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Pawana: Exchange and the Negotiation of Identity Among the Waiwai of Northern Amazonia

I. Introduction

Several contemporary areas of intertribal exchange of goods specialized by tribe have been reported in the ethnographic literature of Lowland South America: the Upper Xingu region, the Rio Negro area, and the Northern Amazonia/Guianese region. Scattered data describes exchanges among Yanomami subgroups and exchanges between Panoan and Arawak groups in the western Amazon in the shadow of the Andes. Archaeological and historical evidence suggest that exchange networks were formerly much more common and extensive, and may even have been linked up at strategic points. What we see today -- relatively isolated patches of intertribal exchange activities -- may in fact be only the remnants of once vast articulated networks composed of various sub-systems of intertribal exchanges.

Despite the suggestiveness of such hints in the data, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the meaning of exchange in these areas. Most writings about these networks are descriptive only, and superficial at that. Of the few analytical treatments, most tend to be structural-functionalist, ecological, or based on economic "cost-benefit" models. Others of a more structuralist bent raise the theoretical issues that have to be pursued, but only at a broad, generalized level unanchored in any detailed account of a specific ethnographic context. These

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various approaches are inadequate for handling the richness of the ethnographic detail, the precise ways each group has employed the logic of intertribal exchange, and how such practices articulate with the culture as a whole. They also fail to account for the how these societies have exploited the potentialities of inter-tribal exchange to confront the challenges to their identity and survival posed by the contact situation.

As an alternative, I would suggest viewing exchange as social action, that is, as a symbolic system, both structural and processual, which manipulates and produces social values. We must examine the meaning that exchange activities have for the social actors themselves, incorporating this into our explanatory model.

This talk is intended to contribute towards an understanding of the relationship between intertribal trade and concepts of social identity among the Waiwai. Rather than tackle the entire issue at this time, I will here concentrate on the popular Pawana ("Visitor") improvisations, which parody trade and marriage with "wild" tribes. I will attempt to show how the improvisation is a ritual commentary on value and self/other relations. As such, it addresses issues of fundamental concern to the culture, namely, the role of social value in the production and reproduction of society, and the construction of tribal identity through negotiation with outsiders.

The data I will draw on and the interpretations I will make are based on two years of fieldwork among the Waiwai, principally in the village of Kaxmi in Roraima (pop. 185), from 1984-1986. Data is also drawn from Niels Fock's book, Waiwai: Religion and Society of an Amazonian Tribe (1963), based on his brief but productive visit to the Waiwai in the mid-1950's.

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II. Discussion

There are currently about 1,200 people who live in the four Waiwai villages in Roraima, Para, and Guyana. Actually, these settlements are composed of various tribes which gradually joined the Waiwai, such as the Katuena, Hixkaryana, Xerew, Mawayana, Karafawyana, Taruma, and Parukoto. These groups were formerly dispersed in small forest settlements throughout the Mapuera and Essequibo river basins, but maintained ties through intertribal visiting, exchange, marriage, sometimes war; they shared many cultural features and most spoke related languages of the Carib linguistic family. Interactions leading to domination or assimilation of one group by another were complemented by other forces leading to fissioning or opposition, while both were counterbalanced by features allowing groups to maintain parity. Fock traces the long history of what he characterizes as the "interesting, ever-repeated process of tribal admixture and division" in this region (Fock 1955:9).

Some of the reasons why one particular group was able to absorb another or led to oppose yet another can be traced to specific historical causes arising from the indirect "ripple" effects of the arrival of non-indigenous populations on the continent. Thus, for instance, in the early part of the century the Waiwai peacefully absorbed through intermarriage the remnants of the Taruma of the Essequibo River, who had been gradually weakened and reduced by contact diseases they picked up largely through their encounters with the more acculturated Wapixana. In the south, groups fleeing the advancing colonist frontier of the Amazon pushed northward into the Mapuera region, exerting pressures which triggered specific incidents of intertribal hostilities, assimilation or accomodation into the regional network.

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As significant as these particular events were in themselves, they were absorbed into a system already characterized by forces making for a state of "dynamic equilibrium" in the region. The intertribal exchange system, which even extended beyond the region to hook up with many other groups in a vast network stretching from northern Brazil to Venezuela and the former colonies of the British, Dutch and French Guianas, -- a network still functioning, in modified form, to this day -- was both an expression and a means of maintaining this state of dynamic equilibrium.

In 1949, North American Protestant missionaries of the Unevangelized Fields Mission set up base among the Waiwai of the Essequibo. Several years of attempts to convert them were met with resistence and even an unsuccessful attempt to kill the head missionary. But he concentrated his efforts on an influential, rising young shaman/leader; when he converted in the mid-50's, the majority of the rest of the Waiwai followed suit. The missionaries took advantage of the Waiwai's entrenched propensity for inter-tribal visiting, exploiting it to contact and attract other groups to the south in the Mapuera region. For their part, the Waiwai took advantage of their privileged access to missionary trade goods and medicines to dominate the other groups. Forces which formerly held the power of each group in check were undone, and the Waiwai gained ascendency in the region, accelerating the assimilation of other tribes who joined their rapidly expanding villages. Gradually the Waiwai resumed control of the contact expeditions and now discourage missionary participation, although the Waiwai continue to use the language of evangelization as one of their strategies of persuading groups to join them. The native church is now entirely in the hands of indigenous pastors, and at times their doctrine and decisions run directly counter to missionary opinions.

