

Origin of the Horse

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THE latter part of the myth entitled "Coyote Went to Get Basketry Material"¹ is more properly referred to as "*Sinawavi Togotsi, Coyote's Grandson*"—a title which is sometimes extended to cover the whole story. The first part of the tale ends with Coyote mourning the loss of his (adopted) daughter, whom he had nourished in infancy by temporarily giving himself breasts and who is now traveling north with the son Wolf has magically created for her.

The narrative continues:

The little girl and her offspring were living far to the north. After they had lived there quite awhile, the son being a good hunter, they had in their possession many tanned hides.

Then the mother said: "Go to see your grandparents [i.e., your grandfather and his brother], packing a load of hides for a present! You will find them living at Snow-Having. When you pass the night on your journey, you must not lie down to sleep in a cave. Even if it rains hard, you must lie outside."

"All right," the son said, "I will go to see my grandfathers." Having packed up some of his buckskins, he went on his way.

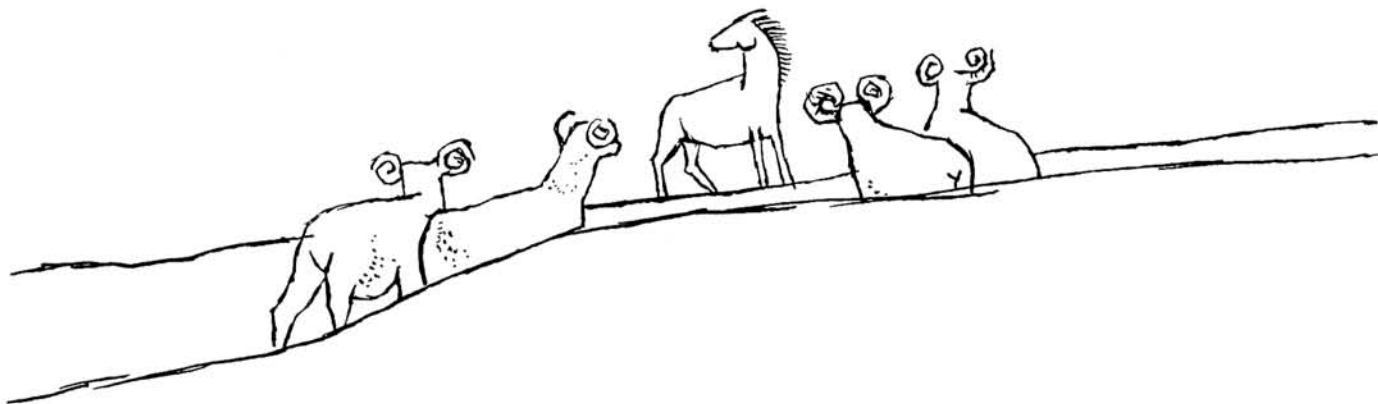
As he journeyed, the day darkened, it clouded over. Then when night came, rain fell.

The youth was lying close to a cave. "What was the matter with my mother," he said, "that she was trying to make me afraid?" He looked inside the cave. "Why, it is a good cave inside which I will sleep well!" With this, he lay down inside.

Snow fell all night. Early in the morning, the young man woke up. "Why, I am all right, nothing is wrong with me!" he exclaimed. "Why did my mother warn me away, telling me not to lie down in here?" So saying, he went back to sleep.

When it was really morning, he awoke. "What is the matter with me, my head feels heavy?" Thinking to touch it, he discovered that his hand had become entirely different. "What is the matter with me?" he asked himself. He got up. His whole body was covered with hair. "I feel better now," he said. Now he was a mountain sheep, standing around inside the cave.

He jumped outside, then went along the moun-



tain side, leaping from rock to rock. As he traveled thus along the mountain range, he encountered a flock of mountain sheep and stayed among them.

In the morning he arrived at Snow-Having, leading many mountain sheep towards his grandfathers' house.

Coyote spied them. "*Haik*^{ya}! My brother-*aik*^{ya}, many mountain sheep are coming towards us-*aik*^{ya}! There is a big one leading them-*aik*^{ya}, I am going to kill him quickly-*aik*^{ya}!"

"The big one is not a mountain sheep," Wolf told him, "it is our grandson."

"*Haik*^{ya}! Do I then have a mountain sheep for a grandson-*aik*^{ya}?"

"You will kill the smaller mountain sheep. That one, our grandson, comes to visit us."

"All right-*aik*^{ya}!" Saying thus, Coyote took his arrows and shot some of the mountain sheep.

His grandson came over to the house. He stayed with them without speaking. Coyote offered him boiled meat, but he did not eat it.

"That is not the kind of food he eats," said Wolf. "Go gather bunchgrass for him! That is what he eats."

