

NATIVE SOUTH AMERICANS
Ethnology of the Least Known Continent

EDITED BY
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LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
Boston Toronto

epidemic he failed to halt), there has been a serious decline of interest in the role. All informants agreed, however, that the absence of any *huni mukaya* seriously jeopardizes the health of the tribe, since only a *huni mukaya* has the power to deal with the spirits with relative safety.

NOTES

1. Most of these data were obtained between May and August 1966 when I was working as an apprentice to Inkamatsi, the principal herbalist in the village of Xumuya. Additional data were gathered during 82 months of field work in 1955–63. The 1966 study was supported by a grant from the Joint Committee for Latin American Studies of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies. An earlier version of this paper was read at the 1969 Northeastern Anthropological Association meeting in Providence, Rhode Island. I have greatly benefited from the criticisms and comments of Luis S. Kemnitzer, Bette Landman, Elmer S. Miller, Patricia J. Lyon, Paula Winberg Sabloff and John Szwed, none of whom is responsible for any deficiencies.

2. Since I was unable to obtain data about female specialists, the present descriptions refer only to males, although my informants told me that the same rules apply for females.

true that works published in South America and in Spanish or Portuguese frequently fail to have the impact on the anthropological world that they should. In fact, in the English-speaking world (of anthropology), any work not published in English is likely to find itself doomed to obscurity until, if ever, it is translated into English.

The present article is a summary of Kogi cosmological thought, and anyone wishing to probe further into this fascinating and complex belief system should make an effort to secure a copy of the more extensive work referred to above. This earlier work becomes even more significant in view of the striking parallels between Kogi and Desana cosmology.

The author's final comments on potential changes in Kogi philosophy are of considerable interest. It would appear, from the timing of such incipient changes, that they were triggered by problems of acculturation brought on by increasing outside pressure within the traditional Kogi domain. We can observe similar philosophical adjustments on the part of other groups. For example, the Kadiwéu origin myth shows slight but significant alteration to accommodate to the change from being the dominant group in the area to being a despised minority confined to a reservation (D. Ribeiro 1950:21–33). Weiss mentions the Campa explanation of their technological inferiority to Caucasians, and we have seen how the southern Quechua have accommodated their view of the universe to include the Christian deities, as have the Yaruro to a lesser extent. Many examples of such accommodation are to be found in the South American Indian literature.

As noted, we have little good data on the intellectual basis for burial customs. Most ethnographies describe burial, but few explain why what is done is done. The following two articles also deal with the disposal of the dead, though from different points of view.

With the Kogi, we turn to another type of religious practitioner, the *priest*, who is the holder and interpreter of the group cosmology. We also turn to another aspect of relationship with the supernatural, the treatment of the dead. William Carter in his fine article on Aymara death ritual discusses the difficulty of studying death rituals (1968:238–239). It is obvious that if the ethnographer is to describe such a ritual someone must die during the period of study. Not only must there be a death but the investigator must be in a proper position to be allowed to observe all the attendant activities. The failure of these two factors to coincide with great frequency may well explain much of our lack of knowledge of the details and meaning of funeral practices. For example, Clastres, whose article follows, was unfortunate enough to be temporarily absent from the Guayaki' settlement when the last cannibal meal was carried out. It would be unusual, except in the case of some sort of calamity, for more than one or two deaths to occur in a small group during the more or less standard one year period that the ethnographer spends on a study. Thus, large bodies of comparative material are simply not available from any one group. It is, nonetheless, quite possible to use a single occurrence of a rite to very good advantage as Carter did and as is demonstrated in the present article.

It is unfortunate that the work of Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff on South American religion had to await the publication of his latest work to achieve general recognition (cf. Reichel-Dolmatoff 1968 or 1971). Perhaps due to the limited number of copies published (500), the second volume of his work on the Kogi which deals essentially with the belief system of the Kogi (1951b), was largely overlooked. It is, however, unfortunately

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Funerary Customs and Religious Symbolism Among the Kogi

Near the Caribbean seaboard in the northern lowlands of Colombia rises an isolated mountain massif, the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. At the time of the Spanish Conquest, in the early sixteenth century, the foothills and lower valleys of

