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AMAZONIAN
TORTOISE MYTHS

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Afrânio Peixoto

TO MY ESTEEMED FRIEND

MAJOR OLIVER CROMWELL JAMES

THIS LITTLE PAPER

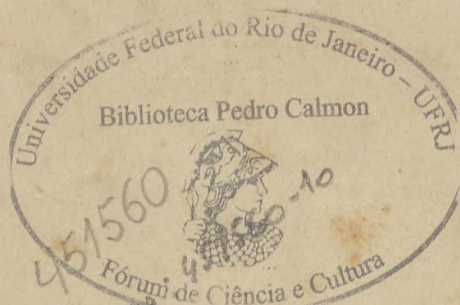
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RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

Ten years ago to-day, on placing foot for the first time on Brazilian soil, at the Palace Square of Rio de Janeiro, I directed myself to the first person I met, and asked the way to the office of the "Thayer Expedition." It was an incident apparently of no importance, but it has nevertheless deeply influenced the course of my subsequent scientific life.

As if providentially, and just at the fortunate moment, I met one, not only well acquainted with Brazil and its people, but who, as the result of several years of expeditionary work in the "Far West" in the service of the United States Government, together with a long and intimate acquaintance with the mining industries of Pennsylvania, was fitted to take a deep, and intelligent interest in my own scientific work.

To the aid and sound advice of this friend, I owe much of the success of my journey, as an *attaché* of the "Thayer Expedition" in 1865 and 1866.



Sist.
Ced. bancária

After my return to the United States, I planned with him my Expedition to the Brazilian coast in 1867, the accomplishment of which would not have been possible but for his generous pecuniary aid.

In the preparation of a volume on the "Geology and Physical Geography of Brazil", I was helped in many ways by the same friend, who even went so far as to make, under my direction, a journey in the Province of São Paulo, for the purpose of ascertaining the general geological structure of this part of the Brazilian plateau. His carefully made observations have since been verified.

The same friend acted as my agent in connection with the two "Morgan Expeditions" to the Amazonas in 1870 and 1871, and to his judicious management was largely due the success of these two Expeditions, as well as the safety of the collections. But for his constant assistance and encouragement I would not be in Brazil to day; indeed, but for Major O. C. James, I should long ago have been forced to abandon Brazil as a field for research.

In deference to his express wish, I have hitherto reluctantly refrained from making a full acknowledgment of my indebtedness; but to day, with it brought freshly to mind, I cannot refrain from giving this expression to the feelings of my heart.

CH. FRED. HARTT.

Rio de Janeiro, April 23rd. 1875.

AMAZONIAN TORTOISE MYTHS

The Geologist on the Amazonas who is not interested in some other branch of science, must lose much time, because geological localities are so widely separated, that he must often travel, for days together, without being able to make an observation of importance.

In 1870, I found myself on the great River, reviewing the work of Professor Agassiz, and occupied in a search for evidence to establish or disprove his hypothesis of the glacial origin of the Amazonian valley.

Brought into very intimate contact with the Indian population of the country, I became interested in the *Lingua Geral*, or modern Tupí, as spoken at Ereré, Santarem, and on the Tapajos River, and I employed my leisure time in its acquirement, making fair progress in collecting material to illustrate its structure.

Mr. Henry Walter Bates, in his charming sketch of his life on the Amazonas, and Madame Agassiz, in her "Journey in Brazil," had called attention to the number of myths existing among the Amazonian Indians. These myths had never been studied, and, being aware

of their great value, I set myself to work to collect them.

For a long time I was baffled, for the whites, as a general rule, were unacquainted with the Indian folklore, and neither by coaxing, nor by offers of money, could I persuade an Indian to relate a myth. The story-teller of the locality was always represented to be an old woman, who could make one split his sides with laughter at odd stories about the *Kurupira* and the *Yurupari*, and all sorts of animals, that used to talk and play pranks on one another, in the olden time when speech was not the exclusive possession of man. But quite invariably, this old woman was absent, or inaccessible. Once only, at Ereré, did I find an ancient squaw, said to be a wonderful repository of *lendas*, but nothing could I obtain from her.

One night, while wearily paddling up the *parand-mirim* of the Itukí, near Santarem, my faithful steersman, Maciel, began to talk to the Indian boatmen in Tupí to keep them from going to sleep. I listened with all my ears, and, to my great delight, found him recounting a story of the *Kurupira*. I followed him as best I could, jotting down in my note-book the leading points in the story, meanwhile joining heartily in the laughter of the men to encourage the narrator. The next day, I took the first opportunity to tell Maciel how much I had enjoyed his story, and to beg

that he would dictate it to me in *Lingua Geral*. He had already received a long training in dictation, and my first Tupí myth was soon recorded; but, for a long time it was all in vain that I coaxed him to tell me another.

I soon found that the Indian myth was always recited without mental effort, its function being simply to please, like a ballad, and not to communicate information, and that when the Indian, unsurrounded by the evening circle of listeners about the camp-fire, and by all those circumstances that make story-telling proper and enjoyable, is soberly asked to relate a mythical tale, he is incapable of the mental effort required to recall it, and, for that reason, he promptly and stoutly pleads ignorance. So, the myth collector will usually go empty away, if he attempts to gather a harvest simply by asking. The only way is to seek for, and create occasions when story-telling would be natural, and, if necessary, to set the ball rolling by recounting some native myth, with which those present are known to be well acquainted, taking care not to show too much curiosity in the stories it elicits.

“*Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte.*” After one has obtained his first myth, and has learned to recite it accurately and spiritedly, the rest is easy. I may here remark, in passing, that one must be on his guard on the Amazonas, and elsewhere, for that matter,

among savages or people of low culture, not to ask a leading question, for an Indian will always unconsciously acquiesce with the interrogator, who is thus likely to be misled. On one occasion, talking of this peculiarity with the captain of my little steamer, he suddenly stepped up to the Indian pilot, who stood by the rail gazing stolidly ahead, and, pointing out a palm by the riverside, said: "That palm is called *Urubú*,* is it not?" "Sim, Senhor!" answered the Indian gravely, without moving a muscle. The question was repeated with the same result. The captain then asked: "What is the name of that palm?" when he promptly answered "*Jauari*".

