth about Ventura's travels to the underworld, recorded by Pardo in Baudó (1984:175-193), opens with an episode in which Ventura, who has insulted the vindictive *Kosasa*, is dragged into the river by the *Antomiá* of *Kosasa*, but in a furious underwater battle the hero is rescued by the *Antomiá* of another, more powerful shaman.

*Antomiá* is said to live in the depths of the rivers, particularly in spots characterized by abysmal mud or quicksand, and its house is to be found where a strong current has hollowed out deep holes in the riverbed. Such a characteristic place is described from among the Emberá of the upper Sinú River basin:

. . . where the current cuts through the mountain range there is a strong torrent full of stones and the river forms a meander, its water resting in a hole of strong whirlpools. Opposite, in the other bank, appears in the dry season a beach with round stones and old trunks, and in the rainy season a smaller beach with a very fine sand. Three hundred metres from the smaller beach a native dwelling rises. The hole in the river is surrounded by leafy Pichindé trees and its shore is a shoal of 'quicksand'; in this deep hole which does not 'have any bottom,' *Antomiá* lives. Fishermen who have ventured to dive there, have met 'a child more or less three years of age,' sitting quietly in the midst of the water, that one is *Antomiá*, or better, one of the preferred apparitions of *Antomiá*" (Cardona 1985:192-193).

A historical reference stressing the awe that the Emberá hold for *Antomiá* is found in a letter from 1808, addressed to the Spanish colonial authorities, in which the native leaders of the village of Quibdó express their respect for *Atumia* [sic] "whom we fear so much that it would be impossible for us to express it" (AHNB:EPC 15:577v).

Another kind of ominous aquatic beast is referred to as *Nusí* or *Nunsí*, which is usually described as a gigantic fish that lives in deep caves in the rivers from which it threatens to devour bathers. The monster shows itself by

night with its eyes burning like fires. According to the Emberá of northwestern Antioquia, the soul of a dead shaman changes into a *Nusí* animal (Santa Teresa 1924:54). The Emberá of the upper Baudó also mention a kind of *Nusí* they call *doimamá*, or "water jaguar" (Pardo 1987:24).

Some versions of the myth of Jerupotouarra classify one of his monstrous enemies in the underworld as *Nusí*. In one case, this *Nusí* is described as a "whale" that swallows Jerupotouarra alive only to be killed by him later (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1953:151-153). In another version, recorded from among the Emberá/Chamí of Risaralda, *Nusí* appears in the guise of four gigantic fishes that are defeated by the cunning hero (Vasco 1985:105). Usually, the *Nusí* fish monster is identified as an enormous specimen of the *chícharro* fish (*quícharro*; *Hoplias sp.*), sometimes referred to as *kidazhara* (Pardo 1987:25). The savoury *quícharro* is a gluttonous, carnivorous species in the Chocó river system and a common element in many Emberá and Wounaan myths. *Kidazhara* is a thought-provoking term for the toothed *quícharro* for the term may plausibly be translated as "head or master of the teeth," from *kida* ("teeth") and *zhara* ("chief, master"). Its tenor is quite evident; *kidazhara* is regarded as the Master of the riverside, i.e. of the mythical opening or mouth of the cosmic waterway, the metaphorical "teeth" of the river in Emberá mythology. This suggested meaning of the name is actually confirmed by the role that *Nusí* usually plays in most myths.

The third category of monstrous beings that rule the riverine underworld is usually referred to as *sierpe* in local Spanish and as *je* by the Emberá, while the related term *jepá* refers to the boa constrictor of the Chocó ophidian fauna. The mythological *je* is usually described as a giant snake that roams the aquatic underworld, always threatening to emerge from the water to snatch humans and devour them, taking them to the subterranean realm. The Emberá of northwestern Antioquia say that the giant *je* is able to locate its victims ten kilometres away; from deep in the river *je* gives rise to whirlpools which drag people as well as canoes down into his big "mouth" (Pinto 1978:244). *Je* is intimately associated with water and water supply and the myths testify to its inherent nature as identical with the water itself; the *je* snake makes the river grow and flow over. In a mythological account, taken down by Pinto (1978:256) among the Chamí, a small, striped "worm" is said to be placed in a small gourd where it grows rapidly at the same time as the gourd is filled with water. Finally, the "worm" is transformed into an enormous *je* in a huge lake. Another myth, also recorded by Pinto (1978:258) tells about *Surrnabe*, which devours everyone who comes near

it. At last, four twins kill the monster with their lances and it vanishes; upon the spot of its death and disappearance, a huge lake is formed. Vasco, who characterizes *je* as "the Master of the Water," also calls attention to this obvious connection between *je* and the making and existence of water (1985:126).

However, the water might also disappear when the *je* being associated with it in myth is destroyed through the magic action of the shaman. Nordenskiöld reproduces an account of the drained lagoon at the Docampadó River which once had been filled with water and was the abode of a giant snake, *he*, until the snake was expelled to the underworld by a shaman, upon which the lagoon was emptied (Wassén 1933:117).

In most variants of the myth of Jerupotouarra, the underworld water monster is described as the giant *je* snake. Jerupotouarra blows his magic flute to make *je* appear in the river. The dramatic encounter with the zoomorphic water is vividly narrated in a version recorded by Kane among the Emberá in Panama: "The water was threatening. They say the river was rising. When in that, to the top. They say the Je comes leaving. Comes leaving with eyes too big. Comes to the top. When in that, they say, he took him below. They say no one was left. It took him. They say the water remained smooth." (1986:596).

This manifestation of the giant *je* snake, opening its huge jaws to swallow the humans in the shape of a turbulent whirlpool, is repeated in several myths. Pardo was told by his informants in Baudó of the deeds carried out by gifted shamans of ancient times, who travelled around to liberate rivers from their monsters to make human habitation possible. Famous shamans such as *Naribamia* ("like smoke") made the beasts submerge by "closing their mouth" with ritual singing (1987:49).

In Emberá thought the *je* mythological water snake is associated with the boa (*Constrictor constrictor imperator*) called *jepá*. It is still believed that the *jepá* boa metamorphoses in its old age into a *je* giant water snake. The old *jepá* is said to search out a small pool at the headwaters where it lies down and turns into *je*. The pool gradually fills with water and when the *je* runs out of space it moves to a bigger pool where it continues to generate water. Finally, *je* becomes so big that it leaves the headwaters and its pool. It moves downriver, growing while moving, until it reaches a marsh where it seeks a place to hide its gigantic body, somewhere in the lower Atrato river delta. Informants clarify that *jepá* boas do not turn into *je* when they die but when they turn old, which means that the essence of *jepá* boas is considered to be everlasting. If killed, however, the *jepá* dies without becoming *je*. *Je* is seen as the very origin of the river and its waters.

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The mythological monsters which roam the riverine world, despite their common habitat and generally aggressive attitude towards humans, are essentially different in nature from each other, apart from the obvious medley of appearances and physical peculiarities that distinguish one from the other. Judging from mythical accounts, there is one main faculty that distinguishes the *je* snake monster from the beastly rest. The *je* is intimately connected to the water itself which is associated with its riverine nature and aquatic configuration as a living being. *Je* not only lives in the water of the river, it has the faculty to control and even make water. What is more, *je* is able to metamorphose itself into plain water and, correspondingly, to make the river assume a snake-like nature and body as well. In the mythological state of things, the streaming water of the meandering river changes into a wriggling giant snake and the turbulent water becomes its wide open mouth, ready to swallow humans standing on the edge of the river mouth, after which "the water remains smooth." The river becomes *je* because *je is* the river, the same river which once emanated from the ophidian roots of the cut *jenené* tree, and the same river that man reproduces in his face.

# 9

## JENENÉ: THE TREE AND THE RIVER

One of the most common tales of Emberá mythology narrates the coming into being of the river. This tale is generally regarded as an example of the world-wide theme of the "tree of life" and considered as an origin myth. This interpretation of the meaning of the tale, however, is doubtful and overly simplistic. The myth has been recorded several times from various regions and I will here present a comparative description of the course of events in different versions with as many details and variants as possible. The comparison is based on my own material and twelve other published versions.<sup>4</sup> Though the nature of the river is our main concern here, I will repeatedly refer to details and specific contexts within this basic and important myth throughout this work.

The myth about the cutting of the *jenené* tree which I recorded from an Emberá shaman on the middle Atrato in 1972 is an example of how the myth can be retold to an outsider, with the provisos that the myth is usually told in Spanish, to a fairly ignorant listener, and out of its natural context. There are published versions that are longer than this one and more explicit in content but this version nevertheless describes aspects and actions which are unknown in other versions. This myth was first told and taped in the Emberá language, and then interpreted in Spanish. Actually, the two versions do not differ substantially in content or in richness of details. The narrator was a well-known shaman in his late fifties, originally from the Bebaramá-Arquía region of the mid-eastern Atrato area but living on a small affluent on the left bank of the Atrato river at the time of my visit. The text published below follows the Spanish version as it was given to me by the informant. His difficulty in expressing himself in a comprehensible way is less due to his imperfect Spanish than to his difficulties in "translating" the actual import of a mythological discourse built on metaphors and contextual semantics.

The widespread myth of the cutting of the gigantic *jenené* tree explains how the Emberá got access to the waters, fire, plantains, sugar-cane and the *atarraya* throwing net.<sup>5</sup> However, the urgent need for water is the ultimate reason for felling the tree. The creator Karagabí locates the water in a cavity



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inside the huge tree and manages to fell it, letting loose all the water and thus creating the sea and all the rivers on earth for the benefit of man.

### THE CUTTING OF THE JENENÉ TREE

They had got their water, the *conga*<sup>6</sup> ant [*Paraponera clavata*] had got its water, and that spider which sticks had got its *atarraya* [throwing net] and that chameleon [*imó*] had got its fire. Then God<sup>7</sup> came and asked for water; water and his fire and *atarraya* to take away, as he had nothing to eat. He asked for plantain but they did not give it to him. Everything, hand-mill, yuca, *rascadera* [a tuber], *dominico* [*Musa sp.*] and nothing did they give him.

«I also want to sow, if you are a man you have everything, you have the thing,» he said to them. He intended to go. They only presented him with tiny bits. Half a small bunch of plantains he gave him, *dominico*, but it was not plantain [in Emberá, *patá*]; the one we eat did not exist, only that one *dominico* and *guineo* [*Musa sp.*].

So it was, he always went and they told him. Well, one day he [God] went away like he was praying, he stuck to the head, stayed there to find out where they had it. That God became acquainted with them. And next day he came before they went to their river, to look for his *guacucu* [in Emberá, *umpé* fish; *Chaetostoma sp.*] with his *atarraya*, to light his fire, everything there. And another, his food that is, plantain. Well, and *conga* and spider. He [God] came early in the morning before they went away. He [God] stayed as louse; "Oh darn, what's itching me?" [the owner of the head said].

They left. So did he, as he clung there [to the head]. They opened up their thing, and right away, ruh!, there he plunged. He [God] threw himself in, he became nutria. He went to the headwaters of the same river. They already opened up, *jenené* had its water, he got inside there. He travelled through everything, came and experienced everything, their sowing, well their plantain sowing, their sown field. He also saw their fire there, where they kept [it], their *atarraya*, everything he came to know.

"Well, I will get [it]," [God said].

Next day he came. He went to the *atarraya* [disguised] as *sábalo* [*amparrá*; *Brycon sp.*], they caught quite a lot of *sábalo* and *bocachico* [*kisaba*; *Prochilodus reticulatus*], everything, *micuro* [*guáchida*, *Pimelodus sp.*], *guacucu*, everything they caught in their *atarraya* and he also fell. He was bigger. More than others. He already was coming home, already he had travelled through everything, but fast, fast. And right there they cleaned everything [the fish] quickly before he came. "Let's clean quickly!" Well, they smoked it [the fish] and that's it, smoking fish. Well, everything was smoked properly and he was half fresh. On with fire! On with fire! On with fire! In vain! When they became careless, he disappeared. He went

off to his house.

Next day he came. "Man, how come? Give me, man!" [God said]. In vain! Now he will insure them. "Man, give me fire, man! One does not have light." First, that spider [was] a man. Why does he [God] not have? And right away he gave.

Why the old man, why did he have, and right away he [the spider] wrapped up his thread, ate, swallowed his thread, that is why he keeps on making his atarraya every day, to eat his scraps of food there. Right away he [God] tightened his [the spider's] little stomach. Well, it turned tiny and thin.

And now he [God] grabbed [the conga ant]. "Give me water, man!" Because, well, he does not have water. Baú! He seized the little stomach [of the conga ant], then the old people why did they have water, and right away he [God] grasped, tightened, "You will turn into conga," when cha, cha, cha! He [the conga ant] returned his water, and grasped the mouth, that's how he walks around. He went away, he became very thin and still, when it is raining, he keeps on walking with his mouth carrying, like very small balls [of water] he carries.

He [God] caught [the chameleon]. "Give me fire, man! Well, why should I not have? The old people why did they not have? Man, he has his fire." He took his firebrand, tak! His [the chameleon's] stomach was burnt, nyó, nyó, nyó, nyó! Chameleon went off. His stomach was burnt, with fire.

Well now, he [God] gathered his people, quite a lot [of them] to fell the tree. He went away, he collected everything he had and then he looked for every animal so it could help him fell the tree. He wanted to open but in vain! Where was the door? Nothing was seen. Onto the tree! Well now, everybody gathered to fell the tree, po, po, po! In the afternoon they left it like that [unfinished]. Next day they got up early, working, working, working in the same way. Onto the tree, working the whole day and, like that, working for eight full days, [the tree] was left hanging on one side. And that liana, *libre*<sup>8</sup> says *chocho*, a big liana, we say *begurú khaú*, there it [the tree] got stuck.

Now we really got caught! Well, now he has to look for *cosumbí*, red howler monkey, *coturo* monkey [*Alouatta villosa*], black spider monkey, *michichí*, every [animal] that roams above, that climbs trees. Well now, every animal that did not do, first *león* [puma] went, first león climbed, then it threw [a] *pelota* [ball] and the ball came first, [the puma] came behind. Well, who came ahead? To find out who was quickest to cut off the liana. And every animal threw [the ball] like this, it [the animal] came behind, the ball came much ahead, it [the animal] came much behind. At last, that squirrel came. It says: "Ey, darn it, I [will try]!" Ruh! It threw. When soon, the ball came forward and [the squirrel] stayed behind, came behind, late. When soon after the old *perico* [green parrot] said: "Let me try!" She went away. Nor could she. They threw balls, descending for about an hour...

When, finally *chidima* came -- in Spanish they say *calenturita* [*Microsciurus sp.*]. "No, I don't think that you are fit to climb but I will try." And, ruh! First he went up and rushed down there. Ruh! He dashed down. When the ball comes

behind, he already was there. "You man, you take it!" He took his *machete*. I do not know what it could have been, it must have been machete, because with what should he cut off, after all? When he had cut it off, it already was there. When, wuuuuuuu, it was already making everything, every creek was being made. My God [made it]. The trace remained, the liana, the crown of the tree, and when it is raining, that thing divides, they say it is blocked, then everything divides, that's why it rains everywhere, windy, because the liana stayed there still and from there the rain comes. And that's it. And right there he said everything [i.e. created] and when, paah!, the sea was made.

### JENENÉ: COMPARATIVE VERSIONS

The chief protagonist in all variants of this myth is *Karagabí* (*Carabí*), translated into Spanish as Dios, God, and usually seen by anthropologists as the Creator and culture hero of the Emberá. In some versions of the *Jenené* myth he appears as *Akhoré* (*Acolé*) instead (Nd,I). Among the Chamí he is sometimes just called "chief" (*cacique*) (Pi) in this myth, or acts simply as "he" (Cn).

The starting-point of the *Jenené* myth is that *Karagabí* and his world still did not have access to water, nor were there any rivers in the world. A female being, *Jeserá*, sometimes referred to as the conga ant, jealously controls the water, hiding it in its mouth. *Karagabí* had tasted the water once but is refused admittance to its source. Having begged for water in vain several times, *Karagabí* catches the conga and squeezes it almost to death by parting it into two halves, forcing it to open its mouth and thus revealing the secret hiding-place of the water (Nd). By doing, this he also turns the conga being into the black, stinging conga ant, which can still be seen carrying small balls of water in its mouth as a sign of its stinginess (N).

According to another version (S), *Karagabí* dreams three times that water exists but he doesn't know where. He sends away a dove which finds water in the other world, called *Orré*. After another dream *Karagabí* sends the *tominejo* bird [hummingbird; *Trochilidae*] to search for water. Variants of the myth, recorded by Santa Teresa, state that *Karagabí* himself changes into a bird in order to look for water. Among the Chamí it is said that *Karagabí* has a "boy as servant in the house," who runs the errand (RD). The Emberá of the Baudó River believe that the god sends "his people" (Pa). In the version published above (I), *Karagabí* turns into a louse, fish and nutria when exploring the aquatic interior of the *Jenené* tree. Among the northern Emberá, a hummingbird or a *periquito* (green parrot) is dispatched (N, T).

These creatures, however, are not animals in a physical and visible sense. They are different beings whose characteristics are described through their names. Karagabí's dove is not a bird but a concept, an essence, described as *truatrua*, read as, "the double-world." Through its contribution to the very process of creation, as a messenger between two worlds (*trua*), this essence is transformed by Karagabí into a physical being, in the shape of a bird, or what we see as a *truatrua* dove. It must therefore be kept in mind that all the assistants of the god, referred to as animals in the myth, still find themselves in a state essentially similar to that of humans. In the ongoing creation of cosmos, however, both humans and animals are amorphous beings with specific differences ascribed to them through their names. It is these "essences," gifted with different capacities and distinctive features, that run the errands of the Creator in the myth, not the physical creatures we are able to perceive.

The *tominejo* bird finds the water enclosed in a huge rock. The cavity, full of crystal-clear water, is closed with a door of stone; the water is seething with fish (S). However, in most versions the water is located in the interior of an enormous tree, called *jenené*, provided with an invisible gate (S,B,Nd), or to a place deep below the tree which can only be reached by way of a stairway (PC).

The water is said to exist at the foot of the tree or in its roots but sometimes it is said to originate from above its crown (Cn). *Jeserá*, the guardian of water, is seen to descend from the head of the tree, carrying a calabash full of water (Pa).

The *jenené* tree is specified in Spanish as the *palosanto* or the *lana* tree (*Pseudobombax*), characterized by a very bulky trunk (Pa). The palosanto, called *mo* (*moi*) by the Emberá, plays a prominent role in their cosmology. Sever, Karagabí's son, constructs his canoe from its wood and stores his magic arrows in the roots of the *jenené*, using it as his hiding-place during his war against the Kuna Indians (Nociones 1929:97-98). More rarely, the mythic *jenené* tree is identified with a variety of tree which is referred to by the same name, *jenené*.

The Emberá of the Pasutó River, an affluent of the Docampadó River, showed a large piece of petrified wood to Nordenskiöld in 1927 which they claimed was from the mythic *jenené* tree (1928:131) and which they blankly refused to trade to the Swedish anthropologist. On the other hand, they presented him with a pair of stone axes, said to have been used by Karagabí's people at the cutting of the *jenené* tree; the axes had been unearthed when their house was built.

The "owner" and jealous guardian of the cosmic water, the female being

called *Jeserá* (*Gentserá*), sometimes appears in the guise of the conga ant or is transformed into a conga as punishment for her greediness. The messenger of Karagabí detects *Jeserá* when she is bathing inside the watery tree (S). After her bath, she emerges surrounded by *umpé* fishes (B). The hummingbird sees *Jeserá* when she passes through the invisible gate of the *jenené* and flies inside to observe the woman bathing and fishing. When *Jeserá* opens up the tree to step out again, the bird sneaks out and flies back to Karagabí with the news (B).

Karagabí asks *Jeserá* repeatedly for access to water but is stubbornly refused. He thus seizes her by her waist and squeezes her almost to death by splitting her into two halves, "she was almost divided in the middle, her thorax is only united to her stomach with a thin thread" (Pi).

When Karagabí has uncovered the source of the water and created the conga ant (*jeserá*) by means of squeezing the *jeserá* "essence," he sets about cutting the *jenené* tree. His assistants are described as his "people" (Nd,W,T) or his "workers," *peones*, (S) but it is obvious that "people" here is synonymous with "animals" (Pa); "in those times, a lot of birds were men, . . . in those times, the animals were people" (Nd,W). The essential idea is here that in those "pre-physical" times, animals and men were identical to each other, only existing as amorphous manifestations of the essence and divine intention of Karagabí, the creator. Different "animals" and "people" are to be interpreted as specified concretizations of his divine intention.

Among Karagabí's assistants are mentioned the spider monkey, the capuchin monkey, the howler monkey, the woodpecker, the squirrel, the carricerito (*chidima*), the cosumbí, the coturo, the michichí (Pa,I), i.e. "every animal that roams above, that climbs trees" (I). In one variant of the myth, the woodpecker (*zorré*) alone carries out the whole task (PC); in another, the tree is felled by eight squirrels (RD).

In order to cut down the *jenené*, Karagabí manufactures axes of stone (S) or of iron, which he sharpens (B). Sometimes, the "animals" make the axes themselves (Pa). In one version, Karagabí's axes of iron are ineffective; only when replaced with axes of iron mixed with steel can the task be accomplished successfully (N). In northern Chocó the bill of the woodpecker cuts the tree, among the Emberá-Chamí the teeth of the animals (Cn).

The felling takes time and is thwarted by different obstacles. The work done during the day is mysteriously brought to nothing during the night; the next day the tree is found intact. Sometimes, Karagabí solves the problem by rubbing his hands to create an intense light, making nocturnal work possible (PC,S). In this case, the task of cutting is fulfilled on the third day (S). In

other versions, the frog willingly participates in the work by day but, when night comes, heals the tree again by licking it. Karagabí discovers the fraud and punishes the frog by treading on it and thus creates the frog (Nd). In the Docampadó version, the frog heals the tree by laying its hands upon it (Nd). In Baudó, the frog is replaced by the toad (Pa). Among the Emberá-Katío, nine months of cutting are in vain, until Karagabí creates his nocturnal light, by making four huge candles of metal and placing them around the *jenené* tree. In another version from the same region, the work goes on for nine months but here the main obstacle, besides that of ineffective axes, is the wilful *jeserá* female. Only when Karagabí has squeezed her to death and she has revived as an ant, can the tree be cut, an episode which is usually related to the discovery of the source of water (RD). Among the Emberá-Chamí as well as in the Atrato basin, the task requires eight days for completion (RD,I), in western Chocó it is performed in four days (Nd,Pa).

When the tree finally falls it gets stuck in some vines half-way down to the ground and "the water was not to be seen until it had fallen altogether" (B). This outcome recurs in almost all versions and is evidently of importance for the central meaning of the myth. The impeding vine is called *chocho* or *pata de vaca* in local Spanish (Pa); its Emberá name in Baudó is *yarré dumé* (Pa) while my informant on the Atrato called it *begurú kaú* or *chocho* in Spanish. Nordenskiöld has only the Emberá name: *migurú* (W). Karagabí thus engages his assistants to set the tree free from the impeding vine but will only choose an animal that is quick and agile enough to escape from the falling tree and the rushing water (B). To test their ability, they must drop a fruit from the crown of the tree and then rush down to reach the ground before the fruit or, in some cases, to reach the ground at the same time (N, B).

Usually an unidentified fruit is thrown down; in one case it is a stone (Pa) while my informant in the version above speaks about "pelotas" (balls), which refer to small balls of clay, the materia prima of man in the Creation.

Several animals try and fail the test, including black spider monkey (*yerré*), red howler monkey (*zrua*), capuchin monkey (*amisurrá*), and squirrel (S); the Chamí version adds jaguar, bear, sloth, and fox (Pi). Usually, it is the *chidima* (carricerito, calenturita), a small squirrel, that passes the test and makes the tree fall by cutting the vine (Pa, I, S, B, Ca). In the Baudó area the animals are, in turn, squirrel, black spider monkey, red howler, and the cotudo monkey; here Karagabí has the woodpecker cut partially through the vine before letting the quadrupeds try (Pa). In northern Chocó, where nothing is mentioned about impeding vines, the whole task is accomplished by the woodpecker; nor is there any vine in the Chamí version

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where eight squirrels finally fell the tree (RD). In the version recorded by Nordenskiöld only birds are mentioned. The toucan fails and so does the green parrot, but the *guacamayo* manages to cut the liana with its strong beak (W).

In most versions the vine is cut with the teeth though the Atrato version (I) says it was done with a machete (cutlass). The animal that executes the cutting manages to escape unharmed except for the eight squirrels whose nose rings burst when the tree falls (RD).

In its fall, the *Jenené* tree is transformed into water: the sea originates from its huge interior, the rivers from its branches, the brooks and springs from its shoots (S), the tarns from its leaves (Ca). The version reproduced above (I) adds an interesting piece of information which is not given elsewhere: the crown of the tree and the vine remained in the sky, giving rise to the wind and the rain of the world.

The reason why the ant woman is disinclined to share her water with humans -- she has after all given water to Karagabí once -- is only revealed in the version from the Emberá-Chamí published by Pinto. This version states that "Gentserá or Jeserá enclosed the water so as to punish some fishermen who refused to give her some fish" (Pinto, 1978:155). This, seemingly cryptic explanation for the stinginess of Jentserá is, however, a statement of central importance which reveals the true meaning and nature of this myth for the Emberá listener. The reasoning behind the structure and message of the myth of the *Jenené* tree lies embedded in the principles of Emberá ontology and cosmology.

The *Jenené* myth supplies a link between riverine man and the anthropomorphic river, inherently bound together by a physiological feature -- the oral male genital -- which is not "natural" for any of them. There are two aspects of interest to be considered here: the relation between the giant tree and the survival of mankind, on the one hand, and the transformative power of the tree to become water, on the other. In this myth, supposedly about the origin of the river, we are actually told how to consider the nature of the river as a metamorphosis of the giant mythic snake. Both in the name for the cosmic tree, *jenené*, and in the name for its "master," the harsh ant woman, *jentserá*, we meet the word for the water boa, *je*. The twofold *ne* in *je-ne-né* refers to the Emberá word for describing the "essence" of any concept or matter, expressing a binary nature which is in fact very distinctive for the water boa, both in the mythical world and in the morphology of the actual species, as I will later explain. The *jenené* tree holds the twofold essence of the mythical giant *je* snake, transformed into water when "slain"

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by Karagabí, the creator. As I have already shown, this theme is repeated in other Emberá myths, but then with the *je* water boa as victim and progenitor of water.



# 10

## THE PEOPLE OF THE WATER SNAKE

The interference of the *je* snake in man's world is the strange and contradictory context of antagonistic confrontation and yet fruitful interaction with humans. Though people are devoured by the ophidian river, they travel within its body to experience the aquatic realm of below and then return safely to our world. The openings of *je*, both mouth and anus, are entrances to the world of the river and to the interior of its huge body. In his mythical riverine quest, Ventura reaches the source of the subterranean river where he meets a giant snake which is said to serve as a bridge across a marsh and which opens its anus to swallow the traveller (Pardo 1984:184). Humans in Emberá myths fall victims to the gluttony of the giant *je* at the same time as they benefit by it and share in its capacity for metamorphosis and cosmic communication.

*Je* also has a sexual attachment to humans; this is described in myths about women who have sexual intercourse with snakes which turn into men at night. In the daytime the woman hides her ophidian lover under a heap of firewood until her family discovers the snake and kills it, whereupon the woman becomes mute (Loteró Villa 1977:36-37). The Emberá are said to compare the contractive movements of the *jepá* boa with the sexual act and the word for the traditional puberty ritual for girls, *jemené* or *jemedé*, is also derived from *je*. During the festive presentation of the pubescent girl to the community, the women perform a ritual dance whose movements and imagery have an unmistakable similarity to the *jepá* snake and its behaviour. Designated *je-me-de* ("boa-penis-house"), the ritual marks the new sexual status of the young woman. A relationship between the mythical *je* water snake of the river world and the snake-like dance of the women inside the house is therefore highly probable. The visible link in this ritualized moment of human fertility between the female dancers on the house floor and the river world below is the *domé* stairway, the "river penis" which rises onto the house from within the mouth of the cosmic snake. As already mentioned, this is one of the occasions when the magical nature of the *domé* stairway presents itself. The conclusive fact, however, is that the Emberá implicitly

claim that this associative metaphor is repeated on man's body by means of his *kiramé* tongue. This claim, in conjunction with the presence of the mythical *je* snake in the *jemedé* ritual, suggests that man literally identifies himself with the *je* snake. Pieces of ethnographic evidence support this conclusion.

To begin with, myth explicitly states that the Emberá are sprung from water. In primeval times Karagabí produced a drop of water which he covered with a calabash; upon his lifting it, the first Emberá human was born. In another narrative Karagabí is himself forced to change into water to escape from his enemy, Tutruiká (Alzate 1987:170; Santa Teresa 1924:4,14; Betania 1964:46,56).

Besides being created from a drop of water, the Emberá state through their mythological discourse that they are born out of the river. The custom of women giving birth at the river or even into its waters is a reminder of the origins of humankind. Formerly, the woman who was to deliver her child even submerged herself completely into the water with her assisting midwives (Palacios de la Vega 1955:20), a measure believed to give strength to the newborn child (Lotero Villa 1977:51).

The relationship with water and man's riverine origin is confirmed by the Emberá term for "to be born," *toi* (*toya*), which is derived from the word for river, *to* (*do*). The belief in man's transformation from water brings him closer to the mythical *je* snake which shares this power of metamorphosis. Actually, Emberá ideas about human nature argue explicitly for such an identification between man and the mythical water snake.

The Emberá of today do not literally declare that they are related to *je* or *jepá* but a comprehensive examination of historical information, mythological inferences, and linguistic evidence points to the fact that they do -- or did.

The preparations for the shamanistic invocations demand that ritual objects as well as the bodies of the participants should be painted with snake patterns. A zigzag pattern of *kipará* is painted, consisting of three parallel lines, the two parallel spaces of which are occupied with a series of dots referred to as *damámbu*, roughly "where the snake is." Another pattern which is commonly painted on ritual objects of balsa and bark cloth depicts a series of hour-glass shaped pairs of triangles which is also described and reproduced as the characteristic markings of the *jepá* boa. Among the Emberá Katío of the San Jorge and Tarazá Rivers in the borderland between the Departments of Córdoba and Antioquia, the *damámbu* is actually rendered as a "boa pattern." This pattern has been described as "double lines with rows of dots in between" which is painted around the arms and ankles

(Dahl 1940:42), or on the face: "from the wings of the nose backwards there are two double cross strokes with a dotted pattern in between -- jepá, the markings of the boa snake" (Dahl 1939:184).

The Emberá do not refer directly to themselves as "boa people," nor does their actual naming system reveal anything like a possible relationship with the mythical *je*. Nevertheless, circumstantial evidence in connection with traditional naming custom suggests otherwise. Among the Emberá Katío of the borderlands between the Departments of Chocó, Antioquia, and Córdoba exists a predominant family name which is both common and well-known, pronounced *Domikó*. This is a surname of very high esteem, "a surname of what could be expressed as the Catía aristocracy" (Santa Teresa 1924:18).<sup>9</sup> The Swedish naturalist Georg Dahl, who spent more than two years (1937-1939) with Domikó family members living on the Tarazá (Cauca River) and the Uré (San Jorge River), argues for the existence of a clan-like organisation among these Emberá groups. They were said to have been structured into an endogamous pentad of intermarrying patrilines where Domikó entered as one of five "clans," designated by their respective surnames: Zápia, Casamá, Juní, Majoré -- and Domikó (Dahl 1940:81-82).

Dahl claims that each one of these five patrilines with whom he was acquainted was designated by a specific totemic animal and that the boa snake was considered to be the totem of the Domikó family. The clan concept is here interpreted by Dahl as an "association or a group of men and women who consider themselves to stand in a kind of mystic relationship to a certain animal, for example, a boa snake (*domicó*), a kingfisher (*zápia*), a hawk (*casamá*)" (*ibid.*, 80). Those Indians who have the boa snake as totem must not kill or hurt boas but are permitted to kill the totemic animals of other family groups, just as other groups are allowed to kill the boa, but not their own totem. Dahl writes that "thus, the *domicó* Indian who would kill a boa snake, would be regarded and treated by the other members of the group as a fratricide or another criminal of the worst kind. Strange to say, however, the Indians have nothing to object to a member of another totem killing their 'relative,' even though they do not wish to be present when it occurs. If, for instance, a *domicó* Indian has got a wife from the *zápia* group, there is nothing to prevent her from killing a boa stealing fowl but if her husband or son does the same, he will immediately be ostracized" (*ibid.*, 81). As Dahl makes clear, the "totemic animal" does not lend its name to its "clan," which is recognized by another name, and yet, interestingly enough, he remarks that the name for boa, *jepá*, actually exists as the "collective denomination for -- not the group in its totality but its core, i.e., those men who have

passed certain trials of manhood, and [the name] may in this meaning not be used by others than the initiated ones" (ibid., 81). It is not clear whether Dahl's remarks refer only to the Domikó family group or if this *jepá* society is a larger association which comprises initiated men from different groups among the Emberá Katío visited. His information on "totems" and "clans" is unique among Emberá-speaking people and must for this reason be dealt with critically. Nevertheless, Dahl's description of the boa snake as the "totemic animal" of the most renowned family group, classified through its *Domikó* surname, is intriguing in view of other supportive evidence.

Pinto has tried to interpret the meaning of the *Domikó* name and derives it from the term for the small *dominijó* or, in Spanish, *chorlito* bird, and the verb *koi*, "to eat," which renders the meaning, "he who eats chorlito." His inquiries about the origin of this name among the Indians were futile but the account of his attempts is worth quoting: "Having asked several times for its import we could only obtain that one of the eldest told us that their ancestors lived in a place called Domí, and that their surname comes from this" (Pinto 1978:399).

The fact that the informant interpreted the name as *domi-ko* is a crucial piece of information for understanding underlying ideas of meaning. The concept *domi* is a very specific "place of origin," identical to the *domé* of which the stairway of the house is one concrete manifestation. However, the matter associated with "eating" (*ko*) is neither a bird nor the *domé* stairway but the *do-me* concept, literally and yet inadequately translated as "river penis." *Do-mi-ko* as "river-penis-eating" is an awkward translation of an intrinsic component of native thought but it constitutes a first step towards understanding the true central meaning of this strange sexual image. The bearers of the *domi-ko* family name are the people of *domé*, the "stairway of the house" and, by analogy, of *kiramé*, the tongue. As *domikó*, "river-penis-eating," man holds the river's penis in his mouth -- *kiramé* as *domé*. This same context appears as a central motif in Emberá myths where sinister females are described as avid eaters of the male genitals. As will be examined in the chapters to come, the two seemingly disparate images of female penis-eaters and of man holding the male genital in his mouth merge into one essential context which is embedded in the mythical metaphor of the ophidian river and/or the *je* cosmic snake. The sexual implications of these images might explain the unwillingness of the Indians to specify the meaning of their *domikó* identity to strangers even though they actually hinted at it to the inquisitive priest.

Setting out from native principles of conceptualization, we see that humans are also shown to possess physical features which unite them to the mythical

snake. The document from 1669 which describes the ornaments and dress of the Emberá mentions that their loincloth was made from the bark of a tree. The loincloth which is nowadays being replaced by cotton shorts is called *andeá* and is made of cotton cloth, usually blue, red or yellow, which is bought in shops in Quibdó or other local villages. Although commercial cotton cloth has been used among the Emberá from the 18th century onwards, the traditional *andeá* of barkcloth, made from the outermost annual ring of the *huépuru* tree (*damagua*; *Poulsenia armata* (Miq.) Standl.), was occasionally used in remote areas of the Chocó in the first decades of this century. The Nordenskiöld collection from 1927, now in the Ethnographical Museum of Göteborg, includes such a loincloth which was acquired from the Docordó River on the Emberá-Wounaan border.

The modern local Spanish term for the barkcloth and for the *huépuru* tree, *damagua*, recurs in the document from 1669 in the form *damajagua*. As *damajagua* is explicitly described as an Emberá gloss, we are entitled to interpret *damajagua* as *dama-kakua*, literally meaning "snake-body." This identification is supported by the variant pronunciation of *kakua* which actually occurs as the term for the bark cloth tree in the Darién area (Duke 1970:362). Moreover, in a myth about the experiences of an Emberá traveller in the world beyond, which I recorded on the upper Atrato in 1990, the *damakakua* loincloth is said to be transformed into a snake. The same informant also confirmed that *damagua* was *damá* or snake itself. The loincloth is thus worn as visible and manifest evidence of man's ophidian nature and origin.

Just as man has features which associate him with the *je* snake, certain morphological characteristics of the boa distinguish it from other snakes and bring it closer to man. In addition to the important fact that species of the Boidae family are viviparous, they have also retained many primitive features such as remnants of a pelvis and a rudimentary thigh-bone. The small, claw-like vestiges of the hind legs are visible on both sides of the base of the tail. Besides these external, human-like physical features there is an internal organ which links the boa with man. Unlike other specimens of the ophidian order, species of the Boidae family have two well developed lungs, a fact which is of conclusive importance for the adherents of Emberá ontology. The Emberá idiom intimates that the foundation of this belief is hidden in the domain of the human body itself.

# 11

## THE ROUTE TO THE UNIVERSE

A metamorphic triad of man, the river, and the *je* water snake permeates Emberá thinking. The relationship between the riverine landscape and the human face is confirmed by the *kiramé-domé* metaphor but the sexual imagery behind this concept is complex and cognitively concealed. Why do the Emberá claim that the river has a male genital which is repeated in man's face as his *kiramé* tongue, as his "facial penis"? This strange association suggests that the Emberá encode in the human face a model of nature that is not a mere representation of the river and its perceptible relation to man. In myth humans are described as entering the mouth of the river to experience the aquatic world of below. With his metaphorical idiom the Emberá speaker directs us to submerge ourselves into our own body to share that experience - - intimating that the entrance is through man's own toothed mouth.

The common Emberá term for "mouth," *itae*, does not refer to the mouth cavity but to the lips, which as "junction of the lips" (*i-tae*) delimit the oral opening. On the other hand, the Emberá present an amazing number of words to describe the human throat; in his lexicon Pinto (1974) enumerates *obuburrúa*, *okopana*, *osorro*, *okarra*, and *ochirú*. One obvious feature in common is that all these terms begin with an "o" but, for reasons I will later explain, if this letter is disregarded, the meaning of each term is easily recognized. What is more, taken as a whole, these terms convey, each in its own way, a semantic message about the inherent nature of the throat itself.

The first term, *o-buburrúa*, which is used to describe the upper part of the throat, is a descriptive word, meaning "wrinkle." In the second term, *o-ko-pana*, the first part (*oko*) refers to a cosmological context shared by the *okú* blowgun,<sup>10</sup> while *pana* is the word for "bridge." *Osorró* is presumably connected with a concept that recurs in the mythical character of the *ochorró* lizard as well as with terms referring to "heart" and "lung" (*so*). The fourth term for "throat," *o-karrá*, refers to *karrá*, the Emberá term for "root," as in *bakurú karrá*, "tree root."

The final gloss, *o-chirú*, contains an interesting concept, *chirú*, that appears in many different contexts in Emberá culture and idiom. It has a

basic meaning of "tube" or "cavity" but, judging from the prominent role it plays in Emberá cosmology, in mythological accounts and in the ritual context of daily life, the term may have far wider and richer symbolic signification.

*Chirú* (*sirú*) has three different meanings according to Pinto (1974:202), "conch," "carrizo reed," and "cavity, hollow space." The word *chirú* is similar and sometimes analogous to *sioro* (*chogorró*) which is the Emberá term for *guadua* (*Bambusa arundinacea* Willd.). The *chirú/sioro* reeds are used for making wind instruments among both the Emberá and the Wounaan. From the *guadua* reed the shaman makes a "trumpet" that is used for calling the spirits during his seances (Pardo 1987:57). The *carrizo* reed is the raw material for the endblown flute with six finger-holes that today is played chiefly for entertainment. Formerly the reed was also used for the ritual *chirú* flute that was played during puberty rites and in other ritual contexts. This flute is made from a section of *carrizo* reed whose lower end is closed naturally through the septum. The flute is played in a set of four to six players who stand facing close to each other with the lower ends of the flutes crossing each other towards the floor. The flutes or tubes are of different lengths and each player produces a sequence of two tones, the pitch of which is proportional to the size of his flute. The blowing is accompanied by the rhythmic stamping of the players' feet as they circulate slowly around the axis formed by the crossed flutes. A similar instrument, called *churo* by the Wounaan and made of *guadua*, is used exclusively for "calling Ewandama" during the Wounaan agricultural ceremonies (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1963:177-178). The instrument may be similar to the trumpet referred to by Pardo from the Emberá on the Baudó. The term *sirú* is also recognized in the native name of a wind instrument played by the Emberá/Chamí of the upper Andágueda as well as in western Risaralda. It is called *pursiru* and is made from the *yarumo* tree (Vasco 1985:60,76). The Spanish term for this instrument is *fututo* and it is mentioned under this name as native to the Emberá during the colonial period.

Another wind instrument of ritual importance which is widespread throughout northwestern South America, far outside the Chocó Department and Emberá habitat, is the conch trumpet, made from the shell of the gigantic sea mollusc, *Strombus galeatus*. Known as *kan-chirú*, it is still included in the obligatory paraphernalia of the Emberá shamans and sounded to call the spirits before and during the seances.

Ethnographic data convincingly demonstrate that, for the Emberá (as well as for the Wounaan) the *chirú* concept confers magical qualities to objects

and phenomena which are related to blowing and to water. This assumption is primarily confirmed by the conspicuous role played by acts of blowing and by water in Emberá mythology. An illustrative case is an episode in the widespread myth which relates the deeds of Jerupotouarra, born out of the calf, knee or foot, alternatively, of his androgynous progenitor. In order to reach the moon to avenge the killing of his mother, this sinister character constructs a "ladder" made of guadua which he makes grow up into the sky just by calling out, "Grow, grow!" In another version of the same myth, Jerupotouarra puts a guadua stalk in a pot of water to make it grow to astronomic heights for the same purpose (Vasco 1978:424).

In a myth recorded by Santa Teresa and Betania (1924:24; 1964:13-14), a similar climbing implement used by Karagabí to reach his celestial abode is described as a "crystal ladder," a paraphrase for water. Besides the ethnographical use of the guadua trunk split in half as a plain but functional aqueduct for bringing clean water to the dwelling, the trunk of live guadua grass contains a great quantity of fresh, drinkable water. With its water-filled sections separated by septums, guadua grass may very well be considered as a true "water stairway" and magic source of water.

In several myths both the *chirú* flute and the *kanchirú* conch trumpet are imbued with magical attributes which are also related to the abundance of water and, not least, to water monsters. In a myth told by the Emberá of the Tatamá River, Porre, the monstrous water snake of gold, is made to grow by the shaman's blowing of the conch trumpet (Cayón, quoted by Pinto 1978:266). Jerupotouarra cuts and plays a carrizo flute to attract *je*, the water monster, from the underworld. During his visit to the river world, Ventura can hear but not see the inhabitants play the carrizo flute (Pardo 1984:179). Ventura's experience reveals the true character of the *chirú*, as its assumed aquatic nature here merges with the water which is the only existing matter of the underworld; *chirú* becomes water as do other beings and phenomena living in the world below in the same way as guadua turns into "crystal" water when raised up in the sky which, for the Emberá, is nothing but the continuation of the water universe that surrounds mankind.

Sometimes the mythical guadua assumes a zoomorphic nature and shape, such as the *sierpe-guadua* monster of gigantic size that is challenged by the powerful shaman *Naribamia* in a myth recorded by Pardo among the Emberá of the upper Baudó River (Pardo 1984:173). By this mythological precept the *chirú* concept enters into the vital context of aquatic metamorphosis which is directed by the *je* water snake, here presenting itself in the semblance of an ophidian guadua being.

To judge from these examples, the concept of *chirú/sirú* entails magical



qualities that are transferred to objects and phenomena referred to by that term. From this conclusion follows that the Emberá name for the human throat, *o-chirú*, indicates a similar magical relationship with water and aquatic communication, which makes it a term with a multifarious meaning that goes beyond that of a mere morphological description of the "tube-like" form of the throat.

Word compounds beginning with the letter "o" in the Emberá language are not restricted to terms for "throat" but appear in many different contexts and meanings. As a matter of fact, *o* itself constitutes a concept which is fundamental to the Emberá and to their conception of the universe. *O* signifies "road" or "way" and appears in that sense in a great number of composite words, such as *ojipa* ("straight road"), *okachirúa* ("dangerous road"), *okida* ("roadside" or literally, "tooth of the road") and in a word compound already mentioned, *otae* ("fork"). There will be many reasons to return to this concept in the text; here it suffices to say that the application of this meaning to the different words for "throat," all beginning with *o*, makes way for a far-reaching interpretation of the symbolical nature of the human organ that houses the tongue or, in terms of the Emberá metaphorical frames of reference, shelters "the penis of the river."

Consequently, *ochirú* becomes "*chirú* of the way," truly a suggestive term when juxtaposed to the metaphorical nature of the human face that was suggested earlier. The evident magical character of the *chirú* concept as a water-generating phenomenon with a tube-like appearance that conjures up the capacity to mediate and communicate is here reinforced by adding the *o* morpheme to it. In combination, these two notions merge into a single significant concept which can be described as a "water way," the aquatic route that moves and communicates on a cosmic level of ongoing metamorphosis, considered as *ochirú* by the Emberá with a particular reference to the human throat.

The cosmic nature of the human throat is emphasized by the synonymous *okarrá*. This term is suggestive of a similar concept that has already been remarked: *dokarrá*, translated as "the roots of the river." *Dokarrá* appears frequently in Emberá mythology and is described as the entrance to the subterranean world which the mythical travellers reach and enter in their cosmic journey on the river and into the sea to a land beyond and below. A tale from Baudó, published by Pardo (1984:211), refers to the mythical war between the Emberá and their *jurá* enemies, during which the latter are persecuted by the Emberá on their journey from the Baudó River northward along the Pacific coast to the Sambú River in the Darién region. Somewhere

in the neighbourhood of the Sambú River the Emberá travellers get lost until they finally end up in the *dokarrá* world where they are received by friendly, humanlike -- but mutilated -- beings.

In another myth which centres around a popular motif in Emberá mythology -- the war with the anthropofagous Burumiá of the Bojayá River and the Burumiá's final annihilation -- the Emberá heroes undertake a long journey downriver all the way to the extreme end of the sea. There, they enter the underworld to experience adventures similar to those told in the story of the *jurá* war. In a version of the same myth about the Burumiá which I recorded from among the Emberá of the Bebaramá River in 1975, this mythical extreme of the sea and gate to the underworld was described to me as *dokarrá*.

On the assumption that there is a correspondence between the river (*do*) and the human throat, which the Emberá regard as one and the same representation of the cosmic water-way that flows through the universe, an analogous relation can be expected to reign between *dokarrá* and *okarrá*, in their joint meaning of "root." *Dokarrá* refers to the cosmological river or sea (which the Emberá actually consider as a huge river) while *okarrá* refers to the same but anthropomorphic phenomenon, specified as "the roots of the throat." The lips and teeth of the human face constitute the other extreme of this cosmic way that the Emberá presumably find is represented by the human throat.

Within the frame of the human body, an imaginary cosmological "route" starts from the riverside mouth, *dokidá*, "the teeth of the river," and runs down the throat, *ochirú*, "the tube of the way," to its end, *okarrá*, "the roots of the way." This last point is presumably the "gate" which communicates with the chest. Although the destination of the *ochirú* route seems puzzling, I maintain that the symbolic role of the human chest is suggested indirectly in mythology which tells us that *dokarrá*, the mythological counterpart of anthropomorphic *okarrá*, actually constitutes the entrance to the underworld or to the universe itself, called *drua* (*trua*) by the Emberá. If the Emberá state that the *dokarrá* route leads to the *drua* universe of below, so too must the analogous anthropomorphic *okarrá* in the human chest. This vital analogy is precisely what is formulated in the intrinsic interplay between myth and idiom.

In Emberá thought, man's chest is a representation of the world. This idea constitutes a basic principle in the Emberá perception of the universe and it is confirmed linguistically by the two separate meanings of *drua*: "universe" and "chest." By means of the *dokarrá/okarrá* analogue the human chest becomes the metaphorical abode of the Emberá universe and the throat is the

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way to get there.

If the Emberá indeed maintain that man wears the universe within himself and that his own constitution is a map and guide for us to understand how to get to this world, the nature and range of this "microcosmos" must be identified, as must its relationship to man himself. Man as a representation of cosmos seems to depict an anthropomorphic world view -- or do the Emberá simply use the human body as an instructive tool to demonstrate the cosmic principles that conduct the relationship between man and his riverine world? In either case, the conception of "man as cosmos" appears to create a disquieting paradox: man carries his universe inside himself while, at the same time, he is placed outside the cosmos as an external spectator.

The human throat and chest are endowed with a cosmological symbolism that confirms the essential function of the tongue in a wider cosmological context as also witnessed by its ritual relationship to the *domé* stairway of the Emberá house. The Emberá do not only mean that the river is reflected in the human face or that it bears anthropomorphic traits in its configuration. Through the code of the human body, man intends to demonstrate the true nature and cosmological significance of the river. The nose house in man's face and its linkage to the tongue, the "river penis," supplies a clue to understanding the inherent nature of the metaphorical stairway as well as its ritual value in the relation between the river and man. The cosmological depth, in both senses of the word, of the "river penis" which the stairway of the house represents but is unable to make clear, is figuratively and ingeniously encoded and explained in the Emberá terminology for the human face and body. The mouth in man's face becomes the "opening" of the cosmic river which leads down the throat to his pectoral underworld. As a bearer of the metamorphosing *chirú* character, man becomes a living manifestation of the cosmic ophidian waterway which opens its devouring mouth like the fatal whirlpool of the mythic water snake, drawing its victims deep into the *drua* riverine world.

# 12

## HUMAN ECDYSIS AND THE SHAMANISTIC EXPERIENCE

The image of man as a cosmic being who has the power to transform himself into a living, regenerating water being constitutes the basic conspicuous feature of the *jaibaná*, or Emberá shaman, and his ability to contact the spiritual world. Since the Emberá apparently claim that *drua*, the riverine world, is found inside the human chest, then the shamanistic experience of the ecstatic flight must be reconsidered. Drawing from the previous analysis, I suggest that the cosmic relocation of the Emberá shaman into the riverine *drua* world, witnessed in myths and the personal experiences of shamans in dreams and visions, is explained and considered in terms of a journey down the throat inside the body of the person involved, a body by then not personal but cosmic. The contact with the spiritual realm, interpreted as the riverine world below, is not made outside the human body because the destination of this dream walk is within, not without; it takes place inside the *drua* chest of man. Through his ritual song the *jaibaná* establishes contact with the beings of beyond and through his song they manifest themselves to the people taking part in the ritual act. The song becomes a means for the shaman to metamorphose from individual to cosmos, withdrawing from his individual ego to become the world itself; therefore, the ritual singing is expressed by the Emberá as *druai*, "to become the world."

During the ritual, the spectators observe the body of the officiating shaman but his presence is only physical and chimerical. His body is but an empty shell left behind during his absence from this world. Thus, when Ventura is described as being taken away and disappearing into the depths of the river, the narrator is not referring to the visible river below the house. Ventura is being devoured by himself, dragged by an evil force into his own body, disappearing down into the river which by then no longer is his own throat but the cosmic waterway leading to the *drua* world. The visible river in front of his house is the shaman's own bodily waterway but it is no more than a

façade, it is just as empty as the bodily shell left behind by the travelling shaman. In this metamorphosis, his throat becomes *okarrá*, "the root of the way," which fuses into *dokarrá*, the mythic entrance to the subterranean aquatic world. Myth and ritual demonstrate how the Emberá regard the shamanistic experience and the *jaibaná* power to communicate with the world beyond.

As I suggested earlier, the wearing of the *damakakua* loin-cloth reminds the Emberá about their reptile origin and character. More specifically, it emphasizes a property shared with snakes, that of the shedding of skin. Most higher land animals shed their skin, generally as a continuous and gradual process. The shedding of skin among humans is almost imperceptible while snakes and reptiles loose their skin whole in a process of some hours, the skin being worked wrong side out toward the tail, like a glove peeled from a hand. This process runs together with the metaphor of the *damakakua* bark-cloth where the loin-cloth becomes the remainder of the old skin which ophidian humans have shed from their bodies in very much the same way as snakes.

If the Emberá maintain that they have a common origin with the *jepá* mythical boa, they will also possess the magic quality of being able to shed their skin like other reptiles do. According to Cayón (quoted by Vasco 1985:127), one of man's souls goes to heaven after death but passes first through a stream of water which changes its body into a young and clean one. This stream is called *Awandor* or celestial river, derived from *awa-awanu*, or the changing of the skin of the snake. The bond of ecdysis between snake and man is evident in the myth about the *Keyemé*, the huge serpent, which is transformed into a human being when it sheds its skin (Vasco 1985:127). In a myth recorded by Nordenskiöld in 1927, humans are said to have once shared this property: "In the beginning God made the people of wood, but they went to the other world where they do not die. God cut his hand with a knife and he did not wish to continue making men of wood, he shaped them from clay and for that reason people die. They turn to clay. If we had not been made of clay, we would have changed our skin like the snakes and the lobsters" (Wassén 1933:110).

The human ability to shed the skin was lost when the second human race was created out of clay, while the primordial humans created out of wood became immortals in the *drua* riverine world. As the Emberá regard the underworld and its inhabitants as a mirror of our own world, the myth indirectly intimates that the Emberá still maintain a mythical relation to this primordial property of ecdysis. Between these two worlds bonds still exist,

often referred to in Emberá mythology. Ventura remarks that he will return to the river world after his death so as to be united with the children he has begotten with the Mother of the Peccaries. Though humans have by now lost the property of ecdysis demonstrated by their mythical congener, the *jepá* boa, they can still benefit from this knowledge through their mythical relationship with their immortal relatives of the subterranean river world, the *chiaperara* people. In fact, by reading between the lines of mythological and semantic information, it becomes clear that the Emberá claim that they have never lost that faculty because, in the end, they constitute the same *chiaperara* people they meet in mythical time as cosmic beings, in a meeting between mind and matter. The argumentation behind this ethereal identification will be examined in the second part of this book.

The *jaibaná* shamans are the specialists in esoteric matters who know how to evoke and master this potent and yet perilous knowledge in order to undergo transformation and liberate themselves from the bonds of time and space. In their visions and dreams they experience the moment when an ecdysis has befallen cosmic man. But the shedding of skin necessary for human metamorphosis is also imaged and expressed within the frames of rite and ritual behaviour. In the traditional *hemedé zroma* rite performed to celebrate a girl's first menses, the participants are expected to wear new clothing; if they cannot, they dye an old dress with red *kanchí* paint (Nociones 1929:78). Santa Teresa (1924:80) describes the nonagenarian lady, Jaibiarí Bailarín, who was found praying desperately to the Christian God for a new *hampurí* so she could join the *hemedé*. Although a Christian convert, she did not question the impossibility of participating in the ceremony without a new dress. New clothing is also required for the *hemedé tsaké* ceremony for boys as for any ritual context where humans take part in a metamorphic situation. In the preparation of the ceremonial *chicha* beer, the men who chop and bring the firewood or the girl who is in charge of grinding and chewing the maize are also expected to put on new loin-cloths or wrap-around skirts. The magic measures taken by the *jaibaná* to purify a possessed house require new clothing of the participants as well (Nociones 1929:77). Apparently, participation in any of these transitional ritual situations demands a symbolic shedding of the skin, manifested in the replacement of clothing which formerly originated from the "skin" of the "snake body" or *damakakua* tree. By his magic ecdysis, man changes into a nondimensional cosmic being to experience the true world of *drua* and join his *chiaperara* ego, staged in transitional ritual moments such as the *hemedé zroma* or the ceremonial *chicha* chanting.

This symbolic shedding of the skin is also hinted at in daily situations.

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When the weary hunter returns from the forest he always changes to a new, dry loin-cloth as soon as he enters the house. Though this is primarily an obvious hygienic measure it should also be considered in the context of the opposition which prevails between the house and the surrounding forest. By putting on a new loin-cloth, the hunter reenters his "skin" inside the house in imitation of the behaviour of the cosmic travellers in the mythological world.

The *damakakua* metaphor is not, however, restricted to human clothing alone. Similar to the transformative process undergone by participants in transitional rites, but less ostentatiously performed, a metaphoric ecdysis actually takes place twice every night when people go to sleep on their mats of *damakakua* bark cloth. In his dreams, the sleeper is liberated from the *damakakua* mat on which he is resting and falls asleep. By shedding his "snake skin" he leaves his physical cover to set out on his dream walk. His awakening brings him back into his skin on the *damakakua* bed.

By shedding his skin and leaving his body behind, man changes into another body of essential water. Liberated from his skin and physical cover, he becomes one and the same with the cosmic river and sets off on a nondimensional journey into himself. This is vividly described in Emberá mythological accounts. I have already referred to Ventura's odyssey into the depths of the river from which he "awakes" into his bodily shell. In a version of the deeds of Jerupotouarra, recorded from among the Emberá on the Catrú River in Chocó (Niño 1978:410), the transference of the mythical hero and his simultaneous metamorphosis into the zoomorphic riverine world is described in terms which are suggestive of the reptilian way of shedding skin, by being turned inside out. The mythic beings of the aquatic world with whom Jerupotouarra merges in his transformation live with their faces looking inwards instead of outwards as humans do. In the same way, the cosmic traveller turns his eyes inwards to "see" in his mind instead of looking out with his eyes, a process demonstrated by the peeled off skin of the metamorphosed *jepá* water boa.

Sometimes, Jerupotouarra is said to return to our world by "waking up without having fallen asleep beforehand, in the stream of his house," as interpreted by Vasco (1985:128). In fact, the narrator of the myth does not mention the word "awake" or "the stream of his house" but only "his stream," indicating that this stream is the same cosmic river that flows through Jerupotouarra's bodily interior: "he opened his eye and saw that it was the current of his stream" (Vasco 1978:431). This connection is confirmed by an earlier episode in the same version where the hero comes across a river which, however, "was like a body of yours which passed

through him like a stream and it was filled up" (ibid., 428). This "river" is *his* stream out of which Jerupotouarra opens up his eyes and thus returns to this world and his bodily cover. The metamorphosis through this cosmic ecdysis can hardly be expressed in a more elucidative way than in this passage; to open one's eyes becomes synonymous to the "awakening" and thus rejoining one's own bodily cover, the new skin of one's reappearance in the human world.



# 13

## BEESWAX AND METAMORPHOSIS

Every human being in the Emberá world is endowed with the cosmic requirements to experience that other dual reality of existence described in terms of either a subterranean aquatic world or a celestial abode above, but this ability is perceived in an arbitrary and uncontrolled way, either in a state of sleep and dream or when exposed to visions and spells. Though he also lives under the threat of evil forces, the shaman, or *jaibaná*, is a religious specialist who knows how to conjure and master a spiritual contact when it is needed. He owns the means and power to transfer himself to the world beyond and to establish contact with the strange beings and vital forces of that world. This contact is usually made during a nocturnal seance inside the house in a ceremonial setting that he and his assistants have arranged. As I will later describe, the factors of time and space are decisive for making the shamanistic experience possible and successful. Here I will not go into the ethnographic details of the shaman's performance of healing and transpatial communication but focus on the quality of transformation which is a prerequisite for the shaman to establish contact with the supernatural world.

The *jaibaná* shaman is assisted in his cosmic endeavour by supernatural beings with whom he communicates in his dreams and visions. They are known as *jai* and are reproduced in the shaman's ritual paraphernalia such as the small balsa figures he uses or his wooden staff, the upper end of which is usually carved into an anthropomorphic figure, sometimes referred to as the shaman's *jai tsarra*, his chief tutelary genius or *patrón*, "master." In his speech and chant the *jaibaná* addresses his *jai* helpers to make them participate in the ritual for the benefit of the people present.

The ideas of what the *jai* concept really stands for diverge considerably among anthropologists. *Jai* is usually regarded as a kind of "spirit" which is either benevolent or malevolent to man (Pardo 1987:22; Torres de Arauz 1966:103; Caudmont 1956:104), though this is not an expression used by the Emberá themselves. For the Emberá, *jai* has the concrete meaning of "illness" at the same time as it denotes the magic anthropomorphic representations and other ritual objects which frame the shaman's

invocations (Pineda 1986:142). *Jai* also refers to the *familiares*, the ever-present "ancestors" of the world beyond, and to the essence of anything seen or experienced, including humans, animals, plants and objects. In other words, as a Chamí shaman expressed it, "everything has *jai*." Vasco argues that *jai* "is the essence of things, considered as an energy, as something vital," later adding that essence "is conceived of as an energy, consequently as something real and material which can adopt different shapes, i.e., which can transform itself. . . ., when something loses its *jai*, it also loses its fundamental characteristics, those which make it be what it is" (Vasco 1985:11,101,103). *Jai* would then refer to an essence that characterizes its bearer; if one's *jai* is lost, one loses one's identity as well. But what is the logic of a concept that equates illness with the essence that defines character?

We cannot ignore the fact that the Emberá actually state that *jai* represents something which distinguishes any matter created and yet also is the term for "illness." The incompatible significations of the concept, simultaneously negative and positive, seem paradoxical and force us to seek alternative interpretations of meaning. I feel that a fundamental fault lies in the traditional view of *jai* as something related to a *property* ("something which *is*"), rather than to a *faculty* ("something which *can*").

To make my standpoint clear I have to return to the Emberá shaman and his ability to contact the spiritual world. As a rule, the *jaibaná* shaman is unwilling to reveal anything substantial about his experience to strangers. Pardo's experience is typical:

Asking some *jaibanás* about details of their ecstatic experience, they told of sensations like unusual cold or heat, the perception of "a power which enters inside yourself" or that "in the chant, the voice and the music are leaving as if you not were yourself any longer, . . . you are observing like blurred, like white, and little by little it begins to clarify and then there the 'familiar' begin to appear shaped as everything, as animal and as people, all sorts of them make their appearance" (1987:63).

Among the Wounaan, the shaman "places his hand on the staff and sets out 'lejos pensando,' that is to say, goes on a dream journey, as it were" (Wassén 1935:112) and sometimes the office of the *jaibaná* is compared to that of a praying Catholic priest: "The Indians regard the Jaibaná in these functions as a priest. Various of them have assured me that he behaves at the altar of his Jaies 'as a Father saying Mass'" (Santa Teresa 1924:33).

The *jaibaná* shaman has the power to turn away from this world and to

behold the true universe through his visions and dreams. This faculty and process is regarded as a kind of labour; the shaman uses the term *kabai* to express this "work" of communicating with the supernatural world. Besides its sense of "to work" (including physical and manual labour), *kabai* also means "to learn" and "to know." By means of his "work" with the spiritual world, the *jaibaná* acquires his knowledge and insights of man's true existence. But what precisely is it in the shamanistic work that supplies him with this wisdom? A tentative analysis of the *kabai* concept offers a stimulating prospect of interpretation.

For reasons explained below, I assume that *kabai* is made up of two morphemes: *ka* and *bai*. *Bai* is a verb with two different meanings, "to be (exist, live)" and "to descend, to hurl down." *Ka* has a more esoteric significance which sometimes is described as "against" (*contra*) because it usually appears in recognized composite words dealing with antidotes in shamanistic healing, such as *dama-ka*, etc. In his ethnobotanical review of plants used by the Emberá Chamí, Cayón remarks that *ka* as a suffix to animal names appears as *contra*, i.e. against illness while in other cases it has an implicit meaning of "possession" or a "master" (1980:14). To say that *kabai* represents the knowledge of how to handle antidotes and thus how to cure, however, is too rash a conclusion. Pinto translates *ka* as "alike, similar," as an abbreviation of *abarika* or *kiraka* (Pinto 1974:161), i.e. as a phenomenon that resembles or is identical to something else, the nature of which is not revealed by its outer appearance. A plant called *damaka* would then be "identical to *damá*" (snake) and therefore supposedly possess a counteractive effect on the fatal nature of the snake. Even if *kabai* could be read as "to live/be alike," suggesting the metamorphic capacity of the true shaman when he is "working" and thus "knowing," this reading does not make clear the divergent meanings of the verb *bai*. In order to understand why "living" is equivalent to "descending/sliding down" it is necessary to look for a connection between these two separate meanings as this presumably would also shed light on the significance of the *kabai* concept itself.

Turning again to Emberá mythology for a suggestion, I will quote and discuss a portion of a narrative about *Baa*, thunder, in which an Emberá boy, escaping from his Kuna enemies, comes across a house with a man who invites him to eat:

"Do not fear, I am Emberá too. Churi<sup>11</sup>, are you not hungry?"

"Yes man, I am starving to death."

"Man, the dinner is ready soon, I am preparing a *mazamorra* [maize porridge]."

So the boy sat down. In a little while, the old man removed the pot from the fire and tasted its contents.

"Now it is good."

But it was *brea* [beeswax] he was preparing. The old man ate with his spoon. The boy told him:

"Oh, churi, I do not know how to eat that, I will prepare my own food."

"Well, eat then, when we have finished we will play."

The boy roasted his partridge and devoured it without any salt nor plantains. When they finished the old man said:

"Let us play here at the back [of the house]."

They came to a precipice and there was a tree-trunk lying across. The old man sat down on it and asked:

"Churi, am I nice-looking?"

"Yes, you are nice-looking."

"Churi, do I have a fine colour?"

"Yes, you have a fine colour."

"Churi, am I big-nosed?"

"Yes, you are big-nosed."

"Churi, am I thin-lipped?"

"Yes, you are thin-lipped."

"Churi, do I have small and light blue eyes?"

"Yes, you have small and light blue eyes."

"Churi, am I strong-legged?"

"Yes churi, you are strong-legged."

"Churi, is it true that I am handsome, real handsome?"

"Yes churi, you are handsome, real handsome."

At that very moment the old man threw himself on his back down the precipice, he went sliding and he changed into melted beeswax, like boiled beeswax (*brea*).

When he [the boy] after a good while looked, the old man came ascending once again, he came back and sat down. He asked him the same questions again and he threw himself again and he turned into beeswax and he showed up as people [*gente*] once again. The boy by now had calculated the time and when this occurred for the third time, he dashed off running and he kept on running until he got tired" (Pardo 1984:78-80).

The scene describes a being who bears a human appearance and expressly states he is an Emberá. His behaviour is queer to the boy who is invited to eat maize porridge but refuses as it turns out to be beeswax. The man suggests a game which consists of throwing himself on his back down a precipice; while doing so he is transformed into beeswax himself. Climbing up he regains his human aspect. This is repeated three times: by descending he turns into beeswax and by ascending he becomes a human. The vertical

movement becomes an alternating metamorphic faculty of flowing beeswax and climbing human, demonstrated by the acting mythical being himself.

A similar episode is included in one version of the Jerupotouarra mythical quest told by the Emberá Chamí in Risaralda, where the sinister protagonist is described as a "fishing fisherman" who prepares the fish in clear soup claiming that the pieces of beeswax he is putting into the soup are maize. Afterwards he invites Jinopotabar (Jerupotouarra) to his game: sliding down a volcano he changes into a stone which is smashed to pieces when it hits the river at the bottom, but out of the remnants the mysterious being emerges like a fly to take on his human appearance while ascending once again up the volcano (Vasco 1978:428-429).

In the first version quoted above, before hurling himself down the precipice the beeswax being asks the boy to assure him about his perfect human physiology, enumerating all the physical traits that are Emberá ideals of beauty. In this way, the myth stresses the transformable opposition between the human appearance and the beeswax found in the same being; despite being beeswax descending he nevertheless becomes a perfect human when ascending. What is the *raison d'être* of this strange episode and what is the reason of the narrator for including it in a myth which otherwise describes the relationship between the Emberá and thunder? I will try to answer the first question here and defer the second for a discussion of the meaning of thunder in Emberá cosmology in another context.

"Beeswax," or *brea* in local Spanish, is expressed as *kanturrona*, but as the *u* phoneme in this case is usually very weak or almost imperceptible when pronounced, the word normally is perceived as *kantrróna*. I read the word as *ka-n-tru-na* where the *ka* (and an assimilating *n*) concept is followed by *tru*, the term for the cosmic mind, and the suffix *-na*, "before," rendering a significance of *ka-tru-na*, "before *ka*'s cosmic mind." Here, *-na* indicates a metamorphic direction in accordance with the nature of the *ka* faculty: "changing into *ka*'s mind." The beeswax man and his faculty of alternately transforming his nature by moving up and down expresses the very faculty of metamorphosis, confirmed by the very same term for "beeswax," *kantrróna*.

The strange behaviour of the beeswax being is suggestive for an attempt to decipher the verb *kabai*, "to work" and "to know." The separation of this verb into a *ka* concept and the verb *bai* ("to exist" and "to hurl down," respectively) appears now less odd than before. I argue that *ka-bai* refers to *ka sliding down (bai)*. By studying the mythical episode of the beeswax man and his peculiar game it can be understood that the alternating movements of descending and ascending indeed become analogous to "existence,"

explaining to the listener within the frame of myth that existence is related to the faculty of *ka* transformation by "sliding down," *bai*. In fact, the narrator of the myth uses the same Spanish word, "derrumbar," as that given for *bai*, according to Pinto.

Now, he who "works," i.e. undergoes metamorphosis by *ka*-sliding in his *ka-bai* performance, also "knows"; he knows the meaning of and requirements for "existence" as human beings. The *jaibaná* shaman is particularly marked with this faculty, therefore he also knows how to work to know. Indeed, his overall aim of establishing spiritual contact is dependant upon his metamorphic power, his *kabai* work of changing his nature. Once again, Emberá mythology has helped us find an answer by means of an "inexplicable" episode, the "queerness" of which is explained by revealing its purpose.

A wide range of contextual linguistic evidence suggests that the *ka* concept expresses the faculty of metamorphosis which is found in any living being as well as in objects related to and made by man. Though I will repeatedly have occasion to refer to this concept of *ka* metamorphosis in the following chapters, I will here give a few cases of its application in Emberá terminology, first with reference to the processing of food.

The mythic message embedded in the beeswax man's offer of maize porridge, *mazamorra*, which the Emberá visitor finds to be pure beeswax, is perhaps emphasized by the Emberá term for maize gruel and other prepared dishes where maize is the principal ingredient: *beká*, "*ka* of maize." Likewise, fish cooked in clear soup is *betá ká*, "*ka* of fish," while green, grated plantain mixed with cooked fish in clear soup is *patá ká*, "*ka* of plantain," expressing a transformative process involved in cooking and food preparation.

In many other contexts *ka* is associated with acts and phenomena that express a changed condition or a ritual action that brings about such an alteration. I have already mentioned the verb *druai*, "to sing ritually" or perhaps better, "to become the world" (*drua*), as a term for the shaman's act of self-transformation through song; he literally becomes the world during his cosmic transference. A synonym of *druai* is *kari* which, through its *ka* morpheme, expresses the same transformation of the acting individual as the related expression *xari*, "to dance."

Another context where the *ka* faculty manifests itself is in the metamorphosis of night and day as shown in the altered state of the sleeping and dreaming person; in his dreams he becomes his metaphysical alter ego who meets his *familiars* in a silent world beyond time and space. By means of this *ka* faculty the "dream" becomes *ka-mokarai* just as the "sleep"

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becomes *kai-nobei*, *ka-ñā*, *kai-boi* or *kai-buey*.

The *kai* morpheme identified in the words for "sleep" is also recognized in the metamorphic category dealing with a person's state of health, where to "fall ill" is *kayai* and "ill" is *kaya*. Closing the circle of *ka* associations, we return to the concept of "illness" or *jai*. In accordance with Loewen's series of k - x - h variations in the Emberá language (Loewen 1963:362), *jai* may be considered a variant pronunciation of its related *kaya/kayai*, and thus may be included in the same category of the *ka* morpheme from which these latter terms are derived. The *ja/xa/ka* variation occurs frequently among the Emberá; Loewen has documented, for example, *jaise/kaise*, *jarupia/karupia*, *cau/jau* and Pinto *jakua/kakua*, *jaisoa/kaisoa*. The phonetic correlation between *jai* and "sleep" is confirmed in Caudmont's *xai* for "protective spirit" and *xaine* for "sleep" (Caudmont 1956:104-105).

On the basis of the analysis above, I consider *jai* to be derived from a faculty to undergo metamorphosis, described as *ka* by the Emberá, which denotes the nature of cosmic man. *Jai* or *kai* is a manifestation of this *ka* faculty but it is not necessarily a physical or visible manifestation. *Jai* as "illness" is a result of the changeableness contained in the cosmos and human nature as well. A person is molded and recognized by his or her proper *jai* which is lost and replaced by the "*jai* of illness" when a malady arises. To recover his health, man must consequently regain his lost *jai*.

The replacement of the *jai* of illness is suggested in a frequently recorded myth about Karagabí and his unfaithful wife. Karagabí (in some versions the moon) pretends to his unfaithful wife that he is ill so as to be able to catch her in the act of adultery. His body is covered with sores and ulcers and she finds her husband ugly and repugnant. But when she has left, Karagabí removes his *jai* illness, described as a *camisa* (shirt) of ulcers and dresses up in his divine outfit to seek out his wife and expose her. She does not recognize her husband in his radiant appearance and has sex with him. On his return to the house, Karagabí puts on his ulcer shirt again so as not to arouse his wife's suspicion. In terms of the *ka* concept, Karagabí replaces his *jai* *camisa* of illness for another *jai*, that of his own true nature and his proper *jai* identity, which his wife does not recognize as she only knows her husband when he is "dressed" and thus disguised in his *jai* ulcer shirt. The myth shows how Karagabí has made use of his power to metamorphose by changing from one *jai* to another.<sup>12</sup> For the Emberá the open sores of his *camisa* make visible the *ka* faculty that makes the *jai* illness possible, because for the Emberá a sore is *kabú*, "where *ka* is."

In the Emberá world, "illness" seems to imply above all a *faculty* to change from one condition to another, where the state of an ill person is considered

in very much the same way as the state he reaches in his sleep and dream or in his ritual dance and song.

If we consider *jai* in a sense of "an altered condition," this change can manifest itself either as an "illness" or as a transformation of a person's outward form as well as his inner nature. This capacity for changing and appearing in different embodiments exists just as it is shown to exist in the mythological world. The tale of the abducted Ventura describes how man can fall a victim to a kind of multiple personality. As a consequence of his previous conduct, Ventura is taken away by the evil *Kirapauaramiá*, "Green Face," but seems to return the following day: "When, the following day in the early morning, the same Ventura came descending with the fragrant herb of toad in his crown. Nothing of the kind! That person was Francisco Dontá. He arrived at the house and went up, he stayed in the corner. Then Ventura's sister came near. Francisco said to her, 'Go away from here because you stink.' 'This one is not my brother!'" (Pardo 1984:187-8).

At first the narrator points out the identity of the person ("the same Ventura came descending"), only to deny it promptly in the following sentence ("Nothing of the kind! That person was Francisco Dontá"), thus giving the listener to understand that the person is not the one we believe we see. This instructional purpose in the myth is repeated when we are told that Ventura's sister also is mistaken; it turns out that the man is not her brother who she first fancied that she recognized. She reacts only when Dontá speaks to her, saying that she has a nasty smell, because she knows that the spiritual beings from beyond cannot stand the smell of humans. By his reaction to Ventura's sister, Dontá thus reveals his presence within Ventura's body.

While Dontá is inside Ventura's body, Ventura himself is lost. Though we are told that Ventura meanwhile appears far away, at the headwaters of the Atrato river, the myth makes us understand that it is the essence of Ventura or his *jai* which has been abducted by Green Face, not necessarily his body, because Ventura is now dumb, "speaking" without words through his heart. His sister, as other humans would have done, saw him return downriver but as an empty shell in which the *jai* of Francisco Dontá had taken his abode. Ventura is no longer "Ventura" but "Dontá." Later, Ventura, assisted by his deliverer Francisco Dontá, rejoins his bodily ego back in our world.

*Jai* is thus the *ka* faculty which is manifested in a being but not necessarily visible and physically perceived. In the myth above, it is not Dontá's exterior features, his "Ventura mask," that is *jai* but Ventura's inner nature which at that moment has been replaced by Dontá's specific *jai* essence. Ventura as individual has been reduced to his bodily exterior while housing Dontá's



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essence in his "mind." Ventura is then not "Ventura" but "Dontá." Similarly, when humans get ill, their proper *jai* is also replaced with another *jai* which usually cannot be "seen" on the body except when *ka* manifests itself by its *kabú* sores.

When the mythical actor comes across such a *jai*, disguised in a bodily cover, he has good reason to question what he sees, asking himself *who* is actually behind that physical apparition. It is then an intriguing fact that an Emberá in such a situation would actually ask, "*kai?*" which is the correct expression for the interrogative pronoun, "who." I even venture to suggest that this single word, "who," accurately defines the core meaning of the *jai* concept better than any lengthy description could do.

A stranger can only be defined by his anonymous exterior because his inner nature and character remain unknown to us. The Emberá seem to argue that any human being remains a stranger as long as he is solely judged by his bodily apparition. In the same way, a person can become a stranger if his *jai* essence is lost or replaced, if he is "taken away," not physically but mentally, leaving only an empty shell behind. As in the case of the abducted Ventura, though we can discern him with our eyes, we do not know him from his corporeal features, he remains a "who" to us, until we know what his inner nature is, what *jai* is disguised therein. Everyone carries a "who" inside, but the "who" can appear in different forms, including that of the "who of illness."<sup>13</sup>

Sharing a cosmos contained in the human chest, every human being can either receive or become victim of different kinds of occupying *jai*. All created matter in the cosmos possesses a characteristic essence which can also seek its abode in other physical manifestations of this same cosmos. The *jaibaná* shaman might keep the *jai* of a jaguar in his body just as the jaguar can shelter the *jai* of the *jaibaná* inside its spotted cover. The *drua* world in the form of a jaguar need not imply a visible and perceptible animal but rather the essence of a jaguar -- that which makes a jaguar. This jaguar essence can conceal itself inside other physical configurations, including the dynamic body of a *jaibaná*. The *jai* of a jaguar then becomes its own distinctive nature, i.e. that metaphysical "jaguar manifestation" which at a given moment is assumed by the cosmos. Man's *jai* acts in the same way. The *drua* world in a human shape dwells inside man himself but it is not limited to the confines of the human body; it can leave, go astray or be abducted to reappear in the shape of other humans, animals or any thing created in the *drua* world, as was the fate of Ventura's *jai*.

The determining factor behind this cosmic faculty to change and become something else, something hidden beneath a visible cover, seems to be the

concept called *ka* by the Emberá. As a cosmic being, man shares this faculty and is thus able to accommodate a number of specific *jai* manifestations in his body. The distinction between *ka* and *kai* (*jai*) must be emphasized because *ka* is the faculty of metamorphosis while *kai* represents its metaphysical "cover" or "skin" (in Emberá: *e/i*, following Loewen's list of *e-i* phonetic variations), i.e., the variety of specific metaphysical manifestations of this metamorphic faculty which defines the individual character of each species and matter, that which makes a phenomenon what it is more than what it really looks like.

Let us ponder over the Emberá boy and his encounter with the sinister beeswax man again. The myth instructs the listener to consider the fact that what we see as a human being is beeswax as well. *Jai* makes man as *jai* makes beeswax; they are both manifestations of a single cosmic *ka* faculty which allows them to meet and merge beyond those separate and distinctive physical covers we observe with our eyes. The *jai* of a human has a physical cover, a materialisation of its true nature, which distinguishes it from the *jai* of beeswax and other *jai* manifestations. This cover tricks us into believing that we only see a human. The inner *cosmic* essence of created matter remains hidden. The *jai* of a human presents itself as a physical human who, however, not only contains cosmos inside his body but *is* cosmos and therefore also has the power to metamorphose into any being or matter -- inside its physical cover. With reference to the myth of the beeswax man, a human being is truly the "world of metamorphosis," *ka-tru*, while the beeswax is "before the world of *ka*," *ka-tru-na*, thus exemplifying the same principle of cosmic metamorphosis that unites all *jai* manifestations into one single cosmos. Unlike ourselves, the Emberá boy of the true mythic world is able to "see" the change undergone by the beeswax man; participating in a "*kabai* work" he experiences *ka sliding down*, i.e. he *knows* the order of things.

A *jai* in itself cannot change as it is a metaphysical manifestation of an individual being; however, it might appear in other physical forms than its own (and thus be said to undergo a change even if it only means that the *jai* has taken abode in an alien body) as all *jai* appear in a common inner world shared by everyone and everything. It is this cosmic participation which enables the shaman to serve as a "meeting place" for the various *jai* "spirits" or to have his own *jai* seek refuge in other disguises, just as Francisco Dontá did when he presented himself inside Ventura's body or as Ventura's *jai* did when he was compelled to assume the physical features of a white-collared peccary.

Human beings and beeswax as well as Francisco Dontá and Ventura

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constitute separate and specific *jai* expressions within one and the same cosmos; they all bear inside of them the world from which they derive and in which they unite. This seems to be the quintessence of the Emberá notion of the nature and function of the *jai* concept.

The shaman, *jaibaná*, is the one whose assignment and vocation imply this faculty to transform and to be transformed, to leave the shell of physical man behind and to contemplate the true world so as to communicate with the beings upon whom man depends and with whom he identifies himself. The traditional etymological interpretation of the word *jaibaná* is "he who is full of spirits or *jai*" or "he who has the spirits." But above all, the *jaibaná* seems to act as the intermediary of *jai* manifestations, a person who is situated in the crucial borderland between the world of humans and the true world of beyond, found inside the human chest as well as in the riverine world of below. "*Jaibaná*" thus becomes the "bridge of *jai*," from *paná* which Pinto renders as "bridge" (Pinto 1974:190). The *jaibaná* is the human "bridge" between the river world, the intermediate stratum of physical man, and the celestial world above. In his ritual performance the shaman sits on his stool clasping his *duma* staff with his left hand and the rustling bunch of *parara* leaves with his right. His left arm points downward with the *duma* staff steadily resting on the house floor while his right arm strives upward, toward the sky. In this position, connected to the river with his *duma* staff and the sky with his *parara* leaves, the shaman, with the *drua* world in his chest, truly becomes a "bridge" between cosmic strata. The etymology of the word *paná* also seems to support my argument, even suggesting a further dimension which will be discussed later in its proper context.<sup>14</sup> Like Karagabí, any *jaibaná* is able to remove his bodily "shirt" in order to undertake his cosmic journey down into himself and enter the spiritual world, the world of *ka* manifestations and, accordingly, the cosmic essence of man himself. This metamorphosis demonstrates his power to serve as a "bridge" between mind and matter. The *jaibaná* experience becomes a journey to meet the essence of all things and, in the end, a quest to unite with the self as cosmic being, on the one hand, and as a human individual, on the other.

# 14

## THE HOUSE OF MAIZE

The Emberá house (*de*) is generally described as a profane construction which is considered in terms of a functional living-place well adjusted to the Chocó environment. At most, the house is regarded as a stage background for the shamanistic practices and other ritual events that take place on the house floor. Its elegant, harmonious architecture with an open square floor, perforated by four steady piles which support a high, conical and slightly concave roof, is suggestive of similar dwellings from neighbouring regions in northwestern South America where a deep religious symbolism is contained in the construction and function. However, the Emberá house has never been subject to any analysis in those terms. It is significant that our ignorance about the symbolic nature of the human body is repeated in our blindness to the underlying character of the Emberá house, because house and body carry the same message about native ontological beliefs.

There are many different types of houses among modern Emberá (Isacsson 1976:26). Sélimo Huacoriso, legendary shaman and Nordenskiöld's chief informant in 1927, claimed that the house with a round, conical roof was the original type (Nordenskiöld 1928:69). Perhaps his view is confirmed by the name the Emberá use for this type of house, *de ará de*, which literally means, "the true (fine) house." The technical description of the Emberá house as an architectural structure of social space has elsewhere been given (e.g., Wassén 1935; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1960; Stipek 1975; Isacsson 1976) and will not be repeated here. Instead I will focus on the house as a structure of central religious importance for the Emberá, arguing that the house is cosmic in very much the same way as man is seen as cosmos.

According to mythic tradition, Karagabí's daughter, the maize goddess Dabeiba, instructed the Emberá how to make their houses (Pinto 1978:189). In the mythological world, houses are often connected with female beings and, on first sight, the house also has a seemingly female character in comparison with the "male" river. The Emberá female fertility rites performed on the house floor during the *jemené* ritual or the Wounaan female ritual drumming on the vagina-like "drum-canoe" hanging from the

ceiling are contrasted to the male river and its *domé* "penis stairway" leading into the house. It is tempting to stress this sexual contrast between house and river; nevertheless, to do so would be misleading. As I will show, the Emberá see beyond the simplicity of this supposed opposition in their belief system.

On the other hand, the technical terms for various parts of the construction do support the idea of the anthropomorphic nature of the house. The pointed end of the house roof is called *de ború*, "house head," and consists of a conical structure placed on top of the pointed leaf coverage, sometimes referred to as "house hats," originally made of clay and sometimes of balsa wood but nowadays generally replaced with metal or plastic materials. The conical structure, sometimes truncated and provided with a disk, is referred to either as *de jedeko*, "the moon of the house" or simply *epedeko*, "plate." Another type of "house head" is shaped as a human being with face and tiny arms, sometimes also carrying the disk like a "hat" on its head. It is sometimes identified as a representation of Karagabí or the Sun itself, carrying its *sombrero de oro*, "golden hat," as in mythology where the sun is seen as a white man, wearing a large, circular hat of gold (Wassén 1935:135). From a superficial point of view, this anthropomorphic type of "house hat" could indeed be regarded as a "head" of the house, confirmed by its Emberá term, *de ború*. The human nature of the house is supported by the fact that the term for the leaf coverage making up the conical roof is *de enkhará*, read as "the back of the house," while the lower peripheral part of the roof reaching outside the tension ring is described as *de ankida*, "the buttocks of the house." Finally, the whole roof structure is supported by the four steady posts, called *de jerú*, "the legs/feet of the house." These "human" terms do not prove anything by themselves but they provide indications supported by other kinds of information.

The materials of house construction are often those used for other ritual objects as well. The etymology of their Emberá names reveals a magic content related to the ritual value contained in the artifacts themselves.

In Emberá mythology the house and its surroundings are subjected to evil spirits and strange beings; its ties with other worlds from beyond are as evident as its relationship to cosmic man himself.

The magic nature of the house as it appears in myths is also reflected in its architectonic terms. Karagabí's son, Sever, is said to have constructed the first house at the headwaters of the Atrato river. The story goes that the heads or teeth of his Kuna (*jurá*) enemies, killed in battle by Sever, were threaded on a string which the victor hung around his house (Santa Teresa 1924:15). Presumably, the most appropriate place for such trophies would be

the tension ring running round the lower part of the roof. *De jurá*, the Emberá term for "tension ring" (*aro*) seems indeed to confirm this mythic motif, as *de jurá* can be literally translated as "enemy of the house," from *jurá*, "enemy; Kuna Indian."

The magic link between the house and humans is also expressed during transitional stages of the human life cycle. In the puberty ceremony the girl is carried by four men who move around in the house and position the feet of the girl against each one of the four posts. A similar transmission of power is performed during the *jemedé tzaque*, or naming ceremony, when four men carry the child by turns on their backs in procession on the floor and make it cling to each one of the posts of the house (Pinto 1978:38-42). After the death of one of its inhabitants, the house must be purified; when the family has removed the body, the floor of the house is rinsed with boiled water, the runnels of which preferably should follow the direction of the removed body (Santa Teresa 1924:123). The floor is also rinsed with herbaceous water before the shaman's ritual performances when no dogs or other domestic animals are allowed to enter the house.

In spite of the importance ascribed in these rituals to the floor and the living space of humans, the most prominent role in ritual life and mythological situations is given the attic and upper end of the roof. The Emberá distinguish the *inkhá de*, or "bat house," from the *de ará de* type on the basis of the lack of attic construction (and one of the two tension rings) in the *inkhá de*.

The attic of the modern Emberá house corresponds to the space between the lower tension ring and the *de ború* apex. Usually it is completely or partially shut off from people's view with a floor which rests on rafters and is reached via a small *domé* stairway from the living floor below. It is a dark space, aloof from daily activities and mainly used for storing salt and maize as well as vessels and baskets related to maize.

The ritual ties between the attic space and maize are manifested during the *jemedé zroma*, the puberty rituals for girls. When the girl has been presented to the guests, a man ascends to the attic from which he empties a calabash of chicha beer which falls like a shower over the participants below. Then another calabash containing grains of maize is emptied. The same procedure is performed during the naming ceremonies for the one-year-old child (Santa Teresa 1924:82,95).

In the mythological world houses are also the abode of animals, spiritual beings or natural forces such as the thunder. Visitors from this world often find a hiding-place in the attic of these houses of beyond from which they can contemplate their sinister enemies and yet be safe from their anger.

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Myths clearly emphasize a metamorphic opposition between the attic and the living floor below. In narratives about the peccaries in the mythological world, the Mother of the Peccaries protects her human visitor from her ferocious sons by telling him to hide in the attic of the house from where he can contemplate the peccaries without being seen.

The Emberá house and details of the construction of the roof structure are said to appear as constellations on the nocturnal starry sky. The Pleiades are called *de jomia* ("heaps of houses") while Orion's Belt is described as *de kau* ("house beam"). The connection between the sky and the house recurs in the belief that beams of light filtered through the ceiling and reflected in the smoke from the fire are a representation of *euma*, the rainbow (Pardo 1984:32,38). Likewise, stars are called *chindau*, as are the glimmering fireflies which sometimes appear inside the house by night, like stars in the attic sky.

The attic space as a representation of the sky is also confirmed by the Emberá term for "attic," *utarebema*. *Utare* signifies "above" or "up" but also "heaven." The conception of the attic as "heaven," as a sacred space in a cosmological sense, is also confirmed by the concept of *undrebema* which Pinto translates as "God, He of above" (1974:214) and which I consider to be but a variant pronunciation of *utarebema*.

Contextual data supplied by myth, ritual and terminology support the idea that the conical roof structure with the *de ború* head on top is a manifestation of the celestial world where Karagabí lives but also an embodiment of the same divine creator's sacred interior: an anthropomorphous heaven inside itself. "Heaven" is a concept which is something embracing as well as something embraced. Karagabí is found in heaven but heaven is also found in Karagabí.