"All right-*aik*^{ya}! I will go gather bunchgrass for him-*aik*^{ya}!"

Coyote gathered bunchgrass, he packed in much bunchgrass. Then in the evening his grandson went off with the mountain sheep.

In the morning he came back toward his grandfathers' house, bringing many mountain sheep with him. When the sun got high, he arrived at the house. Coyote killed some of the mountain sheep. Having done so, he went to gather bunchgrass for his grandson.

Then at evening the grandson went off again to be among the mountain sheep. The next day he brought them again to his grandfathers' house. Coyote killed many of them. He was getting to have a big supply of meat. He gathered bunchgrass for his grandson. In the evening the grandson went off to stay overnight with the other mountain sheep.

In the morning, he returned, again bringing many mountain sheep with him. Coyote killed some of them. "There is getting to be much meat-*aik*^{ya}!" said Coyote, "What you are doing-*aik*^{ya} is good-*aik*^{ya}, my grandson-*aik*^{ya}! I am going to make these hides into buckskin-*aik*^{ya}!" Then his grandson went off with the mountain sheep again.

In the morning he was playing on the mountain among the other mountain sheep. From boulder to boulder he was leaping back and forth.

That morning *Tugumpiin*^{ya}*aaviwi*, Sky-Downfeather-Brothers,² sat on their sky-perch, looking for mountain sheep. The elder brother saw the mountain sheep playing directly under them. Even though he saw them, he did not tell his younger brother. Then the younger brother spied them. "Look! Right here under us mountain sheep are playing! There is a big one among them that is the one I will kill," he said.

"That is not a mountain sheep, that is Coyote's grandson," said the elder brother.

"Can a mountain sheep be had for a grandson? That is a real mountain sheep. Let us kill him quickly!"

"Why should we kill him?" argued the elder brother, "His grandfathers will get angry."

"Without saying anything further, let us go kill him!"

"Go on and kill him, then! You will see!"

With this, Sky-Downfeather-Brothers descended. "Go on and ambush him! You will kill him as you say," said the elder brother.

The younger brother set himself to ambush Coyote's grandson, hiding himself behind the boulder upon which he was about to leap. When he jumped, the younger Sky-Downfeather-Brother shot him. Coyote's grandson rolled down into a gulch. When the younger brother went to look at him, the body of a person was lying there, a person wearing moccasins. Dumbfounded, he just stood staring at it.

"Why are you just standing looking at him without even butchering him? You said it was a mountain sheep even though I said it was Coyote's grandson. Go on, look at it! Quickly we must butcher the carcass and pack it up, not letting any of it fall to earth!" said the elder brother.

They butchered the body and carried all of it upwards with them. Then night fell.

In the morning Wolf began to mourn: "*Huuuuuh, huuuuh, huuuuh, huuuuh.*"

"*Haik*^{ya}! my brother-*aik*^{ya}! What has happened to you-*aik*^{ya}?" said Coyote, "What did you hear-*aik*^{ya}? Without telling me anything-*aik*^{ya} you are crying-*aik*^{ya}!"

"Yes," said Wolf, "because our grandson has

got killed, for that reason I am mourning.”

“Ye-es-*aik*ʸa!” Coyote began to mourn: “*Kayuyayuyayuuu-waik*ʸa! *Kayuyayuyayuuu-waik*ʸa! *Kayuyayuyayuuu-waik*ʸa! *Kayuyayuyayuuu-waik-aik-aik-aik*ʸa!”

Then Wolf got angry. “Coyote, bury all the waters. Leave only one. Having finished doing this, pack this sinew to Black Spider³ and hire him to make a web with which to stop up the sky’s hole. Then you and *Parotsok*^{wa}*itapitsi*⁴ must sit at the edge of the water you have left uncovered, heating a stone at a roasting pit.”

“All right-*aik*ʸa! I will bury all the waters as you say-*aik*ʸa! First I am going over to see-*aik*ʸa where my grandson got killed-*aik*ʸa!”

So saying, Coyote went over and hunted around where his grandson’s body had lain. He found a small piece of bone, also a little blood and a small bit of hair. He put these fragments under a large basket which he weighted down with a rock. Then he returned and covered all the watering places with earth. Then he packed a load of sinew to Black Spider.

“*Haik*ʸa! I am hiring you-*aik*ʸa to make a web-*aik*ʸa, to close the sky’s hole with a web-*aik*ʸa! Sky-Downfeather-Brothers-*aik*ʸa have killed my grandson-*aik*ʸa, that is the reason-*aik*ʸa I am hiring you-*aik*ʸa!”

