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# South American Indian Studies

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## Leadership in Lowland South America

Waud H. Kracke, Editor

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## SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

*Leadership in Lowland South America* began as a symposium, organized by Waud H. Kracke for the American Anthropological Association meetings held in Mexico City, November 1974. Plans for the papers to appear in another journal fell through when it ceased publication. Thus, these papers languished in their authors' files although everyone agreed that they contained significant data and insights into the nature of leadership in Amazonia. In the intervening years, frequent references have been made to various of these essays, based on the circulation of Xerox copies of individual papers. However, they have not been available generally. Therefore, we are pleased to be able to place this volume into the public domain.

The literature on leadership *per se* in Amazonian societies was sparse in 1974. Lévi-Strauss (1945) had described Nambiquara leadership in his classic and often cited paper. Dole (1966, 1973) had written about Kuikuru leadership. Clastres' 1974 book had been published but at the time had not yet been read by most of the participants in the symposium. Although leadership was not a central focus, Arvelo-Jimenez (1971) on the Ye'cuana, Goldman (19xx) on the Cubeo, Harner (19xx) on the Jivaro, Maybury-Lewis (19xx) on the Akwẽ-Shavante, Murphy (19xx) on the Mundurucu, Riviere (1969) on the Trio, and others each provided data on the topic.

Since 1974, several publications have added to our understanding of leadership in Amazonian societies. Based on xxx years of fieldwork, Price (1981) provided us with a more complex picture of Nambiquara leadership, arguing that it can best be understood within the domain of kinship rather than politics, although authoritarian leaders may emerge when a group is in constant danger. Kracke's (1978) multilayered description of contrasting styles of Kagwahiv leadership set a standard few others are likely to attain. Based on the work of Overing (1975) and his own fieldwork with the Amuesha, Santos Granero (1986) examined the relationship between the power of shamans and their embeddedness in economic processes. In an interesting exchange of letters published in the Correspondence column of *Man*, Erikson (1988) questioned the applicability of Santo Granero's analysis to the Cashinahua.

In addition to those already cited, many other monographs and papers have contributed to the ongoing study of leadership in Amazonia, but I leave to another time a thorough review of the literature with apologies to those whose contributions on the topic have not been acknowledged.

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# INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Waud Kracke

University of Illinois at Chicago Circle

Individual leaders play a particularly central part in the indigenous social structures of lowland South America. As in the "big man" form of organization delineated by Marshall Sahlins (1963), local groups in many of these societies are created by their leader, and continue to exist through leadership - a situation presenting something of a "type case" for Bertrand de Jouvenel's (1957) conception as constituted of groups created and maintained by the "authority" of leaders.

The topic of this symposium, therefore, arises out of a shared sense of its importance for the understanding of the societies we study. In order to understand the social organization of such societies, a recent ethnography contends (Kaplan 1975) it is essential to understand the political order. While not all the participants might agree in applying such a statement to the societies they present here, all would agree that the leader plays a part. Though these papers were prepared separately by scholars of widely different background and training, they converge on a number of themes which reflect shared theoretical interests, as well as similarities among the societies themselves, perhaps most from a combination of these two factors. In these papers, which explore the relationship between power, the styles of leaders, and their efficacy in leadership, two theoretical concerns emerge as central: One is to understand the basis for authority in the kinds of environment these societies occupy; and the other is to elucidate the context of cultural symbols, beliefs and values which defines the goals and parameters of political contention in these societies - and defines power itself.

The societies represented in this symposium vary in the exact outlines of their political organization. In some, the small local groups that form the elementary units of the social organization are relatively fluid, not strictly bounded in composition, each held together in the large part by bonds with the headman. In other cases, a headman (or pair of headmen) links together a more widely scattered set of local groups in a territorial alliance. While this leader-centered picture may be less true of the more elaborately structured Gê villages, represented in this symposium by the Suyá, factions recruited by individual leaders play a central

part here as well.

In all of these societies, an important part of the leader's function is the inhibition of fissive processes in his group, and the stimulation and regulation of cooperative activity. Given the particular importance accorded in these cultures to an even, harmonious tenor of social life, the leader promotes concord in the group, and calms dissension, maintaining a kind of homeostasis in group processes. This aspect of the leader's role is nicely illustrated by Seeger's anecdote of a Suyá *mēropakande*, faction leader, forestalling a potential brawl with an aptly timed joke. Similarly, describing the Cashinahua headman's deft handling of interpersonal relations, Kensinger observes that in his absence "the village runs less smoothly."

One question these papers address themselves to is raised by Robert Carneiro. In an environment which offers abundant cultivable land, what scarce resources does a headman command that enables him to exert control over others? Carneiro argues that the principal condition for ascendancy over others is leadership in occurring where land of exceptionally high productivity is available in a circumscribed area, as in the river bottoms occupied by riverine Tupi, but not, he contends, in the intervening expanses of tropical forest and savannah. Other scarce resources may be proposed, however. One, touched on in some of the papers, is women - or more generally (as Kaplan stresses) marital partners. A man's influence over the marital choice of his children gives him a degree of leverage over their marital partners. The strong uxori-local tendencies in certain Amazonian societies, represented in this symposium by the Cashinahua and Kagwahiv, may reflect the control a man is able to exercise, through his daughters, over his sons-in-law. Affinal relationships take on a loading of political commitment, heightening the importance of marriage alliances in lowland South American politics. Another such resource is equally interesting in its theoretical ramifications, particularly as developed by Tony Seeger and Joanna Kaplan: ceremonial knowledge and the supernatural power inherent in it.

The common theme of the papers that follow Carneiro's is an insistence that leadership and political activity must be viewed in the cultural frame that

defines the political process for participants in it. One group of papers stresses the cosmological context of politics, particularly in understanding the nature of power; the other group focuses more concretely on the uses men make of norms, beliefs, and values in expressing their political divergences and implementing their rivalries.

Three of these papers focus their attention on the cosmology of the society they discuss. The "mystical values" which Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940) refer to almost as a residual category in their discussion of African political systems, in these papers assume center stage: They define the parameters of the political system. Joanna Kaplan states most explicitly, and develops most fully, the theoretical position that "power" in a society can only be understood in terms of the cosmology that defines the very sources of that power, the basis on which political power can rest. Anthony Seeger shows how two Suyá leadership institutions, roughly opposed to each other as secular and ceremonial, are rooted in the dualistic cosmology the Suyá share with other Gê. Even the absence of political activity among the Conibo, Michael Harner suggests, reflects their cosmology - but this, he goes on to suggest, may in turn be derived from major political events of regional history.

Two papers study the relationships of shared norms and values to actual leadership and political behavior. Ken Kensinger shows how two Cashinahua factional disputes are couched in the norms of ideal conduct, and conducted in terms of resources valued in Cashinahua society. My own paper shows how the same set of Kagwahiv norms of the headman's office can be variously interpreted to justify two diverging traditions of headmanship coexisting in Kagwahiv society, which embody quite different styles and concepts of leadership.

The style of interaction manifested by leaders in many of these societies appears, at first, highly conciliatory and non-directive. An outwardly gentle demeanor and placating style, however - as both Kaplan and Kensinger stress - are not inconsistent with strong, even forceful, leadership. In his quiet manner, a headman may exercise considerable power. Baldus, in a recent ethnography of the Tapirape (1970:334-340), demonstrates a similar point with the example of the unobtrusive but powerful headman Kamairaho. Such leaders may confront their rivals in forms which, while inconspicuous to the observer, are nonetheless potent in their social context.

Several papers pick up the theme of a contrast of two styles of leadership: The leader who seeks consensus by persuasion and example, and the forceful leader who dominates his followers, or rallies a group to confrontation. Carneiro examines the distribution of

such styles. Two other groups, from different perspectives, examine such contrasting styles within a simple society - implicitly coexisting in Kagwahiv, explicit in Suyá institutions.

De Jouvenel's dichotomy - parallel to the just mentioned stylistic contrast but not identical with it - of the *dux* who creates the group and the *rex* who maintains it, also runs implicitly through many of these papers, as David Maybury-Lewis pointed out in his original discussion. Kaplan is the only one to introduce it explicitly, in explicating a point of Piaroa ideology. Her point might apply equally well to the Conibo in their collective relationship to Inca. In other papers, however, de Jouvenel's contrasting pair could well apply to the functional dichotomy between the provocative faction leader, whose faction is a group in formation, and the conciliatory leader who strives to preserve the unity and peace of the existing community.

A number of common ethnographic features stand out in the various cultures described in this symposium: the generally voluntary nature of a leader's following, even in cases where his position is in principle hereditary; the heightened importance of marriage and affinal ties for leadership in a region where agriculturally usable land is relatively plentiful; and a high value on harmonious group relations, which the leader is charged with maintaining. In those societies which do not in one form or another eschew marital combat, a sharp dichotomy is frequently seen between peacetime leadership and leadership in warfare.

The different papers in the symposium illuminate these common features from widely diverse theoretical perspectives; but all contribute to the growing theory of political anthropology. Together, they further understanding of the symbolism of power, and of the relation of symbolic expressions of power to concrete political activity and its environmental determinants.

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## NOTES

(1) These papers were originally presented in the symposium of the same title at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in Mexico City, on November 21, 1974. This was the second of a

series of symposia bringing together ethnographers working in all parts of the lowlands of northern South America around a common topic; the first, on marriage practices, was organized and later published by Kensinger (1984).

I am indebted to all the participants in the symposium, particularly the two discussants, David Maybury-Lewis of Harvard and James B. Watson of the University of Washington. Special thanks are due to Judith Shapiro for an excellent job of moderating the symposium, showing equal sensitivity to group processes in the audience, the requirements of presentation, and impinging events; and for her contribution of work and effort to the symposium, including reading one of the papers. I am also indebted to her for valuable suggestions and comments on this introductory statement.

# FACTORS FAVORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN AMAZONIA

Robert L. Carneiro

American Museum of Natural History

Political leadership does not invariably exist in primitive society. Some societies lack any form of political organization. The Amahuaca of eastern Peru, for example, have no headmen and indeed would resent anyone who attempted to assume the role. In Amazonia as elsewhere, political leadership arises out of a certain set of circumstances. Chieftainship<sup>1</sup> is a function of conditions that require, or at least benefit from, political leadership. When these conditions are present, chieftainship comes into being.

The conditions that give rise to chieftainship in small, simple societies<sup>2</sup> are related primarily to two spheres of social life: subsistence and warfare. In this paper, I would like to weigh the relative effects of these two factors in generating political leadership in Amazonia.

Let us first look at subsistence. The mode of subsistence common in Amazonia does not require chiefly supervision. The slash-and-burn cultivation of manioc, the principal subsistence activity of the region, can be carried out quite adequately by individual families. Accordingly, in most Tropical Forest tribes, the chief plays no special role in agriculture.

Some slight benefit may be gained, however, from the coordination of agricultural activities, and among a few tribes, such as the Kamayurá, Shavante, Akawaio, Tukano, and Tuparí, the chief directs villagers in clearing and planting their gardens.<sup>3</sup> Tuparí men even help cultivate the chief's garden, but this fact does not by itself indicate that the chief has any substantial authority. Since a Tuparí chief is responsible for providing food and drink for communal feasts, which are frequently held, one can argue that when the men of the village work his gardens they are really working for themselves (Caspar 1956:107). It seems fair to say that among neither the Tuparí nor the other tribes cited above had the chief gained any large measure of authority by directing certain phases of agriculture.

Turning to other aspects of subsistence, we may note that most day-to-day fishing in Amazonia is done by individuals or by small parties which require no direction by the chief. Fish poisoning expeditions, which often involve many men, do require some organization. But, as I have seen among the Kuikuru, a fish poisoning expedition can be organized by any

man. It may be the task of the chief, however, to distribute the catch after it is brought back to the village.

At this point we need to consider the phenomenon of chiefly redistribution. As used by most writers, "redistribution" refers to the temporary acquisition of crops, game, or fish by the chief from producing individuals and the subsequent parceling out of them to members of the society.

In this sense, chiefly redistribution cannot be said to be very widespread in Amazonia. To be sure, a number of instances of it are on record. Thus, according to Father Gumilla, each Otomac chief "shares in common and divides both the labor and its fruits among the whole, the same arrangement holding good with their fish, turtle, cayman, and whatever else they obtain for food" (quoted in Roth 1924:576). And among some Gê-speaking groups of central Brazil, such as the Xikrín (Frikel 1968:94) and Shavante (Maybury-Lewis 1967:201-202), all large game animals caught are turned over to the chief, who supervises the cutting up of the meat, and directs its redistribution to all nuclear families in the village so that each one gets an equal share.

Theorists have recently attributed a great deal of political importance to redistribution. Indeed, redistribution is sometimes seen as the means by which weak headmen become strong chiefs. Thus, in a recent article, Mark La Gory (1975:73) asserts that "the greater the distributive activities of the chief, the greater his status and authority...."

But in my opinion, this view is erroneous. Redistribution does not seem to me to be on the main road of political evolution. Rather, it is, a dead end, a blind alley. It does not hold the key to any major development of political authority. What a chief may gain from redistribution is esteem and affection, but not power. Power accrues to him when he ceases to be a redistributor and becomes an accumulator.

As long as a chief merely returns all he has collected, he gains nothing tangible in wealth or power. Only when he begins to keep most of what he collects, sharing solely with his henchmen and supporters, does his power augment to any significant degree. The Otomac chief who divided "both the labor and its fruits among the whole" did not approach in power the Manasí chief of the Mojos plain who,



according to Métraux (1942:129), "received the first fruits of the crops and a share of all game and fish brought into the village, " but apparently returned nothing.<sup>4</sup>

The power of a chief to appropriate food does not, however, flow automatically from his right to collect and distribute it. When the members of a village allow a chief to equalize each family's share of meat or fish it is because, in the long run, they benefit from it. But they will not willingly suffer the same chief to keep the lion's share of food for himself. Before he can do so, he must acquire additional power from some other source. And in Amazonia, as elsewhere, the power of a chief to appropriate part of the society's food derived from his frequent and successful participation in warfare. Accordingly it is to the military role of the chief and its political consequences that we now turn.

In several Amazonian societies the principal function of the chief is to lead the village in war. This is true of the Yanomamō today, and it was true of such peoples as the Island Caribs and the Tupinambá, four hundred years ago. Of the Caribs, Bryan Edwards wrote that "in these times of peace [they]... admitted of no supremacy but that of nature... [but] in war, experience had taught them that subordination was as requisite as courage; they therefore elected their captains in their general assemblies with great solemnity..." (Edwards 1801:49). Moreover, Island Carib war chiefs had considerable authority, so that, according to Father Rochefort, "in the presence of the island cacique no man speaks if he do not ask or command him to do it" (quoted in Roth 1924:568).

The powers assumed by Amazonian chiefs during wartime often far exceed those they could exercise in times of peace. An example of this is the power of life and death. The German naturalist Carl Philipp von Martius was once walking through the forests of the northwest Amazon with a Miranha chief when they came upon a skeleton tied to a tree. The chief remarked that it was one of his own men whom he had ordered shot to death with arrows for failing to summon allies when ordered to do so in the face of an impending attack by the Omagua (Tylor 1916:431). Only in wartime could the Miranha chief wield such power.

The lapsing of a chief's war powers once hostilities are over is reported for other warring tribes. Gabriel Soares de Souza, after describing the powers of a Tupinambá chief during war, drew the contrast by noting that "in peacetime each person does what his appetite commands" (quoted in Fernandes 1963:329).

Nevertheless, a certain measure of prestige, if not full authority, tended to remain with the chief after the fighting had ceased. Noting that after a war an

Island Carib *ouboutou* or principal cacique "hath no authority but only on his own island," Father Rochefort added, "true it is that if he hath behaved himself gallantly in his enterprise he is ever after highly respected in all the islands (quoted in Roth 1924:573). The same was true of a Tupinambá chief. Sixteenth century chiefs like Cunhambebe, Japi-açu, and Abati-Poçanga, who had successfully led the combined forces of several villages in war, gained a permanent renown that extended many miles beyond the borders of their own villages (Fernandes 1963:330).<sup>5</sup>

But Island Carib and Tupinambá chiefs, though they might assume command of the warriors of several villages in time of war, were basically chiefs of single autonomous villages. And no chief, in Amazonia or elsewhere, ever attained great power as long as his authority was restricted to a single village. Only when it extended over a number of villages did the magnitude of his power increase appreciably. This step in political evolution occurred in two areas of Amazonia: along the Amazon River itself, and in the Mojos plain of what is now Bolivia. Amazon River tribes which attained multi-village chiefdoms included the Omagua, Manao, and Tapajó, while in the Mojos plain chiefdoms developed among the Mojo, Bauré, Manasí, and Cayuvava.

These chiefdoms did not long survive white contact, and so the details of their organization never became known. But their existence is indisputable. Thus, Gaspar de Carvajal, chronicler of Francisco de Orellana's descent of the Amazon in 1542, wrote as follows:

...we arrived in the provinces belonging to Machiparo [apparently an Omagua chief], who is a very great overlord and one having many people under him.... This Machiparo has his headquarters quite near the river upon a small hill and holds sway over many settlements and very large ones... (Medina 1934:190).

De Carvajal later added:

... it took us [two days and two nights] ... to get out of the territory occupied by the subjects of this great overlord..., which in the opinion of all extended for more than eighty leagues,... being all inhabited, for there was not from village to village [in most cases] a crossbow shot, and the one which was farthest [removed from the next] was not half a league away, and there was one settlement that stretched for five leagues without there

intervening any space from house to house, which was a marvelous thing to behold... (Medina 1934:198).

And the chiefdom of Machiparo was by no means unique. De Carvajal cites others, such as those of Omagua, Oníguayal, and Paguana (Medina 1934:200, 199, 202).

While the chiefdoms of the Mojos plain may not have attained quite the same scale as those along the Amazon, the power of their political leaders was nonetheless substantially greater than that of the typical Tropical Forest chief. A passage from Alfred Métraux (1942:129) about the Manasí exemplified the powers and privileges of a chief in the Mojos area:

Nobody dared leave the village without the chief's permission. Young people never sat in his presence, but stood respectfully at a distance. Commoners addressed the chief in a very formal manner.... The main chief lived in a huge house built by the people in the middle of the plaza. Each chief had two large fields which were tilled by his subjects.

And, as we noted earlier of the Manasí chief:

He received the first fruits of the crops and a share of all game and fish brought into the village. Dead chiefs were buried with special ceremonies and amidst general laments.

The question remains, what special conditions were present along the Amazon River and in the Mojos plain that enabled multi-village chiefdoms to arise there when they did not do so in other parts of Amazonia? Elsewhere (Carneiro 1970:736-737) I have argued that these special conditions were, for the Amazon proper, the existence of a great concentration of food resources along a narrow margin of the river. Let us look more closely at this environment and at its effects on political development.

The land forming the banks of the Amazon and the islands in the rivers, called *várzea*, had its fertility replenished every year at flood time by the deposition of fresh layers of sediment. Thus, *várzea* land provided excellent conditions for crop growth, but even more important, it permitted cultivation year after year. Accordingly, it was more desirable as farm land than the surrounding *terra firme* that never flooded.<sup>6</sup> But beyond its value for cultivation, possession of *várzea* land allowed access to the enormous riverine food resources - fish, turtles, turtle eggs, manatees,

caymans, etc. - found in the waters of the Amazon.<sup>7</sup>

The availability of food in such prodigious quantities drew many people to the banks of the Amazon. We need only recall de Carvajal's statement that "there was not from village to village... a cross-bow shot." Moreover, as a coveted element in limited supply, river frontage was intensely fought over. For example, according to de Carvajal, Machiparo and one of his allies joined forces to repel attacks from "other overlords who are [located] inland, ...[and] come each day to drive them from their homes" (Medina 1934:190).

The Mojos plain of Bolivia, which we need not pause here to examine, also manifested conditions of resource concentration, dense population, and competition over land, and it, too, gave rise to chiefdoms (Denevan 1966:43-50, 104-105, 108-110).

Historical documentation of the evolution of Amazonia chiefdoms out of autonomous villages is not available since the transformation occurred before Europeans arrived. Still, we can venture to reconstruct how the process took place.

The first agricultural Indians drawn to Amazon River frontage no doubt found plenty of land to go around. They settled along the river in autonomous villages, and when they warred with each other, which was probably infrequently, they fought over such things as murder, witchcraft, and the stealing of women, but not over land. However, as population grew, crowding began and choice river frontage came into short supply. As this occurred, warfare became redirected to the acquisition of land.

With peoples crowding one another along the river, those villages which suffered defeat in war no longer found it feasible to move out of range of their stronger enemies. Either because easy refuge could no longer be found in the hinterlands or because river frontage was too highly prized to leave, defeated villages remained in place and suffered the consequences. They might be allowed to exploit their old territory, but now they had to work harder in order to extract a surplus of food from it with which to pay a tribute in kind to their conquerors. By such acts of subordination of one village to another, the level of village autonomy was transcended and multi-village chiefdoms established.

That the paramount leaders of Amazon River chiefdoms mentioned by de Carvajal, men like Machiparo, Omagua, Oníguayal, and Paguana, were preeminently military leaders seems very likely. It was by force of arms that they or their predecessors had gained the power and prestige that characterized them when they were first encountered by Orellana. The paramount chiefs of the Mojos plain seem to have arisen the same way. Thus, drawing on the early Jesuit



sources, Métraux (1942:69, 128-129) observed that "during a war... [Mojo and Bauré] chiefs assumed unrestricted power," and noted further that before a Manasí heir apparently could assume the office of chief, he "had first to demonstrate his worth by leading a war party."

As powerful as Amazon and Mojos chieftains seem to have been, they probably failed to match in strength, wealth, or pomp the more prominent chiefs of the Caribbean coast or the interior highland valleys of Colombia. And it is to these areas, with their even more intense wars of conquest, that one would turn to piece together the next steps in the political evolution of native South America.<sup>8</sup>

Taken as a whole, the continent reveals the full spectrum of political development. In the pages of its history and ethnography one can go from entirely leaderless societies like the Amahuaca, to the modest headmen of most autonomous Tropical Forest villages, to the stronger village chiefs of the Island Caribs and Tupinambá, to the multi-village chiefdoms of the Mojos plain and the somewhat larger chiefdoms of the Amazon River. Then, going north and west, one encounters the highly developed chiefdoms of the Circum-Caribbean area, approaches true monarchy in the Zipa and Zaque of the Chibcha realm, and culminates in the might and splendor of the ruler of the Inca empire.

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## NOTES

(1) For convenience, I am using the term "chieftainship" here to include headmanship as well, although I recognize the trend in anthropology to use "headman" to refer to the political leader of an autonomous village, and to reserve the term "chief" for the paramount leader of an aggregate of villages, that is, a chiefdom.

(2) As societies get larger, though, and villages come to include several hundred persons, the need for coordinating their activities may, in and of itself, call forth political leadership; or, if already present, may strengthen it (Carneiro 1967). But at the level of population of most Amazonian villages - several dozen people instead of several hundred - this factor was scarcely operative.

(3) Lacking the necessary historical depth for these societies, we cannot, of course, be sure that the power of the chief to direct agriculture arose from a perception of the advantage that would accrue to the society were he to exercise such control. The power of the chief to direct clearing and planting may be instead a *residue* of a once greater power originally acquired through participation in warfare but now diminished because of the partial or total absence of war.

(4) Anthropologists have generally failed to distinguish between distribution and redistribution. When a chief merely divides up and hands out a catch of fish

or game that has been brought to the village, without first having become owner of it himself, he is merely a distributor. Only if the food becomes his property in some real sense, and is then parceled out by him to the people of the village, is he acting as a redistributor. This distinction seems to me reflect a genuine difference which should not be lost sight of.

(5) A more tangible advantage accruing to a Tupinambá chief was his being able to have substantially more wives than anyone else. Indeed, the 30 wives attributed to some Tupinambá chiefs (Métraux 1948:112) is the largest number of spouses reported for any Tropical Forest tribe.

(6) However, some *terra firme* must always have been planted, or at least held in reserve for planting, since there are years (1975 was one of them) when the Amazon is slow in reaching low water level after the rains have ceased, and *várzea* land stays underwater too long to permit harvesting a crop that might be planted.

(7) Two examples may be cited to convey some idea of the abundance of riverine resources in the Amazon. The expedition of Pedro de Ursua, which descended the river in 1560, saw in the village of Machiparo palisaded ponds enclosing 6,000 or 7,000 turtles that were being kept for food (Ursua 1861:31). Manatees were once so numerous in the Amazon that the Dutch sent out specially fitted ships from Amsterdam to butcher them and transport the salted meat to various Caribbean islands to feed workers on sugar plantations (Bertram and Bertram 1966:183).

(8) A good picture of the warring chiefdoms of the Cauca valley of Colombia at the time the Spaniards arrived is to be found in Trimbom (1949).

# KAGWAHIV HEADMANSHIP IN PEACE AND WAR<sup>1</sup>

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## 1.

Leadership styles in the Amazon Basin vary over a strikingly wide range, from the domination by terror which Apewen is described by Maybury-Lewis (1965 ch. 11; 1967) as exercising over his Shavante village to the gentle, carefully diplomatic elicitation of consensus that is more frequently described among Amazonian leaders, and which was even Apewen's public style (1967:199-204). These contrasting styles sometimes appear in leaders of the same cultural groups, as between the even more blatantly tyrannical Shamatari headman Mōawā and the "unobtrusive" headman of a nearby Yanomamō village, Kāobawā, "who leads more by example than by threats and coercion" (Chagnon 1974:162ff; 1969:15). Among Tupi-Guarani speaking groups, Carneiro has documented the power that some Tupinambá and riverine Tupi chiefs gained during war, sometimes over several villages<sup>2</sup> - only to dissipate in time of peace: "Even when he opens a clearing with the assistance of relatives," Soares de Souza (1938; quoted in Métraux 1948:114) says of Tupinambá chiefs, "he is the first to put his hand to the task."

