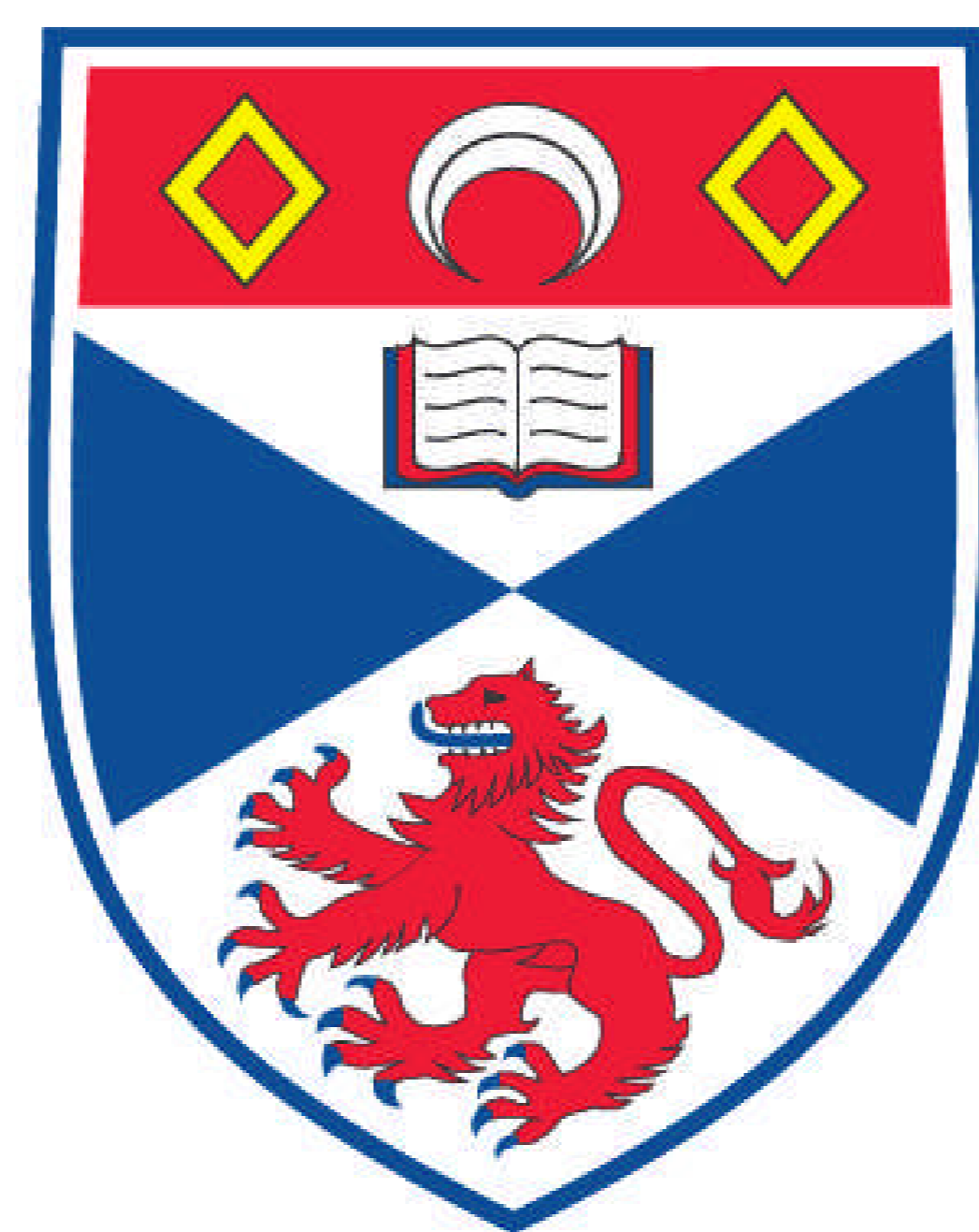


**THE HEARER, THE HUNTER AND THE AGOUTI HEAD: ASPECTS
OF INTERCOMMUNICATION AND CONVIVIALITY AMONG THE
PA'IKWENÉ (PALIKUR) OF FRENCH GUIANA**

Alan Passes

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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THE HEARER, THE HUNTER, AND THE AGOUTI HEAD
aspects of intercommunication and conviviality among
the Pa'ikwené (Palikur) of French Guiana

Alan Passes



A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of St Andrews

March 1998

*To the memory of my mother; and to Sohol, a Pa'ikwené
child, and, through her, her people.*

“How to understand the other without sacrificing them
to our logic, or sacrificing it to them?”

(M. Merleau-Ponty 1971 (1953):147, my translation)

I, Alan Passes, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately one hundred thousand words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

date 7.3.'98

signature of candidate

I was admitted as a research student at the London School of Economics in October 1992 and transferred as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of St Andrews in October 1995; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the London School of Economics and University of St Andrews between 1992 and 1998.

date 7.3.'98

signature of candidate

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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signature of supervisor

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is in the broadest terms an anthropological exploration of intercommunication; it concerns concepts and practices of speech and hearing among a Lowland Amazonian people, the Pa'ikwené, concentrating particularly on the community of Deuxième Village Espérance in southern Guyane (French Guiana). A significant aspect of the subject is the axiological one, i.e., the moral and aesthetic values attaching to proper dialogic, and consequently social, relations - or what Ingold describes (1986:141) as the "conversation that is social life".

Revealing the speech of ordinary people to be as 'powerful' in its way as that of chiefs, the study addresses the instrumentality of speaking and hearing in the creation and maintenance of sociality. Essentially, I argue that intersubjective communication does not so much 'imply' Pa'ikwené society (Lévi-Strauss 1973:390) as construct it as a sociable, pleasurable and egalitarian entity; that it is, in short, one of the fundamental 'tools for conviviality' (Illich 1973).

While the role of language in the process of society has long been recognised by anthropology, and comprehensively investigated, that of listening to it seems, perhaps because of the more 'private' nature of the act, not to have enjoyed the same level of sociological interest. Given this imbalance, special emphasis is laid on native audition as embodied by the cultural phenomenon of "Tchimap", "to hear-listen-understand", and its use in three key spheres, the political, economic and magico-religious.

One central issue deals with the agency and perceived value of "good hearing" in the generation of good relations between humans, and of productive ones between humans and non-humans. Another major theme, of relevance to the ongoing theoretical debate on 'individualism-collectivism', involves the efficacy of "Tchimap" as a performative means of personal autonomy, within and as part of, rather than in opposition to, the group.

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Preface

This thesis is about the Pa'ikwené, more usually known in the literature as the Palikur, a native American people of North Brazil and French Guiana, which I shall hereafter call Guyane. My time in the 'field' amounted to fourteen months (November 1993-mid August 1994, November 1994-mid February 1995), of which eleven were spent with the Pa'ikwené. The bulk of my work was carried out in Village Espérance Deux, an indigenous community of at that time some one hundred and sixty people situated just off the river Oyapock, by the small Créole frontier-town of St Georges in south Guyane. I also conducted research in Premier Village Espérance and Gabaret, and in the Pa'ikwené 'homeland' in Brazil. It should be borne in mind that my findings relate not only mainly to one community (at a particular period of its history), but to a limited number of individuals within it, and to particular classes among them at that: old and middle generation people and children and youths up to fifteen; contact with males from fifteen to twenty-five was scarce, with females of that age even rarer.

Acknowledgements.

In Espérance Deux I lived in the home of Susana and Karinai Labonté and their children, Wahtchit, Virsen, Edison, Lennié, Annie and Soline, to each of whom my deepest gratitude for the tolerance, kindness, help, teaching and friendship accorded me. I eventually received the honorary teknonym of "Anwi", Grandfather, yet frequently felt no older or more knowledgeable than Soline - or Sohol, "a little bird" (?), to give her her Pa'ikwené name, the baby daughter and my companion in learning to "hear-understand". Other Pa'ikwené owed a debt of thanks are Alphonse Yoyo, Elsa Baptiste, Kayút Baptiste, Ivayút Yoyo, Abilio Labonté, Olav and Tavesú Guillaumet. My appreciation also to "Capitaine" Louis Norino of Premier Village Espérance, a caring, committed man; and Nenel, Méoka and Shoni Baptiste, João Felicio, and chief Tchikoi, all of Kúmené village in Brazil.

Acknowledgements are due also to: in St Georges, Dr. Brigitte Vumbi (Borne) whose friendship and medical care both kept me going, and Franck Compper. In Cayenne, Mlle Michèle Fontaine, Mr James, and Emmanuel Montout (Groupe d'Étude et de Recherche en Espace Créolophone), for generously sharing

some of his findings and thoughts about the Pa'ikwené; my thanks too to Renée Civalero who arranged for me to stay at the Résidence des Magistrats during my 'furloughs'. In Brazil, Diana and Harold Green who facilitated my entry into Village Espérance Deux. In Paris, the anthropologists Françoise and Pierre Grenand and Simone Dreyfus, for their kind advice. In Britain, Dr David McKnight and my fellow students at the LSE, where I was initially registered, and St Andrews, in particular my co-Americanists: Rebecca Ellis, Karen Jacobs, Stephen Kidd, Gisela Pauli, Elsje Lagrou, Gonzalo Araóz, Carlos Londoño-Sulkin, Guilherme Werlang; also Mark Jamieson and Marco Antonio Gonçalves.

Especial thanks go to my supervisor Joanna Overing, as well as my respect and admiration for her many qualities, not the least of which is generosity.

I wish also to express my heartfelt appreciation of the encouragement and interest of my family: my wife Jane, my children Emmanuelle and Daniel, and my father; and of the support of my friend Jill Cripps.

Lastly, I gratefully acknowledge funding from the Economic & Social Research Council, the Emslie Horniman Scholarship Fund (RAI), St Andrews University (post-graduate scholarship), and the Central Research Fund, University of London.

Pronunciation and orthography.

Unlike Summer Institute of Linguistics' spellings of Pa'ikwené words (D. and H. Green 1993), which cater to a Brazilian-Portuguese ear, I have tried throughout to render them phonologically accessible to the 'Anglo-Saxon' one, even if having occasionally to borrow foreign accentuation to do it.

Table of Pa'ikwené vowel types, pure and gliding:

a	approximately as in "hat".
ah	as in French "ma".
ai	as in "buy".
aï	as in "buying".
ao	as in "Mao", "how".
e	as in "bet".
é	accented as in French.
ei	as in "they".
i	as in "bit".
í	as in "key".
o	in most cases as in "oh".
oi	as in "boy".
u	as in "bun".
ú	as in Spanish "una".

A number of conjoined strong vowels should be pronounced as distinct syllables:

aé as in French "aéro".
aú as in "ha-oo".
éo approximately as in "hey-oh".
éú as in "hey-oo".
ia as in "mama mia".
ié as in "eee-yay".
io as in "eee-oh".
iú as in "eee-you".
úa approximately as in "oo-ah".

The phonetic values of the Pa'ikwené consonants 'b', 'd', 'g', 'h', 'j', 'k', 'l', 'm', 'n', 'p', 't' are much like English ones; 's' is voiceless, 'y' and 'w' constitute semivowels. In many words 't' is also randomly pronounced as 'tch' or 'ts': for example, most people, both in 'my' community and elsewhere, said "Tchino" and "Eptchi" (woman and seat); some "Tsino" and "Eptsi"; yet others "Tino" and "Epti", the form favoured by SIL. Other cases of free variation are 'k/g', 'g/h', 'b/v', 'r/g' and 'r/l'. In some instances the latter tends to be so unstressed as to turn into a glottal stop, indicated as ', which is why I write "Pa'ikwené" not "Parikwené" or "Palikwené" (For why I choose to call them them that in the first place rather than the 'official' appellation "Palikur", see chapter 1). Variation seemed a matter of personal idiosyncrasy rather than prescription¹ or regional determination, with phonemic differences occurring among individuals in the same household and age group², let alone community.³

The thesis contains Créole, French and Brazilian-Portuguese as well as Pa'ikwené words and expressions. They all take double quotation marks, as do translations of recorded verbatim speech and direct quotes from written sources. Glosses of published material have single ones. Italics will be used for Latin locutions (e.g. *per se*) and scientific terminology (e.g. *Manicaria saccifera*).

¹ With one exception it seemed: the rule whereby the 'p' in some words converts to 'v' when placed between two vowels, e.g. "Ki[p=v]ún" ("Full").

² Cf. Nimuendaju's ascription (1971 [1926]:82) of the phonetic discrepancy between the speech of older and younger Pa'ikwené to cultural influence (i.e., increased contact with Créoles).

³ Not to mention also among observers. To give but one example, compare my "Wavitché", the name of a spirit, with Nimuendaju's "Wapetpiyé" (ibid.:61). Phonological and morphological disagreements in what different people record are probably unavoidable and due in part to diachronicity and the flexibility of the language itself, which the present SIL move to standardise its written form must surely run the risk of damaging.

A note on writing.

For reasons of narration and readability the text contains sections written in the present tense and others in the past one (and some indeed in both). There are plainly drawbacks to either; each is in its own way capable of distorting our perspective on, and thoughts about, events and peoples. The first not only denies the time lag between fieldwork and writing up, and reading; it also, as Fabian points out (1983), establishes a (false) premise of atemporality and stasis by relocating situations from their historical context to a make-believe ‘never never land’. In addition to this, it can pass off given happenings as norms when in fact they may not be. However, may not the past tense freeze time just as effectively as the immutable ‘ethnographic present’? It too can notionally foreclose the possibility, and actuality, of the evolution and change of the world one is writing about, and the creativity, choices and innovativeness of its members (Seeger 1987:86); or else give the impression that described behaviours, concepts and beliefs no longer exist when in reality they still do. If I seesaw between the two tenses, then, it is because despite the pitfalls I find them equally useful. Like Seeger (*ibid.*:xvi-xvii), I value the present one’s ability to express and stylistically underline the particularity of certain actions as autonomous and creative, as opposed to mechanical and normative, acts. And I see the past one as a device for describing not something that is gone for ever but, rather, something that at a given moment in time was a part, a phase, of a yet unfolding process of social, cultural, and individual self-transformation.

Chapter breakdown.

Chapter 1 establishes people and place. Chapter 2 gives a subjective account of my entry into and initial exploration of the Pa’ikwené world. Chapter 3 deals with various aspects of the Pa’ikwené language and speaking; chapter 4 with the no less important issue of audition insofar as, in the conceptual form of ‘hearing-understanding’, it occupies a vital place in Pa’ikwené social life. Chapter 5 describes and investigates different facets of political communication as it relates to leadership and the social practice of non-leaders. Chapter 6 returns by way of a divertissement to the subject of hearing, exploring Pa’ikwené so-called “bad hearing”. Chapter 7 combines and considers the possible interrelationship between two themes: gifting and ‘hearing-understanding’. Chapter 8 concentrates on native work and productivity, and the role of speech therein. Chapter 9 looks at

traditional and modern aspects of Pa'ikwené religion, and chapter 10 is the conclusion.

Methodology.

Above all I relied on 'participant observation', though my observation was effectively only as participatory as the Pa'ikwené allowed it to be. It was also, on the other hand, a fulltime and dynamic (thus occasionally tiring)⁴ activity, requiring openness but not passivity.

Informal - daily, natural, spontaneous - conversation provided the overwhelming bulk of information; however, I did when possible plant specific topics I wanted data on and then wait to see what the event produced. It is in passing extraordinary what divergences, of opinion, knowledge, 'hard facts', there can be on a single subject on the part of the various collocutors. I also conducted structured interviews with chief Tchikoi in Kúmené and "Capitaine" Louis Nerino of Premier Village Espérance; used a recorder for collecting myths and stories and in my session with the shamans (chapter 9; the only payment requested was a copy of the tape, duly supplied); and did a census in Deuxième Village Espérance.

Throughout I tried to maintain, practically, mentally, emotionally and morally, an engagement not just with the subject of my research but the subjects whose lives I sought to witness and understand. To this end, hearing was as important as seeing and speaking. I practised, I like to think, the "active and methodical listening" recommended by Bourdieu (1996:16) as part of the process of osmosis in regard to the worlds one studies, which entails that our approach to their inhabitants be jointly objective and subjective, giving as well as acquisitive (ibid.:17-37).

Personal note.

I found conditions hard. I caught malaria, and pleasurable periods of intense activity alternated with exacting ones of boredom and depression. In great measure the latter was induced by the antipathy of a large Brazilian Protestant fundamentalist (Assembleia de Deus) colony in 'my' community, led by a Pastor who tried continuously, though thankfully not that successfully, to incite my converted Pa'ikwené hosts against me. Another particularly trying aspect was the

⁴ As the diarist Ernst Jünger puts it, "[O]bservation represents one of the highest and wildest processes of movement" (quoted in Karcher 1992:32)

sect's music, with cassettes of Brazilian religious lyrics backed by North American music of the schlockiest kind being played day in day out throughout the village at the highest volume. It took a long while, and several necessary breaks in Cayenne, before I acquired the wherewithal to cope with these two things at the minimum of personal cost.

However, while village life was often, from my perspective, monotonous, this was compensated by events such as canoe journeys, particularly the passage through the turbulent and dangerous Bay of Oyapock, and hunts (not that I went on many). This is no doubt a common experience if probably one not that 'politically correct' to stress. But these occasions allowed a fifty year old to test personal resources and fulfil drives and emotions never explored when younger; for which my gratitude.

Above all, what I remember, with affection, is affection. The constant, overall warmth and closeness between the Labonté family, and them and their fellows (kin, neighbours, friends); their frequent joking and laughing; their pleasure in talking, working, eating, being loud together. And the affection, the love, care and concern they extended to me. As of mine for them, this thesis is written partly with the intention of expressing and sustaining it.

chapter one

INTRODUCTION: The people 'of the middle' and at the margin.

After lunch, tortoise and manioc, and I lie drowsy in a hammock, miles, subjectively, 'from nowhere', on an island in a marsh in the Pa'ikwené homeland, in remotest northern Amapá state, Brazil. My companions, two men, two women, three adolescents, two children, have, more energetic, gone foraging. I am alone, or so I think. For suddenly a face, streaked in awkward crimson patterns of juice, thrusts itself into mine. Five year old Maknayan, known as Annie, has crept up on me unheard. "Look!", she cries, "Indian! Pa'ikwené Indian!" And laughingly lets off a make-believe arrow, little Amerindian girl playing at "Indians", her grin in part self-parody, delighted and knowing, in part cognizance and mockery of the Whiteman's image of Indians¹. But not only. While they may take Christian names and no longer decorate their faces with the traditional designs, and seem no longer to know their meaning, she and her people still know, and deeply, *who* they are.

The material below, the impressions, the speculations, the objective data, is offered in the hope of formulating, for myself no less than others, an insight into aspects of that knowledge, and feeling, of being Pa'ikwené, in the last decade of the twentieth century.

Although I did not undertake a specific investigation into the effects of contact, the subject of 'change' - the transformation and constant regeneration through time of a people who sit astride not only two nation states, Brazil and France, but, as will be seen, several cultures - is of necessity implicit in every chapter. Another underlying and mainly unstressed theme concerns axiology; that is, the moral and aesthetic values which fill, inform and give meaning to Pa'ikwené life, some of whose key features (a number of which will be examined further in due course) I now move on to outline.

appellation.

I call the Pa'ikwené by that name, rather than the common alternative Palikur, because they themselves do, the latter being regarded as a denotative term mostly

¹ Word having a positive rather than negative connotation for the Pa'ikwené. They distinguish between native American "Indians" and Asian Indians, of whom there are some number in Guyane, calling these by the local term "Coolie Indians".

used by others. Before standardisation fixed on this appellation and spelling, they were known in 16th, 17th and 18th century documents as, variously, the Paricura, Paricura, Paricores, Palicur, Palicour(s), Palikurene (Nimuendaju 1971[1926]:1, 4-5, 10-1); more recently Fernandes calls them Parikur (1950) and Parincur léne (1963). Dreyfus suggests (1988) they were dubbed the Palikur by fellow Amerindians; and indeed to their former foe the Galibi they are the Palikura.

Many informants distinguished between the two terms Palikur and Pa'ikwené in another sense: using (and translating) the first as a synonym for generic Indian and reserving the second for a specific type, themselves. More than once I was told that while they were Palikur so were the other tribes insofar as all were Indians, whereas they alone were Pa'ikwené. As one explained: "All Indians are Palikur. The Yanomamo, the Araweté, the Wayapi, Emerillon, Wayana, even the Galibi² are Palikur - but we Pa'ikwené are the most Palikur."

According to informants, 'Pa'ik' comes from 'pakwa' which "is the same" as 'aúkwa', meaning middle: a highly significant word since it is by this that they designate the river and by extension the region around it which constitutes their heartland in north Amapá (Brazil). Thus, calling themselves Pa'ikwené or, less commonly, Aúkwa-yené (Dreyfus 1981), they are through the addition of the self-explanatory suffix '[y]ené', the People of the middle (cf. F. and P. Grenand 1987:22 fn. 22, Montout 1994:26, Arnaud 1984).

The Aúkwa or Middle river, called Urucauá in Brazilian and cosmologically held to be the centre of the world, is so named because it lies between two others, the Kwip (Braz. Curipi), "on the right", and the Wassá (Braz. Uaçá), "on the left", homes to the Karipún, Galibi and so-called "false" Galibi, a mixture of Arúa and others. Dreyfus argues (op.cit.:302) that the Aúkwa cannot really be the middle river for rather than having the Uaçá to its left it is the latter's tributary (map 3). Whether one fact need exclude the other, which to my mind it does not, should not detract from the Pa'ikwené's own topography; nor compromise the deep affective relationship to their territory inherent in such "aukwa-centrism" (Dreyfus *ibid.*).

Accordingly, they may also be said to be people-of-the-middle in a further way: their strong sense of uniqueness and exclusivity seems to allow each individual one of them a feeling of importance and worth - of being, as a *Pa'ikwené*, right at the hub of things. (Collectively a disposition well catered for by their grammar, which possesses three forms of the pronoun 'we': "Wis" meaning me and

² Their traditional enemy are said to be descended from a Pa'ikwené woman (Appendix A, story 5).

you but not them; “Wishwi”, all of us including you; and “Úsú”, me and him-her-them but not you. The latter sums up the Pa’ikwené’s sense of exclusiveness succinctly.)

Paradoxically, the awareness of their difference to others arising from this self-confidence also induces a general sense of apartness, of marginality in the non-indigenous world which, in Guyane especially, they inhabit along with their own.³ As one of them, Jean Narcissio, an Indian rights activist, put it, his people are pulled both ways, painfully stuck in the middle between “le monde civilisé”, i.e., the ‘White’ world, and the ancestral one.

language.

(i) The Pa’ikwené speak Pa’ikwaki, a member of the Arawak language family (de Goeje 1928, Mason 1950, Noble 1965, Matteson 1972:234-8, Derbyshire and Pullum 1986:481-4, Payne 1986, F. and P. Grenand 1987). There is some debate over whether to classify it with the pre-Andean Arawakan languages (Rivet 1924), the ‘Northern’ ones (Loukotka 1968:145-7), those spoken in the Xingu (Noble op. cit.) or, finally, the Rio Negro (Matteson op. cit.).

Pa’ikwaki contains many loan-words from Karib and French Créole as well as a smaller but growing number of Portuguese and ‘French’ French ones. The Pa’ikwené also have a ceremonial language, “Kiptúnka”, at present moribund. Both matters are dealt with more fully later.

(ii) Like many Amerindian languages Pa’ikwaki is agglutinative, e.g. “ah” (tree, timber); “ahavwi” (forest); “ahav’ikúyené” (wildness); “ahtamni” (branch); “ahamna” (leaf); “ahariú” (fruit); “ahmútri” (plant); “ahmútiwi” (garden); “ahgebdi” (small bit of wood); “idahaptchi” (block of wood). Grammatically, the basic word order is SVO: Nah auna Pa’ikwaki: I speak Pa’ikwaki. There are three noun genders: masculine, feminine and neutral. Adjectives commonly follow the noun: Eg tchino kabaino, she’s a good/fine woman (see H. and D. Green 1972, Dooley and Green 1977).

geography and history.

Aúkwa, the Pa’ikwené territory in north Amapá, lies inland from Cape Orange along the river Urucauá, which is off the river Uaçá whose estuary merges with that of the river Oyapock, the border between Guyane and Brazil (maps 1, 3). The latter’s banks are home to a handful of ‘French’ Pa’ikwené settlements, chief among them the neighbouring villages of Espérance 1 and 2 near St Georges. There are also

³ Story 2 Appendix A conveys well this mixture of national self-centredness and alienation.

other communities further north, outside of Macouria and Régina and at Roura (map 2).

It has been said that “it is difficult to set out their [the Pa’ikwené’s] history, even their most recent history, with precision” (Dreyfus 1988:21, my translation). And this about a nation of which the ‘West’ has been aware from as early as 1500 c. E. when their then territory was sighted by the navigator Vicente Yañez Pinzón, who recorded it in 1513 as Paricura, a coastal province on the northern bank of the Amazon (Nimuendaju op. cit.:1).⁴ For the next century and a half and spreading ever northward, the Pa’ikwené, designated by a variety of approximate names (see above) and often mistaken for other peoples⁵, notably the Maraón and Arikaré (Nimuendaju op. cit.:1-4, 11-12; F. and P. Grenand 1987:21-2, 43-4), remained an unknown quantity. Then in 1653 the first ‘hard’ contact was made by Fr. Antoine Biet, who set out from Cayenne expressly to search for the tribe by now dubbed the Palicours and installed in northern Amapá (Biet 1664).

Increasing European encroachment in Amapá, involving the French, Portuguese, British and Dutch, did more than induce migrations among the indigenous peoples. It also coincided with, and probably contributed to (P. and F. Grenand 1988a), a period of inter-Amerindian conflict. A long and bitter war, remembered still today, occurred between the (Karib) Galibi and the Arawakan groups, particularly the Pa’ikwené. In about 1590 the latter joined forces with the Yayo (P. Grenand 1979), then some sixty years later with the Maraón (Nimuendaju op. cit.:4); the Galibi eventually removed themselves to Guyane.⁶

From the 1650’s to well into the 18th century the Pa’ikwené and other native groups (among them the Maraón, Arikaré, Arúa, Mayé, Tokoyen)⁷ were embroiled in the struggle between France and Portugal for control of Amapá. In 1722, under

⁴ They originated either further south (Central Amazonia) or southwest (Rio Negro region), according to P. Grenand (1979; see also Meggers & Evans 1957 and section on language above). Their oral history disproves Dreyfus’ claim (1981:304) that they retain no memory of the migration to Aúkwa.

⁵ By Keymis (1596), Raleigh (1590’s), d’Avity (1604), Harcourt (1613), de Forest (1625), de Laët (1633), Dudley (1646).

⁶ Some of their descendants have since resettled in north Amapá.

⁷ For a comprehensive list see F. & P. Grenand 1987:33ff.

the pretext that the French were inciting the Indians, especially the Arúa, against them, the Portuguese slaughtered or deported to Pará the indigenous communities that had not managed to flee (Hurault 1989).

By the mid-18th century the Pa'ikwené are known to inhabit either bank of the Uaçá. During this period, with North Amapá and the Lower Oyapock constituting a zone of safety for the different indigenous groups seeking refuge from European impingement and enslavement, there developed what P. and F. Grenand describe (1990) as a 'process of inter-tribal fusion' out of which evolved three distinct ethnic entities: the Pa'ikwené, the Karipún, and the "false" Galibi. They propose (F. and P. Grenand 1987:17-29) that the former grew out of a corpus of nine original clans (six inner, three peripheral) which in response to Portuguese geopolitical pressure coalesced under a 'super-chief' with nine non-Pa'ikwené groups in Amapá, palikurised over time as clans also.

Throughout this period, too, the Indians were targeted, with variable success, by the Jesuits (1680's, 1720's, 1735-62, 1780's-94; see Nimuendaju op. cit.:5-8). Between the late 1720's and 1780's the Pa'ikwené were effectively caught between the French Catholics, out to convert and missionise them, and Portuguese slavers often acting in alliance with other Indians such as the Wayapi from the Upper Oyapock (P. Grenand 1979:4). By the 1790's, under the cumulative effects (fighting, deportation, flight) of the colonialist presence, the Pa'ikwené were demographically depleted, their population numbering no more than one thousand (P. Grenand *ibid.*)

It would seem that for the next century or so, the Pa'ikwené, now firmly established in their heartland of Aúkwa (Rio Urucauá) and ignored by the French authorities wielding *de facto* power in Amapá, led a relatively untroubled existence. Catholic missionary activity slackened, although a 'push' in the 1890's netted some converts; the territory abounded in game, fish and manatee; and relations of trade with the Créoles, whose influence on the Pa'ikwené was already strong, provided a ready market for horticultural surpluses. In due course, the Pa'ikwené emerged as a powerful entity, economically and politically; indeed, according to P. Grenand (*ibid.*), as the sole indigenous group of any importance in the region.

When, in 1900, Swiss arbitration ended the protracted dispute over the possession of Amapá and France ceded the territory to Brazil, most Pa'ikwené chose to cross the Oyapock into Guyane. It could be argued that this was less of an

immigration than a return to a territory which historically, according to informants, had long harboured Pa'ikwené communities, certainly as far back as the early 16th century (P. & F. Grenand 1988a). Decimated by malaria and influenza in the first decade then by a measles epidemic in 1914, the bulk of the survivors returned to Aúkwa. Since then the Pa'ikwené nation has consisted of two groups dependent on two remote yet influential political overlords, France and Brazil.

