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WAYS OF FACING CHANGE:
PARINTINTIN STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH CONTACT AND THEIR BASES IN MYTHOLOGY

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Working with a society which faces conditions of contact with the frontier of our own society, the anthropologist has no choice but to participate in some manner in processes which shape the nature of that contact. Such participation puts far higher stakes on the understanding of the social system -- both the indigenous system and the national frontier -- than does ordinary academic study, for the anthropologist's understanding of the two social systems and their interpenetration will have a practical impact on the situation. At the same time, such conditions permit the anthropologist to refine his understanding of the society by observing the effects of his trial formulations, and the actions derived from them, as well as through observing the processes which occur as the society itself responds to the demands of the contact scenario.

Working together for the last five years in the Parintintin society, first in the 1985 "election of area" or "identification

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of indigenous territory" (the first step in creating an Indigenous Area), later in a project growing out of the perception of major problems facing Parintintin society, we early came to recognize certain consistent practices which pervade the society. But it is only recently, this year in fact, that an event which grew out of the election of area process -- a kind of "structure of the conjuncture" in which both of us participated in different ways -- clarified for us the dynamics of Parintintin social organization that are manifested in the above-mentioned configuration of behavior.

THE PROBLEM

A problem that confronted us in the definition of area was the high degree of mobility in Parintintin society, which in current circumstances manifests itself in a constant movement not only from one area to another within Parintintin territory, but also outward. This centrifugal movement seemed to threaten to reduce numbers of Parintintin living within the defined area. One task we saw before us, then, was to understand the motives and dynamics of this movement, perhaps to be able to accommodate it in such a way that it would not threaten the viability and justifiability of a defined and protected indigenous area for the Parintintin.

As we considered this picture of constant movement in preparing the proposal of indigenous area, we recognized it as part of a more pervasive motif of movement manifested in all

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phases of Parintintin history, including the ethnohistory of settlement of the area, and in other domains of Parintintin culture as well, with a basis in mythology. Detailed accounts of the history of movements and changing composition of groups led by some dozens of different headmen were provided by Paulino, the elderly chief who died last February at an age between 90 and 95 years (close to 100 if estimates of his age at the time of first contact in the 1920s were accurate). Paulino's remarkable memory provides us with detailed descriptions, based on his own memories and reports passed on to him by his father-in-law Pɨrehakatú, of groups and their movements from the early history of Parintintin occupation of the Maicí valley after 1850 up to pacification (1923) and beyond, showing a clear upriver directionality in the movement, though with distinct returns back downriver and a curving around as the occupation spread to neighboring secondary igarapés in a downriver direction. The general upriver direction of movement is sanctioned, if not sanctified, in an ethnohistoric myth or legend of the settling of the area by a founding hero, Ika'apɨtĩmba'ví,[1] who came from a land "without forest -- all one could see were sky and water",[2] and came upriver -- up the Amazon and Madeira to the Maicí.[3] He continued up the Maicí, "leaving

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[1]In Paulino's version; Ɨvevevuhú'ga in José Diai'í's.

[2]José Diai'í, April 3, 1967, Field Notes III(2) p. 7.

[3]A problem arises concerning the correspondence of this myth with the ethnic history of the Parintintin. Nimuendaju (1924) demonstrates that, before their migration to the Madeira, the Cawahiba (ancestral tribe of the Parintintin, Tenharem, Uru-eu-wau-wau, Karipuna, and other groups who denominate themselves

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Kagwahiv, his sons, two couples in each place," with two wives for each man.[4] In Paulino's account, the story provides a basic directionality to Parintintin space, -- a cosmological paradigm in which the world is divided into Upriver -- ñande tenondehu-pe, "the ahead-of-us," -- and Downriver, ñande rakɨkwe-pe, "the behind us," where is located the "great tapir," tapiranuhũ, chief of all other animal species.