Irrespective of the fact that the attic is a functional storage-place used mainly for maize, the close connection of maize and utensils used for products derived from maize with the attic of the house, is evident during rituals where maize is a magic element. The pouring of *chicha* beer and grains of maize from the attic onto the house floor is a palpable demonstration of the mythic origin of maize in the heavenly world above. In a Chamí version of this myth, two women are taken to heaven by a white bird, *Ancastor*, where they find maize and *jea*, the peach palm. Despite the danger involved they bring one grain of maize and one fruit of *jea* concealed in their mouths down to earth to sow for the benefit of the Emberá (Chaves 1945:150). The belief in the celestial lake as the origin and mythical headwater of the river, "the river's nose" (*do kum*), also suggests the heavenly origin of maize, as described in a narrative from the Emberá of the

Tamaná River (on the upper San Juan River) (Broberg 1924). In Emberá mythology, maize is closely associated with gold as well as with the sun and the heavenly creator Karagabí himself. The association of maize with the house and the sky recurs in the names for the constellation of the Pleiades, known both as *be jasoá*, "corn-cob" and, as I have said, *de jomia*, "heaps of houses" (Pardo 1984:32). The attic of the house as the abode of maize in the meaning of being inside *be* is expressed by the Emberá as *bedé* ("inside maize" or, alternatively, "maize-house"), and personified by the female Dabeiba as mythic donor of both house and maize to man. The contextual association between maize, attic, and heaven is undeniable in Emberá thought.

The concept of *bedé* has already been introduced in the discussion of the meaning of the *kumbedé* nose disk. This term can now be read as "the maize-house of the nose" or, literally, "nose-maize-inside." It can now be established that the *kumbedé* disk does not represent the Emberá house but its attic space and the roof covering it. This is evident from the conical shape of the disk which exactly imitates the aspect and form of the circular roof. The nose disk does not merely portray the human dwelling but explains to us what the *de* house stands for: a cosmological essence, related to the concepts of golden *be* ("maize") and *kum* ("nose"), both of which, ultimately, are of celestial derivation. The nose disk helps us understand what the house itself is unable to tell.

The relationship between the house (the attic) and the *do kum* source of the river (the celestial world) which is stressed in Emberá mythology, is thus equivalent to the relationship between the *kumbedé* nose disk and the human nasal cavity and root inside the head. The celestial world is found inside the human head in very much the same way that man's chest encloses the subterranean riverine world. The *kumbedé* nose disk is situated in the borderland between these two worlds, as is *de*, the human dwelling in physical man's personal existence.

The human head as a representation of the celestial world, *utare*, may remain an assumption for the moment; however, I will later argue for this interpretation by means of a minute comparative analysis of the cosmological function and meaning of the human head in Emberá thought as well as of the senses of sight, smell, and hearing which have their seats in the head. A serious attempt to penetrate the nature of this dual cosmology, however, requires that we discover the relationship between these two parallel worlds and their significance to man's existence on earth. The Emberá canoe will show us the way.



# 15

## INVERTED WORLDS: THE CANOE

The Emberá house is more than a dwelling, it is also a nocturnal transporter of people in the spirit world of dreams. In a myth of the flooded world, the house remains floating on the water like a canoe or a balsa raft (Wassén 1933:112). The spirits travelling in their boats are portrayed in the balsa replica made by the shaman which is usually seen hanging from a rafter inside the house. The Emberá idea of the house as a "canoe" is concretized in a particular type of house which the Emberá actually call *jambáde*, "canoe-house," showing an oblong ground plan with a boat-shaped, elliptical roof which gives it the aspect of an inverted canoe. When curing illness the shaman sometimes constructs a "hut" for his patient on the house floor with the same boat-shaped, vaulted roof and with the same designation, *jambáde*. Guided by the shaman in his healing rituals at night, the patient undertakes a voyage in the spirit world with the *jambáde* hut as boat, just as the sleepers in the *jambáde* house voyage in their dreams.

The connection between the house and the canoe is manifest in the *depurrude* ritual to inaugurate a new house. In the evening the participants form a circle around the house, playing flutes and shouting. Water, taken from a miniature canoe, and maize are thrown on the roof, flowers are suspended from the tension ring and the female owner of the house sprinkles drops of *chicha* beer on the *de jerú* posts (Torres de Arauz 1966:50).

If the house is the "nocturnal canoe," the real canoe transports people and goods in the daytime. Hollowed out from a tree-trunk, nowadays with axe, adze, and plane, the canoe is one of the most important artifacts of Emberá material culture. In myth it is held that the art of canoe-making was taught to man by Karagabí and the first canoe ever was made by his son, Sever, from the jenené tree. In his magic canoe he went to war against the Kuna (Santa Teresa 1924:15).

The canoe is a hallmark for human occupation and closely related to the human dwelling; the canoe is tied up in front of the house or stored below the floor while old discarded canoes are set up as a rack for a vegetable garden near the house. In fact, the canoe shares many features with the

house, such as an anthropomorphic and "female" nature; details are referred to as "vagina," "ribs" (Kane 1986:222), "back" (*chienkhará*), "bottom" (*jampádrú*), and "nose" (*jambá kembú*). Like the house, the canoe must be purified after death and burial rituals. On the way back from the cemetery the canoe is overturned in the river and then bailed out (Pinto 1978:49; Dahl 1940:78). Finally, the mourners put four stones in the canoe and resume their voyage home (Peñaherrera de Costales 1968:99).

Besides being an absolute necessity in daily life the canoe is intimately related to man and considered an indispensable element of human identity. Any man who lacks a canoe and is forced to travel upriver by foot along the beach becomes target for the heckling and derision of his companions. When not in use, a couple of canoes can usually be seen tied with a vine in front of the house; they become an outdoor lavatory or just a playground for boys learning how to handle the paddle and the pole. An Emberá Indian spends a major part of his lifetime with and in canoes. Scenes of family life are, above all, visualized in canoe travelling and, in fact, the canoe becomes an emblem of the family concept itself. The word for "canoe" and "family" is the same: *ambá* (*jampá*). According to myth, mankind originates from the first man and woman left by Karagabí in a canoe (Chaves 1945:154), and the act of hollowing out the canoe with the iron adze has a sexual connotation; the Emberá call their adze *jaimé*, regarding it as a "spirit penis" (*jai-me*). The canoe is considered a living being with its own spirit (Kane 1986:224) and it is associated with the life and death of humans. Mythic canoes carries dead souls and even become identified and integrated with the spirits of their passengers (Wassén 1935:126).

Formerly, the Emberá buried their dead in a canoe near or below the house (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1963:183; Torres de Arauz 1966:77), thus making the canoe the abode of the dead, like the house of the living above.

In the myth about Ventura, it is explained that the Emberá will join their *chiaperara* relatives when they die (Pardo 1984:193); thus, the Emberá idea of the canoe as the abode of the dead fits their conception of the reversed riverine world of the *chiaperara* whose aquatic houses are the canoes of this world. The souls of the dead undertake their journey to the world beyond in a canoe that truly is their house. The canoes of the living are the "houses" of the dead, just as the houses of the living become a "canoe" in the shaman's dream voyage to the world beyond. The overall Emberá message is that the two objects which we distinguish as "canoe" and "house" are the same in nature and meaning; for cosmic man the canoe is as much an abode as the house is a means of transport.

When the Emberá traveller pushes his canoe upriver with the pole, striving

towards the headwaters and the mythic origin of the cosmic river, his canoe turns into a mythic, moving dwelling-place. It is precisely the movement of the pole which expresses these metamorphic qualities of the canoe, because the pole is alluded to as *dote*, "the river's house." Designed for pushing the essential "house" towards the river's nose, it strives upriver, which for the Emberá is *oara*, "the true way" (*o-ara*), to *dokembú* where the house really is situated. The instrumental nature of the pole is reflected in its name, *dote*, the river's house.

In the myth about Sever and the Kuna wars, we are instructed to consider the house as capable of transporting man and his soul. Severino de Santa Teresa, who brings us this myth, observes what he considers to be a flaw in the narrative: Sever's house is found eight days and nights away from the battle ground and yet, "the mysterious canoe takes Sever to his house in a couple of hours" (Santa Teresa 1924:15). As I will explain later, for the Emberá listener there is no mystery here, because the deeds of Sever take place in a cosmic dimension where his "house" is one with his "canoe." He travels in his "canoe" by staying home and, in the end, by way of his interior self.

The inverse of this scenario, where the canoe is dwelling, is referred to in the myth of the origin of maize, recorded by Nordenskiöld in 1927 (Wassén 1933:107), where a young man travels to the land of the *chiaperara* in his canoe equipped with a tent, (*toldo*). During his voyage to the world of beyond, "he lived in his canoe," the narrator adds.

Every phrase in an Emberá myth has an informative purpose but we are not always prepared to receive its central idea. In one version of the Jerupotouarra myth recorded in Darien (Kane 1986:593), we are explicitly told that the "canoe" is, in fact, a "house." In his rendering of Jerupotouarra's wanderings in the land of the *Chamberara*, the narrator says that the protagonist "went until he found a canoe. There's a house, it was white (like a roof appears when seen from afar)." With these two consecutive statements the narrator simply points out a mythologically significant truth: the canoe is a house. Read singly, neither sentence makes much sense but together they bring us a key message.

The Emberá state that the canoe is analogous to the house, in the meaning of dwelling, abode. They are in fact synonymous concepts and yet the association between them is too imprecise and even fallacious. It is not the whole house, nor even the space habited by humans, but the roof and above all the space covered by the roof that are analogous to the canoe. This relationship is implied in the citation above where the comparison with the "white house" refers expressly to the roof, "like a roof when seen from afar."

If there is indeed an analogous relationship between the house (roof and attic) and the canoe, then we would expect the canoe to hold a cosmic essence as well. The river seen as the entrance to the *drua* subworld is navigated by the canoe which, analogously to the nature of the house, becomes a symbol for the riverine underworld as well. The canoe is seen traversing the riverine world like the house passing across the celestial vault.

The canoe is also related to the *je* water boa. According to the myths, the first canoe ever made was from the *jenené* tree, *jenené* being the dual essence (*ne-ne*) of the cosmic *je* snake. In the metamorphic interplay between the cosmic watersnake and the riverine world where the whirlpool of the river becomes the devouring *jepá* snake, humans are drawn down into the snake's bodily interior and the *drua* riverine world; the snake virtually becomes the canoe and carrier of man between our world and the world beyond. The river-snake-canoe analogue is explicitly referred to in a Wounaan version of the Jerupotouarra myth which describes the entrance to the riverine underworld. There the man is guided by two young women "whose hair reached to their waists." Later, they "arrived at a deep pond and they told him that they had to plunge into it; there was a *sierpe* [*je* snake] which was their canoe to cross" (Lotero Villa 1977:41-42). What the Emberá actually argue is that man is travelling inside a concept called *je-ne-ne*, of which "canoe" is just one out of several interpretations and "translations."

With reference to my earlier argument about man's relation to the water boa and the river, these interrelated associations allow us to relate the cosmic river and the *drua* aquatic subworld to a metamorphic chain of analogous links to which the canoe can now be added. For the Emberá there is no difference in essence or nature between the concepts we would normally distinguish as "river," "water boa," "jenené tree," "human chest," and now "canoe." These are but different physical configurations of one and the same central concept: the metaphysical underworld of the cosmic river, where people do not speak with words but "with their hearts" (Pardo 1984:179). Like the house, the canoe becomes a representation of the *drua* riverine world which it navigates, but as *drua* it is also a representation of itself within itself.

From what has been said here, it is concluded that the house and the canoe together make up a representation of the Emberá cosmos where the house roof is the celestial vault (*utare*) and the canoe the riverine world (*drua*). The notion of a cosmos of inverted worlds described in myth is figuratively displayed by the canoe fastened with its *dote* pole in front of the house, creating the image of two opposite cones that fuse into an elliptic configuration, a graphic version of the Emberá universe. This same image is

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conjured up by the canoe burial beneath the house or by the long-term storage of the canoe beneath the house floor. The canoe and the house represent the complementary halves of a dual cosmos which appears as a binary opposition referred to as *utare* and *drua*, while, following the house-canoe analogue, the Emberá yet seem to claim that the sky and the riverine underworld are parallel worlds.

From this line of argument follows that the human body can be separated into the riverine underworld world of *drua* contained in the chest and the celestial world of *utare* contained in the head and that the head and torso represent these parallel but inverted worlds. In the following chapters I will bring forward facts and arguments that support and explain this cosmological construction. However, the role and position of man himself in the Emberá universe can only be identified when it is understood how the principles of this dual opposition work and express themselves in language, mythology, ritual life, and daily behaviour. Only then can it be accepted why this cosmic "incompatibility" is necessary for man's existence. The following two chapters will briefly present and discuss the principles related to existence, life and death which direct the intracosmic processual pattern of the dual Emberá universe.

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## WORLDS WITHIN, WORLDS WITHOUT: THE PEOPLE OF THE SHELL

The recognition of the nature of man in Emberá cosmology presupposes a distinction between two concepts which I will call "man-in-cosmos" and "man-as-cosmos." As man *in* cosmos an individual acts in the world of humans, as one being among many others. This tangible world of physical beings is said by the Emberá to be placed in between the dual cosmic order of *utare* and *drua* and thus located in a space outside or on the "edge" of cosmos. Man lives outside and "above" the riverine entrance to the *drua* world but he also lives outside and "below" the celestial *utare* world. This existential pattern is repeated in the cosmic structure of the Emberá house where man's living is limited to the space between the floor and the ceiling which screens him from the celestial attic.

Accordingly, we are left with the interrelated issues of man's true nature as a created being and of his position outside the circumscribed space he calls universe. *Drua* is "world, universe" while "existence" as such is given by the Emberá as *druade*, "inside *drua*." Nevertheless, man, as we observe him, seems to be born and to remain outside *drua*.

The image of man *as* cosmos raises another issue: if the mouth in the human face is regarded as the riverine mouth and gateway to the *drua* world of the human chest while the *kumbedé* nasal disk is the roof of the human house and hence the gateway to the heavenly *utare* contained inside the human head, then man's position on the human body is to be limited to the small area between the lips and teeth of the mouth and the imaginary lower "tension ring" of the nasal disk, representing the "entrance" of the celestial *utare*.

Consequently, in the perspective of the anthropomorphic cosmos, man's existence would also be defined to a point on the "outside" of the bodily dual universe, "below" the *kumbedé* disk and "above" the teeth and lips of the mouth. The problem is to recognize and identify man within that limited space on the cosmic body.

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Man seems indeed to be experiencing the baffling paradox of living outside his own universe; he lives in a world he calls *drua* and yet he also claims that this same *drua* is found within his own chest. In other words, if man is cosmos he seems to be living outside himself. And yet, if man indeed is living outside the cosmic body we are not able to see him appear on his own bodily structure referred to as "man as cosmos."

Nevertheless, my main hypothesis is that Emberá ontology does find an answer to man's existence which turns this contradiction into harmony; the second part of this book examines the principles of this reasoning.

When man is man *as* cosmos, the human skin represents the shell that covers the binary world of the cosmic human body. "Skin" is *e* for the Emberá; its analogue in the physical world is the earth crust (also *e*) with the forest and vegetation that embraces the riverine "mouth" of the *drua* world below. In the human face the mouth, representing the entrance to the *drua* underworld, is the riverine opening, the riverbanks of which are partly covered by the lips. "Lip" is expressed as *i* which, in accordance with the variant pronunciations of the *e-i* morpheme (Loewen 1963), simulates it to the *e* cover in its metaphoric nature as the borderline of the human cosmic skin. The Emberá intimate that the lips correspond to the forest and vegetation that partially overreach the riverside in the same way as the lips partially overlap the teeth of the mouth. As explained earlier, the Emberá word for "forest, vegetation" is *oi*, so the forest indeed becomes the "lip of the [cosmic] way" (*o-i*) in an anthropomorphic cosmos.

Man's position on the "skin" of the universe (man-in-cosmos) and his identity as the shell of his cosmic interior (man-as-cosmos), are the two interrelated, ontological factors which justify the name that the Emberá go by. *Emberá*, with a pronounced nasal sound on the first syllable and therefore sometimes written as *eberá*, is thus interpreted as *e-[m]-berá*, where *-berá* is "people" and *e* is "cover, shell, bark." This reading identifies *emberá* as "the people of the shell."

Following my argument on the *ka* metamorphosis, man may be said to be composed of an *invisible* interior essence covered by a *visible e* skin. A recurrent motif in Emberá mythology is the cover that makes man visible and physical and, at the same time, protects him from revealing his true nature to his enemies in the mythic world. *E-m-berá* is then an accurate description of the visible, physical "cover" of a being whose interior nature remains invisible to aliens.

In mythology man is shown to hide himself from his supernatural enemies inside a type of large basket, which significantly is called *e* by the Emberá. The *e* basket is made using a three-element lattice-type technique. The

baskets have large hexagonal openings and are used to transport maize cobs, etc. In the mythic situation the hiding Emberá is able to peep through the holes of his *e* basket without being seen himself.<sup>15</sup> Man as a "basket being" then appears within the physical cover that encloses his invisible and metaphysical interior nature. This same *e* cover is used when the Emberá boy hides from the sight of the mean beeswax man who chases him to the house of the thunder man (Pardo 1984:81). In this myth, the hiding-place is not an *e* basket but the bark (also *e*) cylinder made from the balsa tree, normally used for storing maize in the house. In Emberá myth man's true nature is associated with "balsa" matter and here the cylinder is his concealing skin. Entering and leaving his *e* wickerwork or barklike "skin," the mythic Emberá undergoes an ecdysis similar to the one he accomplishes as a *je* being, shedding his *damakakua* bark skin.

Man's physical *e* "skin" or "bark" is the same cosmic cover that distinguishes his *jai* appearance from the *ka* faculty that makes this transformation possible. The concept of *e* (*i*) refers to a defining borderline between cosmic binary realms, either as a "skin" covering the cosmic body or as the boundary between the world of humans and the subterranean world of the river, a boundary where things and conditions change. Logically, the riverside thus becomes *ika* for the Emberá, meaning the "ka of *i*," i.e., the place where the *ka* metamorphic faculty of the *e* cover takes place, so often recalled in Emberá myths (cf chapter 2). While the riverside is where the metamorphic faculty of the cosmic shell manifests itself in spatial terms, its temporal analogue is the bat, *inká*, named for its habits of being active by night and hanging upside down, abnormal for the human world but characteristic of the beings of the reverse *drua* domain. The name *i[n]-ka* is thus apt for the "ka metamorphosis of the *e* world." Furthermore, the *ka* nature of the bat allows it to put humans into a *ka* condition. According to an Emberá belief, by fluttering its wings, the bat makes people fall asleep, *kai-nobei*, and takes them to the dream world.

Calling themselves "people of the shell," the Emberá inscribe their outer appearance and reality. Implicit to the concept of *emberá*, however, is an inside, an elsewhere we must examine to comprehend man's true nature and existential conditions. As an *e*-being of the world without, what are man's relations with the worlds within?



# 17

## MAIZE CANNIBALS

The Emberá declare that their relatives are found in the celestial world as well as in the riverine realm of below. In the mythical perspective of existence man visits his relatives, both those who have already died whom he must not embrace or speak to (Chaves 1945; Broberg 1924) and those, described as his children, who he will join after his own death (Pardo 1984:193).

The idea of two parallel worlds of existence is also reflected in the native view of the role of maize and its mythical origin. In some myths, maize originates from the sky world (Chaves 1945:123), while in others it is said to come from the depths of the cosmic river where the *chicha* flows freely in the land of the *chiábera* (Wassén 1933:107-108).

The celestial origin of maize is suggested in the word for "attic," *utarebema*, which is "maize of above, of the sky" (*utare-bema*). Maize is smuggled from the sky by a woman, carried by the king vulture, who hides the kernels in her mouth. In other tales, maize is said to be a plant of the riverine world. An Emberá visitor who descends to the land of the *chiábera* marries a woman there with whom he begets a son. The *chiábera* cultivate all sorts of maize, a plant by then still unknown to man, but do not permit their human inlaw to bring the maize back to the human world. The man evades this prohibition, however, by making his son swallow all kinds of maize. Upon their return to the human world he picks out the grains from among the faeces of his son so as to plant them for the benefit of Emberá humans from then on.

By means of their metaphoric idiom, the Emberá show that the mythical act of the father is repeated by the farmer whenever he sows his maize in the field. The grains which are to be sown are carried in a pear-shaped basket with a narrow opening which hangs from the shoulder of the sower. He puts his hand into the basket and takes out a handful of grains which are broadcasted onto the uncleared ground. This basket is called *ampurú* or *ompurú*, which makes it the same "anus" from which the man takes the primeval maize in the myth.

In compliance with the cosmological construct of the Emberá, the origin of maize is to be found in both worlds, in heaven as well as in the river. The messages of the two myths complement rather than contradict each other. The world view and cosmogonic principles of the Emberá imply that the origin of maize -- like that of man himself -- is twofold.

The *jea* palm fruit (*chontaduro*) is also of double extraction. *Jea* is either brought to the human world from heaven inside the mouth of the airborne woman (Chaves 1945:123) or its seeds are fetched from the underworld where it is the principal food of the *chiábera*; sometimes it is even stated that *jea* is the only food to be found there (Nociones 1929:100; Pardo 1984:14). The yellow, palatable *netsarájo* fruit (*caimito*; *Pouteria caimito* (R. Y P.) Radlk.) is another example; it is described as the fruit of the sun fallen from the sky or even thrown by the sun into the river (Wassén 1935:134). It is also said that Jerupotouarra brings caimito seed to humans from the river world of the *chiábera* (Pardo 1984:14).

The twofold origin of man and plants is clearly described in the mythological discourse and yet it is an illusory construction, the purpose and significance of which are integrated to the structure of Emberá cosmology. The chapters which follow attempt to describe and analyse the native thinking behind these principles.

Beings who arrive in this world from below appear in the "mouth" of the river. But the river opening sometimes bears the features of an anus as well. In some versions of the Jerupotouarra epic, the hero leaves the aquatic world within the cosmic snake through its anus. The maize which the father takes out of the anus of his son from the riverine realm is the same maize which grows on the edge of the riverine anus: the maize crop alongside the riverside which the Emberá call *bea*, or "maize faeces," *be-a*. In their ideas about consumption and conception the Emberá put forward reasons for the faecal state of maize that will be examined later. However, it is not only maize which is "defecated" out of the river. Jerupotouarra discovers that the people living in the cosmic interior of the *je* snake feed on *jea* which then leaves through the anus of *je* as its *je-a*: the growing palm trees on the river. Fish are also defecated by the cosmic river as the names of various species, such as *toá*, "river faeces" (*sabaleta*; *Brycon* sp.) or *amá*, "faeces" (*sardina*; *Hemibrycon darienses*) indicate. Logically, then, man himself is defecated out of the riverine anus when he is born a physical human.

The "master" or "mother of the waters," *Antomiá*, is also associated with excrement; when humans make their canoe there is always the risk that *Antomiá* will come and defecate into it. This possibility functions as a metaphor for the physical birth into the cosmos of the uterine canoe.

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*Antomía* or *Atomiá* is "he who is roaming in the river of faeces or filth," *a-to-mia*. The cosmic underground river has an anal "mouth" and its master is the dreadful *Antomiá*.

Our own world is "faecal" matter as well. Construed as *drua*, it is the materialisation of a concept which the Emberá call *dru* or *tro*; *drua* is *dru-a*, "dru matter." Man's own *drua* chest is also a "filthy" concretization of this notion of a "cosmic mind."

Maize (*be*) and its kernels (*betá*) do not grow in our world only. The Emberá can also perceive its presence in the other world, in the water of the river. Maize kernels are *betá* and so are the fish because "the fish of the rivers are the maize of the world of below" (Vasco 1985:125). If the fish are the maize, where do we then find the people of the river world? This question is crucial because it helps us identify man's own nature as well.

The fact that maize is equated with fish is represented in the usage of the *ompurú* basket. Besides being a container for the maize seed destined for sowing, it is used as a repository for newly-caught fish. Like *betá* maize, *betá* fish are also removed from the metaphoric anus of the basket by the fisherman upon his return to the house.

The names of certain species of fish also reveal their nature of *be* maize; one of the most desirable species is the *umpé* (*guacucu* or *boquemanteca*; *Chaetotoma*) or "the way of maize" from *o-pé*. Another is the much coveted and savoury *pemá* (*Aequidens*) which, in its meaning of "the maize," is the riverine counterpart to the celestial maize of the house attic, *utare-bema*.

In its function as the maize of the river world, the *betá* fish demonstrates to humans the behaviour of the true essence of maize. The maize concept known as *be* is of a different tenor and meaning than that which merely includes a plant. Maize is a living being, the behaviour of which can be studied by observing the fish in the river. An immediate inference from this reasoning is that *maize is not only eaten, it also eats*.

The analogous relationship between maize and fish is also recognized on a more esoteric level in Emberá thought. In the myth about the *Awena* woman and the first menstruation, the sister of *Awena* submerges herself into the deep river and is transformed into *Betenabe*, the Mother of Fish (Chaves 1945:152-153). *Nabe* is an Emberá word for "mother" so *Betenabe* would then read "Mother of *bedé*, the house of maize." With the *betá* concept in mind we can now accept that the "Mother of maize" is regarded as the "Mother of fish." The idea that fish is the maize of the riverine world implies that the *beté* concept exists in the river as well. The presence of the "mother of fish" within her "house of maize" is formulated in her name: *bete-nabe*. The *beté* concept then joins the group of phenomena that takes on a parallel

existence where a celestial *beté* is the equivalent of the riverine *beté*.

Now, if there are two parallel *beté* concepts, one of which is found in heaven (*utare*) and the other in the riverine *drua* underworld, then its counterparts must also be identified on the cosmic body of humans, as is suggested by Emberá terminology. As described earlier, the golden nose disk represents the *kum-bedé* concept found in the nasal roots as the "*bedé* of the nose" (*kum*). In a descriptive sense, the corresponding inverted "house" for the *drua* world of the human chest, would be recognized in the shape and position of the shoulder blades. In fact, the Emberá term for the shoulder blades seems to support the supposition that *ofedé* could be a variant pronunciation of *o-bedé* ("*bedé* of the Way"), where *o* takes on the meaning of the cosmic way, as in the *o-chirú* and *o-karrá* concepts which consider the human throat as gateway and passage to the *drua* world. The human shoulder blades are indeed a perfect technical description of an inverted "house roof" that shelters the *be* concept found in heaven as well as in the riverine world. There is a significant hiatus, however; the shoulder blades are only two while the maize house of the human chest is a four-piece construction in Emberá thought. Man is only half a "maize house," so where is the rest? A tentative answer to this question will be submitted in chapter 23.

In sum, I have tried to show that the parallel existence of two worlds in inverted position to each other -- sky and river -- repeats itself in the structure of the human body -- head and chest -- as well as in various phenomena which appear in and belong to these two worlds that together shape the binary Emberá cosmos.

From his intermediate position in the human world man confronts and communicates with the cosmic river below and the celestial world above. In Emberá mythology, man's encounters and dealings with beings of other worlds are depicted and explained. Through mythological events and situations, the Emberá are instructed in the consequences of correct or incorrect actions and conduct, and learn about the true order of things, which they can only observe in their minds, not with their eyes. Man's fate and experience in myth demonstrate and explain the true meaning and nature of human life and existence. The fisherman's striving for fish, the hunter bringing down his game, or the wood cutter bringing his firewood are actions which give rise to unexpected consequences. In this way, myth intimates the true relationship of humans to their environment and, not least, to themselves as cosmic beings.

Emberá myths are distinguished by a recurrent feature which bewilders the uninitiated listener. Man's relationship with his relatives and with beings of

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the true world beyond rests upon a strange fatalism and an antagonistic fervour to destroy and devour an enemy who turns out to be a fellow human, a relative or even the actor himself. The variations on this theme are numerous. The protagonist in Emberá myths often chooses his wife from among the celestial bird people or the mythical beings in the riverine world but he has to beware of his wife's relatives who are eager to annihilate and consume him. The returning anthropomorphic sun and creator is regarded as an enemy and is killed by his own people. Likewise, the sun has to sacrifice his own fruit, the yellow caimito, in order to avoid being devoured by his relatives, the fish people. Humans are transformed into peccaries which later are eaten by their fellow humans even if the hunters are aware of the true human nature of their game. The cosmic *je* water snake and man attack and devour each other; man eats the colourful eggs of the water snake as the *je* eats human children. Similarly, man catches and eats fish but myth reveals that fish catch and destroy man as well.

As *emberá*, man lives on the outside of himself as an *e* being, as a being of the ephemeral shell which covers the true cosmos. The Emberá explicitly state that they are related to maize and their name reflect this relationship as well.

If the Emberá indeed shelter a maize character then they must also be associated with the fish of the river, said to be the maize of the other world. So, by logic, the Emberá are a kind of fish people as much as they are related to the cosmic holder of all fish, the *je* water snake.

In the mythological world man meets and faces the fish as human equals: as fish are the maize of the river world, *emberá* humans are the fish of our own world. The *berá* concept is the same kind of "people" as the category of *betá* fish because *berá* is only a variant pronunciation of the *betá* concept. *Berá*, as used in *em-berá*, is the same *birá/bidá* gentile suffix which frequently appears in tribal denominations of the Chocó region, such as *o-birá*, *ciram-birá*, *citara-bidá* or *citara-birá*. People are still referred to by their gentile as *atra-bidá* (people of the Atrato River), *bau-bidá* (people of the Baudó River), etc.

And yet, it is futile and even erroneous to speak of *emberá* humans in terms of "fish" as much as it is misleading to describe fish as "river people" because they are, each in their own way, different manifestations of the prime motor of Emberá ontology: the principle of maize or *be*. As *betá* fish or *berá* humans they reveal this vital principle in its germinated form, as *betá*, from *be* and *ta*, "seed, green fruit." *Be* essence is manifested as *be-tá* matter. Actually, the Emberá construe a whole group of *betá* manifestations in their environment, each of which is shown to play an essential role in their

conception of existence and creation (such as *pidá* Capsicum pepper, *pintá* seeds which are said to have been used before maize was introduced, or *petá* baskets used as jewel-case or work-box). Man's antagonists in the mythical world are all a kind of "maize beings" where maize man fights maize fish as well as maize peccaries and maize deer. In his daily efforts for survival, man is a "maize cannibal" who not only eats his own kind but also seems to be victimized as a consequence of his aggression. The overall purpose of this seemingly inconsistent and paradoxical aggression and self-destruction of which man is the main victim of self-infliction is concealed in the principles of Emberá cosmology and ontology.

# 18

## A MATTER OF MIND: SUGGESTIONS FOR A COSMOLOGY

In a sequence of seventeen steps I have endeavoured to draw up the ethnographic prerequisites for a model of the principles which frame Emberá ideas on cosmology and ontology.

The Emberá reproduce the riverine landscape in their faces and intimate by means of their idiom, rites and myths that man bears the riverine world within his chest. Man is water, his origin is the river and the mythic giant water snake is his congener.

This triad of man, river, and snake forms a chain of permanent metamorphosis which in itself provides the basis of the Emberá notions of creation and existence. The shamanistic experience demonstrates this metamorphic faculty shared by all humans as well as by all created matter.

From the perspective of physical man, the Emberá explain that cosmos consists of three layers: the celestial world of *utare* above, the riverine world of *drua* below, and the world of humans in between.

This tripartite cosmic structure is rendered in the joint context of the house and the canoe. The attic of the house is a representation of *utare* while the canoe imitates the aquatic realm of *drua*. The attic and the canoe represent the inverse relationship between two worlds. Physical man himself lives in the circumscribed space between the attic and the canoe.

An analogous cosmic structure is reproduced in the human body where the chest is to the canoe as the forehead and nasal roots are to the attic of the house. The upper part of the human head is *utare* while the chest is *drua*. Analogously, the head and torso are in reverse position to each other.

*Utare* and *drua* are parallel worlds and reflected images of each other. Construed dually as heaven and river, house and canoe, head and body, the Emberá cosmos is a binary structure of analogous "worlds" based on a principle of exchange through attraction and opposition, vividly described in myth.

The confined world of *drua* emits its essence as matter. The riverine

opening is an anal mouth which "defecates" fish, maize and humans in a state comparable to faeces, *a*. The master of the riverine world is *Antomiá*, "he who roams in the river of filth."

The position of physical man in the tripartite Emberá cosmos is made explicit in the domain of the cosmic house: man remains outside and above the river of the subterranean *drua* as much as he remains outside and below the attic of the celestial *utare*.

Man describes himself as *emberá*, "the germinated maize of the shell," as compared to the fish people of the *drua* river world where the *betá* fish is the palpable manifestation of the vitality of maize.

This paradox of being cosmos and yet remaining external to himself is repeated in the chart of the cosmic body of man where the house, the *domé* stairway, and the river are explicitly mapped out while man himself is not. The fact that man as a physical being cannot be seen on the cosmic shell of himself is the purport of this same paradox: man is and man is not. The principles of this "incompatible" reasoning are embedded in the native interpretation of the concept of existence. As the Emberá do, we will have to read the cosmic structure of the human body to reach that insight. This text is an attempt to unravel man's hidden nature and his relation to cosmos in Emberá thought. The main hypotheses which formulate my quest follow.

The Emberá use and manipulate their language to conceal messages about existential matters. A limited number of basic concepts appear as morphemes in a conceptual terminology which fashions cosmological and ontological principles into a rich and multifarious pattern which has remained hidden to us so far. "Reading" the native terminology provides clues to understanding the ideas the Emberá have about cosmos, creation, and the existence of man and his world.

The human body is a representation of cosmos, it is a cosmological chart and a "manual" to comprehend the principles that reign in cosmos. The binary cosmos of the Emberá stands for two analogous versions of the true "world" of the cosmic mind which is expressed as *dru*, "the dual river" (*do-do*). In its appearance as the celestial world of *utare*, reproduced either as the sky or, on the cosmic body of man, as the human head, we are able to experience the *being* of the cosmic mind (*dru*) and true creation.

From its *parallel* appearance as the riverine underworld of *drua*, reproduced as the river's depths and, on the cosmic body of man, as his torso and limbs from the mouth down, we are able to experience the *workings* of the cosmic mind and true creation. Any essence, thought or intention of the *dru* mind is materialised in matter and movement in the *drua* world of matter.



### *A Matter of Mind*

The essence of the concept known as *be* is physically configured in the shape of a fish, *betá*, "the seed of *be*," to show man what the essence of *be* "looks like" and how it "behaves." In the same way, for the Emberá any "object" or "thing" is expressed as *netá*, "the seed of *ne*," i.e. the physical manifestation (*ta*) of its essence (*ne*).

The body language of cosmic man is an analogous materialisation of essences and intentions found in the mind of *dru*. All human actions and creations represent and demonstrate a cosmic intention which *is* but cannot be seen or felt in the *dru* mind contained in the celestial head. The human torso and limbs, however, do not demonstrate what cosmos and existence look like, only how their principles *work*. To understand the *being* of cosmos and true creation we must consider the configuration of the human head and the phenomena with which it is associated.

If we can read the semantics behind the behavioural pattern of the binary cosmic body of man we will understand the necessary interaction between *dru* and *drua*, between mind and matter. By then we will also have entered into the tenor of existence and creation as construed and formulated in Emberá thought. The rest of this book is a descriptive analysis of this ideological structure which I refer to as "cosmic man."

My final argument is that the principles which govern Emberá cosmology reflect and share in a pre-Columbian ideological substratum which has shaped or tinged cosmological systems in Mexico, Central America and South America.

### HYPOTHETICAL GUIDELINES FOR FURTHER READING

The metaphoric arrangement of underworld/river/canoe/human chest evokes the concept of a cosmic womb or uterine "receptacle" which is referred to as *ke*.

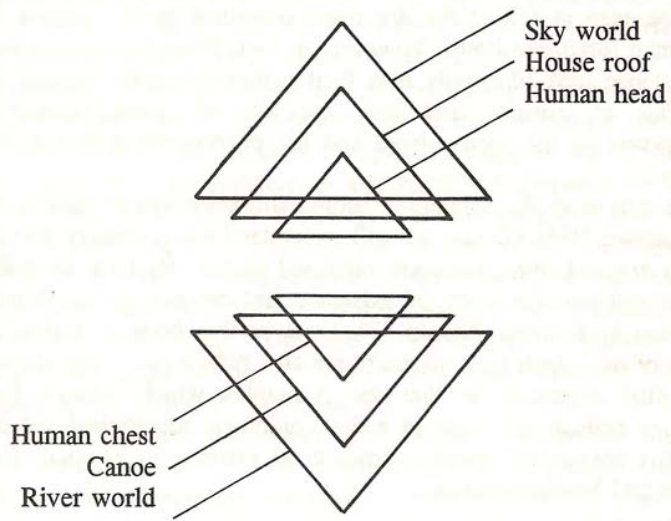
In reverse position to this *ke* concept stands its correlate, called *kirá* (*kidá*, *ketá*), "*ke* germinated," which is rendered as the celestial vault/house roof/human head and face.

The union between *ke* of below and its inverted analogue, the germinated *ke* of above, creates the structure of cosmos and the notion of cosmic man as a binary opposition, described in the metaphoric images of sky and river, house roof and canoe, or head and body.

Creation and existence are founded in a metamorphic interaction within this binary structure of cosmos, described as a linear and vertical process which is referred to as *o*, "the way."

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The concept of *ka* stands for the "metamorphic faculty" which is a prerequisite for any "creation" along the cosmic way of *o*. The knowledge of this cosmic process is found within man himself.



# COSMIC CONCEPTION



III. 5. Sélimo, the shaman, with *dumá* staff and *parara* leaves, curing a patient in the *jambáde* curing "hut." Sambú River (Darién) 1927. (Photo: Erland Nordenskiöld),



III. 6. Making the canoe with *jaimé* adze. Miákoda River (Baudó) 1971.



III. 7. Displaying the *chakira* beads: Emberá men with *porobari* head bands, *udiabari* chest bands and *ambura* girdles. Jaqué River (Pacific Coast) 1927. (Photo: Erland Nordenskiöld).

# 19

## ESSENTIAL EATING AND PECTORAL NOSES

In their terminology for the body the Emberá equate the tongues of both men and women with the male sex by referring to it as *kiramé*, the "facial penis." In this chapter I will explore the cosmological principles behind this designation.

The metaphorical linkage between sex and food is often referred to in South America but is nevertheless insufficiently comprehended. In order to discern the association between the male sex and consumption among the Emberá, the meaning of concepts such as "eating" and "food" must be identified. The Emberá instruct us to consider the mythic dimension of the human condition, i.e. to look at the way things are in *druara*, "the true world," the imagery of essential existence verbalized in the mythological discourse.

In the well-known myth describing the quest of Jerupotouarra in the two worlds of the sky and underworld, we are told that the people of the *drua* river world of below do not eat their food, nor do they defecate. They only smell the steam of the cooked *chontaduro*, their main food, sometimes said to be the only foodstuff in *drua*<sup>1</sup>. In this myth, "eating" is replaced by "smelling."

As the people of the river world are described as Emberá ("cholos"<sup>2</sup>) by the narrator of the myth (Urbina 1978:407), we are taught to consider the act of eating among humans as an act of smelling.

The verb "to eat" is *koi*. With reference to the information given in the Jerupotouarra myth I suggest that *koi* is derived from the gloss for "nose," *ku*. Thus, Emberá usage confirms the mythic message that when humans eat, they *koi*; they smell the food.

The consequence of this reasoning is that the eating, chewing and consuming of foodstuff performed by the mouth is to be regarded as an act of smelling, comparable to that accomplished by the nose. Again, the physiognomy of man and actions related to the nose and mouth are of little help for us to understand what "eating" actually implies for the Emberá. The

human head as a representation of the *utare* cosmos of the *dru* mind demonstrates the *structure* of the true creation. The true creation as *process* - how cosmic intentions are carried through -- is demonstrated by the *drua* cosmic body. In order to understand the function and meaning of *koi* "eating" performed by the *utare* cosmos, we must search for its analogue in the *drua* cosmos by identifying its *ku* "nose" function visualized as process on the human body.

So far I have argued that the *drua* world is located somewhere within the chest of physical man but have not attempted to specify its location or identity with a particular physical organ. I have suggested that the *ofedé* scapulae are seen as a cosmic house roof embracing the *drua* world as the inverted analogue to the *bedé* attic of *utare*.

Inside the inverted "roof" of the scapulae there are two inner organs of major importance, the heart and the lungs; both in fact called *potopotoa* by the Emberá. *Potopotoa* refers to an interesting concept, *poto*, which can be interpreted as "river of *po* (maize flour)," *po-to*. In Emberá myth, the consumption of *po* maize flour is directly linked to humans' ability to travel, as is plain from a tale recorded by Pardo in Baudó. Persecuting their *jura* enemies, the Emberá need lots of *po* for their journey:

They continued upriver and in the mouth of the Jancapiragua they ran out of food, which was *po*, that which we nowadays call *pokurá* which is toasted and ground maize. So they returned to their land once again, to Pepé, to the place where they had begun their training. They came to prepare their provisions for the journey; the women were in the condition to do it. Everybody was preparing his provisions, his *po*, preparing all kinds of provisions, but they had to be light. They went back until they reached the place where the head of their chief was. Next day they went on walking, they arrived at the headwaters of the Dubasa River . . . And then they returned once again to their land, to Pepé. They came to prepare their provisions, lots of it, lots of it, so as to leave now for certain, they prepared lots of provisions (Pardo 1984:208,210).

Three times the mythic travellers are obliged to prepare the necessary *po* flour, each time gaining new ground in their search for the *jura* and the *dokarrá* port to the underworld.

But the mythic situation is also Emberá reality; the preparation and consumption of *po* maize flour is due on the eve of long-distance travel among modern Emberá. I experienced this myself in 1972 when I, accompanied by an Emberá shaman and his son, undertook a month-long journey by foot through the Chocó forest which ended in Urrao and finally in



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Medellín far from Emberá territory. "We will travel far so we need a lot of *po*" was the shaman's answer to my unsympathetic attitude towards carrying a lot of maize flour when food could easily be obtained along the trail. The comparison with the mythic travellers' endeavour to reach the distant *dokarrá* was probably a very likely one for my companion who never had travelled that far from his house before. Like his mythic fellow humans he needed *po* for his intercosmic transference, *po* which was mixed with water and drunk at the beginning of the trip. With this context in mind, *poto*, "the river of *po*," becomes an adequate expression for the "world" in its spatial dimension, given in its binary form, *potopoto*. In accordance with its materialized appearance in the *drua* chest of cosmic man it is defined as *potopoto-a*, "potopoto matter."

The binary world of *drua* seems then to square the double *poto* concept where the "lungs" become the abode of the *drua* world. Cosmic man has a "right" *poto* and a "left" *poto*; together they merge into a binary *potopoto* complex to form the *drua* world of the human chest.

Each *poto* cosmic "lung" is marked on the exterior of the human body by the presence of the breast, called *ju*. In accordance with the *j/k* variable in pronunciation, I suggest that the *ju* breast constitutes the *drua* parallel of the *utare* nose, *ku*; thus, *ju* becomes the "nose" of the *drua* chest.

Following the double pattern of the *do-do-a* (*drua*) and *potopotoa* concepts, the dual *ju* "nose" of the human chest demonstrates the principle of the binary cosmos which characterizes the true *dru* (*do-do*) world of the cosmic mind. The nose in the human face has two entrances, which merge and then separate into the *bedé* spatial structure. The dual principle demonstrated by the *drua* chest shows that the cosmic "nose" does contain this binary character. What seems to be one single olfactory organ in the human face is, in fact, made up of two, as is its parallel in the *drua* world of the human chest, witnessed by its two *ju* "breasts." Celestial *utare* as well as underground *drua* are both composed of two "noses," *ku* or *ju*; i.e., the cosmic mind of the *dru* "dual river" contains a double "nose" as well.

The link between the two interrelated concepts of *ko/koi* and *ku/ju* and the binary cosmos made up of the *potopoto* lungs is emphasized by a synonymous expression for "lung," *kotrúa*, read as "ko world" (the materialized double river of *ko*). The *ju* breast is thus able to "smell" and "eat" like its facial counterpart, the *ku* nose.

Cosmos is self-contained so if the human body demonstrates the working principles of cosmos then any process takes place within the cosmic body and under its *e* cover. Therefore, in contrast to the "open" facial nose, the *ju* nose is "closed." It does not "smell" or "inhale" anything from the outside,

simply because there cannot be any matter "outside" of cosmos. The *ju* nose works inward and within the cosmic shell, it accomplishes its "smelling" or "eating" *koi*-function inside cosmos, not as a process working from out of cosmos like the one performed by the *utare* nose.<sup>3</sup>

Even if the Emberá, through their etymology of the *ju* concept, point out to us that this operation takes place inside the cosmic body, the *ju* nose of the chest is unable to demonstrate how it is composed, how this *koi* eating of the nose is performed and what it implies for man and cosmos. However, the "eating" capacity of the *ju* breast is suggested by the fact that the Emberá look upon the nipple as the "tooth of the breast", *jukidá*.

## 20

### SMELLING HANDS: THE OLFACTORY SENSE AS MOTION

I have earlier argued that the human body is the materialized version of the human and cosmic mind, the materialization (*a*) of the *dru* principle, which bears up the Emberá cosmos. Consequently, the *ju* concept should manifest itself on the cosmic body in its materialized form, expressed as *ju-a*, to show us how these cosmic intents are put into practice by the *drua* body. Actually, Emberá terminology and notions of the interactive pattern of the human body confirm this supposition.

The activity of the *ko/ku* concept in the human head is expressed as "*koi*-eating." In the *drua* universe this same "olfactory eating" by the *ju* breast is visualized and explained by means of physical manifestations and actions of the human body. The movements of the arm and the hand demonstrate the operative pattern of the *ko* principle, which is concealed inside the *potopoto* "lungs" of the *drua* world. For this reason, the Emberá designate "arm" and "hand" as *jua*. The physical configuration of the *ju* concept (*ju-a*, "*ju* matter"), is contained as principle in the breast but transformed and concretized in the shape of the moving arm and hand leading out from the body. The Emberá do not make any linguistic distinction between the arm and hand because the two form a whole and both confer the same meaning as the materialized transformation of the *ju* principle.

The operative mechanism of the basic cosmic *ju/ko* process, located inside the nose of the *utare* head and invertedly repeated in the *drua* chest to demonstrate its binary character and spatial position, is thus made explicit and concrete in the rich and complex idiom of the hands. From what can be inferred from the physical configuration of the arm and hand as well as from the actions performed by them it is possible to reconstruct and penetrate into the constituent parts of the *ju/ko* principle and its internal pattern of operation, as interpreted within the frames of Emberá terminology and conceptual perception.

The physical manifestation of the *ju* principle outside the cosmic

boundaries of the *drua* chest is referred to in the myth about *Ankastor*<sup>4</sup>, the king vulture (*Sarcoramphus papa*) which carries two women to the sky world where they meet some black women with enormous breasts which reach down to their knees (Chaves 1945:150). These women, sometimes described as having only one breast, are a common motif in Emberá mythology.<sup>5</sup> The statement that their breasts reach down to their knees suggests that they are a metaphor for the *jua* arm in its character as an "elongated breast." It is also worth noting that the contact between the palm of the hand and the knee is a common motif in pre-Columbian pottery of western Colombia. In view of the *ju* concept, this contact has cosmological significance to Emberá thought.

The relationship between the *ju* breasts and the *potopoto* pulmonary world is repeated in the morphology of the *jua* hand which is also connected to its own *poto*, which is located to the forearm, aptly called *jua poto* by the Emberá. The *jua poto* is again the physical manifestation of the interactive relationship between the *ju* and *poto*, a "branch world" to the *potopoto* concept in the chest, which thus divides into two *poto*'s, one in each *jua* arm of the cosmic body.

The contact between the *juapoto* and its "mother *poto*" in the *drua* chest is maintained along the arm, the communicative faculty of which appears as a theme in myths. In the tale about the shaman's monstrous son, referred to earlier, the son's nose rots away in the *drua* underworld but he gets on by making use of his hand instead, thereby indicating the related "koi-eating" character of both: "Then the *mojano* [monster] spat in his hand and he put it into the sun and fell asleep, the saliva ascended to his chest, then he knew . . ." (Pardo 1984:196). Here the mythic message confers the same instructional purpose to the listener as the *drua* human body does to the spectator.

The crucial point of connection between the *jua poto* of the arm and the *drua* centre enclosed by the *obedé* structure of the trunk is figuratively expressed in the Emberá term for the clavicle, *opaná*<sup>6</sup>, which can be translated as "the bridge of the [cosmic] way," i.e. the "bridge" along which the *drua* cosmos communicates and makes clear its principles transformed into matter, *ju* made *jua*. The clavicle constitutes the precise point where this metamorphosis takes place, thereby deserving its quality of "bridge." The strategic position of the clavicle with reference to the metamorphosis from essence to matter is also stressed by its alternative term, *okau*. As *kau* is "daughter," we get the metaphorical "daughter of the cosmic Way." However, a more distinct and exact interpretation would be *ka-o*, "ka's way," which accentuates the clavicle as the pivotal point of the *ka* transformation.

If the hand is a materialized extension of the *ju/ko* "nose" in the *drua* chest,

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thus repeating the analogous context shown in man's face, then it should be possible to reconstruct an imaginary "face" in the physiology of the hand. Later, I will show that the hand in Emberá thought is actually regarded as a being in itself with its own head and body.

The basic purpose of the hand and arm is to demonstrate the principles by which cosmos and cosmic man are ruled. The significance of the acting hands in every context of daily life is fundamental for the Emberá. The moving pattern of the hands and arms of the human body as well as the tools and instruments used in performing these directed actions express rich cosmological messages, the hidden meanings of which I will explore in the following chapters.

The motif of the human hand and arm in art, mythology and ritual context is very common in the Americas and widely diffused both in time and space. Nevertheless, the role of the hand as "agent" in ritual performances has rarely been examined and is little understood. As a rule, rites, ritual paraphernalia and the religious specialists have been duly analyzed while, strange to say, the contextual interplay between "sacred" objects and the human actor in carrying out divine intentions is often disregarded.

The crucial link between the "divine intention" and its "sacred accomplishment" is the human actor himself. The verbal discourse is a main instrument of the religious specialist in carrying out these divine intentions but so are his "magic" hands. From the perspective of the human body, the hand is, as much as the mouth, the polarity of an original intention and its ultimate "gate" of expression; yet its role has usually been overlooked in analyzing the significance of the religious act, despite the overwhelming ethnographical evidence of its decisive importance.

Through their myths, terminology and ritual behavior the Emberá also give to understand the magic role of the human hand in the relationship between the cosmic Ego and the world around. Though the relationship is implicitly and obliquely expressed, without restrictions to objects or motions directed by the arm and hand, whatever the *jua* hand does or handles bears a cosmic connotation for the Emberá.

For the Emberá, the human hand is also able to "smell" or "*koi*-eat." This eating operation is described as an act of "cutting" or of other actions, similar to cutting, which indicate a "breaking through" of the *e* cover.

The cutting is accomplished with a tool held by the *koi*-eating hand. These cutting tools have one feature in common, they are all equipped with a "tooth" at the pointed end with which they "eat." The point of the arrow is *chiákidá*, "tooth of the arrow," while the dart of the blowgun is called *úkidá*,

"tooth of the Way." The cutting edge of the knife is *kidá* and so is the hand-held *iukida* stone which "eats" the maize ground on the grindstone. Grasping its "tooth," the *jua* hand turns into a *koi*-eating "mouth" which breaks through the cover of its "food." The association between "*koi*-eating" and "cutting" is evident from the Emberá term for the latter, *koin*.

There is a reference to this "eating" capacity of the pointed artifact in the ritual curing of the *jaibaná* shaman, mentioned by Severino de Santa Teresa (1924:40). In order to liberate the patient from the evil spirit which has taken abode in his body, the shaman uses a pointed stick to drive into the heart or liver of specific animals, applying the other end of the stick to the mouth of the patient: "At a determinate movement of the heart or liver the *jaibaná* knows that the harmful spirit has abandoned the body and *bitten the morsel or bait at the tip of the stick*" (my italics). Here the stick and the evil spirit become one and the same when the stick is driven into the heart or liver and thus "bites" it with its *kidá* "tooth." It appears as if the stick, instead of consuming the *drua* chest of the patient, "eats" the essence out of the *drua* universe represented by the heart or liver of certain animals.<sup>7</sup>

Physical man depends upon the man-made *kidá* tool to convince us about the eating nature of his *jua* hand when performing the cutting act, be it the Emberá hunter spearing his quarry or the woman grinding the maize. But the mythic beings in *drua* make clear for the listener that the hands of true man in themselves are knives. This is the essence of a statement contained in the account of the *bibidí gomía*, the strange beings who lived in the tree-tops, feared because "their hands were knives" (Betania 1964:54). The same author also mentions the traditions about the anthropophagous *burugumiás* who "felled trees with their hands only and cut whatever they needed with them" (1964:55). In another myth it is the arm and the embrace which have the power to cut or slash human flesh. Costé is a "devil" of gold and also the Master of Gold who beheads humans only by embracing them (Betania 1964:53).

The statement that "their hands were knives" teaches us two things of importance: the human hand is an "eating" nasal concept and the matter eaten is the essence of things cut. This conclusion follows from the fact that "knife" is expressed as *neko* and the act performed with the knife is *nekoi*, meaning "to *koi*-eat essence (*ne*)." The true meaning of the sentence above is of course not that the hand is shaped as a knife but simply that *jua* is *neko*, instructing us to consider the human hand as a "*ko* nasal concept inhaling *ne* essence." The hand and the hand-made knife share the same essence as a *neko* device.

While the *drua* beings and their cosmic behaviour demonstrate principles

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of structures and processes otherwise not seen in the true cosmos of the *dru* mind (the human hand as "knife"), physical man and the phenomenal manual of his cosmic body need to add a knife to the *jua* hand to make it execute the cosmic act of *koi*-eating. We are assisted by Emberá terminology to regard the human hand as well as its *kidá*-equipped tool as a principle of cosmic behaviour, as a unity where the knife is an inseparable outgrowth of the *jua* hand.

The inseparability of hand and knife reminds me of a saying among Emberá men: "A true man never leaves without his *neko* (machete)." In light of the context established above, we begin to see why he doesn't. The fascinating association between artefacts and the acting hand will be more explicitly examined in my analysis of the movement pattern of cosmic man.

Before leaving the discussion of the *koi*-eating hand I will add yet another example of the importance of careful and unbiased reading of the myths and the messages which are brought through their phraseology, here with reference to the *ju* principle. The *burumiá* cannibals are said to have practiced another skill: "The devils taught them to use their hands, as if they were hand-mills, to extract the gold from the veins" (Nociones, 1929:84). This piece of information, however, is not about Indians digging for gold with their pure hands. We just need to know that *ne* also means "gold" for the Emberá to understand the true meaning of the sentence. The *iukida* (mill-stone) nature of the *jua* hand *koi*-eats *ne*, the essence of things cut or, in this case, "extracted." The hands of cosmic man "cut" the *e* surface of earth so as to "eat" or extract its essence, gold.

*Ne*, "essence," is perpetual while its material manifestation, its *netá* configuration (the object as the "seed" of *ne*), is not. But remember that gold is physical matter which shares this perpetual nature and, consequently, it also becomes *ne* for the Emberá, standing as the visible manifestation of the principle of eternal *ne*. The phrase tells us that the human hand represents the cosmic *ko* principle that "eats" the essence out of its *a* matter, essence conceived of as gold. Moreover, any essence has its material aspect and so has gold, represented by the slag<sup>8</sup> which the Emberá say is *nea*, the *a* matter of *ne*.

The final and most relevant conclusion of this analysis, however, is that *gold eats gold* in Emberá thought. The power to cut in the metaphysical sense of *koi*-eating is held by gold, as shown by the myth about Costé, made of gold and master of gold. Thus, Costé is *ne*, the essence of things which eats by cutting, or *ne-koi*, i.e. by eating *ne*. In this brief but graphic and telling statement lies the core of Emberá ontology: the intention of *ne-koi* "cutting" transcribed as *gold eats gold*.

# 21

## SEXUAL HUNTING

If cutting and similar piercing actions imply an "eating" by the toothed hand, described as an inhalation of the essence of matter slit open and entering into the body of the actor via the arm, we should examine a particular context where cutting or piercing is basic to find out the significance of consumption. Such a context is hunting and the relationship between the hunter and the hunted.

Hunting among lowland Indians in South America is generally seen as an economic activity of primary importance accompanied by a surprisingly wide range of ritual measures, positive as well as negative prescriptions and precautions, which have to be adhered to by the hunter, his wife and family, as well as by the religious specialists of the society involved. It is an undeniable fact that hunting primarily concerns the basic human need of consumption, but what is "consumption" and what is "hunger"? The motivation and objective of the hunter are directed by our answer to that question.

One of the salient characteristics of hunting magic is related to sex and sexual behaviour. The hunt in itself often assumes the aspect of a relationship with sexual undertones between the hunter and the animal, where the context of hunting is said to reinforce the "maleness" of the hunter vis-à-vis his "female" game. Hunting is sometimes also seen as regulating the formalized exchange of food for sex in the society.

There is no specific term for "hunting" in Emberá. Equipping himself with a fishing spear, machete, basket, shotgun or, more rarely nowadays, with a blowgun or a bow and arrow, the hunter seldom states in advance whether he will go fishing, hunting or anything else; he just departs for the forest, *meauaneyá*.

The wild life resources in Chocó are by now scarce even in the remoter parts inhabited by the Emberá. Big game is relatively rare, though deer, peccaries, large rodents and monkeys are still available and birds are fairly common game. Except for the casual, haphazard hunting in the cultivated plots along the river or near the dwelling, a hunting trip takes up to ten hours



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and the party consists of 1-3 participants, preferably accompanied by dogs. The Emberá in general feel a strong aversion to staying overnight in the forest.

The most important hunting weapon today is a home-made muzzle-loading shotgun which successively has come to replace the bow, the blowgun and the lance. Most Emberá families now own at least one *powá* (shotgun) while the bow is preferred for bird-hunting, generally practised by boys. Sometimes a machete or stones will do for a weapon. Traps are known but rarely used. Hunting is highly esteemed by society and the meat is an important contribution to the subsistence of the household.

The function of the *koi*-eating hand is manifest in the context of hunting. When the Emberá hunter hits the game, the "toothed" point of the hunting weapon enters the flesh and extracts its *ne* essence which is absorbed by the hunter's arm to end up in his *drua* chest. The consequence of this fatal "eating" is the death of the game.

The Emberá express the act of killing as *kenaya*, a term also related to the sexual act and derived from *ke*, "vagina." It seems indeed as if the hunter participates in a sexual relation with the animal where killing is the outcome of a sexual intercourse between a male hunter and a female quarry, comparable to the canoe-maker's cutting with his *jaimé* "spirit penis" to open up the "female" canoe.

This assumption is thwarted, however, by an ineluctable incongruity. The hunter does not implant anything in the animal, he consumes, like the people of below when they smell the steam from the cooking pot or when humans eat their food. The hunter does not give away anything, he is a receiver in the moment of the *kenaya* killing performed by his "eating" hands.

All the same, the Emberá seem to look upon killing as a metaphor for sexual intercourse but if they do their reasoning must be based on principles of sex, fecundation and conception very much different from those that we take for granted.

Considering the confusion that besets the relationship between the concepts of "mouth" and "nose," we must try to identify their nature and function with reference to "eating" and "smelling" in the contexts of food, sex, and death. What are the mouth and nose for the Emberá and why are they analogous in function and meaning?

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### THE VAGINAL NOSE

The operative principles of the *ju* function in the *drua* world of the human chest and their manifestation as an intention transformed into motion by the acting hands are repeated in the human physiognomy and its representation of the celestial world, *utare*.

The analogous complex consisting of the human nose, the attic of the house, the headwaters of the river, and the sky world of *utare* is held together by the unifying concept of *ku* (*kum*), usually translated as "nose," the inverted counterpart to the *ju* concept in the *drua* chest.

I have already called attention to the fact that the Emberá dwelling and the canoe reveal a female nature both in myth and ritual context. The "owner" of the house in the mythical world is often a woman, like the Mother of Fish of the riverine house of maize or her celestial counterpart in the "nose" of the river. The erotic drumming and dancing performed by Emberá women during the *jemené* ritual inside the house is paralleled among the Wounaan by the huge "canoe-drum" with unmistakable vulviform features which hangs from the ceiling down onto the house floor and which is beaten with two drumsticks by women.

As the inverted analogue of the *de* house in *drua*, the Emberá canoe is marked by the same features of femaleness, hollowed out by the *jaimé* adze, and associated with fecundation and procreation in myth, confirmed by an anthropomorphic terminology.

Both the house and the canoe are thus identified with the two concepts of *ku* ("nose") and *ke* ("vagina"), not by being supplied with two separate human "organs" but rather by being associated with a concept carrying the qualities of another organ.

The notion of a nose with "vaginal" qualities is confirmed by Emberá usage. As we already know, "nose" is referred to as *ku* (*kum*) but an equally common term is *kembú*, found, for instance, in the term for the stem of the canoe, *jampá kembú*. The headwaters are either regarded as *do kum* or *do kembú*. The purport of *kembú* is "where the vagina is" from *ke*, "vagina" and the verb *buai*, "to be, live, exist, stay."<sup>9</sup> This interpretation of the *ku/kembú*

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nose tallies with the view of the "female" nature of the house/canoe constellation though I would prefer to speak in terms of a *ku* concept with *ke* qualities rather than use anthropomorphic terminology.

The human nose is also referred to as *kembú*. The Emberá seem to argue that man, independent of gender, has a *me* ("penis") in the mouth and a *ke* ("vagina") in the nose, which carry out an identical purpose in the cosmic face of man.

The human face may then seem to present a cosmic binary opposition of male and female, where the "river penis" of *drua* soars towards the "celestial vagina" of *utare*, in compliance with the inverted relationship of the dual cosmos. However, such a supposition misdirects the analysis of the *me/ke* relationship, the terms of which belong to two different cosmic realms. Any such construction deviates from the strict logic of our model of a cosmic inverted parallelism as cosmos by definition is self-contained. The dualism of the Emberá cosmology must not lead us astray; if there is a *me* concept generated in the *drua* cosmos (represented by the human tongue and the *domé* stairway, respectively), then there should be a *me* in the *utare* cosmos in the same way as the *kembú* concept in the "nose" of *utare* implies an analogous *kembú* which we already have identified in the shape and essence of the canoe of the *drua* river world.

The *drua* cosmos of the human body tells us to consider the *ju* breast as an analogous *ku* concept which "eats through smelling," an act demonstrated by its *jua* materialised principle. Consequently, the *ju* breast is also a *kembú* with "vaginal" qualities. In fact, the linguistic "manual" of the *drua* body reminds us of the analogous relationship between the *ju* breast and the facial *kembú* nose through a synonymous term for "nipple," *jukembú*. The *ju* principle made physical indicates the same faculty in the morphology of the cutting hand, where the point of the *neko* concept (the "knife") is seen as *neko kembú*.

Obviously, the Emberá argue that the nose in man's face is a vaginal organ which extracts and consumes by smelling. Its eating faculty is described as "cutting" and similar ways of "opening up" with its "teeth." This conclusion, however, must also be considered in the perspective of "man as cosmos." Cosmos is then distinguished by a *ku* principle with vaginal properties which consumes by cutting with its "teeth."

Since *koi*-eating, also performed by the mouth, is similar to "smelling" or "inhaling," the Emberá term for "smelling," with reference to the human nose, is instructive. This act is expressed as *ui* and, interestingly enough, a secondary meaning of this term is precisely "to sow," i.e. to make new life possible, in accordance with the cosmic function of the *ke* nature of the nose.

I claim that the principle of the consuming property of the *ke* concept is inscribed in the acting hand of man. Then what happens when the hunter in his "sexual" relation to the animal kills his game? Again, myth gives us the clue.

In the story about Ventura's experiences in the riverine underworld (Pardo 1984:175-193), one thematic context recurs: the hunt for peccaries and abduction into the river's depths. Three times Ventura goes hunting for peccaries; three times he is abducted by his spirit enemy and dragged down into the river. The connection between the peccary hunt and Ventura's unintentional visits to the riverine world of *drua* is obvious; one act leads to the other. In *drua* he meets the Mother of Peccaries, who calls the puzzled Ventura's attention to the fact that he has made her pregnant with his thought. The myth-teller stresses this point to the listener by making Ventura express his doubts, "When did I live with that woman to make her mine?" (Pardo 1984:183) encouraging us to find the answer ourselves in the structure of the myth.

It is quite evident that Ventura's killing of the peccary has resulted in the pregnancy of the Mother of Peccaries as a consequence of his *kenaya* relation to the quarry. But how can she become pregnant if the hand of the hunter is the consuming "vagina"?

Travelling with Ventura down the river to its headwaters (the riverine world is the inverse of our own) and back again, the attentive listener to the myth is gradually initiated into the situation. Ventura's journey is a graphic description of his *ka* metamorphosis of closing his eyes and looking inwards in his thoughts, because the transfer along the river takes place within himself. The metamorphosis which befalls Ventura is explained in two ways, either by means of the metaphor of the human body where Ventura loses himself down his own cosmic *ochirú* throat to enter the materialised principle of the "dual river" in his *drua* chest or by means of the contextual phraseology of the myth which describes the same event in terms of an abduction into the river outside Ventura's house. Ventura descends along his own bodily river which, through his *ka* metamorphosis, turns into a non-dimensional voyage in the *drua* cosmos.

Ventura's action of killing the peccary causes his own *ka* metamorphosis, *as if he were killing himself*. When he brings down the game, his "vaginal" hand extracts the essence, "that which is peccary," out of the animal. This essence is transferred along his arm and across the bridge of *ka* into the *potopotoa* cosmic "lungs" of *drua* where the Mother of Peccaries becomes pregnant.

As a matter of fact, it is Ventura who becomes pregnant and, what is more,

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he becomes pregnant with himself; he becomes father of the child whom the Mother of Peccaries begets in the cosmic river of his *drua* chest. By killing the peccary Ventura has consummated a sexual act of which he himself is victim. Trusting in what we see, we believe that the hunter kills the peccary but the myth reveals the true outcome of the *kenaya* confrontation: Ventura the peccary kills Ventura the hunter! Ventura the hunter dies but his death becomes simultaneously a transformation into new life. By way of his metamorphic voyage within himself he meets with his pregnant ego, the Mother of Peccaries; life is recycled and Ventura rejoins the world of humans.<sup>10</sup>

Later, I will resume the discussion of the principle of the fertilizing hand and the pregnant condition of the cosmic body of man. There are other subjects which must be elucidated before the consequences of cosmic conception can be understood and accepted.

# 23

## THE TOOTHED VAGINA

The problem of the smelling faculty of the *koi*-eating human mouth is still before us. What does the Jerupotouarra myth say? Do the people of the river world have a nose or a mouth or both? Actually, the myth never states that they smell with a nose and one version of the myth even makes clear that they do have a mouth and yet only smell the food: "You have a mouth so why don't you eat?" (Betania, 1964:50). This is also what the Emberá claim when they insist that the mouth is a *koi*-working device.

The mouth has indeed one thing in common with all other "vaginal" organs that appear on the cosmic body of man -- it has teeth. What is more, it has tangible "real" teeth which the *ju/ku* set of "noses" lacks.

The chewing of the teeth cuts the food and the *drua* body has already shown us what this cutting implies: the extraction and inhalation of the *ne* essence from the matter cut, entering the vaginal organ described as *ju/ku* via its cutting "tooth."

Knowing that eating/smelling is obtained by cutting, we can assume that the teeth have a decisive role in making the *ju/ku* vaginal concept operate properly. The Emberá confirm this by pointing at the human mouth and designating its cutting teeth as *kidá*, which I consider to be derived from the two morphemes of *ke* and *ta*, combined to give "vagina- seed/fruit," *ke-tá*, in accordance with the other *-tá* derivations (v.g. *betá*, *pidá*, *netá*) discussed earlier. The *kidá* tooth is thus the physical manifestation or "germination" in the human face of the *ke* principle which operates in the cosmic *dru* mind.

It is a deceptive and even erroneous deduction to translate the *kidá* point or edge of cutting tools as their "tooth" or to consider the banks of the river as the "teeth" of the river. The concept of "teeth" is meaningless for the Emberá, *including the teeth of the mouth*. The part of the body that we regard as "tooth" is precisely what the Emberá declare it to be -- *kidá*, "vagina seed" (*ke-ta*), the tangible manifestation of a concept.

The vaginal property of human teeth is an essential principle in Emberá cosmology and ontology. I also suggest that the vaginal nature of teeth, "the tooth as vagina," is a belief that is shared by many other native societies in

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the Americas where teeth play a prominent role in material culture, oral tradition, and ritual context.

Considering its *koi*-eating feature, the mouth fits the traditional description of a "vagina dentata" with the proviso that, in this case, it is not the female vagina that is dentated but the human mouth - which might seem redundant enough. The concept known as *vagina dentata* usually refers to the condition of mythic time when the vaginas of particular female beings or of women in general were dentated and therefore fatal to men who ventured to have sex. The Emberá, however, do not refer to a female "dentated" vagina but to a mouth regarded as a vagina *due to its teeth*. The "oddity" in the *vagina dentata* motif does not come with its teeth but with its character as (toothed) mouth made vagina. The traditional interpretation of the *vagina dentata* implies that the teeth play a negative and destructive role, threatening and "eating" the male organ that ventures on coming close. For the Emberá, the teeth contain the very essence that makes the mouth a vagina; the destructive *vagina dentata* is replaced by the constructive *dens vaginata*, the vaginal tooth which cuts old life into new. In this light, the original tenor of the prevalent *vagina dentata* motif in American mythology may be worth re-examination.

Focusing on Emberá cosmology, however, an important addendum must be made. For man as cosmos, the mouth is not a metaphor or a "symbol" for the female vagina, it *is* the vagina. What is more, the mouth is also a "male" vagina, deciphered in the physiognomy of the *utare* cosmos, the face of man.

For the Emberá the wide-open mouth of man describes a circle of *kidá* vaginas surrounding a central *me* "penis," the *kiramé* tongue. The vaginal *ke* circle around a *me* centre is a cornerstone in Emberá cosmology and the primary structure from which the Emberá ideology of human reproduction and cosmic endurance is construed.

The human mouth defined as a vagina or more correctly, as an opening circumscribed by a vaginal perimetre which harbours a male organ, is a motif which is referred to explicitly in Emberá mythology. I have earlier suggested that the *Domikó* "family" name refers to the eating of the *domé* river penis, now confirmed by the significance of the *ko* principle. Female beings who consume or are forced to eat the male organ of Emberá prisoners is a well-known motif in myths describing conditions and events that take place in the riverine world or among the mythic *burumiá* and *bibidi gomia* peoples (Chaves 1945:156,157; Nocións 1929:96).

The sinister mythic female who eats the male organ of abducted Emberá fishermen or hunters is usually described as an "old woman," *vieja* in Spanish. Her true nature is fishy enough; she is not a human but the fatal

"fish woman" among the piscine people of the aquatic *drua*. Her origin can be traced through linguistic manipulation: Two species of fish are called *vieja* in local Spanish in deference to the Emberá terms: one is *mekorábeta* and the other *michopa*, both essentially meaning "penis eater fish." Does the Spanish version of the myth intentionally miss the point to trick us into believing that the sinister character is an old woman? Perhaps we are only unable to read the message: the fish people are not women, but they do possess a female essence.

Yet, these references do not make clear the significance of the vaginal mouth sheltering the *me* penis. I have found but one context in the mythological material retold by Floresmiro Dogirama which I consider to render a complete description of this motif in brief but explicit terms. I will quote this portion of the myth in full as I find it to constitute the core of Emberá thought and to illustrate the central principle of their cosmology.

The story, called "*jaibaná* thunder," centres on the confrontations between an Emberá youth and his mythic opponents in *druara*, the true world. The final test is the meeting with *Uera Torró*, the White Lady.

Within a week he went to the woods again; he was walking behind the house. The path steep like this. Over there, quite on high, they say there was in a cleared spot, in a sandy ground, a white woman sitting, a white Indian woman, naked, stark-naked, she had her thing big, which she made look, you know.

"Don't you want?" she said to him.

"Well, I will eat her now," he thought.

"You will give me?"

"Well of course, man. But let us now play first."

So he desired to take her but she did not let him.

"I can't," they say she said.

Anyhow, he tumbled her down but she said:

"I can't. Well, if you insist, let's do it."

When he was on top, he entered and when he was going to give her, he feels, in a hole in the ground! There he had put it, where is the woman? She disappeared.

Now he really was frightened.

"I'm going home."

He picked up his things and further on when he already was coming here, there she was sitting, on top of an old log. They say she was laughing there.

"What happened?"

"Man, why did you do like that to me, why did you leave me like that?"

There they were chatting for a while anew, they remained chatting and once again he said to her, "Let me do it."

"Very well, now I really will let you do it."



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And he also tumbled her down, he mounted on top of her, well, he put it in and when he now was doing it, when he feels, placed into an old log! Where is that woman?

When, closer to here, he was already coming to the house. He arrived and there she was.

"Now I will not do anything any longer because you do not give me anything."

"Now I will truly give you. But if you believe, you will stay well, or if not then you will get along bad."

"Well then, why should I not believe."

"Will you believe in my word?"

"I do believe you. So how will I do then?"

"Now when you introduce it, just do it once, and when I tell you, remove it and you make it bite your thing in my mouth. Then if you eat, it is good; if you don't, then it is bad."

"It's all right."

"You will do like this to me?"

"Yes I will."

"That's fine."

So then he surely gave her. Now he pushed and pushed and pushed and very soon [she said,] "That's enough, remove it."

How could he remove? And now he really began to eat. When suddenly she was laughing, when she guffawed he saw it in the mouth, it was coming out of the mouth. It was coming out of the mouth. Ayy, now, all of a sudden she disappeared. Whoops! He was left with an immense thing! Now he was really done for. How can he possibly put it into his loincloth, poor thing! So then he threw it across his shoulder and left for the outside (Pardo 1984:148-150).

The lines above are replete with vital information for any Emberá listener acquainted with the basic principles of native thought. I will refer to various statements in this text later on but here I will only examine the final passage of the story which presents us with the formation of the principle of the *me* tongue inside the *ke* mouth. In his third attempt to have sex with the wilful woman, the man is instructed to insert his member until it appears in the open mouth of the laughing woman. When he finally removes his organ it has grown to enormous proportions.

In order to understand what really happens we will have to take our bearings first. We are told that the man leaves his house from the rear which is the way of the myth to stress an upward direction, confirmed by the phrase, "The path steep." The human traveller is actually heading for the sky world where the celestial female being, *Uera Torró* or "white woman" sits "on high." We know that subsequent actions take place in the *utare* cosmos

and, consequently, in the human head as well.

The man has failed twice to have sex with the woman because he has tried to do it in the traditional way despite her objections, telling him that she "cannot." He must do it correctly so she instructs him, "Now I will truly give you. But if you believe you will stay well, or if you do not then you will get along bad. Will you believe in my word?"

In the myth the woman directs herself to her partner but the message is meant for us all: listen carefully and have faith, because this is the order of things in the universe. The principal precept is given in a few but fundamental words: "Now, when you introduce it, just do it once."

By this imperative we are told that the cosmic order is based on the sexual union between male and female, not as a process but as a permanent condition. Cosmos is made up of the perpetual fusion of its binary halves, the male body and the female body. Sexual intercourse per se between man and woman is unproductive; only when this binarity is invalidated by merging into cosmic oneness can the subsequent act which leads to conception and initiates the creative process of cosmos take place.

Again, the *drua* cosmos of the human body as operative device demonstrates for us the indispensable *process of unification* of its complementary halves, the "male" and "female." On the other hand, *the image of the unified cosmos* is given in the structure and physiognomy of the cosmic head and face of man, focusing on the context of the *me* penis constantly located inside the *ke* vaginal mouth. Here we are presented with the very foundation of cosmic conception and reproduction.

Sexual intercourse as an infinite condition and prerequisite for cosmic conception is confirmed by another brief passage from myth, supposedly dealing with the consequences of incestuous relations:

In Gioró there was a couple, brother and sister, who were living as if they were married. Caragabí punished them by leaving them in the infamous act without being able to detach themselves and the day they do the world will come to an end (Nociones 1929:101).

I suspect that the missionary who took down this mythic event grossly misread its original meaning. The contradiction is evident: the sin for which they are punished turns out to be the salvation of the world! Of course, this interesting passage, relieved of any token of missionary zeal, explicitly repeats the prime prerequisite of existence: cosmic oneness from everlasting sexual fusion, because "the day they detach themselves the world will come to an end."

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The created union of male and female entails the completion of a cosmic structure in architectural terms which the alert reader might already have observed. Two pairs of *obedé* scapulae are brought together into the four-piece roof of the inverted cosmic house sheltering the *potopotoa* cosmos in the chest of binary man. This structure gives the first sign of the basic principle of the quadruple in Emberá thought.

A model of cosmos based on a structure of perpetual sexual fusion -- "the male sex enclosed by the female sex" -- and the elimination of gender in the process of fertilization and reproduction elicit an identification of alternative principles of conception and creation. The fundamental issue that opens our analysis is the search for the *materia prima* of the Emberá cosmos: What is man himself made of?

# 24

## FOOD AND FAECES

The specific nature ascribed to the human mouth in Emberá thought has far-reaching consequences for our interpretation of the morphological arrangement of a cosmos that is embodied in physical man. How can the digestive system of man turn "cosmic" and what is "food" to man as cosmos?

In order to understand the intrinsic function of food in Emberá ontology, it is necessary to establish the identity of the beings with whom humans are confronted in the mythological river world. Conceptions among modern informants are sometimes bewildering and contradictory on this matter. The most common name for these subterranean beings is *chiábera* or its related forms *chiaperara*, *zhábeda*, *chiábena*, *yábea*, etc., but their identity is ambiguous. Occasionally, the people of the river world who lack anuses and who only smell the steam of cooked food are also described as *chiábera* or *chambera* (Kane 1986:594,601). In general, however, the *chiábera* are distinguished from the people without anuses who are then described as *amókarra*. I was explicitly told by Emberá informants that *chiábera* and *amókarra* are different peoples; *amókarra* smell the food and cannot defecate properly while *chiábera* are "like us." In some regions, *dojurá* ("river enemy") is used synonymously for *amókarra* (Vasco 1978:425-26).

On the basis of Emberá myth and idiom my interpretation of this conceptual "confusion" is as follows. *Chiábera* and *amókarra* are two different kinds of beings and yet the same because their respective characteristics describe two different aspects of cosmic man or any human. In accordance with Emberá ontological premises, man is both a *chiábera* and an *amókarra* being. Both of these categories are said to live in the same world of beyond, ruled by the god, Tutruiká, who is described as a *chiábera* (*yábea*) himself, despite the fact that his "lands" are those of the *amókarra* (Santa Teresa 1924:1,11; Betania 1964:50).

*Chiábera* describes the physical aspect of man as contrasted to his essential nature in the true world, represented by the *koi*-eating *amókarra* people. *Chiábera* are also described as "contemporaries" (*contemporáneos*)

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to humans. The *dojurá* people who only smell their food but who nevertheless are like Emberá (Urbina 1978:407) address their human visitors by calling them *chiábera*, *chiábena* (Vasco 1978:425-26) or *chiápea* (Pardo 1984:127-8). But how is this cosmic scenery staged in Emberá thoughts on food and man?

For the Emberá "food" of any kind is *chiko* from which the verb *chikoi*, "to eat," is also derived. If *koi* is "eating by smelling" then that which is consumed is *chi*, irrespective of the kind of food involved. "Meat," however, is *chiara*, "true/fine *chi*," or *chichi*, which makes it *chi* par excellence.

*Chi* appears as a morpheme in a great number of composite words in the Emberá language. *Chi* alone has the very specific meaning of "flatus," which seems anything but palatable. All the same, it is a phenomenon which is recognized by smell alone so, in a way, it matches the *koi*-eating concept. Furthermore, the direct association between excrement and food is richly referred to in myth.

In the different versions of the Jerupotouarra tale we are told that the food is eaten by smelling its steam in the riverine world below but we also know what becomes of the food that has been smelled. The people find Jerupotouarra disgusting when he eats the food that has been smelled because smelled food is faeces (*a*) in *drua*: "They offered him food and the sun smelled it and afterwards he threw it to the backyard; the people of the house did the same; only BP (Buro-poto) ate it with his mouth. In that land of below, everybody just smelled the food and then they threw it away, because they thought that the food which already had been smelled had turned into faeces. For this reason, BP had plenty of food, he just picked it up from the backyard or the banks of the river" (Isaza Bravo 1987:130). According to another version of the same myth, "the old man came forward to eat and they told him, 'that's our faeces'" (Loteró Villa 1977:31).

In consequence, when humans eat (*chi-koi*), they inhale the *chi* into their *kidá* vaginal teeth and by doing so, they transform the masticated foodstuff into "faeces" or *a*. In other terms, *chi* is transformed into *chiá* (*chi-a*) which goes down the throat. In this image, transferred to the cosmic realm of the human body, *chiábera* are the people who receive the *koi*-eaten and thus "smelled" food which descends along the gullet of cosmic man by then transformed into "faeces." This is an inversion of man's situation and behaviour in our world.

But *a* excrement is also related to the people in *drua* who explain that they are the sons of their human visitors "because we come from your own body" (Pardo 1984:212). In fact, the name of the people reveals that they are made of *chiá*, because they are *chiábera*.

The *drua* world is the materialisation (*a*) of the principles which make up the cosmic mind of *dru*; hence, their inhabitants ought to be described in terms of matter as well. As *chiábera* they are *chiá berá*, "chiá people." In that way the difference between humans and the materialised aspect of man is distinguished. What is *em-berá* in our world is *chiá-berá* in the riverine world.

As the *drua* riverine world is the inverse of our own, its inhabitants consider the *chiá* "faeces" as, in fact, coming up from below. *Chiá* is born out of the opposite river as are both humans and fish in our world. That which goes down the throat as *chiá* to be born as *chiábera* in the *drua* world is a demonstration of man's birth out of the *a* river; therefore, *toya* means both "to be born" and "to consume/to drink" in Emberá language. Consuming *chiá* is the way of the cosmic body to demonstrate the principle of physical man's birth out of the river.

When the Emberá associate the *chiábera* beings with *chiá* "faeces," they emphasize that man in his appearance as a physical being in this world is to be regarded as dead matter. Physical man is an *a* being and an anthropomorphic *betá* "fish" which, leaving its aquatic abode, is bound to die as are the people of the river world when Jerupotouarra pierce their closed anus to make them defecate. The faeces-like and "dead" nature of physical man is confirmed by the reaction of the *dojurá* beings to their human visitors. The *dojurá* ask them not to come close because they smell badly, like the rotten flesh of dead people (Pardo, 1984:212).

The *dojurá* declare that humans eat "faeces." This assertion is paralleled by the mythic statement that masticated *chi* turns into "faeces." Analogously, the *chiábera* in the *drua* chest of man also eat "faeces." Thus, *emberá* also have a *chia-berá* nature.

This parallel is also evident in Emberá terminology and actual behaviour. The attitude of the Emberá toward urine and faeces is natural and uncomplicated, devoid of the lavatory humour of our western society. The Emberá make their practice of defecating in the river almost a social event (Otero 1952:121) in a ritual context shared with the mythical beings of the world below.

The faecal waste of humans is usually eaten by various species of fish, such as *toá*, "river excrement" (*sabaleta*; *Brycon* sp.) or *amá*, "the excrement" (*sardina*, *Hemibrycon dariensis*). Fish have an *a* nature which is shared with other foodstuffs growing at the river's edge, such as the maize crop, *bea* (*be-a*), chontaduro palms, *jea* (*je-a*, "faeces of *je*"), or kidney beans, *kaa*, (*ka-a*). So, when the fish people eat our faeces our dismay is a reflection of *dojurá*'s feelings when they see us eat *a* food in the *drua* world.

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When man defecates in the river he is showing that the food smelled by the *dojurá* inside his cosmic body really turns into dead *a* faeces when it leaves the boundaries of his bodily *drua* and comes out in our world. What the human visitor thought was food in *drua* has now really become *a* faeces; by defecating into the river he deposits this *a* matter into the river's mouth of the *chiábera* underworld and the pattern is repeated. When the *dojurá* have smelled their food they throw it away as faeces down into the backyard and the riverside, where it becomes our growing crops. When humans have eaten their food they throw it away exactly in the same way by defecating *a* faeces on the riverside and into the river.

For the Emberá of this world, the "excrement" of the *dojurá* is thrown or produced "upwards" in the form of the crops growing along the river banks just as the *chiábera* "food" of human faeces is in the inverted perspective of the *drua* riverine world. The smelled food of the *dojurá* which they see descending as "excrement" is the maize and chontaduro ascending as food for *chiábera* humans. Likewise, the masticated "food" of humans descending as "faeces" in the throat is the "food" ascending for the *chiábera* in the cosmic body of man. The fish and the crops coming up from the river's "anus" are equivalent to the faecal matter deposited by man in the river. Defecation becomes analogous to supply of food -- and to birth.

At this juncture, it may be worthwhile to recall the function and meaning of the *ampuru* (*ompuru*) basket which, as a metaphorical anus, delivers fish and maize in a state of faeces. Described in myth as well, the fish and maize are explicitly defecated out of the *drua* world, neatly represented in the shape and position of the *ompuru* basket of cosmic man.

Food, however, is nothing but the matter consumed by the "oral vagina," so that which is "eaten" is actually consumed by the *kidá* mouth and reborn as a being. The *chiá* "excrement" (i.e. the masticated food) enters the *drua* of the human body where it is born as a *chiá* being, as the principle of created man made matter (*chiábera*) which stays alive as long as he remains in his materia world but dies if he leaves it. This is demonstrated by the human act of defecating "dead" *a* matter or by Jerupotouarra's fatal failure to supply the *chiábera* with an anus.

When the fish people eat the excrement which humans deposit in the river mouth it is reborn as a *chiá berá* or an Emberá in material guise; likewise, when humans eat *a* food it goes down the throat to be born a *chiá berá* or an Emberá "child" in the *drua* world. According to this logic, when man defecates into the vaginal mouth of the river he brings a child into the world. There is a remarkable parallel among the Tucanoan-speaking Barasana of the northwestern Amazon who say that "a man going to shit is 'depositing his

daughter" (C Hugh-Jones 1977:204). According to Emberá thought, this is exactly what happens since the materialised nature of man is represented by his femaleness, his female "cover." Defecating into the *drua* river thus engenders the female aspect of man, visualized as his "daughter."

The act of defecating into the river could, in fact, be described in terms of a sexual intercourse performed between one anus and another. A myth recorded by Nordenskiöld in 1927 describes the encounter between the jaguar and the armadillo:

The jaguar came across the armadillo and told him that he wanted to eat as he was very hungry. So the armadillo said, 'Sorry uncle, my shell is hard.' The armadillo wanted to try the anus of the jaguar. So the jaguar stood on all fours and the armadillo did not introduce his male organ. He thrust his ass into the anus of the jaguar and introduced it completely. The jaguar gave a scream and the armadillo removed his ass and went into the water. (Wassén, 1933:115-116).

This story is interesting for various reasons. "Armadillo" is *tro* or *troa* and "ass" is *dru*, both obvious variants of the *dru/drua* concept, while the term for "jaguar," *imamá*, suggests that it is related to the *e/i* concept. Thus, the complete penetration of the ass (*dru*) of the armadillo (*tro/troa*) into the anus of the jaguar (*i*) illustrates the process that shapes the cosmic structure of the *dru/drua* world inside the *e* cover, recognized in the physiology of cosmic man. The continuation of the myth implies that the sexual act leads to the primeval creation of women, who are discovered by the armadillo as a consequence of its penetration down into the river and through the earth from the San Juan river to the Baudó river. On a different level, this act may be seen to repeat the sexual penetration of the body of the jaguar. The story also clearly associates eating with sex; the hunger of the jaguar is satisfied with sex instead of food because the "food" constitutes that which the jaguar consumes in his mouth-anus: the ass of the armadillo.

In brief terms, the contact between the two anal openings ends in the discovery of women in the world, very much in keeping with the consequences of man's defecating into the river's "anus," described above.

The wooden seat of the shaman, often carved in the shape of an armadillo, is called *ambugué*, which I interpret as *ambú-ké*, "the vagina of the rectum." The shaman sits on the seat with his buttocks and as "buttocks" are *ankidá*, "the *kidá* of *a*," one *a-kidá* joins another *a-kidá* (the *ambú-ké* seat). In consideration of what has been argued above, this term explicitly expresses the crucial role of the shaman's seat in ritual contexts where intercosmic communication is bound to take place. The *ambugué* seat is a concrete



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manifestation of a cosmic principle which the myth expresses figuratively in terms of a jaguar-armadillo encounter.

The etymology of the verb for "to defecate," *anggai*, seems to indicate the same process. The verb *ggai* is translated by Pinto as "to bury" and if so, *a-nggai* would be "to bury faeces." However, *betaggai* means "to catch fish" and thus also, literally, "to bury fish" which is true in the inverted perspective of the *drua* river cosmos where the fish people would be "buried" in an upward direction from our point of view. In both cases it is a matter of going from one cosmic realm to another, a faculty which is described in terms of a *ka* metamorphosis, a way of "dying." Thus, I read *anggai* as *a-n-kai*, or "to *ka*-transform the *a* excrement," i.e. to change it into a "living matter" by depositing it into the river to create a "daughter." Remember that "daughter" is *kau*, "the way of metamorphosis" (*ka-o*). A synonym for "buttocks" seems to confirm this transformation of dead matter into a seed of life, as *andaú* would be "the Way of the *a*-seed" or actually, "eyes of excrement" (*a-daiú*). Hereby, man's *ampurú* anus, in terms of a "head" (*a-ború*) with "teeth" (*a-kidá*) and "eyes" (*a-daiú*), assumes the aspect of a "vaginal face" which procreates "anthropomorphized" faeces.

While man essentially is both mind and matter or, in existential terms, both a *dojurá* and a *chiábera* being, the manual of his cosmic body demonstrates the separate functions and natures of these two categories. The invisible *dojurá* people roam in the true world of the river and its anthropomorphous parallel, the pulmonary world of *potopoto*, while the *chiábera* are located at a lower level, below that of the *dojurá*, as an informant explained. Transferred to the metaphor of the human body, the *chiábera* belong to the digestive "world" which processes food (not to say themselves) into the dead matter of faeces (*a*) and urine (*sia* or *chia*) while manifesting the true *chi* "food" as the smellable and audible "steam" of winds (*chi*). All of these secretory products of the human body can actually be shown to play purposeful roles in Emberá cosmology and myth.