If the myth collector wishes to obtain the myth in its purity, and prevent his own personality entering into it, he must, above all, avoid asking of his pundit a leading question, either in writing out the myth for the first time, or in its after revision.

The Indian myths are, so far as my experience goes, rarely ever heard in Portuguese, those of the Tupí speaking population being quite invariably related in the *Lingua Geral*. Their form is a stereotyped one, and the same myth may be found, with but little variation, from near the mouth of the Amazonas, to Tabatinga, on the frontier of Peru.

While some of the myths have clearly been intro-

* *Urubú* is the name of the common Brazilian vulture.

duced, and others, with the advent of civilization, have suffered more or less modification, the great body of those still preserved in the Tupí are, I believe, of native origin.

The question has arisen, whether many of the stories I have given that bear so close a resemblance to Old World fables, may not have been introduced by the negroes, but I see no reason for entertaining this suspicion, for they are too widely spread, their form is too thoroughly Brazilian, they are most numerous in just those regions where negroes are not, and have not been abundant, and moreover, they occur, not in Portuguese, but in the *Lingua Geral*.

Among the myths that I have collected are those in which figure the *Paitúna*, the wonder-working son of woman belonging to a tribe of females with only one husband, a legend from which, not unlikely, originated the story of the Amazonas; the wood-devil or *Kurupíra**; the evil *Yurupari*, a sort of were-wolf; the *Oidára* or water sprite, and other anthropomorphic beings. But the most interesting of all are the animal stories, in which are recounted the exploits of monkeys, tapirs, tortoises, buzzards, and a host of other animals.

*I have published a little paper in Portuguese, on the Kurupíra entitled "*O Mytho do Kurupíra*," "*Aurora Brasileira*," Ithaca, N. Y. Vol. I.

In this paper I propose to treat of one class of these animal stories, of which the Indians are very fond, namely : those relating to the Brazilian land-tortoise.

The Jabutí, as it is called by the Portuguese, or *Yautí*, as it is termed in *Lingua Geral*, is a small species of tortoise* very common in Brazil, and much esteemed for food. It is short-legged and slow, weak, and silent, yet it plays the same part in Amazonian mythology that the fox does in that of the Old World. Inoffensive and retiring, the Jabutí, nevertheless, appears in the myths of the *Lingua Geral* as vindictive, cunning, active, full of humor and fond of discussion. "É *verdade!*" said an Indian at Itaitúba to me on his finishing a tortoise myth, "É *o diabo ; e tem feito estrago!*" (He is the very devil, and has worked havoc!)

In 1870, my guide, Lourenço Maciel Parente, dictated to me at Santarem, in *Lingua Geral*, the following story of "*The Tortoise that outran the Deer.*" Of this I published in the "Cornell Era" of Ithaca, New York, a version that attracted the attention of a writer in the "Nation" of New York, who gave a variant of the same myth found among the negroes of one of the Carolinas.

In 1871, when I revisited the Amazonas, I took

* "Testudo terrestris, tabulata, Schoeff. Emys faveolata, Mik., depressa, Merr." v. Martius, Woertersammlung etc. S. 455, sub voce *Jaboti*.

especial pains to inquire for this myth, being rewarded by hearing it related by the Indians wherever I went. My friend Dr. Joaquim Xavier de Oliveira Pimentel, Captain of Engineers in the Brazilian army, has sent me a variant of the same story from Tabatinga, and Dr. Couto de Magalhães has recently found the same myth in Pará, so that it appears to be current wherever the *Lingua Geral* is spoken. I was told in Santarem in 1870 that the myth was of Mundurucú origin, but this I now doubt, as it appears to be inseparably connected with the *Lingua Geral*.

The story runs as follows : —

HOW THE TORTOISE OUT-RAN THE DEER

A Jabutí met a deer and asked : "Oh deer ! what are you seeking?" The deer answered : "I am out for a walk, to see if I cannot find something to eat; and, pray, where are you going, tortoise."

"I am also out walking; I am looking for water to drink?"

"And when do you expect to reach the water?" demanded the deer.

"Why do you ask that question?" returned the tortoise.

"Because your legs are so short."

"Well !" answered the tortoise, "I can run

faster than you can. If you are long-legged you cannot run so fast as I."

"Then let us run a race!" said the deer.

"Well!" answered the tortoise, "when shall we run?"

"To-morrow."

"At what time?"

"Very early in the morning."

"*Eng-éng!*" (*) assented the tortoise, who then went into the forest and called together his relations, the other tortoises, saying: "Come, let us kill the deer!"

"But how are you going to kill him?" inquired they.

"I said to the deer," answered the tortoise, "let us run a race! I want to see who can run the faster." Now I am going to cheat that deer. Do you scatter yourselves along the edge of the campo, in the forest, keeping not very far from one another, and see that you keep perfectly still, each in his place! To-morrow, when we begin the race, the deer will run in the campo, but I will remain quietly in my place. When he calls out to me, if you are ahead of him, answer, but take care not to respond if he has passed you."

So, early the next morning, the deer went out to meet the tortoise.

(*) Yes! The *ng* represents a nasal.

"Come,!" said the former, "Let us run!"

"Wait a bit!" said the tortoise, "I am going to run in the woods."

"And how are you, a little, shortlegged fellow, going to run in the forest?" asked the deer surprised.

The jabutí insisted that he could not run in the campo, but that he was accustomed to run in the forest, so the deer assented and the tortoise entered the wood, saying: "When I take my position I will make a noise with a little stick so that you may know that I am ready."