Most such movements, we noticed, also involved a return movement. Local groups would interrupt their upriver progress to return to spots near those occupied earlier, but rarely to exactly the same place where they had been located before. In present-day Parintintin society, young men or women leave for long periods, with or without their families, to work -- tapping sorb or clearing fields, as maids, in mining operations, on merchant boats that ply the river, on highway crews, or in the

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Kagwahiv or Cawahib), occupied the confluence of the Arinos and Juruena, formants of the Tapajós. Thus the route described in the story, up the Amazon to the mouth of the Madeira, then coming up the Madeira, would not have been the historical route followed in the Parintintin migration. Noting, however, the sensitivity of this story to contextual information -- each version is shaped by the geographical knowledge of the informant -- it seems most probable that the original myth refers to their coming up the Tapajos and setting the Juruena and/or Arinos, and that the Madeira was simply substituted for the Madeira when the Parintintin moved across to the Madeira. The original names by which the major rivers were referred to have not survived in the current story, and appropriate names -- Rio Amazonas, Rio Madeira, even Belem, etc. -- are inserted according to the teller's current geographical information.

[4] José Diai'í, ibid. Paulino's accounts list the settlements he left -- in a general upriver movement, though again with some reversals of direction to points back downriver. See account by Kracke in a paper presented at the 1990 Conference on Amazonian and Andean Ethnohistory and Archeology, Chicago, February 1990.

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city, in construction or other labor -- but most of them periodically return to the home territory. This large group of mobile Parintintin might seem to be leaving for purely gainful reasons, but there are features of the way in which they reaggregate, as we will show further on, that suggest that their movement may also be related to the practice of frequently-moving residential groups. A large contingent left to work in FUNAI as translators for the Uru-eu-wau-wau.

A stray metaphor suggests that this cyclic pattern of movement may be embedded in Parintintin thinking about other aspects of culture, as well. In describing cross-cousin marriage (or more specifically an ideal of matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, with the daughter of the tuti, "mother's brother") José Diai'i used the metaphor of setting out from home port in a canoe, going upriver, then turning around and coming back down to home port.

The cycle of leaving and return is seen clearly as an often-repeated theme in Parintintin mythology. In one of the most highly revered Parintintin stories,

> Pindova'umi'ga or Mbirova'umi'ga, founder of the realm of the Sky-People, was angered by his children's quarreling and resolved to find a new place to live. He went to the sky, but it was occupied by vultures; he came back home and reported that the place was uninhabitable, occupied by vultures. Next he went into the water, but there were fish there; under the ground, but there were ghosts or evil

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spirits (añang); into a tree, but it was occupied by bees. Finally he tried going on up into the sky again, going on forward (upward) past the vultures -- "the sky is divided" (oño'at) -- and found a space with no inhabitants. Returning, he announced he had found the right place, loaded his family onto the roof of the house, and lifted the house (magically) up into the sky, leaving the rest of mankind to suffer on earth with the meager resources he left behind.

The culture hero Mbahira is also featured in some stories with this theme:

MBAHIRA FIGHTS WITH HIS COMPANION ITARIANO

When teased to the limit by his companion Itariano -- who kept causing Mbahira's arrows to break as Mbahira straightened them in the fire -- Mbahira goes off to live by a waterfall. After a long search, Itariano finally finds him, and Mbahira sends him back to bring his family. But meanwhile, Mbahira removes himself once more, taking his family, his house and the waterfall to a new spot. Itariano seeks him again, and the same thing happens. After several repetitions, Itariano finally gives up the search and resigns himself to not seeing his friend Mbahira again.

These two myths not only reiterate the pattern of forward motion with periodic return,[5] but also contain a clue as to the

[5]Like the pajé, too, whose rupiqwara-spirit journeys outward to return with a helping spirit to blow curing power on the patient.

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dynamics of this pattern of movement. We will return to this later.

