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FILIATION AND ALLIANCE IN THREE BORORO MYTHS

A. Reconsideration of the Social Code in the first Chapters of *The Raw and the Cooked*^x

Summary

Lévi-Strauss has always stressed the importance of the principle of alliance and given much less attention to the principles of descent and filiation (Moyer 1977). This is also the case in the first chapters of *The Raw and the Cooked*, yet a close examination of the myths presented by Lévi-Strauss here reveals that the principle of filiation is at least of equal importance to the principle of alliance. After presenting a short summary of Lévi-Strauss' interpretation of the social code of these myths, I then present an alternative interpretation of the social code of these myths and raise the problem of the meaning of the Bororo myths that are particularly important in these first chapters (M1, M2 and M5).

Introduction

Lévi-Strauss's "alliance" theory of kinship informs much of his myth analysis. The theory developed in part in competition with "a descent" model of kinship systems (cf., e.g., Dumont 1971), and in his analyses of myths Lévi-Strauss systematically plays down both descent and filiation in favour of an emphasis on alliance issues (incest rules, marriage preferences, affinal relations, etc). He frequently begins with the assumption that if myths are about kinsmen then they must turn on problems of alliance, and indeed it may even sometimes appear that the myth analyses lend support to his kinship theory.

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Yet, although alliance theory and the structural analysis of myths were both largely developed by Lévi-Strauss, there is no necessary relation between them. One may adopt his methods of myth analysis without accepting his kinship theory, and vice versa. The present paper attempts to demonstrate by way of the analysis of some Bororo myths analysed by Lévi-Strauss that the preoccupation with alliance is a bias of the scholar and not of the Bororo. Indeed, the myths clearly reveal that their concern with matters of filiation is as great as with matters of alliance.

Three Bororo myths

The first myth (M1) Lévi-Strauss presents is very complex, but a short summary of the main events will suffice for the purpose of this paper. The complete text may be found elsewhere (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942: 225-226; Lévi-Strauss 1975: 35-37). A young man followed his mother into the forest during the preparation of an initiation ritual and raped her. His father noticed feathers in his wife's belt and suspected something had happened. He made the young men dance and discovered that the feathers in the belt of his wife were the same as the feathers his son was wearing as adornment. He resolved to kill his son by setting him a number of impossible tasks. He had to fetch three ritual objects from the *aroe* (spirits). The father assumed that his son would be killed by the spirits, but thanks to the good council of his grandmother and the help of three animals the young man succeeded in his tasks.

The father devised a new scheme to kill the son and invited him to come with him and capture some macaws that were nesting in the face of a cliff. The grandmother gave the young man a magical wand that would protect him. When the men had reached the cliff the father made his son climb up a long pole, and as he reached the nests of the macaws his father took away the pole. The son could save himself only by thrusting the magical wand into a crevice. The father abandoned his son in this awkward position. The son managed to climb up the cliff, but could not descend from it. He made a bow and arrows and killed a large number of lizards. He bound their corpses around his waist but after some time they began to rot and gave off such a nauseating stench that the young man fainted. The stench attracted some vultures, who devoured not only the lizards but also the young man's buttocks. They then carried him down from the cliff with their beaks.

The young man remembered a story of his grandmother's about a

man who had constructed an artificial behind from a paste made of pounded tubers, and he repaired himself in the same way. He returned to his village and appeared to his younger brother and his grandmother, first in the guise of a lizard and then in his own form.

That night all fires in the village except that of the grandmother were put out by a thunderstorm. Next morning the villagers came to her place to fetch fire and the young man was recognized by his father's second wife. When the father heard that his son had returned he took his ceremonial rattle and went to welcome him.

The young man wanted to avenge himself on his father and instructed his younger brother to ask their father to organize a collective hunt. When the hunt had started the younger brother transformed himself into a small rodent and discovered the place where the father was lying in wait for game. The elder brother transformed himself into a deer. He impaled his father on his horns and threw him into a lake. The father was devoured by spirits who had taken the form of carnivorous fish, and his lungs were transformed into aquatic plants. The young man then took revenge on the two wives of his father.

An old version of the myth adds that the young man went away with his grandmother to a beautiful distant land and sent the Bororo rain, cold and wind to punish them.