It is my argument here that different styles of leadership can be found side by side in the same society, in coexisting yet competing implicit traditions or ideologies of leadership based on variant interpretations of the norms of headmanship. Carneiro, in his paper in this symposium, has argued that active warfare favors a domineering style of leadership and a hierarchically structured form of relationship among headmen, while more peaceful conditions with less competitive pressure on resources permits a more gentle, consensual and encouraging style of leadership and a more equal relationship among headmen. The coexistence, within a society, of *both* notions of headmanship, in separate traditions persisting side by side, would permit a culture rapid adaptation to new conditions. More authoritarian headmen, perhaps less successful in time of peace, might find their authority extended in war through their greater effectiveness under such conditions; then when peace is restored - whether through obliteration of enemies, migration to more sparsely populated areas, or more recently imposed by mightier powers - such a leader might sink back into the position of a cantankerous would-be

autocrat over a dwindling local group, perhaps passing on to a successor the vestigial pretension to a paramount authority over other headmen.

Such a process, I shall argue, seems to have operated among the Kagwahiv - or at any rate, the postulation of such a process would account very well for current developments, for changes that have taken place from the leadership situation at the time of pacification and before it down to the present day. The Kagwahiv do not *recognize* divergent traditions of leadership, and certainly do not differentiate between war chiefs and peacetime headmen; but such divergent traditions assert themselves, I shall show, through variant interpretations of the generally accepted norms of headmanship - rather in the manner of the difference between the Gumlao and Gumsa traditions which Leach (1954) showed in Highland Burma, though the Kagwahiv traditions are not so clearly delineated, not named or given such explicit recognition.

The Kagwahiv<sup>3</sup> are a Central Tupi tribe currently occupying the East bank of the Madeira and Machado Rivers of Amazonas and Rondônia, Brazil. Close linguistic relationship with the Urubu of near-coastal Maranhão (Aryon Rodrigues, personal communication)<sup>4</sup> and other internal evidence suggests a coastal origin and a migration up the Amazon, perhaps in flight from the Portuguese. They have been in peaceful contact for only a little over fifty years, since a classic pacification by Nimuendaju, yet already show a transition in style of headmanship similar to what I have suggested. Pre-pacification leadership featured certain headmen - whom I shall call chiefs - who stood out among the headmen in a region, and took active and firm direction over the others in time of war, while the currently most successful headmen are unobtrusive, non-directive men who seek out the group's consensus, and who assert the equality of headmen with one another.

In this paper, I will investigate the mechanism of such a transformation. I will suggest that there has been no real change in the conceptualization of leadership in Kagwahiv society, nor in the norms governing it. Both contradictory ideologies coexisted before pacification, I will argue, as they continue to coexist today. They are not explicitly declared, but are implicitly expressed in variant expressions of the generally

agreed upon norms governing Kagwahiv headmanship. What determines which type of leadership will predominate at any given period in time in Kagwahiv history is not any total consensus of the tribe on the legitimacy of one or the other concept of leadership, but rather the particular conditions that prevail at that point in time, favoring the current success of one or the other type of leadership.

## 2.

Fifty years ago, the Kagwahiv were a warlike group of headhunters. Centuries of being at bay - driven up the Amazon by the Portuguese, and further Westward from the Tapajós by the Mundurucu - intensified the warlike tendencies of their coastal ancestors, coastal Tupi like the Tupinambá or Tupinikin. The *akangwéra-toryva*, "trophy-head festival," celebrating the acquisition of an enemy head, was one of the central festivities of the culture. The name under which they were generally known - Parintintin, perhaps given them by their Mundurucu enemies, since it contains the Mundurucu prefix for "enemy people" - struck fear into Brazilian rubber gatherers for hundreds of miles along the rubber-rich Madeira from the 1850s, when they first appeared on the Madeira, to 1923.

Since Nimuendaju pacified them in 1922, conditions have changed considerably. The head-trophy festival, once a focal ceremony that brought people together from all over the region, gradually ceased to be performed. Taking an enemy head was once a prerequisite for sponsoring an *akangwéra-toryva* and so climbing the status ladder; now the row of dried heads hanging from the rafters has given way as a status symbol to umbrellas, or occasionally a transistor radio or phonograph.

Conditions have changed for the Kagwahiv; yet the structure of the local group, and the corresponding structural definition of the headman's role, remain quite similar to what they were 50 years ago. Local groups are perhaps a little smaller than they used to be - notably three or four nuclear families instead of seven or eight - but they have always been small and widely scattered along tributaries to the Madeira. As traditionally, they are still mobile, though they do not move quite as often as they did in the days of warfare when they moved every five or ten years; and each local group is still quite autonomous under its headman.

Most importantly, the core of each local group - the core of each headman's following - consists still of the headman's sons-in-law. Though a young man when he marries for the first time is for-

mally committed only to five years or so of bride-service to his father-in-law, in practice - if a man likes his father-in-law's leadership and group, and does not have better prospects elsewhere - he will commonly remain with his father-in-law well after finishing his term of bride-service. He may even stay until the retirement or death of the old man, or even stay on afterward - if, as often happened, the old man's son took over the group after him - giving allegiance to the wife's brother.<sup>5</sup> Uxorilocal residence, then - and obligation to one's wife's father and brothers - forms the backbone of Kagwahiv political authority.

But, in the old days as now, the structural core of sons-in-law, or of sister's husbands, would only be a nucleus of a headman's following. A really successful leader would be bound to attract followers from a broader constituency of lineal relatives not bound to him by the structural link of marriage. The number of these voluntary followers might fluctuate from time to time, with major shifts around the times a group moved from one place to another, and at any moment constituted a rough measure of the leader's success.

The headman's formal duties to his group also seem, from informants' accounts, much the same as they were before pacification. First, a headman should give or distribute goods (*omã'ê*) - a requirement more specifically embodied in an explicit code of redistribution, whereby the headman is responsible for dividing among his group any large catch of game or fish a follower makes. A headman tends to be one of the two cosponsors of any *festa*, providing the food and guiding its preparation. The headman oversees or directs work - often formulated now in the Portuguese, *manda trabalhar* - including the specific duty of assigning each adult man in the group to a spot in the jungle for clearing his *roça* (slash-and-burn field). He should be an example of proper, serious adult masculine behavior, working hard and not playing too much. Finally, it is the headman who is charged with watching over (*gwepiakatu*) the settlement, taking care of the fruit trees that border it, its *roças*, and its residents. He makes sure the house and grounds are well cleaned and cleared and the fields weeded, mediates disputes between his followers, and looks after their welfare.

There are several terms for headman, which refer to different aspects of the role. The most common is *nhande-ruvihav*, probably derived from *nhande rúva*, "our father," plus a suffix indicating profession. He is also referred to as *mborerekwára*, "he who binds together." But there is no terminological distinction of different types of leader, except for the very specialized *nhimboyapat*, the individual who organizes and leads a war party.

### 3.

These formal norms or regulations governing a headman's duties toward his followers are strongly agreed upon by the Kagwahiv I have talked to; yet their realization in practice varies considerably. Indeed, the headmen I am acquainted with, and others I have heard about, differ dramatically from one another in style of leadership, and in their conceptualization of the headman's role. Of four relatively successful headmen I have met, two - one quite young, one well advanced in years - fit perfectly into the image of the typical Amazonian leader painted for us by Anthony Leeds (1969), Irving Goldman (1963), or Gertrude Dole (1966): They are non-directive, conciliatory leaders who feel out a group consensus before they act, and lead by persuasion, not compulsion. But two other elder headmen are just the reverse: autocratic, demanding, and punitive in enforcing their commands. One of them, in addition, claims to be a kind of paramount chief, with authority over other headmen. One young would-be headman would also aspire to such a claim if he had followers to base it on.<sup>6</sup> While perhaps somewhat less popular than their more consensually oriented colleagues, these minor despots do seem to possess some legitimacy. They claim allegiance to the same norms that the rest of the headmen uphold, but offer their own interpretations of them - which their followers for the most part accept. Each of these kinds of leaders - each "school" as they might be called, though they do not think of themselves as ranged into two camps this way - consider themselves to be embodying the traditional norms properly, and appeal to precedents in past leaders; but the consensual leaders in particular look on the others as flagrantly overstepping their traditional roles, while the more commanding headmen look down on their consensual colleagues as rather weak and minor headmen. In the remainder of this paper I will first look at how these differences are expressed in differing interpretations of the common norms I have referred to, and then discuss historical shifts in the relative prominence of the two kinds of leader as an adaptation to changing conditions.

#### A. The Obligations of Sons-in-law: Contractual or Inherent?

The variant interpretations begin at the very foundation of the Kagwahiv conception of authority, with the relationship between a father-in-law and his daughter's husband. All agree that a newly married man owes service and subservience to his bride's father, and that his bride-service constitutes the model and foundation of authority in the local group. What they differ on is the nature and duration of the son-in-

law's obligation to his father in law. An elderly and forceful representative of the authoritarian school of leadership, Homero, considers this service and subservience an inherent and enduring aspect of the relationship of a son-in-law to his father-in-law; while other headmen (and even Homero's own son-in-law) take the son-in-law's duties to his father-in-law to be merely part of the bride service contract, terminated when the bride-service is over after five years or so. For these, the relationship between father-in-law and son-in-law, once the bride-service is done and the bride "paid for," reverts to one of mutual exchange, and any continued allegiance of the son-in-law to his father-in-law is purely voluntary.

This divergence in interpretation of the nature and duration of the son-in-law's obligations shows up strikingly in two views on the subject of sister-exchange marriages. Homero's son-in-law claimed that in such a marriage neither man had to perform bride-service: Each had paid adequately for her in ceding a sister to his wife's brother. Homero, on the other hand, insisted that each man still was obliged to do the service that was an ineradicable - and interminable - part of the son-in-law's obligation to his wife's father. The former is consistent with a strictly contractual construction of the nature of the obligation, the latter with an intrinsic view of it.

#### B. Distribution of game

The variations in interpretation of this fundamental relationship lead to equally significant differences in interpretation of the other norms of headmanship. The headman's duty of dividing game, for example, is taken by many as an obligation on the part of the headman to provide for all of his followers, and provide for them equally. He is aided in this task - according to this view - by his followers or sons-in-law who bring him game they have caught so that he can distribute it to the rest of the group. Jovenil, a young consensually-oriented headman, sees it this way, and he takes very much to heart his duty to know how to divide game *fairly*. Homero, though, sees it differently. He considers it to be his followers' inherent obligation to *him* to yield up their catch to him. He may then allot the meat to the families of his followers, but it is his meat to allot; once when I had bought meat directly from the hunter who had bagged it and delivered it to me, I was made to know that I should have paid Homero for it; it was *his* meat, because it was his adherent who had shot it.

#### C. Hospitality

Both headmen take very seriously their duty



of hospitality to guests, but with a subtle difference. Jovenil treats it as an extension of his duty to watch over and take care of his own followers, and to distribute food among them; he will make his guest comfortable as he does for his own followers. Homero, on the other hand, makes entertainment an occasion for lavish display (especially when he gives *festas*), designed more for the elevation of his prestige as a wealthy and generous man - *okokwahav* - than for the comfort of the recipients. In fact, his generosity in general seems often directed more toward outsiders, even Brazilians, whose favor he wishes to curry, than toward his own followers or even the other Kagwahiv he claims as his adherents.

#### D. Manda trabalhar

In "directing work," the young consensual headman Jovenil, like the Tupinambá chief described by Soares de Sousa (Métraux 1948:115), would "lead by example," being the first to get to work on a task that needed to be done. He would lead with as little pressure as possible, using direct commands only when necessary, relying when possible on persuasion. He saw himself as "just overseeing": "It's all of us who are in charge," he told me, referring to his two siblings and himself. Homero, on the other hand, relies more on direct command, and expects to be obeyed. His orders were backed up - especially when he was younger - by physical punishment.

Homero considers it a prerogative of the chief to oversee his workers without participating in the work himself. This prerogative is rather vehemently contested by many other Kagwahiv; the precedents for it in pre-contact society seem to have been mostly elderly prominent headmen, but Homero claimed it even when he was younger.

A contrast which is more one of ideology that of practice is that between the various leaders' attitudes toward reciprocation of work done for them. A consensual headman maintains that work done for him, such as in his *roças*, even by his followers, should be repaid by equal work by himself or his sons, while authoritarian chiefs expect service without reciprocation. In practice there is less difference, though; Jovenil, for example, tends to receive more help in his *roças* than he gives his followers, because his *roças* are larger, while Homero's son-in-law expects a degree of reciprocation in work from Homero's son, if not from Homero himself. But Homero - who considers himself superordinate to other headmen as well as taking a more exacting role - expects all the Kagwahiv in the neighborhood, not only his immediate followers, to contribute one day of labor to the clearing of his large *roça* annually - an expectation in which, on the

occasions which I observed, he was disappointed.

#### E. Gwepiakatu ongá

The task of taking care of the settlement is interpreted by Jovenil literally - he takes responsibility for the upkeep of the houses, the plaza and the fruit-trees - while Homero interprets it somewhat more broadly to mean that the settlement and trees around it were *his property*, except those planted by one of his followers. In fact, he goes further, and claims that since the SPI left, much of the land of the reservation belongs to him, and he extracts fees from all those who collect cash crops on "his" land.

#### F. Setting an Example

To Jovenil, part of his duty was to provide an example of how a good, serious, adult married man should conduct himself. That included working harder than anyone else, and refraining from play - especially with young, unmarried men. He put a strong stress on the exemplary nature of the headman's marriage: Neither the headman nor his wife should engage in extramarital activity. The headman should also, in particular, set an example of the virtue of restraint in any expression of face-to-face aggression to a kinsman, as well as the cardinal virtue of generosity.

Upholders of the great chief tradition also, certainly, see the chief as setting an example: an example of wealth, power, lavish hospitality, and magnificent *festas*. The hard work that goes into it is not necessarily primarily by the sweat of the chief's brow. Nor are they greatly restrained in their expression of emotion. Some, both before and after pacification, seem to have been highly demonstrative in their anger, one going to the length of beating disobedient followers. José Diai'i's noted temper was memorialized in a missing ear he lost in a fight with a work partner. Pyrehakatu was highly jealous, in his sexual relationships with both sexes. In one story, he accused his wife of infidelity because he had heard her laugh as she conversed at dinner, and in another, he retaliated against an imagined pass at his wife by instantly carrying the supposed culprit's wife off to the woods. Such examples, clearly, are clearly more designed to impress all and sundry with the forcefulness of his personality than to serve as an example for imitation - unless it is an example of martial qualities.

#### G. Warfare

One other distinction is particularly diagnostic, though only implicit in the attitudes of the propon-

ents of the different ideologies: where the consensual headmen tend to focus their interest primarily on leadership in day-to-day economic activities, those who aspire to the more exalted position of chief show a special interest in, and inclination, toward, leadership in warfare - and their ability and success in leadership seems most marked in this area. Arino Quatro Orelhas boasts of the many enemies he has killed, delighting in recounting his ambush of the Peruanos; Homero is more discreet, but also delights in telling pre-pacification war stories, and has led at least one expedition against neighboring Indians. As much as in their own martial exploits, however, these headmen of the authoritarian orientation show an interest in the techniques and organization of warfare. They gave me the clearest accounts of how a war expedition was organized - called together and led by two *nhimboy-para'nga*, "outstanding" warriors who instigate a raid, whose position lasted only for the duration of the expedition; and of the head-trophy ceremony, sponsorship of which (after taking such a trophy) bestowed the honorary status of *okokwahav*, "living with knowledge." Though the headman - even the prominent chief in an area - had no special explicit function in warfare *qua* headman or chief, the more prominent chiefs were invariably *okokwahav*, were frequently *nhimboipara'nga*, and frequently co-sponsored head-trophy festivals.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4

It is not only the norms governing the duties of the headman on which headmen like Jovenil and Homero have diverging interpretations, but also on the *scope* of the headman's power. There is a strong tradition, with which Jovenil is aligned, that every local group is autonomous, every headman his own man. At the time of pacification, Nimuendaju asserted that he "never saw... a head of any kind... except family heads" (*nunca vi... chefe de qualidade alguma... sem ser o chefe de familia*), between whom "there appeared to reign complete equality" (1924:239).

Some, on the other hand, assert that there is a traditional superordinate or locally paramount chieftaincy, patrilineally inherited, with one such prominent chief in each major Kagwahiv area. One, whose legitimate claim to succeed the influential pre-contact chief Pyrehakatu was artificially reinforced by official SPI appointment, claimed to be chief over *all* Kagwahiv. Although his claim to paramountcy is manifestly exaggerated - a laughing matter in regions where Pyrehakatu himself never had authority - many informants, including some who personally dislike him, acknowledge the existence of such higher chiefs, and even his rightful claim: His father was such a chief,

and Pyrehakatu favored him. Several informants agreed to the hereditary nature of the position, though there was so much contradiction and confusion in their particular lists of lines of succession as to cast doubt on whether such succession was ever followed in practice. The important point is that these informants accepted the *ideological* concept of a high chieftainship with hereditary succession.

Headmen like Jovenil, of course, dissent - with their followers. Jovenil himself is ambiguous in his attitude toward Homero's position, sometimes grudgingly acknowledging Homero's supremacy, sometimes flatly denying it. Jovenil told me pointedly, in my first interview with him: "Homero is a headman in his settlement as I am in mine." Jovenil himself, in fact took over his father's position as headman, but pointedly does *not* regard it as hereditary succession: He just learned from his father the knowledge and skills necessary to a headman, and so, being the most knowledgeable, was chosen his father's successor.

Another claimant to higher level office has had even less success than Homero. José Dai'i, the son of the powerful pre-pacification leader Dai'i, claimed supremacy in his region as successor to his father. Others in the region challenge his claim, and have joined the group of an older headman of more consensual orientation rather than accept it. One old woman put it:

He wants to be chief, but he has nothing - not even a *roça*. His father had many *roças*, lots of manioc and *macacheira*. His father left him beautiful *roças* at Castanha, but he let them all grow over. He doesn't even take care of those mango trees (Field notes, April 7, 1967).

José still maintained that one day he would assume chieftainship in the region:

It is only I who go around watching over the Indians. I am still young and I don't have experience in leadership. When I get old, I will be in a good position to become chief - won't I, now? (Field notes, August 9, 1967)

#### 5.

The appeal to tradition implicit in hereditary succession brings up the question: Which of these ideologies is a true reflection of tradition? Which more correctly describes patterns of leadership as they were before pacification? The answer is ambiguous; oral tradition, and what little historical evidence is available, support both views.

Certainly there were, at the time of pacification and earlier, preeminent and powerful headmen, who were looked to by others in their respective areas as key leaders in the fight against the Brazilians, the Pirahã and other neighboring tribes: Pyrehakatu on the lower Maici and IPIXUNA, Diai'i in the upper Maici area where Nimuendaju established the pacification post, and before them Pyrehakatu's father Byahu. This last - so the story goes - when the Pirahã killed him, was mourned throughout the Maici area as "our chief," *nhande-ruvihav*.<sup>8</sup> Some of these seem to have been willful men, peremptory in command - at least as they come down in stories. Pyrehakatu certainly indulged in imposing displays of wealth and largess in the magnificent *akangwéra-toryva*, "head-trophy festivals," he is described as having put on.

Yet the tradition of coequal and consensus-oriented headmen is equally firmly supported by Nimuendaju's description of the "complete equality" that reigned between "family heads" whose "authority, even within the circle of their family, was in some cases quite weak" (1924:239) - though he did add that "Yei'i [Diai'i] is the only one who commands and is obeyed - conditionally," and described him reprimanding a woman who stole something from the post. Of the old men who were brought up before or around pacification, as many seemed to support the tradition of coequal, autonomous headmen as support the great chief tradition, and as many old headmen practice a non-directive style of leadership by persuasion as exert direction by command.

The evidence seems to be, then, that both orientations co-existed prior to pacification, as they continue to coexist now. The varied reports from closely related Tupi tribes would seem to support this: Among the Tupi-Cawahib on the Machado River, remnants of the old Cabahiba tribe from which the Kagwahiv are also descended, Lévi-Strauss (1955:pt. 8; 1958) found a tradition - barely preserved in the ragged, straggling group he contacted - of an authoritarian and centralized chieftainship, with the chief commanding a hierarchy of subordinates. Their distant predecessor of the sixteenth century, the coastal Tupinambá, had at least *some* chiefs who in wartime commanded many villages, each village consisting of multiple long houses. The Surui (Laraia and da Matta, 1967) had a patrilineally inherited tribal chieftainship.

Leadership in many present-day Tupi groups, on the other hand - some of them descendants of groups like the Tupinambá - can be widely characterized by Huxley's description of Urubu headmen:

A chief has no authority outside his own family, and can give no orders - everything is done by agreement, and he has only as much

influence as he has prestige. His prestige comes not only from his skill in hunting, his bravery and cunning, but from his generosity. A mean chief has no villagers (Huxley 1956:68).

Wagley and Galvão report the same for the Tenetehara, Holmberg for the Sirionó, and Schaden for the Guaraní. Yet even in Huxley's description of one former chief - a man who, though a "hard worker, and famous for his courage," and despite having been designated successor to the preceding chief in a ceremony of investiture, was unsuccessful under then current conditions - one gets glimpses of a more assertive, even domineering style of leadership:

It seems that he had quarreled with several people... One woman said he had recently threatened to cut her hands off and toast them in the fire....

But he was always a chief. When he asked for a knife or a machete or some more tobacco, he would ask for them with the same calm as a Yorkshire business man who knows his rights (Huxley 1956:67, 72).

In other instances, there are similar hints at coexisting variant styles of leadership. Nimuendaju (1948:316) reconciles conflicting reports about Apiacá chieftainship by concluding that the chief exercised markedly different functions in peace and war:

Under normal conditions, he exercised his office unobtrusively, since perfect equality reigned among all. But when foreigners arrived or in war time, he assumed great authority.

Herbert Baldus (1970:334-341) and Charles Wagley differ sharply over the nature of Tapirapé headmanship - or at least, the power of the Tapirapé headman Kamairahó. Baldus maintains that this headman exercises an inconspicuous but powerful hold over his followers, and occupies a position of chieftainship over all Tapirapé (339), while Wagley holds that there is no centralized chieftainship, only individuals of influence, and that Kamairahó, while undoubtedly an individual of great prestige, has no formal authority outside his own household (Wagley 1977:120-23, 241-44).

## CONCLUSIONS

Comparative evidence, then, suggests that both patterns of leadership are equally typical of Tupi cultures, equally fundamental to the Tupi pattern of



leadership. Historical evidence points to the presence of both ideologies of leadership in pre-contact Kagwahiv society. These two opposed ideologies still coexist today; what has changed is their relative success. Even allowing for the greater historical memorability in an oral tradition of outstanding and dramatic leaders, all accounts indicate that rather peremptory leaders like Diai'i, Pyrehakatu, and Byahu achieved positions of considerable authority in pre-contact society, and enjoyed considerable admiration and success. Currently, however, the unobtrusive headmen who lead by persuasion have a greater following, more economically successful and contented groups, than do the headmen with an authoritarian style and with pretensions to authority over other settlements than their own. Homero is unpopular and his group gradually scattering; another authoritarian headman maintains sway over his group only with the support of the *fazendista* on whose land his band lives; and Diai'i's son has been unsuccessful in gathering any following.

Under pre-contact conditions of warfare, it seems, the hierarchical ideology was predominant. Though the headman's duties do not specifically include leadership of war-parties, the conditions of constant warfare with surrounding tribes and with Brazilians encouraged the emergence of a more powerful central leader in each region, who became the popular symbolic focus of leadership for the population of the area, if not the organizational focus in fighting. Pyrehakatu and Diai'i, and Byahu before them, are spoken of as instructing and sending out war-parties, as well as leading them themselves, and Homero not only looks to these leaders for validation of his style and pretensions, but also has a highly martial orientation of his own - a special interest in past warfare, and a readiness to stir up or participate in whatever confrontations are currently available. But under the present conditions of tranquility imposed by the *Pax Brasiliensis*, a less dramatic style has become more appropriate.<sup>9</sup> For the less exciting agricultural and economic tasks that are foremost under these conditions, a consensual style of leadership that keeps people working comfortably together is more successful than the provocative style of fifty years ago. Both styles, I would assert, are equally part of Kagwahiv political tradition: each has come into prominence as the situation favors it; the more aggressive style with its hierarchical tendencies gaining ascendancy in warfare, the consensual style - which we observe especially in tribes which have been pacified - having its turn in the interval of peace.

The coexistence of these two opposed styles of leadership, presumably over long periods of time - since the egalitarian tradition of which Nimuendaju saw the manifestations had persisted through many

decades of constant warfare, while the "great chief" tradition has remained alive through fifty years of more settled calm - is made possible by the convenient ambiguity of the norms governing a headman's behavior, his obligations to his followers and theirs to him. Some of these ambiguities involve out-and-out disagreement on matters of custom, such as the question of whether or not bride-service is excused in sister-exchange marriages, with its attendant implications as to the nature of the son-in-law's obligations to his father-in-law, and of a follower to his headman. Most are matters of nuance and emphasis - the strictness or looseness with which an obligation is construed, the construal of an obligation as contractual or as inherent in the relationship, the end which one holds a particular duty to serve, the emphasis in reciprocal obligations on whose is the right and whose the obligation.