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In searching for "hidden tribes" (enɨhnɨ komo) and persuading them to join their villages, the Waiwai are playing out certain tendencies that were already latent in the intertribal network before contact. The Waiwai see their role as that of "pacifying" the "angry" tribes (tɨrwoñem) and teaching them what they consider the proper conduct of fully socialized human beings who are guided above all by the ethos of "peacefulness," "equanimity" (tawake ehtopo). Ethnocentrism is characteristic of tribes throughout lowland South America, whereby "one's own people" occupy the most socialized central zone, with "other peoples" blending into the outlying "natural" peripheral zones. But the impulse to pull in outlying groups and "socialize" them seems to have a more restricted distribution. It has been reported in the literature of other Carib groups and certain other regions of mixed tribal interaction. A few examples are the situations of the Maiongong/Sanuma (Ramos 1980); the Wayana-Apalai/Waiampi (Gallois 1980); the Rio Negro groups/Maku; the Upper Xingu groups/Gê. These are also regions of active intertribal exchange of tribal specialities.

The ethnographic data I wish to examine here concern the popular Pawana improvisations which the Waiwai enact during their major ritual events, nowadays coinciding with the weeks of Christmas and Easter. In these improvisations, the Waiwai caricature visits by so-called "savage" or "backward" tribes who have come to trade and seek spouses from the actors representing the Waiwai. Although the improvisation is accompanied by great hilarity and laughter, and are explained by the Waiwai as "play" (esemañitopo) and "joking" (etaporetopo), it is no less a "ritual" than others. Indeed, except for the more solemn "rituals" introduced by the missionaries, most Waiwai rituals are explicitly aimed at producing what they call "joyfulness" (ɨahwore ehtopo), epitomized in laughter, joking and beauty, which for them

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constitutes the highest form of social existence. Certain zones and occasions which an earlier anthropology may have labelled "sacred" and expected an attitude of "awe" are instead marked by the Waiwai with a deliberate stance of joking and "joy."

First of all, let us explore the meaning of the term pawana amongst the Waiwai and other Carib groups. In Waiwai, the term means "visitor" and is applied to anyone, indigenous or not, who comes from the outside to visit the village temporarily. I heard it applied to families visiting from the northern Waiwai village, to visiting groups from other tribes, as well as to myself. Indigenous visitors usually know enough to announce their arrival as they near the village with a particular "wii wii" whistle or shotgun blast, greeted by shouts of "Pawana! Pawana!" hollered from house to house. Everybody drops what they were doing, frantically changes into their best outfits, and dashes to the landing point where the visitors have arrived, also dressed and ornamented to the hilt. They are then ushered into the communal festival house, where they are offered tapioca drink, beiju, and meat broth. They exchange news while someone arranges for a place for them to stay.

This meaning of pawana as "visitor" differs from its use among other Carib groups, where pawana, ipawana, or pavana mean more specifically "trade partner." Colson points out that "The term pawana, or pavana, is widespread amongst Carib speakers" and cites some examples. She states that the "Akawaio refer to the pawana, translating the word as 'those who sell'", and applying it to either the Maiongong from whom they acquire trade goods or more vaguely to those beyond them who produce the goods and pass them on to the Maiongong. She says the Wayana also apply the term to their Bush Negro trade contacts (Colson 1973:16-18). Riviere (1969: 227,79) mentions the Trio relationship between trading partners, called ipawana, and briefly sketches its links to the pito relationship. Thomas discuss the term pawanaton ("trading

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people") used by the Pemon for their trading partnerships with the Makiritare (Yekuana, Maiongong), as well applied between eastern and western groups of Pemon who traded (Thomas 1972:11; 1982:124) (cf. Simpson 1940:399,357, cited in Colson 1973:16).

The only detailed analyses to date of trading partnerships among a Carib group are Thomas' Pemon studies (1972, 1982). Data scattered throughout other ethnographies suggest that other Carib pawana relationships may share the characteristics described by Thomas for the Pemon: an exclusive, one-to-one relationship that is conceptualized as "egalitarian" and based on balanced reciprocity; one that is ideally long-lasting, although actual contact may be sporadic; one that exists between people of different villages or tribes (or even, in an apparent extension of the model, to other ethnic groups); one that is marked by long-term delayed reciprocity and mutual indebtedness; and operating with theoretically "fixed" (though in reality manipulatable) rates of exchange of goods specialized by group.