For P. Grenand (1987:76) the relationship between the two groups is “more or less complementary”; for Montout (1994:12 and throughout), culturally weighted in favour of the more traditionalist ‘Brazilian’ Pa'ikwené. Personally, I balk at drawing too definite a distinction between them and the ‘French’ ones. There is an incessant and dynamic flow of people between the two communities (see chapter 9 fn. 5, also P. and F. Grenand 1990:32), and with it a seepage of ‘modern’ beliefs and artifacts into Aúkwa and in return a (re)infusion of ‘old’ beliefs and ways into Guyane. As will be discussed below, any rift among today’s Pa'ikwené is less likely to do with country of residence than religion, in the form of antagonisms between Christians and non-Christians on the one hand, and, especially, converts to the different Protestant sects on the other.

Later waves of migration began in the early 1960’s. There were two triggers for this. The first was the split in the Aúkwa community due to the hostility between two shamans leading to the murder of one of them, and the flight of the other with a number of his kin and supporters into Guyane, where they settled at Gabaret, downstream from St Georges de l’Oyapock (Arnaud 1970:14-5, 1984:46; Dreyfus op. cit.:306-8; Ricardo 1983:23).

The second cause was the impact of Protestant fundamentalism. Briefly (the subject is addressed more fully later), as the result of sustained efforts by missionaries in the mid sixties most of the community at Aúkwa adopted Evangelical Pentecostalism (Assembleía de Deus). Others, converts to Adventism, went to live in Premier Village Espérance, known also as La Savane, by St. Georges. This community was at the time largely inhabited by creolised Pa'ikwené who had remained, or descended from people who had remained, after the general return to Aúkwa in the 1910’s. The departure to Guyane of an Assembleía de Deus leader and his followers around 1980 constituted another migration. At this time too, a separate small party was motivated to found Deuxième Village Espérance, alternatively called Persévérance. Its population, like that of the other Pa'ikwené communities in Guyane, continues to this day to be replenished by a

steady stream of Aúkwan incomers, though I met a small number of people who decided to resettle in Aúkwa, the pull of the heartland, both emotionally and in terms of lifestyle, apparently proving stronger in the end.

environment and economy.

Like much of Amapá, Aúkwa is 'flooded savanna' country, consisting of mangrove swamps, rivers and lakes and dotted with hilly outcrops of woodland; so the 'Brazilian' Pa'ikwené are as much if not more marsh Indians as rainforest ones, and also to some extent coastal. Factors which necessarily impact on their economy, still overwhelmingly a 'subsistence' one: hunting, fishing (though seldom now for manatee), gathering, horticulture.

The recently established Guyanese communities, in Lower Oyapock as elsewhere, tend to be situated near larger non-indigenous ones, in an increasingly peri-urban environment. Here, sustaining a traditional economy is proving progressively harder. This is mainly due to a the growing scarcity of game and the remoteness of communities from good hunting and fishing sites; a compensatory intensification of agricultural activity threatened by a rising demographic density in relation to the amount of land, and the lack of access to good land. In the Oyapock region for example the authorities grant the Pa'ikwené land poor both in size and quality and save the best, lying nearer to their villages, for non-indigenous agro-pastoral outfits, which also seize profitable sites previously worked by Pa'ikwené. These conditions, highlighted a decade ago by Dreyfus (1988) and P. and F. Grenand (1988b), continued substantially unchanged in the mid-nineties (cf. Montout op. cit.:30-1, 102). As Dreyfus observed, if the Pa'ikwené remain in these ecologically and economically disadvantaged areas it is basically, in the St. Georges area, because of the accessibility of better (Western) health services and schools than in Brazil. This, and the availability of social benefits for those with French papers, has tended to inculcate a certain 'culture of dependency'.

demography.

In 1925 the combined 'French' and 'Brazilian' Pa'ikwené population was calculated as 238 (Nimuendaju op. cit.:15), and 1026 sixty-five years later (P. and F. Grenand 1990:44-5), the 'French' group representing 45% of the total. Today the gap between them is closing further.

Computing let alone fixing the numbers of inhabitants per community proved

problematic, given the mobility of the population, their constant round between Guyane and Aúkwa and between the different villages in Guyane itself; it was not uncommon for individuals to claim residence in two places. Notwithstanding this, my own research gave the following:

(table 1)

<u>AÚKWA</u> (January 1994):	<u>Households</u>	<u>People</u>
Kúmené.....	94	544
Yakot.....	15	94
Imoni.....	5	33
Pwaichiket.....	14	48
Kamú'iwa.....	9	37
Súvinwa.....	4	<u>32</u>
		788

GUYANE:

Village Espérance 2 (my own census February 1994)...27 households:	163 people
Village Espérance 1 (guestimate).....	200 - - - -
Gabaret (December 1993).....	17 - - - -
Trois Palétuviers (down from 1980's figures)..... (approx.)	25 - - - -
Couman-Couman..... (approx.)	20 - - - -
Bambou (down from 1980's figures)..... (approx.)	15 - - - -
Rozé (down from 1980's figures).....	2 - - - -
Macouria (both villages, according to informants August 1994). (approx.)	200 - - - -
Régina (according to Em. Montout pers. com. April 1994).....	45 - - - -
Roura (according to informants).... (approx.)	<u>35</u> - - - -
	722

Despite my own 'head-counts' in Espérance 2 and Gabaret and the tally for Aúkwa, supplied by chief Tchikoi, these statistics cannot be guaranteed. Also, I have no figures for Pa'ikwené living elsewhere, such as people who have married out.

social organisation.

The Pa'ikwené are a clan society.⁸ Nimuendaju gives (op. cit.:15-6) a figure of seven extant clans and four extinct ones for 1925; Arnaud (1984:31-2), six extant and five extinct; and F. and P. Grenand (1987), seven extant and twelve extinct. I came up with eight surviving ones, seven rated "real" by informants and one "false":

(1) *Kawakúkyené*, People of the pineapple (Labonté⁹); (2) *Wakavúnyené*, People of the 'Wakap' tree ant (Baptiste); (3) *Waïvayené*, People of the 'walking' caterpillar

⁸ With 'dual organisation' (Lévi-Strauss 1986:108, 133-63).

⁹ Words in brackets are contemporary family names; cf. F. Grenand & Renault-Lescure 1990:28.

(Yoyo, Norino, Michel); (4) *Paimioné*, People of the catfish (Guillaumet, Martin); (5) *Wahshyené*, People of the (is)land (Auguste, Felicio); (6) *Wadayené*, People of the gecko (Yapara); (7) *Pa'úyené*, People of the wild cotton bush (Orlando); (8) "False" clan *Auniyené*, People-who-speak-on-the-move aka *Nasisyené*, a palikurisation of their Brazilian surname Narcissio (the Mauricio family are also members). Originally, according to informants, a mixture of Pa'ikwené and non-Pa'ikwené¹⁰, they are accepted as a fully-fledged and legitimate clan despite the "false" tag.

Clan membership is patrilineal. While taking the name of her husband's clan, a woman also retains her native one. Marriage is inter-clan exogamic¹¹ with much intra-community endogamy (Dreyfus 1981:309), especially now that villages are structurally multi-clan and relatively large-scale. Traditionally, each clan had its own territory (Nimuendaju op. cit.) and villages consisted of some three or four kin-related households (Dreyfus 1988). Another difference is that communities were mobile, changing sites in function of the group dynamic or the ecology (Dreyfus ibid.), whereas today they tend to stay put.

At marriage, spouses live with the bride's parents. The chief marriage rule entails not only a ban on marrying into the father's, i.e., one's own, clan (Dreyfus 1981:309), but also, I learnt, into the mother's (cf. Mattioni 1975:45).¹² Contravention seemed to elicit no sanctions¹³ and, though it is ill regarded, culpable couples may continue residing in the community.

The Pa'ikwené showed themselves highly egalitarian in regard to gender (there are for example women chiefs and shamans, as we will see) and the generations, though there was a degree of bossing of children by older siblings. This, however, was counterweighed by the former's undeniable 'power' over their elders,

¹⁰ Probably the western branch of the Arúa (Dreyfus 1981:304).

¹¹ A historical (probably 17c or 18c) development for F. & P. Grenand (1987:17), replacing a prior endogamy due to the aforementioned unification of diverse ethnically distinct peoples into a single Pa'ikwené nation.

¹² Dreyfus says (op. cit.:309-10) cross-cousin marriage is not unknown if rare, but that according to informants there was a "liking" for it in the past.

¹³ Nor apparently did non-marital sex between adolescent cross-cousins, which to my certain knowledge also occurs.

exercised typically through ‘relations of demand.’¹⁴

In respect of its internal affairs, Village Espérance Deux was acephalous; on wider issues, including (formal) relations with the non-indigenous world, it took counsel from and deferred to the authority of the two “Capitaines” in Espérance Un, Auguste Baptiste and Louis Norino.

*

Since much of my thesis relates to communication a foreword about language is appropriate. Of principal and fundamental concern is the notion not only that language “implies society” (Lévi-Strauss 1973:390) but is productive of it, a premise shared by the Pa’ikwené and various theorists alike. Charles Taylor, for instance, holds (1985:234) that “it is not just the speech community which shapes and creates language, but language which constitutes and sustains the speech community” by means of the interpersonal dialogues comprising that community. Likewise, Volosinov posits (1986) the interdependence and interconstitutivity of language and society through a historical process wherein the new meanings, or ‘ideologies’, continuously formed by the new utterances of intercommunicating creative speaker-hearers, generate a constant transformation of the social contexts in which verbal interaction, i.e., social relations, takes place. And for Ingold (1986), in the “intersubjective life... [which] consists of people speaking’ (p. 144)... the conversation that *is* social life, is creative, and what is created is a relationship” (p. 141, his stress). As will be seen, the assumption expressed by these and other such views is one I endorse.

Sherzer and Urban have established (1986) that in native South America the customary, and highly regarded and practised, aesthetic and dramatic dimensions of language are not divorced from the other facets of daily life. Rather, they are all of a piece with the various aspects of discourse and wider action, ritualistic, political, economic, technical, ‘magical’... Moreover, the poetic-dramatic features of verbal performance are understood as an intrinsic constituent of such aspects. While Sherzer and Urban stress the performative in respect of formal or ‘special’ styles of speech (oratory, ceremonial dialogue, curing chants, myth telling), they

¹⁴ Of the social hierarchy based on ‘birth order’ purportedly characteristic of Lowland dual organisation (Hornborg 1988), I found no sign.

also recognise its presence in 'informal', conversational speech. It is the latter - the way that the aesthetic, presentational and, also, moral qualities, jointly fill and resonate through the everyday and mostly commonplace talk of ordinary Pa'ikwené - which particularly interests me, as revealed in the second part of the chapter on 'political communication' and, more generally, throughout.

Sherzer and Urban, urging like others the study of Amerindian discourses in view of their fragility and increasing demise in the face of external pressures, argue also (*ibid.*) that they are worth recording not so much as abstract objects by which, as through an invisible glass, the native world may be viewed, but as the symbolic and semantic process whereby knowledge pertaining to the process of social relations, practice and belief is "produced, conceived, transmitted and acquired - by members of societies and by researchers" (pp. 1-2). Accordingly, though presenting few verbatim texts, my aim has been to convey an overall Pa'ikwené style of dialoguing and relating; and through that to illuminate, and celebrate, a particular sociality and culture, at once unique and sharing various traits and values with other Lowland peoples. In describing the manner in which that world is not only spoken but (equally vitally) perceived, I have sought to demonstrate the extent to which these activities are both instrumental in and necessary for its (re)production and continuation. As will be seen, particular attention is paid to the part played in the process by the second one, hearing-and-understanding.

Finally, the reader will not find below long transcriptions followed by technical analyses for which I was neither suited nor motivated. There will however be examples of utterances and dialogues and various speech contexts, and also several Pa'ikwené myths and stories in Appendix A.

PART ONE

**"PIS AUNA, NAH TCHIMAP": "YOU SPEAK, I HEAR-
LISTEN-UNDERSTAND".**

KARINAI (to his adult son): Wahtchit.

WAHTCHIT:

KARINAI (same tone): Wahtchit.

WAHTCHIT:

KARINAI (same tone): Wahtchit.

WAHTCHIT: Ihi ("Yes")?

What follows is an explorative ethnography of the sociocultural and, as far as is possible, phenomenological world of the speakers and 'hearer-listener-understanders' of a particular language called Pa'ikwaki: a description of a way of life expressed and sustained by that language, as translated and experienced by a visitor who, throughout his stay and after, tried hard and perhaps not that successfully to 'hear, listen to and understand' it as well as possible.

chapter two

THE TEXTURE NOT THE TEXT (a way in).

gadji beri bimba glandridi laula lonni cadori
 gadjama gramma berida bimbala glandri galassassa laulitalomini
 gadji beri bin blassa glassala laula lonni cadorsu sassala bim
 gadjama tuffm i zamzalla binban gligla wowolimai bin beri ban
 o katalominai rhinozerossola hopsamen laulitalomini hooo...

(from a Hugo Ball sound poem, in Cardinal 1981:61)

This is an account of my initial reaction to, and attempts to enter into, the oral-aural universe of the Paikwené. For all the near referential quality of some of its neologisms, Ball's Dadaist poem conveys something of how I perceived their speech when I first arrived among them: sounds arbitrarily combined and without denotative use, sounds without meaning. But I knew this could not be true: for one thing all the Pa'ikwené from adults to small children not only spoke Pa'ikwaki to each other but also patently understood it. And in due course it gradually, and naturally, became less and less unintelligible to me too, although never completely. This it did not only in semantic terms, but in non-semantic ones as well. Cardinal writes (1981:100) about Ball's poem, which was devised to be spoken, that "almost totally innocent of semantic reference though the text is, it does make some form of 'sense' by virtue of its rhythms and repetitions of sounds, and thereby bears comparison with a musical composition". Leaving aside the question of whether

music refers to anything outside itself¹, I consider below some of the non- or extra-semantic meanings of the Pa'ikwené language. In chapters five and seven I report on and examine how the Pa'ikwené themselves “hear-listen to-understand” - “tchimap” - this other sort of meaning which fills their utterances, and in chapters four and six I explore the social and cultural phenomenon of “Tchimap” itself. In the present one, I choose to focus on the way in which I myself reacted to and engaged with the preterlinguistic significations of indigenous words, and through them endeavoured to ‘make’ sense of Pa'ikwené speaking; and through that, of their world insofar as I had become, however superficially and temporarily, immersed in it. Whereas, for them, its meanings were grounded in sociopragmatics, morality, aesthetics and affectivity, mine were more functions (and fictions) of my imagination, and of the senses and emotion too. I stress, though, that to the extent that my responses were voluntary, the intention behind them was not to remove or cushion me from an alien society but, on the contrary, to permit me to dwell in, and delve deeper into, it.

Rosaldo cites (1980:20) the received wisdom that “anthropology is, at least in part, an exercise in translation” and that understanding another culture is similar to learning a foreign language. Struggling to comprehend the Ilongots’ world view, she records her frustration at her inability to seize the transcendent meaning of their discourse: “I was distressed by the great gap between my superficial

¹ For Cardinal it does not. Seeger, for one, differs, as is shown by his demonstration (1987) of how the music and singing of the Suyá not only refer to but regenerate their social and cosmological worlds: “Singing was part of social reproduction... [Song] Ceremonies ordered production and through their performative nature were a way the Suyá created and recreated their village and themselves [p. 130]... “[The] Suyá created space, time, and the person, as well as introduced and controlled the power of transformations through their singing... Singing and ceremonies brought many aspects of the cosmos into direct personal experience. Songs attested to the continued interaction of humans and animals...” (p. 132; see also 50-87).

Ingold provides (1993a:449-58) a forceful critique of the ‘Western’ assumption that spoken language representationally transmits meanings (seen to preexist in the mind, and in a context-free relationship between word and context, rather than in the external world) while song, and music as song without the linguistic component, supposedly “do not *have* meaning, they *are* meaning, standing for nothing other than themselves.” (p. 451, his emphasis). Ingold’s thesis is that language has its origins in vocal music and, consequently, meaning inheres just as much in it as in song when it, language, is deployed in the ‘lived-in’ world, i.e., the practical dialectic between socially interrelating subjects. He does not address the issue of whether the theoretical source of language, song, might not itself also convey meaning ‘beyond’ itself, sociologically speaking. Regarding the probable common history of language and music/song, see Williams 1971:120-1. Alejo Carpentier, however, suggests in his novel “The Lost Steps” (1956:198-9, 211-5) that music did not give rise to language but historically arose instead from it, through the repetition of single syllables and words in alternately different pitches by shamans performing in a magical context, particularly that of a threnody (lament).

understanding of their words and the significance their simplest phrases seemed to convey” (ibid.:33). In the Amazonianist context, similar feelings of linguistic inadequacy and disconnection have been expressed by, among others, Descola (1996:39-40) and, in an intense and moving way, Campbell (1989:14-21). Wagley writes (1977:20) that between the Tapirapé and himself there always hung a “linguistic haze”; and Viveiros de Castro (1992:8), that between him and the Araweté and their language lay “something thicker”. I for my part, struggling forever to master some minimal proficiency in Pa’ikwaki, clutched in gratitude and hope at whatever linguistic and semantic perceptions fell into my ken, aware that although they could never dispel the fog completely they might at the very least help like a thread to lead me partway through the cultural maze of Pa’ikwené life; and in the process perhaps to some relatively less misty corners of it.

After about a week in Deuxième Village Espérance my linguistic comprehension had progressed to comprise the following Pa’ikwené words and expressions:

Mwok, Baïta ash, Batnaba, Kaïnsima, Wag, Tchino, Awaïg, Kibeiné, Bakimni, Nigú(r), Nahgú(r), Ig mwaka, Ihm, Ihi, Nah ka tchimap, Kamú, Yúma, Himac, Kawa, Kit kap, Kamash, Kadash, Ba pi ai? Mah pikabayan? Kadahan, Oon, Búgút, Yéyé, Nah ka auna Pa’ikwaki, Pisemni seyné, Nah mativwé, Magúyé, Mahgú, Mahgiú.

(Rain,² Come [and] eat, Sit down, Much/many, Mosquito, Woman, Man, Good/thanks, Baby, My father/FB, My mother/MZ, He wants, Fish, Yes, I cannot/do not hear-understand, Sun, None, To sleep, No, Where [are] you going?, Take/catch!, Do not touch!, Greetings! [literally: Are you here?], How are you?, There is, Water, Bread, Older Sibling/FB older Son and Daughter/MZ older Son and Daughter [vocative], I cannot speak Pa’ikwaki, Your hair [is] white, I [am] hungry, It’s good/Delicious!, What is her name? What is his name?)³

Yet I found that even these examples of basic everyday language were not always semantically as unambiguous as they at first appeared. For instance, “Ihm” literally

² I arrived during the so-called ‘light’ rainy season, in November 1993. It is interesting how many Pa’ikwené started off conversations with me through reference to the weather, like so many English people waiting at a bus stop in a shower. That and food were the two topics they most often resorted to, in my first weeks with them, as a way both of introducing me to their language and breaking the ice socially.

³ I wish to record my thanks to Diana and Harold Green of the Summer Institute of Linguistics for the use of their Pa’ikwaki lexicon, a draft of which was kindly left for me in Village Espérance 2. It was to prove of invaluable and indispensable help. As explained in the preface, however, I have not always followed SIL orthography.

means fish, and is one of three classes of non-vegetable foods (see Appendix B). At the same time, however, Pa'ikwené people also use it to stand for food generally, be it fish, meat, manioc, fruit or a bar of chocolate. What the native symbology involved in this was I never managed to find out. I was forever on guard lest the most apparently unequivocal of words, such as “canoe” or “night” say, turn out in reality to possess not only several meanings⁴, but, like an emotionally packed Russian grandma doll, polyvalent versions of each single one. Thus, for example, while it may not be as exciting and dense as the Ilongots’ “Heart” (Rosaldo op. cit.:39-44 and throughout) and the Ndembu’s “Milk Tree” or red “Mukula Tree” (Turner 1986), the Pa'ikwené’s word for, and concept of, their own language, “Pa'ikwaki”, is replete with implicit, mutually reinforcing meanings beyond the literal one, being an affective and moral symbol of Pa'ikwené-hood itself, of personal identity and group exclusivity, and of their Indianness. Similarly, “Kiaptúnka”, the ceremonial language, had acquired for today’s generation the power, numen, and representational force of a sacred object. Mere mention of it prompted strong feelings of awe and respect for a thing seen to be at once so (grammatically and as if morally) pure and intrinsically, completely Pa'ikwené (see item iv chapter 5). Turner says (ibid.:50) that “a few symbols have to represent a whole culture and its material environment.” I found it both very logical and expressive of the Pa'ikwené’s high valuation of speech and words, that they should choose these two particular terms to symbolise themselves as a society.

Exegesis, then, was never to be a simple affair, as Rosaldo points out (op. cit.:21) in her criticism of the idea that “ordinary language is... straightforward, and as such, does not require a special effort of interpretive reflection” (see pp. 20-30 for her thesis that linguistic interpretation is not a matter of literalism but of seeking to grasp a society’s world view through the utterances of its members; cf. Overing 1985a:1-28, 153-179, 1987, 1997; Firth 1985; Salmond 1985; Asad 1986).

Moreover, like some of Ball’s non-semantic contrivances (e. g. “rhinocerosola”), a number of the fully semantic Pa'ikwené items carried for me references beyond their customary intentions and contexts: “Mahgú” (“What is her name?”), for instance, often brought to mind an image of the bumbling, near-blind cartoon character Mr Magoo. Whether uttered separately or, even more suggestibly,

⁴ For instance “Kaig” variously means moon, month and sweet potato.

conjoined in my head, “Kamash” (“Take hold of this!”) and “Kadash” (“Don’t touch/Let go!”) evoked the Jewish prayer for the dead (the Kaddish). The automatically (to my ear) chant-like sound of either of the two imperatives invoked at the level of the ‘unconscious’ a far deeper and more powerful response than the one solicited by a Pa’ikwené’s insistence that something be picked up or that something else be left alone.⁵

As for the rest of the Pa’ikwené’s language, or more precisely of their speaking, it was then still wholly incomprehensible to me. I tried instinctively to divine the sense of words and, when I could guess where they began and stopped, sentences⁶ in as many of the prosodic and paralingual signs of the speakers’ voices as I could detect let alone attempt to decipher (see Lyons 1977, chapter 3), and looked for clues in their facial ‘microsignals’ and ‘proxemic signals’ (e.g. muscle contractions and direction of gaze, see Ekman and Friesen 1969), and in the kinesic expressions of their bodies. While this may have been unsatisfactory as a means of arriving at purely semantic meanings, it was a useful procedure nevertheless. However feebly, it illuminated for me the first patches of Pa’ikwené culture: for example, how people conventionally acted when they spoke to each other, how they held themselves, and what they did with their faces when listening (see section ii chapter 4); and the link between the typical vocal loudness of the children and their freedom and self-autonomy (see chapter 3). It also allowed me access very early on to that extra-dialogic point in social relations where I and some of the most patient and tolerant of my interlocutors could begin to lay down foundations for a mutual understanding⁷ and eventual friendship (It is true that a number of villagers, and especially most of the children, had some knowledge of French and that we could therefore communicate that way).

⁵ Ethnocentrically, I found this Pa’ikwené-Jewish association arose in other ways too: a similar deft manipulation of alien languages and the incorporation of bits of them into Pa’ikwaki and Yiddish, and the loudness of conversational speech; the fact that the toxin present in the manioc plant was also the one used in the Nazi gas chambers (Campbell 1995:49-50); that genocide was a process experienced by both races; that the Pa’ikwené Evangelical and Seventh Day Adventist converts saw in my Jewishness some kind of a connection with their newfound faiths (they ‘knew’ for instance that Jesus’ biblical ancestor King David had been chief of my own ancestors).

⁶ On the theoretical issue of whether, and when and in what way, utterances constitute actual sentences, and the differences between the two, see Lyons 1981:23-30,195-8.

⁷ See Laurence Sterne 1977 [1768]:78-80,101 for a masterful literary account of the crucial part played in communication between strangers by ‘body language’ and the other extra-lingual elements.

During my early days in Village Espérance 2, I shared to some extent Geertz and his wife's experience of being treated as if they were non-existent and invisible (1993:412). However, my overwhelming feeling was not so much of being unseen⁸ as unseeing, and unthinking. My eyes, my brain, my capacity to observe, were stunned into vagueness and inefficiency by the shock of the new and the as yet indistinguishable, ungrasped and un-understood. I was, in short, in a sensory and emotional daze. The only sense which still operated 'normally' was my audition. Despite the strangeness of the language (its utter differentness, the high agglutivity, the difficulty of pronunciation, and also its then seemingly mocking character as expressed through the use of recognisable and comprehensible loan words from the French and [or by way of] Créole)⁹, my ears not only heard but went into overdrive as, taking over from my eyes, they sought to open up the closed world to which I wanted entrance.

Lying in the dark at night, listening to the Pa'ikwené speaking to each other around me, I would try to *absorb*¹⁰ their words, their world, the sound of them talking, the sounds they made moving, them. I often imagined their utterances as a physical substance.¹¹ Were I to reach out my hand, I could touch it: concrete yet, miraculously, flowing as well, and as unseizable as water. Just as speech, which

⁸ This wore off rapidly except, disconcertingly, in respect of one class of Pa'ikwené, young women between the ages of fifteen to around twenty-five, for whom my invisibility was a permanent fixture. This was due, I was told, to my 'old' age and their feelings of "shame". Cf. Nimuendaju 1971:55 who was "ostentatiously cold shouldered" by the Pa'ikwené young women because he refused to submit to what he describes as their haughty and domineering ways. For more on this supposed female bossiness, and also on Nimuendaju's thoroughly jaundiced view of Pa'ikwené women in general, see chapter 5 item (vi).

⁹ See chapter 3 part 2 for examples.

¹⁰ Willson proposes (1995:251-9) that anthropologists tend to view the 'field' in sexual metaphoric terms as something either to be penetrated or penetrative, permeating and fertilising, and to which one should be open. See Kulick 1995 for an exposition and critique of the first conception and Altork 1995 on the second. My own position, no pun intended, is a synthesis of the two.

¹¹ Regarding the idea that the spoken word is a concrete object, as opposed to the structuralist one of both *Langue* and *Parole* as abstract things, see e.g. Leenhardt (1947:172-3) on the Melanesian Houailou's notion that words constitute tangible manifestations of the human in all its different aspects from the manual to the intellectual to the spiritual. The poet and anthropologist Michel Leiris held words to be so physical as to possess a taste reminiscent of that of fruits (1966:219). See also Cardinal (op.cit.) on the various ways in which different types of Western poets (Romantics, Symbolists, Surrealists, Expressionists, Dadaists) have all concretised language.

after all is made to be heard, becomes visible both to Barthes (1977:161) and, through the shaman's actions, the Piaroa (Overing Kaplan 1982:30), so for me did it transform, rather, into something to be felt and palpated, as if my eyes like a blindman's were in my fingers, and my ears in my palms. Before I could understand the Pa'ikwené's spoken texts (let alone their culture as a Geertzian or Lévi-Straussian text), I tried to apprehend them first as texture. An entry in my diary, written three weeks into my fieldwork, records that a side effect, and benefit, of not understanding Pa'ikwaki was that I as a consequence grew both more conscious of the act of listening and sensitive to the corporeality of language: speech as a virtually material ribbon, or, rather, ribbons, of pure sound: non-lexemic, unsemiotic. In the conversations of others, these ribbons unfurled, though not necessarily in a single or same direction, at some points meeting and at some diverging, while at others yet, merging; or abruptly transforming into knots, as it were, of grunts or laughter, or, sometimes, strands of silence. In the state of linguistic ignorance, I found that by means of compensatory intuitive understanding one could become acutely adept at deciphering through aural, mental and emotional 'touch' the various verbal textures as well as the vocal ones of a person's speech. It was a sort of hearing, a sniffing out, a making sense, through braille.¹² One learnt to recognise and appreciate the unique feel of each speaker's individual speech fabric, as personal and inimitable as a fingerprint: Karinai's deep-chested resonance, precise diction, and occasional granularity of voice; his sister-in-law Méoka's tired and, for a Pa'ikwené of either sex, uncharacteristically soft tones; her nephew Lennié's young boy's smooth joyous shrillness and precipitation of delivery. Through these seemingly incarnate marks I would gain an impression of his or her personality and emotional state; of their intentionality at a given moment in a dialogue with another, and, perhaps, of the constant, underlying dialectic between them. The few odd words that I managed to distinguish in the process, and whose semantic meaning I did recognise, served to reassure me that I was on, or at least not too far off, the right track. And it was with gratitude and

¹² Cf. Ong (1991:25): "[S]ound, both in speaking and in hearing, is closely linked with touch... our hearing is partly feeling". For Ackerman, who stresses (1990:175) the key role of hearing in the process of interpreting, communicating with, and expressing our surroundings, such a disordering of the senses, or 'synesthesia', acts not to confuse our perception of the world about us but *enhance and deepen* it (p. 290-1). Synesthesia seems to be a common phenomenon in Amazonian cultures (see Lévi-Strauss 1964:155-171, Classen 1991:252). Maybe, however, my sensory response to the Pa'ikwené world was ultimately more like that of the Hausa who, apart from sight, apparently recognise only one other category in their sensorium: "ji", a fusion of hearing-tasting-smelling-touching (Ritchie 1991).

relief that I discovered the compass-like value of onomatopœia: “Taka’ahk” (Chicken), “Kúskús” (cat), “Digiki” (Diarrhoea), “Tchéhep” (To cry)...