Lévi-Strauss relates this myth to a number of other myths in various ways, in the first place to another Bororo myth that tells of the origin of water, adornments and funeral rites (M2). A little boy followed his mother secretly into the forest and saw her being raped by a man of her own moiety. He informed his father, who shot the man and secretly strangled his wife, burying her in her own hut with the assistance of four animals. Their little son looked for his mother everywhere. He became emaciated and tearful, and when he could not find his mother he changed into a bird. He dropped some excrement on the shoulder of his father. His father's second wife tried to wipe it off, but did not succeed. Out of the excrement grew a huge Jatoba tree. The father, who was called Birimoddo or Baitagogo, was ashamed of his burden and left the village. Every time he sat down water and rivers appeared around him. At the same time the Jatoba tree shrank until it ultimately disappeared. Baitagogo liked the landscape he had created. He resigned his chieftainship to his father, and the second chief who had governed in his absence did likewise. In this way the chieftainship passed from the Tugare to the Cera moiety (Bororo society is divided into two matrilineal moieties). The former chiefs left their village with a number

of companions and became the culture heroes Bakororo and Itubore.

When eventually they returned they frightened the father of Itubore, but he later asked them to hand over their adornments, and killed those of the companions who brought too few of them (Colbacchini and Albi-setti 1942: 201-206; Lévi-Strauss 1975: 49-50). It is thought that Bakororo and Itubore now rule the lands of the dead. Bakororo lives in the West, and Itubore in the East.

Lévi-Strauss compares the behaviour of Baitagogo with that of the father in M1. Both men attempt to avenge themselves for the injustice that is done to them in an incestuous relation and both have to suffer the consequences of their actions. It is significant that the name of the father in M1, Bokwadorireu, is probably derived from *bokwadi*, Jatoba tree. Both fathers are thus associated with the Jatoba tree. Lévi-Strauss also compares Baitagogo with the young man in M1. He describes them as secluded men, men who want to remain in the profane world of women and refuse to enter the ceremonial world of men. The profane world of women is located at the periphery of the village, where the huts of the women are, while the ritual world of men centres round the men's house in the middle of the village. The young man in M1 committed incest with his mother, while Baitagogo in M2 buried his wife in her own hut and denied her the ritual burial she was entitled to. Both men are overpossessive towards women.

In M5 Lévi-Strauss presents us with another case of a secluded man, who is also called Birimoddo. A young man refused to frequent the men's house. This annoyed his grandmother. She poisoned her grandson by breaking wind above his face at night. The young man grew weak and ill, but when he discovered the cause of his illness he impaled the old woman with an arrow through her anus. He buried her secretly in her hut with the assistance of the same four animals that helped Baitagogo bury his wife, but in this myth they are named in the reverse order.

That day the Bororo went fishing. The young man's sister wanted to entrust her little son to the care of her grandmother. As the grandmother did not answer her calls she placed the little child on a branch of a tree. It changed into an anthill. The young woman went into the water to collect the fish that were floating on the surface. She did not bring the fish to land but ate them all voraciously. As a consequence her stomach swelled and she suffered acute pains. She began to moan and in so doing released the diseases that still plague mankind. She was killed by her two brothers Birimoddo and Kaboreu. Her head

was thrown into a lake in the East and her legs into a lake in the West (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942: 220-221; Lévi-Strauss 1975: 59-60).

Lévi-Strauss does not attempt to give a systematic analysis of all the important social relations in these myths, but selects certain social relations and tries to relate them to particular cosmic relations. The cosmic code is also not analysed systematically.

Briefly, Lévi-Strauss concludes that:

M2 tells of the origin of water, adornments and funeral rites.

Adornments and funeral rites have to do with the transformation from death to life.

M5 tells of the origin of diseases. Diseases are a function of the transformation from life to death.

The opposition between father and son in M2 can be interpreted as:

Son = heaven and father = earth.

The opposition between mother and son in M5 can be interpreted as:

Son = earth and mother = water (Lévi-Strauss 1975: 62).

M1, M2 and M5 begin with incest (the relation between the young man and his grandmother in M5 is interpreted as "alimentary incest") and end with the origin of a mediator. M2 tells of the origin of water (mediator between earth and sky), adornments (mediator between nature and culture) and funeral rites (mediator between the living and the dead).

M5 explains the origin of diseases (mediator between life and death).

M1 poses a problem, for it is not obvious what the mediating agent here is. Lévi-Strauss suggests that M1 is part of a group of myths that explain the origin of cooking, which is a mediating activity between life and death, sky and earth, nature and society (Lévi-Strauss 1975: 64-65). This may be true, but it does not explain how cooking functions as a mediating agent in this particular myth (M1). M1 clearly describes the origin of a number of ritual objects that were taken from the spirits by the young man. Ritual objects are mediating objects par excellence, but Lévi-Strauss does not follow this line of thought. His interest is focused on the culinary code and to prove his point he presents a number of myths of the Ge speaking people that live North and East of the Bororo.

