

The Wild, the Domesticated, and the Coyote-Tainted: The Trickster and the Tricked in Hunter-Gatherer versus Farmer Folklore

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Abstract

Folklore regarding (biological) coyotes and (the mythic) Old Man Coyote the Trickster is rich in both hunter-gatherer and farmer-herder societies in Western North America, and apparently not restricted to language group, socioeconomic status, or subsistence strategy. To date, there has yet to be a systematic comparison of hunter-gatherer versus farmer uses of ‘Coyote’ as a modifier in the secondary lexemes used to name plants and invertebrates, or in associated oral narratives. While these folk taxa may be called “coyote’s biota” for shorthand, it is necessary to discern whether they all share some common diagnostic features or characteristic values in the cultures which name them. I propose that the values embedded in any particular culture’s view of coyote’s biota can to some extent be inferred from the rich body of narratives in which other animals and plants have been associated with one of three entities: a) the biological coyote (*Canis latrans*); b) the mythic Coyote, the Trickster found commonly in the stories of farming cultures, or c) Coyote the Tricked, found more commonly in the stories of hunter-gatherer cultures. This initial comparison of Comcáac (Seri) versus O’odham (Northern Piman) names, morality plays, and narratives suggest that O’odham farmers have traditionally viewed the domain of Coyote’s plants as those which have been tainted, tricked or corrupted by the lazy, or inattentive behavior of their (Coyote-like) stewards, whereas the Comcáac use of Coyote as a marker in secondary lexemes for miniaturized or other peculiar lifeforms indicate that he has been “tricked” into thinking these lifeforms are as beautiful or useful as others.

Introduction

The science of ethnoecology (Berkes 1999) does not merely document the species engaged in ecological relationships among cultures, plants, animals and microbes; it also

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includes narratives which elucidate cultural values and perceptions—symbolic, moral or otherwise—about those relationships (Nabhan 2000). This insight was first brought home to me by my mentor Amadeo M. Rea while we were collaboratively documenting Northern Piman ethnobiological knowledge in the 1970s. Our simultaneous, sometimes co-managed fieldwork resulted in his classic ethnobotany of the Gila River Pima, *At the Desert's Green Edge* (Rea 1997), as well as my still-unpublished dissertation (which he advised) and its more readable complement, *The Desert Smells Like Rain* (Nabhan 1982).

Amadeo Rea has always been fastidious in documenting the identities of the foods and medicines that Piman speakers have used for the welfare of their communities, so much so that some of his readers may assume that his brand of ethnobiology is largely an applied science focused on utilitarian issues. However, as a student of how language, myth and religion influence indigenous peoples' stewardship of the natural world, Amadeo Rea was the first ethnobiologist I knew who asked larger philosophical, moral, and spiritual questions with the rigor of a well-trained ethnobiologist.

Amadeo first convinced me that such inquiries were not only plausible but necessary while we stood around a desert campfire one evening after recording wonderful commentaries from our O'odham (Pima and Papago) colleagues about a number of plants whose names were marked with the term *ban* as part of secondary lexemes. *Ban* appears to be a pan-Tepiman term, included as a modifier in secondary lexemes that allude to relationships with biological coyotes (*Canis latrans*) or to the mythic tricksters often referred to in vernacular English as Old Man Coyote.

Both Amadeo and I were aware that the use of 'Coyote,' '*Coyotl*' (or its many native equivalents) as a modifier in the secondary lexemes was not at all restricted to the O'odham, but that it is widespread among the indigenous cultures of Western North America. Bright (1999) suggests that the pervasiveness of Old Man Coyote narratives in Canada, the United States, and Mexico may indicate that Coyote is among the oldest archetypal characters in American folklore, so it is not surprising that he appears in a number of origin narratives regarding plants (Nabhan 1982). At least since the nineteenth century, Coyote has been used as a marker in the vernacular names of plants among Hispanic and Anglo residents of the continent as well, supposedly through dif-

fusion from native cultures (Cassidy 1985; Moerman 1998). In fact, this marker is one of the few ethnosystematic elements which have diffused linguistically from the many indigenous languages of North America into the *linguas francas* of American regional English and Mexican regional Spanish used in these regions today (Table 1).