These ideologies, I reiterate, are not articulated by their proponents as explicit ideological positions. They are detectable only through close questioning and observation, expressed in subtle differences in the working or interpretation of a stated norm, and only occasionally in outright disagreements over what the norm is. Nor are they held by any clear-cut segment of the community; they are espoused on the basis of personal values, temperamental predilection for one or the other style of leadership, perhaps somewhat on the basis of situational advantage. They are not, in other words, clearly delineated positions: though some individuals (like the two headmen I have most often cited as models of the two positions) tend to be consistent in espousing their respective points of view, others are as inconsistent as most people are.

The particular ambiguities I have laid out here are, of course, specific to the Kagwahiv definition of the relationship between a headman and his followers. The tendency to manipulable ambiguity, as many recent papers on descent and marriage in lowland South America seem to indicate, may be characteristic of lowland South American societies, or especially marked in them. But can any human norm be unambiguous, not susceptible to manipulation or to variant interpretations? To some degree, any system of norms, as Leach illustrated in his study of Kachin policies, is not so much a determinant of human behavior as a grammar for the articulation of differences of opinion - differences that keep a society vital and responsive to changing conditions.

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## NOTES

(1) The research on which this paper was based was carried out in Brazil in 1966-68, and a brief trip in 1973, including eleven months of contact with Kagwahiv culture, in addition to survey and background research in the interior, and archival research, especially at the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro. Initial research was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (fellowship 5-FO 1-MH-29, 905-03) and a grant from the National Science Foundation (FA-1402), and later work by a summer grant from the Research Board of the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle. I am indebted to the Museu Nacional and its staff for its sponsorship and support during the initial field work, and for continued stimulating interchange.

(2) Though not all Tupinambá chiefs seem to have enjoyed such wartime powers as Carneiro documents, Gandavo asserts that "a chief serves no other purpose than to go to war with them and advise them how they must behave in combat; but he neither punishes their mistakes nor directs them to do anything against their wills" (Gandavo 1922:117, quoted in Fernandes 1963:329).

(3) To be accurate, I must now speak of the group with which I work as "Parintintin" rather than "Kagwahiv." I termed this group Kagwahiv because that is their self-denomination in their own language, and "Parintintin" is the name given them by their former enemies, the Mundurucú. At the time I wrote this paper, they and their close neighbors, the Tenharém, (and a few scattered Diahoi and Juma) were the only surviving groups who spoke the Kagwahiv language and called themselves Kagwahiv; but in the last several decades several more groups have come into contact with almost identical language and social organization and who also call themselves Cagwahiv or Cawahib -- fragments of the old Cawahiba tribe of the upper Tapajós, at least three of them in the heart of Rondonia, far to the south. "Parintintin" is now the only term that precisely delineates the Kagwahiv group that lives on the east bank of the Madeira between the Machado and the Maici, and this (as the late Miguel

Menendez pointed out) is the only Kagwahiv group I can speak for from firsthand knowledge, though I have met and talked to members of all the other groups except the Juma and the Mondaua.

(4) This is based on Miriam Lemle's (1971) classification of Tupi-Guarani languages. She grouped Parintintin with Kamaiurá and Urubú on the basis of overall phonological structure. More extensive comparison by Aryon Rodrigues (1984/5), adding some morphological evidence to phonology, does not bear out the close relationship with Urubú, but places Parintintin (along with Machado Kawahib and Apiacá) closest to the lower Xingú Tupi languages Asurini and possibly Araweté, which are grouped with Kayabí (a language which is still quite close to Kagwahiv). Kamaiurá is only slightly further removed. Urubú and Guajá of Maranhão are closely related to the foregoing groups, but as part of a larger group of languages centered on the lower Xingú. Thus linguistic evidence still points to a lower Amazon origin for the Kagwahiv or Kawahib languages, but seems to suggest a point of origin around the lower Xingú rather than Maranhão. Parintintin oral traditions of their wanderings, however, suggests that they came at one time from an arid or semi-arid area near the coast.

(5) At times a favored son-in-law may succeed his father-in-law as headman, as Paulino did Pyrehakatu.

(6) He had only one follower outside his nuclear family, an unmarried parallel cousin. A sixth local group, containing two elderly brothers-in-law with their children, claimed to have no headman - though the rather more assertive man of the two, whose sister was married to the other, and who had more married sons than the other, seemed to exercise some informal leadership in the settlement. A seventh settlement I was never able to visit, completes the roster of extant Kagwahiv local groups. (I do not include half-a-dozen isolated single-family homesteads, somewhat derogatorily termed *jova'vi*, "little spots.")

(7) It is also of interest, in view of the emphasis of some of the other papers in this symposium, that two aspirants to the "great chief" position also had a marked interest in the ritual and higher powers of the *ipaji*, "*pajés*" or shamanistic curers. One, Arino, was rumored to possess such shamanistic powers. While *ipajis* are not as a rule *nhanderuvihavs* (except that most mythological *nhanderuvihavs* had "much *ipaji*"), even good *ipaji* of the past were not above using their powers to influence others' behavior and exact personal favors - one homosexual shaman bought or cajoled his lovers with promises of rich game or threats of the

opposite - and the possession of such powers could certainly bolster a headman's ability to control others (cf. Dole 1966). Huxley (1956:70) remarks that "every [Urubu] chief is a real, a living Mair" - a belief I have not yet unearthed among the Kagwahiv; and the Guaraní *nhanderú* or *nhanderúvitxá* is equally a *pajé* or religious leader, and a civil one (Schaden 1962:105n, links the Guaraní term *paí*, "*pajé*," with Mbair, the culture hero).

(8) Homero acknowledges this story but insists it applies not to Byahu, but to his own patrilineal grandfather Iguaharé.

(9) It is frequently remarked that the Indian Protective Service or its predecessors, in creating the official post of *capitão*, introduced artificial positions of authority where none had existed before. In the Kagwahiv case,

somewhat the reverse has occurred. In appointing Pyrehakatu's son-in-law as their intermediary and headman at the post, the SPI simply ratified a widely accepted state of affairs - the special position of Pyrehakatu, and Pyrehakatu's preference for his own son-in-law to succeed him. Over the years, as the result of dissatisfaction with his uncompromising style, the SPI appointee's position of power has slipped; though still recognized as Pyrehakatu's successor as chief, in fact he exercised no more sway than does any other headman, except in certain limited demands that are grudgingly acquiesced to. A similar but more rapid and radical process has happened elsewhere, of which José Diai'i's fate is a good example. The SPI's appointment, then, may have simply slowed the decline of one prominent chief from his position of superordinate influence.

# LEADERSHIP AND FACTIONALISM IN CASHINAHUA SOCIETY

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Studies of leadership are generally written from the point-of-view of a loyal follower, a disgruntled ex-follower, an "objective" outsider, or a theory-conscious social scientist. The following account of leadership and factionalism in Cashinahua society attempts to convey the ways in which the Cashinahua view their own system; it is a compilation, abstracted and condensed, of some of the many of statements received from a wide range of informants during 84 months of fieldwork between 1955 and 1968 in several villages on the Curanja River of southeastern Peru. Technical jargon has been avoided except where the injection of Cashinahua concepts would require a detailed discussion beyond the scope of this paper, e.g. the kinship and marriage systems. Furthermore, I have tried to avoid interpreting informants' statements in terms of theories currently espoused by political anthropologists and political scientists.

Leadership among the Peruvian Cashinahua is evanescent, often most obvious in its absence. Informants frequently talked about the headman, *xanen-ibu*, while seeming to be almost imperceptibly influenced by his presence in the village. The headman's leadership is subtle; he leads by soft persuasion and quiet example. Rarely is his voice raised to harangue his kinsmen; rather, he strokes them lightly with words, never talking too much. His judgments are largely impartial and fair, more frequently pragmatic than idealistic. He is cool and confident, a good hunter, generous with his food but slow to give advice unless asked. His is not the ability to coerce, but to persuade or, perhaps more accurately, to lead his kinsmen gently to consensus. Yet, when matters of great importance for the wellbeing and tranquility of his village arise, he is firm and forceful, not beyond twisting a few arms and collecting a few IOUs. He uses the invisible reins of power ever so lightly, yet his absence from the village for more than a few days is noticeable; the village runs less smoothly.

His symbol of office is a basket of feathers from which are made the harpy eagle wing feather back rack with its tails of black and brightly colored feathers, the train of harpy eagle tail feathers, and the magnificent headdress of red macaw tail feathers and white plumes made of wispy leg feathers from the

harpy eagle. These are worn during *chidin*, the headman's ceremony, a ritual for restoring unity to the village when dissent and factionalism threaten the social fabric.

His leadership is also given formal recognition by outsiders. Visitors arriving in the village generally go first to the hearth and hammocks of their closest kinsmen; however, they always stop by the headman's hearth before visiting any others or carrying out the business that occasioned their visit. Foreigners, i.e., non-Cashinahua, either automatically go to the headman's hearth or are directed there.

This is, admittedly, a somewhat idealized version of Cashinahua leadership. However, in a village with an abundance of food, with no serious illness, and without any major factional disputes, the headman's behavior over a period of three or four months frequently approximates the above description.

Although a headman may have some influence outside his village because he is a *man-wit*-knowledge, *huni unaya*, the village is his primary sphere of action. Ideally, each village is socially, economically, and politically autonomous. It consists of a single, large, palm-thatched house occupied by two senior males, who have exchanged sisters in marriage, and as many consanguines and affines as they can attract. Post-marital residence is normally matrilocal, but the two focal males need not be residing with their father-in-law if they have enough other kinsmen around them to assure economic self-sufficiency. If the population of a village is sufficiently large, i.e., about twenty adults, two houses may be constructed, each containing a single extended family, plus assorted hangers-on, and each headed by one of the focal males. In recent years, the residential pattern has changed by the dispersion into separate houses of the hangers-on and occasionally even matrilocally extended families.

The focal males are not, however, heads of households. Rather, they are the leaders of the localized segment of their respective patri-moieties, and thus can expect the support of their sons, brothers, and other moiety mates, males who are dispersed within a single large house or residing in different houses. Although men may give orders to their wives, daugh-

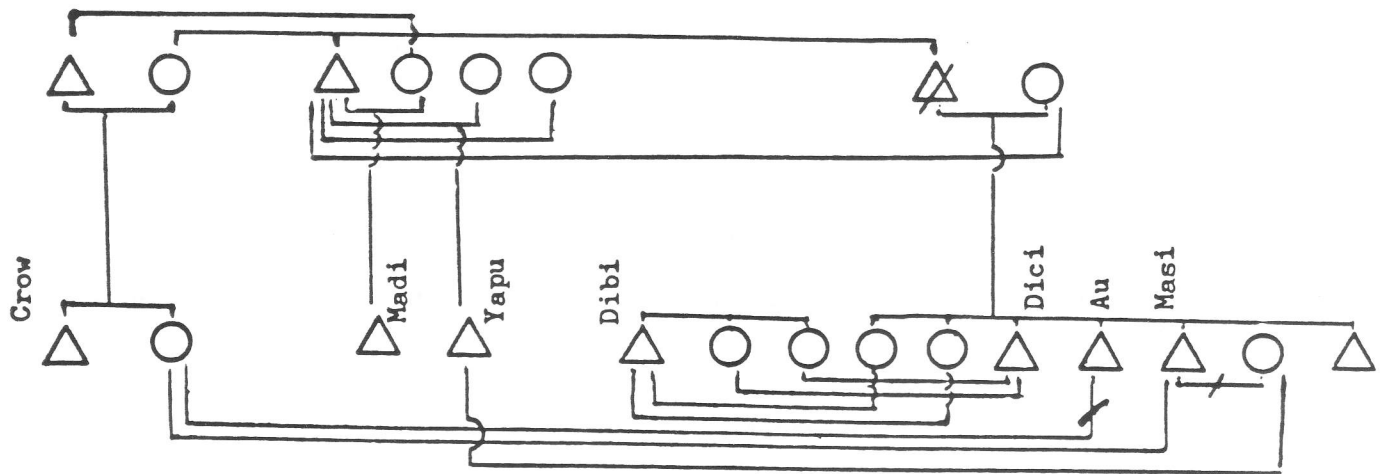


Figure 1: Major figures in the Factional dispute between Dibi and Crow

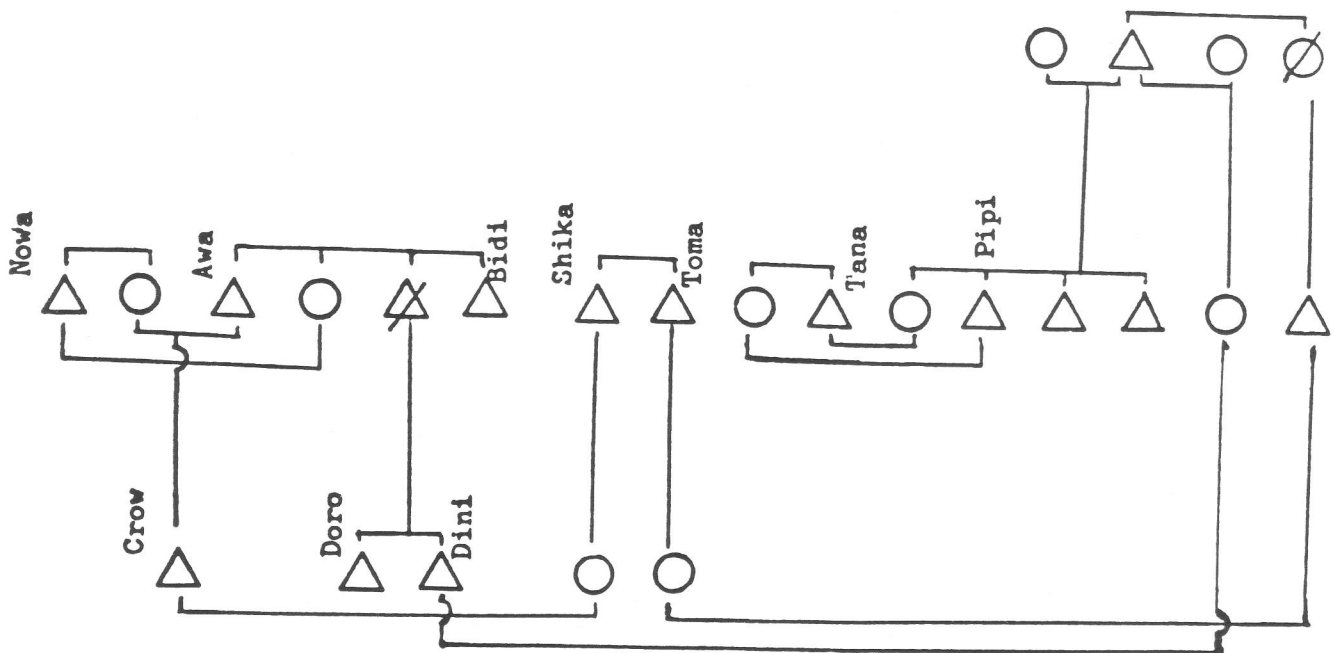


Figure 2: Major figures involved in the factional dispute between Awa and Pipi



ters, and sisters, they have little actual influence over the day-to-day activities of the women of their household. The village, and not the household, is the male's sphere of influence. In a sense, each village has two headmen. However, one generally has more influence, holds the symbol of office, and is called *xanen-ibu*. Any man who exercises leadership is called *xanen-ibu*. Varying degrees of headmanship are recognized; thus, *xanen-ibu ewapa*, large headman, and *xanen-ibu pish-ta*, little headman. However, the second focal male, even if he is rather ineffectual, is called *xanen-ibu* and not *xanen-ibu pishta*. This differential in leadership between the focal males does not produce political factionalism.

Factions may develop out of the political ambitions of individual males. However, they are more likely to arise as a result of intra-village disputes between consanguines rather than between affines, i.e., conflicts within the local moiety segments, rather than across moiety lines. Since factions consist of at least two males who are potentially the focal males in a new autonomous village, disputes for headmanship are usually between those consanguines who are the more influential members of each competing focal pair.

In such a setting, a successful headman is one who is able to resolve these disputes or limit their impact on village life by manipulating both consanguineal and affinal ties in order to either socially isolate his opponent or restrict his opponent's sphere of influence. Some factional disputes escalate to a point where these methods are insufficient and the village fissions.

The nature of Cashinahua leadership can best be seen in the context of actual factional disputes. Therefore, I turn now to an examination of two specific cases.

#### Case 1.<sup>1</sup>

Dibi was a politically ambitious migrant to Xumuya. His long range goal was to establish an autonomous village over which he would preside as chief, not in the traditional Cashinahua style, but in that of the Brazilians and Peruvians. He married the two widows of Ori, a man he had been cuckolding for many months prior to his death. These women were sisters of Dici, who was married to two of Dibi's sisters. His marriage thus set the stage for establishing a powerful faction based on two males from the opposing moieties linked by sister-exchange. In addition, Dici was not politically ambitious nor were any of Dici's brothers whose support Dibi needed to realize his ambitions, since he had no other close kin in the village. As migrants to Xumuya, Dici and his brothers

shared many of Dibi's frustrations. Because the dominant faction in the village, headed by Crow and Madi, controlled the best hunting areas as well as the best actual and potential garden sites, the migrants had to use less desirable areas, most of which were at some distance from the settlement. Thus, over a period of eight months, Dibi was able to gain considerable support by clashing frequently with Crow about a wide variety of topics. He often accused Crow of selfishness, a most serious accusation of a breach of the etiquette of leadership.

Dibi failed in his bid for leadership for two reasons, only one of which illustrates the topic of this paper. First, his indiscrete amorous escapades<sup>2</sup> and his attempts to seduce most of the females of the village produced considerable friction and antagonism resulting in his being expelled from the village. Second, he was unable to cope with his competitor's skilled manipulation of consanguineal and affinal ties which undermined Dibi's leadership within his own faction.

Crow at first took no steps to oppose Dibi's faction-producing activities. The influx of migrants put a strain on the food resources of the village and he hoped that Dibi and Dici would establish an independent village, even suggesting several possible sites and offering help in the initial clearing of new garden tracts. Dici was reluctant to move, however, because three of his brothers were without wives and had better chances of finding mates in Crow's village. In addition, other than his mother, there would be no other women to assist his young wives with the chores. Thus, when it appeared that the added population intended to stay for the foreseeable future, Crow began to exert his influence. Through conversations with his mother's brother, his mother, and his MBS, he arranged for his MB to take Dici's mother as a fourth wife.<sup>3</sup> This marriage opened the possibility for Dici and his brothers to use the hunting territory of their "father," thus linking these males to Crow's MB as well as to Crow's MBS, the co-leader of Crow's faction.

Crow then arranged for the marriage of his ZS to the daughter of Dibi's wife by a prior marriage. And finally, he arranged for his sister to marry Dici's brother Au, and when that marriage failed, he quickly arranged for her to marry Dici's brother Masi. When Masi's wife objected to his second wife and left him, Crow and his brother-in-law Madi together arranged for her to marry Madi's half brother, Yapu, who was without a wife and had been planning to go to another village in search of a spouse (Figure 1 illustrates these manipulations). These new marriages led to a reshuffling of some hunting territories and garden sites, or made new areas available to Dici and his brothers.

As a result, although he was unable to incor-

porate Dici and his brothers into his faction, Crow succeeded in severely weakening the ties between Dibi and Dici and thus reduced the intensity of the factional disputes.

### Case 2.

When I began my fieldwork in the village of Kuntaya the focal males were Awa and Nowa; Awa was recognized as the headman. Shortly thereafter, the entire population of two other groups moved into the village, both groups having split away from the Kuntaya group some years earlier.<sup>6</sup> One group was a viable social entity under the leadership of Pipi; the other focal male was Tana. The second group consisted of two brothers, Toma and Shika, and their wives who had left Pipi's village in a dispute over women.

All groups recognized the headmanship of Awa, but Pipi, having been headman in his own village, almost immediately began to vie with Nowa for the leadership of the local segment of their moiety. The struggle continued for four years, both factions manipulating kin ties without much success. Awa arranged the marriage of his son to Shika's daughter, a move matched by Pipi arranging the marriage of his FZS to Toma's daughter. Awa tried to gain the support of Dini and his brother Doro, his brother's sons, by showing them favors and through the friendship between them and his son Crow. Pipi retaliated by threatening to break up Dini's marriage to his half-sister, thus retaining the support of Dini and his brother (See figure 2).

Awa was convinced that Pipi wanted to be headman and considered him arrogant and uncooperative. As tensions between them increased, so did the disputes between and within their factions, and Awa's statements of the village consensus regarding disputes showed increasing partiality toward members of his faction, resulting in further disagreements.

Shortly after several of Pipi's brothers migrated to Kuntaya from Brazil in the spring of 1959, a Peruvian trader arrived at the village port. Pipi met him and escorted him to his own house, bypassing Awa's house. That evening as the men gathered to eat, Awa recounted the hospitality he and his faction had given Pipi and his faction when they moved to Kuntaya. He argued that Pipi's behavior vis-à-vis the trader was an insult to his leadership and that perhaps it would be wise if Pipi and his faction make new gardens at a new site and move there permanently when they began to produce. Pipi responded by charging Awa with selfishness and unfairness in dealing with disputes. After the corn harvest in January and February 1960, Pipi and his faction moved into their new village, returning to Kuntaya only to harvest

manioc and plantains until those crops began to produce in the new gardens in sufficient quantity to support their dietary needs.

Awa's leadership was weakened by his battle with Pipi, and shortly thereafter he turned over leadership to his son Crow, who along with Nowa's son, Madi, became the focal males in the village. This move angered Awa's brother Bidi, who felt that the leadership should have gone to him. However, having no brother-in-law in the opposed moiety (he had married two of his classificatory sisters), he was unable to establish the focal male tie needed to establish leadership.

### DISCUSSION

The behavior described in these two cases rarely involved overt hostility and verbal conflict. The village presented to visitors a picture of peace and tranquility. On the other hand, the gossip indicated a virtual snake pit of intrigue. Reality lies somewhere in between; periods of relative calm were punctuated by the occasional eruption of disputes.

The headman, however, sees life as a constant struggle to allocate his resources, his energy, and his influence wisely among the multiplicity of often conflicting kinship demands. He knows that his leadership will last only so long as he successfully meets these obligations. For him, life is neither heaven nor hell; it is a chase of an elusive quarry, it is a hunt which demands all the skills he can muster.

### NOTES

(1) Names of individuals are coded to protect their identity. The Cashinahua have strong feelings against foreigners "getting possession" of their names, and I agreed not to use names when writing about subjects the informants deemed sensitive.

(2) Although the Cashinahua males pride themselves on their extramarital affairs, they insist that such activities be carried out with the utmost discretion in order to avoid either embarrassing the aggrieved husband or provoking jealousy.

(3) I am using the term "arranged" very loosely. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that he encouraged and facilitated the marriage arrangements.

(6) I learned some years later that this move was precipitated by a desire to gain access to my trade goods and medicine.



# I SAW THE SOUND OF THE WATERFALL: SHAMANISM, GODS, AND LEADERSHIP IN PIAROA SOCIETY<sup>1</sup>

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## 1.

Many writers<sup>2</sup> on South American lowland peoples have described the leadership of these societies as being "notoriously weak," "ineffective" and "limited in functions." The polity of the Piaroa, a Tropical Forest people settled along the tributaries of the Orinoco in the Guiana Highlands of Venezuela is similar to that of many other South American lowland groups<sup>3</sup> in that the Piaroa "political system" is conspicuous in its fluidity and its lack of a permanent, centralized authority structure. However, I shall be arguing below that it would be highly inaccurate to talk *generally* of Piaroa leadership as being "weak," "ineffective" or "limited in functions." Using Piaroa material, I wish also to show that "weak" leadership and/or "limited" functions of leadership are not necessarily corollaries of a non-centralized authority structure, and furthermore that such a characterization of leadership in South American lowland societies is directly related to a restricted understanding by analysts of "power" and "authority," an understanding forthcoming, and often only appropriate to, the study of societies with greater hierarchical structure. Hence, from my own initial attempts to understand the nature of leadership in Piaroa society, there have emerged what I feel to be some interesting and important problems having to do with the legitimacy of cross-cultural analyses of polities, as such studies are presently conceptualized.

It has long been recognized by anthropologists and political philosophers that leadership within tribal societies is based on an inseparable combination of the jural and the mystical. The recognition, however, that the polity of the small-scale society is qualitatively different from that of the modern industrial society and, as such, requires very different conceptual tools in its analysis has often not been sufficient to the task of achieving an adequate understanding of tribal system. The main problem, I feel, is that anthropologists have frequently not recognized the radical degree to which the conceptualization of the particular tribal organization must differ from that of the modern. As a result, political anthropology, both in its descriptive aspects and as comparative politics, is one of the

weaker sub-areas within the discipline of anthropology.

Indeed, the conceptual problems of cross-cultural comparison are at this time so considerable that we should deeply question some of our efforts in this direction. I am referring specifically here to evolutionary typologies where the comparisons of "power" as a political value and the weight of such power include societies that are considerably different in socio-political type. Within tribal societies, "power," "authority" and sanctions, on the one hand, and the spirit world, on the other, cannot as symbolic categories be analytically separated. Moreover, it is frequently the case that "power over men" and "power over spirits" are not distinct and separate modes of behavior. For instance, the Piaroa leader receives power from one set of gods and with this power he is able to manipulate another, and nature as well, in the service of his community; with this power, he also combats malevolent beings of both the spirit and the human world. His main duty, that of maintaining order, refers as much to the world of spirits and nature as to the world of humans.