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these mountains were occupied by the Tairona Indians, a native tribe which had reached a level of cultural complexity equal, if not superior, to the Muisca culture of the Andean highlands of the interior. At the present time there still remain several thousand Indians who are descendants of the Tairona and who continue to live in relative isolation in the cool uplands of the Sierra Nevada. There are three tribes, all of them speaking dialects of the ancient Chibcha language: the Kogi, the Ika, and the Sanhá, numbering about 6,000 individuals in all. The Kogi are still very little acculturated and occupy mainly the northern slopes of the Sierra Nevada, but some groups live on the western and eastern slopes, in close vicinity to the Ika and the Sanhá whose tribal territories cover rather the southern and southeastern slopes.¹

Although these three tribes present marked physical and linguistic differences, they all share many cultural traits which form part of a common tradition, and the Sierra Nevada thus represents a single cultural area. The Ika and Sanhá are considerably more acculturated than the Kogi, especially in their economic activities, and they look with contempt upon the Kogi whose fields, houses, and general subsistence level they consider to be very deficient. However, in everything concerning the religious sphere, the Ika and Sanhá recognize quite openly the superiority of the Kogi. As a matter of fact, the religious system of the Ika and Sanhá is, in essence, a less elaborate variant of Kogi religion and to the former the Kogi are, and always have been, the possessors of a body of esoteric knowledge which is extremely important to *all* tribes of the Sierra Nevada. This dependence manifests itself in the fact that the other two tribes will approach the Kogi to consult them on religious matters or to ask them to officiate on a variety of ceremonial occasions.

The Kogi, on the other hand, certain of possessing the secrets of the "true" religion, assume in front of their neighbors the attitude of benevolent "elder brothers" of mankind and are, therefore, obligated to propagate the true faith and to teach their "younger brothers," the Ika and Sanhá. It therefore quite frequently happens that the Kogi visit the villages of the neighboring tribes in order to take a leading part in their religious activities.

In all three tribes the men who are specialists in the interpretation, transmission, and execution of religious principles, are designated by the term máma and generally they are old men who have spent many years of apprenticeship at the side of a specialist of high reputation. These men are not shamans or curers, but constitute a class of tribal priests who are highly respected. The mámas of the Kogi enjoy very high prestige all over the Sierra Nevada because they are said to have a very profound knowledge of the tribal traditions and, in particular, of the rituals which are necessary to guarantee the order of the universe. Thanks to the mámas of the Kogi the sun follows his daily round; the seasons change in an orderly fashion, and the great principle of fertility, central to all religious thought, continues to manifest itself in nature as well as in all living creatures. The mámas celebrate the various rituals of the individual's life cycle, and also officiate at the collective ceremonials, the dances, offerings, and other occasions.

In the present paper I shall refer to one of these ritual occasions, specifically to a

burial rite, which I was able to attend during recent fieldwork in the Sierra Nevada. The ritual took place in the village of Seráncua, a small Ika settlement on the headwaters of the Cataca River. Seráncua is only a few hours from Mamaróngó, a major ceremonial center of the Kogi, and the Ika living in the surroundings are therefore strongly influenced by their neighbors.

The Ika of Seráncua had invited a Kogi priest from Mamaróngó to officiate in some minor rituals such as the purification of several houses and the preparation of collective offerings. On the first day of the priest's arrival there occurred an incident which was very characteristic of Ika-Kogi relationships. As soon as the máma arrived the Ika hurriedly took several sick people to the house where he was staying and asked him to cure them. There was a man who had a spell of fever, a woman who suffered from hemorrhages, and another man who had broken an arm. The máma looked stoically at the sick. After a while he said slowly: "I do not know how to cure the fever; I do not know how to stop bleeding. Neither do I know how to set broken bones. All I know is to talk to god." He said these words in a quite superior and ironic manner as, obviously, he felt somewhat offended by the fact that the Ika were taking him for a simple curer, he being a high-ranking priest. Having thus made clear his status, he was treated from then on with great respect. At nightfall he joined the men who had gathered in the ceremonial house, where he spoke to them in a low voice, advising them on how to prepare their offerings and inquiring discreetly into village affairs, always with great patience and with a faint smile of tolerant ennui.

During these days a young unmarried Ika woman had died. When news of her death became known in the village, the máma gave orders to prepare more offerings and gave notice to the family of the dead girl that, in the afternoon, he would officiate at the burial.