When contrasting some of these plants associated with Old Man Coyote with their highly useful counterparts—such as domesticated tobacco, melons, gourds, or squashes—it is clear that those marked with Coyote in their names are often smaller, wilder or more unruly, more bitter or less useable than their unmarked counterparts (Nabhan 1982; Rea 1997). The implications of that trend were not lost on either Amadeo or myself. We were aware that over the last quarter century, tremendous progress has been made in understanding cultural values embedded in “folk taxonomies” or ethnosystematic classifications of biodiversity (Berlin 1992; see also Harmon 2002). All cultures—whether foraging, farming-based, or highly industrialized—not only name various plants and animals within their reach, but infer patterns of kinship between wild and cultivated organisms (Berlin 1992). The distinctions made by naming organisms and grouping them into hierarchical categories also guide the habitat management and genetic selection of populations of these organisms (Nabhan and Rea 1987).

Table 1. Plants with names associated with Coyote in vernacular English or Spanish.

Common English &/or Spanish name	Scientific name(s)	States of occurrence	Source
Coyote berries	<i>Ribes cf. sanguineum</i>	OR	Cassidy (1985)
Coyote brush	<i>Baccharis pilularis</i>	CA	Moerman (1998)
Coyote cactus	<i>Opuntia leptocaulis</i>	AZ, CHIH, NM, SON, TX	Cassidy (1985)
Coyote gourd, <i>Cala-bacilla del coyote</i>	<i>Cucurbita digitata</i>	AZ, CA, SON, BCN, BCS	Cassidy (1985); Hodgson (2001)
Coyote melon, <i>Melón de coyote</i>	<i>Apodanthera undulata</i>	AZ, BCN, NM, SON	Cassidy (1985), Hodgson (2001)
Coyote mint, Mountain coyote mint	<i>Monardella odoratissima</i>	CA, NV	Moerman (1998)
Coyote's rope	<i>Clematis lasiantha</i>	CA	Moerman (1998)
Coyote's tail	<i>Cirsium pastoris</i>	NV, UT	Moerman (1998)
Coyote thistle	<i>Eryngium armatum</i> , <i>E. vaseyi</i>	CA, OR	Cassidy (1985)
Coyote's tobacco, <i>Tabaco del coyote</i>	<i>Nicotiana attenuata</i> , <i>N. clevelandii</i> , <i>N. rustica</i> , <i>N. trigonophylla</i>	AZ, CHIH, NM, SON, UT	Cassidy (1985)
Coyote willow	<i>Salix exigua</i>	AZ, CO, ID, MT, ND, NM, OR, UT, WY	Cassidy (1985)

For instance, agricultural societies may “over-classify” certain domesticated plants and animals that they intensively manage. They may name many varieties or ethno-taxa that are economically important to them even though these taxa may be below the level of biological species recognized by Western-trained bio-systematists. At the same time, both industrialized and wild-foraging societies may “under-classify” these same domesticated species. Finally, some hunter-gatherer societies over-classify mythically and economically-important organisms like mesquite or sea turtles (Nabhan 2003) at the same time they show less interest in domesticated animals and plants. This insight begs the question that is the subject of this inquiry: Are the values embedded in associating a particular plant with Old Man Coyote in a hunting and gathering culture different than those in a farming culture?

The responses to this question suggest that this arena remains contested. Berlin (1992) in particular has proposed that there are structural similarities among the folk taxonomies of all agricultural peoples, similarities that do not necessarily extend to the folk taxonomies of hunter-gatherers. There remains considerable debate over the universal patterns Berlin has devised to discern hunter-gatherer from agricultural folk taxonomies (Nabhan 2003). Nevertheless, it is clear that the plants or animals essential to the major energy flows coursing through a particular cultural community tend to be over-classified, whether they be wild or domesticated. The more intensively certain biota are managed or utilized as food, the greater the probability is that their cultural stewards notice and mark morphological, ecological, and behavioral distinctions along them. Indigenous agriculturalist’s taxonomies encode these distinctions in names, narratives and “scripts” that guide the management and utilization of these organisms (Alcorn 1989).