When the tortoise, having reached his place, gave the signal, the deer started off leisurely, laughing to himself, and not thinking it worth his while to run. The tortoise remained quietly behind. After the deer had walked a little distance, he turned around and called out: "*U'i yarutí!*" * when, to his astonishment a tortoise a little way ahead cried out, "*U'i suasú!*" ** "Well," said the deer to himself, "that jabutí does run fast!" whereupon he walked briskly for a little distance and then cried out again, but the voice of a tortoise still responded far in advance.

"How's this?" exclaimed the deer, and he ran a little way, until thinking that he surely must have passed the tortoise, he stopped, turned about, and

* *Hullo Tortoise!* The Indians always prefix *U'i!* in calling.

** *Suasú,* deer.

called again ; but “*U’i suasú!*” came from the edge of the forest just ahead.

Then the deer began to be alarmed and ran swiftly until he felt surely that he had passed the tortoise when he stopped and called ; but a jabutí still answered in advance.

On this the deer set off at full speed, and, after a little, without stopping, called to the tortoise, who still from ahead cried: “*U’i suasú!*” He then he redoubled his forces, but with no better success, and at last, tired and bewildered, he ran against a tree and fell dead.

The noise made by the feet of the deer having ceased, the first tortoise listened. Not a sound was heard. Then he called to the deer, but received no response. So he went out of the forest and found the deer lying dead. Then he gathered together all his friends and rejoiced over the victory.

The myth as found in Tabatinga, appears to have the same form as that which I have just related. I give it below in Dr. Pimentel’s own words (*).

(*) “Um jabutí apostou com um veado a ver quem corria mais. Marcado o dia, o jabutí empregou o seguinte meio para vencer:— Reunio muitos jabutís e os foi collocar pelo matto, beirando o campo designado para o lugar da corrida. Chegado o veado, sómente vio o jabutí, com quem tinha feito a aposta :

— “Então, está prompto, Jabutí?”

— “Prompto,” disse este, “mas, você ha de correr pelo caminho e eu por dentro do matto, que é por onde sei correr.

Dr. Pimentel informs me that there is found on the Amazonas a variant of the same myth, in which the race was between a deer and a carapato (*). The latter at the beginning of the race laid hold of the tail of the deer (**). During the contest, when the deer called out to the insect, the answer came from so near, that the deer, exerting himself more and more, died at last of fatigue.

The myth of the race between the tortoise and the

O veado aceitou, e collocados, um na beira do matto e o outro no campo, partirão ao signal dado. O veado correu a toda a força e o jabutí deixou-se ficar.

O veado no meio da carreira gritou pelo jabutí para saber onde estava. A resposta foi lhe dada um pouco adiante, por um dos jabutís collocados de vedeta no matto. O veado redobrou de esforços e de vez em quando gritava pelo seu competidor e tinha a resposta sempre adiante. Afinal o veado cahio morto de cansaço e o jabutí ficou vencedor.

(*) *Yaliyika*, Lingua Geral. A species of *Ixodes* very common in Brazil, infesting especially the grass and bushes of the Campos. It attacks all animals, even the jabutí, and burying its proboscis in the flesh, soon swells to the size of a large castor bean, which it remarkably resembles, both in shape and coloration.

(**) This reminds one of the Little Tailor who pretended to help the giant carry the big tree, but who, instead of lifting his share, seated himself on one of the branches, and was carried by the giant. The Valiant Tailor. Grimm.

deer as found among the negroes of South (1) Carolina is as follows : (2)

"Once upon a time," so the story runs, "Brudder Deer and Br. Coutah (3) was courtin,' and de lady bin lub Br. Deer more so dan Br. Coutah. She did bin lub Br. Coutah, but she lub Br. Deer de morest. So de nounge lady say to Br. Deer and Br. Coutah both, dey mus hab a ten mile race, and de one dat beats, she will marry him.

"So Br. Coutah say to Br. Deer : 'You has got longer legs dan I has, but I will run you. You run ten miles on land, and I will run ten miles on water!'

"So Br. Coutah went an' git nine of his family, an' put one at ebery mile post, and he himself, what was to run wid Br. Deer, was right in front of de young lady's door, in de broom grass.

"Dat morning at nine o'clock, Br. Deer met Br.

(1) I do not remember whether the story was found in North or South Carolina and I am unable to settle the question here, (at Rio).

(2) "Riverside Magazine," November 1868 ; "Nation" February 23d 1871, p. 127. I cannot guarantee the accuracy of the dialect, as the story appears to me to have been written out by a Northerner but little familiar with "negro talk."

(3) A terrapin, a species of turtle abundant in the Southern United States. The terrapin proper, (*Malacochlemys palustris*), is a water or swamp species. The form meant is probably the "wood terrapin" (*Glyptemys insculpta*) which is often found in the grass. The word Coutah appears to be of African origin.

Coutah at de first mile post, wha de wos to start from. So he call : 'Well, Br. Coutah, Is you ready? Go long!' As he git on to de next mile post, he say : 'Br. Coutah!' Br. Coutah say 'Hullo!' Br. Deer say : 'You dere?' Br. Coutah say: 'Yes, Br. Coutah, I dere too.'

"Next mile post he jump, Br. Deer say : 'Hullo, Br. Coutah!' Br. Coutah say : 'Hullo, Br. Deer you dere too?' Br. Deer say : 'Ki! It look you gwine for tie me; it look like we gwine for de gal tie!'

"When he gits to de nine mile post he tought he git dere first, 'cause he mek two jump; so he holler : 'Br. Coutah!' Br. Coutah answer : 'You dere too?' Br. Deer say : 'It look like you gwine tie me.' Br. Coutah say : 'Go 'long, Brudder, I git dere in due season time,' which he does, the deer being beaten in the race."

Grimm gives a similar story of a race between a hare and a hedgehog. The latter places his wife at the end of a furrow in a plowed field, while he himself takes up his position at the other end. The hare, mistaking one for the other, acknowledges himself beaten. In Northamptonshire (1) the fox is substituted for the hare, but, in other details, the myth is identical with the German.