The cemetery was located on a hill slope, about 200 meters to the south of the village. The ground was covered with high grass and there were several irregular stones, half buried in the soil, marking the individual graves. At a short distance there was underbrush and then the forest began, but on the burial ground itself no trees were growing. On the day of the burial the following people gathered at the cemetery: the Kogi priest, the local Ika priest, the parents and the maternal grandmother of the dead woman and three maternal cousins of the woman's father. After discussing for a while in low voices the best location for the burial pit, the Ika priest walked away from the group toward the east and then sat facing toward the west. He now concentrated in order to divine the precise spot for the burial. Chewing coca leaves and watching the clouds on the western horizon he sat in silence for about half an hour. Meanwhile the Kogi priest sat down next to me and said: "The Ika are our younger brothers. They don't quite know yet how to bury their dead," and then, looking around at the others, he added: "I have to teach our younger brothers; such is the law."

Now the ritual was beginning. The Kogi priest stood facing toward the east and, with a mute gesture, delimited before him a small stretch of ground, perhaps one meter square; he ordered the men to clear the ground and, with their bush-knives, they now cut the grass and scraped the soil, cleaning it of roots and pebbles. Then

the men stepped back and the priest took several dry coca leaves from his bag and, holding some leaves in each hand close to his chest, stepped into the middle of the space which had been cleared. He then turned toward the south and slowly moved his hands, always close to the chest, as if weighing the leaves, sometimes lifting the right hand, sometimes the left. After a minute or so he turned to face the north and repeated the movements of the hands, again starting with the left hand in a slightly lower position, lifting it up higher until the right hand was lower. Then he turned toward the east and, standing at the western edge of the space, pulverized the dry leaves between his fingers and let the dust fall to the ground, first from the left hand and then from the right. While doing this he said: "This is the village of Death; this is the ceremonial house of Death; this is the house of Death; this is the uterus. I am going to open the house. The house is closed and I shall open it." He now took from his bag a small wooden spade and with it picked up some earth from the eastern side; turning to the left he deposited the soil on the western side. There he picked up soil and, turning again, put it on the eastern side. Then he picked up soil from the south and placed it on the north where, again, he picked up soil and deposited it in the south. He now said: "The house is open," and ordered the men to start digging. At this moment the Ika priest changed his position; walking toward the west he passed by the group of people and sat down again, this time turning his back to us. The men worked in silence, digging a round hole. When they had reached a depth of about 50 cm. the priest ordered the dead woman's father and another man to bring the corpse which was lying in front of the ceremonial house in the village. While the other men continued to dig, the two descended to the village and soon returned with the corpse which was wrapped in a large carrying net. They deposited their burden at the southern edge of the pit and now the dead woman's parents began to prepare the body under the supervision of the priest. The deceased had been dressed in a white cotton garment of the kind unmarried girls wear and had been tied with ropes into a flexed position, with the knees drawn up to the chest and the hands touching the chin. After having taken the corpse out of the carrying net, the father pressed down the eyelids of the dead girl, to make sure they were closed. He then placed the body on a large piece of white cotton cloth and began to wrap it beginning at the feet. The girl's mother had brought with her two skeins of whitish sisal fibers and the father took one of them and twisted a long string. With a bone needle the mother had brought, he now sewed up the corpse, beginning at the feet and forming, eventually, a compact bundle. When he came to the head he took the remaining skein of fibers and twisted from them a stout rope of more than one meter length, one end of which he tied firmly to the hair on top of the head of the corpse. He then continued to sew the cloth until he covered the head also. Then, with the help of the other men, the father placed the body into the carrying net again, tying it firmly into a bundle and fixing to it a loop of rope to serve as a handle.

While the men were thus busy with the corpse, the mother and the grandmother who were sitting nearby began to intone a slow dirge, a long-drawn wailing song without words. From their carrying bags they took some small bundles of dry maize leaves which they opened and from which they extracted a few small marine

shells, some of them of conical gastropods. Holding the shells in their hands they addressed them in low voices saying that they were "food for the dead." They then gave the shells to the men who placed them into the folds of the carrying net which held the corpse.