The rather anecdotal comparisons we have of hunter-gatherer and agricultural folk taxonomies may not necessarily shed sufficient light on a fundamental question: How do various cultures value wild organisms (especially those in their natural habitats) relative to the more highly-managed domesticated organisms that have become increasingly abundant in this world? Does their culture’s ecological relationship with the wild organisms carry more weight in their naming processes and narratives that define them as a

distinctive culture, or is their cultural identity more bound up with domesticated organisms such as horses, camels, cassava, maize, or wheat?

For the purposes of this discussion, I wish to draw attention to some profoundly-different values regarding the wild and the managed that are encoded in the lexicons of two neighboring cultures in the Sonoran Desert of North America with whom Amadeo Rea and I have visited and worked among: the Seri (Comcáac) and the Northern Pima (O'odham). In terms of their subsistence strategies, the Seri of the Sonoran coast and midriff islands and River Pima (Akimel O'odham) fall close to two poles of the continuum from nomadic forager to sedentary agriculturalist, with the Desert Papago (Tohono O'odham) and Sand Papago (Hia C-ed O'odham) falling somewhere between (Table 2). The Seri Indians, who call themselves the Comcáac, live along the desert coast of the Gulf of California, where their economy has remained steadfastly based on fishing, hunting, gathering, and wildcrafting, albeit with some crop plants and meats historically stolen or imported into their territory. The Northern Pima, composed of River Pima, Papago, Sand Papago and Lowland Pima, collectively call themselves O'odham. They live inland from the Comcáac, but historically made pilgrimages to the Gulf, while practicing various mixes of farming, herding, foraging, hunting, and wildcrafting; they are now engaged in commercial ranching and welfare food economies as well (Table 2). For a deeper understanding of the interactions of these people with the biodiversity of the desert and sea, refer to the ethnobiologies of the O'odham (Nab-

Table 2. Simplified comparison of the ecological niches of the O'odham and Comcáac.

Cultural group	O'odham	Comcáac
Major calorie-getting subsistence activities	Ranching, farming, gathering, hunting & wildcrafting	Fishing, gathering, clamming, hunting & wildcrafting
Habitats from which energy is extracted/harvested	Desert-scrub, thorn-scrub, oak woodlands, desert grasslands, & riparian zones/springs	Desert-scrub, mangrove estuaries, eelgrass beds, open seats, thorn scrub & springs
Territorial range	Southwest Arizona, USA, Northwest & Eastern Sonora, Mexico	Coastal Sonora, adjacent islands & Baja California, Mexico
Cultural keystone species	Tepary beans, mesquite, maize, saguaro cactus, amaranth greens, & Creosote Bush	Sea turtles, estuarine fish, ironwood, mesquite, shellfish, chuckwallas, organpipe and cardón cacti
Language family	Uto-Aztecan	Hokan?
Historic % of foods from wild sources	40–80%	95–100%

han et al. 1989; Rea 1997, 1998, 2007); and of the Comcáac (Felger and Moser 1985; Nabhan 2003).

In contrasting the views of the Seri and Northern Pima of the wild and the domesticates encoded in their indigenous languages, I will give special attention to the ways each culture group identifies plants and animals associated with the rather ambivalent mythic figure of Coyote, who may be either the Trickster, the Tricked or both (Bright 1999). Coyote features prominently in many of the narratives of cultural emergence among indigenous cultures of western North America, including the O'odham and the Comcáac (Felger and Moser 1985; Rea 1997). I will specifically focus on the Coyote marker in secondary lexemes as a means of understanding their classification and thus perceptions of wild versus domesticated taxa.

As William Bright (1978, 1999) and Karl Luckert (1984) have cogently summarized, Old Man Coyote is a multi-faceted and therefore ambiguous character that both reflects and challenges the values of the cultures that tell his stories. He can be a clown, a creator, a culture hero, a lawgiver, a spoiler, a lazy steward, a thief, a trickster, a victim, or a hapless loser who has been tricked. "At the same time, Coyote provides a 'horrible example' of how people should not behave; he breaks every taboo, and frequently 'dies' as a result, but regularly reappears for new escapades" (Bright 1978:1-2). As I will make clear in the subsequent discussion, Coyote leaves an indelible mark on certain (formerly sacred or perfect) plants and animals, tainting them with his urine, saliva, or irreverent neglect. I hypothesize that each culture's list of plants and animals tainted by Coyote may reveal its peculiar perception of and preoccupation with the differential values of the wild versus domesticated.