Sometimes, in Old World mythology, it is a hare

(1) "Notes and Queries," January 4th 1851, p. 3.

that runs a race with a tortoise (1) but who, confiding in his swiftness, goes to sleep, while the tortoise, persevering slowly, first reaches the goal.

In Siam the myth takes the following form :— (2)

“The bird Kruth, no doubt a limited and particular form of Garudas, wishes to eat a tortoise (here perhaps the moon) which lies upon the shores of a lake. The tortoise consents to be eaten under the condition that the Kruth accepts a challenge to a trial of speed, and arrives soonest on the other side of the lake, the bird to go through the air and the tortoise through the water.

“The bird Kruth accepts the wager ; and the tortoise calls together millions and millions of tortoises, and places them all in such a way that they surround the lake, each distant a few steps from the water. Then he gives the signal to the bird to commence the race. The Kruth rises up into the air and flies to the opposite bank ; wherever he essays to alight, he finds the tortoise has been there before him.” De Gubernatis suggests that the Siamese myth may represent the relation of the sun to the lunations.

In the East Indian “fable of the ant and the grasshopper,” (3) of which the former represents “the

(1) De Gubernatis, Zoölogical Mythology, Vol. II, p. 369.

(2) De Gubernatis, op. cit. Vol. II, p. 369.

(3) De Gubernatis. op. cit. Vol. I, p. 244.

cloud or the night, or Indras or the Aurora in the cloud of night, or the earth, and the latter the leaping one the moon ; the ant passes the grasshopper in the race, not because it walks faster, but because the two runners must necessarily meet, and therefore one must pass the other.”

In Old World mythology, the myths of the race between the tortoise and some swift animal, as well as between the hare and the hedgehog, etc., have been explained as referring to the race between the slow one, the sun, and the swift one, the moon, and it seems to me eminently probable that the similar Amazonian myth may have the same signification. (1) Perhaps one reason why the moon is called a deer may be owing to her being horned. In Sanskrit myths she is represented by a stag or a gazelle.

Dr. Couto de Magalhães gives me the following story, which I will entitle

THE JABUTI THAT CHEATED THE MAN.

A jabuti was dancing in a hole in the ground, when

(1) I would suggest the comparison of the myth of the “Tortoise and the Deer” with the story, in the Hidopadesa, of “Brama and the Goat” and also with the “Red Swan” in the Hiawatha legends.

Since the above was in type Col. Joaquim José Fulgencio Carlos de Castro has given me a variant of the myth of the deer and tortoise, in which a toad is substituted for the tortoise. This variant was obtained on the Amazonas.

he was found by a man and caught. The man carried him to his house, put him in a box, and went out. By and by the jabutí began to sing. The man's children listened, and the jabutí stopped. The children begged him to continue when he said :—
“If you are pleased with my singing, how much more would you be pleased if you could see me dance!”
So the children put him in the middle of the house, where he danced, to their great delight. Presently, however, he made an excuse to go out, and fled. The children, frightened, procured a stone, painted it like the tortoise, and placed it in the box. By and by the man returned, and, wishing to cook the jabutí, took out the painted stone, and put it on the fire, where it soon became heated and burst.

Meanwhile, the tortoise had hidden himself in a thicket, in a burrow having two openings. While the man was looking in at one hole, the jabutí would appear at the other, and then when the man came to this opening, he would quickly go to the first ; so that we have here, once more repeated, the story of the race between the slow tortoise or sun, and the swift moon or man. We have already seen the tortoise escape from the jaguar by going into a burrow by one opening and retiring by another, just as the sun appears to go into its burrow in the west, and come out in the east.

The following tale was related to me in Santarem by Lourenço Maciel :—

HOW A TORTOISE KILLED TWO JAGUARS. (1)

One day a jabutí tortoise was amusing himself by climbing a hill, drawing into his shell his head and legs, and allowing himself to roll down to the bottom, which was reached in safety.

A jaguar, happening to pass by, observed the proceeding and inquired :—

“What are you doing, jabutí ?”

“ Oh, I am playing, jaguar,” answered the tortoise.

“Let me see how you play,” said the jaguar.

The jabutí then ascended the hill, and, as before, came rolling down. The jaguar was much pleased and said :

“I am going to play also.”

“Well”, returned the tortoise, “climb the hill and then come rolling down as I did.”

The jaguar attempted to imitate the jabutí, but, at the foot of the hill, struck his head against a tree and was killed.

By and by, there came along another jaguar, to whom the tortoise remarked that he was going to play. So the jabutí said to a tree : “Open !” and the

(1) In Tupí it is *Yauareté*.

tree obeyed. Then the jabutí, entering into the trunk, said: "Shut tree!" and the trunk closed up, imprisoning the jabutí, but when the latter commanded it to open, it obeyed, and he walked out. The jaguar, who had been watching, then said:

"Jabutí, I want also to play as you have done." So he said: "Open tree!" The trunk opened and the jaguar entered in. He then commanded it to close upon him and it obeyed, and when he said: "Open tree!" he walked out much pleased. But this did not satisfy him, and he said to the tortoise: "I want to play again." So the jaguar repeated the experiment; but, when he had entered into the tree, the jabutí said: "Shut tree for ever!" and the jaguar being imprisoned, died.

Both parts of this story appear to have the same meaning, and represent the victory of the sun over the moon during the lunations. In the first part of the story, the sun rolls down the western sky to appear again unhurt, but the moon in attempting to follow the example is extinguished. The myth, if this be the true explanation, seems incomplete, and I would suggest that perhaps, on search, the perfect form might be found, which would probably be as follows:—

The jaguar, or new moon, meets the sun, or jabutí, as he has just rolled down the western sky and desires to

follow his example. Next day, and for many days, he is successful, but by and by, after losing his strength gradually, the jaguar (the old moon) descends and is extinguished.

In the second part, the setting sun, or tortoise, cleaves the forest in the evening and disappears in it, to issue again safely on the morrow. The moon, or jaguar, follows his example safely, but on repeating the experiment is destroyed, the extinction of the old moon probably appearing to the Indian a destruction, the new moon being another moon, or a second onça.