In these Ge myths a young man is abandoned by the husband of his sister in the same way as the son of M1 was abandoned by his father. A jaguar found the young man, took him home, adopted him as his son, and gave him roasted meat to eat. The jaguar's wife, who is some-

times represented as a human being, behaved in a hostile way. She refused to give food to the adopted son. The young man killed her or wounded her (in some versions on the jaguar's advice) and fled home. The Indians, who did not possess fire at that time, organized an expedition and fetched the fire from the jaguar's dwelling place. Since that time human beings cook their food, while the jaguar eats his meat raw (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1975: 66-69). Lévi-Strauss assumes that the jaguar's wife was the young man's sister (she is called an Indian in M7) and as a consequence the young man and the jaguar were brothers-in-law. The jaguar rendered the young man a service by giving the fire and the technique of cooking in return for the woman.

Lévi-Strauss relates these Ge myths to another group of myths that are told by the Tupi Indians, the Mundurucu version (M16) being given particular attention. In this myth the culture hero Karusekaibö sent his son to his sisters to ask them for food. The sisters refused to give the boy food, and the angry culture hero resolved to transform them into wild pigs. The boy, appearing in the guise of various animals, made a wall of feathers around the village.

The culture hero blew tobacco smoke into the encampment and ordered the inhabitants to eat their food. They misunderstood him and began to have sexual intercourse with each other. While they were thus engaged they were transformed into wild pigs. Karusekaibö kept the pigs in a pigsty and each day he gave one pig to the people in the village the pigs came from. The trickster Dairu discovered the secret by interrogating the son of the culture hero. Through his avarice he let all pigs escape. He was killed by the wild pigs, who also got hold of the son of Karusekaibö. The culture hero threw a hill over a group of pigs, imprisoning them together with his son. The rest of the pigs escaped. The trickster Dairu was revived by Karusekaibö (cf. Murphy 1958: 70-73; Lévi-Strauss 1975: 85).

Lévi-Strauss postulates an opposition between the jaguar as the good brother-in-law, who gives food to his wife's brother, and the bad brothers-in-law, who refuse to give food to their wife's brother and are therefore transformed into pigs (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1975: 91). In this way he develops an elegant opposition between the Ge and the Tupi myths, which are said to present complementary aspects of the relation between wifegivers and wifetakers. The Ge myths attribute the origin of fire and the technique of cooking to the good brother-in-law, while the Tupi myths explain the origin of food that has to be cooked as a result of behaviour of the bad brothers-in-law. The different groups of

myths are connected by way of a social code in which the principle of alliance is central, while descent and filiation is given hardly any attention at all.

Methodological remarks

We can study myths in different ways, but two, complementary, approaches are particularly important for the anthropologist:

- 1) Myths may be analysed in order to discover their meaning for the participants.
- 2) The structure of complexes of myths may be examined in order to discover the organizing principles that determine their form.

If the first course is chosen, then obviously the ethnographic context is crucial, but there is no need to study the myths of neighbouring cultures, although this may have heuristic value. It would be preposterous to assume that the Bororo myths make sense only to those Bororo who also know Ge or Tupi myths, etc. The meaning of the myths must be found through the careful interpretation of the relations between the structure of the myth and the ethnographic reality as it is conceived by the participants.

At the same time it is true that the mythologies of neighbouring cultures are often related to each other. Bororo mythology and Ge mythology both, for instance, share the theme of the birdnest. There are important differences between the structures of the myths of Bororo and Ge that share this theme, but the structural analysis of the relations between these myths reveals the organizing principles that determine their form. Lévi-Strauss is mainly concerned with this type of research. He is interested in the structure of human thinking as it is realized in mythology and tries to discover the logical principles that organize this thinking. Although I shall also consider the relations between different groups of myths, I am concerned specifically with the problem of the meaning of one particular group of myths: the Bororo myths.

Relating different groups of myths to each other requires the utmost care. I suggest that if it is decided to analyse a certain code, e.g. the social code, one is obliged to consider all significant relations in this code. Further, one must not tamper with it. If a myth specifies that a man is a father or a son one should not turn him into a nephew or a brother-in-law. Lévi-Strauss, however, both neglects significant relations in the social code and deviates from the social code as it is specified in the myths.

In M1 the grandmother (*iemaruga*: father's mother)² plays an important part. She gives the young man council and saves him from his father. She becomes the mistress of fire at the end of the myth, while the father ends his life in the water. The opposition between grandmother and father is neatly expressed in the magical wand that is placed in a crevice and can be seen in opposition to the vertical pole that is taken away by the father. Lévi-Strauss, however, pays no attention to the important place of the grandmother in this myth. Nor does he give much attention to the position of the grandmother in M5. He tends indeed to underestimate the importance of the position of women in many myths. No attention is given to the second wives who support their husbands in M1 and M2.