(Black Spider drew in his breath.)⁵ “All right (inspiration). I will do as you say (inspiration). I will make a web.” Even as he said this, Black Spider was cooking some of the sinew. When it was done, he ate it. Then he cooked some more.

“*Haik*ʸa! I didn’t tell you to do that with it-*aik*ʸa. Just to cook and eat it-*aik*ʸa!” Coyote packed up the rest of the sinew and returned to his home. “*Haik*ʸa! He was just starting to cook it-*aik*ʸa! Just starting to eat it-*aik*ʸa without weaving it into a web-*aik*ʸa!⁶ For that reason-*aik*ʸa I packed the rest of it back home-*aik*ʸa!”

“That is the way he makes it into a web,” Wolf said. “Now pack it over to him again!”

“I understand-*aik*ʸa!” With this Coyote packed up the sinew and took it again to Black Spider.

“*Haik*ʸa! Go ahead-*aik*ʸa, this time make it into a web-*aik*ʸa! I am going over to hire *Parotsok*^{wa}*itapitsi*-*aik*ʸa, I am also going to cover the waters-*aik*ʸa!”

“(Inspiration.) Yes (inspiration). I will make it

into a web.”

Then Coyote went over to hire *Parotsok*^{wa}*itapitsi*; he also buried the waters.

“*Parotsok*^{wa}*ita*-nephew-*aik*ʸa, we two will sit by a roasting pit heating a stone-*aik*ʸa! When the Sky-Downfeather-Brothers-*aik*ʸa come to drink water-*aik*ʸa we will kill them-*aik*ʸa! When they fly up-*aik*ʸa you will make them fall by shouting to them-*aik*ʸa! With a loud voice you will shout to them-*aik*ʸa!”

“All right,” said *Parotsok*^{wa}*itapitsi*, “We will do as you say, you have hired me.” Then they sat by a roasting pit near the water’s edge heating a stone.

The Sky-Downfeather-Brothers got thirsty. “Let us go to drink,” said the younger. “I am very thirsty.”

“Where would you drink?” said the elder brother. “Coyote has finished burying all the waters.”

“Either our time has come to die or we must find somewhere to drink.”

As they were talking thus, they alit on their sky-perch to look for water.

“There is water right here under us,” said the younger brother.

“That is dangerous water where they are sitting in ambush for us,” said the elder. “Coyote is sitting there by a roasting pit heating a stone. How could we get some of that water to drink?”

“Well, let us go over to see it,” said the younger.

They descended, passing over the water. “Oh, Coyote, sitting by a roasting pit heating a stone!” they called as they passed over.

“*Haik*ʸa! We are discovered-*aik*ʸa!”

“Sit still!” *Parotsok*^{wa}*itapitsi* said, “They are just saying that [i.e., they do not actually see us, they are saying it to flush us out].”

Then the brothers went over the water again, coming closer. “Oh, Coyote, sitting by a roasting pit heating a stone!” they said as they went.

“*Haik*ʸa! This time we are discovered-*aik*ʸa! I am going to go out-*aik*ʸa!”

“Sit still! They are just saying that, they will yet drink.”

The Sky-Downfeather-Brothers passed over the water again, still nearer. “Oh, Coyote, sitting by a roasting pit heating a stone!” they called.

Parotsok^{wa}*itapitsi* was sitting in ambush, holding onto Coyote, who was about to go out.

"We are discovered-*aik*^{ya}!"

"No, they are just saying that! Sit still! They will alight, they will stick their beaks into the water. They will just be sitting there with their beaks in the water without drinking. We can tell when they start to drink, their crests will begin to wiggle back and forth. Then you may throw at them!"

"All right-*aik*^{ya}!"

Sky-Downfeather-Brothers descended again. Having got very thirsty, they alit by the water's edge. "Coyote, sitting by a roasting pit heating a stone!" they called. Then they went up again.

"We are discovered-*aik*^{ya}!" said Coyote.

"Sit still without saying anything!" *Parotsok*^{wa}*itapitsi* said, restraining him.

Sky-Downfeather-Brothers came down to the water again. They flew around over it for awhile, then they alit, just sticking their beaks into the water without drinking.

"*Haik*^{ya}! Now let me throw at them-*aik*^{ya}!"

"Sit still! They are not yet drinking. Their crests will start to wiggle when they drink."

Then their crests started to wiggle.

"Go on and throw at them now!" said *Parotsok*^{wa}*itapitsi*.

Then Coyote threw the hot rock at them. It passed clear through one and lodged in the other. The one that the rock had passed through went up. Then *Parotsok*^{wa}*itapitsi* shouted at him. This confused him so that he struck against the web that Black Spider had made. Black Spider sank his teeth into the nape of his neck and they both fell down to earth.