This phenomenological activity (in which my sight, having eventually recovered from its trauma, played its full part) constituted the translation, then, of the sounds of alien words and voices into intuited, sensory comprehensions and thence into all but tangible mind images. These were not semantic ones, such as Wittgenstein’s depicted propositions (1974, 1981: ‘remarks’ 519-20), or the mental snapshots connected with some of the “Fixed Word Meaning” theories described by Aitchison (1987:39-45), or any other type of picture arising from a perception of a language I could speak and therefore understand. They could not, therefore, be a consequence of syntax and (except for the onomatopœia) the morphology of the words I heard. Rather, they had to evolve out of the ancillary verbal and vocal phenomena: intonation, stress, volume, pitch, musicality etc., and also from things like the speaker’s stance, attitude and gestures.

Yet on reflection it is not entirely inconceivable that, as my interrelationship with Pa’ikwaki grew, the words did themselves, in time, cede their semantic meanings to me through their own internal ‘gesticulations’. Merleau-Ponty, for example, making (1945:203-37) the connection between intelligibility and gesture, and in the process linking (to the point almost of conflation) meaning and emotion, posits that speaking a word “projects” (pp. 229-30) and actualises its ‘gestural meaning’ in the same way as a physical gesture is the very act and expression of an emotion, rather than merely its evocation. Because, he explains, we do not perceive the world intellectually but through our body so do we with our body perceive, and understand, its ‘gestural’ meanings; and in our interaction with the world we characterise it in such a manner that our view of it is partly formed by our affective response to its offering itself to us in the first place, and by the way in which that emotion fills our act of perceiving. Meaning is inducible from spoken words since, in that a gesture presents perceivable pieces of the external world to our perception which we perceive to be that gesture’s meaning/emotion, the linguistic one, like all meanings, reveals or depicts (“dessine”, literally “draws”, p. 217) its own meaning (Thus “words, vowels, phonemes, are so many ways of singing the world, being fated to represent objects not because of any objective resemblance to them, as the naive theory about onomatopœia holds, but because they extract

and, in the literal sense of the term, express the[ir] emotional essence.” (p. 218, my translation).

In the flows of speech, whether directed at me or away (in the continual conversations the Pa'ikwené had with each other), the speakers' breathing, pauses, moods and phonetic constructs were themselves textural elements. They did not refer to and represent like signs the alien world about me; rather, they constituted embodiments of its reality. For the inventor Edison, part Hegelian engineer and part Faustian wizard as remade by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam in his novel “L'Ève future” (1992, originally 1885), the ‘essential condition of all reality is true reciprocity of action’ (p. 113); thus in any given speaker-hearer situation, proper exchange depends on the power of the auditive act to capture and comprehend the subjective, inner, ‘spiritual’ vibration which “penetrates a word the instant one pronounces it” (p. 111); the listener alone can subjectively create the “*true* reality” (p. 112, my translations, his emphasis) of the spoken; and only that listener, furthermore, who inhabits the same world as the speaker, socially and historically: Edison (“Phonograph’s papa” [*sic*], “Magician of the ear... Beethoven of Science”) contends that had he been able to record the great sounds and statements of the past, today’s auditors would not be capable of genuinely understanding them, for the reasons given above, and they would in a sense still remain unheard (pp. 103-7, 110-14). According to Villiers/Edison, then, correct aural and cognitive perception cannot exist across time. Could I, I continually asked myself in the field, and still do, achieve it across the span of cultures?

Whereas, too, Edison’s listener is to be confronted with the “dead sounds” (p. 113) of a single recorded voice (one example Villiers proposes is Pontius Pilate’s), I had to handle a never-ending, polyphonic, multivocal and, above all, *living* sound track: a process of countless diverse and confusing conversations within which lay, hidden like a needle in a haystack, the inner, animating ‘vibration’ of not just one speaker’s words, but that of a whole community’s. As Rapport stresses (1997), a society’s conversations are multiple not only in terms of numbers and subjects but

their epistemic contents also, and the various interpretations of these.¹³ Rapport draws on Rorty's postmodernist thesis (1980:357-72) which opposes and favours the "edifying" accounts of society to the "systematic" account in the singular. That is to say, those interpretations which on the one hand are based on, and engage in conversations between, the various ways of seeing and living a multiform reality, and, on the other hand, the monologic argument that seeks 'authoritatively' to establish an objectivist, universalist explanation of a fallaciously absolute reality.¹⁴

Standing (reduced to virtual silence), then, both in the midst of this intense, seamless lexical and dialogic activity occurring all around me, and outside, like a newborn child, the 'adult' world of closed and finished sentences¹⁵ and Pa'ikwené knowledges and meanings, I turned, in my desire to understand not so much the language *per se* as those speaking it, to phonetics: the voice sounds which are supposedly both arbitrary and without intrinsic meaning in themselves (see Hawkes 1977:23-4).

I suggest, however, that for their hearer, these products of respiration, lungs, larynx, tongue, palate and lips may pertinently signify 'something' about their maker (his or her affective state and intentionality) at the pre-phonemic stage, if we accept Barthes' definition of significance (1976:61), that "It is meaning, *insofar as it*

¹³ According to Rapport, actors possess and express a plurality of different and at times contradictory epistemes depending on context, strategy and mood; and it is both legitimate and truthful for anthropological observers themselves not just to hold different views one from the other, but to present mutually exclusive ones in their own work. His argument, then, is twofold: against the notion of a single consensual knowledge of society by all its members, and against representations and explanations of society by a single perspective or theory. In opposition to the latter, an "eclecticism of narrational style" emphasises and indeed demands that the "text [be] constructed out of a conversation between different epistemic realities" (pp. 183-4).

This very footnote could itself be seen, of course, as one more voice in my own epistemically multivocal dialogue with you, with the Pa'ikwené, and with myself. Cf. Wagner's disqualification of footnotes (1991:46) on the I feel uncharitable grounds that they are but the "heritage of a failed attempt at textual polyphony".

¹⁴ It should be noted that some proto-modernists were just as strongly against the *monologos* as are the post-modernists. Robert Boyle, the pioneer experimental scientist, for example, argued in his book 'The Sceptical Chymist' (1661) that "it is not necessary that all the things a Sceptick proposes, should be consonant... It is allowable for him to propose two or more several Hypotheses about the same thing..." (cited in Firth 1972:4).

¹⁵ Cf. Barthes (1976:49-51) on the phenomenon of the Sentence which while infinitely renewable is yet structurally unfree, belongs to the hierarchical world, and is an "artifact created by rhetors, grammarians, linguists, teachers, writers, parents..." (p. 51).

is sensually produced” (his emphasis). For as he imaginatively proposes (p. 66-7) in his description of “writing aloud”, a phenomenon which “is not phonological but phonetic”, speech can of itself contain significance when considered as the “geno-text” rather than the “pheno-text”, which is concerned with meaning. This significance is not to be located in the paralingual and prosodic spheres, but in the as it were physical “*grain* of the voice... [and] the patina of consonants, the voluptuousness of vowels, a whole carnal stereophony: the articulation of the body, of the tongue, not that of meaning, of language” (his emphasis). In short, as if in an aural cinematic close-up, specifies Barthes, this joint materiality and sensuality of the sound of speech works in such a way as “to succeed in shifting the signified a great distance and in throwing, so to speak, the... body of the actor into my ear...” (p. 67).

For Merleau-Ponty (op. cit.:220-1), “All is fabricated and all is natural in man... in the sense that there is not one word or one behaviour which does not owe something to man as a purely biological being, and which at the same time does not evade the simplicity of animal life” (my translation). To this should be added the phonetic sound itself.¹⁶ I am thus tempted to go further than Barthes and suggest that not only are non-phonological sounds a cultural product as well as a natural, physiological one, but their intrinsic, intentional meaningfulness can extend extend, therefore, beyond the single individual to all the members of a community or subgroup. A number of Pa’ikwené for instance used to make a distinctive bilabial, and quasi-lexical, exclamation to signal a ‘put down’: scepticism, scorn, derision, dismissal, belittlement. This sound, “Poï-poï-poï!”, was unequivocal and very well understood by all who heard it, especially the unfortunate person at the receiving

¹⁶ Merleau-Ponty holds (ibid.:225-6) that the “phonetic gesture brings about for the speaking subject and those listening to him a certain structuring of experience and modulation of existence, in the same way as my body invests, for me and others, the objects which surround me with a certain ‘signification’... The human body is defined by its appropriation, in an indefinite series of discontinuous acts, of signifying nuclei which go beyond and transcend its natural powers... For example, to knit one’s brows... or narrow one’s eyes... become components of the human act of meditation, and signify it as such to the onlooker... The problem is no different for language: a contraction of the throat, a hissing exhalation of the breath between the tongue and the teeth, and a certain way of using one’s body, are suddenly invested with a figurative meaning and signify it from within ourselves... In order for th[is]... to happen, the phonetic gesticulation has to use an alphabet of pre-acquired significations, and the verbal gesture has to occur in a certain field common to all the interlocutors...” (my translation).

Cf. Burke 1941:8-18 on how in the “poetics of [vocal] sound”, the relationship between a speaker’s phonetic expression, bodily gesture, and selection of words on the basis of tonality works in such a way that a word’s meaning is made manifest through its very sound.

end; e.g.:

A: I caught a very big fish today, but it fell back into the water and I lost it.

B: Poï-poï-poï-**poï**.

Often too, a vowel or consonant sound would be extended in order to express an emphasis: of time, say, or feeling. Thus “Minikwak” (“in the past”) or “Kabuntchúa” (“nice”, “great!”) could become “Mmiiiiiikwakk” and “Kabuuuuntchúa”. This type of sliding action did not reinforce the speaker’s meaning so much as recognisably embody it.¹⁷ For Seeger (1987:30-1 with reference to Suyá myth telling), such glissandi are “a clear example of iconic speech: where the speech sounds themselves carry semantic meaning. The traditional separation of phonology and semantics cannot be maintained in a case like this. The actual sounds of the performance carried meaning in themselves.”¹⁸

The Pa’ikwené describe an utterance they are pleased with as “pretty”. ‘Prettiness’ relates to a combination of aspects: correct grammatical usage,¹⁹ pragmatic appositeness, and attractive and seductive semantic contents. People are also expressing their real emotional and aesthetic pleasure in the words as words, in their speaker’s performative delivery and in the sonic one: the very sound of the spoken, and the very fact of speaking, both as connotation and manifestness of communality. Hearing voices and words means that one is filled with the sound, and therefore the process and actuality, of social relations; and answering them,

¹⁷ For more on the meaningfulness of Pa’ikwené phonetics, see next chapter.

¹⁸ For another example of the intelligibility of apparently meaningless sounds in an Amerindian context, see Chaumeil 1993:415-6 on the “semantic value” of the esoteric “acoustic... meta-language” used by Yagua shamans for communicating with plants. Of interest too is Kallir’s thesis (1961) that speech sounds are inherently and *specifically* meaningful, being gendered like nouns in that they psychogenetically convey our ancestors’ epistemological perception of procreation. He argues that the beginning sound of a word originally marked its gender in the same way that, in Latin languages for instance, the end sound does today: a fact reproduced in the sound’s graphic representation. Thus A (sound and letter) initially and universally stood for the male, B the female; and so on through the alphabet.

¹⁹ I was once reprimanded, for example, when, referring to a group of people that consisted of more men than women, I automatically transposed French grammatical usage into Pa’ikwaki and gave the word for the male plural ‘they’ (“Igkis”) instead of the more correct female one (“Egkis”). The use of the former in such circumstances was not only wrong but, I was told, “ugly”, which in Pa’ikwené terms amounts to a tautology.

interacting with them, means that one can continue to produce and maintain the relations and, concurrently, the moral and affective substance immanent in them -- and it is that which is beautiful for the Pa'ikwené (the issue is dealt with in more detail in other chapters).

It took me a long time to even begin to become part of these social relations, let alone to start to comprehend them, through my own eventual ability to speak and "hear-understand", albeit but partially, what was said to me. As regards the former, the Pa'ikwené do not assess verbal prowess quantitatively but qualitatively; I describe in chapter 3 how the 'way' in which an individual speaks is valued more highly than the amount of lexical knowledge he or she may possess.²⁰ I once told Susana, in whose house I lived, that I could never hope to speak Pa'ikwaki as well as a certain Brazilian, who to my ears appeared to be expert in the language. He knows many words, she said, but he doesn't say them properly or "prettily"; you have fewer, but speak well and strong. Her (probable) flattery aside, she was praising me for the fact that I made a conscious effort always to meet the Pa'ikwené norms of diction, loudness, pitch and delivery. I scrupulously practised my phonetic enunciation. I strove and in some small measure succeeded to abide by the pragmatic and aesthetic canons of Pa'ikwené conversation; and consequently grew to be "heard-understood" as a reciprocating and significant speaking other in the household and, to a slighter extent, beyond. I like to think that I even, in time, achieved the status of a textual, if temporary, component in the weave of village life in my own right; and that I was appreciated as such by my fellow components, although surely not to the degree that they were by me.

²⁰ This is not to say that most Pa'ikwené do not set great store by their language in terms, among others, of the size and health of its lexicon. On the contrary, they are deeply proud of it, but many people expressed anxiety for its future (see chapter 3).

chapter three

“AUNA KABAI” - “TO SPEAK WELL”**1. The socialisation, standards, everyday styles and aesthetics of speaking Pa'ikwaki.**

“If you have your own language, you're Indian. The Pa'ikwené do, but the Karipún don't. They speak Creole and Portuguese, so they're not real Indians! I speak Pa'ikwaki - and I am!”

(Alfred Norino, informant at Aúkwa, the Pa'ikwené homeland)

Pa'ikwaki, the Pa'ikwené's own name for their language, possesses immense affective value for its speakers. It is also known as Kamúyúné, in that it was initially the language of the Kamúyené, “People of the Sun”, one of the original clans comprising the Pa'ikwené nation but now extinct. It was not at all uncommon for people proudly, and quite without prompting, to sing its praises to me. They held it a special, precious, and unique part of their community's goods, as something to be cherished; and also defended, for many in the present generation fear for the preservation of its integrity in the face of the deep inroads made by Créole, and to a lesser but steadily increasing extent, Portuguese and French. They named Pa'ikwaki as one of the markers and indeed determiners of their identity as Indians on the one hand, and as an exclusive people on the other. Similar examples of the ascription of such status, or power, to language exist elsewhere in Amazonia (it could even be called a worldwide phenomenon). Santos-Granero, for instance, speaks of it (1991:87-8) in respect of the Amuesha. The Pemon, too, according to Thomas (1982:19), consider their own tongue to be the “major identifying emblem of their ethnic identity”. There would seem however to be an interesting difference in this connection between them and the Pa'ikwené. In order to indicate their exclusiveness, the latter point not only to their language but also to two other cultural features known by them to be shared by, or significantly to resemble those of, other ‘Indian’ peoples: the cultivation and eating of manioc and their ‘work’ (see chapter 8). The Pemon, on the other hand, apparently single out their language above any other feature, as distinctly and peculiarly able to impart identity, so as to distinguish themselves from their indigenous neighbours precisely because, says Thomas (ibid.), “of the degree of technological and cultural similarity” existing

between them.

(For me, this capacity to confer identity meant that a Pa'ikwené person regarded their language not only as a defining badge of the group but, somehow, an expression of individual personhood. Thus my informant Alfred's assertion, cited above, according to which he was a real Indian because he spoke his own distinct tongue, seemed simultaneously, polyvalently, a statement about his specific human and social existence. In a manner reminiscent of Descartes' use of the famous "I think therefore I am", he, and the many others whom I heard echo the same sentiment in the same words, seemed to be saying: "I speak Pa'ikwaki, therefore *I am*." I was often struck by the 'performative' power that the phrase "We speak/I speak Pa'ikwaki" had for, and on, those who uttered it. Both for me and for them it seemed to embody and confirm who and what they were. It also revealed the intimacy (in the dual sense of the subjective and the shared) inherent in a 'cultural fact', the way in which one's language is clearly experienced as more than just an external, acquired object, but also something as integrally belonging to the self as one's hands, and as emotionally charged and communicable as the heart. The connection between language and identity at the jointly ethnical and private, existential, quasi anatomical level is well illustrated by Barthes 1977:115-6).

Every Pa'ikwené person is required to "speak well", "Auna kabai", and to "hear-listen-understand well", "Tchimap kabai" (of which more in chapter 4). 'Speaking well' is at once a matter of grammatical correction and more than it. It is seen not so much as an effect of sociable living as an intrinsic and creative agent of social life itself (cf. Belaunde 1992:48 regarding the Airo-Pai). All 'good speakers' are greatly appreciated and admired, their voices and words giving their listeners a pleasure at once emotional and axiological (i.e., combining ethical and aesthetic values). Exceptionally fine talk will be called pretty ("baréúyo") for the quality of the way people utter their words just as much as for that of their content. Not unnaturally, talk which is ugly ("ka baréúyo" or "mbayavyo") is displeasing and offensive to one's "hearing-listening-understanding" on the same grounds. Socially as well as technically, and for women just as much as men, 'speaking well' involves the use of strong tones and volume, a matter described below.

Socialisation and speech.

Investigating the differences between Native American (Navajo) and White schoolchildren, Philips reported (1972) that the former were held by their non-Amerindian teachers to be stupid because of their silences, and the latter to be bright because of their greater verbal input.¹ Philips interprets this as an ethnocentric misapprehension stemming from the fact that Anglo-American culture prioritises children's verbal skills over their non-verbal ones, and that the teaching process largely relies on verbal interaction between teacher and taught. Navajo learning, on the other hand, is more visual and tactile and apparently uses fewer words. Like the Navajo, the Pa'ikwené also acquire and deploy extensive skill in using their visual, tactile and other senses in their own 'traditional' education; it does not follow that they morally prioritise such dexterity over the verbal one. If anything, the situation appears to be the reverse. For, again similarly to the Navajo (Witherspoon 1977), the Pa'ikwené rate speaking (and, as seen in chapter 4, hearing) very highly. However, I found no evidence of them classifying other faculties pejoratively as some other Lowland peoples do. For example, the Suyá categorise sight as less moral than ('good') speaking and hearing, and olfaction as amoral and asocial (Seeger 1981:83-4, 89-91. For a more general view, see Lévi-Strauss' sensory analysis of Amazonian myths 1964:155-71).

But when speaking of education one must also have regard for context, and in practice all these skills were inevitably complementary to one another. If one was more foregrounded than others in a given learning situation, it was not because the Pa'ikwené saw it as superior but more apt and necessary at a certain point in the process. In gaining knowledge of hunting in the forest, for instance, the individual develops his auditory and olfactory faculties since he needs to rely on them for obvious pragmatic and economic reasons, but this does not mean that his verbal and oral skills are not called upon and consequently relegated to a lesser status. They are in fact vital in communicating, and establishing a relationship, with one's prey, as I discuss in the next chapter (section iii).

I also show, in chapter 6, that silence, insofar as it is an aspect of their "bad

¹ *viz.* the common and pejorative use in English of the word "dumbness" to denote stupidity (cf. Devereux 1991. See Enninger 1987 and Jaworski 1993:23, 48 on the general European and Anglo-American bias in favour of speech and against silence. Gilmore however shows [1985] the latter to be positively valued in some Western contexts, notably the classroom). By contrast, the Pa'ikwené like many other Amerindians relate stupidity and intelligence not to oral but aural behaviour (see chapter 4).

hearing”, plays as large a role in Pa’ikwené social life as it does for the aforementioned Navajo. For the present, however, I wish instead to consider its opposite, ‘speech’; or more precisely, proper speech - and, as a chief qualifier of this condition, loud speech. To start with, I shall return to the subject of children and their upbringing as it relates to the matter.

Those of my village were not debarred from, or reprimanded for, speaking when adults were doing so (outside, revealingly, of the context of a church service). On the contrary, they were from the youngest age actively encouraged and expected to participate and, more to the point, interact verbally both in public and in the home. For not only was to speak considered to be social, as noted, but talking together was explicitly held to constitute society itself in that such interpersonal communication embodied social relations, which were themselves thought of in terms of solidarity, sociability, emotional well-being and morality (cf. E. Basso 1986:134-6 on Kalapalo concepts about dialogue).

It was my experience that, irrespective of sex, Pa’ikwené children tended to be listened to with as much respect and seriousness as older people; and their words, for all that they might not contain as much knowledge as a man’s or woman’s, were no less valued. Be the speaker a child or an adult, an important characteristic of their ability to “speak well”, and one I will now focus on, is that of loudness.

“Auna kihao”

This, the Pa’ikwené’s conventional conversational style of communication, means “to speak (loud and) strong”. It is not to be confused with the ‘powerful’ way of talking used in the formal so-called ceremonial dialogues engaged in by some other Lowland groups such as the Trio (Rivière 1971). Nor, while it is certainly required of them, is it the duty or privilege of the chiefs alone, as also occurs elsewhere, e.g. among the Nambikuara, Akwe-Shavante, Amuesha or Wayapi (see respectively Lévi-Strauss 1967, Maybury-Lewis 1967, Santos-Granero 1991:301-2, Campbell 1995:115, and also Clastres 1987:27-47, 152-5). Rather, it is both the ideally correct and proper method of everyday discourse, in terms both of vocal technique and aesthetics, and the common practical norm. It is also ungendered. As a woman informant proudly put it: “We Pa’ikwené, we speak strong.”

Among themselves and, again, be they male or female, children were very much given to speaking in shouts. This they did all day long and, to my ears, piercingly, and not just when playing. Rather than ethnocentrically assessing such conduct to be anarchic ‘natural’ high spirits, or simply the symptom of childish unruliness, I suggest we should see it as a legitimate, culturally endorsed one. Pa’ikwené parents never, as far as I could see, explicitly exhorted children to be loud. But certainly neither they nor any other adults did anything to subdue or prevent what in effect amounted to a norm which they themselves fulfilled, though generally in a more self-disciplined way. It constituted proper behaviour, and one that was pleasurable both to do and to hear (albeit admittedly not always for me). The Pa’ikwené child’s speaking in a shouting and screaming manner seemed to be a form of training by which it was intended that he or she master the typical cultural trait of “auna kihao”, the loud-and-strong speaking described more fully below, which is itself a component of “auna kabai” (speaking well).

Basically, then, what might look to us like utter permissiveness and unrestrained vocal self-expression could perhaps be a socialising technique for incubating in the young individual the Pa’ikwené ethos of personal autonomy and assertiveness within, and as a necessary instrumental aspect of, the group (see F. Grenand and Renault-Lescure 1990:24-6 on the socialisation of Pa’ikwené children and [p. 31] the equality and freedom of Pa’ikwené girls). Various aspects of Pa’ikwené ‘individualism’ are discussed in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Along with learning the vocally technical aspect of ‘speaking well’, the Pa’ikwené child becomes familiar with the rules of grammar (which I shall not be dealing with) and those applying to the social pragmatics of language usage. There are, for instance, categories of people with whom one may talk to and others with whom one may not.²

² Although I found no prohibitions relating specifically to children, there were a number of cases more generally, e.g. mother-in-law/son-in-law and father-in-law/daughter-in-law avoidance, a rule followed less and less in present day practice (cf. Arnaud 1968:10). Another (and still extant) convention requires that a couple that has broken an agreement to marry must no longer talk together directly.

The underlying notion that talking together creates marital relations would seem to exist elsewhere in Amazonia. According to Isacson (1993:365-6), the Embera conceptualise words and speaking in terms of an alliance marriage system - and also of *war*. See too Belaunde (1992:43, 50-4) on the formal dialogue of Airo-Pai ‘conversation partners’ leading to their children’s eventual marriage. Thus, presumably, broken potential relations = no talking together = no marital and social relations. Cf. Lévi-Strauss’ (1969:493-6, 1986:61-2) on the perceived analogy of words and women as the means whereby social communication, and therefore society itself, is established and maintained.

While the term “auna kihao” adequately describes the broad condition of this type of speech style (i.e., loud-and-strong), in reality there were, both quantitatively and qualitatively, various degrees and nuances of loudness and strength. A speaker’s tone could be anything from deeply resonant to stentorian, the voice having at different times recourse to all the conceivable permutations of hardness, sharpness, stridency and thunderousness. A chat about their gardens or a discussion over whether to take the canoe out or not might often in Village Espérance 2 attain in terms of decibel output the level of a shouting match. I exaggerate but slightly; being with the Pa’ikwené was frequently for me like living in a small room with the radio blasting out at full volume.

“To speak loud-and-strong” also entails talking distinctly. This last consists in making each syllable count, giving equal delineation, stress and weight to every word, and “speaking with the front of the mouth.” One reason I was given by an informant for the origin of this way of speaking was the necessity to be heard over distance in a terrain where visibility is impeded by such natural features as trees and marsh vegetation, as the Pa’ikwené habitat (flooded savanna) traditionally was, and still is in the Aúkwa homeland but much less so if at all around St Georges de l’Oyapock. This ecological aspect, while probably not totally explaining the reason for the Pa’ikwené’s booming oral style, indicates the part the natural environment may play not just in sensory perception but also in the socio-moral and aesthetic dimensions of spoken language (cf. Gell 1995).

A further crucial component of their ‘good speaking’ and ‘loud and strong talking’ was pitch. In the case of men, it should be low, and in that of women, somewhat higher - but with both apparently being required to maintain it at the same level throughout. The elements of tone and pitch should not be dismissed as meaningless technique or style, ‘mere’ aesthetic dressing. In Pa’ikwené society, pitching your speech right is to be taken both literally and figuratively if the listener is to find your words agreeable, that is pleasing and acceptable, and they cannot be one without the other. For, pragmatically, correct vocal pitch makes manifest the moral and thought content of the spoken. Speaking loudly and strongly is not for the Pa’ikwené a sign of blind, mindless emotion; the use of the right tone and pitch predicates a mastery of knowledge seen as a matter of morality and proper social conduct.

Ideally, then, and, I found, to a consistently high degree in practice, Pa'ikwené discourse, whether chiefly rhetoric or the everyday talk of ordinary villagers, was nothing if not characteristically robust and, by definition, powerful vocally and, as I intend showing in the chapter on 'political communication', in other ways also.

"Loud and strong" talk, and indeed loudness in general, struck me as a mark of Pa'ikwené sociality. It is, I believe, revealing of them that while, like other Amerindians, they prize the peaceable and tranquil life, its very condition appears to depend on the existence of a (to my mind) less than peaceful level of sound. To quote from my fieldnotes (25th February 1994):

"Except for hunting and sleeping, no-one seems capable of doing anything (conversing, cooking, playing, working, laughing, eating...) in a silent or even a muted way. Connected with this, a Pa'ikwené individual, young or old, while very much their 'own person', does not seem happy if alone. He/she is forever seeking out, and experiencing-enjoying to the full, contact with another or others. It's as if human noise (loudness of talking, working, laughing, eating, sniffing coughing and hawking³ etc.: loudness of co-existing) marks out this contact as more social, enhances its reality, makes it more valuable... somehow paradoxically permits the 'Quiet Life' and makes it manifest⁴ and meaningful." (For more on this see next chapter).

"Auna kihao", however, was not the only speaking style in use; and literally (from my point of view) reasonable sounding dialogues, not to mention 'quiet natters' and, especially at night, hushed tête-à-têtes, did take place. Also, apart from the low tones of hunters in the forest, described in chapter 4 section iii, 'private' conversation between men could sometimes be as subdued as that of upper class Englishmen in the leather armchair'd intimacy of their club as portrayed in Edwardian fiction. Conversations between women, on the other hand, were apt to be consistently loud and strong, and as of a piece with their characteristic assertiveness and generally powerful station in Pa'ikwené society (see the sequence on female 'scolding', item vi chapter 5).

Although, then, not every utterance was "loud-and-strong", the general tone of

³ The Village Espérance Deux Pa'ikwené were constantly getting colds and influenza (see item on healing in chapter 9 part 2).

⁴ See Seeger 1987:65-9, 74-81 on how human noise and voices (speech and singing) recreate and embody the Suyá community.

Pa'ikwené speech at conversational and not just declamatory level was at least a half shout. Whether hurriedly running their words together, or more commonly speaking at the proper, slower, and more measured pace, people sought to give each syllable identical importance, clarity and, as it were, sonic mass. This tended to make for discourse which consisted of undeviating chords of meaningful sound, as equal in tone, pitch, volume and emphasis at the beginning as at the end, though subjacent emotion or laughter would not infrequently cause a swell along the line (see below for more on this aspect).

Often people talked to each other in tones of what I perceived, until I learned otherwise, to be anger. Of course, this emotion existed in the community like anywhere else, but it was seen as a morally unacceptable state and unfavourably valued. Genuinely angry speech was feared as an expression of uncontrolled violence. For the Evangelical Pa'ikwené, it was like all other emotions classed as negative a symptom of ungodliness, a product of "Wavitché", the Devil (see chapter 9). The tone which I mistook for anger, on the other hand, was valued as a conventional, proper, legitimate, and mastered form of 'loud and strong' talking which seemed to be used for stressing matters felt to be particularly salient, important, or grave. Indeed, its use manifested and contributed, I would say, to a person's dignity and gravitas. In descriptive terms, it consisted in the speaker attaining a certain booming quality by audibly inflating the ends of words with his or her breath and thus vibrating them as if simultaneously to demonstrate the intensity of his or her thoughts and intentions, and to accord more power to them.

Other speaking styles and paralinguistic expression.

The above example aside, I have indicated that a distinctive feature of the Pa'ikwené way of speaking was that, regardless of volume, delivery tended to be even, with the voice maintaining the same tone, timbre and pitch throughout. I would not, though, like to give the impression that their speech was vocally flat and stylistically unemotive, for the reverse was true. Nor, as I have already said, was there merely one type of style, or standard, of everyday speaking.