The sisters in M16 are not distinguished from their husbands, and Lévi-Strauss considers husbands and sisters as one corporate set. The underestimation of the importance of women may well be a quite unnecessary consequence of Lévi-Strauss' alliance theory, which need not imply that women are passive objects of exchange between men, although in Lévi-Strauss' analyses of myth this impression is often given (van Baal 1975).

Lévi-Strauss views the jaguar as a brother-in-law of the young man in the Ge myth, although the jaguar is clearly specified as an adoptive father. There is no clear social relation specified between the jaguar's wife and the young man other than that of adoptive mother and adoptive son. The young man kills her but there is no indication whatsoever that this killing implies the murder of a sister. The representation of the jaguar as a brother-in-law can only be explained by Lévi-Strauss's preoccupation with the principle of alliance. This interpretation enables him to oppose the jaguar in the Ge and the pigs in the Tupi myths. But even his interpretation of the Tupi myths is not convincing. The conflict in M16 originates in a refusal of the sisters to give food to their nephew. No mention is made of their husbands. We have to consider the possibility that a conflict between brother and sister is quite different in Indian thinking from a conflict between wifegivers and wifetakers.

Lévi-Strauss does not analyse the Mundurucu myths that continue the story of Karusekaibö (Murphy 1958: 73-79). The next myth relates how Karusekaibö created another son, who committed adultery with the wives of the Mundurucu and was transformed by his father into a tapir. He continued to have sexual relationships with the women and was killed. His flesh was cooked and eaten. When the women dis-

covered what had happened they decided to transform themselves into fish. In the next myth they are again transformed into women.

The Karusekaibö cycle, seen as a whole, obviously centres round the opposition of men and women, relations discussed in terms of sexual and alimentary codes. In M16 the sisters and their husbands are transformed into pigs while they are copulating. In the next Mundurucu myth the wives have intercourse with an animal and are transformed into fish. Thus women who do not live in accordance with cultural rules are transformed into food. These male/female relations are not to be confused with wifegiver/wifetaker relations. Even in M16, for example, where the wifetakers are specified, it is the sisters who are marked, and not their husbands.

Lévi-Strauss's preoccupation with the relation between wifegivers and wifetakers also explains why he considers the man vs. sister -f husband an inversion of the man vs. wife opposition (Lévi-Strauss 1975: 95). It would be more acceptable to leave the husband out of it (man vs. wife is an inversion of man vs. sister) or construct the opposition in the following way: Man vs. sister + husband is an inversion of the man vs. wife + wife's brother.

Lévi-Strauss's interpretation of the relation between Ge and Tupi myths in terms of the opposition wifegivers and wifetakers is therefore open to challenge. Moreoyer, his interpretation of the Ge myths contradicts the text and his interpretation of the Tupi myths is at least doubtful.

An alternative interpretation

(1) the series of myths

If the classification of the jaguar as an adoptive father is accepted it becomes much easier to relate the structure of the Ge myths to the other myths. I shall consider the relations between the Ge myths and the Bororo myths and leave the Tupi myths out of consideration, since they have a different theme and armature.

I begin with the Bororo myths 1, 2 and 5. In M1 and M2 there is a negative relation between father and son and a positive relation between mother and son. In M5 a father is not mentioned but there is a negative relation between mother and son.

Lévi-Strauss characterizes Baitagogo and the young man in M1 as secluded men, who refuse to leave the world of women. Actually it is not Baitagogo, but his little son who clings to the world of women. He also interprets the opposition between father and son in M2 as an

opposition between sky and earth, but this seems hardly justified. There is clearly an opposition between high and low, and this is repeated in the opposition between father and son in M1, but there are no indications that the father is connected with the earth. On the contrary, trees are often connected with water in Indian mythology (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1975: 164-170). In M2 the Jatoba tree shrinks as water appears. The father in M2 creates water and the father in M1 ends his life in water. It is probable that if the fathers have to be associated with a cosmic element, it is with water and not earth.

The opposition between high and low is important in many Bororo myths. The parents are always low and the children always high. The crucial act is the connection or disconnection of the link between high and low. In M1 the father destroys the link between high and low. In M2 the son creates a link between high and low by dropping some excrement that grows into a Jatoba tree. In M34 a number of Bororo children escape to the sky by climbing a creeper. They are pursued by their mothers, but the last child cuts the creeper with a knife and the women drop back to earth. The children are transformed into stars and the mothers into wild beasts (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942: 218-9; Lévi-Strauss 1975: 115). In another Bororo myth a boy escapes his father's anger by climbing a Jatoba tree that grows until it reaches the stars (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942: 253). M1 also suggests a relation between stars and the Jatoba tree in the names of the father and the son. The name of the father is derived from Jatoba tree, while the name of the son, *Geriguiguiatugo*, consists of the words *geriguigui*, "land tortoise", the name of the constellation *Corvus*, and *atugo*, "spotted".