FORMATION OF NEW GROUPS

Parintintin groups are not only mobile, they are also highly fluid in their membership. In the traditional social organization, the only really stable relationship in a group is the temporary one formed between a man and his son-in-law, for the period of bride service. Individual members or families are frequently leaving a group and going to another, to visit or to stay, and the line between visiting and moving is not always clear.From the examination of the data provided by Paulino on the movements of past settlements reveals that many moves involve individuals seceding from a group to form new groups, some of which persist, others collapse back into the principal group. Also, each dislocation of a major group seems to involve a major rearrangement of its members and the members of other groups in its vicinity -- a major population interchange.

The reasons given for these moves varied considerably: exhaustion of natural resources in a particularly poor area, death of a leader or of several members of the group in a short span, etc.; but these specific reasons only account for a small part of the total number of moves. In other cases, the leader or the group simply "got tired" of the place, a "reason" that undoubtedly covers deeper motives for the division and move of the group.

The same kind of process of group formation can be seen in

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moves to the city: Antonio Arimã gets a job in a bakery, invites sons of Manezinho to join him in Humaitá and arranges jobs for them at the same bakery, and eventually for Manezinho himself. It is as if he has formed a group in the same way as groups were formed in the forest -- attracting individuals by offering them access to resources (only earnings instead of good hunting and fishing, abundant gardens, and the headman's daughters). Here we have a kind of "structure of the conjuncture,"[6] an attempt to carry out a kind of process which has been fundamental for the society, but in drastically changed circumstances. A problem with such an attempt to reproduce the process of group formation in the city is that such a group is much more difficult to maintain in the distractions of the urban environment, and has little chance of reproducing itself in the formation of further cohesive groups. In the group which Vivaldo initiated when he joined the FUNAI to work with Uru-eu-wau-wau, many of those who followed his footsteps there married non-Kagwahiv women. Thus, if these attempts at group-formation in the city represent attempts to reproduce Parintintin society -- formations of new "structures of the conjuncture," the results as far as the continuity and cohesiveness of Parintintin society are concerned, are mixed.

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[6]We use this term in Sahlins's sense, as an event in which categories of the society are brought to bear on a novel situation, whose new elements eventually lead to the transformation of the categories themselves. The analysis of this event as a structure of the conjuncture, originally intended for the present communication, will be reserved for another paper.

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It is clear that the frequent movement of groups and the opening of new locales for formation of new groups play an important role in Parintintin society. But the dynamics of these moves escaped us, until an incident of formation of a new group in which we were involved clarified just what kinds of forces impel the formation of a new group, and the part that a group's transfer to a new location plays in the continuity of Parintintin society.

EXPULSION OF A POSSEIRO: A NEW FORM OF EXPANSION

The central figure is one Antonio Marazonas, a Parintintin from the uprivermost group, near Calama, whose life for the last five years well illustrates the mobility spoken of above. Because the Parintintin from around Calama were no longer living in the area when the FUNAI identification team arrived in 1985, the area formerly occupied by Marazonas's group, the Maicizinho de Calama, was not included in the proposed area. At that time, Marazonas was himself already living in the downrivermost area, the Ipixuna, over 200 km distant from his natal territory, where he had just married a daughter of Manezinho's.

A series of fights there, the most serious with his brother-in-law Carlos, led to his leaving the area. He first followed his father-in-law to the Traira, but there fought again, this time confronting the area's leader, Manuel Lopes, who as son of the man who had opened up the Traira settlement (Aruká) was con-

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sidered "owner" of the Traira. The fight occurred when Marazonas questioned Manuel Lopes's leadership because Manuel had failed to avenge the death of one of Manezinho's sons, Marazonas's brother-in-law, who was killed when a truck overturned on the Transamazon Highway. An index of Marazonas's marginality is that Manezinho himself did not involve himself in his son-in-law's fight, and refused to allow any of his sons to come to Marazonas's support.

Expelled from two Parintintin areal clusters for fighting, Marazonas went to the last area open to him, the Pupunhas, where he was granted a place near an upstream settlement to build his house and open a manioc-field.

