

CANNIBALISM AND INFERTILITY AMONG THE  
LILLOOET, THOMPSON, AND SHUSWAP:  
THE SHAMAN AS A SEXUAL  
MEDIATOR

by  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to demonstrate that the symbolic significance of food gathering among the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap generates two major paradoxes, cannibalism and infertility, which arise from a sexual imbalance revealed by certain myths related to food gathering, and that the shaman is a potential mediator of these paradoxes. Initially, I suggest that an analysis of the symbol system of a culture affords an excellent access to native perspective if the analyst is able to avoid the influences of his ethnocentrism with respect to his methodology and selection of data. Thus, analytical methods must possess universal applicability, and the data (native categories of thought) might be selected from native solutions to problems occurring to all humans--e.g., cultural solutions and conceptions of those solutions to food gathering.

The second chapter considers some definitions of symbols proposed by Geertz, Langer, and others and suggests a "working definition" of a symbol as a locus of logical operations. It is then possible to apply structural methods of analysis (metaphor, binary opposition, transformation, et al) to a symbol system as structuralism professes to consider the universal structure of cognition.

In the third chapter, I provide some ethnographic notes concerning the manifestation of one underlying Plateau cultural principle, equality, to the general social structure of the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap with respect to political organization, food gathering, and the sexual division of labor. Although men and women are considered to be generally equal, a strict distinction is maintained between sexual roles. Hence, I suggest that this balance plus necessary distinction might be termed a "sexual balance." Also, the chapter briefly considers the unusual capacities of shamans and suggests that, as shamans are not subject to restrictions imposed upon the normative group, they may be able to manipulate the rigid sexual distinction if the sexual balance is upset.

The fourth and fifth chapters discuss the symbolic significance of food gathering. In the fourth chapter, I suggest that women maintain a metaphorical sexual relationship with the roots they gather. As this relationship is strictly metaphorical, however, serious problems accrue when the relationship becomes literal and when men gather roots. Another myth succinctly states the ultimate results of a violation of a woman's metaphorical relationship with food. This violation generates an excessive cultural union or marriage between two men (necessarily infertile) and an excessive natural union (between woman and tree) whose issue, blood transformed into blackberries, poses the problem of cannibalism to the people.

The fifth chapter suggests that women who hunt also pose a threat to the cognitive system as men appear to have a metaphorical sexual relationship with deer and other game animals. Two myths suggest a former intimate relationship between women and deer. Menstrual blood appears to function as a differentiator of women from deer. The chapter focuses on the logical implications of the hunting ventures of a cannibal woman. This woman not only opposes the role of women by hunting, but also possesses a snake-like vagina which offers death as opposed to life (as in childbirth).

The sixth chapter examines shamans (with respect to myths and ritual actions) as mediators of the two paradoxes, cannibalism and infertility. First, I discuss two myths relating the drilling and sucking practices of mosquitoes to those of thunder. These practices echo shamanic curative techniques. Also, the symbolic significance of the earth people's spiral ascent to the sky world parallels the significance of the spiral in other contexts. Finally, some rituals and myths concerning shamanic performance consider certain problems (including improper sexual distinction, excessive sibling intimacy, and lack of potential spouses) which generate infertility.

The concluding chapter reviews the strategy for analysis and the logical implications of the symbolism of food gathering as well as the potential of the shaman to mediate paradoxes emerging from the logical implications.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

One of the crucial, albeit frustrating, fields for anthropological inquiry concerns the construed world of the culture member, his Weltanschauung, or how the culture member orders his world. Considerable difficulties must be surmounted by any non-indigenous investigator in his endeavors to address this inquiry. Questions posed by anthropologists are often filtered through the sieve of their own ethnocentrism; for example, serious flaws in ethnographic investigations have occurred when the ethnographer's tacit acceptance of an exegesis bars his further questioning-- i.e., the ethnographer knows that "women are a malevolent influence," or that the native is subject to serious delusions concerning the real world and, therefore, cannot possibly employ proper logic to generate his exegesis. Furthermore, native exegetical statements cannot always be accepted as substantive explanations for some particular phenomenon. The native may assume that his perspectives are shared to a great extent by the ethnographer and fail to qualify his exegesis sufficiently. Hence, although the anthropologist is denied intimate access to the perspective of the native, his purpose is to discover and analyze the

various expressions of that perspective. These expressions, I would submit, are inherent in the symbolism of the culture.

Symbols are strategies for communication and, thus, afford unmatched access to native perspective. In this thesis, I propose to illustrate this hypothesis by showing that the symbolic significance of food gathering, among the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap, generates two major paradoxes which arise from a loss of balance between sexual realms. These paradoxes may be mediated by shamans, who, in effect, act as sexual mediators to restore this balance.

Two problems are inherent in this proposal, however. First, if the symbol system is to be considered a communication of native perspective, methods utilized for its analysis must coordinate two distinct conceptual systems (those of the native and the analyst) in terms of some logic possessing universal applicability. Although the world of the native cannot be expected to conform to that of the ethnographer or analyst, I shall assume after Levi-Strauss and Piaget<sup>1</sup> that the physiological mechanisms for perception

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<sup>1</sup>See Claude Levi-Strauss, Structural Anthropology, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Press, Anchor Books, 1967); idem., The Savage Mind, trans. George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1966); Jean Piaget, Genetic Epistemology, trans. Eleanor Duckworth, Woodbridge Lectures Delivered at Columbia University, No. 8 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970); and idem., Structuralism, trans. and ed. Chaninah Maschler (New York: Basic Books, 1970).

and the structure of cognition are invariant in humans. Accepting and applying a universal logic of cognition to symbols should serve to avoid the above-mentioned pitfall of ethnocentrism. Thus, I hope to show that it is possible to discuss and define symbols in terms of the logic or logical relations they exemplify.

Second, a symbolic analysis must be based upon native categories of thought. Hence, the question turns to which bodies of data might be acceptable for the construction of these categories and their subsequent analysis. Native categories of thought could, perhaps, be detected as responses to problems; that is to say, problems and their resolutions serve to define categories by indicating one or more of the following: (1) how the problem may be resolved; (2) who may resolve it; (3) when it may be resolved; and (4) why it may be resolved. Ethnocentrism, however, may colour the investigator's initial selection of a problem in the culture unless that problem is one which necessarily occurs to all humans. Hence, I suggest that one reasonable body of data for symbolic analysis concerns the universal problem of food gathering and the cultural solutions and conceptions of those solutions to the problem. This topic includes: which elements in the environment are considered food, how the food is procured, who procures the food, and who consumes it. Native exegesis for the regulation of these activities must also be included among these data.

Symbolism may be manifested in many ways, including avoidance patterns and cultural prescriptions. These manifestations, subjected to a structural analysis, should reveal much of the logic at play concerning the conceptions of food, procurer and procured, and eating. However, the data may be considerably augmented with the addition of myth. Although serious investigations have been performed on the logic of symbols<sup>2</sup> and the logic of myth,<sup>3</sup> considerations of myths as supplements to established symbolic bases have not

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<sup>2</sup>See Sherry Ortner, "On Key Symbols," American Anthropologist, 75 (October, 1973), 1338-1346; Victor Turner, The Forest of Symbols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, Cornell Paperbacks, 1967); and idem., The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

<sup>3</sup>See Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," in Structural Anthropology, pp. 202-228; idem., "Four Winnebago Myths: A Structural Sketch," in Myth and Cosmos, ed. John Middleton, American Museum Sourcebooks in Anthropology (Garden City, N.Y.: The Natural History Press, 1967); idem., "The Story of Asdiwal," trans. Nicholas Mann, in The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism, ed. Edmund Leach, A.S.A. Monographs, No. 5 (London: Tavistock, 1967); idem., The Raw and the Cooked, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); idem., From Honey to Ashes, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper and Row, 1973); Elli Kongas Maranda, "The Cattle of the Forest and the Harvest of Water: The Cosmology of Finnish Magic," in Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts, ed. June Helm, Proceedings of the 1966 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967); Elli Kongas Maranda and Pierre Maranda, Structural Models in Folklore and Transformational Essays, 2nd. edn. (Paris: Mouton, 1971); idem. (eds.), Structural Analysis of Oral Tradition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971); and Pierre Maranda (ed.), Mythology, Penguin Modern Sociology Readings (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1972).

been undertaken.

Myths (as well as art) afford a remarkable access to the logic inherent in a culture by subtly insisting that paradoxes or logically untenable relationships do exist. This is a contention which Gardner rejects in his criticism of Levi-Strauss:

Levi-Strauss' contention that myths serve the purpose of conceptualizing and attempting to solve paradoxes for the community is an intriguing one, but one most difficult to demonstrate.<sup>4</sup>

He fails to observe that the paradoxes confronting the community and engendered in the myths are readily ascertainable if the analyst has made some initial assessment of the logic of the situation depicted in the myth in terms of its everyday (non-mythic) context. Obviously, particular paradoxes are creations of individual cultures and will not simply nudge the naive observer and reveal to him their implicit, assorted logical considerations. But for the prepared analyst, the paradox can often serve to complete or at least considerably assist in solving the symbolic puzzle.

Paradoxes are logically untenable in the sense they assign two contradictory meanings to one phenomenon. Cannibalism presents a paradox in connection with eating. The cannibal either chooses to eat people or cannot distinguish between people and proper food. One eats in order

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<sup>4</sup>Howard Gardner, "The Structural Analysis of Protocols and Myths," Semiotica, 5, No. 1 (1972), 38.

to sustain one's life, and one's food is essentially a dead animal or a dead plant. A strict cognitive distinction must be maintained, then, between food (what one kills to eat) and self (what one desire to keep alive).

The cannibal violates the cognitive distinction between proper and improper food. In Interior Salish thought, the categories of food and non-food are constructed as follows:

Food (proper)

Roots,  
Berries, and  
Cedar Bark

Deer and  
Other Game  
Animals

Non-Food

Grass, rocks, etc.

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Abhorred creatures  
such as frogs, snakes,  
and insects.

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People

Logically, one might say that with respect to humans, alimential relationships exist between people and proper food or between an element of the non-food category and proper food. Thus, the alimential relationship exists between the two major classifications of food and non-food. But the cannibal selects people for food instead of a more appropriate element from the category of proper

food. Thus, the cannibal rejects inter-category alimentation in favor of infra-category alimentation. He dissolves one major distinction (between humans and proper food).

As the logic of the myths will be shown to indicate, if one such major distinction is violated, the entire cognitive system is threatened. If one major flaw persists in the cognitive structure, others are possible. In effect, one major cognitive distinction in alimentation is threatened--the distinction between eater and eaten. If this cognitive barrier is removed, the cannibal could consume the ultimate non-food, his own body, or eat himself in order to nourish himself. This hapless arrangement is the ultimate logical extension of cannibalism. Thus, two contradictory meanings may come to be applied to a single phenomenon.

Cultural paradoxes are essentially the most pithy statements available regarding the logic of a symbol system as they concern themselves with "what has not been considered." In other words, by indicating the points at which the cognitive system can be destroyed or rendered untenable, the paradox illuminates the cognitive structure of the system itself.

Turner labels as "anti-structure" those elements which constitute the antithesis of the system, or which exist interstitially within the framework of culture.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Victor Turner, The Ritual Process, pp. 131-165.

The paradox points to the anti-structure of a cognitive system and, thus, operates as a nexus linking that which is structured and cognitively tenable to that which is absurd or not cognitively controllable.

A subtle logic emerges. The paradox appears to suggest the destruction of a particular cognitive system by revealing the existence of the cognitively untenable. Cognition is based upon the differentiation of elements in a continuum, their categorization, and their inter-relations. Something becomes untenable when it violates basic distinctions, categories, or relations, and, thus, does not mesh with order. In exposing the cognitively untenable, the paradox forces a choice between two possibilities: (1) the reliability of the logic must be called into question (the cognitive structure does not always "work"); or (2) the untenable elements must be accounted for in terms of their meaning in the cognitive system. If the reliability of the logic is threatened, the entire cognitive system is threatened.<sup>6</sup> The logical system can no longer suffice to maintain order and, therefore, structure.

Thus, the only acceptable choice is to mesh the absurd with the cognitively tenable. In other words, the cognitive system maintains its integrity as the untenable

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<sup>6</sup>Pierre Maranda labels this questioning the "increasing entropy" of the system. See Pierre Maranda, "Structuralism in Cultural Anthropology," Annual Review of Anthropology, 1 (1972), 339.



elements are rendered meaningful through their discovered relationships with the system. Mediation is the device which defends the cognitive system from the possibly malevolent influence of the paradox and, as mediation involves working through the system (as does Levi-Strauss's bricoleur) to discover a solution, it reveals a wealth of symbolic information. Turner, in a more recent consideration of anti-structure, refers to it as a complement of the structure and, thus, part and parcel of the structure.<sup>7</sup> An interdependency exists between the two. Similarly, the paradox may be construed as an armature for the cognitive system, not a weapon directed against it.

Myths, in addition to insinuating the existence of paradoxes, also often provide solutions to these paradoxes through a mediation, which reveals not only the link between the tenable and untenable but also the particular logic effecting the connection. In this thesis, I shall attempt to demonstrate that Interior Salish shamanism is, among other things, a mythic solution to the paradoxes arising from the symbolic significance of food gathering.

The above discussion has suggested an approach to the analysis. Initially, the conception of symbol will be discussed and the methodological considerations necessary for the discovery or identification of symbols will be

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<sup>7</sup>Victor Turner, Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 272-273.

explored. Some ethnographic notes on the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap will then be presented as a basis for further inquiries concerning food gathering. After the symbolic structure of food gathering is established, I shall consider the paradoxes emerging from some of the myths related to food gathering and their analyses. Finally, the shaman will be examined as a mediator of these paradoxes.

## Chapter 2

### METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of my analysis is to discover the logic of certain cultural prescriptions and proscriptions among the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap, and the messages inherent in the logic. I shall attempt to illustrate that a general orientation towards nature and culture is manifested in certain pervasive symbols occurring in the symbolic actions and myths of the three groups. As I content that the thrust of a symbolic analysis should be to discern a pattern of thought or logic, I hope to demonstrate that symbolic significance may be determined by submitting the data to a structural analysis.

Before describing the rudiments of a structural analysis, I shall discuss some of the more recent efforts on the part of students of symbolism to define the symbol and delimit the analysis of symbolism. It is essential to arrive at some "working definition" of the symbol and then to consider the benefits of structural tools for the analysis of the symbol.

### ON THE SYMBOL

Definitions proposed by Langer and Geertz have suggested that the meaning of a symbol is implicit in the

inter-relationships the symbol serves to summarize:

Symbols are not proxy for their objects, but are vehicles for the conception of objects... and it is the conceptions, not the things that symbols directly "mean."<sup>1</sup>

The power of metaphor derives precisely from that interplay between the discordant meanings it symbolically coerces into a unitary conceptual framework and from the degree to which that coercion is successful in overcoming the physic resistance such semantic tension inevitably generates in anyone in a position to perceive it.<sup>2</sup>

Both Langer and Geertz eschew the relegation of a symbol to the semiotic context of symbol as sign, a tool for mapping one-to-one relationships or the correspondence between a referrant and its designator. However, the notions of "conception" and "conceptual framework" are rather imprecise and not satisfactory to the task at hand.

Sherry Ortner attempts to categorize symbols and, in so doing, at least to determine the definition of "framework"<sup>3</sup> if not precisely of "concept." Ortner addresses the question of general symbolic orientation and has specified the term "key symbols" (admittedly after Turner's "dominant

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<sup>1</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, 2nd. edn. (New York: The New American Library, Mentor Books, 1951), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in Ideology and Discontent, ed. David Apter (New York: The Free Press, 1964), p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>Sherry Ortner, "On Key Symbols," American Anthropologist, 75 (October, 1973), 1338.

symbols" and Schneider's "core symbols").<sup>4</sup> Ortner's objective is to define key symbols by initially considering how key symbols might be discovered in a culture and then by establishing two major categories of key symbols.

Her criteria for assigning a symbol major cultural significance are useful and must be employed whether the analyst is in the field or working from abstracted data:

(1) The natives tell us that X is culturally important.

(2) The natives seem positively or negatively aroused about X, rather than indifferent.

(3) X comes up in many different contexts. These contexts may be behavioral or systemic: X comes up in many different symbolic domains (myth, ritual, art, formal rhetoric, etc.).

(4) There is greater cultural elaboration surrounding X, e.g. elaboration of vocabulary, or elaboration of details of X's nature, compared with similar phenomena in the culture.

(5) There are greater cultural restrictions surrounding X, either in sheer number of rules, or severity of sanctions regarding its misuse.<sup>5</sup>

One notes, however, that the criteria depend upon public manifestation of the symbol. In most instances, it may be assumed that the symbol will be manifested publicly, but in considering symbolic domains such as myth and art, the analyst is often isolated from any public confirmation or assurance that, indeed, he is correct in assuming that "flies settling on a carcass" may have profound significance

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<sup>4</sup>See Victor Turner, The Forest of Symbols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967); and David Schneider, American Kinship (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968).

<sup>5</sup>Sherry Ortner, "On Key Symbols," 1339.

for some cultural group. Ortner is not providing a directive for the study of non-exegetical material or certain practices which do not carry concomitant native explanation.

Ortner proceeds to classify key symbols along a continuum where "summarizing" symbols comprise one pole while "elaborating" symbols comprise the other. Summarizing symbols are composed of "clustered, condensed, relatively undifferentiated meanings as the American flag."<sup>6</sup> Elaborating symbols are expressed in one of two modes: the first is Steven Pepper's root metaphor<sup>7</sup> where the "symbol provides a set of categories for conceptualizing other aspects of experience"; the second is the key scenario which formulates "appropriate goals and suggests effective action for achieving them: which formulates, in other words, key cultural strategies."<sup>8</sup> These two modes seem designed to correspond with Geertz's "model of" and "model for" dichotomy.<sup>9</sup> Another correspondence could be with Levi-Strauss's notions of the synchronic and the diachronic.

Ortner returns to the initial question in her paper

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 1342.

<sup>7</sup>Steven Pepper, World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1942).

<sup>8</sup>Sherry Ortner, "On Key Symbols," 1340-1341.

<sup>9</sup>Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, ed. Michael Banton, A.S.A. Monographs, No. 3 (London: Tavistock, 1966), p. 8.

--i.e., that of the justification for isolating some particular symbol as having a critical status. She asserts that keyness is manifested publicly, although she now includes unconscious manifestation as a possibility. How then is she to discover this type of manifestation at all? Ortner shifts the focus of her argument:

But the fact of public cultural concern or focus of interest is not why a symbol is key: it is only a signal that the symbol is playing some key role in relation to other elements of the cultural system of thought. The issue of keyness, in short, has to do with the internal organization of the system of cultural meaning, as that system functions for actors leading their lives in the culture.<sup>10</sup>

She summarizes the "key role in relation to the other elements" by denoting summarizing symbols as constituting logical or affective meanings prior to the other meanings of the system. Cultural ideas may be understood in the context of the meanings of the summarizing symbol. But, if the key role of the summarizing symbols rests upon the status of its particular substantive meanings, Ortner does not effectively differentiate the keyness of summarizing symbols from elaborating symbols. The elaborating symbol, formulating relationships, "parallels, isomorphisms, complementarities, and so forth,"<sup>11</sup> cannot be so different from the summarizing symbol. It may be noted, however, that Ortner's brief discussion of types of relationships is summarily dismissed.

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<sup>10</sup>Sherry Ortner, "On Key Symbols," 1343. <sup>11</sup>Ibid.

Ortner touches upon the crux of the concept of symbol when she implies that the symbol is a signal of inter-relationships. Her further elaboration of this signalling, however, is unsatisfactory. Status is a relational construct and makes sense only in terms of certain oppositions. Thus, the substantive meanings of the summarizing symbols must be constructed from just those relationships in evidence in the elaborating symbols. Ortner appears to approach the structural significance of these relationships rather cursorily and, in a manner of speaking, approaches structuralism through the back door.