That the tortoise should enter into, be imprisoned in, and issue unharmed from the forest, is a most natural form for the myth; for, in a forest-clothed country like the Amazonas, the sun ordinarily seems to set among, and rise out of the trees. The sun also has the power of splitting the trunks of trees; in which latter case he performs the action from a distance, as if by command.

The splitting of the earth, and of rocks and trees by solar heroes is common in mythological tales, the world over, and the second part of the story just related has many parallels.

In Bleek's Hottentot fables, (1) the Nama woman and her brothers, when pursued by the elephant,

(1) p. 64.

address a rock with these words : “Stone of my ancestors, divide for us !” The rock divides and they pass through, but when the elephant addresses it in the same manner, the rock opens, only to close upon him and kill him.

The rock-house, Itohe-likantum-jambali, opens and shuts at the voice of its master. (1) So also when Kurangutuku said to the rock : “Open for me, open !” it obeyed, and he hid himself in it.

Afanasiëff in the observations to the first book of his Russian Stories, refers to a Slavonic tale, in which a hare shuts up a bear in the trunk of a tree (2).

The following is one of the most interesting of the Jabutí stories, and the Indians always relate it with much gusto :—

HOW THE TORTOISE PROVOKED A CONTEST OF STRENGTH
BETWEEN THE TAPIR AND THE WHALE.

One day a jabutí went down to the sea to drink. A whale saw him and called out :—“What are you doing, jabutí ?” To which the latter responded :

“I am drinking, because I am thirsty.”

(1) Calloway. Zulu Nursery tales, Vol. I, p. 143.

(2) Grey. Polynesian Mythology, p. 188. Longfellow relates how the Manito of the mountain

“Opened wide his rocky doorways
Giving Pawpukkeewis shelter.”

Then the whale made sport of the tortoise because of his short legs, but the latter replied :—“If my legs are short, I am stronger than you, and can pull you on shore.”

The whale laughed, and said : — “Let me see you do it !”

“Well,” said the jabutí, “just wait until I go into the forest and pull a sipó* !”

Away went the tortoise into the forest, and there he encountered a tapir who demanded, “What are you looking after, jabutí ?”

“I am looking after a sipó.”

“And what are you going to do with the sipó ?” asked the tapir.

“I want it to pull you down to the sea.”

“Ya !” exclaimed the tapir, surprised, “I’ll pull you into the forest, and, what’s more, I’ll kill you ; but never mind, let’s try who may be the stronger ! Go get your sipó !” The tortoise went off, and presently came back with a very long sipó, one end of which he tied around the body of the tapir.

“Now,” said the jabutí, “wait here until I go down to the sea. When I shake the sipó, run with all your might into the forest.” Having attached one end to the tapir, he dragged the other down to the sea, and fastened it to the tail of the whale. This accomplished, he

* A liana, or aerial root.

said, "I will go up into the forest, and when I shake the sipó, pull as hard as you can, for I am going to draw you on shore."

The jabutí then went into the wood, midway between the whale and the tapir, shook the sipó, and awaited the result. First the whale, swimming vigorously, dragged the tapir backward to the sea, but the latter, resisting with all his might, finally gained a firm foothold, and began to get the better of the whale, drawing him in toward the shore. Then the whale made another effort, and, in this manner, they kept tugging against one another, each thinking the tortoise at the other end of the sipó, until at last, both gave up the struggle from sheer exhaustion.

The tortoise went down to the shore to see the whale, who said: "Well! you are strong, jabutí; I am very tired."

The tortoise then untied the sipó from the whale, and having dipped himself in the water, presented himself to the tapir, who thought the tortoise had been pulling against him in the water.

"Well tapir," said the jabutí, "you see that I am the stronger."

The tortoise then released the tapir, who went off saying:—"It is true, jabutí, you are indeed strong."

In the *Lingua Geral*, the word I have rendered "whale," is *pirá-asú*, literally, the big fish, this being the name applied by the Indians to the cetæcan

which is to them, the fish *par excellence*. It cannot be the Amazonian dolphin, because this bears the name *pira-yaudra**, or tiger-fish. The word *paraná*, which I have translated "sea," is applied also to a river. Maciel assured me that the big fish was a "*balæa do mar grande*"—a whale of the ocean.

Dr. Pimentel has kindly sent me a variant of this myth, which I give in a somewhat condensed form.

A jabutí who had been surrounded by the rise of the river, threw himself into the water to reach *terra firma*. In the middle of the stream he met the *cobra grande*, or mythical great serpent. "Adeos, comadre," said the to the snake.

"Adeos, compadre," replied the latter, "where are you going?"

"I am going," said the tortoise, "to cut down a fruit-tree, to get something to eat."

"What? Are you strong enough for that?" asked the cobra astonished.

"*Ora!* Do you think so little of me as to doubt it? Let us see which is the stronger. But I shall have to be on land, because in the water, I have no strength."

* *Yauára* originally meant the Brazilian tiger, and the English word jaguar is derived from it. To-day it is applied only to the dog, and the jaguar is called *Yauareté* or the true *Yauára*. *Pirá* is fish. The accent is thrown back in this case.

“And I,” added the cobra grande, “must remain in the water, for on land I have no strength.”

The tortoise begged the cobra to carry him to land. The snake assented, and the jabutí, climbing on his back, was quickly deposited on shore.

The day for the trial was set, and the jabutí went away, intending not to return.

A few days after, a jaguar came across the tortoise, and was about to dash him to pieces against a tree and devour him, but the jabutí did not forget himself, and said to the onça :—“O jaguar, you treat me in this way because I am on land. If I were in the water you would not dare do so.”

The jaguar was not very hungry, and being curious as to what the jabutí would do in the water, carried him down to the river and threw him in.

