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Indigenous Peoples of Brazil

The Savage: Religion and Legends of the Tupi

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José Vieira Couto de Magalhães

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Credits

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About:

The Savage (O Selvagem, 1876), by General José Vieira Couto de Magalhães (1837–1898), was written at the request of Emperor Pedro II as a course in the living Tupi language, Nheengatu, together with a study of the Indigenous peoples of Brazil.

The author travelled for years along the Araguaia, in Pará and in the Amazon, and collected legends from Indigenous people and mestizos who still spoke the língua geral.

This selection brings together the chapter on the religion of the Tupi — the theogony in which the Sun (Guaracy) is the mother of living beings, the Moon (Jacy) the mother of plants and Rudá the god of love; the guardian spirits Anhangá, Caipora, Curupira, Saci, Mboitatá and Uauyará; the belief in the immortality of the soul; the legend of Mani, from which the word for manioc would come; and the sung invocations to Rudá and to the moons Cairé and Catiti — with two of the legends Couto de Magalhães translated in full: "How Night Appeared", which he calls the "Genesis" of the ancient Tupi, and "The Deer and the Jaguar".

The English translation was made by artificial intelligence from the Portuguese text of the first edition. It is a nineteenth-century record made by a man of his time: it uses words such as "savage" and compares Indigenous beliefs with Christian ones, but it ar-

gues, against the colonial chroniclers, that Indigenous peoples had a true religion and a morality worthy of respect.

Source: https://archive.org/details/O_Selvagem

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THE RELIGION OF THE SAVAGES

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1 All of us Brazilians, raised on the estates of the interior of the provinces, above all near the small settlements made up of mestizo populations of Indians, were from childhood rocked in the midst of the traditions of the religion of the savages.

2 There was a time in the life of every one of us when the God of the Christians was as much venerated and as much feared as the savage gods. If our mothers often lulled us to sleep with hymns recalling the childhood of the Virgin Mary or the birth of Christ, our wet nurses told us the stories of the Saci Cererê; they told us how a certain boy had been led astray in the woods by the Curupira; how an old man, who went hunting on Sundays without hearing Mass, had been driven by the Anhangá to throw himself into an abyss; how a washerwoman had seen the Uauyará at the bottom of the pools, and so many other stories, which are nothing but fragments of the aboriginal theogony that was taught to us from our earliest years, and in which, as I have said, there was a time when all of us believed.

3 Even today there is perhaps not a single caipira of São Paulo, or a muleteer of Minas, whom you could tell that the Saci Cererê is an imaginary being — the Saci that he thought he met at some unseemly hour beside a gate, that jumped onto his horse's crupper or played some other prank on him.

[4] The beliefs and superstitions of the Indians have all passed into our people, and the gods of the Tupi still live in our fields a life as real as the one the aborigines gave them in the days when their pajés (not piagas) worshipped them: to write the Tupi theogony, then, is nearly to write, up to a point, the beliefs of our own people, what each of us believed until the age of 10 or 11.

[5] As I am not, nevertheless, writing a monograph on Indigenous religion, and must take from this subject only the part that bears directly on anthropology, I shall limit this section to recording only what concerns these three capital ideas: the feeling of gratitude toward the Creator, the immortality of the soul, and the theory of punishments and rewards; beginning with a general idea of how the savages conceived the notion of God.

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THE CONCEPTION OF THE DIVINE

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1 Examining this question of religion as a naturalist, that is, without ever leaving the observed and natural fact, what history shows us is polytheism preceding monotheism.

2 If the Indians of Asia conceived their Brahma, and the Hebrews their Jehovah, one God in substance though threefold in his manifestations, the progress made today in Sanskrit and in the study of the antiquities of the East has already pushed the age of human civilisation far back; so that nothing today entitles us to think that the Brahma of the Vedas or the Jehovah of the Bible were the first conception those peoples formed of God. It is very natural that those lofty ideas, which already reveal such power of abstraction, should have been preceded by rough and crude ideas, such as those through which all other peoples advanced, slowly and step by step, to the possession of conceptions so strong and so lofty.

3 However that may be, the idea of one almighty God was not held by our savages at the time of the discovery of America; and so it was not possible for their language to have a word that could express it. There is, nonetheless, a higher principle called by the name of Tupan, to whom they seem to have attributed greater power than to the others.