(a) There existed a number of culturally constructed strategies by which the speaker's emotions were not just made transparent but concretely embodied and specifically projected. They formed part of a sort of communal crypto-language

which a Pa'ikwené individual could draw on in order explicitly and *meaningfully* to articulate an attitude or an intensity of feeling. Perhaps the most typical example was the phonetic sound “Ong” which one affixed or infixed like an extra syllable to a word as if to invest it with greater expressivity. Thus, for instance, I once heard a person, who noticed another carelessly leaving the lid off a baby's supply of drinking water, exclaim angrily:

“Ig w**ONG**ka ún!”

in lieu of “Ig woka ún” (“He opens the water”). The insertion of this high-pitched, partly nasal, slightly strangled, and elongated sound, which an informant described to me as a “nearly word” (i.e., it was held virtually to constitute a legitimate lexical item), acted, then, as an oral, and aural, punctuation for making and emphasising points, and giving direct voice to affective states.

Sometimes, when placed paragoge⁵-like at the end of a word, the “Ong” converted into “Bong”. For example:

“Nah ka mwaka-**BBBONG!**”⁶ (“Nah ka mwaka” = “I don't want!”)

(b) Another method, resorted to both in ordinary conversation and story telling, and which relied on duplication, was the use of stretched or sliding vowel and consonant sounds. This too was done in order to express and stress an emotion. For example:

“Kabuntchúa”, meaning ‘wonderful’, becoming “Kabuuuuntchúa!”

“Magúyé”, meaning “that's good/delicious”, becoming “Mmmaggúyééé!”

“Henéwa”, meaning “it is true”, becoming “Hennnééwwaaa!”

These glissandi also served to indicate, and acoustically ‘illustrate’, the dimension of a given object or circumstance. Thus:

“Kaínsima”, meaning “much/many”, becoming “Kkka'aaaiĩnsima!”

“Minikwak”, meaning “in the past/a long time ago” becoming “Mmiiniikwakk!”

⁵ Technical term meaning the addition of a syllable or sound to the end of a word.

⁶ According to Kallir (1961:85-125), the elemental primary sound “B” possesses homœopathic magical force and its reduplication induces power.

(c) Such features not only contributed to the musicality of Pa'ikwené speech, but to that of their social life more generally. In spite of the demise of traditional singing in Village Espérance Deux, due to the influence of the Assemblée de Deus church (see chapter 9), everyday verbal communication was nevertheless musical in its own right.⁷ For me, the most musical of all their speaking actions, and in its way their most quintessentially expressive act of social (re)production, was the loud, cheerful, and indeed frequently joyous, yodelled greeting call with which individuals hailed, responded to, and 'confirmed' each other:

Bai-ahēēē^e**EE**?

lhēēēē^e**EE**!

This being the sung rendition of the convention:

-- "Ba pi ai?" ("Are you here?")

-- "lhi, nah ai" ("Yes, I am here.")

A salient aspect of this performance was the way in which the two parties concerned very often not only invested a standard formula with their emotion, but also employed it as a means of giving vent to their artistic expressivity (cf. Crocker 1977:44 on how the use of formulaic and traditional rhetorical norms need not for all that be without creative and poetic qualities).

In interesting and, for the anthropologist, paradoxical contrast to this, particularly emotionally charged greetings between intimates could customarily display an air of decided coolness. Thus the closer the relationship between individuals and the longer, or more intensely felt, the separation, the less verbally and gesturally effusive and marked their eventual re-encounter seemed to be. For example, Susana, acutely worried on one occasion by the failure of her husband and eldest son to return from the hunt, all but wordlessly, and as if indifferently, acknowledged them when they finally turned up some two days late, and just as a search party was about to set out to look for them. Conceivably her attitude might be attributed to 'psychological' factors; however, it was conventional behaviour. For Susana to have acted other than with such flatness and verbal restraint would

⁷See Ingold's argument (1993a:449-58) that the distinction between music/song (and emotion/expressivity) and language (and thought/volition) is not a universal dichotomy but a culturally constructed 'Western' one; and that, on the contrary, the two terms form a natural continuum in reality.

have been deemed improper.⁸

There were also a number of other greetings and salutations, ranging from the more formal to the very casual and 'pally':

- "Aitné, Kíavyé/Kíavúno", the conventional formula of respect for hailing an older man/woman.
- "Mmah pikabayan?" ("How are you?")
- "Nah kabai (or, very often, kabai nah), ya pis?" ("I'm fine, and yourself?").
- "Mah pisneba?" (literally: "Is it you?" and meaning "Glad to see/meet you")
- "Ahadjé", or "ihé/Yé", or "ihí" ("Yes" meaning "Likewise", and said by a male and female responder respectively).
- "Ai kam" (to a single person) or "Ai ka" (to a group).
- "Ahadjé" or "ihí" (The response for a man or a woman respectively).
- "Yaba?" ("How's it going?", "Hi")
- "Koh" ("Fine")

As Goffman notes (1972:4), "there is an etiquette for initiating an encounter and bringing it to an end." In respect of the latter function among the Pa'ikwené, the norm was for farewells to be all equally unstressed, and sometimes even barely marked, speech events. They were flat tonally and also emotionally (in the sense of the interlocutors not letting their feelings show in their voices), with the leaver merely and very matter of factually announcing:

- "Nah méchwik" ("I'm going")

to which the addressee either laconically gives the unconcerned-seeming and identically matter of fact conventional response:

- "Ahadjé" ("Yes/okay/fine/right")

or else, frequently, says nothing at all.

According to Goffman (ibid.:79-80), such behaviour is characteristic of "passing greetings" (i.e., those in which the parties involved swiftly proceed on their separate

⁸ Cf. the description in K. Basso (1969) of a similar avoidance of speech by affectively close Apache when remaking contact after a long absence.

ways) where “Hellos are exchanged, but *goodbyes are often dispensed with*, as if the end of not being in touch was being marked but the beginning of being in touch not realised and therefore *its termination unneedful of ritual comment*.” (my emphasis). It was my observation that the Pa’ikwené’s low-key or even non marking of the farewell salutation seemed generally to apply to longer contacts as well as fleeting ones, irrespective of the social or affective closeness of the actors (See Goffman *ibid.*:73-91 on greetings and leave-takings which he terms “access rituals”).

(d) Men and women belonging to the same generation and who were not only socially but emotionally close would sometimes speak to one another in soft, sugary tones which can best be described as a ‘sweet talking’ voice. While generally occurring among spouses, I did see examples of this speech style between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. Expressing affection, it was not exclusively reserved for private intimate moments as its equivalent tends to be among Europeans, and people resorted to it publicly and unselfconsciously.

A nasal and even more saccharine variation of this was in use among many of the men. It was an ‘ ‘ikkle baby ’-type voice which a man would adopt with close male kin and friends of the same generation (though I have observed it between fathers and adult or near adult sons) as a style for joking, mutual teasing, ridiculing and lampooning third parties, and general playfulness. In putting it on, a person’s mouth sagged, his entire face assumed what the English call a ‘soppy’ expression, and he exuded a visible sense of fun. Individuals vied with each other over who could produce the silliest, most babyish voice; their efforts invariably ended in fits of giggling and laughter.

Karinai, in whose house I resided, and who frequently indulged in this vocal play with his cronies, told me that the behaviour arose in his circle as the result of mimicking a fellow villager, now dead, whose normal speaking voice it apparently was. Assuming this to be true, and given that I heard this style in different Pa’ikwené communities, might not the phenomenon have some bearing on the process whereby impromptu and innovative actions become established in small-scale societies as widespread and customary cultural traits?

.....

I have talked so far of volume, pitch, tone, and some of the other meaningful sonic components of a discourse which comprise its 'prosodic' (intonation, stress pattern) and 'paralingual' (vocal tone, loudness, cadence etc.) aspects (see Lyons 1981:26). As noted in the previous chapter, a hearer will also take into account the communicative value of the speaker's kinesic (movements, gestures) and proxemic (muscular, facial, ocular and other somatic signals) qualities when responding to utterances. Similarly, the personal and socio-cultural situation (see Hymes 1971) within which any given discourse is embedded and, also, the speaker's emotional and physical attitudes, can add meaning to utterances beyond the semantic (sign-referential) level of the words and the propositional content level of the sentences. Furthermore, both context⁹ and stance may 'describe' a verbal action as more than just sociopragmatic behaviour. Accordingly, I now turn my attention to the aesthetic and, in more detail than before, affective dimensions of the oral-aural process, in so far as both are indispensable elements of Pa'ikwené intelligibility.

Some aesthetical and affective aspects of Pa'ikwené speech.

Sherzer and Urban, noting (1986:3) the high value Amerindians place on the aesthetics of speech, suggest that its poetic and dramatic features are no more divorced from the other characteristics of daily social life than they are from those of discourse proper. They claim, I believe rightly, that rather than merely coexisting with these other elements, 'performance' is in fact a constituent of them. I propose that this is as true of the Pa'ikwené's informal types of speaking as their more formal ones.

A Pa'ikwené will not only "hear-understand" and assess the semantic meaning of a speaker's words but also the *style*, and its own perceived meaning,¹⁰ in which he or she delivered them: the tone, pitch, enunciation, vocal timbre; and the sum of the non-oral facets of his or her "presentation of self" (Goffman 1980). That is, all the performance qualities, both denotative and suggestive, and conventional and

⁹ For a good general discussion on context with reference to linguistic analysis, and the need to rethink the very notion, see Goodwin & Duranti 1992

¹⁰ As will be seen my use of "meaning" is broad, but I find it neither necessary nor helpful here to oppose it to the linguistics term "implicature" (see Lyons 1981:206-17) or any other. On the multiple meanings of "meaning" see Lyons (ibid:13-15) and Sperber (1979:8-16).

private, as far as these can be distinguished, which add up to more than technique; and which the speaker's audience perceives - and judges. While 'ordinary' Pa'ikwené dialogic relations are notably informal, as are the great majority of their social ones in general, they nevertheless possess commonly understood criteria (verbal, presentational, and social). These should be followed and speech kept "appropriate" (Hymes op. cit.:56) in terms other than the purely linguistic. Failure to do so will be interpreted, and a meaning drawn. According to Hymes, 'appropriateness' pertains to what one is able culturally to say in any given situation; I extend the term to cover the way in which one says it.

I reported above that 'good speaking', i.e., to speak loudly, strongly and confidently, and to articulate deliberately and clearly, signifies social as well as discursive correctness for a Pa'ikwené. Not to speak that way, therefore, patently implies the opposite. It also, at the same time, means ugliness and, by extension, antisocialness and immorality, for 'good speaking' is valued in aesthetic terms too. The Pa'ikwené are particularly attentive to this aspect of it. As mentioned earlier too, they will often praise an example of fine delivery, calling it "baréúyo" ("pretty", "beautiful", and also "clean" and "proper"¹¹). And a hearer will cut his or her cloth accordingly: it is one of the factors instrumentally at work in the choice of response to a speaker; it influences the suitable volitional and social 'hearing-understanding' action, as opposed to the neurophysiological reflexive one, to take.

Like Overing with regard to the Piaroa (1989), I found that the Pa'ikwené did not disassociate the aesthetic from the ethical and the sociopolitical. For them too, it seemed, "beauty' is seen as an expression of moral and political value" (p. 159). And 'good speaking', as a behaviour at once cultural, sociopolitical, moral and beautiful, and thereby pleasing, "fits their aesthetic of community life" (p. 172). Thus, to give one example, when a Pa'ikwené parent, surveying the rounded head of his or her baby, loudly, strongly and confidently announces "nah batek", which simultaneously means "I like/love" and "I (am) happy", he or she is expressing more than a 'purely personal' pride and joy. For typical in Pa'ikwené babies as it is among other Amerindian peoples,¹² that "most beautiful" of shapes, which is at

¹¹ A similar concept exists elsewhere in Amazonia, e.g. the Shipibo-Conibo term "Quiquin" jointly signifies 'aesthetic' and 'appropriate' (Gebhardt-Sayer cited in Howes 1991:6).

¹² Cf. Clastres 1988:15-6 apropos the Guayaki.

once natural and enhanced by daily massaging in infancy, elicits approval as a socio-cultural norm. Simultaneously, it is also the object of an appreciation both coolly critical and intensely heartfelt as a (fulfilled) aesthetic ideal. As such, people both comprehend and value it as another (beautiful and meaningful) marker of their Indian-ness; of the (beautiful and thus satisfying) state of being Pa'ikwené. In my discussion on Pa'ikwené work and productivity (chapter 8), I will describe in more detail the procedure entailed in realising this ideal head shape and, through it, the construction of beautiful and proper social beings.

“Kabai” (“good”), “ka kabai” (“not good”), “bareúyé” [“-yo, feminine] (“beautiful”), “mbayavyé [“-yo”, feminine] (“ugly”, “not nice”, “improper”): expressed in respect of speech actions, and their actors, these terms are at one and the same time moral judgments, sensory and affective evaluations, aesthetic assessments, and statements about meaningfulness (see chapters 4, 6 and 7 for other aspects of the Pa'ikwené’s response to speakers, speaking and speech situations).

The Pa'ikwené’s manifest soul-pleasure, then, in round-headedness and ‘good speaking’ and all the other signs and behaviours which both represented the ‘good life’ and were conducive to, and necessary for, its reproduction (such as, say, joking and laughing, or the making of extra beautifully decorated artifacts specifically intended as gifts), would seem to confirm the thesis that aesthetic notions are not just learnt normative conventions and intellectual criteria. They are also very much a question of sensory perception and emotional ‘feel’.

Similarly, ‘feel’ was just as instrumental, I believe, as lexical knowledge, linguistic and pragmatic analysis and logical deduction, in enabling a person to work out the jointly verbal and extra-verbal sense of any given speech situation. For a linguist, ‘sense’ tends to be specifically a matter of semantic relations between a word and others substitutionally or combinatorially linked to it (Lyons op. cit.:58, 91). This concept notably underpins Saussure’s structure-dependent theory of meaning (1965) with its twin bases of the ‘paradigmatic’ and ‘syntagmatic’.¹³ As will have been understood from the above, my own notion, informed by Pa'ikwené *relations between speakers* and the “hearer-listener-understander’s” *engagement with the verbal performance*, combining semantic, pragmatic, aesthetic, moral, sensory and

¹³ For a cogent critique of the abstract notions of linguists, see Ingold 1993a.

emotional action, is laxer and wider (cf. Burke 1941:8-18, Merleau-Ponty 1945:204-37).

As this issue is explored further in both chapters on 'hearing-listening-understanding', I move on now to discuss some of the effects and implications of the encounter between the Pa'ikwené's native language and those spoken by the various (non-Amerindian) peoples with whom they are in contact.

“AUNA KABAI” - “TO SPEAK WELL”

2. Pa'ikwaki and other languages.

Relations between Pa'ikwaki and non-indigenous languages.

I briefly noted earlier the influence of Créole (and also Portuguese and French) on Pa'ikwaki, and the fears of virtually all the Pa'ikwené I met in regards to its future. I would like now to look at this issue a little more closely. Such invasiveness is not a new phenomenon. Contact with the non-Amerindian universe and, it follows, a certain absorption of its traits, has been occurring to a lesser or greater degree for well nigh half a millennium (see chapter 1). In the 1920's Nimuendaju had already observed (1971:82) the “degeneration” of the indigenous canons of pronunciation, and blamed it on the effects of Créole. There is no doubting the particularly unrelenting impact of that outside world, in terms of persistence and concentration, on the life of today's Pa'ikwené, both linguistically and in many of the other vital cultural spheres. Furthermore, this influence does not stem from a single alien culture only. Apart from the inevitable consequences of their longterm relations, principally of trade, with Créole society among which, in Guyane, they are enclaved (and which is itself undergoing considerable cultural change), the Pa'ikwené are also subjected, and open, to the diverse and not infrequently contrasting influences deriving from their joint incorporation in both the Brazilian state and the French one.

On top of this, as a number of the chapters below will reveal, they prove not immune to, and indeed are, so many of them, seduced by, the radically transformational capacities of a general and modernist ‘Western’ culture, especially in the areas of the economy, religion, education, and even medicine - each of which may be said to affect the native ways of seeing the world and, ultimately, speaking Pa'ikwaki. This should not be taken as meaning that the imported vocabulary necessarily imposes or brings into being new and alien concepts and destroys the previous ones. For as the subsequent chapters will also show, the Pa'ikwené, like other Lowland peoples (see for example McCallum 1990 apropos the Cashinahua), seemed perfectly able to reconcile the new language to the views, expectations and requirement of the ‘old’ system of values and meanings.

The use of Créole, or Créole derived, and so French based, words peppered Pa'ikwené discourse, notably in the areas of practical life. Thus, for example: "Kwiyeg" ("cuillère": spoon), "Simis" ("chemise": shirt), "Alimet" ("allumettes": matches), "Katúsh" ("cartouches": cartridges), "Búwet" ("boite": box). I found some of these terms slightly disorientating. This was not just due to the, for me, unfamiliar accents in which they were uttered, but also because they were as if a bit off-key or no longer content to stay in their original *French* French place; thus, for instance, "Triko": a tee-shirt for the Pa'ikwené but, as "tricot", a knitted jumper in France (what the English call a "woolly"). This slippage, though, seemed less the Pa'ikwené's own doing than the prior effect of creolisation.

A further feature of Créole appropriated by the Pa'ikwené was the agglutination of the French definite article ("le", "la") and partitive article ("de", "du" = 'some [of the]') into the substantive; thus: "Lésens" ("L'essence": petrol), "Dilúi" ("De l'huile": oil) and "Dilet" ("Du lait": milk).

Although they realised that some of their words were also used by Créoles, and were interested to hear (from me) of the French connection, some Pa'ikwené seemed not to know that they were in fact loan words. Rather, they thought of them as wholly and inherently their own. To give an example, I once asked a woman how to say "mango", and was told:

"Mangue".

"No, not in French, in Pa'ikwaki," I said.

"*That...*" she insisted, looking at me as if I were stupid, "is Pa'ikwaki!"

There is, of course, a 'purely' Pa'ikwaki word for mango (although I cannot recall it), just as there is for not a few other items which people now tend more and more to call by their non-Pa'ikwaki Pa'ikwené terms instead: e.g. "Kwak" (manioc flour; in Pa'ikwaki: "Púpeyé"); "Mamai/Papai" (Vocative: Mum/Dad, borrowed from the Portuguese). Other things were referred to alternately by their Pa'ikwaki and non-Pa'ikwaki names, such as an owl: "Shúwet" (French/Créole "Chouette") and "Púkúpkú" (indigenous); or the manioc-and-water drink rendered both as "Chibé" (Créole) and "Búgúhat" (indigenous).

Some expressions deftly incorporate two or even three languages, as in "Paiva (Pa'ikwaki) ler (Créole)?" ("What is the hour [time]?") which has replaced the traditional "Kinei kamú?" ("Where is the sun?"). Indeed it was not uncommon for

people to mix three languages in one and the same sentence, as in “Kadahan dois kilos encore” (“there are still two kilos”), which is how I once heard someone describe the current state of his sugar supply to a Brazilian visitor.

With Pa’ikwené children now attending the state schools on the French side of the Oyapock river, and being taught by Brazilian teachers in the Aúkwa homeland, the community’s fluency in these two languages will, I estimate, soon match their knowledge of Créole, which has historically been the practical lingua franca for all the peoples of the region. For Jean Narcissio, the president of the Association d’Amérindiens Palikurs at Macouria (some 25 km outside Cayenne), there is a pressing need for the Pa’ikwené in Guyane to acquire more proficiency in French in order precisely to circumvent and combat a certain hegemonic expansion on the part of the creolophone world. He told me of his deep fear concerning the, for him, pernicious cultural and political implications of the invasive influence of Créole, and the growing tendency of, or pressure on, some individuals, especially among the younger generation, to discard Pa’ikwaki in its favour. This contrasts rather starkly with the claim by F. and P. Grenand who reported [1979:5], admittedly nearly twenty years ago, that in Guyane the “Palikur language seems to be successfully holding its own against the Créole influence”; a view they maintain in P. and F. Grenand 1990:33, and at odds with Nimuendaju’s historically earlier perception, referred to above.

But perhaps what is at issue now is not the inroads of Créole (and Portuguese and French) as such. After all they have been occurring for several centuries and, no less than Karib linguistic imports (see F. and P. Grenand 1987:30 fn. 25), are an inevitable contributory factor in the diachronic growth of (Arawakan) Pa’ikwaki. Rather, the problem seems to be one of attitude: the choice and behaviour of a certain section of today’s ‘acculturated’ youth who hold it more ‘modern’ to speak Créole than their own language (and to adopt Créole and ‘Western’ ways in preference to ancestral ones). This has resulted in a situation which is both deeply disturbing to and condemned by most of their elders; and also by some of their peers. During my fieldwork, the youngsters of my village swapped punches on a number of occasions with those from the neighbouring one (Espérance 1) over this question: the former retained a fundamentally ‘traditionalist’ stance in respect of Pa’ikwaki (though not towards all ‘old time’ Pa’ikwené cultural features), while many of the latter were assertively and, it was felt, tauntingly dropping it in favour of

Créole.

According to Virsen, one of the Espérance 2 youths, even those younger people who, like himself, have made it a point of ethnic integrity and honour to retain Pa'ikwaki, do not know how to speak it properly. Describing the language spoken nowadays as “New Pa'ikwaki”, i.e., Pa'ikwaki with a heavy foreign admixture, he stated: “We don't speak ‘real’ Pa'ikwaki anymore.” This assumption, held by many of his generation, seemed to pose their language in terms of a historical succession of progressively deteriorating stages. Each of these, as it travels further and further away from some purportedly ideal matrix of purity, correctness and authenticity, is inferior in relation to the last; with “New Pa'ikwaki” grammatically and, somehow, ethically and aesthetically near to utter degeneracy.

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Hagège, considering the disappearance of so many ‘minority languages’, writes (1991:56-7) that their death, which he stresses is a cultural and not a “biological”, i.e., natural, one, is due to the “irresistible diffusion of [alien] languages which bring in their wake [Western] money, technology and ideology” (my translation). He concludes that those languages in which these three ‘values’ are not spoken are fated to disappear one by one. Such appears to be the present plight of the Pa'ikwené's highly prized yet moribund ceremonial language, Kiaptúnka (item iv chapter 5). What though of the vernacular and, in its own way, no less valued Pa'ikwaki, given the profound, long-standing impact of Créole and the steadily growing one of French and Portuguese, the decision by some people to opt for them at the expense of their own tongue, and also the irreversible absorption and grip of outsider economic, technological, philosophical and other cultural influences? It seems to me that in spite of these factors (and Virsen's misgivings) Pa'ikwaki remains sufficiently resilient to survive, at least in the foreseeable future. I suggest that it might even continue to grow and prosper thanks to its speakers' adroit and discerning flair for appropriating and adapting some of the perceivably advantageous features of the foreign languages; to the extent that, as reported, they are regarded as being, and thus to all intents and purposes ‘really’ are, indigenous ones. I have presented above some examples of non-native lexical items which have been reinvented and naturalised. In item vii of the chapter on ‘political communication’ we will note too how a certain discourse of power felt to

be inherent in the French language is borrowed by the Pa'ikwené for use within the family.

Some might see in this the sign of an unconscious, unbuckable acculturation. Could it not be instead evidence of synergy? I join with F. and P. Grenand (1987:54-6) in thinking that the Pa'ikwené like other Lowland Amerindians relate not only interactively but dynamically with alien cultures. That in the sphere of language as in the others of their life, far from being passive victims they are a society the majority of whose members possess robust and effective agency, which allows them to confront change through a "series of successive readjustments... around a central framework of inherent values" (F. and P. Grenand *ibid.*:56, my translation).¹⁴

In view of Pa'ikwaki's vigour and regenerative force, as well as the Pa'ikwené's intense and near mystical attachment to it as an essential and defining part of their personhood and identity, and, too, the depth of axiological and affective feeling for, and perceived socially productive nature not to mention characteristic loudness of, speaking, it might be worthwhile resurrecting Marcel Cohen's term of "puissances" - that is to say, potencies/strengths/powers - which he coined for his typology of speech (1971:5-37).¹⁵ To my mind this is preferable to the notion of 'function' propounded by Malinowski (1930) in respect of language in so-called 'primitive societies', where its "essentially pragmatic character" (p. 316) means that it is a "mode of action, [but purportedly] not an instrument of reflection" (p. 312). For, as I have tried to describe, and as I believe the material suggests, the Pa'ikwené themselves see speaking in terms not just of utilitarian purpose but also of social and moral efficacy.

¹⁴ Cf. among others Campbell 1989:55-8 on the Wayapi, Gow 1991:274-98 on the Piro; also more generally Ramos 1991, Campbell 1995:218-9.

¹⁵ I borrow Cohen's terminology, not his Marxist approach. His work relates to different types of "specialised uses of language in the framework of the superstructure [which] can often be regarded as fragments of institutions... or the means of actualising institutions" (*ibid.*:5, my translation). These types are: (1) "The word and extra-human forces" - e.g. language used in religion, magic, human-spirit communication; (2) "Effective formulae used in interpersonal relations" - e.g. meetings and partings, inductions and expulsions, vows, codified prescriptions; (3) "Persuasion and instruction" - e.g. pleas, propaganda, reasoning and analysis; and (4) "Entertainment" - e.g. literature, theatre, word games.

chapter four

"TCHIMAP", "TO HEAR-LISTEN-UNDERSTAND"¹: THE SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF PA'IKWENÉ AUDITION.

"I knew I had difficulty understanding others..."

(Felisberto Hernández, 1990 [1960]:359, my translation)

"You wish to see, listen; hearing is a step toward vision."

(St Bernard de Clairvaux)

While speaking occupies an important place as a subject of anthropological study, the same cannot be said of its twin social action, hearing. Relatively little research has been carried out on the topic, some of which I shall be referring to in due course. In the main, however, despite its validation as a cultural construct and 'social fact' (Mauss 1979:111), hearing is still thought of, it seems to me, as having a lesser role sociologically in the process of discourse and relations with others: something so taken for granted perhaps that its contribution and, indeed, the hearer's agency, tend to become eclipsed. I offer the present discussion in the hope of redressing the balance.

A structuralist notion proposes that language is an abstract social phenomenon, and speech its unconscious adjunct (Lévi-Strauss 1986:56-7). I for my part share with others² the assumption that speaking sets up and maintains relations which are not only dialogic but thereby necessarily and concretely social. In Amazonia, where its societal nature is culturally highly aspected and valued, oral expression is typically perceived also to generate and maintain relations between human

¹ As will be seen, the conceptual linking of hearing and understanding is not rare in Amazonia. Apart from "Tchimap" there exists an alternative Pa'ikwaki word for 'to understand': "Púkúha", which also signifies 'to count'.

² E.g. Malinowski 1930; Burke 1941; Hymes 1971; Ducrot 1972:423-31; Freire 1977; Ch. Taylor 1985; Ingold 1986; Sherzer & Urban 1986; Volosinov 1986; Hagège 1991.

beings and non-human ones, such as animals, spirits and gods³ (a notion, need it be said, also found elsewhere). It is my thesis, based on observation of the Pa'ikwené's discursive practices and beliefs, that in this region hearing can also act - and act instrumentally - to the same ends; and substantially in the same manner. That is to say, relations between people, and between people and other categories of beings, are established, kept alive over time, and can be brought to an end, by the willed, intentional, purposive and thought-full *aural action* of the individual social actor.

The topic will be presented in two detached parts, the present chapter and a later one, spatially but not thematically separate. The former is divided into three sections: an introduction giving a basic outline of the subject, my reasons for addressing it, and the theoretical and other notional perspectives involved; a description of some pragmatic aspects of Pa'ikwené aural behaviour; and an examination of "Tchimap kabai", which means 'to hear-listen-understand well' and which I have glossed as "Good Hearing", with particular regard to its role in the actualisation of productive relations. The second and deferred part (chapter 6) is a discussion in the form of a 'philosophical dialogue' on the complementary phenomenon of "Tchimap ka kabai", meaning 'to hear-listen-understand badly' and glossed as "Bad Hearing".

(i) Introduction: Why hearing?

The decision to highlight the subject was primarily influenced by the fact - and memory - that in the strange and alien environment of the 'field' which at first overwhelms the senses, the fledgling anthropologist can only, like any newborn child, hear before he or she can speak.

My choice was also prompted in large part by the high incidence of, and great tolerance for, bad hearing which is so noticeable in the community where I was based. Whereas for much of the time I saw the Pa'ikwené world as through a mosquito net, unclearly, I had the feeling that I, and everyone else in Village Espérance Deux, was being heard as through a receiver which only worked one time out of five or six. In due course, for reasons which will be made clear, I put this

³See *inter alia* Métraux 1967; Crocker 1985; Seeger 1987; Santos-Granero 1991; Viveiros de Castro 1992.

down to cultural rather than congenital deafness. It was rare, for instance, outside of the ritual duet of the Pa'ikwené formal greeting with its typically prompt yodelled reply, described in the previous chapter, that an individual would immediately acknowledge that he or she was being addressed. More often than not, the stock response would be silence, which only ceased after a number of (generally) undaunted and patient reprises by the speaker. Sometimes an inordinate number of them was required to unblock the muteness which the addressee frequently upheld for elaborate and even, in my view, farcical lengths. It was just as rare for the addressor to take offence at this. Certainly, it was not a behaviour they found strange or eccentric among themselves. Openly acknowledged, it was referred to as "hearing badly" - "tchimap ka kabai" - and contrasted with "hearing well" - "tchimap kabai". Not to be confused with the transient non-communicativeness which often exists among adolescents in our own cultures, it occurred just as much between adults as youths and children, and between adults and non-adults.