One primary but significant statement on symbolism is offered by Fernandez:

A symbol can be otherwise defined as something which is linked with something else which it is not but about which linkage we can be clear. A device we understand as a contrivance of communication; anything ingeniously designed by new combinations of information which denotes the situation, ambitions, the frustrations, or the desires of the persons adapting it.<sup>12</sup>

Symbols may best be viewed as effecting a strategy for communication. Symbols are cues to the types of coding involved in the inter-relationships of disparate elements in addition to identifying the disparate elements themselves. For as Burke relates:

If we start by trying to analyze the terms in a

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<sup>12</sup>James Fernandez, "Unbelievably Subtle Words: Representation and Integration in the Sermons of an African Reformatory Cult," History of Religions, 6 (1966), 46.



work of art, such as a poem, drama, or story, we automatically begin with problems of sheer internality among these terms--and if one were to start analyzing such a structure of terms, one's first job would obviously be to spot the internal terministic relationships as such, whatever one might finally take to be the allusive element (we mean the terms' possible direct or indirect reference to a universe of discourse beyond their internal relationships to one another).<sup>13</sup>

Burke's indirect reference might appropriately be termed the "message" whereas the internal terministic relationships are the "code." The notion of the symbol as a communicative device is, thus, more apparent.

Fernandez, in his definition of the symbol, summarily dismisses the linkage of a symbol as something about which "we can be clear." This raises the question of how the analyst assures himself that such a linkage exists. However, Fernandez does approach this question in his summary of Metraux:

Rather serious methodological problems are raised when we speak about the associations of words--the images evoked by them--for, though we question our informants about them, a good deal that is resonant remains implicit. And we may too easily fall back upon the sovereignty of empathy and intuition, particularly if we are working on the resonance between images and attempting to build a cultural configuration.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Kenneth Burke, "What Are the Signs of What? A Theory of 'Entitlement'," Anthropological Linguistics, 4, No. 6 (1962), 12.

<sup>14</sup>James Fernandez, "Revitalized Words from 'The Parrot's Egg' and 'The Bull that Crashes in the Kraal': African Cult Sermons," in Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts, ed. June Helm, Proceedings of the 1966 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), p. 48, citing Rhoda Metraux, "Resonance in Imagery," in The Study of Culture at

Isolating models of perception is imperative to achieving an understanding of a people's cognition. However, as Scheffler remarks, methods for the isolation and interpretation of these models must "minimize the danger of fore-shortening the process and uncritically imposing alien models."<sup>15</sup> Metraux's and Scheffler's cautions raise the insufferable paradox of the cultureless ethnographer.<sup>16</sup> The cultureless ethnographer endeavors to interpret what Kaplan terms "system-specific" meaning (the meaning or significance to the actor)<sup>17</sup> without resorting to a priori categories. Appell attributes such a position to the cognitive structuralists, including Frake, Conklin, and Goodenough. Although a legitimate criticism is raised by the cognitive structuralists against an apriorism founded on an English-language pattern of thought and subscribed to, in Appell's opinion, by the comparative ethnographers, Goodenough's distinction between system-specific models and

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a Distance, eds. M. Mead and R. Metraux (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 354-355.

<sup>15</sup>Harold W. Scheffler, "Structuralism in Anthropology," in Structuralism, ed. Jacques Ehrmann (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Press, Anchor Books, 1970), p. 57.

<sup>16</sup>G.N. Appell, "The Distinction Between Ethnography and Ethnology and Other Issues in Cognitive Structuralism," Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, No. 129 (1973), 5.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 35, citing Abraham Kaplan, The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Science (San Francisco: Chandler, 1964).

ethnological methods results eventually in "the paradox of extreme relativism: how can any system be described without reference to any other system?"<sup>18</sup>

Appell chides the "new" ethnographers for eschewing theory-meaning (the descriptions and interpretations of behavior in terms of its meaning or significance to the observer) inquiry but also associates the comparativist with a failure to distinguish data derived from system-specific as opposed to the theory-meaning level.<sup>19</sup> The analyst of symbols must avoid imbuing native constructs (or create native constructs) from his own culturally influenced affectivity. He must address the formulation of abstract analytical systems.

A scheme of universally applicable analytic tools must be constructed from the basic processes of human thought. In short, by determining what sort of terministic inter-relationships (to cite Burke) are possible, the analyst can determine the existence of a symbol, its code and message.

#### ANALYTICAL TOOLS

The question of what might constitute acceptable apriorism is, to various extents, answered by Leach, Burke,

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<sup>18</sup>G.N. Appell, "The Distinction Between Ethnography and Ethnology," 5.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 44.

Levi-Strauss, and Piaget. In articulating his theory of taboo, Leach postulates that the physical and social environment of a young child is not differentiated--it is a continuum. A child learns to impose a "discriminating grid which serves to distinguish the world as being composed of a large number of separate things, each labeled with a name."<sup>20</sup> Thus, the paramount problem is to determine and maintain (conceptually) boundaries between things.<sup>21</sup>

One example presented by Leach is the continuum of women including a man's sisters (whom he cannot marry) and potential affines. The distinction of the two categories of women is considered critical by every society (hence, the incest taboo). Leach asserts that the taboo imposed upon the sister in relation to her brother effects the semantic operation of emphasizing the distinction between women as sisters and women as potential affines and, thus, masking any continuity between the two groups. Leach's thesis, then, is that humans discriminate things along a continuum and create taboos to support their discriminations.

Burke concurs with Leach's postulation of a continuum but is fascinated with the very existence of the

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<sup>20</sup>Edmund Leach, "Anthropological Aspects of Language: Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse," in Mythology, ed. Pierre Maranda, Penguin Modern Sociology Readings (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 47.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

negative--a property of cognitive structuring more basic than taboo recognition. Burke distinguishes man as the inventor of the negative:

...there are no negatives in nature, where everything simply is what it is and as it is. To look for negatives in nature would be as absurd as though you were to go out hunting for the square root of minus-one. The negative is a function peculiar to symbolic systems...The quickest way to demonstrate the sheer symbolicity of the negative is to look at any object, say, a table, and to remind yourself that, though it is exactly what it is, you could go for the rest of your life saying all the things that "it is not."<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the very delimiting of categories, any division of the universal continuum, results in an awareness of the negative or those elements not included in a particular class. Leach hints that the origin of taboos may have been the necessity to maintain or create a marked distinction between two similar groups (affines and sisters). Burke and Leach have essentially touched upon the origin of binary oppositions as a fundamental principle of logic.

Since many choose to restrict structuralism to the discerning of binary oppositions, it is appropriate at this point to discuss structuralism. The point of departure for Levi-Strauss is the discovery of a cognitive arrangement, an arrangement of the relations between terms rather than the terms themselves. He avoids the problem of cultural relativism by postulating that modes of structuring or

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<sup>22</sup>Kenneth Burke, Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p. 9.

logical arrangements are finite and universal. A certain support for this postulation may be discovered in the work of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. Piaget maintains that the primary structures of mathematics as defined by the Bourbaki group corresponds with the logical operations performed by pre-linguistic children. These operations include reversibility, ordering, and set inclusion.<sup>23</sup>

Leach and Burke both remark upon the human capacity for discrimination, the division of the continuum into identifiable or signifiable units. However, another principle of logic, set inclusion, is glossed over by Leach as he proceeds from a discussion of the continuum to a particular set; or, as it seems, discusses the continuum within a set--e.g., the class of women is a continuum but has been distinguished from the class of men. There is, thus, a human tendency to classify or to include elements in some particular set of elements according to some shared characteristic(s)--i.e., a human tendency to categorize.

One might say that "meaning" is acquired when something that has been perceived can be construed in some relationship with existing categories. Objects cannot be identified unless they can be discriminated from other objects; however, objects also cannot be identified unless they can be related to other objects in some manner.

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<sup>23</sup>Jean Piaget, Genetic Epistemology, trans. Eleanor Duckworth, Woodbridge Lectures Delivered at Columbia University, No. 8 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

Turner describes the former in his reference to Ndembu colour classification. The Ndembu classify yellow and orange as red.<sup>24</sup> Hence, although they are visually capable of perceiving the same range of light waves as all other humans, they do not choose to "see" yellow or orange. Castaneda, in his discussions with Don Juan, experiences difficulty in comprehending the old sorcerer because he does not share the same conceptual categories.<sup>25</sup> If characteristics isolated from "what is perceived" correspond or share an identity with characteristics of elements subsumed under a particular category, "what is perceived" may be included in that category--e.g., a dolphin might be classified as a fish, not as a mammal. But including a perception in an existing category is only one method of determining the meaning of the perception.

A metaphorical relationship is a second possibility. Metaphor is a sensed similarity between two things--"objects-to-objects, relations-to-relations, levels-to-levels, domains-to-domains, people-to-birds, people-to-people, etc."<sup>26</sup> Metaphor does not profess to create an exact identity be-

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<sup>24</sup>Victor Turner, The Forest of Symbols, p. 60.

<sup>25</sup>Carlos Castaneda, A Separate Reality (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1971).

<sup>26</sup>James A. Boon, From Symbolism to Structuralism: Levi-Strauss in a Literary Tradition (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1973), p. 74.

tween distinct elements, it creates a relationship based upon a sensed similarity. Metaphors have the capacity to link disparate planes of classification.

Metonymy, the third relationship, "is a means of connecting things by the notion of their juxtaposition, whether temporal or spatial."<sup>27</sup> Boon contrasts metaphor and metonymy as "metaphor=sensed identity; metonym=conceived difference plus necessary inter-relationship."<sup>28</sup>

It is necessary to define these inter-relationships. Levi-Strauss asserts that the logic in the association of sexual and nutritional relations may be reached by "semantic impoverishment: the lowest common denominator of the union of the sexes and the union of eater and eaten is that they both effect a conjunction by complementarity"--i.e., the eater cannot be defined without reference to the eaten.<sup>29</sup> The conjunction is the association of the sexual with the nutritional; the complementarity, that of the eater to the eaten or one sexual partner to the other. Binary opposition is implicit in the concept of complementarity.

Contiguity constitutes another necessary inter-re-

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>29</sup>Claude Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, trans. George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1966), p. 106.



lationship. Boon compares the association of knife with fork (a metonymical relationship based on contiguity) with the association of knife with sword (a metaphorical relationship).<sup>30</sup> A spatial juxtaposition includes complements, binary oppositions, and contiguities. The temporal dimension of the metonym is contingency. Cause may be substituted for effect. A predictable response to a specific situation stands in a metonymical relation to that situation.

Structuralism is concerned with the arrangement of inter-relations among elements. Meaning, in effect, consists of the inter-relationships among these elements. The initial logical principle to consider is class inclusion; it renders the universe intelligible by introducing a system of ordering. This ordering, however, is based upon conceived identity, metaphorical, and metonymical relations.

Although metaphorical relationships are constructed from a sensed similarity, the metaphor is also concerned with a conceived difference. Metaphor postulates that one element can never be classified in exactly the same manner as another. Metonymy also assumes a difference between two elements but eschews similarity in favor of complementarity, opposition, contiguity, and contingency.

The concepts of metaphor and metonymy have been

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<sup>30</sup>James Boon, From Symbolism to Structuralism, p. 74.

elaborated as they represent the logic of correspondence, a logic which must be applied to data such as myth or other forms of symbolic action in order to decipher the code and subsequent message of the data. It is difficult at times to reduce Levi-Strauss's elaborate thesis to intelligible dimensions--i.e., to discern the exact nature of "code" and "message." Levi-Strauss delights in the diverse:

Now, on the theoretical as well as the practical plane, the existence of differentiating features is of much greater importance than their content. Once in evidence, they form a system which can be employed as a grid is used to decipher a text, whose original unintelligibility gives it the appearance of an uninterrupted flow. The grid makes it possible to introduce divisions and contrasts, in other words the formal conditions necessary for a significant message to be conveyed.<sup>31</sup>

From the formal conditions, then, one can determine the message. The differentiating features establish the metaphorical and metonymical relationships. The divisions and contrasts apparent in these relationships would, thus, constitute the code. Boon maintains that the synchronic dimension of the structure may be determined from the set of logical relationships among the myth's oppositions.<sup>32</sup> The oppositions in the myth are essentially what Levi-Strauss refers to as constitutive units.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>C. Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, p. 75.

<sup>32</sup>J. Boon, From Symbolism to Structuralism, p. 67.

<sup>33</sup>C. Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, p. 131.

Constitutive units are essentially paradigmatic sets. An example of such sets in a myth might be the different or equivalent responses by actors to similar situations--e.g., the hero rides his horse to the castle; the villain rides his camel to the market. Often these relationships between constitutive units serve to illustrate logical contradictions. A paradigm might be established, for example, between some initial event in the myth and what would be normally expected in that event. In answer to Gardner's assertion that "Levi-Strauss' contention that myths serve the purpose of conceptualizing and attempting to solve paradoxes for the community is an intriguing one, but one most difficult to demonstrate,"<sup>34</sup> one might argue that the paradoxes are to be found in the logical contradictions occurring among the constitutive units. These contradictions should be readily apparent to the analyst possessing some knowledge of "what might be expected." The code is established from the inter-relationships of these constitutive units--the manner in which the logical paradox is depicted; the message indicates whether or not the logical contradiction can be resolved and what implications may be drawn from the contradictions.

Boon defines the diachronic dimension as "the set

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<sup>34</sup>Howard Gardner, "The Structural Analysis of Protocols and Myth," Semiotica, 5, No. 1 (1972), 38.

of relationships--transposition, inversion, and so forth--among...(the) synchronic structures (i.e. among their differences, their contrasts)."<sup>35</sup> In other words, from a diachronic perspective, one can discover the attempts made to resolve logical contradictions. Such attempts appear to be confined to two operations, transformation (a preferable term to "transposition") and inversion. An opposition on one level can be transformed into an opposition on another level. Levi-Strauss remarks that the key to myth analysis consists of trying to "discover the scheme of discontinuous oppositions governing its (the myth's) organization behind the mythical 'discourse'."<sup>36</sup> The oppositions are not actually discontinuous; instead, they are transformations of one another. Levi-Strauss insists that a message may be coded in different categorical oppositions without altering its content; hence, if a mediation (resolution) cannot be constructed between the sky and the earth, perhaps one can be constructed between an eagle and a deer.<sup>37</sup> The transformation can be effected through metaphorical or metonymical associations: the eagle is a sky-creature; the deer, an earth-creature.

Inversion, the other diachronic operation, explores

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<sup>35</sup>J. Boon, From Symbolism to Structuralism, p. 67.

<sup>36</sup>C. Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, p. 136.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 149.

the possibility of resolving a contradiction by reversing certain relationships in the contradiction. For example, a logical contradiction might exist on the synchronic level between a woman who is hunting (not a normal occupation for Interior Salish women) and a man who is hunting the woman. The contradiction arises from the necessity to maintain a complementary relationship between the hunter and the hunted--i.e., the woman cannot maintain the status of a hunter if she is concurrently being hunted. If the woman is able to invert the situation--i.e., the man becomes the hunted while the woman remains the hunter, she effects an inversion. This inversion does not resolve the contradiction as no mediation has occurred (the woman is still a contradiction, being a hunter) but the relationship between the man and the woman has been reversed. Transformation and inversion serve to alter the terms of a contradiction. Transformation shifts a contradiction to a different level of classification; inversion reverses relationships within a level of classification.

#### CONCLUSION

An outline has been presented of the basic tools utilized in a structural analysis. These tools include modes of analogy and comparison and the operations relating these analogies and comparisons on different levels. What remains, then, is to return to the concept of symbol in terms of structural considerations. A symbol may well be

determined through the application of Ortner's criteria to the data; however, a symbol may also be discerned from texts as a locus of logical operations. A symbol is somewhat like a prism. Although the light refracted from the prism is revealed in a brilliant display of the colours of the visible spectrum, the incident light is perceivable only as natural or white light. Though the wave lengths of the colours are, of course, subsumed under the white light (white light is composed of all light wave lengths), the colours are not detectable until the light has been subjected to the prism. Each colour is refracted from the prism at a singular angle; thus, the particular relationships existent between each colour and the prism, among the colours themselves, and between the natural light and the colours are demonstrated. In a similar manner, the symbol occurring in one particular context may illuminate the relationships existing between that context and other contexts. For example, a woman who hunts generates a series of logical oppositions (these associations are borrowed from Interior Salish data): if women are like deer, they cannot hunt as they are metaphorically the hunted; if women hunt, they hunt themselves; if women hunt, they could be hunting people, etc.

A woman who hunts also precipitates a series of metaphorical and metonymical associations arising from these oppositions: if women who hunt are like cannibals (in the sense that they hunt and eat their metaphorical

selves or other people), their vaginas might also operate in an inverse fashion--i.e., as wielders of death (vagina dentata) rather than issuers of life. A symbol, then, acting as a locus for logical operations, may precipitate certain logical contradictions and generate metaphorical and metonymical associations. If, in applying structural tools to analyze the data, a significant convergence can be discerned for these logical operations, this convergence may be designated as a symbol.

### Chapter 3

#### SOME ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTES ON THE LILLOOET, THOMPSON, AND SHUSWAP

This chapter is intended to provide some ethnographic notes relevant to this thesis on three Plateau Culture groups: the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap of British Columbia. These three groups belong to the Interior Salish linguistic division which is bounded on the west by Coast Salish, the north by Athabaskan speakers, the east by Kutenai, and the south by Sahaptin speakers. As noted by Ray, the underlying principle of the Plateau Culture appears to be equality.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the ethnographic notes in this chapter will cover, in general, some of the manifestations of that equality with respect to social structure and the general organization of food gathering including the distribution of food resources, inheritance patterns, and the sexual division of labor among the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap. Also, some of the talents serving to distinguish one member, the shaman, from the other people of

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<sup>1</sup>Verne F. Ray, Cultural Relations in the Plateau of Northwestern America, Publications of the Frederick Webb Hodge Anniversary Publication Fund, Vol. III (Los Angeles: The Southwest Museum, 1939), p. 29.



these groups will be mentioned

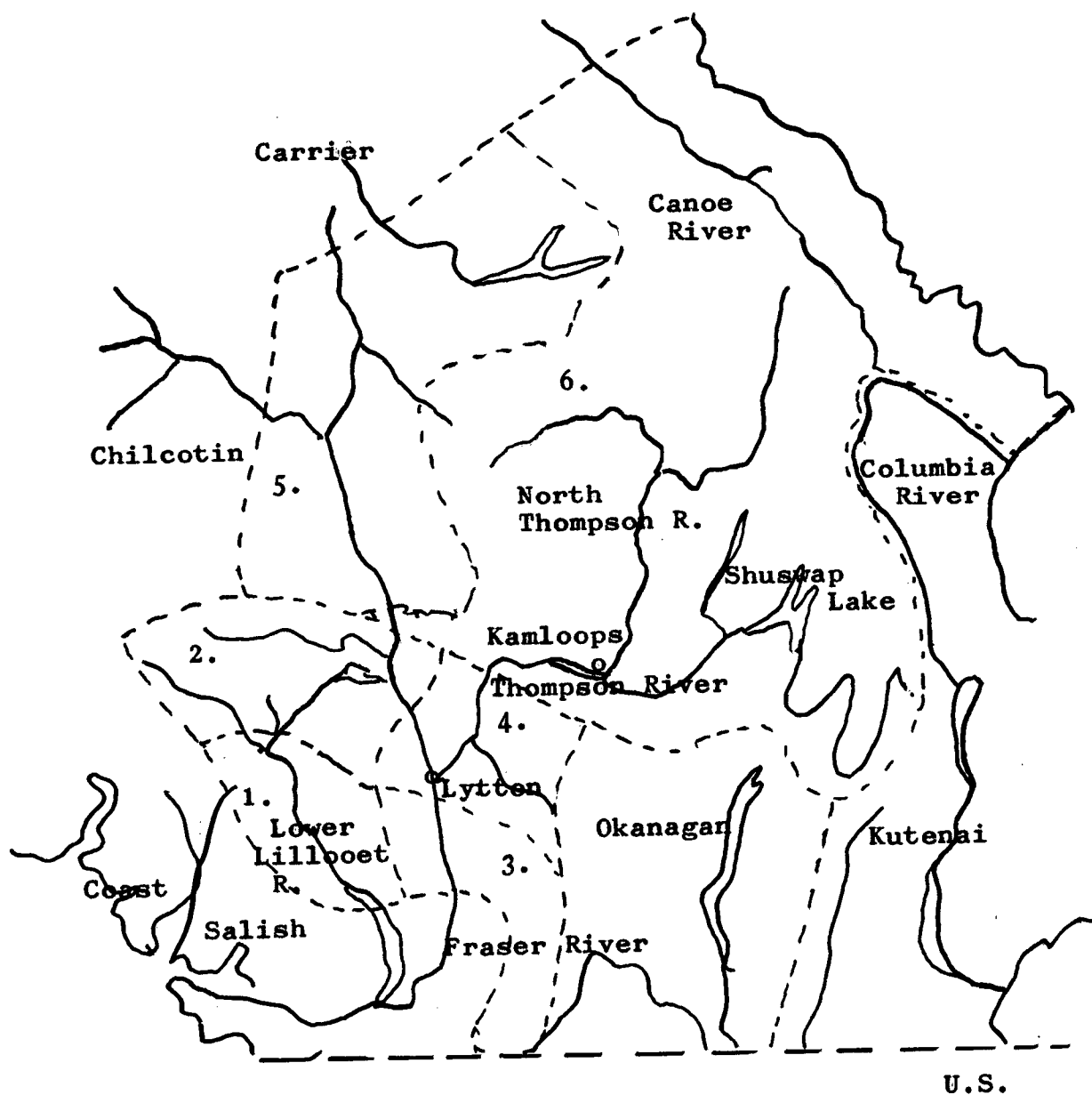
The Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap, together with the Okanagan, constitute the northern of Canadian Interior Salish Plateau groups. This northern Plateau is bounded by the Coast Ranges on the west, the Rocky Mountains on the east, the Canadian border on the south, and, roughly, by the great bend of the Fraser River on the north. Although the region is referred to as a "plateau" (non-mountainous area at an average elevation of 3,500'). the topography includes flat plains, rolling hills, and coastal mountains.