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THE THEOGONY OF THE INDIANS

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1 The theogony of the Indians rests on this capital idea: all created things have their mother. It is worth noting that they do not use the word father; the word father does not indicate a person's origin except in a society in which marriage has already excluded the sharing of women; and therefore it could not be used by our savages in so rudimentary a state of civilisation.

1.2 The Roman maxim pater est is quem justæ nuptiæ demonstrant clearly explains why a primitive people, when it needed to express descent, would prefer to use the word mother, as one writer judiciously observes.

2 The general system of the Tupi theogony appears to be this: there are three higher gods: the Sun, who is the creator of all living creatures; the Moon, who is the creator of all plants; and Perudá or Rudá, the god of love, charged with promoting the reproduction of created beings.

2.2 As I shall observe further on, the Tupi words for sun and moon seem to me to show the religious feeling our savages had toward those heavenly bodies, as has just been indicated. Each of these three great beings is the creator of its own realm: the sun, of the animal kingdom; the moon, of the vegetable kingdom; and Perudá, of reproduction.

2.3 Each of them is served by as many other gods as there were genera recognised by the Indians; these in turn were served by as many beings as there were species they recognised; and so on, until every lake or river, every animal or plant species, has its guardian spirit, its mother.

2.4 This belief is still common among the people of the interior of the provinces of Mato Grosso, Goiás and above all Pará, and probably also of the Amazon.

3 The sun is the mother of the living, of all who dwell on the earth; the moon is the mother of all plants. These two general divinities, to whom they attributed the creation of living creatures and plants, did not have names expressing supernatural qualities. Expressions indicating abstract qualities must have come in a period long after the one in which the Aryan civilisation, brought by the conquering race, came upon the savages of America.

4 They had no abstract terms to express them: they simply said mother of the living, mother of the plants. It is well known that the word for sun is guaracy, from guará, living being, and cy, mother. Moon is jacy, from já, plant, and cy, mother.

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LOVE AND FEAR OF THE GODS

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1 What is the natural feeling towards the one who created us in the same way our mother brings us up? No further proof is needed to conclude that the feeling the Tupi offered the sun must have been, to a certain point, identical to the one they offered their own mother.

2 What feeling would we cherish toward the being to whom we attributed the creation of all plants, that is, of what we feed on? I think I need no other facts to show that the poor savages offered their gods feelings of gratitude as pure as those we Christians offer our God.

2.2 In the prayer taught to us by Christ, the way of expressing our fundamental relation to the Creator is the word father. They use the name mother; in what way does this express the utter absence of any idea of gratitude towards the Creator, as the Portuguese, and above all the Spaniards, claimed?

3 Nearly all the gods of the American Indians, they say, are evil gods, to whom they attributed the power of doing harm to men rather than that of doing them good.

4 Here is the result of wanting to write about things one has not examined. This is an absurdity; it is the opposite proposition that is true, namely: with the possible exception of Jurupari, there is not a single supernatural being among the savages who is not credited with the beneficent work of

protecting a certain part of creation, of which he was held to be a nearer father than the sun or the moon, but a father all the same. This is a fact I have examined with the greatest care.

5 What I never found among the savages was the conception of a supernatural spirit whose mission was wholly and exclusively evil, as is our conception of Satan: that, indeed, I do not hesitate to assert does not exist.

5.2 Jurupari himself is not such a case; the traditions I have gathered about him, which are found today only in the north of the Empire, are not complete; but the word jurupari is the equivalent of what our wet nurses describe to us as nightmare.

5.3 He is, according to the Indians, a being who at night grips the throat of children, or even of men, to bring them distress and bad dreams.

6 Certainly evil deeds are attributed to the gods. Can anyone who reads the Bible, without making allowance for what human language had to introduce of its own, conscientiously affirm that everything it attributes to the God of the Jews is holy and honest?

6.2 Let us not speak of the Bible; can it be said that the Greeks had no idea of divine beings because they attributed to Jupiter and the others deeds unworthy of divinity?

6.3 Well, if this happened among peoples so cultured and with such lofty notions of the divine, how can it be claimed that the gods of our savages are all evil beings, when our savages, with Hesiod, Homer and above all Aristophanes in hand, could argue the superiority of their own gods over those?