From the time he arrived in the Pupunhas, Marazonas went to great lengths to cultivate goodwill, giving coffee, sugar, sharing the farinha he toasted in someone's oven, helping clear fields with the buzz saw he got from a FUNAI agent, caring for people when sick. But soon he ran into problems again. Sorb is the principal crop available for commercial exploitation, and the stands of sorb-trees belong to "owners" on the basis of a kind of patrifiliation -- children of a man who first exploited a particular sorb stand "own" that stand. Being from another area, Marazonas did not have hereditary access to a sorval (stand of sorb-trees), so he depended on others permitting him to work in stands they "owned." At first one family permitted him to tap sorva in their sorval, but soon the "owners" became reluctant to let him work in their sorvais, on the pretext that he extracted too much sorva and depleted their reserves, despite the fact that

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he paid well for sorva he extracted -- unlike the neighboring whites they often invite in as "work companions" to accompany a Parintintin in tapping his sorval, who make no recompense for the sorva they tap.

The reason for this apparently inexplicable apprehension with respect to Marazonas becomes clearer when we consider the relationship of leadership and place in Parintintin thought. Leadership is associated with the concept of "ownership" of a place. A person becomes "owner" (dono, -'jara) of a place (a habitation site or a jungle resource such as a Brazil-nut grove, a sorva stand or a rubber-tree avenue) if he opened it himself, or, more often nowadays, inherited it from his or her father who opened it. The owner of a habitation site has a right to be headman there, or to cede it to someone who asks to occupy the place, who is headman as long as he occupies it with his family and other followers.

The headman has an obligation to take care of the place, which entails also taking care of the people living in it, including their alimaentation. One of the most important attributes of a chief is his duty of distributing, omã'ẽ, especially game. Omã'ẽ signifies distributing game one has killed oneself, but in the case of the chief his followers deliver their large catches to him in deference to his role as the distributor of food.

Marazonas ran afoul of a confusion of Parintintin categories. The problem did not lie in his discontent with the chief, for in

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Parintintin society such discontent with authority is accepted and even expected. Rather, his very assiduousness in caring for others generated distrust: he seemed to be assuming too readily a task that is by rights a headman's, and thus to manifest an aspiration to that position. Not having a place of his own in the area, he began to appear a threat to those "owners" of places who at first saw in him a way of augmenting their prestige. When Levinho asked one of the Pupunhas residents what were the reasons for Marazonas' having so many problems, the response was: "He is jealous of his sisters-in-law, and wants to be boss" ("ele tem ciúmes das cunhadas e quer mandar").

In connection with the question of access to the sorvais, FUNAI entered the picture, through Marazonas's initiative. Marazonas had been spending a good deal of time in Porto Velho at the Casa do Indio for treatment of his children, and while there engaged the FUNAI personnel in discussions of the situation in the Pupunhas, especially those problems which affected him most directly -- such as problems concerning exploitation of sorva stands. In one of these visits he managed to convince the FUNAI staff of the imminence of conflict in the area. A meeting was held in Porto Velho of the principal residents of the Pupunhas area, in which the FUNAI emphasized that whites should not have access to the Indigenous Area, and that the resources there belonged to all the Parintintin in common -- the latter point, of course, an argument of obvious interest to Marazonas, as one who had no traditional claims to rights in the forest resources.

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One Parintintin who did not take part in this meeting was another contender for leadership in the area, who had been working his sorval together with a regional "work companion." Marazonas sent him a letter informing him that FUNAI did not want whites inside the Indigenous Area -- an act in which he in full consciousness violated a basic Kagwahiv norm of not interfering in others' lives.[7] The particular individual in question (like Marazonas, from outside the Pupunhas) is also a highly temperamental and self-willed individual, one who is not infrequently provoked to quarrel -- a quality which subverted his aspirations to leadership in the area.

Not surprisingly, a fight ensued, from which MArazonas came out with a head wound. While the other's leadership aspirations were clearly in decline, a situation of intense enmity persisted between the two. A number of other residents of the Pupunhas, including some of the long-time "owners," resented the pretension to leadership of both Marazonas and the other, and began to talk of wishing both to leave.