Contrasting Energy Flows Through O'odham and Comcáac Societies

As neighbors for centuries, the O'odham and Comcáac do not form mutually-exclusive populations or spheres of influence. While their languages are mutually unintelligible and belong to different linguistic families, there are perhaps 10-20 loan words between the two, due to historic trade and at least two bilingual villages. Most relevant to this discussion are the facts that O'odham and Comcáac have: 1) exchanged stories and songs

about commonly shared biota (such as desert bighorn sheep) over centuries; 2) exchanged genes through sporadic intermarriage; and 3) traded marine goods from the Comcáac for agricultural goods of the O'odham for centuries. Although their homelands share much of the same desert biodiversity, the Comcáac retain a larger lexicon for marine biodiversity (Moser and Marlett 2005; Nabhan 2003), while the O'odham retain a larger lexicon from agro-biodiversity (Mathiot 1973; Nabhan 1982). As noted earlier, both cultures have narratives about Coyote the trickster/tricked one, and name specific plants and animals with which he is associated.

Defining Wild, Domesticated and Feral in O'odham and Comcáac Culture and Language

In this section, I compare and contrast certain terms in the languages known as O'odham Ha-Nioki and the Cmique Iitom of the Comcáac to provide insight into their cultural perceptions of wild and domesticated. The terms come from both currently available lexicons in published dictionaries and ethnobiological monographs cited above. In general, this comparison shows much more discernment of wild versus feral in O'odham than in Comcáac discourse, and much more discourse regarding domesticated biota among the O'odham as well.

For the O'odham, the core condition of a healthy life is wildness, but paradoxically, domesticated plants and animals are given considerable attention and are seen as having been present in a perfect form at the time of their emergence as a culture. Their verb, *doajk*, means 'to be wild, untamed or unbroken.' It is related to the terms *doa*, 'to be healthy,' *doak*, 'whole, having integrity,' and *doaj*, 'to cure, heal restore or recover' (Mathiot 1973). Thus *daokud*, 'the condition of healthfulness,' and *doakam*, 'something whole and full of life,' or 'lively animals of a single species,' are not merely etymologically related. Rather, they suggest an underlying relationship between health and wildness. In contrast, this assumption of health is not extended to a domesticated animal such as a horse when it is intentionally "broken" and becomes *maaxo*, that is, 'tamed, muzzled or trammed.' In addition, the O'odham term *ha'icu doakam*, 'something alive' is frequently used as 'unique beginner,' describing the entire domain of what we might

call “the animal kingdom” in vernacular English (Mathiot 1973; Rea 1998). This term includes wild, domesticated, and even feral animals, the latter being labeled as *misciñ*, a loan word derived from the Spanish *mesteño*, in much the same way that the American English term *mustang* is derived from the same cognate. As Rea (1997) rightly observed, all of these terms are “unequivocally utilitarian rather than morphological” in nature, describing the organism’s condition based on access for use, rather than on anatomical, physiological, or evolutionary similarities.

At the same time that the O’odham lexicon suggests a relatively positive view toward wild/unmanaged species, a countervailing sentiment is embedded in O’odham creation and emergence narratives, especially in those within which Coyote the Trickster appears. In these narratives, certain domesticated (as well as wild) plants are given to the O’odham at the time of their emergence as a distinctive culture. However, in subsequent episodes of these mythic narratives, certain domesticated plants that were perfectly useful in every way were spoiled by neglect, laziness, greed, or misuse at the hand of Coyote the Trickster. They then “degenerate” into the forms that botanists recognize today as wild relative crops. O’odham narratives suggest that this degeneration process resulted in marginally-useful wild forms of tobacco, devil’s claw, and gourds that grow naturally in Sonoran Desert, for these are considered inferior to their domesticated kin (Nabhan 1982).

In essence, these narratives suggest that without appropriate human management, these domesticated species go feral and then lose some of their economically-important traits. One can make a loose and very limited comparison with the Judeo-Christian-Moslem narratives which suggest a “fall from grace” that contaminated the perfect plants and animals (including humans) with sins, flaws, or imperfections. As I will explain in the next section, these degenerated crop relatives are among those that the O’odham label as Coyote’s plants, because they have been tainted by his foolhardiness and negligence.