The *máma* stood now at the northern edge of the burial pit and, with deliberately slow movements, took off his cap, then his two carrying bags, and lastly the small bag of coca leaves he had been wearing. Taking once more some dry leaves in both hands he repeated the gestures of "weighing" the content of each hand, lifting or lowering one hand or the other. He then scattered the dry leaves over the bottom of the pit which, by now, was about one meter deep. Taking from one of the bags several small bundles of leaves, he stepped into the pit and slowly untied the little packages of dry maize leaves. Extracting from them some pulverized stones, seeds, and cotton fibers he deposited these in the center of the bottom. Stepping out of the pit again the *máma* now approached the corpse. There was a moment of great tension; everybody looked at him watching anxiously every gesture, every expression on his face. Standing with his feet well apart, planted firmly on the ground, as if preparing himself to lift up a heavy weight the *máma* bent over and grasped the rope handle with both hands, trying to lift the corpse. By his bodily position as well as by his facial expression he made it understood that he was making a great effort and that the corpse was very heavy. As a matter of fact, it seemed that he could hardly lift it from the ground; he lowered the corpse again and looked around at the others with a gesture of impotence, of doubt. After a short while he stooped again and tried to lift the carrying net but soon he straightened again, giving the impression that his strength had failed him. There followed long minutes of anxious silence. At the third attempt the *máma* pretended that the corpse was somewhat less heavy than before. He smiled and, looking at the others as if to encourage them, he bent down again to lift the corpse. Nine times this act was repeated and each time the *máma* made it understood that the corpse was becoming lighter and lighter. At the ninth time, smiling, he picked up the corpse as if it was almost weightless, as if it were something small and light. People looked at each other with relief. The *máma* placed the corpse carefully on the ground and walked to the other side of the pit. After throwing a few coca leaves into it he directed the father to place the corpse in the pit, lying on its left side and with the head toward the east. The father now went to the underbrush and soon returned with an armload of green fern leaves which he spread carefully over the corpse. The *máma* now ordered the men to fill the pit with earth, but when it was half full he interrupted them in their work and took from his bag five small bundles the contents of which he placed in the pit at the four cardinal points. There were some very small stones, some seeds, and some white cotton. The contents of the fifth bundle he placed in the middle of the pit, directly on top of the corpse.

During the entire process of filling in the grave care had been taken not to bury the rope which was tied to the dead woman's hair, and the *máma* often reminded the men not to lose sight of it and to keep it taut. When finally the pit was completely filled in the *máma* asked one of the men to bring a thin rod, about 80 cm. long. The father now tied the free end of the rope to this stick which he pushed

vertically into the soft soil while twisting the remaining rope loosely around it. In the meantime the other men had brought a heavy stone which they placed over the pit, next to the rod. Then the men stepped back while the *máma* placed the contents of another leaf bundle at the foot of the rod. He then again took his little spade and now "closed" the grave, this time in the inverse order, by carrying earth from south to north, north to south, west to east and east to west.

The *máma* now called the parents of the dead woman and asked them to stand in front of him, at the western side of the grave. He said to them: "Turn around completely to the left." The two did as told. "Now turn around completely to the right," he continued. The two turned rapidly and the *máma* said: "Now go away while turning left." The couple began to descend the slope, turning and turning until, after a while, they continued to walk toward the village. Then the others passed before the *máma*, turning first to the left, then to the right. "Get going, get going!" the *máma* said. When all had left he walked back to the grave and stood facing toward the east. Very slowly he turned to the right and then, three times, to the left. With the last turn he started to walk downhill, always turning, until the burial ground was far behind. While all those who had touched the corpse now went to a nearby creek to wash their hands and arms and to clean their bush-knives, the *máma* went directly to his house.

Nine days later, the *máma*, followed by the dead woman's parents, returned to the burial ground. The *máma* grasped the end of the rope which was tied to the rod and pulled at it, lightly first, then more strongly. The fibers were already rotten and when suddenly the rope broke, they all smiled and nodded and returned to the village.

The burial rite I have described so far lasted approximately two hours and was carried out in almost complete silence. Except for the women's dirge only the *máma* had spoken a few times, but there had been no prayers, nor chants; only a few short indications given to the men who were digging the grave, and to the parents as they prepared the corpse. However, it was a ritual in which every phase, every step, had been carried out with great precision.

A casual observer could easily think that this was a very simple rite and he might deduce, from what he had seen, that the burial rites of these Indians were limited to a few quite elementary practices. Worse still would be the conclusions of an archaeologist who, at some future time, in digging up this grave would find nothing more than a simple pit, with a flexed skeleton facing east. But perhaps both—our casual observer and the imaginary archaeologist of the future—would be very much mistaken. As a matter of fact, behind this apparently very simple ritual I have described there exist complex ideas and there lie religious and philosophic concepts of unusual interest.

I shall try now to isolate the different components of the ritual, to identify and analyze them, in order to appreciate their function within the wider context of Kogi culture.