As a cosmic phenomenon, the river is supplied with one big opening which is at the same time mouth, vagina, and anus. This physical complexity is often referred to in myth but it is nevertheless hard to understand. A good example of this confusion is found in a myth published by Kane. "Je's anus is where the mouth is. And thus there, making a noise. That was the mouth. Where it's closed, that's the mouth. Thus there, the anus is, where it's closed. The sound, there where the mouth was" (1986:603). The problem lies in the difficulty of distinguishing between the river and the metaphor of the human body. The river opening, whether "vagina," "anus" or "mouth," is separated into these three functional openings on the human body, which constitutes

the phenomenal manual needed to comprehend the principles which reign in cosmos. In the end, the Emberá cosmos has only one opening but we need the human body of *drua* ("the materialisation of an intention") to understand the complex processes that take place therein. This is the reason why the river is sometimes described in terms of a vagina, sometimes an anus, and sometimes a mouth. Step by step, it is possible to reconstruct a contextual focus into which the human acts of defecating, eating, and engendering merge as one single process: the regeneration of cosmos and reproduction of cosmic man.

# 25

## THE FACE OF COSMOS

*Chiá* is the matter from which man is composed as a physical being. As a visible and tangible substance, *chiá* is the residue of masticated *chi* that has been transformed into "faeces," as *a* of *chi*. *Chiá* descends the throat of man to beget the *chiaperara* in his cosmic body; *chiá* represents the material, physical aspect of *emberá* beings, that which "dies" as the fish dies when it leaves its riverine cosmos. For the *Emberá*, the physical birth of man signifies his transformation into putrefied matter, into his formation as one of the living dead.

*Chi* is the "essence" of the food that is masticated by the vaginal *kidá* teeth. *Chi* has the specific meaning of "flatus." As such, it is produced by the *drua* body and describes in material terms the existence and character of the *chi* concept. Unlike the *chiá* matter, flatus is invisible and untouchable and yet may be identified through its odour and sound. The *drua* body demonstrates in technical terms the aspect of *chi* and the way it differs from its waste product, *chiá*. But the *chi* concept as it appears in the cosmic mind of *dru*, represented in the cosmos of the human head, is unperceivable; we cannot perceive the *chi* essence enter the vaginal teeth, but we know it is there as a consequence of the process demonstrated by its *drua* analogue. The concept of *chi* is not described in terms of a "spiritual" element or "soul," it is "metaphysical flesh," a volume of essence, with which man is filled and replenished as a created being.

While the "excrement" of the masticated and "smelled" *chiko* food descends in the throat to beget the *chiaperara* in the cosmic body, *chi* itself enters the *kidá* vaginal tooth to fertilize the cosmic *dru* mind.

The *chi* essence is imagined to enter the *kidá* vagina through a minute and invisible "hole." The aspect of the *kidá* teeth as numerous minute vaginas corresponds to the description of female beings in the world beyond whose faces are full of holes. They are described as having "a face as a sieve, the face full of holes, covered with hair" (Guardia 1976:170-171).

The *Emberá* express "hole, cavity" as *chirú*, a word also used for the carrizo or guadua grass and found in one of the terms for the human throat

(*o-chirú*). But *chirú* appears in various other conceptual disguises, one of which is mentioned in the myth about Ventura.

The woman who is made pregnant with Ventura's thought in the river world explains to him the second time they meet, "Look brother, you made me pregnant just with your thought the first time you were here, so your woman down there treated me as an old woman, as I have tick on my face" (Pardo 1984:183). The word "tick" is here a paraphrase for the vaginal hole in the human face. "Tick" is *chitu*, a variant pronunciation of *chirú/chido*, "river of *chi*." The tick is an apt metaphor for the *chirú* hole which "sucks" the essence out of food. Ventura the hunter has been "eaten" by the female Master of the Peccaries who is dwelling in his *drua* chest; thus, she has *koi*-eaten Ventura's *chi* essence into her facial vagina and become pregnant by him. What the woman actually tells Ventura is that she has "eaten" his *chi*, which makes her an old woman ("vieja," *mekorabeta*, "penis eater fish"), and she has inhaled Ventura's *chi* into her vaginal "hole," imaged as the sucking tick, which makes it a streaming "river" of *chi*: *chitú*.<sup>11</sup>

*Chirú* and its variant pronunciations refer to a wide range of phenomena, including "hole, cavity, throat, conch, tick, guadua, trough," and "fury." These phenomena have one thing in common, they refer to a "river of *chi*," in the imaginary world of the Emberá. *Chirú* as "throat" or "trough" seems plausible with reference to food and its *chi* nature. Later, I will argue that the *kanchirú* blowing instrument, used by the shaman, and even the abstraction of "fury" evoke the same image of flowing *chi*.

When the Master of the Peccaries tells Ventura that she has *chitú* in her face, she refers to her face as a *ke* vagina. Like the *kidá* teeth, her face is all a *chitú*, a "river of *chi*," and so, in fact, is every human face.

Again, the significance of a concept is disguised in its term. The Emberá say that "face" is *kirá*, which I consider an alternative way of pronouncing *ke-tá* (*kidá*). The face as vagina is regarded as *chirú*, a river of *chi*, made up of an infinite number of small holes. One comprehensive *chirú* "tick" or "trough" stands to numerous *chirú* "holes" as one comprehensive *ke-tá* "face" stands to numerous *ke-tá* "teeth."

The physiognomy of the cosmic "face" differs considerably from our own. The true *kirá* face emerges out of the mythical context, the decorated body of physical man and Emberá terminology read between the lines. The cosmic vaginal "face" is a conical structure which is perforated with small holes and covered with streaming hair or fibres; the mythical women are provided "with long hair which falls over the face, making it possible to see but its shape which is as a sieve" (Guardia 1976:171). This *kirá* "face" which man shares with his own cosmos becomes real in moments of ritual time directed

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by the *jaibaná* mediator.

The concept of the *kidá* vagina, whether seen as "cutting edge," "tooth" or "face," is a fundamental principle in Emberá ontology. The essential significance is hidden in the mythic idiom and the body graphics of *drua* but cosmic man also transforms this principle of the *kidá/kirá* vagina into an object which can be described as "the face of the hole."

This object concretizes the appearance of the "face of the hole" but also explains its function so that we can see that which runs as a "river of *chi*" through its hole, that invisible substance in the *dru* cosmos of divine intention which makes man come into being.

The "face of the hole" is rendered in the shape and use of the glass bead called *chakira*, "*chiá* face." The glass bead is a very conspicuous and important cultural element among the Emberá and their native neighbours in northwestern Colombia. It is a personal item which is highly valued and carried daily but it also has a ritual value in ceremonial contexts. Normally it is described in terms of a personal embellishment of the body and a commodity much coveted in local trade transactions. The cosmological or ritual value of the beads among the Emberá has never been suggested or commented on, though its presence on festive occasions or in shamanistic performances has been documented.

Today the term *chakira* or *chaquira* is used in Colombia as well as in other Spanish-speaking countries to denote any kind of glass bead. Nowadays, the Emberá themselves usually refer to the beads as *okama* or *kurrujuma* but I consider *chakira* to be Emberá in origin. The first chroniclers attribute the term *chakira* to the native peoples of northwestern Colombia. Oviedo comments that the people of the Urabá coastal area "call these necklaces and things of this kind, *chaquira*" (Oviedo y Valdés, Hist., III, 110), a statement which makes Friederici (1947:171) conclude that the word is of Kuna origin. At the time of Oviedo's observation, around 1526, however, the Kuna were still living to the southwest of the Isthmus and had not yet settled on the Caribbean coast or near the Bay of Urabá. The Spanish soldier, Cieza de León, another eye-witness chronicler, travelled through western Colombia in the 1530's and saw the Indians to the west of Cali use elaborate beadwork. He wrote that "they bring large tied strands of small beads of bone, white and red, which they call *chaquira*" (Cieza de León 1962:99). It can only be concluded that the term *chakira* seems to have originated in a region adjacent to or even inhabited by Emberá-speaking peoples.

On the assumption that the word is of Emberá origin<sup>12</sup>, the bead may be regarded as the "face of *chiá*" or "*chiá ke-tá*," the vaginal hole of *chiá* which consumes and produces *chi*, the life essence of man. Indeed, the bead of

stone, bone, glass or any other hard material ingeniously reproduces the form and function of the perforated *kidá* "tooth," as it is described in mythological contexts.

Body decorations of *chakira* beadwork are profuse on festive occasions when people meet for chicha drinking bouts or for celebrating the marriagable status of girls. However, the myths emphasize the association between the wearing of *chakira* and sexual activity. In the story about Karagabí's unfaithful wife, the god removes his *kai* shirt of illnesses and puts on all his *chakira* decorations as he will join the party with the intention of courting his wife anonymously and making her commit adultery. The sexual role of the *chakira* beads is also manifest in the story which describes the (supposedly) incestuous relation between Karagabí and his sister, in a time when there was only one house in this world, inhabited by an old couple and the two lovers. Karagabí pays nightly calls to the bed of his sister without revealing his true identity until she finally detects him by painting his face black with *kipará* juice. The sexual function of Karagabí's *chakira* beadwork is obvious in the context of this story, "at night he used to dress himself with *chaquiras*, with all the garments that he used, *amburá* [girdle of beads], *cruzadilla* [thick strands of beads crossed over the chest], *bajapelo* [diadem], *manillas* [bracelet], everything. When the old ones were sleeping, he went to the bed of his sister" (Pardo, 1984:35).

The position of beadwork on man is directed by the morphology of the cosmic body. The collar, fastened around the neck, marks the location of the opening of *dokarrá*, the toothed entrance to the *drua* world in the human chest. The heap of *chakira* beads is concentrated to the *drua* chest in the shape of two thick girdles of tens of beaded strands each, and as a broad *amburá* girdle of thousands of beads on the hips.

The collar is often combined with other worked materials which all share a similar sexual connotation, such as seashell which is *pusa kidá* "the *kidá* of the sea," small silver laminae also called "shells" or very hard *chirú-ta* seeds, not to mention a variety of animal teeth. In the collections of the Ethnographical Museum of Göteborg there is a necklace from the Emberá Katío of the San Jorge River which consists of small carved pieces of fragrant wood with a tiny human figure carved in wood which is said to foster fertility in its wearer.

The *chakira* collar is called *kurrujuma* or *kurruma*, a term which is unmistakably similar to one of the words for the grinding stone, *kuruma*. They are both related to the "chewing" that teeth do. The grinding-stone "chews" as do the human teeth and the *chakira* bead, the *kidá* of *chiá*. "Chewing" is expressed as *kai* or *kaya*, i.e., to undergo a *ka* metamorphosis.

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The *chakira* bead "chews" the *chi* essence into rebirth and new life, a faculty which might explain its Emberá name: *okamá*, "the *ka* metamorphosis of the Way."

The riverside is the mythic source where the *chakira* beads are found.<sup>13</sup> A myth, recovered by Nordenskiöld, describes how an Emberá man manages to reach a far-away land at sea inhabited by a small people which probably are the same *chiaperara* of other mythic tales. The human visitor is helped by a pelican that gives him warm chicha to drink after which the man goes to the riverside to gather *chakira* beads, "there were lots of them on the river bank and he managed to fill up a calabash with *chaquirá* and he threw them on his shoulders to take them away" (Wassén 1933:113).

The myth points out the conclusive fact that the man gets the *chiá kidá* beads from the *do kidá* river banks, hereby disclosing the essential nature of beads. The *kidá* "teeth" of the *drua* river (*dokidá*) are analogous to the *kirá* "face" of its *chiaperara* beings (*chiá kirá*). As the perforated "teeth" that eat and smell like the vaginal face of man and the river, the *chakira* beads constitute the very same banks of the cosmic river.

The *chakira* bead shows us what the cosmic vagina looks like but we can also contemplate its function as the vaginal hole which consumes and delivers a flowing stream of *chi* essence. The invisible *chi* essence in the cosmic mind, streaming through the *ke-tá* cosmic "face" and "teeth," is concretized by the function of the *chiákira* beads. *Chi* as cosmic intention is embodied in the thread that runs through the beads in an everlasting circle. "Thread" or "string" is *dchi* for the Emberá, a slight variation in pronunciation of its mother concept, *chi*. The metaphor of "thread" as the essential substance of cosmic man is a basic principle in Emberá cosmology. Consequently, the thread holding the bead necklace together is more important than the beads themselves, for while the beads make the thread, the thread makes life. The ethnographic context of the thread and its metaphoric importance in helping us understand Emberá thought will be examined in chapter 68.

The *chakira* necklace is the materialised principle of the vaginal opening defined as a circle of minute vaginas. This principle recurs on various levels of Emberá cosmology, as shown by the human mouth with its *koi*-eating teeth, by the opening of the cosmic river with its toothed banks or by the *chakira* collar around the "toothed" *okarrá* entrance to the *drua* chest. The multiple strands of *chakira* beads across the human chest repeats the pattern of cosmic conception from the view of the *drua* cosmos.

The "face" and "head" of cosmic man's *ampurú* anus, tentatively

reconstructed in chapter 24, is also supplied with "hair" by means of the presence of *chakira* beads. The broad girdle of beads which used to be carried around the hips by adult men on festive occasions is *amburá* or "a hair" (*a-budá*). The hair is represented by the numerous loops of *dchi* thread "begotten" by the thousands of vaginal beads which compose the *amburá* girdle. Furthermore, in myth it is explicitly revealed that human hair is associated with *dchi* fibre (cf. chapter 49).

The concept of the vaginal face and teeth is also present in the sky world. In the firmament it is represented by the Pleiades which generally are known as *be jasoá*, "maize cob."<sup>14</sup> The maize cob is covered by kernels which make it a *be kirá*, a "face" of maize, interpreted as one huge "face," when referring to the cob as a whole, or as several small "faces," when referring to the kernels of the cob. The alternative name for the Pleiades, *de jomía* or "heaps of houses," leads us to the parallel of the celestial roof and attic of the Emberá house where the *ke-tá* concept is also recognized.

In the mythic tale of Sever and his wars against the vile Kuna enemies, it is mentioned that the hero and his sons used to attach the teeth of their dead enemies around the house: "Sever extracted the teeth from the Kuna, strung them on a thread and hung them around his house" (Santa Teresa 1924:15). As mentioned before, the name of the tension ring of the house confirms this custom for it is known as *de jurá*, "the enemy of the house."

The teeth of dead enemies were usually strung as necklaces (cf chapter 4) but probably also attached to the houses. The modern custom of attaching the jaws and skulls of hunted animals to the tension ring of the house might be a vestige of this practice or belief. The "dental" *ke-tá* nature of the tension ring is also reflected in the term for the attic floor, called *kidapo*, "po flour of *kidá*."

The vaginal "teeth" of the sky world recur also on the cosmic body of man. The cosmic mind is closed to human spectators but the Emberá demonstrate its existence on their bodies. The golden *kumbedé* nose disc is the factual evidence of the cosmic mind beheld in the sky world as well as the celestial head of man. Its round shape renders the vaginal opening of the cosmic mind and its *materia prima* is gold or *ne*, the essence of all things but primarily associated with Karagabí, the sun and the divine maize, residing in the *bedé*, the house of maize. As is the case in the *drua* cosmos, the vaginal opening of the cosmic mind is dentated in the sky world, faithfully depicted in the punctuated *kidá* pattern around the *kumbedé* nose disc.

To sum up, the cosmic opening of the "face" of the *dru* mind, imaged as a circle of vaginal "teeth," is constantly repeated on different levels of perception and physically rendered in a wide range of ethnographic



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situations and artefacts among the Emberá.

# 26

## MALE AND FEMALE FOOD

The vaginal circle of teeth as rendered in the image of the human mouth embraces the *kiramé* tongue, the "me of the *ke-tá*." *Ke* is the "vagina" which encloses *me*, the "penis," as a receptacle which encloses foodstuff. In the cosmological perception of the Emberá, the concept of *ke* takes on this container-like configuration of a vessel containing "food." We have already met this configuration in the conical structure of the Emberá cosmos, as rendered in the appearance of the sky world (whether seen as the firmament, the house roof, the nose disc or the human head) or in its inverted cosmic representation, the river world (whether seen as the river's depths, the giant water snake, the Emberá canoe or the human chest).

These representations of the bowl-shaped cosmos all convey a connotation of a cosmic vagina and womb. The canoe is a womb-like concept which engenders life in the mythical perspective of existence. One example is the mythical motif of the woman who has slept with several men and leaves the residues of her sexual affairs in the canoe (Pardo 1984:224). The maker of the canoe always runs the risk of meeting *Antomiá* when the "Master of Filth" defecates into the canoe (Kane 1986:224), a metaphor for the birth of a physical child when humans cut their *chiampa* "family" with the "spirit penis," the *jaimé* adze. Another case of the reproductive faculty of the uterine canoe is the Emberá fisherman who imbibes sugarcane, *chia-so*, and falls asleep in his canoe, to find upon waking a nice catch of *ampará* fish inside (Pardo 1984:145).

The canoe imitates the nature of the giant *je* water snake which also engenders humans, animals and plants through its vaginal mouth/anus. The *je* water snake has a dentated *ke* opening (the *dokida* riverside) just as its celestial analogue, the *ke* face. It is here suggested that *je* is a variant pronunciation of the *ke* concept because the monstrous *je* snake constitutes the original *ke* vagina of cosmic man. The *je/ke* affiliation is further confirmed by the mythical context where the *je* giant water snake is said to have originated from a small worm called *ki*.

The structure of the unified cosmos described in chapter 23 demonstrates

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the formation of *ke* as a cosmic womb. Cosmos is made up of the perpetual fusion of its binary halves, the male body and the female body. The everlasting condition of the sexual act in myth shapes the binary cosmic womb made from the *drua* chests of man and woman forged together into one. This also implies the junction of two pairs of *poto* cosmic "lungs" into the fourfold structure which denotes the Emberá universe (cf chapter 19). Two pairs of shoulderblades join in a conical form of quadruple character that we recognize in the structure of the Emberá house as well as in the fourfold categorization of beings and events in the mythological world, that I will show later.

In this cosmic amalgamation the binary opposition of male and female is dissolved to be replaced by another, that of the opposing principles of *ke* and *me*, the uterine container on the one hand and its "food," the essence of life, on the other. However, *ke* is as little a "vagina" as *me* is a "penis." Instead of considering these oppositions in terms of gender, the Emberá see them as transitoriness against perpetuity, process as against being, exterior shell as against inner essence.

Both men and women have a "female" cover and a "male" core. In the cosmic union their covers become one, that of the *ke* vagina and the cosmic uterus, while their essential core merges and forms the principle of the binary *me*, the double "male sex", which is characteristic of the cosmic mind of *dru*. Every human being carries a *me* principle, the existence of which manifests itself through the cosmic sexual act as the *kiramé* "tongues," the male sex of the *ke* vagina appearing in the two "faces" of the binary cosmos. The "male" *me* and the "female" *me* brought together compose the principle of the cosmic mind of *dru*, the "dual river."

The cosmic principle of *meme*, the double male sex, is corroborated by the cosmic *ke* embodied in the giant water snake, *je*. The *jepá* snake or the boa constrictor, like any other species of the reptilian order, has two male organs, called hemipenises which, furthermore, Emberá imagery displays in the bifid tongue of snakes. *Je* is indeed *ke* enclosing the double *me* in its cosmic uterus.

The double *me* of the cosmic snake, however, expresses more than the structural outcome of the sexual fusion between man and woman -- two interrelated and analogous *kiramé* tongues. Every human individual, man as well as woman, carries a binary *me* nature which is affiliated to the essence of the double cosmic *poto* "lung" of the *drua* chest. The two lungs of cosmos constitute a basic condition which the boa, as the only reptilian species that has developed two lungs, is suited to represent.

Cosmic man has a right *ju/poto* and a left *ju/poto*. These are related to each

other within each individual as male is related to female. The right *ju* is "male," it is *juara*, "the true *ju*," while the left *ju* is "female," it is *juabí*, "*juá* maize." But it is deceptive to construe this opposition on a gender basis because cosmic man, irrespective of sex, displays the same principle of the binary *me* which is shown in myth to result from the perpetual cosmic fusion. Both men and women have the same dual nature, which is demonstrated by cosmic intercourse when a binary male/female cover of *ke* femaleness encloses a binary male/female principle of *me* maleness, known as *meme*. *Meme*, the principle of the binary *me*, "the double male sex," occurs frequently in Emberá mythology, terminology and ritual context. Just a few examples of its significance will be mentioned here.

The two *me* penises of the giant water snake can be deduced from the name of the "tree of life" which is also the *je* cosmic snake. The energy from the binary *je-ne-ne*, "the double *ne* essence of *je*" is released as a double flow of *chi* transcribed as water in its mythic fall.

The Emberá term for "father" is *sese*, a variant of *sisi* or *chi-chi*, where "father" stands for the true maleness of existence: the double *chi* derivated from the double *me*. It was "Our Father," *Tachi Sese*, who begot Karagabí, also regarded as *sese* and creator of the human world and physical man. *Chichi* is also one of the terms for "meat" which stresses its character as the materialisation of the "metaphysical" flesh of *chichi*, derived from the binary *ne* essence held by the *meme* concept.

The concept of *meme* has even more meanings and manifestations in the Emberá world. It is the name of a palm (in Spanish, *palma*, *chonta*; *Socratea sp*) which has a wide range of applications, practical as well as magical. *Meme* stands also for "uncle" which is the only term of address in Emberá relationship terminology that is used exclusively by female speakers. The corresponding term used by males is *zroa*, a variant pronunciation of *drua*, "world, universe." Among the Emberá Chamí of the upper Atrato basin, *meme* also signifies "friend, companion" (Cayón A. 1980:61) and possibly "male" (Uribe Angel 1885:542) in accordance with the male character of the concept.

The cosmic womb is similar to a receptacle which contains essence or matter described as "food." This "food" has basically two sources; it is *be* food or *me* food. In the first case, it is food related to a wide range of species of "maize" while *me* food is that which is devoured by the female "penis eater."

I suggest that the two concepts of *me* and *be* are analogous expressions of just one basic principle, that which is consumed, molded and delivered by the cosmic womb. In other words, the fusion of these concepts yields the

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principle of life, "that which is in perpetuity," seen as *me* or *be*.

For the Emberá almost any foodstuff has a *be* derivation: beside the great variation of *betá* species of *Zea mays* used in food preparation, there are also other edible plants of the mythological *be* family such as the *begó* avocado fruit (*Persea gratissima* Gaertn. f.) or the *pidá* hot pepper, usually eaten together with maize dishes and associated with maize in myth. Any kind of fish is also *betá* while some species are actually described as *me* beings such as *michopa*, *mekorábeta* (chapter 23), and *mimbú* (chapter 27).

Remarkably enough, most of the quadrupeds and mammals hunted for food also have a *be* nature, such as the white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu pecari spiradens*) which is *bidó*, "maize river," or the collared peccary (*Peccari tajacu bangsii*) which is *bidobe*, "maize of maize river." The brocket deer (*Mazama americana reperticia*) is *bekí*, "maize vagina," and appears also in myth as the cosmic worm (*ki = ke*) used as bait on the celestial fish hook of Thunder Man. The "guagua" or spotted cavy (*Cuniculus paca virgatus*) is *beróara*, "true maize river" and the nutria (*Myocastor coypus bonariensis*) is *ba-bera-ma*. As a matter of fact, many more species of edible animals hold a *be* nature which, however, is usually voiced in an indirect way. In the end, *em-berá* man himself is *be* and *me* food for the cosmic vagina. The mythic female "penis eater" is as much a consumer of *be* food as of *me* genitals.

The association between *me* and *be* is apparent in a remarkable maize ritual which was witnessed by Georg Dahl among the Emberá Katío of the Tarazal River, Northwestern Antioquia (Dahl 1940:120-122). Married women who take part in the ritual are given two maize cobs, holding a cob in each hand, while unmarried women are only given one cob. At the end of the ceremony, the married women eat some of the kernels from the cobs together with their husbands. A woman in the married state is considered to be once and for all fused with her male cosmic partner and therefore possesses of two *me* "male" organs, her own and that of her complementary half, her husband with whom she is integrated.

Finally, it is worth noting that the reptilian nature of maize is documented in native American thought; the suggested analogous relationship between the bifid tongue of snakes and the aspect of the young maize shoot<sup>15</sup> neatly fits the Emberá conception of *be* as *me*.

Maize is related to the sky world, to the sun and to Karagabi, the creator of the world of humans. A local species of maize, *maíz capio*, is *be nembé*, "maize of essence" or "maize of gold." Maize was given to humans by Karagabi's daughter, Dabeiba, and as *utarebema* it is considered to have a celestial nature and to be associated with the creating god himself.

The analogous association between maize, gold and the cosmic water

snake is evident from the description of a 16th century sanctuary in northern Chocó which was said to be dedicated to the golden *jepá* water snake venerated by the cult of Dabaibe.<sup>16</sup> In Emberá terms, the mythic water snake made of gold is also an outright allusion to the double *ne* essence of the reptilian Tree of Life, *je-ne-ne*.

The fact that maize is said to have certain female properties for the Emberá (Dahl 1940:87) while the *me* concept is decidedly male does not seem to conform to my suggestion of an analogous relationship between *me* and *be*. If they are analogous concepts, why is *me* then distinguished from *be*?

*Me* is a principle of the cosmic order which is also found within *be*. In the physical creation of Karagabí, the concepts of *me* and *ke* appear separately as "male" and "female" human beings, respectively, as the embodiment of the process which makes clear the gender fusion of the binary cosmic body. As the principle of "maleness" and "life essence," *me* is the perpetual "intention" of the cosmic mind of *dru*, manifested in the configuration of the *drua* chest of cosmic man. *Be* is the same principle of *me* which is recreated through the intervention of the sky world of Karagabí to reappear as *be kirá* (*be ke-tá*). Through Karagabí's creation, *me* of the cosmic mind is transformed into the "disguise" of maize, or *be*, where the "male" principle of *me* has been supplied with the vaginal "teeth" of its female cover, maize. In other words, *me* wrapped in *ke* has become *be*. This structure, in turn, is also the foundation of the *kidá* concept, rendered in the creation of the "toothed face" of the maize cob, as revealed by its Emberá term, *be kirá*.

If *me* represents the cosmic principle of "maleness," then *be* can be said to symbolize the nature of cosmic man who is beyond any distinction of gender: a male principle of cosmic intention enclosed by its ephemeral female cover. Allocated to the structure of the cosmic body, *me* is the primordial concept which originates in the cosmic mind of the *drua* chest, while *be* is the same concept recreated by Karagabí and thus located in its celestial abode, the house of maize (*bedé*), in the sky world of the human head.

Similarly, in the context of the Emberá habitat, the "river penis" of the *do-mé* stairway ascends from below as the principle of the *me* intention while the celestial maize of the house attic, *utare-bema*, descends from above as its *be* transformation.

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# 27

## MANIPULATING FINGERS

The *chi* essence which makes mankind and this world come into being carries off the *me* principle which is found within its *be* disguise, referred to as "food," *chi-ko*. The contextual compound made up of the concepts of *ke* ("vagina"), *be* ("maize"), *me* ("penis"), *ne* ("gold" or "essence") and *chi* ("metaphysical flesh") is best understood in the light of the conceptual instructions left by the body language of cosmic man. By examining the anatomical idiom of the human hand and studying its pattern of behaviour, Emberá ideas on reproduction of the life process can be reconstructed.

The human hand seen as a concretization of the *ju* principle of cosmic reproduction has been described in chapter 20. The hand absorbs and inhales the "smell" of the vital *ne* essence by its way of cutting or piercing matter, a particular faculty described in terms of a cutting knife and comparable to the function of teeth when chewing and breaking food.

The hand operating as a consuming and engendering device is an aggregate instrument of four or five equal components that concordantly perform the reproductive process of "cutting." These instrumental properties of the vaginal hand are envisioned in the function of the fingers. The fingers operate individually and yet in harmonious accord to express a joint movement or sign or to grasp an alien object for a particular end.

Each finger constitutes separately a vaginal device that bears the *ne* essence of the *me* principle inside. For the Emberá, the "finger" is regarded as *jimini*, which I interpret as *ke-me-ne*. This term expresses the essential significance of the fingers, orchestrating the same principle that is found in the human *kirá* face with the *kira-mé* tongue: a vaginal or uterine cover (*ke*) which embraces the male (*me*) essence (*ne*). With its variative but controlled pattern of movements the fingers of the hand jointly accomplish acts of cosmic intent, consuming *chi* and begetting *chiá* materia, not only imitating the same process performed by the chewing teeth (cf chapter 25) but actually explaining figuratively what happens when "food" is "smelled." Subsequently, the *chi* essence moves through the "entrance" of the *jimini* fingers into the *juapoto* world of the *jua* underarm and from there across the



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"bridge of the Way" (the clavicle) to enter the *drua* cosmos in the human chest.

The separate streams of *chi* essence extracted by the fingers from the "food" join into the principal channel of the vaginal *juá* hand. The position of this main channel of flowing *chi* is indicated by the middle finger. The Emberá call the middle finger *juáso*, which would be interpreted as "the heart of the hand," from *so*: "heart." However, *so* is most probably a variant pronunciation of *chi-ó* (*cho*), the "Way of *chi*."<sup>17</sup> Read thus, *juáso* becomes the "*chi* way of the hand."

In the mythical domain, the *juáso* middle finger is the cosmic trachea by which a person can be strangled to death, obstructing his vital inflow of *chi*. This peril befalls Ventura when he is abducted into the river world by his enemy Antomiá who catches hold of his middle finger to kill him: "The Antumiá of Kosasá caught Ventura by his middle finger and squeezed it so as to kill him" (Pardo 1984:178).

The impregnating operation performed by the interacting fingers, "eating" the *chi* essence out of its "food," is implicit when the hunter kills his quarry or when the canoe-maker handles his *jaimé* adze (cf chapter 32).

The sexual nature of the acting fingers is especially clear during the public presentation of the marriageable girl in the ceremony called *jemedé zroma*. The women of the ceremony perform their own ritual dance, forming a semicircle by clasping each other's hips. The woman who takes the lead holds a small drum in her left hand. Beating her drum, called *tonoa* and exclusively used by women, she sets the time for the dancers, who move forward by jumping while singing and laughing. The dance and song is expressed as *jemeneya*, "to play," but the actors undoubtedly imitate the water snake in a sexual act which is associated with the arrival of the young girl to the human society.

The woman at the head of the moving semicircle of female dancers beats her *tonoa* drum with the forefinger and index finger of her right hand. The "playing" act performed by the dancers is directly related to the sexual "eating" of these two *jimini* fingers; it is the fingers that "play" in an act of fecundation and conception taking place in the *jemedé zroma*, "the huge house of the *me* of *ke*." In other words, the act unfolds in the cosmic uterine body of the *je* water snake, represented by the wriggling semicircle of moving dancers.

The intercosmic sexual act is displayed in the intercourse between the right and left sides of the woman's body when the two fingers of her male right "eat" her female left, represented by the drum. The two fingers are the binary *me* principle, the "double penis," while the drum<sup>18</sup> with a double membrane

of peccary (*bidó*) skin is the "maize river" (*be-dó*) of the female cosmic left, i.e., the sexual "food" of the binary *me* fingers.

The drumming fingers are two in number. "Two" is *omé* for the Emberá. I consider this number to be directly associated with the fundamental principle of *meme*, the "double penis." For this reason, "two" becomes *omé*, "the *me* of the Way" (*o-mé*) as the "*omé*" vital essence indeed is twofold. Whatever phenomenon that is associated with "two" holds the *o-mé* principle, in my interpretation of the Emberá definition.

*Jumini* is a synonymous term for "finger." In the context of this ceremony, the *ne* essence of the *me* principle is associated with the *ju* concept which makes it identical in meaning since the finger here stands for the *me-ne* of the vaginal hand (*ju-a*). Pinto records *jimindi* which might be a parallel association with the *jemedé zroma* ritual as an event that takes place in the "house of *ke-me*" (*je-me-n-de*).

Similar to the function of a knife, the human hand "smells" or extracts the essence of its food by "cutting" in a process executed by the fingers. The fingers are the *ke-me-ne* of the *ju* reproductive concept (the *juá* hand), i.e., the essence (*ne*) of the male sex (*me*) within its uterine encasement (*ke*). This essence is referred to as *chi* and is the main component and characteristic element of all "maize beings," including man himself. In short, it is the essence of maize, *be-chi*.

The flow of *chi* which the manipulating hand stimulates with its directed actuation manifests itself at the tip of the fingers. The *chi* extracted from the *be* "food" by the fingers (or yielded by the *drua* bodily cosmos through the fingers) is contained in the outgrowing nails, called *pichi* (*pisi*) by the Emberá: "*chi* of *be*" (*be-chi*). The ever-growing nails constitute living evidence of the *pichi* life essence which is consumed and begotten by the cosmic womb, as visualized in the features of the human body.

In the rendition of the hand as "knife," cutting is executed by the sharp nails. In the mythological realm of existence nails are in fact described as cutting tools; with their nails, Ventura's *Antomiá* assistants cut out the intestines of an agoutí (*Dasyprocta sp.*) offered as food to Ventura (Pardo 1984:185).

The cat is an animal which is always eager to sharpen its claws; this is perhaps the quality that renders it one of its esoteric names among the Emberá, *chibira* (Dahl 1941) which I interpret as *chi* "being." In Pinto's lexicon (1974:273) "claw" is *chijúa* which makes it the appropriate "hand" (*juá*) of the *chi* concept due to its cutting nature. Relying on its sharp claws for food and survival, cats embody the living flow of streaming *chi* essence. With their scratching capacity they represent the life essence of the opposite

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reality of existence. The mythic shaman raises his son from the dead by singing and preparing chicha maize beer. According to myth, the morning after his son's death the shaman "saw like the hair from a cat. That was mojado [spectre] of him who came to the grave. The following week he heard a noise. Then he ordered digging to see him and he was already prepared. And he came out alive, just his nose had rotted away" (Pardo 1984:195). The myth emphasizes that the hair of the cat entering the grave is an apparition of the life-giving *chi* essence which makes the shaman's son return, though marked by the world beyond through the absent nose.

Many Emberá still prefer to keep some of their fingernails quite long, supposedly for practical reasons; a long index fingernail is often useful in manufacturing and handling tiny details of construction. But this habit might also be a vestige of old traditions referring to the symbolic significance of *pichi* nails. According to a 16th century chronicler, among the people occupying the land between the Atrato and Cauca Rivers of Northwestern Colombia, the leaders allowed their fingernails to grow long, for reasons the informant does not reveal (Steward & Faron 1959:220).

In the myth which describes the reincarnation of the shaman's son, referred to above, the father cuts off the nails of his son except those of the index finger and the thumb. The motif of his measure is understood later when the monstrous son spits in his hand and falls asleep: "he put his hand in the sun and fell asleep, the saliva ascended to his chest, then he knew" (Pardo 1984:196). The action of the son, raised from the dead, and his power to reach insight, are given from the joint nature of the remaining *pichi* nails of his hand and the solar light which is *pichia*, i.e., the materialised aspect (*pichi-a*) of *pichi* as cosmic principle. Here, the nails stand for the invisible solar light, the *chi* essence of the Sun, which only appears as an intention in the cosmic mind; the nails are the evidence of an inner solar light contained in the cosmic body of *drua*. Thus, the sun radiating in the sky takes on the aspect of the open palm of the hand with *pichi-á* "light matter" beaming out from its *pichi* "solar" fingers.

The beaming sun as the celestial evidence of divine maize is the "house of maize" which the Emberá artist reproduces in the golden *kumbedé* nose disk, where the cosmic ring of *jimini* "fingers" is substituted by the peripheral punctations of the vaginal *kidá* face.

I have earlier argued that the cosmic eating performed as an act of cutting and extracting the essence out of matter is done by the *kidá* "tooth," rendered in the shape of the point of a weapon or of the tooth in the human mouth, which is regarded as the germination of the *ke* uterine concept, as the "seed of *ke*." Now I claim that it is the *chi* essence of *be* ("maize") that cuts, as

demonstrated by the function of the *pichi* nails. What the Emberá truly say is that the *be-chi* content of the *ke* vaginal cover makes the cutting possible, here seen as the *be-chi* nail held by its *ke-me-ne* finger. Again, it is the principle of *me* which has the cutting capacity but only when it has been "activated" by its encasement in the *ke* vagina and hereby undergone a metamorphosis into *be* -- a cosmic structure and processual prerequisite which is the primary consequence of the creation of Karagabí. This distinctive feature of *me* turned *be* is explicitly demonstrated by the Emberá interpretation of the function of the nails.

The cutting nature of nails confirms what has been suggested already: the *kidá* concept -- the fusion of *me* and *ke* into *be* -- does not stand for concrete matter ("point," "tooth," etc), but implies an abstract faculty which is distinguished by anything that is "sharp" or has a "cutting edge." The metaphysical significance of this concept is evident from the fact that "sharp" or "keen" can also be expressed as *kum* or *kembú*, "nose." For the Emberá, a straight nose is much more than an aesthetic ideal, it is a necessity. The nose is a knife which smells by cutting with its sharp edge.<sup>19</sup>

The cutting nature of the *me* concept is also suggested by the Emberá term for "point," *chimitu*, or a "river of *chi-me*" (*chi-me-do*). Here, our concrete conception of a point as an object is replaced by an abstract idea of a piercing faculty which gives rise to a river of fertilizing invisible essence. In a similar way, the piercing intention of the hunter turns his pointed spear, made of *meme* wood, into a *miaso* concept when directed by his cosmic hand. His spear becomes *miaso*, representing the "*chi* way of the materialised *me*" (*me-a-si-o*).

*Me* is also able to cut by itself; this power is embodied in the *mimbú* fish which hides in the river-bed and defends itself with its poisonous spines when trodden on by the fisherman. For the Emberá the painful stings are a reminder of the cutting edge of *me*, a characteristic which renders the fish its name of *mimbú*, "where *me* is."

The human hand is a cosmological tool and instructive chart which help us read the meaning of Emberá ideas of existence and creation as well as of man's identity in cosmos. Through its linguistic identity and iconographic idiom, the hand takes on features of a metaphysical being made concrete. Set into the metaphorical chain of cosmic reproduction, the hand acquires human aspects which can be rendered as a head with face, nose, mouth, teeth, and eye.

Throughout this book, however, I have tried to show that these concepts carry meanings which are far from what their physical appearance seems to suggest. The "head" is an image of a cosmic structure, while the "nose,"

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"face," or "teeth" are but different presentations of a joint cosmological principle of metaphysical consumption and conception.

The hand is a mechanism of digital "openings" which differs from what we normally consider as openings on the human body. The hand rendered as mouth or nose does not eat or smell and yet it consumes and conceives with its vaginal "teeth." In its rendition as a "head" with a cosmic vision, the human hand also has an eye, recognized in the shape of the ulnar head of the wrist joint, called *jua dau*, the "eye of the hand." But this is the esoteric eye of the cosmic mind which does not observe out of itself like our eye does. The eye of the hand is not open, yet it sees with an introspective vision which discerns the essence of things, rather than their material representation.

Apparently, the cosmic nature of the human body as interpreted by the Emberá does not fit our view of bodily openings. The hand, as interpreted by the Emberá, constitutes one of the main "openings" of the human body while, for instance, the female sex in its perpetual fusion with the male sex remains closed. The Emberá model of cosmos advises us to be careful in deciding the correct criteria for an identification of bodily openings: that which is "open" for us is as much "closed" for them.

For the Emberá the hand is an intricate and multifarious actor that speaks, observes, eats, smells, and begets new life in a cosmic drama in which we both participate and observe.

To summarize, we can say that, in Emberá thought, the concept of *je* ("the cosmic water snake") stands to *ke* ("vagina") as the concept of *be* ("maize") stands to *me* ("penis"). *Be* or *me* is that which is consumed and begotten while *je* or *ke* is that which consumes and begets. *Me* is the principle which is manifested in *be* as *ke* is the principle which is manifested in *je*. In this view, the human body is a structure of two inverted *ke* wombs (head and body) which share a common *me* or *be* core, respectively: the perpetual and indestructible principle that makes life and existence possible.

The principles which determine the interactive process of the binary cosmos and the intermediate function of the *be/me* concept are embodied and made explicit in the instructive working pattern and morphology of the *jua* hands and arms of the cosmic body. The anatomical nomenclature and operative pattern of the human hand is our map and gateway to the Emberá world.

The *materia prima* of cosmic man is metaphysical matter, identified as *chi*, which is processed through principles of conception illustrated by the behaviour of cosmic man. *Chi* is the vital essence inherent in *be* ("maize") which is the food of the cosmic womb and a prime achievement of Karagabí,

the Creator. The overall purport of this creation is the bewildering fact that the *chi* essence of *be* is consumed by the cosmic vagina while, at the same time, it remains a consumer. As demonstrated in the processual pattern of cosmic conception, the cosmological model of the Emberá neutralizes this incompatibility into cosmic order.

# 28

## MALE FRUITS FROM ABOVE

"Food," in our usual sense of the word, is an irrelevant concept in the imagery of the Emberá. A food concept normally implies a particular kind of consumption associated with an oral opening, a "mouth," which is marked off from other openings on the human body, an invalid distinction in Emberá cosmology.

Consequently, even if "food" is interpreted as *chiko*, these terms are not synonymous in essence and thus not comparable. While "food" is a matter related to the individual, *chiko* is associated with cosmos. For the Emberá, eating is not an individual act but the manifestation of a cosmic intention. Food stands to man as man stands to cosmos: man is cosmos, hence, the "food" of cosmos is man himself or more precise, the embryonic material from which cosmic man is remade. From the ontological standpoint of Emberá thought, the food of cosmic man is as much "living" essence as physical man is "dead" matter.

For the Emberá the meaning of food comes in terms of a cosmic conception. The processing of this cosmic food and the process leading to fecundation will be the main subject of this chapter.

That which we call "food" is for the Emberá the seed for a new life, it is the embryonic matter which is "chewed" into rebirth in the true world, it is *chiá* that becomes *chiábera*. In conformity with the nature of physical man and his materialized environment, physical food is nothing but an illusion, a way of concretizing a cosmic thought and intention which illustrates a processual pattern in the realm of the cosmic mind.

The preparation of food becomes a means for the Emberá to demonstrate the complicated process which directs the formation and growth of the foetus. The dawn of life takes place in the metaphoric image of the boiling pot; in their culinary philosophy the Emberá show us the recipe for the creation of human life.

But the human being is also seen as a "foodstuff" which is prepared during the course of a cycle which we refer to as a "lifetime." Man is "boiled" and processed in the "pot" which the temporary stay outside cosmos implies.

Physical man born into this world corresponds to the quarry brought down by the spear, the fish hooked by the cosmic fisherman or the maize gathered from the plant. Man, like food, is processed into cosmic life. Physical man is born a foetus; subsequently, every step and measure taken during his lifetime in our transitory world follows the cosmic recipe for the making of a foetus to be reborn into the infinite world of the cosmic mind. This birth takes place at the moment man -- as physical being - dies and is consumed by the cosmic "mouth."

*Chiko* "food" is consumed by the cosmic body through a process described as *koi* which is directed by an organ referred to as *ko* (*ku, kum, ju*). *Ko* is a binary concept with an "olfactory" nature which manifests itself in the sky world of the human head as the "nose" and in the subterranean riverine world of the human chest as "breasts." This *ko* (*kum*) concept is also denoted as *kembú*, revealing that it carries vaginal properties which process this food. *Chiko* becomes the food for the vagina of the cosmic womb.

Man-as-cosmos consumes the *chiko* food in three different ways. The mouth devours the food while the nose extracts its steam or aroma. The *chi* essence of the food is extracted and inhaled by the cutting edge of the *kidá* teeth, transforming the foodstuff into a "waste" product, *chiá*, which goes "the Way" down the throat. The significance of the chewing and the smelling of the food is demonstrated in, respectively, the operative pattern of the "eating" knife-hand and its manifestation of the extracting attribute of the *ko/ju* principle.

In the analysis of Emberá texts, we are repeatedly confronted with the vexatious paradox of "self-consumption" in the processual context of "essential food." For example, the hunter or the fisherman is a consumer of "essential food" while, at the same time, he is consumed as a consequence of his own practice (chapter 22). The significance of the nails as operative tools in the consuming process shows that *chi* essence is as sharp as a knife and "eats" by using its cutting edge, but that which it "eats" is *chi* itself (chapter 27), just as "gold eats gold" (chapter 20). Man is a maize being and a consumer of maize but consuming fermented maize beer makes him inebriated, which the Emberá see as a sign of his "death." Maize man literally consumes himself in the act. The consumer and the matter consumed become one and the same.

The same contradiction arises again and again: that which is eaten or consumed is the consuming agent itself. The uterine *ko* principle, formulating the concept of a cosmic vagina or womb receives *ko* food, *chiko*, the "*ko* of *chi*." *Ko* eats *ko*, as *chi* eats *chi*.

*Chiko* as "food" transcribes the visible representation of the otherwise



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"invisible" *chi* essence contained in the vital maize. The *ko* morpheme as suffix denotes a specific quality of *chi* which makes it "edible," marking off a particular status of *chi* in opposition to itself. *Chi* as *chiko* is consumable while *chi* alone is the consumer. In other words, *chi* eats its own *ko* representation, its own flesh.

*Chiko*, as a product of itself, *ko* generated from *chi*, may most accurately be described in terms of a "fruit" grown from its mother *chi*. As a matter of fact, in the sliding scale of variant pronunciations, *ko* (*ju*) comes very close the Emberá gloss for "fruit," *jo*.

That which is eaten -- *pichi*, the vital essence of maize -- is a "food" that comes from above, from the sky world which is the celestial origin and home of the maize and the sun. In its multiple appearances in Emberá imagery, the maize falls like a fruit from above. Harvested from its plant, the cob descends into the huge, oval *e* basket, a representation of the earthly womb covered by its skin or cover (*e*), inside which maize man also hides in the mythological world (chapter 16). The maize is transported in its uterine cover of the *e* basket down to the canoe in the river, a threefold descent into the cosmic womb seen as basket, canoe, and river.

The cosmic nature of the Emberá house is evoked during the *jemedé* ritual when kernels of maize and *chicha* beer are disseminated from the celestial attic to fall like a fertilizing rain from above on the participants on the house floor. But maize also falls like a ripe fruit from the sky itself, represented by the *pichia* rays from the maize sun. The son of the shaman receives in his vaginal female *jua* hand the male fruit of the *pichia* rays from the maize sun. Essentially the same event occurs when maize, processed in the cooking fire, "falls" into the oral vagina of man's mouth when he eats.

Thus, on all levels of representation, the divine maize is bound to enter its own *ko* vagina and womb as its "fruit," as *jo* of *ko*. The fall of the fruit is vertical and its destiny is inescapable. It is bound to be consumed by its mother womb of below.

Pinto quotes an expression which seems to literally confirm the destiny of the falling fruit. In his lexicon, the Emberá phrase for "to fall vertically" is *jippa eda baei*. *Baei* is "to fall," *eda* is "below, within," and *jipa* (sic) is "middle, centre." But *jipa* is also *jepa* or the giant water snake, the cosmic womb of the river world par excellence. The meaning of the "vertical fall" is then "to fall into *jepa*," i.e., to fall into the materialised image of the cosmic womb, seen as the giant water snake. That which falls vertically is foremost the ripe fruit, which produces a splashing effect when it hits the water to be consumed by the river, a familiar sound for the traveller in the riverine context of the Chocó forest.

Fruits falling into the river is a motif which also appears in Emberá mythology. The sun sacrifices his own fruit, caimito (*Pouteria caimito* (R. Y P.) Radlk), to the voracious fish in the river as he fears that they will eat him when he submerges himself into the water to travel to the world of below:

The boy then began throwing fruits of the caimito tree in the water, and the stranger, who was told to join in, did likewise. They threw the fruits here and there, and all the large fishes gathered together and ate the fruit. This was done in order that the fishes should not eat the sun. When a section of the water was free of fishes the sun suddenly dived in. The sun set off for the other world (Wassén 1935:135).

The boy in the story is the son of the sun and the stranger is Jerupotouarra. The boy tells Jerupotouarra that they do not eat caimito themselves because it belongs to his father, the sun. Caimito is *netsarrajo*, interpreted as: *ne-chi-ara-jo*, the "fruit of the true *chi* of *ne* essence." In this case, *ne* directly refers to the golden sun. The round and glossy caimito is a light yellow, savoury fruit which is an appropriate representation of the sun and his "true *chi*."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the Wounaan say that the setting sun is like a huge caimito fruit (Loteró Villa 1977:31) while the Emberá Katío liken the world of humans (created by Karagabí, the personified sun) to the round caimito (Cardona 1985:208). According to an Emberá informant, an archaic term for the human body is *nejo*, which is also a name of the caimito as the "fruit of *ne*." Thus, the image of the human body as cosmos in Emberá thought makes the *nejo* body analogous to the metaphor of caimito as our world and sun.

Even if the myth tells us that the sun sacrifices his own fruit to escape from being eaten himself by the fish, the essential meaning of his divine measure is quite different. The true message of the myth is that the sun does not escape his fate. Instead, throwing caimito fruits to the fish is a reiteration and emphasis of the central event, for the setting of the sun into the river is the "male" maize-sun being consumed by the "female" river. The caimito thrown to the fish is the sun thrown to the river vagina. Caimito stands to the sun as the uterine fish woman stands to the river vagina, because the caimito shares the essence of the sun as the fish share the essence of the uterine river world. Again we meet the image of the Chinese box: an event occurs simultaneously on various levels, one within another, so as to reinforce the cosmic principle of conception.

But how is the difference between "falling" and "throwing" to be considered? Ripe fruits either fall or are picked and eventually "thrown" to the ground. In this myth the sun throws his own fruit (or his "son" does) while descending or "falling" deliberately himself into the river.

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Following the principles of Emberá cosmology there is no essential difference between throwing and falling in this myth; the fall of the ripe fruit is as little deliberate as the setting of the maize-sun. Where we see the caimito and the sun as "falling," the Emberá see them as "thrown" to the ground. The fall of the fruit is a divine intention described as "throwing." The fruit falls because it is "thrown" by its own decision as sun. As expected the Emberá use a single term for both "to fall" and "to throw," *bai (baei)*.

But why should the sun sacrifice himself or his offspring -- his own essence? Why should he throw his fruit to escape if he is sacrificed anyway? As the Emberá do, we must turn to mythology for an answer to these questions and an understanding of the meaning behind this act of "self-annihilation."

## 29

### LETHAL LAUGHTER: OF LICE AND MEN

Pinto reproduces a myth, recorded by Cayón and Gutiérrez among the Chamí in 1973 (Pinto 1978:265-266), which is referred to as *Boroegade*, "The house of the head torn off."<sup>21</sup> The text describes a man and a woman who gather and eat guama fruits (*Inga sp.*). The man climbs the tree and throws the fruits to the woman below but becomes horror-stricken when he sees the woman remove her head to eat the lice instead of the fruit.

This myth is replete with essential information on the controlling principles of Emberá thought. Here I will only quote the introductory portion which deals with the motif of fruit consumption.

A long time ago a woman and a man went away to eat *tukujo* (caimo). The man stayed clinging above to gather and the woman stayed below. Then she saw the man naked from below because he remained stark naked. [The woman] laughing and observing the man clinging there, she was gazing at his balls hanging and his *chimé* (penis), she stared intensively and remained laughing as if she were going mad. Then the man told her, "You will go crazy." Then she laughed even more, and the man throwing guama and the woman eating and laughing and she laughed even more. The man throwing guama to her, she went on eating and laughing. The man cautiously remained eating above and the woman said to him, "*Chiita* look!"

Then the woman ripped off herself from her forehead and up (*boroebasi*). "*Chiita ochiase* (look man)! *Eda ochiase* (look down)!" Then he looked and the head which the woman ripped off she had put on her legs and the man saw that the woman was killing lice (*tu*). Then the man was frightened, "What a filthy mess, is that all you were laughing at. You are not a cristiano<sup>22</sup> anymore."

In the very first sentence a sexual context is evoked: a man and a woman are going to eat *tukujo* together, the fruit of the river's *ku*. Thus, a sexual *ko* vs *ko* (*koi*-eating of *ko* food) relationship is established.

Moreover, the fruit to be eaten is the caimo solar fruit belonging to the

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cosmic sphere of above as diametrically opposed to the female consumer of below, representing the *ko* principle of the river world (*tuku*).

The man in the tree-top assumes the features of the celestial sun while the woman standing on the ground below creates an image of the vaginal river opening. The man climbs the high guamo tree to throw its fruits from on high. An expression quoted from Pinto substantiates the cosmic relevance of a contrasting distance of the fruits thrown from the extreme of one cosmic realm to another: "to fall from the height" is *durubai* (*dru-*, *dodo-*), the "falling" intention of the cosmic binary river.<sup>23</sup>

Like the sun, the man in the tree sacrifices his fruit to the ravenous woman below. He throws guama fruits, the various terms for which bear a strong sexual connotation: *joara-jó* (*ku-ara-jo*, fruit of the true *ku*), *ki-jo* (vagina fruit).

However, the woman also longs for the male fruit itself, as she gazes at the man's sex and testicles. The fact that she really is eating the male fruit is emphasized by her laughter. She gazes at the man's penis and testicles and roars with laughter. The reason for her laughter is not amusement or happy expectation; she is already enjoying the male fruit. The man has good reason to be horrified because to him her laughter is lethal. When she bursts out laughing she is *michiggai*, which means that she is "burying" the *chi* of *me*, she catches and kills the male fruit and the man himself in an inverted parallel to the fisherman catching the fish (*betaggai*). With her chewing she makes her *michi* (*pichi*) food undergo a *ka* metamorphosis, taking it from one cosmic sphere to another, from heaven to river. Her frenzied laughter corroborates her sexual activity.

Laughter emanating from sexual eating is also evident in the myth describing the encounter with the mocking White Lady (chapter 23). Savouring the male fruit in her mouth she bursts into laughter and the frightened man withdraws his sex which has taken abnormal proportions in this cosmic intercourse.

Emberá men and women in particular are very anxious about not showing their teeth to other people. If they are moved to laughter they try their best to stifle it and quickly put their hand over their mouth to conceal their desire to laugh. The strong sexual import of the teeth means that a woman who bursts into laughter and unreservedly shows her dentated mouth invites the one who made her laugh to have sex with her - or to risk danger. To a man, a laughing woman becomes menacing, a situation which places him side by side with the man in the guamo tree.

The fact that laughter is fatal is found in the belief that a person who laughs when asleep (in a *kai* condition) brings death to one of his nearest

relatives (Pinto 1978:309).

The female consumer in the quoted myth is devouring a fruit which matches the aspect of her sinister sex. The image of her mouth as a toothed vagina clearly comes forth in the shape of the guama *kijo* fruit which, slit open with its long row of seeds covered with white pulp, produces a wide grin of white huge teeth.<sup>24</sup>

The sexual import of the guama grin is found in the concept of "delight" which is expressed as *kiraju*, "the fruit of the *kira* vaginal face," a joyous mood to be sexually savoured as a juicy fruit.

The deliberate exposure of the teeth is associated with femaleness. Pinto has recorded a specific term, *kidinchiai*, which means "to show one's teeth." Interpreted as *ki-di-chiai* it bears an unmistakable "female" connotation: to show one's teeth signifies a "processing of *chi* essence inside the vagina."

The "female" laughter and the toothed mouth ("vagina dentata") as an image of sexual voracity and imminent peril of destruction might explain the wide distribution of this motif in American iconography and oral lore which abounds in cases of uncontrolled laughter.

Suddenly, the woman in the myth rips off the top of her head and places it on her legs. She calls the man's attention to what she has done by shouting *chiita* to him. The panic-stricken man, seeing how she picks and eats lice from her hair, tries to persuade her to eat guama fruit instead, which he throws as far from the tree as possible so as to be able to escape himself, like the sun sacrificing his caimito.

The man is terrified even though the woman has substituted his guama fruit for her own lice. His fear is due to the fact that the woman asserts that her lice are his fruit, calling out: "Look, *chiita*" to him. Cayón & Gutiérrez suggest that *chiita* is an archaic word for "male" (Pinto 1978:265) but it more likely refers to the *chi* concept as "essential food," transformed into its germinated form: *chi-ta* (the seed of *chi*) and manifesting itself in the guise of a louse. *Chita* is also the term for testicle which confirms that the lice is male fruit despite its occurrence on the head of the woman of below.

The louse is a common metaphor for the male essential food of the sky world. Lice are gold, the three golden ladies of the celestial lake on top of the *Torrá* peak, referred to in a mythic tale from among the Emberá of the Tamaná River, comb their hair free from lice. Their lice are the grains of gold found in the river (Broberg 1924).

Thus, lice have a double *ne* nature. As "male fruit" they are life essence (*ne*) and they are gold (*ne*), as the manifestation of itself as essence.

Lice bear the essence of Karagabí and are thus associated with the divine sun. In the version of the myth of the *Jenené* tree of life which is reproduced

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in chapter 9, Karagabi assumes the features of a louse so as to enter the *Jenené* tree and travel in its crown of "hair."

Finally, lice are intimately associated with sexual transitoriness. During the initial phase of strict seclusion, the menstruating girl is not allowed to remove a single louse from her head; upon entering a period of fewer restrictions, her mother picks three lice from the head of the girl and kills them on a specific stone called *motzitzzi* fetched from the river (Santa Teresa 1924:78).

This kind of prohibition also occurs upon the death of a member of the community. On the day of the burial the mourners are not allowed to remove any lice from their heads until they have been separated from the deceased by bathing in the river and rubbing their bodies with a stone (Santa Teresa 1924:123-124).

The crucial moment in the myth, for the man in the tree as well as for the listener, takes place when the woman calls the man's attention to the fact that her lice are his own *chiita* fruit. The man panics as he knows that her sacrifice of her head and consumption of its lice is the sacrifice of himself and the consumption of his own essence. By "cutting" her head, she cuts the tree and picks its male fruit, the man reshaped as lice. Her own head and the cosmic head (envisioned as the male tree-crown in the myth) are equal of magnitudes in the nondimensional mind of the *dru* cosmos.

The guama fruits thrown by the man from above to the eating woman below is the demonstration of the principle of cosmic reproduction which thus repeats itself on the female half of the cosmos as lice "falling" from the woman's head into her mouth. As the falling guama fruit is an image of man's own sacrifice, the cause of his fear, the lice is an image of the sacrifice of the woman's own head, demonstrated by her ripping off the top of her head. Thus, her own contradictory nature of head in opposition to body (celestial lice "fruit" as against riverine "consumer") is analogous to the cosmic opposition of sky and river of which she herself represents the consuming womb of below, rendered in her position on the ground as a woman, eating while laughing, in opposition to the male fruit associated with the celestial crown of the tree above.

The text of the myth suggests that the horror of the man is caused by his discovery that the woman's consumption of his fruits makes her laugh hysterically. However, reading the text, we understand that he does know what will happen to the fruits, because he is eating them himself in the tree. The cosmic opposition of "female below" eating "male above" which is repeated "below" (dichotomic woman) is thus repeated "above" as well (dichotomic man). The man eats his own fruit -- just like the woman does.

His own opposition of head and body (consumed and consumer) is analogous to the cosmic opposition of male and female of which he himself represents "the consumed male."

The first sentence of the myth formulates the cosmic prerequisite: the sexual fusion of the basic complementary opposition of male and female. Later, a secondary opposition of the same order is introduced which results in a binary or two-level dualistic structure of male and female.

This two-level dualistic design creates a cosmic fourfold structure which is the Emberá principle of existence, suggested already by the principle of the double male sex, *meme*, which has the structure of a male *me* and a female *me*. Remember that the male principle of the cosmic way is double or "two," *omé*.

We have already met this fourfold structure in the cosmic fusion of man and woman. The male right and female left of the man, fused with the male right and female left of the woman constitute a fourfold structure which now repeats itself in a different form, as a two-level opposition between a "male above" and a "female below," developed from a corresponding male/female dichotomy internally found in both. The essential meaning of this principle can be expressed thus: man stands to woman as maleness ("right") stands to femaleness ("left") within any human, irrespective of gender.



# 30

## ITCHING FOR SEX

The process of the fourfold structure which is implicated by perpetual cosmic intercourse must now be examined to yield an understanding of how conception is perceived and accomplished in Emberá thought. The view of the human body as the cosmic womb which reproduces itself as its own fruit, manifested as the human head, is a physical fiction of the principles which direct the cosmic process of genesis and reproduction. Physical man as a manifestation of cosmos is an illusion, as is physical man himself. Man and his world are products of Karagabí's work of creation which set about a materialisation of intentions and thoughts which reign in the true cosmic mind of *dru*, the dual river of pristine intention, that which precedes human thought. In the following pages, I will attempt to describe the way Karagabí makes the operative pattern of cosmic conception intelligible for us, using the human body as an explanatory device.

The mythological imperative of infinite sexual intercourse as the primary prerequisite for a lasting human world is heeded in Emberá ideas on marriage and the marital bond between man and woman. Nordenskiöld was told that "when a man moves in with a woman, it is regarded as an alliance which should last a lifetime and usually it does" (1928:77). A long period of trial, preceding marriage, is stipulated for the future spouses and expressed as an Emberá "law" (Santa Teresa 1924:85). Camino, writing in 1730, comments that the marriage is established when the man brings a fish and firewood which he should chop and give to his future wife. She prepares the fish and while the two eat the food, the father and the relatives of the girl present her to the man and the marital bond is confirmed (Camino 1956:245).

The conjugal status implies the establishment of uninterrupted sexual fusion as given by the mythological discourse. By bringing together man and woman into marital oneness the cosmic womb is created and the fundamental condition for the vital and creative process is established.

Marriage brings about a metamorphosis for the contracting party similar to the one that befalls the dreamer, a sick person or the *jaibaná* shaman. To

marry is *kain* -- to use the *ka* metamorphic power to enter another dimension of reality, that of true existence in the cosmic mind, where man becomes cosmos and individual boundaries between male and female are erased. As part of a conjugal oneness, the natures of male and female as individuals change character to enter a creation of a different order. From being "man" and "woman" they become "spouses," *kima*, a term that refers to the two cosmic *ke* wombs which, fused into one, lose their individual character and create the binary cosmos of the Emberá. As part of the marriage, each *kima* spouse enters a *jai* state which marks this metamorphosis from individual to cosmos, as described through the term for "contracting marriage," *kima-kai*. Thus, the marriage act imitates a work of creation: the foundation of the human world of Karagabí.

For the Emberá, sharing a meal means more than a good start for a marriage. The association between the joint preparation of food as a sign of marital status and the marital institution as the beginning of a cosmic process is of vital relevance. The significance of the marriage as the cosmic womb where the life-making process takes place is made explicit in the food ritual during which the marriage bond is established. When the man passes the fish to his future wife, he is offering the male fruit, the *betá* fish as the sexual "maize" food, and by that he also gives himself up as the "male" fruit to his "female" consumer, behaving as the mythic man in the tree, throwing his own fruit to the woman below while eating it himself. The firewood which should be chopped by the man is also a male ingredient in the symbolic preparation of life. The woman receives the fish and the firewood because she is the "female" cooking pot that prepares the "male" food, the *ke* womb housing the *meme* seed. The father of the woman confirms the union of the couple precisely in the moment of their consuming the food, i.e., when the two, through their *kimakai* status, have been transformed into their common womb which receives and processes the male food with its cosmic *kidá* "teeth," staging the first step in a new cycle of cosmic reproduction, manifested in the formation of a new family. The ritual preparation and consumption of fertilizing "food" substantiates this reiterated genesis.

The death of one of the spouses implies a rupture of the marital oneness and a virtual splitting of the cosmic womb. For the surviving spouse the separation from the dead is a mournful event which involves a lengthy and ritually charged process of restoring the cosmic whole of the surviving individual whose "open" body must be "hardened" by means of a series of precautions.

If the marriage institution represents the uterine container of cosmos, sexual intercourse is an expression of the process which carries out the

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essential fertilization and conception of cosmos.

The cosmic womb configured in the chest of cosmic man is a concretized manifestation of the cosmic principles which reign in the cosmic mind of *dru*, "the dual river." The life process of man as cosmic being takes place inside the cosmic womb which "eats" its sexual food described as a "male" fruit. Through Karagabí's creative power these principles are made real in the configuration of the human body and the human world; the principle of the "male fruit" becomes "real" as the human head, the sun, the maize, physical man, and, in the end, as Karagabí himself. However, as representations of a male fruit in female disguise they are but fictions of essential conditions in the cosmic mind.

Sexual eating is orchestrated by the binary *ku (ju)* concept in the cosmic chest of man, the conceptive mechanism in the heart of cosmos which, like a nose, smells the *ne* essence out of its *me* food. The olfactory faculty of *ku* is characterized as a "cutting" operation inherent in the nature of the *chi* essence of the male principle, *pichi (me-chi or be-chi)*. This "eating through cutting" operation which truly takes place inside the cosmic chest is demonstrated by the mobile arms and hands. The arms and hands are the materialised extension of the *ku/ju* principle of reproduction, the *ju-a* manual tools. The unbroken cosmic intercourse between maleness and femaleness is a continuous consumption of this principle's exterior "female" *e* cover, performed by the scratching *pichi* nails in an extractive process staged by the interior *meme* "male" intention.

The Emberá and the Wounaan claim that both men and women are "eating" when they engage in sexual intercourse (Pardo 1984:40; Lotero Villa 1977:55). For this reason, it is noteworthy that scratching your partner with your nails is prescribed behaviour during the act of love-making, something which Nordenskiöld also comments on: "If there is real affection involved, the lovers scratch each other, and so it is among the Indians of the Gran Chaco as well" (1928:77). The scratching is generally interpreted as a token of affection and fidelity (Pineda 1986:93; Wassén 1933:111).

The scratching of the partner's body also occurs in the mythic dimension of reality. The scratch marks on his wife prove to Karagabí that she has been unfaithful during his absence: "When the woman came back from the party, she had scratches on her stomach as she had been with other men" (Wassén 1933:111). In other versions of the same myth, the woman scratches the stomach of her partner or is scratched herself in her face by her husband in disguise (Santa Teresa 1924:22).

The association between the eating metaphor in the sexual act and the habit of scratching with the *pichi* nails within the act itself is now

conceivable. The nails *koi*-eat the *chi* essence of its male fruit contained in the cover of the cosmic womb, envisioned in the *e* skin of the human body.<sup>25</sup> However, the nails cut and eat only specific parts of the cosmic body: the hands, the nose (or face), the stomach and the back (Loteró Villa 1977:55). Thus, one *jua* hand "eats" its opposite and complementary hand in the cosmic interplay and vice versa, following the pattern of *ku* eating *ku* (i.e., its *ju* fruit). This pattern is repeated in the scratching of the face or nose where the *ku* principle contained in the hand consumes its own fruit, contained in the nose, *ku*. The opposition of "inside *me*" and "outside *ke*" in the first case is replaced by the alternative opposition of "female below" and "male above," as a consequence of the "maizification" of the male essence (*me* transformed by *ke* into *be*, chapter 26), which renders the fruit as the celestial head, Karagabí's contribution. The scratching of the back, finally, is a motif which is related to human behaviour in other contexts where fertilization also comes into play (see chapter 62).

# 31

## FOUR WORLDS OUTSIDE A WORLD OF FOUR

The fourfold structure of the Emberá cosmos is displayed in the eating function of the four hands, each one linked to its own *ku* source in the binary *drua* chest. Each hand and each *ku* device of conception has a unique gender which distinguishes it from the others.

The working principle of the *ku* concept is expressed by the four *jimini* fingers, at the tip of which the stream of *pichi* essence runs. The thumb, *juapapa*, or "the mother of the hand," has a function which is distinct from the four *jimini* fingers and is identified with Karagabi's creation of the human world, as I will later show.

The numeral four is highly significant for the Emberá. *Four times four* "eating" fingers added to *four* thumbs make *twenty*, a number expressed as *emberá aba*, "one man." Man as cosmos exhibits the cosmic relevance of twenty as the sum that completes the Emberá world. Twenty is cosmos in numerals as physical man is cosmos in structure.

The evidence of the significance of four is overwhelming in Emberá ethnography. Loewen provides a good summary: "The number *four* must be underscored. This number has magical significance. It is a prime number in the curing ceremony. The shaman places a spirit plaque *hai+oma* on each of the four main pillars of the house. When more are used, they generally occur in multiples of four. A shaman may be *hai* 'to practice' when he has four *haibara* 'curing canes' from four teachers. He becomes a fullfledged *haipana* when he has two time four *haibara* 'curing canes'. His gourd dishes with liquor for spirit participation in the ceremony are generally arranged in two rows of four. Spells and other curing devices are most potent when repeated four times" (Loewen 1960:214-215).

It is true that the shaman officiates in a multifarious fourfold context, attended to by his four assistants, but the number four surfaces in all aspects of Emberá life and thought. An event or an action must be performed four times to be successful, both in ritual contexts and in the mythological world.

The number four is intimately associated with the cosmic nature of the house. For example, dancers make four rounds on its floor and the feet of children participating in the *jemedé* ritual must touch each one of the four main posts of the house, magic leaves are tied to the four posts and the shaman strikes his magic staff four times against the floor. In his treatment of a patient, the shaman blows his sea-shell four times in the cardinal points and repeats his treatment four times a day. Ritual baths are usually four in number as well. Karagabí has to knock at the gate of the Jenené tree four times to be attended to by its female owner, while the giant *Je* water snake only appears when the magic drum has been beaten four times.

The number four is also related to intervals of time. Events occur only after four or eight units of time, things are said or done after four or eight days of travel, Sever goes to his mythic war against the Kuna after four months, the Jenené tree is cut after four days' work, the woman having her first baby takes her first bath four days after delivering the child, and the child inherits a name from a deceased relative who has been dead for at least twenty years. Sometimes, mythic time is rendered in terms of space, the decisive moment taking place after travelling past four or eight houses.

Finally, anything created in the world of Karagabí has a fourfold nature and appears in units of four. Referred to as *troa* (*tro* or *torro*), the armadillo represents the *drua* world in Emberá imagery; the principal reason for this is probably the fact that armadillos consistently bear quadruplets of the same sex.<sup>26</sup> In mythology we are instructed about the true conditions of existence. Jenené, the tree of the cosmic river, has a fourfold nature and appears sometimes as four Jenené trees, four girls are made pregnant with the Aribada monster, another monster cuts up a woman in four parts, the Costé demon branches off into four jaguars, the mythic fish grows to a size four times the length of a man's arm, four men meet eight women each one killing four wild boars. The list could go on.

In mythic warfare each party consists of four canoes, sharing in a cosmic war of eight. Like the shaman, caciques formerly had a council of four members. The *jemedé* girl needs four "god-fathers," humans are said to have four "souls," and a deceased person is represented by four stones which are picked from the river and rolled on and off the house floor in the same direction as the corpse was removed from the house. Returning from the burial, the mourners put another four stones in the canoe.

The recurrent occurrence of the number four in the Emberá world is derived from the principle of fourfoldness in human nature and cosmic order. Concepts such as "existence" and "creation" are considered in terms of a cosmic conception which is executed by means of the four *ku* principles

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of reproduction, found within man and thus within cosmos itself. As the four hands of the binary cosmos manifest the assignment of the four *ku* reproductive sources, each hand in turn displays the same fourfold design in its four operating fingers. Each hand is a world of its own -- it is an anthropomorphic arrangement and hence a cosmic structure as well. The cosmic body manifests itself as four worlds, four reproductions of itself, as in the communicated concept of the mythological discourse.

Each hand holds the same binary sexual dualism which has been referred to earlier in the analysis of the myth about the man in the guamo tree, a "male" female/male opposition against a "female" male/female opposition. This binary dichotomy is perceived in the individual character of each of the four *jimini* fingers. The middle finger and the forefinger stand to the "male" cosmos (its "male" *ku* to the right and "female" *ku* to the left) as the ringfinger and the little finger stand to the "female" cosmos (its "male" *ku* to the right and "female" *ku* to the left).

The *omé* "two" ("the binary *me* of the Way") which "eat" the sexual food are represented by the middle and index fingers, displayed in the beating of the *tonoa* drum during the *jemene* (*jimini*) ritual. In consuming the drum as her cosmic *be* food, the female drummer uses her middle and index fingers of her right hand: the most "male" and most essential binary *ku* principle out of four. The woman is *je*, the water snake, and embodies as such the female cosmic womb which encloses its male intention that directs sexual eating: the most male intention (the *omé* fingers) enclosed by the most female cover (the woman).

The paramount importance of the number four in Emberá thought and its intimate association with the equally cardinal concept of *ku* reproduction is ingeniously condensed in the native term for "four": *kimarre*. I interpret this as *kima-de*, "the house of *kima*," i.e. a concept including the *ke* vaginal principle, that which manifests itself as "four" (as "the four spouses" of existence). The myth-teller, explaining the meaning of the fourfold context while indicating this number with his four fingers, needs only to pronounce *kimarre* to close the associative circle for his audience.

Man represented four times out of himself is a motif which is dealt with in the myth about "Jaibaná Thunder." The principal character, a young man, struggles with the mythical opponents of his own bodily cosmos, one of whom consists of four diminutive men of astounding strength who challenge their human visitor (Pardo 1984:147). As these small persons are called *emberá pichi* they seem to refer to the four anthropomorphic beings of the cosmic hand which can be contemplated as the *pichi* nails of the four fingers. The myth relates man's encounter with his own fourfold self, -- four

persons, four worlds -- as external manifestations of an inner condition.



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### THE COSMIC WOMB BORN TWICE: THE INTENTION AS OBJECT

The reproductive *ku* eats its own fruit, its own essence made flesh. However, one sex does not eat the other, the "male" intention *koi*-eats itself as a "male" fruit enclosed by a female shell or, as I have already shown, *me* eats *be*, *chi* eats *chi-ko*, or *ku* eats *jo*. Man, male or female, bears the world inside: the uterine cosmos is in his chest and its inverted analogous "fruit" in his head. This fruit has sprung from the womb that will receive it anew.

The working process of the cosmic womb, made possible through the marital and sexual union between man and woman, is found within the individual himself. The young man who wishes to marry and settle down has to prepare himself for his task of securing a cosmic rebirth. Marriage presupposes a womb to shelter new cosmic life and the man who has chosen a woman, brings his womb with him. As a matter of fact, the womb brings him to his wife and will shelter his future family as well. His womb is the womb of cosmos, rendered in the canoe he has created with his own hands.

The metaphoric association between the river world, the *je* water snake, the *jenené* "tree of life," the *drua* cosmic chest of man, and the canoe has already been briefly described. The canoe is a symbol for the family and represents values which extend its significance far beyond that of a pure vehicle for river transportation. It would be as inconceivable for an Emberá man to travel upriver by foot as for his future parents-in-law to doubt his ability to make his own canoe. By bringing his own canoe he presents his parents-in-law with a solid piece of evidence of his splendid qualities as a son-in-law. The canoe-maker is a creator of the cosmic receptacle which will hold the regenerated life, not of his family but of himself as cosmos.

The symbolic value of the canoe and the significance of canoe-making is an appropriate presentation of the ideology behind the object and the objectification of existence held by the Emberá.

Canoe-making is a joint enterprise in which close relatives take part, combining hard work with heavy chicha drinking. When the appropriate tree

is felled, it is shaped roughly with axes on the spot. It is then hauled down to the nearest brook to be transported via the river to the house where the work is finished with axe, adze and plane.

The canoe is hollowed out with an iron adze called *jaimé*. When the man wields the *jaimé* it becomes the *me* "male" intention in its *jai* disguise, a tool with the *ka* metamorphic power to conjure up the *me* essence in its nature -- a divine intention objectified. The man's hand, clasping the *jaimé*, visualises the cosmic intention of "eating" when it works the wood that will be the canoe. The cutting edge of the adze is the vaginal *kidá* "tooth" that extracts the *chi* essence out of its food, the selected wood.

The work process, exemplified in the making of a canoe, has a meaning for the Emberá which differs widely from our own. While we can imagine and accept a metaphysical relationship between the artist and his work, said to bear the mark or "spirit" of its creator, the Emberá argue that there is an intimate association not only between the artist and the artefact but between the artist and the raw material as well. It is said that the tree is a living being that dies when it is hollowed out with the axe; it needs "food" to avoid causing a disease which, in that case, would be transferred to the man and his future wife (Kane 1986:222).

The character of the relationship between artist and his work is conditional by their common origin. The craftsman and his raw material are of the same source. For the Emberá, when the canoe-maker "eats" the *chi* essence out of its fruit, he is actually carving himself out into a "canoe" and becomes one with the canoe in the process. The tree from which the wood is taken is regarded as a "ripe fruit" which has sprung from the same cosmic vagina which cosmic man bears inside. Hence, the raw material, the binary *chi* essence, is the fruit of cosmic man himself. It may be worth emphasizing, however, that it is not individual man who eats the wood with his *jaimé*, but the male intention of cosmos disguised as a *jai* human being, "he who knows what is going on."

The work of hollowing out and changing the tree trunk into the shape of a canoe signifies that the *jaimé* adze with its cutting edge extracts the *chi* essence from the wood. This essence is transported along the arm and into the chest of cosmic man where the *chi* essence takes on the same character which the piece of wood simultaneously visualizes in concrete terms in front of the canoe-maker. Concurrently with the shaping of the new canoe, a cosmic womb is being recreated little by little in the *drua* chest of the carver, the womb which is requisite for his new roll as "husband" in the cosmic dimension of his future marriage.

By "eating" its own fruit, the *chi* essence of the wood, that which

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formulates its nature as appropriate for making cosmic wombs, the cosmic mind engenders a "canoe" within the cosmic chest of man, at the same time as the "real" canoe is finished before our eyes. The canoe is the vehicle which will make the transfer of the young family possible in our illusory world. Both the canoe and its physical offspring, the young family, are but a physical illusion that mirrors conditions within the true cosmos, the immeasurable mind of *dru*, "the dual river."

The canoe that we see as a result of the work of the *jaimé* adze is dead matter, comparable to human faeces, *a*. This conceptual relationship is implicit to the message in the myth about Jerupotouarra, where "the food which already had been smelled had turned into faeces." As shown earlier, "eating" and "food" are not limited to our concept of "mouth," nor is "smelling" an act which can be performed by the nose only. If the work of the *jaimé* adze is correlated to the metaphorical context of smelling/eating/cutting, the consequences of the carver's action is comprehended. From the perspective of the principle of *ku* reproduction, the tree-trunk is the "ripe fruit" and the food which is "smelled" by the cutting *jaimé*. As soon as the "aroma" (the *chi* essence) from the tree-trunk has been inhaled into the *drua* cosmos, the food is transformed into "excrement" which is unfit for the true cosmos but of great use to humans -- as their canoe.

The canoe, on the riverbank below the house, assumes the character of the smelled food which, according to myth, is thrown out of the cosmic house as faeces onto the garden below. The faecal nature of the canoe as a consequence of its construction is suggested by a commentary from an Emberá canoe-maker, quoted by Kane: "They say, this way, in Ancient Times when you are working, when I'm taking off the top, then comes the devil there inside, to shit inside. So, one is to die, the woman or you" (Kane 1986:224). The "devil" is *Antomiá*, the Master of Matter, who represents the materialisation of the cosmic mind and constitutes a mortal threat to cosmic man when the latter performs his *jai*-transformative act of conception.

In its aspect as mythical embryonic food for the cosmic *ku* womb, the tree trunk is "born" two ways, as "aroma" or *chi* essence going in and as "faeces" or materialised *chi-á* (*chiampa*, canoe) going out. The finished canoe with its slender form and elegant lines is a masterpiece which shows the proud artist's cosmic preparation for rebirth. At the same time, the canoe is nothing but the putrified remains of a cosmic meal, relished in the *drua* realm of the artist's chest.

The uterine character of the canoe is also suggested by its mythical origin. The first canoe ever made was worked out from the mythical "tree of life,"

*jenené*. When Sever, Karagabí's son, carved his first canoe out of the *jenené* wood with his cutting *me* essence (that which now is seen as a *jaimé* "tool") he actually extracted the binary *ne* essence out of the cosmic *je* (*ke*) principle: *je-ne-ne*. As a result, the canoe has become a physical representation of a reborn *jenené*, recreated into man's cosmic nature as the same *jenené* "tree of life" which is bound to be cut in due time. For the Emberá, the analogous relationship between man's cosmic chest and the mythical *jenené* tree is confirmed through the metaphor of canoe-making where the principle of *ke-ne-ne* is literally passed on to man. By making his canoe, man reestablishes *jenené* within himself and thus within cosmos as well. A new cosmic river is born.

The making of the canoe implies a simultaneous remaking of the craftsman. As a consumer of *chi* essence the man experiences a metamorphosis which changes his individual male character into a cosmic orchestration where maleness and femaleness lose their genders. Housing an essential "canoe" in his cosmic chest, the man with his eating *jaimé* assumes a "female" character, imitating the behaviour of the woman below eating the fruit above. As consumer of the *jenené* essence, the canoe-maker turns into an "essential male," dressing himself with the "female" receptacle of the cosmic womb. He becomes mind within matter. He is no longer a physical being classified as man or woman, he is cosmic man, "he" is cosmos.

The canoe is also a demonstration of the "mobile" womb, the cosmic "vehicle" that takes its human fruit from place to place. The canoe, however, is a metaphysical carrier which covers any distance in the world of dreams in but four or eight days, the total space of time in the immeasurable cosmic mind. As mentioned earlier, the mythic travellers in search of their Kuna enemies and the *dokarrá* gateway to the riverine underworld have to return twice to their point of departure for want of the *po* flour which is necessary for the voyage. Likewise, within the chest of cosmic man the uterine canoe travels on a double river of *po* flour (*po-to*), which is the prime requisite for cosmic transfer on a river made cosmos, *potopoto* or *dru*. The essential purport of the "river of *po* flour" will be examined in its context later.

The canoe is the uterine abode of its new germ, the young family that will grow up as a new fruit of the cosmic womb. This same image is recalled in the use of old, worn-out canoes which are placed on four poles close to the house where they serve as a small, hanging vegetable garden for flowers, herbs, onions and other plants used in food preparation. The metaphor of food as embryonic substance which will be recycled into human life by the *kidá* process makes the canoe appropriate for sprouting humans in vegetal disguise.

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To construct or manufacture something is rendered as *oi* (*oya*), a term we recognize from the context of eating as an act of "smelling:" *ui*. On the one hand, Pinto quotes *ui* as "to sow" and "to smell," on the other, *oi* is translated as "to manufacture" (Pinto 1974:187,213). Now we can easily see close connections between all these meanings of one and the same concept, "to do the (cosmic) way." When the canoe maker *manufactures* he *sows* new life by *smelling* with his cutting *jaimé* device. By making his canoe he initiates the process of true reproduction, that of sowing by smelling essence, a process in which the canoe is but a dead shell.

To work is expressed as *kabai*, a concept which also denotes "to know" and "to learn." I have suggested that this term refers to a faculty for metamorphosing, characterized as *ka*, which enables the bearer to change his individual identity and enter a cosmic state.

The Emberá notion of knowledge through work also takes on a more concrete significance in the specific sense of *kabai* as doing manual labour or working on the land (Pinto 1974:161). The essential meaning behind the *kabai* concept seems to be related to the metamorphic operation of the *ku* device, to the manual labour executed by the cosmic principle of reproduction in the "hand" configuration, *ju-a*. To perform manual labour is to understand and to know what really is going on behind the physical guise of using a tool and acting out an intention with the hand and the fingers. If a man knows what his hands do when they "work," then he also "knows" the essential meaning of that "work," because the work performed is essential knowledge itself. Working "by hand" is the insight into the principles of metamorphosis as a cosmic conception within the actor himself, a process in which he is "de-individualised" and reborn a cosmic man, sown along the cosmic way of *o*.

The canoe as "object" is *netá*, a seed of its own essence, that which makes an object what it is. The object is created from the death of the "fruit" which gave it substance while transmitting its essence back to its mother womb inside the cosmic body of its creator.

Pinto quotes a synonym for "object," *nekae*, which I interpret as a variant pronunciation of *ne-jai*. As *nekae* it implies the metamorphic *ka* power of the *ne* essence to reappear in a physical guise of itself as "object."

The making of a canoe is a two-way process of cosmic conception which, from the *chi* aromatic essence of the "food" eaten with the *jaimé* edge, creates the cosmic womb, "canoe essence," in the chest of the craftsman while, at the same time, leaving the rest as smelled *chiá* "excrements" in the shape of a canoe outside cosmic man. The same interrelated process of binary conception is highlighted in an Emberá custom related to the

preparation of ritual *chicha* maize beer. To assure themselves of the good quality of the *chicha* beer to be offered later, guests are given small calabashes with some breast milk from the woman who has prepared the *chicha*. If the milk, *jubá*, is tasty, so will the *chicha* be. This reasoning implies that the "eating" act of the woman when she grinds the maize kernels as well as the remaining *kabai* work of *chicha* preparation beget two kinds of *chicha*. The *chi-chi* essential beverage produced by her *drua* chest manifests itself in the form of mother's milk (*ba* from her "uterine nose," the *ju* breast). The quality of this essential *chichi* beverage guarantees the quality of the visible *chicha*, kept in the *chokó* jar, which will be drunk later even though, for cosmic beings, these are only the smelled "faecal" remains, the *chichi-á* beer which humans prefer.

The idea of an objectification of the principles which reign in cosmos permeates every situation in the Emberá world where man appears as an agent in executing cosmic intentions by transforming them into objects and movements. The death and birth of objects make them as alive as physical man himself. Sprung from a common womb, man and object are inseparable from each other and united by the same purpose: to instruct us in the meaning of life and existence.

Separate categories of sacred and profane objects are devoid of meaning in Emberá culture because life itself is "religion" in which every act is cosmically imposed and therefore sacred, like the objects performing them.

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## HUMMINGBIRDS AND HUMAN NECTAR: MAN AS SMELL

The *jo* fruit of above, holding the *me* intention within its *ke* cover, composes the *kira* "face" of the cosmic "body." The creation of Karagabí constitutes the union of the separate principles of *me* intention and *ke* womb into the concept of *be*, which we recognize as "maize." A "maization" of cosmic principles becomes manifest in the configuration of the maize cob, *be kirá*, "the *be* face," which is the opposite germinated *ke* concept, *ke-ta (kirá)*, holding *me* inside.

The *be* or *be kirá* concept, however, is not only a creation by Karagabí, it is foremost a representation of Karagabí's own *be* character, as is the *pichia* sun, the *be* prey, the *betá* fish, the *pidá* pepper, and other *ta* "seeds" sprouting as *be* plants or beings, all of them holding the essential *chichi* life energy which defines their origin from the cosmic womb of below, including that of man himself. *E-berá* is the germinated *be* of the cosmic cover.

The *ta* seed, sprouting from the *ko* cosmic womb, grows into the *jo* fruit which reassumes the structure and character of its origin, turning into a reflection of its *ko* source. When the *jo* fruit is ripe, it falls or is "thrown" to be consumed by its *ko* mother womb below.

Ripe fruits as well as "ripe" flowers and herbs emit smells or fragrances as does the prepared food steaming from the pot. The aroma of boiling food is the food of the *dojurá* people in the true world of below, and so is the fragrance of the ripe fruit.

Man is a *be* fruit which also gives off a smell, fragrance or odour. Physical man smells hideously, the *dojurá* say, because he is like food which has been deprived of its essential scent and thus has turned into faeces.

In the metaphorical relationship of physical man as embryonic food which is consumed when he is "thrown" as a ripe fruit, the smell of man is the food of the cosmic womb. The fragrance of "processed" ripe man is like the

aroma of the prepared food on the firestead. The true essence of physical man described in terms of smell or fragrance is manifested in mythology. Ventura is but scent when he returns from the true world:

That night Ventura came home, he came drunk from the sip which the woman had given him. "Iiiiiii -- Iiiiiii," he came calling out. "Aha, that is the yell of my brother."

And they went off to look for him. They could smell the perfume of Ventura but they did not see him so they intended to leave when he said: "Now listen, why don't you see me?"

So they lit the fire and there he was (Pardo 1984:181).

On his return from the true world, Ventura first makes his appearance as sound and as scent. Ventura expresses surprise at his invisibility as he feels that he has already arrived among humans but the others can only observe him when they light the fire. However, it is not the light from the fire that allows them to see him; it is because "they light the fire" that he becomes "human" again, just as food assumes its embryonic nature when "lit" by the kitchen fire.

The perfume is not a metaphor for Ventura's existence, the perfume *is* Ventura. If Ventura, like any other human, is the "fruit" of his uterine origin, then his smell or fragrant scent is the *true* fruit. The food cooking on the fire is as little the food for the true cosmos as the physical body is the "real" appearance of cosmic man. The only possible embryonic food for the cosmic womb is the aroma which is emitted by the food. Hence, "aroma" is *juara* for the Emberá, i.e., "true/fine fruit," *ju-ara*, and so is the "aroma" of man, his "perfume." Ventura, "eaten" and deprived of his smell, is nothing but empty matter.

"Perfume" is expressed as *chitúa* or *kera*. As *chitúa*, the perfume holds the same power of attraction for ensnaring its opposite counterpart as does the *túa* fish hook with which cosmic man, in his *berá* (*betá*) disguise as a "fisherman," captures his inverted analogue, the *betá* fish from below. In this sense, "perfume" becomes the "hook of essential *chi*" (*chi-túa*) which attracts its own *chi* (*emberá*), in accordance with the principle of *chi* eating *chi* (as *ko* eats *jo*). Scent attracts as the aroma of prepared food attracts; it is the true sexual fruit for the covetous *ke* vagina or *ku* cosmic womb, a structure and a process which Emberá thought demonstrates in the behavioural pattern of the male-female ensemble played out in the physical dimension of man's existence.

"Perfume" is also *kera*. A number of plants and herbs which are



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distinguished by their aromatic smell may be recognized by containing *kera* in their names (Cayón 1980). In addition to their fragrant properties, all *kera* plants have one characteristic in common: they are used as "charms" in hunting and fishing, and as "aphrodisiacs" to attract the opposite sex. In this way the role of *kera* plants confirms the sexual connotation of the *kenaya* "killing" which, roughly speaking, equates sex with man's behaviour as hunter or fisherman.