In contrast to O’odham agriculturalists, the Comcáac hunter-gatherers do not necessarily place such pejorative connotations on wild relatives of crops that grow without human management in the desert, nor on other wild plants and invertebrates associated with Coyote. As Cathy Moser Marlett (pers. comm.) has suggested to me, the narratives

she remembers from growing up among the Seri often treat him as a buffoon who is easily tricked rather than as the Trickster *per se*:

“... the coyote is greedy and takes some things as his own because he thinks it is pretty or nice (as humorously noted by others, it is NOT [nice], i.e., not the real thing), so it is rather funny that he ends up with something inferior.”

By inferior items, Cathy Moser Marlett refers to lifeforms that appear miniaturized or minor in value compared to other, more commonly used or seen ones. These lifeforms may have meager fat and meat, soapier flavors, or smaller bodies than their counterparts, which are named by primary lexemes, even when these counterparts are also wild species.

Over many years of meals with the Comcáac, some of them have hinted to me that a few domesticated species such as beef, wheat, peas, and chickpeas are of inferior value when compared to wild species in both flavor and texture (However, Cathy Moser Marlett does not sense that this can be inferred across the board). For example, the domesticated chickpea (*Cicer arietinum* L.) introduced by Jesuit missionaries to the Sonoran desert is called *paar icomitin*, ‘the padre’s ironwood seed’ and the domesticated pea (*Pisum sativum* L.) is called *paar icomible*, ‘padre’s mesquite seeds’ (Felger and Moser 1985). Although somewhat similar in appearance to the seeds of the wild ironwood and mesquite that historically sustained the Comcáac, these domesticated legumes must be sown, weeded, irrigated, and uprooted to obtain a similar food product. In contrast, mesquite and ironwood grow on their own, without human intervention, and their pods and seeds are simply harvested.

Curiously, the term the Comcáac use for ‘domesticated’—*quixz*—is etymologically derived from their term that means both pet and parasite, *iixz* (Moser and Marlett 2005). In fact, at least eight ectoparasites on particular species or genera of animals that are economically important to the Comcáac include the term *iixz*, ‘pet or parasite’ in their folk binomials (Moser and Marlett 2005). In contrast, the closest term used by the Comcáac for ‘wild’—*catol*—also means fearless, uncivilized, or untamed. This sentiment is found embedded in their compound lexeme, *yequim catoli*, which refers to their Yaqui or Yoeme neighbors to the south, who have remained undefeated and defiant of Spanish and Mexican control in their territory. There is thus the positive connotation in this term

that someone described as *catol* has not been subjugated or dominated, but lives with an unbroken spirit.

Thus, the lexicons of both the Comcáac and the O’odham reveal positive values associated with wildness. However, the O’odham place more value in domesticated plants and animals, whereas the Comcáac suggest relationships among tamed or domesticated organisms and parasites. One might speculate that both cultigens and parasites demand human energy in return for their products. The O’odham—whose economy has perhaps been based on balancing domesticated and wild resources for their survival in the desert for over four millennia (Mabry 2008) seem to treat some wild relatives of crops and feral animals with ambivalence. I suggest that an association with Coyote may be linked to the Comcáac and O’odham perceptions of wild and domesticated resources.

Coyote-Tainted Organisms and Their Significance

In both the Comcáac and O’odham cultures, the ethnobiological lexicon includes organisms that have been associated with Coyote the Trickster or the Tricked (Tables 3 and 4). However, there is a key difference among these organisms in the two cultures. Of the nine ethnotaxa of plants and invertebrates associated with Coyote by the Comcáac, none are wild relatives of crops. In contrast, half of the six ethnotaxa of plants affiliated with Coyote by the O’odham are wild relatives of crops (3) and the others are either dimin-

Table 3. Secondary lexemes used by the O’odham that refer to Coyote the Trickster.