7 It is difficult to understand the spirit of the Indians' religion well without being among them, without having the necessary patience and the means of questioning them; and from this comes that Babel of inaccurate information that has been given about their religious ideas.

8 Those who deny that the savage gods do any good say: Anhangá, Curupira, Caiupora (otherwise Cahapora) are preserved in the traditions of Brazilians only as beings that can do harm to man, without being able to do him any good at all.

9 So it is, if they mean the popular traditions of our people, modified by Christianity.

10 But the reason is not that these beings are evil by nature.

11 As I said above, the Indians assign to each order of creation a guardian god, a kind of mother, who defends it against everything, and especially against the destructive action of man. In the stories they tell there is almost always a man who persecutes a certain order of creation, and it is to this man, who persecutes that order of creation, that the god appears doing him some harm; the harm done to such a man is therefore not an evil but a just and deserved punishment, according to the ideas of the savages.

12 Let us take the same examples cited. Anhangá is the god of the game of the open country; Anhangá was to protect all land animals against Indians who wished to abuse their fondness for hunting to destroy them needlessly.

12.2 One easily understands the important part hunting must play among peoples who raise no domestic animal at all and who therefore feed only on those that breed of themselves in the woods. Starting from these

ideas, could anything be more natural than that there should be thousands of stories in which Anhangá appears doing harm to men?

13 From my collection of tales I shall take one legend, at random, as an example:

14 "In the neighbourhood of what is now the town of Santarém, a Tupinambá Indian was pursuing a doe followed by the fawn she was suckling; after wounding her, the Indian, managing to catch the fawn, hid behind a tree and made it cry out; drawn by her fawn's cries of agony, the doe came within a few paces of the Indian — he shot her with an arrow; she fell; when the Indian, well pleased, went to take his prey, he saw that he had been the victim of an illusion of the Anhangá: the doe he had pursued was not a doe, it was his own mother, who lay dead on the ground, pierced by the arrow and all torn by thorns."

15 Here is a demonic act, they will say. No, say I, this act is not unworthy of a divinity; these things must be studied from the same point of view as those who imagined them.

15.2 The Indians had their livelihood in hunting; instinct had shown them that they would easily destroy that livelihood if they did not spare the lives of animals that were suckling their young; and since they had not and could not have a code of game laws, they had a religious precept.

15.3 This tale, like all the others, contains a profound moral lesson, and is moreover the expression of an eminently conservative rule, from their point of view and in the state in which they found themselves — things that must never be forgotten, on pain of not understanding them and of writing romances instead of history.

16 The Cahapora is another example. A colossal man with a hairy body, riding a wild boar, no one could see him without being extremely unhappy for the rest of his life. The Cahapora, then, is a being so evil that he cannot be seen without bringing misfortune upon whoever sees him. So it is; but let us listen to the tradition, and it will give us the explanation.

16.2 The Cahapora was the guardian spirit of the game of the forest, and was seen only when someone surrounded a whole family of wild animals with the intention of wiping it out.

16.3 Here, therefore, as in the tradition about the Anhangá cited above, what we have is a good deed: an act of protection exercised by the spirit against anyone who sought to destroy the beings that, according to the beliefs of the savages, had been entrusted to its care, and in whose preservation the savages themselves were the first to have an interest.

17 I cannot follow this discussion in all its details, for it would be necessary to review all the Indigenous traditions; and that is the subject of a special book that I began years ago and shall publish some day.

18 What has been written, nevertheless, seems to me enough to reach this conclusion: among the savages, as among ourselves, the action attributed to supernatural spirits is a beneficent action; whoever refuses to see in these beings the expression of a true and powerful religious instinct, on the pretext that among them such beings are capable of evil, must also deny that the Greeks and Romans had such instincts.

19 However rude and barbarous any institution of a people may seem at first sight, it must be studied with respect. The fundamental institutions of peoples, whatever their degree of civilisation or barbarism, are the necessary result of the eternal laws of morality and justice that God created in

the human conscience — laws that are at bottom the same in the savage and in the civilised man, though capable of different expressions according to the degree of progress each has reached.