The Emberá have a predilection for perfumes and scents which finds expression in their habit of attaching flowers and fragrant herbs to their heads, in their hair and ears, when making social calls or participating in festive gatherings. Like Ventura, they present themselves as the "true" ripe fruit to be enjoyed by the opposite sex, the tempting fragrance which is desired by the vaginal *kum* nose. Observers find it noteworthy that men more than women wear flowers and herbs in their hair (Pinto 1978) but in the light of my analysis it is logical that men "perfume" themselves for man is as much the fruit for the consuming woman as the head is the fruit for the consuming body. For the same reason, scent is primarily associated with men just as scent is associated with the head.

I have already pointed out that the *ku* principle of cosmic reproduction can be described as a "nose" (*kum*), as a "tooth" (*kida*) or as a "face" (*kira*), which is due to the analogous triad of eating, smelling, and cutting.

By referring to "perfume" as *kera*, the Emberá again emphasizes the cosmic principle of *ku* consuming *ju*. *Kera* is *ke-ta*, the germinated *ke* or the seed of the *ke* vagina, which is "eaten" by "itself" or its own mother, *ke*, seen as the *ku* nose or the *kira* face. *Ku* consumes *ju* as *kira* consumes its opposite *kera*. The perfume shares the fate of the hunter and the canoe-maker in being literally consumed by itself. The canoe wood, the hunted prey, and the perfume are but different representations of the same procedure of cosmic conception which is orchestrated by the *me* intention of the cosmic mind, an intention materialised in the configuration and actions of the canoe-maker, the hunter, or the cosmic body consuming its perfumed head.

The concept of the perfumed head is closely associated with Emberá ideas of flowers and the consumers of flowery nectar. The essence of flowers is consumed by wasps, bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, each of which plays a prominent role in Emberá imagery related to the conception and reproduction of cosmic man. Their importance as suckers or "cutters" of flowery *chi* is also reflected in the names which are bestowed on them by the Emberá.<sup>27</sup> Indulging in *chi* consumption, they share in a common context and their importance is richly documented in the mythology and belief system of the Emberá. For example, the butterfly pattern is often painted

around the mouth and nose of the human face.

"Flower" is *nepono*, which I interpret as *ne-podo*, "po river of *ne* essence," for reasons which will be evident below. As a prime conveyor of essential *chi*, the flower is attached to the human head and, in particular, to the ears. "Ear" is *kuru* or *kuburu*, which I suggest are variant pronunciations of *ku-do*, "ku river," and of *ku-po-to*<sup>28</sup>, respectively. If this conclusion is correct, the essential meaning of the human ear would be yet another case of the relationship between the *ku* principle and the concept of "po river," earlier described with reference to the cosmic chest (*potopoto* vs the binary *ku*), and an analogue to the *jua poto* concept located to the forearms of the *drua* body. The Emberá regard the closed hand or "fist" as *juaburu*, "the head of the arm (materialised *ju*)." The ear, considered as *ku-buru*, would then be its parallel in the *utare* cosmos, "the head of *ku*," indicating an analogous relationship between the two pairs of active organs of the inverted binary wombs, where the consuming and begetting *jua* hands of the *drua* womb of below answer to the consuming and begetting *ku* ears of the *utare* womb of above. While the "real" hands of the *drua* body, through intentions remade into actions, "eat" the wood and beget a "canoe," the "auditory hands" of the *utare* head eat the name of the same wood and beget *ambá* (canoe), respectively, by processing their essence as "words."<sup>29</sup>

Supposedly, "sound" would be food for the ear but what does such a correspondence suggest? This is where the flower and the consumers of nectar play out their symbolic roles in Emberá thought. As a metaphorical "po river of *ne* essence," the flower correlates with the ear as the *poto* of the *ku* reproductive principle. By attaching flowers to the ears the Emberá express the principle of flowing *chi*, made possible through the piercing and thus essential opening of the ear as conductor of essence. The ear constitutes the instrumental *poto* of the *ku* device while the fragrant flower expresses the flow of *ne* essence available to the consumer.

Humans do enjoy the fragrance of flowers but one consumer of the *ne* essence held in flowers stands out from the others: the hummingbird. This insatiable little bird is busy ingesting nectar until after sunset and falls then into a state of numbness similar to a profound sleep (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1988:66). Thus, the hummingbird exhibits behaviour which concentrates Emberá ideas on the opposition between day and night, waking and sleeping, where insatiable sexual eating by day leads to bountiful conception by night (said to be the "day" of the cosmic mind) implied by the profound *kai* "sleeping" state of the bird.

The hummingbird has a conspicuous and multifarious role in native thought in tropical America. Here I will confine myself to mention but a few

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contextual examples from among the Emberá which suggest one distinctive cosmological function of this little bird which might shed some light on the hummingbird's esoteric significance in other areas and cultures as well.

For the Emberá, the hummingbird is regarded as *kimbisu* (*ke-be-si-o*) or the cosmic conveyor of "maized" *pichi*. Its name, interpreted as "the way of the *pichi* of the *ke* vagina," reveals that the hummingbird represents the consuming *ke* uterine device of "below" which sucks its true fragrant fruit of "above." Here, the consuming *kira* of below appears in the guise of a hummingbird, extracting its *kera* analogue, *ne* essence in the guise of "perfume," which is begotten by the ears by means of the metaphorical image of fragrant flowers.

The hummingbird has a long, prominent beak which stresses its capacity to consume essence. "Beak" is also regarded as *kida*, the "tooth," which is a variant of the vaginal *kira* concept, here smelling its *kera* scent. Among the Emberá the beak is a symbol of female fertility, manifested during the puberty rituals.

The associative context of hummingbirds, flowers and ears which is suggested here is reproduced in a pair of ear ornaments of gold found in the Colombian department of Nariño but now in the Museo del Oro, Bogotá. The ornaments show a hovering hummingbird sucking nectar with its long beak from a flower shaped as an ear ornament. The ornament is made to be stuck through the earlobe of its wearer.

The Emberá say that "ear ornament" is a *nedé*, a "house of essence." They consider the ornament a metaphorical "vessel" which holds the *po* river of essence, the fragrant flower, to be imbibed by the cosmic *ke* in its manifestation as a hummingbird. The golden *ne* flowery ornament opens up this essential "river" when it eats/pierces the earlobe and becomes saturated with *ne*, like a blossom, offering itself to the golden hummingbird. The ornaments give a composite image of *ne* essence transcribed as gold.

As an insatiable consumer of nectar and metaphor for the life energy of cosmic man, the hummingbird stands out as the foremost "female" sexual symbol, devouring its "male" fruit and inhaling *kera* scent by "cutting" with its *kida* beak. The sucking hummingbird may be equated with the woman devouring guama fruits thrown from the man above but neither the woman nor the hummingbird are "women" in our sense of the word. The hummingbird is a tireless and ferocious male in female disguise, it is the male intention of *me* eating its own "maized" essence, *me* made *be*, here visualised as "nectar" or "fragrance." To clarify this point, I must return to man the hunter and reassume the discussion of his nature as a slayer of his game, this time assisted in my analysis by the hummingbird in detecting the

meaning of the hunting context.

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## PECCARIES AND HUMMINGBIRDS: THE PREGNANT HUNTER

Fragrance from blossoms and herbs is a lure in attracting the opposite sex in an act of sexual eating which extracts man's true fruit, his scent. The eating "female" deprives the "male" of his essence, his smell, which leads to his "death" as a living being -- the signification of the *kenaya* act as a ritual killing. The "female penis eaters" of Emberá myths are not women nor do they eat the male organ. *Me* as "penis" is only a physical manifestation of a cosmic principle on the male *drua* body which expresses the perpetual "male intention" of cosmos. The "female penis eater" is an "anthropomorphic" process that extracts the male intention out of man in a way compared to an inhalation of smell. The same ritual killing within the metaphorical frames of sexual intercourse, *kenaya*, takes place in other contexts as well, such as in the confrontation between the hunter and his game.

I have already discussed the hunter as a consumer in the *kenaya* killing of his game. Ventura's killing of the peccary implies a metamorphosis of himself as a consuming hunter; he becomes pregnant with his game, described in metaphorical terms of a pregnant Mother of Peccaries who dwells in the cosmic mind of *dru*. As a consequence of the altered *kai* state brought about by his *kenaya* killing, Ventura meets with the Mother of Peccaries inside his own cosmic chest. She tells him that he has made her pregnant with his thought, manifested in the *kenaya*-act performed by the "vaginal" hand of the hunter. This fertilizing process is executed by the cosmic body in its aspect of "man the hunter."

The people of the true *drua* world eat their food by smelling its aromatic vapour, but as consumers of smell they also appear as smell. The jaibaná shaman argues that if you smell the fragrance of the *ártotokera* plant, "the flower of the dead," you make the *chiaberara* "come out." The *chiaberara* represent here the invisible fragrant character of Emberá, man as smell or true food.

As in courting among humans, fragrance is also a lure in the mythological

relationship between the "female" hunter and his "male" game, actually a "lure" that works both ways. For the Emberá, the encounter between man the hunter and the peccary is not described in terms of two physical beings but as two opposing smells. The smell of the human hunter meets the smell of the peccary; the two species of the Tayassuidae family have a very characteristic, strong, musky odour emitted from a scent gland under the skin that opens on the ridge of the back. Among early Spanish chroniclers it was believed that this gland constituted the navel of the peccary (Oviedo y Valdés 1851:409). The vaginal hand of the hunter which is unable to hit its fragrant food, i.e. the hunter's failure to kill the game, is a common motif in Emberá myths. The lance of the hunter is attracted by the smell and eats it by aiming at the gland of the animal, attacking from behind.

When man goes hunting peccaries his own smell is like a flowery nectar which attracts the game. Like the fisherman, throwing out his *túa* fish hook, the hunter "throws out" his scent as his *chitúa*, a "hook of *chi*," which is irresistible to the game.

Perceiving the *chitúa* smell of man the hunter, the peccary is attracted and "hooked." With the *kidá* edge of his lance the hunter "eats" the essential smell of the peccary. Allured by the *chitúa* scent, the peccary behaves like a hummingbird that covets the opposite *chi* nectar. As a matter of fact, in the mythological dimension of reality, the peccary *is* a hummingbird for the fragrant hunter. This is what an Emberá myth makes clear, narrating the experiences of an Emberá hunter and his meeting with the Thunder Man.

One day [the Thunder Man] said, "Churi, tomorrow we will eat fresh peccary's head."

And they went away, each one with his arrows; over there the peccaries were grunting and the youth said, "Look, there they are."

"No, churi, those are not peccaries, those are hummingbirds; look, the peccaries are over there."

And the cholo looked and they were hummingbirds that were sucking the flowers. At that moment a hummingbird came near, bustling around and the other [the Thunder Man] took out the arrow and killed it, after a while another came and he killed that one too. He was looking for a vine with which to carry it but the Emberá said, "Man, what do you need a vine for?"

And he put them into his pelvis. Further along the Emberá killed two peccaries and he was looking for a carrying vine and the man said, "What do you need a carrying vine for? Let me have them."

And he put them into his pelvis.

Well, they arrived at the house. The Emberá cleaned his peccaries and the man also cleaned his hummingbirds and started to smoke them. The following day they had

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become real peccaries, plenty of food which they ate (Pardo 1984:84-85).

The experience with the Thunder Man takes place in the world of thoughts, in the cosmic mind of *dru*, where Emberá visitors learn about the true conditions of existence. The two hunters bring down two animals each, in accordance with the cosmic principle of the "dual river" and the binary "male intention," *meme*. Each hunter brings home his own peccaries but they disagree on what peccary is, classifying the one's game as hummingbirds. When the Emberá youth claims that he has spotted peccaries, the Thunder Man denies it, saying they are hummingbirds. Later, he indicates peccaries for his human companion who finds them to be hummingbirds. Naturally, when the Thunder Man finds his "peccaries" heavy to carry, the Emberá easily picks them up and fastens them to his hips, as they are small birds to him. Analogously, the Thunder Man helps the Emberá to carry his peccaries which the thunder man earlier said were hummingbirds.

The myth stresses the bewildering assertion that "peccaries are hummingbirds." Peccary is "hummingbird" in the sense that it bears an essence the nature of which is unveiled in the Emberá term for this bird, while hummingbird is "peccary" because it represents this same essence in the body of a peccary.

Through the words of the Thunder Man, humans are told that what they perceive with their eyes is illusory. That which is seen as a peccary is truly a "hummingbird" or, in Emberá usage, a "cosmic way of *pichi* essence," *kimbisu* (*imbisu*). The peccary is a means of expressing a cosmic principle which is not present in flesh, but only as a thought, something which actually takes place in mind, not in matter. The peccary is a representation of an essential condition, known as "hummingbird," that the hunter brings down with his vaginal hand.

When the hunter thrusts his lance into the peccary, his cosmic *ku* hand "eats" the essence out of the game by piercing with the *kidá* edge of his weapon. His lance is *measo* or "me's way of *chi*," the cosmic conveyor of life essence which is extracted from the peccary and brought inside cosmic man. As the *measo* lance is made of *meme* wood (*Wettinia sp.*) it bears the "eating" capacity of the binary *me* concept; clasped firmly by the hunter's hand it is an extension of the joint *jimini* fingers which carry out the conception of the *ku* principle within the *drua* cosmos. A cosmic intention (or, as phrased by the myth, a "thought") known as *me* is performed as a physical act by a "hunter" against his "game." This vital essence extracted by the hunter's hand is in its embodied form the same hummingbird which the Thunder Man describes as the true peccary.

The human act of hunting peccaries has a twofold meaning: as individual

man the hunter aims at a peccary but as cosmic man he releases a "hummingbird process" -- like the Thunder Man when he brings down his game. When the hunter *observes* a peccary, the *ku* principle of his cosmic hand *kills and sexually consumes* an essential hummingbird to be begotten in man's pregnant body -- the implicit meaning of the *kenaya* concept.

The hummingbirds are brought to the house by the hunters where, as a consequence of being smoked, they are transformed and born into "real" peccaries to be eaten by humans. This metamorphosis takes place at the moment when the Thunder Man "lights the fire" to smoke the game.

The measure the mythic hunter takes to attach his "peccary," envisioned as a hummingbird, to his hip for transportation to the house might refer to the custom of carrying small game beneath the waist string which holds the *andiá* loincloth in place. However, the Emberá visitor in the myth experiences the world beyond where the true order of things is revealed.

In mythical discourse, the hummingbird, fastened to the pelvis, is not a dead bird hanging on the hip of the hunter but the principle of the "*pichi* way" restored to life within its cosmic realm. The vital *chi* essence of the peccary has been brought inside the bodily cosmos of man the hunter, indicated by the mythic statement that the hummingbirds were "put into his pelvis."

A parallel relationship between the symbolical function of the *ku* hand of the *drua* body and the *ku* ear of the *utare* head was suggested above. The ear as a cosmic flow of *ne* essence emitted from the *ku* device, is rendered in the image of the golden hummingbird sucking nectar from a flower moulded as an ornament for the ear.

The hummingbird as a processual agent in the "house of essence" (*nedé* ear ornament) seems to have been transferred from the head to the body as a consequence of the hunter's *kenaya*-killing of his *kera* fruit, the "hummingbird." The hummingbird-ear constellation has now been replaced by an analogous hummingbird-pelvis relationship. The essential hummingbird is associated with the "pelvis" which Pinto translates as *kurruburru*, a term almost identical to the word for "internal ear:" *kuruburu*. To this can be added that "hip" is *kurru* while "ear" is *kuru*.<sup>30</sup> The myth uses the metaphoric image of hummingbirds attached to the hunter's hips to explain the analogous condition of the fruit of above relocated in its inverted origin in the cosmic womb of below, within man -- the "hunting" executor of cosmic principles.

The act of killing is regarded as *kenaya*, an act of sexual intercourse leading to conception and rebirth; life recycled through death. We believe that the hunter kills a living peccary and brings home a dead hummingbird. For the Emberá, however, the *kenaya* act brings life<sup>31</sup>: by "killing" a tatabro,



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a hummingbird is born. As "hunter," cosmic man processes the vital *pichi* essence inside the peccary to make it come alive in the cosmic mind, a behaviour which demonstrates the perpetually regenerating principle of "hummingbird, the way of the *pichi* essence." A dead peccary makes a live hummingbird.

Though we observe a hunter who kills a peccary, we are not able to see the essential purport of the hunter's action. The fact that the peccary is killed is irrelevant because that which truly happens is expressed in the Emberá term *kenaya*: to hit and consume the essence of the game. It is not a matter of consuming physical food seen as a "river of maize" (*bidó*) but of reiterating the principle of the perpetual "way of *pichi* vital essence." This principle ripens as a "hummingbird fruit" within the peccary game and is begotten through the *kenaya* intention. It is to be noted that the mythic hunter does not look for peccaries, he covets peccary *heads* ("tomorrow we will eat fresh peccary's head"); by this the myth emphasizes the opposition between the consumed above and the consumer below.

The Emberá see the behaviour of the hummingbird as a "living" principle of the cosmic conveyance of *pichi* essence, as a being which is pure essence, aggressively and continuously searching for nectar until after sundown, voraciously devouring essential food in its purest form. Within the behavioural context of hunting, the "hummingbird principle" of cosmic regeneration finds its most manifest expression under the direction of cosmic man, acting out the *me* intention of the *dru* mind.

A dead peccary is a live hummingbird but there is no causal relationship between the two conditions. "A dead peccary" is an outcome of an action which is separate and altogether different from that which produces "a live hummingbird." The first is represented by the view of the ignorant Emberá hunter, the latter by the sage Thunder Man. Individual man kills a peccary while cosmic man (as an agent of cosmic principles) begets a hummingbird; the first action is an illusion because "killing" is *kenaya* and nothing else. In the mythical realm we experience both these events and are instructed to keep them apart: peccaries are indeed "hummingbirds."

Apart from the inevitable fact that true peccaries do not exist in Emberá thought, in the physical dimension of man's existence peccaries have an essential nature which indicates a close relationship with humans. Peccaries originate from humans and present human traits. They shelter humans in their bodies, man may turn into a peccary and, in the mythical world, humans and peccaries communicate with or confront each other.

In short, for the Emberá, peccaries are a kind of human, an idea which, however, must be juxtaposed with the notion that humans are a kind of

peccary. Looking into the human nature of peccaries brings us one step further in understanding the Emberá model of essential man.

In Chocó imagery, both species of peccaries are said to originate from humans. A Wounaan myth, recorded by Wassén in the lower San Juan River in 1934, is here quoted in full, as it will be referred to later on:

On one occasion a number of Cholos, as many as from about three huts, got together for the purpose of clearing the maize fields. They worked at this until evening, when they suddenly ran off into the forest, shrieking. For the space of two years people could hear these runaways grunting like saínos (*Dicotyles labiatus*) in the depths of the forest. They had become changed into wild pigs. The Cholos that had remained killed one of those saínos, but it was found still to have entrails like a human being, so it was not eaten. Five years later it again happened that one of those saínos was caught, and then its flesh was like that of a wild pig. It was eaten by the Cholos. The saínos multiplied and filled up the forest; they even replenished the earth.

The second species of wild pig, tatabro (*Dicotyles torquatus*), was originally a negro. He captured a dozen or so of the Cholos and carried them off to a creek. In two months' time they were changed into tatabros. They were rooting about along the river-bank, and fed in the manner of pigs. And since then, tatabros are found all over the world (Wassén 1935:123-124).

The course of events leading to the transformation of humans into peccaries will not be analysed here but the outcome seems to be related to the handling of maize in the perspective of the shift between day and night. The fact that the people came from three houses indicates a cosmic bearing as the number three is often mentioned in contexts related to human origination.

The tatabro is not to be described as a Negro but as a being of black appearance. As is evident in the myth of Thunder Man, the tatabro is related to thunder which originally appeared as a triadic constellation of White, Red, and Black Thunder. Black Thunder was evil and used to kill people whenever particular words were uttered. In Baudó I was told that the rumble of thunder is the grunting of a tatabro.

Humans always run the risk of being transformed into peccaries. Ventura meets this fate but his humanity is saved when he refuses to devour the chungá palm fruit. Consumption would have marked the point of no return to humanity. The last animal trait to disappear from his body are the fangs the size of which is reduced by the touch from the shaman's staff (Pardo 1984:190-191). In myth peccaries also take on a human character in their houses where the concealed Emberá visitor can hear them talk. Their

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peccary appearance is described in terms of a "waistcoat" which they remove upon entering the house (Pardo 1984:106). After his metamorphic bath in the true world a human can also put on this peccary waistcoat and become a peccary.

The humanlike character of peccaries is associated with the mythic people, sometimes known as "cimarrones" which is the local term for runaway Indians in colonial times. These reserved people are said to still roam the uppermost headwaters of distant small rivers.

A reminiscence of the "peccary people" of the headwaters is rendered in a former name of the river which nowadays is known as Nekorá, said to shelter cimarrones in its headwaters. In the 17th century this river was called Bidomikodá, a name which modern Emberá informants from the same area consider to derive from a people called *bidó* living on that river, i.e., a "people" of white-lipped peccaries (*Tayassu pecari*).

A myth, published by Pardo (1984:233-238), describes how two Emberá hunters going upriver meet five cimarrones, "each one with a peccary above," who invite them to their house where their chief offers two of his daughters as wives.

For reasons clarified in the mythological discourse, humans may also appear as a link between mankind and the realm of the peccaries. This is a motif in a widespread myth which illustrates the interdependent relationship between man and the peccary. From his famous informant, the shaman Sélimo Huacorisó, Nordenskiöld got a short version which is here published for the first time (Field notes 1927):

There was a cholo who could not kill the peccaries any longer. The others killed. Then the woman said to her husband: "Why do you not kill the peccary now?" Then the man said: "I cannot hit with the lance."

He could not kill any longer. And again they went to the forest to beat the peccaries. Then he said to his wife: "If a peccary is not killed I will not return from the forest."

And they went off and beat the peccaries but he could not kill. And he followed behind, running. Then he caught up with [them] but he could [not] kill and he walked behind and he walked behind and the night came and he slept there. The next day he went on again and on the following day about five o'clock in the afternoon he ran across the big cave of the path of the peccaries and then he came to the cave and he cut two sticks and placed them as a fork and he climbed on top and the peccaries passed below. When they passed he continued ahead and the herd came behind and he put up the fork once again and the peccaries passed and he continued ahead. Then he got out to the other world. He found a house, there was an old woman and then the old woman asked, "What do you look for here?"

And he said, "I am lost here."

And then she made him go up to the *déutária* (attic). There she had a big trough and she covered him and in the afternoon the sons of that old woman arrived. They said, "Mom, what do you keep here, we can feel the smell of people from the outside."

Their mother said, "I have nothing here, my sons."

And the next day they went to bring the youths and then the old woman took him out to bathe and then the old woman asked what he wanted.

"If you wish I will give you a herd of peccaries. Then you will become the leader (*chihuántra*) of the peccaries (*pidó*)."<sup>32</sup>

"That's all right," the cholo said. She gave him a shirt. He put on the shirt and he became peccary. Then he went once again with his herd of peccaries to this world (*namaría*) and the people from here could never kill any peccaries of this herd. And once when the people followed behind those peccaries, this cholo appeared (they were his sons and brothers).

Then he said, "My brothers, I will not return to my house any more. Now I am a leader of peccaries and I will call for peccaries so that you can kill."

He told his brother, "Take careful aim and kill the peccary right all at once because if it is wounded it will be maggoty and hard to cure."

The peccaries came quite peacefully and each one killed two peccaries. After that he went away and they have not seen him any more.

In another version of the same myth, recorded by Pardo (1984:105-111) in Baudó, the unsuccessful hunter who becomes the leader of peccaries is an affine, married to a woman and brother-in-law to her four brothers. Hiding in the attic of the house of the peccaries, he slips down to them by night and makes love to a woman. As in the text recorded by Nordenskiöld, the man makes his herd available to humans. Next day he takes his peccaries to the forest where one animal is killed by his four brothers-in-law. The consequences of the killing are described as a chain reaction: (1) upon the death of the game, (2) the immediate sound of a seashell is heard, (3) the brothers-in-law tell their sister who (4) is "thinking of her husband," the leader of the peccary herd. The act of killing actually takes place in a "world within," as a closed context described in figurative terms of a mother of peccaries-four brothers-their sister-her husband whose interrelated behaviour represents the principles of reproduction within cosmic man.

Among South American Indians it is generally argued that if a hunter wishes to be successful he must refrain from sexual intercourse with women on the eve of the hunt. It seems as if the unsuccessful Emberá hunter in the quoted myth disobeys this command. Another version of the same myth which I recorded on the upper Atrato suggests that the hunter's inability to

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hunt is associated with the fact that his woman is "evil"; the man also points out to his wife that if he manages to kill peccaries he will not come back. In the end, his ability as a hunter is of a different order and so is the pregnancy of his "thinking wife."

On the other hand, the relationship between the hunter and his game is sometimes rendered in terms of rewarding sexual intercourse in a metaphysical sense. This is suggested in the myth about "The King Vulture" which tells about the Emberá hunter who always kills five peccaries but leaves four of them on the riverbank for the vultures to eat (Pardo 1984:97-103). He makes friends with the birds and makes love to a beautiful girl among them. The vultures explain that they are human, "those feathers which we wear are shirts." The hunter continues to kill peccaries for the vultures which is rewarding for him because "always when he killed he could sleep with her." The mythological message is unequivocal: the hunter killing his game is interpreted as a sexual act between man and woman.

The vulture as a carrion bird with a strong beak is associated with female fertility; the girl who has her first menstruation, breaks the silence of her seclusion by shouting to the vulture (Santa Teresa 1924:79).

This faculty for "sexual eating" is also referred to in the myth of the King Vulture when the birds explain to the human hunter that their beaks are "like a knife to cut meat," i.e. a *neko* consumer of essential *chiko*.

The Mother of the Peccaries is an old woman in the Nordenskiöld text but a young woman in the Baudó version. The difference in age is explained in the Atrato version of the same myth. Here the Mother of Peccaries has a dual appearance, presenting herself as two beautiful young sisters, one of whom stems the passion of her human visitor by telling him, "Do not think of us, I am an old woman, she from yesterday is also an old woman as I am an old woman."

This female being is identical to the Mother of Peccaries who Ventura meets during his odyssey in the riverine underworld. Her commentary that Ventura has made her pregnant with his thought resembles the situation where the sister of the four peccary hunters is "thinking" of her peccary husband when she is told of the successful hunt.

In this myth the association between hunting and conception is again implicit in the *kenaya* action between the cosmic "hunter" and his game. The four hunters answer to the cosmic wholeness of four *me* (the *jimini* principle) that executes the "male" intention of conception of the "female" womb, here represented by their "sister" in her function as the "Mother of Peccaries." As a set of five -- four "brothers" within a "sister" -- the fourfold nature of the cosmos is figured. This configuration has already been

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suggested by the image of the *jua* hand (4+1 fingers) and the image of the four "intentional" *me* incased in their united *ke* womb, which is manifested in the cosmic design of sexual intercourse.

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## AS IN A MIRROR: THE FEMALE FACE OF THE MALE INTENTION

Displaying the principle of cosmic regeneration, the Emberá hunter is cosmic man who cuts new life with his *nekoi*-consuming hand. The hunter is fecundated by the killed game in a performance staged through Karagabí's work of creation which reproduces the contextual pattern of a process in the cosmic mind. The same "objectification" of cosmic principles is performed by man in his role as canoe-maker or as any other actor in the dramatization of cosmic conditions implied in any situation of "daily life" among the Emberá.

As a consumer of essential *chi* through *kidá* cutting, cosmic man fertilizes himself with his own matter. Man is the anthropomorphized "maize intention," holding the two principal ingredients which compose the maize recipe of life -- the "sexual" codes of *me* and *ke*. He eats the *chi* essence of his own *be*-created maize fruit, described as *pichi* (*be-chi*). Man as cosmos eats his own matter and literally becomes pregnant with himself; this is the purport of cosmic sexual intercourse, as interpreted in Emberá thought. I have already suggested the same contextual "paradox" with regard to the hunter and his game. Ventura is consumed by himself and pregnant with his own matter, Ventura the hunter is killed by Ventura the peccary. The apparent paradox is that the cosmic fruit is created only to be annihilated by its own progenitor.

The idea of a cosmic womb begetting a progeny which is an inverted reflection of itself -- a binary structure of "body" and "head" as manifested in the formation of cosmic man -- is the foundation of Emberá cosmology. How is this principle of cosmic autogamy and autogenesis construed by the Emberá? And how is the sexual dichotomy of man/woman and maleness/femaleness conceived and arranged in the cosmic structure and process?

The answer lies in the mythological discourse though the linguistic signals and symbolical contexts are easily misinterpreted by the outsider. Despite

these epistemological inconveniences I will refer to a myth motif, already quoted in the text, which I believe affords an opportunity to enter into the heart of Emberá ontology: the tale of the mocking White Lady and her sexual play with her frustrated lover.

*Uera Torro*, "the White Lady," exhorts the listener to pay attention to her because what she has to tell is crucial. The very fact that she makes this remark is indicative of a revelation with a decisive purport. The core of her message lies in one sentence, "Now, when you introduce it, just do it once, and when I tell you, *remove it and you make it bite your thing in my mouth. Then, if you eat, it is good; if you don't, then it is bad.*"

The man does not understand what she is referring to and it is doubtful whether he does even after his hard-earned experience is over. I feel that the teller formulates this passage in the myth to elicit a discussion among the listeners on the ontological premises of Emberá thought. What does *Uera Torro* really mean with her enigmatic instructions? My interpretation follows.

The man introduces his member and suddenly he can see it appear in the mouth of the laughing woman. This image gives him the prerequisite for obeying the woman's instructions: in front of him he has a wide-open, toothed mouth which shows his own penis inside. *Uera Torro's* first precept is, "remove it and make it bite your thing in my mouth." The man must make his own penis bite his own penis in her mouth. In what possible way can the man's own penis "bite" itself in the face of the woman? And why should it?

The mythological message implies that this intercourse is a metaphysical act which should not be mistaken for carnal love-making. The Emberá man fails to recognize this when he twice attempts to make love to the elusive woman. These two unsuccessful attempts take place in the open while the third is accomplished indoors, "he was coming to the house; he arrived and there she was," and the woman assures him, "now, I will truly give you." While the sexual contact in the human world takes place alfresco among the Emberá, the intercourse that *Uera Torró* offers her ardent visitor can only be achieved indoors. The house represents the cosmic structure of the *dru* mind while the outside is beyond and without, a place of physical illusions. Thence it follows that the actors are no longer physical humans when they are in the house; like the peccaries they have left their human "waistcoat" outside to change into essential beings.

The meeting between the Emberá man and *Uera Torró* is depicted as an encounter between humans but the actors are now abstractions in a mental image. They are anthropomorphized formulations of pristine ideas and objectives, constituent elements of the cosmic mind. They are not acting in



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cosmos, they are cosmos.

The woman is not a human being of flesh and blood; she is naked and she is white. When she speaks she communicates in her mind because she is faceless. The man cannot see but her "big thing" staring at him. The myth intimates that she is but a huge hole which the man, in fact, experiences upon his first attempt to make love to her.

The man is in confrontation with a cosmic design described in anthropomorphic terms, the notion of the "dual river," *dodo* or *dru*. This nature is coded in the lady's "white" appearance, she is *torró* which is the same *dru* (*durrú*), the "dual river." "White" as a mental abstraction does not refer to a visible colour because "whiteness" is imperceptible in the world of the cosmic mind where vision is introspective, like the closed eye of the hand contemplating the essence of things, not their material representation.

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Seen as a huge "hole," the woman is *chirú*, harbouring the nature of the "river of *chi* vital essence" which eats and begets the embryonic food of cosmos, inviting the male intention of *me* to fill up her "hole," her empty uterine container which thus becomes the cosmic womb.

As a "hole," the cosmic woman bears the very same character of sexual consumer which is characteristic of her as a "tick" and fatal "penis eater," precisely the role *Uera Torró* assumes and makes explicit in her sexual lesson to her cosmic lover. As a "tick" extracting blood, she induces the man to enter her by extracting his essence which here is himself, the *me* design.

In the myth the man is the male intention of the Emberá cosmos; as the woman is shown to be *ke*, he is *me* as an anthropomorphized abstraction of the male sex.

The mythological expression, "the man speaks," signifies that "the male principle has something in mind" - *me* turns into a male design and a cosmic objective. *Me* stands for the everlasting condition in everlasting motion; it enters or is devoured by *ke* and it is begotten by *ke*. But *me* is not set in motion by itself. The initiative to move is directed by *ke* as the complementary principle which makes *me* enter and makes it be removed anew, described in *Uera Torró's* command: "when I tell you, remove it." Thus, *ke* is foremost the "processor" of the life essence supplied by *me*.

The uterine *chirú* "hole" gets saturated with *chi* essence from its *me* substance. This image of *me* substance within the *chirú* hole is rendered in the human throat which is the "*chirú* of the way" (*ochirú*) that shelters and begets the *kiramé* tongue.

Inhaled into the *chirú* cavity by the absorbent nature of *ke*, the mass of *me* makes the womb stretch like that of a pregnant woman. Analogously, for the

Emberá, the human throat will stretch as a consequence of the introduction and presence of the male *kiramé*. An expanded throat will then be a token of pregnancy and lost virginity. This belief seems to be the motif of a public trial which the girl must undergo during the puberty ritual, described by Severino de Santa Teresa:

When the parents doubt the virtue of their daughters, they subject them to a superstitious trial which they guarantee is irrefutable. They measure the neck of the girl with a strip and they make her hold it between her teeth. Then her father with his hands seizes the strip which hangs from the teeth of his daughter and turns it over her head to her neck. If the strip passes with ease, it is a sign that she is not a maiden; if the strip only reaches her forehead and not can pass to her neck, then she is maiden (*chatagai*) (Santa Teresa 1924:84).

By measuring the circumference of the girl's throat, her parents will know if she has performed sexual intercourse. If she has, the male sex inevitably will have penetrated and extended her throat to emerge in her mouth as a *kiramé* surrounded by her *kidá* teeth. Through her sexual experience her teeth have assumed a vaginal character that will reveal her lost virginity by means of the *dchi* string, firmly clenched by the teeth. In this way, a mythological dictate is corroborated by ritual context and the relationship between a central myth motif and the intrinsic meaning of man's sexual life is confirmed as well.

While the *ke* design, personified as *Uera Torró*, triggers the process of shaping the prerequisites for cosmic reproduction, the *me* concept executes the "biting" of its own opposite "fruit." The capacity to "bite," however, is only acquired by *me* when it has been reformulated by the *ke* processing, i.e. when *me* has been commanded by *ke* to enter its *chirú* hole as "*me* inside *ke*." Through this process the *me* intention is "activated" and acquires the prerequisite to bite: the *kidá* teeth as the *ke* concept in its germinated form. The cosmic intention of making *me* enter *ke* thus formulates an abstract structure which I refer to as the cosmic mind of *dru*, the "dual river" (*durrú*, *dodo*). This essential arrangement evokes the concept of *kirá* (*kidá*), a "facial intention," which carries out the objective to "bite." Through the metaphoric image of the Emberá man, the *me* intention is told to bite but that which executes the biting is actually the essential *kidá* "teeth" which now surround him in his state of being enclosed by *ke*. The imaginary "face" of cosmic man is now ready to "bite" its opposite and inverted "fruit."

Complying with *Uera Torró's* directions, the man can suddenly see his own penis appear in her open mouth, "when she began to laugh, he could see

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it in her mouth, it was coming out through her mouth." In front of him, the man observes a face with an open mouth holding his *me* inside which is the analogous progeny of its essential mother womb or its "facial intention." The myth shows that conception is signalled by the roar of laughter from the woman; *me* entering *ke* provokes the laughter. "Roaring with laughter" is *michiggai* which literally means "to transform (*kai*) the *chi* of *me* (*mi-chi-ggai*). In other words, *ke* processes the *mi-chi* essence into its corresponding *pichi* metamorphosis as the *be* fruit, our concept of "maize" or *be kirá*, "the face of *be*." The man observes his *me* remade into a "facial *me*," i.e. a *kira-me* "tongue" surrounded by *kidá* "teeth." He sees a "face" which is the pristine manifestation of the new creation: the concept of the "head" which is also the physical evidence of Karagabí, the creator, in his multiple manifestations as maize, sun, and human fruit. This is the formation of the head of the *drua* body, the sky of the river world.

The action of biting is directed by *Uera Torró* and the biting is made possible by the "technical innovation" of the *kidá* teeth of the "facial intention." Despite the fact that she tells *him* to bite, the action is controlled by *Uera Torró's* command and made possible through "her" *kidá* device. "His" biting is, in fact, "her" enterprise; the man becomes a "female consumer" or a "female penis eater." Consequently, the mythical "penis eater" in Emberá imagery is not a woman though "she" is described as such. The penis eater is a cosmic being of male within female, construed as the "facial intention" of *me* within *Uera Torró*.

The man catches sight of his own sex in the open mouth of the laughing woman. At first, the listener assumes it must be the woman's face which holds the male sex as a consequence of its cosmic penetration of her body and *ochirú* throat but this is, actually, never stipulated in the myth. As a matter of fact, the face that the man sees in front of him is not a woman's face although it is the face of *Uera Torró*.

The metamorphic power of *Uera Torró's* laughter has transformed the *chi* essence of *me* into its *be* opposite "fruit," into *pi-chi*. Hereby, the cosmic structure of *me* within *ke*, configured as a "facial intention" (*kirá*), reproduces itself as its opposite and inverted analogue, its material representation of the *be kira* concept. Right before his eyes, the man can now observe his own face which is not a woman's face but a face in guise of *Uera Torró's* exterior physiognomy, holding his own *me* intention in its material representation as the *me* of the *kira* "facial intention," the *kira-me* "tongue." The vital essence of *me*, directed by *Uera Torró's* instructions and operative tools, brings on the creation of itself, the "facial intention" conceiving its face in flesh and blood, in a process where mind germinates

into matter. As *ne* (intention) gives birth to *ne-tá* (object), *ke* as "facial intention" breeds its "facial object," *ke-tá* (*kidá*, *kirá*).

In this situation, the man experiences something he has never seen before. When he catches sight of the woman's face with his sex in her open mouth he is observing a face in front of him which is his own; he is looking at himself, *as if he were looking into a mirror*.

The metaphor of the mirror is provocative but substantiated in Emberá ethnography. The use of mirrors is a constituent element in the practice and ritual paraphernalia of the *jaibaná* shamans. The *jaibaná* mirror is a small mirror which has to be quadrangular, framed in wood and, though small, may vary between ca 10-20 by 5-10 cms (Nociones 1929:72). "This mirror plays a very important role in the functions of the *jaibaná*, above all in their healings, for which reason it must not be missing on the *chimia ego bari* [the altar]" (Santa Teresa 1924:31). The *jaibaná* mirror is dangerous if not properly handled; looking into it might cause eye disease (ibid., 132). In his "ecstatic" journey into himself and his ensuing rebirth as a physical human, the shaman undergoes a metamorphosis which resembles the experience of the Emberá man in the myth. In his mirror the shaman can observe the veridical reflections of the cosmic mind and of himself as cosmos. In his mirror he can read the portrayal and semblance of his visions from beyond.

The vast prevalence of almost identical types of mirrors in South and Central America does not corroborate the theory (Pineda, 1986:142) that the mirror is a post-Conquest cultural element among the Chocó peoples. The magic function of the mirror in a variety of contexts is firmly established in native societies all over the hemisphere and there is no reason why the Emberá should be an exception.

Referring to the Inca, Garcilaso de La Vega comments that "the men never looked into the mirror, something they held for infamy, for being a womanish thing" (quoted by Nordenskiöld, 1926:109, note 5). Such a conception inevitably brings the Emberá myth to mind where the man gazes at his "female" face before him -- the same face any human confronts as his or her mirror image.

The offspring of the *me-within-ke*-intention, rendered in terms of a "face," calls forth the impetus of the *me* male intention to carry out a metamorphosis through "biting" (*kayai*) with its *kidá* teeth and *kirá* face.

As soon as the new "face" is created, *Uera Torró* instructs the man to let "it" bite his "thing," i.e. to make his *me* bite its own replica, *me* recreated as *be*. *Me* is not the male organ any longer but a cosmic design, a male intention described in anthropomorphic terms. The man is *me* as the human body is the principle of the *drua* cosmos in materialised terms. In this

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precept of having "*me* bite *be* (as the matter of *me*)" lies the basic notion of "mind eating mind matter" which already has been referred to as *chi* eating *chiá*, *ko* eating its *jo* fruit (*ku* vs *ku*), or *me* eating *be*.

By preparing for the stimulus to "bite," the *kidá/kirá* construction supply the *me* male intention with an aggressive nature to "bite" its own *be* matter: the inevitable incentive to destroy itself as matter in order to regain mind -- the prime mover of the perpetual process of the cosmic way, *o*.

*Uera Torró* intimates that her cosmic lover has but two options: if he eats, it is good; if he doesn't, it is bad. Her message is plain: *me* must eat its own matter, its own flesh, because this is the command of the cosmic way. If *me* does not bring back its own progeny, *ne* is lost and so is cosmos.

The myth of the *Jenené* tree of life phrases the same message in a more graphic manner; if the fisherman does not give fish, the world will come to an end, the river will vanish and the regeneration of life and existence will cease. The fisherman is cosmic man who must sacrifice his "fish," i.e. his own *betá* matter. The "flesh" of cosmos must be consumed back into its mother womb of the *dru* mind to keep life going. Cosmic man is bound to consume himself; if he does not, he will perish and the cosmos with him.

The facial intention observing its own objectification creates a binary opposition of consumer and consumed, expressed as "face to face," *kirá* vs *kirá* or *ke* vs *ke*. The principle of *kirá* (*ke*) confrontation has been met with repeatedly in the text. For example, the hummingbird smelling nectar describes the relationship in terms of a *kidá* beak vs *kerá* fragrance, the *kirá* "teeth" of the guama fruit is the "male" food for the *kirá* "female" consumer, the shaman places his *ankidá* buttocks against the *ambuké* stool, the *be kirá* kernels are embryonic food for the human *kirá* face, the *kidá* edge of the hunter's weapon opposes the *kirá* peccary head in a *kenaya*-relation of *ke* vs *ke*. The *kirá* vs *kirá* context repeats the overall principle of the consuming *ke* womb of below in opposition to its own *kirá* fruit of above: river vs sky, body vs head.

Likewise, in sexual intercourse between man and woman the *kirá* confrontation is marked. The *kirá* hand scratches and "eats" the opposing *kirá* hand of the partner or his/her *kirá* face and *ke* nose. Within marriage the same principle of cosmic autogamy is described in terms of a *kima* vs *kima* encounter.

Sexual intercourse as an explanatory model of cosmic principles expresses the same *kirá* confrontation, as the *Uera Torró*'s lesson shows. In this act, the man begets his own facial fruit in guise of the female partner's face. The woman's face, as an objectification of the pristine facial intention, is given the capacity to see and give shape to "her" origin, the facial intention; she

sees a "male face" which is identical to her own. But like transient physical humans, "she" is an illusion who is only able to see the primordial facial intention in its physical outlines, as a materialisation of principles. Her position may be likened to that of individual man looking down and observing his origin, the essential womb of his *drua* body. Sexual intercourse between man and woman is, like any other physical human action, an expression of principles; the "female" face is nothing but a fruit of its own "male" intention, begotten for the expressed purpose of being consumed anew.

As will be shown later, the cosmos reproduces itself as "oneness" (cf. the concept of *abá*) but this oneness has an essential, binary *dru* character of a male *me* and a female *me*. Moreover, the cosmic principle of *o-mé* or the *me* of the cosmic way may be seen as "twoness," described and made explicit in the process of the sexual act between humans, which further becomes perpetually fused into the quadrupled structure of the cosmic womb.

The situation which defines cosmic man as a "hunter" relates him to an object which is referred to as "game." This game forms a category of animals which possess a maize character. They are all "be'ings" as their names suggest and, accordingly, they are associated with *emberá* humans too. The game is a "maize fruit" which is begotten by the cosmic womb or the "facial intention." The peccary is the foremost representation of this *bidó*, or "maize river," which flows out of the fecund *ke*, the common source of life and existence. For the Emberá, the peccary is not an "animal"<sup>34</sup> but the physical aspect of the maize intention which is given by the male *me* in the disguise of cosmic man. "Peccary" is the holder of the essential *pichi* which must be returned to its origin. With the hunter as agent, the essential *be* is restored to its mother womb and "peccary" reveals its true identity as "hummingbird," "the *pichi* way of *ke*."

The sexual relationship between the hunter and his game is demonstrated by the *kenaya* act when the hunter "eats" the animal with his piercing *measo* lance. The relationship between the hunter and his game is analogous to that of the cosmic encounter between the man and *Uera Torró*. The hunter represents the facial intention while the animal is the face of *Uera Torró*. Cosmic man as a "hunter" fulfils the command given by *Uera Torró* to let "his thing eat his own thing."

The face of *Uera Torró* is begotten as a consequence of the penetration of *me* into *ke* and subsequent formation of the *kirá* facial intention. The game as the "face" which the hunter confronts in the hunt has been begotten in the very same way. The game as "maize fruit" was born when the *me* design of cosmic man penetrated *ke* in his role as *be* "sower." In the myth about the

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origin of peccaries there is an evident causal connection between the sowing of maize and the formation of *bidó* peccaries. Even though the myth does not say so, I conclude that the peccaries are not transformed humans in the sense that the Emberá sowers are substituted for peccaries; rather, I see maize sowing as an act of "sexual eating" which is a variant of the cosmic fusion of *me* and *Uera Torró* where the Emberá sower is the facial intention which begets its own reflected image in the shape of a "peccary." As a "sower" of maize, cosmic man is a virtual "maize river" which renders him his own progeny, his *bidó* "face."

In his complementary roles as "maize sower" and "hunter," cosmic man brings together the behaviour he demonstrates in his relationship with *Uera Torró*. In the encounter with his *bidó* "face," man the hunter is attracted to his own fruit, as eager to "eat" as he is before *Uera Torró* or as a human being facing his/her sexual partner.

As an inverted progeny of its mother womb and the *kirá* facial intention, the game becomes the "head" of the cosmic "body." Acting as a "hunter," man does not bear human traits, he is a "cosmic intention" which is remade into matter as "game" in the reflected image of himself. The hunter is the consuming womb and the game is the head which is restored to its origin in the sexual *kenaya* act. Ventura the hunter experiences this when his head is "lost" and he is brought into the riverine world which is his own *drua* chest. In the world beyond he is also seen wearing a peccary's head and fangs; in compliance with this mythological imperative, like the cimarrones in the myth, "real" humans are expected to carry "peccaries above."

The intrinsic uterine nature of man the hunter is also implied by the fact that hunters do pursue peccary *heads* in the mythological world.

When the hunter maintains that the game is a "woman," his predication is as true -- or false -- as the "fact" that his sexual partner is a woman. Both these female partakers are the fruit of the *kidá* capacity of the cosmic intention to change *michi* into *pichi*, to objectify the facial intention into its "face." The game which the hunter pursues and eventually brings down is the hunter's own face, his own physical and visible manifestation which he is bound to consume and restore to his essential *dru* cosmos, figuratively contained in his chest. The game is as much the face of *Uera Torró* as is the woman in sexual intercourse; hence, the game is the alleged "female" participant in the sexual act which the hunter truly performs with himself, a sexual act between mind and matter.

For the cosmic hunter who confronts his peccary "offspring," *Uera Torró's* nature has assumed the aspect of the Mother of Peccaries in his *drua* chest. Emberá myths reveal that the behaviour and attitude shown by the two

towards their human visitors are the same.

When cosmic man faces his female partner in sexual intercourse, he gazes at the face of *Uera Torró* which, actually, is his own face vis-à-vis his intentional bodily womb. Analogously, when cosmic man opposes the peccary in the hunting context, the game assumes the physiognomy of the Mother of Peccaries whose "face" is his own face in relation to his intentional bodily womb. For this same reason, Ventura the hunter is expected to "bite" Ventura the peccary, so as to restore "his own mind back to himself."

Cosmic man as a hunter is defined by his predestinated task to "bite" his own face: the game. This "biting" is carried out as a scratching or piercing procedure using his *jimini* fingers and *pichi* nails. The *neko*-eating "knife-hand" of the human hunter is inadequate and needs to be supplemented with tools such as the *measo* lance or the *neko* knife, described earlier.

The metamorphosis which befalls the hunter is a decisive aspect of Emberá thought. With particular reference to the Ventura case, I will next discuss another implement of cosmic principles related to the *kenaya* act of "killing": the blowgun and the poisonous dart.



# 36

## THE BLOWGUN: AT THE END OF THE ROAD

While the traditional bow and arrow has nowadays largely been replaced by the muzzle-loader and is, if at all, only retained as a hunting weapon for boys shooting birds, lizards, and similar small game, the blowgun is still a weapon of high esteem among adult hunters. It is still found in many homes among the Emberá of central Chocó and the adjacent Departments of Risaralda, Valle, and Antioquia, though few specialists now survive who know how to manufacture it properly or to prepare the poison for its darts. The blowgun is still considered unsurpassed as a noiseless and effective hunting weapon.

The first reliable description of the Chocó blowgun dates from 1780 and is worth quoting in full:

The Chocó Indians use for their own weapon an arrow one palm long and about four mms [*líneas*] in diameter which they make from a kind of cane called "lata," but very strong and resistant; at one end they smear it with poison and at the other they put cotton in order to adjust it to the hole of the blowgun with which they shoot it; this is about eight mms [*líneas*] in diameter and from three to four *varas* long, the whole blowgun having a diameter of one inch in its lower part and in the upper, where the arrow is put to be shot by force of air, one and a half; this blowgun they make from any useful wood and then they wrap it up with a vine or pole which is bent, coating it afterwards with beeswax [*brea*]. The arrows are carried in a tube, and the cotton in a hole of a certain fruit as large as an orange. This weapon is invincible for the Cunacuna Indians, even when they [the Cunacuna] poison their arrows (HDCh 1954:220).

The blowgun has a widespread distribution in the Americas, from Mexico in the north to northeastern Bolivia in the south. It is an ingenious technical device which demands high skill both in manufacture and usage. In Amazonia, local groups are specialists in preparing poison and others in manufacturing blowguns, which creates an interdependant exchange system of both economic and social significance. Size and form varies considerably from one area to another though it is noteworthy that the Chocó blowgun is

almost identical to the one used among the Shuar in eastern Ecuador. The geographically well-defined distribution of the blowgun as a technically advanced implement with a significant role in native mythology and iconography inevitably suggests the existence of an underlying associative ideological context shared by blowgun hunters throughout this area.

The occurrence of blowguns in Emberá myths and the Emberá belief system, though scanty, suggests a more esoteric significance than that which is usually associated with the blowgun as a weapon. I will continue my examination of the essential messages embedded in the myth about Ventura's quest in the underworld and pinpoint one particular situation which denotes the metaphoric value of the blowgun in Emberá thought.

In the beginning of the story Ventura goes hunting and kills several peccaries. After the successful hunt he returns home only to experience his first abduction into the river next morning. This is what happens according to the Spanish version published by Pardo: "The following day the peccaries were running and they killed a lot of them. Ventura had cut a *chakarra* palm so as to manufacture blowgun darts and he had left it stuck into the riverside. Next day at dawn he left to bring back the little palm when, suddenly, Josepa in the house heard the shout and the blow. 'Antumiá took him. Kosasa's Antumiá Erojó took him'" (Pardo 1984:176)

Episodes within myths, however irrelevant they might seem to the main story, are never devoid of meaning nor are they sheer embellishment of the main story. Each piece of information is a crucial link in a contextual chain where each detail can only be interpreted in consideration of what is said before and after. From Ventura's perspective, 1) he kills peccaries, 2) then cuts a palm for darts, 3) then places the palm on the riverside, 4) then goes to pick it up next morning, 5) then is abducted into the subterranean river. Is there any reason for us to ask why Ventura sticks the palm into the riverbank and if so, how is this related to the preceding peccary hunt and his subsequent disappearance?

Considering my earlier argumentation on the nature of man the hunter, I assume that Ventura's actions actually indicate that he is preparing for the "voyage" (or transformation) which he knows will ensue as a consequence of his killing peccaries. His metamorphosis, described in metaphoric terms as a submergence into the river's depths, is likened to a dart rushing inside a blowgun, an event which is revealed in the sequence of sentences quoted above.

The preferred raw material for blowgun darts is a palm (*Socratea eschorrhiza?*), called *chakarrá* by the Emberá, possibly interpreted as "the roots of *chiá*." When he cuts the palm after the peccary hunt has taken place,

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Ventura becomes participatory in the essence and the particular qualities that make the *chakarrá* appropriate for darts. That which we consider an act of "cutting," to the Emberá bears the meaning of *neko*: an act of consumption performed as smelling the *ne* essence out of the matter cut. With his *ku*-device, shown as a moving hand clasping the *neko* cutlass, Ventura becomes fertilized with the metaphysical properties of *chakarrá*, the material which makes a perfect blowgun dart. Ventura, in his *ka*-metamorphosed condition after the *kenaya*-killing, thus is transformed into an "essential dart."

In the evening Ventura sticks the *chakarrá* palm into the river bank. Through this action, the river opening turns into a huge blowgun turned downwards and the *chakarrá* palm trunk becomes a dart of comparable size. More importantly, with this measure Ventura actually loads himself as "Ventura the dart" into the mouth of the cosmic river blowgun. The discharge of the essential dart takes place in the magic moment of dawn when Ventura is lost with a "shout and a blow."

The river's depths are the cosmic way of *o*, made explicit on the cosmic body as the *o-chirú* passage. The blowgun shares this inherent meaning because the Emberá say it is *o-kú*, the *ku* "nose" of *o*, the "ovarian" device which is found within the cosmic way of *o*. The blowgun is made of magic materials such as *meme* wood, *porré* vines, *kandorróna* beeswax, and supplied with a *beróara* tooth at its mouth. The blowgun is a constituent part of cosmic man; it is said to be united with its owner even after his death and is taken care of by his family (Nordenskiöld 1927).

A skilled blowgun craftsman, the Emberá hunter constructs his metaphysical blowgun within himself. He assumes the same blowgun properties which enable Ventura the hunter to consume Ventura the peccary as a dart in his bodily blowgun bore.

I have suggested that Ventura's journey into the river is a graphic description of his metamorphosis as being consumed by himself, descending into his own bodily river which is contained in his *drua* chest. The river opening and the opening of the *ochirú* throat of cosmic man become one and the same. As the cosmic canoe-maker deprives the wood of its essence with his "eating through cutting," leaving the visible canoe a dead, faeces-like matter, Ventura cuts and "kills" the *chakarrá* palm, leaving it a physical but inanimate representation of the essential dart which he now holds in his cosmic chest. The palm as a huge dart stuck into the mouth of the river is nothing but a materialised demonstration of an event which actually takes place in the cosmic mind of *dru*, embodied in "Ventura, the dart."

When Ventura "kills" his peccary game, he follows *Uera Torró's* instructions to "bite" his own *me* concept, rendered as the "peccary face," the

metaphor for Ventura's own transitory, "female" face. The killing is a *kenaya* confrontation between the *ke* of the cosmic mind (Ventura the hunter), and the *ke* of its reflected image, the peccary game (the *kirá* "face").

Through his *koi*-consuming operation, the hunter "bites" his own *me* intention and brings it back to its origin in the mother womb of his *drua* chest. In metaphoric terms, Ventura the hunter consumes his own *pichi* "head," the hummingbird essence of the peccary, to impregnate his cosmic womb anew. The abduction of Ventura into the riverine world transcribes the consumption of Ventura the peccary (or face) by Ventura the hunter (or womb).

Ventura is described as a blowgun dart when he is abducted into the river. The Emberá listener knows that Ventura does not disappear as a physical human. He becomes, however, a mental construction; as a consequence of his *kenaya* act he has left his physical appearance behind. The abducted Ventura is not a human, nor is he to be regarded as a physical head or face. To accurately describe what is being brought into the riverine womb, the myth-teller uses the explicit metaphor of the blowgun dart, because the inherent nature of the dart is that which characterizes Ventura as restored "face" or *pichi* "fruit."

The dart is rendered as *ukidá*, the "tooth" (or "face") of the cosmic way. Thus, Ventura the dart is the *ukidá*, the face of the way, which is bound to enter *and return to its origin* in the *o-kú* blowgun. This origin is the cosmic womb described as the pregnant Mother of Peccaries who becomes fertilized with Ventura's "thought," a thought described in terms of Ventura's nature as consumed and returned *ukidá* "*pichi* face."

The *ukidá* describes the consequence of the *kenaya* killing of the "peccary head." The *pichi* essence is consumed by the hunter in his representation of the cosmic womb brought back to impregnate himself, embodied as the Mother of Peccaries in the myth. The *pichi* essence returns as *ukidá* into its *okú*. But how and when is Ventura transformed into a "dart?" *Uera Torró's* instructions reveal that metamorphosis takes place at the moment when *me* enters *ke*. In the Ventura myth, this principle is manifested in the metaphoric compound of man's uterine chest, the river opening, the blowgun, and the Mother of Peccaries. In the case of *Uera Torró's* sexual play, "her" laughter triggers the making of the *kirá* "face." In the Ventura myth, Ventura's shout creates the same *kidá* metamorphosis -- the sprouting of the *ke-tá* concept where the *kirá* "face" becomes a "facial dart," *u-kidá*. Ventura's shout when dragged into the river as *u-kidá* is a parallel to the splashing sound of the falling *pichi* fruit when it is consumed as the *kirá* face of above by its riverine womb of below. The shout is the signal for two interrelated and

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simultaneous events: Ventura's transformation into *kidá* and the impregnation of the Mother of Peccaries in accordance with the mythical prescript: "in the underworld. . . the women give birth as soon as they have become pregnant" (Nordenskiöld 1928:133).

Ventura the *ukidá* dart, as restored and reborn *me* inside *ke*, hits his target, the "pregnant" Mother of Peccaries, and then instantly executes his cosmic task of "cutting" and consuming the opposite *kirá*, perceived in the myth as the vaginal face of the Mother of Peccaries, described as her *chitú* "water hole for animals." Her *chitú* face is the appropriate "water hole" for Ventura, the opposite *ukidá* essence, because Ventura has been abducted as "animal," as peccary head, and thus is fitted for drinking from the *chitú* of the uterine Mother. She offers him bits of her own life essence maize bread (*tumbú*; in Spanish, *envuelto de maíz*). By eating this essence, Ventura is reborn as a human and reappears from the river into the human world. However, the import of Ventura's meeting with himself (the Mother of Peccaries) is his restoration as cosmic man through the rebirth of the new *pichi* head, i.e., the reconstruction of the hunter/game relationship which portrays man as consisting of body and head, of "cosmic hunter" and his "game," prepared for a new confrontation.

The property that makes the *ukidá* dart "bite" or "cut" its reflected *kirá* face is kept in its *kidá* point. Like the "eating" *jumini* fingers of the cosmic hand, the dart contains its *ne* essence of the *me* intention. This is the *neará*, "the true *ne*," which is the fatal poison, smeared on the tip of the dart by the cosmic hunter. The Emberá term for "poison" is *neará* because, as "true *ne*," it is the foremost executor of *kenaya* killing. Seemingly, *neará* has a contradictory nature as it also means "remedy" for the Emberá. However, with the essential meaning of the *kenaya* operation in mind, accomplished by the fatal *neará*, "poison" and "remedy" are seen to be analogous concepts. In Emberá thought, *neará* poison becomes the remedy for unregenerated life.

I have assumed that Ventura the hunter's killing of Ventura the peccary is likened to a dart set into the mouth of the giant riverine blowgun. To us this comparison contains a directional contradiction which, however, is eliminated in Emberá cosmology. Ventura's actual killing of the peccary is an action moving out from and taking place outside the cosmic body, demonstrated in the *neko*i-eating hand and the discharge of the blowgun dart to hit and kill the game. "Ventura the dart," on the other hand, is set into a blowgun which is turned downwards to hit the Mother of Peccaries at the end of the road, in the "*ku* of *o*" at the opposite end of the *okú* blowgun. While Ventura's dart is discharged outwards and upwards as shown by the hunter's handling of his blowgun, Ventura the dart is himself discharged

inwards and downwards, as shown by the riverine metaphor.

When the Emberá hunter handles his blowgun he plays out an event which takes place within cosmic man. Aiming at the game with the fatal dart, he manifests the cosmic intention of extracting the vital essence out of himself, using the metaphor of the blowgun equipment and the movement pattern of the *jua* arms to illustrate the process of the cosmic mind. The external movement and action of blowing the dart at an external target repeats the process in which the Emberá man is supposed to bite "his own thing" in the external face of *Uera Torró*, the reflection of his own cosmic facial intention. The outward trajectory of the dart is the materialised inversion of an essential inward movement towards the end of the cosmic way, the *ku* centre in the *chitú* face of the Mother of Peccaries. The dart which enters the peccary is identified with its agent, Ventura the hunter, and the action as a cosmic intention made manifest in the body language of cosmic man is described in the myth as Ventura the dart rushing down into the river blowgun turned downwards. In this way, the correct direction of the trajectory of Ventura the dart is indicated. The peccary face above is a physical illusion and reflection of the Mother of Peccaries below, the processor of life in the *drua* cosmos of the human chest.

The "blowgun nature" of cosmic man and the true way of the *okú* blowgun is illustrated by man's behaviour and his begotten equipment. The cosmic blowgun itself is described in terms of the river opening and the *ochirú* throat within man.<sup>35</sup> The poisonous dart, pointing downwards and set into the mouth to be blown into the *drua* chest, is portrayed on cosmic man in the shape of the quiver carried by the hunter on his chest. The metaphor of the quiver is described in terms of a huge frog which represents the *neará* principle through its name; "frog" is *kokoi* or *neará*. The image of the quiver as a frog is made up from the interrelated meanings of its composite construction.

The quiver is used to hold the poisonous darts. These are thin, sharp sticks, 20-25 cm long, which are shaped with the *neko* knife. About one cm from the end, a bobbin-shaped tuft of "cotton," *mojaupudda*, from the *moi* (*mo*) tree (*Eriodendron occidentale* L.) is secured with *dchi* fibre. The dart is only effective when poison has been applied to its point. The Emberá use two kinds, one of which comes from a tree, *pakurú neará* (*Oqcodeia ulei* (Warb.) *Macbr*), which is prepared as a decoction from its bark. The other poison, which is more common, comes from different species of "arrow poison frogs" of the gen. *Dendrobates* and *Phyllobates* (fam. Dendrobatidae) (Myers & Daly 1983:99). Captured frogs are kept in a cage, made of a section of the *siurú* guadua grass.

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The poison is extracted from the frog by using a sharp stick of *siurú*, ca 20 cm long. This stick is pushed through the mouth of the frog and into one of its hind legs. From the pain the frogs secretes the poison as a white froth on its back. The tip of the dart, which has spiral scratches to absorb the poison, is tapped against the back of the frog.

After the application of the poison, the darts are kept in a tubular quiver, called *nearadú*, made of *guadua*, *chirú*. Two globular containers made of totumo or a fruit shell are fixed to the upper end of the quiver with a string; they hold the silk cotton which is applied to the darts as described above.

The constituent parts of the quiver are symbolically loaded. The quiver is a "river of true *ne* essence" (*ne-ara-dú*) holding numerous "teeth of the cosmic way" (*ukidá*). The *mojaupudda* silk cotton which is applied to the darts comes from the *jenené* tree of life (the *moi* tree, see above) and has the power to fly up to heaven, as explained in the myth about Jerupotouarra. The two containers holding the silk cotton are called *jinuputude*, "the house of the calves." Their position on both sides of the upper end of the quiver evokes the image of a conventionalized huge frog with its strong hind legs which represent the force of the *jenené* silk cotton that makes the dart rush through the blowgun and cut its victim back to life in cosmos. Through the metaphor of the *nearadú* quiver, numerous *ukidá* darts are united into one giant *neará* frog leaping through cosmos. The quiver provides a powerful image of the vital principle of the piercing *kidá* "tooth" of existence.

The cosmic *neará* frog is turned upside down on the human body. The quiver hangs on the *drua* chest of cosmic man, as a physical manifestation of an inner presence within cosmos, where the true "mind frog" has come into being as a consequence of the skill and *kabai* labour of the craftsman of the different elements of the quiver. Inside man, a stream of true *ne* rushes down, striving to *koi*-eat the binary *ku* reproductive centre of the *dru* cosmos with its *kidá* teeth -- like "Ventura the dart" when he is thrust down into the river blowgun in the consumption of himself as hunter and hunted.

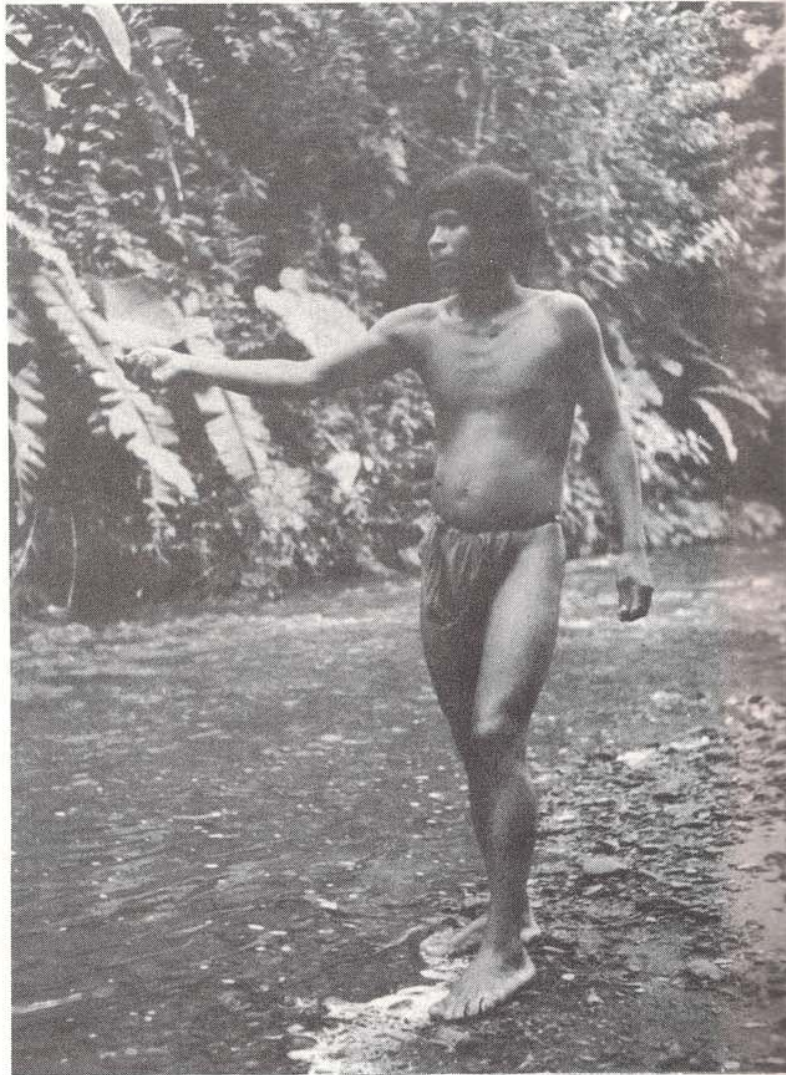
The blowgun hunter demonstrates the dual cosmic way in action. The vertical position of the blowgun clasped by the two hands and put to the mouth is joined with its inverted metaphysical analogue, the *ochirú* "blowgun" inside cosmic man starting from the same point but heading downwards. These two blowguns repeat and expose the pattern and process of the two binary *dru* rivers held by the sky and underworld, respectively. The position of the quiver remade into the inverted frog of the true *ne* fortifies the essence of this imagery.

Thus, the manmade blowgun becomes a constituent part of man himself; it is the image of the physical "head" of cosmic man which is lost in the

*kenaya* action and consumed by the cosmic womb. The *kidá* dart discharged to hit the game is the same *kirá* "face" which is lost with it. The dart that Ventura sends off returns saturated with *chi* essence from the consumed game. The "recoiled" trajectory is repeated in its inverted form when Ventura the dart submerges himself into the river cosmos to become enriched by the essence of the Mother of Peccaries. His submersion allows him to return to the world of humans, to his "head;" he is a *kidá* reborn *kirá* which re-establishes the hunter-hunted relationship. The metaphorical role of the blowgun expresses the principle of the "recoil movement" which is essential to Emberá ideas of reproduction: that which goes out, goes in. This aspect of reproduction will be further commented upon in the analysis of the role of the bow and arrow in Emberá myth and imagery. Cosmic man, in his role as a "hunter," enacts the process of the regeneration of cosmos. In Emberá ideas of reproduction, the sexual dichotomy of male and female is replaced by the notion of cosmic oneness ("cosmic man") where the male intention *me* merges with its female uterine "agent" *ke* to produce the primordial concept: the *kirá* "facial intention." The formation of the facial intention implies the creation of its opposite and reverse fruit, the *kirá* face. Cosmic man depicts this binary opposition in terms of the uterine hunter who begets and eats its reflected progeny, the "facial" game. The immediate consequence of this inner sexual intercourse between and within hunter and hunted is the illusory death of the peccary and the factual loss of the hunter's essential "head" or "face," devoured by his cosmic womb to be reborn anew.



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III. 8. The fisherman and Fish Woman. Miákoda River (Baudó) 1971.



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III. 9. The wrath of God: shaman's balsa boat with armed spirits.  
Sambú River (Darién).



III. 10. Distributing ritual *chicha* beverage from the shaman's *baraoá* "altar." *Joropo kirá* in the background. Chicué River (Atrato) 1972.

# 37

## PECCARY WAR

In myth, the conceptual distinction between humans and peccaries is fluid or erased altogether and the distinction between the hunter and the hunted changes into a confrontation between beings on par with each other. Two externally opposing categories of "hunter" and "game" merge into a single category of internal opposition that is best described as "enemy," like two adversaries in an encounter of war. Sometimes, this mythological interpretation is also applied to situations and conditions in the physical world of humans:

It happened to me once when I was young that my father took me along. He told me, "We are going to war."

And I thought that we were going to meet the people so I said to him, "No, I am not going there."

Then my father told me, "We are going alright my son because we will find the war there." And I thought it meant people and the old man dragged me along as I was afraid.

I was ascending, we climbed a steep mountain range, we heard the din, the noise from raging animals. Then the old man said, "Well son, here we will find peccary, that was the war, and if you catch sight of it you drive that *miáso* into it."

And he showed me, "Look, You stay over here, here peccary passes by, the wild hog, here it passes, and you stay here."

Previously, they used to kill in war, they bring the people like this very close, so as to get them in ambush, like getting them treacherously. Then I stayed there, I was thinking, I was like a boy, ignorant that is, when suddenly one passed by and I couldn't attack it, I showed cowardice. Then he saw me when I was going there, then I stayed there. When one big [peccary] was passing by, tall like this, *chiáss* [the whizzing sound of the lance], I got it, I plunged as the old man told me to do, to plunge over here. That *miáso* nailed it here to the ground. When finally I got it, I did nail it there, I got it.

And after a while the old man came. No, the old man was firing over there, you could hear "tang, tang, tang, tang." He did it four times, then after a while the old man came, "Hey man, what happened my son?"

"No, I have plunged it here but I can't kill, it has not died."

"So then it remained in the wrong place."  
Then the old man killed it.  
In this way they also got the people in war.

These reminiscences of an old Emberá informant and shaman, recorded in upper Atrato in 1990, ensued from a conversation of ours about the mythical peccary people. The story is a recollection of his first experiences as a hunter but foremost it is a description of his learning about the true nature of killing peccaries, a practical lesson in religion given by his father about the implicit meaning of the hunting experience. The decisive point lies in his father's exhortation, "we are going to war," which refers to the peccary hunt on a par with war.

If hunting is making war, we would expect war to be a kind of "hunting" as well. The essential association between the hunter and the hunted suggested above offers an interesting analytical key for an alternative interpretation of warfare among the Emberá. Why did the Emberá go to war and what did warfare mean to them?

In addition to the mythological text quoted several other myths or stories offer examples of overlapping contexts of hunting and warfare. In Emberá myths, men are usually mysteriously abducted and taken prisoners by other Indians when they are hunting upriver in the forest. In fact, it seems as if there is a direct relationship between the fact that they act as hunters and that they are abducted by enemies to be killed and eaten. These myths often begin by telling that, "the Indians went hunting and they were lost. Other Indians got hold of them and took them away" (Chaves 45:155-156). The enemies are headhunters and cannibals; the survivors discover heaps of skulls from fellow tribesmen who have been caught by their enemies and eaten while out hunting. But the causal connection between hunting and disappearance is puzzling and abstruse, as is suggested by the mythological phrasing, "those things were secret and nobody realized how the people were lost" (Pardo 1984:205). As I see it, the main purpose of these myths is precisely to describe graphically the processual pattern of this context of hunting as warfare.

The Emberá notions of warfare have to be construed from secondary sources, for although the native peoples of the Chocó lowlands were formerly bellicose societies, traditional warfare ceased about 300 years ago. Information on martial traditions and the native art of war can be gleaned from Spanish documents written during the Conquest and the subsequent colonial administration of the region. Oral traditions on warfare are kept within the framework of myth where the past becomes merged with mythological revelations. The dividing line between historical information

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and interpretation is often hard to determine: our notions of historical "truth" as opposed to mythological "imagination" do not square with Emberá thought where myth is reality while history is built on the illusion of the human senses.

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## THE TOTAL WAR

The Emberá and their native neighbours in the northwestern lowlands of Colombia lived in a perpetual state of war with each other until well into the XVIIth century when the Spanish administration, aided by devastating epidemics and missionary zeal, put an end to the traditional intertribal social structure. The last manifestation of Emberá warfare against the Spanish took place during the desperate uprising in 1684; its failure revealed the bitter experiences of a shattered society where a new ideology had by then disrupted traditional views on the meaning and function of warfare.

During the early 17th century, the Chocó peoples consisted of four "provinces" occupying the headwaters and the eastern affluents of the Atrato and San Juan Rivers, respectively, in mid-eastern Chocó. These were the Citarabirá (usually identified with the modern Emberá of the upper Atrato), the Chocó or Tatamá (roughly corresponding to the Emberá Chamí of the upper Andágueda and San Juan Rivers), the Emberá speaking Poyá living in the Tamaná area east of San Juan River, and the Noanama of middle and lower San Juan (the Wounaan of today). These four peoples were intermittently at war with each other as well as with their culturally more distant neighbours to the west and north. However, the main enemies of the Chocó peoples were the Kuna or Cunacuna who occupied a vast territory to the west and north of the Emberá and the Wounaan. The concept of "enemy" was embodied in the Kuna foe and the bitter hostility between the two peoples runs all through Emberá mythology as well as history, as revealed by contemporary Spanish sources. The Emberá expansion out of its heartland on the upper Atrato, partly to escape from the Spanish yoke, gradually pushed the Kuna northward to their current territory in Panamá and northern Colombia.

Spanish eye-witnesses or victims of native aggression expressed their astonishment at the martial spirit of the Emberá. Even the women were impetuous warmongers. In 1639 a Spanish attempt to settle in the territory of the Citarabirá failed when the expedition of Martín Bueno was ambushed and annihilated by the Emberá. Three Spanish boys were taken alive but one of them was killed by order of the daughter of Chocorropi, the headman. Her



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reason was simple and straightforwardly formulated, "why should they want to keep any Spanish among them?" (Isacson 1974:460). Meanwhile, the Citarabirá incited the Poyá, their neighbours who were allied to the Spanish intruders, to take as many as possible of the odious Spanish with them so as to take their heads and add them to the trophies already won from dead enemies (AHNB:CeI 68:531r).

At the drinking bouts which preceded the assaults on the enemy, the warriors raised their martial spirit with ostentatious proofs of their bravery. According to one witness among the Poyá in 1640, "following this custom of theirs, they had bragged a lot saying that they knew how to kill Spaniards" (ibid., 429v). The fury and outrageous temper of the warrior is demonstrated by one of the Citarabirá war leaders in 1684 who, in his meeting with the other conspirators, shouted that "he did not wish for anything but to kill" (AGI:SF 204(6):799r). To Misiribire, one of the Citarabirá leaders of warlike reputation in 1640, it was all the same whether the Spanish commander wanted war or peace; if he offered him peace he was satisfied but "if he wanted war, he would have it alright with all his men" (AHNB:CeI 68:287r).

The Emberá were in a perpetual state of readiness for war. The natural state of man was a state of war where the omission of facing and killing the enemy was a breach of a cultural norm. The Spanish experienced this attitude and were surprised to find that the Indians would not understand that it was a sin to kill their enemies. In their reports to their superiors, the Spanish settlers tried to explain "the barbarian inclination that these Indians show to kill, in the practising of which Your Grace will notice that they spend, in different provinces of Indians, most of the time of their life without considering their killings to be a crime" (AGI:SF 204(6):833r). In 1678 the Jesuit missionary Antonio Marzal described the warlike attitude of the Emberá, remarking that "only for this vanity of being held for brave they go to war with the desire to kill whenever they wish, without no one to stop them, because he who kills most is the bravest" (Pacheco 1962:501).

The Spanish officers were astonished and impressed by the frank conduct of the Emberá warriors who were taken prisoners in 1685. They did not withhold or deny anything about their deeds; instead, they boasted of their killings and openly gave detailed and accurate accounts of the sanguinary events. Torture was not necessary to get information about or from the culprits who by no means concealed what they had done: "the Indians are so truthful about this that no one denies what he has done because they hold it for honour and they commit their crimes out of vanity" (ibid., 821v). The Spanish governor Juan Bueso de Valdés noted that "it is very rare that anyone denies what he has done" (ibid., 830v). The Indians were openly

proud of their martial deeds; the witnesses unreservedly described their own as well as their relatives' killings without trying to conceal actions, even though they knew that their testimony or confession would mean punishment or even death to the defendant: "despite that [the punishment] they do not deny nor do they palliate their crimes" (ibid., 823r).

Obviously, many of the prisoners did not know or understand that it was considered a crime to kill human beings. This attitude surprised the Spanish so much that the question was repeated over and over again. When Sadragama, one of most notorious slaughterers, was asked "whether he knows that it is an offence to kill the Spanish or whoever it may be and to accompany the killers, he said he does not know ... and this he repeated several times" (ibid., 839r).

A Spanish defender alleged this native ignorance as an extenuating circumstance:

It must be understood that they executed said killings with less knowing because today they suffer the punishment they now are facing while in those times they did not even expect it and despite this they do not deny nor belittle their offences due to the craving which these Indians feel for war; they spend their whole life in this practice of killing and capturing in different provinces and nations in these mountains and they have never suffered any punishment concerning these matters because the time for them to get used to a civilized manner of living had not yet matured so as to let them experience it and it must be understood that these barbarians compared the present crimes to their natural wars" (ibid., 823r).

Making war and killing the enemy was the meaning of life and martial exploits defined the social status of the individual. The native view of these matters is hard to document in contemporary sources but the Emberá prisoners' endeavour to answer the bureaucratic and sometimes awkward questions in the Spanish interrogation after the uprising in 1685 is revealing. The first question referred to the prisoner's name and profession. Tajina, one of the leaders, said he was a "captain" because he had killed five Kuna and Burgumiá Indians (ibid., 795v). Another killer, Guaguirri, gave a laconic but telling answer: "his profession is to cut the bush for sustaining his children and to make war" (ibid., 789v).

Even outside combat, aggression and aggressive behaviour in meetings and salutations seem to have been normal social conduct. This was particularly manifest in drinking bouts and councils of war or in establishing the first contact with outsiders. In 1673 the Spanish settlers were peacefully received by Guatique, the *muy brioso* (fiery) headman of the Tatamá province, whose reception, apparently, did not follow Spanish standards of

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civility and amiability because "it seems as if he received us in the manner of war" (AGI:AQ 67:404v). During the futile attempts to organize the Emberá population in the second half of the 17th century, the representatives of the formal Spanish administration as well as the rigid and single-minded priests repeatedly clashed with hot-tempered and aggressive Emberá braves.

The Emberá were not the only native people of northwestern Colombia to view war as a natural condition of society. If anything, the propensity for martial confrontation and destruction of the enemy was one of the most prominent features of the native peoples who occupied the Cauca Valley and the neighbouring lowlands to the west and north. Among these peoples "reigned the uninterrupted war of everybody against everybody, a continuous battle of destruction between tribes" (Trimborn 1949:275). This was literally the total war.

Chroniclers of that time as well as historians and anthropologists of today have debated the reasons for this perpetual state of war but can only agree on its incomprehensibility. Trimborn's final words on the subject in his excellent encyclopedia of native culture in the Cauca Valley are that it is "incomprehensible how the inhabitants of the Cauca Valley could be *so blinded by their mutual hatred* that they were not capable of understanding the necessity of *postponing their ancient tribal rivalries* before the defence against the common enemy" (ibid., 377).

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## MAKE LOVE, MAKE WAR

The predominant role of warfare in Emberá society and the behaviour shown by Emberá warriors towards their enemies imply that an alternative interpretation of the meaning of warfare is called for. I suggest that the overall importance of warfare is embedded in the ideology which finds its main expression in the principle of the *kenaya* operation: the act of killing as a fertilizing act of regeneration.

The act of war and the incessant striving to kill may be considered in terms of sexual intercourse between the warrior and his enemy where sexual eating is performed by cosmic man and the "cutting" property of his weapon, in accordance with the principles of cosmic reproduction. The death of the enemy is a reproductive act of *kenaya* intercourse analogous to the fatal consumption of the sexual partner as enacted in mythical intercourse or in the hunting context.

Death in war is the ultimate expression of cosmic reproduction in Emberá thought. As the prime prerequisite for life itself, death is the beginning, not the end, of the cosmic cycle because "death" is *beuará*, "the true way of *be*," the vital principle which is eternal, continuously reborn through death. Death was not frightening or shunned by the Emberá combatant, it was desirable and eagerly sought.

*Kenaya* -- the act of killing as an act of sexual reproduction -- warrants the unaffected acceptance of war and violent death among the Emberá and their neighbours in the Cauca Valley, a war not meant for territorial expansion or for control of ephemeral goods and people but directed by the desire and necessity to regain life and to re-establish the cosmic order.

The permanent state of war and the killing of the enemy in battle as a cosmic prescript should be considered in relation to particular features of the Emberá art of war: the total influx of the society in a martial operation and the actual killing of an enemy as a joint enterprise.

When an assault on the enemy was planned, everyone was expected to take part in the operation: "not a single adult Indian stays home when they plan to do some killing; . . . when they are going to kill, everyone goes; . . . because the said old men, as captains and headmen whom they in their tongue call

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*charras*, take all of them along and only the boys are left behind."

The victim was killed over and over again as everyone was eager to stab the body with his weapon. If possible, the attackers tried to pierce the body before the enemy died: "all of them, one after another, stabbed them with their spears before they died; . . . there is nobody left who does not thrust his spear before [the enemy] dies."

However, the main thing was not to kill the enemy but to pierce his body with the spear even if he already was dead: "when they kill, everyone hasten to the spot and they throw a spear towards him even if he is dead; . . . he threw his spear after the enemy had fallen; . . . it is the custom that each one of them makes use of his weapon even if they are dead" (AHNB:CeI 68:535-548).

The weapon used in this case was a kind of short spear referred to as *dardo* in Spanish. I have not found any contemporary description of it from among the Chocó peoples but a modern informant describes it as a fairly short spear, 1.2 - 1.5 m long, made of a hardwood called *palanca de guanábana* in Spanish (*Guarea trichilioides* L.?) in local Spanish or *dzururúa* in Emberá, not to be confused with the *guanábana* fruit-tree (*Anona muricata* L.). As indicated by its vernacular name, nowadays this wood is the preferred raw material for the *dote* poles (*palanca*) used to push the canoe upriver.

Though different from the modern hunting spear, the short spear (in Spanish, *dardo*) used in war is also described as *meáso*, the meaning of which I have earlier interpreted as "the chi way of the materialised *me*," i.e. the concretization of the principle which directs the transference of *chi* essential matter held in *me*, remade into a "cutting" spear as a prolongation of the eating *jua* hand.

My informant stressed the fact that the *meáso* used in warfare was equipped with an iron point similar to a knife: "nowadays they use a different one, it is not as they used it before; formerly they used sheer knife." In this statement, the informant evokes the *neko* nature of the *meáso* spear which enables it to extract the *ne* essence out of the victim through the olfactory operation by means of cutting and piercing with its *kidá* "tooth."

By the collective action of piercing the body of the victim, whether alive or dead, the warriors become participants in a cosmic meal where the enemy is the food which is deprived of its aroma by the *koi*-eating nature of the *meáso* spear. The aroma of the enemy becomes the embryonic food for the cosmic womb configured in cosmic man in his role as "warrior." The accomplishment of this essential consumption demands the presence and active participation of every male member of the community (the "local" cosmos), representing a cosmic wholeness which in mythological terms usually is described as "twenty men," "eight houses," "four canoes," etc,

within the vigesimal structure of the Emberá universe.

This collective enterprise in war resembles behavioural attitudes in other contexts where the *kenaya* principle is evoked. When a new canoe is made all male members of the local kindred attend and contribute with their share in the work, cutting and carving. Maize beer is profusely offered and consumed by all participants who contribute in the sexual consumption of the wooden matter with their eating *jaimé* adze in order to create the cosmic womb which unites them all into one cosmos.<sup>1</sup>

The collective sexual eating whether of a common enemy or a common canoe, bears the features of a symbolical "rape" which seems to have had its counterpart in sexual habits. During traditional chicha drinking bouts sexual affairs with ritual undertones used to take place with various men involved in a collective "eating" of one woman. One informant showed me once a cave which used to be the "dining room for the boys" during these events.

The aggressive behaviour shown in performing the *kenaya* act of "eating" the victim to "death" is played out as an act of cutting or piercing with *kidá* teeth, demonstrated in the piercing *kidá* point of the *meáso* spear by the warrior, in the cutting edge of the *jaimé* adze by the canoe craftsman, and in the scratching *pichi* nails of the *nekoí*-consuming hands in the sexual act. This type of eating follows upon the consumption of *chicha* maize beer in all three cases. The two enemies who are eager to "eat" one another to death in the battle thus share a common goal which is identical to that of the "eaters" of the canoe or of the woman: the re-establishment of the cosmic order and rebirth into essential existence.

The extinction of physical life as a cyclical cosmic necessity demands periodical contributions which sometimes cannot be accomplished through regular warfare alone. The casualties in Emberá warfare were usually low and there are indications of arranged warfare as a regulating factor between partakers of a common universe.

In 1638 the Tatamá entered the Citarabirá territory on the upper Atrato as allies to the Spanish intruders. The Tatamá assaulted the Citarabirá and killed two of them; upon this killing, however, the two "provinces" made peace and agreed to ambush the Spanish force (AHNB:CeI 68:375). Though unexamined in the Spanish documents, a tacit understanding of the need for ritual killing in war is definitively intimated by the account of this event. The fact that two enemies were killed is also suggestive with reference to the cosmological implications of this number, earlier mentioned in the context of hunting.

Perhaps this constant need to consume human life was met through arrangements similar to those described as war games and mock battles among the neighbouring peoples in the Cauca Valley. Among the Lile, the

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Quimbaya and the Anserma, on the western fringe of Emberá territory, ritual battles were arranged as "the climax of their feasts" (Trimborn 1949:150). It has been said that the Quimbaya "come together to make feasts in their enjoyment when they have drunk; a troop of women is formed at one end and another at the other, and the same goes for the men, and the youths do not stand there, they do the same, and some attack others, saying in unison, 'Batatabati, batatabati,' which means, 'come on, let us play;' and like this, with throwing sticks and staffs the game begins, which afterwards ends with wounds of many and deaths of some" (Cieza 1962:87-88). In their feasts, the Lile "charged like enemies against one another; and in this manner skirmishing, entering and leaving in their skirmishes, they were busy the whole afternoon, and from the game many of them were wounded and some dead; and they did not mourn the person who they killed there nor did any enmity ensue" (Andagoya 1986:139).

As in real warfare these mock battles were manifestations of the total war where both men, women, and youngsters participated in a lethal game which aimed at giving the opponent the fatal blow. The word for "playing," *jemeneya*, has a sexual connotation among the Emberá; the "play" of ritual warfare might have had a similar meaning in the Cauca Valley. The fact that victims were not avenged suggests that the primary intention of these "games" was to organize a "sexual meal" through ritual killing within the community for the benefit of all, similar to the *kenaya* action among the Emberá.

# 40

## THE DEATH OF THE ARCHER

The enemy is "eaten" when pierced with the *kidá* point of the weapon. However, this kind of eating is a metaphysical event which extracts the vital essence out of the victim. The enemy dies because he loses his vital essence; deprived of his smell, he turns into faeces, dead matter, as any *chiko* food which has been deprived of its smell.

This vital essence is known as *chi* and it is extracted as a "smell" in a process called *chikoi*, "to eat," literally "to inhale or process *chi*." *Chi* is the life essence or, in terms of volume, the metaphysical flesh of cosmic man. The purpose of the martial confrontation is to obtain *chi* from the enemy. Booty is calculated in amounts of vital essence, not in goods or land.

The faculty to "eat" or extract the *chi* matter is provided by *chi* itself. *Chi* processes *chi* as *ku* processes *ku* according to the *kirá* principle of complementary opposition. This principle is, in fact, demonstrated in the context of warfare and the sexual consumption of the enemy.

The metaphorical value vested in the usage of the *meáso* spear and the *neko* knife has already been suggested in other contexts of essential eating. In warfare, cosmic man has yet another instrumental means of demonstrating the processual pattern of the Emberá cosmos: the bow and arrow he uses in his role as archer.

The bow was formerly one of the most important weapons among the Emberá, in hunting as well as in war. Nowadays, only youngsters use it for hunting birds. In myth, however, its role remains unchanged. A modest artefact in size and workmanship, the bow is, nevertheless, rich in symbolical content as its predominance in Emberá thought suggests.

The essential hand of cosmic man "eats" like a *neko* device with its scratching *pichi* nails. As a "warrior" cosmic man ejects his cutting *chi* in the shape of an arrow, released from the bow. For the Emberá, the arrow is *chiá* or *chiákida*: the *chi* matter which is released through the intentional movement of the *ju* reproductive concept (as rendered by its agent, the *jua* hand) to open up and consume its opposite matter, the *chiko* flesh of the enemy. As *chi-á*, the arrow is the materialised principle of cutting *chi*, a technical extension of the *pichi* nails of the hand which, analogously, cut the



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sexual partner to "death" in intercourse.

The bow and arrow are made from powerful materials: the shaft of the arrow is from the *chiá* reed (*Gynerium saggitatum*), the rear butt is carved from *pichindé* wood while the *kidá* point is made of *memé*, stuck into the *chiá* reed and fastened with *dchi* thread and *kandorona* beeswax. The bow is of *memé* and the string is twined *dchi* fibre. The metaphorical structure of the bow and arrow in action holds a rich and composite imagery which explains fundamental processes in the cosmic mind.