The Lillooet country lies entirely withing the coastal mountains and, thus, the inhabitants were forced to erect their more permanent dwellings in the river valleys. A watershed between Mosquito and Anderson Rivers divides the country into a northern, drier area inhabited by the Sla'lemux or Upper Lillooet and a southern area of greater precipitattion inhabited by the Li'luet or Lower Lillooet.

The Thompson country, less mountainous than the Lillooet, is similarly divided into two regions by the junction of the Thompson and Fraser Rivers. The Uta'mqt or Lower Thompson inhabited the southern, more rugged region; the Nku'kuma or Upper Thompson, the drier, hill and plateau coutry to the north and east of Lytton.

Shuswap territory is largely plateau. The Columbia River and Shuswap Lake regions are heavily forested, but the Bonaparte and Kamloops regions, bordering the northern Lillooet and Thompson, are semi-arid and support only bunch

Figure 1. A Map of the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap Areas



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|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Lower Lillooet | 4. Upper Thompson  |
| 2. Upper Lillooet | 5. Western Shuswap |
| 3. Lower Thompson | 6. Eastern Shuswap |

grass (see map).

The Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap lived in bands which were essentially units of expanded autonomous local groups. In other words, a "small number, within a relatively small range" joined together in a "mutually advantageous union."<sup>2</sup> Local control was effected by a head-man, not a chief, except among the Lillooet and western Shuswap.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the Thompson and eastern Shuswap, the Lillooet had a clan system and the hereditary chief of a major clan in the village was the ruling chief.<sup>4</sup> The Thompson and eastern and southern Shuswap elected chiefs for war, hunting, and dancing.<sup>5</sup> The sons of the chiefs sometimes were favored to assume their fathers' roles.<sup>6</sup> But a certain rank was also bestowed by the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap on persons acquiring merit through wisdom, wealth, oratory, or liberality. These persons were referred to as "chief."<sup>7</sup> Ray considers the western Lillooet and western Shuswap hereditary

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 15.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>James A. Teit, "The Lillooet," Vol. II, Part V of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. IV, Part VII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1906), p. 257.

<sup>5</sup>J. Teit, "The Thompson Indians," Vol. I, Part IV of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. II (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1900), p. 289.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>7</sup>Ray, Cultural Relations, p. 27.

nobility to be a recent introduction to Plateau culture:

It (hereditary nobility) was in all areas superficial. Deep-seated Plateau standards have been maintained in one way or another. The "nobility" may include two-thirds of the population; a parallel "aristocracy of merit" may permit all men to be in effect upperclassmen; all may hold slaves; slaves are few; women maintain their equality; "special privileges" are said to exist but are hard to find.<sup>8</sup>

The territory occupied by each Interior Salish group was considered for the most part to be the common country of the group. Although a particular band may have frequented a certain hunting area, other bands of the same major group were generally not forbidden access. Berry and root-digging grounds were also considered common property. The Thompson appointed an old woman to watch the berry patches and prevent any premature picking. In this manner, a common announcement of their ripening ensured an equitable distribution of the berries.<sup>9</sup>

Both hunting and gathering were considered to be extremely important. Band migrations took into account the availability of each resource. For example, the Lytton band of the Thompson would cross the mountains and descend to the Upper Nicola Valley in April to hunt elk and fish trout. Then, they would return home when the service berries ripened around Lytton and travel to the root-digging grounds at Botani Valley. In the fall, they would split

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>9</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 295.

into small hunting groups and finally aggregated in underground houses for the winter.<sup>10</sup>

Inheritable property was distributed along strict sexual lines. Males inherited all fishing, trapping, and hunting utensils, dogs, and canoes. A widow with children inherited her husband's lodge as well as the kettles, baskets, cooking utensils, and blankets inherited by girls. A woman who left her husband was entitled to take with her all her property and the roots and berries she gathered. The practice of levirate ensured the equitable distribution of resources to widows.<sup>11</sup>

The structure of inheritance was determined by the sexual division of labor. Men were the sole manufacturers of stone, bone, and wooden tools including: pipes, knives, skin-scrapers, chisels, wedges, stone dishes, arrows, arrow flakers, bows, and canoes. Women made baskets, mats, clothes, and shelters.

Men were the hunters. They constructed a variety of traps, deer-fences, dead-falls, and snares to capture deer, bear, wolves, martens, minks, fishers, elk, beavers, and other animals. Bow and arrow hunting was employed when game was tracked.<sup>12</sup>

Gathering roots and berries was distinctly the work

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 295.

of women. Common roots and berries included: hog-fennel root, sunflower root, Claytonia, Allium, blackberries, blueberries, service berries, currants, bearberries, strawberries, and salmon berries. The root-digger, from two to two-and-one-half feet in length, was made of service berry wood and bent slightly at the tip (which was burnt to increase rigidity). A handle of wood or horn was fitted to the other end of the digger. When the tip became dull, the stick was reversed. A woman would carry a small basket on her back and toss roots into it.<sup>13</sup>

Cooking was also the usual task of women. Boiling, pounding, and roasting were the common culinary techniques. Salmon, deer's blood, and various berries were boiled in baskets into which red-hot stones had been thrown. Dried meat and berries were pounded together and mixed with hot grease. Fresh meat and fish were roasted. Roots were somewhat more difficult to cook. A circular hole was dug in the ground about two-and-one-half feet in depth and filled with four or five flat stones. A fire of dry fir wood was built on top of these stones. Then successive layers of damp earth, fir branches, and pine needles were laid over this fire. The roots were placed on top and covered with more layers of the above-mentioned materials. Finally, a fire was built on top and the roots left in this oven from twelve to forty-eight hours.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

Concurring with the general principle of equality in Interior Salish culture, shamans could be male or female. But shamans were not ordinary people. Ray maintains:

No matter how strong a man's power may be, no matter how many guardian spirits he may possess, he is utterly incapable of performing as a shaman unless (1) he has received a definite shamanistic spirit, or (2) he has been specifically commissioned by the spirit at the time of the vision quest, or (3) he has received shamanistic power by heredity.<sup>15</sup>

Shamanistic power could be malevolent or beneficial. If not treated with proper respect, a shaman could cause illness or bad luck in hunting. However, shamans were also doctors. They alone could discern the cause of and effect the cure for illnesses. Illness due to loss of the soul proved an exacting test of any shaman's power. The shaman had contact with the spirit world and could track a person's soul as long as the person was still alive. The shaman's task, then, was to chase the errant soul and return it to its owner. This feat was rather significant as the shaman's body did not travel with him.

Shamans had other useful and remarkable capacities. They could locate game animals by detecting the movements of the animals' souls and cure infertility in women. When ill, shamans could cut open their bodies and wash their intestines and, thus, cure themselves.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Ray, Cultural Relations, p. 93.

<sup>16</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," pp. 287-289.

In conclusion, the underlying principle of Plateau culture was equality. This equality extended to the relationship between the sexes (according to Ray). I shall refer to this relationship as a "sexual balance." If this principle is as pervasive as the data suggests, one may suspect that an imbalance would be considered a serious problem by the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap. The shaman is a paradoxical figure and does not appear to be restricted to normal occupations or structure. Thus, if the shaman can move between the earth and the spirit world, illness and health, and other realms, he might prove an effective mediator to problems occurring in the rigidly determined, sexually balanced world of normal Interior Salish men and women.



## Chapter 4

### THE CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF GATHERING OR MEN WHO GO ROOTING

This chapter will examine the cultural implications of food gathering and the consequences of a sexual role reversal in the performance of this task. A description of tasks performed by each sex in the preceding chapter indicated that the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap subscribed to a sexual division of labor. This sexual division of labor reflects the ecology or the human recognition of resource potentials and realization of resource potentials of the three groups. Ecology, however, does not include all of Levi-Strauss's "science of the concrete"<sup>1</sup> or, in Burke's phrasing:

All non-verbal "nature" is in this sense not just itself from man, the word-using animal; rather, for man, nature is emblematic of the spirit imposed upon it by man's linguistic genius.<sup>2</sup>

It is possible to discover, upon examining the ecological adaptation of a particular people, that certain perfectly

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<sup>1</sup>Claude Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, trans. George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1966).

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth Burke, "What Are the Signs of What? A Theory of 'Entitlement'," Anthropological Linguistics, 4, No. 6 (1962), 7.

nourishing food sources (such as frogs or insects) are abhorred. It is not possible to discover the logic behind this abhorrence, however, unless cultural prescriptions and proscriptions are explored.

Women appear to have a specific cultural relationship with the food they gather; and, as the cultural relationship is synonymous with a cognitive structuring, any violation of this relationship should precipitate logical manipulations of the violation. Thus, it may be expected that certain reversals will occur when men gather roots.

#### GATHERING

Women were the exclusive gatherers of roots and berries. The data suggests that a certain cultural relationship existed between women and the roots they gathered; for example, Thompson and Shuswap women avoided eating in the morning prior to venturing forth to gather roots or rob the nests or stores of squirrels.<sup>3</sup> The Thompson claimed that failure to observe this proscription would result in a failure in the gathering endeavor. Thus, the woman necessarily had an empty stomach or was empty before she could

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<sup>3</sup>James Alexander Teit, "The Thompson Indians of British Columbia," Vol. I, Part IV of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. II (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1900), p. 349; and Franz Boas, "Second General Report on the Indians of British Columbia," Report of the Sixtieth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science-1890 (London: John Murray, 1891), p. 637.

obtain roots and nuts.

Women maintained a different state of emptiness in order to collect and cook the sunflower root successfully. Supposedly, cooking the sunflower root was an exceptionally difficult task. Women painted their faces when seeking the root and avoided sexual intercourse while gathering and cooking it. Men were not even permitted to approach the oven in which these roots were cooked.<sup>4</sup> Hill-Tout extends this prohibition to the cooking of roots in general among the Thompson.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, one might say that, among the Thompson and Shuswap, women maintained a sexual or vaginal emptiness while gathering and preparing the sunflower root. An analogy exists between the alimentary and sexual emptiness:

Women should have an empty stomach to obtain food.

Women should have an empty vagina to obtain and cook the sunflower root.

Since women eschewed eating in order to obtain food, it appears from the second example that women might be thought to have some type of sexual relation with the sunflower root.

Ascribing a sexual quality to the relationship be-

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Charles Hill-Tout, "Notes on the N'tlaka'pamuq of British Columbia, a Branch of the Great Salish Stock of North America," Report of the Sixty-ninth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science-1899 (London: John Murray, 1900), p. 513.

tween woman and root is strengthened somewhat by the sunflower root's stature as a fertility symbol. Young people who ate the first vegetable products of the season propitiated the sunflower root which was thought to be great in mystery. Teit observe that, as a rule, young people were not permitted to partake of the vegetable products until more than half of the crop had ripened.<sup>6</sup> This dietary restriction imposed upon young people may be understood as analogous to similar restrictions prescribed in the first salmon ceremony.

Although the Lower Lillooet were sole observers of this particular ceremony, the symbolic significance appears to be reiterated in the other groups with regard to vegetable resources (ceremonies honoring the first fruits of the season).<sup>7</sup> The Lower Lillooet believed that improper treatment of the first salmon caught each season would result in a poor seasonal run. The first salmon caught was permitted to die on land and was cooked with some ceremony into a mush subsequently divided into two bowls. Males drank from one; females, from the other. However, no menstruating woman, unmarried woman, orphan, widow, or or widower participated in the consumption. Any violation

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<sup>6</sup>James Teit, "The Thompson," p. 349.

<sup>7</sup>C. Hill-Tout, "Notes on the N'tlaka'pamuq," p. 504; and James Teit, "The Shuswap," Vol. II, Part VII of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. IV, Part VII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1909), p. 601.

of this proscription resulted in a poor harvest of salmon for the season.<sup>8</sup>

Those forbidden to partake of the salmon mush were associated with infertility. The widow, widower, and unmarried women were without spouses. Hence, in a general sense, they were not engaging in sexual activity and subsequent fertility. While the menstruating woman emphasized her lack of pregnancy or temporary infertility by her condition, the orphans signified deceased parents, another form of infertility. Unmarried (virginal) men were probably exempt from this category as they were not associated with child-bearing and had not been engaging in sexual activity or thwarted sexual activity (as the widower).

Human infertility, then, was metaphorically related to a dearth of salmon. Contact between a person in an infertile state and the first salmon stood in a synecdochic relation to the entire crop of salmon. The vegetable crop, of considerable importance to the Lillooet and Thompson, was probably influenced in a similar manner. The young people were usually permitted to partake of the berries after more than half of the crop had ripened--i.e., when the fertility of the crop was assured. The unmarried

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<sup>8</sup>James Teit, "The Lillooet," Vol. II, Part V of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. IV, Part VI (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1906), p. 280.

status of the young people intimated that their fertility was not yet proven; hence, they propitiated the sunflower root when endangering the vegetable crop (by consuming the first berries of the season).

The sexual relationship between women and roots, however, was metaphorical or cultural, not natural or literal. Women were not supposed to copulate with roots. Several myths dictate the necessity for enforcing the distinction between "cultural" and "natural" sexual relations in Lillooet and Thompson mythology--e.g., "Tsu'ntia,"<sup>9</sup> the "Story of Kokwe'la; or Kokwe'la's Sku'zas,"<sup>10</sup> and "Koakoe'la, or Husband Root Myth."<sup>11</sup> The Thompson version presented here illustrates the structural implications of a failure to distinguish the cultural from the natural.

#### Child-of-Hog-Fennel (Kokwe'laha'it)

There once lived a maiden in some place in the upper country (to the east or north of the Uta'mqt) who went out to dig hog-fennel roots (Peucedanum macrocarpum Nutt.). While digging, she took a fancy to a very large thick root, co-habited with it, and as a result became pregnant. Feeling ashamed of her condition, she left the people and erected a lodge some distance away, in which she lived. In due course she gave birth to a son, who, when he became old enough to use bow and ar-

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<sup>9</sup>Idem., "Traditions of the Lillooet Indians of British Columbia," Journal of American Folklore, 25, No. 48 (October-December, 1912), 350-352.

<sup>10</sup>Idem., Traditions of the Thompson River Indians, Memoirs of the American Folklore Society, Vol. VI (1898), p. 45.

<sup>11</sup>C. Hill-Tout, "Notes on the N'tlaka'pamuq," pp. 564-566.

rows, asked his mother who his father was. He said, "I never see my father and he never comes home." She told him that his father fell in the rocks many years ago and was killed. Then he said, "I will have revenge on the rocks for killing my father." So he went to the precipice and asked it why it slew his father; but the precipice answered, "Your mother has told you a lie. I never saw your father." He returned home and told his mother what the cliff had said: so she told him that his father fell from a tree many years ago and was killed. He said, "I will have revenge on the trees." So he took his bow and arrows and went to interrogate the tree; but the latter answered, "I know nothing of your father. Your mother must have told you a lie." Returning, he told his mother what the tree had said. Then she told him that his father had been drowned in the river. He said, "Then I will have revenge on the water." Taking his bow and arrows, he went to kill the water for murdering his father; but the water said to him, "Those whom I kill I know, but your father I never saw. Your mother has told you a lie." Returning home, he told his mother what the water had said, and was very angry at her for telling him lies, but she was ashamed to tell him the truth.

He left his mother and travelled over the country. Wherever he went, the hog-fennel plants shook their leaves with gladness; and when he trod near them, they embraced his legs. As he was jumping over a stream, Bullhead Catfish (tsena'tz) saw him, and cried out, "Nkokwe'lahait!" He turned back three times to look for the person who had called him names. On searching the fourth time, he found him, and was going to kill him, but, changing his mind, he transformed him into the bull-head catfish and threw him into the water, saying, "You shall be the catfish, and shall never again call people names."

Now he thought he knew who his father was, and, returning to his mother, he asked her if the hog-fennel root was his father. She acknowledged having had intercourse with the hog-fennel root, and told him that it was his father. Then he killed her (some add that he transformed her into a stone), and said, "Henceforth women shall not have intercourse, or be made pregnant by roots."

Now, Child-of-Hog-Fennel travelled over the country again, and did many wonderful things. He travelled as far down as the upper borders of the Uta'mqt country, whence he turned back. At last he came to a large river, where very many people lived. He stayed with these people four nights, and each morning on awaking found his belly wet. He told the people, who assembled all the women, and asked which of them had slept with the stranger. They all denied having had

any intercourse with him. It was noticed that Frog was absent. Presently she came in, and they asked her the same question. She answered, "Yes, I visited him, and I wish to marry him." The people said, "No, we cannot allow you to become the wife of so great a man. He must have a better and a prettier wife than you." Then all the people crossed the river, deserting Frog. They gave the finest young woman of all the people to be the wife of Child-of-Hog-Fennel. Next night, when Child-of-Hog-Fennel was sleeping with his bride, Frog gathered herself up and, jumping across the river at one bound, alighted on Child-of-Hog-Fennel's face. Frog stuck there and the people tried in vain to get her off, although they pulled and scraped very hard. Thus Child-of-Hog-Fennel, who had been a very handsome man, became disfigured for life.

Some time after this the people wished to make a moon, for hitherto there had been no moon, and they thought they would have a light at night somewhat similar to the sun. They asked Coyote to be the moon, and he consented. The first night, he arose in the evening; and as he passed overhead, each time that he saw a married couple having sexual intercourse, he cried out, "Ha! You are in the act of having sexual intercourse!" ("Ua'xeplip katix!") The people were displeased at his thus taking notice of their actions, and asked Child-of-Hog-Fennel to take his place. He assented to their proposal and became the moon. He conducted himself properly and did his work well; therefore the people agreed that he should always be the moon; and thus he continues to be at the present day.<sup>12</sup> The frog may still be seen as dark spots on his face.

The Child-of-Hog-Fennel myth is particularly concerned with the maintenance of appropriate distances. A maiden violates the distinction between a potential food and a potential spouse and thereby violates a metaphorical relation since eating or gathering food is similar to having sexual relations with the food. The metaphorical relation

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<sup>12</sup>James Teit, "Mythology of the Thompson Indians," Vol. VIII, Part II of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. XII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1912), pp. 224-226.



distinguishes the plane of alimantal consumption from that of sexual consumption by the very necessity of relating the planes metaphorically. The woman violates the metaphorical distance by consummating what should remain only metaphorical sexual relations with the root. Her status as potential mother of a root child is socially untenable and requires her to remove herself from the community.

|                               |                                 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Woman                         | Woman                           |
| (too close a<br>relationship) | (too distant a<br>relationship) |
| Root                          | Community                       |

Discovering his paternity, Child-of-Hog-Fennel finds his relationship with this socially untenable woman to be unbearable and either kills her or transforms her into stone. Child-of-Hog-Fennel functions as a transformer in the myth--i.e., he seeks to create orderly relationships.

The direction of movement reverses. Child-of-Hog-Fennel discovers a community living by a river and joins it (his decision has positive connotations as some intimate contact with a community is desirable for any individual). The hero attempts to mediate the untenable position formerly occupied by his mother. He attempts to create order and reverses her actions by moving to a community. Frog, however, completes the following paradigm by desiring sexual relations with the root child:

Mother desires root.

Frog desires root  
child.

Mother moves from the  
community.