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THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

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1 Did the savages believe in the immortality of the soul? Did they distinguish the soul from the body? Without any doubt. They all do. I have strong proofs to affirm it.

1.2 In the first place: anyone who visits an Indigenous burial ground recognises the graves by the pots they set beside them, in which they place food; the dead man's weapons go with him, because he needs food and weapons to provide for his sustenance. Neither would be of any use to him if death were the end of everything.

1.3 Serious persons assure me that the Chavante women, in the savage state, eat their children who die, in the hope of taking the child's soul back into their own bodies.

2 I have never witnessed this; I am even on very good terms with the most powerful of the Chavante chiefs, named Zaquè; I have asked him about it; he laughed and did not answer me, which I took for a confirmation; for it should be noted that our Indians are very proud of their beliefs; nothing offends them so much as to call them into question, and hence they are extremely discreet when they talk with a Christian about such matters.

3 Many tribes of the lower Tocantins and of the Amazon bury their dead inside their own houses, and this I have witnessed; they do it in the hope that, when they sleep, they will be visited by the souls of those they loved.

3.2 These facts show beyond any doubt that they believe that, besides the life we enjoy in this world, there is another that the being continues, independent of the body. Do they think it is eternal? Do they believe in a

place of bliss and of eternal punishment?

3.3 I do not know; I have not yet been able to verify these things; as I said, the Indians are very reserved and discreet in everything that concerns religion. In the middle of the liveliest conversation, if one puts to them any question meant to clear up any of these points, they at once become cold, sometimes gloomy, and either answer in monosyllables or do not answer at all.

4 Besides this mysterious destiny that man pursues after death, and for which they place the dead man's food and weapons, teonguera, beside his grave, I possess two legends that I collected in February of this year in Pará, which seem to show that the Tupi accepted a kind of life similar to the one our superstitions attribute to souls in torment, as well as the possibility of a man being transformed into other beings.

5 There is still today in Cametá a famous Honorato to whom the Indigenous population of the place attributes the power of turning himself into a fish or a snake and travelling along the bottom of the rivers whenever he pleases. These superstitions are remnants of some religious belief of the old Tupi that either has not come down to our day or that we have not known how to collect.

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THE LEGEND OF MANI

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1 One of the legends I mentioned above preserves the tradition that the use of manioc, which plays so important a part in the life of the Indians, was revealed to them in a supernatural way. Manioc is not only the bread of our savage but also the substance from which they make various wines, such as kauin, maniquera, puchirum and others. Its discovery was more important for them than that of wheat was for the Aryans.

2 Though this legend belongs more to the realm of poetry than to that of science, I cannot resist the wish to include it here as a curious specimen of the imagination of our savages. Here it is exactly as it was told to me by the mother of Colonel Miranda, former treasurer of the revenue office of Pará, a respectable lady of about 70 years of age who lives in Belém. The legend says that manioc was discovered in this way:

3 "In times gone by the daughter of a savage chief, who lived near the place where the town of Santarém stands today, was found to be with child. The chief wished to punish the author of his daughter's dishonour for the offence his pride had suffered, and to learn who he was he tried in vain entreaties, threats and at last severe punishments.

3.2 Before entreaties and punishments alike the girl remained unshaken, saying that she had never had relations with any man. The chief had decided to kill her when a white man appeared to him in a dream and told him not to kill the girl, for she was truly innocent and had not had relations with any man.

3.3 When the nine months had passed she gave birth to a most beautiful girl, and a white one, this last fact causing the astonishment not only of the tribe but of the neighbouring nations, who came to visit the child to see that new and unknown race.

3.4 The child, who was given the name Mani, and who walked and talked early, died at the end of a year without having been ill and without showing any sign of pain.

4 "She was buried inside the house itself, the grave being uncovered and watered every day, according to the custom of the people. After some time a plant sprang from the grave which, being completely unknown, they did not pull up. It grew, flowered and bore fruit.

4.2 The birds that ate the fruit became drunk, and this phenomenon, unknown to the Indians, increased their awe of the plant. At last the earth split open; they dug, and thought they recognised in the root they found the body of Mani. They ate it, and so learned to use manioc."

5 The fruit was given the name Mani oca, which means house, or transformation, of Mani — a name we keep in corrupted form in the word mandioca, but which the French still keep uncorrupted.