It soon became apparent that the Pa'ikwené's "Bad Hearing" was not due to neurophysiological dysfunction. In the majority of cases, their apparent failure to hear on being spoken to turned out to be a social custom, not a natural act; and, too, very much an intentional and conscious one.⁴ Somewhat confusingly from my point of view (as will be seen), it is a class of action subdivided into two types: an unacceptable, illegitimate, antisocial behaviour, and an acceptable, legitimate and social one, on which I shall be concentrating. I would distinguish at this point between the silence associated with the latter kind, i.e., the tendency on the part of an addressed person to delay giving a verbal response, and normatively prescribed avoidance behaviour like the traditional 'no talking' rule, which forbids direct communication between members of certain Pa'ikwené categories of social beings such as mothers-in-law and sons-in-law. Furthermore, while these

⁴ While I define such auditory behaviour as conscious, obviously not all Pa'ikwené are cognizant of this (or indeed any other) action each and every time they engage in it. It might be more correct and convenient to regard it as a cultural trait that has become so internalised as to be 'second nature'. This by itself should not preclude it from also being conscious to some degree. So even if, at one level, it is a collective habit performed (seemingly) without self-reflectiveness most of the time by most people, I would be chary of calling it an unconscious act. I find Ingold's concept (1986:300-4) of 'practical consciousness', i.e., embedded in spontaneous practical action, a serviceable one for describing such behaviour. Inasmuch as hearing is, wholly or qualifyably, a conscious act, I think about it as Volosinov does about speaking (1986:85), that the actor's consciousness is both subjective and, being shaped by the collective consciousness, objective.

Various informants knowledgeably, and *knowingly*, described in their metadiscourse the fact of 'bad' and 'good' hearing and their uses, both social and, as will be seen in the case of the latter kind, magical.

proscriptions are followed less and less, to the point of being virtually defunct among the younger generation, 'non hearing' is, as I have intimated, a widespread and thriving practice.

The first point I am making, then, is that in Pa'ikwené society bad hearing (of the positive type) and the silence accompanying it are a convention.

I am however running a little ahead of myself, so will put off a fuller description of this phenomenon till later (chapter 6). In the meantime, I broach some of the theoretical aspects, both indigenous and non-indigenous, of hearing.

Variable sense data.

As stated above, in comparison with other topics there does not exist much ethnographic material on hearing both generally and where Amazonian societies are concerned; and what there is tends, barring some notable exceptions (to which I shall be paying due attention), to be both incidental and slight. There would seem to be two reasons for this. The first is that for the Western or Western-trained observer hearing-listening is clearly not as 'visible' a trait as speaking. Not as objectively seizable and recordable, seemingly a less concrete social fact, morphologically less easy to describe, overall it is a far less juicy topic.

Secondly, and underlying this, we tend culturally to favour sight and speech over hearing anyway. However, as Seeger (1987), Stoller (1989), Howes (1991 and 1991a), Classen (1991), Howes and Classen (1991), and others have shown, the classification of the senses varies from culture to culture.⁵ Ong explains (1969 and 1991) that while in 'Western' thinking sight is 'seen' as superior to hearing and the other faculties this may not necessarily be true of non-Western sensoria⁶; and Gell for one has pleaded (1995:236) for anthropologists to beware the disadvantages of this visual bias and adopt a more multi-sensorial approach to their field work. The perceived dominance of sight is premised on the Ancient

⁵ It will be objected that speaking does not constitute a sense. However, some cultures do consider it one, e.g. the Javanese (Dundes 1980) and Wolof (Rabain cited in Howes 1991a:182-5). Like sight, it is judged in the 'West' to possess a higher status and greater value than hearing (Ong 1991) and, commonly, to be a sign of intelligence in its own right (Philips 1972). It is also held a more active action than hearing, something I shall be returning to throughout the chapter.

⁶ See too Foucault 1979a, Summers 1987, Tyler 1984, Synnott 1991, Burnett, Fend & Gouk 1991.

Greek notion relating it to knowledge and truth and their acquisition (Wilden 1975:175, Sorabji 1987, Synnott 1991). Plato, for instance, posits the primacy of sight on the grounds that it leads to God and Truth. According to Aristotle it is the most developed and morally superior sense (and touch the most inferior and 'animal' one), being directly linked to knowledge. The Ancient Greeks conceived of understanding itself as a kind of sight, in contrast to the Ancient Hebrews' notion of it as a kind of hearing (Ong 1991:27).

The Pa'ikwené philosophy of the senses is (perhaps) less unilateral in this respect. Although, as already noted, they too couple understanding with hearing, knowledge might rather, as with the Hellenes, be associated with vision by virtue of the (it seems to me) probable relationship between the Pa'ikwené words "Hiyap", to see, and "Hiyak", to know. As to the connection between sight and thought there can be no doubt, given that their term for 'to think' is formed by the union of the verb "lveg" (to look) with the morpheme "-min" (meaning very far, beyond).

The tendency conceptually and verbally to combine all or some of these actions, hearing, listening, understanding, knowing, in a single act and word seems a not uncommon Amerindian trait. Joanna Overing, Anne-Christine Taylor, Rebecca Ellis, and Karen Jacobs have told me that it is also to be found among the Piaroa, Achuar, Tsimanes and Ashinenka respectively. See also Reichel-Dolmatoff (1981) on the Desana, Seeger (1981:83-4, 1987:79) on the Suyá, Rosengren (1996:7) on the Matsigenka, and Isacson (1993) on the Embera. The link exists, too, of course, in some European languages, e.g. French, and as already stated in Ancient Hebrew. Examples of other non-Amerindian epistemologies in which the ear is similarly the seat of intelligence are the Melanesian Ommura (Mayer 1982) and the Indochinese Sedang (mentioned in Devereux 1991).

Notwithstanding the Greek privileging of sight, Aristotle regarded hearing as a prime sense also (Towey 1991 and Frangenberg 1991). He considered it the medium whereby the totally empty mind with which the human being is supposedly born becomes filled with the (vocal) teaching of a 'knowledge master'; thus conceptually it was the faculty which contributed most to the gaining of knowledge and growth of intelligence. Building on this, early Christian ideology stressed the moral and sacred role of human hearing in relation to an omniscient divinity: the

ears as the express means of receiving and following God's wisdom in the metaphorically perceptible form of his Word (Sears 1991:19-29).

Despite the attempts to endow hearing with a greater value,⁷ 'Western' culture continues to favour vision and the visible⁸ (and as an aspect of this, the written word rather than the spoken and heard one). There are others, though, who accord sight a lesser position in their own sensorium. The Weweya of Eastern Indonesian, for example, privilege taste (Kuipers 1991), the Wolof touch (Rabain cited in Howes 1991a:182-5), and the Batek smell (Howes and Classen op. cit.:283). As for hearing itself, a considerable number of societies would appear morally and symbolically to prioritise it over sight (prized more for its practical usefulness): among them the Songhay (Stoller 1989), the Inuit (mentioned in Howes and Classen op. cit.) and the Moroccans (Griffin 1991).

This faculty can be said to play a similarly major role in not a few Amerindian typologies of the senses, and also in their ethics of sensory perception - and in a manner consistent with Howes' point (op. cit.:186) that it would more correct to consider the senses in terms of their relationship instead of in the characteristic 'Western' way of breaking them down individually. In particular, Lévi-Strauss' sensory analysis of Amazonian mythology (1964:155-71) demonstrates the metaphysical agency of all the faculties, but perhaps most significantly sight and hearing (see myths 1, 9, 10, 12, 69, 70, 81 and 85 in respect of the latter).

We may note too that hearing can acquire a social salience among certain peoples for whom it may not have one symbolically. For example, because of its perceived link with comprehension, the Desana apparently value it as the 'most cultural' of the senses, whereas sight's instrumentality in the creation of the world makes it the most important cosmologically (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1981, see also Classen op.cit.).

Like some of the other peoples referred to, but unlike the general run of 'Western' cultures, the Pa'ikwené do not seem to classify sight over hearing and the other senses. Nor, moreover, do they distinguish between hearing and listening, as their single term for both actions, "Tchimap", indicates. Does this imply

⁷ Other than Aristotle's, we can note those of St Augustine (Sears *ibid.*:27-8), Galen, Francis Bacon and Helkiah Cooke (Gouk 1991), and Ficino and Charles de Bovelles (Frangenberg 1991); see too Voltaire 1979 [1764]:344.

⁸ See e.g. Schor 1987 and Synnott 1989/90 on Western aesthetics. Conversely, emphasis is laid on the connection between acoustic action and the passions (Gouk 1991:100-13; Burnett, Fend & Gouk 1991).

that they hold the first just as volitional and intentional as we do the second? The question brings us to another pertinent issue relating to audition: the nature of the action itself. Voluntary and autonomous on the part of the actor, or merely automatic sensory-motor skill?

Hearing and Listening.

In English as in French, though not in the Pa'ikwené language, a conceptual distinction is made between hearing and listening; the first tends to be thought of as passive, the second recognised as active - and a matter of subjective choice. A religious (Christian) rationale proposed in the early Middle Ages that while a person's hearing was created by God, in that he or she was also imbued with Free Will the option of whether to listen or not (to his 'Word') was basically their own decision (Sears op. cit.:35). But listening is not only a question of epistemology and ethics; research in experimental psychology (see *inter alia* Moray 1969a:88-92 and 1969b:25-6, 41; Treisman 1960; Swets 1963) validates the listener's autonomy as objective fact. Moreover, the same data appears to show that hearing entails purposive action as well, involving both the subject's biological and psychological conscious volition to a lesser or greater degree. So-called 'shadowing experiments' reveal that an important element of such behaviour is the individual's ability not only to choose to listen but indeed to, in Moray's words (1969a:88), "exercise considerable voluntary control over *what* he will hear" (my stress). This is done by, among other things, filtering out unwanted signals and in particular favouring emotionally valuable ones (See too Koestler 1964:513-17 on the role of 'selective hearing' in the process of human creativity).⁹

Perhaps, as far as the Pa'ikwené are concerned, the perception that hearing is no less a function of the actor's will and purpose than listening might be summed up in the phrase of a friend of mine who, when I asked him why he ignored a Brazilian woman's repeated attempts to engage him in conversation, bluntly replied: "Nah ka mwaka¹⁰ tchimap" - "I don't want to hear-understand [her]."

⁹ Sándor Hervey has pointed out (personal communication) that rather than occurring at the level of motor processing of auditory stimuli, bad hearing, in the sense of 'turning a deaf ear', happens before the point of response to speech, but after the act of comprehension.

¹⁰ "Nah mwaka" and "Nah ka mwaka" (I want/do not want) are very common Pa'ikwené terms, applied (loudly and virtually emblematically) to all and any action that a person wishes or is disinclined to undertake. For me they performatively express the autonomy of the individual and its high profile in and value for that society.

The relationship between hearing and speaking.

The interdependence, complementarity, and indeed cooperativeness of speaker-hearers in the technical process of verbal interaction has been studied and confirmed by among others Grice (1975), Hancher (1979), Stiles (1981), and Schlegoff (1981). There is material showing the inherent instrumentality of hearing with respect to speaking in the processing and creation of meaning (e.g. Grice op.cit., Hymes 1986, Sperber and Wilson 1986). It has been claimed, too, that for ego the two actions are symbiotic to the point of consubstantiality: "Hearing oneself speak combines the physiologically separate organs of hearing and speech into a unique sense that speaks one's hearing...; that is, it receives as well as transmits. Speech in this sense is a form of otorrhea." (Kahn 1992:103 fn. 57).

Yet, for all that we are bound to recognise their mutuality, we ethnocentrically still tend, as mentioned earlier, to privilege speaking over hearing. If only implicitly, the two are viewed hierarchically, with the former as active and determining, and the latter as passive and determined, operating reflexively rather than instrumentally. Thus, for example, the universalist claim advanced by Malinowski (1930:314) that the "bonds... between speaker and hearer [in a generalised 'primitive society'] are not quite symmetrical", being weighted in favour of the "man linguistically active" and, it is implied, against the aurally passive one.

That hearing is in reality just as active a process as speaking would seem to have been corroborated by research in phonetics (Sándor Hervej personal communication): the so-called 'monitoring' and 'feedback' processes have invalidated the methodological separation between speakers and hearers, given that the former are the hearers of their own utterances anyway (which is basically Kahn's point above).

Some Amazonianists have already reached a conclusion about the above two questions: does the subject have the choice of whether and what to hear, and is 'hearing-listening' merely a passive action? F. Grenand reports (1982:24) in connection with the Wayapi that the decision to be part of a myth-teller's audience is purely the individual actor's alone, and no less so than it is the myth-teller's to choose whom to tell his story to (let alone presumably whether to tell it in the first place). Overing writes (1986:140) that the part played by the (female) audience in similar Piaroa events is every bit as active as the (male) performance, not just

complementary with but equal to it to the extent of constituting a performance in its own right.¹¹

For the Suyá, on the other hand, while "strong" (i.e., 'good') speaking is male and active, "strong" ('good') hearing is both male and female and passive (Seeger 1981:85-91), a notion which concurs with the European one. The Pa'ikwené however consider the two activities to be just as female as male; and each, we have already noted, as equally 'active'. As will be seen, one example given below crucially involves the dynamic and productive hearing of a baby girl.

The Suyá also grade speaking and hearing morally (Seeger 1981:83-4, 89-91, 1987:79). "Strong" speech and hearing are categorised as social and 'good' behaviours; 'bad' speech and hearing as antisocial ones along with "strong" vision and "strong" smelling (both in the sense of having a keen sense of smell and a powerful odour), which are also classed as 'natural'. While, as far as I was able to discover, the Pa'ikwené do not also explicitly rank the senses in a hierarchical moral league table, a positive status and value are associated with 'hearing-listening-understanding well', equal and complementary with those given to 'speaking well'. As already stated, and as we shall explore in more detail in chapter 6, they also, paradoxically perhaps, attribute a positive one to 'hearing-listening-understanding badly', though not unreservedly nor in every case. Although seldom expressed in metadiscourse, this attribution was visible in the behaviour of individuals, the way in which they personally used, or reacted to someone else using, 'bad hearing'. While positive 'bad hearing' would be implicitly recognised, and allowed, the practice of negative 'bad hearing' (sociomorally improper, i.e., rude, uptight, 'aggressive') was explicitly named, criticised and rebuked.

Furthermore, as will also be discussed more fully in due course, positive 'bad hearing' not only coexists with 'good hearing'. It also does so, revealingly and harmoniously, with 'good (i.e., loud and strong) speaking'. Metadiscursively, such speech is at all times singled out as the positive ideal mode of communication, technically, aesthetically, and in terms of social correctness. While hearing, 'good' or 'bad', is less often referred to, there is a definitely stated recognition of this

¹¹ See too E. Basso 1985:15-8, 1986, 1995:29-32 on the important dialogical role of Kalapalo "listener-responders" in myth narration; and Sherzer & Urban 1986:8-11 on the *active* contribution of auditors and their interdynamic relations with speakers in native South American discourse generally.

faculty's sociomoral importance and motivational power; this last being figuratively formulated and perceived within a world view which unitarily incorporates humans and non-human species and involves communication between them, a process described in section iii and also chapter 9.

While it seems to be the practice cross-culturally to ascribe good moral qualities to speaking and hearing-listening, the ethical status of silence tends to be more ambiguous. The Airo-Pai, for instance, associate it with treachery, enmity and evil intentions (Belaunde 1992:48, 145). For the Pa'ikwené, on the other hand, silence, in particular when resulting from "Bad Hearing", can possess a positive as well as a negative value (cf. Seeger 1987:68-9 on the Suyá). Again, this is something I intend to enlarge on in chapter 6.

Having established the Pa'ikwené duality of 'good' and 'bad' hearing, and its connection with understanding, I now proceed to a closer inspection of the topic.

(ii) The basic pragmatics of Pa'ikwené hearing.

I will lay the aural scene by getting you to imagine the so-called background noise of Village Espérance Deux, the daily human 'hum and murmur' which as far as the Pa'ikwené were concerned could never be, it seemed, loud enough. As mentioned in the previous chapter a Pa'ikwené person tends constantly not only to seek out the company of his or her fellows, but the sound which in all its varied aspects, from talking to laughing to eating to working, characterises such contact, and effectively acts to enhance it. For the Pa'ikwené the louder this noise the better, for the contact is then "heard-listened to-understood" as that much more 'real' and social, thus more valuable and meaningful.¹²

From around seven in the morning, then, till quite late at night, with a slowing down, a slight dropping off, in the hottest, middle hours of the day, there was as part of the global texture of sound a flow of loud and voluble speech in all its varied and multiple forms, from conversations to rows and reprimands, and from joking to the

¹² Cf. de Saussure for whom, according to Culler 1982:19, noise is, in contrast, merely unsignifying sound unless it serves the specifically linguistic function of expressing or communicating ideas.

typical shriek-talking of the children (see chapter 3): an intense, usually orderly multi-vocal process which I would qualify not so much as an accompaniment to sociable community life than a generative constituent of its very existence. Overlaying this was the ever insistent voice of the Protestant fundamentalist song repertoire which, with musical backing and the choral contributions of all and sundry, resonated virtually non-stop, and at the fullest volume, from the *Assembleía de Deus* church's sound system and a score of privately owned ghetto-blasters (for other aspects of the Pa'ikwené converts' existence see chapter 9 part 3). This inescapable, monolithic presence induced, it must be said in passing, acute bouts of depression in me; so much so, that, fearing for my health, I was obliged at one point to leave the village for a month. Given the small size of the place, the flimsiness of the houses, and the general open air lifestyle, the composite sound was both essentially and unavoidably public;¹³ and its apparent seamlessness only relieved, and underscored, by an irregular punctuation of silences. Some of these were undoubtedly natural hiatuses; others wilfully manufactured, a process examined in chapter 6. It will be obvious that such vocal and sonic activity called for an equally intensive counterpart in the sphere of audition; and with it too, one relating to the process of understanding, as defined by the term "Tchimap". My immediate aim in this chapter is to describe as many of the latter's properties as I could locate, and to suggest a broad explication of some of the effects and underlying principles of its application not only in Pa'ikwené discourse but the wider process of social relations.

Basically, and in general, "Tchimap kabai", "to hear well", is the same as the 'good hearing' of other Amazonian Amerindians: an instrument of socialisation and instruction (Seeger 1981:84-5, 1987:79-80) which together with 'good speaking' works to (re)create and maintain the 'good life' (Belaunde 1992:48). That is, one that is sociable, peaceful, congenial, satisfying, pleasing. In this use, 'good hearing', like 'good speaking', is primarily to be seen as a productive agent.

The next important point to establish is that, from my point of view, it was in one sense often difficult to differentiate between 'good' and 'bad' hearing despite their explicit demarcation. The problem, which is gone into more fully in chapter 6, lay

¹³ For a good account of the typical "acoustically transparent" quality of Lowland village life, see Seeger 1987:65-8.

basically in the fact that Pa'ikwené people can listen badly in the Western sense of failing to pay full attention¹⁴ yet in reality 'hear-understand' perfectly well; they are masters in the art. It seemed to be a cultural trait of theirs that listening should so often appear on the surface as if it were its opposite. There was a tendency not to acknowledge and respond to an interlocutor directly but, as it were, away from them, by keeping your eyes, and sometimes even face and body, averted, while typically at the same time carrying on with whatever you were engaged on before being addressed. Outside of the most formal occasions, such as attending church, a Pa'ikwené does not usually stop whatever he or she may be in the middle of doing in order to listen to someone speak. While I am not suggesting this is unique to the Pa'ikwené, it did seem to be particularly marked among them, to the extent of constituting a sort of informal convention. Neither would it be correct, however, to say that all Pa'ikwené automatically adopted it at each and every communication. For there were people who did look speakers in the face, and who did not particularly indulge in the silent response associated with 'bad hearing' (described below). It was, I suppose, a question of individual choice and temperament. Nevertheless, I found this kind of listening sufficiently widespread to be described as a 'behavioural genre', and to warrant being labelled a learned 'body technique' (Mauss 1979:111).

Nor does such conduct mean that listeners are thereby expressing disrespect for the speaker, or ignoring or showing an indifference to what is being said. Rather, such apparent inattentiveness should, again, be understood as a socially constructed behaviour which can mask from the non-indigenous observer the hearer's engagement with the discourse in question and their acquaintance with its meanings, semantic and otherwise (see chapter 3), that are shared with the

¹⁴ See e.g. Roget's Thesaurus (edited by Lloyd 1984, items 415, 416) where 'attention' is given as an analogous term for 'hearing', and 'inattentive' as one for 'deaf'. Moray's psychological research (1969a) conflates attention and 'selective listening', while also taking into account factors such as the subject's mental concentration and "state of arousal" (e.g. whether drowsy or alert). The issue of the Pa'ikwené's apparently inattentive but actually engaged listening in the context of political speech is expanded on in chapter 7.

speaker.¹⁵

The listener's averted stance aside, the pragmatics of Pa'ikwené audition proved difficult to ascertain. The indigenous metadiscourse and (observable) behaviour and attitudes in regard to it seemed ambiguous. People would joke to me about "Pa'ikwené 'bad' listening" as if it were a notorious and peculiarly 'national' trait, something almost to be proud of. At the same time, 'good' listening was constantly stressed as important for the promotion and maintenance of good social relations. There turned out to be no real contradiction here. For, as already mooted, although called bad, such (seemingly) negligent listening was not necessarily deemed negative and improper. Depending on context and the speaker's reading of the addressee's intentionality and mood, 'bad' listening would be evaluated as to its legitimacy and acceptability. Following the same sort of reverse logic which in certain situations converts the French "terrible" and nowadays the English "wicked" into their semantic opposites, legitimate 'bad listening' might paradoxically be said to constitute *de facto* 'good listening' for the Pa'ikwené, in that it is not indicative of bad social relations but, as will be more amply discussed in chapter 6, quite the opposite.

There was, too, the added factor that 'good hearing' and socially permissible 'bad hearing' are complementary. So much so that to the observer they can sometimes confusingly appear to be one and the same; for the norm is that a Pa'ikwené who engages, or is engaged in, a discourse should hear-listen-understand without interruption. One's response should be just as considered and deliberate, whether physical, taking the form of silence, or (eventually) verbal. In effect, as I will be exploring later, the silence offered by the hearer in return for the speaker's

¹⁵ This is not to attribute a homogeneity to commonly owned meanings; nor to deny the agency of each individual speaker-hearer in the processing of meanings, and the frequent divergences between them. As Siran warns (1993:241): "What one person has stored in memory is never exactly what another may have. One consequence of this is [to quote von Humboldt]... 'Nobody means by a word precisely and exactly what his neighbour does... Thus all understanding is always at the same time a non-understanding'... This is the ultimate and inescapable reason why meaning has to be 'negotiated'; and the job of the anthropologist and other social scientists is not to deny it, but to describe it." See too Jankélévitch (1964:42-4): given that "equivocality is the very law of expression", there is no guarantee that another person will be able to understand us, let alone wish to, in spite of all our efforts to make ourselves understood. Cf. Derrida 1967.

For more on the ambiguity and changeability of meaning refer *inter alia* to Lyons (1977, 1981), Wittgenstein (1981), Weber (1978:Vol. 1:26-8), Sperber (1979:8-16), Aitchison (1987:39-50).

utterances amounts to words held provisionally in abeyance.¹⁶ The above behaviour was less marked in some circumstances than others, such as the (relatively) formal situation, described in chapter 5, of a visit from a "capitaine". However, while spontaneously occurring interruptions, interjections and cross-talking were not unknown in everyday informal discourse, people nevertheless did on the whole listen to one another for much longer silent and 'unresponsive' periods than we tend to do in that context.¹⁷

In contrast to the ambivalence of 'Bad Hearing', 'Good hearing' is unequivocally social, and moral, in that it is not only a proper but also, almost by definition, an eminently sociable behaviour. I now examine some of the aspects of this quality in respect of a specific field of social activity, namely hunting. In particular I will look at the productive, as seen by the Pa'ikwené, nature of audition. I shall begin by recounting my experience and perception of the indigenous use of hearing in that connection, and then present a native view. As will be seen, it illustrates the interactivity, and possibly interconstitutivity, of the spheres of economics, social relations and relations between people and natural species; and their mediation by language, audition, and magic.

* * *

(iii) (S)talking and listening in the forest: human-nature intercommunication and the productivity of "Good Hearing".

The first time I was allowed to accompany some Pa'ikwené on a hunt, one impression I had, among the overwhelming ones caused by the forest and the moment itself, was of the quality of the men's silence. I was indelibly struck by its attentiveness, its intensity and its intent. Also, it came as a welcome relief. It meant a respite from the aforementioned and virtually non-stop loud talking and general loud noise of village life. In the forest, though, even when not hunting, voices were relatively muted, conversations toned down. And when hunting, both were put on 'hold' for long periods of time. Speaking did not cease completely, however, as it was necessary for three reasons:

¹⁶ Cf. Goffman (1972:xiii) on "public order": the ground rules and patterning of face-to-face social intercourse; and also (p. 3 fn. 1) on 'turn taking' in conversation and (pp. 35-8) more generally.

¹⁷ For more on the sociopragmatics of Pa'ikwené hearing see chapter 7.

People hunting in pairs (that is, covering together, though at a distance apart, a relatively wide territory) have verbally to communicate information, advice and intentions to one another when lack of visibility rules out hand signals, or as an alternative to blazing. Next, two or more hunters may meet up at a prearranged site for a shared meal-break and 'chin wag'. My feeling is that in like manner to the food, which replenishes their energy, the chats, consisting typically of gossip, hunters' yarns and jokes, regenerate and strengthen their affective sense, and state, of *communitas*. Lastly, hunters talk to - or, in Pa'ikwené terms, with - the game that they are hunting. This speech is one of the main means at their disposal, should they wish to use it, for locating and establishing a relationship with their prey.

At one point during my first hunt, Karinaí, whom I was accompanying, suddenly stopped and signalled to me not to say anything. He cocked an ear in one direction, wafted the air towards him with his hand to sniff the wind then, lifting his fingers to his mouth, whistle-called towards the undergrowth on one side of us. Almost instantaneously, a dark shape appeared in profile in the trees ahead. As soon as it saw us, it turned and retreated. Karinaí had not aimed his gun let alone fired it. What we had seen was a jaguar, a non-edible animal for the Pa'ikwené (see Appendix B for probable reasons and taxonomy of animals). What we had not seen, and what Karinaí had hoped to call up, was an agouti. Later, in reply to my questions, he revealed the following: his call was not a whistle, which is how I referred to it, but a blowing ("púnka"), and what I had observed was, in his words, "a blowing of breath in the animal's own language" - known in Pa'ikwaki as "kaïnsapka". Each "Puigné" (animal) and "Kohivra" (bird) speaks a different language, thus there are specific kinds of "kaïnsapka", which a hunter uses variously according to his intended prey. Whereas the verb 'to speak' is generally "auna", that for speaking to an animal in its own language is "kaïnsené".

In a hunting situation, then, one speaks to animals in order to make contact with them and ask them to come and be killed. As Karinaí put it, "I kaïnsené'd (as it were) to call the agouti to die." A summoned animal will hear and often comply, sometimes 'speaking' in its turn to the hunter; though apparently not every species is caught this way, deer being one example (reason unstated). Karinaí told me that he had learned "kaïnsapka" from other hunters when younger, and that all Pa'ikwené hunters know and resort to it .

Ingold, who argues strongly (1993b:441-2) against the 'Western' concept of humankind's relationship with nature as one of struggle and dominion rather than dialogue, points out (p. 433) that our practical engagement with it is in effect partly a verbal and aural one:

"There are techniques of speech just as there are techniques of hunting and gathering; through speaking and listening... one gains a perceptual knowledge of the human environment, as through hunting and gathering... one gains a perceptual knowledge of the environment of animals and plants - although... *one may also speak [and listen] to animals and plants* and use tools on other humans." (my stress)

Paradoxically, however, he seems to regard the dialogue as a one-way exercise, for he contests (1994:6-8) the very notion of 'animal language' on the grounds that it lacks ideational content, purportedly the one quality which makes of Language something more than speech and more than a means of communication. So while animals communicate with each other, he writes, the fact that their communication is non-ideational means that they "do not *converse*" (my stress).¹⁸ But is not the anthropological point, rather, that many peoples, including the Pa'ikwené, believe they do?

Karinai put the jaguar's appearance down to its appetite: having 'heard-listened (to)-understood' his call, it knew an agouti would respond and turned up intending to nab it before he himself did. He put the agouti's non-appearance down to the jaguar's interruption of the discourse before it could get properly underway, and to the former's fear of the latter.

Thus, in this instance, the 'conversation' between human and animal was broken off, and contact unconsummated. Karinai was not to get any agouti that day at all.

¹⁸ Ingold further muses (ibid.:3) that if humanity were defined not as '*homo sapiens*' but "'*homo loquens*', a natural kind including all animals with language and speech", we might have to accept the possibility of including some non-human animals in it, on the grounds that the eventual realisation of a linguistic capacity in animalkind equal to the one in humankind cannot theoretically be ruled out. Cf. Nollman's proposal (cited in Masson & McCarthy 1995:218-9) that the vocal communication of whales shows evidence of development over time and thus of an "oral tradition"; and Masson & McCarthy's question (ibid.:215-9) as to whether animals might not possess a realisable "narrative urge".

Speech, then, is not absent during a Pa'ikwené hunt, but very much a component of it. In one sense, it is part of the hunters' technical and communicative panoply, utilised in conjunction with their sight, smell and, especially, audition. I wish now to concentrate on the latter item.