In the first place, I shall list the symbolic elements which were observed during the burial. This list is the following:

1. Verbalization of the cemetery as the "village of Death" and as the "ceremonial house of Death"; verbalization of the burial pit as a "house" and as a "uterus."
2. Flexed position of the corpse, placed in a carrying net, with a rope tied to the hair.
3. Corpse resting on the left side and with the head oriented toward the east.
4. Marked emphasis on right and left: position of hands; position of the corpse; left turns and right turns.
5. Placing of offerings at the sides, the center and the top of the burial pit.
6. Verbalization of the offerings as "food for the dead."
7. Attitude of "opening" and "closing the house."
8. Purification by turning.

Let us see now to what extent these diverse symbolic acts are related to the cosmogonic and socio-religious concepts of Kogi culture.

Underlying many forms of thought and action among the Indians of the Sierra Nevada is a concept of dualism which expresses itself on many different levels. On the level of the individual as a biological being, it is the human body which provides the model formed by the concept of opposed but complementary principles. It is the apparent bilateral symmetry of the body and the sexual differences, which provide the norm. On another level, that of the social group, we find another dualistic division, this time between "people from above" and "people from below," terms which do not refer to altitudinal differences in the habitat of certain groups living on the mountain slopes, but which express the existence of groups of opposed but complementary segments of society. The villages themselves are divided into two parts and the dividing line, invisible but known to all, separates the village into two sectors. The ceremonial houses, too, are imagined as being divided into two halves, each with its own central post—male and female—and with a dividing line running diametrically between the two doors and separating the circle of the ground plan into a "right side" and a "left side." On a cosmic level, the same division separates the universe into two sides, determined by the sun, which, going from east to west, divides the world into a right and a left half. The dualistic elaborations of this type are innumerable: male/female, man/woman, right hand/left hand, heat/cold, light/dark, etc., and they are furthermore associated with certain categories of animals, plants, and minerals; with colors, winds, diseases and, of course, with concepts of Good and Evil. These ideas manifest themselves in all religious practices. Of course, many of the dualistic manifestations have the character of symbolic antagonists which, in the final analysis, share a common essence. Just as the tribal deities which, in one single divine being, unite benevolent and malevolent aspects, thus man carries within himself this vital polarity of Good and Evil.

The Kogi believe in the existence of a principle of Good (right), the presence and benevolent function of which is determined by the simultaneous existence of a principle of Evil (left). In order to guarantee the existence of Good it is necessary to foment Evil because if the latter should disappear—finding no justification for its existence—the principle of Good would disappear as well. It is deemed necessary

then that a person should occasionally commit sins which bear witness to the active existence of Evil. It is here where, according to the Kogi, lies the main problem of human existence: in finding a balance between these two opposed but complementary forces and in establishing a harmonic relationship between them. The basic concept is called *yuluka*, a term which might be translated as "to agree," "to be equal." This idea of "agreement," of knowing how to balance the creative and destructive energies on the path of life leading from east to west, is a fundamental principle of human conduct. It is for this reason that the *máma*, by "weighing" in his hands the coca leaves or other ritual objects, first tries to establish this balance, until, at least, the right hand, i.e., the principle of Good, "weighs more."

Beginning with a dualistic concept of complementary opposites, the dimensions broaden now and lead to a structure consisting of four points of reference. This is still a static concept, a bidimensional one, in which, on the horizontal plane, the world is divided into four segments. The paradigmatic model is the four cardinal points: North/South/East/West. Associated with them we find a long series of other concepts, mythical beings, animals, plants, colors and attitudes. In the first place, the mythical ancestors of the first four clans, together with their wives, occupy the four cardinal points: in the North the opossum and his spouse the armadillo; in the South the mountain lion and his spouse the deer; in the East the jaguar with his spouse the peccary, and in the West the eagle and his spouse the snake. As we are dealing here with a system of patri- and matrilineal descent reckoned from father to son and from mother to daughter, the relationship of complementary opposites is expressed by the idea that each "male" animal (opossum, mountain lion, jaguar, eagle) feeds on the "female" animal (armadillo, deer, peccary, snake), all ancestral couples forming antagonistic pairs. Then follow certain color associations: North-blue, South-red, East-white, and West-black. On the other hand, the color red (South) is classified as a "light" color and forms, together with the color white (East) a "good side," in opposition to an "evil side" formed by the North and the West which have "dark" colors. There are countless other associations with each cardinal point because each clan is, at the same time, the spiritual "master" of certain animals, plants, minerals, atmospheric phenomena, manufactured objects, dances, songs, and other elements.