The archer clasps the bow with his left hand. The principle of the binary cosmos ("two" or *omé*: "me of the Way") is found in the *memé* grip of the hand (2x2 *jimini* fingers) and from there extended into the *memé* matter of the bow. This opposite pair of binary *me* deliver two opposite streams of *dchi* fibre which emanate from the two opposite *chi* "heads" of the bow (*chiború*) to create the bow string. In this way, the string turns into the powerful *dru* "dual river" rendered as intertwined *chichi* fibres which transfer the *memé* strength of the bow to eject its own cutting intention, manifested in the *chiá* arrow. The power of the bow string is held in its internal opposition, the same internal or directional opposition which characterizes the concept of *dru*, the "dual river," the cosmic river which runs in two directions simultaneously. The principle of the "dual river" is also kept in the essential nature of the *enéndruma* bow as *e-ne-dru-ma*, "the dual river of *e*," i.e. the bow is the physical manifestation of a cosmic intention directed by the *jua* hand.

The right hand clasps the rear end of the arrow and draws the bow to release the shot. With this action the archer repeats the directional opposition which gives the bow its strength, expressed in the contradictory *dru* nature of the string. His left arm pulls in a direction opposite to that of his right arm, demonstrating the same principle of the contradictory *dru* as it is worked out by the binary *ju* poles within the cosmic chest of man and thus within cosmos itself.

Again, a cosmic principle is repeated on various levels in Emberá thought. The directional opposition between "left" and "right" forms the *dru* cosmic river which is the prime mover of existence. The same directional opposition is shown and, in fact, made explicit, in the operative pattern staged by the counteractive pairs of binary *me jimini* fingers of each *jua* hand alone, a counteraction transmitted on to the bow and worked out positively in the creation of the powerful *dru* nature of the string.

The dialectical *chichi* string is an instructive image of a basic principle in Emberá thought -- a principle which is the primeval element of life and the foundation of man as well. On the level of the *jua* hand, the "male" *memé* (the index finger and the middle finger) stands to the "female" *memé* (the

ring finger and the little finger) as the "right" *ju* stands to the "left" *ju* of the cosmic body. Expressed with reference to man the archer, one *chiburú* "head" of the bow is related to its opposite "head" as the bow itself (the "left" *ju*) is related to the arm (the "right" *ju*) that withdraws and releases the arrow. The visible *chichi* string which is created out of the directional opposition of the bow has its metaphysical or intentional counterpart in the imaginary *chichi* string between the opposite *ju* poles in the *drua* chest, the "string" between cosmic left and right which allows cosmic man the archer to fulfil his task of reproducing life. *Chichi* also appears, consistently, as *cheche* or *sese*, the word for "father" or "progenitor," suggesting an anthropomorphized adaptation of the vital "string of life."

The visible consequence of this cosmic directional opposition is the release of the fatal *chiá* arrow, given the power to cut and eat with its *kidá* point. The release of the arrow signals a dialectical explosion<sup>2</sup> out of cosmos. This is the same "explosion," derived from the internal opposition of the *potopoto* chest of cosmic man, that releases the *ukidá* dart out of the blowgun. It will also become evident that the origin of physical man is to be sought in this eruptive force out of cosmos.

The arrow, released by the archer, is aimed at the enemy. Perception or intuition suggest that the arrow usually strikes its victim, but the myth which instructs us to read the essential meaning of events and conditions in life says that it does not. The *chiá* arrow, released in mythic warfare, either misses its target to fall onto the canoe or the house roof instead, or is blocked and neutralized by the enemy who stops it with his hands, arms, hair or, if he is travelling in a canoe, with his paddle.<sup>3</sup>

In a myth recorded by Pardo from among the Emberá of the upper Baudó, the skill of evading or blocking arrows is described as a kind of military training which bears the unmistakable features of a mock battle, similar to the ceremonial war games of the Quimbaya. According to the myth,

the people came to practise training in Pepé.<sup>4</sup> The training for them was with *copetarra* arrows which are blunt at the point; those arrows hit you in your eye or in the body but they do not enter, they just leave you black and blue. The blow is quite strong though. Finally it was not with *copetarra* any longer but with real arrows, with spears. . . . When they at last were well-trained, they tried to learn how to catch the arrows; they seized the arrow with their hair, as they in those times used to have long hair. They wrapped up the arrow in the hair, with their foot, with their hand, with their head they diverted them (Pardo 1984:207).

The enemy, who successfully evades the arrows, picks them up and shoots back at the aggressor who dies by his own arrows. This course of events is

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described in a myth recorded by Wassén from among the Wounaan: "The Cuna boy collected all the arrows with his hands, but did not himself shoot. All through the night the Cunas kept shooting at the hut, so that in the morning it was full of arrows. Then the Cuna boy began to shoot. To every shot of his, two of the attackers fell down dead" (Wassén 1935:128). Karagabí's own son, Séver, defends himself against the Kuna in the same manner: "he picked up the arrows which they shot at him so as to shoot the same arrows at them and with these same arrows he defeated them" (Nociones 1929:97).

The many examples of this "rebounding" shooting in mythological lore suggest that the destiny of the shooter is inevitable. The aggressor falls victim to his own action; by shooting the enemy, he shoots himself to death.

And yet, the mythological message is that the arrow does hit its intended target and penetrates the enemy in the proper way. The intentional *chi*, transmitted by the *chiá* arrow, seeks and finds its equivalent matter, not in the body of the enemy but in his *jua* hand. When the enemy is said to block the released arrow with his hand and to pick it up to shoot it back, the arrow extracts its opposite *chi* from the *jua* hand of the enemy so as to return saturated with *chi* to its origin inside cosmic man, the intentional archer. His *chiá* arrow, released from the *jua* hand of cosmic man, seeks out and hits its counterpart, the *jua* hand of the enemy. Again, *ju* is attracted to *ju*, in accordance with the *kirá* principle of complementary opposition.<sup>5</sup> (The hair which stops the arrow and wraps it up repeats the same process; I will go elucidate this correspondence in my discussion of the meaning of hair in Emberá thought).

One variation of this same theme appears in a Wounaan myth recorded by Wassén (1935:125) in 1934. The Kuna Indians arrive in a large boat but are all shot to death by the attacking Wounaan. During the night, however, they all come to life again, this time armed with machetes, and cut the heads off their enemies. The arrow is here transformed into a cutting *neko* device, the "machete" which kills the Wounaan, but the meaning is the same: the *chiá* arrow penetrates the Kuna body only to be instantly reborn, in accordance with the cosmic law of instant birth, for "in the underworld the women give birth at once when they have become pregnant." The *chiá* "arrow," in this myth replaced by (or transformed into) *neko* machetes, now repeats its mission by extracting the essence from the Wounaan by cutting off their heads. Intentional *chi* is begotten to beget in a perpetual cosmic cycle, as long as man obeys the cosmic command of biting that which he faces.

In cosmic existence arrows are countless, the sky is darkened when the enemies release their arrows and Karagabí's body is perforated by them. In 1671 Citarabirá Indians even claimed that their enemies to the west, the

Suruco of the Baudó Range, knew how to release two arrows at a time (Isacsson 1975:104; AHNB:CeI 11:979r). This claim reveals the ideal *omé* way of "twoness" in proper behaviour.

Sometimes the mass of flying arrows is likened to a downpour, a rain of *chi* falling onto humans (Wassén 1935:127). As "rain" is *kué* for the Emberá, a "rain of *chi*" would make *chikué*, but *chikué* also means "crab." In one myth, when Jerupotouarra visits the underworld the *chiábera* warn him of their enemies who will come in great number to attack them (Wassén 1935:136), but these enemies turn out to be nothing but crabs, i.e. *chikué*. The crab with its cutting claws is the "rain of *chi*" embodied as *chikué*, the same "rain" which is produced by the cutting *chi-á* arrows. Thus, the metaphorical circle is closed, enemy : rain of *chi* : *chikué* : crab : enemy.

The Emberá say that the Kuna and other enemies came into being as a shower of rain (Nociones 1929:97) and a 17th century authority on the Kuna mentions a native belief which seems to corroborate the *chikué* metaphor as well: "They hold it for certain that the sources of the rivers originate from the urine of some crayfish that breed in the headwaters, and that the rain [originates] from the souls of these crayfish that, being dead, ascend to the sphere of the air and transform themselves into water" (Requejo Salcedo 1908 (1640):127).

In the Wounaan myth quoted above, the "rain" of *chi-á* arrows falls upon the house making a *sound* like a downpour of rain on the hut. The house is a paraphrase for the human head or the celestial cosmos. This means that the arrows falling on its roof are essentially the same arrows which are blocked by the enemies' hair. In both cases, the arrows are fertilized with *chi* to be begotten and "released" anew, as when the Kuna boy picks up the arrows "with his hands" the morning after the attack and kills two attackers at a time with every arrow he shoots.

The import of this fertilizing process is that the intentional *chi*, objectified as a *chiá* arrow, searches out its opposite self contained in the body of the enemy. In the same Wounaan myth there is a remarkable motif which, transferred to Emberá conditions, explicitly depicts this *chi* encounter in a figurative way. This is the text of the passage in Wassén's English translation:

After a while the Cuna suggested making bows and arrows from the chonta palm. For a mark, he stretched a thin cord, and every time his arrow hit this in the middle. For four days the Cholos practised at this. After that the Cuna said to the Cholo boy: "Tomorrow let us go out hunting in the forest" (Wassén 1935:127).

It is worth considering why the myth-teller includes this seemingly

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irrelevant episode in the story. Why would the Kuna practise archery and why would he choose a cord for a target? The reason seems to be found in the context examined above, configured in the encounter with the enemy: the cord is *dchi* and the arrow is *chi-á*. Thus, by shooting his arrow at the cord, the Kuna boy manifests the cosmic principle of *chi* vs *chi*. He emphasizes this by hitting the cord every time and he hits it right in the middle because the central point of the *chichi* string is the powerful spot which releases the intentional arrow. The centre point is where the highest concentration of essential *chi* in the course of the *dru* river is found, giving the cord its strength. This mythical training in *chi* confrontation is then transmitted to the context of hunting by the Kuna's suggestion, "tomorrow let us go out hunting in the forest."<sup>6</sup>

The rich imagery of the bow and arrow as a metaphor for cosmic conception is demonstrated by cosmic man, the archer, in contexts of hunting and warfare. Because the archer makes his own weapon, however, the essential nature and power of the bow and arrow is kept and played out in the cosmic mind: the *drua* chest of cosmic man. The prime prerequisite for shooting at the cord is formulated when the Kuna boy suggests *making* bows and arrows from chonta palm (*memé*, following the *omé* principle of binary *me*), the *kabai* manual labour which provides essential knowledge, "knowing through working."

# 41

## ON CANNIBALISM: ANOTHER WAY OF EATING

In establishing the *kenaya* relationship between the warrior and his enemy, cosmic man the archer releases his "toothed" arrow so as to pierce his enemy and extract his essence with the *koi*-smelling faculty of the *ju* (*ku*) reproductive principle, objectified in the moving *jua* arm and its explanatory extension, the bow and arrow which perform the intention of eating. The enemy is the essential food for the cosmic womb, represented by the "eating" archer.

The decisive link in this consumption is the active hand and arm. The hand, with its essential nature of a "knife, accomplishes the eating through the idiom of its fingers. In Emberá myth the ominous hand is vividly described. In a version of the myth telling about the meetings with the Beeswax Being and the Thunder Man, the Emberá visitor is told not to touch the hand of his mother upon his return from the world beyond. He forgets this of course and cannot stay among humans any longer (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1953:157). The myth intimates the same consumption of his essential nature which takes place when cosmic man the archer touches the "hand" (the same "hand" of the enemy which blocks his arrow) with his own *nekoi*-eating hand (extended into the eating *kidá* arrow point). In both cases the consequences are the same: the consumption of the essence of the opponent, taken away from the human world.

One who takes someone by the hand is threatening to devour his vital matter and thus to "kill" him. This becomes clear in the myth about the shaman's dead son who is resuscitated as a monster by his father; one day the monster "left with his son and he tried to catch him by his hand. Then the little boy came running back to the house and told his grandfather: - Look, my father wants to eat me!" (Pardo, 1984:196). It is evident that the boy's misgivings about being eaten by his father are related to the latter's purpose of touching his hand. To touch someone implies a kind of killing and a kind of eating where the food coveted is not flesh but life essence.

17th century Citarabirá Indians accused their enemies to the west, the

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Soruco and the Burumiá peoples, of being dedicated to anthropophagy. After the uprising in 1685 several Emberá refugees headed by one of the war leaders, Aucabirá, escaped across the Atrato river into Soruco territory where they were killed by their enemies. The only survivor, a girl by the name of Tapitima, told the Spanish governor that "they went to the land of the Soruco and having arrived at their houses they tried to make them receive them as friends and they accepted. But in this friendship they killed them. . . . When the Soruco intended to kill the Citará the latter also resorted to their weapons and in the fight four Soruco died and all of the Citará. The Soruco who survived killed all of the boys and girls and they left only the grown-up women whom they were to kill so as to eat them little by little" (Isacson, 1975:105-106; AGI:SF, 196).

Were the Soruco really "cannibals," eaters of human flesh? With the metaphorical context of essential *kenaya* killing in mind, the girl's testimony might well render a metaphysical killing of another order. Four dead enemies opposed to the annihilation of all the Citará *except marriageable women who were to be eaten little by little* suggests a *kenaya* operation on two analogous levels: in warfare and in sexual intercourse.

The cannibalism of the Soruco is a matter of perception. For Tapitima, the Soruco were cannibals. While we want to know whether the alleged "cannibals" really ate human flesh or not, this was irrelevant and insignificant for Tapitima. To her and to the Citarabirá, "eating" is *koi*, the extraction of life essence, whether it is accomplished by the mouth or by the hand. For Tapitima, the fact that her fellow tribesmen in some way or another had been *touched* by the enemy meant that they had been *killed* and *eaten*, i.e. irretrievably lost. While the son of the monster managed to escape, the Citará had been "taken by the hand" by the enemy and consequently killed and consumed as well.

In Emberá myth the Kuna enemies are also accused of being man-eaters which the Emberá explicitly are not; this Kuna weakness for human flesh is always associated with the same kind of essential killing and consumption.

The touching or clasping of the enemy in war seems to be regarded as the decisive mortal wound and the instant death of the victim. His death in physical terms is of secondary importance. This conception of killing is implied in an interesting testimony given by Igaragaida, one of the Emberá killers, after the uprising in 1685. This is the text verbatim from the record of the interrogation:

He was asked how many he killed. He said that he killed a boy who served Herrero and the interpreter repeated that this confessor said that he did not kill him, he seized him and the headman Quirubirá gave him a blow with a machete in his

stomach from which he died. He was asked how he can deny the slaughter of Juan de Oficial de Herrero when it is made clear by indictment and also declared by his own relatives. He said that he caught the victim and that it was Quirubirá who killed him (AGI:SF 204(6):788).

Answering the question, Igaragaida first declares that he has killed a Spaniard but then does a turnabout by saying to the interpreter that he did not kill him; he seized him and Quirubirá gave him the fatal blow. Igaragaidá's original opinion about who actually killed the boy is, however, supported by the testimony of his own relatives. Apparently, Igaragaidá by now understands that the Spanish are after the "real" killer, so he repeats that he only seized the victim.

Igaragaida's inconsistency in answering bewildered the Spanish who sent for another interpreter so as to repeat the interrogation. The irritation of the governor is easily read between the lines in exhorting Igaragaida to speak

with clarity and distinction who killed the young Juan Herrero. He answered through the interpreters that the headman Quirubirá ordered him to seize the said Juan as he wished to kill him. And this confessor took him and the said headman killed him. He [Igaragaida] was asked if it is true that this confessor said to Pedro Montoya, his uncle, that being present on the Bebará river he had killed the said Juan Oficial de Herrero with his hands. He said that he denies this because what he had said to him was that he with his hands had seized the said Juan and that he then had killed but he did not say that he had made him dead, the one who had made him dead was the said Quirubirá (ibid., 789).

There are two statements in the text which are particularly revealing. After the killings, Igaragaida had told one of his relatives that he had *killed with his hands*, the significance of which is unambiguous between two Emberá speakers. Secondly, Igaragaida tries to explain the misunderstanding by making a distinction between two different ways of killing and dying: he had killed but he had not made the victim dead ("*que ya mató pero que no dijo que él lo había muerto*").

After all, Igaragaida confessed that "it is not good to seize and kill ("*coger y matar*") the Spanish or friends." He avoided the death penalty but was given a hundred lashes and ten years of penal servitude (ibid., 789,791).

In Emberá imagery, "to be taken by the hand" implies a fatal touch which is a literal coup de grace for the opponent in cosmic warfare. By coveting the hand of the other, the cosmic *ju* hand intends to cut and eat its complementary counterpart into regenerated existence, like the scratching hands of the loving couple. "To seize" is *jitai* which is probably related to the homonymous *kitai*, "to extinguish," referring to the extinction of



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essential existence which is executed by the *kidá* device. Another expression of a similar tenor is "to touch someone else," *guai*, which probably is interpreted as *jua-ui*, "hand-sow/smell." By touching another person with the hand, vital essence is sown as a consequence of the "olfactory fecundation" which takes place in the *ju-a* complementary opposition. The Emberá myth and the testimony of Tapitima and Igaragaida clearly indicate different ways of killing and different ways of eating. These perspectives provide us with new insight into the practices of the heartland of cannibalism, the Cauca Valley.

# 42

## THE ENEMY FRUIT

The *ju* reproductive concept, shown as the manipulating *ju-a* hand of cosmic man, seeks its complementary counterpart, the opposite *ju*. In the context of warfare, this process is played out by cosmic man with his *neko*-extracting weapon. Man the warrior is *ju*, the cosmic womb, which begets and consumes its proper fruit, the germinated matter of the *ju* intention. The adversary in the martial confrontation represents the *ju* intention made matter. As an "enemy," the adversary is *jurá* to the Emberá warrior, he is the "seed of *ju*" and the ripe fruit which is coveted by the cosmic womb, according to the *kirá* principle of complementary opposition. If the Emberá assailant with his *neko*-extracting power is the hungry cosmic womb, manifested as the *drua* chest of man, then his enemy is the fruit of above, manifested as the head of man.

The word for fruit, *jo*, is related to the *ju (ko)* concept. As "food," it is the *ko* "edible" matter of essential *chi*: *chiko*. The enemy is regarded as a fruit which is picked when it is ripe.<sup>7</sup> The image of the enemy as a ripe fruit is evoked in the Emberá term for the forked pole with which ripe fruits are picked from tall trees in the forest, *jurakoko*. Just as the gatherer seizes the fruit with this binary *ko* device (his extended *ju* hand), the warrior picks the *jurá* enemy fruit with his fatal hand.

"Ripe" is expressed as *kuara*; "true" or "fine" *ku (ku-ara)* is the proper sexual food to be consumed for cosmic conception. When essential *chi* manifests itself as "true *ku*" it turns "yellow," *chikuará*. The ripe and fertile *chi* is yellow, as are its various representations: the sun, maize, caimito, and other celestial ripe fruits for the cosmic vagina.

The enemy is not only compared to a fruit to be harvested at the point of the weapon, he also presents himself as a tempting ripe fruit to his adversary in war. The Spanish chronicler Juan de Castellanos describes an episode in the confrontations between the Spanish conquerors and the Nutave Indians of the Cauca Valley which gives an accurate image of the rich symbolism of fruits and fertilization through death that is found in Emberá thought.

A meeting had been settled between the contending parties and, on the appointed day, a group of 36 Indians, equal in numbers to the Spanish

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soldiers, presented themselves, each bringing a bunch of delicious guama fruits as a gift to every soldier. Standing close to their adversaries, however, each warrior brought out a machete which was hidden in his bunch and slew the Spaniard who was busy savouring his guama fruits (Castellanos 1852:540).

Translated to Emberá imagery, this event alludes to the sexual metaphor of the guama fruit which I described earlier. The guama is *kijo* or the "vaginal fruit" but it is also known as *ju* due to its resemblance to a wide-open, toothed mouth which suggests the essential nature of the *ju* concept: its power to cut and extract the life essence with its *neko*-eating teeth, similar to a *neko* machete. The martial show of the Nutave was a well-directed cosmological act before an unsuspecting Spanish audience. By displaying the "grinning" guama fruit to his enemy, the Nutave warriors called forth the image of the fatal woman who invites her partner to lethal sex with her enticing laughter -- a laughter which brings the cutting edge of a knife.

# 43

## ARROWS OF URINE

The enemy fruit emanates from the heights of the tall trees. In Emberá myth the enemy roams above as well. The Emberá traveller goes upriver to meet his enemies, "up there there was another adversary who was the *jurá*, the enemy" (Pardo 1984:206). The fisherman meets with the Kuna upriver and the anthropophagous Burumiá "lived on a height, like a waterfall and from there they could see the people coming upriver." In the mythical perspective of existence, the Emberá fight from below, enduring and eventually picking the enemy fruit from above.

The enemy emits a rain of *chi*, fertilizing the Emberá consumer with his *chiá* arrows. But like the ripe fruit which emits a fragrance, the enemy also secretes its own essence for his enemy to experience. Like any other *chi*, this enemy secretion has its cutting edge which pierces and "eats" its victim to genesis.

During the night, which is day to the *chiaperara* or *dojurá* people in the true world, the mythical Emberá warrior slips near the Burumiá house to spy on the enemy: "The following night the Cholos went upriver armed, they came observing. They knew by now that he who was in a hammock, in a big house, that one was the headman. When he rose in the night to urinate, they shot him with arrows, at the same time all the Cholos attacked, two for each house and they killed all the Burumiá except for the two from that house that was secluded" (Pardo 1984:203).

The same event recur in a myth about the war between the Emberá and their *jurá* enemies when one of the warriors leaves at night to find out about the *jurá*. The warrior "left at night, secretly, and entered where the *jurá* were. And they were sleeping in the cane field, in their hammocks. He came close, real close, and one of the *jurá* got up and he urinated on his back but he made as if he were dead but he was alive, observing, counting the people, how many they were" (Pardo 1984:206). Later the Emberá return to fight off the Kuna successfully with their arrows.

From inside the house, Emberá men always urinate in a standing or squatting position at the edge of the floor, urinating down into the yard below. When it is stated in the myth that the *jurá* headman rises to urinate it

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should be understood that he takes the same position and urinates down into the yard. The Emberá warrior is hiding below in the dark and receives the urine on his back.

The mythological message is that the urine is to be regarded as an arrow which fertilizes the Emberá warrior. "Urine" is *chia* or *sia*, very much the same word that is used for "arrow." The jet of *jurá* urine emitted from above to hit the Emberá "consumer" of below is released as an arrow, manifesting the unbroken link between the *chiá* arrow and its *chi* source and origin, the archer. The arrow is as much "secreted matter" from its human *chi* origin as is the *chiá* urine. Between the archer and his flying arrow there is an invisible line of *chia* "urine" which connects him with the victim.

The image of a jet of *jurá* urine which is "released" to hit the Emberá enemy as an arrow is corroborated by another detail which the myth adds for the sake of clarity. When the myth states that the *jurá* are sleeping in the cane field the Emberá listener understands that the *jurá* enemies roam in a "field" of *chiá* which is the word for cane (the raw material for the arrow shaft). The *jurá* enemies are situated in a well of *chiá* vital essence; indeed, they are themselves the embodiment of the same *chiá* matter which secretes itself as *chiá* urine. In a few sentences the myth explains the metaphorical triad of urine : reed : arrow as the cutting *chiá* device which consumes and begets *chi* vital matter.

I have earlier suggested a relationship between the concept of *chiá* matter and the meaning of the *chiákira* beads. *Chiá* seen as "urine" seems to support such a context in consideration of the fact that mythological *chiá* urine as an arrow-like device opens up and produces a "hole" in a sexual and reproductive sense which is manifested in the essential nature of the *chiákira* bead itself. Among the Aguaruna of northern Peru there is an interesting myth motif which explicitly describes a direct connection between urine and beads. A woman who is a transformed astral worm urinates in a pot; every time she does so, beads of different colours are deposited inside, beads which are used to make collars and other adornments. Her husband always collects them to make ornaments for her (Chumap Lucia & García-Rendueles 1979:221). Urine and beads as a joint image of fertility is here emphasized by the husband-wife relationship.

The unconstrained manner shown by Emberá men urinating from the house floor suggests a prescribed behaviour which is related to its symbolic meaning. Sometimes, newcomers and guests seek out the edge of the floor to urinate even before they have settled down to talk. This habit was also noticed and commented upon by Nordenskiöld (1928:71).

When the *jurá* enemy urinates on the back of the Emberá warrior below, he repeats a pattern of fertilization which unites him with the hunter and

lover in the sexual intercourse. The *enkarrá* back of humans and animals seems to be the point where fertilization is concentrated. Partners in sexual intercourse scratch each other's backs and the hunter strikes the game from behind like the warrior attacking the enemy in ambush. This behaviour was described to me by a shaman: "Previously, they used to kill in war, they bring the people like this very close, so as to get them in ambush, like getting them treacherously;" . . . "they held it [*meáso* spear] like this, and as the war comes there, they are ready. When they were passing, *chiá!* from behind. As there were so many people, like in a row, and the war was coming little by little, they did not notice."

This "treacherous" behaviour in war is also confirmed historically by witnesses of the Citarabirá uprising in 1684. The warriors attacked unsuspecting Spaniards and Indians from behind, usually killing them in the back with the *meáso* spear: "Dané . . . gave him the wound with a spear in his back from which he died; Masupi gave him a wound with a spear in his chest from which he died while Buriro gave him another spearing in his back; Nucarama . . . speared him in his back from which he died; Quibarigama . . . speared another Indian in his back from which he died" (AGI:SF 204(6): 821,828,831).

Why would the back be the precise point of penetration for the "eating" *kidá* edge of the weapon? I suggest that the Emberá regard the back as *e-n-karrá*, "root of the *e* shell," which means that it constitutes a "beginning" similar to the *okarrá* and *dokarrá* cosmic openings, the gateway to fertilization of the Emberá cosmos.

The "arrow" of *chiá* urine which is emitted by the *jurá* "archer" hits the Emberá in the very same way as the "true" arrow does, as I have shown. Here, the *chiá* arrow is blocked by the back of the Emberá adversary instead of his hands or hair ("he urinated on his back but he made *as if he were dead but he was alive*"), but the essential meaning is the same: united with its opposite *chi* or *ju* complement it is returned by the Emberá warrior to hit and kill the original archer, the urinating *jurá* enemy. In the first example, the numeral "two" (the *omé* principle) is a key to understanding that the nocturnal assault by the Emberá is a cosmic enterprise: "all the Cholos attacked, *two for each house* and they killed all the Burumiá *except for two* . . ." Cosmic killing is undertaken for cosmic survival.

In his position below the mythical *jurá* abode, the Emberá warrior represents the cosmic womb while the enemy is the ephemeral matter of above, the fruit or head which "falls" or is "thrown" (*baei*) into the womb, provided that the cosmic command of *Uera Torró* is obeyed. Thus, as cosmic warrior, the Emberá receiver of below is in the same position as the *dojurá* beings receiving the urine and excrement from physical man of

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above. In fact, as nocturnal cosmic warrior, man is the same *dojurá* being who he confronts as diurnal individual human. The *chiá* urine and the *a* faeces deposited by humans is his "sexual food," as earlier shown.

The Emberá man who urinates at the edge of the house floor is "shooting" his "arrows" into the cosmic womb of below -- as does his *jurá* enemy in the cosmic mind of *dru*. It is quite conceivable that a newcomer, by urinating from the house he is visiting, hereby demonstrates that he comes with friendly intentions. By shooting his *chiá* he participates in a joint attack with the inhabitants of the house against the *dojurá* beings below. A cosmic warrior by night, he becomes a *jurá* enemy by day.

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## HEAD EATERS

In the cosmic mind which man experiences when he is asleep or in any other *kai (jai)* condition, his *jurá* enemy approaches from above. In the perspective of the Emberá house as a representation of cosmos, the *jurá* enemy is associated with the roof and attic from which the *be* maize fruit is "thrown." This pattern is dramatized in ritual contexts. Formerly, Emberá warriors used to hang the heads of killed enemies as "trophies" around the house, repeating a behaviour prescribed by mythological events: "They cut the heads of the vanquished and took them to the house of the Captain Domicó and they hung [the heads] around it" (Santa Teresa 1924:18).

The custom of attaching enemy heads around the house coincides with the Emberá term for the tension ring of the house roof which is *dejurá*, "enemy of the house." The custom of hanging peccary heads and jaws along the tension ring in modern Emberá houses confirms the meaning of the *dejurá* term. The *jurá* enemy is associated with the house roof as he is associated with the head of cosmic man.

Ripe fruits are meant for eating and so is the enemy fruit. Consequently, heads are also eaten, but in the Emberá way. When the enemy fruit is gathered or "seized" in cosmic warfare, the Emberá use various explicit ways of demonstrating their consumption. The seizure and sexual eating of the enemy fruit is a metaphysical event which cannot be experienced with the human senses but it can be conceptualized by means of cosmic man's *jua* arms which translate cosmic processes into movements where thoughts become actions. The eating of the enemy in his essential nature as *jurá* fruit is displayed when his head, the *jurá* fruit, is removed from his body, the cosmic womb.

The Emberá were strenuous "head hunters" until the middle of the 17th century, beheading the dead enemy to keep his head as a manifestation of a cosmic meal. In this practice they followed a pattern which had become an institution in the Cauca Valley where heads and bodies were prepared and presumably eaten in various studied and ingenious ways. The Emberá explain that by hanging the enemy head in the house, their ancestors were warned of enemy assaults. An Emberá shaman gave me his version of this



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custom: "They used to place the head in the house. With that house of smoke they knew about those who were coming, the danger.<sup>8</sup> That head they kept in the house and suddenly: 'Hey man, here comes the enemy!' There they came out, it broke into pieces, it decomposed altogether, that is why they used it in the house. It was a warning. The teeth also broke into pieces and in this way they noticed."<sup>9</sup>

Actually, ripe fruits are not meant for eating, they are meant to be smelled like any other food in Emberá thought. Although the enemy head is said to have been used to warn of an attack, the decisive use and meaning did not come with its function as a "trophy." The decisive moment occurred when the enemy head was "eaten," an event which took place in the moment of decapitation using the *neko* knife.

The one who was given the task -- or right -- of beheading the enemy performed the act of "cutting off the head," *borotoi* (*borototai*). The etymology of the Emberá term is revealing for it means literally, "to give birth to the head" or "to drink the head." The double meaning of this term (*toi*, "to drink"; "to give birth to") implies the notion of the essential consumption which leads to instant regeneration. The act of extracting (*koi*) the essence (*ne*) of the head fruit with the *neko* knife-hand was a simultaneous act of cosmic rebirth where the killer was the deliverer of the head. Taking heads was as necessary as going to war, since one act corroborated and completed the other. But the act of taking the head, i.e. of "eating" it, meant much more than the mere possession of the head as a "trophy."

The mythological practice of hanging the enemy heads around the house or along the tension ring of the roof cannot be verified historically from among the Emberá and yet it is confirmed indirectly by testimony from the 17th century. In 1639 the Citarabirá beheaded the Spanish commander Martin Bueno and all his men who were ambushed and killed at the confluence of the Atrato and Andágueda rivers. The Emberá witness confessed that the heads were "placed along the Atrato river, each one attached to a pole in a row" (AHNB:CeI 68:531r).

Heads placed on poles in a row along the river partakes in the rich imagery which recurs on different levels in Emberá thought and cosmology. By placing the heads on the riverside, the Emberá warriors evoked the image of the cosmic body where the river opening corresponds to the human throat, the river's depth to his *drua* chest and the trophy head to the reconstructed cosmic head.

Among the native peoples in the Cauca Valley trophy heads were arranged in a similar manner. The heads were stuck on guadua poles and displayed in public places or inside the houses (Trimborn 1949:370). It is not known

what kind of material the Emberá used for their poles but it is quite conceivable that guadua was used because, as *chirú*, the pole connecting the head with the riverine body would then constitute the perfect analogue to the cosmic entrance of man, his *ochirú* throat.

The head of the enemy is deprived of its "smell" in the olfactory operation of the *neko* knife and in this way is transformed into "dead" matter. The "eaten" head left on a pole on the riverside thus corresponds to the "faecal" nature of the manufactured canoe or the carved blowgun dart as dead, putrified matter, delivered on the edge of the vaginal river opening from the cosmic womb of below. The trophy head stuck on the *chirú* pole becomes visible proof of a "sexual meal" which brings on instantaneous rebirth, as rendered in the reconstruction of the cosmic body with the trophy head on top. The head is a physical manifestation of a *jurá* meal which is arranged and relished by cosmic man as killer and head eater.

The row of heads stuck on poles on the riverside calls forth the multiple nature of the *kirá* face. In chapter 25, I argued that one comprehensive *chirú* "tick" or "trough" stands to numerous *chirú* "holes" as one comprehensive *ke-tá* "face" stands to numerous *ke-tá* "teeth." Each head on its pole gives expression its essential nature. Each is a reconstructed "head fruit" or "face" of cosmos while the row of heads along the riverside conjures up the image of a set of teeth mounted in the giant river mouth. The Emberá arrangement of heads on the river is a metaphoric masterpiece where one structure of many faces changes into another structure of sets of teeth which depict the cosmic face and its biting *kidá* power.

While the head is placed on the riverside, the teeth of the dead enemy are threaded as a necklace around the neck of the killer. An event which takes place on one level is repeated on another: the "toothed" row of faces along the river opening corresponds to the row of teeth around the *ochirú* throat of cosmic man.

An event which actually occurs inside man and inside cosmos is confirmed by the residues of the "smelled fruit" left on the cosmic opening in the shape of a tooth necklace or as trophy heads. Both "teeth" and "heads" are cosmic conveyors of essential *chi*, manifested in the nature of the *chirú* pole and in the *dchi* thread of the necklace which runs through the teeth and holds the multiple face together.

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## THE PREGNANT WARRIOR

The ritual measures taken by the warrior who had killed and beheaded his enemy can only be conjectured; historical sources are silent on this matter and so are oral traditions. I have found only one historical reference which mentions a practice directly associated with the killing of an enemy. In 1639, Porras, an Emberá warrior from the Poyá subgroup of the Tatamá province, revealed under torture that he had killed one of the Indians allied to the Spanish force and that he had done so for a particular reason. Porras said that "he threw his spear against an Indian of the friendly sort so as to smear himself with jagua" (AHNB:CeI 68:540v). Obviously, the Spanish interrogator was satisfied with this somewhat cryptic answer because he did not ask why the warrior wanted to smear himself with black paint so badly that he was prepared to kill. However, one conclusion can be drawn from this fragmentary piece of information: The practice was not founded in the belief that the painting of the body entailed or assisted the destruction of the enemy but that the death of the enemy led to the painting of the body. The right to apply jagua to the body was apparently earned by killing the enemy.

Can the modern use of jagua paint reveal anything about the inherent nature of the paint and its ritual significance in body painting? The bluish black dye of jagua is used for body paint on certain occasions such as during the *jemedé tsake* naming ceremony or when a girl first menstruates but, above all, is it used in all contexts which entail *collective consumption of chicha maize beer*. Chicha is a necessary constituent in the ritual communication that the shaman establishes with the spiritual world. As *be* matter, chicha is related to the Emberá themselves; consuming *chicha* implies drinking (*toi*) oneself to ritual death through intoxication and subsequently being reborn (*toi*).

Warfare as a collective enterprise is an illustrative case of this particular relationship between consumption of chicha and body painting. Historical documents from the 17th century reveal that the Emberá, on the eve of an attack on the enemy, assembled to consume large quantities of chicha and get intoxicated. During the violent encounters between Spanish invading troops and the Indian population on the upper Atrato and San Juan rivers in

the 1630's, the native assaults and confrontations were preceded by councils of war with warriors participating from the four, temporarily united, "provinces" of Citarabirá, Tatamá, Poyá and Noanama. On these occasions a gathering with maize beer, or *borrachera* (drinking-bout) as the Spaniards saw it, was held. In such a *junta y borrachera* (meeting) held in Poyá in 1640, the Indians agreed upon attacking the Spanish officer (*mre de campo*), Pereira Farias, and his troops on the San Juan river or, as it was known to the Indians, the Agado. Heavy drinking and ritual fighting during these events was testified to by participants who later were taken prisoner by the Spanish (AHNB:CeI 68:539r).

The direct association between abundant consumption of chicha and body painting suggests that the application of jagua represents an altered state of the human body which is related to fertilization and conception. When the Emberá drink chicha, they consume the male *be* fruit into the cosmic womb in their *drua* chest. The black colour of the jagua fruit indicates this fertilizing process on the *drua* body, a sign of the pregnant condition of cosmic man. The woman who is in charge of preparing the ceremonial chicha for the officiant shaman has her *jua* hands covered with jagua dye as a sign of the "pregnant" state of her "eating" and "begetting" hands. In the same way, by consuming the enemy in his *kenaya* act of killing, the "victorious" Emberá warrior becomes pregnant with the essence of the enemy, the smelled "food" which turns his victim into dead matter. The victor has "eaten" himself into pregnancy, manifested in his painted body.

The Emberá term for jagua is *kipará* or *chipará*, where *pará* (*bará*) is "rich, with," thus "with *ke*/with *chi*," alternatively, indicating something that is fertilized, conceived. The gloss *bará* is also recognized in the verb *uarrabarai*, "to become pregnant," literally, "to become with son." Thus it seems as if the *kipará* dye marks an altered state of the body of cosmic man where, as a consumer of *chi* essence, takes on a *ke*-like nature. By adding black *kipará* to his *e* skin, he becomes "with *ke*."

A Kuna custom mentioned by Restrepo (1888:121) seems also to confirm the association between the black jagua dye and pregnancy. During the puberty ritual for girls, jagua fruits are slowly cut in half with a knife while ceremonial chicha is drunk. The patronesses of the girl separate the halves of the jagua fruits; if the fruits turn black it is a sign of lost virginity.

When the Emberá apply jagua to their bodies they usually cover their whole body, only omitting to paint thin negative-marked bands around the arms and feet. The women do not paint the tips of their breasts. The upper limit of the painted part of the body is on a level with the upper lip or just above it. Delimiting his body paint in this way, cosmic man explicitly evokes the metaphor of the human mouth as the entrance of the cosmic womb in

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man's *drua* chest. By painting his body to above the mouth, the Emberá consumer of essential *chi*, whether he is a slaying warrior, a scratching lover, or just emptying the calabash of maize beer, demarcates a womb filled to the limit as a result of his fertilizing act of killing.

The *jurá* enemies embodied in the Kuna Indians shared this practice of body painting in times of war. Wafer comments that the Kuna warrior painted himself with jagua after having killed an enemy and that he kept his painting until the next new moon (Wafer 1934:79-80). This connection between the "pregnant" warrior and the phases of the moon can also be traced in Emberá thought as I will later describe.

Consumed in his fatal *kenaya* encounter with his adversary, the *ne* essence of the dead enemy is reborn into the cosmic mind of *dru*, the "double river" contained in the blackened *drua* body of the victor. In accordance with the principle of instant birth, the surviving warrior has not become pregnant in the physical way of a woman, for his pregnancy is birth itself: the coming into being of true existence in the uterine Emberá cosmos, the transference from the ephemeral world without to the true world within.

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## FISHERMEN AND FOES

The linguistic metaphor of the *jurakoko* fruit-picking fork describes the enemy as a ripe fruit which is "thrown" to the ground through the olfactory extraction of the *ko* device, configured in the aggressive hand of the warrior when he cuts open his adversary with the "toothed" point of his weapon. Like a fruit or a flower, the warrior emits a strong smell or odour which attracts the adversary and his covetous *kum* nose. The scent of the warrior is the sexual food longed for by the enemy.

To make himself attractive to the enemy, the Emberá warrior applied a specific aroma to his body, transforming his personal smell into a cosmic odour. From the seeds of the *achiote* or *bija* fruit (*Bixa orellana*) the Emberá still obtain a bright, light red dye which they call *kanchí*. Mixed with animal fat from deer or bear, it gives off a strong characteristic odour. During the 17th century, while the Emberá still remained hostile to the Spanish and their native neighbours to the north and west, face painting with red *kanchí* was part of the preparations for going to war. The hostile Kuna warriors on the Panamanian Isthmus painted their faces with red *kanchí* on the eve of an attack (Wafer 1934:83) and the Emberá seem to have done the same, judging from an episode in the conflicts with the Spanish around 1640. On one occasion the Spanish captain Hernando de Ocio ran across Esteuá, one of the principal headmen, in the Chocó forest. As a token of his friendly attitude, the Spaniard attempted to embrace him but the war-painted chief slipped away. Esteuá extended his hand under the pretext that he was *enbijado*, painted with *bija* or *kanchí*, and would muck up the Spaniard with his greasy painting in an embrace (AHNB:CeI 68:286v). There might, however, have been other reasons for the warrior's evasion of physical contact with a conceivable enemy than a mere consideration for the Spaniard's clothing.

Decorating the body with red *bija* dye before going to war was common among the peoples of the Cauca Valley (Trimborn 1949:324). Often, long in advance, the marching enemy made his presence in battle known by his smell alone. While defending the town of San Juan de Rodas, the Spanish soldiers could smell but not see the approaching Guacuceco warriors who smelled of tobacco smoke and the strong odour of the *bija* and turpentine

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oleoresin with which they were painted (Castellanos 1852:402). Patiño remarks that fragrant war-paint was so prized by the warrior that he did not abstain from painting himself with *bija*, though he was otherwise a very cautious tactician in war (1967:150). My own argument is that the scented warrior sought to be discovered through his essential smell, that he represented himself as the fragrant *juara* food which would tempt his hungry enemy. As in the Emberá myth about Ventura's return from the underworld first as "perfume" and only later as a physical human, the warrior in a cosmic war made his initial invisible appearance before the enemy as fragrant food, presented to be eaten in lethal intercourse of *kenaya* killing.

Among many native peoples of northwestern South America *bija* is primarily used for decorating the head and hair or the upper part of the human body, unlike the black *jagua* which is used to paint the body from the neck down. Among the Emberá this pattern is strongly accentuated and its underlying significance is possible to trace in their cosmology.

While the black *kipará* dye descends from above, harvested from the crown of elevated trees in the Chocó forest, and enters the cosmic womb of below (as shown by the painted chest), the red *kanchí* ascends from below, picked from bushes on the forest floor, to assimilate with the cosmic head which is destined to be harvested (*beai* or "killed") in due time. As a sexual "appetizer," red *kanchí* is applied to the head before battle and the *kenaya* killing. As "fertilizer," black *kipará*, is added to the body after the battle and the "consumption" of the killed enemy.

The true source of red *kanchí* is the *dru* mind visualized in the *drua* chest of man. From the chest it rises to make the celestial head fruit possible. The Emberá Katío of northwestern Antioquia used to demonstrate this cosmic origin by always carrying prepared red *kanchí* on their chest in a container made of a beak (*kidá*) attached to a *dchi* string around their neck (Santa Teresa 1924:71). *Kanchí* is the "*chi* of *ka*" which thus makes the cosmic transference of vital matter possible from one realm to another.

I argue that the consumption of the cosmic head and the *kirá* face (the celestial *utare* realm of above), as rendered in the contexts of hunting, warfare, and sexual intercourse, is accentuated on cosmic man by means of the painted pattern of red *kanchí* and its concentration to the human face.

Through the application of bright red *kanchi*, the human head is made more attractive to the opposite *kirá* face. Its fragrance, like that of a reddish yellow, ripe *ju* fruit, lures the *jurá* enemy to eat like the fierce hummingbird sucking nectar from the blossoms of the head: a hummingbird warrior fighting his flowery enemy.

When the warrior paints his face before the battle he offers himself up to his enemy. The red *kanchí* invites the foe to eat with the cutting edge of his

weapon, to smell the warrior's scent with his *neko* "knife" in a lethal fecundation between the opposite *kirá* "faces." The association between "self-mutilation" and application of *kanchí* is explicitly described in a belief about dreams where this paint occurs. According to Severino de Santa Teresa, "if they dream that they are painted with *achiote*, they are going to cut themselves" (Santa Teresa 1924:132). In just a few words the essential significance of the *kanchí* dye is here explained. In the *kai* dreaming state of cosmic man, the real conditions of life are disclosed: painting your face means that you deliberately offer yourself to be "eaten" or "cut." By painting himself red, cosmic man as a warrior offers his own head to be eaten by the enemy. In other words, he "cuts himself."

Why did the warrior expose himself so defiantly to the enemy? There is no simple answer to this question but we can get an inkling of his motives by looking into the rich metaphorical imagery that still characterizes ritual behaviour and language of the Emberá.

In their thought the Emberá place the fragrant *kanchí*-red warrior side by side with the fisherman and his baited fish hook. As fisherman and warrior, respectively, cosmic man acts out different roles which nevertheless have an identical purpose: to obey the cosmic command of "eating" its own matter. To understand this connection we must consider what the fisherman actually does when he catches fish.

I have already suggested a connection between *chitúa* perfume and the *tua* fish hook, both used to attract the material opposition of cosmic man, the *be* game of the hunter and the *betá* fish of the fisherman. In the same way, the fisherman, in fulfilling his task of fishing, shares the fate of the hunter: he is swallowed up by the river. Abducted, as was Ventura the peccary hunter, the fisherman disappears into the aquarian realm of the fish woman and his *dojurá* "river enemies." This is a recurrent motif in Emberá myths.<sup>10</sup>

The fisherman has several weapons at his disposal in his symbolic war against the fish but here I will restrict my analysis to one of the most important: the fishing-line and the hook. The point of the hook is the *kidá* "tooth" which consumes through olfactory cutting. It manifests the cutting power within the operating hand of the cosmic fisherman. Like the bow and the arrow, it is a material extension of the essential *neko* nature of the hand. From the reproductive center (*ju*) inside the *drua* chest is a route of essential *chi* which ends in the *kidá* point of the hook. The metaphor of the *chiá* jet of urine as the imaginary connecting line between the *chiá* arrow and the archer is here rendered in the fishing-line of *dchi* thread as the conveyor of *ne* essence. Like the *okú* blowgun, the *dchi* fishing-line is considered a personal component which is integrated with the body of its owner. Severino de Santa Teresa was told that the fishing-line cannot be parted with as it is too highly



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personal, "if lent to someone else, it will be useless" (1924:128). Among the Emberá Katío women never fish with a hook, they seize the fish with their hands only (Betania 1964:9). The cosmic fisherman is primarily a male intention as are the hunter and the warrior.

The mind of the "dual river" (*dru*), which is situated in the *neko-dru* handle of the essential knife, is evoked for the fisherman in the fishing-rod he clasps with his *jua* hand. From the *dugatru* rod emanates the *dchi* line and the *kidá* hook.

When the fisherman "fishes with a hook" he performs an act which is expressed as *douggai*, "river-way-metamorphosis" (*do-u-kai*), and which is directed through his *dugatru* (*do-ka-tru*) fishing rod. Two other Emberá glosses, *ggai*, "to fish," and *kai*, "to dream," are similar in content as experiences of essential existence. Thus, "fishing with a hook" becomes a "river-dreaming" experience, the *kabai* knowledge which the fisherman acquires in his riverine dream-walk while working.

Over the years, several finds of fish hooks of gold, presumably pre-Columbian, have been made in Chocó territory, principally in the upper basins of the Atrato and San Juan rivers. The curious practice of making fish hooks of gold may be explained by an examination of the *kabai* work of the cosmic fisherman.

In order to obey the command of eating its opposite "face," the *betá* fish cannot accept the empty *tua* fish hook alone. Remember that the *kirá* face of *Uera Torró* is unable to "bite" as long as *me* is alone and outside that which activates it, the *ke* vagina. The hook needs to be dressed in *ke* matter ("*me* inside *ke*") to entice the enemy fish. Different species of crickets which all have a *chichi* nature are a favoured bait among Emberá fishermen but the image of the opposite *kirá/kidá* "face" is explicitly reconstructed in the *mokitá*<sup>11</sup> angling worm which encloses the male *me* hook as the *kitá* of *Uera Torró* covers the male sex. *Uera Torró's* instruction to cosmic man to enter into her *ke* is complied with when the fisherman baits his hook; the *me* hook penetrates the worm to evoke its *mokitá* nature. The hook, entering the angling-worm, creates the image of the *kitá* "face" where the male *me* emerges in the shape of the cutting edge of the hook out of the *kitá* "face" of the worm. By having the *mokitá* worm enclose his *me* hook, the cosmic fisherman transforms his *me* male intention into *be* and the *be kirá* "facial intention" (the formation of *be* as a consequence of *me* inside *ke*), creating the enticing and yet lethal sexual food for the opposite *kirá* face, here represented by the *betá* fish.

This view of the act of fishing is supported by Emberá mythology. In the invaluable myth about the thunder, narrated to Pardo by the famous Floresmiro Dogiramá in Baudó<sup>12</sup>, the real meaning behind human actions in

different contexts is revealed by Thunder Man's words and actions as he performs the same tasks, but properly. This is what happens when he proposes to his young guest that they go fishing together:

"Today *churi*, we are going to eat fresh fish."

"Very good, let us eat."

"Go and look for crickets for fishing."

So he went to a clearing to look and there were a lot of them and he brought [several] wrapped up into his loin-cord [pelvis].<sup>13</sup>

"Hey man, did you bring crickets for fishing?"

"Yes, here they are."

"Churi, why did you catch that little animal? Poor little thing, let it go, that's not a cricket. Wait here, I will go looking."

So he went to the clearing. Suddenly, after a short while, a deer was barking, "uee, uee, uee." And, after a while, another one barked "uee, uee, uee." And he came out with two live deer tied up. There he /Thunder Man/ gave him a fishing-rod which was a large trunk and they went off downwards to the border of a laguna. There he seized a large hook and he put it into the head of the deer and took it out through its ass. And then he threw it to the middle of the laguna with the deer still alive. Suddenly there was a lapping of the waves and he drew up a giant fish, like a *nusí*. Immediately he struck it with a thick stick and he killed it. Then he did the same thing again. There he brought out a vine for carrying and he told the cholo, "You take it, churi."

But he could not even lift it up.

"Well, take the rod then."

"Hey, that's real heavy."

"OK, I'll take it."

And he seized the trunk with one hand and in the other the huge animals and he carried them as if they were small *sabaleta* fish. When they came to the house, he asked him for a small hook to bring out some fish. The other one ate his *nusí* and the cholo his fish (Pardo 1984:82-83).

This episode precedes the one describing peccaries as hummingbirds and they have many features in common. Again it seems as if the myth-teller wishes to stress the difference between the "micro-cosmos" inside the Emberá dwelling and the "macro-cosmos" outside, where analogous phenomena and events occur on different levels. The constituent parts of the fishing gear are gigantic and so is the haul, the cosmic pair of monstrous *nusí* fish. But when they return to the house the human visitor asks for a "normal" hook and gets fish of a "normal" size. While Thunder Man eats his *nusí*, the visitor eats his fish.

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Apart from the abnormal proportions in their undertaking, there is another surprising detail in the story: Thunder Man calls the deer a cricket and baits it as such on his hook. Crickets have a binary *chichi* nature which makes them appropriate as "food stuff" but apparently they are not enough for Thunder Man, they need to be replaced by a deer which, nevertheless, is described as a real cricket, i.e., provided with a *chichi* nature as well. What is the difference then?

In their name for the brocket deer the Emberá disclose that they regard it as *bekí*, "maize-vagina." Seen as "*ke* of *be*," the deer in its mythological function as "bait" on the cosmic hook establishes a symbolical affiliation with the operating *uera torró*. By "making" the *me* hook enter her vaginal opening, the deer mouth, her essential character as *ke* vagina encloses the male hook into her uterine cover and herewith creates the image of the "facial intention," the transformation of *me* into *be* and the formation of the *kirá* structure. Thus, the baited hook, a cosmic operation directed by the *jua* hand, assumes the character of the *be kirá* "face" which creates its binary opposition and the cosmic command of "eating" its own matter. The female face of the male intention is here rendered in the image of the "face" of the baited hook and its mirror image, the *betá* fish.

By this, the command of *Uera Torró* can be obeyed by cosmic man in his role as "fisherman." Through the metaphorical imagery of the fishing gear the cosmic "face" is reconstructed; the requisite structure of *me* inside *ke* is evoked and the binary opposition of the *kirá* faces are there to fulfil the shared cosmic assignment of "eating."

In this "facial intercourse," the fish is lured into biting the opposite *kirá*, the baited hook, the consequence of which is that the fish itself is "bitten" by the "toothed" hook and consumed into the cosmic vagina of the fisherman's *drua* chest. The *ne* essence of the fish is instantly reborn in the *dru* mind and as smelled/consumed food, deprived of its "smell," is expelled from the riverine anal opening as a "faecal" matter. This event is described in the metaphorical graphics of the *ompurú* "anal" basket from which the fisherman picks up the fish as "excrement" from the river.

The fate of the cosmic fisherman is identical to that of the fish because the fish *is* the same fisherman. The instant essential rebirth of the fish into the *dru* cosmic mind corresponds to the fisherman's own riverine "dream-walk" as a consequence of his catch. His successful "fishing with hook" becomes the "river-metamorphosis" (*doggai*) which entails instant rebirth for the fish.

In the context of fishing, the fish stands to the human head as the hook stands to the human torso. Through his catch, the fisherman literally "loses" his head in his riverine dream-walk. The *kirá* complementary opposition between hook and fish is an instructive image of an event which actually

takes place on a cosmic level, within the binary and internally inverted Emberá cosmos of the "facial intention" (the cosmic womb of below, seen as the river world or the fisherman's chest) and its opposed mirrored matter, the face (the head fruit of above, seen as the sky or the fish). The same opposition between head and body makes up cosmic man himself.

The return of the cosmic fisherman to his physical identity as an individual in the human world parallels his action of taking out the "faecal" fish from his anal *ompurú* basket. The cosmic fisherman, deprived of his essential smell, is thus "defecated" back into the human world as faecal matter, i.e. he regains his physicality, his "head" and human consciousness. Actually, the fisherman shares the fate of the canoe-maker. Both become victims of their own double-acting "eating" and fertilizing performance where the fisherman is to the fish as the canoe-maker is to the wood.

The function and fate of the fisherman thus repeats a pattern we also recognize from the contextual behaviour of man the hunter and his opposed materialized self, the game. The hunt and the fishing trip become graphic contextualizations of processes which truly take place within cosmic man himself, demonstrations of the intrinsic binary opposition of mind and matter which characterizes man as cosmos in Emberá thought.

The interaction between the fisherman and the *betá* fish symbolically demonstrates the meaning and consequences of the *kira* complementary opposition where "eating" is implicitly "eaten." While the significance of essential hunting needs the mythological discourse to be comprehended, the cosmic role of the fisherman is brilliantly explained in the multifarious metaphor of the fishing gear as a facial structure.

The Emberá had reasons enough to manufacture fish hooks of gold, the indestructible matter of *ne* essence which stands for the same principle that the hook enacts as a tool of a cosmic intention. The presence of the "golden" *ne* essence possessed by the hook is explained by a comparison with another "facial" structure which also cuts open things to eat, the *jimini* finger. As a *ke-me-ne* construction it exactly describes the composition of the baited hook: the essence (*ne* of gold) of that which bites (*me* of the pointed hook) when enclosed by its activating "bait" (*ke* of the *be-ke* maize vagina). As the fisherman's hook is of gold, so is the cutting nail at the point of the finger. Each *pichi* nail is a ray of the invisible maize sun in cosmic man, the same inner sunshine which eats saliva from the hand of the shaman's son.

The warrior defies his enemy as the *kirá* facial intention which bites with his *kidá* cutting edge, surrounded by the enticing *kerá* smell: three different expressions of one and the same *ke-tá* concept. Furthermore, Cayon's observation that "the *kerá* suffix defines a whole group of plants which are used for hunting, fishing, love-making and, sometimes, for killing enemies"

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(1980:12) thus confirms my conclusion that all manifestations of *essential eating of man as smell* are expressed in the *kerá* morpheme.

The warrior is the golden and baited male hook who strives to seize the enemy as the fisherman catches the fish by luring his enemy to bite first. The warrior is the male *me* which is enclosed by the female *ke*, here reinforced by the *kanchí* smell applied to cosmic man with the female coating of *bekí* deer fat. The *kanchí* smell, activated by mixing it with the *bekí* fat, is the "deer" bait which induces the enemy to bite. In his eagerness to bite his scented opponent, the enemy is caught like a fish by the hook of the warrior, the *kidá* point of his weapon which emerges out of its cover of smell, like the point of the baited fish hook.

Behind the physical guise of swimming fish, however, the fisherman's main adversary is Fish Woman herself, she who eats *me*. Like the Mother of the Peccaries she drags man into the "river," into his cosmic self. As partakers in the *kenaya* interaction, directed by *Uera Torró* and her human partner, the game and the fish are considered as "female" when defined in opposition to man the hunter and man the fisherman, respectively.

Then, who is the warrior confronting?

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## FOES AND FEMALES

Warfare is the main expression of the *kenaya* concept where physical and individual death implies instant essential and cosmic birth for the Emberá. Meeting the enemy in war is a sexual encounter and the adversary is the tempting ripe fruit whose fragrance is extracted at the point of a weapon. But the laughing fruit has the lethal teeth of a woman who savours the male fruit herself. The paradoxical fate of the cosmic fruit is that *ju* eats *ju* and is therefore eaten by *ju*. This is the outcome of the divine command which the White Lady formulates, "bite your own thing." The archer obeys this same command with his self-inflicted death.

The enemy of the warrior, like the game of the hunter or the fish of the fisherman, exhibits a female essence which becomes evident in the context of sexual intercourse. By all evidence so far, the enemy bears female traits for the Emberá, he is a "woman" when defined by his adversary in war.

Apart from the fact that women sometimes did participate in war in the Cauca Valley or at least were active warmongers as among the Citarabirá, the essential nature of male enemies from the Emberá point of view is probably impossible to document in historical sources. Even if the enemy possesses a female nature in battle, the warrior need not necessarily define him as a woman. However, when the Pozo Indians received Robledo and his native allies, they made "a lot of noise and called us 'umes', which means women, and other words even worse" (Cieza 1881:26). Did the indignant Spanish chronicler with these "words worse than women" allude to matters related to the female sex? With the inherent meaning of Emberá warfare in mind, it is less probable that the Pozo warriors called their enemies cowards and more likely that they defined them as enemies to be "eaten" as "women" or "vaginal faces" in martial intercourse.

This interpretation finds some support in Emberá linguistic usage. The Emberá woman always carries something with her which seems to define her as an "enemy." Like the man who displays the "snake body" with his *damakakua* loincloth, the woman reveals her nature as "enemy" by carrying the *jurá* overlapping skirt around her waist. But the woman, like the enemy, is the germinated *ju* fruit (*ju-tá*) in relation to "her" adversary, the opposite

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mother *ju* or *ku* womb. The fertility of the woman is suggested in other terms for her skirt as well: *chío* ("way of *chi*"), *oa* ("way-matter" or "blood"), all of which are associated with the metaphor of *dchi* thread as the metaphysical flesh of cosmic man. The fertile nature of the "female" cover of cosmic man which is eaten by the scratching nails during intercourse is here reinforced by the metaphor of the *jurá* skirt.

The woman as an essential "warrior" is evoked in a situation which is described by Severino de Santa Teresa: "When a young woman leaves her house, not wishing that any man shall molest her, she carries a knife on her arm. When the Indians meet her, they stray various metres from the track and they do not look at her nor do they speak to her" (Santa Teresa 1924:85). The danger is here imminent for the passing man when the *jurá* enemy woman displays her eating sex at the point of the knife.

The enemy is a woman, though not a woman in our usual sense of the word for there is no "woman" in the Emberá cosmos, nor a "man." The woman, as one of two actors in intercourse or marital union, constitutes the physical projection of a cosmic intention. "She" is the face in the mirror which cosmic man sees before him, the human being as the physical reproduction of its concept, a "woman" in the disguise of the ephemeral illusions of male and female. "She" is the physical creation that maize embodies as *be kirá*, the "face" of the germinated *ke* with *me* inside, the face of *Uera Torró* which is cosmic man's.

The *uera* woman is the fruit which must be returned to its mother womb, matter restored to mind. Although "she" is the head of cosmic man, head and body are analogous entities. Put together one is the mirror image of the other, the two inverted worlds that make up the binary cosmos of the Emberá.

The marriageable young man who has not yet entered into any marital bond is referred to by a term which likens him to an enemy and classifies him as such. As a "bachelor" he is *kurá*, a variant pronunciation of the same *jurá*. Settling as a stranger in the house of his father-in-law he definitely has to withstand the harshness of his future wife's family, which may resemble the hatred and fury between two enemies in war. Ritual and violent wrestling with his father-in-law and brothers-in-law during *chicha* feasts is but one expression of aggression against the "enemy bachelor."

As a bachelor the young man also takes the aggressive stance of a warrior on social occasions, presenting himself painted with red *kanchí* and black *kipará* and smelling strongly of aromatic herbs and ostentatious flowers in his hair. He is indeed the essential *kurá* enemy ready to conquer and "kill" his female adversary in a sexual liaison which will eventually lead to the formation of the *kimakai* cosmic womb.

Warfare among the Emberá and their neighbours was more than ritually significant, it was a cosmic undertaking with motives and inducements which probably were shared by their opponents. When the warrior faced his enemy in war he looked into the face of *Uera Torró* herself, his "female" enemy who he is bound to eat and, in doing so, is to be consumed by himself. The face of the enemy is the reflection of his own face, the physical image of the facial intention represented by himself as cosmic warrior, as if he were looking into a mirror to see the face of the enemy. The Huastec warrior used to carry a huge round mirror in his girdle when going to war in 15th century Mexico (Seler 1960:412). One feels tempted to suggest it was for a similar reason: to have the enemy identify himself with his adversary by looking into the mirror to see his own face reflected in the chest of his other self, his physical *alter ego*.

Presumably, the Emberá warrior would not have objected to this idea because to him the enemy is not only considered as *jurá*. The enemy is also *kiramá*, "the opposite face;" the very same *kirá* "face" the warrior sees when he recognizes himself in the guise of the enemy. Like the "head-hunting" Ashuar of Ecuador who explain that they do not hunt heads but "faces,"<sup>14</sup> the Emberá warrior is attracted by the enemy as "the facial intention" which searches out and destroys its own "face."



## THE WRATH OF GOD

The enemy regarded as the physical reproduction or inverted reflection of cosmic man as warrior provides an image of the *jurá* concept as another and yet the same phenomenon through which it is created and defined. The enemy as the "face" of the warrior vis-à-vis the warrior as the "facial intention" makes *jurá* another kind of Emberá, establishing an opposition where "intentional Emberá" (the Emberá warrior) stands to "physical Emberá" (the enemy) as the body (chest) stands to the head of cosmic man.

The interaction between enemy and warrior thus creates a complementary opposition which we have already met in other contexts where cosmic man operates as a physical actor (hunter, lover, or fisherman). Within the structure of cosmic man, the concepts of "enemy" and "warrior" take on the same essential nature as that implicit to the concepts of "female" and "male." Following the prescript formulated for gender opposition in Emberá thought (man stands to woman as maleness stands to femaleness within cosmic man, cf. chapter 29), the "enemy" stands to the "warrior" as "*jurá* matter" stands to "*ju* intention" within cosmic man as warrior. Thus, "cosmic man as warrior" consists of the joint structure of "warrior" and "enemy," i.e. the analogous complementary internal opposition of "body" and "head" within cosmic man which already is identified with maleness as "intention" and femaleness as "intention made matter." This series of analogies confirms my identification of the enemy as a "woman" in the Emberá sense of "male intention made matter." Once again, substantiation for my interpretation may be found in myth.

The implacable hatred of the enemy becomes an irresistible force of attraction which impels the warrior to kill and destroy. The relationship between the warrior and his enemy is a contradictory manifestation of opposition and attraction which is suggestive of the contradictory power of the *chichi* bowstring, the internal directional opposition which characterizes the concept of *dru*, the "dual river."

The odious enemy who must be annihilated at any price is found within man himself. This conception is disclosed in myths where the Emberá warrior fights off an enemy whom he later finds to be another Emberá

disguised as a *jurá* enemy. This fate befalls the Emberá warriors who pursue their *jurá* enemies and reach the entrance to the underworld; after half an hour of futile arrow shooting without any casualties, the Emberá suddenly discover that their enemies are Emberá too: "Hey man, we were going to kill ourselves being of the same kind." Later, the travellers reach the underworld where they meet with their "sons" who tell them the true conditions of existence and make their "fathers" reflect on what they have done: "Man, we were killing our brothers who also were *jurá*" (Pardo 1984:213). The *jurá* enemies reveal themselves as Emberá and the Emberá warriors realize that they have been attacking and killing their own people.

The same "mistake" is committed by the primeval humans in a Wounaan myth which describes the creation of the first men:

The first human beings were created by the pelican, on the sand beach at the mouth of Rio Baudó. He only made women. The whole beach was full of women. They were stark naked, and did not even wear loin-cloths. Then God's son said, "This is too bad, father, it will not do. I will go and find a small staff for putting into the vulva." And God said, "Very well, go!" The son went away, and set about creating men from the staff he put into the vulva. Night came on, but he was still busy creating men. Then God said: "That will do, my son, go and see your people at daybreak." Very early, as day was breaking, he went over to them and found them copulating. This was one half of the people . . . . About two months later God returned in a large vessel. As this came in sight the son called out, 'Here is my father coming', but the people said, 'No, it is the Cuna who are coming to kill us'. The boat came nearer, and they gathered together to meet it, and began shooting at God, whom they then killed with their arrows. When they had killed him, they left the vessel on the river-bank. The son then told them: 'Bury my father decently under the house'. . . . (Wassén 1935:124-125).

The creation of cosmic man as we know it from the myth about *Uera Torro* recurs here in a different version. *Uera Torro* appears in the guise of women who are "stark naked." God's son is the male intention, the same *me* which here is transmitted through his body and *jua* arm to be objectified as a "staff," presumably of *meme* wood,<sup>15</sup> as a manifestation of the principle of *omé* twoness: "*me* of the way."

The pristine prerequisite for creation is the cosmic perpetual structure of *me* inside *ke*; this is complied with by God's son when he puts his *me* staff into the *ke* vulva. He does this "just once," to use *Uera Torro*'s words; his staff is not a single concrete object, it is the multiple manifestation of his *omé* male intention which is "put" once and for all into each woman. The overall concept of *Uera Torro* stands to the quantity of "naked women" as cosmos stands to the multiplicity of cosmic man.

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At first it seems as if the myth first mentions the creation of women and then, through the intervention of God's son, the men are created. In fact, however, this is the creation of cosmic man, the coming into being of the *kirá* face by placing *me* inside *ke*. The "stark naked women" are transformed into the *be kirá* structure which I have construed as the "female face of the male intention." The enigmatic phrase that "only half of the people" were copulating seems to corroborate this suggestion as the myth intimates that this "half of the people," is actually analogous to all the people created by God's son. Filled with intentional *me*, "naked women" change into cosmic men.

God disappears but returns two months later in a large vessel. God's son assures the people that it is his father who is coming back but they are convinced it is the Kuna who are coming to kill them, so they shoot God to death with their arrows. Why does God return and, for one thing, why does he disappear at all? Finally, why do the people not believe in what God's son say?

In my reading of this myth, God vanishes as a consequence of the act of creation said to be directed by his son. The placing of *me* inside *ke* brings on the creation of *be kirá* which is the shaping of the celestial fruit, the opposite inverted *kirá* analogue to the cosmic womb of below; in other words, this is the design of the "celestial head" of cosmic man, that same cosmic realm which houses the odious *jurá* enemy fruit which falls on man in the *dru* realm of below. It is the same "female face" and physical reproduction of the male intention which is God or Karagabí himself.

As a consequence of his own creative act, God has been "abducted" from the true *dru* cosmos to appear enclosed in the semblance of the *jurá* "female" veil. This metamorphosis is described in the image of God returning as the Kuna enemy in a vessel which is the cosmic womb rendered in the construction and role of the Emberá canoe. Transmitted to the graphic idiom of the head of cosmic man, God is the *kiramé* tongue enclosed by the toothed *kirá* facial womb of the *jurá* enemy head fruit. In other words, the Kuna enemy is the joint *be* structure consisting of God inside his vessel -- *me* inside *ke*, the same *be* food which is the sexual fruit that cosmic man desires and fights for.

After two months God returns. His return is the manifestation of the enemy head of cosmic man and of his own creation as flesh, as mind made matter. His return is the formation of the sky world and the visible sun in the firmament: cosmic man made cosmos.

This contextual process gives the answer to the third question formulated above. The people do not disagree with the son of God. The one interpretation of events complements the other: God returns but he reappears

in the disguise of an enemy. Their two seemingly contradictory statements are yet another expression of the complementary opposition which is the basic principle of the *dru* cosmos: mind must be recovered through the privation of matter.

The Emberá's unrelenting hatred of the *jurá* enemy is said to have originated with the primordial event in which the Kuna killed Karagabí with their arrows (Santa Teresa 1924:17-18). This detail is crucial. This view of the Kuna seems to be an old tradition judging from an early 19th century source which reports the same causal connection: "These Indians [the Kuna of Darién] are at war with the Chocoes, keeping up an enmity which is handed down from father to son, and arising from the circumstance of the Indians of Darién having put to death a curate, who was held in high reverence by them, about the last century; and from that time, each of them carries a skull of an Indian of Darién, who has met his fate at their hands, out of which he regularly drinks" (Alcedo 1812, quoted by Wassén 1963:63). This "curate" is of course the same Karagabí, or Cargavi, as he is called in a contemporary document from 1808.<sup>16</sup>

We interpret this piece of information in negative terms, as a cataclysmal threat against Emberá existence and survival. However, if this alleged origin of hatred is compared with what occurs when God's son accomplishes his work of creation it becomes evident that the Kuna's killing of Karagabí with their arrows provides a similar description of the essential nature of the pristine act of creation: the formation of the "hostile" head of cosmic man.

By necessity, the very creation of cosmic man implies the simultaneous coming into being of the *jurá* enemy. The hatred is there from the beginning, not as a subsequent negative construction, because hatred is the prerequisite for cosmic survival, the motor that brings the complementary opposition of cosmos into harmony. While we regard love as the opposite of hatred, the Emberá conceive of love *as* hatred. Actually, these two expressions seem to be linguistically closely related since "to love" or "to wish for" is *kiriái* or *kiriabí*, while "to hate" is *kiriabai* or *kiriabé*. The attracting power of love between man and woman in sexual intercourse becomes the attracting power of hatred between "loving" enemies in the cosmic intercourse of war. The transformer of this hate/love is the very same *jurá* enemy who the Emberá warrior regards as his *kiriakau*, the "Way of the metamorphic power of *kiria*." An individual feeling of "hatred" turns into cosmic "love" through the complementary opposition between "enemies."

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## BEVERAGE OF HAIR

After this cosmic detour it is time to return to the Emberá warrior on the battlefield. After having challenged his enemy and killed him, he covers himself with the black *kipará* dye as a sign that he is "pregnant" with the essence of his foe. But if the enemy is his other Emberá ego, the death of himself as enemy must befall him as slayer as well. The warrior is bound to perish as *kenaya* killer; eaten in his operation of eating he will lose his "hostile" head. The victor is beheaded by himself but how can he possibly manifest this destiny without going to extremes?

Through their use of metaphor the Emberá say that the slayer "beheads" himself by cutting his hair upon the death of the enemy. In the Cauca Valley this was a prescribed measure taken by warriors who had killed in war; the Kuna on the Panamanian isthmus did the same.

By cutting his hair, the Emberá warrior "eats" his head with the *kidá* edge of his *neko* knife. The conception of *hair-cutting* as *head-eating* is evident in the term for "to cut the hair," *borokoi* (*borochikoi*), the literal meaning of which is precisely "to eat the head." The essential *koi*-eating of the enemy in the *kenaya* killing is thus recalled in the *koi*-eating of the hair as the metaphor for the hostile *jurá* head; these are two manifestations of one and the same eating with the *kidá* cutting edge.

When the warrior cuts his hair he displays the complementary opposition of cosmos; his *jua* hand is the agent of the *drua* chest which executes the eating of its opposite counterpart, the *jurá* head. The *jua* hand is as much an essential "head" as the human head is an essential *ju* "hand," figured as the sprouting *jurá* enemy. Assisted by the *jua* hand, *ju* eats *jurá* within the cosmos of a warrior.

Still, we must ask ourselves why hair whets the appetite of cosmic man as warrior. How can hair be synonymous to head?

The cosmic womb regains the *ne* essence of itself by consuming its appropriate nutriment which is referred to as *chi* and contained in *be* food as *pichi*: *chi* of *be*. If the womb desires hair to "eat," then hair should be an expression of *be* food as well.

For the *jaibaná* shaman there is a connection between hair and ritual

chicha which is so crucial that we are led to ponder its underlying significance. When the incantation of ritual chicha is performed by the shaman not a single hair must fall into the beverage on his *baraoá* (*mesa* or ritual table); if it does the chicha will be spoiled and the purpose of the ritual will fail as well. If hair really is "maize" then the fatal consequence of mixing chicha with hair is comprehensible; the chicha beverage is the *pichi* head fruit which has been ritually prepared through a series of formalized measures. Consuming ritual chicha is the foremost ritualized expression of cosmic conception; therefore, mixing "raw" hair from the opposite *jurá* womb with *pichi* essence processed by the *ju* mother womb into sacred *chichia* is disastrous to the shaman's project.

Another intimation of hair as essential food is the fact that cut hair must be disposed of into the river, otherwise the owner will run the risk of becoming bald (Pinto 1978:310). Considering that the cutting of the hair is a way of eating, we can now accept that *koi*-processed hair which has been deprived of its essential smell can only be disposed of in one way: as faecal food into the oral opening of the riverine womb. But is hair really maize matter?

Emberá culinary art includes a great variety of maize dishes, prepared for different purposes and occasions. On the eve of a long journey preparation and consumption of roasted and ground maize mixed with water, called *po*, is required as a precaution, even in the mythological world. The grains are roasted in a ceramic pot of a globular shape with a narrowing neck and opening which resembles the *ompurú* fish and maize basket. This particular type of pot is called *u* which refers to its specialized function and characteristic shape as a representation of the cosmic Way, *o*.

First, the grains must be roasted; the woman enters her hand into the hot pot and stirs the roasting grains with a small spatula. This image of *be* maize, processed by the *jua* hand "inside" the cosmos of the *u* pot, illustrates the start of the true parallel preparation inside the cosmic chest of man, which is accomplished with the grinding of the roasted maize into *po* flour on the millstone. The woman clasps the hand-stone (*viú-kida*, "the tooth of the way of *be*") with both hands to extract the essence from the flour and regenerate it as the binary *potopotoa* "river of *po*," inside the *drua* chest. The *potopotoa* lungs are the cosmic "dual river," the same *dru* inside which man travels in the true world and which needs to be periodically replenished with *po* flour to make transference possible, as explained in myth. Designed for preparation of *po* flour only, the essential matter of the "dual river" of the *dru* cosmos, this particular type of pot represents clearly the objectified principle of *u*, the concept of cosmic transference which characterizes the Emberá cosmos.

In myth, *po* flour and hair are obviously transformed expressions of one

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another. Pinto has published a myth which clearly shows how *po* is able to change into hair:

The wife of a man died and he was left without flour. He had a daughter of whom he had torn out her hair so as to free her from lice and itch. Once when the man was absent, an old woman came and gave some flour to the girl. When her father returned from the sown land, he saw the flour and asked the girl who had brought it. She assured him she had prepared it. The man beat it to drink it heartily, and when he beat it, a long hair came out . . . (Pinto 1978:232).

The absence of *po* is marked by the absence of hair, as explained by the reference to the bald-headed girl. When the man beats the flour mixed with water it turns into hair, as if he were about to consume a beverage of hair. The myth explicitly makes clear that the hair originates from the beaten flour. The man refuses to take this beverage of hair but, as a matter of fact, he already has. By beating the flour drink with his stick, he has "eaten" the *po* essence into his *drua* chest, the consequence of which is the visible transformation of *po* into hair. The essence of *po*, transformed through the stirring, is thus described in terms of "hair." What, then, is hair?

We can establish that hair only exists in the world of above, i.e. on the head of man, but not on the *drua* body which the Emberá are anxious to point out by carefully depilating any body hair. This means that hair is created matter, a physical manifestation of a cosmic intention held in stirred *po* flour: the hair on the head corresponds to essential "hair" in the *drua* chest, the identity of which we are trying to detect.

Actually, the word for "hair," *pudá*, seems to confirm that hair originates from *po* if we interpret *pudá* as *po-dá*, "germinated *po*," hairy matter created from stirred *po*. The stirring is done with a wooden implement called *kansusu*, the handle of which is often carved into a human face or arrow-like shape, similar to those found on the shaman's paraphernalia. This ritual connection could explain its name as the binary "*chi* way of *ka* metamorphosis" (*ka-so-so*), a metamorphosis which all food that is prepared and cooked with the *kansusú* stirrer undergoes.

"To stir" or "to beat" is expressed as *poerai*, the literal meaning of which offers a daring but interesting interpretation of the essential nature of hair itself. The final part of this word is *erai* which Pinto translates as "to sharpen, to put a point to." Thus, *poerai* would read "to sharpen *po*." Considering the fact that "sharp" as well as "point" is seen as *kidá*, then the stirring of *po* seems to imply its transformation to a biting concept similar to *chi*, the basic element of essential existence which has the power to cut and eat matter into regenerated life. Stirred *po* thus enters as a cosmic "cutting"

*kidá* power in the *drua* chest while manifesting itself physically as "hair" in its opposite realm, the human head. In this view, hair visibly defines the acquired cutting edge of *po*.

Pinto reproduces another oral tradition which is similar in content and meaning to the myth about *po* as hair. Again, there is a widower and his daughter who, left alone in the house, is assisted by a strange old woman. When the widower discovers her presence, he throws the woman to the ground in anger. Upon hitting the ground, her beautiful flowing hair changes into *dchi* fibres, "*the mother plant of all other plants*" (Pinto 1978:233; my emphasis).

This story seems to offer us the metaphorical linkage between hair, thread, and *chi* essential matter that we are looking for. I have already referred to the "cutting" *kidá* capacity of essential *chi* on various occasions but do the Emberá really say hair has this power to cut and eat as well?



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## HOSTILE HAIR

Hair is "secreted" from within the head. "Head" is *boró*, the meaning of which I earlier tentatively associated with the *poto* concept, "the river of *po*," as the inverted analogue and "outgrowth" of its *potopotoa* mother concept in the *drua* chest. In that case, *pudá* hair would sprout from the *boró* head as *po-tá* from *po-to*. In Emberá imagery we will find several references to this essential face or head or flowing *po* which is described in terms of "hair" or "fibre."

As mentioned earlier, the cosmic head is described as a "face" perforated with innumerable small holes which secrete flowing *chi*, or hair. The face is seen as one huge cosmic *chirú* hole (a hole of small holes) the term for which renders it as a "river of *chi*," transcribed as hair or fibre in myth and ritual. The face of the *tuluvieja* woman is "full of holes, covered with hair" and Ventura meets with similar female beings in the riverine underworld, three singing, inebriated women with their heads lowered who put aside their hair to "speak" (Pardo 1984:179).

The cosmic face of long hair is called forth during the *jemedé zroma* ritual. The women who perform the *jemeneya* ritual dance to the beat of the *tonoa* drum, move rhythmically with their bodies bent forward and their heads lowered so as to cover their face with their flowing hair in a pose which reminds the participants of the mythical ladies with their long hair covering their faces. Likewise, mourning women let their hair cover their face during the funeral (Betania 1964:37).

The Master of the Water, *Antomiá*, "he who roams in the river of a matter," is an ominous being of streaming hair, his body and face covered with hair, said to resemble the sloth. *Antomiá*, in its aspect as a "sloth," is another suggestion of hair as *po*; the sloth is called *buchiá*<sup>17</sup> which can be read as *po-chiá*, the *chi* matter of *po*, the hairy essence of which manifests its dangerous "cutting" power. The sloth with its streaming hair and powerful claws is an appropriate image of *Antomiá*'s "hairy" aspect and "cutting" nature. Significantly enough, *Antomiá* clasps Ventura by his hair when abducting him into the river (Pardo 1984:178).

Man is the representation of the binary structure of cosmos. His head is an

explanatory chart of the sky world, demonstrating conditions and arrangements in the firmament which are invisible or at least difficult to discern and understand for humans. In their beliefs, however, the Emberá reveal that the face of the sky is as hairy as we expect it to be as a true image of the invisible cosmic face in the cosmic mind of *dru*.

The long, streaming hair of the sky face is represented by the clouds which usually cover the firmament above the Chocó forest. The association of hair with clouds is suggested in the myth which describes *po* as hair, quoted above. The old woman who prepares the *po* flour for the girl and is killed by the girl's father, is transformed into a large storm cloud which gives off a heavy downpour, said to be the first one after a long spell of drought (Pinto 1978:232).

This conception of a cloud as celestial hair seems to be corroborated by its Emberá term, *porá*, which I interpret as a variant pronunciation of the word for hair, *pudá*. This reinforces the hypothesis of stirred *po* flour as essential hair. When the old woman changes into a huge cloud the image of the stirred *po* flour turned into hair is repeated on a cosmic level: the *po* flour stirred or "sharpened" by the man with his *kansusu* spatula changes into hair, while the old woman as anthropomorphized *po* is "sharpened" to death by the man's consuming *kenaya* action, the consequence of which is her transformation into "hair:" the storm cloud of the celestial face. But again, it must be remembered that the fate of the old woman is shared by the man; even better, she is an image of that which befalls her slayer. Her cloudy hair is his own cosmic hair as two parallel representations of a single and unique condition in the cosmic mind of *dru*: cosmic man's acquisition of "sharpened *po*." This analysis forwards another consequence of essential *koi*-eating: that which is "sharpened" by a cutting edge in *nekoi* consumption acquires the power to cut itself. We have yet another example of the "recoiling effect" in Emberá thought, which has been expressed as "that which eats, is eaten." The ideology behind "the death of the archer" finds many expressions in Emberá imagery of which the metamorphic origin of hair, flour and clouds is but one.

The cosmic *po* flour turning into clouds in the sky is a giver of profuse precipitation. Another cosmic liberator of rain is the giant *jenené* tree; in its fall, a portion of its huge tree-crown remains in the sky entangled by the *beguru khau* vine: "the trace remained, the liana, that is to say the crown of the tree, and when it is raining, that thing divides, they say it is blocked, then everything divides, that's why it rains everywhere, windy, because the liana stayed there still and from there the rain comes."

The *jenené* tree sets the water and the rivers free for the benefit of mankind. Clouds seem also to receive their aquatic nature from their origin

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as hair or "sharpened *po*" if we trust what the *dojurá* say when they implore their human visitors not to comb their hair in the river "because that hair goes downriver and here it turns into a *carrá*, a *choibá*, an *epavé*<sup>18</sup>. And for us, all mutilated and one-armed, it is very tough to cut them; if we don't cut them the sea will inundate all the mountain ranges" (Pardo 1984:214).

The crown of trees is *bakuru boro chimitu* ("tree-head-point"), a kind of "head" through which *chi-me* is streaming. The tree as a transformed expression of hair strengthens this image of the tree with its lofty crown of leaves as a metaphor for the celestial head of cosmic man -- an intriguing comparison in the context of cosmic warfare as I will show below.

The tree as an enemy is evoked in the work on the maize field when the men clean the bush with their machetes, inciting themselves with cries and aggressive exhortations such as: "Hit it in its roots! Hit the man!" For the Emberá, "to charge with the machete" is *nekodeba beratoi*, which, in principle, implies the essential birth (*toi*) of any *berá* matter, be it *betá* fish, *betá* maize or *berá* people.

Slashing the bush with the *neko* machete becomes a martial action with the enemy disguised as *mea* forest. By killing it "at its roots," the same way the *jenené* tree is killed and the same way the partner is scratched at his/her "roots" (the *e-karrá* back) in intercourse, the Emberá fights off his vegetable *jurá* enemy so as to have the *be* fruit regenerate as *bea* matter, the physical manifestation of a process within cosmos.

As will be remembered, the Emberá warrior Guaguirri in 1685 proudly declared his profession to be "to cut the bush to sustain his children and to make war." This is a cogent formulation of Emberá values that equate war with slashing the bush; two expressions of one and the same action: to charge with the machete so as to beget *bera* "children."

Guaguirri's reasoning was founded in a reality which the Emberá shared with their neighbours across the Western Cordillera; Cieza observed that the Pozo Indians, "when they are sowing or working the land, have in one hand the digging stick for cutting the bush and in the other, the lance for fighting" (Cieza 1962:81). An illustrative sign of contextual pugnacity.

We can briefly compare the fate of the sower with that of the peccary killer or the warrior. To cut the bush and to sow maize is expressed as *beui*, a second meaning of which is "to die." He who "dies" is again the sower himself as a direct consequence of his own act of sowing. By cutting the bush and sowing the maize he charges at himself with his *neko* machete. Through the *kabai* work as a "sower," directed by his *drua* chest, he is the anthropomorphized cosmic intention who sacrifices his own "head" in order to regenerate as a "river of maize," *bidó*, as the "peccary head" which every sower carries above, as explained by Emberá myths. As a sower he cuts

(eats) the bush, *mea* ("me matter"), and begets the maize crop, *bea* ("be matter"). Again, we have a manifestation of the principle which maintains that "me inside *ke* turns *be*," i.e. *mea* bush consumed into the *ke* body of the sower reappears as physical *be*, seen either as the maize crop or the "peccary head" of cosmic man in his nature as the processual "maize river." This is the reason why the mythical sower runs away as a peccary at dawn.

Confrontations between humans and trees are also manifested in a more pronounced way as real "arboreal combats" during certain transitional rituals in an individual's lifetime. It is perhaps telling that man challenges his arboreal enemy in crucial moments related to regeneration, such as when the woman has delivered her first child, when the girl first menstruates or when the widow or widower dissolves the marital bond with the deceased spouse. Trees such as *caimito*, *guayacán*, or other hardwood species are scratched with the nails, embraced or "touched" in other significant ways. The widowers finish their mourning and purifying measures with a final bath in the river and on their return to the house "they perform a final ceremony consisting of a 'fight' with the branches of the *guayacán* or the '*rey del guayabo*', the strong branches of which they shake with all their force trying to break them; if they do not manage to do it, it means that the spirit of the deceased will not return for them and their life will be long; if the branches break off easily, it is a sign they will die before the end of a year, demanded by the spouse" (Pineda 1986:115).

In this "combat" with the tree, another case of the fatal *guauí* touch is exhibited. "Branch" is regarded as *bakurujúa*, and when the widower clasps the branch of the tree he seizes the "hand" of his arboreal enemy in a decisive confrontation between opposite *jua* "hands" which is fatal for the widower. The outcome of this trial of strength is again self-inflicted: if cosmic man breaks the branch he "breaks" himself to physical death. In this ritual, the tree is a metaphor for man's own existence as a physical human -- his "female face of above" -- and the combat is the essential fight within the binary structure of cosmic man himself. It is as if he were challenging the hair of his own head.

The trees and the bush also have their ways of attracting cosmic man into "martial confrontation." Their leaves are likened to the perfume of *chitúa* and as such they entice the edge of the opposite *chi*. This attraction is expressed in relation to another image of cosmic hair, the "hair" on the "head" of the Emberá house roof in the form of *kidúa* or *chitúa* leaves. These are the "hooks" of *chi* (*chitúa*) which attract and "neutralize" the opposite *chiá* arrows released by the enemy against the Kuna boy and his Wounaan friend hiding in the house. Next morning the roof of the house is covered with arrows which the Kuna picks up with his hands and shoots back to kill

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all the aggressors. As the *betá* fish is attracted by its opposite *ke*-dressed *be* "face," the angled hook, the *chiákida* arrow of the enemy cannot resist the fatal temptation to bite its opposite *ke*-dressed *be* matter, the *duá* "hook" of *ke*, the *kidúa* leaves; the male *me* contents of the *kidúa* leaves is held in the *chimitu* "point" of the leaf crown of the cosmic house roof.

The uterine character of the foliage of the roof is suggested in the Emberá term for "roofing," *kotroai* (*kitroai*), "to make the *ko* (*ki*) world" (*kotrua* is a synonym for *potopotoa*). As the outside of the roof is known as *de enkhará* ("back"), the piercing of the hostile arrow may be compared to the scratching of the *pichi* nails on the partner's back in sexual intercourse. In both cases cosmic man concentrates his eating to the "roots" of the *e* cover, as does the sower when he attacks the roots of his vegetable enemy.

As we already know, this metaphor of the attraction of fragrant leaves is applicable to man and his fertile hair as well. The arrows from the enemy are blocked by the hair of the Emberá warrior. The hair is the *chi* matter of sharpened *po* which has the *kidá* point necessary for essential *koi*-eating as well. The arrow and the hair of the enemy meet "face to face," or *kirá* to *kirá*, an encounter which makes the eating arrow be eaten. The hair is the sharpened maize essence which bites as hard as any arrow does, because in the end they are one and the same. The warrior stands to his enemy as the arrow stands to its hair. In the end, the arrow united with its hair offers us another version of the true cosmic face: the piercing *kirá* face with streaming "hair."

Cosmic hair could be described in terms of a kind of armour for the warrior in myth, but there is an essential difference: armour is passive while the "hairy" protection of the Emberá in myth works actively by killing the enemy with his own weapon. It seems as if the fighting warriors among the people in the Cauca Valley were led by a similar kind of belief, because Cieza describes how the Quimbaya "from their hair manufacture large bucklers which they carry when they go to war to fight" (Cieza, 1962:88). In his meeting with his adversary in battle, the warrior could use the shield of hair to reinforce the image of the essential arrow which is eaten through its own consumption of the enticing bait of the enemy. His *jua* hair emanates out of the *jua* hand through the metaphor of the clasped buckler.

The main conclusion of my argument is that cosmic hair is able to charge at the enemy in Emberá imagery like any other weapon in war and, as a matter of fact, the Emberá do present us with an image of the lethal nature of "sharpened" *po*. The principle of the arrow transformed into hair or sharpened *po* is demonstrated and objectified by means of a modern artifact in Emberá culture: the home-made muzzle-loader.