As noted, the term pawana in Waiwai does not apply to trading partnerships, but only to the word "visitor." Their formalized trade partnerships are called warawan and follow the classic Carib features of exclusivity, delayed reciprocity, longevity, long distance, etc. Waiwai pawana visitors, we will see, are expected to enter into some kind of trading activity during their visits, but this is distinct from the more formal warawan trade partnership. The universe of meaning surrounding Waiwai warawan is not the same as the universe of meaning pertaining to their notion of pawana. But interesting questions are raised by the fact that they took the Carib term pawana which elsewhere refers to the formalized trading partnerships and used it instead for "visitor." The Pawana improvisations, I will show, dramatize the conduct stereotypically expected of the role of the "visitor." But my point for now is that the phrasing of the relation between warawan and pawana is differently skewed in

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the case of the Waiwai as opposed to other Carib tribes, and that there are significant reasons for this. These differences between Waiwai and other Carib definitions of pawana reflect different exchange practices with "outsiders", and therefore alternative visions of the "Other."

There is a certain ideological promiscuity to Waiwai trade practices with outsiders. At some point during his visit, every pawana visitor to the Waiwai is expected to conduct some trade. A wide variety of relationships can be exploited or even created as a legitimating basis for trade. If one asks the Waiwai, "With whom do you trade?" they respond, "With anyone and everyone." They say this not only of evanescent, one-time-only trades, but also for intervillage trade and for more formalized warawan partnerships. Upon examination, the data shows that there are certain patterns to the social relationships exploited for the different kinds of exchange bonds. But an ideological purpose is being served in their expansive embrace of all outsiders as potentials for exchange.

The expansive view of anyone as a potential for trade is echoed in the broad Waiwai meaning of pawana as "visitor." While visitors may eventually become warawan trading partners of certain individuals in the village, or even become affines if the exchange is extended to women, all this exists as potentiality -- as something fundamentally to be achieved. The "Other" must be persuaded to become a trading partner or an affine; it is in essence a conquest. It also corresponds to a different view of relations with outsiders and of the potential for converting outsiders into insiders. I would even argue that this may be related to the ability of the Waiwai to assimilate other tribes and "Waiwai-ize" them.

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Let me now offer a general description of the Pawana improvisation. The improvisation is a caricature of arrival of pawana, "visitors", to the Waiwai village for purposes of trade and marriage. The invariant feature of the improvisation is that the pawana tribes are always backward, "primitive", from "very far away"; they take themselves very seriously but are reveal themselves to be ignorant and ridiculous. These characteristics apply to every detail of costume, purported origins, conduct upon arrival, proposed exchanges, and qualifications as marriage partners, provoking hysterical gales of laughter at each detail.

The basic "plot" is also invariant: the pawana arrive by sound of visitors' whistle and are ushered into communal house. The actors representing the resident Waiwai ask to what tribe each belongs, from where each has come, and why. The Waiwai offer them tapioca and beiju (as to real visitors) but the pawana reject or mishandle it in some way (e.g., disdain it, vomit it, or don't even know what it is). Barters are then proposed, the pawana offering ridiculously inferior versions of trade items, which the Waiwai accept, exploit or offer farcical substitutes. Then marriage partners are requested or offered; the qualities of each potential spouse are discussed (again, as caricature). The visitors may then demonstrate some "barbaric" dance of theirs or another characteristic practice. They then leave abruptly, taking their new Waiwai spouses with them.

Besides the plot, another invariant is that all the actors playing the side of the pawana are of the same sex; a men's Pawana rite will be followed later by a women's Pawana. As part of the caricature, however, many of the actors playing the part of the "visitors" are dressed as the opposite sex; the women come bearing bow and arrows (which they pathetically try to shoot), while some of the men come dressed in women's clothing and suckling baby dolls. The "Waiwai" side is as a group of the same or opposite sex of the "visitors" (male "Waiwai" may greet female "visitors"

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in one Pawana rite, while in others, both sides may be of the same sex), but the "Waiwai" do not engage in transvestism; instead, they will pull from the audience the pawana's "true" opposite-sex spouse, the one the actor has in real life. The "Waiwai," in other words, are not confused about which gender they "truly" are.

Along similar lines of inversion, some pawana actors portray themselves in the extreme opposite age category: elderly women may state they have just come out of puberty seclusion, while young men of the youth's age category may hobble into the communal house bent and leaning on a walking stick. Members of the "Waiwai" side may verbally misrepresent their age, but it takes on the flavor of a deliberate "lie" pulled over on the ignorant "visitors" who cannot tell the difference, rather than a symptom of their own identity confusion.

Within this invariant structure, a great deal of room is made for inventiveness and creativity; this is what makes it an improvisation. Humor is generated not only by the ridiculousness of the pawana and their mock seriousness, but also by the inventiveness of each actor and the pointedness or complexity of his parodies, witticisms, and responses. The audience inspects and comments on each detail of the actors' costumes and paraphernalia, evaluating each item with the shrillness of their laughter. Their bursts of laughter also measure the success of each response given by the pawana actors according to its cleverness, audaciousness or number of levels it reverberates on -- including references to "real" circumstances, politics or tensions in village. Since no actor, Waiwai or pawana, knows exactly what the other will say in the dialogue of questions and answers, humor is also generated by the spontaneity and quickness with which actor is able to come back with a repartee to anyone's question. The comedy hinges on the element of surprise within loosely prescribed rules.