6 This legend contains two things common to all the Asian religions: 1st, attributing to a god the teaching of the use of bread; 2nd, conception without loss of virginity. Is this a mere product of the imagination, a law to which the human mind is subject, or some memory of old Asian beliefs, confusedly preserved by oral tradition? Any of these things is possible, but for the present it is no more than conjecture.

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THE NAMES OF THE TUPI GODS

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1 The higher gods, to whom they attribute a general action upon the world, are, as I have already said: the sun, the moon, and Rudá, the god of love, or of reproduction.

2 Guaracy, the sun. This god created man and the living creatures; below him there seem to have been other supernatural beings, especially attached to certain orders of animals.

3 That of the birds, or Guirapurú; the name means borrowed bird, or bird that is not a bird. This Guirapurú takes the form of a bird that always goes about surrounded by many others. The popular superstitions of Pará attribute to this bird the virtue of bringing a constant flow of people to the house of whoever owns one.

3.2 In Pará, Maranhão and the Amazon there are not many tavern keepers who do not have a Guirapurú buried under the threshold of their door, to which they attribute the virtue of bringing customers to their tavern. For that reason a Guirapurú is expensive; I own a dead one (it is impossible to catch one alive), which cost me 30$ in Pará.

4 The fate of the game of the open country seems to be in the charge of the Anhangá. The word Anhangá means shadow, spirit. The figure in which the traditions show him is that of a white deer with eyes of fire. Anyone who pursues an animal that is suckling its young runs the risk of seeing the Anhangá, and the sight of him brings fever and sometimes madness.

5 The fate of the game of the forest seems entrusted to the Cahapora. They picture him as a big man covered with black hair over his whole body and face, always riding a huge boar of exaggerated size, gloomy, taciturn, and now and then giving a shout to drive on the herd. Whoever meets him is sure to be unhappy and to fail in everything he attempts; hence the Portuguese phrase estou caipora, meaning: I am unlucky, I fail in what I attempt.

6 The fate of the fishes was entrusted to Uauyará. The animal into which he turns is the boto, the river dolphin. None of the supernatural beings of the Indians has given American poetry so many legends as the Uauyará.

6.2 Even today in Pará there is not a single village of the interior that does not have a series of stories to tell the traveller, now grotesque and extravagant, now melancholy and tender, in which he appears as the hero.

6.3 The Uauyará is a great lover of our Indian women; many of them attribute their first child to some trick of this god, who sometimes surprised them while bathing, sometimes took the shape of a mortal to seduce them, sometimes carried them off under the water, where the unhappy woman was forced to give herself to him.

6.4 On moonlit nights on the Amazon, the people of Pará say, the lakes often light up and one hears the songs of the feasts and the stamping of the dances with which the Uauyará amuses himself.

7 The gods subject to Jacy, the moon, who is the general mother of plants, are: the Saci Cererê, the Mboitatá, the Urutau and the Curupira.

8 The Saci Cererê is one of those who appear constantly in the traditions of the people of the south of the Empire. However, I have found them so mixed up with Christian superstitions that I cannot clearly understand

what his mission among the plants is. The traditions show him in the shape of a little Tapuio, lame in one foot, with a red cap and a wound on each knee.

9 The Mboitatá is the spirit that protects the fields against those who set them on fire; as the word says, mboitatá means snake of fire; the traditions picture it as a small serpent of fire that usually lives in the water. Sometimes it turns into a thick glowing log, called méuan, which burns to death whoever needlessly sets the fields on fire.

10 I do not know the traditions about the Urutaú, or urutau, and so I merely record the name here, which means phantom bird, from uru and táu.

11 The Curupira is the god who protects the forests. The traditions show him as a little Tapuio, with his feet turned backward and without the openings needed for the secretions indispensable to life, for which reason the people of Pará say he is solid.

11.2 The Curupira, or Currupira, as we of the south call him, appears in an endless number of legends, in the north as in the south of the Empire. In Pará, when one is travelling on the rivers and hears a distant knocking in the middle of the woods, the oarsmen say it is the Curupira striking the buttress roots (sapupemas) of the trees, to see whether they are strong enough to withstand some storm that is coming.