The terminology of the constituent parts of the muzzle-loader reflects ideas

which already are familiar to the reader. The muzzle-loader is called *kang* in local Spanish but the Emberá consider it as *pooá*, possibly read as "blood (way-materia) of *po*" while the ammunition is *puruma*, probably a variant of the *po-do* concept for reasons explained below.

This weapon is virtually a technical reproduction of the Emberá cosmos: the butt is divided into three main parts, the centre is *chikuku* (the binary *ku* concept), the front is *chikidatru* (the "world" of the *chikidá* device, corresponding to the *nekodru* handle of the machete or the *dugatru* fishing rod) while the back, which lacks relevance to Emberá cosmology, has only the Spanish term, *chiculata*. The barrel also bears the local Spanish term (*chicalibre*) while the muzzle, seen as the opening of the cosmic womb, is *chikembú*. The trigger is -- as expected -- *chimé*. The *me* male intention of *chi* as the "triggering" device of the Emberá cosmos finds here its most explicit expression.

The ammunition consists of small pieces of lead which, like the *po* flour, are "ground" and molded on the millstone by the hunter. The load consists of, in order, powder, a small piece of bark-cloth, 10-20 pieces of "small shot," closed with another piece of bark-cloth. Thus, the muzzle-loader as a technical model of the binary cosmos charges its own *puru* matter, consisting of *puru-ma* (small shot), *hué-puru* (bark cloth), and *puru-ara* (powder, probably from Spanish *pólvora*), a volley of small shot as an explosive river of *po* "flour."

The association between the "fertilizing" ammunition of the *pooá* muzzle-loader and human birth is suggested when the Emberá father fires a shot from the house into the river upon the delivery of his son. This measure may be compared with the four shots fired by the hunter's father in the peccary war described earlier. A shot fired in war means birth, not death.

When *po* goes the other way - into the nose - it is fatal. In the myth about the shaman's monstrous son, the son cannot be killed with any weapon. The only way of doing away with the monster is to give him *po* through his nose (his "closed" *ku* cosmic "nose" for the myth explains that he does not have any nose at all). He dies by drowning but takes four men with him in his death (Pardo 1984:197-198).

In his war with the sky world, cosmic man releases his arrows against the fertile hair of his celestial enemy, the cloudy sky. The enemy and owner of this cloudy hair is *Baa*, the Thunder Man, who releases his deadly arrows when shot at by the Emberá archers. *Baa* admonishes his human visitor:

"If someone comes to kill me, I kill right away." And he showed him his arrows. "This one is for the spotted cavy, this one for the deer, this one for the guatín, this one for white-lipped peccary and this one for white-collared peccary."

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And he released them against the forest and there they dispersed and killed all these animals (Pardo 1984:87).

*Baa* is a maker of cosmic arrows -- his bolts of lightning -- which are destined to hit and eat their five-course meal of *be* sexual food: *beroana*, *bekí*, *uambé* (*kuriwa*), *bidobe*, and *bidó*, described in the image of five "maize animals" as the essential *be* nature of cosmic man. The human companions of the Emberá who has befriended the thunder cannot resist the temptation of aiming at *Baa* with their arrows, the consequence of which is their instant death, pierced by the flashing arrows of *Baa* who releases them with his hand only. This myth motif presents us with yet another variant of the cosmic prescript which I have described as "the death of the archer."

Challenging the thunder man with weapons was formerly a common practice during thunder storms. Severino de Santa Teresa describes a tradition from among the Emberá Katio about the mythical killing of the *Baa* lightning by piercing his chest with a *miaso* lance: "In memory of this fantastic event the Indians keep in their houses a sacred lance of no particular beauty. As soon as they hear the rumble of thunder, they bring out their lance and place it pointing at the sky on the roof of the house" (1924:53). A Spanish witness in Chocó observed this ritualized behaviour in 1709: "one night, more or less about midnight, a thunder storm with lightning and a hurricane came up, . . . the women were throwing smouldering brands towards the sky . . . and the men were threatening the sky with their arrows, lances and *dardos*" (AHNB:Conventos 39:496v).

The celestial arrows, said to be released by the anthropomorphized *Baa* thunder, are the bolts of lightning which originate from his cosmic "hair," the cloudy sky. The piercing *chiákida* nature of "sharpened" *po* manifested in clouds, suggested in more esoteric terms in other contexts, is here manifested and confirmed in the metaphor of flashing arrows, in a sky war with cosmic man below. In addition, the cloud conceived of as a celestial enemy appears from a synonym to *póra* which the Emberá also consider as *jurara*, their "true *jurá*" enemy.

The impenetrable cloudy firmament above the Chocó riverine landscape is the huge leafy crown of the *Jenené* "tree of life." The crown is the *bakuru boro chimitu*, the "pointed head" which has the overall power to "eat" by piercing its foe, a power transmitted to *kidúa* leaves and *bakurujúa* branches. The giant crown of the *jenené* is a cosmic *kirá* face covered with hair. It is the same *jenené* hair which Karagabí ventures to explore as a biting louse in challenging his female foe, the *jentserá* owner of the tree.

For Karagabí as well as for his multiple representation, cosmic man, the *jenené* crown is hostile territory, the land of the *jurá* enemies of above. In

Emberá myths the *jenené* tree is infested with *jurá* enemies who are identified as dreadful *bibidigomia* or *burumiá* man-eaters and consumers of the male sex. The *burumiá* are said to have lived "in some giant trees called *jenené* (identical to the tree of Gentserá). These trees were four in number" (Betania 1964:55). The cosmological message can hardly be expressed in a more explicit way; the fourfoldness of cosmic man which earlier appeared as four *emberá pichi*, here makes itself felt as the *jenené* tree in its fourfold representation. The four "hostile heads" are physical reflections of an inner condition -- the four "female faces" of the fourfold *jua* intention which makes up the *dru* cosmic mind.

The hostile hair of cosmic man finds a wide range of expressions in Emberá thought, the overall significance of which is encapsulated in the myth about the *jenené* "tree of life." The destiny of the *jenené* "tree" is not an account of genesis, but portrays a prescribed conduct as a reiterated and incessant process necessary for cosmic renewal. The *jenené* tree was not cut in primeval times, it must be cut over and over again. The myth describes the requisite measure of cutting the hostile celestial "head" of cosmic man, the transitory holder of his *me* intention which is bound to be consumed and recovered by its own cosmic progenitor. This progenitor is the *dru* mind, a cosmic law brilliantly formulated in a few but telling words: "the fisherman must give fish . . . ."

The mythical cutting of the *jenené* tree is a reminder to the warrior of his obligation to "seize" the enemy and eventually to take his head by cutting it as the *jenené* tree itself is cut. His taking of the enemy head is but a manifestation of his own fate as physical individual, an image of how his own life will be cut in the end; the self-denial of his own "female" physical appearance and the loss of his "head" to the benefit of his essential "body," the materialization of the *dru* mind.

By aiming at his own hostile hair, metaphorically represented by the leafy house roof, the flashing storm cloud, the *dchi* hair of *po* woman, the hairy shield of his enemy alter ego, or the *burumiá* "head-roamers" of the *jenené* cosmic tree-crown, cosmic man fulfills his obligation to annihilate his hostile physical ego, to "eat his own thing" of his opposite hostile *kirá* "face" in a confrontation between body and head, mind and matter. In this "civil war" of cosmic man, the ultimate end of the complementary opposition of the *dru* cosmos is adroitly expressed in the twofold meaning of *toi*, "to be born through cutting" or, literally, "to make the river run."

So far, the essential meaning of warfare among the Emberá has been considered from the perspective of the Emberá warrior alone. But what does his foe have in mind?

Ethnographic evidence suggests that the overall and ultimate purpose of



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the Emberá warrior is shared by his enemy. From the perspective of cosmic man, the interplay between two enemies in war should be compared to that between man and woman in sexual intercourse. In the same way that the Emberá erase the gender opposition between two cosmic lovers, the opposition between the Emberá warrior and his enemy is eliminated as well. They are no more "enemies" to each other than lovers are "man" and "woman" in Emberá ontology.

In both cases the two are essentially equal magnitudes, roughly described as "*me* inside *ke*," the one distinguished from the other by being the intention ("maleness"/"Emberá *kenaya* ego") which, carried through, brings on its own materialisation ("femaleness"/*jurá* enemy"), the *kirá* facial intention and the opposite *kirá* face. As I have tentatively argued, however, this is a process of illusory twoness which implies essential oneness.

Two enemies meeting in action do share a common purpose: to charge at the opposite *jurá* "fruit" and to eat its enticing "maized" *me* intention back to its essential origin. As enemies they are attracted to the other's fragrant matter which is finally the same, single fruit of cosmos. Both desire to cut the "head" and imbibe the *kirá* face configured by the *jurá* "hostile fruit." As two enemies in war they are the binary co-actors whose *harmonious* interplay demonstrates the *omé* principle of the *dru* mind: the way of the binary *me*.

The Emberá afford a means of demonstrating the *omé* principle in action which is superior to the martial context for explaining the shared purpose of two enemies of enacting the cosmic harmony of complementary opposition.

Ritual *chicha* feasts among the Emberá often include a violent trial of strength which usually is described as "hair wrestling." The combatants, usually pairs of men but sometimes also women, confront each other by clasping the hair of the opponent with both hands. The idea of the fight is to hurl the opponent to the floor and eventually to the ground below the house by pulling him by his hair only.

This kind of "hair wrestling" precisely demonstrates of the *omé* way of the complementary opposition which characterizes the *dru* mind. Through the image of "hair wrestling," the *omé* principle is rendered both as structure and process. In clasping each other's head with both hands, the two opponents merge into a binary structure which is the united cosmic womb of the two-level dichotomy, earlier recognized in the arrangement of cosmic intercourse.

At the moment they seize the opposite head, the fight changes meaning, character and even direction for the wrestlers involved. At that moment, the struggle ceases to be a "horizontal" challenge between two physical individuals and becomes a cosmic confrontation between the binary *ju*

womb of below and its progeny, the binary *jurá* head of above.

Hair wrestling is a ritual identification of the enemy head as cosmic man's own. When cosmic man charges at the enemy he charges at himself as physically created being; the "head" of the enemy is his own "head." This ontological paradox is made real when the combatant seizes the hair of the other's head and feels the pain at the edge of his scalp himself. He suffers the consequences of his own "killing." His intention of pulling the enemy hair is reflected in his enemy's action of doing the same, "his enemy" who is his nothing but the materialisation of his intention of pulling, of eating his own *me*. Again, the "arrow" of cosmic man, aimed at the enemy hair, strikes back to hit his own head.

The outcome of hair wrestling is not considered in terms of winner and loser. Whoever wins this fight, the "loser" is bound to be the *jurá* head, defeated by the double *guauí* seizure when the *jua* hands of the *drua* womb hurl the enemy head to the ground by its hair: the outcome of the fight is as certain as is the inevitable fall of the celestial fruit into its mother womb.

Like two enemies in war, the purpose of the fight is shared by the combatants and complied with through their joint operation of "wrestling," expressed as *chioi*, or the binary accomplishment of "smelling/sowing/making *chi*" (*chi-oi*). This struggle symbolizes the twofold essential eating of essential hair by the fourfold cosmic womb.

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## WHITE BLOOD

The cosmic "face" covered with streaming "hair" is conceptualized as a conical or dome-shaped structure with a pointed apex, which is amply manifested or suggested in the multifarious imagery of Emberá thought. On certain occasions the Emberá make it appear in the material world of humans as well. During the ritual consecration of *chicha* beverage, staged by the *jaibaná* shaman, the cosmic face is fashioned into an object which combines all essential characteristics of its veracious appearance and contextual function.

The preparations needed for the consecration of *chicha* requires the construction and presence of one or a series of conical structures made of bright light green fibre material which hang close to the ceremonial *baraoá* table during the ritual. During such an event which I attended on a small affluent of the middle Atrato river, the local *jaibaná* placed ten of these conical structures in a row from the riverbank up to his house. They were tied to a vine which was fastened to two poles stuck into the ground and to one of the "table legs" of the *baraoá*. Two more poles were stuck into the ground close to the vine but not supporting it. The first "cone" hung from the pole at the water's edge while the last one was tied to the vine close to the *baraoá* construction.

This foliated structure is known as *joropo kirá*, "joropo face." For various reasons I consider it to represent the cosmic face of streaming "hair" described above. In addition to the fact that it is associated with the ritual metamorphosis of *chicha*, its conical shape is similar to that of the house roof, one of many images of the cosmic face. Like the roof, it is circumscribed and shaped by its own "tension ring" which, like the *dejurá* tension ring of the house roof, is made from the *potré* vine.

The *joropo kirá* paraphernalia are an integral part of a ritual context where the *jaibaná* plays the role of cosmic man releasing his magic arrows during the ceremony. These "arrows," or small *measo* spears, are prepared especially for this occasion and are meant to emphasize the ritual aggression of the *jaibaná* in his martial confrontation with himself as essential *emberá* being. Like *baa*, the Thunder Man, the *jaibaná* "releases" his arrows with his

hands only and his target is his celestial face and head, signified by the *joropo kirá* structure: a hairy face shot at with arrows, as myth instructs.

At intervals, the *jaibaná* or his patient dresses in a foliated conical cover which resembles the *joropo kirá*. In his *kai* state, induced by the shaman's spiritual exertion, the wearer acquires the cosmic face of streaming hair which denotes the mythical beings in the true world.

The hair of the cosmic face is a transformed expression of *po* maize flour and the ritual leafy conical "face" of the *jaibaná* seems to be streaming of *po* as well. This essential *po* nature is suggested by its *joropo* and *potré* materials as well as deduced from a comparison with the "hair-like" roof of the Emberá house.

The foliated *joropo* face has a light-green shade which almost looks white in the shadowy moment of true existence. The cosmic face reflects the white tint as the physical manifestation of the "invisible" inherent whiteness which characterizes the "dual river," *dru*, conceived of as *torró*, "white."

The essential whiteness of the cosmic face appears on all levels of representation. The *po* flour is white as is its celestial equivalent, the *porá* cloud. The white "hair" of the *jenené* tree-crown is its *mojou pudá* cotton, the magic transpatial white cotton<sup>19</sup> which makes the *ukida* dart erupt out of the cosmic way of the blowgun or enables Jerupotouarra to fly up in the sky. The cosmic white of the cloudy *jenené* tree is imitated by the Emberá who dress their hair with white flowers and white "feather crowns" of fresh balsa wood or add talcum powder to their hair at ritual events. The officiating *jaibaná* identifies himself with the *joropo kirá* by evoking his fertile *dchi* hair with his strands of white *chiakira* beads, used exclusively for this occasion.

The *buchiá* sloth is a "white" species (*perezoso blanco*; *Bradypus spp*). As a mythical *a* being and the celestial equivalent of the riverine *Antomiá*, the "white" sloth is met with in the elevated tree-crowns and regarded as the mother and sister of *baa*, the thunder, in the mythical world (Pardo 1984:87). The white *buchiá* sloth, having potent *pichi* nails for clinging to the cosmic tree-crown turns into an incontestable image of a celestial "hairy cloud," the genuine progenitor of the arrows of lightning.

Even the roof of the Emberá house has a greyish white shade when observed at a distance, a fact also emphasized by Jerupotouarra's experience in his mythical quest: "there's a house, it was white (like a roof appears when seen from afar)" (Kane 1986:593). The same greyish white shade is carried by cosmic man in an advanced age when he becomes *zroa*, "old man," and ripens to become a true image of *drua*, the materialisation of *dru* cosmos.

*Uera Torro* who manifests herself as the opposite *kirá* face with the male fruit inside is essentially "white," the true whiteness of the "dual river" which

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changes its hue from invisible white to visible dark shades when created into physical matter. The "white" hair of the facial intention becomes the black hair of the "female" face of humans. The *jaibaná* sage still masters the power to meet with his "White Lady" in the realm of the *dru* mind where he assumes his inherent nature as the *me* intention. His meeting with *Uera Torro* is his transspatial flight into himself, the consumption of his celestial *jurá* head by the cosmic womb of the "White Lady" and subsequent reappearance as a physical being as his opposite *kirá* face comes into being and he returns to the world of humans. His white *chiakira* against his black hair is a manifestation of the metamorphosis of the dyed cosmos, where "black" is born "white" only to die "black" anew. These colours provide an image of the reversed conditions in the *dru* mind where the death of physical humans means the birth of cosmic man -- "death" is *beuara*, the "true way of *be*" of the *me* intention when "black" turns "white."

Among some native peoples of the South American continent, hair is seen as a metaphor for menstrual blood. Upon her first menstruation, the hair of a girl of is often cut short as a ritual event in many societies. The Mapuche women used to tie up their hair, which otherwise was left loose, during their menstrual periods (De Laet, quoted by Karsten 1926:50). The Barasana of the northwestern Amazon also associate hair with symbolical menstruation (Hugh-Jones 1979:204-205).

It is tempting to search for a similar associative context in Emberá thought. The Emberá claim one should not throw ordinary cut hair into the fire "because the soul falls ill and bleeds by its hair" (Pinto 1978:310). If *pudá* hair "bleeds" then its mother concept, the *po* flour, seems to "menstruate;" this is at least suggested by an expression which occurs in the myth about the mythic voyage to *dokarrá*. The mythic travellers need to prepare new *po* provisions to be able to continue their expedition to the world beyond. They manage to get their *po* flour because "the women were in the condition to do it," suggesting that the preparation depends on a particular "condition" of the women which I assume refers to their having their period, "menstruating" *po* maize flour. This is perhaps the same "menstrual blood" which Jerupotouarra desires in myth; in that case, his desire is less strange if his thirst for "menstrual blood" is just the proper way of describing the essential consequences of imbibing the *po* flour beverage: the vital matter needed for cosmic conception through *toi* drinking.

Another connection between maize and menstrual blood is suggested by some comments on the Jerupotouarra myth which were given to me by an informant in 1993. He explained that Jerupotouarra drank the menstrual blood from a wooden receptacle called *batía* which the women used for depositing their blood. The same kind of receptacle actually is used in the

preparation of *chicha*; the women strain the liquid into the *batía* which bears the unmistakable features of a small canoe. Thus, when Jerupotouarra drinks menstrual blood from the *batía* receptacle, he demonstrates what happens when humans drink *chicha* prepared in the uterine canoe. By drinking (*toi*) "menstrual blood," humans intoxicate themselves which means that they die ("inebriated" is *biubú*, "where death is") to be reborn (*toi*) into their *drua* chest. This transformation from death to birth is described in the way Jerupotouarra is abducted into the river world each time he has drunk "menstrual blood."

A connection between *po* flour and menstrual blood can be deduced from the belief that rain originates from the menstrual blood washed off the sun by the moon (Pinto 1978:219), the same rain which also derives its origin from the storm cloud of *po* woman.

The question is how red menstrual blood becomes "white" *po* maize flour. If we tentatively search for an etymology for the Emberá term for "red," a contradiction seems to be accentuated. "Red" is *chipurrú* which, in the name of consistency, should be interpreted as *chi-po-do*, the same "*po* river" which I earlier assumed is "white." The cosmological chart of the human body suggests a way out of this contradiction.

The cosmic way, *o*, is the "double" river of invisible whiteness. On the *drua* body of man which is the materialization of the principles which reign in the *dru* mind, the cosmic way is manifested as *oa*, "*o* matter," the term for "blood" running through the veins which are *kíu*, "the way of the *ke* vagina." Thus, the blood represents the pulsing binary "way" of veins and arteries which runs counterwise to itself, the dual *kíu* way of blood circulation.

The dual nature of this image explains why *potopotoa* denotes both "lungs" and "heart." *Potopotoa* represents the metamorphic power of the binary *dru* mind which fluctuates between "red blood" and "white blood:" blood transformed into the essence of vital blowing, which is actually expressed as *poi* ("to do *po*"). By this, *chipurrú* "red" is the "river" of magic *po* which runs its metamorphic course through the *potopotoa* pulmonary world to change from "red" to "white," from *purú* red blood to *torró* "white" breath. A synonym to *poi* as "blowing" is *sirui*, "to make the *chi* river run" (*chirú* concept) which confirms the inherent meaning of *poi* as conveying *chi* essence held in *po* "flour" and all its metamorphic disguises.

*Purú* "red" is the "matter" of the *torró* principle as much as the *burú* head is the materialisation of the *dru* "white" mind. In Emberá thought, the concept of "red" is "white" made matter; these are two reversing chromatic manifestations of the versatile *chi* vital essence of cosmic man which turns hair into menstrual blood of invisible white, the vital nutriment which cosmic man as a "victor" in war imbibes when he cuts his celestial hair as a

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sign of his physical death and essential rebirth into the true way of *be*.

The same measure is taken by the widow or widower. The loss of the spouse signifies a state of cosmic "pregnancy" which the widow(er) manifests by cutting her or his hair, the meaning of which is the loss of her or his own head. The deceased *kimakai* spouse is seen as the opposite *kirá* face of the cosmic union. The death of the spouse leaves the cosmic womb "cut in half," a decisive change in a cosmic condition which manifests itself in the open and vulnerable body of the survivor who is left with a shattered *drua* bodily cosmos which needs to be "hardened" through the ritual preventive measures by the shaman. The fulfillment of these practices secures the same process which is conceived of as the "rebirth" of the spouse as cosmic man and his return to the physical world of humans. Like the warrior, he has regained his "head" -- his physical identity -- and is prepared for a new encounter with his *jurá* ego by establishing yet another marital union.

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## SUN AND MOON: ON INCEST, ADULTERY, AND NOCTURNAL DAYS

The *jurá* enemy is the opposite *be kirá* face, the illusion of the "female" physical aspect of cosmic man. The coming into being of the opposite hostile ego of cosmic man signifies the abduction and metamorphosis of Karagabí, the creator who also creates himself as god imprisoned in his "female" flesh as *jurá* enemy, the consequence of his own divine intention made matter.

Cosmic intercourse as directed by *uera torro* brings about the formation of the *kirá* face and the *jurá* enemy. The act of war displays the *kenaya* interaction which completes the divine commandment of biting the opposite fruit back to its essential origin. The martial operation of cosmic man is a war between mind and matter which is reflected on any level of human consciousness. Man the warrior is a metaphor for the complementary opposition of river and sky, earth and heaven. But how is the operation of man the warrior related to the parameters of time and space? At what time is the *jurá* enemy eaten?

Warfare among the Emberá as well as among their native neighbours was usually a nocturnal enterprise. Trimborn has mapped several documented cases of native peoples in the Cauca Valley who used to carry out their attacks by night or at dawn (Trimborn 1949:352-353). The Emberá interpreted courage in war differently from the Spanish who commented with contempt that the Indians "carry out these braveries treacherously against the poor people who they find asleep" (Pacheco 1962:501). The most sanguinary event during the uprising in 1684 took place when the Emberá attacked the village of Niguá just before sunrise on the 15th of January and killed all the Spaniards while they were asleep in their beds. This was followed by another assault at dawn on the village of Nauritá which, however, failed (AGI:SF 204(6):813v,815v). The Emberá had to suffer the consequences of nocturnal warfare themselves; in 1640 their enemies, the Burumiá, assaulted the community of the Porre River on the eastern shore of the Atrato "by night so as not to be noticed and they killed most of the people who lived there and they also burnt all their houses down" (AGI:SF



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196:303r).

Mythical warfare also takes place by night, the moment of true existence when cosmic man befalls his physical *jurá* ego of above. The ideal moment of performing the *kenaya* operation is at dawn, just before sunrise when darkness yields to light. At this very instant, the warrior picks the *jurá* fruit to regain his own essence, extracting *me* out of its *be* shell. Through this act, cosmic man is the divine liberator of his godly essence, bringing back Karagabí, the creator of the human world, to its origin in the cosmic womb of divine man the warrior.

The *kenaya* operation is the essential eating of the divine fruit and the fecundation of the cosmic womb. In the cosmic mind of *dru*, conception is instant: "women give birth as soon as they are pregnant". Thus, the fecundation of the cosmic womb implies the instant conception of the *jurá* enemy anew. The cosmic testimony of this event, staged by man the warrior, is the rising sun at dawn, following upon the eating of the *jurá* fruit. The *kenaya* killing of the *jurá* is the coming into being of the *jurá* anew, as the eating of the *kirá* face is the reformation of the same *kirá* face. This cosmic *kirá* face is the rising sun and the formation of light: the creation of the day. The diurnal sky is the celestial image of the cosmic *kirá* face where the opposite fruit -- the *kira-me* tongue of the *kirá* face -- manifests itself as the bright yellow sun shielded by its cosmic cloudy hair. The sun is the "yellow" intention of *me*, emitting its *pichia* light as the transformation of *me* into *be* (*pichi* essence), the male intention encased by its "female" diurnal face. The liberation of the divine intention -- the eating of the *jurá* enemy -- has thus become another loss and abduction of god into the formation of the "face of the diurnal sky" as the constantly returning hostile *jurá* enemy: the distant god.

Emberá ontology as formulated through the principle of the *kenaya* event establishes that the destruction of *jurá* is the rebirth of *jurá*. If the purport of this conclusion is to be understood and accepted, we must identify the essential nature of the *kenaya* act as *process*, defined in "time," and relate it to the dichotomic distinction between "day" and "night" in Emberá thought.

In the cosmic mind of *dru*, concretized into the *drua* world and its *chiaberara* beings which provide a metaphor for the essential nature of the *emberá*, time is said to be the reverse of time in the human world. The day of humans is the night of *drua* (Kane 1986:593). Thus, an event which takes place at sunrise in our world would occur at "sunset" in the true world. Reformulated in the context of cosmic warfare, the act of eating the *jurá* enemy is the "setting" of the essential solar fruit into the cosmic womb, which corresponds to the sunrise in our world and the creation of the "day" and the divine *pichia* light of Karagabí.

The conclusion that "our" day is "their" night while "our" night is "their" day, however, is wrongly formulated; "day" and "night" are not separate phenomena. The notion of our night as the day of *drua* signifies that our night is the moment of true existence because *drua* is not separate from our own world; *drua* is a figurative way of describing the veracious nature of our own world. *Drua* is here and now, the veracious conception of our own existence and creation.

The day, as the matter of "night," stands to the night as the opposite *kirá* face stands to its facial intention. The "day" is essentially a "night" as "femaleness" is essentially "maleness" or as *jurá* is essentially *ju*. "Day" does not "exist," nor "femaleness" (physical appearance), nor the physical *jurá* enemy. They are "nocturnal" and therefore non-existent phenomena, only to be regarded as physical and dead "faecal" illusions to make us understand the true conditions of existence: *drua* as the transcript of *dru*, the dual river.

As physical humans we are the "offspring of daylight," incarnations of the dual cosmos of sky and river world, created through the creation of Karagabí, the lord of light. The dual cosmos is an illusion as is the female *kirá* face which constructs its male partner below: the *drua* body. Cosmos is not structured into earth *and* sky as little as cosmic man is made up of man *and* woman, nor is cosmic time made up of day *and* night.

The spatial dimension of the true world is also said to be the inverse of that of our physical existence; thus, the subterranean river "descends" to its headwaters as the way of the *ochirú* throat in the *drua* chest of man. As a consequence, the night which is the "day" of the true world, i.e., the moment of true existence, is "below" us but only when we visit that world as true being in our dreams or in any other *kai* state. In our dreamwalk we truly descend into the cosmic river. Our descent is described in myth as well as through the symbolic manual of the *drua* chest.

If we are awake after dark we are able to observe the nocturnal sky with our eyes. However, the true world can only be experienced by "introspective observation," as shown by the closed eye of the *jua* hand or through the *jaibaná* experience. When awake we act as physical humans, begotten by the light of day, who look at the nocturnal sky as we look at the sky in daytime. The nocturnal firmament offers us a graphic image of the true world but the perspective is wrong; we look at the true world upside down. Only by introspective observation are we able to experience it correctly. Nighttime and "extrospective" observation are two contradictory concepts which, if brought together, transmit false and misleading signals of existential principles.

For the same reason, the Emberá hunter fears to stay in the forest after dark. If the night sky is an image of the true world, then the physical dark

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world outside the house is a cosmic "non-space" which is unfeasible for humans by night, a dangerous abode meant only for demons and evil forces.

The day is shaped by the presence of the solar light while the nocturnal light originates from the moon. The sun and the moon constitute a controversial and seemingly contradictory constellation in Emberá mythology which offers a distracting array of interrelated metamorphic images. The moon is sometimes said to be a man, sometimes a woman. Karagabí is generally associated with the sun but also with the moon. The sun and the moon appear as husband and wife in an incestuous relationship between a brother (the sun) and his sister (the moon). Sometimes they are instead imagined as two brothers, one of whom commits adultery with the wife of the other.

The conclusion that "these variants are not consistent with each other" (Pardo, 1987a:82) is rash and inaccurate in consideration of what has been argued above. As a matter of fact, the "contradictory" context given by the sun and moon relationship is a logical consequence of cosmological principles in Emberá thought.

It is futile to attempt to unravel these "inconsistent variants" one by one; as always, all contextual information needed is kept in the concise cosmological discourse of Emberá myth. The supposedly incestuous relationship between the celestial siblings of the sun and his sister, the moon, recurs in various parts of the South American continent. Below is a variant of the Emberá version, as told by Floresmiro Dogirama:

They say it was like this. That Carabí lived in only one house, there together with the other persons. Then, but there was no one, no young people, only he and his sister and the old ones. And there were no more people in those times. Only one single house. And then they say at night he used to dress himself with chaquiras beads, with all the attire that he used, *amburá* [girdle of beads], *cruzadilla* [Spanish for thick strands of beads crossed over the chest], *bajapelo* [Spanish for diadem], *manillas* [Spanish for bracelet], everything. Then, when the old ones were sleeping, he used to go to the bed of his sister. Well, the first night he went there, the woman asked, "Who are you?"

"I am from said place, I am not near from here."

Well, now the woman wanted and, well, so, "If you are going to take me, that's all right, I will let you come."

"Why not, I'll get you, I'll announce it."

"That's fine."

So they stayed living together, well, it turned out like this, always, every night he went there, sometimes he did not go, other nights he did go. And like this it would have remained, until the woman became pregnant. Then she felt that she had a child inside. So she said, "Well, why don't you come out by day so we can marry."

"No, later."

He always said like this. So, one night, when the night was coming, they say she picked a jagua fruit and she grated it and put it there because that fruit turns black. Well, then she kept it there close to herself. Then, when it was getting dark, when he came, always when he came she let him come. But then, he began to eat the woman and when he was about doing that . . . and . . . she grasped the jagua very gently and at once she anointed his face with the sap from that jagua fruit and he went away after a while, when he went away, he disappeared and never returned again.

Well, the following day, at daybreak, her brother did not wake up in his bed and then she knew that it was her brother. By then she was already pregnant and ready to give birth. And as he was not there any longer, he left, he ran away, the woman thought . . . (Pardo 1984:35-37).

In this text which I will refer to as "myth A," Karagabí is said to live in a house with his sister and the "old people," the only house and the only people in the universe. This is the image of the house as cosmos, inhabited by the binary *zroa (drua)* "old couple," and the divine sun and his sister. When the *zroa* couple is "sleeping," i.e. when the *drua* physical world enters into the *kai* state of metamorphosis which occurs during the night, Karagabí and his sister wake up to a new "day" to resume their cosmic intercourse.

The sister does not recognize her "brother" in the dark (despite the fact that there is nobody else available). After a while she becomes pregnant and she asks her nocturnal lover to present himself by day so that they can marry. To find out who he is she paints his face with *kipará* paint. Next day she discovers that her brother has disappeared and she realizes he has been her lover and is the father of her offspring.

The message of the myth is disclosed in the sequence of the events: 1) the woman accepts the proposal from her unknown lover to establish their union, 2) she becomes pregnant, 3) she asks him to "come out," 4) she paints his face with black *kipará*, 5) next morning she rises only to find that her anonymous lover has disappeared, 6) she learns the identity of her nocturnal visitor, 7) she is about to deliver her child (actually two children whom she by then has already delivered).

The myth is an allegorical sequence of words and sentences. In his role as the anonymous lover, Karagabí is the *me* intention which penetrates its "sister," the dark "hole" which is the globular structure of the nightly vault. In the reverse position of diurnal existence, the same event is portrayed in the solar disguise of Karagabí, the ripe sun which sets in the dark uterine vault of his "sister," represented by the cosmic riverine opening of the earthly shell at dusk. The woman sees him as *kai*, asking "who" he is in his metamorphic disguise as solar essence. He confirms that he comes from afar.

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Receiving his male presence inside her uterine body every "night," Karagabí's sister becomes pregnant. The essence of Karagabí is the yellow foetal fruit which is observed to grow little by little in her nocturnal womb as the "moon." The Emberá interpret the moon as *jedeko*, "the fruit of the uterine house," the foetal nocturnal sun which we recognize as the moon. Thus, the setting sun of diurnal illusory existence turns into the growing foetal moon of nocturnal essential being.

When the moment to conceive the solar fruit has arrived, Karagabí's sister asks him to "come out." The conceiving act of creation is displayed in her measure of painting his "face" with the metamorphic dye of *kipará*, which she applies in its "white," transparent condition, slowly turning to bluish black concurrently with the transformative process of physical creation: the begetting of her solar offspring at dawn, Karagabí as "sun." The essential "white" of *Uera Torró*, the "White Lady" materializes into ephemeral "black" as a chromatic metaphor for the creation of the *drua* world. The celestial vault of the dark night demonstrates this "invisible" whiteness as "visible" blackness when observed by diurnal humans before turning to sleep to experience the inner whiteness of the true "day" of the *dru* mind.

The myth explains that Karagabí has disappeared upon his sister's application of the *kipará* paint and yet, next morning "she knew it was her brother." How can she identify him if he has vanished without letting her see his blackened face? The answer is found within herself because the face she painted by night has now become the face of her own physical apparition. Karagabí's sister paints (*paai*) herself into creation through which "his" face becomes "her" face in the very same way as the facial intention turns into its own opposite "female" face through the exhortation formulated by *Uera Torró*. What the White Lady formulates in words, Karagabí's sister executes by her metamorphosing "painting" with her *jua* hand, the processual tool of the *ju* womb which engenders the male fruit in her physical facial disguise, her own painted face. By this cosmic intercourse, the "moon" reappears as the "sun" and the nocturnal facial intention becomes the diurnal face which is the firmament above the earthly shell, illuminated into creation by the *pichia* solar energy of the "male" sun, the abducted and raging *jurá* god.

It is now becoming clear that the identification of gender does not serve any purpose in the context of this myth. It cannot be established that the moon is either male or female, nor can it be argued that the sun is a brother of his sister, the moon. The relationship between the sun and the moon is not based on the sexual dichotomy of "man" and "woman." Sun and moon are but two different representations of one unique and shared phenomenon: the ripe *me* male fruit, or the "true *ko* of *chi*" which manifests itself as *chi-ko-ará*, "yellow," as the golden *ne* of the *me* intention.

The female/male opposition is here expressed in terms of a "sibling" relationship, as two opposing aspects of a common whole. However, this "sibling" relationship between the sun and the moon is of another order. The sun and the moon are two parallel binary structures of a "brother within a sister." It is the "sister" of the nocturnal sky who devours or shelters her "brother" of the yellow intention, the vital essence of the penetrating and consumed sun: the eater as eaten. The creation of daylight renders the same process possible in the bright sun encased in the firmament of the diurnal vault, a "visible" representation of "brother sun" devoured by "sister day." Thus, what we erroneously interpret as a brotherly sun in contrast to a sisterly moon, is actually a structure in accordance with the *omé* principle: a nocturnal "sister" devouring and covering her "brother," conceived of as the facial intention, is in contrast to a physical diurnal "sister" devouring and covering her "brother," conceived of as the opposite physical face, the mirror image of its own intention. As in the case of *Uera Torró*, cosmic man looks into his own "female" face, not into another face of a "woman." The bright sun in the sky is not another sun different from the moon, it is the "female" face of the lunar facial design, the consequence of its own creative process of "painting" its *dru* mind into *drua* matter.

The alleged incestuous relationship between two siblings described as the sun and the moon is founded in the idea of a cosmic fusion between a "female" process and a "male" purpose which results in its own objectification. Thus, the male design of "entering" creates its own "female" materialization as the very shell which covers its own essential "male" ego. This same intention of penetrating allows the penetration to be effected by creating that which can be penetrated; the intention of entering the "hole," defines and delimits the hole into the walled cosmic womb which holds its own creative design fettered inside as its "yellow" intention, *chikoará*, as the "true *ko*" of the *ko (ju)* womb.

The true nature of Karagabí as sun is the "hidden" theme of another myth which I will refer to as myth B, usually interpreted as a narrative of Karagabí's unfaithful wife. Let us compare the text of two versions, the first one of which was told by Sélimo Huacoriso to Erland Nordenskiöld in 1927:

The sun and the moon both lived in this world. The moon had a woman and she had a daughter. The moon had his body covered with boils and his wife was tired of washing them as they did not want to heal. When the daughter was grown-up, her mother went off to harvest plantains and she told her to stay at home to take care of her stepfather (*chésakauí*). The moon removed his shirt and said to his stepdaughter, "Hurry up and put it onto the sun."

Then as soon as she had removed it [the shirt], all his boils disappeared as they

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stayed onto the shirt. When her mother returned, the moon said to his stepdaughter, "Look for my shirt, my little daughter."

He put it on again. Then the woman said, "I am tired of curing this man."

Her daughter answered, "Mum, my father keeps all his boils in his shirt."

Her mother could not believe her.

The people were drinking *guarapo* [Spanish for sugar-cane wine] in the other house, and the moon told his wife that if she wished to drink wine she could very well leave, but he intended to stay at home. When the woman returned from the feast, she had scratches on her belly, because she had been with another man. The moon did not say anything to her. The woman went off to drink once again. This time the man said to himself, "Now I will really find out."

He looked for his attire, his bracelet, his earrings (*parataquéra*), his nose ornament and his *chaquiras*. He left his shirt, and the girl stayed at home keeping a watch so that worms would not get into it. It was already dark. The drunk women were sleeping. The moon seemed to be another man, and his wife scratched him on his belly. At nine o'clock the following day, the moon was back home, and he had put his shirt on once again. The woman had been with other men, and he said nothing. Once again they prepared *guarapo*, and the moon said to his wife, "Go and drink, I will stay home."

The woman left to drink. Round about seven o'clock in the afternoon, the moon arrived at the place where they were drinking. She was well dressed, and as he saw her, his wife scratched his belly to show him how much she liked him. The moon said to her, "So you were with other men then."

He knocked her over, he put his foot in her mouth, slitting her to her ears. Then he said to her, "When I come out again, you will cry for me."

The woman changed into *baracóco* (owl). When the moon appears close to her there is a star, this is his stepdaughter *Mikaukau* (Wassén, 1933:110-111).

Floresmiro Dogirama provides another version of Myth B.

Carabí made his house, he lived there. He made a brother and then he made a woman so that they would keep him company. Further up there were other people in a house. Then he got ill and got a boil and he also resulted with a "*cocó*"<sup>20</sup> which was cutting up his fingers. He also caught "*lazarino*" and "*tiña*". And he caught leprosy; he was covered with pimples and he was already stinking. Then the woman did not like him any longer because he was ugly.

He was bringing up a little girl and there was not anyone who could make the plantain. The woman was always drinking in the feasts and she was lying with his brother. The little girl began to roast black plantain. He ordered her to roast with the peel and in an instant it was ready. There the woman arrived from the drinking-bout with her belly scratched all over and he said nothing to her.

"How did you get on?"

"Fine, I was only drinking."

"Was the drink good?"

"Yes."

One day she told him, "I will go to the drinking-bout."

"You can go because how could I go when I am ill like this."

He got alone and he removed like a shirt with all those pimples, and he got clean. That day his brother did not go to the feast because he already knew. Carabí dressed up with his chaquiras and he left for the drinking-bout. When he arrived she was already there. She thought that it was his brother and she came near him and he said to her, "Control yourself because my brother will get angry."

"Ha, that disgusting one, how could he possibly notice."

And they went down from the house and there he was with her. At dawn he went home and he put on his shirt and became disgusting once again. When the day was breaking, she was coming and she had already bathed. She gave him food to eat but he did not accept it. She had a piece of cloth on her belly because he had scratched her. She said, "Man, why are you angry?"

"Haven't you been living with my brother then?"

"Man, I have not, that's nonsense!"

"And this?"

And he uncovered her scratched belly. Then he ripped her mouth and made her into the moon bird which they also call "she who delivers standing" ["*sacaparado*"]. That bird suffers when she broods, it delivers its child standing and is always looking at the sun or the moon (Pardo 1984:29-33).

Limiting the analysis of this myth to the identification of the concepts of "sun" and "moon," a comparison of the texts suggests that the sun and the moon are considered "brothers." The unknown lover of the woman in one version is said to be Karagabí's brother in the other but, whoever he may be, the woman does not actually not commit adultery with another man. When Karagabí removes his shirt at dusk he is the setting sun which liberates itself of its diurnal "ulcerous" aspect to take on the essential nature of his "brotherly" self, reappearing as "brother moon." The "wife" of Karagabí, the ulcerous sun, does not commit adultery with Karagabí's brother but with Karagabí the moon. At dawn "brother moon" puts on his shirt again to rise as the offended "brother sun," he who really knows what is going on for he is "brother moon" himself. The essential "lunar" nature hidden behind the solar mask of Karagabí is explained in the introductory sentence in Nordenskiöld's version, "The sun and the moon both lived in this world."

When Karagabí removes his ulcerous shirt so as to visit and make love to his ignorant wife by night "in the other house" (in the *dru* cosmos) he is the very same nocturnal Karagabí who passes to the bed of his ignorant "sister" to commit his "incestuous sin" in Myth A. When his "sister" paints "his" face, his "wife" scratches his face or body for the same reason: to make "his"



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face "her" face.

In a third version of the Myth B, not recounted here, it is not the scratched belly of her husband that reveals the crime of the woman but her own scratched face (Santa Teresa 1924:22; Betania 1964:15-16). In Myth A, the acquired black face of the "sister" corresponds to the scratched face of the "wife" in the third version of Myth B; both are images for the rising sun and the formation of the day. Comparing the variants of Myth B, his scratched belly stands to her scratched face in the same way as the intention of scratching the "male" belly stands to the materialization of the same intention: his "female" face. The scratching of the moon ("his" belly) becomes the scratched sun ("her" face).

Karagabí's removal of the shirt from his body may be equated with his wife's decision to leave for the other house to meet his "brother." Inversely, the woman's scratching of her lover's face corresponds to Karagabí's decision to put on his ulcerous shirt again because his "ulcerous shirt" is a metaphor for the ephemeral "female" face which is created and rises as the sun in the diurnal sky. Thus, the acts of "removing" and "putting on" the shirt constitute a process which is anthropomorphized into a "woman," either a "sister" or a "wife." The ulcerous shirt is at the same time the "female face" of this "anthropomorphized process," the consequence of its committed "adultery" or "incest" to paint a face which is her own. Thus, Karagabí is both male and female, "he" *intends* but he does not implement his intention, "she" does.

"Adultery" and "incest" are but two different ways of describing the same paradox of the "heterosexual" and yet internal fraternization of binary cosmic man. In the first case, the transition from mind to matter is described as a "sister" touching (painting) the face of her brother which makes it her own face sheltering her brotherly essence inside. In the second case, the same process is rendered in the "wife" touching (scratching) the belly of her essential "husband" which makes him reappear in his ulcerous disguise (= his wife) as her husband, the diurnal sun.

Both myths emphasize the fact that the pristine intention of creation is male. Karagabí as "brother" seeks out the bed of his "sister" while she ignores the identity of her lover. In his role as solar "husband," Karagabí, both sun and moon, detects the deed of his unfaithful wife who does not recognize the true appearance of her husband nor understand how he can know. In both cases, "he" *knows* while "she" *ignores* what she is *carrying out*; *intention* is "male" while the *processing* of the intention is "female."

Karagabí is said to have withdrawn to the sky, taking the sister of his unfaithful wife with him as his new companion. But their relationship is platonic, they live together "as brother and sister," because Karagabí's wife is

only his "cook" (Santa Teresa 1924:22). This cosmic "housewife" is the same anthropomorphized process that makes her "husband" penetrate her hollow interior so as to create their united structure of male inside female, mind within matter. Karagabí as "mind" is unable to manifest himself in flesh alone, he needs his conjugal cook to process his essence into physical mind. His sister wife, on the other hand, is but an empty dark "hole," a process which cannot materialise itself without the assistance of the triggering device of *me*, the male intention. The mythical unfaithful wife of Karagabí who was left behind, transformed into a night-owl, represents the ephemeral physical appearance of anything created while her essential sister is the white "processual principle" which is described as *Uera Torró*, the White Lady. Karagabí's conjugal cook of human life and cosmic regeneration is the cosmological principle which lies behind the rich metaphorical complex of food preparation as exposed in Emberá thought and practice.

# 53

## FATAL FRAGRANCE: THE SWEET FRUIT OF WAR

The rising sun and the making of daylight is the celestial image of the regenerated *kirá* face, created from the penetration of the lunar intention into the nocturnal black hole of the "white lady," the anthropomorphized invisible white essence of visible black. Accordingly, the sun rises as a consequence of the killing of the *jurá* enemy at dawn. The death of the enemy is the eating of the materialised *be* fruit of the *me* intention which makes the *jurá* return. This return is signalled by the breaking of a new day with the captured sun appearing in the "oral" opening of the heavenly womb.

The rising sun, delivered as the yellow offspring out of its intentional womb of night, is the visible manifestation of the fulfillment of the cosmic intention, of *me* entering *ke*. By noon it has reached its highest point from which it descends anew to enter its mother womb of below. Like a ripe *caimito* fruit, the yellow maize sun falls or is intentionally thrown down (*bai*) to be consumed anew by the cosmic vagina. The entering of the sun into the river is another killing, or is it a repetition of what takes place in the morning?

If read properly, Emberá cosmological principles state that the rising sun does not follow upon the killing of the enemy. Instead, the eating of *jurá* is the rising sun. The sunrise demonstrates the act of penetration, the moment when *me* enters *ke*, when the cutting edge of the essential *me* instrument of the cosmic warrior enters into the "flesh" of its opposite *jurá* fruit to "eat" its *chi* metaphysical matter, *be* or its own "maized" intention. The sun is the "yellow" *chikoará* male intention of *me*, the penetration of which shapes the structure and boundaries of the face which keeps it inside: the face of its reflected brightness, the face of the "day." "Sunrise" thus renders the physical movement of "going out," a directional process which truly is the essential movement of "going in," of intentional *me* entering *ke*. Thus, "that which goes out, goes in" in the same way as "that which eats, is eaten." Sunrise is not an event separate from sunset, "sunrise" is "sunset," as an alternative way of interpreting that which is described as "sunset."

"Sunset as sunrise" signifies that the eating sun equals the sun which is being eaten. As "sunrise," this event is interpreted as a process demonstrating how the *me* male intention enters into the "hole" of his female processor to create his own shell, the bright day. The visible event of "sunset" makes explicit the same event, but reversed, by demonstrating how the same eating *me* is eaten into its cosmic womb: the sun sets into the cosmic riverine opening. Thus, the rising sun manifests "that which eats . . ." while the consecutive reverse direction of the same sun while setting, manifests ". . . is eaten." In this way, "sunrise" becomes the complementary opposition of "sunset," and the position of the sun at its zenith at noon is the turning-point where the consuming *me* starts to be consumed. The rising consuming sun, as a consequence of its own act, turns into the setting consumed sun.

The setting of the sun is the crucial moment when it "gets dark," *kiui*, when the solar fruit "goes *ke*" to "sow" or "manufacture" its *ke* vagina, visualized as "sunrise." This moment repeats the process of cosmic man the warrior when he eats his hostile *jurá* "face" and hereby is eaten "into himself" to become "rich with *ke*" in his cosmic womb as black as the uterine nightly vault.

Consequently, the setting sun is analogous to the sun which rises in the morning. Sunrise and sunset become inverse perspectives of each other's common fate: to be consumed while consuming. The sunrise is a manifestation of that which follows upon our sunset while the sunset makes explicit that which precedes our sunrise, but this is a causal connection out of time and out of space because these two events are but one synchronic event. Sunset corresponds to the male intention to "enter" while sunrise is the female process of "coming out."

"The sunset of sunrise" is described in the binary meaning of the *toya* concept. The sunset manifests the principle of "entering," it is the physical manifestation of an essential event described as an act of "eating," described in the *toya* act as the "cutting of the head," executed by the instrumental hands of the cosmic womb, which leads to essential birth into the *dru* cosmic mind and nocturnal existence.

The sunrise manifests the principle of "coming out" in the physical consequence of an essential event -- *toya* as "to be born" out of the river -- as a consequence of the same *toya* cutting of the head. Two kinds of *toya* are but one: the coming out of the entering as the sunrise of sunset, or the birth of death.

Birth through death is the conviction which guided the behaviour and zeal of the warrior in the cosmic war. For the Emberá death is *beuará*, the "true way of *be*," the maintenance of essential existence through the act of eating

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by cutting. Death involves the sacrifice of ephemeral *be* matter to recuperate the pristine *me* essence into a renewal of the cosmic command of perpetual eating. "Death" is but another way of pronouncing "birth" and the creation of the *kirá* face: life on earth. Through "death" the Emberá learn the principle of making *me* enter *Uera Torro*, where "death" indeed becomes the "true way of *be*." Through death, *Uera Torro's* commandment is obeyed, accomplished through either killing or being killed.

The Emberá warrior did not shun death. He sought it as eagerly as he struck at his enemy, and for the same purpose: to follow the true way of *be*. Wishing for the cutting edge to be pierced to life through death. To be eaten so as to be able to eat. This desire is an echo of a conviction which permeates Aztec poetry of cosmic wars and fragrant flowers (Leon-Portilla 1969:88):

"In the midst of the plain  
my heart craves death  
by the obsidian edge.  
Only this my heart craves:  
death in war."

War is an abstraction which the Emberá turn into a tangible object with a highly abstract contextual content. This abstract object is the anthropomorphization of war as "enemy." The term for war enters into a conceptual compound which runs all through my text. "War" is *jum*, a variant pronunciation of the *ku* concept which refers to anything which is able to smell and/or to emit smell. Thus, war is anything which can accomplish essential eating or be eaten through "smelling." Throughout this book I have presented and briefly touched upon a variety of situations related to the *kum* nose, the olfactory eating of the *ku* (*ju*) breast and the *ju-a* hand, the fragrance of the *jo* fruit, the smellable *ko* matter of *chi*, etc.

The enemy of the cosmic war is the "contradictory" construction of a fragrant phenomenon with fatal olfactory capacity; he is the fragrant flower and fruit which is picked by himself as an anthropomorphized bee, butterfly or hummingbird. He is the fragrant *kirá* "face" which is nothing but fragrance, *kerá*.

As *jurá*, the enemy is not only the begotten seed of its cosmic *ju* mother womb, he is also a son of war, *jurá* of *jum*. For the Emberá, the enemy is regarded as war itself, that which makes the crucial cosmic process of war possible: "there the war is coming" and "the war did not notice" are other ways for the myth-teller to describe the essential role of the enemy. As the *drua* human body is a complicated technical construction of cosmic principles made matter, the enemy in his behaviour and role performance as

a "warrior" holds and plays out the very essence of war; he is the essence of a "male war"(*jum*) objectified into a physical appearance of a "female" warrior (*jurá*).

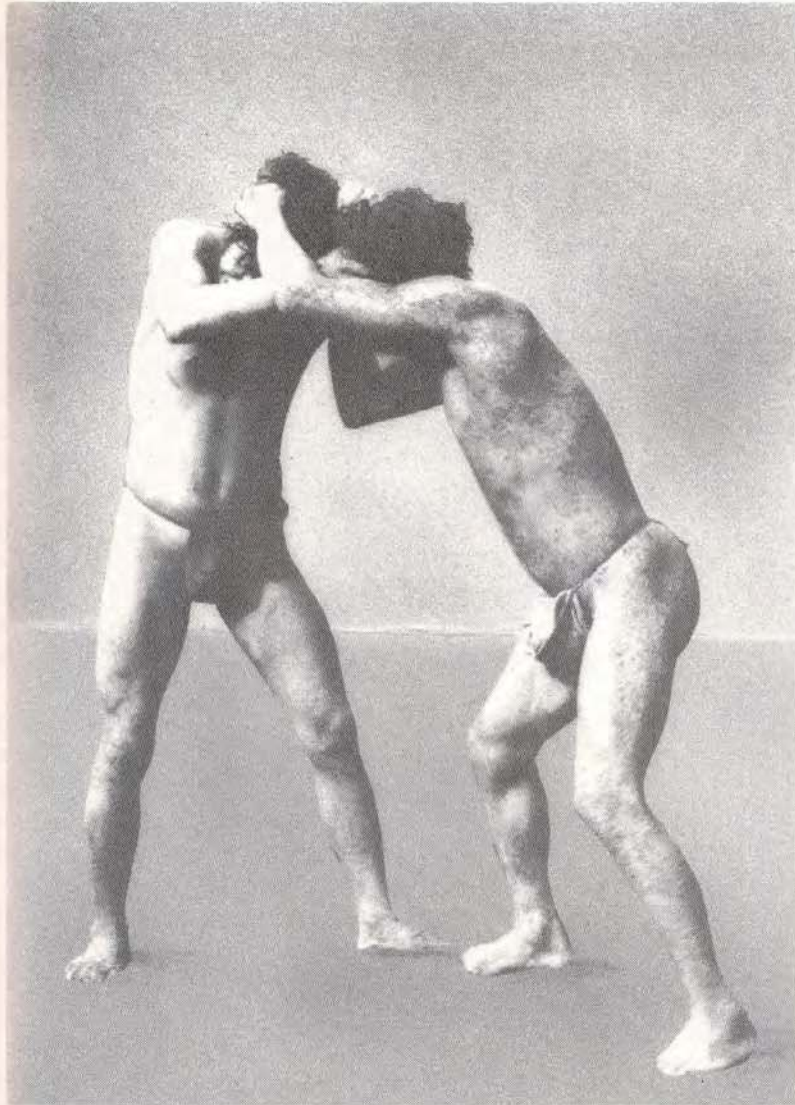
The *jum* war is the war of the cosmic nose, the olfactory eating which creates itself as eaten. Likewise, the *jurá* enemy, as the physical reproduction of its olfactory intention, is the visible "nose" which, like any other physical matter, only exists as an illusion of something which truly takes place within the cosmic mind of *dru* as cosmic man. The war of *jum* demonstrates and explains the inherent meaning of the contradictory nature of *dru*, the "dual river" which runs counter to itself and is the primeval prerequisite for the creation of *emberá*. In the ontological structure of the dual river the true nature of *emberá* is revealed.

## THE WORD



III. 11. *Baa de*, the House of Thunder; its opening is seen close to the hilltop. Neguá River 1972.





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Ill. 12. Hair wrestling -- at the eve of Creation.  
Chicué River (Atrato) 1972.



III. 13. Making *dchi* thread is men's work. Chicué River (Atrato) 1993.

## THE COSMOGONIC PARADOX

In brief, condensed accounts I have endeavoured to reconstruct Emberá ideas on creation, reproduction and existential matters using a comparative analysis of underlying structures in mythology, ritual, idiom, and "daily" behaviour. I would now like to scrutinize this model in the light of the available, direct oral information on Emberá cosmogony, summarized by Pinto and based mostly on what Severino de Santa Teresa and María de Betania managed to record from Emberá-Katio informants in northwestern Antioquia in the early 20th century. Study of this valuable material is recommended, but I will here restrict my comments to some of the "contradictions" in these oral traditions which have puzzled Pinto and other interpreters of Emberá cosmogony.

*Tatzitzetze*, "Our Father," is said to be the "pre-existing" primeval god who has no beginning and who created himself. Karagabí, the creator of the human world and its inhabitants, was begotten from the saliva of *Tatzitzetze* and subsequently defeated his father, an event which puts an end to his role in Emberá thought, according to Severino de Santa Teresa (1924:1). The eternal god was destroyed by his son.

The sky world and creation of Karagabí is opposed to the world of *Tutruiká* who rules a realm situated "below our planet" though "not inside the earth but of the world close to our world" (ibid., 1924:1,11). *Tutruiká* is the lord of "the other part of the world, a part which is inverted to our own" (Betania 1964:51).

Severino de Santa Teresa points out that "despite the fact that there are four worlds above our own and four more below, with their respective gods, they only have information about this world and another called 'Armucura', the god of which is called Tutruika. In their legends Caragabí and Tutruicá are the only intervening gods" (Santa Teresa 1924:1). The land of *armucura* is where the people without anuses and noses live, visited by Jerupotouarra and other mythical "humans."

These parallel worlds are said to have long existed without knowledge of the other's existence (ibid., 1924:1), despite the fact that the world of *Tutruiká* and *Tutruiká* himself are said to have been created by Karagabí (ibid., 1924:53-54). There were constant confrontations between the two

gods in primeval times. The world of Karagabí is more beautiful than the world of *Tutruiká* and so are his women. The "war" between them is said to have started when *Tutruiká* and his "people" abducted the women of Karagabí from his sky world (ibid., 1924:2). On the other hand, the world of *Tutruiká* does not suffer from death or illness; if Karagabí had been defeated in this cosmic struggle, mankind would have been immortal as well (ibid., 1924:2,4).

The ruler of the world beyond, *Tutruiká*, is sometimes replaced by or interpreted as the "Master of Matter/Filth," *Antomiá* (Betania 1964:14), and described as a "devil" (*diablo*) in opposition to a "god" (Santa Teresa 1924:53-54). *Tutruiká* does not have any forefathers and cannot die in his everlasting realm while Karagabí was created from the saliva of his father and creates beings who are mortal in a transient world (Santa Teresa 1924:11; Betania 1964:41). Paradoxically, Karagabí is thus the creator of a world that is better than his own and he is governed by a sinister, immortal lord equal or even superior to Karagabí (Pinto 1978:126).

As a twofold cosmogonic paradox testified to in Emberá oral lore, Karagabí puts an end to his everlasting father (*tatzitzetze*) and creates his equal who is immortal (*Tutruiká*). *Karagabí* is the created god who destroys the eternal to beget the eternal. Based on my previous arguments, I interpret this incompatibility as follows.

In his name, *Dachi Sese* shelters *chichi* ("our *chichi*"), the binary vital essence of the *omé* principle which rules the mind of "the dual river." Karagabí "defeats" his father at the very moment he himself comes into being, bringing his father to "silence" within his own divine creation as visualized and objectified god: the binary opposition of earth and sky, body and head. Karagabí is the "abducted god" who is created out of *Dachi Sese* as the face of the facial intention. Karagabí as created god turns into the hostile *jurá* or "female" *kirá* facial structure in opposition to its cosmic origin, the binary *chi*. He is his "male" father's "female" creation who by this same act "defeats" his paternal origin, *Dachi Sese*, by embracing him within his diurnal shell. *Dachi Sese* is not different from Karagabí, he is the same Karagabí as a "father" consumed and sheltered by his "female son."

Karagabí is both "male" and "female." As a "male" progeny of his father, Karagabí is a "son," an *uarra* who brings his paternal essence with him as the "true cosmic way" (*o-ara*). On the other hand, as "female son" Karagabí is the "daughter" of his father, a *kau* who "paints" her paternal male face into physical female creation as the "cosmic way of *ka* metamorphosis" (*ka-o*).

Begotten as the spit of his father, Karagabí is the metamorphosis of his

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fatherly intention into its materialised equal; he is "defecated" out of an intentional "nowhere" in a process which repeats that which befalls the *betá* fish and *emberá* humans. As a creator of the physical world and its physical people, expelled from the riverine womb as *a* matter, Karagabí himself acquires his "female" ephemeral physical apparition as a defecating act of creation, *anggai*, here seen as being "spit" out of his riverine origin as "faecal" and perishable *a* matter, the *pichi-a* sunlight of his *pichi* essence.

Karagabí, as the created sun, is *umandau* which I read as the "eye (*dau*) of the cosmic way (*u-ma*)." The crucial event in this creation is Karagabí as the seeing god, as the eye in the sky. When he came into being, "the god of above, called Caragabí, discerned a black thing here where our earth is and he wished to see what it could be. He came and, indeed, he saw this land but it was dark as there was no light." Through his seeing experience Karagabí meets with Tutruicá, the god of below who is also *yábea* or "contemporary" to Karagabí,<sup>1</sup> and the cosmic communication between the two gods is established. This event is the ontological prerequisite for complementary opposition in its physical rendition as head vs. body, sky vs. river world.

*Tutruiká* is "created" through Karagabí's observation acting as conception. Karagabí "sees" this dark world into light in the same way as the "female" *kirá* face discovers the face of "her" male partner by looking back at her male origin, the everlasting *dru* mind made *dru-a*. Karagabí is the sky who looks back at "her" "male" origin and *sees* the earthly cover of the cosmic womb into creation.

As the created image of his divine origin, Karagabí has acquired the physical form of the sun as the materialised *ta* seed of his essential "yellow" nature. He is an "object," *netá*, the seed of his *ne* "golden" essence which we regard as the "sun," *umandau*. As *umandau* he is the "eye of the cosmic way," the huge "eye" (*dau*, *dabú*) which is the "way of the seed" (*da-u*) or "where the seed is" (*da-bú*). Within his creative power of shaping the *ke-tá* structure (the *kirá* face or *kidá* "tooth") out of its *ke* origin, his own material appearance manifests his *ta* nature as well as his *ta* power of transforming mind to matter, *ne* to *netá*. His faculty of creating matter is held in his sight and eye. His forehead is *datru*, the "*dru* of the seed," being the seat and source of the cosmic "thoughts" which evidence themselves as observed matter along the metamorphic channel of the opened eye. Consequently, the celestial world, the firmament above our heads, is regarded as *utare*, "way-seed-house" (*u-ta-de*), where the cosmic way germinates.

While the *drua* cosmic womb emits manifestations of its living interior as *a* "faecal" matter *defecated* out of its uterine "anus" of the river, the

parallel sky world of Karagabí creates its manifestations of the cosmic mind by *seeing* mind into matter. This analogue is expressed in the Emberá idiom where the faculty "to see" is *akai*, the essential meaning of which is synonymous to *anggai*, "to defecate." Matter leaves its riverine "anal" vagina as *be-a* maize, *je-a* chontaduro, *to-a* fish, etc. Karagabí as sun transforms the same essence into matter by "defecating" it with his sight (*a-kai*). Both ways of *a-kai*, either as *anggai* or as *akai* are metamorphic acts of the physical creation of matter from mind. In the first case, matter is to be touched and in the second, matter is to be observed.

However, consideration of my previous argument suggests that apparently parallel processes of matter-making are in fact a single process. The creation of matter is analogous to the way the sunset is but another mode of describing sunrise.

The act of *anggai* is in fact the very same act of *akai*, as the simultaneous creation *of* and *by* Karagabí signals. His own coming into being is the cosmic intention of eating which creates him as "eaten," as the *pichia* diurnal sunlight. The cosmic *intention* of Karagabi's creation corresponds to the event which was earlier described as "sunset," the instantaneous implication of which is "sunrise." The "sunset of sunrise" is here rendered as the *anggai* of *akai*. Through the "evening death" as an act of *anggai* implied by his extrospective seeing (*akai*), Karagabí the setting sun sees (*akai*) the intention of his creation (*anggai*). This seeing insight, *akai*, is the moment of the discovery of the world of *Tutruiká* below, when the image of the cosmic principles of *dru* are instantly transformed into "objects" and "movements" which we call the "world" with all its richness of cosmic designs in its materialised forms: trees, animals, humans, artifacts, eating, fighting, working, talking, etc. Through his own creation as light and celestial world, Karagabí, with his transforming sight, brings forth the cosmic mind of *dru*, the dual river, into the *drua* world of human existence, into our earthly shell, *e*.

By this materialising act, his paternal origin, *Dachi Sese*, is reshaped into *Tutruiká* or *Antomiá*, the Master of Matter, the true physical "replica" of the facial intention which gives life and shape to Karagabí as cosmic man and as *emberá*. Karagabí becomes a physical manifestation of himself as the multiple nature of the "living" *drua* world. Evidence of the metamorphosis of the *dru* mind into matter is retained in the name of *Tutruiká*.

The processual principle of solar existence, "the sunset of sunrise," is the foundation of the context which has been referred to repeatedly in this book. The principle is reproduced as thematic variants of the "recoiling" effect described as the "death of the archer" or in the imagery of the

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*úkida* dart, the piercing intention of which gives rise to its own facial creation as pierced face.

By the looking down of Karagabí the sun, his *Dachi Sese* "father" (his male origin) sacrifices his perishable nature, his "daughter" or "female son," to his own origin. Through the "falling" release of Karagabí's *akai* seeing, *Dachi Sese* "defecates" his *kau* "daughter" (the *pichia* sunlight) along the metamorphic way back into the same cosmic "anus" from which "she" came. The process of defecating into the same anus which is executing the defecation is a simultaneous one. This is a transcript of the principle of the "sunset of sunrise" envisioned as an image of the binary inverted anus which earlier was suggested as sexual intercourse between two anuses, figuring in Emberá myth and idiom.

The celestial *kirá* face, the sky, is a cosmic realm which reiterates its intentional origin of below but in an inverted way and with a structure which only can be experienced through human sight. We can see the cosmic hair, the solar *be* fruit, the flashing arrows of the sky world, but we cannot touch them. The celestial face is a seeing world seen into creation, it can see as it can be seen but it cannot be touched. When its cosmic eye, the sun, sets in the womb of below at dusk, the end of its seeing capacity implies the simultaneous end of its creation as matter to be seen and the "death" of the diurnal creation. By entering the cosmic mind of *dru* its extrospection turns into an introspection just as the human eye closes itself into the way of *kai* transformation. The sunset moment of falling asleep (*kai*) is part of the same event which is seen as the sunrise moment of awakening and revival (*urumai*, "to wake up;" *urumabei*, "to revive").

The physical and "immortal" world of Tutruiká is an illusory reconstruction of the everlasting cosmic intention which is embodied in *Tatzitzetze* as the binary *chi* essence of the "dual river." According to Emberá myth, Karagabí's defeat in the cosmic contest with his opponent and essential ego, Tutruiká, would have resulted in immortality for humankind but this is a kind of immortality which would have nullified creation per se. Karagabí, vanquished by Tutruiká, implies his own annihilation as created god and thus the end of man's existence as well; an immortality in terms of "nocturnal" existence at the expense of "diurnal" consciousness.

The martial contest between Karagabí, the sky, and Tutruiká, the river of within, is described as having its origin in the abduction of celestial women from the sky to the world within. This is the *jom* war of restoring the captured *jurá* god to its origin, liberating it from its female and transitory apparition, a "woman" who appears in many disguises: as the game of the hunter, as the enemy in war, as the *be kirá* facial fruit, as

Fish Woman, as the head and hair of cosmic man, as physical man, as the diurnal sun, and, finally, as that which we call creation and existence. This is the cosmic war between Intention and Intention Performed: the never-ending abduction of the process called "woman" in a struggle which is the prime prerequisite for existence in Emberá thought.

"Destroying that which is eternal to beget that which is eternal" - this is not a cosmogonic paradox, it is the image of the true nature of Creation, the cosmic code of existence.



## GREEN LADIES IN A BLUE WORLD

Karagabí's intention to "enter" gives rise to the opposite "face," the diurnal female face of his own male essence, that which we call and observe as the diurnal firmament with the burning sun. The sky and the daylight are other expressions of the cosmogonic phenomenon which I earlier described as the "female face of the male intention," the female process of making "him" enter into a *kidá* facial structure which is herself as process made structure. The female process is transformed into his female face: the sun embraced by the sky of daylight and the creation of the celestial uterine world. Through this cosmogonic process, Karagabí the creator creates himself as well, imprisoned in his transitory, female appearance. The formation of Karagabí into his celestial face and solar eye is the pristine creation which makes consecutive creation possible; our physical world below, the *drua* body and the *e* crust, is "seen" into creation through the *aka* vision from his *umandau* "eye" of above. However, it should be emphasized that these are not two separate and consecutive processes; they are two ways of interpreting the same unique event where "seeing" is "seen," or where *akai* is *anggai*. Thus, the sky world is not separate from the river world, it is the same, unique cosmos; their separation into two worlds is an illusion brought about by Karagabí's own creation.

The genesis of the celestial face is associated with a concept which the Emberá call *ba* (*pa*). It is usually translated as "milk" or "liquid substance" but also appears as a morpheme in several composite nouns connected with the sky world and the sun, as well as with fire, growth, and other phenomena striving upward. Thus, *ba* appears in the name for firmament, *bajá*.

"Karagabí . . . also decided that the first world of above, *ntré*, should be blue and he kept it as a realm for the gods. It is a world like our own but where the trees, the water, the stones are blue . . ." (Alzate 1987:170). In this blue world of beyond the human visitor meets with his twofold *Uera Torro*, two beautiful Emberá women with blackened teeth, painted with *kipará*, adorned with *chakira*, and dressed in *jurá* skirts of light green. The woman "was really beautiful, you could not guess what kind of

woman she was." Like the Mother of Peccaries, her sister in the river world, she offers her male visitor maize in *envuelto* (maize bread wrapped up in a leaf) and *chicha* beer but she advises him to give up any thoughts of carnal love. She is an old woman, despite her apparent youth, and says, "you are not going to touch me because I am your sister-in-law. Whatever you intend to do, you will do it with your wife, she is at home."<sup>2</sup>

This mythical situation is recognizable by now. The Emberá human meets here with his two "sisters-in-law," the binary "sisters" of the *dru* mind who are the same "sister-in-law" who Karagabí brings as his matrimonial "cook" to his sky world. They are also the same "sister" who paints Karagabí's nocturnal face into "her" facial creation. "Sister-in-law" is the anthropomorphization of the processual principle in Emberá ontology construed through parental terminology: "she" who processes "his" intention into "her" genesis.

Why, though, are there green ladies in a blue world? In fact, the Emberá do not make a linguistic distinction between green and blue, both are referred to as *pauará*. So the *pauará* green ladies live in a *pauará* blue world. As celestial, the colour is the "true Way of *pa*," *pa-o-ara*, which rises into the blue sky as do the growing trees with their green crowns. Set into the metaphorical context of fertile cosmic hair, trees -- with the flickering green shades of their high majestic crowns -- indicate the true way of *pa* creation. Like any other tree, the green world of the *jenené* crown acquires its nutriment by means of its trunk, *ba-kuru*, which suggests a rising *ku* stream of growing *ba*. *Pauará* also appears as a verb, *pauarai*, which Pinto translates as "to germinate," i.e. to turn green (or blue) by "going the true way of *pa*."

The shaman positioned in the middle of the binary cosmos between the river and the sky, is a mediating agent of this creative *pa* power. While the shaman's left side indicates the descending way of the river, his right side strives upwards. His left hand clasps the *dumá* staff which truly is the "river deep,"<sup>3</sup> made of *okendo* wood, "the river of the vaginal way." In the healing ceremony the vertical position of his staff, supported against the floor of the house, manifests an uninterrupted link between the river below and the same river in his chest. Meanwhile, the right hand of the shaman is held upright, clasping and shaking the bunch of *parara* leaves towards the sky. His right hand is *juara*, the "true *ju*" which creates the rustling celestial speech of his *pa* faculty manifested through the metaphor of the *parara* leaves.

The verbal form *bai* has several meanings: to fall, to throw, to live, to exist, to roast. I maintain that *bai* is related to the "rising" concept of *ba* and yet it is evident that *bai* associates "existence" with "falling." This

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incongruity vanishes if the *ka-bai* working experience is reconsidered. In myth, ascending *ka-tro-na* beeswax turns *emberá* as descending *emberá* turns *ka-tro-na*; this is a demonstration of the purport of the *dru* principle (the dual river), held in any *kabai* labour, which considers "rising" as the "rising of falling."

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## BEESWAX BLACK OF WHITE

In the mythological meeting between the Emberá human and the beeswax being, the latter takes his seat on a log across a precipice. From his appearance as an Emberá sitting on the log he is transformed into fluid beeswax as he slides down the precipice; while ascending he regains his human appearance. His descent, however, may also be seen as an *entering* the precipice, and his ascent as an emergence. The beeswax slide then becomes a paraphrase for the leaving and entering of the cosmic womb, here described as a precipice.

The beeswax being tells his human visitor to join him in the game. In this way, the myth discloses that Emberá humans are also able to metamorphose into beeswax if they "descend the slope" and that they have an essential origin of "beeswax" as living humans "on top." Re-entering the cosmic womb is the *beuará* way of death when humans shed their human skin and physical disguise in a sliding *ka* metamorphosis into the cosmic mind of *dru*. This process is transcribed in terms of *ka-torrona* "beeswax," the black matter of the essential "whiteness" of the dual river.

The myth describes the same metamorphosis between maize and beeswax in an episode which precedes that of the sliding game. The beeswax man offers his visitor *mazamorra* (maize porridge) which, to the dismay of his Emberá guest, is pure beeswax. The beeswax man eating his beeswax "porridge" is actually another version of the same process described as sliding down into the precipice. The maize eaten by the beeswax man is the emberá sliding down into beeswax.

The beeswax man reassures his anxious visitor that he is an Emberá too. But this encounter between him and his human guest in the true world is not a meeting between two individuals, it is the confrontation between an Emberá and his inner self, between a maize human and his internal beeswax essence. The Emberá visitor does not observe another person eating *mazamorra*; the beeswax man claiming to be eating maize is the visitor, regarded as an Emberá human, thinking he is eating maize. In the same way, beeswax man sliding down as beeswax is the fate of Emberá humans in a metamorphic act which is repeated and made

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explicit by the "emberá" maize porridge "sliding" down the throat of cosmic man as beeswax.

Beeswax man does not exist as another Emberá, he is an intrinsic virtue found in any Emberá human as a created being. The myth portrays this ontological truth in terms of an encounter between an Emberá and his essential self.

Beeswax is *ka-n-do-rro-na* which expresses cosmic man's power to undergo metamorphosis and to perform the intention of descending as an act of ascent: the perpetual regeneration of Emberá, cosmic man. The living "beeswax power" of cosmic man has a character which resembles that of the solar wife who, with her "adulterous" act, processes her ugly husband through his lunar metamorphosis into regeneration as a new diurnal sun. She is not a woman but a "female" embodiment of a process contained in that which is processed.

The power to change which is embodied as "beeswax man" is manifested in "his" preparation and consumption of *mazamorra* maize porridge. This scene is the anthropomorphic (embera-ized) process of the metamorphosis of maize (of its own matter and of man's own matter), not into beeswax but into "new life." The Emberá visitor does not see *mazamorra* as black beeswax in the physical sense, he perceives the metamorphic power of maize, and this acquired knowledge is "translated" through the mythological dramatization into "beeswax" or *ka-n-dorro-na*, transformation (*ka*), dual river (*dru*), before (*na*).

The beeswax man is an anthropomorphized construction of the processual power of metamorphosis. "He" is the transformation of sunset as sunrise, the metamorphosis of dying Emberá as reborn Emberá. Beeswax man moving down and up is not a "human being" in motion, he is a metamorphic power described in terms of motion. These movements of up and down/in and out are furthermore a fiction in the *dru* mind as is the walking and gesticulating *drua* body of physical man. Observed beeswax is black while comprehended beeswax is invisibly "white" (*torró*).

If the import of the cosmological principles of Emberá thought is entirely distinguished and accepted, the sun never moves, nor does cosmic man sitting on his pole. Emberá is not born out of the riverine womb, nor does he enter it upon his death. Cosmic man does not move but is "periodically" transformed in a reiterated pattern which we divide into the "spatial" terms of "birth" and "death." The *kandorróna* concept expresses this inherent quality of man in the vivid and graphic language of myth. Before developing this reasoning further I will comment on some more ethnographic situations to elucidate my arguments.

The beeswax man takes his seat on a log which lies athwart the

precipice. Sitting on the log he makes sure that he has an ideal human appearance, that he looks like an Emberá should. What does the myth intend to say with this log lying across the precipice? The significance of "lying athwart" is suggested in Pinto's dictionary where a surprising number of synonyms for this verb and its adjectival form are enumerated. All adjectival forms begin with *pera-* and end with *-kubú/-kaubú* (*perakuaukubú*, *perausukubú*, *perakubú*, *perakaubú*) while the verb is expressed as *perakauí* or *truauañu*.

By all evidence, the significance of this concept stresses its association with creation, either as sprouted maize, *berá* (*perá*), referring to the sitting *emberá* human, or his created point of reference, our world of *drua* (*trua*). The quality of "lying across" is interpreted as the uterine (*ku*) prerequisite of *bera* creations or, as a verb, the act of executing the *ka* metamorphosis of any *berá* creation, *pera-ka-uí*, described in action by the sliding beeswax man. In fact, *Uera Torro*, the White Lady, has the same role when she is sitting on her log laughing at her frustrated lover.

The Emberá word for "bridge" also seems to be associated with concepts of transformation and creation. As *paná* it is *pa-ná*: "*pa*-before," the symbolical crossing which is a "movement" of coming into being, a *paná* bridge "lying athwart." The *jaibaná* shaman embodies this power of crossing from one realm to another for as *jai-pa-ná* he is the anthropomorphized bridge between mind and matter.

## SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES: MAN AS TORCH

As an essential maize being, Emberá humans possess a metamorphic quality which they also symbolically manifest in their material culture. Beeswax, molded and wrapped up in a leaf, makes a functional torch which is the traditional way of producing artificial light by night. When used in the house, the torch is sometimes put into a hollowed socket on a tripod of balsa wood. This structure which gives off a feeble, flickering flame and a powerful, black, sticky smoke is an ingenious and instructive metaphor for the true nature of *emberá* humans, because the torch is man, as disclosed by its native name, *imbira*.

The torch is wrapped in an *inguedé* leaf, the nature of which implies the *ke* concept of the *e* shell (*i-ke-de*). In other words, the leaf represents the *e* skin of cosmic man. In order to understand the meaning of this image we must reconstruct the nocturnal world as the moment of voracious existence: the "day" of the *dru* mind. The nocturnal sky is the inverted map of the *dru* cosmos, wrongly turned "upside down" and dyed black. As observing, waking "children of daylight" we seem to remain below and out of cosmos but as true beings "*kai*-observing within" we truly find ourselves inside the "whiteness" of the cosmic womb, looking upward to imagine its uterine opening through which our *jurá* opposites - ourselves as diurnal humans - discharge their/our *chiá* urine and faecal waste, vividly described in myth.

The black smoke from the fireplace and the *imbira* torch is a nuisance which the inhabitants must stand in the traditional Emberá house which is devoid of any flue to let out the smoke. Indeed, the conical shape of the roof functions as an effective accumulator of sticky smoke which dyes the ceiling shiny black. The inhabitants are accustomed to it and apparently do not regard it an inconvenience worth mentioning. According to Pinto, the black smoke is sometimes used in a marriage trial for the future couple to find out if they are suited to each other.

The black, aromatic smoke emitted from the burning torch is an image of the true nature of cosmic man as a nocturnal being offering himself as sexual food for the cosmic womb. The smoke is consumed by the black

ceiling of the *utare* roof. The pale flame from the burning torch manifests the transitory *imbira* nature of man as a glimmering light on the rim of cosmos, "sacrificing" his smoky secretion for the benefit of himself as essential being while ending physically as a torch burnt out altogether on the house floor.

The torch is a nocturnal phenomenon; it is a metaphoric construction betwixt and between, a light of nocturnal existence when vision is within instead of without. The paradoxical nature of the *imbira* torch reflects that of *emberá* man, the burning light is meant for your eyes to see but it emits a black nourishment meant for your nose but not for your eyes, a choking smoke which forces you to close your eyes, preventing you from observing the same light which justifies your physical existence. The *emberá* hand is the obedient tool of the cosmic mind which lights itself as an *imbira* torch that causes you to close your eyes (*dau kai*) to see the light within, instead of the ephemeral light without. The metaphor of the intentional lighting of the *imbira* torch teaches us that physical existence is no end in itself, it is a means for us to see within, to experience existence as it really is within the realm of the cosmic mind.

Man as a burning torch is held in the firm grip of the balsa tripod. Like food held between three fingers of a hand, it is physical matter to be eaten. The torch in its tripod is not only an image of man's destiny, it also explains his intentional way, as matter created out of a threefold origin. In myth this triadic origin of man often assumes the features of beautiful but dreaded women (Pardo 1987:45; Broberg 1924).

If the *imbira* torch is a metaphor for *emberá* humans, then the balsa tripod can be envisioned as a cosmic holder of the *drua* concept: our physical world. This ontological reconstruction coincides with a belief from among the Emberá Katio of northwestern Antioquia who say that Karagabí keeps the *drua* world between the first three fingers of his right hand (Betania 1964:40). This is the created *drua* matter which is "hand-made," shaped and manipulated by the *jua* hand, operations made possible only by means of the grip between the fingers and the thumb.

It is the thumb which makes this physical handling possible; without the thumb the *jua* hand is unable to beget matter, unable to mold it, and even unable to "hold" it. The thumb is *juapapa*, the "mother of the *jua* hand" (*jua-papa*) which generates matter through the union with the "me of the Way," with "two" *jimini* fingers. But what is the significance of a "mother" concept for the Emberá, if the physical female progenitor is absent from their cosmology? If there are no "women" in the cosmic mind as little as there are any "men," what is meant by "mother" and what is her relationship to cosmic man?



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## MOTHER OF CREATION

In Emberá thought, the parental term "mother" implies a *kimakai* status of marital union which earlier has been described as the formation of the cosmic womb and the *kirá* creation of the facial intention.

The formation of the *kimakai* arrangement implies its regenerated creation, its becoming a "mother." The process which shapes the cosmic womb of the *kimakai* marital union is described in terms of a "sister-wife" or a "female conjugal cook," who processes the intention of a "brother-husband" into "her" recreated matter, the accomplishment of which makes the "female" process a "mother."

The *kimakai* womb gives rise to the celestial creation as *me* inside *ke*: the face of its intention, that which we observe as the human head or the celestial vault. From the union of the dichotomic male and female contracting parties a fourfold fusion, construed physically as the sexual union of man and woman, materialized progeny rises: the celestial face and head of cosmic man manifesting a binary *pa* "female" exterior which shelters the *omé* principle ("two") inside, the binary "male" *chichi* or *meme* essence.

Thus, the binary male *chichi* of the created celestial head and face is the "father" (*tzetze/sese*) concept of cosmic man. It is "Our Father" who is recreated and fettered inside our binary female shell as the abducted god, Karagabí the diurnal sun. Our facial exterior, the *kirá* uterine face, is our "mother," *papa*, the materialization of "her" own "processual" nature which shows itself as the celestial uterine world and our *bajá* sky, as a lady dressed in the "true way of *pa*" blue (*pa-o-ará*).

As a created being, cosmic man is now able to perceive and observe with his *aká* sight the maternal principle which brought him, as well as her, into creation as cosmic man. Through his *akai* sight he transforms this processual principle into a female being, a physical reconstruction of his "maternal" origin who becomes his "mother," *papa*.

Again, as observable and tangible humans, "mother" and "father" are only illusory materialized replicas of cosmic principles which cosmic man, their "son" as *uarra*, the true cosmic way, perpetuates within himself as "intention (*me*) processed (*ke*) into mattered process

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(*ketá/kirá*). "Mother" and "father" are the same physical but illusory earth which Karagabí *sees* as his uterine origin below, the "faecal" world of Tutruiká. "Mother" and "father" are the same old couple which is described in the myth about Karagabí as nocturnal lover (Myth A); as "old people" they are *zroa*, suggesting their true nature as *drua*, the transient world of humans.

Cosmic man "translates" the principle of his paternal origin into the human shape of a "father," *tzetze (chichi)*. As a "son" of his intention to "enter" he bears his "paternal" origin inside himself because the very fulfillment of this intention transforms it into a "father" in relation to its "son." "Intention to enter" becomes a "father" at the exact moment it is "entered." The import of this metamorphosis is explained in the cosmic intercourse between *Uera Torró* and her human visitor, the paraphrase for the *me* intention. When the man discovers his own *me* in *Uera Torró's* opposite face (= his own "face" as "entered" *me* inside *ke*), he becomes a "father" who observes his "child." This "child" is his regenerated self, a filial father.

Correspondingly, "mother" is the regenerated and "created" form of the cosmic principle known as *Uera Torró*, in the same way as "father" is the realization of the binary male principle and triggering *me* device of existence. "Mother," then, realizes the binary (*omé*) intention adjusted to the "two" rivers of invisible white, processed by the White Lady, *Uera Torró*.

While *Uera Torró* is the pristine process and *me* is the pristine intention, "mother" and "father" are terms which presuppose the same intention (*me*) processed (*ke*): the facial intention "created" into its opposite "female" face with the "male" intention inside. Through this operation *Uera Torró* becomes her own mother as an image of conceived process. Cosmic man harbours a "processual mother," which is the *ke* mother of her own *ke-tá (kirá)* "face", and an "intentional father," which is the *me* father of his own *kira-me* "tongue."

As a conceived "child," the Emberá human observes with his *akai* sight the cosmic womb which begot him (*anggai*). This sight allows him to observe it as a structure of cosmic principles made matter, as a "father" and a "mother" forever united in the *kimakai* uterine structure of their marital union. The same structure is also given in the shape of *drua* as our earth or as the chest of man, where "mother earth" is the exterior fertile *e* shell or skin which covers its binary "father" of within, the *chichi* essence of the *potopotoa* cosmic lungs. But this is an illusory and secondary reconstruction, formulated by human sight transforming mind into matter (*akai*), because the true character of these principles are given in the configuration of man's celestial head as well as in its inherent

essence, the *bedé* "house of maize" of *me* made *be*, enclosed by the physical female shell which molds his physiognomy into a vaginal *kirá* face encircled by *kidá* teeth. This is the "face" of man as intention.

## ONE-TWO-THREE: CREATION AT HAND

As *juapapa*, the thumb represents a nature associated with *pa/ba* creation. Existence is based on the principle of the dual river, which orchestrates the *omé* way of "twoness." The union of "male" and "female" creates the binary *papa* exterior, not the "single" *pa* celestial creation which we mistakenly perceive as humans when we look at the sky. Cosmic man knows better as he bears the knowledge of his binary nature within: he is male intention and female process which united turn process into structure.

True existence is *omé* while illusory physical creation is *abá*, "one." Jerupotouarra of the famous Emberá myth is sometimes not a single character but two (Loteró Villa 1972:22; Wassén 1935:133), he is an *abá* being of *omé* nature and therefore sometimes appears as a "twin:" *omédu*, "twoness river" (*omé-do*).

As stated in myth, one and two makes matter - created matter to be held between the first three fingers of the hand. The principle of the dual river of within are represented by the "two" *jimini* "male" fingers (the same forefinger and middle finger of the male right which "eat" the *tonoa* drum of the female left). With their scratching *pichi* nails they are the *chi-chi* binary "father" who, united with the "mother" of the hand, the *jua-papa* thumb, beget and hold *netá* matter.

The *drua* world is the faecal matter of its own *dru* mind, brought forth and held by its threefold origin: *omé* (two) fingers plus *abá* (one) thumb. While we state that "two" and "one" makes "three," the Emberá hold that *omé* and *abá* makes *umbeá*, the "be matter of the way" (*o-be-a*). One and two together makes matter, that which we see as the *bea* maize harvest rising up from the *o* way of the river's edge. But as "three," *umbeá* stands for any *be* matter which is begotten by its materialised riverine womb, (*be* maize, *be* animals, *emberá* humans, *betá* fish, *mea* forest, etc). *Umbeá* is *be* matter as the "smelled" faecal remains of the *me* essence eaten through the olfactory scratching by the "two" *pichi* nails. The *abá* nature of the thumb is the factor which makes *umbeá* "three" possible, holding matter and making matter to be held.

The tip of the thumb against the tip of the forefinger forms a circle and

a hole which illustrate the uterine opening of the *jua* hand. The function of this hole is clear in contexts related to birth and food consumption. The young Emberá woman, on the eighth day after the delivery of her first child, peels a plantain (*Musa paridisiaca*) and removes the crust from a flat maize bread (in Spanish, *arepa*). She thrusts these through the hole between her thumb and forefinger in order to reestablish the *kimakai* arrangement; her husband is not allowed to share any meal with his wife until this measure has been taken. If he breaks this law, he will fail as a hunter (Santa Teresa 1924:90).

The association between the action of thrusting "sexual" food through the *chirú* hole of her *jua* hand and the pregnancy of a *kenaya* operation which the woman shares with the cosmic hunter is here unquestionable. The hole of the hand begets materialized created matter in our *drua* world, *netá* objects and sprouting manifestations of their *pa* creation. The "birth" of the plantain, thrust by the young mother through the hole of her hand, shows this *pa* transformation, because the plantain is *patá*, "seed of *pa*," for the Emberá.

Green or blue is the colour which denotes the creating way, motion and space depicted in the celestial vault and its diurnal manifestation. *Pa* also appears on the *drua* body of cosmic man. While the sky world indicates the true way of *pa*, however, *pa* on the *drua* body announces itself physically as black.

The essential *torró* white begets the *pauará* blue sky which looks back to observe its white origin as black matter, as white turned black. Its uterine origin assumes the physical structure of a *ke* vagina delimited through its physical shell of acquired blackness, as *pa-i* or *paimá*, the Emberá term for black.

The pregnant condition of the *kenaya* actor is rendered in man's blackened chest and body, painted black with *kipará* sap on a level with the upper lip. The application of the *kipará* sap indicates that cosmic man is "pregnant," he is "with *ke*" (covered with *kipará*). The concept of *pará* and its verbal form *parai* bears a meaning of "becoming" or "holding" and seems to be associated with the metamorphosis of creative *pa* into *patá* matter, explained in the image of the plantain, born between the thumb and the forefinger of the right hand. Thus, the *kipará* jagua sap is applied to the *drua* body in its transparent form of "invisible" and intentional *torró* white, only to change and remain as a black shell of *pa*, as *paimá* black. The blackened *drua* body of man is the *patá* conception of the *ke* cosmic womb (*ki-pará*) where *barai* "to become, to hold," equals *patai*, the sprouting of *pa* into the metaphor of a *patá* plantain.

In both myth and ritual, the Emberá associate *patá* plantains with "ripe" humans as edible sexual "food" for the cosmic *ke* vagina. During the

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traditional puberty rites for boys, plantains were hung from the ceiling. The participants pierced the plantains with pointed sticks similar to *úkida* blowgun darts. Through this "eating" they acquired the *pa* nature of the ripe fruits.