Hearing, in Pa'ikwené hunting, operates on two levels. Firstly, in the rainforest habitat where long-range visibility is impeded, 'good' ears become as pragmatically vital as good eyes. An animal deposits acoustic as well as other spoor, and the Pa'ikwené hunter is expert not only in tracking olfactory and visible signs but audible ones also. As Gell has proposed (1995:235-8, 245)¹⁹, the tendency to organise the sensory modalities in a manner which privileges audition might be typical of forest dwellers in general. Where the Pa'ikwené are concerned, high aural skills and powers are also required in the 'flooded savanna' environment which, especially in the Aúkwa river (N. Brazil) 'homeland', constitutes their territory to a perhaps even greater degree than the rainforest. While open in contrast to the forest, it is covered in tall dense reeds and other vegetation which are an obstacle to clear sight.

Secondly, and ethically, not only is hearing necessary in order to permit communication between human/hunter and animal/hunted, 'good hearing' is vital if it is to be a successful one; that is to say, fruitful (to the former) and, I would suggest, 'social' - a factor I will return to later.

The hearer, the hunter, and the agouti head.

Some ten months after my first hunt, the conceptual mechanics behind the Pa'ikwené hunters' use of "kaínsapka" became clearer to me almost by accident. I will now try to reveal how. In order to do so, I need to present to you the moment when understanding began first to dawn.

From my fieldnotes:

17th January 1995. Baby-sat S. this morning. She's very responsive, reacting immediately when spoken to. When commenting on this later to her mother, was told of a correspondence between 'good hearing' and the situation where a hunter 'whistles' (or as the Pa'ikwené say 'blows') into the forest around him in the not infrequently realised expectation of making

¹⁹ Deriving from research on the Umeda, his ecological-cum-phenomenological theory posits the determining action of hearing in the phonological process of word construction for tropical forest dwellers whose chief sensory modality for coding the environment is auditive rather than visual (see also Feld 1982, Weiner 1991).

contact with an animal. Often a "búgútrú" (agouti) will respond and show itself, conveniently making itself a target in the process. My informant explained that humans who answer promptly to being called, like S., should be given the head of an agouti to eat as this will bring success in the hunt to those they live with. Also, hunters should always seek to stand beside them, but avoid 'bad hearers', i.e., people who respond slowly or reluctantly. These must not be given agouti head to eat as this will result in an unsuccessful hunt. I suggested that if they were given it, then perhaps they might eventually also become good hearers/quick responders, but was told this wasn't the case.

(I still do not know, in passing, what was wrong with my logic. And certainly the Pa'ikwené do believe in the effectiveness of direct contagion between humans and other animals, as opposed to it being at one remove in the case of a hunter and a cooked agouti. For example, it was said that "red fish" gives a person energy, and that a pregnant woman who eats sloth will have a slow and painful labour and a lazy child. Other Amazonian peoples apparently share such notions. Viveiros de Castro reports (1992:48) the Araweté consider that consuming the throat fat of a male howler monkey makes a man a good singer.)

In my analysis of this example I will investigate the following contextual issues: Pa'ikwené hearing-listening as a dual natural and social action; magic and causality; and the intercommunication between society, nature, and supernature.

It is necessary first of all to distinguish between 'good hearing' and 'good listening'. My informant did so herself. As previously noted, the Pa'ikwaki term "tchimap" incorporates both the concept of hearing and listening (as well as that of understanding). But this is not say that these acts are necessarily undifferentiated or conflated by the Pa'ikwené. When I tried to clarify in French whether what was being discussed was a case of "Entendre" (to hear) or "Écouter" (to listen), the woman replied, also in French, that it was definitely the former. Semantically, though not syntactically, because of the shared appellation, a Pa'ikwené person may (just like an English- or French-speaking one) listen to an utterance well yet hear (i.e., understand) it badly. They also explicitly recognise, to a greater degree than English and French speakers, that they can understand it perfectly yet at the same time hear it 'badly' in the sense of turning a deaf ear. The Pa'ikwené, so it seems to me, see "tchimap" as a dual action; one that is both natural and cultural.

And depending on context, it can be one or the other, or one more than the other. Thus an individual can simultaneously hear at one level, the 'purely' sensory, and not hear at another, the social (and accordingly be judged to 'hear badly'). To repeat what I said earlier, the second behaviour is (qualifiably) conscious, volitional and active.

Language, magic and causality.

The configuration of language, magic and productivity is not a new one in Western academic thinking. As Mauss writes (1972:141): "Magic is the domain of pure production, *ex nihilo*. With words and gestures it does what techniques achieve by labour". He and Malinowski (1954:73-6, 1965) have described how in "mouth magic" oral expression effects a desired material end (see too Tambiah 1968:185-203). With or without the accompaniment of non-oral acts, the uttered or silent words, or the breath, of a magical practitioner produce, or induce, what is wished for (and did not exist prior to the words or breathing) by action which, operating under the 'laws' of contiguity, similarity and opposition (Mauss op. cit.:64-79), may be called tropic. In the Pa'ikwené instance referred to above, which incidentally bears out Mauss' claim (p. 25) that a magical 'specialist' is not always required for magic to happen, metaphoric causation is extended. Here the sympathetic association and mutual transference of human and animal faculties or powers bring about a practical result (the getting of game) through a process which unitarily involves four separate acts of magic: two relating to the mouth (speaking and eating) and two to the ear (human hearing and animal hearing).

My intention here is not to re-debate theoretically the issue of magic (profane and technical action or sacred, metaphysical one? Proto-science or aspect of religion?) nor to examine the notion of causality. Mauss (ibid.) and Malinowski (op.cit.:17-92) deal comprehensively with the first. For a relativist and an emic Lowlands Amerindian perspective of the second, I would refer you to Campbell 1989:61-93 and *passim*).

As regards the Pa'ikwené, magic is considered to be of practical usefulness, and there is the belief that certain things can come about through substitution and transference. To give but one example, their ascription of particular afflictions or cures to the oral actions, in the form mainly of magical utterances and the blowing of tobacco smoke, of both the "ihamwi" (healer/shaman) and "aviri" (a sort of

wizard-cantor), would seem to indicate that they share the probably universal notion that the mouth, the voice and words possess, or are the conduit for, causal cosmic power.²⁰

Auditive interaction between humans and the 'supernatural world'.

What I think is exciting, and relatively rarer (in terms of ethnographic data), is the Pa'ikwené's parallel belief in the causal power of hearing.

I must distinguish at this juncture between sound, the heard, and to hear. The Iroquois believe that some natural sounds of themselves contain latently causal mystical power (Mauss *ibid.*:113; cf. Witherspoon 1977 on the Navajo and Stoller 1984, 1989 on the Songhay of Niger). According to Campbell (*op.cit.*:68, 76), Wayapi logic holds that certain 'natural' sounds, heard in specific contexts by humans, will make certain determined things come about. It is the sound itself, rather than its auditory perception, which is the causal agent. This motivational capacity is to be found in humans as well as in nature. For example, human noise is said to arouse the anger of a particular supernatural entity which manifests itself in the form of a rainstorm (p. 84). For Francis Bacon such a correlation could be explained by the theory of 'natural magic', according to which sound and hearing operate on a principle of 'sympathy' (Gouk 1991:98-9).

I would argue that, given the obvious: if a noise can be heard, it follows that someone can hear it, we have moved from passive to active. This crucial shift characterises, to my mind, the Pa'ikwené conception of hearing. For them, as the example of the agouti head would seem to indicate, it is the subjective action 'to hear' (and in this context 'to hear well' especially) which, instead of the object which is heard or the sound itself, carries effective force.

The idea of audition as a creative (and destructive) agent is to be found in various cosmogonies. In Jewish Kabbalistic tradition, for example, there exists a pre-'Genesis Adam' known as Adam Kadmon ("Primordial Man") whose body, the prototype of several human manifestations of God's image, comprises the different stages (Sefirot) of godly attributes, i.e., powers and instrumentality, by which the divine will, thought, emotion and action are realised. The attribute of knowledge,

²⁰ See *inter alia* Cassirer 1953:44-83; Tambiah *op.cit.*; Mauss *op.cit.*:113-4; Goldman 1975; Witherspoon *op. cit.*; Stoller 1984; Ch. Taylor 1985:223; Isacson *op. cit.* For more on this topic in relation to the Pa'ikwené see chapter 9 (part 2); see too in Appendix A their creation myth which tells how the spirit founder Kaúmaïyé sung (and danced) them into existence.

located in the seat of the Holy Spirit, the face and throat, and distinct from understanding and wisdom which are housed in the head, is made up of sight, speech, smell - and hearing; it is through them that God intervenes concretely and causally in existence (Halevi 1995:5-18; cf. Encyclopaedia Judaica 1971:250-1).

In their turn, data such as Isacson's (1993:346-73) on the Embera notion of the divine procreative power not only of speaking and the mouth but of hearing and the ears, and Lévi-Strauss' (1964) on the instrumentality of hearing as portrayed in the origin myths of the Bororo (myth 1), Apinayé (myth 9), Timbira (myth 10), Sherente (myth 12), Taurepan (myth 69), Caraja (myths 70 + 85) and Tukuna (myth 81)²¹, have pointed to the important position *active* audition can occupy in the metaphysics of the native peoples of Amazonia and the Guianas.

Santos-Granero's material (1991:124-31) on the "acoustic quest" for divine revelation of Amuesha priests, and the shamans' "audio-visual" relations with the supernatural sphere, and Chaumeil's (1993) on the Yagua shamans' arcane knowledge enabling them to hear and communicate in the "invisible language" of the spirit masters of plants who are the owners of the shamanic songs and powers, would seem to establish an indigenous belief in the effectiveness of audition yet further. As does A-C. Taylor's work (1993) in respect of the Achuar, for whom hearing is part, with speech, sight and touch, of a variety of 'species-specific' modes of communication operative in contacts between humans and different types of spirits.

As this research clearly demonstrates, then, aural action is 'traditionally' seen by some Lowland peoples as a key mode of access to and exchange with the non-human world; and a powerful cosmic agent.

Due, however, to the radically transformational effects on the ancestral Pa'ikwené culture of Protestant fundamentalism, there seemed on the ground to be a dearth of data pertaining to their pre-Christian religion; and consequently on the part hearing might, correspondingly, have played in it. The overwhelming majority of Pa'ikwené that I met, either Evangelical or Adventist converts, appeared, or declared themselves to be, ignorant of its philosophy in the sense of it constituting a comprehensive (cosmo)logical system. Some would still know bits of it, tantalising

²¹ Myths 1, 10, 85 relate to the hearing of natural and supernatural entities; 9, 12, 69, 70, 81 to that of humans.

yet (to my mind) disconnected shards, seemingly meaningless shreds. And I could detect, or would be offered glimpses of, it 'concealed' in their daily behaviours and talk. But, frustratingly, no overall meaningful pattern ever emerged; no clearly visible model. All these aspects are discussed in chapter 9, where I show that elements of the old cosmology not only survive, co-existing with the new one, but indeed underlie and to some extent infuse some of the Christian beliefs and practices.

Nevertheless, through an elderly couple, Waptchi and Ovayan, reputedly the "last two" Pa'ikwené shamans, I managed to obtain enough basic if fragmentary information to piece together something of the role of hearing in 'traditional' Pa'ikwené intercourse with the supernatural world.

During our meeting, described more amply in chapter 9 part 2, Waptchi told me that audition between him and the spirits was a two-way affair. He can hear inside him the invoked spirit which enters the "house" in his head. He also hears it 'outside' him, since, he explained, the words and chants coming from his mouth in a shamanic session are the spirit's own. It uses his, Waptchi's, human voice to transmit its own utterances and, through that voice, its powers, which are said to reside within the utterances.²² A Pa'ikwené "ihamwi" (or "pajé", regional term) can also hear a spirit in 'natural' sounds: e.g. the song of a bird, the rustle or creak of a particular tree. Conversely, as was demonstrated to me during a shamanic performance put on for my benefit, the spirits hear the "ihamwi". One told Waptchi, "I have come to listen to your song"; and another that it was responding to his request for help for a (putatively) sick person.

In the contemporary context of the Village Espérance Deux Pa'ikwené's adoption of evangelicalism, explicit stress is placed on verbal intercommunication between humans and "Ohokri" (God) and Jesus Christ, and hearing-listening-understanding considered an equally important aspect of the process (cf. Sears 1991:19-29 on the phenomenology of the human audition of God, and pp. 29-35 on his audition of us). In the village (Assembleia de Deus) church, Portuguese tends to be the public and audible language in which one discourses with the divine pair; and Pa'ikwaki the private and silent one. The latter is also the tongue in which one prays aloud in

²² Cf. Viveiros de Castro op. cit.:65-6 on the Araweté who hear the "music of the gods" in the shaman's trances and songs, and hold divine potency to be concretely present in his rattle.

one's own home. In church, "Ohokri" and Jesus Christ, through the mediumship of the Brazilian pastor (and his permanent fifth limb of a microphone, of which more in Appendix C), communicate in Portuguese. However, they are also said to speak and hear-listen (to)-understand Pa'ikwaki, and all the other languages in the world, since "Ohokri" made each and every one. Furthermore, in heaven, I was told, the righteous Pa'ikwené dead will be able to speak and "hear-understand" the "Language of Angels" in which God, Jesus and the other spirits converse among themselves. "Tchimap", then, is not limited to life - cf. the Guarani's resurrectionist attempt to "make the bones continue to listen" (Clastres cited in Viveiros de Castro op. cit.:213).

For the reasons given earlier, I cannot claim categorically that the important role of hearing in the present day Evangelical Pa'ikwené cosmos was carried over from a previously non-Christian one; although my intuition is that such a thing did occur. There is possible 'evidence' for this offered by Butt Colson's data (1985:111) relating to prophets among another people of the Guianas, the Akawaio. These individuals, who are Christian, attain revelation of God acoustically in dreams, and she thinks (personal communication) it very probable that indigenous pre-Christian notions have been woven into their contemporary Christian(ised) world-view.

Oral and auditive interaction between humans and the 'natural world'.²³

The Pa'ikwené belief, shared with many other peoples in Amazonia (and elsewhere), that animals, whether in their spirit or 'natural' forms, can speak both human and animal languages and, it follows, hear-listen (to)-understand them, is attested to in a number of their myths. In them we see that this verbal and aural activity is important for the well-being and very survival of society, in that it can intercede on its behalf in times of crises and at other key moments. One story, for example, tells how Súyen and Kaú, two half-spirit bird brothers, warn their human father of a plan to exterminate the Pa'ikwené. This protective mediation works in the other direction too, as in the case of Mainai, a man who dissuades the son of two watersnake spirits from wreaking vengeance on the villagers who have slain

²³ In effect, the separation I assume between 'supernatural' and 'natural' worlds is, like that between humanity and nature, a false one from a Pa'ikwené perspective since, like many other indigenous peoples in Amazonia (and elsewhere), they regard them as connected, interpenetrative, and to some extent fused, a view expanded on in chapter 9.

his parents, and then helps him get to safety (respectively stories 3 and 4 in Appendix A).²⁴

We noted earlier that Ingold qualified his conviction that the relations between humans and nature constitute a "dialogue" with the claim that animals do not actually possess a *bona fide* Language (since although they may be said to 'speak', their communication is bereft of ideational substance). Kenneth Burke, on the other hand, is someone for whom the very notion of humans engaging with nature in a verbal interaction, of whatever type and outside of fables presumably, would appear to be a patent impossibility. His cosmology, the antithesis of an Amerindian one, posits (1969, and in Rueckert 1982:247-40) a universe divided into four hierarchical stages, the lowest being the empirical, natural, and non/pre-verbal one: what our own world would be if the word was absent. The other three stages depend on words (language) and are added to this wordless nature by man, the word-user, standing Cartesian-like outside of and distinct from it. They are in ascending order the 'sociopolitical'; the 'purely verbal', wherein occurs the 'cult of language'; and the 'supernatural', which is the extra-verbal; i.e., what divine and/or authoritative Word there is in it is in reality made and placed there by man.²⁵

While animals do speak (according to the Pa'ikwené and other Amazonians), or speak but do not have real Language (Ingold), or do not speak (Descartes and Burke), what of plants?

The Pa'ikwené world-view proposes that as the spirit masters reside not only in fauna but flora, and other natural phenomena too, then their breath and voice can be heard to emanate from the latter two just as much as from the former. Thus for example the music that a shaman produces on his bamboo flute is perceived as the song of "Iwiv(r)ayené", the bamboo spirit; and the sound of water the voice of "Marivoka", the Master and Mother of water, or "Konopo", a lake spirit (for more on this topic see chapter 9 part 2).

²⁴ The latter story also provides an example of the symbolic role of hearing among animals/spirits. Setting off to attack the Pa'ikwené, Wamwi the watersnake spirit tells his wife to listen out for thunder. If she hears it coming from the left it will mean that he has killed the humans; from the right, that they have killed him.

²⁵ Cf. Masson & McCarthy 1995:7-9 on Descartes' endorsement and Voltaire's rejection of the assumption that because animals do not possess language they are consequently automata without thoughts and emotions.

These 'things' are not only held to speak but also to hear(-understand). Aristotle, in regard to plants, held the distinctly opposite idea (in Towey op.cit.:8-9): though, like animals, they are imbued with souls, unlike them they are unable to perceive, lacking the means of receiving "perceptibles". The Yagua on the other hand (Chaumeil op.cit.:415-6), label the vegetable world as "dumb" because plants do not emit any perceptible sound; yet as mentioned earlier they nevertheless also believe that plants' spirit masters speak a so-called invisible language audible to shamans, who can converse back to them in it - and be heard.

For Eliade (1972:93), "'animal language' is only a variant of 'spirit language', the secret shamanic tongue". Among the Pa'ikwené, however, the ability to speak and hear-listen-understand animal language (or more precisely, animal languages, since each species is said to have its own) is not an esoteric knowledge limited to shamans. Some 'ordinary' hunters possess it, as I saw for myself when in the forest with Karinai. I should make it clear that while not a shaman, and indeed as an Evangelical strongly opposed to shamanism, he was a shaman's son, though shamanic skills are not held to be inheritable. This tallies with the Maussian observation, referred to earlier, that the so-called arcane skills and powers are not the preserve of a magic 'specialist' class. Campbell makes the even more pertinent point with regard to Amazonian Amerindians when he suggests (op.cit.:104-6) that "it might be useful to regard the notion of 'payé' [Wayapi shaman] not primarily as a role or an office, but as a quality" latently present in natural objects and humans, whether 'officially' shamans or not (see too Overing 1988 on the accessibility of supernatural powers for all Piaroa).

Specialist skill or not, I would be chary of describing Karinai and the other Pa'ikwené's ability to dialogue with nature as no more than a ploy in a strategy of domination. While at the practical level the ultimate intention behind it was explicitly to obtain food, it seems more likely that, as Taussig suggests (1993:104-5), the purpose of conversing with animals through what he calls the "magic of mimesis" is not so much to gain control over them as, principally, to give their spirit tangible form in the physical world.

*

Such, then, is the framework within which I shall now analyse the example presented in my fieldnotes. Structurally, and objectively, none of the four

unofficial²⁶ magical acts - two oral, two aural - can be said to have sole direct causal effect, since they all work through one another. Singly, each has a participatory causality; together, they possess joint, and direct, causality. Namely, that of bringing about a successful hunt. For the causal effect to occur, these acts must not only coexist but interrelate. None of the four terms of the relationship (human hearing, animal hearing, human speaking, human eating) can, in the combined magical action, occur without the other. Thus, for a person's 'good hearing' to exist it must have sympathetic access to an animal's, which can only happen by means of the metaphoric - and real - act of eating its head; which latter act can itself only exist thanks to the magical act of the hunter's 'good speaking' to the animal and its 'good hearing' of him. (Why the agouti was singled out as a particularly good hearer I forgot to ask.)

The quadruple relationship exists as one aspect of a dual process of reciprocity and predation²⁷ seemingly typical of human-nature interaction in Amazonia; and dynamically comprises a continuous, continually flowing loop. Each act operates as a conduit through which their joint orbit must travel. Each is fixed in terms of its place in the orbit. That is to say, each act of one type (oral or aural) is set between two acts of the other type, and in a specific order. This order is only apparently one of priority. It seems that the human 'good hearing' should come first, for it looks as though it is the act which initiates the process, that sets off the chain of other acts. However, it itself cannot exist as a constituent of the unitary magical act without the prior existence not only of the eating act but also of both the speaking act and the other (animal) hearing one. Since each of these is, at any given stage of the process, prior in time to the one immediately following it, none may be called absolutely prior. They are all prior turn and turn about.

For the magic to achieve its purpose, the interdependence of the four acts is a requisite: the effectiveness of each, and its maintenance within the magic circle, depend on those of its three partners (In fact, two other acts are also implicitly part of the process: the hunter's own 'hearing' and the animal's 'speaking').

Not coincidentally, I believe, the above scheme, which is one of 'magical

²⁶ Because carried out not by a shaman but an 'ordinary' person.

²⁷ I apologise for virtually ignoring this side of the issue. This is due to a lack of data, not because I do not reckon it as vital a component as reciprocity in the overall relations between the Pa'ikwené and nature. For some accounts of the subject as it relates to Amazonia see Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971, Crocker 1985, Descola 1986, Viveiros de Castro 1992, Overing 1993a, Isacson 1993.

economics', echoes virtually all Pa'ikwené work activity of a traditional nature. As described elsewhere in the thesis, this is typically a group process, involving the participatory input of two or more individuals, whether simultaneously or serially. The productivity (labour) of each contributes to the product which is produced by the co-productivity of all. But the scheme does more than just reflect. The activity it describes is an integral part of work. Having witnessed, as related, the occurrence of some, though not all, of the above-mentioned magical acts in a hunting situation, I wonder if it is too far-fetched to ask whether all traditional "anivit" (work) might not once have contained, for the Pa'ikwené, a 'magical' aspect?

However, despite my demonstrating the equality of all the interrelating terms of the four part magical act, the fact remains that the Pa'ikwené appear to see things differently. From their point of view, as put by my informant, of all the crucial causal agents involved, it was audition which was the most crucial, the most causal. For them, it clearly acts as the arc between the two conductors, 'desirer' and 'desired'. Conceptually, each of these subsumes a range of further oppositions:

DESIRER	:	DESIRED
...human		...animal
hunter		hunted
speaker		spoken to
killer		food
(hearer-)eater...		(hearer-)eaten...

In the resolving of these oppositions, the hunter's 'good hearing', not explicitly mentioned by my informant but observable on the ground, is no less crucial and causal than that of the non-hunting human and the hunted animal. As explained above, in the forest, his personal auditory skill comes necessarily to the fore. The catching of game is as much if not more dependent on the efficacy of the pursuer's ears as that of his eyes. So much for practice. Conceptually, however, it would seem that the Pa'ikwené hunter appropriates, or shares in, the animal's 'good hearing' through contact with it at one, or possibly two, removes. He must seek physical closeness to, and 'contagion' from, someone whose own 'good hearing' will have been (re)generated, maintained and enhanced by the consumption of the animal's head; and the incorporation thereby of the auditory powers - which might perhaps, I tentatively suggest, be an aspect of productive spirit powers - present in it. As corroborative data for this notion, I offer Waptchi the shaman's statement,

cited earlier, that invoked spirits and the powers connected with them lodged in the "house" inside a person's head. I feel that such beliefs, as well as the beliefs and behaviours of the people with whom I lived, and which I have tried to describe both here, in relation to Karinai, and in the chapter on religion, point to the probability of there being a 'traditional' Pa'ikwené philosophy in which humans and natural and supernatural species do not merely interrelate but dialogue and, therefore, socialise together for productive ends.²⁸

It is individual hearing, then, that of humans and that of animals, which in the above case reconciles the opposites in the relations between (Pa'ikwené) humans and animals. And ensures that the group is fed.

As regards the hunter's vocal contribution, I would stress again that it is the action of an 'ordinary' person which is at issue here. Ellis also describes (1997:127-8) the communication with potential animal victims and their 'guardians' which is carried out by Tsimané hunters, as well as by shamans. Both instances, the Pa'ikwené and the Tsimané, would seem to confirm that success in the hunt is not necessarily dependent on the magico-religious activity of the 'titular' shaman alone; indeed in this Pa'ikwené case it was not dependent on it at all, given that, to my certain knowledge, none took place.²⁹ There is too the fact that the Village Espérance Deux hunters often offered (Christian) prayers before setting off, which could conceivably constitute a transformation or extension of pre-Christian hunting rituals.

It would seem, then, that despite the difference of degree in their respective knowledge and skills, non-shamans can be just as active and capable as shamans in the 'cosmonomic' task (Århem 1996:197) of ensuring the well-being of their community through an interlocutive engagement with nature.

Lastly, the 'magic' used in the collective work-communication event involving the

²⁸ On whether human relations with nature and supernature in Amazonia might be social ones, see Descola 1986, Belaunde 1992:162-4, 193-4, Århem 1996, Ellis 1997:117-37. For some other views on human-nature relatedness see in Descola & Pálsson 1996, the ecological perspectives of Reichel-Dolmatoff 1975 and Rappaport 1979, and the Marxist one of Tapper 1994; refer also to *inter alia* Willis 1990, Ingold 1993b, 1994. Finally, Eiseley 1969 provides a good historical overview of the evolution of Western thinking on 'man and nature'.

²⁹ On the decline of Pa'ikwené shamanism in terms of numbers and practice, though not necessarily of belief, see chapter 9 part 2.

hearer, the hunter and the agouti head is to be seen as an instrument not an agent. It does not of itself 'cause' a successful hunt but serves as the means of assisting 'good hearing', as an expressive³⁰ feature of fruitful communicative and social relations, to effect that desired end.

³⁰ By which is meant that it does not just represent or convey but actualises. This, I suggest, would also make "Tchimap" expressive in the manner proposed by Herder and other 18c German "*Sturm und Drang*" Romantics (see Ch. Taylor 1975:13-29), for whom all human activities, and human life itself, are subjective expressions "in the sense in which we speak of expression as giving vent to, a realising in external reality of something we feel or desire" (p. 14).

chapter five

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION
Power and the politics of Pa'ikwené speaking

Introduction.

This chapter describes and examines a number of types, or modes, of Pa'ikwené speaking which, together with their associated contexts, I shall characterise as political because they relate to the regulation and maintenance of the interpersonal, and dialogic, relationships constituting their society. This speech is not just to do with its control and protection but, vitally, its very generation. Living in Village Espérance 2 led me time and again to the conclusion that where the Pa'ikwené were concerned, the social and the political were interconstitutive. In the words of Clastres, who has convincingly refuted (1987:7-47) the supposed apoliticalness of stateless egalitarian societies without coercive 'Power', as typified by those of Lowland Amazonia: "[Whereas] the political can be conceived apart from violence, the social cannot be conceived without the political" (p. 23). What was social in Pa'ikwené life entailed the political; the political was, in the end, social.

As will be seen, some of the types of speech described belong to the category of 'leadership talk', while others are fundamentally demotic. My aim as regards Pa'ikwené political speaking is to show among other things that this activity is not the monopoly of chiefs.

According to Rivière's comparative study of Amerindian social organisation in the Guianas (1984), the fundamental factor underlying the political structure and, indeed, *permitting* the very condition of indigenous community life, is the "vital relationship... between the leader and his settlement... [which] latter depends for its survival on the existence of the former..." (p. 72). Village Espérance 2 did not meet these criteria, however, for the simple reason that it had no leader, a matter to which I return in fuller detail shortly; nevertheless there is no gainsaying the validity of its own continuing existence, anomaly or not. (Admittedly, the Pa'ikwené, an Arawakan society, are not included in Rivière's book which concentrates mainly on

Carib ones). Concerning a further point he makes (*ibid.*), that “successful leadership derives from an ability to handle the social network that constitutes the settlement and the community”, I found such adroitness to be the possession and prerogative of any and every fellow villager. Without this effective manipulatory skill he or she could not exist and survive as a successful co-member and co-producer of the community, which is to say one whose several relationships, be they with kin, affines or others, are “*kabai*”, “good”; that is, proper, peaceful, sociable, congenial and productive in one form or another.

Some of the ‘political’, and necessarily social, means he or she might employ to this end are working together; playing together; sharing and gifting (subjects discussed in chapter 7 and increasingly replaced nowadays by lending and borrowing, which carry the very real danger of causing rifts); marriage; and speech. I believe this last the most basic and, possibly, the most important. It is certainly the most resorted to in that it figures complementarily with, and instrumentally in, all the others. In speech I include, though will not necessarily give examples of each specific type, both directly political discourses, such as public exhortations (a rarity in Village *Espérance 2* outside of church services) and homilies (by no means an exclusively chiefly device), and indirect or ‘secondary’ ones like ordinary conversations, greetings, joking, teknonymic usage, and gossip, and the Pa’ikwené ‘institution’ of scolding (item [vi] below).

I report in chapter 4 that Pa’ikwené (‘good’) hearing was not a male activity solely. Neither, observation revealed, was (‘good’) speaking. In some Amazonian societies, an opposition between the two behaviours seems to be made along gender and ‘power’ lines. The Suyá apparently regard speaking as male and active, and listening, classed as both male and female, as “largely passive” (Seeger 1981:84-6, 89-91). The polarity is particularly marked in ceremonial and ritual situations. Although Suyá women do perform in some song events, in others their role tends to be more important as an audience for the men (1987:76).¹ And in political and religious rhetorical events, the chief or the shaman is the doer, and everyone else, whether male or female, those that are done to (*ibid.*:50). However, I would suggest that the notion of ‘performer/active : audience/passive’ in these contexts might be suspect and misleading. I agree with Soyinka (1976:33-44) that

¹ I would dispute Howes’ reading [1991:178] that this is indicative of Suyá male hegemony.

it forms part of a certain Eurocentric premise about performance and drama which denies, or at the most downgrades, the audience's participation as an integral, creative, and in essence protagonistic element of the experience.²

For Overing (1986:140), also, the role of women as audience in indigenous myth-telling and ritual events is as active and public as that of men as performers. She judges the former activity not only complementary with but, as it were, so equal to the latter as to constitute "female performance" in its own right.