The root child moves  
into a community.

Also, while the root is a desirable food, frogs are considered disgusting and never eaten by the Thompson and Lillooet.<sup>13</sup> Thus, while the mother desires sexual relations with a desirable food, an undesirable food seeks sexual relations with her son. The community deserts the frog woman and opposes the earlier desertion of the community by the mother of the root child.

Frog woman, however, leaps across the river and affixes herself to the hero's face; thus, she transforms him from a handsome man to an ugly one. The transformer is transformed. Child-of-Hog-Fennel, no longer so socially acceptable as he was formerly, receives the role of the moon. Once again, the hero is isolated from the community:

Frog

Community

(too close a  
relationship)

(too distant a  
relationship)

Child-of-Hog-Fennel

Child-of-Hog-  
Fennel as the  
Moon

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<sup>13</sup>Idem., "The Thompson Indians," p. 348.

The initial refusal to respect the metaphorical distance between root and woman precipitates the oppositions throughout the myth. The woman indulges in too close a relationship with the root (the metaphorical distance is eliminated). This relationship is transformed into a separation of the woman from the community. Thus, the resulting paradox is coded in terms of distance: the woman is at once too close to the root and too distant from the community. Discovering the nature of his paternity, the root child slays his mother and prevents any possible mediation of the distance between the woman and the community.

The events surrounding the son are in an inverse relation to those surrounding the mother: the son moves to a community, not from one; he is the object of frog's desires, not the one who desires; frog is sexually and nutritionally undesirable to the hero while the root is considered the opposite in both respects to the mother; and frog affixes herself to the head of the hero, not to his genitals (the violation of distance is effected through too intimate contact with the head). This extreme reduction of distance is complemented by extreme amplification of distance; but the distance is not mediated in either case.

The message relayed by the myth concerns the disastrous consequences generated by a violation of a metaphorical relationship, or, a metaphorical distance. The ramifications of such a violation include the inability to maintain appropriate sexual and social distances.

Couching food gathering operations in terms of sexual relationships enables the native to know which tasks are appropriate to each sex. The myth illustrates the impossibility of enjoying normal sexual and social relationships for the violator of a distinction between nature and culture or the literal and metaphoric.

#### MEN WHO GATHER ROOTS

Serious consequences result when men violate the cognitive order and gather roots:

##### The Wechx#in Cave

One of the people living at Anderson Lake said, "We should go up the mountain and get some roots." All the women agreed, so they started up the mountain. The young men heard that the girls had gone, so they decided to go also. They caught up to the girls and were having fun helping them dig vegetables.

When evening came, they made a shelter and settled for the night. All the girls, but one, had a boyfriend. The lone girl remained outside of the cave. This was the cave that the Wechx#in lived in. In the morning, when the others didn't come out of the cave, the girl decided to look around. She looked in the cave and found that they were all dead. The girl went home and told the parents that their children were dead. They all went up the mountain and saw the swollen bodies. Gathering a pile of sticks, they put them in the cave and burnt the bodies. This place is now called "smoked rock." The people were digging Shk'ampch, Indian potatoes. This root is about six to eight inches long, and it looks like a white carrot.<sup>14</sup>

An initial violation of the cultural order--i.e., men gathering roots, precipitates the resulting events in the

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<sup>14</sup>From a corpus of Lillooet myths collected by Randy Bouchard in the summer of 1970 for the B.C. Indian Language Project.

myth. The young people decide to retire for the night in the cave of the wechx#in. This animal is a small, black lizard dreaded by the Thompson, Lillooet, and Shuswap. If it discovers human tracks, the lizard will follow and, at night, crawl into the person through the anus and devour the intestines.<sup>15</sup> The human is, thus, cannibalized by the lizard. The lizard reverses the process of normal alimentation by entering the body through the anus; thus, the root gatherers, intending to seek and obtain food, become food themselves. Also, the method utilized for disposing the bodies rather closely resembles the procedure for cooking roots. The bodies, like roots, are placed in a cave (hole) and cooked from a fire built at the entrance (top) of the cave. Some concern is demonstrated at the end of the myth by the narrator for describing the particular root sought by the gatherers--an analogy between the white carrot and a penis cannot be disregarded.

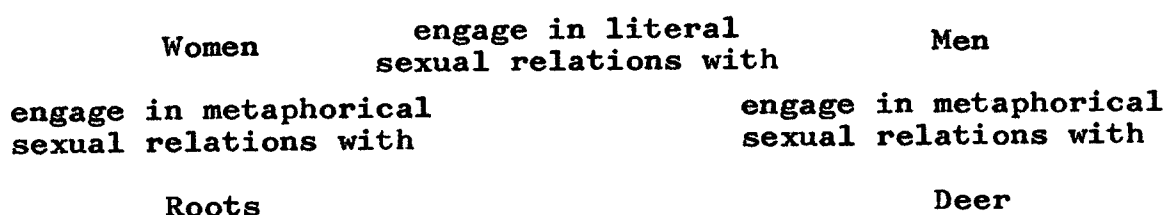
The relationship between women and the food they gather has been described as a "cultural" or metaphorical sexual relationship. Thus, men, in approaching the oven in which the sunflower root is cooked or by engaging in root gathering, violate the distinction between the natural and cultural orders. In the myth, men, the objects of sexual as opposed to alimental consumption, confuse the relationship

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<sup>15</sup>James Teit, "The Thompson Indians," p. 348; idem., "The Lillooet," p. 290; and idem., "The Shuswap," p. 619.

between women and roots (women should be empty while seeking food).

In the next chapter, I will show that men, in a sense, engage in metaphorical sexual relationships with the game they hunt. Thus, it is possible to analyze the disruption of the natural and cultural orders occurring in the myth from the following diagram:



If men engage in metaphorical sexual relations with roots (their metaphorical selves), they contradict cognitive order. What would under normal circumstances be a complementary relationship (that of gathered to gatherer) becomes an opposition (men cannot gather their metaphorical selves). The resolution of this contradiction is attempted through the following inversion:

Gatherers (men)

Gatherers (par-  
ents)

----- (Since men are  
cooked like  
roots, they be-  
come like roots)

Gathered (roots)

Gathered (men  
cooked)

No mediation is possible, however, as the parents cannot eat the former gatherers; the men have been eaten before they have been cooked. As the myth is coded in terms of the relationships between gatherer and gathered, the message suggests that men who gather roots or their metaphorical sexual selves precipitate cannibalism. The violation of an alimential order is concomitant with the violation of a sexual order.

This message is elaborated in the following myth:<sup>16</sup>

#### Made-Her-Sit-Down-On-A-Seat

A man lived with his wife in an underground house which formed one of a group of such houses. His relatives lived with him in the same house, while most of his wife's relatives lived in one of the adjoining houses. His wife went gathering slo'lats (the inside bark of cedar) every day, and always came back loaded with the very best kind. She went oftener than was necessary, and generally stayed away all day. She dressed herself in her best clothes, and took much care with her toilet before departing. These actions aroused the suspicions of her husband, who made up his mind to watch her.

He followed her into the forest next day until she stopped in front of a tall, shapely cedar-tree. Then he hid himself and watched. The cedar changed itself into a man, tall and good-lucking, and approached the woman, who received him affectionately and embraced him. They had sexual intercourse with each other, and lay together all day. Towards evening the man gave her a large bundle of the finest cedar bark, which she put on her back to carry home, and when she departed, he changed himself back into the tall cedar tree.

Having obtained full evidence of his wife's guilt, the husband hurried home, and next morning told her that he would accompany her to gather cedar bark. He took her to the same tree which had changed itself into a man the day before, saying to her, "This is a fine tree, and has nice bark. Let us climb to the top of it and start stripping the bark from there." When they reached the top, he cut it into a sharp point, and, making the woman

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. Teit, "Traditions of the Lillooet," p. 339.

strip herself naked, he placed her on the top with the sharp point inserted in her privates. After tying her securely, he stripped the bark off all around for a considerable distance down, and then, descending, went home.

She cried to her youngest brother for help (his name was Xoxolame'ya), but he did not hear her at first. At last he heard her cries and found where she was; but, seeing that he was unable to render her any assistance, he ran home and told the people, who at once hurried to the scene.

She was dying then from the effects of the hot sun, loss of blood, and the great pain. She said to the people, "I am dying. You cannot rescue me. The sun is hot, and you may be thirsty; but do not eat the berries which you see growing underneath (or at the foot of) this tree, because they are drops of my blood." The berries were black berries.

The people began to climb the tree to try to rescue her; but none of them could pass the barked part, because it was so slippery. At last they got Snail to attempt it; but although he was able to climb over the barked part, he took so long to reach the top, that the woman had expired before he got there. He released her and took the body down, and the people buried it.

Now, it happened that the woman had another brother who was exactly like herself in height, build, complexion, voice, and features. He dressed himself up in her clothes, and a few days afterwards he repaired to the husband's house. He said to his brother-in-law, "I'm your wife. I was not really dead, although the people thought I was." The brother-in-law, as well as the other people in the house, believed the story, so the supposed wife went to bed with her husband; but when the latter wished to become too familiar, the former pushed him away, saying, "You must desist for a few days. That was a terrible injury you did to me. You surely don't expect me to be healed yet."

One night, after his brother-in-law and all the people were asleep, he pulled out his knife, which he had concealed on his person, and killed his brother-in-law by cutting his throat. Then he suddenly left the house. Next morning, before it was quite light, a boy in the house said to his grandmother (the husband's mother), "I will go to my elder brother's bed and lie down with him for a while" (the boy had been in the habit of doing this some mornings); but the old woman, hearing a subdued sort of noise, said, "Do not bother your elder brother this morning. Don't you hear him? He is making a nephew for you."

The sound she heard was that of the blood gurgling and dripping from the dead man's wound. As the sound continued, the mother thought to herself, "He remains



long having connection with his wife this morning!" Then she said, "Getup, child, and wash yourself. It is morning." But still the sound continued. When it was really light, the people discovered him lying dead with his throat cut.<sup>17</sup>

The myth of the woman impaled on a tree<sup>18</sup> is another illustration of the consequences of a failure to distinguish between literal and metaphorical orders. The initial event is the husband's discovery of his wife's adultery with a cedar tree-man. Unlike the Child-of-Hog-Fennel myth, though, the woman does not have sexual relations with a plant, but with a plant transformed into a man. Since the woman is very successful in her cedar-bark gathering, she appears to have a proper metaphorical relationship with the cedar tree --i.e., the transformation of the cedar tree into a man indicates that the sexual relations are of a man-woman as opposed to woman-vegetable character. The woman obtains food from vegetable trees, not from the bark of the tree-man.

The husband notes the infidelity of his wife and extracts vengeance by impaling her on the tree. The imagery is unmistakeable: the woman is stripped and the sharpened tree-top inserted in her vagina; thus, the woman now has literal sexual relations with the tree. A violation of cognitive order is effected as one must not have intercourse

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<sup>17</sup>James Teit, "The Mythology of the Thompson," pp. 285-287.

<sup>18</sup>In one Shuswap myth, Coyote admonishes the future mothers of his children to stick any females born on the points of tree branches. See Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 630.

with one's food.

Attempts to rescue the woman are unsuccessful as she dies before Snail, the only one capable of negotiating the barked tree, reaches her. To avenge his sister, one brother determines to impersonate her. He completes his physical resemblance to her by dressing in her clothing and then assumes her role; thus, the brother becomes a cultural (although not a natural) woman. The brother, however, contradicts not only the natural order but also the cultural order by inverting the levirate:

Cultural Order

When a man dies, his wife marries his brother.

Inverted Order

When a woman dies, her husband marries his brother-in-law.

This inversion of the levirate may be subsumed under the implications of an excessively cultural union while the woman impaled on the tree represents an excessively natural union. In other words, the events of the myth are logical results of the initial violation of metaphorical distance between women and food (the cedar bark). The violation upsets the balance between nature and culture and generates two parallel extremes: an excessive cultural union and an excessive natural union. Each union may be deemed "excessive" or unbalanced--i.e., culture is not mediated with nature and vice versa.

The following paradigm clarifies the implications of the excessive unions:

Excessive Cultural

Union

union of husband  
to brother

husband's throat  
is slit

blood gurgling  
thought to be  
the husband and  
wife copulating  
(sex)

Excessive Natural

Union

union of woman  
to tree

woman's vagina  
is slit

blood gurgling  
thought to be  
blackberries  
(food)

Death, of course, is a significant outcome of both of these excessive unions, but a more illuminating message may be uncovered: when the old woman is questioned by the small boy regarding his uncle's activities, the woman replies that the man is making a nephew for the boy; the woman impaled on the tree implores the people not to eat the blackberries because they are her blood. Firstly, the noise of blood gurgling is not the noise from sexual intercourse indicating the possibility of new life (fertility), it is a signal of death. Two men could be married in a cultural sense but no children would issue from such a union. Therefore, the blood gurgling signifies death and infertility.

Secondly, though the issue from the woman's excessive union with the tree appears to be blackberries, the woman maintains that the berries are her blood and not to be

mistaken for food. Eating the blackberries would be equivalent to cannibalism. A paradox emerges: the people must eat food in order to survive, but they can no longer trust their former cognition of food. The union of the woman with the cedar tree produces, in a sense, a cognitively untenable offspring--i.e., blackberries appear to be food in all respects save their correspondence with the woman's blood.

The myth provides a rather elegant demonstration of the manipulation of logic. The excessive natural union results in a cultural paradox--how may the people recognize food? Thus, an excess of nature generates a cultural paradox, cannibalism. An excessive cultural union generates a natural dilemma, infertility. Both products exemplify improper mediations of nature and culture and stem from the original violation of metaphorical order.

The initial contradiction arose from a failure to separate nature and culture; the final contradiction presents a failure to balance or bring together nature and culture. Excessive culture is complemented with infertility; excessive nature, with cannibalism. Thus, cannibalism and infertility appear to be metonymically related or are two facets of a cognitive disjunction.

### CONCLUSION

This chapter suggests that a natural relationship between women and roots is that of food gatherer to food; however, a complementary cultural relationship exists--i.e.,

a metaphorical sexual relationship between women and roots. The association between food gathering and sexual activity is metaphorical but ipso facto the two activities must be kept distinct.

Implementing a sexual metaphor facilitates the ordering of task assignment. If roots are like penises, it is more fitting for women to collect them than for men. Also, the procedures involved in the task of root gathering (digging roots from the ground and tossing them into round baskets) evoke similarity between women and containers, further evidence that the task may be construed as having a sexual character.

The analysis of myths corroborates the expectation that violations of the metaphorical order should result in related logical contradictions. The woman indulging in sexual relations with the root violates the metaphorical distance, and, like her son, is doomed to an inability to mediate the insufficient sexual distance and the excessive social distance. Men who gather roots contradict the sexual relationship between women and roots and, thus, invert the order between eater and eaten.

Finally, cannibalism and infertility are seen to be two complementary products of an excessive cultural union and an excessive natural union or logical consequences of a violation of the cognitive structure ordering nature and culture.

## Chapter 5

### THE CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF WOMEN AS HUNTERS

If men precipitate serious repercussions when they invade the relationship between women and roots, it is probable that women reversing their food gathering role by assuming the traits of hunters will also generate problems. This chapter will examine the logical implications of women as hunters with respect to the symbolic significance of proscriptions concerning menstrual blood and menstruating women, the relationships of women to game animals and hunting, and the peculiar correlates of cannibalism. The logic will be constructed from the relationships between women and their signifiers--e.g., if a woman may be metaphorically associated with a game animal, how does this association relate to her negative effects on hunting endeavors?

The first part of the chapter will discuss the significance of menstrual blood both to the pubescent girl and the woman; the second part will discuss the relationship of women to hunting including the relationship between men and game, the significance of the negative influence of women on hunting, and the peculiar characteristics of grizzly bear hunting. Finally, some hunting myths will be analyzed with

with respect to their illustrations of violations of these relationships.

### MENSTRUAL BLOOD

Menstrual blood, often the bane of hunting and gathering societies, has been surrounded with intriguing but seemingly illogical taboos which hint at serious punitive consequences for violators. Therefore, the prohibitions concerning menstruation may be taken as a focus for symbolic analysis. The importance of menstrual blood to the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap is readily demonstrated by the rituals observed by pubescent girls and the numerous avoidance patterns followed by menstruating women.

#### Menarche

The Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap observed similar practices regarding the puberty of girls and their subsequent menstrual confinements. The menarche signalled the transformation of girl into a woman capable of bearing children; the import of this transformation was communicated by the isolation of the girl from the community. A pubescent girl was considered to be great in mystery.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>James Alexander Teit, "The Thompson Indians of British Columbia," Vol. I, Part IV of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. II (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1900), p. 327; Teit, "The Lillooet," Vol. II, Part V of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. IV, Part VI (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1906), p. 276; and

Conical puberty lodges constructed of fir branches served as temporary dwellings for the pubescent girls. The Lillooet and Thompson dug circular holes in the puberty lodges where the girls would squat during the day (the practice was continued until the menstrual flow ceased).<sup>2</sup> Separating the puberty lodge from the other houses was believed by the Thompson "to prevent the smoke of the lodges from blowing down to the girl, as it was believed to make her unlucky or sick."<sup>3</sup> In many Lillooet villages, the first menstrual period was termed tlo'gamug (referring to the hole in the ground beneath the menstrual lodge) and the second, tlokaucim, "putting the knees together." All subsequent menstrual periods were termed either alitska or "going outside" and zomet or "abstaining from fresh meat."<sup>4</sup>

The period prescribed for isolation varied with the community: the Lillooet<sup>5</sup> extended the puberty ritual from one to four years; the Thompson,<sup>6</sup> to four months (although

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Teit, "The Shuswap," Vol. II, Part VII of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. IV, Part VII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1909), p. 587.

<sup>2</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 312; and Charles Hill-Tout, "Report on the Ethnology of the Stlatlunh of British Columbia," Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 35 (1905), 136.

<sup>3</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 312.

<sup>4</sup>C. Hill-Tout, "Report on the Ethnology," 137.

<sup>5</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 265.

<sup>6</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 317.



it was claimed that the ritual once lasted over a year); and the Shuswap,<sup>7</sup> to one year. Girls desiring more power or shamanistic powers trained for a longer period of time and indulged in sweat baths.<sup>8</sup>

Fasting was prescribed for the first four days of the menarche. During the succeeding four days, the girl was permitted to eat part of the meals brought to her by her attending relatives (only females attended the girl).<sup>9</sup> Among the Thompson, part of these meals was buried. Lillooet girls spat out the first four mouthfuls of each of the meals.<sup>10</sup> Partial consumption of these meals was thought to ensure sufficient food and drink for the remainder of the girl's life.<sup>11</sup>

Illness or witchcraft resulted from violations of food taboos. Any roots, vegetables, or dried salmon and trout were permissible food for the pubescent girl. Forbidden items included fresh salmon or trout, deer and other game animals (fresh or dried), birds dead less than one day, and berries ripening the first month of the season.<sup>12</sup> Any

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<sup>7</sup>Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 587.

<sup>8</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 317.

<sup>9</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 314; Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 265; and Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 587.

<sup>10</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 314; and Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 264.

<sup>11</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 314.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 317; Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 265; and

young woman was thought to become infertile if she consumed bear meat.<sup>13</sup>

Isolation and abstention from fresh meat were two substantive characteristics of both the menarche and subsequent menstrual periods. Although the pubescent girl was restricted from consuming any meat, the semantic emphasis was on abstention from fresh meat or meat that bleeds. Hill-Tout provides Lillooet exegesis for the restriction:

First, the girl, it was thought, would be harmed by the fresh meat in her peculiar condition; and second, the game animals would take offence if she partook of their meat in these circumstances. Should a pubescent girl eat fresh meat, it was believed her father's luck as a hunter would be spoiled thereafter. The animals would not permit him to kill them; for it was held that no animal could be killed against its own wish or will. Indeed the Indian looked upon all his food, animal and vegetable, as gifts voluntarily bestowed upon him by the "spirit" of the animal or vegetable, and regarded himself as absolutely dependent upon their good will for his daily sustenance.<sup>14</sup>

Despite careful observation of dietary restrictions by the pubescent girl, her father still suffered in his hunting endeavors for a temporary period. A Thompson man refrained from hunting or trapping for the first month of his daughter's seclusion and did not participate in the normal distribution of game.<sup>15</sup>

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Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 587.

<sup>13</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 317; Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 269; and Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 592.

<sup>14</sup>C. Hill-Tout, "Report on the Ethnology," 136.