For Marazonas, there no area of Parintintin settlement where he had not quarreled and made himself unwelcome. The only alternative seemed to be to move to some distant place, most likely in the city. Indeed, he was planning such a move on the pretext that the Pupunhas was an unhealthy place for his children; two of his

[7]Personal independence in decisions is highly valued in Parintintin life. Parintintin children are treated as individuals with their own will, fully capable of making their own decisons. A important attribute of a good headman is to respect the will of his followers, leaving them space to make their own decisions.

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infant children had died in succession.

Due to a conjuncture of circumstances, however, Marazonas did not follow that route. Instead, he devoted himself to engineering the expulsion of an "invader" who had ensconced himself in a spot just within the limits of the identified indigenous land, at the mouth of a stream (Igarapé do índio) which was designated in 1985 as a boundary of the Area Indigena Nove de Janeiro, where the stream flowed into the Lake of the Pupunhas.

The interloper was a workman who had been placed there by the executor of the will of a former occupant of the property. The terrain of this spot included a Brazil-nut grove which, while within Parintintin territory, had for a long time not been worked by any single man, but was clandestinely exploited in turn by various Parintintin and regional neighbors, and the choice of the stream as boundary was intended to place the grove definitively within the Indian territory. The interloper had made himself thoroughly unpopular with regional neighbors as well as Indians by aggressively defending the Brazil-nut groves against the predations that had become customary, earning himself a reputation for violence in so doing.

As soon as the peon was placed there, the Indians began complaining to the new agent of the recently establised FUNAI post in Humaitáto have the intruder removed. The agent, a novitiate from Manaus with no acquantance with the area or with the Indians, pleaded ignorance of the situation and alleged the need for new studies, a position which the Indians interpreted as

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cowardice -- unwillingness to face the violent homesteader.

In January of this year Marazonas confronted the intruder, then -- taking advantage of the departure of the Humaitá agent, who had been transferred to another post in late 1989-- telephoned FUNAI in Porto Velho, warning that the Parintintin would use force to expel the invader. The threat was an empty one, but -- reinforced by the testimony of a member of OPAN stationed in Humaitá for assistance to Parintintin -- convinced the FUNAI of the gravity of the situation. With unaccustomed rapidity, on the same day they sent a functionary to the area who, with the support of a unit of military police, expelled the invader.

This outcome was made possible by a conjunction of factors which could only take shape because of the peculiliar role taken by Marazonas in all this. In an interview with Levinho shortly after the event, the FUNAI functionary described Marazonas's performance in the police station to which the invader was taken after being removed. According to him, Marazonas's participation was crucial in convincing the police who was in the right:

> At the moment that the invader was arguing that that area was his and he had title to it, Marazonas spontaneously entered the discussion and confronted the invader. ... He was confronting this position of his, counter-arguing that his grandfathers were there in that territory for a long time. That when he was a child he used to gather Brazil-nuts there. That his relatives knew that area well. That

that was Indian land there. That was his argument. It is quite possible, indeed virtually certain, that Marazonas's relatives gathered Brazil-nuts there. But he never saw them, nor was he there when he was a child. He was born and raised in the Maicizinho near Calama, in Rondonia. The essence of his argument was quite true, but the specific affirmations -- like the threats of tribal violence, playing on regional images of the "wild indian" -- were a pose.*

Nonetheless, it was his directing of the circumstances that brought about the successful expulsion of the invader, and his dramatization.

The outcome of it all was that Marazonas achieved a place for himself in the Pupunhas -- not one cleared out of virgin forest, but one achieved by more current means, utilizing the diplomatic and organizational methods necessary for expelling an interloper. He had "opened his own place", in the only way now possible to form a new settlement in a place not already "owned" by a Parintintin: by entering land occupied by "whites," an outcome made possible by the FUNAI definition of the area, which had only become official by a presidential decree in 1989.