11.3 The function of the Curupira is to protect the forests. Whoever fells trees, or in any way needlessly damages them, is punished by him with the penalty of wandering for immense stretches of time through the woods, unable to find the way home or any means of reaching his own people.

12 After these two orders of gods, who are subordinate, as I said, to the sun and the moon, and who are held to be charged with the preservation of living beings, comes another higher god: Rudá, the god of love.

13 Rudá. The traditions picture him as a warrior who dwells in the clouds. His mission is to create love in the hearts of men, to awaken longing in them, and to make them return to the tribe from their long and repeated wanderings.

14 Like the other gods, he seems to have had lesser gods under him, namely Cairé, the full moon, and Catiti, the new moon, whose mission is to awaken longing in the absent lover. It seems that the Indians regarded each phase of the moon as a distinct being.

15 There is undeniably fitness and poetry in this conception of the new moon and the full moon as the source and origin of longing.

16 The same lady to whom I owe the legend written above gave me the words and music of the invocations the Tupi addressed to Rudá and to his two satellites.

17 As they are short, I transcribe them here exactly as I heard them, for it seems to me that either the language has been corrupted or this is some fragment of Tupi older than the changes the language had already undergone when it became known to us, because there are words I do not understand.

18 These invocations were made at the setting of the sun or of the moon, and the chant, like nearly all those of the Indians, was slow, monotonous and melancholy.

19 The young Indian woman who felt oppressed by longing in the absence of her lover, during those continual wanderings on which hunting and war took the warriors — the young Indian woman, we say, was to turn to Rudá at the dying of the sun or the rising of the moon, and, stretching out her right arm in the direction where she supposed her lover to be, she sang:

20 Rudá, Rudá,
Iuáka pinaié,
Amãna reçaiçu...
Iuáka pinaié,
Aiuetê cunhã
Puxiuéra oikó
Ne mumanuára ce recé
Quahá caarúca pupé.

21 I do not understand the word pinaié; from the sense, however, I presume it means you who are, or you who dwell; the other words are perfectly clear, and so the translation is as follows:

22 "O Rudá, you who are in the heavens and who love the rains... You who are in the sky... make him (the lover), however many women he may have, find them all ugly; make him remember me this evening when the sun goes down in the west."

23 As I said above, the full moon and the new moon, which according to the Tupi were distinct things and different beings, were helpers of Rudá and had invocations like those sung to that god, for the same purpose of bringing lovers back home by the power of longing.

24 The invocation to the full moon was as follows:

25 Cairé, cairé nú
Manuára danú çanú.
Eré ci, erú cika
Piápe amú
Omanuára ce recé
Quahá pitúna pupé.

26 I do not understand the first two lines; the others say:

27 "Come, O my mother (the moon); bring to his heart (the lover's) this night the memory of me."

28 The name of the full moon was Cairé, that of the new moon Catiti; the latter had its own invocation, different from the one addressed to the full moon, though with the same purpose.

29 The invocation to the new moon is as follows:

30 Catiti, Catiti,
Iamára notiá,
Notiá iamára,
Epejú (so-and-so)
Erú manuára
Ce recé (so-and-so),
Cuçukúi xa ikó
Ixé anhú i piá póra.

31 I do not understand the 3rd and 4th lines; the 1st and the last say the following:

[32] "New Moon, O New Moon! Breathe into so-and-so the memory of me; here I am in your presence; make me alone fill his heart."

[33] These chants are still repeated among the mestizo populations of the interior of Pará, and, as I have said, I also have their music.

[34] The god of love also had in his service a serpent that recognised the girls who had kept their virginity, receiving from them the gifts they brought it, and devouring those who had lost their virginity.

[35] The Tupinambá of Pará believed that there were serpents of this kind in Lake Juá, a little above Santarém. When a maiden (cunhãtãí) was suspected of having lost her virginity, her parents took her to the lake and, leaving her alone there on an islet with the gifts meant for the serpent, withdrew to the opposite shore and started to sing:

[36] Arara, arara mbóia,
Cuçucui ne remiú.

[37] Which means: "Macaw, O macaw serpent! Here is your food."