<sup>15</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 317.

After finishing her training, the girl burned the dress worn and hung her other clothes up in trees.<sup>16</sup> She altered her hair style from one knot behind each ear to the style of women--two braids or two braids folded up on each side.<sup>17</sup> Among the Lillooet and Shuswap, a shaman purified the girl before she was permitted to return to her village. Hill-Tout explains that "her bad medicine had to be taken from her. This was done by the shaman marking in red paint the symbol os his snam or 'familiar spirit' upon her blanket and face."<sup>18</sup> A shaman led a Shuswap girl back to her village at the conclusion of her puberty ritual.<sup>19</sup> Employing a shaman for the purpose of purification imputes no small significance to the possible negative influences of the pubescent girl.

Menarche signalled a girl's transition from childhood to womanhood. Her future success as wife and child-bearer was supposedly determined in her performance of puberty rituals. Three salient features of the menarche provide a basis for symbolic consideration: (1) isolation from the community was requisite for the protection of the

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 312; and Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 225.

<sup>18</sup>C. Hill-Tout, "Report on the Ethnology," 136.

<sup>19</sup>Franz Boas, "Second General Report on the Indians of British Columbia," Report of the Sixtieth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1890 (London: John Murray, 1891), p. 642.

girl and her community; (2) female pubescence had a negative effect on the father's hunting success; and (3) some semantic association existed between the blood from fresh meat and the menstrual flow.

### Subsequent Menstrual Periods

Isolation from the community during menstruation continued throughout the woman's life; for example, cooking and eating utensils used during the menstrual period were expected to be the personal property of the menstruating woman and clothes worn during the confinement were hung in trees to be used the following month or washed. Women were expected to bathe before returning to the community.<sup>20</sup>

Dietary restrictions observed by the menstruating woman corresponded to those of the pubescent girl. Eating venison or other large game animals was thought to displease the animals and increase the flow of blood.<sup>21</sup>

Again, blood from meat was associated with menstrual blood.

Menstruating women did not cook for others. A man eating food prepared by such women was susceptible to illness and little success in hunting.<sup>22</sup> A Lillooet man immediately vomited and purged himself by drinking medicine

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<sup>20</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 326.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 327; Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 269; and Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 592.

<sup>22</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 326; and Boas, "Second General Report," p. 642.

upon discovering he had eaten food prepared by a menstruating woman.<sup>23</sup> Also, a man suffered not only from eating food prepared by a menstruating woman, but also from eating in her company. Sexual intercourse was prohibited during a woman's menstruation and the clothes mended by a woman at such times could not be worn by men.<sup>24</sup> The logic of these prohibitions emerges only upon consideration of the relationship of women to hunting.

## WOMEN AND HUNTING

### Women and Deer

Menstruating women exerted a powerful effect on men and their hunting success. As described above, men avoided any intimate contact with menstruating women. A partial exegesis for this proscription maintains that bears could detect a man's contact with a menstruating woman and would attack him.<sup>25</sup> Women could also render hunting or martial weapons ineffective by simply crossing in front of them. The owner was forced to negate the effect by washing the weapons with medicine or striking the woman on the principal parts of her body with the weapon.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 269.

<sup>24</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 326.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.; and Boas, "Second General Report," p. 642.

<sup>26</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 327.

Furthermore, a woman had to observe particular proscriptions with regard to the game carcass. She was not supposed to touch a carcass nor pass in front of the head of a large game animal as it might "throw sickness on the woman herself, or cast a spell on the weapons of the hunter who had killed the animal."<sup>27</sup> The Lillooet extended this prohibition to include not passing by the feet of the carcass.<sup>28</sup> Even when a woman was not menstruating, she was forbidden to eat the head of a large game animal. The Thompson claimed that if she violated this restriction, her mouth would become twisted. Other parts of the animal--the heart, kidneys, insides, feet, etc.--were known as "mysterious" and forbidden to women.<sup>29</sup>

There were certain parts of the animal considered to be greater in mystery than the head, feet, kidneys, and so forth. These included: "the paint or 'paint-bag' piece of the ham near the thigh; the ski'kiks, a piece of the flesh of the front leg; and the 'apron', the fleshy part of the belly, extending down to between the hind-legs."<sup>30</sup>

These mysterious parts are referred to in the following myth:

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 326.

<sup>28</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 269.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.; Teit, "The Thompson," pp. 326-327; and Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 592.

<sup>30</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 280.

## Story of the Deer

In mythological times the deer was an animal, and never had human form. At first people could not kill it, because it was able to jump from one mountain-top to another. Neither bow and arrows, nor traps and snares, were of any avail. Then they asked an adolescent girl, who threw her kilt at it. She struck it on the side, and this reduced its jumping powers to some extent. Then she threw her apron, which struck it below or behind the ribs, and reduced its power still more. Again, she threw her breech-clout at it, and this reduced its power still more; but still it could jump out of arrow-shot at one spring. At last she threw her paint-bag at it, which struck it on the legs. Then it could jump only just as deer do now.

After this had been done the people could hunt successfully, and killed deer with bows and arrows. This is the reason that there are mysterious parts inside the deer now. The girl's kilt may be seen as the pleura and diaphragm. Her paint-bag is now a muscle on the legs; her breech-clout is the pericardium; and her apron is the meat below or behind the ribs.<sup>31</sup>

The adolescent girl mediates the distance between the hunter and the deer by throwing various garments (probably containing menstrual blood) at the deer. Intimate garments worn by the girl are now part of the deer's body.

Another myth establishes an even stronger link between women and deer:

### Women and Deer Giving Birth

Formerly women gave birth with the same ease that deer do now, while deer had as much pain in giving birth as women have at present. When the deer complained of their hardships, the women laughed, and said, "Let us change." They changed, and it was ordained that henceforth the women should have childbirth pains, and the deer be exempt.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 653.

<sup>32</sup>Teit, "The Mythology of the Thompson Indians,"

Thus, the myth maintains that women and deer exchanged their very organs for giving birth.

A deer carcass was brought into a hunting lodge through a hole in the back, never through the common door where women could pass.<sup>33</sup> The Sanpoil and Nespelem, though not the major groups in consideration, are Interior Salish speaking people of northeastern Washington and reflect much of the general Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap culture. In describing the Sanpoil and Nespelem method of transporting game into the hunting lodge, Ray relates:

...the objection to the use of the door was that blood from the dead animal was sure to drop in the doorway. A menstruating woman might walk through the passage and over the blood, thereby insulting the deer, who would no longer permit themselves to be taken by the hunters.<sup>34</sup>

The Sanpoil and Nespelem thus clarify this particular semantic association. It was not simply the woman, but her blood that would mingle with the blood of the deer. This intimacy would effect some violation.

A question to address, then, concerns the specific relationship between menstrual blood and a deer or other game animal. The capacity of menstrual blood for pollution

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Vol. VIII, Part II of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. XII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1912), p. 331.

<sup>33</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 347; and Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 269.

<sup>34</sup>Verne F. Ray, The Sanpoil and Nespelem: Salishan Peoples of Northeastern Washington, University of Washington Publications in Anthropology, Vol. 5 (Seattle: University of



is elaborated by Levi-Strauss:

...at the semantic level, pollution, at least in the thought of the North American Indians, consists of too close a conjunction between two things each meant to remain in a state of 'purity'. In the hunt at close quarters menstrual periods always risk introducing excessive union which would lead to a saturation of the original relations and a neutralization of its dynamic force by redundancy.<sup>35</sup>

In this instance, redundancy is the over-similarity between menstruation and the hunt. A more detailed analysis of this relationship is in order.

As Ridington suggests, the most significant correlate of menstrual bleeding is its signifying infertility or lack of pregnancy.<sup>36</sup> The implications of infertility could be extended to include lack of new life in general or the imminent death of the community. A menstruating woman presents a paradox in the sense that she bleeds normally or not from culturally inflicted (as in hunting or warfare) or self-inflicted wounds; she will not die from her bleeding. Her condition, then, can be contrasted with the situation of the hunted animal where bleeding almost surely signals death.

Menstrual blood, an abomination, was thought to be a primary cause of illness. Deer's blood, on the other hand, was boiled thick with roots, berries, and deer fat and consi-

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Washington Press, 1932), p. 91.

<sup>35</sup>Claude Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, trans. George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1966), p. 52.

<sup>36</sup>Personal communication.

dered a delicacy.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the menstruating woman might be viewed as an inversion of the game animal:

| <u>Woman</u>   | <u>Deer</u>  |
|--|--|
| A menstruating woman is still alive.   | A wounded deer will probably die.  |
| Menstrual blood causes sickness.   | Deer's blood is a food.  |
| Menstrual blood signifies infertility or lack of child and lack of life continuance. | The deer carcass and blood are foods and, thus, connote life support and life continuance. |

Menstrual blood is a prime differentiator. The myths imply that women are very similar to deer--i.e., they exchanged sexual organs and deer assimilated the clothing of adolescent girls; therefore, menstrual blood serves to distinguish the cognitive position of women from that of deer. If women are similar to deer as men are to roots, it might be expected that some relationship exists between men and deer which evokes that of women to roots. In other words, men may have a metaphorical sexual relationship with deer.

### Men and Hunting

Pubescent boys observed dietary restrictions which

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<sup>37</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 236.

complemented those of the pubescent girls. Boys did not eat roots, berries, or any food prepared by women. Fresh or dried deer meat was preferred, but any other game animals or birds were permitted. Puberty observances required the trainee to consume only food which would be hunted by him in adult life.<sup>38</sup>

Some trappers or hunters, like women embarking on a root gathering expedition, would not eat before the hunt. Also, the trapper or hunter avoided food cooked by a woman unless she were old.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the trapper or hunter remained empty of food when hunting or trapping and refrained from eating food cooked by a sexually available woman (one not menstruating or menopausal).

Among the Lillooet, the father fired an arrow into a miniature grass deer at the birth of his child.<sup>40</sup> The birth of a baby, thus, could be analogous to the successful shooting of a deer. Birth is a successful mediation of the sexes as expressed through sexual intercourse. Therefore, success in hunting could imply successful metaphorical sexual relations between men and game animals. The logic behind the negative influence of menstruating women on hunting weapons may well be that the menstruating woman would confuse the semantic domains as would a man gathering

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 321; and Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 267.

<sup>39</sup> Teit, "The Thompson," p. 348.

<sup>40</sup> Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 260.

roots with the women. A woman, an inverse of the deer, affects hunting weapons inversely. As a woman is not a legitimate target, the gun becomes ineffective. The gun would supposedly fire if confronted with a deer.

It appears that the message inherent in the code of menstrual blood demands a necessary distinction between women and deer. Men can hunt deer since men are in certain respects the opposite of women; for example, if pubescent boys approached the menstrual lodge of women, the boys would bleed spontaneously from the nose.<sup>41</sup> Women bleed from the vagina; men, from the head. Vaginal blood signifies female puberty; dreams signal male puberty (opposition of head to vagina).<sup>42</sup> Thus, men should be able to hunt metaphorical women as women gather metaphorical men. Menstrual blood, which serves to separate women from deer and women from men, may link deer with men by default. In other words, it permits men to establish a blood conjunction with deer in the context of hunting. The relationship of grizzly bears to hunters clarifies the sexual character of the hunting endeavor.

### Grizzly Bears and Hunters

An interesting relationship existed among black

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<sup>41</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 321.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 318; Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 266; and Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 588.

bears, grizzly bears, hunters, and women. Women who ate bear meat were thought to become infertile and an unborn child would dissolve in the womb if the husband of the pregnant woman were to hunt or eat bears.<sup>43</sup> Bears became agitated from the scent of menstrual blood and attacked hunters contaminated with it. However, a bear was the protector of Thompson twins,<sup>44</sup> said to be the father of Lillooet twins,<sup>45</sup> and the apparent father of Shuswap twins who were called "young grizzly bears."<sup>46</sup>

Bears are the only game animals reversing the hunter/hunted dichotomy. This reversal arises when bears detect menstrual blood or infertility. Bears are also the only animals regarded by the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap as the fathers of human children. In attacking hunters, the bears become cannibals. A woman who eats bear meat eats a potential father for her children; thus, she, too, resembles a cannibal. The paradigm follows:

| <u>Women</u>    | <u>Bears</u>          |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| infertile woman | bear becomes cannibal |

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<sup>43</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 304; Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 269; and Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 592.

<sup>44</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 311.

<sup>45</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 263.

<sup>46</sup>Boas, "Second General Report," p. 644.

Women

woman in a receptive  
state for child  
(not menstruating,  
not pregnant)

woman pregnant  
(potential father  
is a bear)

Bears

bears can be  
hunted

bear will be  
cannibalized both  
by women and their  
husbands if eaten

A woman who eats bear meat violates an important semantic distinction--i.e., one cannot consume what one considers a sexual object (this category includes any potential father). Also, as the bear can be hunted and eaten only when the wife of the hunter is in a sexually receptive state, the relationship between the hunter and the hunted is more sharply defined.

## HUNTING MYTHOLOGY

Two hunting myths serve to reveal the cognitive structure of hunting relationships and the negative implications of any violation of the structure. The first defines proper order, the second discusses the ramifications of a woman who hunts.

## Coyote and the Hunting-Cannibal

Coyote, while travelling about, met a Cannibal who was hunting. The latter said to him, "Come help me hunt deer! There is a band of deer just coming around the shoulder of the hill yonder!" Coyote looked where the Cannibal had pointed, and saw many people travelling along the hillside. He said, "These are not deer, they

are people." The Cannibal answered, "No, they are deer and good food. Let us go and drive them." Coyote said, "I tell you, they are not deer. They are people going to visit another village."

When the Cannibal and Coyote had thus spoken to each other four times, Coyote said, "I will show you deer." He stepped up to a tree, took some of the roots, and transformed them into a buck-deer with large antlers. Then, after showing the animal to the Cannibal, he took some of the meat and cooked it. Coyote ate some of the meat first, and invited the Cannibal to do likewise; but at first he refused, for he was afraid it might poison him. At last he ate some, and acknowledged it to be good. Coyote said, "This meat is food, flesh of people is not food. Now we will go together, and I will show you how to hunt and kill deer."

After hunting for some time, they found a band of deer; and Coyote shot one with an arrow, cut it up, and cooked some of the meat. After they had eaten their fill, Coyote took the Cannibal's sack, which contained human flesh, emptied out the contents, and replenished it with venison. Then Coyote said, "I ordain that henceforth no one shall eat human flesh. There shall be no more cannibals in the world. All people shall eat deer-meat." Some say, that, on leaving, he transformed the Cannibal into an owl.<sup>47</sup>

The initial situation depicts the general definition of cannibalism--i.e., the cannibal man cannot distinguish between people and deer. The cannibal cannot make the cognitive distinction between people and deer as he refers to the people as deer.

Coyote orders this muddle in a rather unusual manner: he transforms the roots of a tree into the antlers and the body of a large deer. An analogy arises between the tree roots and the deer's antlers. Now, tree roots are dug by women for the purpose of making baskets and other implements. Deer are hunted by men and the antlers

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<sup>47</sup>Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 632.

fashioned into implements of various sorts utilized by men. Another opposition may be noted in the juxtaposition of the roots or base of the tree to the antlers or top of the animal. Coyote has accomplished a distinction of food from food gatherer on several levels. First, Coyote creates a greater distance between humans and deer by fashioning deer from a plant. Thus, in Fernandez's terms, Coyote effects a "strategic metaphor" or one which serves to shift a paradigm.<sup>48</sup> The deer are transferred from the paradigm of people to that of trees or plants; thus, deer become creatures to be exploited by people but are not people themselves. Second, the antlers of the deer are placed into a metaphorical relationship with the roots of the tree, but both are subsumed under the category of tool materials or cultural implements--i.e., a more specific cultural distinction is established between man, the tool-user, and his tools. Finally, the opposition of antlers to tree roots serve to corroborate the distinction between men and women in food gathering endeavors:

| <u>Women</u>                | <u>Men</u>                  |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Low                         | High                        |
| Roots<br>(women's<br>tools) | Antlers<br>(men's<br>tools) |

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<sup>48</sup>James Fernandez, "Persuasions and Performances: Of the Beast in Every Body...And the Metaphors of Everyman," Daedalus (Winter, 1972), 43.



WomenMen

## Vegetables

## Animals

Thus, the myth not only distinguishes people from potential food, but also it illustrates a basis for sexual balance in food gathering.

The second myth reveals the logical results of a violation of this balance:

Xolakwa'xa or Aaqux

An old woman lived with the people. She took a desire to eat their hearts, and picked up four pieces of gritstone on the mountain to sharpen her legs with. She always sat in a corner of the house, keeping her legs covered and out of sight while she was grinding them. The people noticed her always grinding under the blanket, and asked her what she was doing. She answered, "I am scratching my legs." The children said to her, "Grandmother, why do you always scratch your legs?" and she told them she did so because they were very itchy. They said, "You ought to use a wooden scratcher, Grandmother, those stones are too hard." But she told them stone was best. Thus she filed her leg-bones until they had fine points like awls. One night, when the people were asleep, she left the house to try her legs. When she walked gently, they made such small holes that her tracks were not noticeable. When she stamped hard on clay, they went in so far that they stuck, and it was almost daybreak before she was able to disengage herself. The following night, while the people were asleep, she arose and pierced all the adults through the neck and all the children through the belly, thus killing them. After cutting out and eating all their hearts, she wrapped dried grass and skin around the points of her legs, put on moccassins, and went to the nearest lodges, calling, "aaqux" as she went along.

It was now morning, and the people heard her coming. As she entered the house, they said, "The old woman must want bait (a'qwan);" and they offered her some; but she refused it. After leaving the house, she shouted again "aa'qux" as before. The people said, "The old woman must be crazy! She calls for bait, but, when some is offered to her, she refuses to take it."

Xolakwa'xa went on, intending to reach a certain un-

derground house, and to kill the people that night. Meanwhile Coyote, Fox, Wolf, and Lynx had discovered the murdered people, and started in pursuit of the old woman. They tracked her to where she had visited the lodges, and the people told them she had been there. When Xolakwa'xa knew that she was pursued, she took off her moccassins, and walked on the points of her legs. As they made little pricks only in the ground, she thought her pursuers would be unable to track her. But in this she was mistaken; for the men following her were among the best trackers of the ancients, and they soon gained on her. When she saw that she would be overtaken she lay down on a flat rock, stuck her legs up in the air, and, exposing her privates, waited for her pursuers to come. When they drew near, she said to them, "I want a man. Come here and have connection with me." She intended to kill them. They answered, "We will satisfy you. Have patience." Fox said, "I do not like those awl-pointed legs of hers: she may pierce us with them." Wolf said, "I am not afraid: I will go first." Coyote said, "That is Xolakwa'xa; she intends to kill us. The danger is not with her legs, but with her privates, which bite and are poisonous, like the head of a rattlesnake. With them she intends to kill us. I will go first as I am the most knowing one." He sharpened a short stick at both ends, went up to the woman, and, when she tried to bite off his privates with hers, placed the stick so that they could not shut. Now the others also had connections with her, and, when they were through, Coyote transformed her into stone, saying, "You will henceforth be a stone, and you will be called Nkaxwil. You will remain with your privates open."<sup>49</sup>

Xolakwa'xa's rampage is initiated with an emphasis upon her unusual choice of tools. The choice is unusual in the sense that she selects tools not normally used by women --i.e., a sharpened leg is more similar to a spear or arrow than to a bone awl used by a woman. The children caution her against harming herself with gritstone or a stone sharpener (customarily employed by men to sharpen arrows).

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<sup>49</sup>Teit, "The Mythology of the Thompson," pp. 365-367.

Xolakwa'xa is not satisfied with the honing of her legs until she has difficulty extricating herself from the hard clay. Her legs are now proper weapons, but another significance may be attributed to them. The tracks left by the old woman are so infinitesimal as to be virtually impossible to follow. In other words, she dissolves her metaphorical association with game animals by eliminating her tracks. Such a dissolution confirms Levi-Strauss's law of mythical thought where the transformation of a metaphor is achieved in a metonymy--i.e., by eliminating her tracks, she negates her metaphorical association with game animals.

Women are invariably associated with birth. Yet the old woman denies this association on two levels: (1) she stabs children through the stomach; thus, as children are given life through the mother's stomach, Xolakwa'xa inverts the relationship of mother to child by killing children through their stomachs; and (2) the woman's privates are "like the head of a rattlesnake" or cause death rather than life.