The four points of the cosmic structure are also found in many microcosmic versions. The world is sustained by four mythical giants; the Sierra Nevada is divided into four sectors; the villages are traditionally constructed with four entrances and, surrounding them, there are four sacred sites where offerings are deposited. The ceremonial houses have a cosmic structure and in their interior there are four hearths around which gather the members of the four principal clans. Besides, in the ceremonial house the line which divides the circle into two segments also divides the men into two antagonistic groups: those of the "right side" (red) where sit the men who "know less" while those of the "left side" (blue) "know more," the latter being closer to the negative forces which dominate the universe.

But a scheme of four points necessarily leads to a fifth—the central point, the point in the middle. The symbolism of the central point is of great importance to the Kogi; it is the center of the universe, it is the Sierra Nevada, it is the central

point of the circle of the ceremonial house where the sacred offerings are buried and where the *máma* sits when he wishes to "speak with god." In divinatory practices, the person places on the ground four ritual objects, or groups of objects: stones, seeds, or shells, orienting them toward the cardinal points. But in the center he will place a tiny stool, a little bench carved of stone or of wood. This is his "seat," sitting upon which the essence of his being—a diminutive and invisible replica of his person—receives the answers to the questions the diviner formulates.

The next step in this scheme is a tridimensional system with seven points of reference: North/South/East/West/Zenith/Nadir/ and the Center. The cosmic axis formed by the last three points also has its associations in the form of "masters," animals, and colors. Again, it is a static system of fixed points circumscribing the universe which, according to the Kogi, has the shape of an enormous egg. But now there appears a new concept, this time a dynamic one, formulated in terms of developmental phases: the concept of the nine stages.

The great Mother Goddess was the creator of the universe and of mankind. She had nine daughters and each daughter represents a different kind of agricultural soil: black soil, brown soil, red soil, sandy soil, and others. These soils form a series of horizontal layers within the cosmic egg and symbolize a scale of values. Mankind lives on the fifth layer, the layer of black soil, the "middle layer," while above and below there follow four different layers of soil, four different worlds.

The great cone-shaped mountains of the Sierra Nevada are imagined as "worlds," as houses, with exactly the same structure; and also the ceremonial houses are microcosmic models containing four layers of circular shelves in the interior of their conical roofs. In a negative sense, it is imagined that the structure of these houses continues underground, so that a ceremonial house is a replica of the cosmos, and its center is the "center of the world."

But the associations continue. The universe, the cosmic egg, is interpreted by the Kogi as a uterus, the uterus of the Mother Goddess, within which mankind continues to live. But also our earth is a uterus, the Sierra Nevada is a uterus; every mountain, every ceremonial house, every dwelling and, finally, every tomb is a uterus. Caves and crevices are openings which lead into the body of the Mother Goddess. The huge round roof apices constructed in the shape of funnels, which crown the ceremonial houses, are her sexual organs where offerings are deposited representing a concept of fertilization. These apices are the "doors" which open and connect with the cosmic levels of "above." From the highest point of the interior of the conical roof of the house there hangs a rope which represents the umbilical cord and it is thought that through this cord the *máma*, sitting in the center, establishes contact with the supernatural powers.

We can now understand the symbolism of the burial rite. The dead person returns to the uterus, in a flexed foetal position; wrapped in a carrying net which represents the placenta, and connected with this world by an umbilical cord which is cut after nine days, after which follows rebirth into another world. When the *máma* lifts the corpse nine times, he symbolizes by this action the return to the uterus because he makes the corpse return to an embryonic state by leading it through the nine months of intrauterine gestation. At the same time, the tomb is

the cosmos, the world. Offerings are deposited in the seven points of the sacred space: North/South/East/West/Zenith/Nadir/Center, and the head of the corpse is oriented toward the east, the direction where the sun, the light, life itself are reborn every day. The burial rite then was an act of "cosmification."

We must discuss now in more detail the concept of offerings. In their material aspect the offerings consist generally of small stones, seeds, small marine shells, pieces of thread or cotton, or fingernails and hair. All these objects have to be collected in certain spots and under certain circumstances because each supernatural power demands offerings of specific materials, forms or colors. The material is then wrapped into small thin leaves taken from the interior of a dry corncob which are then tied into a tiny bundle with a short piece of fiber or string. In preparing these offerings several symbolic acts have to be performed. In the first place, it is necessary that each offering be identified with the person who performs it. In order to do this, the small bundle is taken into the uplifted left hand and a circular movement is made with it around the head, in order to "extract the evil"; then the same movement is repeated with the right hand to "introduce good." In the second place, in tying or untying the bundle of leaves, a certain order has to be observed. The piece of dry leaf on which the material of the offering is placed has an oblong shape and the two protruding ends represent the North and the South respectively. These two ends are now folded upwards and downwards in such a manner that the southern end comes to lie on top of the northern end. The fibers or threads are now tied from east to west, and when the bundle is being opened in order to deposit its contents on a sacred site, the reverse order has to be followed.