Yet Lasswell and Kaplan (1950:75, my italics) have this to say about political power insofar as it is distinct from power in general:

...power in the political sense cannot be conceived as the ability to produce intended effects in general, but only such effects as directly involve other persons: *political power is distinguished from power over nature as power over other men.*

As any student of tribal societies should know, the categorical acceptance of such a programmatic statement, while it may well be proper for the study of modern Western societies - since it is after all an expression of Western ideology - would distort the analysis of the polity within any society where leadership and the religious are conjoined. Nevertheless, we find that many anthropologists do not recognize the necessity of relating how members of societies do conceive of their world and themselves within it to

how they act in terms of these conceptions. In *both* descriptive and comparative (evolutionary) endeavors of South American lowland societies, the extent of power is usually phrased and/or judged in terms of violence or is based upon the degree of centralization of the economic organization under study.<sup>4</sup> We are thereby placed in the peculiar logical position of saying that leadership and power do not exist within economically decentralized societies or within societies where physical violence is not recognized as a legitimate sanction. In short, such societies become, by quick definition, ones with no polity at all (this is a problem which I shall discuss again in conclusion). Yet we all immediately see, as investigators of such societies, that their members can quite easily judge and point out certain people as leaders with power, and others as men without power. It is then not so difficult to elicit statements about what these leaders have power over. But because of definitional ineptitude, we frequently miss what is unique to the tribal and see only what is unique to the modern.

Adam Kuper (1973:238) has recently reminded us, quite succinctly, what the distinctive anthropological perspective remains, no matter what the theoretical orientation - "this is to begin by assuming that the actors' models are part of the data..." This, I believe, is no more than to say that adequate description must precede adequate comparison. The society must be studied in terms of its own categories before we move on to the more abstract level necessary to the comparative endeavor. I close this introductory section by suggesting that the conceptual problems in political anthropology are considerably greater than have been recognized in the past, and that the time has come for us to face this complexity and attempt to mitigate the extreme confusion now extant in our present analytic categories.

Below I shall describe "power" and "authority" as it is conceived by the Piaroa, and in so doing pay particular attention to Piaroa notions of what "good" and "bad" leadership entails. The discussion will deal with the ideal role of the leader in Piaroa society and with Piaroa beliefs concerning the scope of his power. The Piaroa *believe* their leaders to be extremely powerful within certain domains and they *act* upon these beliefs. I have illustrated at great length elsewhere (1975) how this action has impact upon Piaroa social organization; thus my main concern here is to deal with the normative aspects of Piaroa political behavior. I shall nevertheless preface my discussion of Piaroa ideology with a brief account of Piaroa political organization. In so doing, my purpose is to orient the reader by providing him with the more tangible aspects of Piaroa political behavior. In conclusion, I shall make a few remarks about the relevance of my de-

scription of Piaroa ideology to various problems in political anthropology as it now stands.

## 2.

The two to three thousand members of Piaroa land are divided into twelve to fifteen territorial units (*itso'fha*).<sup>5</sup> Each territory, isolated geographically as well as politically from the next, is located along a stretch of one of the large right bank Orinoco tributaries or along several adjacent small tributaries within a headwater region. The territory is the largest social unit within Piaroa land, and is normally composed of six to seven *itso'de*, or multiple-family residence units, each separated from the next by approximately half-a-day's walk along jungle paths. The population of this local residential unit normally ranges from sixteen to sixty people. The house (*itso'de*) is a semi-endogamous, kindred-structured, residential group serving multiple functions within Piaroa society as an economic, kinship and ceremonial unit (see J. Kaplan 1972; 1973). The organization of the territory (*itso'fha*), however, is based upon factional politics. Its existence as a territorial unit depends solely upon a specific set of alliances made among a group of men. Within each territory we find a loose hierarchy of leaders, men referred to as *ruwang*.

The term *ruwang* is not an easy one to translate; for depending upon the context, the *ruwang* may take on the attributes of what we have labeled as "headman," "shaman," "sorcerer" or "priest." Also, the signification of the word depends very much upon the frame of reference. It can refer in general to a "being of knowledge"; it is not limited to the human world, for culture heroes and gods are also given this label. It implies personal responsibility. On the other hand, in other instances, all Piaroa men are *ruwang*, beings separated as men and distinct from women and animals (M.R. Kaplan, unpublished manuscript). However, since I am dealing in the main in this paper with Piaroa ideology, and since the term itself as used by the Piaroa is much too complicated to be facilely glossed, I shall use the native term in its most common (and third) usage; that is, to refer to the "man of thoughts," who, as such, is the Piaroa politico-religious leader.

The land of each territory is "owned" by its territorial *ruwang*. The Piaroa express "ownership" by saying that such a powerful leader is "*ruwang*" of the territory (*ruwang itso'fha*); that is, its "master." As such, the *ruwang* of a territory has the responsibility for its fecundity and the obligation to protect it and its members from all supernatural danger. The right to "ownership" of this land is one that he has achieved as a religious practitioner, as a man of accomplishment

through his knowledge of the world of the sacred; it is not based upon ancestral occupation. The territorial *ruwang* does not automatically pass on the land to his descendants. On his deathbed he "names" in secret as his successor the *ruwang* within his territory he feels to be most able. His successor, however, even if his own son or son-in-law,<sup>6</sup> must prove through ritual accomplishment his right to "ownership," just as he himself also had done. Indeed, there exists no principle among the Piaroa of birthright to the land. People establish a relation with the land as much as they do with spirits of the jungle, and the relation so established by the territorial *ruwang* is the superior one because of his own superior knowledge of the land, just as his knowledge of spirit beings, too, is greater than that of lesser men. The individual is in fact property-less, as indeed is also the case with the *ruwang*. Land is not viewed as a limited commodity by the Piaroa;<sup>7</sup> limited, instead, is the insurance of having the protection of a great *ruwang*.

The concept of *itso'fha* cannot be separated from the man who has a specific set of followers who happen at any particular moment to be occupying a certain area of land. The territory of a new territorial *ruwang* is not necessarily co-terminus either spatially or in membership with the territory of his predecessor. Each territorial *ruwang* must build his own following, and that bounded entity which is his territory will always refer to the land occupied by his following; *itso'fha* refers to both the territory and the following of a specific man, and never to simply a piece of land. The rule that permission must be sought by all adults from each territorial *ruwang* for residence within his territory reflects this fact. Moreover, the boundaries of the territory of any specific *ruwang* do not remain constant; they expand and contract to accommodate the fluctuating organization of personal factors extant within it,<sup>8</sup> an organization which pivots about the actions of the territorial *ruwang*. Technically, if a territorial *ruwang* should die or lose power, his territory loses its identity as a specific social and territorial unit. Its unity may be disrupted as members re-group around other leaders within the former territory or outside of it (cf. Sahlin 1963, on big-man politicking; for specific examples on the Piaroa, see J. Kaplan 1975).

That the territory is relative to the man who owns it underlines another crucial characteristic of territorial organization: there exists in Piaroa society no formal institutions, such as the lineage, to place form on social groupings larger than the residential group or house (*itso'de*) in the case of disruption of the order created by the territorial *ruwang*.<sup>9</sup> The ties that bind these local groups together within a territory are not founded on a principle of kinship, except on the

very general level where the notion is expressed that all Piaroa are kinsmen. Rather, the local groups are bound together as a unit only because they reside within the boundaries of a territory owned by a specific territorial *ruwang*, to whom each local group (*itso'de*), as an individual unit, owes its allegiance.

Within each territory there is a loose hierarchy of *ruwata* below the territorial *ruwang* in status. While the territorial *ruwang* is involved in unceasing effort to maintain and consolidate his own position, those *ruwata* of lesser status are competing among themselves by personally creating and maintaining their own followings. The ultimate aim for each is the *ruwang*-ship of the territory. Nevertheless, to retain membership within the territory, each of these lesser *ruwata*, no matter how ambitious, owes his allegiance to the territorial *ruwang*. Much of the activity between local groups within a territory is conducted or initiated by the respective *ruwang itso'de* ("owner of the house"), his own house usually being the core of a *ruwang's* following. All critical business which is economic, ceremonial and political in nature is left completely in the hands of the *ruwang*.

A *ruwang* creates a personal following through careful and calculated strategy. It is here that it is crucial to distinguish between the idiom in which political battles are fought and the political process itself. Certainly, in conformity with the ideal, a *ruwang* must prove himself increasingly capable in the performance of ritual. However, the demonstration of one's knowledge of the sacred is only one of many strategies necessary to the achievement of high position within the territory. The history of a successful *ruwang* is not only that of a man attaining relations of a certain nature with the world of the supernatural and increasing his power over that realm; it involves, as well, a series of shrewd marriages and power alliances, and well-calculated attacks against competitors. It is especially deftness in the handling of affines that it is necessary to the attainment of a large personal following. All large houses - again, the house being the core of any *ruwang's* following - are built up through the development of a number of complex affinal relationships (see J. Kaplan 1973; 1975). To be sure, the Piaroa reasoning goes somewhat differently and is *ex post facto* in nature, the large size of a following being the most important proof of the ritual knowledge and thus wealth of a strong *ruwang*. If he could not protect and provide bountifully for so many people, he would not have a large following. For the Piaroa, ritual and wealth go hand in hand (see Arvelo-Jimenez 1971, who equates wealth and ritual for the Ye'cuana).

A further word on the political nature of the affinal relationship among the Piaroa is in order. In an

overview of Carib societies, Rivière (1972) has tentatively suggested that the affinal categories of the two-line terminology (ever-present in Carib society) have possible political import: there is a logical implication "of hierarchical ordering of the inferior/superior order" holding between affinal categories in general of the two-line terminology. The affinal relationship, always asymmetrical among the Caribs, is sometimes taken *political* advantage of by them, and it is certainly true that affinal categories are also used among the Piaroa as the idiom for expressing political relationships that involve subordination and domination.<sup>10</sup>

By taking into account the asymmetry of the affinal relationship, we can better understand the heavy weighting of affinal relationships in the development of the larger houses within Piaroa land. As I have remarked in an earlier paper (1973), when the size of the house is small, the emphasis is upon the comfortable sibling relationship and not the difficult in-law one. But no viable *political* base can be built upon the foundation of "kin" relationships, for "kin" categories imply, above all for the Piaroa, the principle of amity. Those in the category of "brother" to one another or in the "father"/"son" relationship never compete with one another politically (this is despite the fact that the Piaroa relationship terminology makes the distinction of "elder" and "younger" sibling, which certainly makes this relationship potentially an asymmetrical one). All political battles are between those who are in the category of "affines" to one another - either as "father-in-law" and "son-in-law" or in the reciprocal relationship of "brothers-in-law." The latter relationship, although applied reciprocally, is always potentially asymmetrical in that one is the giver and the other the receiver. However, it is important to note that the asymmetry underlying categories of a system of direct exchange is *logically open-ended in direction*. This openendedness is reflected in the Piaroa use of affinal categories. First, the content of the giving or the taking is unimportant to status differentiation - whether a daughter, a son, a sister, and so on is given or received. Nor does it matter whether one is in the position of giver or receiver. Whether in the position of "father-in-law," "son-in-law" or "brother-in-law," the man who initiates the contract is the one in the dominant position.<sup>11</sup>

The hierarchical structure of *ruwangship* within a territory is expressed quite clearly in, and acted out in terms of, the idiom of affinity forthcoming from the Piaroa relationship terminology. Political battles most typically take their form in the wake of arrangements for marriages. In short, the marriage alliance and the political alliance are one and the same among the Piaroa - a battle of one-upmanship. The irony is that once any given marriage is actually con-

tracted, the idiom of relationship is soon transformed through the teknonymic system from one of affinity to one of kinship (J. Kaplan 1972). When the asymmetry of a relationship is made politically concrete - through the marriage alliance one man joins or becomes more fully incorporated within the following of another - the relationships of asymmetry become unmarked. Moreover, political battles are fought out *between* followings and not within one. Should relationships within a following become competitive in nature and thereby threaten the existing asymmetry, the following loses its unity and disintegrates as a unit. The idiom of asymmetry can then once more be used among those who were its members. The idiom of asymmetry, then, is critical to the hierarchical ordering that obtains within the territory as a whole, and not to the structure of a particular following.

I have also noted in an earlier paper (1973:562) the tendency of a Piaroa to manipulate his relationships outside the immediate kindred range in such a way that he establishes himself as "affine" to as many people as possible. In so doing he facilitates the continuation of on-going sets of political-marital alliances and allows for the development of new ones. Manipulation of this type occurs only within the territory, the largest political unit among the Piaroa. Outside the territory, crucial relationships are consistently reckoned as "kin" ones - between "brothers" or "fathers" and "sons." Trade is carried out among political equals, not between the politically subordinate and dominant. Trade between territories, which is of considerable importance to Piaroa economy, is conducted only by the great *ruwata*. Their relationship vis-à-vis one another has no hierarchical content since the notion of hierarchy pertains only to relationships within the territory. Such trade into foreign territories is always potentially dangerous; hence, the idiom of amity becomes crucial to its undertaking, and is so recognized by the Piaroa.

In this section I have been outlining a political system based on factionalism. We have seen that the political process impinges upon the ordering of groups within Piaroa society. The *ruwang* constantly seeks to enlarge his own following, preferably drawing its members into his own house; the non-*ruwang* makes considerable efforts to seek the protection of the powerful. Indeed, it is my position elsewhere that it is only by taking into account "the political" that order can be placed upon Piaroa social ordering (J. Kaplan 1975). However, if one attempted to use as analytical tools in the study of Piaroa society "power" and the "political" defined in terms of coercion through overt command and physical punishment, or in terms of control over economic activity, one would discover leaders with no power and a society with no political



organization. Moreover, there is the danger that the possibility of such ordering as I have above described it would be overlooked by the analyst if he assumed, because of a *a priori* notions of what power is about, that leadership within Piaroa were "ineffective."

So far, we have not been talking about power and authority within Piaroa society as I shall define them for analytic purposes. I shall follow Parsons (1969) in his definitions of "power" and "authority," for I feel them to be exceedingly useful as analytical categories for certain ethnographic purposes in so far as they are *broadly* conceived and *both* are based upon the notion of *legitimation*.<sup>12</sup> Parsons treats "power" as "a generalized medium" through which collective goals are accomplished, or "as the capacity to make... decisions which are *binding* on the collectivity of reference..." (Parsons 1969:46) and "as the *means* of acquiring control..." (1956:356). "Authority," on the other hand, he views (1969:325, 322) as a *status* and as the "legitimized right to make certain categories of decisions and bind a collectivity to them." If "authority" is seen as the institutionalized counterpart of power (1969:372), then power becomes the "instrumentality of effective performance *in that position*" (1969:325). Most importantly, Parsons (1969:382, 396, 446) emphasizes the symbolic character of "power"<sup>13</sup> and its dependence upon legitimation. According to him, power is dependent upon the institutionalization of authority, and it is only in the institutional code that the "language of power" becomes meaningful. His definition does not contain *within* it specification for either scope of power<sup>14</sup> or its means of control, such as through specific types of positive or negative coercion (see Dahl 1963:50-51).

In following these definitions, we must turn to the Piaroa ideology of "power," the understanding of which now becomes critical to an understanding of the pivotal role of the *ruwang* within Piaroa society. Power battles are fought out in terms of this ideology; the non-*ruwang* seeks the *ruwang* for a reason: he views him as having considerable power within certain domains. Since power in Piaroa society centers around the person of the *ruwang*, it is on the Piaroa conceptualization of his role, on their ideas about his special relationship to society and to the spirit world, that attention must be focused in an analysis of Piaroa beliefs about the nature of good and bad power. In closing this section, I would like to note that there is seemingly a great contrast between the world of power politics and the Piaroa ideology of power. Here we are simply faced with an age-old philosophical question (see MacIntyre 1972:25): "Is it important for the ruler to be just, or is it only important for him to be thought to be just?"

### 3.

For the most part, as the Piaroa see it, the major duty of the *ruwang* is the performance of ritual, the proper enactment of which is no less than to attain "the good life" and all that this entails for the members of his community - fertility, prosperity, freedom from disease, safety. As Hocart once observed of the "Red Indian" (1959:48), "the word life is written large over his ritual." And so it is with the Piaroa. The *ruwang* is able to perform such ritual because he is first and foremost a "man of knowledge," a "thinker," or a *tu'eparing* in Piaroa language. As a "man of knowledge," he understands and can interpret the world of spirits and the mythical past. He knows the origin and the nature of the world and the place of society within it. Because of this knowledge, the Piaroa *ruwang* has within his power - to use the words of Hocart once again (1970:33) - "the techniques of life-giving." As a *ruwang* increases his knowledge of the proper order of things, so too does he gain in power in his ability to control the world of spirits. Such power should be used to help the people. In itself, this power is amoral in nature; it can be used for both beneficent and evil purposes. Hence, a *tu'eparing*, or thinker, is judged as a good *ruwang* and as one having legitimate power insofar as society perceives him to be using that power which is his in a moral way; that is, for the good of the community. As shall be discussed below, legitimation is achieved through the display of moderation and tight control over one's mind.<sup>15</sup>

A *ruwang* increases the strength of his "thoughts" and thereby his knowledge of the order of things within the universe through long apprenticeships with "thinkers" who have greater knowledge than he, and from whom he learns a body of standardized ritual knowledge and acquires competence in the art of conducting ritual. These teaching ceremonies, *maripateau* (literally, "to learn thoughts"), involve far more, however, than the memorization of chants and rituals, for it is through such sessions that the apprentice is enabled to establish a special relationship with certain beings on various levels of the spirit world. Each teaching session itself is comprised of a series of purification rites, most of which are associated with the taking of various hallucinogenic drugs (*yopo*, *kapi*).<sup>16</sup> The Piaroa view these rites, not as a process preparatory to learning, but as the actual learning process. They transform the apprentice into a state whereby he then, afterwards, is able to memorize; it is only after the ceremony that he is able to understand the chants he hears, thus also able to remember them. The hallucinogenic drugs not only purify his body, a necessary step in preparation for learning, but they also give him

the visions through which he is able to establish a relationship with the set of gods (the *tianawa*) who play the crucial role of giving him the chants, one of the critical means to his power.

It should be noted that in sharp contrast to Tungus shamanism,<sup>17</sup> the Piaroa shaman never introduces spirits into his body during his trance, nor when in this state is his behavior at any time hysterical or visibly ecstatic. Indeed, as will be emphasized further, his actions must be under complete control. Judged as being one of the most controlled in temperament among Piaroa men, he must never show his ecstasy; he plans for his trances from the very beginning, and pays for them, just as the giving itself is prepared for and agreed upon by the teacher long in advance.

While under the influence of hallucinogens, the apprentice's *ta'kwa ruwang* receives the chants. The mechanism involved is that which Lewis (1971:30) has referred to as "de-possession," or the "loss of a personal vital force." *Ta'kwa ruwang* is the Piaroa term signifying both the shadow and one of the souls of a man, his "thoughts." It is *ta'kwa ruwang* as "thoughts" that is necessary to the learning process, and as "thoughts," it is anthropomorphized as a dwarf which dwells inside the head of a man. It is this dwarf, when the *ruwang* is under the influence of drugs and sitting in his hammock, who goes up to the *tianawa* spirits to receive the chants. It is he who gives the *ruwang* his visions through his physical visits to the various worlds of the cosmos. It is the dwarf of the powerful *ruwang* who transforms himself as other beings - as birds, as jaguar, as anaconda and other animals - for the purpose of doing good or evil for the *ruwang*; who visits animal places of creation beneath the mountains and those of the Piaroa in the lakes up in the sky. It is the *ta'kwa ruwang* that enables the *ruwang* to diagnose diseases; the dwarf can see inside the body of the patient and can travel into it in order to take out objects shot into the victim's body by the *marimu* (sorcerers). The *ruwang's ta'kwa ruwang* can also see the *ta'kwa ruwang* of the one who is ill, and in so doing detect whether the "thoughts" of the other is ill. If the latter is the case, the *ruwang* knows that his patient is ill from the "sickness of an animal" (see below), and not from sorcery attack. The appropriate curing chant can then be taken from the *tianawa* gods by the *ta'kwa ruwang*, which is then chanted by the *ruwang*. Most importantly, it is the dwarf in the head of the *ruwang* that teaches him, and in this role, along with the others listed above, is one of the crucial centers of the *ruwang's* power.

Not all those allowed to be initiates achieve the status of *ruwang*, for while high on drugs, the apprentice must have a particular series of visions in order to become a "thinker": visions depicting specific

episodes of the mythic past and those of his own future. He must see the abode of the celestial *tianawa* gods; his *ta'kwa ruwang* must visit there in the spray of the waterfall, and see its sounds. The initiate must see the chants and see himself as one of the *tianawa* gods, chanting with a maraca in his hand; he must see his future wife as the most important of the *tianawa* gods, the goddess of fertility; he must see her creation in the stomach of her *tianawa* father - see him take the strongest of the drugs (*kapi*) unrefined, and see her grow from this roughage in his stomach. These visions and others, clearly culturally as well as drug-induced - the significance of each being carefully explained to the initiate by the teaching *ruwang* before he gives the drugs - are symbolic, indeed prophetic of his power to be. They are visions of his future as a great *ruwang*. If he should be so fortunate as to hear and to see emanating from the spray of the waterfall at the *tianawa* abode the sounds of the sacred instruments of the sari, the increase ceremony given first by the culture-hero, Wahari, the young initiate knows that he will be among the greatest of "thinkers"; he will one day be able to teach.<sup>18</sup>

There are two distinct sets of *tianawa* gods with whom a *ruwang* establishes relations.<sup>19</sup> They occupy two separate levels of the spiritual world, and just as they are spatially separate, so too do they represent different kinds and sources of power to be tapped. Those from the more celestial level are symbolic, and the judges as well, of morality within Piaroa society; while those from the second abode are amoral in nature. It is of the first, the moral level, that the initiate must have visions and it is from its members that he receives the chants. The *tianawa* gods, or personages, of the second level dwell, too, in the sky on top of a mountain; but they also travel down to earth and visit Piaroa land in the guise of earth spirits - as animals, birds, insects and even as Spanish conquistadors in full armor. The members of this group neither chant nor give chants; rather, much of the content of the chants of the *ruwang* is directed toward the supplication of these beings.

The main purpose of the chants is to protect the Piaroa from the "diseases of the animals."<sup>20</sup> The Piaroa believe that much of their illness is passed on to them by animals of the hunt. Very briefly, the essence of an animal, as that of another person for that matter, is polluting. The *tianawa* spirits from the lower level, called upon by the *ruwang* in his nightly chants, are asked not to send the disease of the animal to his people, but rather to protect them by transforming dangerous meat of the hunt to vegetable. Because of this transformation, food eaten by the Piaroa is almost entirely vegetable in form. As one Piaroa explained:

The blood, the sweat, the urine of the pecary, the sloth, the paui, the monkey, are dangerous to us. If we cross a stream where a tapir has passed we become ill. If we should eat an animal without first drinking the water into which a *ruwang* has blown through his flute the words from his chants, we will become ill. A pregnant woman who does not drink this water in the morning will give birth to an animal, for when she eats the animal without drinking the "blown" water, the penis of the "father" of the animal who lives in his sacred home beneath the mountain will impregnate her.

The Piaroa are unable to differentiate verbally between food that is meat and food that is vegetable. Theoretically, the former does not exist, and the Piaroa term for food, in line with this theory, is *kwawa*, which literally means "plant food." There is good reason for their aversion to animal meat. Animals hold a highly ambiguous position within the Piaroa ordering of the world. In their taxonomy of living things, the Piaroa do not contrast "people" with other animals: both animals and people are within the category *itso'du* and not within that of *dauwiya* (plants); the distinction being between entities that breathe and those that do not. Moreover, for a Piaroa, it is not clear that animals as we see them on earth are what they are in essence. Animals are seen by the *ruwang* in his visions of them during his nightly chanting, when his *ta'kwa ruwang* visits the animal places of creation beneath the earth, as having human form. Piaroa mythology says that the culture hero, Wahari, who created and gave form to the Piaroa, gave to the animals the form they take on earth only after the Piaroa complained to him that they could not eat creatures that looked like themselves. They could not be cannibals. The transformation of the flesh of the animal to vegetable is but another step precautionary against such a danger.

Hence, the second level *tianawa* spirits, as critical agents in this transformation process, are important protectors of the Piaroa, and as such, considered for the most part as benevolent beings, though they potentially can do harm. Dealing with them is fairly programmatic and generally in the realm of manipulation. If the *ruwang* conscientiously chants to these spirits they in turn do not send disease - but protect the Piaroa from it. Without the chant, they would send the disease. Many of the daily rites which the *ruwang* performs routinely to protect his people are directed toward acquiring further aid from these spirits. If asked, for instance, they guard children from the dangers of the forest by transforming them into

their own terrestrial form. Since the food of one spirit consists of jaguar and anaconda, the children dressed as him and having his smell scare away these animals.<sup>21</sup> A *ruwang* also calls upon one of them, a giant in his earth form, to protect his house against the dangers of the night, the most notable being the *marimu*, beings who are the cause of all Piaroa death and who are believed to be powerful sorcerers from neighboring tribes.<sup>22</sup> These sorcerers transform themselves upon entering Piaroa land in hidden guise as butterflies and bats. In striking the skull of an armadillo against the floor of his house, the *ruwang* thereby calls out hundreds of the giant *tianawa* spirits who then surround the house as a protective guard against the *marimu* and other dangers.<sup>23</sup>

In sum, the *tianawa* of the lower abode are viewed as being more or less beings of the earthly world whose power can be tapped and manipulated in highly specific circumstances. They are not so much a source of the *ruwang's* power as its means; he does not so much partake of their power as to make use of it. By cajoling them and by paying for their aid, he enlists their help, their power, toward the end of fulfilling his responsibility to protect his community. It is through the power and knowledge acquired from the *tianawa* gods of the higher abode that he is able to do this. The *tianawa* gods from the more celestial level represent the general and most potent source of power for the *ruwang*, and, in contrast to those from the lower abode, maintain a relation with the *ruwang* which the Piaroa view to be highly moral and abstract in nature. The power they give to the *ruwang* is given as a gift.