Nemesis arrives in the form of Coyote, Fox, Wolf, and Lynx, the best trackers of the ancients. Thus, the old woman is once more the object of the hunt. But she again achieves a transformation from her status as a hunted object to a hunter through a metonymy. Lying down on a flat rock, she throws her legs into the air and exposes her privates in order to invite sexual intercourse. The transformation from an object of the hunt into an object of sex results from the

change in position of her legs--legs on the ground produce tracks and make her the object of the hunt; legs in the air connote a sexual invitation. Altering the leg position is the metonymy.

Another transformation has also occurred from this action. Xolakwa'xa utilizes her sexuality as a kind of bait inducing her trackers to have intercourse with her and be killed by her vagina dentata. She resumes the role of the hunter. The vagina with a poisonous bite is analogous to the mouth of a cannibal. Xolakwa'xa exists as a cannibal on two planes, the alimantal and the sexual.

Xolakwa'xa is an antithetical woman. Her actions continually contradict normative expectations:

| <u>Women</u>                         | <u>Xolakwa'xa</u>   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| use wooden tools                     | uses stone tools  |
| sew garments<br>with awls            | stabs people<br>with awl-like legs                                    |
| nurture children                     | devours children  |
| vaginas issue life                   | vagina threatens<br>death   |
| metaphorically deer<br>(non-hunters) | denies metaphorical<br>association and<br>hunts people, uses<br>bait. |

The critical opposition the woman must mediate is between her desire to hunt and her metaphorical association with the hunted.

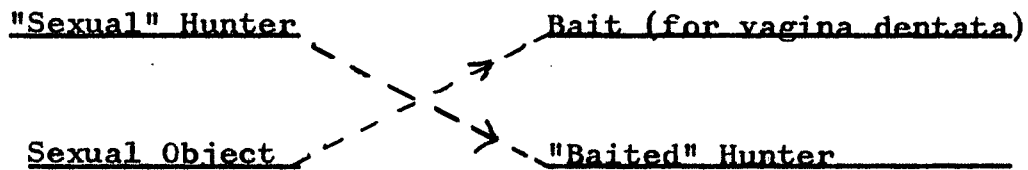
Hunter (desired position)Hunted (metaphorically the  
position of women)Following trackstransformation  
precipitated by  
sharpening her  
legsLeaving tracks

Mitigating the opposition by transferring it to the plane of tracker and tracked, the old woman attempts to mediate it by means of her sharpened legs which leave infinitesimal tracks. However, Xolakwa'xa is unsuccessful in this attempt; the ancient trackers detect her trail and establish her position once more as an object of the hunt.

Xolakwa'xa attempts a second mediation through a substitution of the sexual plane for that of the hunter and hunted.

Hunter"Sexual" HunterHuntedtransformation  
precipitated by  
altering the position  
of her legsSexual Object

Xolakwa'xa inverts this situation:



But once more her efforts at mediation fail.

Coyote perceives the sharpened legs as a ruse and realizes that the vagina dentata are the critical danger. Insertion of a sharpened stick of wood into the vagina renders the dentata ineffective. There is a curious parallel between the insertion of this stick of wood and the method used occasionally to kill grizzly bears:

Stories are related of an Indian who lived a couple of generations ago, and hunted grisly with weapons of a type peculiar to himself. One of these was a bone, which he held by the middle with his hand. It was sharpened to a point at both ends. His other weapon was a stone club. When the grisly opened its mouth and stood up to fight him, the Indian shoved the hand holding the bone (with points up and down) into the animal's mouth. When the beast closed its mouth, the sharp points pierced it, causing it great pain; then, while the bear was trying with its paws to take the obstruction out of its mouth, the Indian clubbed it.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, a stick sharpened on both ends was used to kill the grizzly bear, the only hunted animal related to cannibalism. This stick is paralleled by the double-headed snake used by the Thompson hunters as a charm against the grizzly bear.<sup>51</sup> Thus, Xolakwa'xa is negated by a doubly sharpened stick or by a double-headed snake. Her single

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<sup>50</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 249.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 371.

points (her vagina dentata) are mediated with double points.

Thus, the myth is essentially concerned with the implications of woman-as-hunter. Such a role reversal is regarded as untenable (demonstrated by the inability to mediate the hunter/hunted dichotomy). Because no mediation is possible between hunter and hunted, the old woman becomes a cannibal when she attempts to hunt. Failure to remove herself from her metaphorical position forces her into a situation similar to that of the men gathering roots. To seek an object of alimentation in a metaphorical associate is an act of cannibalism.

Another message can be discerned from the myth. Xolakwa'xa's activities are inversely related to those normally expected of women. Thus, she represents a sexual imbalance. She should be a producer of life, not a hunter or rather, ogress. Her endeavors to succeed as a hunter present a threat to the cognitive order. Thus, a violation of the sexual order also invokes cannibalism.

## CONCLUSION

The relationship between men and the objects they hunt is coded in the same terms as the relationship between women and roots--i.e., a sexual code. Sexual metaphors relate the woman or man to the food she or he gathers or hunts. Utilization of such metaphors orients the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap to their environment--i.e., a balance

may be maintained if the logical domain of women is separated from that of men. However, as these metaphors are in a sense Geertz's "models of and for" a culture,<sup>52</sup> they precipitate a series of logical manipulations when they are construed in their literal sense--i.e., when a woman consumes bear meat, she confuses the alimentary and sexual levels; thus, she commits a type of cannibalism by consuming the metaphorical father of her twins. This cannibalism is reflected in the dissolution of the fetus. Women should produce life and not cause death.

Employing a sexual code also precipitates cultural paradoxes when men are uncertain of the distinction between women and deer. Menstrual blood orders the relation designating women as sexual objects and deer as alimental objects. The story of Xolakwa'xa affirms this ordering. It is impossible for her to separate herself from the domain of the hunted. However, the ultimate concern of the native thought appears to be the maintenance of a sexual balance. The myth of "Coyote and the Hunting Cannibal" presents a movement from cannibalism to balance. The inverse operation is a logical possibility and appears to be a matter of no small concern.

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<sup>52</sup>Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, ed. Michael Banton, A.S.A. Monographs, No. 3 (London: Tavistock, 1966), p. 8.



## Chapter 6

### THE SHAMAN AS A SEXUAL MEDIATOR

The preceding two chapters have sketched the general structure of food gathering and its symbolic significance among the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap. This structure is dependent upon the distinction between the literal and the metaphoric. The basic metaphor is a proposed similarity between food and a sexual partner; however, the implementation of a sexual metaphor insists upon a consistent and assiduous observance of sexual role distinctions. Hence, maintaining a sexual balance is essential to the integrity of the entire cognitive structure.

The myths presented have examined the ramifications of violations of the literal-metaphorical distinction. The violators, warranting such epithets as "cannibal" and "snaky vagina," generate a host of untenable propositions or paradoxes--e.g., one cannot have sexual relations with one's food. Essentially, these propositions represent improper mediations of the sexes and have been subsumed under the complementary categories of cannibalism and infertility. These two themes illustrate two major logical consequences of imbalance and serve to focus cultural orientations more sharply.

In this chapter, the task is to examine the mediation of cannibalism and infertility and, therefore, of sexual imbalance by shamanism. First, a consideration of two myths concerning the Mosquitoes and Thunder will demonstrate shamanic mediations of cannibalism and the symbolic significance of the spiral. Second, the role of the shaman in creating an abundance of game will be discussed. A dearth of game reflects both cannibalism and infertility. The spectre of cannibalism emerges when no food is available. Inabundance of game may be thought to result from the infertility of the animals. Finally, the specific role of the shaman as restorer of human fertility will be examined in relation to infertile women, adolescent girls, and a myth concerning incest, marriage, and distance mediation.

## CANNIBALISM

### The "Mosquito and Thunder" Myths

#### The Mosquitoes and Thunder

The mosquitoes were very numerous, and lived in the upper world, where they were ruled by a chief. Thunder also lived there, but not with the mosquitoes. One day, when the weather was very hot, the mosquito chief sent one of his people to the earth to search for blood. This mosquito, finding some men, sucked their blood, and returned home with his belly full. When he arrived, he vomited the blood into a kettle, and, after boiling it, invited all the women to come and eat it. Then the chief sent another man to the earth in quest of more blood. He found some women asleep, and, after gorging himself with blood from their privates, he returned to the upper world. He vomited up the blood, boiled it in a round basket, and invited all the men to eat.

Having acquired a taste for blood, and having learned where to obtain it, the mosquitoes lived on it

almost altogether. Every warm day their chief sent down great numbers to earth, where they collected much blood, and then returned home with it, boiled it, and ate it. Then the mosquito chief said, "Henceforth mosquitoes shall go to earth and suck blood when they can get it. Female mosquitoes shall suck men's blood, and male mosquitoes shall suck women's blood; and anyone who kills mosquitoes when sucking blood shall be attacked by many other mosquitoes, and thus be punished.

Now, Thunder heard that his neighbors the mosquitoes were living on blood; so he went and asked the first mosquito who had visited the earth where he obtained the blood. The mosquito told him that he sucked it from the tree-tops. Then Thunder shot the tree-tops, went down, and sucked them; but he could not extract any blood. He went to the other mosquito who had first brought blood from the earth, and asked him where he got the blood. The mosquito answered, "I sucked it from the rocks." Thereupon Thunder shot the rocks, and sucked them; but he could not obtain any blood. If the mosquitoes had told the truth, Thunder would have shot the people and sucked their blood, instead of shooting trees and rocks, as he does at the present day. The mosquitoes thus saved the people from being shot by Thunder.<sup>1</sup>

Though the mosquitoes suck blood from humans, they do not appear to impose any serious danger to the health or life of the humans, in Lillooet thought. Rather, they are creatures effecting a balance between the sexes in food-gathering procedures and are interested in maintaining a natural order by preventing Thunder from indulging in humans as food. The opposition between Thunder and a mosquito in terms of respective strength can be extrapolated to contrast the different quantities of food consumed by each.

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<sup>1</sup>James Alexander Teit, "Traditions of the Lillooet Indians of British Columbia," Journal of American Folklore, 25, No. 48 (October-December, 1912), 311.

Thunder would require a portion of the human rather than a few drops of blood.

The mosquitoes construct a model of sexual complementarity with regard to their food gathering:

| <u>Obtainer</u> | <u>Source</u>              | <u>Cooking Implement</u> | <u>Consumer</u>   |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| female mosquito | male genitals <sup>2</sup> | stone kettle             | female mosquitoes |
| male mosquito   | female genitals            | round basket             | male mosquitoes   |

Stone, a material worked by men, is the only substance which seems to have been used in kettle manufacturing.<sup>3</sup> Women constructed and utilized baskets. Hence, female mosquitoes collected male blood, cooked it in male containers, and offered it to female mosquitoes; male mosquitoes did the reverse. This type of sexual complementarity reflects the same themes stressed in the chapters on gathering and hunting: females gather a male-type food; males gather a female-type food. Sucking blood from human

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<sup>2</sup>Although such actions are not explicit in the myth, I am assuming that female mosquitoes suck blood from male human genitals. The exacting nature of the sexual balance illustrated by this myth appears to support my assumption.

<sup>3</sup>James Teit, "The Lillooet," Vol. II, Part V of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. IV, Part VI (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1906), p. 204.

genitals emphasizes in a rather overt manner the sexual relationships involved in obtaining food. However, two basic oppositions remove the blood-sucking from the sexual plane. In sucking blood from human genitals, the mosquitoes employ their mouths and preclude the possibility of actual genital contact (on their part) with their food. Also, the blood, having filled the stomachs of the mosquitoes, is, nonetheless, vomited into suitable containers for cooking. Blood directly from the human is in too natural a state for actual consumption; it must be boiled in a sexual container and eaten by the other sex.

One further opposition can be noted in the mosquito's advice to Thunder to suck blood from tree-tops. The mosquitoes obtain blood from the genitals of humans or from their lower areas; Thunder is admonished to seek blood in the tops of trees. Thus, the mosquitoes are effecting another dimension of order. Thunder's food must not only be quite different from that of the mosquito (trees as opposed to people), but also obtained from the top rather than from the bottom of the tree. This myth, in summary, provides a clear description of proper balance between the sexes and their food gathering.

In a second version of the myth, Thunder succeeds in his cannibalistic desires:

#### Mosquito and Thunder

This is a legend. There were some people living in a village. A mosquito came down from the sky and

bit the people, drawing their blood, and then went back into the sky. The Thunder had noticed what the mosquito had brought up to the sky to eat. "Where do you get the red stuff you bring up here?" asked the Thunder. "Oh, I have been down below. I get the red stuff from the trees. I drill it out of the tops of the big trees," Mosquito told him. Thunder said that he was going to go down, so Mosquito said, "Sure, sure, you go down and when you see a big tree, drill the top of it."

Thunder went down and tried to do what Mosquito had told him, but he couldn't get any blood from the trees. He got angry and struck the tree. It split in two and fell to the ground.

He went back and told Mosquito, "There is no blood in the trees. I stripped a tree, but I couldn't find any." Mosquito said, "Sure, there is. That's where I get the blood that I bring up here." Thunder went down and tried again. He made his thunder-noise, but he still couldn't get any blood. He went back to see Mosquito.

Thunder was still very angry and went down below again. He found a person and took him above, into the sky. They have no houses in the sky, only shelters called Ya-Y'ama. Thunder had a mother and a daughter, who went up to dig some wild potatoes and onions. When they came back with the vegetables, they cut a piece of meat from the person that was brought up into the sky. They cooked it with the vegetables. The person was still alive.

The people below missed the man, when he didn't come home. They wondered what had happened to him. The Indian doctor said, "I am going to try and find out where he went." He put a magic cover over his head. This enabled him to see where the person was, if he was still alive. He told the people that the man had gone up into the sky. He didn't know how he got there, but the man was still alive.

The people wondered how the man got up there, one man said, "We must find a way to get up there." The people asked him how. "I make bows and arrows," another man said, "We can shoot up there and make a chain of arrows into the sky. That is how we will get up there." The people told him to go ahead and do that. "You must be a powerful doctor," they said. "We will watch you do it."

He made a bow and arrows, and shot an arrow into the sky. He sang a song, for power, as he did it, and the arrow stuck into the sky. He sang again and told the people to watch the arrow stick on the notch of the other arrow. It hit the notch and stayed there. The man said that he would sing and put another arrow into the sky. He kept shooting and the third arrow also

stayed. It took four arrows to get from the sky to the ground, where the people were. He told them that they could get up to the sky on these arrows.

At this time, the people were animals. They said to the squirrel, "You do a lot of climbing, you try and climb up the arrows." The squirrel tried, and went about half-way before he started to slide down. They decided that a smaller man should try and climb the arrows. They asked the weasel, "You had better go up. We think you can make it." Weasel tried and got further than the others before he gave up and came down. The next best man was fisher. "You are big and strong. We think that you can make it," the people told him. He just about made it before he slid back down.

There was a woman snail, whom the chief asked to climb the arrows. He said to her, "We can't make it, but you will find a way to climb the four arrows." She answered, "Even the men can't make it, but I am going to try. I have no arms or legs, but I will find a way." She stuck on the arrows and twisted herself around them. Because she was a snail, it was very sticky. She got half-way up and said to the people below, "You can come up now, you will be able to make it." The people climbed up the arrows, aided by the snail's sticky slime. They made it up to the sky.

They looked around for some vegetables, Indian potatoes and onions. They dug them up and found that they could see below where the vegetables were. The vegetables were the stars that they had seen from below.

They saw a woman in the sky, who was the wife of Thunder. They killed her, and found all her potatoes and onions and other vegetables. The Indian doctor liked the clothes of Thunder's wife, so he put them on. Thunder's mother was also a powerful doctor. She noticed right away, when the man was coming with her daughter's clothes on. She saw that her daughter-in-law breathed differently. When the daughter-in-law put down her basket that she was carrying, the mother noticed that the breathing was like a man's, not a woman's. When the man came, the people were trying to cook something for Thunder.

The mother kept saying, "My daughter-in-law is acting more like a man." When the Indian doctor was fixing the bed for Thunder, he didn't make it as the women usually do. He put everything in the wrong place. The old lady said, "My daughter-in-law acts like a man!" Thunder didn't notice, or he didn't care how his bed was made. When he went to sleep, his head was hanging over his pillow, and the people from below cut his throat.

They didn't harm Thunder's mother, and she is still living up there today. She doesn't harm anyone, she

just makes a lot of noise and strikes the trees.

The people from below gathered together in the place they lived. The slave whom Thunder had taken was cut up in many places. They had used him to cook with the vegetables, but he was still alive. They showed the man how to get down on the arrows. "We will wait here, till you get down," they told him. He climbed down, and then kicked the arrows out of place. The other people couldn't get down. The man crippled his feet, as he kicked the arrows, and after that he found it hard to get around.

There were people at this time, and they got stuck up in the sky. These are the dipper, the big bear, the hunter, and the fisherman. They are still up there in the stars. They are the constellations.

The people below didn't like the man who kicked the arrows. He became crippled and was helpless. When he realized that the people didn't like him, he decided to take revenge on them. He went to a place and sharpened the bone in his leg on a rock. He started to sing his songs and went after the people. He speared them with his sharpened leg. He killed some of them with his xwlxwlk/x#an. It means a sharpened bone with spirit-power on it. The people that he didn't kill ran away. He was the only one left.<sup>4</sup>

The initial violation of order is Thunder's seizure of an improper food. Although Thunder attempts to imitate the model provided by the mosquitoes, Thunder's rapacious technique (slicing meat from his victim) has more serious effects upon the well-being of his victim than do the delicate thrusts of the mosquitoes.

The people discover the location of the victim with the assistance of an Indian doctor or shaman who can discern the location of missing souls if the souls' pos-

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<sup>4</sup>From a corpus of Lillooet myths collected in the summer of 1970 by Randy Bouchard for the B.C. Indian Language Project.



sessors are not yet dead.<sup>5</sup> A shaman also constructs the arrow chain linking the sky world to the earth. The arrow chain is not dissimilar to lightning and thus presents a distinct opposition to the drilling of Thunder:

Thunder (with lightning) drills towards the earth to obtain blood from trees.

Thunder (with lightning) captures a slave from the earth.

A shaman directs an arrow chain (analogous to lightning) towards the sky.

As the arrow chain's direction is opposed to the drilling by Thunder towards the earth, the intent of the arrow chain might be opposed to Thunder's cannibalistic desires.

A negotiable path to the sky world is not created until the Snail Woman ascends the arrow chain. She traces a sticky helix which twists toward the domain of Thunder and envelops the pointed arrows. Snail Woman's convoluted response to the arrow path is an obvious sexual metaphor. The sticky woman twists herself around the masculine arrows. The resonance of this helical route with the pattern in the shell Snail Woman carries on her back echoes the analogy between Snail's shell and a basket as Interior

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<sup>5</sup>James Teit, "The Thompson Indians of British Columbia," Vol. I, Part IV of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. II (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1900), p. 363; and Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 287.

Salish baskets exhibit clockwise coiling patterns.<sup>6</sup> Sharp arrows and lightning contrast with baskets and sticky helical patterns. Both classes of elements are complementary and must be considered synergistically if the people are to journey to the sky world--i.e., if a successful mediation between the earth and the sky is to be effected.

In the successful ascent to the sky world, an opposition is engendered between the nature of Thunder's assault on the earth and the response of the people:

Thunder

drills down  
towards the  
earth

cannibalism

The Earth People

shaman shoots  
arrows towards  
the sky

sexual balance

Once more cannibalism may be considered to be in opposition to a sexual balance.

Arriving in the sky world, the people slay the wife of Thunder and enable the shaman to impersonate her in both appearance and function. The myth implies that a shaman might practice transvestism as he "liked the clothes of Thunder's wife." In effect, the shaman transforms himself into a cultural, not a natural, woman. As Thunder violates a cultural norm in his selection of food (the failure to

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<sup>6</sup>H.K. Haeberlin, Helen Roberts, and James Teit, "Coiled Basketry in British Columbia and Surrounding Regions," Bureau of American Ethnology Annual Report, No. 41 (1928), p. 160.

distinguish improper from proper food is a cognitive and, therefore, cultural dysfunction), he violates a natural norm in expecting to engage in sexual relations with a man (no issue could be expected from such a union). The shaman, of course, invites this violation by posturing as a potential sexual partner for Thunder. Although Thunder's mother, a shaman, detects aberrant behavior in her supposed daughter-in-law, Thunder notices nothing; he fails to distinguish proper from improper behavior in a woman.