[38] The serpent would begin to rise to the surface and to sing until it caught sight of the girl, and either it received the gifts, if the girl was truly a virgin — in which case it went about the lake singing softly, which put the fish to sleep and allowed travellers to lay in provisions for the journey — or, in the opposite case, it devoured the girl with fearful roars.

[39] Here, as in the other legends, there is a moral idea. The purpose of the legend was probably to protect innocence, acting wholesomely on the minds of Indian maidens through the terror that the prospect of being de-

voured by the serpent, should they lose their virginity, must have inspired in them.

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LEGEND: HOW NIGHT APPEARED

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1 This legend is probably a fragment of the Genesis of the ancient South American savages. It is perhaps the degraded and corrupted echo of the beliefs they held about how this order of things in which we live came to be; and, stripped of the crude forms in which grandmothers and nurses probably clothed it, it shows that everywhere man has set himself to solve this problem: where do we come from?

1.2 Here, as in the Vedas, as in Genesis, the question is at bottom answered in the same way: in the beginning all were happy; a disobedience in an episode of love, a forbidden fruit, brought about the fall.

2 The legend, in short, is as follows: in the beginning there was no distinction between the animals, man and the plants; everything spoke. Nor was there any darkness. The daughter of the Great Snake, having married, would not lie with her husband as long as there was no night over the world, such as there was at the bottom of the waters.

2.2 The husband sent for the night, which was sent to him shut up inside a tucumã nut, tightly closed, with the express prohibition to those who carried it against opening it, on pain of losing themselves, their descendants and all things.

2.3 At first they resist the temptation, but then curiosity to know what was inside the fruit made them break the prohibition, and so they were lost. Put the forbidden tree in place of the tucumã fruit, and the temptation of the evil spirit in place of the curiosity to know, and there seems to

me to be at the bottom of the episode such a likeness to Asian thought that I hesitate and ask whether it may not be a degraded and transformed echo of that thought.

3 In the beginning there was no night: there was only day, all the time. The night lay asleep at the bottom of the waters. There were no animals; all things spoke.

4 The daughter of the Great Snake, they say, had married a young man.

5 This young man had three faithful servants. One day he called the three servants and said to them: "Go out for a walk, because my wife will not sleep with me."

6 The servants went off, and then he called his wife to sleep with him. The daughter of the Great Snake answered him: "It is not night yet."

7 The young man said to her: "There is no night; there is only day."

8 The girl said: "My father has night. If you want to sleep with me, send for it there, along the great river."

9 The young man called the three servants; the girl sent them to her father's house to bring back a tucumã nut.

10 The servants went and came to the house of the Great Snake, who handed them a tucumã nut very tightly closed and said to them: "Here it is; take it. Mind! Do not open it, or else all things will be lost."

11 The servants went off, and they heard a noise inside the tucumã nut, like this: tem, ten, ten... it was the noise of the crickets and little frogs that sing at night.

12 When they were already far away, one of the servants said to his companions: "Shall we see what this noise is?"

13 The pilot said: "No, or else we shall be lost. Let us go on — come, row!"

14 They went on and kept hearing that noise inside the tucumã nut, and did not know what noise it was.

15 When they were very far away, they gathered in the middle of the canoe, lit a fire, melted the pitch that sealed the nut and opened it. Suddenly everything went dark.

16 Then the pilot said: "We are lost; and the girl, in her house, already knows that we have opened the tucumã nut!" They went on with their journey.

17 The girl, in her house, then said to her husband: "They have let out the night; let us wait for the morning."

18 Then all the things that were scattered through the forest turned into animals and birds.

19 The things that were scattered along the river turned into ducks and fishes. From the basket the jaguar was born; the fisherman and his canoe turned into a duck: from his head came the head and bill of the duck; from the canoe, the duck's body; from the oars, the duck's legs.

20 The daughter of the Great Snake, when she saw the morning star, said to her husband: "Dawn is breaking. I am going to divide the day from the night."

21 Then she wound a thread and said to it: "You shall be the cujubim." So she made the cujubim; she painted the cujubim's head white with tabatinga clay; she painted its legs red with urucú, and then she said to it: "You shall sing for ever when the morning is breaking."

22 She wound the thread, shook ashes over it and said: "You shall be the inambú, to sing at the different times of the night and at dawn."