The opposition between high and low is thus clearly very important in the Bororo myths in relation to parents and children, but this does not mean that high stands for sky and low stands for earth. Similar objections can be made against Lévi-Strauss's interpretation of the cosmic and social relations in M5.

In both M1 and M2 there is a negative relation between father and son and a positive relation between mother and son. There are also important differences between these myths. In M1 the father disconnects the link between high and low and the son becomes polluted in his high position. In M2 the son pollutes the father and so creates a connection between high and low (the Jatoba tree). M1 explains the origin of heavenly water (high) and M2 explains the origin of earthly water (low). In M1 it is the polluted son who becomes a culture hero, in M2 it is the polluted father who becomes a culture hero.

Both heroes share an important characteristic: they deny the principle of alliance. In M1 this is expressed in a positive way: incest with the mother. In M2 it is expressed in a negative way: murder of the mother. In each case the men must leave their village as a result of their crime. They return with cultural goods, which they give to their fathers. The fathers attempt to kill their sons or their companions and the sons hand over the cultural goods (and their chieftainships in M2) to their fathers. This happens only once. Since this mythical past cultural goods and offices have been transmitted matrilineally from mother's brother to sister's son.

Finally, both heroes leave human society forever. The son in M1 departs with his grandmother to a far and beautiful land. Itubore and Bakororo live in the lands of the dead.

In M5 the structures of M1 and M2 are inverted in important respects. While M1 is marked by a positive relation between son and grandmother, there is a negative relation between grandmother and grandson in M5. The relation between mother and son is also inverted. The total inversion of the structure is also expressed in the inverse order of the four animals that assist in burying the victims.

The inversion of the structure can be explained by considering what the myths are about. M1 and M2 explain the origin of cultural goods, which belong to the world of men, while M5 explains the origin of diseases, "natural goods", which among the Bororo are associated with the world of women.

The relation between the men are, to a large extent, determined by their relations towards women. The disjunction between father and son in M1 is the result of the incest of mother and son. The disjunction between father and son in M2 is the result of the father's murder of the mother and of the son's longing for the mother. Both disjunctions lead to the origin of cultural goods. Another variation of this theme can be found in the myth of the origin of the stars: a disjunction between father and son leads to the origin of knowledge about the stars (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942: 253). A conjunction of father and son has a negative result (death): a father changes into a ray that hides under a tree while his son changes into a bird that sits on a branch of that tree. When someone passes he is killed by the father at a signal from the son (Colbacchini and Albisetti 1942: 254). The conjunction of grandmother and son in M5 leads to the origin of diseases. In M1 the wives of the father are messengers. The first wife carries a sign (feathers) that give the father an indication of what has happened. This

leads to a disjunction of father and son. The second wife informs the father of the return of his son, and this leads to a temporary conjunction of father and son that proves ineffective. The son avenges himself on both women. In M2 the situation is more complicated. Here the son informs the father of the incest of his mother, and this leads to a break between father and son. The son changes into a bird and creates a (temporary) conjunction of father and son in the form of the Jatoba tree, which connects high and low. The second wife tries to destroy this conjunction by cleaning her husband's shoulder but she fails.

The relations between mothers and sons are ambiguous in both myths. The sons cling to their mothers (incest in M1, longing for the mother in M2), but at the same time the son in M1 is betrayed by the mother and the mother in M2 by the son. The second wives side with the husbands against the sons.

The Bororo myths 1 and 2 explain the origin of heavenly water (M1) and earthly water (M2). The Ge myths explain the origin of fire. Moreover, M1 and the Ge myths share the theme of the birdnester. The structure of the Ge myths is in many respects an inversion of the structure of the Bororo myths, in particular of M1 (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1975: 81-82, 138-139). In M1 the father makes his son climb the side of a cliff and leaves him there to starve. In the Ge myths the adoptive father finds the young man high in the tree. He makes him descend and feeds him roasted meat. In the Bororo myths there is a positive relation between mother and son and a negative relation between father and son. In the Ge myths the reverse is the case. In the Bororo myths natural parents live in a cultural setting (the village), in the Ge myths cultural parents live in a natural setting (the forest). In the Bororo myths cultural goods are transferred from son to father, in the Ge myths from father to son³. In the Bororo myths the heroes ultimately leave their village; in the Ge myths the young man returns to his village, but his adoptive father, who has lost the possession of cultural goods, disappears into the forest.