In this way, by opening a place on the edge of Parintintin territory, stretching occupation to the the furthest limit of the newly consolidated Indigenous Area, Marazonas once more managed to reproduce the dynamics of movement inherent in Parintintin society -- <u>ñande tenondépe</u>, "ahead of us." To live with him there, he invited his brother-in-law from the Traira -- the one

*We might point out the similarity of this ruse to the image of the trickster portrayed by Bahira in mythology, and by various comic figures in the folk tales, especially small animals who vanquish more powerful [illegible]

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with whom he had fought in the Ipixuna; and to work with him in the Brazil-nut grove, his wife's mother's brother, Coriolano--also an immigrant from the Ipixuna, along with the latter's son-in-law. Thus he associated with himself, in his newly won territory, a group of people formerly without firm claims to land in the Pupunhas.

Several of the longtime residents of the Pupunhas voiced the opinion that, "now that he has found his own place, things will calm down."

With this new base, Marazonas has begun to assert a wider claim to leadership. He has assumed a position vis-à-vis outside groups, especially the Tenharem, as "cacique dos Parintintin," and has attended a major conference of indigenous leaders -- the first ever attended by a Parintintin -- assuming the role of representative of the Parintintin there. The UNIND leader Airton Krenak designated him "chefe dos Parintintin."

Still, there is continuing resistance to his leadership at home: a number of the residents of the Pupunhas resent his assumption of a superordinate chiefly role. Raimunda velha, a central figure in the Pupunhas, complains, "He goes around yelling in the houses of others. I don't yell in the houses of others."

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DISCUSSION

The situation in the Pupunhas area before the event just discussed had been a tense one for some years, with considerable rivalry among groups and contestants for leadership. In retrospect, part of the reason for this was the situation of circumscription, potentially there since pacification but recently much intensified by the transamazon highway running through their territory, and the influx of colonists. Election of land put a limit to the further encroachments of colonists, but at the same time set a hard limit to the extension of Kagwahiv settlements within their territory.

By establishing a new group, opening a new place on the very frontier of their territory -- establishing a place in land that had not been the site of a settlement in recent years, though the Brazil-nut stands had been exploited in historical memory-- Marazonas calmed the situation in the Pupunhas. Drawing a number of "loose" individuals into his groups -- individuals not structurally tied into other groups, and without claims to specific sites along the river based on fathers or grandfathers who were active in the area,[a] who might otherwise be potential

[a]In present-day Parintintin society, an individual is considered to be "owner" of settlements that were opened and/or long occupied by his <u>or her</u> father, Brazil-nut groves and sorva stands that were customarily exploited by him, and the (vaguely bounded) area in which the person's father was active. This does not by any means exclude others from occupying sites in this area or exploiting resources in it, but they must ask permission of the <u>dono</u> before doing so -- as Manezinho asked permission of Manuel Lopes before settling in Traira. Many of those with established settlements along the Pupunhas have such claims to their settlements, in most cases through the spouse (Elias

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sources of conflict.

Marazonas in this achieved something that formation of a new group did in the past, when it was easier to expend into new terrain to establish one. In forming a new group, the incipient leader draws off individuals who are in conflict, or in potential conflict, in the groups they currently reside in. In the Ipixuna when I first was there between 1967 and 1973, Manezinho's group clearly served this function, drawing into it members who had entered into conflict with Paulino, the chief at Canavial.

It is to be noted that this analysis corresponds to the myths cited above that portray the process of movement. In both the myth of Pindova'umi'ga moving to the sky to found the Sky-People's village, and of Mbahira successively moving to hide from his companion, the moving was initially precipitated by contention. In the myth, too, then, moving of a settlement is a consequence of potential or actual conflict.

Thus understanding Marazonas's accomplishment gives us insight into the dynamics of the push for moving into new territory to establish new groups, and for existing groups to move to new settlements upriver -- the push for moving that is so deeply embedded in Parintintin social organization. Both processes offer occasion for a wholesale realignment of the composition of groups in the area, restructuring the situation in

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through Alice, José Gomes through Raimunda, Vinciano through Amélia Diaií). Marazonas, and his principal adherents Coriolano and Rosalina (with her husband Raimundo Gomes) are "outsiders" without such claims.