If, in accord with this, Pa'ikwené women's public hearing is an active performative conduct, as social practice shows it to be, it should not then be assumed that as a corollary their speaking is, in contrast, constrained to the supposedly private sphere. I not only saw no evidence in Pa'ikwené social life of a hierarchical 'male/active/public: female/passive/private' dichotomy, such as can exist elsewhere (see e.g. Friedl 1967 on Greek peasant society), but their private-public divide was by no means an unambiguous and impermeable one anyway. In linguistic communication, then, the public action of Pa'ikwené women is not confined to listening; they also speak publicly, and just as "well" and "strongly" as the men.

I have claimed that for the Pa'ikwené, speaking and hearing are each as active as the other, and that in public the two acts are ungendered. Before proceeding, however, I should admit that while I not unnaturally observed much everyday discourse and performance, my access to the 'grand occasions' was in contrast very limited. The 'traditional' rituals I saw were virtually all informal and mainly domestic, but not for all that necessarily private; and there seemed to be a male-female parity in respect of the participants' verbal contributions. At the only (loosely) formal political meeting I attended, there were no women present, though they did have the right, I was told by informants of both sexes, to participate, to speak, and even to officiate (The Pa'ikwené do in fact have female leaders; that is, women, like Mauricienne the head of the settlement at Macouria, who are sole chiefs of an entire community, as distinct from women who share the chieftaincy with men, usually their spouses, such as exists among the Cashinahua [McCallum 1989:223ff., 247-8 and 1990], the Piaroa [Overing Kaplan 1975:51] and the

² Cf. Brecht's equation (1969:15, 26-7, 37-8, 140) of the passivity of modern Western audiences with emotion, which he strove to combat through the creation of the "scientific audience", characterised by an objective yet actively engaged reason.

Araweté [Viveiros de Castro 1992:111-6]).³

My inability to witness at first hand much ceremonial and formal politics was due to the following. Firstly, as already stated, 'my' community was itself literally acephalous in respect of all practical and 'everyday' sociopolitical affairs.⁴ Secondly, despite my warm and mutually trustworthy relations with some of my fellow villagers, and cordial and respectful ones with "Capitaine" Louis of Espérance 1, the bulk of the villagers for reasons ranging from shyness to, on the part of some of them, intractable suspicion, were none too keen on my presence as an outsider at their discussions of their internal affairs; and I generally only got to find out about them after the event. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, political activity was typically informal and uninstitutionalised anyway. Overall, it tended to occur in terms of domestic self-governance and ever readjustable, self-regulating relations between the individual members of a family, a kin unit or neighbouring households. Formal political, as distinct from religious, meetings which involved the wider community were very few and far between.

Nevertheless, my one solitary instance of personal observation of a 'formal' moot and, above all, the recording of their daily informal self-rule, provided me with insights into the role of speaking and listening in the Pa'ikwené political process. The latter behaviour is addressed in chapter 7. As regards the former, my emphasis will not be on political rhetoric as such, if by this is understood only a special public oratory performed either by leaders (see e.g. Steward 1946-59: Vol. V, p. 343; F. Huxley 1963:88; Seeger 1981:85, 1987:27, 38; Gow 1991:221-8) or others (see e.g. Rivière 1971). Rather, I shall consider political speaking as the process wherein individuals, whether chiefs or not, through the use of various types of public and private verbal interaction, do some or all of the following: communicate, instil and actualise norms and values as desirable things; induce, enable and accompany pragmatic acts favourable to the maintenance of the well-being of the group; foster and sustain emotional ties of union (cf. Malinowski 1930:315); perpetuate and indeed (re)create the social field in which the political

³ For Viveiros de Castro (op. cit.:260), female leaders are a "logical step in uxori-local societies [such as the Pa'ikwené], where the sociopolitical world falls in general under the aegis of the feminine".

⁴ On 'big issues', particularly those involving political relations with the non-Pa'ikwené world, people tended to seek guidance and representation from a "Capitaine" in the next-door village. They also recognised the Pa'ikwené 'superchief', Tchikoi, who lived in Aúkwa (North Brazil) and on whom more later.

process occurs.

Amerindian power, politics, society and speech - a framework.

Before presenting the data, I find it necessary to situate the issue of Pa'ikwené political speech within a broad theoretical and cultural context. Invited once by a Pa'ikwené to a festive communal meal, I was asked to contribute towards it. This was phrased (in French) as "Alain, you give a little present to buy some food". Not so much a statement, let alone a question, as an injunction. Or so it felt. This was probably because I was an outsider, for the Pa'ikwené will tell you that among themselves there is neither an obligation to make a gift to anyone nor to offer one in return; and if you did choose to do so, the counter-prestation need not be of the same kind as the one offered to you, though should ideally be of the same value (for more on this see chapter 7). My money, I suggest, was not only seen to be a gift (which may explain why I was not asked for it explicitly by name), but one evaluated as equal to my inviter's gift to me: her invitation. Let me try and explain. The Pa'ikwené verb "aunasa", which translates as "to invite", comes from that for "to speak" ("auna"), and pragmatically, it seemed to me, its use, even in translation, clearly means more than the recognition that functionally one resorts to words in order to effect the request that someone be your guest. It indicates too that the invitation is not only for the purpose of eating and drinking *but also of speaking together*. It is as if the inviter's words to the invited were in themselves a performative act constituting an initial gift-giving, and food and words each somehow as valued as the other (see Lacan's thesis [1975:35, 118-22 note 80] that words are gifts, indeed the original gift).

There seemed, then, to be a rationale at work behind the act of inviting which held speaking and eating together to be equally powerful actions for (re)producing good social relations. Talk was not something taken for granted by the Pa'ikwené as the automatic and incidental accompaniment to feasting and any other social activity. Nor, I judged, did they just see it in terms of a behaviour necessary for the upkeep of sociability. For them, rather, it appeared to be an act which one undertook in common with others so that together they could realise and perpetuate sociality itself, as Kaúmaiyé, the creator spirit, did when, sad in his solitude, he danced and sang and *through words* brought his people into existence (see Appendix A, myth 1). From my point of view, that verbal communication had the power to create

society, as told in indigenous myth, was not only an ideological principle. It also constituted practical and, intrinsically, political actuality.

Clastres argues (op. cit.:27-47) that Lowland Amerindians hold that whatever power exists in a community is not the property of an individual or of the group but rightfully belongs to an extra-social sphere. According to him, this power comes from nature. For others, such as Overing (1982, 1983-4:338-40) and Santos-Granero (1991), it derives from supernature as the property of the gods and spirits. In either case, the presence of power in society presents a great risk to one and all for power is by nature violent and coercive, and can only be subdued by various cultural means, including, centrally, *language*, which for the Amerindian, says Clastres, is the “very opposite of violence” (op.cit.:46). The Pa’ikwené proved broadly true to this model. Their shamanic beliefs and practices, for all that they seemed on their last legs, showed that society was seen as the place into which, by the use of ritual means, humans brought non-human power from outside (I describe in chapters 4 and 9 how oral expression is one of the main agents by which this power is expressed). Once inside, its true locus becomes not the chief or shaman but society as a whole (Clastres op. cit.:154). And as with the Pemon, Pa’ikwené society was also in practice the “meaningful... moral order... by which power is mediated “ (Thomas 1982:9).

On the other hand, though I saw no particular evidence of it, could it truly be said that there was no human proclivity for personal political power on the part of some members of Village Espérance 2? For Lévi-Strauss this tendency, a purportedly universal and natural given expressed through the taking and exercise of unilateral leadership, is a “prerequisite for the existence of human society” (1967:46) - the leader’s primary power being as it were the power of attraction and agglomeration (see Overing Kaplan 1975:65 and J-P. Dumont 1978:129 concerning Piaroa and

Panaré leaders respectively);⁵ and without this purely political impulse of the single power-seeking individual, no society, it is claimed, could exist. Yet, in the event, the very real and concrete existence of 'my' village surely invalidated this premise in that, as I have already said, it did not possess a leader of this kind, or any other. Nor had it by all accounts ever done so.

The settlement was pioneered in 1980 by three women and three men: two sisters, their parents, and their spouses. They were motivated, one of the founders told me, by economic reasons and the hope of obtaining better medical care in "France" than in Brazil and a Western education for their children (at that time two small boys and two babies). Crossing into Guyane from the Aúkwa homeland, they were given land near to the town of St Georges de l'Oyapock, in an insalubrious area of what was then still rank jungle next door to the already long established Pa'ikwené community of Premier Village Espérance. Here they hacked out a living space and laid the foundation for a community of (according to the census I did in February 1994) about one hundred and sixty persons, many of whom, now belonging to the middle and older generations, joined them from Aúkwa.

While it may be said that some of the original group, who provided the nucleus around which the others aggregated, clearly possessed the skills and qualities of leadership, none of them was thought to stand out above his or her fellows in such a way as to constitute 'the' leader of the village. This position had never been foisted onto any of the six, neither did a single one of them ever seek it (Nor, indeed, was any other member of the community its leader). Now five in number, the oldest woman having died in the meantime, and respected by their co-villagers, they occupied the status of elders, though were in this no different from any other similarly endowed individual in their generational peer group. This conflicts with Rivière's assumption (1984:72) that the founder (in the singular and

⁵ The ability to attract a following is not always conjoined with the desire for personal power. In the Pa'ikwené context, and in Amazonia more generally, the former factor does not necessarily imply (let alone result in the fulfilment of) the latter, and 'charismatic' but non-power seeking individuals are sometimes reluctant to accede to the post of chief which in a good many Lowland societies is typically both bereft of personal power and burdensome (see below apropos chief Tchikoi). Thus I believe that, while seemingly self-evident, the claim that the ~~the~~ chief has to preexist as someone bent on leading and unifying in order for there to be a group (Lévi-Strauss op. cit.:52; cf. Gow 1991:226) assumes a one-way process rather than the more likely dialectical one. For it could be argued that the group already exists latently and with a predisposition for unity in the shape of heterogeneous individuals who actively decide that a given person should lead them; and that it is his/her acceptance of that decision which empowers them to become an actual cohesive group. Nor can I accept that the group's needs are for nothing in the process, as Lévi-Strauss also insists (ibid). I prefer to think of both preexistent parties interactively and complementarily calling each other into being rather than a chief unilaterally conjuring up a group as from out of nowhere, or a group somehow one-sidedly throwing up a chief.

male) of a settlement is explicitly recognised by its inhabitants as its chief and owner, for both historically and according to the villagers, Espérance 2 was neither the creation of one person, let alone a man, nor anybody's exclusive possession.

However, despite this noticeable absence of leadership, which tends in 'Western' eyes to be considered a negative condition equated with apoliticalness or anarchy (Clastres op. cit.:27-47), Village Espérance 2 nevertheless existed in practice as both an authentic and cohesive entity. And one in which politics were patently not missing since they were empirically to be observed at play every day in the different activities fashioning and sustaining the community as an enduring, self-perpetuating and orderly social entity.⁶

Central among these activities, and on a par perhaps with marriage, was that of speaking. The inextricable and universal link between it and politics (power) is well established; and like other Lowland groups, the Pa'ikwené bore out Clastres' claim (ibid.) that unlike 'Power' in the State (i.e., a society with coercive authority and a structure of subordination), which possesses the right to speak, leaders in non-coercive "stateless' societies, have, by contrast, the duty, placed upon them by the collectivity, to do so. Nevertheless, as far as the Pa'ikwené specifically are concerned, their belief that the speaking action incumbent on their leaders was necessary for the maintenance and well-being of the community did not preclude them from simultaneously and empirically perceiving that their own discourse also counted for something in the process; that it too on a daily basis exerted pragmatically instrumental effect on the constant creation and recreation of the good relations which comprise society.

On speech and Pa'ikwené chiefs and chieflessness.

The Pa'ikwené in common with other Amerindians demand that their leaders 'speak well' (see among others Lévi-Strauss 1967, Maybury-Lewis 1967, Clastres op. cit.:31, 41, 152-5, Santos-Granero op. cit.:301-2); a skill not possessed, however, solely by the chief for in practice every Pa'ikwené is supposed to acquire it. As noted in chapter 3, by "auna kabai" ('good speaking') is meant not only linguistic and grammatical correctness and the positive affective and aesthetic aspects of the oral performance, on both of which the Pa'ikwené place great value.

⁶ The case of Espérance 2 shows that while there might be no chief without a group, there most definitely can be, *pace* Lévi-Strauss, a viable and united group without a chief.

It refers also to the ability typically to use words in a manner strong in knowledge, morality, persuasion, and care and concern. We saw too that in the Pa'ikwené context 'good' further signifies strong in tone and volume, and the term "auna kihao" is used to describe this technically correct and socially proper way of talking, which, again, is not the chief's alone.

'Strong talk' would seem to be a common feature of many Lowland groups. As a defining characteristic of 'speaking well', it is among the Pa'ikwené the requisite, though not the only, vocal style of everyday verbal communication and, again as noted above, is not limited to chiefs as it can be elsewhere (see Campbell 1995:115-6 on the "hard talking" of Wayapi leaders, and Santos-Granero op. cit.:301-2 on Amuesha ones). Nor is it reserved for ceremonial occasions (see Rivière 1969:236-9 on the Trio's ranking of ceremonial dialogue according to intensity, length and strength).

The aforementioned chief Tchikoi conformed to the rule whereby "to speak well" is a leader's first and main obligation. According to both him and my informants it constituted too the prime prerequisite for his position, the *sine qua non*.. Like chiefs, the "capitaines" also had "the duty to speak" (see Clastres op. cit:153) and, therefore, the need to possess particularly good verbal skills. Among these is included the ability to communicate well in the languages of the two states, Brazil and France, in which the Pa'ikwené nation has been incorporated. Tchikoi spoke fluent Portuguese; and that "Capitaine" Louis, for instance, one of the two headmen at Village Espérance 1, was markedly more proficient in French than the general run of the St Georges Pa'ikwené, was a vital factor in his having been elected to the post. In connection with this, Jean Narcissio of the Association d'Amérindiens Palikur de Macouria stated the need for the Pa'ikwené living in Guyane to learn French if they were successfully to engage in the wider political process of that country and assert Indian rights through the courts.

Jean was neither a chief nor a "capitaine", and his attitude, I submit, reveals and reflects more than the 'militant' Indian's desire for and claim to redress. It is, I believe, grounded in a traditional core belief that speech and power are interlocked and that *to 'speak well' is not just a matter for chiefs alone but a behaviour required of, and a power attainable by, all the members of the community.*

While qualifiably true as regards "formal" verbal communication with outsiders,

Clastres' contention that the Amerindian chief exercises a "near monopoly over language" (op. cit.:41), holds no water where the Pa'ikwené are concerned. The notion of exclusive access to, and ownership and control of, any resource by a single human individual is not consistent with their social ethos. What is more likely to be the case is that the ability to handle through speaking the power perceived to be embodied in their language, a skill belonging in varying degrees to everyone in the community, is judged to be possessed to the greatest degree by the one whom the others select as their leader. Given that every Pa'ikwené is required to 'speak well', and that 'good speaking' is so valued aesthetically and morally, it will be appreciated just how important it is that their chiefs speak that much better.

Socialised from infancy into 'speaking well' and in the ways of hearing, as reported earlier, the Pa'ikwené seemed to "hear-understand" ("tchimap") that there is a link between words and the potency attaching to them, intrinsically and in their performative effect. Whatever the full indigenous hermeneutic explanation for it, and I regret that I did not obtain as much data in this respect as I hoped, this verbal and vocal power was overtly perceived by my informants to have causality. This power, which I talk about in greater detail in chapter 4 section iii, made things happen, be it a cure, a kill, or the state of sociality. Previous ethnolinguistic studies tend perhaps to focus on this type of power as it relates to the realm of religious activity. My aim here is to try to describe and, if possible, to explain in some measure how it also operated in the 'profane' everyday life of the Pa'ikwené community in as much as the first penetrated the second. In being brought up to 'speak well', Pa'ikwené individuals gain access to the power of, and *in*, words. For speech seems to be understood not so much as the instrument of power as its agent, the active medium through which it is effectable in all its different and various forms.

What is my basis for claiming that words are charged with, and infuse power into, the Pa'ikwené's social world? While I was told that there was a word for power ("Hiya"), I never encountered it in action, so to speak, and cannot say in what context(s) it is used; nor can I be certain that it really was the right term. Metadiscursively, power tended to be seen in terms of its attributes, effects and source. The converted inhabitants of Village Espérance 2 held, and stated firmly,

in line with Christian teaching, that power is not singular but dual and that in effect there existed two powers: the one to do all things good was attributed to God, or in Pa'ikwaki, "Ohokri"; that of doing all things bad, to Satan, whose name was "Wavitché". Yet their notions about this latter entity, whose very name was likely to provoke nervous smiles and joking, and whom they alternately referred to in translation by the Créole term "Le Diab" ("Devil") or simply and less specifically as "a spirit", revealed a deeper, more ambivalent layer of conceptualisation and belief. It appeared that "Wavitché", while greatly feared as a begetter of affliction and instigator of mischief and evil, was also to be credited with positive acts. His power, it turned out, was indeed singular, but not as unilateral in its function and application as the orthodox Evangelical view would have it; he could be benign as well as malign (cf. Arnaud 1970:20-1 who explicitly names Protestantism as the cause of the Pa'ikwené's modern belief that shamanic acts effect only malefic ends). Nimuendaju's claim (op. cit.:61) that "Wavitché" is a Christian construct having nothing to do with the prior religion, was contradicted by my Christian and non-Christian informants alike.

According to the shamans (and non-Christians) Waptchi and Ovayan, who dwelt in the neighbouring village, "Wavitché" was not the satanic anti-God but one of several superspirits in the Pa'ikwené pantheon, who is neither good nor bad in essence and whose unitary 'amoral' power may be tapped by, and transmitted through, humans for either moral or immoral, social or anti-social, ends. For example, to cure a sick person, or to cause a well one to fall ill and die. Furthermore, and germanely, this ambiguous power can be incarnated orally, by an individual's breath, and verbally, by his or her words, as occurs during the shamanic process, discussed more fully in chapters 4 (section iii) and 9.

As far as belief in "Wavitché" was concerned, it became clear that despite the overlay of their acquired Christian notion of the moral heterogeneousness and inimical opposition of powers (divine/good, satanic/bad), the Pa'ikwené of Espérance 2 tended to continue to behave as if they were one and the same at root. Value, both positive and negative, was given not to different powers as such but to the various and multiple uses and ends of the sole power.

Integral to this was the concept, apparent in myth and the practices of shamans and, it seemed to me, in the pre-Christian credence of my converted fellow villagers, that oral expression - speech, song, and breath - was one of the guises of this spiritual power.

In chiefless, shamanless Village Espérance 2, this idea, often reported as supporting and legitimising the special speech behaviours of the ‘powerful’, manifestly also underpinned the speaking of the general populace regardless of age, gender, status or material wealth. Items (i), (ii) and (iii) below will deal with the specific issue of the talk of Pa’ikwené leaders; item (iv) describes an esoteric type of language called “Kiptúnka”, which possesses unique political and religious significance for all Pa’ikwené; and (v), (vi) and (vii) relate to the everyday political speech of the leaderless inhabitants of my community.

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On the Speech of Pa’ikwené Leaders, and on Speaking and Listening to Them.

(i) An interview with chief Tchikoi.

Tchikoi is not only the head of Kúmené (Aúkwa, Brazil) but also the overall chief of the Pa’ikwené nation, according to my informants.⁷ F. and P. Grenand report (1987:18) that according to theirs, each clan did not historically possess its own leader but recognised a single chief, or “king”, who was resident in Aúkwa and had authority over all the clans comprising the Pa’ikwené federation; they seem to suggest, however, that the position of super-chief no longer exists today.⁸

Tchikoi was a well-liked, gracious, and somewhat shy individual in his thirties, possessed of a natural gravitas. I was told that he had been elected to the leadership as a replacement for his own father, Paulo Orlando, from whom the

⁷ It should be borne in mind, however, that they were Evangelical-Pentecostalist converts, as was Tchikoi. Thus the situation could possibly be otherwise for the following reasons: the fact that today the Pa’ikwené world is subdivided along general religious lines (Christian and non-Christian; Catholic and Protestant) and sectarian ones (Adventist and Evangelical-Pentecostalist), a situation described in chapter 9, so it is not inconceivable that an Evangelical-Pentecostalist leader might not be recognised by non-Evangelical-Pentecostalists. Secondly, I did not think to crosscheck what my informants’ told me in this respect with any non-Evangelical-Pentecostalists. It is noteworthy, though, that despite a certain tension between the Adventists of Espérance 1 and the Evangelical-Pentecostalists of Espérance 2, the latter deferred to the former community’s “Capitaines” on some issues, as reported above.

⁸ The rationale behind this, the Grenands propose (ibid.), was to prevent any one clan leader from dominating the others, thereby rendering interclan and/or inter-ethnic union impossible.

community, finding his qualities and conduct wanting, had withdrawn its support.⁹ Nimuendaju reports (op. cit.:74) that while Pa'ikwené chieftaincy is not inheritable¹⁰, chiefs name and in effect appoint their own successors. This was not the case with Tchikoi. Nor did it coincide with what my informants told me, that leaders can only accede to their post thanks to the universal support, and at the demand, of their co-villagers, and on the basis of their perceived and recognised attributes (see Grenands op. cit.) and popularity (Nimuendaju op. cit.).

Tchikoi, whom I later met several times much more informally, received me in the 'community office'. Against a continuous background crackle from the two-way radio transmitter in the corner which linked the settlement to FUNAI regional headquarters in the town of Oiapoque, our interview was carried out in a mixture of Pa'ikwaki, Créole, French, and Portuguese, and with the help of Karinai, with whom I resided in Village Espérance 2, and his bother-in-law, Nenel, my host in Kúmené. As generally with the Pa'ikwené, this occasion, the most formal that I ever encountered, was by no means a one-way affair. I was asked as many questions by Tchikoi as I put to him; and if anything his were more 'personal' than I allowed mine to be. I was aware throughout that my listening was being judged. While my two 'escorts', Karinai and Nenel, were most attentive to what was being said, and how I "heard-understood" it, the other Pa'ikwené present paid more or less attention for various lengths of time, some people coming or going at will, others turning away to chat and joke among themselves. I, however, was allowed no such respite but subjected to a steady pressure from them to pay not merely courteous but unwavering attention to Tchikoi's words. Our dialogue was more than once interrupted by some anxious and even stern bystander or other seeking reassurance that I had fully grasped this or that point. It should be borne in mind that Tchikoi was not so much speaking for himself as for the group. Whenever a Pa'ikwené bystander did choose to speak his own mind, it was always done with regard for proper etiquette. Accordingly 'turn taking' was more formal, and its rules

⁹ For more on this individual, the charismatic founder and leader of the Assembleia de Deus community in Aúkwa, see chapter 9. Ricardo assumes (1983:28) the Orlando family corresponds to the Wawayené clan and cites an informant's claim that it is mostly to members of this group that the Pa'ikwené assign the leadership. But my own informants said that this clan, an 'inner core' one, covers the Yoyo, Norino and Michel families but not the Orlandos, who are of the peripheral Pa(r)úriéné clan; and that it is anyway untrue that any one clan has a monopoly on the chieftaincy .

¹⁰ According to Fernandes (1948:219), it used to be hereditary until the combined influence of the French authorities and Catholic missionaries put paid to the practice in the 18c.

more diligently followed, than customarily occurred in ordinary conversations (see chapter 4).

According to informants, the position of chief falls to the man or woman (such as the aforementioned Mauricienne)¹¹ who, regardless of age,¹² is recognised by his or her peers as possessing the necessary qualities and skills for fulfilling a certain number of criteria. Bearing in mind the exigencies of present day macro-political reality and the cultural invasiveness of the non-indigenous world on that of the Pa'ikwené, it will be seen that while they do not agree on all points, these conditions tally in a general way with those pertaining to chieftainship in other Amazonian societies (Lévi-Strauss op. cit., Clastres op. cit.:29-31, Rivière 1984:73). Briefly, Tchikoi, who referred to himself explicitly as the people's guardian, described his duties as follows: To talk (that is, primarily, to be their spokesman in dealings with the outside world, and internally to have the final word in settling disputes where all other measures, including action by a "capitaine", have proven unsatisfactory. Thus as a peacemaker, and needing to be as good a 'hearer-understander' as he is a speaker, he is called upon to make King Solomon-like pronouncements in cases which are otherwise unresolvable or where an aggrieved party has not chosen the option of fission). To allocate community tasks in conjunction with the "capitaine". To be generous not so much with his possessions as his time, energy, care, and knowledge; he also had to think more on behalf of the others than himself in the sense of unstintingly using his mental powers to find solutions to collective concerns, to display in other words that ingenuity which is the "intellectual form of generosity" (Lévi-Strauss op. cit.:55). To protect land rights and combat the incursion of unwanted outsiders, such as "garimpeiros" (gold prospectors), into the Pa'ikwené homeland. To ensure the procurement of certain essential imported goods such as salt, ammunition, oil, rice, and, very importantly, medical supplies. Tchikoi had received training as a paramedic, as had "Capitaine" Louis in Village Espérance 1, and was at pains to

¹¹ In their material on Pa'ikwené chieftainship no mention of female leaders is made by Nimuendaju (op. cit.), F. & P. Grenand (1987), Fernandes (1948) or Arnaud (1984).

¹² Nimuendaju asserts (op. cit.:60) that the chief is always an old man (see too Ricardo 1983:28); the basis for this claim being perhaps that, as he writes on p. 74, both the chief whom he interviewed in 1925 and the one the French Jesuit missionary Fauque reported having met some two hundred years earlier were the eldest members of their community. While this could suggest old age is a determining factor in the accession to Pa'ikwené leadership, Tchikoi's incumbency, and Mauricienne's in Macouria, shows this is not so in practice. Or if it once was, is no longer so today.

stress his responsibility to maintain the health of his people.¹³ I asked him if he liked being chief.

“Not much. Only a little”, he answered.

“Why?”

“Because it’s a lot of work.”

“You could quit.”

“Yes.”

“But you don’t.”

“No.” And he laughed, then paused, then said as if this explained everything: “I have to watch over the Pa’ikwené.”

Being chief was clearly an onerous task, then. I feel that Tchikoi’s last phrase sums up how both he and his followers conceive of it less in terms of personal power than of guardianship. That great store was placed on looking after their people’s physical health, and the basic (Western) medical training undertaken by some leaders, might indicate a possible modern extension or variation of their ancestral function of (re-)generating the community’s vitality and welfare: what Hocart describes (1970:32ff.) as the necessarily ritualistic “life giving” aspect present in all government whether it be authoritarian and by the state or non-coercive and stateless.

Writing about the Pa’ikwené’s supernatural sphere, Arnaud cites (1984:44, 1970:3) the word “Hiyepuene” as meaning a shaman (see too Nimuendaju op. cit.:65 who says it is a sorcerer). Although my informants knew it they invariably resorted instead to the term “Ihamwi”, translating it as “healer”. I suggest a (possible) connection between the former word and the one for chief, “Hiyaptihi”; and that it is not inconceivable that at some time in the past Pa’ikwené chiefs and shamans were seen to possess overlapping qualities and fulfil correlative duties in the different yet interconnected spheres of the social and the supernatural.

In this regard, Montout proposes (op. cit.:87-8) that before the recent decline of shamanism, Pa’ikwené chiefs and shamans historically embodied the two aspects, at once oppositional and complementary, of a single power, the one operating in the spiritual world, the other in the temporal. However, the perception that the former intruded at all times into the latter resulted in a “certain supremacy of the shaman’s role over that of the “capitaine” in respect of decision-making” (p. 87,

¹³ See in chapter 9 part 2 regarding the indigenous system of medicine and its relationship with the Western one.

my translation). In effect, he concludes, the temporal leader was just left to technically and strategically organise and administer various activities like hunting, fishing and warring,¹⁴ which necessitated orational and man-management talents. Similarly, Arnaud declares (1984:44) the Pa'ikwené shaman's function to be "compatible" with the duties of the chief" and mentions the existence in the 1950's of an individual in Aúkwa whom Fernandes reported to be both a "capitão" and a shaman.¹⁵

I suspect that "Chief" ("Hiyaptihi") might be etymologically (and, I think, conceptually) associated not only with the the verb "to see" ("Hiyap"), but perhaps also with the term I collected for "power": "Hiya". A derivative of the former is the word "Hiyapkis", which means "to show", "to demonstrate" and "to punish", and which I personally further interpret as "to guide". I incline, too, to the possibility that there is a relationship between "to see" ("Hiyap"), and therefore "chief" ("Hiyaptihi"), and "to know" ("Hiyak") ["Hiyakinimiyé"= knowledge/intelligence/wisdom; "Hiyaknimiki"= "group of wise well-doers"]. Lastly, and I would say not merely coincidentally, there may also be a link with "to laugh" and "to smile": "Hiyar" and "Hiyara". As elsewhere in the region, Pa'ikwené leaders are expected to be of good humour themselves and to instil and maintain it in the community.

(ii) A public meeting. In Kúmené I had my sole experience of a collective political assembly. It was convened in order to discuss the current state of negotiations then underway with the Brazilian authorities over the protection of Pa'ikwené territory from interlopers. The participants sat in a loose circle; some choosing to stand when feeling the need to speak, others doing so while remaining seated. There were no women present, though, as stated earlier, they had the right to attend. When asked why she had not come, one informant (Susana) told me that she had other things to do at the time. She would have gone, she said, had she considered the situation urgent, but she thought that Tchikoi was handling the issue (a long-standing one) satisfactorily and therefore her own presence was not necessary that particular afternoon.