All offerings are meant to be "food" and are verbalized as "food for the dead," it being understood that the category of "the dead" comprises not only the spirits of specific ancestors, but also those of mythical beings, of the "masters" of animals and plants and, of course, of the total concept of "Death." For the Kogi there exists a close relationship between eating and sexual intercourse. In myths, dreams and, as we have seen, in the rules of exogamy, the act of eating symbolizes the sexual act. The contents of the offerings have thus a double significance: they are "food," but at the same time they are a fertilizing matter, they are male semen which impregnates the supernatural personification which, being the anthropomorphic counterpart of a plant or animal, thus maintains its creative and multiplying quality. If, for example, a Kogi makes an offering to the Mother of Maize, she is not only nourished by his offering but is inseminated and will procreate more maize. A third interpretation compares an offering with a uterus, that is, the wrappings represent the placenta, the thread represents the umbilical cord, and the contents of the bundle have an embryonic character. As a matter of fact, on certain occasions the Kogi weave diminutive bags, one or two centimeters in length, which contain offerings and which are directly designated as "little wombs." We can now understand the symbolism of "opening" and "closing" of the homologous series: burial pit/uterus/offering.

I have mentioned that while the women were singing they handled several small sea shells which were deposited with the corpse. In many ritual practices the Kogi employ small marine shells, as offerings or as personal amulets. Bivalves represent

the female principle while gastropods represent the male one, and both are offered to the Mother Goddess in order to increase fertility. The little shells, however, which were buried with the corpse represented the surviving members of the girl's family. The largest shell was a gastropod which symbolized a husband for the girl because, if this object were not put into her grave, once in the Beyond she might ask for a husband and thus might cause the death of a young man of the tribe.

I also mentioned the act of turning left and right, when the participants in the ritual left the burial ground. There are several interrelated concepts connected with this act. On the one hand, many religious contacts between the individual and the supernatural powers are conceived of in terms of a union which is established by a connecting thread. Also all diseases are "like a thread" which entwines the sick person, and a strong cotton thread tied around the wrists or the ankles hinders the entrance of diseases to the body. On the other hand, many sacred songs are thought of in terms of "threads" which connect the singer with the deity to which he addresses his song. One must untie these threads in order to avoid evil influences, or one must tie oneself firmly to those forces which are benevolent. When turning around next to the burial pit, the person unties the thread of Death and, at the same time, forms a cosmic axis. It is also thought that when turning rapidly several times one becomes invisible to Death. Turning rapidly "one does not see" and, therefore, "one cannot be seen." When walking away from the cemetery, turning and turning on their axis, people free themselves from the invisible threads of contagion and, besides, become invisible and invulnerable.

I also mentioned that nine days after the burial the *máma* demonstrated that the rope which was tied to the hair of the corpse was broken. The nine days represent again the nine months of gestation and the rupture of the rope symbolizes the cutting of the umbilical cord at birth. According to the Kogi, the soul of the dead wanders for nine days and nine nights on the dangerous trail which leads to the Beyond where, upon its arrival, the dead are reborn. But not all connections with the world of the living are severed; through the offerings the dead continue to participate in the nutritional and sexual spheres of the living, punishing with diseases should they not fulfill their duties or rewarding them with the fertility of their crops and families.

In the foregoing analysis of the symbolic elements observed during the burial rite, we have seen that the Kogi conceive the world in terms of a series of points of reference with which they connect categories that are of importance to the individual, to society, to nature, and to the supernatural forces. Starting with a basic principle of dualism, of antagonistic but complementary pairs, the scheme continues to develop into a four-fold structure, bidimensional, and fixed in space. A third dimension is then introduced, formulated in terms of "above" and "below," now containing a central point and being penetrated by an axis. Across this static structure of fixed points there now move the nine developmental stages. This macrocosmic structure is then repeated and reproduced in a series which diminishes in extension and leads to the microcosmic vision, repeating in its different forms the same patterns which control the cosmos. These are binary chains of associations which form a harmonic whole within whose dimensions all phenomena fall into

recognizable, manageable categories, and any person who knows the barest outline of cosmogony can readily identify the religious and moral codes he has to obey.