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such a way as to reduce tensions within groups, and channel them into the task of expansion. As these processes of reproduction of Parintintin society create a new ordering of the elements of the society on each occasion, Parintintin society may be said to be in this respect a "performative society" (Sahlins 1985, ch. 1, parts 2-3) -- one in which structure is created by pragmatic acts, the active element in this case being the outward (and back) movement of groups into new areas.[9]

The performative nature of Parintintin social organization, particularly with respect to leadership, makes sense of several characteristics of Parintintin society which it appears to share with most other Tupí-Guaraní societies. The vague, nonlocalized character of the moieties, virtually negated in cultural elabora-

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[9]A chief is chief because he successfully establishes a new group. If he is successful enough, or acquires broad influence in an area, then it may emerge that his father was also a"great chief." The apparent patrilineal emphasis which led Laraia (1985) and Menendez (1989) to see Parintintin or Kagwahiv society as patrilineal is, for the Parintintin, an ex-post-facto epiphenomenon of effective leadership. The successful leader creates a retrospective reputation for his father (as Paulino did for his father Mandat), from which he derives the claim to "great chief" status which is in fact based on his succcess; whereas if the son of a "great chief" does not show his father's qualities, his claim to be his father's successor will remain wholly empty, no matter how influential his father was. The great chief Diaií who led the Maicí Parintintin at the time of pacification, was described by Nimuendajú (1924:86) as "the only one who commands and is obeyed -- conditionally," His son José tried to capitalize on his father's reputation to take over leadership of the Pupunhas area before his death in the early 1970s, but, unpopular for his combativeness and criticized for failing to take care of his father's fruit-tree plantations, he never achieved any recognition.

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tion[10] -- in conformity with a tendency which Viveiros de Castro has pointed out in Tupí-Guaraní cultures to "dis-mark" social boundaries -- and the fluid rules of composition of local groups provide a flexibility in the reordering of groups each time a new one arises, permitting the dynamics described here in which tensions are resolved by reordering of group relationships with the founding of a new group.

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[10]There is no explicit reference to the exogamous moieties, so central in Parintintin social organization, in any of the myths I have collected, nor in the extensive collection of myths by Nunes Pereira, except in one story "the animals come to a ball" in which bird species and a few mammals are classifeid by moiety. Menendez (1989:105) presents an ingenious reading of a myth in which he is able to find there an allusion to moieties: he cites a Tenharem myth of origin in which Mbahira paints certain animal species and fruits to separate those that belong to the respective moieties (1989:187) -- black animals and fruits to mutum, brightly colored or reddish ones to Kwandu. He then points out that in one variant of the Parintintin myth of Mbahira and his son-in-law Mbarupa'í (Nunes Pereira 1980:575) there is also a mention of Mbahira painting things. Here, though, Mbahira paints "the leaves, flowers, tree bark, stones and the earth of the paths," <u>not</u> the birds and animals associated with the two moieties. Although the myth does deal with affinal relationships, there is no indication in it that the act of painting here referred to has anything to do with separation of species into moieties. In the context, it is rather presented as a part of Mbahira's general act of creating the landscape.

Menendez has, then, pointed to a possible, highly disguised allusion to moieties in a myth; but this exactly fits my general point. While there are passing allusions to the moieties in myth and in other domains of Parintintin life (as, for example, in the fletching of arrows with mutum and harpie eagle feathers), I have not been told any Parintintin myth of which the moieties are an explicit focus (and only one in which they are even explicitly mentioned), and in particular no myth of origin for them. The Tenharem myth which Menendez presents on p. 187 is the first Kagwahiv myth of moiety origins I have encountered. It would be interesting to know a little more about the identity of the myth teller (what is his moiety affiliation, for example), and of the circumstances in which it was told.

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