The Ge myths and the Bororo myths begin with a denial of the principle of alliance. In the Bororo myths this is expressed in relations between men and women (M/S and H/W); in the Ge myths in the relations between brothers-in-law. What is the reason of this inverted structure?

A key is offered by Turner's report that among the Kayapo ceremonial adoption is an important institution. A boy is ceremonially adopted when he is about eight years old. The adoptive father, who

may not be genealogically related to the boy, takes care of his education in the men's house (cf. Turner 1978: 10). Thus the relation between adoptive father and son in Kayapo society is a cultural one, but is given a natural foundation in the kinship system by the institution of adoption. Among the Bororo the situation is completely different. Here the natural (biological) relation between father and son has to be given a cultural (ceremonial) base.

Figure 1

PARTIAL SUMMARY OF MYTHICAL STRUCTURE

(a) *Precipitating event:*

	Actors	Action	Location	Disrupts relationship
M1	Mother and son	incest	forest	Father and son
M2	Brother and sister	incest	forest	Husband and wife Father and son
M5	Grandmother and grandson	alimentary "incest"	village	Grandmother and grandson and mother and son
M7-M12	Wifegiver and wifetaker	hunting together	forest	Wifegiver and wifetaker

(b) *Mediation:*

	High - Low	Mediators
M1	father low son high	pole (low - high) vultures (low - high)
M2	husband high wife low son high father low	Armادillos (high - low) excrement (high - low) Jatoba tree (low - high)
M5	grandmother high grandson high son high mother low	arrow (low - high)
M7-M12	wifegiver high wifetaker low	pole (low - high) jaguar (high - low)

(c) *The culture hero:*

	Póllution defines culture hero	Culture hero master of	Goods transferred	Fate of culture hero
M1	son	cultural goods	from father to son	leaves the village
M2	father	cultural goods, natural goods (water, sources, streams, etc.)	from father to son	leave the village (now live east and west of village)
M5	grandson	natural goods (diseases)	from sister to other people	—
M7-M12	wifegiver	cultural goods (fire)	from father to son	returns to village

Figure 2

CENTRAL SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS
(+ and — signify friendly/unfriendly)

	father/son	mother/son	grandmother/grandson	brother/sister	brothers- in-law
M1	—	+	+		
M2	—	+		-	—
M5		—	—	—	
M7-M12	+	—			—

Taking this series of myths as a whole, it is evident that they are logically related by way of various shared oppositions (father-son, culture-nature, male-female, etc.) that determine their structure. There is no need to tamper with the code, and specifically no call to represent the jaguar as a brother-in-law. On the contrary, he is unambiguously an adoptive father, and the importance of this position is confirmed by the ethnographic data of the Kayapo.

Yet, while the Ge and the Bororo myths can be related to each other in their own terms, by specifying the oppositions which determine their structure, if we wish to understand the *meaning* of these oppositions it is necessary to consider the ethnographic context of the myths.

(2) the meaning of the Bororo myths

I now come to the relations between the social code of the Bororo myths and the ethnography of Bororo social organization, for which I rely heavily on Christopher Crocker's recent studies.

Bororo society is divided into two exogamous matrilineal moieties, Tugare and Exerae. Each moiety is composed of four clans and each clan is divided into two subclans. In each subclan we find three to six matrilineages (cf. Crocker 1977b: 169).

The village is built in a circle and divided into two halves. The Exerae moiety lives in the North and the Tugare moiety in the South. Each clan has its own fixed position in the circle. The men's house is built in the centre of the village.

Marriage is uxorilocal and each household is matrifocal. Matrilineal kinfolk constitute the nucleus of the household. However, the Bororo are not completely matrilineal. Names, goods, etc., are transferred matrilineally, but the clans are not conceived of as matrilineal units, and the Bororo do not assume that different households of the same clan are linked genealogically. The unity of the clan is constituted rather by the *aroe*, a multi-referential concept which has a central place in Bororo religion, and which is particularly relevant here in its sense of the name souls of the dead ancestors.

Each clan has its own set of names, ceremonial goods, ritual rights, etc. The members of a clan are not entitled to the performance of the rituals they own. These have to be performed by members of a clan of the other moiety, who can represent the *aroe* of the clan that owns the ritual. The owners of the ritual enable the members of this clan to represent their *aroe*. This is considered a great gift and gives the owners of the ritual the right to marry the women of the clan that performs the ritual (cf. Crocker 1977c: 169).

The relation between the two moieties is not conceived of in terms of the opposition between wifegivers and wifetakers, but in terms of father and son.