Individual *tianawa* gods from the higher level are viewed as being weaker or stronger sources of power. To perform most rituals, the chants and other means of control over spirits and forces received from the more moderate sources are sufficient. The Piaroa believe that only a very powerful *ruwang* should attempt to tap the stronger sources of power, and even then it is dangerous to the safety both of the *ruwang* and society if he should prove incapable of controlling it. For this reason, the most difficult and dangerous rituals of all, yet those most protective of the well-being of the people, are usually performed by the territorial *ruwang*, the owner of the territory. Such rites would include those that ensure the protection and the fertility of the entire territory and the ritual necessary to the teaching of sacred knowledge. The lesser *ruwang* is likewise minimally responsible, on a smaller scale - hence weaker sources of power are all that are necessary to the task - for his house and the jungle surrounding it. Most important, the process of learning and the receiving of power from the *tianawa* gods must proceed slowly so that each gain in power can be

carefully controlled by the *ruwang*. If a man begins to learn too quickly, the theory goes, tapping too soon the stronger sources of power, he may become overly ambitious, flaunt his knowledge and use it dangerously.<sup>24</sup>

The degree to which the *ruwang* shows moderation in acquiring relations with the *tianawa* gods from the first abode is the most important criterion by which the Piaroa distinguish legitimate from illegitimate power. Control on the part of the *ruwang* is emphasized as being the most critical attribute of leadership. The theme that nothing is more dangerous for society than uncontrolled power is repeated time and again - in Piaroa mythology, in everyday assessments of individual *ruwang*, in theorizing about the *ruwang's* role. In myth, the father-in-law of the culture hero, Wahari, is the archetypical evil "thinker," a man who has no control at all over his powers. In every cycle in which he appears, at one point or another usually because he has taken too many drugs or drugs too strong for him, his lack of control is depicted by his erratic running around in circles. His evilness is thereby mitigated by the slapstick quality of his behavior. Indeed, one feels when listening to such episodes that the Piaroa place much more emphasis upon the foolishness of his antics than upon his evil motivations (his desire to eat one or the other of his in-laws). Wahari's attitude toward him is that of condescension, not fear. And, as we shall see below, such a mood has its implication for power in real life that is perceived as going astray.

Power received from the *tianawa* gods is general in nature; it has the potentiality for being used for the good of the community and also for selfish gain and killing. The Piaroa, in recognizing very clearly the inevitable association of power and ambition, place severe constraints on the egoistic side of power through an ideology which says that any power which manifests itself as uncontrolled in nature cannot be legitimate. To achieve legitimacy, a Piaroa must do more than demonstrate his skill as a "man of thoughts," as one who knows much about sacred things; he must show that he learned well and has never forgotten his lessons from another level of knowledge: that of how to be a tranquil person.

The Piaroa differentiate between two types of knowledge: the knowledge of cultural ethics and that of sacred things. Each Piaroa boy at the age of six or seven is taught by a *ruwang* the nature of a good Piaroa: he is taught how to live tranquilly; he learns how to work peacefully with other people. The aim of all Piaroa is to lead the tranquil life, and the ability to do so, they believe, is a state which is achieved. It is a matter of control. I cannot emphasize too much the Piaroa concern for such tranquility.<sup>25</sup> Piaroa society is

one in which peace is institutionalized and violence absolutely condemned. Indeed, so the Piaroa say, a Piaroa who kills another man by physical violence will die through the defecation of his very insides. The Piaroa ideal of manhood is not the warrior (in the ordinary sense of the word) or the one who works hard in the field, or the hunter, but rather, it is the man who lives peacefully. The Piaroa leader, the *ruwang*, must approach more than other men this ideal of controlled manhood, for the *ruwang* as example ensures the tranquility of his people.

Bad power, then, in Piaroa society is that power which fails to live up to the conditions of the first level of knowledge, that of cultural ethics, for lack of restraint in this realm can only lead to lack of restraint in the other; that is, to a lack of control in one's relation with the spirit world. The Piaroa take many precautions to ensure the legitimate use of power. It is the duty of one with legitimate power, in his role as protector of his people, to prevent the emergence and the growth of dangerous, uncontrolled power. The most potent weapon at the disposal of the territorial *ruwang* in preventing the growth of evil power within his territory is his control over the teaching of sacred things, his control over the second level of knowledge. If a child throws temper tantrums, he is never allowed in his adult life to undergo *ruwang* apprenticeship. He may not be able, the Piaroa reason, to learn proper control of his emotions, and, thus, he might inappropriately attack any kinsman with whom he is irritated. Vicious feelings, evil intent and jealousy are only annoying and never considered harmful in the man who has no power over the spirit world, whereas such characteristics in a *ruwang* are understandably thought to be highly dangerous to society's welfare. Uncontrolled power can kill at whim, cause natural disasters, prevent the increase of animals and cause infertility of the land.

Even a great *ruwang*, the Piaroa insist, must be careful not to acquire too much power from the *tianawa*, else he, too, can become socially dangerous. As one Piaroa explained:

A very powerful thinker can see all the world as one place. But this is bad for him, and it only leads to problems when he has such power because he *sees too much*. He may see that a brother-in-law in the next *iso'de* is angry. And when he sees this he thinks that his brother-in-law is angry with him, though probably he is not. He very likely will retaliate then for no good reason at all. The great *ruwang* must develop the controlled ability to have visions of other places and of the future, and the controlled



ability to transform himself through his thoughts. It must be like a small house within his thoughts, bounded and tight. But too often people want stronger powers than this.

If a territorial *ruwang* makes the judgment that one of the other *ruwang* within his territory is acquiring power from the *tianawa* gods before he can handle it, he forbids the lesser *ruwang* to participate in further learning sessions. Any *ruwang* who becomes too ambitious in his attainment of power, and in so doing uses it for his own self-aggrandizement, is likewise forbidden further lessons. Such measures also halt his progress in attaining higher status within the hierarchy of *ruwang* within the territory. Here the judgment of motivation is critical to such decisions, and can only be understood within the context of the Piaroa concern over "correct" and "incorrect" uses of power.<sup>26</sup> Finally, if a *ruwang* becomes completely unmanageable, by for instance openly threatening uncalled-for retribution (such as calling on the *marimu* to attack kinsmen), the other *ruwang* of the territory can call upon the *tianawa* goddess of fertility to "take his thoughts away," thereby rendering him completely powerless.<sup>27</sup> Thereafter, any bad temper indulged in on his part is merely viewed as being that of an irritating and silly man.

In sum, the most important criterion of legitimate power is the demonstration by the *ruwang* of both good intent and control in his relations with the world of spirits. As any particular *ruwang* increases his ability to tap stronger sources of power, so too must there be an increase in his ability to control his emotions; any lapse in such control becomes more dangerous to society with each gain he makes in power over spirit beings. Ultimate judgment as to whether a power be good or bad always revolves around the question of the relation of the *ruwang* to his sources of power. If his relations to his fellow men be good, then so will his relation to the world of spirits from the point-of-view of society also be a good one. It might be added that the line is fine, and indeed indecisive, between the *ruwang* who through his lack of control kills inadvertently and he who deliberately kills. The identical explanation is given in either case: the relationship of the *ruwang* to his sources of power is not as it should be; he has been negligent in following the most important rule of social behavior laid down by Piaroa society - that of moderation.

#### 4.

The Piaroa theory of sovereignty does not allow for concrete powers of force and coercion to be

placed in the hands of leaders, and it certainly does not equate earthly power with sovereignty, a very modern idea requiring a conceptualization of the world and its order that recognizes flux, change and progress, or at least necessitating a concept of change as being a state which is good. Rather, similar to the notion of sovereignty during the Middle Ages in Europe (see Jouvenel 1967:30sq), the ultimate right of command in Piaroa society lies at once in myth and custom and with certain beings of the spirit world. This is never, of course, a true dichotomy, the gods being part and parcel of the mythological world. The Piaroa creator, Wahari, laid down once and for all times the laws for social behavior.<sup>28</sup> The upper-level *tianawa* gods, who as we have seen are the ultimate source of power in which a *ruwang* partakes, act as preservers of this order of Wahari and they also pass down moral judgments: they give power to the controlled and take it away from those who become uncontrolled. The *ruwang* does not make laws; rather, it is his role to conspicuously and rigidly conform to the law laid down by Wahari. Moreover, he has no means at his disposal to physically punish wrongdoers. Power to solve civil disputes, such as marriage problems, stealing, laziness, remains within the realm of the individual family and are not normally the affair of the *ruwang*. The same holds true for the organization of labor non-ceremonial in nature. The *ruwang* is not an organizer of men; he has neither a bureaucracy at his disposal nor even a coterie of henchmen. As the most highly controlled of individuals, he must never raise his voice nor give direct commands. He suggests, he asks, he teaches, and he maintains peace by being the paragon of a peaceful person. Should any Piaroa leader begin to display arrogance, give open commands or order physical punishment - to metamorphose the power that is his into sovereign power - his followers would believe him to be crazy (*uniwa*) and to be misusing his power. They would no longer recognize his leadership.

On the other hand, the *ruwang* who does follow proper procedures is far from being powerless, and far from being considered powerless by the Piaroa. He must not be taken lightly, as his power over spirit beings increases, so too does a *ruwang's* ability to perform such acts as transcending normal laws of space and gravity, transforming himself into dangerous animals of attack (anaconda, jaguar), causing earthquakes, removing souls, sending illness and indeed death through sorcery. A brief summary of the realms over which he does have control, many of which have been mentioned in passing, is now in order.

The *ruwang* has the obligation to protect his followers from all danger and to ensure the fertility of animals and plants of the land for which he is respon-

sible, the house site(s) and/or territory. When game is scarce he performs ritual which calls the peccary out of their fertile sacred home beneath the earth to take up inhabitancy in the earthly jungle surrounding his house.<sup>29</sup> The *ruwang* is host to all strangers (being the most hospitable of all men), trader with other territories and tribes, and protector against all enemies (mostly of the spirit world) of the people for whom he is responsible. In such dealings, he is protected as a non-*ruwang* is not by his own powers; the benefits of such protection should be passed on to his followers.

The *ruwang* is also the Piaroa warrior, but a very special type of warrior, who wards off malevolent beings and kills the enemies of his people, never through violence, but by calling upon the aid of beings from the spirit world. Although there exists a sanction against killing by physical force, there is none to prevent killing through magical means when such killing is for the good of the community. Thus, the *ruwang* is daily engaged in numerous rituals, with the end result of each being the destruction of ever-present, ever aggressive *marimu*, the beings who cause all Piaroa death. The *marimu*, as powerful sorcerers believed by the Piaroa to be from neighboring tribes, are foreign enemies. It is protection from them that makes it especially necessary for every Piaroa without power to live with a great *ruwang*. From our perspective, the *ruwang* is much more significant as a warrior against other-worldly spirits, than as an executive of this-worldly affairs.

Although the *ruwang* plays little part in daily economic activity, he does have considerable power over economic process through the increase ceremonies he performs. Most economic activities among the Piaroa - cultivating, hunting, fishing and gathering - require little organization, and most work is initiated and carried out on individual decision. A *ruwang* of some status rarely participates in these daily activities; his time is filled instead with the never-ending ritual necessary to the protection of his large house.

While all garden plots and their produce are privately owned by individual nuclear families, all wild foods from the jungle, plant and animal, are divided among members of the house. The results of gathering trips are distributed equally by the collectors to each family of the house. In contrast, it is the responsibility of the *ruwang* to redistribute among the families of his house all meat brought in by hunters residing with him. The role of the *ruwang* in the daily distribution of meat within the house can best be understood by considering both the highly dangerous and ambiguous nature of animal meat within Piaroa ideology and one of the primary duties of the *ruwang*, that of preventing disease and curing it. The presentation of meat to the *ruwang* by the men of his house is

not a statement of his power over economic activities, but rather one on his position as a man with control over the spirit world.<sup>30</sup> The meat which the *ruwang* distributes is meat which he, as *ruwang* has made edible, hence non-dangerous, through other ritual. Through his chants, he transforms meat to vegetable, thereby freeing it of the dangers of pollution and disease contamination.

Some activities, most notably the building of a large house or the presentation of a large *sari* (the "festival of the gods," the great increase ceremony presented by a territorial *ruwang* when he is at the height of his power, each year during the rainy season) require the coordinated efforts of all or most of the members of his house and, in the latter case, the territory. The house-building sponsor is the "owner of the house" (*ruwang itso'de*); of the *sari*, it is the territorial *ruwang*. Whereas the *ruwang* plays little part in the organization of daily activities, except as a fund of knowledge, he does take active lead in the soliciting and the coordination of labor for the large work parties required for these greater events. Contrary to his role in ordinary economic affairs, the *ruwang* also takes part in the actual process of house construction. The *ruwang*, although coordinator of the activity, never gives direct commands, but only makes suggestions.

Finally as teacher of the correct moral categories on which Piaroa society is based, the *ruwang* is responsible for the maintenance of tranquil relationships between men, for order and peace within his following. Because of his relations with power and spirit beings, he has power over men. It is the power of a man of wisdom; his judgments and decisions are scrupulously followed because he knows which behavior is condemned by the *tianawa* gods and which is condoned, which behavior will maintain both order within society and order between society and the various levels of cosmos, and finally which behavior will disorder upon society. As such a man of wisdom, he has at hand certain powers of negative coercion.

The *ruwang* expresses negative coercion ritually through "social silence," not through overt command and physical punishment. But this does not mean that punishment is not forthcoming. The *ruwang's* reaction to an impious act is pointed silence, a sanction as fearful to a Piaroa as the sword to individuals of another society. In general, not to follow the *ruwang's* knowledge of both cultural ethics and the sacred is to place oneself, and perhaps society, in a dangerous position vis-à-vis the spiritual world and to lose the protection of the *ruwang* as well.

A *ruwang* has considerable and highly effective means of legitimately punishing wrongdoing, such as when a biological father does not perform *couvade*, when a lesser *ruwang* performs a dangerous ceremony

sanctions what was created by another; it is that of maintaining an order, not of creating one. Hence, his position with respect to men is more in emulation of the *tianawa* gods as a force of peace and calm, as the protector and benefactor of men, than of Wahari, a force of heat and restlessness. The *ruwang*, whose main role is viewed by the Piaroa as being that of a preserver of the eternal past of society by maintaining a balance among things, is an example of leadership which would be difficult to match as one typifying power in the Lévi-Straussian "cold society" (1966:233-234).<sup>34</sup>

## 5.

I began this paper with a statement of discomfort over the definitions and typologies of evolutionists when addressing themselves to the politics of South American Lowland societies. I can now be more specific in my questioning. When the evolutionist does not distinguish between his comparative program and his descriptive endeavors an analytical muddle inevitably follows. When we speak of the analyst's definitions, we should recognize that what "something is" depends upon which aspects of a phenomenon one is interested in and to what end one is interested in those aspects. Unfortunately, there is a tendency for anthropologists to forget the dependence of their specific investigative mode upon the particular question they ask (D. Kaplan 1965). Too often we find a confusion of investigative levels in the analysis of political systems of South American tribal peoples. The discussion of Leeds (1969, 1974) of the Yaruro of the Venezuelan savannahs and that by Goldman (1963) of the Cubeo of the Northwest Amazon Basin are cases in point.<sup>35</sup> Both authors are concerned not only with presenting a description of a particular society, but also with the identification and the explanation of a type. The broader problem in evolutionary theory they are seeking to answer is that of why "tribal" societies of South America have not "progressed" to a "chiefdom" level of politico-economic organization (also see Carneiro 1961). Goldman (1963:85-89, 51), for instance, correlates an essentially conservative and equalizing economy with a political system characterized by a weak authority structure.

While quite legitimately focusing on one area of political control when working on a comparative level of analysis, Leeds and Goldman continue to weight the domain of economic organization when describing the polity of specific tribes.<sup>36</sup> In so doing, they have *reduced* leadership in these societies to the zero level. One cannot talk, then, about "the political" in these societies, for by evolutionist definition, leaders in tribal societies do not have extensive control

over economic activity, and authority is not subject to centralization and hierarchical arrangement in any formal sense (see Sahlins 1961, 1963; Service 1965:144 on the contrast of "chiefdom" with "tribal" level of society).

The route out of this dilemma is to recognize the obvious, as Parsons (1969) has done and as Lasswell and Kaplan (1950) have, also;<sup>37</sup> that it is a matter for empirical enquiry to discover what a particular society considers to be legitimate political domains and legitimate political sanctions. The use of specific sanctions, such as violence, tells us nothing about political power in general. We can only talk about cultural interpretation of violence, a mode of behavior which may or may not be acceptable in any given case as a means of power. With a broader definition it should also not be difficult to grasp the areas over which the leaders of a society have genuine control (e.g., ceremonial life, foreign relations, trade, tranquility and order, fertility of the land) - particularly when this is the question being asked. It follows that instead of speaking in general terms of the *extent* of power, we could describe the power and authority systems of any given society in terms of *modes* of power (its scope) and the institutionalized means of acquiring control over such specified values. Even when dealing in evolutionary endeavors, there is considerable efficacy in such an approach. The evolutionary problem can then be phrased positively in that the discussion could center upon variation within modes of power; that is, variation in the form and the extent of power within given realms. There is no methodological reason why the discussion should revolve entirely around the *degree* of power within only one particular mode of control, i.e., the economic. It is only by re-thinking the evolutionist's problem that we can gain a better understanding of the organization and the variations within what anthropologists have come to view as the troublesome category of "tribal society."

But I certainly do not mean for this paper to have relevance only for problems within evolutionists' typologizing. I am afraid, however, that any answers that I can provide are minuscule when compared with the enormity of the questions raised. I dare do no more than simply raise once again the question: "To what extent can any of us claim to be using legitimate comparative methods which would enable us to advance and to test genuine law-like cross-cultural generalizations?" In a highly interesting and provocative article (1972), MacIntyre recently has quite persuasively raised doubts about our ability to do so in comparative politics. Stated very simply, the main problem is that we cannot logically disengage the study of the institution or practice from the study of political beliefs, or vice versa.<sup>38</sup> More specifically pertinent to

beyond his capabilities, when one ignores a food taboo, or offends dangerous jungle spirits or desecrates scared places, and when one shows uncontrolled social behavior. The minimal punishment is the temporary withdrawal of protection.<sup>31</sup> In such cases, not only is public opinion turned against an offender, but the culprit also becomes highly vulnerable to the attack of spirit beings. The food he eats can poison him, he is not protected from jungle spirits, dangerous jungle animals, or the *marimu*. The ultimate legitimate sanction of a negative nature is excommunication from the *ruwang's* following. If the offender does not comply, he can expect direct reprisal on the part of the *ruwang*; the *ruwang* can call on the *marimu* to attack him. With the curing rites being denied him, such an attack would mean certain death.

There is also always the possibility that an angry *ruwang* might use sorcery for private retaliation. So far, we have been dealing with the realm of "authority," or the legitimate ways of dealing with recalcitrance. Sorcery is condoned when used against the enemies (human, animal or of the spirit world) of his community, but obviously condemned if used for his own personal satisfaction or self-aggrandizement. A certain amount of whimsicality is allowed the *ruwang*. A *ruwang* who transforms himself into a thunderbolt to startle away a thief in his garden is viewed with both admiration and amusement. However, sending illness to the children of political competitors and causing their land to be infertile are not examples of legitimate uses of power. As we have seen above, the *ruwang* must constantly prove and defend the beneficence of his motives - and this is the substance of "power politics" within the territory. On the other hand, the possibility of dire consequences for the man who offends a *ruwang* must be treated with respect. It is because his powers are so considerable that the powerful "man of thoughts" is sought out by the non-*ruwang*,<sup>32</sup> and it is for the same reason that the latter has great fear and healthy respect for the former.

De Jouvenel sets in opposition two types of power recurrent throughout the history of man: the *rex* and *dux*. There is an analogy between the type of authority the *ruwang* represents and that to which de Jouvenel (1957:34) has referred as the *rex*. The *dux* represents the power of the unrelenting creator, the source of change, while the *rex* that of the peaceful stabilizer. The *dux*, the founder of society, the initiator of action, acts as a source of heat; he epitomizes the principle of movement. The *rex*, on the other hand, in representing the principle of order, whose job is that of maintaining that which is and has always been, acts as a source of cold. The power of *rex* is aimed at keeping things in their place, tidy, as Mary Douglas would say.<sup>33</sup> Good ordering of relations among men,

peace and plenty with respect to the natural environment and to the world of spirits is equated with the good relations the *rex* himself maintains with such forces and beings. Discontent among men, a period of lack of plenty, is associated with bad leadership, one whose relations with the spirit world are not as they should be. Hocart says (1970:62) of ancient Vedic Indian ritual, as he compares it with that of other societies that are also "pre-governmental" in form, that

the purpose [of the ritual] stated with *wearisome iteration*, is still the same: to increase the supply of food and wealth..., to insure progeny, to ward off illness and untimely death, to thwart enemies.

However, it is more than simply with the maintenance of life that the *rex* is concerned; it is with the maintenance of a particularly conceived type of "good life," contingent, as such, upon the proper ordering among things within the universe.

The Piaroa, in their clear-cut distinction between two types of spirits - their culture-heroes and the more celestial *tianawa* gods - recognize quite clearly this dichotomy between the restless creator and the peaceful stabilizer. The culture-hero, Wahari, holds a similar position in Piaroa myth as David in the story of the founding of the Kingdom of Israel. Wahari is the creator of the world, the founder of society, but in the wake of his heroic creativity, as with that of David, come a series of sinful and violent acts: Wahari makes several unsuccessful attempts to kill his son - a son whose very birth is the result of an immoral act, being the product of an incestuous union between brother and sister; indulges in periods of irresponsibility - times of wanderings and sexual exploits; he kills his father-in-law, and it is soon after this event that he meets with his own violent death.

The *tianawa* of the upper abode represent the principle of order and calm as Wahari and his tempestuous life could never do. Tranquil beings in an ethereal setting, who neither eat nor hunt nor have sex, they are the greatest benefactors of the Piaroa, in constant service toward the end of peace and prosperity. They are symbolic of a type of authority in sharp contrast to one which is associated with the creation of an order with its inevitable connection with violence and restlessness.

As is usually true of a typological polarity, the truth exists somewhere in between. The *ruwang*, it is true, partakes of some of the attributes of Wahari. He creates, but his creation is not that of an initiator, but of one who continues, maintains and balances what already is. He is a creator only from our own narrow perspective, for ideologically, his power is that which



this paper, and also relevant to my attempt at cross-cultural analysis, are the doubts MacIntyre (1972:18sq) raises "about identifying institutions in different cultures as 'the same' and therefore interestingly different." Why should we not label what I have called "political institutions in Piaroa society as "religious" ones? If we can do this, does this not show the poverty of our categories for classifying the phenomena we find in at least some exotic societies? Furthermore, in what comparative contexts is either label applicable? The problem is much more complicated than that of merely assuming the legitimacy of speaking of the "political" or the "religious" aspects of any given institution in straightforward descriptive endeavors. To be sure, we do know that we are dealing with more comparable phenomena when comparing Piaroa institutions with those of Akwé-Shavante, the Trio or the Yáruro than with those of chiefdoms of Polynesia or with Western society. And, perhaps this is the answer for now. Nevertheless, it may be more expedient for us to stop talking about "political anthropology" as a *separate* domain within the discipline.

My main point in this paper is that we should make a concerted effort to discover new bases for comparison. To do this, we must attempt to purge our ethnographies of *ad hoc* typologies and assumptions.<sup>39</sup> I would like to suggest, for instance, that the emphasis upon "religion" *per se* in tribal societies and its articulation with "the political" is perhaps misplaced. "Political" ordering within Piaroa society appears to be the institutionalization of a people's notions about proper world ordering in general. Ultimately such a view of "the political" might have much to say about modern politics as well. How much of *our* politics is really conducted in a dream world? What proper relationship among things does each of us have in mind as we press the lever on the voting machine? We should be forewarned, however, that most of the general statements forthcoming from cross-cultural endeavors will be either universally true of all mankind or untestable. In neither instance do we have the empirical base for a social science (also see MacIntyre 1972:15).