As soon as the cobra grande saw the tortoise, he took him to task for not having kept his appointment. The jabutí excused himself as best he could, and said that he would immediately get a sipó, so that the two might pull, one at one end, the other at the other, to determine which was the stronger. Then, going close in shore, he said to the jaguar :—“Cut a long sipó.”

The jaguar did so. Then the jabutí said :—“Give me one end, and when I make a signal, pull with all your might.” But the jabutí gave his end of the sipó to the cobra grande, and told him to wait until he had

reached the land. The jabutí then gave the signal, and hid himself, and the cobra and jaguar began to tug at the sipó, each thinking the tortoise at the other end.

The jabutí had stipulated that the one who was vanquished in the struggle, should forfeit his life. Both jaguar and cobra soon became fatigued, and abandoning the contest, fled as fast as possible, while the jabutí escaped.

Dr. Couto de Magalhães has found this same myth in Pará, but, for the tapir or jaguar, is substituted the *kad-póra* (the forest-dweller), a sort of mythical giant of the woods.

This myth is, perhaps, susceptible of more than one interpretation. The tortoise, or sun, has a trial of strength with the jaguar or tapir, the moon, and vanquishes by substituting another in his place, in which case, we have simply a different form of the myth of the Tortoise and Déer. It has, however, suggested itself to me that the tortoise, in this myth, might perhaps be the sun or moon, provoking the everlasting tidal contest between the sea and the land.* It is worth noting that Brazil is so situated geographically, that

* Claude d'Abbeville says that the Indians of Maranhão knew that the flux and reflux of the tide was caused by the moon. *Histoire de la mission des PP. Capuchins en l'Isle de Maragnan.* Fol. 320.

the sun and moon are rarely seen to set in the sea. On the Amazonas, however, the sight of their disappearance behind a water horizon is a familiar one to the Indian. If this myth is really of native growth, it would be interesting to discover whether it originated on the Amazonas, or on the coast.

The following is a somewhat free translation of another story I obtained in the *Lingua Geral*, at Santarem :—

HOW A TORTOISE KILLED A JAGUAR (1) AND MADE A WHISTLE OF ONE OF HIS BONES.

A monkey was high up in an Inajá tree (2) eating the fruit, when a jabutí came up underneath, and, seeing the monkey, asked :

“What are you doing, monkey !”

“I am eating Inajá fruit,” answered the monkey.

“Throw one down to me,” said the tortoise.

“Climb up, jabutí,” retorted the monkey.

“But I cannot climb.”

“Then I will descend and fetch you.”

Down went the monkey and carried the tortoise up into the tree, placing him on a bunch of the fruit. He

(1) De Gubernatis. Zoölogical Mythology. Vol. II, p. 110. See also p. 213 and Reineke Fuchs.

(2) The palm *Maximiliana*.

then went away, leaving the tortoise, saying that he would presently return.

The jabutí ate until he was satisfied, and waited for the monkey, who did not return. He desired to descend, but was unable, and so he remained looking down, afraid to let himself fall, lest he might be killed.

By and by, a jaguar came along, and, looking up into the tree, saw the jabutí.

“*U'i yautí!*” said he, calling to the tortoise, “what are you doing up there ?”

“I am eating Inajá fruit,” answered the jabutí.

“Throw me down one !” said the jaguar. The tortoise plucked a fruit and threw it to the jaguar, who, having eaten it, said : “*Sé reté!* (1) Throw down another !” The tortoise obeyed.

“Why don't you come down ?” asked the jaguar. The tortoise answered that he was afraid lest he should be killed.

Now the jaguar wanted to make a meal of the tortoise, so he said :

“Don't be afraid ! Jump ! I will catch you !”

The tortoise leaped down, but the jaguar missed his aim, and the tortoise, striking him on the head, killed him. The jabutí, unhurt, then went off to his hole.

(1) In one variant, the tortoise is represented as throwing down only empty shells.

A month afterwards he came out and took a walk, to look at the remains of the jaguar, and finding the skeleton, he carried away one of the bones, out of which he made a sort of *gaita* or fife, on which he piped, as he walked about: “*Yauareté kaunguéra sereny'my' 'l'*” The bone of the jaguar is my fife.

Now it happened that another jaguar, passing by, heard the sound, and stopped and listened. “*Yauareté kaunguéra sereny'my,*” piped again the jabutí. The jaguar, determined to investigate the matter, followed the tortoise, who presently came to the mouth of his hole.

“*U'i yautí!*” cried the jaguar, “What is that you are saying?”

“How is that?” asked the tortoise.

“Did I not hear you saying: “*Yauareté kaunguéra sereny'my' 'l'*”?”

“No,” said the tortoise, “I said “*Suasú* (2) *kaunguéra sereny'my' 'l'*” and immediately he entered his hole, from which he piped: “*Yauareté kaunguéra sereny'my' 'l'*”

The jaguar, on hearing this, turned towards the hole and said: “I am going to eat you, by and by, jabutí.”

(2) *Suasú*, deer. He denies that he said that his fife was made of a jaguar's bone, but declares that he said that it was made of the bone of a deer.

The jaguar remained watching for the tortoise, but the latter escaped by another hole, eluding the jaguar. A monkey in a tree, seeing the latter waiting, called out to him and asked him what he was doing. The Jaguar answered: “I am waiting for the jabutí to come out that I may eat him.”

The monkey laughed and said: “You are a stupid fellow, the jabutí has gone away. He will not appear until it rains.”

“Well, if that is the case,” rejoined the jaguar, “I will go and take a walk,” and he went away, cheated by the tortoise.

In another version of this story, the jabutí is represented as spreading out his *tauari*, (1) to dry in the sun, before the mouth of the hole. The jaguar caused a wind to blow the *tauari* about, hoping in this way to entice out the tortoise, but the latter, too wary, sent out another animal to look after the *tauari* and himself escaped.

In a variant of this myth obtained by Dr. de Magalhães the jaguar is represented as reaching down into the burrow and catching hold of the tortoise, who, resisting, cries out: “Oh, you foolish fellow! You think you have caught me when it is only the root of

(1) A thin, paper-like, inside bark of a large tree of the same name, a species of *Couritari*. This bark is used by the Indians as a wrapper in making cigarettes.

a tree that you have secured." The jaguar there upon realises his hold.