It is significant that conflicts between brothers-in-law are rare in Bororo society. Brothers, on the other hand, are notorious for their inability to get along with each other, although the ideal of fraternal solidarity is rated very highly. Crocker's explanation is that matrilineal kinsmen, particularly brothers, are rivals for status, power, etc., in their own clan. The relations between brothers play an important part in many myths. They constitute a central theme in the cycle of Meri and Ari, sun and moon, in Bororo mythology.

The relations between father and son are ambivalent. It is thought that a man loses his vital life force, *rakare*, in frequent sexual contact with his wife. Frequent sexual intercourse is thought to be necessary to create and support the new life in the womb of the woman in the first stage of pregnancy, and so the father loses his *rakare* in order to beget children who will belong to the clan of his wife. At the same time it is these sons who will be able to represent the *aroe* of the father's clan, something the father could never do. The fathers give their vital life force to beget sons who can represent name-souls of the dead ancestors.

The ceremonial relationship between a man and his paternal clan is also stressed in other ways. In the initiation ritual important acts are performed by members of the paternal clan. Every married man brings large quantities of food to his parents. This institution is so important that Crocker suggests that the Bororo exchange men for food (Crocker 1977a: 250). When a man dies he is replaced by a symbolic representative of his paternal clan, who provides his parents with food. This implies an inversion of important social relations, for the father of the deceased belongs to the other moiety.

Almost all Bororo are symbolic representatives of deceased kinsmen. On those days that ceremonial hunts are organized and the Bororo have to participate in their capacity as social representatives the Exerae become Tugare and vice versa. It is death that makes this inversion possible.

The importance of patrilineal relations in Bororo society leads Crocker to the conclusion that the Bororo are uxorilocal residentially, matrilineal corporately and patrilineal ceremonially (Crocker 1977a: 256). The men's house in the middle of the village is the centre of ceremonial life, associated with the *aroe*.

The huts where the women live, on the periphery of the village, are associated with the organic processes of sex, eating and drinking, child-birth and death. The spirits responsible for these processes, the *bope*, are associated with the huts of the women, but although the women are associated with spirits that effect change, they themselves have a fixed position in Bororo society. They do not leave their moiety, clan or household and remain in their own household until they die.

The position of the Bororo men is quite different. A man grows up in his matrilineal household and spends much time in the men's house. When he marries he crosses the boundary that divides the two moieties of Bororo society. He has to live with his wife's kinsfolk and will remain an outsider in her matrilineal household. His own name, social

position, ritual rights, etc., are derived from his natal matrilineal group. He plays an important part in the social and political affairs of his own clan and is responsible for the education of his sisters' sons. His paternal clan, which belongs to the moiety of his wife, supports him in the context of ritual and enables him to represent its *aroe*.

A man is related to one moiety by matrilineal descent and to the other by marriage. In both cases his identity is defined through women. In the men's house he can escape the ambiguity of this situation in a man's world. The men's house is placed in opposition to the female world of the periphery, and this is manifest in its plan, which inverts the plan of the village. Here the Tugare sit in the North and the Exerae in the South. In the ceremonial context of the men's house, moreover, patrilineal relations are crucial. The moieties here do not consist of brothers-in-law who oppose each other, but of fathers and sons who complement each other. On the periphery women have their fixed positions, and in the men's house men have equally fixed positions, which do not change at marriage.

The Bororo myths explain the origins of the ceremonial and cultural order in terms of the relations between fathers and sons. The heroes of M1 and M2 deny the principle of alliance. By doing so, they place themselves outside the cultural order. At the same time this enables them to become culture heroes who belong completely to the world of men. They do not need to spend their *rakare* to beget sons. As a consequence they have no sons who will live after them. They leave their village with some companions, but not with a wife or children. They go to a distant land, the land of the dead. They become immortal, but the price of their immortality is death. They are associated with water, the element bound up with funeral rites and death in Bororo society. (The remains of the dead are ultimately disposed of in water.)

The culture heroes are also the masters and creators of cultural goods. The father-son relation is essentially a creative one. In the myths a disjunction between father and son results in the origin of cultural goods. This disjunction is caused by a denial of alliance. In ethnographic reality the conjunction of a man and a woman in marriage (alliance) results in the origin of children who are supported by the father. In myths cultural goods are transferred from sons to fathers, whereas in practice the cultural goods pass from mother's brother to sister's son. The former process is regressive (from young to old) and cannot continue indefinitely, the latter process is progressive and can go on for ever.

The relation between mother's brother and sister's son is uncreative (in the sense that nothing new is created). The sister's sons are not begotten by their uncles and the cultural goods they inherit are not created by them. Matrilineal succession and inheritance from old to young is thus an uncreative process, but it enables society to exist.