23 From then on all the birds have sung at their own times, and at dawn to gladden the beginning of the day.

24 When the three servants arrived, the young man said to them: "You were not faithful: you opened the tucumã nut, you let out the night and all things were lost; and you too, who have turned into monkeys, shall go for ever along the branches of the trees."

25 (The black mouth and the yellow stripe they have on the arm are said to be still the mark of the pitch that sealed the tucumã nut and ran down over them when they melted it.)

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LEGEND: THE DEER AND THE JAGUAR

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1 The following legend, divided into two short episodes, is the development of this maxim: Auá nhahã oikó uahá çuáizána irúmo intí opituú quáu. — He who lives with his enemy cannot live in peace.

2 The maxim is developed with great skill, not lacking the interest of a very simple dramatic action, yet one well suited to fixing it in the childlike understanding of peoples who had not yet passed beyond the stone age.

3 Since it would not be natural for two enemies to go and live together of their own will, the Indigenous bard supposed that the deer, after choosing a place for a house, went away; that the jaguar, not knowing of the deer's choice, chose the same place; that the deer came after the jaguar had gone and cleared and cleaned the place; that the jaguar, coming after the deer had gone, thought that Tupã was helping her; and so they worked by turns, each supposing that it was Tupã who did the other's work, until, the house finished, when they discovered the mistake, they resigned themselves to living together so as not to lose their work — and from this comes a situation of mutual distrust that is described with as much simplicity as aptness of detail.

4 The deer said: "I am having a very hard time, and so I am going to look for a place to make my house." He went along the bank of the river, found a good place and said: "This is the very spot."

5 The jaguar also said: "I am having a very hard time, and so I am going to look for a place to make my house." She set out and, coming to the same place the deer had chosen, said: "What a good place; here I will make my house."

6 The next day the deer came, weeded and cleared the place.

7 The day after, the jaguar came and said: "Tupã is helping me." She drove in the forked posts and set up the house.

8 The day after, the deer came and said: "Tupã is helping me." He roofed the house and made two rooms: one for himself, the other for Tupã.

9 The day after, the jaguar, finding the house ready, moved in, took one room and went to sleep.

10 The day after, the deer came and took the other room.

11 The next day they woke up, and when they saw each other the jaguar said to the deer: "Was it you who was helping me?" The deer answered: "It was I myself." The jaguar said: "Very well, now let us live together." The deer said: "Let us."

12 The next day the jaguar said: "I am going hunting. You clear away the stumps and see to the water and firewood, for I shall come back hungry."

13 She went hunting, killed a very big deer, brought it home and said to her companion: "Get it ready for our supper."

14 The deer got it ready, but he was sad and would not eat, and at night he did not sleep for fear that the jaguar would catch him.

15 The next day the deer went hunting and met another big jaguar and then an anteater; he said to the anteater: "The jaguar over there is speaking ill of you."

16 The anteater came, found the jaguar scratching a tree, crept up behind her slowly, gave her a hug, sank his claws into her, and the jaguar died.

17 The deer carried her home and said to his companion: "Here it is; get it ready for our supper."

18 The jaguar got it ready, but she did not eat supper and was sad.

19 When night came the two did not sleep, the jaguar watching the deer, the deer watching the jaguar. At midnight they were very sleepy; the deer's head bumped against the jirau and went: tá! The jaguar, thinking it was the deer about to kill her, gave a leap. The deer was frightened too, and both ran away, one running one way, the other running the other way.

20 The deer went to live with the dog.

21 A long time afterwards the jaguar also went to live there, because the deer had already forgotten her.

22 The next day they went hunting. The jaguar wanted to catch the dog. The dog, coming back in the evening, brought small game: agouti, paca, armadillo and inambú. They had supper, and after supper they began to play. The jaguar played and said: "What I hunted I could not catch." The dog played and said: "Whoever has short legs should not go hunting." So they played until the jaguar leapt on the dog.

23 The dog and the deer ran away, the jaguar went after them and, when she caught the deer, he turned into stone.

24 The dog crossed a river and said to the jaguar: "Now, if you want to catch me, you will have to throw me a stone." The jaguar picked up the stone and threw it. When the stone fell on the other bank it cried out: "Mé!" and turned back into a deer. That is how the dog's rage against the jaguar began.

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