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## NOTES

- (1) This paper is an expansion and a considerable revision of a paper read at the 1973 Northeastern Anthropological Association meetings in Burlington, Vermont. The field research on which it is based, carried out throughout 1968, was funded by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health, and awarded to my husband, M.R. Kaplan. Both the writing and the revisions of this paper were made possible by the summer grants given to me by the Vanderbilt Research Council and the Vanderbilt Latin American Center. Lynn Joiner, Mayer Walt, Judith Shapiro, and Waud Kracke for critical readings of an earlier draft of this paper and their very helpful suggestions.
- (2) See Nimuendaju 1952; Carneiro 1961; Dole 1966; Goldman 1963; Leeds 1969.
- (3) See, for example, Dole (1964, 1966) on the Kuikuru, Butt (1961) on the Akawaio, Goldman (1963) on the Cubeo, Gillin (1936) on the Barama River Caribs, Leeds (1969) on the Yaruro, Rivière (1969) on the Trio, and Arvelo-Jimenez (1971) on the Ye'cuana.
- (4) See Popper (1967:2-21) who makes the important distinction between the "nominalist" and the "essentialist" use of definition.
- (5) The second syllable of all Piaroa terms used in this paper are accented. The terms *itso'fhu*, *itso'de* and *ruwang* have identical singular and plural forms. When I returned to Piaroaland in 1977, and worked with Piaroa from various territories, I discovered that there was a good deal of linguistic variation. For example, the term *itso'fha* is not universally recognized. So too did word order vary. Thus in some areas the *ruwang itso'de* was referred to as *itso'de ruwang*.
- (6) It is highly likely that both the son and son-in-law would reside with a great *ruwang*. If this were the case, neither would have to pay for the learning of sacred knowledge; they would thereby have an advantage over other *ruwata* within the territory.
- (7) Piaroa rarely move because of "need of land," but rather because of house infestation, death of close family members, and political reasons. Also, it should be noted that since land is not inherited among the Piaroa, land cannot play a part in the definition of "corporate group" as it applies to the Piaroa.
- (8) In using the term "faction," I am following the discussion presented by Nicholas (1965) on the characteristics of "factionalism" as a political phenomenon,

e.g., factions are fluid and temporary conflict groups, political in nature, with no corporate status. They also are typically recruited by a leader.

(9) Contrast factionalism among the Shavante (Maybury-Lewis 1969:169) where ideally, at least, faction loyalties are lineage loyalties. Lévi-Strauss (1967:51) presents a similar discussion of the structure of band organization among the Nambikuara. A critical difference between the two, the Piaroa and the Nambikuara, is that the latter do not appear to have a territorial organization on the order of the Piaroa *itso'fha*, which consists of interacting, overlapping and fluctuating factions. It should also be noted that although the entire *itso'fha* is the following of the *ruwang itso'fha*, he also is the leader of a smaller faction within it.

(10) I would no longer use the phrase "subordination and domination" for any context relating to Piaroa political life. For explanation, see Overing 1993.

(11) Instead of the term "dominant," I would now use "superior."

(12) I wish here to note that the use of Parsonian definitions as analytic categories are probably much more amenable to the study of small-scale societies, as that of the Piaroa, than to the study of complex societies in which the delineation of "collective goals" may not be so clear-cut, as also might be the case with the process of legitimation.

(13) Also see Lasswell and Kaplan 1950:74, but contrast Fried 1967:13. I do not find useful the distinction which Fried makes between power and authority: "'Authority' is taken here to refer to the ability to channel the behavior of others in the absence of the threat or use of sanctions. 'Power' is the ability to channel the behavior of others by threat or use of sanctions." Fried states further (1967:13) that "it is more difficult to give an example of power without authority [than of authority without power], for demonstration of the former is usually a prime source of the latter." He thereby sets up authority as being at once control without power and as being evident only through the use of power.

(14) I am referring to Lasswell and Kaplan's (1950:77) use of the phrase. By scope of power they mean those "values whose shaping and enjoyment are controlled," such as economic practices.

(15) For a more in-depth discussion of the importance of moderation to the legitimation process, see Overing 1985.

(16) See Harner's (1973) edited collection of essays for more technical discussions of drug use in the Amazon basin. The Piaroa are highly experimental in their use of drugs.

(17) See Lewis (1971) for an excellent synthesis of work done in anthropology on shamanism.

(18) It is highly significant that the teaching ceremony itself is one of the greatest of the Piaroa increase ceremonies.

(19) Later fieldwork with the Piaroa in 1977 made it clear that the ordering of the *Tianawa* gods presented here is a particular one. As with language, Piaroa cosmology includes considerable free variation as one moves from region to region.

(20) For more discussion on the Piaroa disease complex, see Overing 1986.

(21) For a fuller discussion of this spirit, *Re'yo*, see Overing (in press).

(22) The neighboring Ye'cuana (see Arvelo-Jimenez 1971) have a similar belief, but with this difference: it is the Piaroa who are the sorcerers responsible for Ye'cuana death.

(23) A *ruwang* one morning announced that he had saved me from a jaguar attack on my tent the night before through precisely this method.

(24) Again, see Overing 1985 for a lengthier discussion of the acquisition of the *ruwang*'s power.

(25) This does not appear to be an unusual norm among South American lowland peoples. The Trio also place high value on tranquility in personal relations. Rivière (1971:306) has noted the general dislike of the Trio of strong personal emotions. Rivière has also stated (1970:248) that Trio political institutions "are mainly concerned with mediation and conciliation, a reduction of tension." Leeds says of the Yaruro (1969:378fn) that "it is as though it were not fitting to utter commands or express anger in Yaruro." Even among the Yanomamo (Chagnon 1968), leadership is usually conjoined with the responsibility for preventing emotions from moving to a level of uncontrolled violence.

(26) Winch (1970:100) notes that "there is an intimate conceptual connexion between the notion of authority on the one hand, and on the other hand, the notion of there being a right and a wrong way of doing things."

(27) I was told of one example of this occurring a couple of years before I arrived in the field. One of the *ruwang* lost most of his *itso'de* members to a *ruwang* who had "proven" himself to be more powerful. In anger, the offended *ruwang* threatened to send disease to the children of the other *itso'de*. Several children became ill and a conference of all the *ruwang* of the *itso'fha* convened, which made the decision to "take away his thoughts."

(28) I would no longer use the terms "laws" and "rules" in a discussion of Piaroa social and political life. See Overing 1989.

(29) Hocart (1970:3) suggests that one of the most important duties of leadership in "pre-governmental" societies is the transference of life from objects abounding in it to objects deficient in it.

(30) For a lengthier discussion of the *ruwang*'s role in the hunting process, see Overing 1988.

(31) I wish here to make a correction, for the discussion is phrased too strongly in the direction of "punishment." In most instances of "wrongdoing," the role of the *ruwang* is to *cure* the "patient," and not to punish him or her. It is only in extreme and rare cases that a *ruwang* would withdraw protection, for instance if someone consistently over time acted violently. Excommunication is a very last resort.

(32) Obviously, I disagree with Clastres (1974), who views the South American lowland chief as being powerless. According to him, the non-reciprocal relation which holds between chief and followers negates political power and thereby places the chief outside of society. I hope that I have shown that for the Piaroa, at least, the chief and the political are set firmly within society and that society itself is highly dependent upon the chief.

(33) See Lévi-Strauss (1966:233-234) on the distinction of leadership within "hot societies" and "cold societies." Also, of course, see Max Weber (1925) on his classification of authority types.

(34) I would now phrase this discussion differently in a number of ways. First, I would not use the language of "balance" and "order." Secondly, there have been problems in the interpretation of Levi-Strauss' meaning

in his typology of "hot" and "cold" societies which space forbids me to unfold here. It should be noted, however, that the Piaroa are not ahistorical; they are passionate about history. Their understanding of history, however, is not *our* understanding. For the sake of creating a productive and tranquil social life, they value what we can call "non-cumulative" history over "cumulative history." However, the Piaroa have become increasingly integrated in the market economy and their values will surely be changing. A research student, Paul Oldham, is now in the field with the Piaroa examining such issues.

(35) But see Overing (1989) where I pay tribute to Irving Goldman's superb understanding of Cubeo social organization. In the end, I would say that his analysis is *not* an evolutionist one.

(36) Leeds (1966:227, my italics) says that among the Yaruro accumulation of wealth and management of production is unnecessary, "consequently there are no economic status differentiations and no *effective* leadership among the Yaruro."

(37) Consider, for instance, the following remarks made by Lasswell and Kaplan (1950:92):

... political phenomena are only obscured by the pseudo-simplification attained with any unitary conception of power as being always and everywhere the same (violence or economic power or...). What is common to all power and influence relations is only effect on policy. What is affected and on what basis are variable whose specific content in a given situation can be determined by inquiry into the actual practices of the actors in that situation.

(38) In MacIntyre's words: "... institutions and practices are always partially, even if to differing degrees, constituted by what certain people think and feel about them (1972:11)." And, since "beliefs are always liable to be altered by reflection upon the situation,... we cannot ever identify a determinate set of factors which constitute the initial conditions for the production of some outcome in conformity with a law-like regularity (Ibid:22)."

(39) See Overing 1987.

# PHYSICAL SUBSTANCE AND KNOWLEDGE: DUALISM IN SUYÁ LEADERSHIP<sup>1</sup>

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The culture and social organization of the Northern and Central Gê tribes in central Brazil are characterized by a fundamental dualism which has been described by various authors, including Lévi-Strauss (1963a, 1963b, 1964), Maybury-Lewis (1967), Melatti (1970), and Seeger (1974). The opposing domains of nature and culture, continually acting upon each other, have been described as dominant features of the cosmology of the Northern Gê (Lévi-Strauss 1964; Da Matta 1970; Melatti 1970; Seeger 1974; T. Turner, ms.). The dualism and the interaction of nature and culture are clearly revealed in the ideologies of leadership found in these groups. Leaders are mediators between the two domains, and because of this mediating position they are regarded with ambivalence by the rest of the population.

The Gê-speaking tribes in Brazil may be divided into three discernible groups on the basis of linguistic, cultural, and geographical criteria.<sup>2</sup> These sub-groups, the Northern, Central, and Southern Gê extend from about 3 degrees S. latitude to about 30 degrees latitude in the interior of the country. The Northern Gê group includes the Timbira tribes (among them Krahô, Krikati, Ramkokamekra, Canela), the Apinaye, the Northern Kayapo, and the Suyá. The Central Gê are represented by the Sherente and the Shavante. The Gê-speaking tribes exhibit a number of interesting variations in social organization and culture. They are an ideal group of tribes with which to undertake what Fred Eggan has called "controlled comparison" (Eggan 1954). This paper opens with a discussion of leadership roles among the Suyá, one of the Northern Gê tribes.<sup>3</sup> Later, the differences and similarities of leadership among the tribes of the Northern and Central Gê will be examined for comparison.

Among the Suyá there is a clear dualism in the leadership roles. There are two kinds of leaders, political leaders (*mēropakande*) and ceremonial leaders (men who lead ceremonies, *mērokinkande*). Each of these roles has certain attributes which express the power of the leaders, and which individual men manipulate to obtain and maximize their power. The qualities attributed to leaders are apparently paradoxical, since the very persons who are said to unify the village are also said to have anti-social attributes. The

political leader is at once the representative of the ideal man and of the whole village, and is also believed to be "like a jaguar." The ceremonial leader, though he teaches the songs necessary for the perpetuation of Suyá society, is said to be "not as socially complete" as other men. The apparent paradox derives from Suyá attitudes about the nature of power: the defining features of powerful leaders are animal features because all power ultimately comes from the natural domain.

Suyá leadership will be discussed first in terms of the ideology of the way leaders *should* behave and then as they *do* behave in practice. The conflict between ideology and practice is one of the causes of Suyá ambivalence toward their political leaders.

In the next section the general features of power are discussed. Finally, a comparative analysis of the inheritance of political power and the dualism of leadership in the Gê-speaking societies will be presented. This comparison should raise with particular clarity some of the important features of leadership and cosmology among the Gê tribes and in lowland South America in general.

## LEADERSHIP AMONG THE SUYÁ

The word *mēropakande* translates literally as "the owner-controller of the place where the Suyá live in a group" (I shall occasionally use the term "political leader" to designate this Suyá concept).<sup>4</sup> The word *kande* (owner-controller) is an important one and it appears in a number of contexts. A person who makes a bow is that bow's *kande*. A family that plants a garden becomes the garden's *kande*. "Owning and controlling" includes control over goods and resources. The goods may also be intangible, such as songs, and the resources may be symbolic. Both types of Suyá leader are *kande*. One controls the village; the other, the *mērokinkande*, controls the performance of ceremonies.

The position of *mēropakande* is ideally and in fact usually inherited patrilineally. Almost any village has several political leaders, each one the head of a faction composed largely of his own bilateral kinsmen. A *mēropakande* coordinates collective activities, oversees distributions, is supposed to resolve disputes,



and sees to the defense of the village. The controller of the village cannot command. He leads through a delicate balance of consensus and implied sanctions. He can propose a course of action such as a raid. If there is support for the raid, the rest of the men will indicate their assent. If they do not agree, the *mēropakande* must either change his plans or manage with the help of his close allies when all of the dissenters conveniently absent themselves. Just as there is no power to command, so there is no formal investiture of a *mēropakande*. He must continually maximize his support, and if his faction and the rest of the village see the cogency of following his advice, they do so. If they cannot be convinced, they ignore it.

In the past,<sup>5</sup> Suyá leaders were supposed to be particularly bellicose and violent. They are described as always wanting to lead raids, and always looking for enemies. Under the influence of the administration of the Xingu Indian Reserve, raiding is no longer practiced and enemy attacks are less likely though still feared. *Mēropakande* continue to look for enemies in the forest and on the rivers. One man said of them:

When there are belligerent Indians to the north, the controller of the village always hunts and fishes to the north. He goes out in the morning and late in the evening looking for signs of the enemy. If there are enemy Indians to the south, he goes out to the south. He is always looking for enemies.

In the past, *mēropakande* were also considered to be dangerously volatile within the village. They were feared especially by women, children, and young men. One famous leader liked to shoot arrows at the men's house and make the unmarried men resident there dodge his arrows. Another would take the lip disc out of a young man's mouth and break it in his hands. Such violent leaders were said to be particularly frightening and "animal-like."

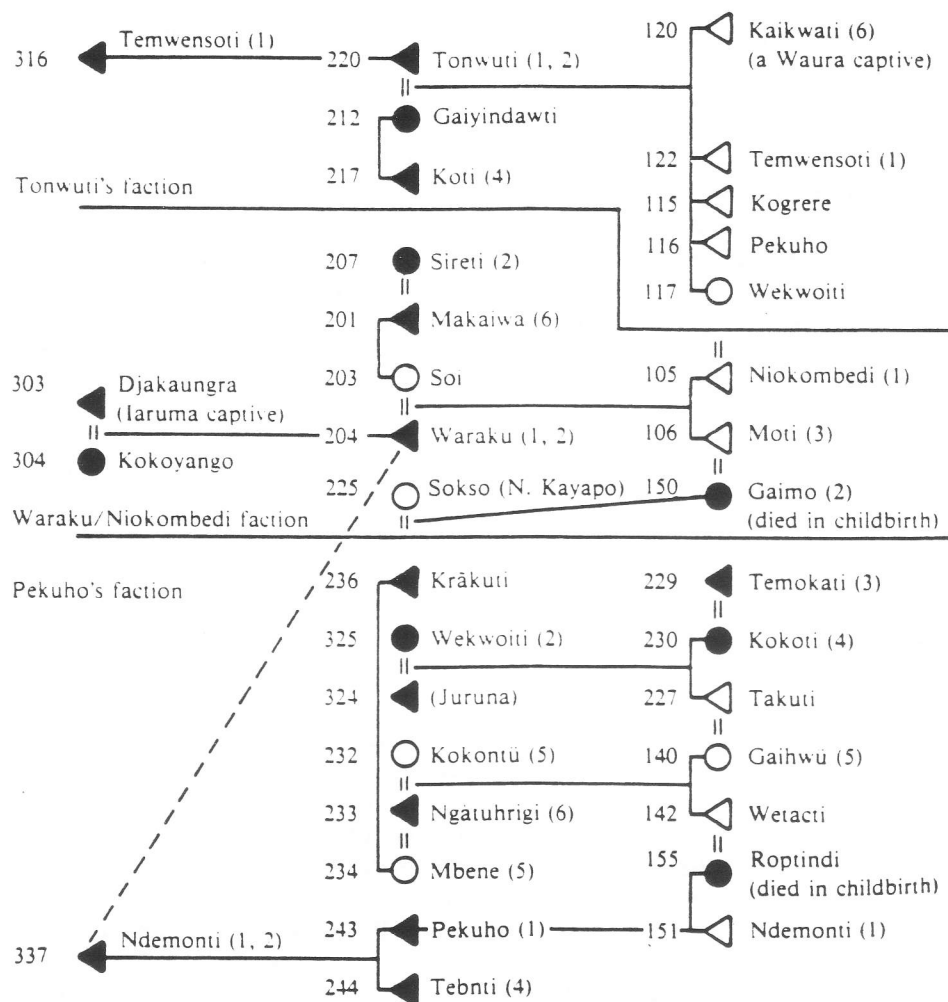
In addition to their belligerence, six attributes are said to characterize *mēropakande*: (1) They should be direct patrilineal descendants of previous *mēropakande*; (2) They should be distribute food, game, trade goods, and other items to the rest of the village. Under most circumstances, a man who is not a political leader will distribute food and other things only to his kinsmen, certain ceremonial relations, and some ceremonial friends. When a *mēropakande* distributes, he is supposed to forget no one and to give fairly to everyone; (3) They have the special duty of orating and exhorting people to behave correctly according to the norms of the tribe; (4) They coordinate collective activities such as group hunting and fishing expedi-

tions, some garden clearing, raids, village relocation, and other cooperative enterprises; (5) Through exhortation and influence they are supposed to resolve village disputes and maintain village peace; and (6) *Mēropakande* should behave as examples. They should work hard, behave correctly, and participate in ceremonial activity. They officiate at certain ceremonies as representatives of the entire village. They especially represent the ideal, bellicose, adult man.

When a *mēropakande* dies, his eldest son ideally takes his place.<sup>6</sup> If he has no son who is old enough, then he should be replaced by a brother. If neither sons nor brothers are available, then the Suyá say that a sister's son (*taumtwa*) will do.<sup>7</sup> All of the sons of a *mēropakande* are potential leaders. Those who are not active are called "*mēropakande* who do not orate." More than genealogical relationship is necessary, however, in order for a son to succeed his father as a *mēropakande*. In addition to the inherited legitimacy, a man must also be considered to be capable of doing the job. The faction which he represents must agree on who will replace their deceased leader. For this reason, my question about whether any particular man's particular son would become a *mēropakande* were always answered vaguely: "When the father dies, the people will know."

I have up to now described the ideal attributes and patterns of inheritance of Suyá *mēropakande*. It is essential to discuss as well the ways in which ambitious men can become leaders of factions and eventually become "controllers of the village." While the process of gaining influence is not given much recognition by the Suyá when they discuss leadership, it is important in any analysis of political power. Men who inherit the position of *mēropakande* as well as the occasional ambitious man who does not, must all maximize their influence and their claims to secure their legitimacy.

In 1972, the Suyá lived in a single village of approximately 130 residents in the Xingu National Indian Reserve (*Parque Indígena do Xingu*). In the past, the population of the tribe was considerably larger, counting a number of villages - two on the Xingu and several between the Arinos and Sangue rivers to the west. Among the Suyá in 1972, there were three active *mēropakande*. It is usual for a village to have at least two *mēropakande*, some have had as many as four. Each *mēropakande* was the head of a faction composed largely of his own close kinsmen (see Figure 1). Two of the three *mēropakande* claimed to be direct patrilineal descendants of *mēropakande* through three generations. Knowledge of the third ascending generation is extremely rare among the Suyá. The unparalleled ability of the *mēropakande* to remember their male ancestors through that generation



**FIGURE 1: SIMPLIFIED DIAGRAM OF THE THREE FACTIONS IN THE SUYA VILLAGE IN 1972.** (1) An important *mēropakande* (political leader). (2) Death attributed to a particular witch. (3) Killed as a witch. (4) Principle killer in a witch assassination. (5) Individual accused of being a witch by members of Niokombedi's faction. (6) A *mērokinkande* (ritual specialist).

reflects the importance of the inherited aspect if the role. The third *mēropakande*, who is presently the strongest, traces his descent from his father's genitor's father, through his father's genitor (who was not his father's pater), through his father, to himself.

Waraku and his son Niokombedi<sup>8</sup> became the strongest *mēropakande* by manipulating a number of resources to justify and further their claims as the dominant leaders of the tribe. There are at least eight resources which they, and other controllers of the village, have consciously manipulated during two generations. The first six of these are related to the ideal attributes of a *mēropakande*. The last two are of a different order, but equally important.

(1) Descent. Niokombedi repeatedly stressed his biological descent from the strong *mēropakande* of some fifty years before, Ndemonti. Waraku's mother's husband was a Iaruma captive and was thus in no way related to any *mēropakande*. Waraku called Ndemonti his "father" because Ndemonti had been having sexual relations with his mother before he was born. Members of Niokombedi's own faction (faction I) and of the allied faction (faction II) agreed with his claims. Members of faction III were divided. Some accepted Niokombedi's claim to legitimacy, others said that Waraku had never been a "real" *mēropakande* but rather only a belligerent man. When Niokombedi orated, he would ask rhetorically, "Was not my father a *mēropakande*?" It was a fact that he was continually trying to establish, although not one that every Suyá completely accepted. The genealogical link was considered by both Niokombedi and his opponents to be an important factor in his position. What they did not agree on was the reality of the link.

(2) Distribution. Niokombedi based one of his claims to being a *mēropakande* on the way that he gave things to everyone. He did not distribute much food, but instead distributed trade goods given to him by the administration of the reserve and by certain visitors. Members of other factions, especially faction III, were jealous of the quantity of these goods that he kept for himself and the great amount that he gave to his numerous kindred and affines. One of the most outspoken complainers was a woman, Kokoti, who was subsequently assassinated by Niokombedi and his brothers in 1972 for suspected witchcraft. Her complaints had made her a suspect because witches kill people of whom they are jealous. Niokombedi's faction feared the jealousy of the members of the other factions. Their fear may have induced them to distribute more equally than they might otherwise have done. Niokombedi's overwhelming favoritism toward his kindred and his affinal allies (faction II) was one of the important resources at his disposal, but there was constant tension in any kind of distribution between his

desire to reward his allies and the need to avoid the jealousy of the rest of the village.

(3) Oratory. Niokombedi was considered to be a fairly good speaker. He would only occasionally use the oratorical style restricted to leaders (both *mēropakande* and *mērokinkande*) because he felt himself to be still a fairly young man and young men are not supposed to orate at public meetings. In non-oratorical discussions people would listen to him and comment aloud that he spoke well. When several other key men from the other factions agreed to what he proposed, the entire village would follow his advice. When they did not agree, Niokombedi would either go ahead and do it himself with his kinsmen or change his plans.

(4) Niokombedi coordinated collective activities including hunts and fishing expeditions, plaza clearing, and occasional work at the administration post of the reserve, Diauarum.

(5) Dispute settlement. Niokombedi claimed to act as a peacemaker. Except when his own interests were intimately involved - for example, when his brother's wife died and he helped kill Kokoti (described above) - he did prevent disputes from becoming violent. He would repeatedly reduce tension in the evening men's gatherings by interrupting, joking, orating, or otherwise dominating the meetings. He would also talk to the individuals involved and try to settle the matter outside the public arena. He could count on the support of his numerous close kinsmen. The support of his wife's kinsmen (faction II) could not be taken for granted. They backed him on most occasions, but not on all of them. As Figure 1 illustrates, one of his wife's brothers was a *mēropakande*, another brother (an adopted captive) was the *mērokinkande*.

Two examples will suffice to illustrate the combination of humor and implied force which Niokombedi used every day to prevent tensions from erupting into outright hostility. The first occurred in the public arena; the second was accomplished by talking to each of the parties in private.

(a) A group of Suyá-speakers who had recently been pacified (known in the literature as the Beigos de Pau, or wooden lips) had been living with the Suyá for nearly three years. They were all at Diauarum being treated for an epidemic of "flu" and all of the other Suyá had returned to their village, having been more easily cured apparently because of increasing resistance to virus infections. The Suyá men were gathered in the plaza one evening and they were angry about the newcomers' depredations on their manioc gardens.

There was a shortage of manioc in 1972 and they were sensitive about the continued dependence of the recent arrivals on their gardens, especially when their own gardens had begun to yield. Several men were orating angrily and someone suggested burning down the house in which most of the newcomers lived. At that moment Niokombedi walked out of his house, where he had been rolling himself a cigarette. As he strolled to the men's meeting he loudly addressed his joking relative and said, "Jirup, when the newcomers return we'll screw all of their women." That was both funny and accurate. They women of the newly-arrived group were considered to be particularly desirable as sexual partners. Niokombedi's comment effectively put a stop to serious discussion about the newcomers for the evening and prevented any concerted action.

(b) Wetacti's wife died in childbirth. One of the newcomers feared that Wetacti was going to kill his wife in retaliation for the death. When Niokombedi found out about those fears, he spoke to the man and told him that ever since he and his brothers had killed Kokoti, the witch, some time previously, the village had been quite "good." To kill anyone else, he said, would be bad. He added that Wetacti had few relatives, and only one fairly young brother. Niokombedi himself had two adult brothers and a large number of other relatives. To Wetacti he said that there was no malicious gossip about the newcomer's wife and that it was bad for people to kill each other. Then he asked Wetacti outright, "Are you going to kill that man's wife?" Wetacti answered "No" and the matter was dropped.