Dr. Silva de Coutinho has found the same myth among the Indians on the Rio Branco. Here, however, the jaguar left a toad on guard at the mouth of the burrow of the tortoise. The jabuti seeing him asked why his eyes were so red and swollen, and persuaded him to rub them with a certain plant, which, being caustic, blinded him. The tortoise then escaped. The jaguar wished to kill the toad but the latter jumped into a pond. The jaguar then called an alligator which speedily drank up the water, so that the jaguar was able to catch and kill the toad.

In this myth the jabuti is still the sun, who conquers and kills the jaguar moon. The taking of one of the bones of the latter, for a life, naturally suggests itself to the Indian, who is accustomed to make whistles of the bones of his enemies. Another jaguar, or another moon, gives chase to the jabuti, who, entering his burrow by one hole, escapes by another, as the sun, descending into the earth in the west, comes up out of the east.

THE JABUTI AVENGES HIMSELF ON THE TAPIR

A tapir (1) met with a jabuti in a wet place, and step-

(1) The English word "tapir" is derived from the Tupi *Tapy'ira* the *y'* having a sound somewhat like a guttural German *u umlaut*.

ping upon him, buried him deep in the mud, where the tortoise remained two years before he could extricate himself. When, at last, he succeeded, he said to himself: "Now I will take my revenge on the tapir!" So off he started in search of that beast. Pretty soon he found a mass of the droppings of the tapir covered with grass, and inquired of it: — "*O Teputi!* (2) Where is your master?" The Teputi answered, "My master left me here a long while ago. I know nothing of him, but, when he left me, he went off in this direction. Go after him!" The tortoise followed in the direction indicated, and presently found another heap, of which he asked as before: "*O Teputi!* Where is your master?" receiving the answer: — "My master left me here about a year ago. Follow in his track, you will come up with him." The tortoise continued his journey, and, before long, met with another heap, which, on being interrogated as before, answered: "My master is not far away. If you will walk rapidly you will come up with him to-morrow!"

The next day he found a perfectly fresh mass which said, "My master has just left me here, I can hear the breaking of the branches as he goes through the

When the ox was introduced, the Indian applied the same name to it, and the tapir came to be called *tapy'ira-kaauara*, or the forest-dwelling tapir.

(2) Dung.

forest. Go after him ! ” The tortoise followed, and soon came up to the tapir, whom he found lying fast asleep. He looked at the tapir carefully, and then very quietly went up to him, and fastened his jaws into his thigh. The tapir awoke with a start and dashed into the forest, the tortoise keeping a firm hold, and, maddened with the pain, he ran on until, at last, overcome by fatigue, he fell dead. After a month, the tortoise came back and found the skeleton, from which he took a bone to show to his friends, as proof of his exploit.

In the *Pantchatantram*, (1) a collection of Sanskrit stories, there is one of the elephant and hares, that bears a close resemblance to that just related. It runs as follows :—

On the shores of the lake *Tehandrasaras* live the hares in numerous burrows. The elephants, driven by thirst, come down to the lake to drink, and break in the burrows as they walk, killing and maiming the hares. The hare, in the name of the moon, in which is the palace of the hare-king, remonstrates with the elephant-king, saying that the moon is angry. The hare shows him the reflection of the moon in the water. The elephant, disturbing the water, causes the reflection to be multiplied. The hare tells him that

(1) Book III. Story I, vide de Gubernatis' *Zoölogical Mythology* Vol. II. p. 76. See also *Anvar-i Suhailé*. Chap. IV. story IV.

the moon is more angry still, whereupon the elephant king begs pardon and retires, leaving the hares in peace.

According to Gubernatis,^{aa} the elephant is the sun who goes down to drink at the lake of the moon : “the hare warns the elephant that, if he does not retire, if he continues to crush the hares on the shores of the lake, the moon will take back his cold beams, and then the elephants will die of hunger.”

In the African *Kanurí* tale, an elephant sits down upon a cock, and the latter, in revenge, picks out one of the elephant's eyes.

The Amazonian story seems susceptible of the following interpretation :—The tapir is the sun, the tortoise the moon. The rising sun extinguishes the old moon, and buries her, but after a time, the new moon appears and begins the pursuit of the sun. The fact that the race continues day after day, and that the scent grows constantly stronger suggests, however, that the pursuer may, after all, be the sun. May not the story, perhaps, have become confused through an interchange of characters ?

THE TORTOISE KILLS THE OPOSSUM BY INDUCING HIM TO
BURY HIMSELF.

A *jabutí* made a bet with a *mukúra*, or Amazonian

(aa) *Zoöl. Mythology*. Vol. II. p. 76.

opossum, to see which could the longer stay buried. The jabutí was first interred by the mukúra, and came out in good order. The jabutí then buried the mukúra under a heap of dried leaves, and left him. A few days after, when he came to look at him, he found only a swarm of flies.

Here the solar tortoise, who buries himself daily, without harm, induces the nocturnal mukura, or moon, to follow his example, resulting in the extinction of the latter.

THE TORTOISE SENDS THE JAGUAR ON A FOOL'S ERRAND

A jabutí and a spider entered into a sort of copartnership, and lived together. The jabutí had killed a tapir, and was engaged in cutting up his flesh, when a jaguar came along.

“Well jabutí”, said he to the tortoise, “what are you doing?”

“I have killed a tapir, and am dressing him,” answered the jabutí.

“I'll help you,” said the jaguar, who immediately fell to and helped himself, much to the disgust of the jabutí. Presently the latter said to the jaguar: —“I am very thirsty, and am going to get some water. Spider, go on storing away the flesh in your house!”

The tortoise went off a short distance, wet himself in the dew, and returned.

“Where is the water?” asked the jaguar, “for I also am thirsty.”