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Some specific examples of Pawana will illustrate the above points. Besides the clothing representing the opposite sex or age category, the costumes are often old and torn; outworn farine sacks may be used as a farcical "dress." Bizarre arrays of feathers testify to the pawanas' utter lack of aesthetic standards. Many of the ornaments represent impoverished versions of true decorations, e.g., cotton strands instead of beads for knee bands, or decorated bark sheaves for arm bands -- which, in fact, the Waiwai used until recently when beads became easier to acquire.

The props brought by the pawana actors are, like the costumes, potentials to be exploited in course of improvisation. Old kettles or broken machetes are presented as "brand-new"; discarded Brazil nut hulls are used as drinking cups; full-grown men may wear children's carrying baskets, or else huge ones containing a single shrivelled piece of game; walking sticks are swung around menacingly as war clubs. One time a "visitor" wore a large animal bone, painted red, provoking the accusation that he was apparently a killer of people (accompanied by hysterical laughter). Real dogs may be brought as a parody of the actual Waiwai's trade specialization in hunting dogs; sometimes parrots, another of their specializations, are brought, but so are chickens, called nevertheless "parrots." In one of the women's Pawana, they brought cashew fruits on sticks; it was explained that these are the favorite food of wayam land turtles -- creatures which carry numerous sexual connotations, notably in the word for "lover", wayamnu, "my turtle."

The names of the villages or tribes from which the pawana come usually refer to some animal or to some "primitive" trait; the "unsocialized" nature of the visitors is the key feature. The pawanas' demeanor is often "angry" (nɨrwona); as "primitives" they are backward but also somewhat dangerous and powerful. In a variant of this, the visitors are "sickly" -- another mode of

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being faulty and dangerous humans. (The pawana sometimes say they picked up the diseases as they travelled through Brazilian towns.) Lest it be thought it is only other indigenous tribes whom the Waiwai consider "unsocialized", there is the example of the Pawana filmed in "Terra de Ninguem" (Courbineau, 1979) where the "tribe" that comes to visit are karaïwa -- Brazilians -- whom the Waiwai view as somewhat "unsocialized," "angry," and dangerous/powerful as well.

The pawana further demonstrate their lack of proper socialization in their trade conduct: they are too greedy by demanding more and more, too quick to accept a deal (one "ought" to deliberate slowly), or accuse their trade partner of lying or holding back other goods.

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III. Analysis

How are we to understand this ritual? Pawana, I would argue, is a commentary on the meaning of "value" and group/ outsider relations. At its clearest level, the basic logic of the ritual operates the opposition "own group:outsider :: know value: ignorant of value." The identity of each group is bound up with its differential perception of value. There is a deliberate play on confusing cepethîkyem (valuable things) vs. ero pîntho (valueless things). The actors label things as what they are not, portray people as who they are not, offer items in exchange which are not commensurable in value. Ignorance is ritually defined as being fooled by naming a valued thing as valueless, and vice-versa. In this is touched the relationship between language and value, as well as language and group identity. The "anger" (yîrwon) of "savage peoples" is thought by the Waiwai to be linked, among other things, to "not understanding our language." Many of the lines spoken by the pawana are in other languages, and many of the jokes revolve around puns and clever plays on words. This is illustrated in a scene from a women's Pawana (the women played the part of the "visitors," the men, the part of the "Waiwai"); it plays on misunderstandings surrounding the exchange of parrots trained to talk, one of the trade specialties the Waiwai send to the Tiriyó:

> "Parawa xe way!" a "visitor" says in the Tiriyó language, meaning, "I want a parrot."
>
> "What does 'parawa' mean?" the "Waiwai" man pretends not to know. "'Parawa,' 'parawa': Oh dear, I don't understand them!"
>
> Another "Waiwai" warns, "Look out, she'll try to confuse you!"

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The first complains, "The visitors do nothing but confuse us! Find someone who understands their language!"

Another "Waiwai" actor is brought over, claiming to know the Tiriyó language. "'Parawa': that means "parrot." 'Parawa xe way': they want parrots."

"Oh yeah? A 'parrot'?" exclaims the first "Waiwai." "So that's what they said! Well, I have some parrots to give. I just didn't understand, oh dear!"

"I thought it meant 'parawaku,' 'grasshopper'," says another "Waiwai." "It sounded just like, 'Parawaku xe way,' 'I want a grasshopper!'" Resounding laughter accompanies the idea of trading grasshoppers.

Another "Waiwai" actor explains his confusion. "'Parawa...xe...way,' 'parawa xe way,' [quickening pace] 'parawa-xe-way,' 'parawaxeway,' 'parawxiway' -- I thought it meant, 'Arawxi xe way!': 'I want Arawxi'!", meaning "I desire that man's body."

Yet another explains what he thought the visitor said. "'Parawa': that's sorcery!", referring to the Waiwai word for the most dangerous kind of vengence magic. "I thought she said she worked parawa sorcery, oh my!"

Someone on the "Waiwai" side brings a small parakeet. "Here's a parrot! A 'parawa'! I want a necklace. I'll give you my fine pet for one! I want your old arm band!"

A spirited session of bargaining follows.