In myth, Emberá hunters who have been abducted by their mythical man-eating enemies, the Burumiá, are fattened so as to be eaten in due time. The appropriate time for the cannibalistic meal was indicated by ripe *primitivo* plantains which were harvested at the same moment the Emberá were taken captive. The fattened prisoners were to be enjoyed when the plantains were so ripe that their skins burst. The image of edible humans as ripe plantains, suggested in this myth, supports the idea of a direct relationship between the "eating" by piercing with darts which takes place during the puberty ritual and the voracious mythical Burumiá eating their ripe *patá* enemies.

Man as well as his *drua* world is a *patá* creation, appearing out of the *chirú* hole of the cosmic *jua* hand. The triadic *umbeá* grip conceives physical matter, the ephemeral nature of which is described in the human metaphor of the burning *imbira* torch. The torch inserted in the socket of its balsa tripod makes an arrangement which repeats the ontological prescript that transitory physical creation is conceived as *patá*; the balsa tripod is referred to as *imbira k'oábata* which evidences a close connection with the *jua-pata* conceiving hand of the young mother. The Emberá human holding the *imbira* torch in his right hand is Karagabí the creator holding the *drua* world between the first three fingers of his right hand. Karagabí is a divine tripod manifesting his creation of himself as transient Emberá human. As an image of Karagabí, the divine intention which is the father of cosmic man, *Emberá* manifests his physical existence as *imbira*.

*Emberá* as flesh and matter bears the nature of an *imbira* torch. As a *holder* of his *imbira* torch, however, *emberá* is Karagabí, the cosmic intention who embodies himself as *imbira*, the torch. *Imbira* is held but not holding while *emberá* is both holder and held, both cosmic intention to enter and the same intention entered, both Karagabí and Karagabí abducted. Cosmic man carries within himself the intention of his own creation, as the divine creator holding himself as matter between his *first three* fingers, as a progeny of "one-two-three."

Emberá numerals are all associated with essential conception as it is demonstrated by the divine *jua* hand of cosmic man. Number five is *juesoma* which completes the image of the intentional hand as the united Way of *chi* essence, *chi-o-ma*, five manipulating fingers contained in the shape and configuration of a concept we call "hand" and the Emberá conceive of as *juá*: the conceptualization of the cosmic uterus which is

eaten by its eating, which is both *ku* and *ju*.



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## PENTACONCEPTION

As also explained in Emberá myth, Karagabí is the creator of our *drua* world. Creation arises through Karagabí's "sight," *akai*, when the creator *sees* the structures and the processual principles of the *dru* cosmic mind into matter. Karagabí recreates his "father," the *chichi* essence of his intentional origin, by enclosing him in a visible representation of *Uera Torro*'s cover which we regard as the *e* shell of the globe with its uterine opening, the river. The same construction is rendered by Karagabí the creator in the cosmic body of man as the *drua* chest covered with the *e* skin which leaves the oral opening on top, our "mouth," open for the communication along the cosmic way.

The fertile *e* shell of the cosmic womb is continuously consumed by man who considers it in terms of "forest," *oi* ("cover of the Way"), to be made use of as "food" such as fruits, game, and crops. But this food is "embryonic" matter for the same cosmic womb which brought into life. *Uera Torro*, materialized as *e* cover, is now eaten as she once ate the *me* male intention which gave her shape; she is eaten as a consequence of eating.

This cosmic eating performed by the facial intention and directed at its exterior self, at its "face" (here seen as the earthly *e* cover of the intentional womb) is made explicit by the *drua* world reformulated as cosmic man. That which we cannot understand by observation of our world only ("the eating of the earthly crust from within"), is explained through the behavioural pattern of the instructive *drua* body of cosmic man.

The creative power of Karagabí the sun brings the invisible intentions of the cosmic mind into light by transforming them into matter and motion. Karagabí sees the complex structure of *dru* into "life" by giving it shape as the morphological cosmos of man: man is created as a visible and physical being. His *jua* hands demonstrate the *me* intention of the *ju* cosmic womb to eat its own created physical exterior, the fertile *e* shell. This process is elucidated in the "closed" sexual intercourse of the joint binary uterine structure of "man" and "woman" with its four hands scratching -- as an intention from within -- its *e* exterior: the human skin

cut open as an act of essential eating. This is the explanatory metaphor for the cosmic intention of eating its own materialization, its created *kirá* "face." This operation was earlier described as *Uera Torró* staging "her" facial intention to eat its own opposite face, which gains ontological status through its "female" implementation of this "male" intention. Here, the exterior "female" *e* shell corresponds to the *jurá* face of above (as well as to the "fertile" *jurá* skirt of the Emberá woman in the realm of textile symbolism).

The rounded shape of our created world, *drua*, denotes the structure of the permanent sexual union between "man" and "woman." The fused, global whole is the cosmic womb of *ke*, the *dru* cosmos of within made up of the four *poto* or *ju* "wombs" which Emberá myth refers to as the four worlds of the cosmic realm of below. But, to all appearances, the crust of our *drua* world lacks the four *ju-a* arms that execute the cosmic orders of within as described by the human body.

We cannot see any cosmic arms on the body of earth, but the Emberá can. In their imagery they perceive those four hands which scratch the scars of eating into the global "skin" of the *drua* world, four hands which are physically non-existent and yet comply with the command of recovering the *me* fruit back to its origin by eating with their cutting *pisi* nails. Like the loving couple in the everlasting cosmic embrace, four hands and twenty fingers scratch the *e* crust of our earth, of cosmic size and yet small, invisible and yet discernible.

As indicated by their name, the *emberá* are beings related to the crust of the earth; they are *e-bedá*, the "sprouted maize" of the *e* shell, begotten through the riverine opening of the *drua* womb. Their presence on the outside of the cosmic sphere marks the acting pattern of the four arms which mirror the internal process of the *dru* mind. The human body is an instrument which participates in an overall structure of four cosmic "arms" which obey the instructions from within. The body is a concrete transformation of the *ju* device of conception which we consider as a "hand" or "arm," *jua*. Actually, the Emberá regard their body as *kakua*, an idiomatic construction which suggests a meaning similar to the "hand of *ka* metamorphosis," *ka-jua*. As a "transformed hand" the complex body language makes explicit in a much more instructive way what the cosmic hand truly performs in its *kabai* labour. It is not so much the human body in itself which represents the four arms of the universe but the working pattern the body pursues in interaction with other people in Emberá society as communities of "corporal atoms" which make up any of the four arms.

The Emberá house is a true representation of cosmic man and of cosmos itself; it has no arms because the cosmic mind acts within. The

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people living on its floor are the invisible arms of the cosmic house. During the night, which is the "day" of the *dru* mind, the "arms" of the cosmic house cannot be seen on its exterior: the people sleep in the house for staying out of it is fatal. In their *kai* sleep they experience the true existence when they execute *ju* operations in their mind, not in physical action. By night, the Emberá are the cosmic "arms of within."

At dawn, when man goes to the river to be reborn as the solar maize fruit, his own physical appearance manifests the formation of the "diurnal" hands and arms of the *drua* cosmic body. As he himself, as a waking human being, begins a new day of work with his hands and body, his physical presence turns into the diurnal "arms of without," the transformation of the acting *ju* into its *jua* matter, the *kakua* body.

Everything that man performs as a diurnal working being on the *e* outside of cosmos is directed from inside his *drua* chest; the making of a canoe, working in the maize field, participation in ritual, conversations and gesticulations. Anything man does or acts out by day is a visible staging of cosmic processes from "within." As a physical being who stays outside the cosmic house by day, his playground is the fertile *e* shell which he "scratches" with his actions and tools, like a hand scratching the skin of the cosmic body.

Through his multifarious *kabai* labour and daily behaviour, man is a "manual" tool, a working *ju-a* instrument of cosmic intentions. His cosmically regulated work is the moving arm of the cosmic house which is objectified into the arm of the human *drua* body. The image of a joint *kabai* labour of many people working together as one of the four arms of the *dru* cosmos is represented invertedly in the interpretation of the hand of the human body as a single human being who, as one of four people (the 2x2 hands of the cosmic embrace), make up the complete processual pattern of the Emberá cosmos.

As interacting members of one and the same cosmic house are seen as its four executing "hands," the hands of the human body can be described in terms of *emberá* people as well. I have already pointed at the fact the the Emberá regard the human hand and arm as a kind of anthropomorphic being with a "head" (the *juaboru* fist), "nose" (the *ju-a* hand) that can "smell" like a cutting knife (*neko*), an "eye" (the *jua-dau* wrist joint), and a "chest" (the *juapoto* forearm). As *jua* hands they primarily illustrate their function as a metaphor for the people on the outside, the "sprouted maize of the shell," *emberá*.

The *drua* bodily cosmos is structured into a *bedé* "maize house," built up from two pairs of *opedé* shoulder blades which are united into the "bedé of the cosmic way" (*o-bedé*) as a consequence of the cosmic embrace between man and woman. As a replica of its master *drua* body,

the human hand is also supplied with its own *bedé* maize house which the Emberá find at the elbow. The term for "elbow" is *ibidi* or the "*bedé* of the *e* shell" (*ebedé*). The elbow is interpreted as the source of the *juapoto* forearm, the pointed and conical form of which imitates the four-piece *opedé* "shoulder-blade house" or, invertedly, the celestial maize house as reproduced in the form of the Emberá house roof and the *kum-bedé* conical nose disk.

The varied instrumental repertoire of the manipulating hand reflects the complexity of the cosmic process. With its "hand-made" tools the hand acquires the same qualities which the tool demonstrates in action performed by the same hand. With its moving idiom the hand "works" the essence out of its "food" which is harvested from the *e* crust of earth. The food which has been deprived of its vital essence through this olfactory consumption of the *jua* hand is left as "faecal" matter for humans to savour as their food. This food matter is served on a plate which brings out another feature of its manual master when held by the hand. As "plate" it is *epedeko*, "*ko* of *e-bedé*" which begets the *a* food for hungry humans. The plate is thus the wide-open "olfactory mouth" and "uterus" of the *emberá* hand people who present their smelled sexual food as faeces on its round opening. This is smelled food, deprived of its aroma, which humans see as *kodá*, as food, but it is also a kind of "enemy," *jurá*, who cosmic man confronts in a hostile meeting between mind and matter. There is no essential difference between the *jurá* enemy, the *kurá* bachelor and prepared *kodá* food-stuff. Food prepared for consumption is an enemy to the human mouth in the war between mind and matter. The leading enemy among hostile food-stuffs is the *po* maize flour. When it confronts the human mouth it presents itself as *pokurá* on the plate, as "*po* enemy," destined to succumb in the cosmic war against itself just as humans are when they are consumed to death by their cosmic ego. The close association between human *jurá* enemies and the *pokurá* "enemy" is suggested in the myth about the Emberá who reach the *dokarrá* entrance of the underworld. The fact that the Emberá drink *pokurá* maize flour results in the confrontation with their *jurá* enemies who are the same Emberá as matter stands to mind. Consuming *pokurá*, however, also implies the arrival of the Emberá to the *dokarrá* underworld. Thus, instead of three consecutive events in this myth we have only one: consuming *pokurá* maize flour equals producing and fighting *jurá* enemies as its equals killing one's own physical existence to be reborn into cosmos, i.e. to reach *dokarrá*. The mythical arrival of the Emberá to *do-karrá* is analogous to the "arrival" of *po* flour to the *o-karrá* throat when consumed by cosmic man. The principle of this event is explained by the "speaking" hand when humans eat their food.

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The Emberá conceive of the joint labour within a restricted and regulated group of people and members of the same household as four "arms," a metaphor which tells us that *physical humans* do not exist outside cosmos, *only the fourfold pattern of their executed work and labour, regulated by the cosmic code of the dru mind*. The Emberá instruct us to consider the *drua* universe as a living structure with nothing but fictive arms. The cosmic house does not have any arms nor does earth because true existence is within, not without. Consequently, as *jua* arms, which are likened to the acting pattern of Emberá humans, do not exist in a physical sense, nor do the Emberá. They, as well as the arms of the human body, are manifestations of Karagabí's creative effort to transform cosmic thoughts and intentions into flesh and blood, as matter to be seen, touched, and smelled through the *akai*-looking divine creator. The principle of *ju* is transformed into *jua* "arms" on the *drua* body and into *ka-kua* "bodies" on the *drua* earth. When the Emberá wish to stress that a person assumes a physical appearance in a mythological context they use the Spanish word "cristiano" as *emberá* describes the true nature of cosmic man whose existence and presence is of another order.

The Emberá consider the local community, a cosmos per se, as a construction of four "hands" which scratch the shared fertile *e* skin of their shared *drua* cosmos. Five ("fingers") times four ("hands") accomplish this cosmic "eating" as a constellation of 20 *emberá pichi* that give the "total" cosmos as *emberá abá*, one man, cosmic man. This vigesimal pattern of 5x4 directs Emberá society and social organization.

The classification principles for Emberá social organization are still insufficiently understood. Principles of Emberá social organization are said to be based on the exogamous bilateral kindred. There are no prescriptive marriage nor residence rules but it has been stated that "persons prefer to marry an individual just outside of their kindred domiciled on the same river or, if none is available, a kindred mate of an affine in residence elsewhere" (Stipek 1975:79). The terminological system varies between Hawaiian (Darien and Dubasa) and Eskimo (Buey, Nauca and Baudó) (Deluz 1970:3; Faron 1961:97).

Historical data suggest, however, that the organizational pattern of the Emberá may have been based on a vigesimal system of four times five units. The Swedish naturalist Georg Dahl, who spent several years among the Emberá Katío in NW Antioquia argues that the local alliance system was based on five intermarrying "clans." The clan he visited, the Domikó, could only marry women from four other local groups: Jumí, Zapia, Casamá, and Majoré. Thus, the Domikó group entered into a system of marriage exchange between five segments of an endogamic compound which maximizes the number of marital relations to twenty, to produce a

closed cosmos of "one man," *emberá abá*, cosmic man.

Only weak hints of this fourfold organization are possible to trace in the historical information. The Emberá settlement seems to have been structured into clusters of vicinages of 4-5 houses each, under the leadership of a local chief (AHNB:CeI 11:963). The Chocó "nation" (Sp: *nación*) were said to form an entity of five separate "provinces" (Sp: *provincia*) each one with a local *cacique*. One of the earliest references on this matter is found in the *Relato* by Fray Martín de Medrano from 1574, which explicitly states that "Chocó" consisted of "five provinces all of the same tongue" called *Mamananbira*, *Tabira*, *Termiji*, *Ysaza*, and *Guaya* (Romoli 1977:18). A cosmic community of five is also suggested within the sphere of Emberá myth which states that Karagabí (or his son Sever) got five sons who staged the cosmic war with their Kuna enemies (Santa Teresa 1924:14).

Cosmic man, following the principles of the alliance system mentioned by Dahl, thus establishes his *kimakai* status by acquiring his complementary *kima* from any of four external groups available. The Domikó cosmic Ego realizes itself as created *drua* universe, *abá* oneness, and as *papa* creation by means of this integrated pattern of established four complementary *kima* alliances. Domikó is created as a fourfoldness from within itself. This "creation" is reflected in its name: *ko* of *do-me*, *Domikó*, *domé* made "edible."

The Domikó cosmic Ego is a *juapapa* creation as a consequence of its established fourfold alliance: a "thumb" united with four fingers which makes it a *jua* hand and thus, in the perspective of the human individual, a *kakua* body.

Cosmic man as a vigesimal structure, built of 4x5 interacting constituent *je-me-ne* "fingers," is described as *emberá abá*, "twenty" considered as "one man." A synonym for "twenty," listed by Pinto (1974:157), neatly describes this digital nature of the *kakua* body of cosmic man by referring to "twenty" as *juadroma abá*, "one big hand." The role of the four hands within the sphere of the cosmic body is compared to the role of man within the sphere of the fourfold alliance system of the Emberá "cosmic" community. The *kakua* body of cosmic man is the vigesimal cosmos of *juadroma abá*, "one big hand," where four hands with five fingers make "one big hand" of twenty: the cosmic vigesimal uterus of *ju*.

The vigesimal structure of the Emberá cosmos is explicit in the *kenaya* interaction of warfare. In 1639, Vega, a Citarabirá witness, explained that for each Spanish soldier "there were twenty Indians because the whole earth assembled for this purpose" (AGI:SF 196:307v). Vega's statement must not be read literally for his motives were of another order. The

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construction "one soldier against twenty Indians" implies that each encounter between a soldier and an Indian is a cosmic clash in terms of "twenty" or "one man" who meets himself just as (vigesimal) *ju* meets (one) *jurá*. In fact, the inverted perspective of this combat is imagined in Kuna thought. The Kuna were the *jurá* enemies par excellence for the Emberá. Nevertheless -- or perhaps for this same reason of being bitter enemies -- the two peoples seem to have shared similar cosmological values. The Kuna regarded the killing of an enemy a "religious" act which was necessary to quench the sun's thirst for human blood. Furthermore, the Kuna warrior was bestowed an honorary title when he had killed *twenty* enemies (Requejo Salcedo 1908:128).

The acting pattern of the four *jua* hands of the cosmic body is repeated in the social interaction between the four categories of marital alliances which formulates the cosmic uterus of the Emberá dwelling and household. The four hands united in the *kimakai* marital arrangement and perpetual union of man and woman -- the *mo* stone of the cosmic Ego -- uphold the structure of the fourpiece *bedé* "house" of man's chest like the four pillars which uphold the roof of the Emberá dwelling. Each pillar represents one of four categories of inlaws available which supply the cosmic house with conceiving *chi* essence for cosmic regeneration.<sup>4</sup> To this is added the mythological analogue of the fourfold *jenené* (*jenené* as a body of four *jenené* trees) and its four burnings lights (Santa Teresa 1924:8). Thus, we here have the analogous chain of cosmic conception consisting of four scratching fingers (cosmos as hand), four scratching hands (cosmos as *drua* chest), four acting intermarried alliance groups (cosmos as house), four interrelated *jenené* trees (cosmos as river and sky). These four different images of the Emberá universe yield an identical pental structure out of their fourfold interactions.

In myth, each of the four *jenené* trees which shape and carry the celestial "roof" of the *jenené* arboreal cosmos is related to a burning light. Similarly, the image of the fourfold cosmos of the Emberá house with four supporting pillars and four conceiving fireplaces, one for each affinal category, is suggested in a historical reference from the early 17th century which describes the "*Tarabirá*" (Citarabirá) settlements: ". . . in each community this witness saw *eight* big houses and each house has *four* hearths and in each hearth the mentioned Chocoes declare that there exist and that they bring up *four* huge Indians without their women and the rest . . ." (AHNB:CeI 68:933v). The informant, who was a Chocó Indian of the Tatamá group, alludes here to the fourfold nature of the vital firestead which tallies with its crucial position in Emberá ideas about cosmic conception. His description is an idealized image of the principles which direct the process of "pentaconception" in native

thought.

As members of the cosmic Ego, "we" are *tachi* (*ta-chi*) while "you" are *pichi* (*be-chi*), as people of within. As members of a domain outside the cosmic Ego, "he" is *ichi* (*e-chi*) and "they" are *anchi* (*a-chi*), representing people of without, seen as faecal *a* matter on the *e* shell of cosmos. The meanings of these personal pronouns are denoted with reference to Ego - so who is Ego? Who am I?



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## THE PETRIFIED EGG

The personal pronoun "I" is expressed as *mu*. I have already argued that cosmic man is not formulated as to gender; he is not male and female, he is *me* inside *ke* (rendered in the created structure of the *me* tongue within the *kirá* vaginal face). This inherent nature as *me*-inside-*ke* is summarized in his/her designation of himself/herself as "I," *mu*. "I" refers to woman as well as to man because they both consider themselves as a created being of "*me* inside *ke*," as *mu*. By all evidence, *mu* is related to *mu* (*mo*), a concept which is usually translated as "stone." My arguments for such an identification are briefly submitted in this chapter.

Emberá thought presents various expressions of stone symbolism, usually associated with man and his metamorphic nature. In myth, humans are transformed into stones, created from stones, and sometimes killed by stones. Stones, rocks, and mountains with salient forms appear often in myth where their origin and local importance are explained.

The domestic use of stone artifacts is nowadays limited to the traditional hand-mill and the grinding of maize for the ritual *chicha* beer used in the shaman's ritual healing. In times of war, stones earlier served as cheap, effective weapons against the unsheltered enemy. When the Citarabirá Indians in 1645 accompanied the troops of Pedro de Santiago in an attempt to explore the Baudó river basin they carried loads of stone and slings which they used against their enemies, the Minbocana (Isacsson 1975a:104). On this occasion stones were valuable but scarce "ammunition" which had to be transported all the way from the upper Atrato river to the muddy shores of the stoneless lower Baudó river. Slings were also used against the Spanish intruders. In 1639 the Spanish commander Hernando de Osio put the Citarabirá of the Bellavista community to flight, "abandoning spears, arrows, slings, stones, clubs and fire bombs which they had brought" (AHNB:CeI 68:408r). During the siege of the Nauritá stronghold in 1684, a witness saw the Citarabirá assaulters provided with "a lot of stones which they threw with slings or with their hands" (AGI:SF 204(6):816r).

Fatal throwing of stones also occurs in the mythical world. Ventura is threatened by an ogre disguised as a deer and is advised to hit him with a

stone so as to get rid of him (Pardo 1984:189). Formerly, ownership of land seems to have been validated by ceremonial throwing of stones. By planting stones, the demarcated land was identified with its human owner and "planter." Perhaps this was one way of applying the inherent significance of magic stones, repeating the metamorphic power of Karagabí's speech when he made words change into acts and objects in mythical time. According to myth, "passing where the people were working, he asked them, 'what are you doing over there?' And some of them answered, 'I am sowing stones,' and immediately that which he was doing changed into stones" (Santa Teresa 1924:13).

Where do stones come from? Emberá thought suggests that stones proceed from within the world of below embodied in the shape of the "black" *Antomiá*. The Emberá say there are two kinds of *Antomiá*: *Antomiá torro* and *Antomiá paima*. Once, a woman decided to kill the black *Antomiá* so she threw him into a boiling pot with *moindú*<sup>5</sup> roots. *Antomiá paima* burst with a blow and from his stomach came fire, smoke, and stones. "If *Antomiá paima* had not died, we would not have had those things and the rivers would have been smooth, without any stone whatsoever" (Nociones 1929:96-97).

Jerupotouarra is able to change into stone and this is also his eventual fate in death. Like *Antomiá paima*, he is put to "death" with boiling water thereby being transformed into a beautiful stone. "When the old people saw that beautiful stone they began to shape it so as to make the hand-mill for grinding maize, *curuma*. When the chips of stone turned up they changed into animals which suck blood, such as gadflies, mosquitoes, bats and many others" (Isaza Bravo 1987:127-132). The same event occurs in Wounaan versions: "He told them that when he died he would become a stone. When he turned into stone, the others began to cut it" (Wassén 1963:72).

Jerupotouarra reborn as stone is the mythic motif which establishes a direct relationship between the distinguishing character of Jerupotouarra and the nature of the hand stone (*iúkida*, *mokida*, *kuruma*) used for grinding maize. The *iúkida* hand stone bears the same thirst for menstrual blood as does its sinister progenitor, the ravenous Jerupotouarra. When the hand clasps the *iúkida* stone to "eat" the maize by grinding it into *po* flour, cosmic man in his *kabai* labour as maize grinder repeats the act of Jerupotouarra's drinking women's menstrual blood, consuming the *chi* essence out of the maize while leaving its visible manifestation of this "smelling" act as *po* menstrual blood being offered to humans as *po* flour. By drinking *po* flour humans thus turn into Jerupotouarra themselves when consuming "menstrual blood" from the "vaginal opening" of the *epedeko* plate.

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Emberá myth supplies more evidence about Jerupotouarra's "stony" nature. In his quest between the cosmic levels he is able to change to a blue stone so as to fall to the land of the *chiaperara*. But in order not to fall too heavily he utters the word *mojoupuda* (*mojopodo*, *mónporo*) which changes his nature from that of a heavy stone to that of the light silk cotton produced by the balsa tree (Santa Teresa 1924:57; Pinto 1978:118; Pardo 1984:64). Balsa shares the nature of the *mo* stone which allows this alternating metamorphosis between lightness and heaviness as rendered in the native term for this wood: *mo-jou*.

Man appears to possess the same power to transform his character. The first man and woman who Karagabí created were imperfect as they only could laugh and not speak; this pair of humans was made from a semi-precious stone called *mompauara* (Santa Teresa 1924:10), presumably the same "blue stone" into which Jerupotouarra changes in his cosmic flight. The same mute beings of the true world of below are also said to be made of wood: "There is, according to the Chocó, also a world of below but this is no inferno for bad people, there live other beings who never die and whom God created out of wood before he created the Chocó Indians, . . . from these people the Chocó originally got their maize" (Nordenskiöld 1928a). These balsa beings are the same *chiábera* people who in other myths are the primeval donors of maize and who portray the true nature of Emberá humans as beings originating from "stone" or "balsa," as *mo* beings.

The *mojou* (balsa) nature of man manifests itself in a variety of ways in Emberá culture and mythology. Artefacts of balsa play a prominent role in the shamanistic healing rituals and in myth humans find their refuge in the *mojou* cylindrical containers used to store maize.

The close connection between stones and humans is accentuated in ritual acts during the period of seclusion for the girl having her first menstruation. The first period of strict isolation ends with a series of measures to bring back the girl to human existence through an act of ritual rebirth.

After a fortnight the rigour of the seclusion is somewhat moderated. She may leave her confinement and sit close to the fireplace in view of everybody but still maintaining a complete silence. She is allowed to eat pork provided that she eats it sitting on a millstone. During this second period of seclusion, her mother relieves her from three parasites from her head and kills them on a particular stone on the river which they call *motzitzí* through which she remains immune against any kind of sore (Santa Teresa 1924:78).

The three lice in the girl's hair are suggestive of the three golden ladies

of the celestial lake on top of the *Torrá* peak who comb their hair free from lice. The lice, removed from the girl's head and killed by her mother, are "eaten" by the *jua* hand as a consequence of the *kenaya* killing act taking place on a *mo* stone which holds the binary *chichi* principle. The *mo-chichi* stone originates from the riverine subworld as does the reborn female human whose physical creation is manifested by the *umbeá* lice of her head. In fact, the girl's mother "eating" the three lice of her daughter's head with her hands and nails stages the mythical role of the woman who rips off her head to eat her own lice, a metaphor for the "yellow" fruit of above. As *papa*, "mother," she embodies her processual role in cosmic conception. The association between essential eating and stones also surfaces in the situation where the girl is bound to sit on a millstone while eating pork.

Man's relationship to stones and trees also finds expression in his identification with the *jenené* "tree of life." I have already argued that the cutting of the *jenené* tree is not to be understood as a unique cosmogonic event in primeval times but an ontological mandate related to the appropriate and necessary behaviour of cosmic man as warrior. The *jenené* tree and cosmic man are one and the same and they share a common destiny.

The *jenené* tree is described as a species of silk-cotton trees (*Bombaceae sp*) referred to as *palosanto* in local Spanish, known as one of the most voluminous and tallest species of the Chocó forest. Species of silk-cotton trees, including the *palosanto* among the Emberá, are usually chosen to represent the "World Tree" or "Food Tree" in South American native cosmologies, some of which suggest a notion of the universe as a fertilized egg, "a kind of cosmic zygote that postulates existence as a continual and self-generating process of differently antagonistic, but complementary forces embodied in the drama of mortality -- death yielding up life and life surrendering to death" (Roe 1982:4).

By all evidence, the Emberá connect the *palosanto* tree with the same kind of metamorphosis which characterizes man as a transformable *mo* being. This species of the *Bombaceae* family is referred to as *moi* or *mo*. Interpreted as *mo-i*, "shell of *mo*," it harmonizes with the mythical role of the *jenené* tree in representing the shell which hides the true world and the water from man, the same *e* shell which must be cut open to make the water and the true world available to man anew. The mythical *jenené* tree keeps true existence inside its hard shell as the *emberá* human veils his true cosmic essence inside himself. His *mu* ego remains inside his physical *e* appearance. I argue that Emberá thought envisions this *mo* concept inside its shell in terms of a cosmic fertilized egg and that the *mo* "stone" is a metaphor for this zygote, found in man's nature as well as in

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the cosmic *jenené* tree. Does cosmic man also portray this fertilized cosmic egg in his description of himself as *mu*, "I?"

The stone works as a metaphor for the fertilized egg in an Emberá oral tradition which describes the metamorphosis of man and the simultaneous formation of the "stone" as the immediate consequence of the dichotomic union between male and female into the cosmic harmony of complementary opposition.

From the beginning when God created the humans, he gave them names and said, that those with the same name were not allowed to marry each other or to have any other relationship. A man and a woman who were cousins on their father's side did not believe him. When they were out collecting firewood, they made love to each other and, for this reason, God turned them into stone and this stone still exists in the San Juan (Nordenskiöld 1928:75).

The text stresses the fact that the lovers were cousins to each other, construing an incestuous relationship which follows the contextual pattern of the sun-moon interaction. The incestuous amalgamation between the two cousins implies the fusion of male and female into a new structure -- cosmic man -- which is the formation of *mu* (*mo*), a "stone," or, in other terms, of *mu*, the "ego" of cosmic man. This is but another way of expressing the structural outcome of the "incestuous" intercourse between two lovers eternally stuck together, the ontological fruit which, through the graphic metaphor of the "stone," is a concise description of the basic principle behind our created world and existence. The collection of firewood associated with sexual intercourse triggers the formation and fertilization of the fourfold cosmic womb and brings on its metamorphosis into a "stone," the facial intention of *me* inside *ke*.

"*Me* inside *ke*" has earlier been described as the facial intention of the "true *ko*," transcribed as "yellow," *koará*, which is situated within the fatal White Lady, the processual female which is the essential whiteness of the dual river, transcribed as invisible "white," *torró*. As a structure of "yellow inside white," the eternal cosmic intercourse assumes the shape and appearance of a bird's egg. As a matter of fact, the Emberá seem to confer a cosmic dimension to the bird's egg which they consider as *umú*, "mu of the way" (*u-mu*). They offer an image of what is usually referred to as a fertilized cosmic egg and hereby, in fact, hold up the egg as a graphic representation of cosmic man himself. As a consequence of his "yellow" intention and "white" process (the fusion of "male" and "female"), cosmic man is indeed a "stone," a *mo*, or as he describes himself, a *mu* ego. The cosmic zygote presents itself as "I," not as an individual point of reference but a cosmic ego dressed in the individual

disguise of its physical representative. "I," cosmic man, am the "stone" of sexual fusion, the fertilized egg of processed intention, eaten through eating.

The *mu* concept is beyond individual and sexual categorization. Men and women alike refer to themselves as *mu*. An examination of the terms for "man" and "woman," however, discloses the essential difference between the two as well as their respective roles in cosmic conception. "Woman" is *uera* or *muena* (*muera*), the meaning of which possibly has ties to the "female" ephemeral shell which encloses either the cosmic way (*u-e-ra*) or the *mu* "stone" (*mu-e-na*) as the physical manifestation of the embracing White Lady. Both the vegetational cover of the human world, *oi* (*u-e*), and the *jenené* tree, *moi* (*mu-e*) (through its female guardian, the *jentserá* woman), have female connotations associable with the *uera* (*muena*) terminology.

It is tempting to read *muena* as *mu-e-na*, or "mu-shell-before," with a view to the woman as the cosmic cook who processes herself into matter. Made into a "woman," she portrays the "female" transformation of process into structure as "she who is, before turning into the shell of *mu*." In this reading, the word is a linguistic metaphor for the metamorphic process behind the cosmic genesis I refer to as "the female face of the male intention."

This somewhat hypothetical interpretation of the Emberá word for "woman" as the created matter and "facial shell" of the cosmic mind seems justified when set against the complementary term by means of which its own signification is defined. The Emberá term for "male" or "man" is *mukira*. Thus, while "woman" is the created "female" face which the male intention, as a consequence of his fulfilled intention of entering, faces as his own, "man" is *mu-kira*, the "face of *mu*," embodying the same facial intention of the cosmic mind which eats itself into "female" creation. *Mukira* stands for the inner face of the cosmic mind -- the male intention to eat -- while *uera* exposes the outer face of creation. "Woman" is the fertile but transitory *e* "face" of our world and human appearance, the male intention "femalely" eaten into creation.

Unlike our own terms for gender, *mukira* and *muera* are not mutually exclusive. Instead, they are integral to each other's being, expressing a dichotomic whole which is the foundation and structure of the fertilized cosmic egg. They manifest the dualistic prerequisite of existence: the facial intention and the shell of the same and unique *mu* which unites them into the binary structure of cosmic man, as the cosmic "ego" of *mu*, shared by both and made possible through their sharing it.

The facial intention which is bound to eat its own opposite created fruit is the male essence of the cosmic mind, the intention of *mu* to enter and

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bring about the *ke-ta* transformation, the *kirá* "face" of cosmos which means our creation and the emergence of human consciousness.

Through the metaphor of the *drua* cosmic body, Emberá thought demonstrates the inevitable and necessary force of the male cosmic intention to pierce and "smell" its own matter so as to fecundate its cosmic womb anew. Jerupotouarra's fate describes this cyclical conception: the *mukira* faculty is acquired through the double *kenaya* act of killing Jerupotouarra into a *mu* stone and cutting him as *mu* into the *mokida* hand-stone used for grinding maize. The *mukira* male equals the *mokida* hand-stone which is Jerupotouarra, the voracious consumer of menstrual blood, he who drinks *po* whenever the women are "in a condition to do it." *Mukira* and *mokida* hereby become synonymous concepts.

We have already met the "face of *mo*" in another ethnographic context. In his role as fisherman cosmic man makes explicit the same context of eating/conception when he pierces the "deer-like" (*be-ke*) wriggling body of the *mokita* worm with his golden hook. This is yet another variant of the menacing "face" of the cosmic egg.

*Mu* is the cosmic ego which constructs and faces the matter of its facial intention, formulated as *pichi*, "you," and *ichi*, "he/she:" the "female enemy" of himself as matter to be regenerated through the *kenaya* event. Analogously, with his *aka* sight, *mu* constructs and observes his cosmic mind of *dru* as *drua*, the physical world.

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## THE CRY OF THE COSMIC EGG: WORDS AND MEN

Oral tradition holds that the homeland of the Emberá is at the headwaters of the Atrato and San Juan Rivers in mid-eastern Chocó. Even the distant Emberá Katío of northwestern Antioquia feel allied to this area, in particular to the upper Atrato and the site of Lloró at the confluence of the Atrato and the Andágueda Rivers, "the land of many deeds" (Betania 1964:14). Pinto translates Lloró or "Yoró" as "land," noting that Lloró "would mean the land of antonomasia, of the centre or axis of the katío world, . . . Lloró means something like the foundation of the world, its junction with the sky and the key of its end" (Pinto 1978:269-270).

Historical data also indicate that the Atrato and San Juan headwaters were the core area of the Emberá when the Spanish arrived. During the first Spanish attempts to conquer and control the gold districts of central Chocó at the end of the 16th century, the Emberá "provinces" were limited to the headwater area of the Atrato and San Juan Rivers, while the Wounaan were living on the middle and lower San Juan. The banks of the Atrato constituted the western limit of Emberá territory, which was surrounded by different hostile peoples in all directions except in the east where the Andes were a natural barrier to further expansion. This settlement pattern of the Emberá population remained more or less unchanged until the end of the 17th century.

The headwater area of the Atrato river basin has a salient role in Emberá mythology. Many of Karagabí's deeds are reported to have taken place here and this is also where the Creator departs from this world by climbing his crystal stairway to take up his abode in heaven with his "sister-in-law." Karagabí's stairway is said to have rested on a stone which is located somewhere near Lloró (Pinto 1978:185).

There are many other mythological instances of stone symbolism which are associated with Lloró and the Atrato headwaters. Karagabí transforms incredulous Indians to a stone upon which he engraves a message. The day anyone reads what he has written the world will come to an end. "The stone is a kind of rock with engravings; at its base it has Caragabí's footprint and it is accompanied by a tutelary stone in the shape of an



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animal stretched out" (Betania 1964:67). According to another source, this tutelary stone has the shape of an Indian who looks after the first stone (Evangelina de Cristo, quoted by Pinto, 1978:186).

Local toponyms frequently refer to stones on the upper Atrato, such as the fluvial names of *Mumbaradó*, *Mombú*, *Mondó* or *Munguidó*. Karagabí's stone of petrified Indians is said to be in the neighbourhood of the *Mombú* river which is an affluent of the Capá river debouching into the Atrato not far from Lloró. As *mombú*, "where *mo* is," the name of the river presumably denotes the position of Karagabí's stone and the place of his departure from this world.

The region near Lloró, however, is above all of cosmogonic importance. This is the spot on earth where the cosmic zygote is created and located. The incestuous intercourse of primeval times which changed into the undetachable and eternal sexual fusion of cosmic man took place in "Gioró." The outcome of this cosmogonic event is also described in terms of a stone: "Lloró or Gioró: It happened in those parts -- Chocó -- that God, as punishment for a sin, punished a couple, giving rise to the eclipses and leaving as a testimony a huge stone" (Betania 1964:50). This pristine act of the facial intention described in terms of an incestuous relationship shapes the fertilized cosmic egg of *mo*, the overall metaphor for the Emberá cosmos and cosmic man. The egg of *mo* signifies Karagabí as a creation of himself, as the "consumed" god inside the "female face" of Emberá humans, created out of his own intention to create. In myth this is described as an act of creation which takes place in *Mombú*, "where *mo* is."

The cosmic Ego in human disguise states his existence as *mubu*, "I am." The condition of "being" is a consequence of the fertilized cosmic egg of myself as *mu*, the "stone" of *me* inside *ke*. Inferring from this interpretation, I see the cosmogonic toponym of *Mombú* as conferring a meaning of "I am," the topographical point of departure for the anthropomorphized space of Emberá territory where the Atrato basin assumes the aspect of the cut *jenené* tree or cosmic man himself with its stony headwaters as the leafy crown and streaming hair of the *kirá* face.

There is a conspicuous connection between cosmogonic stones in Emberá thought and the territorial extension of their habitat. The area occupied by Emberá-speaking groups upon the arrival of the Spanish coincides quite well with the extension of stony banks of the Atrato river and its affluents. In the middle of the 17th century the downstream limit of Emberá settlements on the Atrato river was a small cluster of houses headed by a local leader called Lloró. On this site one of the first Emberá villages was founded by the Spanish in the early 1670's, receiving the name of San Pedro de Lloró. The modern village which now bears the

name of Lloró at the confluence of the Atrato and Andágueda rivers further upriver was in the 1670's called San Francisco del Atrato. Modern Emberá informants still localize the original village of San Pedro de Lloró, known as "the old village" (*Pueblo Viejo*) to the left shore of the Atrato not far from the mouth of the Samurindó river. While the banks of the middle and lower Atrato are muddy, from these surroundings and upriver the watercourse of the Atrato including its many affluents is all framed in stones, rocks, and pebbles. It seems as if the Emberá originally restricted their settlements deliberately to rivers with stony riverbeds. Bearing the metaphorical meaning of stones in mind, the reason for their choice seems to be founded in the belief of a close relationship between men and stones. In Emberá thought, the stony Atrato headwaters are the fertile *dokida* shores of the cosmic womb of below which abound in *mo* embryonic eggs as visible vestiges of the metamorphosing death of the black *Antomiá*, "boiled" to stones. These are the same stones which, like the grinding hand-stone or bloodsucking animals, are apt to cut and consume the vital essence of "menstrual blood."

The Mumbú debouches into the Capá river on the upper Atrato. The upper Capá river is still densely populated by the Emberá. It is mentioned in Spanish sources from the 17th century but under a different name. At least until the end of the 17th century, the Capá river of today was called Samugrado by the Emberá/Citarabirá, while Capá referred to a small tributary of the same Samugrado river. Mumbú is mentioned in 1685 as an affluent of the Samugrado.

The former name of the Capá is evocative in light of the evident importance which this river and its surroundings have in Emberá cosmology. I interpret Samugrado as Samugarrado or *samú-karrá-do*. *Samú* or *samó* (*chamó*) is the Emberá term for the crested curassow (in Spanish, *pavón*; *Crax rubra*) while *karrá* is "root." Thus, the name suggests "curassow-root-river." Such an interpretation would fit neatly in the mythological context of local topography and pinpoint the cosmological importance of this particular river for the Emberá.

The Capá is a river which flows on the axis of the Emberá universe. It is the home of the cosmic petrified egg and the scene of Karagabí's exploits. This position is manifested in its former name where *karrá* refers to the point of intersection between the riverine world of below and the celestial realm of above. We met the *karrá* concept when the fate of the *jenené* tree which is cut at its roots was described. The *dokarrá* entrance to the underworld is where the water is hidden from humans. In the same way, cosmic man the warrior complies with his mission of cutting the *okarrá* throat of himself as *jurá* foe, separating sky from underworld and "eating" himself to cosmic regeneration with his *jua-*

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directed *neko* knife. *Karrá* represents the edge of the cosmic womb where the metamorphosing *ka* power manifests itself, the starting-point of metamorphosis. On the cosmic body, the fertile *e* cover or skin is transformed into being at a point called *e-karrá*, which we recognize as the human back. Remember that the back is the point where the *jua* hands and their sharp *pichi* nails cut the human "tree" at its roots to eat its essence in the cosmic intercourse of the *mo* egg.

The Emberá point out that the *mo* concept is endowed with *karrá* as well by referring to its liminal appearance as a *mongarrá* "stone" at the river's edge, the stone which must be "seized" and "consumed" in different ways as the "root" of the fertilized egg. *Karrá* is also the name of a tree which is traditionally used for calculating time; the year begins when its fruits ripen (Pinto 1974:164). Thus, in all its aspects, *karrá* stands for anything that begins or comes into being.

The Capá or Samugrado river is the topographical point of reference for the transformation of the *be* essence or the coming into being of *Emberá* humans on the earthly *e* cover. In its modern name, Capá testifies to the same phenomenon as the place of *ka-pá*, the metamorphosis of *pa* growth. In its former name, as Samugrado, the same river manifests an identical role as the *karrá* "root" of *samú*, the point of metamorphosis of the crested curassow. For what reason then is prominence given to this particular bird?

The region of the Mumbú river and the site of Lloró is the scene of Karagabí's exploits in primeval times. This is where he celebrates his *jemedé*, this is where the cosmic egg arises from cosmic "incest" and this is where the *jenené* is cut. Here is Karagabí's home and haven after his victories against the Kuna and from here he vanishes into the sky on his stairway with his sororal housewife. The headwaters of the Atrato is Karagabí's place on earth.

Karagabí is the one who accomplishes the cutting of the tree. Thus he is also cosmic man the warrior who cuts himself into recreated matter as he is also "she" who cuts the *e* skin with his *pichi* nails in cosmic intercourse with himself. As the son of his "father," the binary *chichi* principle of the *dru* mind, Karagabí is the male intention which eats its fruit at its "roots." By means of his *kabai* labour of cutting he knows the *karrá* "roots" of transformation and creation. He is *Karra-kabí*, the "root-worker." He who works the "root" is He who knows metamorphosis: the Creator.

Karagabí, in his created structure as *mombú*, reappears disguised as the crested curassow; Karagabí is cosmos and so is the *samú* bird. After his nocturnal sex with his "sister," Karagabí disappears mysteriously. Next time he appears in the myth he presents himself in the body of the crested curassow and speaks to the two sons he has begotten with his "sister."

Karagabí has assumed the aspect of the crested curassow to instruct his spectators and us that he, as a consequence of his own begotten transformation, has created himself into matter, into the structure of cosmic man, into the joint creation of underworld and sky, of intention and intention accomplished. For this reason he chooses the metaphor of the crested curassow. In the first place, the curassow is a bird which is *ipaná*, the "bridge of the *e* shell" which shows the transition of creation (*pa-ná*) in its flights between heaven and earth. Primarily, however, the bird is a *chamó* (*samú*) species, capable of representing the *mo* arrangement, the cosmic structure of the fertilized egg made matter: it is *chiá-mo*. The crested curassow is an image of the binary structure of cosmos and cosmic man, an accurate demonstration in matter and behaviour of the making of the Emberá cosmos: Karagabí within "herself" as "the female face of the male intention."

Several of its salient features make the crested curassow an appropriate metaphor of the abducted god, fettered within the matter of cosmic man. The divine presence within the *chamó* bird is but another way of describing *Emberá* as cosmic man. And they do resemble each other. Like any *Emberá* man, the male bird wears its proper golden *kumbedé* nose ornament on top of its powerful *kidá* beak. Males have a yellow outgrowth on their beak which the *Emberá* refer to as *ibanakumbedé*, "bird's nose ornament," comparing it to the *kumbedé* of humans. The association between crested curassows and nose disks is confirmed by the fact that pre-Columbian nose disks from the Cauca Valley bear designs depicting the crested curassow.

The crested curassow has a black plumage which is the vestige of the event where Karagabí's "sister" paints his face with the black *kipará* (*jagua*) dye. Karagabí himself says so when he explains his avian appearance to his sons: "His face was still dyed with *jagua*, the sign. 'Look, this is the sign that your mother gave me'" (Pardo 1984:45). The black bird represents physical creation in terms of *paimá* black, produced by the female process of painting, *paai*, which turns "his" facial intention of invisible white into "her" face of materialised black. The magic of *kipará* chromatic metamorphosis is displayed.

The head-feathers of the curassow are hooked in a characteristic way which reminds the *Emberá* of the "hooked" nature of *ki-dúa* leaves of the cosmic house roof. Considered as *chii* by the *Emberá* speaker, feathers bear the same aggressive power to cut as any other manifestation of "hostile hair." The hooked head-feathers of the crested curassow explicitly emphasize this feature. Powerful claws give birds their ability to seize or cut and the crested curassow is distinguished by notably long digits set in the same level.

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The true image of the cosmic mind is the *drua* chest. For the same reason, that which makes the crested curassow of particular interest and relevance to Emberá thought is not found on its exterior but within its body. The *ochirú* trachea of cosmic man indicates the entrance and road to the cosmic womb but the crested curassow is also able to demonstrate its magnitude. The trachea of this species has an extra convolution running along the pectoral muscle, a remarkable feature which the Emberá hunter presumably interprets as an indicator of the incomparable distance of the cosmic way. For this reason, the chest of the crested curassow is the *drua* world which Karagabí the creator selects for his abode.

Man the hunter also has his own means of manifesting the cosmic nature of the crested curassow. Besides hunting down his peccary enemies and keeping their mandible as a "trophy" in the celestial uterus of his house roof, there is another "trophy" he also is eager to put there: the carcass of the chest of *kenaya*-killed curassows. This bird attests to the death and rebirth of the *drua* world, staged by cosmic man the hunter and, in the end, by Karagabí himself.

The *chamó* bird is a living metaphor for the fertilized cosmic egg made matter and *chamó-karrá* denotes the turning-point of its binary structure: the opening of the cosmic womb. Applying the same metaphorical idiom to the Chocó landscape the Capá river, as *Samugarrádo*, may be seen to mark off this crucial spot on the surface of the earthly womb. For the Emberá this particular river represents *the* opening and "vaginal mouth" of the cosmic *drua* world where the earth is the body of the cosmic bird and its head the celestial vault above. The Samugrado is the riverine mouth on the shore of which cosmic man passes his life multiplied into Emberá humans. As *samu-karra-do*, the river is the "mouth" of the cosmic womb which not only eats and talks but also defecates and begets.

The topographical metaphor of the crested curassow suggests that the river, indeed, speaks. The morphological peculiarity of an exceptionally long trachea found in this species also serves to amplify its characteristic shrill cries which resound through the Chocó forest. Karagabí speaks through the body of the crested curassow so this is the prime testimony of Karagabí's presence within his avian costume. His divine speech through a shrill cry which rises from the bottommost cosmic inside of the crested curassow brings us the essential knowledge of Emberá ontology: the meaning of the spoken word.

The *chamó* bird is the binary cosmos and the god speaks through its body. Thus, as cosmic man, *Emberá* is intermediary of the divine word as well. But what is this word, spoken and "born" out of the vaginal opening of cosmic man?

Through their metaphorical idiom the Emberá state that the river is a living being with a language of its own. The river is the uterine opening and metamorphosing cleavage of the cosmic egg which speaks its divine message, begotten by the cosmic womb. The speech of the river is visible because its spoken words are the people living on its shores. Man is born out of the river; his presence and behaviour is the divine speech of Karagabí, the Creator. Words and phrases are translated into matter and motion.

Visible speech, man as word - how do the Emberá convince us of the intrinsic nature of cosmic man, of humans created into flesh and blood and yet only existing as sound? Cosmic man himself bears the evidence but the ontological principles of Emberá cosmology are only disclosed if we are able to decipher the cosmic code of the *drua* body.

Man must be recognized and identified on the surface of cosmic man, the binary structure of complementary opposition between body and head. If the Emberá human being depicts the binary cosmos on his body then he must also evidence his own presence as a physical being on himself as cosmos. In order to perceive his presence we must return to the metaphor of man's face and physiognomy and sum up what has been postulated with reference to its relationship to the riverine landscape of the Emberá habitat.

The mouth cavity in the human face represents the river in its meaning of an opening to a cosmic space below, the teeth are its river-banks and the lips are the final edge of the vegetational cover of the *e* skin of the cosmic body, the *oi* forest partly covering the *dokida* riverside of the facial river. The *kumbedé* nose disk is a minute representation of the house-roof reaching from the celestial riverine nose, the *dokembú* headwaters, to the river's edge of the *dokida* teeth. The communication between the celestial house-roof and the river's opening of below is maintained by means of the *kiramé* tongue, wriggling up the riverine mouth and touching the edge of the *kumbedé* disk like the *domé* stairway leaning against the edge of the house-floor.

By observing the metaphor of the human face and paying attention to what cosmic man says, we can perceive the birth of man out of the riverine mouth and see his climb up the "stairway" of the *kiramé* tongue to present himself under the house-roof of the golden *kumbedé* disk. Through his divine speech Karagabí manifests the true nature of his created man: man is word. The spoken word is the riverborn Emberá human who ascends the stairway of the *kiramé* tongue, as a progeny of the facial creation -- the cosmic womb of *me* inside *ke*, separated into the two "speaking" components of "tongue" and "teeth" of the *kirá* framework which make man as word come into being. Man as a created

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being is not matter to be touched or seen, but to be heard. Man is an audible being of sound.

The spoken word moves across space as humans do. The floor and walking-ground of spoken man is as unperceivable as his own physical existence. Man the word walks on the invisible white blood of the human breath which conveys him from the depth of the cosmic throat up onto the surface of cosmos. Cosmic breath, menstrual blood of invisible *po*, flows from the toothed river mouth bringing man the word above. As a being of sound, man walks on his *kidapo* "ground" of "white" *po* produced by the "facial" circle of vaginal *kidá* teeth. This is the ontological truth which cosmic man demonstrates in linguistic terms when he refers to the actual floor of the house as *kidapo* as well. When humans set their feet upon the *kidapo* floor of the house, they manifest their true nature as beings of sound, conveyed across the cosmic space of the house on a flow of *kidapo* breath as sets of word-people ordered in meaningful "societies" of phrases: the divine speech of Karagabí from within the cosmic body of *Emberá* humans.

The analogue of the spoken word explains the unconditional need for *po* flour for the transportation of humans across space, as it is described in myth; man travels as word and words need breath to move. Cosmic man can only speak as long as he breathes, man can only walk as long as there is a floor to walk on. Whenever *Uera Torró*, the female process of cosmic man (the mythical women preparing the *po* flour) is "in a condition to do it," "he" produces "menstrual blood" as a prerequisite for the conception and birth of man as walking word.

Man as word shows the true nature of man as a creation on the outside of the cosmic womb. His appearance as tactile and visible matter is an illusion, his physical creation is audible -- and transitory. As a child of the fertilized cosmic egg, he comes from within the concept of *me* processed into *be*. As a spoken word, true man (the germinated *be* on the *e* cosmic shell, *emberá*) is *bedea*, "word" as the transitory, momentary *a* matter of the *bedé* "maize-house," *bede-a*. The golden *kum-bedé* nose disk indicates the celestial and *kirá* "facial" origin of man the word.

Man is born in two ways. His birth as word, spoken out of the celestial river is his true coming into being. His physical appearance as a human is an illusion of putrefied matter or excrement. This difference is demonstrated in the bodily metaphor of man; while his celestial face speaks man as sound, his opposite anal face "speaks" man into birth as excrement, "deposited" into the river.

As a progeny of the facial creation (the cosmic zygote of *me* inside *ke*), man the word is no longer classifiable as to gender; he is not male, nor female. He is cosmic man, the binary cosmos molded into intentional

sound. Man the spoken word is a reflection of the womb which begot him, he is the bearer of the binary principle of *me*, of the *omé* way of cosmic "twoness." His *omé* nature is summarized in his mother concept, the divine voice of cosmic man which speaks him to existence. The Emberá call attention to this duality by referring to "voice" as *mimi*, a variant pronunciation of the *meme* concept.



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## IN THE HOUSE OF THE CRESTED CURASSOW

Though cosmic man speaks "people" out of his mouth, one piece in this comparative metaphorical context is still missing: the binary cosmos of sky and underworld which surround the Emberá as listening and observing humans must also be able to speak. Interpreted as the cosmic *chamó* bird, earth is represented in the bird's black body, the river where Emberá humans dwell is its mouth and the celestial vault corresponds to its head and the golden nose disk. But where is the cry of this cosmic curassow? Can we listen to Karagabí's speech and hear his word as the audible evidence of the true nature of man?

To begin with, a summary of what has been postulated with reference to the creation and existence of man would stand us in good stead. First of all, man as matter rises from the river, as *a* beings which smell like dead people according to the mythical beings in the true world. This people of dead matter are the Emberá as physical, observable humans living on the river. Applying this image to the cosmic metaphor of the human body, the "faecal" nature of humans is compared to *a* faeces and their birth from the river is demonstrated by the *drua* body when defecating into the same river. Faeces are a metaphor for the rotten, lifeless nature of physical humans. Man's defecating into the riverine womb is an accurate demonstration of the mythical event when the people of below are said to receive human faeces falling from above.

Secondly, man's true existence as sound is made explicit on the cosmic body of man himself, where his voice and words represent the true physical existence of man on the outside of the cosmic egg. Man's lifetime is figured as an explosion of intentional sound.

Thus, on man-as-cosmos (the human body as a cosmological tool and explanatory manual) the true physical creation of man as sound and as "cosmic man" is separated from his illusory, physical existence as tactile matter and as individual defined by gender. The former and the ontologically true creation -- audible cosmic man -- is born out of the mouth of man-as-cosmos, while the latter and ontologically illusory -- the tactile and visible individual -- is defecated out of the *amburú* anus, the "*po-do* or "head" of *a* faecal matter," the anal riverine mouth of man-as-

cosmos.

Let us now return to the picture of the binary cosmos where earth is the *drua* body, the river its mouth and the sky its head. This is the world we perceive below, around, and above ourselves. Yet, on this cosmic level, we have not identified the analogue to Karagabí's creation of "cosmic man," made explicit through the metaphor of spoken words by man-as-cosmos. The only humans we can experience are the physical individuals of men and women, spending their lives by the river but they are matter, not sound. The fact that people speak is irrelevant because we are dealing with two incomparable levels of interpretation: man as speaker and man as spoken. Where, then, is the analogue of man as sound in our world, the audible being of "male within female?" Are we as "cristianos" able to *listen* to the existence of cosmic man somewhere between the river and the sky the way we perceive his existence as divine speech on the lips of man as cosmos, i.e. on the lips of ourselves as *emberá*?

There is but one track to follow. This cosmic being of pure sound, indeed our own cosmic ego as pure sound, must also manifest itself as an offspring of the celestial House of Maize, as a matter of *bedé*, if it is indeed analogous to man as "word," *bede-a*. Karagabí speaks this being into creation as his divine word-child. Karagabí, the speaker, hides behind the mask of the cosmic *chamó* bird and there, inside its plumed shell, within the head of the crested curassow, his unspoken word-child roams. This is "his" word which is himself, the foetal word which is the "yellow intention," Karagabí himself as word not yet begotten. As soon as he steps out of his house, Karagabí manifests himself as a son of himself, the divine intention made sound.

The word pronounced by the cosmic *chamó* bird -- the cry of the cosmic egg -- is the atmospherical discharge which is recognized as "thunder" and referred to as *baa* by the *Emberá*. *Baa* thunder is analogous to the spoken word of cosmic man and, in this way, also represents "man-as-word" as the complement to "man-as-matter," the physical humans living by the river. Actually, both live in the same place on the cosmic body (a tautological conclusion as they are one and the same: the one is the true nature of the other): *Emberá* humans live at the *karrá* point of intersection -- the river mouth -- of the *chamó* bird ("*samu-karra-do*") and so does man-as-sound: *baa* thunder. "Prenatal" *baa* lives in the *bedé* house of the crested curassow and turns into thunder/word/man as soon as he steps out through his "mouth," speaking as god, as a son of himself. The contextual details are supplied by myth.

The young *Emberá* hunter who manages to escape from the sinister Beeswax Man keeps on running until he reaches a house inhabited by a man who later presents himself as *Baa*, the Thunder Man. After having

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experienced the essentials of cosmic fishing and hunting, the Emberá visitor assists his strange host in warding off the violent attacks of his animal enemies. In this context the listener incidentally learns about the strange house of *Baa*: ". . . the crayfish and the shrimps were struggling below the house to knock it down because the uprights were bones of the crested curassow and the roof of feathers" (Pardo 1984:80). Here, the avian roof of feathers joins the metaphorical context of "hostile hair" where the hooked feathers of the crested curassow bear the same piercing nature as the "hooked" *kidúa* leaves of the cosmic house.

As a matter of fact, while still escaping aimlessly from his beeswax enemy, the young hunter suddenly feels the invisible presence of the *chamó* house: ". . . he was walking and he was hungry and the curassows which were eating all kinds of plantains took to flight and he raised his eyes and there was a house with a man who was making an arrow . . ." (Pardo 1984:86). Here, just in one sentence, the context between *chamó*, *pa-tá*, and *ba-a* is given. The relationship between plantains and the Thunder Man is repeatedly stressed in the myth; *baa* is the prime "roaster" (*bai*, "to roast") of *patá* plantains but this takes place *inside* his *chamó* house where he still is the "prenatal word" - performing the *bai* process of *ba* into *pa-tá* embryonic food for humans to eat into cosmic regeneration.

The house of Thunder is also recognized as *baade*, "house of *baa*." On a forested hilltop close to the banks of the upper Ocomitá river at the foot of the Western Cordillera a dark hole indicates the opening of a cave which is referred to as *baade* by local people. The dark hole is seen as the visible mouth from which Karagabí delivers his divine thunderlike words made men. This dark hole is situated at the borderland between heaven and earth, on the metamorphic point of *karrá* where the opening of Below meets the opening of Above, at the crossroad of the binary cosmic river which runs counter to itself.

As ignorant humans we can only perceive one of these two rivers. The one we see comes from below, the *banea* water of which is our own origin as physical beings. But the complementary river which comes from above, from the uterine opening of the celestial world, also exists. This river is the invisible river of "creative essence," "*ba-ne*," which ejects us as "words;" it is a river of "essential water" rather than the visible river of tactile water, *bane-a*, materialised "*ba-ne*."

We cannot perceive this distinction with our eyes but we can understand how it works by contemplating Karagabí's masterpiece, the *drua* body of cosmic man, where the two rivers are separated into the mouth begetting words and the anus begetting matter.



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## THE PRENATAL WORD

*Baa* is the cosmic counterpart of cosmic man as word and sound, and yet the two are deadly enemies, always eager to destroy the other. *Baa* is Emberá as well, but he is as prone to destroy humans with his bolts of lightning as they are to kill him, threatening him with their arrows raised towards the night sky. Their mutual antagonism appears incontrovertible.

As the matter of *ba* and metaphor for created man, *Baa* Thunder represents the physical *jurá* enemy from above who confronts his own self, the cosmic ego of *Emberá* as essential beings of the facial intention "from below." The nocturnal challenge between *Baa* Thunder and cosmic man is the inevitable war of *kenaya* attraction between mind and matter, the facial intention of eating itself into genesis. *Baa*'s important role in Emberá cosmology is to tell us that the matter of man's opposite *jurá* self is sound, not flesh.

In mythical times *Baa* Thunder seemingly had yet another enemy: Karagabí himself. This is how the story goes, according to Severino de Santa Teresa: "The Thunder was a very rich Indian who lived in a hut of gold, more beautiful than that of god himself. Caragabí wished to change huts with him, something which Baha opposed, categorically refusing to do so. As Caragabí was more powerful, he seized him by his hair and threw him into the air, telling him to live in that element. He carries a drum in his hand so as to announce to people when the rain is coming" (Santa Teresa 1924:53).

The antagonism between Karagabí and the Thunder is essentially identical to the nocturnal confrontation between cosmic man and his physical audible self, *Baa* Thunder Man. Karagabí's hands which seize the hair of his opponent are the same hands with which cosmic man in the true moment of nocturnal existence releases his arrows against the sky. At that moment, cosmic man's *jua* hands are the intentional invisible "hands" of the creator which dramatize the conceiving intention of the "true womb" (*ko-ará*), the "yellow" intention. The struggle is fought with the same kind of weapon, different manifestations of the piercing *kidá* point of the cosmic *chiá* arrow which eats itself into reproduction. Cosmic man's arrows against the sky and the lightening arrows of the

Thunder Man equal the challenge between Karagabí's hands and the hostile hair of his rumbling self, respectively.

Thus, this combat does not take place between two opponents but "between" just one: Karagabí and Karagabí as Thunder. The cosmic war of *kenaya* interaction between the facial intention and its opposite created self, the "female" *kirá* face, is here rendered in terms of an encounter between Karagabí and Thunder. As cosmic man the warrior meets his *jurá* foe who is himself as matter, Karagabí meets his antithetical self in a fertilizing fight where his "eating" (*ko*) intention becomes himself "eaten." "Creating" is metamorphosed into "created." Karagabí as "Thunder" (*ba* as *ba-a*).

The implicit meaning of this cosmic duel and its complex processual pattern is demonstrated by Emberá humans in their ritualized behaviour. It is evident that Karagabí and Thunder are the actors in the primeval contest of hair wrestling where Karagabí defeats his opposite self and throws "him" out of the house as his own substance: ". . . he seized him by the hair and threw him into the air."

In performing their violent hair trial of strength, the Emberá hair wrestlers reiterate this act of mythical times. The drama of *chioi* hair wrestling is performed inside the Emberá house which is the cosmic space of the feathered *chamó* bird. The loser of the fight embodies Thunder who once again is ejected out of the cosmic space of the house. The loser who is thrown out of this space is not only Thunder, however, he is the cry of the cosmic egg which is the divine word made man: Karagabí himself, fettered in the human disguise of his "female face."

The mythical challenge between Karagabí and Karagabí as Thunder describes in metaphorical terms the formation of man as sound. "Their" fight describes the ontological prelude to creation, the prenatal state of the word or the foetal formation of man and his concept of "existence." The outcome of the fight manifests the very creation of man and of his momentary "life," which is as brief as the transitoriness of a spoken word: Karagabí pronounced.

The formalized behaviour in hair wrestling makes ontological premises in Emberá thought explicit, demonstrating the principles and process of cosmic conception in action. The contenders, who are not two in number but of an *omé* nature, share in a context of dualistic antagonism which establishes the binary womb of complementary opposition. Two antagonistic pairs of *jua* "hands" are united in their common task of "eating" their opposite created "face" of above, the head and hair of their binary *jurá* enemy. The dualistic purpose of vanquishing an opposite self bind the "two" opponents together into the fourfold structure of the cosmic womb. The four *jua* hands of this womb eat themselves into a

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joint regeneration: the oneness of a sound created out of a fourfold origin. Hair wrestling is one of several ingenious ritualized ways the Emberá use to demonstrate the principles of the cosmic *kenaya* war which formulates and accomplishes what we conceive of as "creation" and "existence."

The intrinsic fertilizing process of the dualistic god imparts the two mutually exclusive aspects of man as a created being, bringing out the difference between "Man as Speaker" and "Man as Spoken." Man as speaker is the anthropomorphized structure of the divine intention; speaking man is Karagabí the Creator. Man as spoken is Karagabí as created -- created not as a human of matter but sheltered within the guise of sound, as testified to in his divine speech through man as speaker.

The outcome of the cosmic hair wrestling leaves us with one disquieting conclusion: He who is created is the *loser* in the fight while the winner stays inside! Evidently, the loser falls victim to creation while the winner remains safely "uncreated." What, then, does creation mean?

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## WORDS ARE EATEN: ON NAMES, MYTHS, AND PEOPLE

The personal name of an Emberá is the name of his cosmic ego, not of himself as individual. In existential terms, his name means much more than his physical presence. His name is himself created, the evidence of his true coming into being as cosmic man in contrast to his illusory appearance as physical bearer of the same name. Personal names are protected because whenever they are uttered the cosmic ego of its holder is born anew. For this same reason, to be born from a uterine mouth which is not your own is fatal as it means that you are compelled to existence out of your opposite *jurá* self. In fact, any utterance of names brings consequences which will affect the cosmic ego of its bearer if not handled properly.

"Name" is expressed as *trun* by the Emberá. As *trun* it is more than a name, it is the audible expression of the cosmic mind of *dru*: the vital principle of the dual river, held in the fertilized cosmic egg. Consequently, "to name something/someone" is *truai*, literally, "to create." This is a concept which comes very close to that which describes the ritual singing of the shaman: *druai*, performed as an act of true creation.

The name-giving ceremony, *jemedé tsake*, was formerly an important rite of transition which took place when a child was one year of age. The new and unique name was chosen by the *jaibaná* shaman who found the appropriate name for the child in his dreams. "Apart from the Jaibaná, some old Indians also bestow names, but these are not new names but repeated from Indians who died a long time ago, at least twenty years" (Santa Teresa 1924:92-93). The name must be unique as it is identified with its bearer. In colonial censuses of Emberá villages containing careful enumeration of all inhabitants, personal names are never repeated.

The intimate association between the name and its owner is confirmed by the belief that a deceased person must not be mentioned by name; anyone who violates this immediately suffers the consequences of his imprudence. Camino, writing in 1730, comments that the Emberá "are not permitted to mention him by name because they say that this will do



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harm to their tongue and teeth" (Arcila R. 1956:246). Speaking a name belonging to a person who has died, presumably less than twenty years ago, generates a pernicious spectre of liminal nature, the birth of which affects the same conceiving organs of the *kirá* womb, the *kirá-me* tongue and *kidá* teeth, which begot it to abnormal existence.

In the cosmic mind of *dru*, the life of man -- "his stay on earth" -- is an explosion of sound which evanesces as soon as it arrives. Why is sound produced and for what purpose are words formulated? Why does cosmic man leaves his uterine abode for a moment in an explosion of existence on the outside of cosmos?

As expected, Emberá cosmology is both laconic and enigmatic on these matters. Severino de Santa Teresa was told that in mythical time, Tutruiká insulted his rival Karagabí for not being able to create immortal humans: "To which Caragabí retorted, 'it doesn't matter. After death I will recover their souls and I will take them to heaven where they will be immortal'" (Santa Teresa 1924:11-12).

But Karagabí speaks also by means of the *mimi* voice of cosmic man, when Emberá informants explain that: "It is that which we speak which goes to heaven, '*acolemä*'" (Nordenskiöld 1928a). This statement makes explicit that the spoken word is related to man's "soul" which returns to celestial immortality, not when the speaker dies a physical death but whenever he opens his mouth to reproduce himself in words. "*Acolemä*" is synonymous to *Akoré-mé*; thus, the spoken word is "*me* of *Akoré*" which corresponds to the yellow intention of Karagabí. The return of the spoken word signifies the recovery of his own "thing" - his male *me* fruit liberated from its "female," transitory shell of sound.

Applying both these divine statements to the cosmic metaphor of man, we find the heavenly abode of Karagabí in the root of the *kembú* nose and the *datru* forehead inside man's head. This is the final destination of man as smell but how does man as sound, the divine word of *Akoré-mé*, finds its way back to eternity?

Words are spoken with a particular purpose in mind: they are meant to be heard. Listening confers understanding (*uri*) for the Emberá who accentuate the symbolic role of the human ear by their artistry and metaphorical associations. I have already suggested that words for "ear" (*kuru*, *kuburu*) are connected with the *ku* (*ko*) concept as a conveyor and processor of vital *chi* as it is expressed in olfactory conception where man is equated with smell.

Karagabí's creation, the facial creation of *me* inside *ke* configured as the head of man, accepts the physical structure of man as created being only in terms of smell or sound. The metaphorical imagery of the Emberá describes how the aromatic essence of man, the "sexual food" for the

*chiábera*, enters the *kembú* nose where it is conceived as *ne* essence. This *ne* is received and processed by the ear through the associative chain of *po* flour, flowers, golden ear ornaments, and hummingbirds. The equation between listening and smelling which is suggested here suggests that the Emberá are aware and make symbolical use of the connection between the auditory meatus and the nasal cavity. This "two-way" communication allows for a metamorphic "bridge" between the nasopharynx and the eustachian tube. The point at which the two incoming streams of *ne* meet accords with the innermost of the *kum* nose as the central point of the cosmic mind where *ne* is conceived, the site of the *bedé* uterine house.

In the same way as the nose "eats" the essence of man by smelling him, the ear "eats" his essence by listening to him as a savoury word; in both cases, this is a kind of sexual eating comparable to the *kenaya* killing. The *kuru* ear opens its mouth to extract the essence of the "maized" word in the very same way as the *jua* hand scratches the essence out of the maize cob by "shelling maize with the hand," an action expressed as *kurui*.

The maize word enters the ear as divine *me*: *Akoré-me*. Man the word contains the "golden" *ne* nature of *me*, as described in a synonymous word for "voice," *nemi* (*ne-me*); words shelter *ne* as do "things," *netá*. The golden *ne* nature of sound is also reflected in the "golden house" of the ear ornament (*ne-de*) attracting the *kidá* bill of the hummingbird warrior.

The ear eats words so as to beget them as *ne* essence in the cosmic mind of *dru*. But *ne* needs to be constantly renewed and replenished and this is accomplished by continuous recreations of "sound" -- man as spoken -- in an everlasting cosmic cycle of "birth" and "death." Creation is not primeval, it is a constant process which goes on forever in the incessant pulsating auditory eruptions of the cosmic egg.

When cosmic man opens his mouth as Man the Speaker he creates over and over again. By speaking "meaningful" words and phrases, he pursues the cosmic assignment of "eating his own thing," i.e. of maintaining and nourishing the *ne* vital essence of the cosmic mind.

When the Emberá tell a story as words meant to be listened to, they literally prevent *ne* from being lost. "To tell a story" is expressed as *nemburai*, which is derived from *burai*, "to keep, to shroud." A second meaning of *burai* is "to scratch," which explicitly makes the listener understand why stories are told. Spoken words are "scratched" by the *koi*-eating ear and conceived to keep *ne* within the cosmic mind: *nemburai*. Man the Speaker "sacrifices" himself as Spoken, giving up matter for the benefit of mind. Mind needs matter to remain mind.

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As expected, personal names are also created with the intention of being listened to. Severino de Santa Teresa's commentaries on the importance of naming and the faculty of speech are illustrative: "The Indian does not give any names to his children until these are able to respond to his calling. . . They even believe that those who learn to talk early will have bad habits, so that their mothers do not hasten to teach their children to talk" (Santa Teresa 1924:93).

But personal names cannot be revealed to outsiders. The Emberá still keep their own names secret, using instead their Spanish first name or any of a number of pet names in daily conversation. I was told that the proper name is only revealed between husband and wife when their first child is born, presumably as the mark of the final establishment of their *kimakai* union as cosmic oneness.

Cosmic man listens to his own words as well as to those pronounced by others but he does not speak to himself; he speaks for other people to hear, offering his words as "sexual food" for consuming ears other than his own. Other people offer their own words in exchange, establishing an alliance system of verbal *kenaya* interaction which mirrors that of Emberá society.

Cosmic man fraternizes with four intermarrying categories of people: the four "female faces" of himself as *jurá* matter. Thus, as Man the Speaker, he directs himself to four kinds of listeners when he formulates his words, giving up himself as Spoken to four binary ears. In the same way, as listener he receives and processes the words from the same social spectrum of four speaking *jurá* categories. His spoken words are his fourfold self, his own "female" created beings who are offered as sexual food to their four "marrying partners" of listening ears, anxious to consume them in a fertilizing *kenaya* intercourse between sound and hearing. Man as word is offered as "spouse" to eligible auditory partners from four possible intermarrying groups -- a telling metaphor in words for the suggested alliance system of "pentaconception" among the Emberá. Cosmic man speaks his words to four listeners who each answer by offering him his kind of words. These words are "marriage partners" in exchange for the words offered by the cosmic ego.

*Baa* Thunder has five arrows with which he eats his *be* animals, one arrow for each one of five different kinds of *be* sexual food which are meant for cosmic conception. Similarly, the piercing ears of cosmic man consume five kinds of words: his own words and those of the four alliance groups available as "speaking" partners.

Cosmic man is only able to conceive words -- himself as Spoken -- when he is able to direct himself to the four listeners of his physical self. Without "intermarrying" listeners, any formation of words is meaningless

as is the creation of people without anyone to marry. This is another way of expressing the principles of creation: the creation of the *jua* hand as a consequence of its fourfold alliance with the *juapapa* thumb is here repeated as the creation of man the Speaker as a consequence of having someone (four) to speak to.

The interrelated and "fertilizing" pattern of hearing and intentional sound as imagery of the social organization and alliance system in traditional Emberá society seems earlier to have found its expression in material culture as well. In 1669 Citarabirá chiefs and warriors were reported to wear a special kind of ear ornament of gold which consisted of "five rings, one of gold and the others of silver." As a structure of "one plus four," it comes close to the social classificatory ideology of the spoken word where the word uttered by the cosmic ego would correspond to the ring of gold while the four rings of silver would allude to the fourfold marriage alliance which makes possible the creation of the *jua* pentaconception: the *ju* cosmic womb as the five-piece *ju-a* hand or five-piece *nedé* ear ornament.

Interacting patterns of people and communities, establishing alliances of cooperation and marriage or fighting each other, create social systems and processes based on agreement or opposition which the Emberá equate with conversations between the cosmic ego and its opposed facial self. Conversation is seen as a verbal war of *kenaya* intercourse between sound and hearing which summarizes all those different manifestations of *kenaya* fertilizing relations which usually are classified as sexual intercourse between men and women, confrontation between hunter and prey, combat between adversaries in war, or the *kirá* "facial" meeting staged by the piercing edge of *chiá* and *neko* cosmic tools of conception used in any fashioning of "objects." The notion of conversation as a "human society" in words and sentences is the prime reason for making words and the ritualized performance of speech so important in Emberá society.

Following the ontological principles of Emberá thought, "sowing maize" can be performed in two ways, either as an action or in the form of pronounced words. In "primeval times" the pronunciation of magic words rendered the physical effort of "sowing maize" or similar actions superfluous. Karagabí shows this when he asks questions to his people: "And you, what are you doing?" 'I am sowing maize,' he answered, and that which he was sowing turned into maize. The same thing happened to anything else, except to the animals which did not exist in those times" (Betania 1964:43).

By means of this and other similar mythological references, Emberá myth communicates the true meaning of words to its listeners as much as

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it reveals the illusion of physical action which only characterizes "animals," i.e. man as "peccary." "He" who answers Karagabí's question is not a person, "he" is composed of words, transcribed as a human, which are begotten by the divine question. The last sentence -- "The same thing happened to anything else" -- stresses the fact that persons are not involved, only words, because "animals" (physical humans) "did not exist in those times."

Oral tradition indeed describes Creation in terms of a conversation between the opposing gods, Tutruiká of below and Karagabí of above (Santa Teresa 1924:11; Betania 1964:41), where cosmogonic processes are carried out through the conception of verbal interchange between the cosmic intention of "eating" (interpreted as Tutruiká) and the same intention "eaten" into creation (interpreted as Karagabí). This conversation is the moment when "God and the Devil joined" (Wassén 1933:110). The created fusion of the speaking complementary gods is reflected in the cosmic body of man, his *drua* chest and *utare* head.

In reverse, the "speech" of the *jua* hand is its intentional pattern of movement when it sows maize as a visual "sentence" of interrelated acting components; the *jua* "hand people" speak actions instead of words. Sometimes, however, their speech can be heard as well, when the sonic people of the sexual *tonoa* drumming, of the whizzing bull-roarer or of the shaman's rustling *parara* bunch of leaves. Often, the two kinds of speech appear together, as demonstrated by the sower charging his *neko* machete against his vegetation enemy to the accompaniment of his fierce shouting.

When the Emberá speak they give themselves up as Spoken, as words which are consumed for the continuous conception of other words. Words marry words into meaningful sentences where conversations become verbal societies and sonic metaphors for the true nature of their speakers as "existing" beings and as integrated members of social groups.

"Everyday life" for the Emberá is intrinsically ritual because anything that man does or says expresses principles of his behaviour as cosmic ego. The relation of the past becomes a mythical revision for finding the truth behind physical actions. When a historical story is retold, we are given an opportunity to "revise" the course of events by placing them in their cosmic context. Then the "secret" of the disappearing hunter or a mere war with the Kuna becomes a cosmic *kenaya* confrontation between mind and matter while a voyage along the Pacific coast is disclosed as an endeavour to enter the *dokarrá* gate to the river world of below, etc. In this way, our concepts of "history" and "myth" exchange tenors. The Wounaan myth about the Kuna warriors who are shot dead but who revive the following night to kill their Wounaan archers, from our point

of view, begins as a reliable description of a historical event. When the narrator describes the nocturnal revival of the dead, however, we feel he has gone too far, indulging in fantasies. An "authentic" historical tradition turns into the concoction of a "myth." For the Emberá matters are just the other way around; this is the point where historical fantasy turns true because myth reveals what actually takes place behind the "fantasies" of physical experience. In telling their myths, the Emberá "use" history to explain how matters really are, whether they took place yesterday, several centuries ago or actually are occurring at this very moment.

The telling of stories and "myths" becomes what we refer to as the historical truth of "wie es eigentlich gewesen" but the myth does not retell how creation came about or how things were in primeval times. The myth *is* creation whenever it is formulated in words. In Emberá thought, "creation" is the coming into being of sound and of "words" so the telling of creation is the very same creation taking place anew. Myth does not refer to an event in the past, it is this very same event created again. The Emberá listener does not bother to find out whether a myth contains a "core of historical truth" because, to him, an observable event which took place in the past is an illusion, irrespective of the amount of historical evidence available; on the other hand, when listening to a myth he participates as an "ear-witness" in the formation of an event which is more veracious than any "historical past" ever can be.

Karagabí, the "yellow intention" of existence, recurs in the guise of the sage myth-teller in Emberá society who has the divine power and knowledge of creating his *listeners*. As a sonic experience creation is meant to be listened to -- and so is myth. As listeners to the mythological discourse the Emberá actively participate in the creation of themselves instead of playing the subordinate role of passive "believers" in a historical past.

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## CRIES OF DEATH

Man's coming into being is marked by sound, as the true evidence of himself as created being. In traditional Emberá society, the mother used to announce the coming of her child by a shout when she was about to deliver. The Spanish priest, Joseph Palacios de la Vega, writing in 1787, witnessed a case from among the Emberá Katio of northwestern Antioquia when the woman who was about to deliver went into the river accompanied by two midwives; "giving a loud scream, the Indian woman plunged into the water together with the other two. When they took a deep breath it was with the child" (Palacios de la Vega 1955). The scream from the woman is the true physical birth of her child followed by his materialised appearance when "defecated" as *a* matter out of the riverine anus. Nowadays, the arrival of a man-child as sound is sometimes announced and indicated by the father's firing his shotgun from the house down into the river.

The conceived sound, here the scream from the woman or the shot from the father, originates from above and falls vertically into the river, just as the lightening arrow of *Baa* Thunder which threatens man with his thunderclaps from above. These manifestations of sound, spoken from above, enter the riverine opening below and conceive man as *a* matter. "The word was pronounced and man was born" is a serviceable paraphrase of Karagabí's magic words of creation. The scream from the mother or the shot from the father is the same spoken sound which I construe as Karagabí's begetting conversation in myth.

Without going further into the subject here, I believe that the association between human conception and the vertical fall of sound can also be expanded to include the widespread symbolism of the sound of falling fruit which occurs in Emberá mythology as well as in many other native societies of South America. But the question is, does the fruit really fall? In fact, does it ever move at all? Emberá cosmology suggests it does not.

Man is born as sound and yet his birth seems to make him a corpse of rotten flesh. This is at least the opinion of the people in the other world who will welcome their human relatives, their "fathers," when they die,

but who not can stand the smell of their putrid flesh when they receive them, because to the people of the river world humans are dead and smell badly: "they held their nose because one smelled ugly, because it was like rotten one's body from this world. Because [in] the other world the flesh is transformed, it is not like living here." Man's reawakening from the world of the dead -- our physical existence -- takes place when he is truly born along the "true way of *be*," *beuará*, the Emberá term for our concept of death.

Since our concept of "death" is the conception of essential existence in Emberá thought, "birth" would appear to be associated with the destruction of cosmic man; as a human being born into our world he is declared dead by the people of the true world of below. If physical birth brings death to cosmic man, then the pronouncement of himself as sound, as spoken word, also must imply his destruction. This is, in fact, what the Emberá hold; cosmic man made into sound kills him. The connection between the making of sound and killing is evinced in Emberá terminology where *beai* means "to shout" as well as "to kill," while *jintai*, "to sound," is almost homonymous to *kitai*, "to extinguish." Shouting is seen as killing.

Provoking "essential death," i.e., what we refer to as "birth," is a way of killing. However, this kind of killing is a fertilizing act of *kenaya* intercourse. True killing must be of the same order as true birth, i.e. being born as sound. Consequently, provoking sound is provoking death, the particular way of killing we are looking for. This is the reason why the Emberá hold that shouting implies killing, or *beai*, literally, "to make *be* essence turn into *be* excrement," *be-a*. This is the same killing of his own *be* essence which is carried out by cosmic man the sower. He chooses between "speaking" or "sowing" the maize into its crop of death, *bea*.

The reasons for killing are embedded in the antagonism of the complementary opposition within cosmic man. An Emberá myth narrates another hostile meeting between *Baa* Thunder and man, where the confrontation is one of sound with words as weapons. The myth depicts a kind of "sonic war" with lethal outcome. The Emberá say that there are three kinds of *Baa* Thunder: *Baa paimá* (Black Thunder), *Baa purú* (Red Thunder), and *Baa torró* (White Thunder). Among these, *Baa torró* is benevolent while *Baa paimá* is evil, as is evident from the story about the black thunder and its destruction of speaking humans:

You could not say anything. You could not say 'louse'. When you say, Prah! [a rumble of thunder]. He who said 'louse,' it killed him. You could not say anything, anything. So when it killed, it remained silent. When a youth forgets; he says something, that 'bird,' right away, praoh! It killed him. And so it went



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on. You could not mention the thing of men, that is, you could not say *me*. When you say, *prah!* There it killed. The thing of women you could not mention, you could not say *ke*. Ouch, right away, *prah!* You could not say anything at all.

Then an old man [said], 'I am already old, damnit. I am going to die.' He went to a huge stone. He said it, '*ke!*' When: *prah!* Thunder burst. And they went looking at his ear, when a white man, he was feeling, white nails, the Emberá saw him. He disappeared.

'He is the one who kills us!' . . .

In this myth, a man finally succeeds in killing the evil thunder with his *measo* lance which he thrusts four times into *Baa paimá*, after which humans can utter words without exposing themselves to the risk of being killed.

As soon as a word is pronounced by humans, *baa* answers with his "words" of thunderclaps which are fatal to the human speaker. The myth evokes contexts already commented upon, such as the close relationship between *baa* thunder and stones as well as between hearing and "white nails" belonging to a "white man" who is at the bottom of this sonic killing. The Emberá of Catrú (Baudó) believe that, after a thunderstorm, *Baa* leaves its "nails," *baa pichi*, as proof of its bolts of lightning. These are sometimes found petrified in the shape of pelican or toucan bills.<sup>6</sup> Here, the nail assumes its true *kidá* nature as a piercing and consuming tool for killing and conception, for the lightning is the arrow of *Baa* Thunder.

What causes *Baa's* anger? Evidently, it is man himself who is to blame, as he provokes *Baa's* sonic killing of him with his speech. It is worth noting that the words said to have been pronounced by the victims all suggest a fertilizing nature related to cosmic conception: *me*, *ke*, *tu* (louse), and *impaná* (bird).

As already postulated, *Baa* is cosmic man as a sonic being. Consequently, *Baa* does not respond to man's fertilizing speech with his deadly thunderclaps. Instead, the myth uses allegory to reveal that man's utterance of conceiving words is identical to *Baa's* thunderclaps. Man's word does not precede *Baa's* "response" because they are the same, the "latter" is the true import of the "former," and the true import is that words kill. What is more, the word kills itself.

The process of this self-inflicted killing is phrased in the notion of the chromatic sound. The myth-teller explains that there are three kinds of thunder associated with colours, each of which is known to bear an essential meaning related to man's own cosmic nature. Consequently, black, red, and white thunder reflect the tripartite character of man-as-

word. As an offspring of sonic creation, man shelters an "invisible white" essence of the *dru* mind (his *Baa torró* character) while his creation as a sonic "face" out of his facial intention also makes him a "red" thunder (*Baa purú* as an image of streaming *po* blood of his created *burú* "head") but his coming into being as sound also evokes his opposite "black" illusory origin. In this, cosmic man is like the celestial Karagabí who looks down to "see" his black counterpart, Tutruiká of below, into creation. Analogously, man's birth as sound provokes the formation of his opposite, uterine self, described in terms of his *Baa paimá*, or the "black" aspect of sonic man. The myth about the destroying *Baa paimá* asserts that when man the word is born, he evokes the mirrored hostile alter ego of himself, his "black" origin. He is "killed" into regeneration, taking his black opponent with him, a fate shared with cosmic man as hunter, warrior or lover. In chromatic terms, when "white" turns "red," "black" is created to eat "red" so as to die and return "white." The same context was explained in the few but telling words of my Emberá informant, "Black Thunder is worse, Red Thunder is better, but White Thunder is best."

Man's purpose in pronouncing his word represents Karagabí, the "yellow intention" of existence and creation. The divine word is pronounced solely with the intention of destroying itself. The meaning of creation is its own destruction and physical annihilation because its death is the true way to the eternity of the cosmic mind: the *beuará* way of vitalizing "death." The cosmic mind needs to multiply itself into matter to feed upon so as to remain mind. This is the *raison d'être* of creation and "existence." The birth of the human child bears witness to this cosmic law; when the young mother gives birth she raises the scream which kills itself, i.e. the sonic essence of her baby coming up from the river. This is the start of a human lifetime which is truly but a moment in the eternity of *dru*, a moment of explosion out of its cosmic origin.

In Emberá thought, the "meaning" of creation is not man's momentary "life" *outside* cosmos but his "death" as the gate to regeneration *within* cosmos. By means of his own created "fire," the image of Karagabí as diurnal sun, man undergoes metamorphosis as a sonic foetus "boiling" in the huge pot on the rim of cosmos, the "pot" (*tsokó*) which equals the sacred territory of the *Chokó* province. Thunder Man's transformative act of food preparation is described in myth but also reflected in the Emberá word for "boiling," *baakai*. This is literally "*Baa's* metamorphic action" (*baa-kai*) where boiling is seen as a process of transformation through sound and fire. Allegorically, the *Emberá* are words boiling in the pot of their *Chokó* territory.

Now we can also accept why the warrior shouts or makes a lot of noise even before he can actually see the enemy. With his fierce shouts, the

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warrior evokes and destroys the physical presence of his enemy who is the warrior himself as the opposite *jurá* reflection of his *ju* intention. Analogously, his shout is his own physical presence as sound. He therefore confronts himself as the sonic enemy on the battlefield. His shout is "eaten" back to his cosmic ego as is the physical enemy when he is pierced by the *kidá* edge of his weapon. The *kenaya* intercourse of fertilizing killing with his weapon is paralleled by the way his *kuru* ear "eats by scratching" (*kurui*) him as pronounced shout, the "maized" sonic cover of his essential *ne*. By his shouting and making noise before battle, cosmic man the warrior is actually announcing the predestined and inevitable end of his enemy, the transient external appearance of himself as cosmic intention in disguise.

By declaring his enemy *umé*, "woman," cosmic man creates his own female hostile flesh into destruction. He creates his "female" sonic self which is the sexual food for his eating intention. But his shouting also manifests his willingness to give up his own flesh and not shun physical death in battle, an attitude which surprised the Spanish but probably formed an integral part of a wider ideology in northwestern Colombia: the overt acceptance of death "by the obsidian edge."

To sum up, the nature of man and the ontology of sound are intimately connected. Emberá thought postulates that: 1) Creation is a sonic phenomenon; 2) The intentional act of making sound implies the extinction of sound; the implementation of the intention nullifies its being implemented; 3) From our own conceptual frames of references, the ultimate purpose of creation is its inevitable destruction and prompt termination of itself; 4) Creation is a never-ending succession of sonic eruptions out of a cosmic intention; the "sunset of sunrise" of the "yellow" intention of *dru*, the dual river of invisible whiteness.

With this understanding we can pity the loser in the hair wrestling contest who is ejected into a creation lost in the very act and we can share the winner's satisfaction with the prize of victory: to stay alive inside cosmos.

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## JAWS OF EXISTENCE: BETWEEN ABOVE AND BELOW

The notion of the cosmic body runs all through this work. The complementary opposition in terms of head versus body or sky versus river world is a basic principle in Emberá thought as has been amply demonstrated. Nevertheless, the precise limits of this binary universe have not been defined and the transitional point at which one cosmic sphere changes into its inverted opposition has not yet been located. Where does the celestial world of above end and where does the river opening of below begin? What does it mean to cross these two realms?

The cosmic hair wrestling between Karagabí and *Baa* Thunder is said to have been caused by the divine desire for the golden house of *Baa*. The metaphor of Emberá hair wrestling tells us that the divine duel is fought on a housefloor and yet, I claim that it neither takes place in the glittering house of Thunder nor in Karagabí's modest dwelling but somewhere in between.

The fight between Karagabí and Thunder is, in fact, a cosmic encounter between the very same houses they represent through their "persons." Their contest is the cosmic clash of *kenaya* conception between the House of Above (the sky or "Thunder") and the House of Below (the river world or "Karagabí"). But, how can I claim that Karagabí, the creating god, belongs to the river world if I earlier have identified him with his own creation: the sky world and the facial creation of the human head above? Before discussing this apparent incongruity, I must place the god's envy for the golden house of *Baa* in its proper cosmic perspective.