"*Haik*^{ya}! What we have done is good-*aik*^{ya}! Nothing else will happen-*aik*^{ya}!" So saying, Coyote returned home.

Then he went over to see where his grandson had been killed and where he had left the fragments of his body weighted down under a basket. Long since the grandson had revived and gone away from there. Having become a horse, he had eaten all the grass off the top of Snow-Having, then he had gone west.

"*Haik*^{ya}! Long since having become a horse-*aik*^{ya}, he has gone away to the west-*aik*^{ya}!" said Coyote.

In this episode Coyote reverts to his normal role. He is volatile, clownish, and impul-

sive, but without a hint of femininity. He again appears as a hunter, although here also he is inferior to Wolf. Coyote delights in slaughtering the mountain sheep which his grandson-turned-mountain sheep, now acting as Judas goat, leads to his very door. Wolf apparently disdains such easy game. Coyote, true to his gluttonous nature, kills a number of them every day and revels in an excess supply of meat. (One might almost be tempted to say that this foreshadows modern man's senseless slaughter of game animals.) Coyote, however, is as always much more than a foil for the dignified, good, wise, and powerful Wolf. With a single exception,⁷ in all the myths I collected the nature of Coyote is much more richly and lovingly depicted than that of Wolf—and why not, since he (however unworthy!) is the acknowledged Exemplar for mankind?

The fixed framework of a Chemehuevi myth may be embroidered to suit the fancy of the narrator or to reflect changing times. In one tale, the Sun is said to bring his twin sons gifts of red flannel—eminently appropriate although obviously a recent addition. (The primary theme of the myth, Sun's impregnation of a woman on earth, must be as old almost as man's dream-weaving faculty.) With the appearance of the horse, unknown until the coming of the white man, there arose the necessity of fitting a new animal into the mythic structure. What better way than to make him a sort of descendant of Coyote? Appropriately his advent is placed late in the mythic cycle, when Coyote and the earth were both already old.

Coyote, since he was not a shaman, could not resuscitate the dead by touching them with his *poro*. However, we are not told that even the greatest shaman could restore form and life to a few fragments of blood, bone, and hair. This Coyote did on at least two occasions, though he never succeeded in making things just as they had been. His grandson, already having been bewitched into the semblance of a

mountain sheep, came out from under the basket as a horse; and Wolf, after meeting his death in the great battle with the Bear People, emerged as Wolf but immediately departed toward the mystic North, thus putting a period to the mythic, prehuman era.⁸

Besides giving the horse a brief existence in that prehuman era (but not, be it noted, as an animal who was a person—horses, like mountain sheep, belonged to “the kind that do not talk”), this myth also gives a description of the Sky-Downfeather-Brothers, who belong to the realm of pure fantasy and apparently have no actual animal counterparts. In the myth, “How Bat Killed Rattlesnake,”⁹ these brothers seem to be quite human except for their ability to fly (literally, “to rise up”). They lose their arrows betting upon their non-existent excellence in contests of skill and strength; they lean, disconsolate, upon their bows; they leave long hairs behind after swimming in a lake. In the story told here, they are depicted in their avian form, dipping their beaks into water and with crests (*kotsovi*, applicable both to a quail’s crest and a rooster’s comb) that “wiggle back and forth.” This reaffirms the shifting, dream-like nature of the animals who were people; their forms were substantial enough to be killed, yet the image in the mind of the narrator shifted constantly between the human and the animal.

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NOTES

1. *Journal of California Anthropology* 5:67-72.
2. In another myth, “How Bat Killed Rattlesnake,” which George Laird told me at a much later date, this name was rendered in English simply as Sky-Brothers. See *The Chemehuevis* (Banning: Malki Museum Press, 1976), pp. 182-192.
3. *Hukwampi*, black widow spider. In other myths which George Laird told at a later date he invariably referred to this personage as *Tavahukwampi*, which he translated as Sun-Spider. *Tavahukwampi* (or in the earlier texts *Hukwampi*) invariably appears as guardian of the sky-hole.
4. *Parotsok^{wa}itapitsi*, unidentified bird species. The word also occurs without the honorific *-pitsi*, but George Laird preferred the form with *-pitsi*.
5. This strong inspiration (like a groan with breathing reversed) is Black Spider’s (Sun-Spider’s) speech peculiarity.
6. Web or net. Coyote is or pretends to be ignorant of the fact that Black Spider secretes his web.
7. “The Bluebirds Went to War with Wolf.” This unpublished Chemehuevi text was collected in 1919 or 1920.
8. *The Chemehuevis*, (Banning: Malki Museum Press, 1976), pp. 192-207.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 182-192.