Across all these differences and confusions between the pawana and Waiwai actors, the attempt is made to construct a bridge of inter-translatability through the exchange motif of trade and marriage. Although the barters are foolish and the marriage partners unworthy, at least some link has been made. This link offers the possibility that these "backward" groups can

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be socialized by the Waiwai. In the Shodewika myth cited in Fock (1963:56-74), a large number of animal "tribes" are invited to a dance; they take on human form at the host village, but turn back into animals when they return home -- all, that is, except for those who take back spouses from the host village; they remain forever humanized.

The very existence of the ritual suggests that the social structure of the Waiwai must include its interface with other groups as an essential characteristic, not just as an added dimension. This feeds into the historical fact that once Waiwai villages became concentrated after missionary contact and they had no "others" to invite as true pawana, the logic of social structure impelled them to invent outsiders in the playful form of the Pawana ritual. The creation of the ritual dates to the early 60's after several tribes had already been assimilated into the expanding Waiwai settlement complex on the Essequibo. Traditionally, villages were dispersed over great distances; members of other villages would be invited for Shodewika dances to drink, dance, trade and find lovers. The reinvention of the arrival of "visitors" in a comic genre -- the humorous production of "outsiders" from within the bounds of the village "insiders" -- testifies to the continuing impulse to enact the principles of the production and reproduction of their society.

The myth of the anaconda people (Fock 1963: 48-53) sheds some light on the Pawana improvisation. In it, the anaconda visitors (including various water-dwellers) come to dance outside a Waiwai grandmother's house while everyone else is away at another village's festival. They try to procure the grandmother's adolescent granddaughter but are unsuccessful. They leave behind a sort of "proto-ornaments," saying "Here is something for poimo ("male cross-cousin") to look at when he returns from the dance." The anaconda people leave what were ostensibly feather and bead ornaments: "upper arm and calf bands of beads, ceremonial hair

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tubes, chin, mouth corner and nose feathers, women's ear ornaments, bead criss-cross" (Fock 1963:49). From these, the Waiwai got the idea of how to make themselves truly beautiful.

Up to then, the Waiwai had used "primitive" versions of ornaments: "Before that time they had only possessed everyday hair tubes without feathers, their loin cloths had been undecorated; on their loin cords they had only had teeth; their calf bands were of woven cotton, their wrist bands of bark, the upper arm bands were of bark, and ear pegs had only been embellished with mussel shells" (Fock 1963:50). These "primitive" ornaments are the very ones parodied by the actors portraying the "backward" visitors in the Pawana rituals today. Although seen as "uncultivated," they echo the Waiwai's own past; "backward" tribes are in all contexts (serious as well as humorous, "mythical" as well as "historical") viewed as the same as the Waiwai "used to be." The logic is that if the Waiwai managed to become socialized, so can the others.

However, a serious problem plagues the ornaments left by the anaconda people: they soon decay. "But the fine beads proved to be fish eggs which soon became soft and rotten, and the beautiful necklace plate was a small, flat fish which could not keep either" (Fock 1963:50). The gifts left by the anaconda people demonstrate a self/ornament identification: fish eggs as beads, a flat fish as a breastplate. The ornaments were "signs" of aquatic wearers they detached from themselves and left behind. But although these gifts were "beautiful," they succumb to "rottenness" as they dissolve back into their watery origins.

Any Waiwai listening to this myth would already know the role of the anaconda people in the myth cycle of their creator hero (Fock 1963:42-48). In it, the creator Mawari fishes up his wife from the water; she is the daughter of the anaconda people. Their offspring become the Waiwai people. However, Mawari never retributes the anaconda people with a woman in exchange or even

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with the labor expected of a son-in-law. Hence the Waiwai to this day are in a permanent debt relationship to the anaconda people. They are "ashamed" before them (nîhyapamya) in much the same way that an actual Waiwai son-in-law is "ashamed" before his parents-in-law. "Shame" is the social emotion associated with being "indebted" to someone; my informants sometimes explained their return gift to someone as "something to remove one's shame" (oyehyapampokatopo). The Waiwai believe that the anaconda people are still trying to claim a Waiwai girl as a return compensation; hence it is dangerous for a menstruating adolescent girl to bathe in the river, as she will be grabbed by the anaconda people. In real life, wife-givers can claim a woman in exchange in the immediate generation (sister exchange) or in the next (sister's daughter marriage or cross-cousin marriage).

The relationship between poimo, male cross-cousins, has the potential for becoming an affinal relationship; it is, in other words, potentially highly "social," like the beautiful "socializing" proto-ornaments in the myth left by the anaconda people "for the poimo." However, these proto-ornaments decay -- precisely because no cross-generational network of intermarriage links are set up. The anaconda people fail to get a woman in return for the one Mawari fished up. The mythic characters have not yet gained control over the principles of reproduction of their society; hence the ornaments decay. They did, however, give the Waiwai the idea of "true ornaments," a model of the principles of production, over which they eventually gain control when they learn how to reproduce them in a cultural mode. Although they decayed, "the adornments of the Anaconda-people had been so lovely that the Waiwai never forgot them, but spoke of them from generation to generation, saying: 'That is how the Anaconda-people looked, they really were beautiful. We should very much like the ornaments, if only we had beads!'" (Fock 1963:50).