Patrilineal succession and inheritance from young to old could only exist in a mythical past, but the relations between fathers and sons remain essentially creative ones. The Bororo myths explain and clarify the ritual and social position of Bororo men in terms of filiation and alliance. Bororo men are caught between opposing principles (matriliney versus patriliney, male versus female, filiation versus alliance, etc), and the myths explain how the existing social and ritual order originated in events that were the inverse of the existing order.

The ritual world of men is thought of as being in opposition to the social world of the periphery that is dominated by matrilineal principles. Moieties are related to each other by marriage, but in the ritual context moiety relations are conceived of in terms of father-son relations. A male world is thus created, where women play no part. At the same time the denial of the principle of alliance is impossible. Without alliance human society must perish. This is true for the social order, but also for the ritual order. Only through women bearing sons can a man express the representation of the *aroe* of his own clan. Ultimately the world of the *aroe* and the world of the *bope*, the world of men and the world of women, have to be related to each other.

The Bororo myths describe men who try to transcend the limitations of their social world. Through denial of the principle of alliance they become cultural heroes and attain immortality in the land of the dead. There is no room for them in the world of the Bororo where cultural goods and prerogatives are transferred from mother's brother to sister's son, and indeed the mother's brothers are conspicuously absent in these myths. Filiation is the central theme. This opposition between filiation and alliance is not an "unconscious" organizing principle of Bororo thinking. Crocker has demonstrated that the Bororo are well aware of the meaning and importance of this opposition, which dominates their thinking about social and ritual relations.'

Crocker insists repeatedly that Bororo clans should not be considered as matrilineal units. This is consistent with the categories that determine the structure of myth, for the myths are concerned not with patriliney and matriliney, but with filiation and alliance. These two principles determine Bororo social organization in myth as well as in practice.

Conclusion

Crocker has provided a masterly theoretical basis for the relation of the myths to Bororo social structure. He has shown that matrilineal and patrilineal relations generate a field of tension in which each man always has an ambiguous status. The myths offer an explanation for the genesis of the tensions and at the same time illuminate their structure. They offer no straightforward solutions and interpose no mediators who can resolve the contradictions. On the contrary, they bring out precisely the ambiguity of the situation of Bororo men, even in their exploration of logically possible transformations of a problematic reality. Principles of filiation and alliance, *Aroe* and *Bope*, nature and culture, etc, determine in changing combinations the structure of the basic field of tension. There is no escape either in the ethnographic reality or in the cognitive structures from the basic ambiguities that determine the human condition of men among the Bororo.

Although I would argue that my interpretation is preferable to that offered by Lévi-Strauss, I would not pretend to have established the meaning of the myths. Meaning and understanding are relative concepts, as this paper itself demonstrates. Interpretation is crucially affected by the ideas brought to bear by the person attempting the interpretation. The reading of an observer will therefore unavoidably differ to some extent from the reading of a participant in a culture.

It should be clear, however, that simple etiological explanations of myths should be rejected. Curiously enough this type of explanation is also given by Lévi-Strauss where he reduces the message of the myths to an explanation of the origins of things that originate in them (water, adornments, funeral rites, diseases etc).

J. C. Crocker informed me in a personal letter that the Bororo referred to MI as "*a negative charter for matrilineality*" (cf. Crocker 1979: 294). This tells us something about the ways the participants conceive of their myths, but it does not establish *the* meaning of the myth,, which is never reducible to one particular message. The full meaning of a myth must be found in the relation between its structure and the structure of the ethnographic reality.

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NOTES

- ¹ This paper is the result of a class devoted to the study of *The Raw and the Cooked* at the department of Cultural Anthropology at Leyden University in 1978-1979. I want to thank the participants in that class, M. Hekker, K. van Iersel, F. Kool, E. Reesink and G. Winkel for their help in the preparation of

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- ² The term *iemaruga* refers to a senior paternal kinswoman, often the paternal aunt, who plays an important part in the name-giving ceremony (cf. Crocker 1977b: 172; 1977c: 172). It is also possible that the *iemaruga* is a FFZ and, given either prescriptive bilateral or patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, a MM at the same time. This might account for the coresidence of the young man and the *iemaruga* (cf. Crocker 1979: 331).
- ³ Crocker states that the fathers transfer ritual goods to their sons in Bororo mythology. Although terminological relations between *móieties* can be inverted and sons can be referred to as *pa-je*, "our fathers" (personal communication from Crocker), there are no indications that the fathers and sons in M1 and M2 are anything other than genitors and their sons.

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