The second case followed a typical pattern. Women gossiped about the accusation for several days. Then the men took up the matter. A direct confrontation in which one person agreed to keep the peace would usually settle things for a while and the issue would be dropped without further discussion. The underlying conflict would not be resolved, however, and could be used to fire up emotions at another time. Wetacti was a classificatory son of the deceased leader of faction III. Any retaliation for a death in his faction would be aimed at Niokombedi's kinsmen or against his prestige as peace-keeper

through an attack on the newcomers. Factions I and III have a history of avenging deaths against each other for two generations. Until fairly recently, the two groups were equally strong and alternated in their killings. Now, with faction III seriously weakened and faction II allied by marriage to faction I, Niokombedi has little powerful opposition. The implied threat of physical sanctions which Niokombedi used against Wetacti is another important part of being a faction leader and *mēropakande*.

(6) Appropriate behavior. Niokombedi behaved as an example for the rest of the village. He approached rituals seriously and sang hard. He hunted and fished well. He observed all of his relationships with proper, or even exaggerated, decorum (or lack of it in the case of his joking relationships). Leading by example, he provided a model of an active, socially correct man.

There were two other factors which greatly increased Niokombedi's influence: a large kindred and the influence of the administration of the reserve.

Faction III was considerably weakened by Pekuhō's failure to have more than one surviving male child, and that one a cripple. Both Wakaru and Kokoyereti were more fortunate in that respect. Niokombedi had two adult brothers and a number of sisters and female patrilineal cross-cousins. These were largely married to non-Suyá upon whom he could count for support. He made two excellent political marriages himself. His first marriage, with the sister of the leader of faction II, was arranged by Waraku when Niokombedi and the girl were very young. His second marriage, which occurred during 1972, was with the "niece" of a Cajabi Indian who was in charge of Posto Diauarum when Claudio Villas Boas was absent. This alliance cemented the ties between Niokombedi and the person in charge of the day-to-day operations of the post who was in a position to help him in a number of ways.

Continuing a process begun by his father, Niokombedi tried to maximize the number of his close kin. He did so by observing completely the diet restrictions for certain classificatory relatives for whom such restriction are not usually observed, and by tracing his relationship to people through consanguineal rather than affinal ties when both were possible. The former strategy made some more "distant" kinsmen into "closer" kinsmen. The second emphasized relationships of physical substance over alliances by marriage whenever possible. Niokombedi, and his father before him, had reclassified large numbers of kinsmen in these ways.

Niokombedi was also strongly supported by the administration of the Xingu reserve. Waraku, and later his son, was quick to adapt to the presence of

neo-Brazilians. The first peaceful contact with the Suyá occurred at Waraku's village. Waraku proved himself immediately to be the more cooperative leader. His son, Niokombedi, was groomed by Sr. Villas Boas to be his representative in the Suyá village. In itself, this support by the administration of the reserve was a resource because Niokombedi could count on the approval of the Villas Boas for most of his actions and because almost all trade goods were introduced to the Suyá through the Villas Boas or their representatives and friends.

As a result of his manipulation of the traditional supports and resources as well as the recently-introduced influence from outside, Niokombedi was definitely the strongest of the three *mēropakande* in 1972. He had pretty well dominated the members of faction III, who were his traditional rivals, and he had allied himself with faction II and the administration post by marriage.

Factional disputes continue to arise, however. Because every serious illness and every death is believed to be the result of witchcraft, Niokombedi and his family believe that they have more to fear from their enemies than from the bows and arrows of a numerically superior opposition. Even a weak opposition is dangerous. Niokombedi is therefore conflicted as he tries to be both the self-interested leader of a strong faction and the beneficent, ideal, leader of all of the Suyá.

The other important leadership role among the Suyá is that of the *mērokinkande*. "*Mērokinkande*" translates literally as "owner-controller of Suyá ceremonies." The *mērokinkande* is the man who knows all of the songs for the major Suyá rituals. He usually decides when a ceremony should be performed. He orates in the plaza and exhorts the rest of the tribe to be good and to perform the ceremony correctly. He may organize the collective hunting and fishing expeditions prior to the ceremony. He decides which particular songs are to be sung at which times and leads their performance. He may also decide not to perform a given ceremony, or to delay its performance. He is consulted on most aspects of ceremonial etiquette and song.

Using Swartz's definition of a leader as a person who formulates and implements public goals and events (Swartz 1968:2), the *mērokinkande* is a definite leader. Ceremonies such as those associated with the initiation of young men, cutting gardens, or warfare are believed to be necessary for the continued existence of Suyá society.

While there are usually several *mēropakande* in any Suyá settlement, there is usually only a single *mērokinkande*. There is no fixed rule of succession. Instead, becoming a *mērokinkande* depends on interest,

musical talent, and on having lost one's spirit. The Suyá say that a son may learn from his father, but such a relationship is not necessary. When a *mērokinkande* dies, or a village fissions and a new ceremonial leader is needed, there is apparently no competition for the post. People ask the man without a spirit who knows the ceremonies best to lead them.

*Mērokinkande* are always recruited from a group of men who are called "men without spirits." The spirits (*mēgaron*) of these men are believed to have been taken by a witch from their bodies and hidden with some species of animal, plant, or fish. After a time, the man whose spirit has been stolen can hear and understand the speech and songs of the species with which his spirit is residing. When there are ceremonies for which new songs are needed - and many Suyá ceremonies require a new song for every man in the village every time they are performed - men without spirits teach other men songs that their spirits hear as they live with the animals, plants, or fish. In the recently deceased generation this capacity was more common than it is today, though men without spirits were always in the minority. Excluding the newcomers, there is presently only one man without a spirit and he is the *mērokinkande*. Although there is no idea that people inherit the trait of being without a spirit - it happens at the whim of a witch - my genealogies indicate that people without spirits are often children of people without spirits. Captives, too, often lost their spirits. Controllers of the village, on the other hand, were rarely men without spirits.

The present *mērokinkande* maintains that people without spirits are less "socially complete" than men with their spirits inside them because their spirits are living with animals and they can never get them back. The contrast between "complete men," with their spirits inside them, and "incomplete men," who have lost their spirits, was frequently made in discussing *mērokinkande*.

The roles of *mēropakande* and *mērokinkande* have always been, and remain, complementary. The contrast between the *mēropakande* (political leader) and the *mērokinkande* (ceremonial leader) is summarized in the Figure 2.

The complementarity between the roles of the *mēropakande* and *mērokinkande* can clearly be seen in an eclipse. Eclipses are said to occur because the Suyá are not belligerent enough. The Suyá claim that when there is an eclipse of the sun, snakes slither across the plaza, jaguars come up in back of the houses, and caymans leave the rivers and crawl on the land. The very structure of society is threatened. In solar and lunar eclipses the *mērokinkande* leads the Suyá in preventing the further disintegration of their social universe by leading them in song. The invasion of the



<u>Trait</u>	<i>Mēropakande</i>	<i>Mērokinkande</i>
<u>Inheritance</u>	patrilineal from genitor	not inherited, although may learn from father
<u>Power</u>	secular power, based on kinship	ceremonial power, based on knowledge
<u>Animal Qualities</u>	belligerent, "strong smelling," "like a jaguar"	can hear and understand the speech of animals; not socially complete
<u>Oratory</u>	speaks "everybody listens speech"	speaks "everybody listens speech"
<u>Role</u>	distribution, oratory, coordination of collective activities, dispute settlement, behaves as example, leads raids and acts in certain ceremonies as representative of adult men	teaches songs to the entire village; leads singing at all ceremonies; settles disputes through oration, especially when a <i>mēropakande</i> is involved

**FIGURE 2: *Mēropakande* and *Mērokinkande* Compared**

village by "strong-smelling" and dangerous animals is halted by singing a certain song until the eclipse passes. After the eclipse the Suyá traditionally would go on a raid. The *mērokinkande* led the singing; the *mēropakande* led the raid. Both roles are necessary, and they are complementary.

## THE POWER OF DESCENT, THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE

I have described the roles of the *mēropakande* (political leader) and the *mērokinkande* (ceremonial leader). The *mēropakande* is said to be an ideal man and at the same time to be frightening, to have a strong odor, to be unpredictably bellicose and "like a jaguar." The *mērokinkande* is said to be less socially complete than other men because his spirit is in permanent residence with some species of animal, plant, fish, or insect. On the basis of the foregoing description there are two areas which shall be investigated through a comparison of the Suyá with some of the other Gê-speaking groups.

The first topic is the significance of patrilineal inheritance among *mēropakande* in a society where descent is otherwise not stressed. The patrilineal nature of the inheritance for political leaders is related to their peculiar position as mediators between nature and culture, and between kinship-based factions and the collectivity of the village. The second topic is the examination of the clear complementarity between the *mēropakande* and the *mērokinkande*. Two leadership roles are found among some, but not all, of the Central and Northern Gê societies. The dualism of Suyá leadership needs to be examined in a comparative perspective to discover the significance of its peculiar structure.

In order to clarify the relationship between patrilineal succession and the ambivalent attitude toward political leaders, the Suyá ideologies of conception, gestation, and relationships of "biological identity" must be explained. The Suyá believe that a fetus is formed gradually through the accumulation of a man's semen in a woman's womb. The woman is said to be merely the receptacle for the semen. To illustrate this, one informant rubbed his arms and body and declared, "this is all semen." Both parents observe the same post-partum sex restrictions, and an individual has a strong biological identity with both of his parents, with his full siblings, and with his own children. These relatives are said to be "the same" or of one kind, rather than "different."<sup>9</sup> This identity is expressed in social actions by reciprocal food and activity restrictions for injured parents, siblings, and children. There is believed to be such a close identity among these members of a family that food eaten by, or activity

undertaken by one, will affect another member just as if the other person had eaten it, or performed it, himself. These restrictions are not observed for most half-or-step-relatives (an exception being Niokombedi, above). They are never observed for non-relatives or adopted relatives.

All Suyá have two different identities: a biological one and a social one. The physical identity of a child is inherited from his parents. His social identity - his names, moiety, plaza-group membership, certain ritual prerogatives, and ceremonial statuses - are all given to him with his name set. A male child receives his name set from a *ngedi* (any group of relative including "real" and "classificatory" mother's brothers, and mother's brother's son in a system with Omaha-type generational skewing). A female child receives her name from a *tuwuyi* (any of a group of relatives including "real" and "classificatory" mother's mothers, father's mothers, and father's sisters). The Suyá specifically state that "real" and "distant" parents and siblings may not give their names to a child. The relationship between name giver and name receiver is a very close one, but it is not a physical identity. Name givers and name receivers do not observe diet and activity restrictions for one another when one of them is sick or injured. They are compared with a double rainbow: essentially identical. Normally, when a man moves from his natal household to the men's house as an adolescent, his biological ties are attenuated and his ceremonial relationships are strengthened. This process continues when he moves from the men's house to take up residence with his wife.

The ceremonial identity of a *mēropakande* is unimportant for his status. *Mēropakande* may be members of either moiety, of any plaza group, and of any name set. The biological, genealogical identity is never attenuated. Belligerent men and *mēropakande* are often called "men with strong flesh and bones" and their physical strength is frequently mentioned when discussing them. These physical attributes are passed from a father to his son through his semen. Neither physical identity nor leadership is given by a man to his name receiver. The biological nature of succession among the Suyá has important implications.

The social identity of a man is received with his name set and it stresses his ceremonial ties and his membership in ceremonial groups. The continued emphasis on the biological ties between a *mēropakande* and his sons is an exceptional situation and one which sets the leader apart from other men. The enduring relationship between the *mēropakande* and his sons may explain the tendency of political leaders to be exceptions to the uxorilocal residence rule among the Suyá and also among other lowland South American societies. Among the Tapayuna, the only reported exception

TRIBE	Ideology of Conception	Ideology of descent for political leaders	Differentiation of leadership roles	Recruitment of factions and "strength"
KRAHO (Timbira)	ideology of conception is mixed	a vague preference for a kinsman to succeed a leader, no special kinsman stressed	two roles: ritual and political leaders	factions are weak, recruited from a diffuse bilateral kindred
APINAYE	fetus is formed from both semen and blood	a sister's son of a leader should become a leader	two roles: ritual and political leaders	factions are weak, recruited from a diffuse bilateral kindred
SUYA	fetus is formed by semen alone	the son of a <i>mēropakande</i> should become a leader and does	two roles: ritual and political leaders	factions recruited from a bilateral kindred
NORTHERN KAYAPO	fetus formed from blood and semen	the sister's son of a leader should become a leader	one role: political leaders also lead rituals	strong factions consist of men's house groups which are quite clearly defined
SHAVANTE (Central Gê)	fetus formed from semen alone	a leader's son is in a good position to become a leader	one role: political leader controls faction and rituals	strong factions recruited on basis of lineage membership

FIGURE 3: SOME ASPECTS OF LEADERSHIP AMONG SEVERAL GÊ-SPEAKING TRIBES OF CENTRAL BRAZIL

to uxori-local residence was one *mēropakande*. A similar pattern of exceptions existed among the Mundurucu (Murphy 1960:121).

The emphasis on the ties of a *mēropakande* with his son, the ideology of conception and gestation, and the stress on the physical and animal-like attributes of the controller of the village are all consistent with the power base upon which the authority of the *mēropakande* is centered. His power is based on his control of a faction through the manipulation of his kinship ties. He organizes daily activities which are primarily in the secular rather than the spiritual sphere. When a man's father has maximized his kinship ties and the number of his kinsmen, the son is in a good position to do so also as long as he maintains his identity with his father and his father's allies. This is most easily done by remaining in his father's house, or in the same part of the village arc.

The strong odor which is said to be characteristic of the *mēropakande* has its origin in same principles of ideology and social organization. Among the Suyá, odor is an important means of classifying animals, people in certain states, body exudates, and certain attributes. The animal kingdom is divided into three groups on the basis of odor. There are strong smelling, pungent, and bland animals. The strong smelling ones are the most powerful in Suyá cosmology. They include all carnivorous animals and birds as well as the deer, tapir, and sloth. The jaguar is the most powerful representative of the group. When the controllers of the village are said to be "strong smelling" and "like a jaguar," they are being classed with the most powerful denizens of the natural realm. Other adult men are said to have no smell at all. Boys who have not yet begun the first stage of initiation are said to be strong smelling. Among adults, only women have a "strong smell." Women are associated with the uxori-local houses, just as the political leader is associated with a kinship-based faction. Women, like uninitiated boys, are also less fully socialized than men. *Mēropakande* are adult men whose status is based on their biological relationships, associated with the circle of uxori-local houses, rather than with the ceremonial groups associated with the plaza. Their behavior is potentially dangerous, and they are equated with the most dangerous and powerful species of the animal kingdom.

In every Gê tribe which has been described, there are persons who are said to be leaders of the village, or heads of factions within villages. In all Gê groups a political leader must be an active adult man who knows the traditions of the tribe, heads a faction, and is (or before pacification, used to be) a belligerent warrior. He is also supposed to be an impartial figure who makes peace and arbitrates disputes within the

village as well as protects the village from enemies.

David Maybury-Lewis was the first to comment on the paradox of Gê leaders, in his analysis of Shavante political organization. Gê political leaders represent both a single faction and also the entire village:

The qualities ideally required of him [the Shavante leader] and the behavior expected of him while he is in office are diametrically opposed to those of which he had to make use when he aspired to the chieftaincy (Maybury-Lewis 1967:204).

My discussion of the ideology and practice of Suyá leadership has shown that the Suyá are well aware of this conflict. As among the Shavante, the *mēropakande* is beset by conflicting responsibilities: to his kinsmen and faction, and to the entire village. The heart of this particular paradox lies in the characteristics of the *mēropakande*, whose political and social power, which operates in the center of the village, derives ultimately from his biological kinship affiliations, which are associated with the periphery.

While political leadership passes patrilineally among the Suyá and Shavante, the other Northern Gê have different rules of inheritance. There is an important parallel between the ideologies of conception and the inheritance of the leadership position among all the Gê societies (summarized in Figure 3). In those tribes where both parents are believed to make a contribution to the development of the fetus (Kayapo and Apinaye), the sister's son is the ideal inheritor of the chieftainship. In the societies which believe that only the father contributes to the fetus (Suyá and Shavante), the descent is patrilineal. In the one tribe (Kraho) where the theories of conception are reported to be mixed, the form of inheritance which is considered to be ideal is also mixed.

The Apinaye believe that conception occurs through the accumulation of female blood with semen inside the mother. Both partners make a contribution to the development of the fetus. Apinaye political leaders were all supposed to be of a single moiety (*kolti*). The chieftainship was supposed to pass from a man to his sister's son, though this might be altered if a more fitting candidate were to be found (Nimuendaju 1939:19). Names are passed in the same way, from a mother's brother to a sister's son. The position of political leader, since it has a moiety membership requirement, appears to be at least partly a transmissible ceremonial status.

The Northern Kayapo beliefs about conception parallel those of the Apinaye. Both partners make a physical contribution to the growth of the fetus. The

Kayapo, also, say that the *tab-djuo* (sister's son, son's son, or daughter's son) of a chief should become one. Names and ritual duties pass in the same direction, from a *i-nget* to a *tab-djuo*. There is no moiety membership requirement, however. Terence Turner maintains that there is no factual basis for the Kayapo claims of inheritance, but the ideology is important and it was used as a political support by at least one Kayapo faction leader (Terence Turner 1966:87).

Among the Suyá and Shavante, the office of political faction leader and contender for village leadership passes from father to son in ideology and usually in fact. In both groups, only the father is believed to contribute to the growth of the fetus and there is a strong tie between a father and his sons.

On these very issues, the Kraho are different from both the Suyá and Shavante and from the Apinaye and Kayapo. According to Melatti (1970), the Kraho have no rule of descent for their political leaders other than a vaguely-phrased and rarely-occurring preference for some relative of a leader to take the role when the leader dies (Melatti 1970:300). In a similar fashion, the Kraho have no consistent theory about conception. Some Kraho informants give the Apinaye and Kayapo theory; others give a theory similar to that of the Suyá and Shavante. Neither collateral nor lineal relatives appear to be preferred in this particular aspect of Kraho society and Kraho ideology.

The ideology of inheritance of the chieftaincy consistently parallels the ideology of conception and gestation among the Northern Gê and the Shavante. This might be a commonplace if descent were an important feature of other institutions in those societies. Except for the Shavante, however, inheritance of leadership is one of the few areas in which descent figures at all. An explanation of the importance of inheritance may be the otherwise diffuse recruitment to factional groups. Da Matta (1971) has observed that there is a diffuseness in Northern Gê societies which makes the legitimation of power difficult. There are no named lineages or other important kinship-based corporate groups, and, as a result, political power appears to rest on relatively amorphous groups of kindred. The ideology of conception and gestation, as well as the ideology of descent, lend some structure to the formation and perpetuation of political groups. Although there may be considerable flexibility in practice, the association of leadership with relationships of physical identity legitimizes certain types of alliance within factions. Genealogically reckoned relationships - according to the biological concepts of the respective tribes - are the bases of political power among the Shavante, Suyá, Kayapo, Apinaye, and probably the Timbira groups (represented here by the

Kraho) as well. The differences among the groups lie in which ties are genealogically emphasized: the Kayapo and Apinaye emphasize the MB-ZS relationship, the Suyá and Shavante stress the father-son relationship, and the Kraho do not agree on either theory.

In addition to this clear variation among the Gê with regard to the ideologies of inheritance, there is also variation in the role of ritual leader. Ritual leaders are found among the Kraho (and other Timbira), Apinaye, Suyá, and possibly the Xikrín group of the Northern Kayapo.<sup>10</sup> They are specifically absent among the Northern Kayapo groups studied by Turner and among the Shavante. Turner writes that the Kayapo chiefs act as the ritual embodiment of the entire community. They do not share their leadership with ritual leaders. He does mention, however, that one chief in each of the two villages performed almost all of the chiefly ritual functions. The others were "apparently content with this state of affairs and show little flair for ceremonial activity" (T. Turner 1966:94). The Kayapo may therefore have some kind of de facto specialization, even though there are not two different categories of leadership. According to Maybury-Lewis, the Shavante chief led the rituals and appointed his close kinsmen as the ritual leaders of each age set (Maybury-Lewis 1967:192-193).

None of the societies in which ceremonial leaders are to be found specifies any form of descent for the role. Nimuendaju does mention that among the Apinaye, a man might learn the role from his father. I was told the same thing by the Suyá. Knowing ceremonies, however, according to the Suyá, is not something which comes either with body substance or with a name set. Instead, it comes from individual experience and individual qualities such as an interest in learning and a good memory. Suyá and Apinaye make a clear distinction between political leadership and leadership of ceremonies, between physical bonds of descent and the acquisition of knowledge. Both political leaders and ceremonial leaders have power. Where the two types of leadership are found, they are clearly distinguished and complementary.

In the two groups without ceremonial leaders, the factional leader single-handedly organizes both political and ceremonial life. The Kayapo and Shavante tribes are among the most intensely factional of the Gê societies. Although it is difficult to determine the "degree" of anything as situational as factionalism, the monographs of the Gê reveal a clear difference between the Shavante and the Kayapo on the one hand, and the Suyá, Apinaye, and Timbira groups on the other. In those groups in which there is a division of ceremonial and political leadership into two separate roles, factionalism exists, but in a less extreme form. Perhaps this is because the complementary role of the



ceremonial leader acts as a check on the excesses of the factional leaders. Among the Suyá, the peace-making and exhortative activities overlap in the public arena of disputes. Both *mēropakande* and *mērokinkande* can use the style of oratory restricted to leaders. Even while one leader may be inciting his supporters to action, another leader - still representing the unity of the village - may speak for the importance of the unity over and above factional disputes.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Political leadership, political succession, recruitment to factions, and political power are all closely associated with notions of physical relationship and descent among the Gê tribes of central Brazil. Among the Suyá, emphasis is placed on the physical identity of the son of a *mēropakande* with his father and on attributes of the physical body which are also directly inherited from the father. *Mēropakande* are supposed to be strong, active, and to have a genealogical relationship with the members of their factions. There is little emphasis on the ceremonial identity of the *mēropakande*, although he participates fully in ceremonies.

Ceremonial knowledge and the ability to compose songs are complimentary forms of power among the Suyá. Rather than being "like" an animal, the *mērokinkande* is in direct and permanent contact with the animal domain because his spirit has taken up permanent residence there. He can understand the speech of a natural species; this is the source of his knowledge. Certain rituals are essential to the continued existence of the tribe. The *mērokinkande* decides when and how most rituals will be performed, and he teaches the men the new songs required for their performance. The *mērokinkande* has prestige and may help to mediate disputes - especially those disputes in which a controller of the village is actively involved.

A Suyá village without both types of leader would be incomplete. Although the sources of their power are different, the roles of controller of the village and controller of ceremony are similar and complementary. Both are mediators. The controller of the village mediates between men by settling disputes, protecting the village from enemy attack, and leading raids. More recently, he has come to mediate between neo-Brazilians and the Suyá. The controller of ceremonies mediates between men and animals. His spirit lives with the animals whose songs he teaches to his fellow men. Society is perpetuated by his continual transference of songs from animals to men because new songs are required for the correct performance of ceremonies.

Both of the Suyá leadership roles are appar-

ently paradoxical. Leaders are said to be ideal men, but they have definite animal-like, negatively-valued, attributes. The paradox may lie in the very nature of power itself. All power, in the Suyá cosmology, comes from the natural domain. The natural domain also threatens the existence of society, to which it is opposed. Power is necessary in society - in curing (in which animal metaphors are central to the curing chants), in ceremonies (in which animal songs are sung), and in political leadership. Nature, with its power, does not always have a beneficial effect on men. Nor do Suyá leaders. The ideology of power and the realities of political power are the same. The *mēropakande* is at once a peace-maker acting for the entire village and the self-interested head of a kinship-based faction who is continually striving to consolidate his position. The attributes of having a strong odor and being "like a jaguar" as well as the patrilineal inheritance of the role are further indications that a political leader is an ambivalent figure. He is both social and natural, powerful and unpredictable. Similarly, the *mērokinkande* has knowledge, but at the expense of losing his spirit to a natural species. He, too, has power, but it is obtained at a definite cost; he is not as socially complete as other men. The opposition of the domains of nature and culture, found in the cosmological beliefs of most of the Gê tribes, is somewhat mediated by political and ritual leaders. Their medial position expresses their power, and it also gives them their power: the power of faction leadership through inheritance and the power of leadership through knowledge. At once similar and complementary, the *mēropakande* and the *mērokinkande* reflect both the dualism of Suyá society and the importance of the opposition of nature and culture and their mediations and transformations in Suyá and Gê ideology.

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## NOTES

- (1) An earlier version of this paper was presented at a symposium on South American leadership at the 1974 meetings of the American Anthropological Association in Mexico City. Research on the Suyá was supported by a grant from the Training Program in the Behavioral Sciences, USPHS GM 1059.
- (2) Glottochronologies of the Gê have suffered from the poor quality of the original sources and are not sufficiently accurate to be used alone.
- (3) The author and his wife spent fifteen months with the Suyá between June, 1971, and June, 1973.
- (4) *mē*, Suyá; *ro*, (?); *pa*, to live in a group; *kande*, owner-controller.
- (5) Suyá leadership underwent some alteration during two separate periods. In about 1925, the Suyá were decimated by their enemies and they were heavily influenced by the customs of the Indians of the Upper Xingu. Further changes occurred following their "pacification" in 1959. These changes were relatively minor, however, and I have gathered comparative data from a Western group of Suyá known in the literature as the Tapayuna, whose traditional leadership survived to 1969, when population loss destroyed the social organization of the Tapayuna altogether.
- (6) My Tapayuna informant maintained that the youngest son was preferred.
- (7) I was only able to discover one case in which this occurred.
- (8) I have altered the names of the participants. The names given here are different from those given in Seeger (1974). The following is a concordance of names used here with the numbers of these individuals on the genealogies in the other work: Kokoyereti (220), Waraku (204), Niokombedi (105), Ndemonti (337), Pekuhó (243), Watacti (142), Kokoti (230).
- (9) The ideology of kinship is further discussed in Seeger (1974), chapter V.
- (10) Lux Vidal (1972:XIV) mentions a chief and an "old shaman" who may have been a ritual specialist. She also says that the Xikrín looked with disfavor on the Gorotire Kayapo system of factions, each with its own leader, and maintain that they, the Xikrín, were different (Vidal 1972:47).