O’odham Ethnotaxon	Scientific name	Traits	Untainted Analog
<i>Ban ’ihug-ga,</i> <i>Ban xuuxk</i>	<i>Proboscidea altheafolia</i>	Dried fruit’s claws too small for basket fiber	<i>Proboscidea parviflora</i> var. <i>hohokamiana</i> *
<i>Ban viiv-ga, Itahes</i>	<i>Nicotiana clevelandii</i> and/or <i>N. trigonophylla</i> (current name?)	High nornicotine content, too harsh to smoke	<i>Nicotiana tabacum</i> * & <i>N. rustica</i> *
<i>Baaan ’auppa-ga</i>	<i>Acourtia nana</i>	Plants too small to offer timber, beams	<i>Populus fremontii</i> #
<i>Ban bavi, Ban cexenig,</i> <i>Cepulina bavi</i>	<i>Phaseolus acutifolius</i> var. <i>tenuifolius</i> & <i>P. filiformis</i>	Beans too small, pop out of pods	<i>Phaseolus acutifolius</i> var. <i>acutifolius</i> *
<i>Ban cepla, Ban ha-mauppa, Baaban ha-’iiswigi, Ban cekida</i>	<i>Mammillaria thornberi</i> & <i>M. grahamii</i>	Fruit too small, too few	<i>Echinocereus fasciculatus</i> #, <i>E. fendleri</i> , & <i>E. Fasciculatus</i>
<i>Ban toki</i>	<i>Gossypium thurberi</i>	Barely any cotton in boll	<i>Gossypium hirsutum</i> var. <i>punctum</i>

* = domesticated species, # = historically-cultivated species.

Table 4. Secondary lexemes used by the Comcáac that refer to Coyote the Tricked.

Comcáac ethnotaxon	Scientific name	Traits	Inferior Analog
<i>Oot asáac</i>	<i>Myceroperca jordani</i>	A large grouper called son of Coyote, troublesome, lacking in edible meat and fat	<i>Epinephelus itajara</i> & <i>E. labriformis</i>
<i>Oot icáanaj</i>	<i>Rypticus bicolor</i> & <i>R. nigriprimis</i>	Smaller and “soapier” than giant groupers	<i>Epinephelus itajara</i> & <i>E. labriformis</i>
<i>Oot iháxöl</i>	Not known	Smaller, rarer and less edible than several commercially-harvested clams	<i>Agropecten circularis</i>
<i>Oot ijöéene</i>	<i>Passiflora arida</i>	Disagreeable taste of small fruit	<i>Passiflora palmeri</i>
<i>Oot iqéépl</i>	<i>Petrolisthes armatus</i>	Smaller than the most common porcelain crab	<i>Petrolisthes cintipes</i>
<i>Oot iquéjüc</i>	<i>Jatropha cinerea</i>	Fuel wood too dry to light well and produces too much smoke; basketry fiber not pliant	<i>Jatropha cuneata</i>
<i>Oot ixpaléemelc</i>	<i>Olivella dama</i>	Half the length of those used by Indian artisans	<i>Oliva incrassate</i> & <i>O. spicata</i>
<i>Oot izámt</i>	<i>Cronius ruber</i>	Miniature of blue-eating crab	<i>Calinectes bellicosus</i> & <i>C. arctuatus</i>
<i>Oot yacmolca</i>	<i>Morum tuberculosum</i>	A tiny helmet shell, too small to use as shaman amulet or in necklaces	<i>Cassis</i> spp.

tive look-alikes or close kin to other economically-important plants. In neither case are we sure that any of these taxa are ecological associates of *Canis latrans*.

In both languages, Coyote’s biotas are smaller, less useful or somehow inferior compared to their counterparts named with primary lexemes. As Felger and Moser (1985:53) have summarized for the Comcáac, “false items and things of little use or value were commonly associated with coyote [including] *Bursera microphylla* A. Gray, *Jatropha cinerea* and *Passiflora arida*.” For instance, the Comcáac call the ashy limber-bush (*Jatropha cinerea* (Ortega) Müll. Arg.) by the nickname ***Oot iquéjüc*** (‘Coyote’s firewood’) because its dead, dried branches are nearly worthless as fuel (Felger and Moser 1985). Similarly, ‘Coyote’s passion vine’ (*Passiflora arida* (Mast. & Rose) Killip) produces fruit with a disagreeable taste compared to those of other wild passion vines. Likewise, the O’odham call a desert-holly (*Acourtia nana* (A. Gray) Reveal & King) by the name ***Baabán auppá-ga*** (‘Coyote’s cottonwood’) because its small prickly leaves superficially resemble cottonwood seedlings. When Gila River Pima elder George Kyyitan once saw a patch of desert-holly, he exclaimed, “Ha ***Baabán auppá-ga!*** Can’t make

no house with it ... no beams with it; it's good for nothing, just like the owner [Coyote]" (Rea 1998).