Thus, the opposition between cannibalism and a correct selection of food is transformed into the opposition between a natural and a cultural woman:

Proper Consumption

Cannibalism

Proper Woman (Natural Woman)

Death (also infertility)

Improper Woman (Cultural Woman)

Thunder's failure to distinguish the shamanic imposter from his wife results in his death. Also, as remarked earlier, an excessive cultural union between man and man results in another manifestation of death, infertility.

Thunder's mother assumes his role but restricts herself to striking trees. The ravaged slave returns to earth, and, by deliberately destroying the arrow chain, he gains the enmity of the earth people, whose comrades are stranded in the sky world. The destruction of the

arrow chain is an anti-social act, a destruction both of a sexual balance and of the only negotiable route to the sky world. The slave is, thus, censured for his actions by the remaining earth people and faces an untenable condition:

Community (connoting strength, assistance, etc.)

Slave (crippled, helpless, and isolated)

The slave must mediate the distance existing between the community and himself and attempts to effect the mediation through a metonymical transformation. He sharpens his crippled leg on a rock and endows the leg with spirit-power. The crippled limb is transformed into an ominous weapon. The leg is now a strength rather than a weakness. The slave proceeds to stab the people who have rejected him but does not create a desirable mediation (an integration into the community). Thus, the distance between the community and the slave is never mediated; the slave is left in isolation, a negative condition.

Community (strength and solidarity)

Community (weakness)

Slave (weak and isolated)

sharpened leg is  
the metonymical  
transformer

Cannibal-like Slave  
(strength)

The untenable position of the slave with respect to the community is a manifestation of a deeper, more insistent message. The slave's vindictive gesture (fashioning a weapon from his leg) and subsequent impaling of the people is recidivistic. The gesture can be subsumed under the category of cannibalism. Stabbing people with a sharpened leg parallels the peculiar drilling practiced by Thunder and the mosquitoes. Although the slave does not devour the people he slays, his actions are distinctly cannibalistic in the tradition of Thunder and Xolakwa'xa. The sharpened leg places the slave in the category of the cannibal.

The metonymical transformation of the crippled leg into a cannibal's leg is a logical consequence of the slave's destruction of the arrow chain, a sexual mediation. A reversal of this logical sequence or syntagmatic relationship is initially presented in Thunder's improper cultural distinction (regarding humans as food) resulting in Thunder's improper natural distinction (failure to distinguish men from women); in effect, Thunder's cannibalism is causally related to his inability to recognize (and thus maintain) a proper sexual balance. The slave's destruction of the sexual balance precipitates his subsequent cannibalism.

The message, however, has not been exhausted. Cannibalism has been shown to be both the cause and the effect of a sexual imbalance but yet another dimension of this cannibalism emerges from a consideration of the implications of

the sharpened-leg motif.

The sharpened-bone-with-spirit-power-on-it is the major vehicle for bewitching or inflicting illness upon individuals in the Interior Salish culture. Shamans sharpened a feather, stick, or stone, tied it to the hair or feathers belonging to their guardian spirits or to the intended victim, and shot the victim with this creation. The shooting was effected simply by the will of the shaman and the victim was liable to die if a successful diagnosis with subsequent treatment was not performed by some other shaman.<sup>7</sup> The Lillooet attributed such malevolent desires strictly to shamans; the Shuswap, to shamans and lay practitioners.<sup>8</sup> Thompson shamans often selected the nasal bones of deer as prime spirit-arrow material and shot these arrows with the assistance of a guardian spirit or by concentration of thought. The victims complained immediately of a sore head.<sup>9</sup>

A cure for illness induced by such shooting could be effected only through the proper diagnosis of the illness and its treatment by a shaman. Although practitioners of witchcraft other than shamans could inflict illness on their victims, shamans were the exclusive possessors of effective curative techniques. Following an accurate diagnosis, a

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<sup>7</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 287.

<sup>8</sup>Teit, "The Shuswap," Vol. II, Part VII of Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, ed. Franz Boas, Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Vol. IV, Part VII (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1909), p. 612.

<sup>9</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 360.

Lillooet shaman sucked and probed the patient and, upon retrieving the disease, displayed it before the people.<sup>10</sup> Thompson shamans would sing their songs to invoke the assistance of their guardian spirits and suck the disease from the patient's body. The disease was spit from the shaman's mouth and displayed to the people in one of three forms: (1) if the disease manifested itself in a deer hair, the patient had violated hunting regulations or offended the deer; (2) if the disease was blood, the patient had been subjected to the malevolent influence of menstrual blood; and (3) if the disease was a bone tied around the middle with a deer's hair, the patient had been shot by a hostile shaman. A powerful shaman sucked the brow of the patient thought to have been shot with the spirit-arrow, and caused blood to flow from the patient's brow. After displaying the disease (a bone tied with bloody deer hair), the shaman caused the hostile practitioner to fall ill by throwing the spirit-bone away or towards the west and blowing at it four times.<sup>11</sup>

Boas presents a more elaborate description of the curative procedures practiced by the Shuswap shaman. Disease was attributed to four factors: (1) the presence of some foreign substance in the body; (2) witchcraft; (3) failure to observe some cultural regulation; and (4) soul-loss.

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<sup>10</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 287.

<sup>11</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 363.

If the disease was caused simply by the presence of a foreign substance, the shaman placed a mat headdress on his head and practiced the following:

As soon as the shaman puts on the headdress he acts as though he were 'crazy', i.e., he puts himself into a trance by singing the song he had obtained from his guardian spirit at the time of his initiation. He dances until he perspires freely, and finally his spirit comes and speaks to him. Then he lies down next to the patient and sucks at the part of the body where the pain is. He is supposed to remove a thong or feather from it, which was the cause of the disease. As soon as he has removed it he leaves the hut, takes off his mat, and blows upon the object he has removed from the body, which then disappears.<sup>12</sup>

In order to cure two other forms of disease caused by witchcraft or improper observance of cultural regulations, the shaman was forced to journey (in a trance) to the lower world where he might consult freely with his guardian spirits and thereby discover the nature of the disease. On his return, the shaman offered some plausible cause for the illness--e.g., a woman passed by the head of the patient or the shadow of a mourner fell on him.<sup>13</sup> Boas, however, fails to distinguish in a precise manner what appear to be two distinct forms of illness; thus, he applies the term "witchcraft" rather arbitrarily and equates instances of soul-loss with sharpened-bone diseases. An important structural distinction must be emphasized: disease induced by soul-loss

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<sup>12</sup>Franz Boas, "Second General Report on the Indians of British Columbia," Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1890 (London: John Murray, 1891), p. 646.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.



results from something leaving the body (the shaman must retrieve the soul); disease induced by witchcraft, from something entering the body (the shaman must remove the disease by sucking it).

This sucking-vomiting technique has been illustrated by the mosquitoes. I have argued that the mosquitoes are superior observers of sexual balance; thus, they are not cannibals. They balance their drilling with sucking. The Thunder and slave, on the other hand, do not balance their drilling. As the sharpened bone is the identical element employed by hostile shamans to inflict illness on their victims, it serves as the nexus revealing the arrangement of elements in the myth. A distinct message is transmitted:

The evil influence of the sharpened bone flung by the hostile shaman can be negated through the sucking of the victim by another shaman.

Thus, the antithesis of the sharpened-leg cannibalism of the slave is the sucking of humans by the mosquitoes.

Now, as the cannibalism of both Thunder and the slave is contingent upon or the generator of a sexual imbalance, one may view the negation of this cannibalism as a restoration of sexual balance. Sucking equilibrates the effects of the sharpened bone; sucking restores a sexual balance. Therefore, the shaman's curative technique, sucking, is a negation of cannibalism and a restorer of the sexual balance.

The link between mosquitoes and shamans is enforced by their dual natures. Although the mosquito imposes no

particular threat to the Interior Salish, the mosquito both drills or pierces and sucks his victims. Shamans are capable of both malevolent and beneficial actions.

### The Spiral

It is now useful to return to a somewhat neglected event in the myth--the sticky arrow chain enabling passage to the sky world. This arrow chain incorporates several relationships between constituent elements of Interior Salish culture and, thus, constitutes a locus of logical operations.

The arrow chain route is a sticky female helix enveloping sharp male arrows. Initially, it has been shown to represent both a mediation of the earth and sky worlds and of male and female. As the direction and intention of the arrow chain is antithetical to Thunder's cannibalistic desires, it also signifies a sexual balance as a negation of cannibalism. However, the generative capacity of the spiral has not been exhausted. It bears a remarkable similarity to the fire drill:

Fire was obtained by means of the fire-drill, which consisted of two dried sticks, each over a foot in length, and rounded off to less than an inch in diameter. One stick was sharpened at one end; while the other was marked with a couple of notches close to each other,--one on the side, and the other on top. The sharpened end of the first stick was placed in the top notch of the other stick, and turned rapidly between the straightened palms of both hands. The heat thus produced by the friction of the sticks causes sparks to fall down the side notch upon tinder placed underneath, which, when it commenced to smoke, was taken in the hands, and blown upon until fanned into a flame.

The tinder was dry grass, the shredded dry bark of the sagebrush, or cedar-bark. The sharpened stick was called the "man," and was made of black pine root, tops of young yellow pine, heart of yellow-pine cones, service-berry wood, etc. The notched stick was called the "woman," and was generally made of poplar root. However, many kinds of wood were used for this purpose. When hot ashes or a spark fell upon the tinder, they said, "The woman has given birth."<sup>14</sup>

The conception of fire from a fire drill as the product of a sexual balance is introduced. Also, two classes of fire emerge: fire produced by a fire drill (cultural fire) and fire ignited by lightning (natural fire). Negative attributes are accorded the natural fire; positive attributes are accorded the cultural fire.

The Shuswap believed that to dream of lightning striking was a sign of murder or war.<sup>15</sup> The Lillooet avoided carrying wood struck by lightning on their backs, shoulders, or sides. Teit cites the case of a man who defied this proscription:

Once a man laughed at the idea of lightning-wood being a "mystery," and, taking a long splinter of it, he pushed it along his face from the point of his nose to the back of his head. Soon afterwards his hand and face swelled, and eventually burst, leaving a large sore. When it healed, and the man became well again, a mark or scar was left in the shape of a white stripe the width of a finger, which extended over his nose, brow, and head, down to the back of his neck.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Thunder, although no longer capable of cannibalizing, could still inflict illness with his sharpened arrow

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<sup>14</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," pp. 203-205.

<sup>15</sup>Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 620.

<sup>16</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 291.

(lightning). The Lillooet subsumed cultural fire under the category of the colour red, which connoted good, bright, life, and luck.<sup>17</sup>

Fire was essential for cooking, light, and warmth. This fire was obtained with the assistance of the fire drill, from neighbors, or from shamans. Shamans who had thunder for a guardian spirit could create fire. Such shamans could swallow fire and had power over it.<sup>18</sup>

The following excerpt from the Lillooet myth "The Indian Doctor Who Made Fire" illustrates the method used:

Tum#a7 (the Indian doctor) started to perform. He danced around and then kicked the snag. He danced around a few more times to frighten the stump. The second time that he danced around the stump, the storm stopped..He kicked the stump again and smoke came out of it. As he danced around the snag, singing, the fourth time, the stump exploded and a fire started.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, the shaman creates fire from the stump of a tree in opposition to Thunder's striking the tops of trees. One further example of fire as the negation of the cannibal is illustrated by the method discovered to dispose of the dreaded black lizards: the lizards were lured into a fire.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the spiral represents a negation of Thunder's cannibalism and Thunder's fire and equates this negation with sexual balance.

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.    <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>19</sup>From a corpus of Lillooet myths collected by Randy Bouchard in the summer of 1970 for the B.C. Indian Language Project.

<sup>20</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 348.

The spiral is also important as a dance form.

The Shuswap divided themselves into societies amalgamating nobility and the common people in which membership was determined by patrilineal descent or by choice. Each society possessed a unique song and dance. One society, the Tseka'-ma, or Cannibals, practiced the Corpse or Ghost dance and supposedly had power over the dead (a feat accomplished by training in cemeteries). Teit describes the performance of the Tseka'ma Society dance as follows:

In the performance a man was introduced wearing a mask of white birch-bark (or of wood painted white) painted black at the eyebrows and mouth, and with shaggy black hair, which hung down over the face. After dancing a while, he vomited blood and fell down, apparently dead. The men formed a circle around him and sang the Cannibal or Corpse Song, while the women formed another circle on the outside. They danced in circles around him, the women moving in a direction opposite to that of the men. When the dance was at its height, the dancer revived and arose.<sup>21</sup>

The following diagram illustrates the dance:

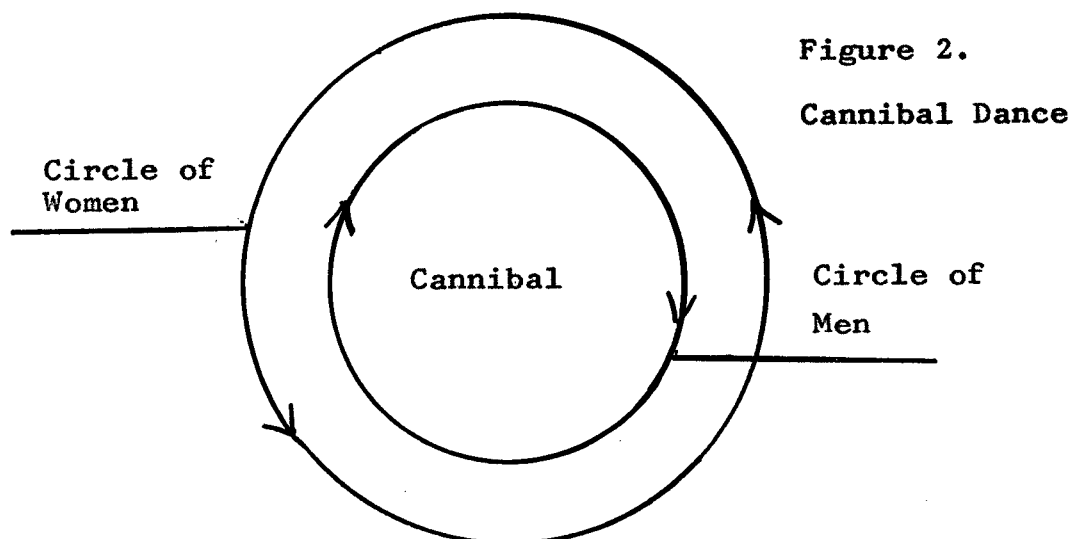


Figure 2.

Cannibal Dance

<sup>21</sup>Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 612.

This contrapuntal twisting is highly suggestive of the snail's helical journey and the particular rotation involved in starting a fire with the fire-drill. Singing the cannibal song, the dancers enact the negation of the cannibal. The cannibal feigns death (the inevitable result of cannibalism as, taken to a logical extreme, cannibalism implies eating one's self). However, the dancers are able to restore life and negate cannibalism by symbolically effecting a sexual mediation. As in the case of the fire, female envelops male in a spiral fashion.

The symbol of the spiral is also readily apparent in the implements of food gathering. Shuswap and Thompson arrow shafts were decorated mainly with spirals;<sup>22</sup> thus, the arrow, in effect, was the center of the spiral. Hunting has been metaphorically related to a sexual activity between men and deer. Hence, the arrow decorated with a spiral signifies a sexual mediation or balance between the hunter and game.

The baskets women utilized for root gathering were woven in spiral fashion and were containers for roots. Placing tap roots into a basket is analogous to the arrow ornamented with a spiral design. Lillooet baskets often exhibited ladder, lightning, or arrow-head patterns.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 243; and Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 519.

<sup>23</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 207.

Sexual mediation or balance is represented in hunting and gathering with a spiral. The sexual balance created between consumer and consumed precludes the possibility of cannibalism.

#### INABUNDANCE

Lack of game was counteracted by the extreme care which hunters practiced in the treatment of carcasses and weapons. For example, when a bear was killed, honorific songs were sung in its behalf and supplications were directed towards it requesting future good fortune in hunting.<sup>24</sup> Hunters would throw the bones of deer and beaver into water (native exegesis states such actions prevented defiling of the animal by dogs) and pray to the animal.<sup>25</sup>

This practice, however, may also be understood with reference to the following myth:

#### Mink and the Jaw-Bones

This is a legend about some people who lived around here. One of them said to Mink, "You should go spear some salmon. There are some around here." The Mink decided to go. His mother, Ts'it, coaxed his younger brother to come fishing, also. Said Mink, referring to a certain place. "Let's go fishing there!"

While the Mink was fishing, he lost the sharpener that he was using to fix up his spear. The sharpener fell into the river, and he told his younger brother to get the sharpener. The younger brother dove down to get it, but he turned into a salmon and swam around. Mink speared him.

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<sup>24</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 279.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

When they got home, their mother sat beside the fire and cooked the salmon that they had speared. Mink was sitting across from her, making something and whistling. He said to his mother, "You are eating your own young one, your own baby! I am going to throw the bones back into the river."

He threw all the fish bones, except for the jaw, into the river. When he came back, his younger brother, now a salmon, didn't have a jaw. Mink's mother asked him what he did with the jaw bones of the fish. "Oh," he said, "I didn't throw them away, I just put them aside."

His mother said, "Mink, you are just like your name. You are full of tricks!" "Yes," he replied, "That's why I was telling you that you were eating your own son. I hid the jaw bones so when he came up again, he didn't have a jaw. You have to replace his jaw by giving back the bones."

The young mink, now a salmon, came up to the surface of the water. He didn't have a jaw. "Oh," the old lady said, "We will have to put back those jaw bones. Mink threw the others into the water, but these jaw bones are still here."

Mink said, "You will have to throw the bones back in the water, where he is. Then he can come back, with jaws." She threw the bones into the water, and the young mink came back with his jaws. He changed from a fish back into a mink. His jaw was all fixed.<sup>26</sup>

Mink, the trickster, both creates and negates cannibalism. He offers his mother the brother as food and then accuses her of cannibalism. The jaw bone is a pivot for the myth as Mink retains it as the ultimate proof of the cannibalism. In the myth, the jaw bone is a type of pun; although it belongs to the eaten, the jaw is essential in eating. Perhaps the distinction between eater and eaten is not so absolute--i.e., a modicum of the cannibal is manifested in man's consumption of animals (his brothers). Therefore, the hunter must counteract this by throwing the

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<sup>26</sup> From a corpus of Lillooet myths collected by Randy Bouchard for the B.C. Indian Language Project.



bones in the water, a shamanic technique.<sup>27</sup> This action negates cannibalism and infertility or inabundance of game.

Despite their observances of these particular propitiatory acts, hunters were occasionally confronted with a dearth of game. Shamans were then summoned to counteract the lack of game. The shaman either drove away ghosts frightening the game away or sang magic songs at night in the hunting lodge--songs functioning as a type of soul-catcher. As the shaman sang his song, the souls of animals to be caught the next day were heard as they passed the back of the hunting lodge; thus, the people could then divine the number of game to be killed by counting their tracks (the tracks of the animals' souls).<sup>28</sup>

A Thompson shaman in a hunting party sat naked all night by the fire, anticipating a vision. At dawn the shaman travelled to the nearest stream to bathe, pray, and sing. These practices were repeated by the other hunters. Returning to camp, the hunters were directed by the shaman towards the game. He instructed them to kill one animal and not eat it until the following day. After this ritual was repeated once, the hunters were assured great success.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Mircea Eliade, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, trans. Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series, No. 76, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Bollingen Paperbacks, 1972), p. 63.

<sup>28</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 288.

<sup>29</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 365.

Thus, the shaman mediates the inabundance of game by negating malevolent influences, capturing animal souls, and by introducing the practice of renewing life from bones.

### INFERTILITY

The powerful influence of the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap shamans could counteract human infertility. Lillooet shamans could not only cause barren women to bear children but also decide the sex of the child.<sup>30</sup> A Thompson shaman reknowned for treating childless women painted the upper part of the woman's face, exacted her promise to name the child according to his desires, and gave her a hog-fennel root to eat.<sup>31</sup> The symbolism involved in this particular root eating is significant.

In the "Mosquito and Thunder" myth first presented, the mosquitoes were shown to effect an elegant sexual balance. Sucking blood from human genitalia emphasizes at once both the strength of the association between sexual and alimental consumption and the necessary distinction or metaphorical distance between the two modes of consumption. In the same sense, by feeding a hog-fennel root to a woman, the shaman illuminates the relationship between woman and root. The woman does not engage in literal sexual relations with the root but she does consume a metaphoric phallus.