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One final element was needed in order to be able to "fix" the principles of production in an enduring, reproducible form. Ornament materials had to be obtained from another kind of "outsider": "After the meeting with the Anaconda-people the Waiwai began to decorate themselves with feathers at all these and other places, and a desire was felt also to adorn themselves with beads. Then men came from another world bringing beads with them, so that it became possible to wear beads on chains and, particularly, on women's aprons" (Fock 1963:50). The anaconda people give icons of themselves but they too closely resemble them as metonyms (fish eggs). One more step is needed, a metaphorical substitute of these icons: beads. These don't decay, they are hard and enduring; their higher value represents the "fixing" of the relationship beyond its momentary existence.

The issue is the generation of value; recall that the pawana improvisation dramatizes, in antithetical form, the issue of value. As Turner argues (1979, 1986), the production and successful reproduction of the society depends upon orienting these principles according to social values, which in turn are reproduced along with the production of the society itself.

Data from other ritual games played among the Waiwai shed further light on the Pawana improvisation. Its plot and humor is echoed in the animal imitation games: actors imitate a series of various animals who invade the Waiwai village; other actors playing the part of the hunters attack; in the ensuing struggle, the hunters always win; they bring the animals back as game to the women who then butcher them, accompanied by gales of laughter.

These games represent classic "culture over nature" rituals. They dramatize the society's assertion of identity in the face of the non-human "other" and the successful absorption of the powers of "nature" by cultural forces. Society is regenerated by the assimilation of these "wild" powers, suitably controlled and converted into a non-lethal form -- game -- which serves to nurture the members of the society.

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A similar idea is being expressed in the Pawana rituals. We have seen how the "outsiders" are portrayed as not up to par on the human scale; though not animals, they display many "naturalized" features. But these features also bespeak a certain power which, if it can be "tamed," controlled, and channelled through exchange, have the potential of invigorating Waiwai society.

By symbolically marrying Waiwai women, the pawana actors, as in the Shodewika myth, can become humanized; in turn, their offspring will come back in the next generation as wives for the Waiwai -- thus ensuring the continued reproduction of the society. We see the same idea at base in both the animal imitation games and Pawana: the threat posed by outside powers, the desirability of absorbing those powers, and the necessity of finding a way of controlling and coopting them in order to harness them for the ultimate reproduction of society.

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IV. Exchange and Identity

To complete the data relevant to the Pawana rituals, let me briefly sketch the general features of the intertribal trade network. The Waiwai's trade specialties include manioc graters, which they shuttle up towards the Wapixana, and which are then further traded to more northerly groups. During my fieldwork, the Waiwai of the village of Kaxmi left the specialization of manioc graters to the northern Waiwai village in Guyana (which lies closer to the Wapixana) and instead concentrated on the other trade route feeding into the Tiriyó of Surinam by way of the northern Waiwai village. Along this route the Waiwai send talking parrots and highly trained hunting dogs. Under this rubric go other subsidiary specialties, such as hand-spun cotton thread, urucu paint, hair oil, etc. In exchange they receive from the Tiriyó manufactured goods: aluminum pots, knives, mosquito nets, and above all, glass beads. These the Tiriyó obtain from the bush-negros of Surinam (increasingly from missionaries), who acquire them in the coastal cities, where the beads have been imported from Europe.

On the other end of the trade route, the central Waiwai use the beads and subsidiary manufactured goods they have acquired for their contact expeditions in search of isolated tribes. They believe that the beads "pacify" these "angry peoples". This belief seems to have two aspects: the beads "pacify" them insofar as they are given by the Waiwai as "gifts" (wakrecho), and insofar as the beads are "beautiful" (cenporem). Both "gifts" and "beauty" are viewed by the Waiwai as the epitomes of their ethos of "peacefulness," "sociability" (tawake ehtopo). Laden with so many symbolic "virtures" (Schwimmer 1973), as well as embodying their own history of transactions through the exchange network, the beads are thought to be able to pacify "angry peoples" in and of themselves.

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These newly "pacified" tribes are assimilated and gradually "Waiwai-ized" by learning the language and norms of "peaceful" conduct. It usually takes a generation before they are given Waiwai women as wives. At this point they become symbolically associated as a sort of class of subordinate, indebted sons-in-law. They owe labor and basketry not only in their role as wife-takers, but also as a sort of diffuse retribution for having been "elevated" from their rude roots. Their children, offspring of Waiwai women and raised in the Waiwai village, are considered yet more "Waiwai-ized" than their fathers. These children can thus more freely marry other Waiwai; they represent in fact the return of a woman in exchange for one given--in the previous generation.

The system, in other words, has been built up such as to guarantee the continued reproduction of the principles of its own regeneration. This relates back to what was said on the problem of the anaconda people's "decaying" ornaments; some means was required to ensure the continuity of the exchanges over time such as to "fix" the initial relationships in an enduring form. Both in the myth and in the trade network, beads represent this "fixing" of relationships in an ultimately self-reproducing form.

This data can be analyzed using what De Copprt (1981) calls "chains of transformations." By this model, certain objects are symbolically associated with aspects of persons such that they can be "detached" from the person; they are then put through a series of exchange "replacements" which sequentially transform their meaning and expand the breadth of social relations they bind together. In his analysis of Melanesian mortuary rites, the death of a person is, by means of several "chains of transformations," ultimately converted into a source of "life" for the society.