It is surprising then that this great design, so complex but, at the same time, so harmonic and predictable, does not satisfy some of the *mámas* who see in it an oversimplification of human destiny and of the place Man occupies in the Universe.

One might say that the structural concepts, from dualism to the construction of sacred space, are based essentially on the empirical observation of nature. In the first place, it is the human body and the sun which establish the basis of this dichotomy of the division of space and of the successive phases of developmental cycles. But this observation of nature at times lacks precision because occasionally there appear phenomena which are quite unforeseen in the established scheme and which seem to throw doubt on the absolute validity of the cosmic vision and of its human projections.

While the great mass of the people accept the premises and postulates of their traditional religion, the *mámas* are preoccupied by certain facts which seem to point to other possibilities, to other dimensions of being and becoming, and which still escape the established norms. These exceptions are, for example, the left-handedness of some people, a phenomenon which leads to the inversion of "right side" and "left side." Which, then, is the "good side,"—the positive, the vital one? Some cases of hermaphroditism have been observed, of bisexual individuals whose very condition contradicts the clear distinction between a male and a female principle. A child born seven months after conception seems to invalidate the theory of the nine developmental stages of intra-uterine life, and an eclipse of the sun or the moon shows that not even the heavenly bodies always follow the same predictable path. Of course, not all the Indians of the Sierra Nevada have realized the importance these phenomena have for the philosophical basis of their culture, but some of the priests recognize that there do exist problems which do not have an easy explanation.

However, it is not so much the question of *what causes* these phenomena which occupies the priests, but the problem of *how to integrate them* into the established cosmogonic scheme. What is certain is that there exist *other dimensions, other categories* which are still unknown, but—who are their "masters"? What are their associations? In which direction do they lead? What ritual or moral attitudes do they imply for the individual and for society?

There is still much doubt and uncertainty, but among some of the tribal priests new ideas are arising. The most disquieting question is the one referring to the directions in which men go toward their final destiny. In the course of his life man follows the path of the sun, from east to west, from birth to death. But after death man must follow other directions, other trails which are determined by his moral conduct on this earth. Those who have been virtuous used to go toward the east or the south while those who had done evil went toward the west or the north. But nowadays, the *mámas* say, the principle of Evil is increasing. The ancient traditions are being forgotten; the old customs are disappearing; theft, lies, and aggressiveness are the rule. In what directions do these sinners go? What will be their destiny? What powers lead them on and make them commit so many sins? Under these circumstances—how can the balance of the Universe be maintained?

The old division of the circle into a cross formed by four cardinal points is now being subdivided and the *mámas* speak of the "in-between ways": northeast, southeast, northwest and southwest. But each one of these segments is now being subdivided into eight "ways of the soul." It is not clear yet where these ways are leading, and who will have to travel on them and why. The priests are trying to divine it and to revise their traditional theories. And—if the horizontal plane contains that many intermediate points and directions, that many new categories and clusters of concepts—how many new points of reference might not be contained in the tridimensional structure of the cosmic egg?

In these preoccupations we can observe the dynamics of a culture in which the apparently rigid premises of a philosophical-religious system are being transformed by the thinking of a few priests who do not conform to the basis established by tradition, but who glimpse new horizons and new dimensions in which human destiny might fulfill itself.

NOTES

1. For more detailed treatment of this area and its inhabitants see Reichel-Dolmatoff 1950, 1951a, 1951b, and 1953.

Perhaps because of our own practices of interment or cremation, we may sometimes forget that there are other ways to dispose of the dead. The following two articles deal with one of the more exotic methods, as well as with one of the most obscure and debated aspects of South American Indian culture—cannibalism, more specifically, endocannibalism. Dole had the opportunity to observe the more common form of endocannibalism, the drinking of the burned and ground up bones of the dead, while Clastres had the only opportunity given to a modern anthropologist to work with a group practicing a much less common form of endocannibalism, consumption of the flesh of the dead. Dole had no opportunity to see Clastres' material, since his fieldwork was done after her article was written. Obviously Clastres never saw her material, or he might have had to modify some of his conclusions. Each author attacks the problem with a different question in mind, but the data are complementary. Although it is possible that some of the data cited by Dole for the existence of flesh endocannibalism may be subject to question, certainly the quantity and quality of the material on the Mayoruna, at least, are sufficient to make it highly unlikely that it was all invented. Osculati's account of the old man's desire to be eaten by his relatives is especially suggestive in the light of Clastres' material. The data assembled by Dole tend to make the dichot-