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<sup>30</sup>Teit, "The Lillooet," p. 287.

<sup>31</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 363.

The opposition of oral to genital ensures the preservation of metaphoric distance, and, thus, it avoids paradox.

One significant function of the Shuswap shaman noted by Boas was his assumption of the role of guide on the occasion of an adolescent girl's return to her village after the puberty rituals:

...the shaman led the girl back from her seclusion in grand procession. He carried a dish called tsuqta'n, which is carved out of steatite, in one hand. The dish represents a woman giving birth to a child, along whose back a snake crawls. The child's back is hollowed out and serves as a receptacle for water. In the other hand the shaman carries certain herbs. When they returned to the village, the herbs were put into the dish, and the girl was sprinkled with the water contained in the dish, the shaman praying at the same time for her to have many children.<sup>32</sup>

This bowl is similar to the figure below.<sup>33</sup>

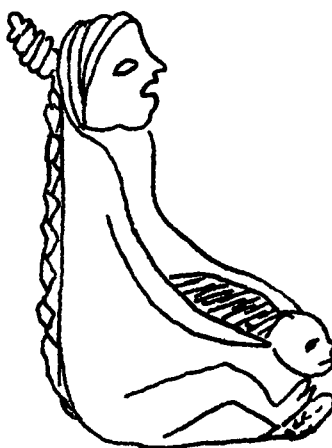


Figure 3.

Stone Dish

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<sup>32</sup>Boas, "Second General Report," p. 642.

<sup>33</sup>This drawing was adapted from a photograph of a Shuswap Lake Bowl in Wilson Duff, "Prehistoric Stone Sculptures of the Fraser River and Gulf of Georgia," Anthropology in British Columbia, No. 5 (1956), 129.

The structure of a snake's rattle bears an external resemblance to a tightly coiled spiral, the symbol of sexual balance. The woman giving birth to the child indicates the result of a sexual mediation or new life. But the myth of Xolakwa'xa intimates that a rattlesnake's head may appear in a woman's vagina and symbolize not only cannibalism but also infertility.

Thus, the figure, used by shamans to ensure fertility and mediate between the girl and her village, is a locus of logical oppositions: the snake's rattle viewed as a spiral is opposed to the snake's head (the cannibalistic vagina); the snake's position is opposed to that of the woman (head-to-tail and tail-to-head); the shape of the snake (phallic) is opposed to the bowl emerging from the woman's belly or from the child's body; and, finally, the child is internal to the woman, the snake is external.

Upon encountering a snake, a pregnant woman was supposed to turn and walk away in the opposite direction.<sup>34</sup> If her husband killed a snake, "the child would resemble a dead person or ghost."<sup>35</sup> Thus, the snake has some affinity with the child but seems to be in opposition to the pregnant woman. Some sense may be made of these oppositions if the child is considered a type of mediation between woman and snake. The woman must be in every respect opposite to

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<sup>34</sup>Teit, "The Thompson," p. 303.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 304.

the snake; but this opposition is necessary (as is the opposition between male and female) to maintain a sexual balance or create new children. Thus, if the woman remains in opposition to the snake, she will function normally and produce children; if she becomes in some respect like the snake, she will have a snake in her vagina and not produce life, but death.

One further example of the shaman's role as mediator of infertility is illustrated in the following myth:

#### The Man Who Got Four Wives

Four brothers lived in the same house with their four sisters. They were all anxious to marry; but they knew of no people in their country except themselves. In the neighboring country there dwelt a man who trained in the mountains and became like a shaman. Through his magic he learned of these people, and made up his mind to relieve them. He put on a deer's skin, and in the form of a buck-deer passed by the brother's house. Next morning they noticed fresh deer-tracks, and followed them up. After following them a long distance, they got tired and three of the brothers gave up and returned; but the eldest persevered, and overtook the deer.

When the shaman saw that he was nearly caught, he made a house near a creek, and a sweat-house close by. Then, changing himself to his natural form, he began to sweat-bathe. The brother came to the creek, and searched for the buck's tracks, which had come to an end there. At last, unsuccessful and tired, he decided to return home. Just then he noticed the sweat-house, and, approaching it, found a man inside. He asked him if he had seen a buck go past; but the man answered, "No. Go to my house over yonder," said he, "and I will come to you when I finish sweating." The stranger went to the house and the man, arriving presently, treated him very kindly.

On his return home, the brother related what he had seen and, as the shaman was a good man, the brothers sent one of their sisters of him to be his wife. Some time afterwards the man changed himself into a deer again and did as he had done before. Another of the brothers found him, and, thinking it was a different man in a different place, as soon as he returned home, sent one of his sisters to marry him. Thus, the man acted four

times, until he had got the four sisters for his wives.

Now the man said, "I have taken all the brothers' sisters. I will try to get wives for them." He changed himself into an eagle, and flew away to a neighboring country. Here he saw four girls picking berries. Three of them were singing, and one was quiet. He took off his eagle's body, and approaching the quiet one, who was alone, asked her if she would come with him. She consented, and jumped on his back; he flew away with her, and gave her to his eldest brother-in-law. Then he returned as a different man, flew away with another one of the sisters, and gave her to the second one of his brothers-in-law. Thus he continued until he had obtained wives for the four brothers. Then he left and went to a distant country with his own wives.<sup>36</sup>

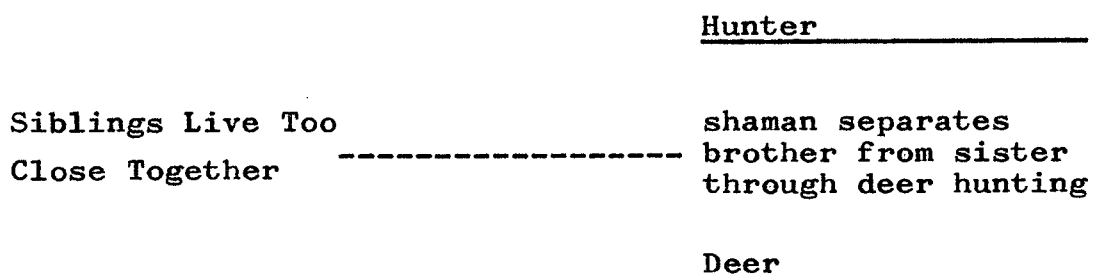
The initial paradox is coded in terms of distances: the brothers and sisters confront a major dilemma concomitant with their isolation--i.e., although marriage and procreation are desired and necessary to the maintenance of their social unit, incest must be avoided. Since the siblings know of no neighbors (potential spouses), the situation is precarious. The brothers live in too close a proximity to the sisters (possibly precipitating incest) while potential spouses are too distant (not known). The paradox is resolved by the shaman.

The shaman adopts the form of a buck deer and lures the brothers towards his dwelling with the promise of food (also, he is a metaphorical woman as a deer). Each brother is successful not in obtaining deer but in discovering a potential spouse for his sisters. In effect, deer hunting mediates the distance between the brothers and the

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<sup>36</sup>From a corpus of Lillooet myths collected by Randy Bouchard for the B.C. Indian Language Project.

shaman and between the brothers and sisters. The deer hunter does not capture the deer with his hands or be intimate contact with the animal; weapons are used to mediate the distance between the hunter and the hunted. In a sense, the deer serves to separate the brothers from the sisters:



But the shaman must find spouses for his brothers-in-law. Adopting the form of an eagle, the shaman discovers four women picking berries and lures them individually with the promise of marriage (the eagle is, thus, a metaphorical man). By climbing onto the eagle's back in order to traverse the great distance, each woman effects a relationship with the eagle proving to be the inverse of that between each brother and the deer.

Eagle hunting is in a certain sense the inverse of deer hunting. Initially, a pit is dug large enough for a man to lie in on some high ridge eagles might frequent. A simple structure of two horizontal branches each resting on two pairs of supports and linked by two cross branches is rigged above the pit. Then some bait is tied to the two

cross branches. The man lies in the pit and covers himself with branches. When an eagle alights on the structure, the man seizes its legs and drags them between the cross bars. The tail feathers are then pulled out and the bird is usually released.<sup>37</sup>

As Levi-Strauss remarks in comparing deer with eagle hunting:

Hunting with bows and arrows involves the region of space immediately above the earth, that is, the atmosphere or middle sky: the hunter and his game meet in the intermediate space. Eagle hunting, on the other hand, separates them by giving them opposite positions: the hunter below the ground and the game close to the empyrean sky...One hunt involves the shedding of blood (by means of bows and arrows), the other does not (eagles are strangled without any effusion of blood).<sup>38</sup>

Thus, eagle hunting involves the mediation of two creatures occupying distinct and radically different cosmological zones, the earth and the sky, by intimate contact between hunter and quarry. The deer hunter, on the other hand, maintains a distance between himself and the deer.

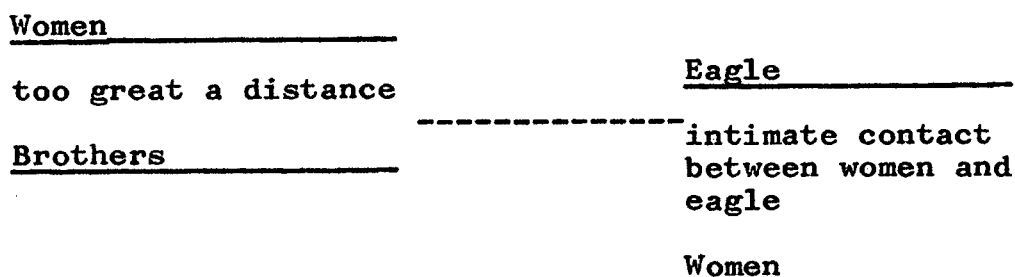
In the myth, the shaman mediates the distance between the men and women by posturing as an eagle. The intimate contact between the women and the eagle evokes not only the intimacy of hunting but also the intimacy of woman with metaphorical man.

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<sup>37</sup>Teit, "The Shuswap," p. 523.

<sup>38</sup>C. Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, trans. George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1966), p. 51.





The distance between the brothers and the women is mediated by the intimate contact between the women and the eagle. The shaman creates the necessary distance between the siblings by luring the brothers away with the promise of food (also, the deer is a metaphorical woman). The shaman eliminates the distance between the brothers and the women by promising the women marriage (the eagle is a metaphorical man). Too little distance is mediated by distance hunting; too great distance, by intimate contact. Thus, the shaman mediates sexual imbalance with appropriate methods of food gathering.

### CONCLUSION

As humans create and accept culture, they are forced to accept paradox and contradiction. Two major cognitive contradictions or threats to the cognitive system of the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap are cannibalism and infertility, both of which are aspects of sexual imbalance. One is metaphorical while the other is literal. Preceding chapters have illustrated the logic creating cannibalism and infertility, this chapter has demonstrated the logical mediation of cannibalism and infertility through shamanism.

The two versions of the "Mosquito and Thunder" myth illuminate certain pervasive symbols constructed by shamans to combat cannibalism. The arrow chain, created by a shaman, provides a route for the people to mediate the earth with the sky and, thus, counteract the cannibalistic rampages of Thunder. This mediation of cannibalism is achieved through the sticky spiral formed on the arrow chain, a symbol of sexual balance also manifested in fire making, cannibal dances, hunting, and root gathering. Though the shaman does not create the spiral himself (though the snail may be a female shaman), he does provide a path for the people. The fire drill is utilized in a manner similar to the snail's twisting about the arrow chain; thus, the shaman also indicates how a cultural fire might be created by the people. The myth revealed that the curative shamanic technique of sucking is, in effect, the negation of the cannibal or the negation of the sharpened bone. The mosquitoes balance their drilling with sucking as do shamans. Shamans also counteract cannibalism by regenerating life from bones or by ensuring an abundance of game.

Shamans can cure infertility in women. As shamans enable hunters to find game (a metaphorical sexual relation), they enable women to have children (a literal sexual result). The shaman can either indicate the path of mediation or effect the mediation himself. In the myth, insufficient distance between brother and sister is transformed into the distance between hunter and deer; excessive dis-

tance between potential spouses is transformed into the intimate contact between hunter and eagle. The shaman appears to have an extraordinary ability to transform untenable positions into situations which may be mediated. Thus, the paradoxes emerging from the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap symbolic system are resolved by a plastic mediator, the shaman.

## Chapter 7

### CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I proposed to show that the symbolic significance of food gathering among the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap generates two major paradoxes which arise from a loss of sexual balance. Also, I proposed that these paradoxes may be mediated by shamans, who, in effect, act as sexual mediators to restore this balance. I suggested that accusations of ethnocentrism directed towards the analysis might be avoided if the analytical methods selected were universally applicable--i.e., if the tools for analysis were not generated from a particular language's pattern of thought, and if the data for the analysis, the native categories of thought, consisted of responses to problems necessarily occurring to all humans.

If the analyst accepts the postulations of Levi-Strauss and Piaget concerning the universality of human cognitive structure, he may apply the supposed principles of that structure to his data and, thus, avoid the pitfall of his ethnocentrism. In the second chapter, I constructed a "working definition" of a symbol as a locus of logical operations. Such a definition permits the analyst to discern and analyze symbols from a structural perspective. In other words, the definition permits a structural analysis

of symbols based upon metaphor, metonymy, transformation, inversion, and mediation.

The second problem concerns the selection of data. I proposed that the universal problem of food gathering, cultural solutions and conceptions of those solutions to the problem, and relevant myths, might be a reasonable body of data for symbolic analysis. The ethnographic data suggested that a strict sexual division of labor was practiced with respect to food gathering and that one underlying principle of the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap as Plateau cultures was equality. Hence, any violation of that sexual division of labor or sexual balance might generate serious cognitive consequences.

To establish the symbolic structure of food gathering, I examined the cultural prescriptions and proscriptions concerning women and their root gathering activities and then, men and hunting. Women had to maintain, for example, an alimantal emptiness while gathering roots and berries and a sexual emptiness while cooking certain roots. A paradigm based upon emptiness linked gathering to sexual intercourse; hence, I suggested that women maintained a metaphorical sexual relation with the food they gathered. This suggestion was amply supported by the events in the "Child-of-Hog-Fennel" myth where disastrous events ensued from the transformations of the metaphoric into the literal or the violations of the metaphorical sexual relations between woman and root. By engaging in sexual intercourse

with a root, a woman precipitated a series of logical consequences resulting in the inability of both herself and her son to maintain appropriate social and sexual distances.

Another myth, "The Wech#in Cave," also presented the violation of the woman-root relationship. In the myth, men violate cultural order by gathering roots with the women. These unfortunate gatherers enter a cave where they are cannibalized by a lizard that enters the body through the anus and, finally, are cooked in the manner of roots by their grieving parents. The men violate cultural order by gathering roots and confuse the metaphorical sexual relationship between women and roots. What should be a complementary relationship between gathered and gatherer becomes an opposition. Men cannot gather (or have metaphorical sexual relations with) their metaphorical selves, roots. Instead of consuming, the gatherers are consumed or cannibalized. Hence, cannibalism becomes an expression of the violation of a sexual relationship.

A third myth, "Made-Her-Sit-Down-On-A-Seat," illustrates with a particular logical elegance the results of a violation of gathering. Angered by his wife's infidelity with a handsome cedar tree-man (the inner bark of cedar is a food gathered by women), a husband impales his wife's vagina on the sharpened top of the cedar tree. This action, however, effects a violation of the initial relationship between the woman and the tree (the woman formerly engaged in sexual intercourse with the tree transformed into a man).

The woman's brother, desiring to avenge his sister, adopts her dress and role in order to slay the husband. Two paradoxes arise from the blood issue of the two unnatural unions (brother wedded to husband and woman to tree). First, the blood gurgling from the slain husband's throat is thought to be the sound of sexual intercourse or the "making" of a new child. But the gurgling blood actually signifies death. Furthermore, no child could issue from the union of two men. Hence, a concomitant significance of the blood is infertility or the paradox of an excessive cultural union (marriages are designed for procreation). Second, the blood issuing from the woman's vagina is transformed into blackberries. Hence, if the people eat the berries (a proper food), they will eat the woman (an improper food) or commit cannibalism. The cognitive system is threatened; the people can no longer trust their classification of food. Thus, a violation of metaphorical sexual relations producing an excessive natural union between woman and tree results in the paradox of cannibalism. The violation of normal marriage or the excessive cultural union between two men generates infertility. Cannibalism and infertility are two complementary products of sexual imbalance.

Men engage in metaphorical sexual relations with game animals. According to certain myths, women and deer exchanged organs for giving birth and deer became accessible to hunters after receiving the undergarments of an

adolescent girl. The similarity between women and deer threatens the cognitive order. As the planes of alimentation and literal sexuality must not be confused, I have suggested that menstrual blood evokes negative reactions in a hunting and gathering society because it evokes the inverse of the positive qualities of deer's blood. Essentially, deer's blood is a food and signifies life support and continuance; menstrual blood serves to differentiate the alimential and sexual orders or deer from women.

Hunting by women is not cognitively tenable. The myth of "Xolakwa'xa" depicts the inability of an old woman to dissolve her metaphorical association with game animals or to mediate the hunter/hunted dichotomy. Although the woman is a cannibal, structural emphasis is placed upon her desire to be associated with hunters, not with the hunted. She sharpens her legs to render herself virtually untrackable. However, as the old woman fails to evade her pursuers, she attempts to engage them in sexual intercourse in order to kill them with her vagina dentata. This deadly vagina contrasts sharply with the child-bearing role of women. But she fails once more and is, therefore, unable to become a cognitively acceptable hunter. The message of the myth maintains that a woman who hunts is not only a cannibal, but also incapable of giving birth or infertile.

The general structure of food gathering, among the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap, is based upon a sexual metaphor and a critical distinction between the literal and



the metaphoric. The similarity between food gathered and a sexual partner insists upon a consistent and assiduous observance of sexual role distinctions in food gathering. When literal-metaphoric or sexual role distinctions are violated, the cognitive system is threatened. As these violations result in a sexual imbalance, the cognitive system is essentially threatened by a sexual imbalance.

The major contention of this thesis is that shamanism mediates cannibalism and infertility among the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap, and, thus, mediates sexual imbalance. In the "Mosquito and Thunder" myths, Thunder's cannibalism is echoed in his inability to distinguish a cultural (a shaman dressed as a woman) from a natural woman. In other words, his cannibalism is manifested not only by his choice of food, but also by his choice of women (inability to differentiate the sexes). The shaman mediates Thunder's cannibalism by discovering the location of Thunder's victim, providing the people with an arrow chain, and, ultimately, causing the death of Thunder. To ascend the arrow chain, the people must follow a sticky spiral route and, thus, evoke sexual intercourse by enveloping the sharp points. This spiral, displaying the sexual mediation of the earth and sky worlds, also signifies fire making with the fire drill, hunting with spiral-decorated arrows, and the symbolism of root gathering (tossing roots into spiral baskets often decorated with lightning or arrow patterns). Thus, this spiral is a locus of key cultural

oppositions. The myth also reveals that the curative shamanic technique of sucking (practiced by the mosquitoes) negates the sharpened bone of the slave or cannibal. The sucking of a sharpened point evokes the snail's journey up the arrow chain and ultimately suggests the same mediation as does the spiral.

Among the Lillooet, Thompson, and Shuswap, shamans could cure infertility in women with several techniques including feeding them the hog-fennel root. This consumption strengthens both the association between sexual and alimantal consumption and the necessary distinction between the two. In other words, it focuses on the necessity for a balance between the sexes. In the myth of "The Man Who Got Four Wives," a shaman must mediate an opposition between desire for marriage and avoidance of incest among siblings. He lures the brothers from the sisters by posing as a deer (metaphorical woman) and, thereby, mediates too close a proximity of brother to sister with distance hunting. Then, the shaman mediates the great distance between the brothers and their potential spouses by posturing as an eagle (metaphorical man). He mediates great distance with the close proximity of eagle hunting. Thus, the shaman mediates infertility with the careful observance of the structure of food gathering.

The shaman is capable of mediating paradoxes because he is himself a paradox. In the myths, one shaman adopts the characteristics of the opposite sex while

another postures as objects of sexual and alimantal consumption (the eagle and the deer). These posturings, in effect, defy a cognitive structure which demands a strict division between the sexes and distinction between the literal and the metaphoric. He impersonates a sexual or alimantal object with equal facility. The shaman transcends the cognitive structure (without threatening it) because he is the most competent interpreter of that structure.

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