This model can be fruitfully applied to the Waiwai. The series of exchanges in the intertribal trade network is a transformation from (a) perishable (mortal) items to enduring

(non-temporal) ones, in other words, from "valueless" (ero pîntho) to "valuable" (cepethîkyem); and (b) from indigenous goods to manufactured goods. Subsequently, in the transfer of "gifts" to "backward" tribes, the "hard"/manufactured goods -- epitomized in beads -- are transformed into relations of power, dominance and a claim on future generations which will reproduce Waiwai society. The overall effect of these two aspects of the "chain of transformations" is from an inferior position, to balanced reciprocity, to a superior position. This can also be stated as a move from the lack of social relations, to the production of social relations, to the gaining of control over their reproduction -- theoretically in perpetuity.

I will first discuss the transformation from "mortal" to "enduring" goods.

This aspect of the chain of transformations involves a series of substitutions of metaphors for the human signified, each step allowing a greater manipulation of meaning. Food -- physical nurturance -- is "embedded" in hunting dogs which as pets represent a metaphor of human children and which are "raised" and nurtured just like people. As the means towards obtaining game, the dogs represent the means of ensuring a continued source of food -- its reproduction. These pets are metaphorically associated with children in numerous ways (Waiwai dogs are pampered to an extreme unheard of elsewhere in Lowland South America), but they can be "detached" from the household and given away more easily than children. When given away in exchange, they are further "processed" through the chain of transformations and converted into beads. These serve as an icon of hardness and non-perishability; as such, they represent the overcoming of the problem of the mortality of the human life-cycle and the transience of the relationships that gave rise to the exchange. Their ability to represent "permanence" is not only an attribute of their physical hardness; it is also the result of the series of

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exchange relations and transformations that led up to them. This is the essence of their "value."

This icon of permanence and value -- the beads -- is fed back into the life cycle of offspring and "savage" tribes. This represents a higher order "nurturance" than that which began the chain, food products. Beads epitomize the value of "beauty," "attractiveness," which in its turn hinges on the essence of "sociability," of being tawake, "peaceful." It is significant that the afterlife in the sky is conceived as a permanent state of being tawake where everyone is ornamented and "beautiful." Imparting beads to one's offspring makes them "attractive" and likely to attract a mate -- an apt symbol of human for social reproductivity, and one which constitutes a more powerful level of "nurturance" than simple bodily nourishment. Beads when imparted to "backwards" tribes similarly represent a higher order of "nurturance"; the transfer makes the "unseen" people (enîhnî komo) into "seen" people (eñexapu komo); it makes those who are "ignorant" (camkînon) into ones who are "knowledgeable" (tîhtînoñem); and it makes "angry" ones (tîrwoñem) into "peaceful" ones (tawakem).

It is possible to argue that the transference of beads to "savage" tribes is "pacifying" and "socializing" not just as a metaphor of the nurturance of "children" but also because the beads have come to signify the process itself of the transformation from mortality to permanence. They carry along with them the symbolic load of the history of their own production of value.

It should be recalled that the term for valueless things, ero pîntho, can be used not only in the sense of "worthlessness" but also as "mortal," "subject to decay." Women complain about using cloth skirts nowadays, which quickly tear, get soiled and become outworn; they are ero pîntho, unlike the bead aprons they used to wear, which were "hard," "durable" (ceypî). A similar

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contrast appears in the ideology of the person. The body (yupun) is considered ero pîntho, "mortal," because upon death it decomposes and "is forgotten," "disappears" (nîhcamnoya); but the "spirit," "soul" (ekatî) is "forever" (eroromero). A child's ekatî is thought to be "soft" (cukmape) but in the course of maturation becomes "hard" (ceypî). After death it continues its existence in the sky in a sort of perpetual present where no temporality exists to cause aging or decay.

The term ero pîntho and its relationship to value reappears vis-á-vis the social hierarchy in the contrast between leaders and noro pîntho, "nobodies," "those who are no one special," i.e., ordinary villagers who hold no special position of authority. Although their social identity is tied to the relations they have with others, only those who do hold influential positions control the relations amongst them. This may take the form of negotiating village disputes, granting permission for marriages, or mobilizing communal labor on behalf of a household head. Their sphere of interaction is broader; the network of interrelations they link together is more expansive, even extending beyond the village to represent it to the outside. Their role is also hierarchically more powerful, as the control of relations among relations. This is the essence of their "value" and it is what distinguishes them from those who are noro pîntho, "no one special."

This expansion in the breadth of social relations that are tied together is replicated in the series of exchanges in the chain of transformations. The feeding of pets (as well as of children) occurs within the household and is the responsibility of the mother. Puppies and parrot fledglings are given as "gifts" to very near kin in other households, generally between women. The meat the dogs will hunt when grown is exchanged to a broader network of households; the most "valuable" dogs catch the largest game, tapir, which is distributed to the entire village at large, irrespective of kinship relations, through a leader. As a dog

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matures, it becomes more associated with men through the medium of the hunt they both conduct, the meat they provide (both husbands and dogs are sometimes called "my meat") and the breadth of the social relations they tie together. Finally, when a dog is to be exchanged for beads, the trade is conducted between men who live in different villages, usually those who are affines or Warawan trading partners. Both know their trade items will eventually be shuttled on to other tribes and even other ethnic groups.