A similar commentary has been made by Tohono and Hia C-ed O'odham elders about the wild devil's claw that Coyote is said to vomit up after eating (Nabhan 1982). Sometimes called *Ban xuuxk* ('Coyote's shoe or sandal') because of the shape of its green fruit, this desert plant is a relative of one that the O'odham themselves domesticated in historic times for its exceptional basketry fiber (Nabhan and Rea 1987). While the domesticated form is called *'ihug*, both its wild progenitor and a related wild species are commonly called *Ban 'ihug-ga* ('Coyote's devil's claws'). According to Tohono O'odham lore, "those other ones are *Ban 'ihuga-ga* because Coyote left them out in the desert, uncared for. Now they are no good for making baskets with—those fibers are too small, too brittle. They just snap. You can't make anything out of them."

Two O'odham stories about Coyote's tobacco make a similar moral point—that crops given to their ancestors must be cared for, or else Coyote will get them, neglect or defile them, and the resulting feral forms will be degenerate. In one story, Coyote's carelessness in sowing, singing to, and tending maize resulted in it being transformed into Coyote's tobacco (Saxton and Saxton 1973). In a second narrative, Coyote stole sacred tobacco from the grave of a mythic woman and tried to use it in a sacred smokehouse without sharing it with others; that is when it degenerated into a wild tobacco so harsh that it is difficult to smoke (Underhill 1946).

Comcáac narratives about Coyote collected by Mary Beck Moser and Stephen Marlett (2005), Cathy Moser Marlett (pers. comm.), and by myself, suggest that Coyote's mythic character has been tricked by mirages, duped by beetles, and by rabbits. What is most interesting, however, is that none of the wild relatives of crops within Comcáac territory are referred to as Coyote's plants in their native language. Although the Comcáac may now call wild tobacco *tabaco del Coyote* in Spanish, they never do so when speaking in their own language. Lacking an agricultural heritage, such comparisons of closely-related wild and domesticated organisms may have traditionally been less engaging for the Comcáac. In at least four cases, their comparisons are sometimes with economically-important wild species. It appears that in their tradition as desert hunter-gatherers and marine fish-

ers, they have focused their humor and delight in anything in miniaturized or gigantized form, or anything of dubious value in the wild.

Discussion

Farmers and herders in many agricultural societies tell mythic narratives that speak to the value of domesticated plants and animals as cultural keystone species essential to their society's identity and survival (Harlan 1995). However, genetic manipulation of plants and animals under domestication creates organisms that some hunter-gatherer societies such as the Comcaac liken to parasites, in that they are dependant upon diverting human energy for their survival. Perhaps their lexicons and narratives offer us hilarious reminders of the sometimes parasitic aspects of the co-dependence among domesticated crops, livestock, and humans. Their underlying message may be a caution to us all: an overly-managed world with genetically-manipulated organisms dependent on human energy investment may be less interesting, less tasty, and less liberating.

The era of the Homogocene—one of overly-managed farmlands, forests, and trawled sea beds replete with invasive species—is clearly upon us, in that a larger proportion of the surface of the earth and its offshore waters is under human management than ever before in history (Jackson 1998; Vitousek et al. 1986; Watling and Norse 1998). This comparison of folk taxonomies for wild, domesticated, and feral organisms may, if nothing else, remind us that wildness has its own intrinsic value, one that all of us need to recognize and celebrate. Wildness, like diversity itself (Harmon 2002), provides humankind with benchmarks by which to measure the impacts of our actions. One remarkable legacy of Amadeo Rea's fieldwork and archival documentation is that it will provide a lasting benchmark by which future generations can measure the degree to which we have tolerated and fostered such diversity and wildness, or alternatively, suffocated it out of existence.

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