In the first place, I have already claimed that this is an internal fight "between" a binary force within cosmos where the contenders are Karagabí and Karagabí as pre-thunder. "Karagabí" represents the facial intention of below while "Karagabí as pre-thunder" is the facial creation or the "female" structure of *me* inside *ke* of above, the *be-kirá* face. This upper face of maize creation (*be* as an outcome of *me* inside *ke*) is the "golden house" of above which Karagabí as the yellow intention of below longs and fights for in his encounter with himself as created: Karagabí as pre-thunder.

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The dialectical pair of Karagabí and pre-thunder Karagabí is the same opposition we have already identified in terms of Tutruiká of below and Karagabí of above. Tutruiká is the "materialization" of the facial intention ("lunar Karagabí") which assumes its opposite nature *as a consequence of* its facial creation, Karagabí as sun. Karagabí, the divine intention of below who wishes for the golden "house" of above, is the same Tutruiká who desires and abducts the beautiful women of Karagabí's world. These "women" are here a human metaphor for the female facial creation of above, Karagabí dressed in the glittering female disguise of the diurnal sun. The creator's desire is understandable: as the yellow intention from below he envies the golden accomplishment of his own intention, the created house, which is his "female" processed self.

Karagabí, who is the creator of -- and identified with -- the facial world of above, represents the realm of below in his meeting with himself as thunder. The spatial definition of this event is instructive. The two contenders meet "halfways" to fight out their combat on the cosmic house floor situated between the celestial "roof" above and the riverine opening below.

The ceiling above the two wrestlers is the "toothed" upper entrance to the golden house of *Baa* thunder with the *dejurá* tension ring as a linguistic expression of the "enemy house" above. The actual house floor represents the "toothed" lower opening to Karagabí's house below. Both of these openings are covered with a *kidapo* floor; in this space between two floors of "invisible breath" circumscribed by two circles of teeth (*po* of *kidá*), Karagabí and Thunder are "float" in a cosmic embrace of aggressive attraction which composes their dualistic fusion of fourfold conception: the cosmic egg which nourishes the embryonic word.

However, a contextual hiatus remains unsolved: the house floor as the lower *kidapo*-coated stratum on which the cosmic conception is staged represents the riverine opening of below but *not* as river (body) versus sky (head). The *kidapo* house floor is the toothed river opening *of and within* the head, not *in opposition to* the head. Again, we must face the cosmic body of man to perceive the meaning of this distinction.

The offspring of the conception between Karagabí and pre-thunder Karagabí shows itself as the created *Baa* thunder, hurled out of cosmos as sonic man. This event transferred to the cosmic metaphor of the human body manifests itself as the spoken word expelled from the mouth.

The oral cavity parallels the space between the two *kidapo* strata of the cosmic house where sonic man is shaped in combat. The *kidapo* ceiling of the house is represented by the maxilla with its "circle" of teeth mirroring the toothed *dejurá* tension ring. Analogously, the *kidapo* house floor corresponds to the mandible with its "circle" of teeth which portrays

the round opening of the toothed *dokida* riverside.

This is a vivid linguistic metaphor. "Maxilla" is *kidatru utarebema* which explicitly reveals that it is analogous to the sky and the celestial realm of the attic. The word is the same as that used for "ceiling" or "attic," *utarebema*, with a secondary meaning of "god" or "maize of above" (*utare-bema*). "Mandible" is *kidatru ekarebema*, conferring a meaning of "maize of below" (*ekare-bema*).

The maxilla and the mandible constitute the dialectical structure of the facial creation (sky or head). They represent the complementary opposition between Above and Below *within the celestial realm of Above when defined in opposition to Below*. As indicated by its *bema* derivation, the jaw of Below belongs to the celestial face as does the *utarebema* jaw of Above. This association with the *be kirá* face is confirmed and strengthened by the fact that the Emberá refer to both jaws as constituent parts of *kidatru*, the *dru* concept of the *kidá* creation, which unambiguously places both within the context of the facial creation as the reification of the binary opposition within head or sky.

*Baa's* golden house of Above corresponds to the conical structure of the maxilla while Karagabí's house of Below is situated in the mandible. Thus, both houses belong to Karagabí as created god fettered within his "female" face. He is the binary creator who, in opposition to himself, is interpreted as two dialectical house-owners who meet in a *kenaya* combat for cosmic conception.

In order to comprehend the relationship between the two dialectical levels of "Upper" and "Lower" in Emberá cosmology (Head versus Body as Upper jaw versus Lower jaw within Head) we must turn to Emberá myth which is unsurpassed for its elucidation of contexts through compelling images. I refer here to a myth already quoted in this book which describes the man who climbs the guamo tree to pick its fruits but who is threatened by the laughing woman eating guamo on the ground below the tree. This dialectical two-level structure is an exact reproduction of the true nature of binary Karagabí as "wrestler." The opposition between the woman below and the man above corresponds to the opposition between the facial creation above (Sky or Head) and the facial intention below (River or Body). This contrast of the lower "female" process eating the upper "male" fruit, is repeated on the upper level where the man's *drua* body with his eating *jua* arms represent the same lower "female" process of eating as that which defines him as upper male fruit in the tree. By this, the man eating ("lower") his own fruit ("upper") while sitting in the tree-top (as a structure of "upper," defined as "tree-top" as opposed to "ground"), parallels Karagabí striving to eat ("lower jaw") his own fruit, the golden house of pre-thunder Karagabí

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("upper jaw"), as the binary god situated within the head of "upper," ("tree-top" defined as "head"). In this way, the complementary opposition of two jaws is identical to the image of the man eating his own fruit in the tree-top: the dialectical prerequisite of creation.

As demonstrated by the varied pattern of intentional movements enacted by the *drua* body and its instrumental *jua* hands, "lower" is associated with "female" motion and process while "upper" is associated with "male" intention and structure as given in the "facial" creation of process transformed into matter.

Consequently, the same distinction between "lower process" and "upper structure" is described in the internal opposition of the face where its representation of "lower," the mandible, executes the "female" process of moving and "eating" while its "upper" complementary half, the immobile maxilla, is the "male" everlasting intention in "toothed" disguise. In the same way, Karagabí from below is the active "processual" part in trying to gain the golden -- and static -- house of above.

Again, it is misleading to talk in terms of gender as this may foster the impression that "lower" Karagabí has a female nature as opposed to a male "upper" equivalent. This kind of femaleness refers solely to the intention of recovering the "male" fruit; "femaleness" is defined in opposition to its "male" fruit, "processed" back in the *kenaya* intercourse by the "female" nature of Karagabí as the marital cook of himself.

Within the metaphorical context of the mouth cavity, "Karagabí vs Karagabí," the binary cosmic intention which defies itself into conception is conceived of as two respiratory "rivers" running counter to each other. The rivers are of *po* "menstrual white blood" and they emanate from the two parallel *kidá* openings of above and below, the two jaws of the *kidá-tru* mind. Through its fertilizing "hair wrestling" (hair as *po*) this binary breath engenders the *mimi* voice as the embryonic matter of the word-child. Like the inevitable attraction of mutual hatred which brings two enemies together in war, the dialectical nature of the binary "male" *me* intention ("Karagabí vs Karagabí") generates and triggers the "female" process which makes the primordial intention accomplished. This accomplishment is a "structure of processed intention" conceived of as "creation." Creation as such is then "female" in matter while "male" in mind, it is the "female face of the male intention."

The *kenaya* intercourse between opposite *kirá* uterine devices (*ke* vs *ke*) is demonstrated in the aggressive encounter between the "upper" teeth and the "lower," processing the transformed *me* intention into regeneration: the chewing of *be* food. "Chewing" is expressed as *biakai*, which confers this meaning of transformation (*kai*) of the *bea* "maize matter."

On the understanding that A stands to B as A stands to B within A, it is

easier to accept my earlier statement that Karagabí's facial creation accepts the physical structure of man as created being only in terms of smell or sound. Man as smell is associated with the materialized cosmos of below, the *drua* body, but is accepted and incorporated with the head of above as a constitutional and complementary part of the facial creation as its own, moving, mother womb, the mandible of Below. Thus, man is accepted in terms of smell as well as of sound by the facial creation through its *koi*-eating by the nose and ears, while solid food is chewed as *bea* matter back to metamorphosis by going down the throat to the *drua* materialized cosmos.

The violent clash between the opposite jaws "fighting" over the coveted *me* fruit when chewing its sexual food corresponds to the martial encounter between two warriors whose united endeavour renders the same "fruit" of their effort, the *jom* fruit of war, described in anthropomorphic terms as a result of complementary opposition.

The "war" of the two jaws meeting over their shared *me* fruit, the dyadic *kira-me* tongue, constitutes an image of binary process and binary intention which, in conjunction, give rise to creation, the formulated word. The position of the *kiramé* tongue between two circles of teeth thus equals the binary Karagabí fighting with himself between the two "jaws" of the binary cosmic house.

The dual mechanism which triggers the cosmic outburst of creation is demonstrated by the interaction between the two opposed *jua* arms of the uterine *drua* body, where right against left is not to be interpreted as "male" vis-à-vis "female" but as the binary opposition of *me* which is the "male" twoness of the *o-mé* Way. This confrontation of "two" (*omé*) generates "femaleness," the processual agent of the *meme* intention which transforms itself into creation.

The conception of the *mimi* voice, the fighting loser which is begotten by the opposing jaws and bursts out on the floor of the dual river of invisible menstrual blood, describes an ontological principle which is repeated and made more explicit in the morphological idiom of the *drua* body. Here the violent birth of man as word and sonic creation is depicted in the imagery of the contrasting forces which make use of the bow and arrow as metaphors of a cosmic event: the conception of creation.

The initial position is taken by the two *jua* hands, the left of which clasps the central point of the bow while the bowstring and the butt of the arrow are clutched "between the first three fingers of the right hand". The bow, made from strong *meme* wood, holds the same twofold essence as the *mimi* voice, while the two *po* rivers of breath which convey the voice correspond to the two opposite *chi-ború* ends of the bow. The opposite



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ends of the bow, symbolizing the *poto* rivers which run simultaneously in opposite directions, are the binary sources from which left and right *chichi* essence emanate. The force engendered by the directional opposition between right and left is contained in the bowstring which releases the arrow. The arrow is the yellow intention held between the first three fingers of Karagabí's right hand which triggers the eruption of creation. The whizzing arrow is the image of sonic man who dies as a consequence of his fatal self-inflicted appearance out of cosmos.

As suggested earlier, the principle of the dual river (*dru*) which makes true creation as sound come true is represented in the dialectical interaction between bow and arrow. The bow is *e-né-dru-ma*, the explanatory instrument of a cosmic dialectical intention directed by its *jua* hands. The accomplishment of this intention renders its outcome, the facial creation which is its own intention created. The facial creation is the same arrow which is *chiá-kidá*, the "tooth" or face of *chiá*. The arrow is a composite structure of vital essence; the butt of the threefold grip is of *pichindé* wood, "house of *pichi* essence," the shaft is *chi-á* while the piercing and *koi*-eating point is the same *meme* intention to enter. The *meme* point is fastened to the shaft with *dchi* thread and *kandorróna* beeswax, indispensable materials of construction but also magically crucial for the transformation of released creation.

Analogous to the *úkida* blowgun dart, the *chiákida* arrow creates the very same opposite face which it intends to pierce and eat. The arrow is a metaphor for the sonic explosion of man outside his cosmic origin; when it is released it shapes the opposite female face of its essential self. The arrow is therefore the same *jurá* enemy who is the target of its trajectory of momentary existence outside itself, shot so as to kill itself back into regeneration in the *dru* mind. The facial explosion of creation is given in terms of an arrow.

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## THE KNOT OF EVERYTHING: KNITTING CREATION TOGETHER

The arrow is discharged to hit a target which is formulated simultaneously with the accomplishment of its intention to strike at itself. The target of the facial intention is the same *chichi* flow which in its confrontation with itself triggers off the arrow as creating creation. The target is the opposite facial creation or germination of the *ju* cosmic womb: the *jurá* enemy. This is a *jurá* enemy of fertile "edible" flesh or, as formulated by the Emberá, *chichi* meat. In this manner, the intentional *chichi* encounters its opposite materialised ego in the *chichi* "flesh" of its "female face." The intentional *chichi* consumes itself back to conception and rebirth as intention within *dru*, a process described in the metaphor of the enemy picking up the shot arrow which he has stopped with his hands or hair to return it to the intentional origin which made it possible. This event occurs as a momentary creation, the dyadic "motion" which runs to its contrary, the "sunrise of sunset." Creation is, in fact, a cosmic explosion of invalidated motion.

The facial creation as arrow is discharged from the central point of the *chichi* bowstring, at even distances from the opposite *poto* "heads" of the bow. This central position of the piercing intention is repeated when it becomes pierced by its own intention. In the myth earlier quoted, the Kuna boy hits a string right in the middle with his *meme* arrow. Thus, the arrow which is discharged or "created" out of the centre of the *chichi* bowstring, strikes itself at the same central point of its dialectical origin. It strikes the exact middle of the *chichi* metaphysical "flesh" of its *jurá* enemy, as demonstrated by the practising Kuna archer. When the arrow (the piercing intention) finds its target (its pierced self), the course of creation is over, after a burst of life as long, or as brief, as that of man in the everlasting perspective of *dru*.

The association between human flesh and the vitality of the *chichi* thread is formulated in myth where the material opposition of the cosmic ego is mirrored in the "maize" animals he pursues as a *kenaya* hunter with himself as prey. In mythical time these animals presented themselves as *dchin-dchin*, "a kind of animal, like thread." They are

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man's opposite flesh as monstrous *chichi* matter.

In Emberá imagery, the meaning of cloth and thread enters into the complex context of game, enemies, and women. Cosmic man performs a symbolical sexual intercourse with cloth which does not differ in essence from that which ties him to his "female," "hostile," or "beastly" opposite ego. Cloth and thread form a metaphorical compound of blood, enemy, and streaming *chi*, which is the target of the hungry *kidá* point of the facial arrow. The woman is the human bearer of the facial creation in Emberá thought; thus, her skirt of cloth is the foremost metaphor for the fertile hostile flesh which attracts the piercing intention. The Emberá point at this fact by referring to women's "skirt" as *jurá* ("enemy"), *oa* (*o-a* "blood") or *chió* ("way of *chi*").

In the inimical *kenaya* intercourse, the *kidá* facial intention cuts open its created self, be it women, game, enemies, heads, hands, hair or cloth. This contrastive relationship between death and fertility is found among native societies in the Amazon, such as the Shipibo of the Peruvian Montaña where cloth is used as a target for ritual archery during the celebrations of the girls' initiation. The famous Ani Shreati and Besteti Shreati ceremonies seem to manifest all these images of female hostility into one single context of ritual cutting which befalls the clitoris of young women, the head of men, the sacrifice of peccaries, curassows, and tapirs, cloth shot at with arrows, and ritual fighting with knives between the male participants.<sup>7</sup> The conceptual framework of the Ani Shreati is unclear, but several of its features closely resemble Emberá ritual behaviour within the *kenaya* domain.

In this conceiving war between cosmic man and his fibre enemy, the thread must also be able to cut, eat, and kill if the postulates of Emberá thought are to be obeyed. If man attacks his hostile cloth, then he is also bound to be a victim of his own action when his fibrous hostile ego is killed by killing in accordance with the principle of "the death of the archer." If man kills cloth, then cloth also kills man. How do the Emberá intimate this power of *dchi* thread?

It has already been suggested that the *dchi* thread is one of many manifestations of the metaphysical concept of *chi*. *Chi* cuts and consumes *chi* like its *me* nature does when it eats its own thing back to its origin. The close association between *chi* and *me* as the ontological principle of eaten from eating must by necessity include the intrinsic nature of *dchi* thread as well as its function in Emberá metaphoric idiom. Needles do seem to eat by piercing into flesh, as was suggested by the shaman's ritual action referred to earlier. Now I argue that needles also eat thread when cloth is produced. This requires, however, that the cloth which is eaten by the needle is also capable of eating, as a parallel to the confrontation

between cosmic man the archer and his fibre enemy. How, then, can we determine whether the thread has the power to cut, eat and kill?

The *dchin dchin* monster which Jerupotouarra meets in the mythological world is indeed a fatal fibre being, that looks "like thread," and inflicts death on humans. These are the characteristics of the *dchin dchin* as revealed to me by an Emberá informant in 1993:

It looks like a *tsokó* pot, a huge *tsokó* which is situated in a swamp. From this pot *dchin dchin* sticks out its tongue which is like a thread. The thread comes out a little bit from the swamp. It pricks you in your foot and you disappear down into the swamp. With the thread it sucks out all the blood and you die. This *tsokó* pot monster does not have a wide opening, it is rather like a small spout out of which it sticks the thread tongue. The name of *dchin dchin* has to do with thread.

The *dchin dchin* fibre monster is the basic principle of the eating *me* inside its *ke* cover which has so many manifestations in native thought. Here it is explicitly said that *dchi* thread is a "tongue," the *kira-me* concept of "me-inside-ke" which is the primary prerequisite of cosmic conception. In the same way, man's tongue is a piercing and eating "thread" which is "eaten by eating," as envisaged in many images of native thought in the Americas.

The making of thread and cloth becomes an act of creation which equals that of the arrow. The piercing point of the needle which eats the essence of the shaman's *chichi* meat also eats the vital *chichi* thread into patterned cloth with intentional significance. The way of the conceived thread is described as a metamorphosing act where "sewing" is *kaa-tui* or *ka-jui* (cf. interrelated meanings of *toi* or the word for "grinding," *jui*), stressing the *ka* nature of this work. In the same manner, "to weave" is *kai*, "to transform" (cf. *dau-kai*, "to close one's eyes" or *baa-kai*, "to boil"). The thread is begotten into essential life in the woven fabric, in a metamorphosis similar to the nocturnal rebirth of cosmic man when he closes his eyes to sleep.

This is the cyclical work of the fourfold *ju* uterine intention: to scratch itself into regeneration where the scratching intention becomes that which is scratched. The four *jua* hands scratch their joint fertile *e* skin into being so as to "eat" it continuously into an "eaten" cover of sonic matter seething with explosions. This cyclical creation of sonic shell around its intention is described by means of the rich imagery in Emberá thought equating cloth with the human skin of the *drua* body and the vegetational cover of the *drua* earth. Cloth, skin and vegetation are the fertile pulp coveted by the yellow *me* intention of within.

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Thus, the woven and embroidered cloth is nothing but the physical reproduction of its true creation which takes place within the cosmic body of its creator, the weaver. As is the case with the canoe maker, making cloth is a manifestation of *kabai* labour of learning where the *chichi* fabric is created onto its creator to enrich and nourish his foetal extracosmic body until the moment when he as "old" has become *zroa* with a *drua* body ready for cosmic rebirth while leaving his transitory *dru-a* matter and *zro-a* "old age" behind.

I once showed an Emberá shaman some colour photographs of 2000-year-old embroidered fabrics from Paracas, Peru. One of the motifs was an anthropomorphic being whose body has been said to depict a kidney bean (*Phaseolus sp*). My informant agreed to this and the justification for his opinion was revealing. "The reason," he said, "they have made it into a bean is because the thread goes there." He referred, in other words, to the crucial fact that the kidney bean is *kaa* or *chaakita* for the Emberá. As *kaa* it represents the same metamorphosing *ka* power as that which comes about when the thread is woven or embroidered into a vital cloth with an intentional pattern, while *chaakita* is a variant of the *chiákida* concept associated with vital *chi* and conception as well.<sup>8</sup> Observing another photo showing a spindle wrapped up in thread, my informant referred to the whorl as *kurujuma*. As this is also the term the Emberá use today for the *chakira* bead, his statement seems to confirm the "facial" nature of beads as "consumers" and procreators of the vital *chi* of man, his *chichi* flesh or "string of life" which *chakira* beads and *chakida* arrows covet in creation.

There is every indication that an unbroken, underlying dialectic runs between the Paracas mummy bundles, wrapped up in numerous expressive and colourful fabrics, and the complex *kenaya* ideology in Emberá thought. This tradition has survived more than two millenia, and has found multitudinous expressions all over the Americas, including the dominant role of cloth in Inca warfare, the Maya lord's practice of piercing his tongue with a ritual awl so as to pass a cord through it or the custom among the Kapon hunters of the Guianas who use a string of twined razor grass to cut its way through the nasopharynx and oral cavity.

For the Emberá the crucial thing in life is to tie the two opposing flows of *chi* essence together. The joining of two strings of metaphysical flesh renders the "oneness" of *abá* creation possible by means of a knot which is tied by the very same *jua* intentional "hands" which generate the two "strings" in their binary uterus. By bringing the opposite rivers of the *dru* mind together, sonic creation is attained. That creation is the ultimate meaning of everything because "everything" is *joma* and so is the "knot,"

*juma*. This is indeed the knot of everything because as *ju-ma*, it is the primordial expression of the *ju* uterine intention of the Emberá cosmos. Everything's knot manifests the eruptive force of the cosmic way of intentional twoness which brings creation and existence: the *omé* principle of the *dru* mind.

The trajectory of the released arrow marks an imaginary string of vital *chichi* essence between the *ju* uterine intention (here: cosmic man the archer) and its materialized dialectical self, the *ju-rá* enemy. As I have already argued intermittently in the previous chapters, in relation to the variants of the *ju/ko* concept stands a corresponding variety of *jurá/kodá* derivatives (-*tá*) and related *jurai/kodai* processes formulated by their mother concept, *ju*. Between the *ju* uterine intention and its oppositional *kodá* self runs the process which formulates this dialectical structure: the *koi* (*ju*) action of *ko* (*ju*). The "eating" action of *koi* equals the "destructive" action of *joña*, the "cutting" action of *koin*, the "grinding" action of *ju*, and the "ending" action of *join*. These different manifestations of the *ko/ju* concept have one common inherent meaning: the conceiving nature of essential consumption.

The *koi* process, however, also unites the intention to eat with its equivalent as matter to be eaten, as demonstrated by the metaphoric image of the archer and his self-inflicted death upon his consumption of his *jurá* hostile self. Here the *koi* process of eating is accomplished and made explicit by the "recoiling" trajectory of the *chiákida* arrow which unites the *ju* intention with its *jurá* matter or, in other terms, which brings intentional *chichi* (the bowstring) together with its materialized counterpart, the *chichi* flesh of the enemy. This intrinsic meaning of "uniting" or "bringing together" which is contained in the *koi*-eating process is evoked in the Emberá gloss *ju* (to unite, to join). Thus, the "uniting" process of *ju* → *ju* → *jurá* parallels the "eating" process of *ko* → *koi* → *korá*.

A binary flow of *chi* essence running counter to itself within the dialectical and complementary structure of *ju* and *jurá* suggests the image of a connecting *chichi* string which recurs as a motif in Emberá mythology. This string is the outcome of an antagonistic confrontation comparable to that between two enemies in war. In the myth of the *jenené* tree, the fatal grip of the *jua* hand of Karagabí squeezes his female foe, the *jentserá* owner of the tree, not into death but into the creation of the *jentserá* stinging black ant. With his hand the creator squeezes his female foe into two halves connected by a thin thread only (Pinto 1978:156-157).

A similar thin thread of vital *chi* is also established between cosmic man and his adversaries in the *kenaya* confrontation of *chiákida* "eating."

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In a version of the *Jerupotouarra* myth retold to me by an Emberá shaman in 1972, the "killing" nature of the thread-like *dchin-dchin* animals in the context of conception and birth is explicitly described. Here, *Jerupotouarra's* "mother" (alternatively described as "he") is "killed" and made pregnant by the *dchindchin* being which "seized her, like thread." The same "seizing" and cutting *chichi* "thread" ensues between the cosmic archer and his *jurá* victim by means of the arrow metaphor. The *jurá* enemy is captured with this piercing and fertilizing twofold *chichi* string which makes the archer pregnant with himself.

The fertilizing *juí* union of a binary "string" between *ju* and *jurá* is suggested in a particular habit which marked the fighting Indians of the Cauca Valley. Whenever they went to war they carried along cords with which they tied their captured enemies; "they marched against the enemy, carrying sturdy cords to tie up those they caught" (Cieza 1962:82). This custom also recurs as a central motif in Moche iconography of northern Peru where warriors are seen bringing their prisoners coupled with a cord.

The fertilizing nature of fibres, thread, and cords in native thought as well as its close association with a uterine concept seems to be confirmed by the Emberá term for "cord," *junkarrá*. I read this as *ju-karrá*, "the root of *ju*," as the intrinsic nature of cords shares the same meaning as that found in the concepts of *do-karrá*, *o-karrá*, and *e-karrá*, where *karrá* stands for a decisive crossing of coming into being or transformation where the metamorphosis of *ka* takes place. The cord which defines the dialectical *ju* confrontation and the *juma* knot which brings its opposite ends together make explicit the same "scratching" and "eating" character which marks other manifestations of *karrá* "root" turning-points. Analogously, "to line" or "to scratch" is *konkai*, the metamorphic process of *ko* (*ju-kai*), which concretizes itself as the *ju-karrá* cord between the *ju* poles of eating and eaten.

Transmitted to Emberá imagery of the *jum* cosmic war, the cord between the victorious warrior and his prisoner represents the metamorphic turning-point between the *ju* intention to eat and its dialectical *jurá* matter eaten. The cord is a "leash" for holding the captured enemy and it formulates a metaphorical umbilical cord of reborn cosmic man when seized by the hand of the warrior. Seen as *ju-karrá* the cord is the metamorphic "root" between the *ju* intention and its *jurá* matter, as *okarrá*, the link between head and body, *dokarrá*, the link between sky and river world or as *ekarrá*, between outer transient cover and inner perpetual mind of the *drua* chest.

The cord makes sensible the reuniting condition of the *ju* uterus; it is the sign of its fertilizing joining by eating itself, mirrored in the term

*junkoi*, "to join" or, literally, the *koi*- "eating" action of *ju*, *ju-koi*, as a way of "putting together," of being created anew. Interpreted as *junkarrá*, the cord between the complementary opposition of *ju* and *jurá* holds forth the reunited and regenerated *ju* uterine principle, as given by the Emberá verb *karai*, "to unite, bring together." Literally, the cord represents the "union of *ju*" in Emberá thought.

The cord between *ju* ("the facial intention") and *jurá* ("the female face") recreates the transitory shell which covers the cosmic intention. *Kará* is "down," "feather" or "hair" which covers cosmic man as created being, as bird or animal, and as human being. To be reborn through the metamorphic nature of the uniting *junkarrá* cord brings a cover of "down" around cosmic man, a layer of *ju-kara* matter, brought into existence through the cosmic *kenaya* interaction.

The *jua* hand demonstrates the principles of creation and existence. String figures, fashioned by the interplay of the *jumini* fingers, manifest the nature of true existence. The *dchi* string renders the outlines of created *netá* objects, invisible and yet existing through the image of the string as a thin skin of *chi* matter (or *kara* "down") which defines its shape around an invisible core of "clean mind." Wassén has recorded a string figure from among the Wounaan which depicts a house roof. What else would have been conceived by the cosmic *jua* hand if not the celestial *utarebema* "roof," the perfect metaphor for the world, held between the fingers of the right hand! Here, the true metamorphosis of the cosmic mind is shown in terms of a roof, "lined" in thread and thus also "scratched" (*konkai*) into existence.

The *koi* interaction between *ju* and *jurá* is the same confrontation of complementary opposition which is described in anthropomorphic terms as the encounter between *Tutruiká* and *Karagabí* in Emberá mythology. The divine intention is restored when its *jurá* opposition, *Karagabí* as the fettered diurnal sun, sets into his mother womb, the objectified river world of below, to be "eaten" (*koi*), "bathed" (*kui*) and "united" (*jui*) with his own intention which, in this act, complies with the stricture to "eat his own thing."

This is the moment when the two gods become one or, as expressed by the Emberá, when "god and the devil joined" (Wassén 1933:110). The union between *Karagabí* and *Antomiá* (*Tutruiká*) is the outcome of a binary opposition. The dialectical attraction of a mutual hatred and the combat between the complementary gods creates the same, unifying conceiving cord which unites antagonists in the confrontation of war.

The combat and verbal challenge between *Karagabí* and *Tutruiká*, the "primeval" creation, is expressed as a cord with which the god of above intends to tie and strangle his opponent of below. This is but another way



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of describing the consequences of killing the *jurá* enemy as an act which befalls the killer himself, "eaten as a consequence of eating." It is the *ju* intention, described as Tutruiká, of "killing" and "eating" the *jurá* self, described as Karagabí, which triggers the latter's attempt to tie his intentional self with the *junkarrá* cord. This cord eventually unites the dialectical god with himself when Karagabí, the setting sun, merges with Tutruiká to once again become *Dachi Sese*, "the everlasting male intention."

According to Emberá myth, the cosmogonic encounter consists of two more trials of strength and power for the opposing gods. In addition to the trial of the cord, the test includes the endurance of fire or boiling water and the trial of the water and the canoe. In all three of these trials -- by cord, by fire, and by water - the combat ends in a draw; the two gods endure all hardships so as to re-emerge more radiant than ever.

This same confrontation within the dialectical god is the fertilizing *kenaya* cosmic act of *koi*-"eating" which leads to conception and the metamorphosis of rebirth and reexistence, the coming into being of the fettered god, Karagabí of above, and his complementary self, Tutruiká (Antomiá) of below, the embodied intention of the cosmic mind (*Dachi Sese*).

Through their semantic usage, the Emberá neatly express the metamorphosis of conceiving consumption in the joint imagery of cords, water, and fire. To be tied with the *junkarrá* cord bears consequences which parallel those of being "washed" or those of being processed by fire and boiling water: they all bring metamorphosis and regeneration by means of the recuperation of the male intention and the *ju* uterine principle. This metamorphosis is explicitly described in the contextual semantics of the "washing" event in Emberá thought. To be processed by water can be expressed in different ways, all of which imply a wider and metamorphic context of consumption, conception, and annihilation. Some of these are summarized here:

*Kui*, to bathe

*Koi*, to consume, etc.

Comments: Bathing in the river is a way of being "chewed" between its *dokida* riversides. To bathe is to be "ground" (*juí*), "eaten" (*koi*), and "cut" (*koin*) but also "born" (*kerai*; *toya*; cf below).

*Jerai*, to wash/scrub

*Kerai*, to live/become

*Kitai*, to extinguish

*Jirai*, to elevate

*Jitai*, to seize

Comments: Ritual bathing at sunrise and sunset is an act which implies cyclical birth and death. To live (*kerai*) is to be seized (*jitai*), cut and smelled.

*Suguya*, to wash

*Sugu*, tool for fire-making

Comments: Washing is also cleaning and cleansing through fire. Transformation through fire: lighting fire (*baai*), roasting (*bai*), and burning (*baai*) are different manifestations of the life-making process because *bai* also means: to live, to exist, to be, to fall.

*Toya*, to wash

*Toya*, to be born  
*Toya*, to drink.

Comments: Washing is related to becoming/extinguishing, particularly accentuated during shamanistic healing and life-cycle rituals. To wash the head implies the "cutting" of the head (*boro-toi*), if done before sunset.

*Jogai*, to drown

*Konkai*, to line/scratch.

Comments: The act of scratching confers a meaning of being consumed and engulfed by the river, to drown. It is the transformation of the *ko* cosmic womb, *ko-kai* (*jo-kai*).

By all evidence, *juma*, the "knot of everything," is not dependant on the tying of cords only. Water and fire are also able to unify and tie the cosmic mind into everlasting cyclical creation as esoteric expressions of the *koi/jui* phenomenon which "eats" itself into revival in the rich imagery of Emberá ontology. Consequently, essential bathing and washing do not require water; they can be done with cords only:

Dumío twisted thin cords and at a distance of a *cuadra* he shot at them with a blowgun. The man also shot but he failed. 'He needs a lot of instructing', Dumío said. So the man bathed with cords and then he almost hit the cord. 'Yet another bath', the old man said. Then the man indeed hit the cord. 'Now you need only two arrows', the old man said. 'Let us kill peccary in the forest', he said (Reichel-

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Dolmatoff 1953:156).

This myth recorded from among the Emberá Chamí of Río Frío, El Valle, brings together motifs which otherwise are presented in separate tales. The message of the passage quoted here is not that ritual bathing leads to precision of aim with blowguns. The true import is that ritual bathing with cords is equivalent to hitting the cord right in the middle. These are two analogous ways of accomplishing the operation of *koi*, the conceiving consumption of metaphysical *chi* which is demonstrated in the binary "living" structure of cosmic man, *emberá*.

In the dialectic of the *jumá* concept lies the core of Emberá ontology. *Jumá* ("knot") and *jomá* ("everything") are the same principle of conceiving opposition which is so richly manifested in Emberá thought. As was revealed to me by an informant in 1993, "*ma* is odious, something that you hate". This idea explains why the enemy is *kiramá* (cf. chapter 47), he is the "detestable" face of cosmic man's physical appearance which must be recovered and eaten, and so must the "odious" *ju*, the *ju-má* knot of everything.

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## TRANSFORMATIONS OF ETERNITY

*Emberá* is not a human being in our sense of the word. As explained in myth, he does not bear the physical presence of a "cristiano." As *emberá* he is the illusory projection of the cosmic mind and its overall *be* vital principle, the processed "male" intention which is eternal. His physical appearance as well as his behaviour and language are cosmological instruments which objectify and concretize intentions and principles of the *dru* mind, otherwise only experienced in dreams, visions and thoughts. The true existence of *emberá* is not that of a physical individual defined by gender and acting physically "in this world." He is cosmic man, the explanatory image of the *Emberá* cosmos "in action," simultaneously inside and outside of his cosmic self.

In *Emberá* thought, "creation" and "existence" are explosions out of an invisible design which can be described as a uterine intention, the interactive elements of which are referred to as *me*, *ke*, *dru*, and *ko*. *Me* is the "yellow" intention which creates by creating itself. *Ke* is the vaginal processual "container" of *me* and the metamorphosing agent of motion into matter. *Ju/Jo* or *ku/ko* is the uterine device of cosmos which "smells" itself into conception by its *koi*-piercing intercourse. The *me* "yellow" intention manifests the *ne* essence of things created, a nature envisaged by *ne* gold. As "yellow" it is *ko-ará*, holding forth the radiant aspect of "the true *ko*," the uterine source of creation. *Dru* is the overall concept which expresses the dyadic nature of the cosmic mind. It refers to the two rivers of complementary opposition which is the energy source and primordial trigger of the cosmic clash of existence.

*Emberá* imagery is dedicated to explaining the illusion of space and time. The concepts of space and time are created, they do not exist per se. They follow from the formation of the facial creation which separates creator from creation where *ke* is formulated in time and space as a consequence of its opposite *kirá/kidá* "germ," the "female" face. On the basis of this separation, the "complementary opposition" between Upper and Lower is defined, the metaphorical framework of *Emberá* thought which finds its expression as body versus head, river world versus sky world, man versus woman, hunter versus game, etc. or, in fact, as intention versus created intention (*Karagabí* of above looking down to discover - *a-kai* - himself as intention, as *Tutruiká*

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of below).

The concepts of "small" and "big" are set in a cosmic perspective as well. "Small" is *chaké*, construed as *chiá-ke* and referring to the minimal size of the *chiábera* and the "small" perforated hole of the vaginal *chakira* and *kidá* "teeth." On the other hand, "big" is *zroma* (*droma*), as a measure of the boundless cosmic mind.

Thus, "small" refers to the spatially circumscribed, materialized version of the Emberá cosmos. The river world of the tiny *chiábera* is a metaphor for the physical world of humans. "Big" is associated with the undimensional cosmic mind of *dru* which is really an immeasurable magnitude beyond time and space. The *drua* world is not big but *dru* is.

Emberá ontology tells us that spatial and chronological dialectics are imaginary constructions because the parameters of time and space are undefinable. Our concepts of time and space follow from the illusory creation of the "female" face which is not a separate face from that which observes it but the same. This inference makes physical perception and *akai* creation impossible. There is only one cosmos, not two.

This incongruity is made evident in the notion of *me-inside-ke*. Does *me* go inside *ke* or does *ke* form around *me*? As I have repeatedly described, Emberá ontology lingers on this problem where the *me* intention of *going inside* chokes with the *me* intention of *already being inside*.

This cosmic event may be summarized: 1) *Uera Torró*, the "White Lady," instructs the man to insert his *me* until it appears in her mouth; 2) She tells him to let his own thing eat its thing in her mouth (*me* versus *me*) but this thing is his own thing already eaten; 3) This means that the only "face" existing is his own, acquired through his intention to "enter"; 4) Thus, *me* does not *move* to "enter" something else, the "female" face comes into being around *me*.

This "female" face is the creation of the uterine cosmic intention into its materialised exterior appearance, into the cosmic womb or, as it was phrased by my sage informant, into a universe "which is like a sack, *como un costal*, of perishable matter around a clean, everlasting mind."

*Ko* is the uterine principle which acts as *koi*, translated as "eating" but in the specific sense of "metaphysical smelling" accomplished through piercing or cutting. That which is eaten is formulated as *kodá*, a concept identified in the river names of *Miákoda* (Baudó) and *Nekoda/Mikora* (Atrato). *Kodá* is the opposite facial creation in terms of an opposite, inverted *ko* creation: *kodá* as *ko-dá*, *ko* germinated (analogous to *ke* as *kirá/kidá*). The same *kodá* creation is identified in the *jurá* concept, the opposite enemy who is evoked in order to be "eaten" by the same *ju* intention which made it come into being as "*ju-dá*."

The *jurá* enemy is made present by the shouting of the cosmic ego, the

warrior. When "shouting" is pronounced, *korai* is evoked, the process of creating the *kodá* matter, but "shouting" means death and destruction which is confirmed in the related verb of *jurai*, "to decompose." As a consequence, that which is "decomposed" (from *jurai*) is the same *jurá* enemy who is called out by "shouting" (from *korai*). From this we can infer that *korai* (to shout) stands to *jurai* (to decompose) as *beai* (to shout) stands to *beai* (to kill) or *jintai* (to sound) stands to *kitai* (to extinguish). These actions are three variants of the lethal purpose of sonic creation.

"Creation" is an unbroken, pulsating series of cosmic explosions likened to a chain of interlocked words and phrases in a continuous conversation between mind and matter, speaker and listener. The uterine design creates itself into a "sonic web," an invisible shell seething with explosions when the yellow intention insatiably eats itself into regenerated activity which will last until the day when *me* is detached from *ke* and the cosmic egg is shattered.

The cosmic explosion is the sonic manifestation of the vital principle of *dru*, the dual river. All Emberá terms which refer to explosions, cracks, fissures, and palpitations are described as "*dru*-ing" phenomena, emanating from the *ku* uterine principle. "To discharge" is *dru*; "to explode, burst, split" is *tojundrui* (*do-ku-dru*); "to beat, palpitate" (heart) is *jundrui* (*ku-dru*).

The binary nature of the *dru* mind makes its two "rivers" into one: *dru* as *do* (*to*). The multifarious contextual meaning of the *dru* explosion emerges in the wide array of analogous actions of the *do* river, described as *doi*. When the river manifests itself as *doi*, it drinks (*doi*), cuts (*tui*), gives birth (*toi*), is born (*toi*), fires (*toi*), rubs (*toi*), washes (*toi*) and clashes (*tui*).

The act of creation is transcribed in one single word, *jerandrui*, "the rising of the sun." This idiomatic expression is central to man's orientation in cosmos because here the "explosion of the facial creation" is revealed as *kira-dru* (*jera-n-dru*), the sun which sets through its rising intention in a luminous clash between sunset and sunrise.

The dyadic motion nullifies itself into a metamorphosing explosion where the energy of the opposing rivers is transformed into sonic matter, the "bang" of creation. The intention of the *dru* cosmic mind "creates" itself into that which it intends to destroy. As a bearer of the *dru* principle, the facial creation devises the dimensions of time and space by which one motion is separated from its complementary opposite, establishing the distinctions of upper/lower, creator/created, rising/falling, before/after, etc. as created manifestations of dialectical motions which actually occur simultaneously and thus invalidate each other in the clash of creation. The sun does not rise so as to set. The sun rises while setting, and so does man, as an action of *jerandrui*, the facial explosion. "To live" is *kerai*, to let the "face" come into being while, at the same time, consuming it.

Man is surrounded entirely by fiction, a pulsating reflection of an inner condition, because cosmos is found within man himself. In the brief moment of physical existence and individual awareness man has left this true existence to move out of mind as a consequence of the intention of eating himself back to his undimensional cosmic mind. His birth into this world is the making of embryonic "putrid" matter

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which is cooked with his own solar fire or "explosion" into regenerated life in the huge pot on the brim of cosmos. The Emberá envision this "pot" of mankind's existence on earth as their *chokó* territory which they metaphorize as maize food being processed by fire in the pot to be eaten and reborn. Man on earth -- the Emberá in their *chokó* territory -- is the same food which cosmic man the cook (Karagabí's "wife") prepares in "her" *chokó* pot on the hearth of any Emberá house. The consumption of maize food is the *beuará* way of the death of physical man which is the "true way of the maize," the renascent moment of death which joins him as individual with his cosmic ego to become *mu* - "I, cosmos." Man's sacrifice of individual matter for cosmic mind is accomplished in this way and the divine command of regaining the *me* principle is obeyed anew.

In definition of the clash of creation, "birth" and "death" are synonymous, and simultaneous, with each other. The birth and death that we as humans experience as the two separate and liminal events of a "lifetime" form the complementary whole of the binary opposition which constitutes the clash of creation. Our physical birth is our essential death, while our physical death is the end of our transformation, the moment which allows us to be born anew, into the "seething" pattern of sonic existence.

The command of the White Lady to "eat" is the process which creates the purposeful manifestation of itself. The intention to eat, *koi*, is the simultaneous action of *ko* which begets that which is eaten. It begets the intention of *koi* eating. *Koi* as an act of "birth" and "death" in one yields the instantaneous event of creation.

"The rising of the setting sun" manifests the purpose of *koi* eating and shows us the essence of creation and existence. The setting sun is an illusion. Or in other terms: "birth" is the "death" which makes "birth" come into being. The clash between rising and setting (birth and death) is the metamorphic, creative "bang" which makes the cosmic mind stay forever. Our concept of creation is the sonic "fixed-point" -- the bang -- of cosmic transformation which the Emberá refer to as the *karrá* root of existence.

Existence as an atemporal concept of transformation is inferred from ontological principles in Emberá thought. My final interpretation of the notion of existence as transformation starts from one of numerous ethnographic metaphors used by the Emberá to explain and shed light on ontological problems: the metaphor of the reflective mirror.

According to the mythological discourse, there was nothing prior to creation, only the intention of "eating" (*koi*). The moment of creation reformulates the intention into matter, envisaged as the rising sun at daybreak or as humans born out of the cosmic river. Creation assumes its configuration while rising, turning into the celestial vault which encapsulates the fruit of its making: the *me* principle turned *be* maize including *e-berá* humans and the *be-chia* sun. As the man experiences when he meets the White Lady, the consequence of his entering is the emergence of his transformation as the *kiramé* tongue enclosed in the "vault" of his own created human face and head, the "female" face and sky which is the "facial

creation." The true fettered fruit within the shell of creation, however, is the yellow sun and the solar sight of man because creation *observes*. The sun in the sky is *umadau*, the "eye of the Way," as is the *dau* eye of man.

When the seeing creation rises it can discern its own origin. The origin is the vaginal opening of the eating intention, the huge river mouth surrounded by the "lips" of vegetation, our earth or, better, the Emberá world of river and forest. But this world, "observed" into creation by the facial creation of above, is an illusion for the uterine opening of the river which the facial creation shapes with its seeing intention, the solar eye, is its own created celestial face.

Here we have the metaphoric image of the reflective cosmic mirror which is blank at the threshold of creation. When the intentional fruit rises into its materialization -- the sun in the sky -- its mirror image simultaneously expands, striving down "into" the mirror as the facial creation rises. The seeing intention can now see its origin which is not something from afar but the intention itself, meeting face to face with itself so as to start the cosmic combat between mind and matter, like two enemies in war. As "sun" and "eye," the seeing intention is now able to recognize its transient self in the cosmic mirror, a "facial" world of below -- our earth -- which is *visibly* expelled with the *akai* seeing of cosmic man, the solar maize fruit - a world of excrement and putrid matter.<sup>9</sup>

When the seeing intention, the sun and observing man, descends at dusk, so does its opposite facial creation in the cosmic mirror, seemingly rising from below so as to meet face to face in the fusion of nowhere at the surface of the mirror. When the solar fruit reaches the point where it touches itself in the surface of the mirror, creation is no more, the descent of the facial creation has brought itself as well as its opposite illusory image back to "nothing," to the meeting-point of nowhere in the by now blank mirror of existence.

When the seeing intention is about to penetrate its uterine origin at dusk, its seeing nature ends and so does the creation of observed matter and light, creation is no more.<sup>10</sup> There is no motion, no time or space, beyond the point where the solar fruit meets itself "face to face" with its imaginary matter from below. This meeting is the annihilating conception of the sonic clash of creation which "eats" (*koi*) itself (*ko*) into its birth as "eaten"(*kodá*), the metamorphosis of the divine intention which is creation and existence.

If creation and existence are found in the clash of the dual river, manifested in the rising nature of the setting sun, how can man and human existence be described in terms of transformation instead of time and space? When we as observing humans "set" into ourselves, into our own cosmic river, we are the same sun setting into itself. Our crossing at the blank surface of the mirror is the end of our seeing nature. Man experiences this crossing not as an entering motion but as a nonspatial transformation. The end of man's seeing creation is the moment when he "falls asleep," *daukai*, which is the transformation of his eye (*dau-kai*) or of himself as seeing sun. Contextually (sleeping man as setting sun), "entering" is here explicitly interpreted as *transforming* (*kai*), not "moving."

Falling asleep is the *kai* event which transforms created man from "eaten" matter to "eating" intention -- the event of *ka* metamorphosis which takes place at the



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border of the *karrá* "root" of existence and which is rendered in myth as the *dokarrá* gate to the riverine underworld as the "root of the river" (*do-karrá*), the same imaginary gate "through" the surface of the mirror.

Sleeping man is reborn at the moment of his awakening, when he opens his eyes to rise as sun. Thus, "awakening" (*urumatai*) is associated with "reviving" (*urumabai*), to be born and created anew.

I have repeatedly argued that eaten *is* eating as setting *is* rising, and Emberá terminology confirms that the setting sun does not set to "die" but to live and be created. "Sunset" is *umandau dorroai*, the "creation of the sun." Consequently, what seems to be two separate and time-bound events are actually only one: the *ka* transformation of creation. In the same way, man's falling asleep is not separate from his waking up and reviving. His falling asleep *is* his waking up. Only in this transformation out of time and space, "the waking up of falling asleep," can man experience the full meaning of true creation, i.e. of creation as liberated intention, creation as "eternity." The mythological discourse assists us in understanding how this is possible.

The cosmic clash or transformation which is creation and existence takes place *by night which is said to be the day of the people in the other world*, i.e. the "space of time" when man truly *exists*. However, this is an eternity bounded by timeless transformation. In his dreams, man experiences his cosmic metamorphosis of being the divine principle of entering and eating. This experience is the "moment" when he meets with the White Lady to accomplish his nondimensional intention to create forever. Regarded as *kaimokarai*, the "dreaming" experience equates this atemporal transformation as perpetual process: transformation as eternity. Physical man's "falling asleep" marks his metamorphosis into cosmic man when "motion" (as individual experience) changes into "transformation" (as cosmic experience). His falling asleep denotes the passage from Time to Non-Time, while his awakening is his return from Non-Time to Time. This return is the birth of himself as motion and seeing creation. But as Non-Time is devoid of dimension, there is no "time" between falling asleep and waking up, the moment of closing the seeing eye is the moment of its opening. Within this non-existent "space of time" between falling asleep and waking up, i.e. "the waking up of falling asleep," lies "eternity" as transformation (*ka*). The Emberá conceptualize transformational eternity into the dimension of "dreaming," *ka-mokarai*, the sharing in the transformation of the "cosmic egg" which allows us to explore the "non-existent existence" of Non-Time.

In cosmic man's "dreamt" transformation, existence is not calculated in time from dawn to dusk, nor in the futile frames of a lifetime. Our dreamwalk is reality -- *based on the understanding and acceptance of eternity as transformation, not as unlimited time* -- while our observing diurnal existence as created beings between birth and death is an illusion in time, space, and matter.

In fact, the Emberá word for "eternal" expresses explicitly the same idea; "eternal" is *jokau (jukau)* -- the way of the transformation of *ju*.

Like the facial intention falsely reflected in the mirror of existence, "eternity" is not found outside creation as an illusory reflection of itself as transformation, in the

fictitious mirror of temporal nights. Eternity is set within itself as creation. The concept of "creation" is not framed in terms of time and space. Creation is forever, in an eternity out of time.

Matter which comes into being by the intention of eating is annihilated in the very same process -- in the "clash of creation" which makes matter an illusion. "Matter" is cosmic transformation.

As this book has tried to explain, the Emberá imagery is continuously centred on this ontological postulate. One case in question is the relationship between humans and peccaries in native thought which intermittently has been referred to in my text. I will here give a brief summary and some conclusions to illustrate the significance of the idea that matter should be considered as transformation.

In myth, peccaries are described as humans dressed in "peccary shirts" but these humans are not different from ourselves except that they are our enemies (pp 223-225). Humans dress in peccary disguise (become peccaries) as a consequence of man's eating intention described in terms of a hunter/hunted context which is founded on a dialectical relationship formulated in the ontological concept of "peccary heads" (pp 211-218). Peccary represents the facial creation or the "enemy" (*jurá*) as images of the complementary matter of the *ko* intention which is itself as "food" (*kodá*): man as eater/congener of himself as "peccary head".

The first step in detecting the role of peccaries is to accept the ontological fact that man is peccary. However, the human character of peccaries is of no concern in Emberá imagery, nor the assumption that humans *may* appear as peccaries. Humans *are* always peccaries in the sense that man is *be-do*, "peccary," as an outcome of his behaviour as a warrior, fisherman, maize sower or lover.

In order to understand its meaning we must also accept another postulate given by the mythological discourse: even if man becomes peccary through his behaviour, the peccaries we observe with our eyes are hummingbirds. Alternately, when we observe hummingbirds we see the true nature of peccaries in action: hummingbirds are peccaries (p 278). Consequently, the peccary nature of man is hummingbird. What does this entail?

As *be-do*, man is flowing life essence (transcribed as *do*, "river" and *be*, "maize"). Man is not peccary, man continually *becomes* peccary. The hummingbird is the way of transformation of life essence, a fiercely eating warrior who continually fights by his "eating" by day so as to fall into profound sleep by night (p 188-190). A diurnal existence of continuous *koi* eating or, in other terms, of *continuous becoming*. Thus, hummingbirds continuously become peccary but they never are. Hummingbirds never are, they become - and so do humans. This is the purport of the man-peccary-hummingbird imagery in Emberá thought. Existence is not to be, existence is

## *The Word*

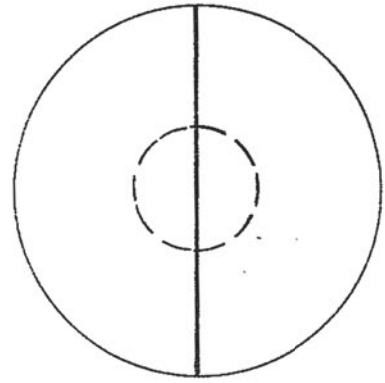
to become. Man created is a peccary of hummingbird nature. Man never is, he is not a being, he is a "becoming." Matter is not measured in dimensions of time and space, matter is transformation. Cosmos is not, cosmos becomes.

This is the "cosmogonic paradox" of that which exists forever -- the *dru* mind or the everlasting intention of "our father," *Dachi Sese* -- expressed as that which is continually born and destroyed -- the *dru-a* world of humans or *Karagabí*, as the "son" of *Dachi Sese*.

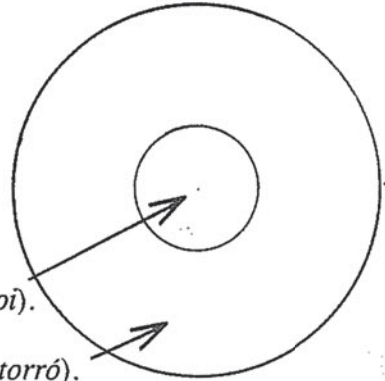
*Karagabí* is the *created god*<sup>11</sup> which "embodies" the transient guise of his paternal mind. *Karagabí's* nature is reflected in the way Emberá informants refer to their creator as God and Jesus Christ in one: "they say he was Jesus, God they called him too, two words he had." For the Emberá, *Karagabí* the Creator (the Creator Created) is translated into both God and Jesus because he is the returning god in human disguise, a god who "kills" his own divine matter, his "son," into eternal existence with the "promise" to return anew. The miracle of the Christian resurrection happens in Emberá thought whenever a human disguised in the hostile matter of the *jurá* metaphor is born. *Karagabí* shelters the divine intention, God, inside the shell of himself as created creator. As the created one he is the abducted god in the guise of physical creation, the hostile *jurá* matter of the *ju* intention, the mirror of himself as god. This is the holy "war" between mind and matter, between a god and his son, a godly son who must sacrifice himself to the benefit of his own divine mind. In Emberá thought, the Messiah is not to be awaited because he is already here, in the transient disguise of man -- but only he who "knows by working" the *kabai* scheme of transformational existence. The making of God as eaten by eating, in the disguise of created man, makes him a son of himself, a godly son sheltering his "father" inside who is set free and recovered through the meaningful event of death, the liberation and reactivation of the divine intention. *Karagabí* is a divine "father" (God) who makes himself "son" (Jesus) in his act of creation of man. As a "son" (*uara*) of his divine intention, physical man is the "true way" (*o-ara*) of existence. Creation is the offspring, not of a distant god, but of its own divine superior self as "paternal" intention.

*Karagabí* is the creating god created, he who makes by making himself, he whose return is ensured by means of his own destruction and "death." *Karagabí* is this world but, above all, as the creator of humankind, *Karagabí* creates himself as cosmic man: he who knows who he is. In Emberá thought, the creating god does not retire after the completion of his divine task, he is not a *deus otiosus* resting aloof, nor is he silent. He is very much alive, fettered within his own masterpiece: man. The speech of man is the speech of god, as a living manifestation of his constant creation and transformation of himself. This is the word.

The *kima-kai* arrangement of "marriage" transforms the gender dichotomy of *me* vs. *ke* (man vs. woman) to a concentric duality of binary *ki-ma* "spouse" structure.



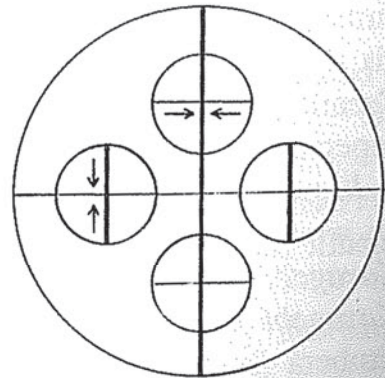
This structure formulates the ontological prerequisite of "*me-inside-ke*" which manifests itself in a wide array of images in Emberá thought.



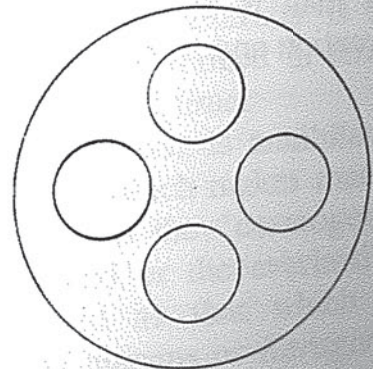
The "yellow" intention (*ko-ara*) of "eating" (*koi*).

The "white" process of the "dual river" (*do-do, dorró, dru, torró*).

The quadripartite design of Emberá cosmology, based on a two-level dialectic which expresses itself in the *kenaya* process



Creation is founded in the structure of "pentaconception" -- "five as a consequence of a unified four" -- which is outlined in, for instance, the house roof of four posts, the celestial vault of four *jenené* trees, the "family" of four affinal groups, cosmic man of four "hands", etc.



Ill. 14. The quadripartite design of Emberá cosmology.

## GLOSSARY OF EMBERÁ TERMS

- a*, faeces; filth  
*abá*, one  
*abarika*, similar, alike, analogous  
*Acolé*, cf. *Akoré*  
*acolemä*, that which is spoken  
*aka*, vision  
*akai*, to see  
*Akhoré*, god, creator  
*amá*, fish species  
*ambá*, family; canoe  
*ambugué*, stool, low wooden seat  
*amburá*, bead girdle  
*amburú*, anus  
*amisurrá*, capuchin monkey  
*amókarra*, world of below  
*amparrá*, fish species (*Brycon* sp.)  
*ampurú*, anus  
*Ancastor*, mythical bird  
*anchi*, they  
*andau*, buttocks  
*andeá*, loincloth  
*anggai*, to defecate  
*ankidá*, buttocks  
*Antomiá*, Master of the Water  
*anuma*, niece  
*Aribada*, mythical monster  
*armucura*, world of below  
*ártotokera*, plant, "flower of the dead"  
*atrábida*, people of the Atrato  
*Atumiá*, cf. *Antomiá*  
*awandor*, celestial river  
*Awena*, mythical woman
- ba*, milk, liquid substance  
*baa*, thunder  
*baade*, house of thunder  
*baakai*, to boil  
*Baa paimá*, black thunder  
*Baa purrú*, red thunder  
*Baa torró*, white thunder  
*baberamá*, nutria  
*baei*, to fall, to throw
- bagabaga*, butterfly  
*bai* (*baya*), to fall, to throw; to roast; to be (live)  
*bajá*, sky  
*bakuru boro chimitu*, crown of tree  
*bakurujúa*, branch of tree  
*bakurú karrá*, tree root  
*banea*, water  
*bará* (*pará*), rich, with  
*barai*, to become, to hold  
*baracóco*, lechusa  
*baúbida*, people of the Baudó  
*be*, maize  
*bea*, maize crop  
*beai*, to harvest, to kill, to shout  
*bedé*, house of maize  
*bedea*, word  
*begó*, avocado  
*begurú khaú*, vine  
*be jasoá*, maize cob  
*beká*, maize gruel  
*bekí*, brocket deer  
*bekirá*, maize kernel  
*be nembé*, kind of maize  
*berá*, people  
*beróana*, (*beróara*), spotted cavy  
*betá*, maize; fish  
*betaggai*, to catch fish  
*betaká*, fish soup  
*beté*, maize house; in maize  
*Betenabe*, Mother of Fish  
*beuará*, death  
*beui*, to cut the bush, to sow, to die  
*biakai*, to chew  
*bibidí gomia*, mythical people  
*bidá* (*birá*), people  
*bidó*, white-lipped peccary  
*bidobe*, collared peccary  
*boró* (*ború*), head  
*Boroandé*, a myth motif  
*borokoi*, (*borochikoi*) to cut the hair  
*borotoi* (*borototai*), to cut head  
*buai*, to be, live, exist, stay

*buchiá*, sloth  
*burai*, to keep, to shroud; to scratch  
*burú*, head  
*burugumiá*, mythical people  
*burumiá*, mythical people  
*Bushiá*, mythical woman

*Carabí*, cf. *Karagabí*  
*carrá*, hardwood  
*cirambirá*, "province" of Indians  
*citarabirá*, "province" of Indians  
*curuma*, millstone  
*chaakita*, kidney bean  
*chai*, palpar, medir, pesar, tocar  
instrumento  
*chakarra*, palm for blowgun darts  
*chaké*, small  
*chakira (chaquira)*, bead  
*chamberara*, mythical people  
*chamó*, crested curassow  
*charra*, headman  
*chésakauí*, stepfather  
*chi*, flatus  
*chiá*, arrow; urine  
*chiábera (chiábena)*, mythical people  
*chiai*, palpar, medir, pesar, tocar  
instrumento  
*chiakida*, arrow point  
*chiakira, (chakira)* bead  
*chiampa*, canoe  
*chiapa kau*, sister  
*chiaperara*, mythical people  
*chiara*, meat  
*chiaso*, sugarcane  
*chibira*, cat  
*chiburú*, ends of bow  
*chicha*, maize beer/beverage  
*chichi*, meat; father; string  
*chidima*, squirrel (*Microsciurus*)  
*chienkhará*, back  
*chihuántra*, chief of peccaries  
*chií*, wing  
*chijúa*, claw  
*chikembú*, muzzle  
*chikidatru*, front of butt

*chiko*, food  
*chikoi*, to eat  
*chikuará (chikoará)*, yellow  
*chikué*, crab  
*chikuku*, centre of butt  
*chimé*, penis; trigger of rifle  
*chimia ego bari*, shaman s altar  
*chimitú*, point  
*chindau*, star; firefly  
*chío*, women's skirt  
*chioi*, to wrestle (with the hair)  
*chipará*, cf *kipará*  
*chipurrú*, red  
*chirú*, cavity, hollow space; conch;  
carrizo reed  
*chirúta*, seed  
*chitá*, testicle  
*chitú*, tick  
*chitúa*, perfume; leaf  
*chogorró*, guadua  
*choibá*, hardwood  
*chokó*, vessel for ritual chicha  
*churi*, mouse  
*dabú*, eye  
*dachi sese*, our father  
*damá*, snake  
*damaka*, plant for curing snake bites  
*damakakua*, bark-cloth; snake body  
*damámbu*, snake pattern ("where the  
snake is")  
*datru*, forehead  
*dau*, eye  
*daukai*, to close one's eyes  
*ddepurruddé*, inauguration of a new  
house  
*de*, house  
*de ankidá*, edge of house roof  
*de ará de*, house with conical roof  
*de ború*, tip of the house roof  
*de enkhará*, leaf coverage of house  
roof  
*de jedeko*, tip of the house roof  
*de jerú*, house post  
*de jomía*, The Pleiades  
*de jurá*, tension ring

*de kau*, Orion s belt  
*dekurunka*, hoops of roof structure  
*déutária*, attic  
*do*, river  
*doimamá*, water jaguar (mythical being)  
*doitae*, river mouth  
*dojurá*, mythical beings of the river world  
*dokarrá*, mythical entrance to the river world  
*dokembú*, headwaters  
*dokida*, riverside  
*do kum*, headwaters  
*domé*, stairway  
*dométa*, stairway  
*Domikó*, family name  
*dotae*, river mouth  
*dote*, canoe pole  
*douggai (doggai)*, to fish with hook  
*droma*, big  
*dru*, dual river  
*drua (trua)*, world, universe  
*druara (zroara)*, true world; old people  
*druade*, existence, in the world  
*druai*, to sing ritually  
*druí (druya)*, to discharge  
*dúa*, fish-hook  
*dugatru*, fishing rod  
*dumá*, shaman's staff  
*durubai*, to fall from the height  
*dzururúa*, hardwood  
*dchi*, thread, fibre  
*dchindchin*, mythical animal like thread  
  
*e*, skin; bark; large basket  
*eda*, below, within  
*emberá*, human being  
*emberá abá*, twenty  
*emberá pichi*, mythical people  
*enéndruma*, bow  
*enkarrá*, back  
*epavé*, species of hardwood

*epedeko*, plate  
*eperá*, cf. emberá  
*erai*, to sharpen, to put a point to  
*euma*, rainbow  
  
*Gentserá*, cf. *Jeserá*  
*ggai*, to bury; to fish  
*guáchida*, fish species (*Pimelodus*)  
*guauí*, to touch someone else  
*Guaya*, Chocó province  
  
*hampurí*, women s clothing  
*he*, cf. *je*  
*hemedé tzake (zroma)*, naming ritual (puberty ritual)  
*huépuru*, bark-cloth  
  
*i*, lip  
*ibanakumbedé*, bird's nose ornament  
*ibidi*, elbow  
*ichi*, he  
*iká*, riverside  
*imamá*, jaguar  
*imbira*, torch  
*imbira khoábata*, balsa tripod for torch  
*imbisu*, hummingbird  
*imó*, chameleon  
*impaná*, bird  
*inguedé*, kind of leaf  
*inká*, bat  
*inkháde*, type of house with conical roof  
*ipaná*, bird  
*itae*, mouth  
*iukida*, millstone  
  
*jai*, illness; spirit  
*jaibaná*, shaman  
*jaimé*, adze  
*jaizarra*, shaman s spiritual master  
*jambáde (jampáde)*, canoe house  
*jambá kembú*, canoe stem  
*jampá*, canoe  
*jampádru*, bottom of canoe  
*jampá kembú*, canoe stem  
*je*, mythical boa  
*jea, chontaduro* (peach palm)  
*jemedé zroma*, puberty ritual for girls  
*jemené*, play; transition ritual

*jemeneya*, to play  
*Jenené*, mythical "tree of life"  
*jepá*, boa constrictor  
*jerai*, to wash, to scrub  
*jeraméta*, stairway  
*jerandruí (pichía)*, to rise (the sun)  
*Jerupotouarra*, mythical protagonist  
*jeserá*, sting ant; mythical female being  
*jimindi*, finger  
*jimini*, finger  
*jintai*, to sound  
*jinuputude*, container for silk cotton  
*jipa*, middle, centre  
*jippa eda baei*, to fall vertically  
*jirai*, to elevate  
*jitai*, to seize  
*jo*, sweet fruit  
*joarajo*, guama  
*jogai*, to drown  
*join*, to end  
*jokau (jukau)*, eternal  
*joma*, everything  
*joña*, to destroy  
*joropo kirá*, ritual foliated structure  
*ju*, breast  
*jua*, hand  
*juabi*, left  
*juaburu*, fist, closed hand  
*juadau*, ulnar head of wrist joint  
*juadroma abá*, twenty  
*juapapa*, thumb  
*juapoto*, forearm  
*juara*, right  
*juaso*, middle finger  
*juba*, breast milk  
*juesoma*, five  
*juí*, to grind  
*jukembú*, nipple  
*jukida*, nipple  
*jum*, war  
*juma*, knot  
*jumini*, finger  
*jundruí*, to beat, to palpitate (heart)  
*junkarrá*, cord  
*junkoi*, to join  
*jurá*, enemy; women's skirt  
*jurakoko*, pole for picking fruits

*ju*, guama  
*juara*, vapour, aroma, steam  
*juí*, to unite, to join  
*jurai*, to discompose  
*jurara*, cloud  
*jurui*, to search  
  
*ka*, similar, alike  
*kaa*, kidney bean  
*kaatui*, to sew  
*kabai*, to know, to learn; to work  
*kabú*, sore  
*kai*, who  
*kai (kaya)*, to chew; to weave  
*kaiboi*, to sleep  
*kaibuey*, to sleep  
*kain*, to marry  
*kainobei*, to sleep  
*kajui*, to sew  
*kakua*, body, torso  
*kamokarai*, to dream  
*kanchí*, bija red paint  
*kanchirú*, conch trumpet  
*kansusú (kamisusú)*, wooden stirrer  
*kanturrona (kantrrona, kandorróna)*, beeswax  
*kaña*, to sleep  
*kará*, down, feather, hair  
*Karagabí*, god, creator  
*karai*, to unite, to bring together  
*kari*, to sing (cf. *xari* to dance)  
*karrá*, root  
*kau*, daughter  
*kaya*, ill  
*kayai*, to bite; to fall ill  
*ke*, vagina  
*kembú*, nose; sharp, keen  
*kenaya*, to kill  
*kera*, perfume  
*kerai*, to live  
*keyemé*, mythical serpent  
*ki*, worm  
*kidá*, tooth  
*kidabe*, fruit for dental treatment  
*kidapo*, house floor, attic floor  
*kidatru ekarebema*, mandible  
*kidatru utarebema*, maxilla  
*kidazhara*, fish species



*kidinchiai*, to show one's teeth  
*kidúa*, leaf  
*kijo*, guama  
*kima*, spouse  
*kimakai*, to contract marriage  
*kimarre*, four  
*kimbisu*, hummingbird  
*kimikimi*, bee  
*kipará*, jagua black paint  
*kirá*, face  
*kiraka*, cf. *abarika*  
*kiramá*, enemy  
*kiramé*, tongue  
*Kira pauaramiá*, "Green Face"  
 (mythical being)  
*kiraju*, delight  
*kiriabai*, to hate  
*kiriabé*, to hate  
*kiriabí*, to love, to wish for  
*kiriai*, to love, to wish for  
*kiriakau*, enemy  
*kirinsía*, thought, memory  
*kisaba*, fish species  
*kitai*, to extinguish  
*kúu*, vein  
*kiui*, to get dark  
*ko*, uterine principle  
*kodá* (cf. *jurá*, *korá*), food stuff  
*koi*, to eat  
*koin*, to cut  
*kokoi*, frog  
*konkai*, to line, to scratch  
*kontrua*, wood (cañaguate)  
*kopetarra*, arrow with blunt point  
*korá*, bachelor  
*korai*, to shout  
*koroi*, to dig, to make holes in the  
 ground  
*Kosasa*, mythical being  
*kotroai* (*kitroai*), to roof a house  
*kotrua*, lung  
*ku*, nose  
*kuará*, ripe  
*kué*, rain  
*kui*, to bathe, to swim  
*kuku*, butterfly  
*kum*, nose; sharp, keen  
*kumbedé*, nasal disk

*kuriva*, agouti  
*kurui*, to scratch  
*kuruma*, grind-stone  
*kuburu*, ear  
*kurujuma*, whorl  
*kurruma*, collar  
*kurru*, ear  
*kurui*, to shell maize with the hand,  
 to scratch  
*kuruburru*, pelvis  
*kurru*, hip

*Mamananbira*, Chocó province  
*me*, penis  
*mea*, bush, vegetation  
*measo*, spear, lance  
*meauaneya*, to go hunting  
*mekorábeta*, fish species  
*meme*, palm-wood; uncle  
*Miákoda*, river  
*miamichiabú*, danger  
*miaso*, spear, lance  
*michiggai*, to roar with laughter  
*migurú*, vine  
*mikaukau*, mythical figure  
*Mikorá*, river  
*mimbú*, fish species  
*mimi*, voice  
*michopa*, fish species  
*misamisajo*, guama fruit  
*mo*, lano tree (palosanto); stone  
*moi*, lano tree (palosanto)  
*moindú*, leaves  
*mojauptudda*, silkcotton  
*mojou*, balsa  
*mojou pudá*, tree-cotton  
*mokida*, hand-stone for grinding  
 maize  
*mokita*, angling worm  
*Mombú*, river  
*mompauara*, semi-precious stone  
*Mondó*, river (affluent of the Atrato)  
*mongarrá*, stone  
*mónporo* (cf. *mojoupodo*)  
*motzitzí*, ritual stone  
*mu* (*mo*), stone; I  
*Mumbaradó*, river (affluent of the  
 Atrato)

*muena (muera)*, woman  
*mukira*, male  
*Munguidó*, river (affluent of the Atrato)  
*mũ*, I  
*mũbu*, I am  
*mũntru*, I personally

*na*, before  
*nabe*, mother  
*namaría*, this world  
*Naribamia*, famous shaman  
*ne*, gold; essence  
*nea*, gold slag  
*neará*, poison; remedy; poisonous frog  
*nearadú*, quiver for darts  
*nedé*, ear ornament  
*nejo*, caimito; human body  
*nekae*, object  
*neko*, knife  
*Nekoda*, river  
*nekodeba beratoi*, to charge with the machete  
*nekodru*, handle of knife  
*neko kembú*, point of knife  
*nemburai*, to tell a story  
*nemi*, voice  
*nendurru*, wasp  
*nepono*, flower  
*nesarrajo (necharrájo, netsarrájo)*, caimito fruit  
*netá*, thing, object  
*ntré*, world of above (cf. utare)  
*nusí (nunsí)*, mythical gigantic fish

*o*, road  
*oa*, blood  
*obuburrúa*, throat  
*ochirú*, throat  
*ochorró*, lizard  
*ofedé*, shoulder blade  
*oí*, vegetation, forest  
*oi (oya)*, to manufacture  
*ojipá*, straight road  
*okachirúa*, dangerous road  
*okamá*, bead, bead work  
*okarrá*, throat

*okau*, clavicle  
*okendo*, hardwood  
*okidá*, road side  
*okopaná*, throat  
*okú*, blowgun  
*omé (umé)*, two  
*omédu*, twin  
*ompurú*, basket for maize and fish  
*opaná*, clavicle  
*opedé*, scapula  
*orré*, dove  
*osorró*, throat  
*otae*, fork in the road

*pa*, created essence  
*paai*, to paint  
*paimá*, black  
*pakurú*, tree  
*paná*, bridge  
*papa*, mother  
*pará*, rich; with  
*parai*, to become, to hold  
*parara*, palm tree  
*parataquéra*, earrings  
*patá*, plantain  
*pataká*, soup of plantain and fish  
*pauará*, green, blue  
*pauarai*, to germinate  
*pemá*, fish species  
*perakuaukubú*, laying athwart  
*perakubú*, laying athwart  
*perakaubú*, laying athwart  
*perakauí*, to lay athwart  
*perausukubú*, laying athwart  
*petá*, basket  
*pichi*, you  
*pichía*, sun light  
*pidá*, hot pepper (Capsicum)  
*pidó*, white-lipped peccary  
*pintá*, edible seed of vine  
*pirú*, nasal ornament  
*pisi*, nail  
*Pixaawina*, mythical woman  
*po*, maize flour  
*poerai*, to stir, to beat  
*poi*, to blow, to broadcast  
*pokurá*, maize flour  
*pooá*, muzzle-loader

*porá*, cloud  
*porré*, vine  
*poto* (cf. *juapoto*, *jerupoto*)  
*potopoto*, lung  
*potopotoa*, heart, lung  
*potré*, vine  
*pudá*, hair  
*pursirú*, wind instrument  
*purrú*, red  
*puruara*, powder  
*puruma*, ammunition  
*pusa kidá*, sea-shell  
  
*samó*, crested curassow  
*Samugrado*, river (affluent of the Atrato)  
*sese*, father  
*siá*, cañabrava; urine  
*sioró*, guadua  
*sirú*, cf. *chirú*  
*sirui*, to blow  
*sisá*, chicha  
*sisi*, father  
*siurú*, guadua  
*so*, lung; heart  
*sokó*, jar  
*Surranabe*, mythical being  
  
*ta*, seed; green fruit  
*taa*, salt  
*Tabira*, Chocó province  
*tachi*, we  
*tachi sese*, our father  
*Tarabirá*, cf. Citarabirá  
*Tatzitzetze*, Our Father  
*Termiji*, Chocó province  
*toá*, fish species  
*toi* (toya), to drink; to give birth to; to be born; to wash  
*tojundrui*, to explode, to burst, to split  
*tominejo*, bird species  
*tonoa*, women's drum  
*torró*, white; armadillo  
*totali*, river mouth  
*tro* (*troá*) armadillo  
*trua*, world, universe  
*truatrua*, dove

*truauañu*, to lay athwart  
*truai*, to name someone/something  
*trun*, name  
*tsokó*, vessel for ritual chicha beverage  
*túa*, fish-hook  
*tukujo*, caimo fruit  
*tumbú*, maize bread (envuelto)  
*Tutruiká*, god of below  
*tu*, louse  
*tzetze*, father

*u*, pot for roasting po flour  
*uambé*, agouti  
*uara* (*oara*), upriver  
*uarra*, son  
*uarrabarái*, to become pregnant  
*uera*, woman  
*Uera Torró*, "White Lady", mythical woman  
*ui*, to smell; to sow  
*ukida*, blowgun dart  
*umandau*, sun  
*umbeá*, three  
*umé*, two  
*umpé*, fish species  
*umú*, egg, ovule  
*undrebema*, God, He of above  
*uri*, to listen, to understand  
*urumabei*, to revive  
*utare*, above, up, heaven  
*utarebema* (*ngtarebema*), attic

*urumai*, to wake up

*viúkida*, hand-stone

*xai*, protective spirit

*xaine*, to sleep

*xari*, to dance (cf. *kari*, to sing)

*yábea*, mythical people (cf. *chiaperara*)

*yarré dumé*, vine

*yerré*, black spider monkey

*Ysaza*, Chocó province

*zhábera*, mythical people

*zharra* (*tsarra*, *charra*), chief,

headman

*Zirambirá*, cf. *Cirambirá*

*zorré*, woodpecker

*zroa*, uncle; old man

*zroma* (*droma*), big

*zrua*, red howler monkey

## NOTES

1. I have adopted the form Wounaan, recently suggested by their own organization, OREWA, as the most adequate orthographic form of the name for this people, instead of the former Waunana or Noanama.
2. Upstream, according to Pineda (1986:101).
3. In one version of this famous myth about the daring and fearsome Jerupotouarra which I heard among the Emberá of the middle Atrato River it is argued that the nutria (*baberamá*) is *Akhoré* (a synonym for *Karagabí*) while the identity of the "mother" [sic], i.e. the fisherman, is unknown (Field notes April 1993). This confusion of identities evanesces in the light of Emberá cosmological principles.
4. Pinto 1978:87, from the Capá River, Chocó; Kane 1986:268, from Panama; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1960:60 (fig. 4:2), from the Docordó River, Chocó; Cardona 1985:167, from Sinú; Nordenskiöld 1928:64, from the Sambú River, Darién.
5. In addition to the variant reproduced here (I), the following published versions have been consulted: 1) Pinto (Pi) 1978:155-160; 2) Santa Teresa (S) 1924:5-8; 3) Betania (B) 1964:43-45; 4) Pardo (Pa) 1984:21-28; 5) Peñaherrera de Costales (PC) 1968:85-86; 6) Cardona (Ca), 1985:217-218; 7) Torres de Arauz (T) 1966:84-85; 8) Nordenskiöld (Nd) 1928:131-132; 9) Wassén (W) 1933:109-110; 10) Cayón (Cn) 1980:64-65; 11) Reichel-Dolmatoff (RD) 1953:164-165. 12) Nociones (N) 1929:87-89.
6. The acquisition of these cultural traits are best described in the version from Baudó, published by Pardo (1984). Sometimes these episodes within the Jenené myth are presented as separate tales (see, for instance, Reichel-Dolmatoff 1953).
7. All animals and plants mentioned in the myth bear Spanish terms.
8. In the Emberá version, the informant says *Dachi Dios*, "Our God", though he also explained that "God" for the Emberá is *Akhoré*.
9. A local name for the black population in the Chocó province, meaning "freeman".
10. "It is one of the most common surnames in the Department of Córdoba and in the region of Urabá" (Pinto 1978:399).
11. See chapter 36.
12. Churi means "mouse" and is often used in myths when addressing a person (Pardo 1984:78).
13. Cf Pardo's version (1984): "entonces él se enfermó..." which actually signifies that he is *ka*-transformed, from *jai*, illness.
14. The interrogative pronoun "what" might be derived from an analogous context. The Emberá say *kané?* which I read as *ka-ne*, "ka essence." As "ka essence" it has a changeable character which makes it impossible to identify -- implied by the interrogative "what." A synonymous term is *karé*, possibly "inside ka" (*ka-de*, according to Loewen's *d - r* variation).
15. See chapter 56.
16. The Cayapa of northwestern Ecuador, who manufacture the same kind of

baskets, liken the hexagonal holes to "eyes" (*ka'pu*), indicating a similar symbolic meaning (Barrett 1925:207).

17. "They lived on steam of chontaduro" (Santa Teresa 1924:57). "The people did not die nor did they eat. They fed on the steam which emitted from the cooked chontaduro fruits and, consequently, they did not have any digestive system. Why do you not eat if you have a mouth? If the smell is so good?" (Betania 1964:50). "They only smelled the steam which came out from the pot" (Pinto 1978:119). "They only smell it" (Loteró Villa 1977:31). "They only ate steam" (Vasco 1978:426). "They only smelled the food" (Isaza Bravo 1987:127).

18. The local Spanish term for both Emberá and Wounaan Indians in the Chocó department.

19. The nursing child indeed manages to open up the closed nose and make it secrete milk. This fact might by itself explain the circumstance that the nursing child itself is regarded as a pure *a* being of faecal matter not yet "prepared" into life. The "Master of Filth," *Antomiá*, is often described as a three-year-old child and the Emberá have a specific name for children until they become four years old (Pinto 1974).

20. Probably a misinterpretation for *ankosó torro*, the Emberá term for the king vulture.

21. Cf. Nordenskiöld (tuluvieja; 1928:154) and Roberto de la Guardia for various references on "tuluvieja" (1976:215).

22. On the etymology of *opaná*, see chapter 56.

23. There is an interesting parallel in a myth recorded from among the Mataco of the Bolivian Chaco which mentions the strange habit of a mythical being who eats larvae by threading them onto a needle (Palavecino 1940).

24. "A black concentrate called jagua, which consists of a mixture of tiny flakes of heavy magnetic iron oxide, ilmenite, and gold dust" (West 1957:178).

25. Cf. the construction *jampabú*, "where the canoe is."

26. The "death" and "rebirth" of the hunter can be deduced from the contextual information in various myths (see v.g. Chaves 1945:155-6,158; Pardo 1984:201,205). The meaning of this transformation will be discussed in the context of *jurá* hostility examined in Part 3, War of Man.

27. According to Pinto, *chitú* has a second meaning of "a place where animals eat and drink" (1974:125).

28. *Cha* is a variant pronunciation of *chiá*. *Chiá*, the materialised *chi*, is sometimes pronounced *siá*, *zha*, *cha* or *sa* when it appears as a morpheme in composite words: *chiaperara* is interpreted as *chamberara* or *zhábera*; "cañabrava" (*Gynerium sagittatum*) is pronounced as *siá* or *chiá*; the currasow bird is *chamó* or *samó*; *sisá* is synonymous to *chicha*, etc.

29. According to another belief which was reported to me by an Emberá informant from the Atrato region in 1993 the *chakira* beads originate from a plant which grows on the bottom of the sea and produces the perforated beads in different colours.

30. An alternative name is *de jomia*, "heaps of houses" (Pardo 1984:32).

31. Cf. Luckert (1976:66-67), quoted by Roe (1982:284).

32. "...*las Prouincias de los indios chocoes, pormias, oromiras, los del guacuse y gran davaybe donde se dize está el santuario de la sierpe de oro y otras muchas*

*prouinicas...* (Ancerma, 1636; AHNB:CeI 68:34v).

33. Cf *si* or *chi*, "flatus"; *sioró*, *chioró* or *chogorró*, "guadua"; *sokó* or *chokó*, "jar".

34. The name of the drum, *tonoa*, is, possibly, a variant pronunciation of *do-do-a* or *drua*, "world".

35. Cf. the Aztec custom to replace the nose of decapitated heads with a sharp stone knife embedded in the nasal cavity of the victim. Another stone knife replaced the tongue in the mouth -- as a piece of evidence of the cutting and "olfactory" nature of the nose and the tongue? (Matos M. 1980:772-773).

36. The Emberá claim that the caimito fruit only can be cut with the teeth of the human mouth but not with the "teeth" of the knife-like *jua* hand. In Chocó there is a general belief that if a caimito fruit is cut or peeled with a knife the fruits from the same tree will always be worm-eaten. In this myth we are given the reason for this belief, disclosed in the phrase pronounced by the son of the sun, "they do not eat caimito themselves". This dictate refers to the essential *koi*-eating of "smelling" through "cutting" which is accomplished by a "knife" or *neko* device. As cosmic beings and "sons" of the sun, the Emberá are affected by the same prohibition.

37. Pinto argues that the correct translation of *Boroeande* is "the house of she without a head".

38. *Cristiano* has the meaning of "physical human" (in contrast to *emberá*!); cf. Reichel-Dolmatoff 1953:156.

39. As described in chapter 10, the motif of fruits falling from on high is of central importance in the myth of the *jenené* Tree of Life.

40. Here, the guama grin offers itself as *kira* food to the opposite *kira*, the human mouth. The sexual nature of the guamo (*Inga sp.*) is documented in South American imagery; on the Tukano, see Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975:96.

41. The *e* skin of the body of cosmic man is regarded in terms of "fertilizing food" which appears in various disguises and on different levels of representation in Emberá imagery, cf. also chapter 68.

42. Another important characteristic of cosmic relevance for the Emberá presumably is found in the exterior of the nine-banded armadillo (*Dasyopus novemcinctus*; Peterson 1990:56), a number associated with the belief in four underworlds, four celestial worlds, and the human world in between.

43. Wasp is *nendurru*, as a variant of *ne-dru*; bee is *kimikimi*, a binary "*me* inside *ke*" apparition (*ke-me*); butterfly is *bagabaga*, as transformation of *ba* creation in its binary form (*ba-ka*), a synonym is *kuku*, associated with the *ku* concept.

44. On *buru*, "head", as *poto*, see chapter 51.

45. Cf. the belief that the *dojurá* beings defecate through their ears.

46. This analogy between ears and hips completes the image of the "anal face" discussed earlier. The hips become the ears of the anal face, otherwise composed of a "head" (*amporú*), "face/teeth" (*ankidá*), "eyes" (*andaú*), and "hair" (*amburá*).

47. Cf the local Spanish expression for "to go hunting": *buscar la vida*, "to search for the life". For the Emberá, "to search" is *jurui*, very much like their word for "to scratch", *kurui*, which has an unmistakable meaning of "essential hunting". If the Spanish *buscar la vida* is founded in Emberá thought it supplies the precise inducement for hunting: a regeneration of life.

48. Note by Nordenskiöld: "The leader of the wild boars: *pido uantra*."

49. If we wish to know how "white" looks like we must consult the *drua* body to

see what is streaming in the *ju* "double river": the whiteness of breast milk (cf. on the concept of *ba*).

50. Significantly, there is no term for "animal" in the Emberá language, simply for the reason that there is no place for an animal category in Emberá thought.

51. Cf. the synonym for "throat": *okopana*, as a metaphoric "blowgun-bridge", *okó-pana*.

52. Mythical canoe makers also disappear, taken by enemies and eaten, as a consequence of their work (Pardo 1984:205).

53. Cf. *dru*, "to fire, to throw," as an act of *dru*.

54. See, for instance, Wassén 1935:128; 1963:64; Nociones 1929:97; Pardo 1984:203; 207; Santa Teresa 1924:16.

55. An affluent of the lower Baudó river.

56. Cf. the relationship between *chiá* and *chiá-pa* in the mythical sentence, "with their arrows [*chiá*; my note] they [the enemy] killed and ate the Emberá when they were making canoes [*chiá-pa*; my note] (Pardo 1984:203). The *koi* action of cutting "canoe essence" produces the *chiá-pa* canoe but "kills" the craftsman with the "arrows" of *chiá* essence, released by the same action.

57. Cf. the same motif in an Emberá Chamí myth recorded by Reichel-Dolmatoff (1953:156).

58. Cf. the 16th century Tupinamba of eastern Brazil who went to war when a certain kind of fruit was ripening and a particular species of fish was spawning (Staden 1925:ch.27). Cf. also the Emberá myth about their enemies, the Burumiá: "at the same time [as when the Burumiá caught the old woman and two children] they sowed a seedling of *primitivo* [*Musa sp.*]. When the *primitivo* bore fruit and the ripe fruits burst, at the same time the skin of the [captured] boy burst because of the fat [as the boy had been forcibly fed]; this was the sign that it was time to kill him so as to eat him" (Pardo 1984:201).

59. "Danger" is *miamichiabú*. The enemy is seen as a being of danger in the same way as he embodies "war".

60. According to Santa Teresa, "those heads moved by themselves and their hair stood on end as soon as any Cuna was approaching" (1924:18).

61. Cf. "The *pixaawina* woman" (Chaves Ch. 1945:157-158; "The Cuna boy that went to live with the Cholos", "The boy who caught a quicharo-fish" (Wassén 1935:126, 141-142).

62. Cf. *mu-kira*, "male", as the anthropomorphic equivalence to the *mo-kitá* angling-worm on the hook.

63. Floresmiro Dogiramá became acquainted with Erland Nordenskiöld during his expedition to Baudó in 1927 and gave me his impressions of the Swedish ethnographer and his zealous collecting of artefacts when I met him in 1971.

64. According to Pardo, the Spanish word used here: *berija*, in Chocó refers to the cord which supports the loincloth (1984:82, note 2).

65. Personal communication by Philippe Descola, lecture in Göteborg 1991.

66. In a short tale which refers to the same mythological motif from Guanguí (Cauca), these staffs are of *chonta* (in Spanish), i.e. *memé* (Isaza Bravo 1987:135).

67. "God is referred to as Cargavi" (Letter from the Emberá *cacique* Don Francisco Chicamia and the *gobernador* Don Francisco Machuca in Quibdó 1808. AHNB:Empl publ Cauca 15:577v).



68. Ventura, the cosmic explorer in the river world of man, has a niece whose name is *Bushiá*, which in mythological semantics makes her an essential sloth (*buchiá*). As a daughter (*kau*) to Ventura's sister (*chiapa kau*), to Ventura himself she is *anuma* ("niece") or the "Way of a matter", a kind of sloth.
69. Huge and elevated hardwood trees of the Chocó rain forest.
70. The *jenené* tree interpreted as *lano* (*Pseudobombax*) (cf. Pardo 1984:267).
71. *Cocó*, *lazarino*, and *tiña* are local names on skin diseases (Pardo 1984:29).
72. Betania 1964:41; appearing as *yábea*, *Tutruiká* is the divine "prototype" of the same *chiábera* or *chiaberara* contemporaries of *Emberá* humans.
73. Personal communication by Custodio Tunay, nov 1990.
74. Pinto (1974) translates *dumá* as *charco*, the local Spanish word for an immeasurable deep spot in the river.
75. During the *jemedé* ritual participating boys or girls, assisted by their four "god-fathers", must touch the *de-jerú* pillars of the house with their feet in an act which transmits essence from "feet to feet."
76. *Araceae*; *Xanthosoma mafaffa* Schott (Cayón, 1980:63).
77. These "nails of the thunder" are ground and put into the navel of the newborn child.
78. Roe, 1982:93-102; 328. Roes seems to argue that the arrows hit the cloth instead of the animals due to the inebriated state of the archers while I feel their "misses" were intentional.
79. According to Cayón, pregnant women must not eat *chaakita* beans (1980:31).
80. Cf. the Hohodene Baniwa myth: "This earth, his shit, Kuai's shit is this earth" (R.M.Wright, quoted by Sullivan 1988:35).
81. This is what the man, the male intention, learns when he tries to enter into the White Lady -- she disappears.
82. *Tutruiká*, the everlasting god of below, contemptuously labels his divine adversary of above, *Karagabí*, a "created god" (*dios creado*) in opposition to his own perpetual nature (Santa Teresa 1924:10).

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