“Go off in this direction,” said the tortoise, pointing with his finger. “The water is just beneath the sun. Go straight ahead, following the sun, and you will find it”. The jaguar walked and walked, but found no water; so, disgusted, he returned to finish the cutting up of the tapir. But the jabutí and spider had worked diligently while the jaguar was gone, and had stored all the flesh in the house of the spider, leaving only the bones for the jaguar.

This tale is exactly matched by the following African story given by Koelle: (*)

A weasel and a hyena, wishing to cook an animal killed in the chase, sent out the weasel to search for fire. The weasel went, but returned unsuccessful. The hyena, on seeing the sun set in the west, thought that it was fire, arose, and said to the weasel: —“Look after our meat, while I go and fetch the fire.”

While the hyena was gone, the weasel hid the meat in a hole. The sun set as the hyena was going toward it and he returned. The weasel said that two men had stolen the meat and hidden it in the hole. The weasel went into the hole, promising to tie the meat to the hyena's tail; but instead he tied the tail to a stick, so that when he called out to the hyena to pull, the

(*) African Native Literature. p. 166.

latter found himself fast, and in his struggle broke off his tail.

I add also the following story of a conversation between a jabutí and a tapir, which however appears condensed and incomplete.

A jabutí met a tapir in the forest, and asked him where he was going. The jabutí said:—"I am going to marry the daughter of a humming-bird." The tapir laughed, and told him that he had such short legs that he would never reach her house.

The jabutí then asked the tapir where he was going, when the latter replied that he was on his way to ask the daughter of the deer in marriage. The tortoise laughed in turn, and answered:—"Ya! You will never marry the deer's daughter." "Why not?" asked the tapir. "Because she will run away from you," replied the jabutí. "Well," said the tapir "I also can run. I break down the branches before me as I go."

Besides the jabutí stories, there are others found on the Amazonas that seem to me to be solar myths, but the limits of this article will not allow me to do much more than refer to them.

In one of these stories, the kingfisher marries the daughter of the *mukúra*, and with his wife goes out fishing. The *uairiramba* or kingfisher, shakes his *maraká* rattle; a big *tukunaré* fish comes up, and he pounces upon him, and brings him to land. The *mukúra* is

jealous, and insists upon fishing also in the same way, So he borrows his son-in-law's rattle and follows his example, being speedily swallowed by the fish. His wife runs home in distress and calls the son-in-law, who promptly rescues him, in rather a poor state of health.

In the continuation of this story, the kingfisher is represented as being obliged to flee from the *mukúra*, who is angry because the kingfisher has laughed at his plight. The wife of the latter then takes for her husband a *carapato*, and soon after the pair go out to gather green Brazil-nuts, the *carapato* climbing the tree, plucking the fruit, and throwing it down to his wife. After he has finished, he plucks a leaf, and holding on to it, comes safely to the ground. Then the jealous *mukúra* must needs follow his example, but when he attempts to descend by holding on to the leaf, he falls with a crash to the ground.

The myths I have placed on record in this little paper have, without doubt, a wide currency on the Amazonas, but I have found them only among the Indian population, and they were all collected in the *Lingua Geral*. All my attempts to obtain myths from the negroes on the Amazonas proved failures. Dr. Couto de Magalhães, who has recently followed me in these researches, has had the same experience. The probability, therefore, seems to be that the myths

are indigenous, but I do not yet consider the case proven. Whether of native or foreign origin, they exist and are current among the Indian population, and they deserve careful collection and critical study.

Fortunately we are not without historical evidence as to the existence of celestial myths among the ancient Indians. Claude d'Abbeville (*) tells us that the Tupí Indians of Maranhão gave names to many of the stars and constellations. The evening star they called *Pira-panem*, the pilot of the morning. Among the constellations were *Ouegnonmoin*, the crab; *Yassatin*, called after a bird of the same name; *Tuyaté*, the old man; *Conomy manipoère ouaré*, the boy that eats manipoy; *Yandoutin*, the white ostrich that eats the *ouyra-oupia* or birds' eggs, two stars in the vicinity; *tapity*, the hare; *Gnopouçon*, the mandioca oven, etc. etc. What is, however, most interesting is the statement that the name *iaouére* or dog, (more properly jaguar), was given to a large star that follows close to the moon, and which was supposed by the Indians to pursue her in order to devour her. After the rains, when the moon made her appearance, ruddy in color like blood, the Indians went out, and facing her, beat on the ground with sticks, saying: —“*Eycobé chera moin goé goé*;

(*) Histoire de la Mission des P. P. Capuchins en l'Isle de Maranhon. Fol. 317—319 verso.

Eycobé chera moin goé, hau' hau'—My grand-father, may you always be well!

In the myths I have given, I have interpreted the jaguar to be the moon, having been led to this opinion from analogy. It may, however, be fairly questioned whether it may not, at least, in some instances, mean the star just named. The question cannot be settled with the facts on hand. On another occasion I shall discuss this whole matter more thoroughly.

Since the above was in type, Dr. Silva de Coutinho has informed me that the Indians of the Amazonas not only give names to many of the heavenly bodies, but also tell stories about them. The two stars that form the shoulders of Orion are said to be an old man and a boy in a canoe, chasing a *peixe boi*, by which name is designated a dark spot in the sky near the above constellation. The Indians say that originally the old man, the large star, was in the bow, the boy, the small star, being in the stern, steering. When the man caught sight of the *peixe boi* he became too much excited to shoot, and so he exchanged places with the boy. There is a constellation called by the Indians, the palmtree, and near by is a line of stars which they call monkeys coming to eat the fruit. Another constellation is called the *jaburú* crane (*Ciconia*) and another the white crane.

Dr. Coutinho has found on the Rio Branco and Sr. Barbosa has reported from the Jamundá a myth, in which the moon is represented as a maiden who fell in love with her brother and visited him at night, but who was finally betrayed by his passing his blackened hand over her face.



DUTCH
VALRY

500-1653

MUNDSON

OXFORD