# WAITING FOR INCA GOD: CULTURE, MYTH, AND HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

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During 1960-61, I made an ethnographic field study of the Conibo Indians of the Río Ucayali region of eastern Peru.<sup>2</sup> One of the reasons that I was motivated to study their culture was that the Conibo and the Shipibo maintained an artistic tradition, especially in the decoration of their ceramics and textiles, which was arguably the most elaborate remaining among Amazonian Indians. Their geometrically painted pottery, for example, even rivaled some of the most outstanding prehistoric South American ceramic complexes. I was curious to learn why this highly developed art persisted despite the fact that the Conibo inhabited one of the main arteries of the Amazon River and had been subjected for centuries to missionization and exploitation.

While I will refer to the Conibo rather than the Shipibo in this paper, most of the observations probably also apply to the Shipibo, with whom they extensively intermarry. Since I have not returned to the Conibo since 1960-61, the ethnographic present used here refers to that time.

### THE CONIBO ENIGMA

As I pursued my fieldwork, another puzzle emerged alongside that concerning the question of why they were maintaining their elaborate art in the face of continuous first-hand interaction with the outside world. During the months that passed, I saw white *patrones* of the river forcibly take Conibo men off to the logging camps without resistance. Also whites (including acculturated Cocoma passing for white) continually were grabbing lands and village sites used by the Conibo, yet the Conibo never seemed to make an outcry nor, out of frustration, did they hardly ever seem to resort to physical resistance against these oppressors and encroachers.<sup>3</sup> While I knew from historical sources that there had been revolts in the past, these were only a dim memory among the Conibo and they seemed resigned to avoiding physical confrontation with the whites. No Conibo came forth as leaders to avenge white wrongdoings or even to plead the case for their people before Peruvian governmental authorities in the then frontier town of Pucallpa located downriver.

Despite my attempts at anthropological de-

tachment, I became perturbed by what I perceived as the "failure" of the Conibo to "stand up" for their rights in the face of white exploitation. After having lived with the Untsuri Shuar (Jívaro) of eastern Ecuador (Harner 1984), who often took action in response to exploitative acts by whites, I was dismayed and frustrated by the passivity of the Conibo when being taken advantage of by the *patrones*, traders and others. At the same time, the Conibo would confide in me that they despised and hated the whites and that all whites were thieves.

The Conibo's clear consciousness of their situation made their passivity even more puzzling to me. These were not a beaten people; although exploited, they retained pride in their cultural identity, and through head-flattening and distinctive dress (which the women wore even when visiting Pucallpa) they made their uniqueness obvious to all.

The absence of reactive activism among the Conibo could in part perhaps be ascribed to their past experiences in the futility of such action in dealing with the dominant society. This explanation, however, could not account for their tenacious hold on their traditional identity and culture. Other nearby riverine groups, such as the Cocoma, when faced with white discrimination, simply abandoned their traditional language and culture, interbreeding with the dominant population, and passing for white. The Conibo, in contrast, seemed to be bent on demonstrating their non-white identity by emphasizing their Indian-ness. Sexual intercourse or marriage with whites was a grave and relatively rare breach of custom.

They maintained their language and their spectacularly decorated native dress and artifacts despite the fact this made them easy targets for discrimination and exploitation by the whites. Adoption of western material culture tended to be restricted to certain items, such as metal cooking pots, machetes and axes, shotguns, trade beads, and men's shirts and trousers (the men's traditional garb, the home-woven *cushma*, was normally reserved for evening relaxation or ritual activities). Furthermore, in the relatively isolated location where I did my fieldwork, Imiría Cocha, a lake of the Río Tamaya, their conservatism in the arts could not be ascribed to any commercial motivation, such as making their beautiful pottery and

textiles to trade to whites for cash.

Indeed attempts by whites to trade for Conibo artifacts were typically met by refusal, particularly if they occurred in public. This was a symbolic demonstration of "triumph" over the whites. Even if an individual Conibo was willing to sell an object, he or she preferred to do it later in private in order not to lose face for "surrendering" to the whites. In the same vein, lying to whites in public was a valued and respected act.

Within Conibo settlements, individuals were subjected to ridicule if they tended to deviate from the traditional canons of social and cultural behavior. When I asked why such-and-such a custom was followed, or why people were expected to maintain it, I typically met with two types of answers: either "People would laugh at me if I did it differently," or "Well, because our forefathers did it this way."

These rather frustrating replies contrasted sharply with those I had received in my earlier work among the Untsuri Shuar of eastern Ecuador, who normally responded quite explicitly when asked about the specific advantages of retaining this or that custom. How then could I account for the Conibo stress on maintaining their traditional culture but their lack of emphasis on taking any action against the externally imposed forces that threatened its survival? I simply could not.

## INCA GOD

It was only in the latter part of my fieldwork that I came to understand why the Conibo repeatedly gave me the same unsatisfying answers. As the months passed, I began penetrating the mysteries of *ayahuasca* and shamanism (e.g., see Harner 1990). These experiences led to greater acceptance of me by the Conibo and to an understanding of their cosmology and mythology and, with regard to the problem posed at the beginning of this paper, the discovery of the mythical basis for Conibo cultural conservatism.

The long period of Christian missionary activity on the Ucayali had taught them the dangers of admitting to not being Christian. But there was another factor; they were intentionally concealing their religion because they knew that whites would have considered one of its central myths to be subversive and threatening. So it was not too surprising that the major work published on the Conibo and Shipibo up to that time, and which I had taken with me into the field, was entitled *Menschen ohne Gott*, (*People without a God*), by Günter Tessmann (1928).

Despite Tessmann's conclusion (1928:183-4), the Conibo (and Shipibo) not only had a god, but a variety of them. The reluctance of the Conibo to talk

about their religious beliefs was especially due to their fear of revealing to the whites that their most active god, Inca, was an anti-white messiah.

Inca God, referred to in Conibo as *Inca Riós* (the Riós is from Diós) or, more commonly, simply as *Inka*, is basically the Conibo-Shipibo culture creator. The other gods are *Nun Riós* ("God Child" -- claimed not to be Jesus, who is referred to in Conibo by the missionaries as *Diosen Bakë*), *Wari Riós* or just *Wari* (the Sun God), and *Ochítini Riós*. Inca is separate from the Sun God, *Wari Riós*, the creator and master of the land mammals and the otter, and *Ochítini Riós*, the god and master of dogs. Inca is also separate from, as well as lower than, *Nun Riós*, the creator of fish, birds, heaven, earth, water, and humans. *Nun Riós* made Inca "to live with us as a chief," according to the Conibo.

Inca God did not create people (they were made by *Nun Riós*) or domesticated plants (although he taught the Indians how to obtain them by killing "Bad Inca"); rather, he gave the names to the tribe and taught each tribe their customs. The Conibo say, for example, that the Inca had a flattened head and that they learned head deformation from him. Likewise, Inca's wife (or wives) taught them how to paint fine designs on their pottery and textiles. As one Conibo said, "A long time ago we painted [made lines] poorly. We were like children; and like children we learned from the wives of Inca."

In brief, their belief is that Conibo culture was taught to them by Inca God and was his legacy to the people. Inca lived at the present-day site of "Z" and then went away after burying his gold and silver treasure there. (For ethical reasons involving the rights of the Conibo people, the exact location and identity of "Z" are not provided here.) The treasure remains at "Z" to this day in an earthen hill. The Conibo were generally uncertain as to where Inca is now, but usually they felt that he was upriver and some believed that he had gone to Cuzco.

## CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF INCA GOD

When a Conibo dies, his eye-pupil soul (*wëro yoshin*) goes first to Inca to confess his sins. Since Inca is the culture creator, the sins that the soul confesses are primarily sins against culture rather than sins against people. The Conibo contrasted their view of sin with that of Christian missionaries. One informant said:

The missionaries say that bad acts, like adultery and killing, are sins. Since ancient times we, however, have not believed that these are sins. A sin is when we break



something: a pot, a canoe, setting a house roof on fire... even if it is an accident, it is a great sin. But lying and fornication are not.

Additional interviewing revealed that while killing within the tribe was generally also viewed as a sin, it was only a slight one. Thus, when I asked one informant what was a bigger sin than killing someone, he unhesitatingly replied, "Damaging or setting fire to a house." Other informants agreed. Similarly, it was a sin to damage a pot, canoe or other material item, but not a sin to steal it.

A significant theme here is the emphasis on the importance of conserving the material culture and arts that Inca and his wife or wives gave the people, including the knowledge of how to decorate pottery and textiles. Inca was not the creator of people, and therefore offenses between people, such as stealing or even killing, do not particularly concern him. To damage or destroy his cultural legacy, however, is a great sin and must be confessed to him when a Conibo dies. Otherwise Inca will not permit the deceased person to proceed up the ladder to the heaven of the blue sky and stars and of *Nun Riós*. Inca thus still lives and will be encountered at death. He is said to be more powerful than any other person.

Inca will return. A widespread belief among the Conibo and Shipibo is that he will descend the Río Ucayali in a gigantic river steamboat that will be so big that it will break in two a certain mountain peak upstream where the river is narrower, and will widen the river as it comes downstream. As it progresses downstream with Inca as its captain, the Conibo on the banks will get on board until it finally reaches the place ("Z") where the Inca formerly lived and buried his treasure. When all the Conibo and Shipibo are together there (no other tribes will be present), the ground will open up to reveal the silver and gold. Everyone will take some. Later the other tribes will also be gathered together by Inca. According to one version, Inca will make prisoners of the whites; according to another, he will drive them away.

So, when I was among the Conibo in 1960-61, they were waiting for Inca God. It had apparently been a long wait. Farabee (1922) caught the fact that they believed in Inca, and the belief in an Inca messiah was an old tradition among the Campa upstream. Since the Conibo speak a Panoan language (although it contains Inca-language [Quechua] loan words), and since I was unaware of any evidence of Inca hegemony ever extending that far down into the forest, I assumed that the Inca belief was partially a diffused ideology stemming from the revolt of the adjacent Campa in the 18th Century under the Inca pretender, Juan Santos

Atahualpa (see Métraux 1942).

It was also evident that the belief in Inca God had been influenced by the centuries of Christian missionary activity on the Ucayali as indicated by the use of the term "Riós." An additional indicator of the cultural "contribution" of Christianity to the belief system was that one of the reasons given by informants for the ancient departure of the Inca God messiah was that "the Jews chased him away." In view of such "enlightening" information, I almost immediately dismissed the possibility that historical fact was involved in the belief that Inca had once been their "chief," and concentrated on the implications of this obviously mythical quasi-cargo cult messianic belief system for my understanding of contemporary Conibo behavior.

In terms of my immediate fieldwork, knowing about the belief in Inca God made some basic features of Conibo life understandable for the first time. Their faith in the eventual return of Inca as the saviour of the Conibo was consistent with their desire to maintain their linguistic and cultural identity and with their reluctance to take the lead in dealing with the whites either cooperatively, as through intermarriage or, competitively, as through physical and political resistance.

Since Inca God and his wives (or wife) had given the Conibo their distinctive customs, any significant deviation from them jeopardized the Conibo's identity as the "chosen people" (along with the Shipibo). Failure to honor Inca by not carefully maintaining the traditions he and his wives (wife) gave them meant that he might not return, not share his treasure, and not get rid of the whites. With a knowledge of the Inca God belief system, it became understandable why the Conibo and Shipibo maintained an elaborate native art style and persisted in continuing their traditional customs.

For example, it was now possible for me to understand why Conibo women alone made the designs on artifacts, even the *macanas*, war clubs, of the men: they, not the men, had learned to make designs from the wives (wife) of Inca. furthermore, I now understood why the Conibo women avoided creativity in their designs, laboriously spending hours trying to copy the designs on broken pots or those made by other women. Of course, they were creative despite themselves, but the intention of the art was to preserve tradition, not to innovate.

With a god possibly arriving at any time to solve virtually all problems connected with the whites and poverty, it was presumptuous and disrespectful for any ordinary individual to attempt to take up a leadership role to solve such matters actively, when Inca was going to do it all. There was the possibility,



however, of spiritual leadership as a prophet or emissary acting on behalf of Inca. About fifteen years before my fieldwork, informants told me, mysterious hooded emissaries repeatedly appeared at Conibo villages prophesying the Inca's imminent return. They appeared at night and spoke before groups of Conibo outside shamans' houses. Whether they constituted shared visions or were ordinary Conibo, they communicated concrete messianic messages. This is an excerpt from the reported speech of one such messenger:

This world is not good for anything. Soon we will be together with the Inca, and the whites will be kept like prisoners of the Inca. You will be happy. We will be together. We will be rich. We will have all the things of this world.

At the end of my fieldwork in 1961 I felt that I had discovered a relatively hidden mythic ideology, influenced by Christianity and possibly by the Campa, that provided a charter, and thus an explanation, for Conibo-Shipibo preservation and maintenance of their spectacular decorative art.

#### THE POSSIBLE HISTORICAL REALITY BEHIND THE INCA GOD MYTH

This view, restricted to seeing Inca God as a purely mythic figure, may itself have been a personal mythic charter for limiting my own vision of possible realities. Therefore, it was with surprise and personal humbling that, while pursuing some unrelated historical research about a decade after my fieldwork, I ran across a remarkable passage in Juan de Velasco's 1789 *Historia del reino de Quito en la América meridional* that placed an Inca emperor squarely in the territory of the Conibo.

Before coming to that, let me note that I was already well aware of the post-Conquest retreat of Manco Capac II from Cuzco to the *montaña* and his rule at Vilcabamba (e.g., see Hemming 1970, Markham 1907: xvii; Vásquez 1948:485; Murúa 1952:218-220; Garcilaso 1945:123; and Pardo 1972). The Inca relocation was substantial, including the transfer of the Temple of the Sun, the convent of virgins, and other institutions and lasted at Vilcabamba for thirty-five years until 1572 (e.g., Markham 1907:xxi, and others).

I had no idea, however, that there was any written historical evidence that he had also gone down the Ucayali from Vilcabamba and ruled over the populations there. The relevant passage in Velasco (1842:200; Translation by M.H.) reported that:

I spoke at length in the ancient history about the coronation, revolt, and the differences that Manco Capac II had with the Spaniards, and how, after the siege of Cuzco, he had retreated to reign in the *montañas*, followed by 40,000 Indians. He moved inland through the eastern cordillera, following the course of the torrential Yucay and the Paucartambo, in whose provinces he paused and made himself secure for a while. From the junction of those rivers with the famous Apurimac, that compose the great Río Ucayali, he descended to 9 degrees latitude,<sup>4</sup> according to established tradition, and what is more, according to the vestiges of the royal bridge called Yaca Chaca, that remain to this day, for crossing the immense waters of the Ucayali.

In these extremely vast fields, filled with rivers, forests and mountains, he spread out the 40,000 Indians who followed him, dividing them into segments which were confederated with the other nations downstream, as far as the junctions with the Marañón,<sup>5</sup> they rendered vassalage to Manco Capac, recognizing him as sovereign. Leaving his monarchy established in these lowlands, he returned upriver and reigned peacefully in the upper provinces of Vilcabamba, where he died in 1553, leaving the crown to his first-born son, Sayri Tupac. In addition he had two other sons, who were Cusitito Yupanqui and Tupac Amaru, who also reigned successively.

Needless to say, I was startled to find that Velasco's history and the story given by the Conibo were in basic agreement. According to both sources, the Inca once ruled on the Ucayali and then left, going back upstream in the direction of Cuzco.

However, there are problems with relying on Velasco as a sole historical source (e.g., see Szászdi 1964:508-511). He has been criticized, often justifiably, for his uneven reliability, especially with regard to the portion of his work subtitled *La historia antigua*, in which his nationalistic (Ecuadorian) bias apparently led him to make major prevarications with regard to the pre-Hispanic history of the Quito region in order to legitimize the concept of a separate Ecuador. It is precisely Velasco's nationalistic bias,

however, that makes it seem unlikely that he would have made up an account of a (Peruvian) Inca ruler laying claim to the Marañon, since this would be exactly contrary to Ecuadorian nationalistic aspirations.

Velasco also often seems to have had access in the eighteenth century to some kinds of post-Conquest oral traditions and documentary sources that are no longer extant. For example, his account of the Jívaro revolt of 1599 (Harner 1984:18-25) is by far the most comprehensive I have encountered and appears, on the basis of my knowledge of Jívaro (or Untsuri Shuar) geography, culture and history, to be probably the most accurate. I should add that the part of his work subtitled *La historia moderna* is one from which the quotations used here are drawn and is the portion found to be relatively reliable by many ethnohistorians (Thomas Meyers, personal communication, 1991).

That the sovereignty of the Inca may have continued to be recognized despite his absence is indicated by this additional passage from Velasco concerning the events following the death of Manco Capac II in Vilcabamba:

Informed of the death of Manco Capac and the coronation of Sayri Tupac, in those distant provinces that rendered vassalage as far as the Marañon, they performed in all of them the ceremony of recognizing him as their legitimate sovereign, especially the provinces of Muyubambas, Tarma and Chonchos (Velasco 1842:200).

That such vassalage did extend into the forest far beyond Vilcabamba itself is suggested by Garcilaso's statement (1945:II,119-120;125) that the Musus (presumably Mojos) continued to send yearly tribute until the collapse of the Vilcabamba Inca dynasty in 1571-72. The Musus, however, may present a special case in that they had been conquered in pre-Hispanic times by Topa Inca Yupanqui, and Inca colonists had apparently been settled among them since that time (see Garcilaso 1945:II,118-121).

Interestingly, Velasco's account finds some support in the statement of Murúa (1952:226) who reports that Sayri Tupac, Manco Capac's successor, was assisted not only by the Chunchos, but also by "Indians of the other part of the great river, commonly called the Marañon [emphasis supplied], and by other provinces that still are given little attention by the Spaniards..."

As I noted earlier, Velasco alone cannot be considered a necessarily reliable source of informa-

tion. Therefore, with regard to the question of an Incan presence on or near the Ucayali, I offer some passages from the 1774 manuscript of the Franciscan father Fernando Rodríguez Tena regarding mid-1600's missionizing expeditions among the Panatahua and their neighbors in and near the Huallaga River valley, adjacent to and west of the Ucayali River valley:

In the year 1641, Fathers Fra Gazpar de Vera and Fra Juan Cabezas, knowing that the nations in the interior of the *montaña* wished to be Christians, being fond of our monks, set out for the Tepqui and Quidquidcana Indians....located in the llano of the *Montaña de Andes* in the northern part....[around 9 degrees latitude -- M.H.] not only hoping to convert them and all their allies, located around the provinces where the Incan Indians retreated when the Empire of Peru was conquered by the Spaniards: coming to be between the Panatahuas and the Rio Marañon, in order to avoid misunderstanding, is called in our missions, the Big Río Paro or Apu-Paro, today on our maps of the Ucayali, on whose eastern bank one also finds innumerable villages and immense populations. The capital of the retreated Incas, they were saying, is called *Carancayma Inga* They went with some Christian Indians; the Tepquis and Quidquidcanas resisted them when the first arrived....

In the year 1643, the Fathers Fra Gazpar de Vera, Fra Juan Cabeza, Fra Agustín Mendiá, Lego, Gazpar Lorenzo Baez, a Spanish layman, leading more than 100 Indians, returned to Tepquis in the middle of August. Going around their settlements, they were received with welcome....[the Tepquis offering to take them to the nearby Camunahua Indians] they arranged the expedition. The Tepquis lent 23 archers as guides; with them in three days they were in the first settlements, where they took by surprise masses of Indians....They greeted them [the Indians], giving them iron tools, beads, and trinkets: pacified by these, they [the Indians] told about large numbers of people in the interior, especially the retreated Incas, telling them their names. They assured as one that they were to be found on an island 7 leagues long, very high in the middle and

well-proportioned, surrounded by a deep river that was fed from the slopes of the Cordillera de Huánuco....They said that on this island there was a famous temple dedicated to the Sun and the Moon, where they offered things of value; a stone fountain, and many settlements. They freed an Indian woman so that she could go to notify those on the island of their coming. She returned with a *cacique*, and others, whom they welcomed, as they had done with those who arrived with him; giving the males machetes, called swords, and the females, beads, soap; they chewed coca, and made ceremonies of the Indians of Cuzco; all resembled [Cuzqueños] in their forms of address; their weapons, arrows of two kinds; and powerful *macanas*. The *cacique* requested a seat, and an Indian showed up with a carved seat like those of the Incas, [and the *cacique*] in a sad song told the story of the Inca kings, the death administered to Atahualpa, mentioned Cuzco and other towns. Such was his affability, and the information he gave, that we, charmed by him, freed most of those arrested, keeping some as interpreters; those that came escaped in the night; afterwards no one appeared. Lacking provisions, and fearing an ambush, since there was no lack of canyons and tight spots, although the land appeared flat on the trails, the padres retreated to the Tepquis, where they baptized an adult, and a Párbulo, who later died. Their trip lasted 40 days...

They were determined to return to the Camunahuas, and to the retreated Incas, to place crosses among them....in the summer of 1644 the converted Indians found draped in the trees at the entrance to [the Incan] lands curiously woven shirts and clothing, embroidered with...fine colors, that the Incas use; and staves leaning against the trees; one of which was brought back to the padres. From this, they deduced that [the Incan Indians] had come to the edge of their territory in search of them. (Rodríguez Tena 1774 as reprinted in *Amazonia* 1(1):147-149; translation by M.H.).

The main relevance of Rodríguez Tena's

account is that it offers significant evidence, independent of Velasco, of a surviving Incan presence near the Ucayali well into the seventeenth century. Of course, it does not throw light as to what was happening on the Ucayali proper at that time. It is interesting, however, to note the existence of the "curiously woven shirts and clothing, embroidered with....fine colors."

Finally, with regard to historical reality, there is the question of the Inca's treasure which, according to the Conibo, is buried at the aforementioned location "Z" in their territory on the Ucayali. Velasco (1842:203) may be in basic agreement with the Conibo, stating:

It was knowledge that the ancient treasures of the Incas that had not fallen into the hands of the Spaniards, either as the ransom for Atahualpa or with the capture of Cuzco, had been transposed by Manco Capac, when he withdrew to reign, followed by 40,000 vassals, to the *montañas* and the *Ucayali* [emphasis supplied], where he had deposited them....

As quoted earlier, Velasco (1842:200) stated that Manco Capac II descended the Ucayali River "to 9 degrees latitude, according to established tradition." This is interesting because the place where the Conibo believe Inca left his treasure, location "Z", is south of 9 degrees latitude. If Velasco's account is accurate, then the Inca ruler would have passed the "Z" site and could have stayed there at least for a while. Accordingly, there is the real possibility that the Conibo knew what they were talking about all along. As the fascinating work of Finney (1991) shows with respect to Polynesian sea voyaging, there can be much historicity in the "impossible" stories embodied in the myths of non-literate peoples.

In conclusion, it seems quite possible that an Inca emperor, Manco Capac II, did visit the Conibo. His stay, the possible extension of his rule to the intersection of the Ucayali with the Marañon, and the apparent continued residency of Incan populations in the larger region into at least the mid-seventeenth century, may well have had very significant effects on the lives and culture of the Conibo not only at that time but up to the present day. Through honoring Inca and waiting for his return, the Conibo-Shipibo have maintained their traditions and their elaborate art with a conservatism little known elsewhere on the main rivers of Amazonia.

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## NOTES

(1) This revised version of the paper originally read as part of the symposium at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association in 1974, incorporates portions of the paper "Inca God: the Conibo Messiah," read at the symposium, *Classic Panoan Topics in Light of Recent Research*, at the 47th International Congress of Americanists in New Orleans, July 7-11, 1991. I wish to express my appreciation to Ralph Bolton, Gertrude Dole, and Patricia J. Lyon for their advice in connection with the original version. None of them, however, is responsible for the views expressed here.

(2) The research was engaged in as an independent part of the 1960-61 Upper Amazon Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, NY. The fieldwork was undertaken primarily on Imarfa Cocha, a late tributary to the Río Tamaya, a location selected for its relative isolation compared to other settlements nearer to the Río Ucayali and more interactive with non-Conibo-Shipibo populations. The population I lived with was statistically more Conibo

than Shipibo, although both groups were represented. The results of the study remain essentially unpublished. A significant documented collection of Conibo-Shipibo artifacts was made for the Hearst Museum of Anthropology of the University of California, Berkeley.

(3) The last case the Conibo could recall of one of their tribesmen killing a white was during the rubber boom, about a half-century earlier.

(4) He thus seems to have entered the upriver portion of the Conibo territory, both as known today and as reconstructed for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Myers (1974:141, Figs. 1 and 3) for these reconstructions.

(5) On present maps, at least, there are two junctions of the Ucayali with the Marañon: the main mouth of the Ucayali and Caño Pucate.