To summarize what has been said so far, the transformation from "mortal" to "enduring" goods represents the symbolic absorption of outsiders and the construction of a non-temporal image of the self representing perpetuity. This is a social response to the threat of decay of social relations when the social fabric is ruptured, especially by death, or rendered infertile by isolation. In this respect, the exchange transformations move from a cluster of operations performed on "mortal" things (life-enhancing, modelling growth and the life cycle, but ultimately leading to death) to the opposite cluster representing "enduring" things. This offers an image of the overcoming of decay, transitoriness, death, and isolation, thus echoing the image of the afterlife in the sky where no time passes.

I will now discuss the second way in which the chain of transformations schematizes the process of negotiating identity, insofar as it involves the conversion of indigenous goods into manufactured ones.

Recall that in the anaconda myth that although these creatures left beautiful proto-ornaments, they decayed; only later "men came from another world bringing beads with them" -- whether Europeans or bush-negroes, it obviously refers to members of the more powerful national society who channel beads into the exchange network. In this respect, then, the exchange network represents a social response to the threat posed by the national society. The chain of transformations represents the possibility of symboli-

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cally absorbing the more powerful national society in a form that Waiwai society can dominate without being dominated, manipulating and handling it through the medium of its products. Waiwai society "pacifies" the national society by subjecting its products to the processes of tribal exchange; it "tames" those powers by embedding them in a set of social relations governed by the values and norms of a tawake ("peaceful") society. At same time, Waiwai society is coopting the powers of that more powerful outside society (as already "tamed"), making it their own. They keep the national society at a distance but take what they want from it -- but not just the material goods themselves (they are acquired only in order to be given away) but moreover as attributes of social relations created in exchange transfer itself -- notably hierarchy, influence, and prestige.

It should be recognized that beads, as well as iron knives, machetes and axes, filtered through the intertribal trade network to the Waiwai and neighboring groups long before they had direct contact of any kind with Europeans, certainly well before the turn of the century. They appear to have known at least that the ultimate source of these goods was from "another kind" of person on the other end of the chain of trading contacts (cite Schomburgk 1849).[1]

The Waiwai contact expeditions to search for and bring back "hidden peoples" represent a new wrinkle in traditional inter-tribal relations and a reformulation of identity in the face of interethnic relations. Not only are the Waiwai manipulating metonyms of the more powerful society in the form of its manufactured goods, but they have also gained control over the

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[1] It is equally interesting that even current-day Waiwai, after thirty-five years of sustained contact with missionaries and sporadic contact with colonists, still believe that beads are "natural" products -- either seeds from a "bead tree" or granules of riverbed sand found in foreign lands.

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relationship which the missionaries once held over them. By reproducing this hierarchy in their relations to other tribes and at the same time expelling the missionaries from the picture, the Waiwai are creating two parallel hierarchies which are "separate but equivalent." The tribe is in fact quite astute in manipulating the missionaries and extracting from them what they want for what "really counts," their interrelations within their own society and ethnic group.

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V. Conclusion

In the Pawana rituals we can see a rich and complex dramatization of intertribal relations with both mythical and historical references. They represent not only a "model of" action but also a "model for" action (Geertz 1973); not only a reenactment of past events, but a program for confronting the future (Turner 1986).

The intertribal trade network represents the Waiwai's control of their relations to the outside; it is an expression as well as a medium of asserting control. Trade items, as parts of persons, are given, absorbed, and replaced in constant interchanges with the outside, thereby altering the relationship between the parties to the exchange. As Paz puts it, "Exchange is not an effect of society; it is society itself in action." With the Waiwai, both the relationship and the identity of parties are transformed in the process of exchange; Waiwai society is what and how it exchanges.

We have seen that once Waiwai villages became concentrated and they no longer had "outsiders" to invite as true pawana, the logic of social structure impelled them to invent comic pawana from within their own ranks. I have tried to outline a perspective that takes this need for "outsiders" seriously and as intrinsic. Waiwai social structure can be viewed as an "exoskeleton" that requires relations with other groups to sustain its framework. This view contrasts with that characterizing the groups of this region as "individualistic" and "simpler" than other regions (Riviere 1984). Furthermore, this view allows us to factor in the indigenous reaction to contact with the national society, not just as an extraneous "change agent" but as an entity that the indigenous society attempted to come to terms with and to a certain extent to channel its impact along certain lines.

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I have argued that intertribal exchange schematizes the process of negotiating identity by symbolically absorbing outsiders and constructing a non-temporal image of the self representing perpetuity. I furthermore argued that the current Waiwai practice of assimilating other tribes must be understood as an historical response to the contact situation, representing an attempt to gain control of the forces perceived to be behind the powers of the foreign society. As such it is an active assertion of ethnic identity in the face of external threats to tribal integrity.