¹⁴ The Pa'ikwené used historically to appoint provisional war chiefs as and when necessary (see F. & P. Grenand op. cit.:18; Boyer 1654).

¹⁵ See too Ricardo 1983:28. On the issue of the 'political' power of shamans in Amerindian societies see Chaumeil 1983, Descola 1988.

Basically, the chief's contribution amounted to a report back to the community on the latest round of talks (a summary of his presentation of its grievances, demands, and defence of its rights; and of the Brazilian authorities' response). Other than that it seemed to me that his role was just as much that of a listener as anyone else there. After his report, which was heard without interruption, various individuals asked questions of him or otherwise had their say. There was no hierarchic order to this that I could see. No permission was sought to speak, and, discounting myself, all present had the right to, including several Brazilians who had taken Pa'ikwené wives and lived in the village. People awaited their turn in a way which, while seemingly unregulated, was more orderly than what obtained in ordinary everyday conversation. Voices were not that much louder though, and there was an absence of what we would call 'dramatic' rhetorical effects, no oratorical flourishes, and no haranguing. Some men spoke earnestly, some passionately, some flatly; and others, for all that the overall ambiance was sober, joked. A number came and sat in on the proceedings for a short period only, leaving as the mood took them, some out of boredom perhaps, or because they had, like Susana, something else to do (a cluster of "young adults" rose en bloc to go and play football). No one appeared to take exception to this incessant coming and going. If the meeting was formal it was so in the sense of following custom and established convention, rather than that of the participants' behaviour being in any way constrained and stiff. Overall, the event was characterised by a mixture of casualness and a discipline which was self-imposed by the group rather than being imposed by the chief. Once he had delivered his report, his subsequent contributions to the discussion were listened to more or less silently and with more or less attention -- but no more so, and no more respectfully, than those of any other speaker.

(iii) The "Capitaines" rounds. From time to time, one or other of the two "capitaines" of Village Espérance 1 (Louis Norino and Auguste Labonté), would walk across to Village Espérance 2 and visit each household in turn in order to check on things generally. This was done with a mixture, again, of the formal and the relaxed. People tended to put their polite face on and behave with reserve and decorum; at the same time they could not quite hide the spontaneous emotion prompted by their personal feelings for either of the two men. (On the whole there was more affection for "Capitaine" Louis. Auguste was regarded with distaste by

many villagers for having allowed himself to be seduced some years back into standing as a candidate for Le Pen's Front National party in the regional elections: a situation which had caused a deal of friction between the Pa'ikwené and the Créole inhabitants of St Georges.) One factor shaping a person's response would be the degree of kinship he or she might share with one or the other "capitaine", and beyond that, the affective and/or political desire to profit, or distance him- or herself, from it. The inhabitants of the two neighbouring communities necessarily had diverse common clan and kin links. Everyone appeared to be related to the two "capitaines", by blood or classification and affinal circumstances. Once greetings were exchanged, and the "capitaine" had had his 'official' say, which was listened to in silence, people felt free to engage in dialogue with him, and the more formal mood thawed considerably. At length, the "capitaine" would take his leave and move on to the next house, where the whole process started all over again.

I now wish to look at a particular type of speech which while included under the rubric of 'leader's talk' in effect transcends it.

(iv) "Kiaptúnka", a 'grammagical' language. This particular type of language, which means the "speech of respect", traditionally constitutes the idiom of formal political exchanges, diplomacy and ceremonial, and possesses virtual numinous force in its own right for today's Pa'ikwené. It is distinct from Pa'ikwaki, the vernacular language, also known as "Kamúyúné", the "language of the sun clan" which came historically to supplant the languages of all the other clans comprising the Pa'ikwené nation (see Arnaud 1968:7, 1984:23-33). "Kiaptúnka" was in the past employed for contacts between clan chiefs and in relations between the Pa'ikwené and other Amerindian peoples of the region, some of whom became incorporated over time as clans in the Pa'ikwené federation (F. and P. Grenand (1987:31).

The Grenands report (ibid.:31-33) that they recorded songs in "Kiaptúnka" which were connected with the cycle of ceremonial dances, but that otherwise the language was nearly extinct. It had been one of my aims when starting fieldwork to find evidence for disproving this. In the event, although I too managed to record a few examples of the language, I was obliged to reach the same conclusion. The use of "Kiaptúnka" still lingers on in certain songs performed at dance and cashiri-

drinking events, themselves increasingly on the wane. Although it continued to be spoken and sung in rituals in the small settlement of Gabaret, downriver from Espérance 2, which I visited in December 1993 and was abandoned in 1994, it had all but met its total demise in Village Espérance 2 itself. This was due, I would say, to the same two factors cited by the Grenands (pp. 31-2): the rising death rate of those people of the middle and older generations who still knew it, however patchily, and the anti-traditionalist influence of the Protestant church.

Despite this, however, while people in Espérance 2 no longer appear to sing in “Kiptúnka”, or hold dance ceremonies, a few, mostly older, individuals did “know” it in the sense of being able to speak some words but not being able necessarily to understand them all. At best, comprehension proved hazy. According to the Grenands (p. 32), what is remembered might not be “Kiptúnka” at all but a old clan dialect, though my informants disagreed with this claim strongly.

Also, and as further demonstration of the close connection between the ‘political’ and the ‘religious’ in Amerindian life, Waptchi and Ovayan, the two shamans in Village Espérance 1, resorted to “Kiptúnka” when in a state of trance in some of their communications with diverse supernatural entities during the session which I attended. I asked them whether it was a ‘spirit language’ and learnt that this was not the case, being informed that it was, rather, “the language of the old ones” and that the spirits were able to speak it and often chose to express themselves in it, although they themselves, Ovayan and Waptchi, did not always understand what was being said.¹⁶ In regards to this stated connection between the shamans’ “language of the old ones” and “speech of respect”, the etymological meaning of “Kiptúnka”, it is worth noticing that “kia(p)vié”, translatable as “old man”, “sir”, and the one to whom you pay respect, is also the term of address for God used by converted Pa’ikwené when communicating with the Christian supernatural sphere.

Effectively, then, apart from these few instances of its survival, “Kiptúnka” has entered into a probably terminal phase of entropy. Paradoxically, and as good as posthumously, what seems originally to have been a practical vehicular and political tool has come to acquire a sacred status (cf. Grenands *ibid.*:32) which seems to grow in direct proportion to its progressive disappearance. People,

¹⁶ See chapter 9 part 2 and also in section iii chapter 4. For Tambiah (1968:177-81), unintelligibility is a factor of a religious language’s power, while its archaism contributes to its sacredness, gives it its authority, and is itself empowering.

including youths who knew not one word of it, categorised it in Créole as “langue grammaticale”; that is, for them, the purest and most correct form of language (cf. Grenands p. 32 fn. 32). This term, invariably and automatically appended by them to the word “Kiptúnka” whenever I raised the subject, seemed to fulfil a diacritical function in that it stressed the mixture of awe and reverence, somewhat tinged by sadness, with which the inhabitants of Village Espérance 2 thought about their dying esoteric language. So high was its affective value, and acute the sense of loss for something *felt* to be so precious and so intrinsically, essentially Pa’ikwené, that the more the knowledge of how to speak it dwindles, the more the word itself seems to approach the condition of a holy object with a near talismanic force all its own. So much so, indeed, that the very utterance of the term “grammatical language”, carrying with it a feeling at once ritualistic and full of nostalgic yearning, came in my head increasingly to sound like “grammagical language” instead.¹⁷

I now move on to describe some different aspects of ‘everyday’ political speaking.

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The Political Speech of Ordinary Pa’ikwené People.

(v) A dispute settlement. Sherzer, ascertaining (1990:82) that the oratory of a Kuna chief is “creative, adaptable, [and] flexible”, concludes that the nature of the political discourse of societies with “egalitarian ideologies and the desire to avoid confrontation, particularly in... Lowland South America and the Pacific” contradicts Bloch’s well-known claim (1975) concerning the supposed constraint and rigidity of political ritual and speech in traditional societies. I would like to extend Sherzer’s proposition to cover the non-ritualistic practice of everyday political verbalisation by Amerindians who, while not chiefs, share both their expertise and, just as

¹⁷ Cf. Sherzer (1987) on how in speech, through the use of “optional grammatical categories” (which enable speakers to choose different ways to express and actualise meaning in discourse, p. 296-7) and the “poeticization of grammar” (where the grammatical function combines with the poetic one, p.299), there occur the following things (among others): discourse, especially the artistic and ritual sort, is revealed as the “expression of the essence of the *relationship... between language and culture*” (p. 299); and “by the packing of a maximum of meaning into a minimum of form, *grammar becomes poetry and poetry becomes magic*” (ibid. my emphases). Both of these seem to apply to Pa’ikwené interaction with their moribund “speech of respect”: the first in connection with how they talk about it; the second in connection with its very appellation. Here the form in question would appear to be a single expressive term: a language’s name. “Kiptúnka”, a specific “optional grammatical category”, has historically evolved through social and discursive practice into a reified yet sacralised and (as if) magically potent concept: GRAMMAR.

germanely, their objectives. He refers to the use by leaders of “artistic and indirect and often allusive speech” as the means of channelling, and preempting potentially physical, conflict and competition. I wish, through the example below, to look at the situation where an ‘ordinary’ Pa’ikwené villager similarly, and I would say spontaneously, resorted to a certain form (or more truthfully mixture of forms) of speech in order to put a stop to a conflict already underway; and in the process showed as much skill and creativity as Sherzer’s Kuna chief. At the same time, given that Espérance 2 did not necessarily as a large community uphold the fiction of a solidary consanguineal group, the event may also be said to compromise the claim made by Rivière (1984:74) that outside of the extended family unit there is among Amerindians in the Guianas a “lack of any mechanisms for settling disputes”, and that those within it are mediated through the chief.

From my field notes, 16th March 1994:

“An argument between two women this morning: loud irate shouting across the wide public space between the houses. Notable features: neither tried physically to approach the other in order to assert herself and squash the other bodily. It was as though an invisible but tangibly felt, and respected, line kept them apart. Everything was done in and through the voice alone. The dispute ‘technique’ involved very marked and scrupulously adhered to ‘turn taking’, unlike the fuzzier demarcations of ordinary conversation, and also surprisingly in view of the anger and other emotions flying around: neither participant sought to interrupt or invade the the verbal territory of the other by violating her ‘blocks’ of utterances. However, if they didn’t talk over them, each definitely tried to top the other’s in terms of volume, quality of insult, and depth of invective and accusation (I thought at first that since the women were carrying buckets the fight arose over access to the stand-pipe in the square. In fact it started when one of them criticised the other’s daughter whose intended marriage had recently been cancelled due to the husband-to-be pulling out at last moment). The event was only finally resolved by a third party (also a woman: Yvette Narcissio) thrusting her face out of one of the houses and forcefully calling on them in Jesus’ name to stop, and making derisive and comic remarks at the same time about their behaviour. She also laid it on thick with some pithy moralistic sermonising for good measure. The gist of her homily being how the antics of a few “bad and angry people” permitted the Devil to take roost in a whole village. Playing it for the gallery, her eyes gleaming with a mixture of righteousness and fun, she produced widespread hilarity and enjoyment among the onlookers. Her action, half exhortation and half mocking broadside delivered in even louder tones than the disputants’, succeeded in evoking such a sense of shame in them that in the end they had no other recourse than to

break off their fight. At which Yvette withdrew back inside with the air of someone having done a good job.”

So, public ridicule, the appeal to proper standards, the charge (more via insinuation and homiletic analogy than direct accusation) of antisocial and sinful behaviour, and consequent shame on the part of the two women involved: such were the methods used for bringing about a “dispute settlement”. It was as if Yvette’s action not only served to make the disputants aware of their disruption of the social order. It seemed to me that, through it, they also, and just as importantly, became conscious that they had infringed their own usual self-restraint. I suggest that seeing her words as a chastising or sanctioning device alone might be to miss the point. For could they not just as well have constituted the catalytic means whereby the pair were encouraged and enabled each freely to retrieve and reintegrate the norms of self-containment and self-control which both characterise personal autonomy for the Pa’ikwené, as elsewhere in Amazonia,¹⁸ and exist in practice within the person rather than being imposed upon them from without as an objective or disembodied Law? In all events, a verbal fight between two ‘ordinary’ individuals was ended by a peer, an ‘ordinary’ fellow member of their community, through a forceful and successfully *persuasive* verbal act which carried, and in view of the outcome was acknowledged as carrying, the full moral weight of that community. And just as much so as if it had been carried out by a leader. It will be allowed, I hope, that Yvette’s action was nothing if not political in effect.

It was also, I would maintain, artistic in character. While just as much a convention as a chief’s harangue, her discourse, with its combination of homily and humour, morality and mockery, displayed an inventiveness and even a playfulness, a sort of virtuoso serio-comic performance within the given parameters of the genre, which elicited not only compliance in the wrong-doers but also much pleasure and approbation in the spectators, and a visible satisfaction in herself. Crocker, stressing the importance of context in respect both of the speaker’s performance and the addressee’s perception of it, holds (1977:44) that the use of standard rhetorical devices drawn from the social repertory can be as apt, spontaneous and imaginative as the coining of a new phrase: “[Being] formulaic and traditional... does not diminish their creative or poetic quality in terms of the circumstances of usage”; and when the addressee takes into consideration not only how well the

¹⁸ See e.g. Overing 1988 or McCallum 1989:239, 395 note 22, apropos the Piaroa and Cashinahua.

speaker says what he or she says but also its appositeness to the given social situation, then the “distinctions between creative and formulaic tend to break down”.

A small number of similar incidents occurred during my fieldwork. One concerned the very public rebuking by her sister and brother of a woman for ill treating her child. The most serious was a fight one night involving a drunken “Awaig takwié” (young man) and the husband and daughter of a woman he had physically assaulted. It ended up by drawing in the entire community and causing an intense outpouring of emotion. People were aghast to see this very real and brutal rent made to the social web by one of their own number. It was as if each person felt the violation inside his or her own being, and adults and children alike publicly and concertedly shed tears of fear, shock, and grief, an experience I found deeply moving.¹⁹ Yet even in this case, which was perceived as an outrage, and notwithstanding the eventual recourse to fists on the part of some people present, speech was the first and most instrumental means resorted to for the purpose of regenerating social harmony. There was no turning to a ‘higher’ political authority, although it must be said that in the latter incident the passions of the husband of the attacked woman became so inflamed that it was only with the greatest difficulty that he could be dissuaded from sending for the French Gendarmerie, who have a post in St Georges, to deal with the assailant. In the event, punched and sermonised, the culprit fell into a drunken sleep then took himself off next day to stay with his sister in another community.

That daily life was acephalous and informal to the highest degree in Village Espérance 2 did not mean that it was without ‘rules’. And ethical standards and criteria of social propriety existed as communicated and actualised deeds in the speech of those ordinary members of the community who were impelled to re-establish harmony in circumstances of disharmony. The examples I have given, and most particularly that involving Yvette, show to what extent their words were

¹⁹ Like Hill (1990:34-5), I consider that while the feelings involved in crying may validly be said to possess a “universal biological foundation”, sadness itself is a “highly social emotion” with an intrinsic infectious capacity. It is moreover not so much a cultural construction as what Eitchinger Ferro-Luzzi calls (1995:185) “culture-free, i.e., not bound to any specific culture.” Unlike Frijda (1986:2), I would argue that the performance of sadness, as well as that of other emotions, is not necessarily centred more inwardly upon the subject than outwardly; and that (as the above case shows) “affective interaction” between the subject and his or her social environment does in fact occur.

necessarily full of all the moral authority and force required to stop or divert a divisive action, and the effective power to repair, or limit, a breach in the social fabric.

(vi) 'Scolding': women, politics and talk. 'Scolding' is a type of speaking style affected by Pa'ikwené women specifically. I use the word "affected" advisedly for, as will become clear, this kind of speech entails a large measure of contrivance, appearance, and intrinsic theatricality. While loud and strong, indeed very loud and strong, it needs to be distinguished from "auna kihao" (discussed in chapter 3).

From my field notes again: "Early morning. Ossi's mother at it again: screaming at him to either go hunting or earn some more money (he has a part-time job helping in the bakery in town): they need food and his father is absent. Ossi's standing there sheepishly taking it while she goes on and on, arms raised and throat tilted backwards as if addressing the entire village and calling on the very sky itself as witness."

Quite often in Village Espérance 2 the general hubbub would be pierced in this way by the shouts of a woman directed at some young or fully adult man. It was, in part, the irritated and frustrated cry of someone aggrieved or deprived, or feeling themselves so to be; and to that extent perfectly normal and legitimate conduct in a society where 'relations of demand' were a cultural feature. As such it was also a learnt behaviour. For instance, acquiring the manner from her mother and aunts, five years old Annie already 'scolded' her older brothers and other male children, secure in the knowledge that they would not by and large permit themselves to stop her. (This was not, I hasten to add, a case of boys submitting to the imperious but engaging ways of a younger sister or female cousin; her 'scolding' quite lacked charm, at least in my eyes, but that was neither its intended character nor purpose.)

Even more than this, inasmuch as it was a learnt and proper social behaviour, 'scolding' constituted a mode of speech which transcended not only the gripe and dissatisfaction of the individual female speaker but also the 'relations of demand' in order to express and embody a certain political statement having regard to 'relations of equality'.

It is this statement that I wish to consider. First, I have to situate 'scolding' within the

framework of the relations between the sexes in Village Espérance 2. The very first sentence of the section devoted to women in Nimuendaju's study of the Pa'ikwené declares (op. cit.:54-6) that of all the social phenomena connected with their life, the one "which strikes the observer most is assuredly that of woman's dominant position in relation to man" (p. 54). This perception seems not so much to strike as shock and horrify him as he proceeds to cite at length the ways in which, according to him, this dominance asserted itself. Until aged ten or twelve, says he, Pa'ikwené little girls are as "friendly and sociable as the little boys", after which time they look down on the younger members of the male sex and act highhandedly with men in general, strangers included. Once she takes a husband, his "fate is sealed" from that moment on and she has him fully in her thrall: "The wife tells him when he must hunt, when he must fish, and when he must go and work in the garden... [and] decides what goods he must purchase on the Oyapock... If he resides uxorilocally, his mother-in-law also bosses him around via her daughter... The woman commands...the man but obeys" (p. 55, my translations). All in all, for these and other given reasons, such as the spendthriftness, graspingness and vanity of younger women, the prevailing situation was one of "female tyranny" (p. 56), against which men but seldom revolted (see too Fernandes 1948:203, who concurs but sees the wife as the medium of her father's, rather than her mother's, domination over the husband).

For my part, I saw no evidence of any systematic female domination or male subjugation among the Pa'ikwené with whom I lived, nor among those I visited in other communities.²⁰ To the extent that a woman ever planned and directed the day's economic activities of a household, I believe that she tended to do so in consultation and partnership with her husband, and generally as an equal²¹ co-member of the domestic work team (see chapter 8 regarding the distribution of labour). I personally never encountered an instance where the woman unilaterally decided for, and issued orders to, the man. On the contrary, while it is true that

²⁰ For all his stress on the (purported) domination of husbands by wives, Nimuendaju somewhat surprisingly characterises Pa'ikwené marital relations as "very good" (op. cit.:57). This is rejected by Arnaud who, citing instances of wife beating, claims (1968:11, 1984:35) that in general they are quite the opposite.

²¹ Similarly to Viveiros de Castro's material on the Araweté (1992:45), this contradicts the common belief that Amerindian women carry the economic burden in relation to their men. If anything the Araweté's average work load seems to be weighed in favour of the former who, like Pa'ikwené women, "show a great deal of assertiveness, independence, and extroversion" both in the work sphere and the wider sociopolitical one.

women 'controlled' the family purse-strings²² and the distributive end of a large portion of both the men's hunting products and the family's horticultural products, I found that each gender seemed broadly both in principle and in practice to enjoy as much economic power as the other. There was also the same equivalence of power politically and where knowledge was concerned (I have already reported the existence of women chiefs and shamans). When I wondered whether the Church might not be affecting things through its injunction to women to respect and obey their husbands. I was told by Susana: "Of course we do that, but so do our men respect and obey us. That is the Pa'ikwené way: wives and husbands respect and obey each other."

For Nimuendaju, the high rate of female power was a significant marker of Pa'ikwené life, and a disturbing but rare or even perhaps unique phenomenon in the wider context of Amerindian cultures. Writing (op. cit.:92) about the Pa'ikwené's neighbours, the "Wassa people"²³, he states that the women there "also have a strong influence [in society] but not in the *exaggerated* manner which we observed among the Palikur" (my translation and emphasis). As I have made clear, my own view is in contrast to this: among the latter, woman's power is not 'over the top' but on a par with man's.

However, while I stress the existence in Pa'ikwené society of a very real and visible gender equality in daily operation at the level of attitude and practical existence (notwithstanding a small number of households with clearly 'dominated' spouses, both male and female), there sometimes also appeared to be a tendency among women toward a certain type of socially permitted aggression beyond their customary assertiveness. It seemed not so much a natural fact as a culturally constructed one, which I am chary of describing as domination, or domination-seeking, mainly because Pa'ikwené men did not see it like that. While acknowledging women's strength, they never told me, or in any other way indicated, they felt themselves to be oppressed by it. No less than the man's, the Pa'ikwené woman's social persona is comprised of self-confidence, self-assertion, and robustness. (Sometimes, and in some individuals more than others, these

²² F. & P. Grenand on the other hand specifically point (1979:1) to this control of the finances as evidence that Pa'ikwené social relations "are distinguished by the wife's ascendancy over the husband". In direct contrast to both the Grenands and me, Arnaud finds (1968:10-11) that it is the male spouse who is in charge of ("determines") the domestic unit and the disposal of its products.

²³ A gloss term for the Arúa, Galibi, Itútan and others.

features can make for a distinct overbearingness - or for a type of conduct perceived as such by me, and doubtlessly by other outsiders as well, which could account for Nimuendaju's perception of Pa'ikwené womanhood as bullying, pushy and domineering.) In addition to this, women possessed, and were at liberty to resort to, the gender-specific aggressive behaviour characterised by the vocal and verbal manner of expressing oneself which I call 'scolding'. This was basically a device or technique for maintaining and affirming their power, though not, I insist, their supposed domination.

The tone assumed for 'scolding' was louder and stronger than that for ordinary speech, and charged with a combination of crossness, impatience, asperity and self-righteousness. A woman would deploy it in order to complain, demand, berate, recriminate, accuse (laziness seemed to be the most common charge), sermonise, and vent grievances. Her voice, in short, expressed the very model of shrewishness, both very real yet at the same time sounding, in my opinion, somewhat artificial. To my ears, displays of 'scolding' always possessed the quality of exemplar; of serving as a sort of dramatic vocal presentation of 'something', some implicit meta-point woven into Pa'ikwené culture perhaps; some ideological but, for me, elusive subtext. Adding to this impression of as it were aural spectacle was the fact that 'scolding' was very much a public event. It more often than not involved a lone woman holding intensely and unstoppably forth in this or that part of the communal space, often outside her own house, and inveighing against some failing or failure or other of her husband or son (who might or might not be present). At other times, one could hear a kind of 'scolding' round robin when two or more women, a woman and her sister and her sister-in-law, say, joined in to emit the same diatribe or command, pitching it at the poor improper soul who was the object of their collective disfavour and, so it seemed, further outwards yet, as if aiming for the community in its entirety, and beyond.

It is as though 'scolding' were at one and the same time a spontaneous outburst deliberately acted out and meant. There was, as I have said, a noticeable theatrical aspect to it. While not a formal set-piece, it did have ritualistic elements. But to my eyes it was singularly different from the typically loose and desultory-seeming character of the general run of informal domestic rites which I observed, in that the performance itself had a strong static quality, and the performers a

purposeful air. Standing with legs firmly planted, her body taut and concentrated, and face held at a stiff, resolute, and businesslike angle, a scolder exuded intent; her very stance had, unambiguously, its own semantic value for others. Her behaviour seemed integrally to entail the striking of a tableau-like pose in, and through, which she projected a given role ('The Aggrieved and Long-Suffering Woman'; 'The Ill-Provided For Wife'). In dramatic terms, this physical stance together with the voice perfectly constituted a form of "*actio*", which in antiquity, as Barthes informs us (1976:66), was a section of rhetoric consisting of a "group of formulae designed to allow for the corporeal exteriorisation of discourse: it dealt with a theatre of expression, the actor-orator 'expressing' his indignation, his compassion, etc." ²⁴

Whether a monologue or, less often, a group action, 'scolding' was the means whereby the scolder-actor called on her audience, in effect society at large, to see and "hear-understand" her ire and its cause; and accordingly judge, and in their own hearts condemn, the anti-socialness of the scolded. 'Scolding' therefore perhaps works somewhat like negative gossip in that by focussing the group's attention on the offender in their midst, the latter will be led, it is hoped, to (decide to) comply not so much with his wife or mother's demands as such but with group norms of behaviour, under the weight of the publicly enacted presentation of his shortcomings. It is therefore a corrective, a means of social control; to that extent it can be said to have a moral and political purpose.

On the other hand, though, scolded men did not, as far as I could see, fall into line as automatically and submissively as Nimuendaju describes. Rather, they seemed to continue to act as individualistically as they ever did, while at the same time having regard for the group ethos (allowing for occasional lapses perhaps in their adherence to it). Despite the conclusions above I remain puzzled about the full role, and 'reason', for 'scolding'. Was my observation faulty and the Pa'ikwené woman truly the unmitigated nag, tartar and despot that Nimuendaju claims, and the man hen-pecked and tongue-lashed? I admit that on the surface the practice of 'scolding' makes this appear to be the case at least to some extent. Yet while the vehement and even violent female public rebuking of males is an observable fact of Pa'ikwené life, it is also utterly at odds with that society's prevailing gender equality and the similarly visible and, in all other respects, non harridan-like

²⁴ Cf. Schnechner 1988 on the dramatic dimension of everyday social actions.

conduct of the women. Many entries in my diary attest to this paradox. For example:

6th January 1994, "As often, there's a tone in S.'s voice which to my non-Pa'ikwené ear sounds like one of grievance, complaint, recrimination... I can hear it in the speech of other women too... but maybe among the Pa'ikwené the tone expresses something else?... For all her 'sweet' side, S. does also definitely have, as do a lot of other Pa'ikwené women (though I haven't seen it in the men), a tart, tetchy, harsh one... She... and many of the other women... have this scolding air in a lot of what they say..."

and:

15th January 1994, " There is a lot of female shouting in Espérance, scolding, berating, voicing of demands, grievances and self-righteousness... not so much directed at men as being about men...one facet of Pa'ikwené social life, and of otherwise un-harpy female behaviour, is a very observable tendency of the women to loudly and publicly and crossly give voice... What is the reason? The weather? The drift away from the ancestral lifestyle? The fact that Pa'ikwené women may be, as Nimuendaju asserted, shrews and tyrants?..."

and:

19th January 1994, Kúmené (Aúkwa). Mid afternoon. Raining very hard. As at Espérance a feeling of desolation over the village... As at Espérance too, the sound of scolding women...

and again:

8th March 1994, "... an important thing to bear in mind (in regard to women's scolding) is that Pa'ikwené men do not seem to be or act as oppressed, henpecked, castrated etc... "

The reality of 'relations of equality' between men and women makes it unlikely in my mind that this particularly female type of speech is some kind of functionalist counterbalancing act. It seems both illogical and unnecessary to compensate women, through the use however legitimate of verbal bossing, for the absence of something which in that society they plainly in practice possessed already, namely power. I do not know whether the 'true' nature and purpose of 'scolding' can be determined. The Pa'ikwené themselves used either to laugh it off or, when I tried too persistently to ask about it, deny that it ever happened. I am however

convinced that it is neither a completely natural act nor a psychological symptom ascribable to so-called female neurosis, though it surely possesses a psycho-social connection.

But if not deriving from hysteria, the phenomenon patently has a histrionic aspect, as I have described. It pertained not just to the style of the performance but, I suggest, to its subliminal message: that which was transcendently being said by the scolding voice. I cannot pretend to understand the actual nature of this 'institution'. However, given both the theatricality of the act and the mundaneness for the Pa'ikwené of their sociosexual egalitarianism (its 'taken for granted-ness'), I wonder if, apart from all its possible other reasons and functions, Pa'ikwené female 'scolding' might perhaps be a sort of dramatic mnemonic technique. Could not its public use recall to the mind of not just one specific husband or son or even of all the men in the community, but, rather, of all its members, both male and female, the existence and necessity of female, and not just male, power within that community? And might not the rhetorical and theatrical reminder, the 'scolding', itself not merely symbolise but actually constitute that very fact, performatively, demonstrably, and politically?

(vii) Power and the domestication of borrowed language. Daily life in the village would often be filled with abrupt and startling cries and ejaculations in French.

“Arrête!” (“Stop!”)

“Non!”.

“Assez!” (“Enough!”)

“Viens!” (“Come!”)

“Ça suffit maintenant!” (“That's enough now!”)

“Donne!” (“Hand it over!”)

Cutting through the Pa'ikwaki, giving staccato emphasis and a foreign turn to native family discourse, these borrowed words and expressions, and others like them, supplied a punctuation of insistence and irritation, of disapproval, displeasure, and demand. Although delivered in the no-nonsense tones of harsh authority they nevertheless not infrequently had a touch of self-mockery on the part of their enunciator, who would give them a certain knowing spin. The tendency of Amerindians to imitate the linguistic and other behaviour of White people has been

reported elsewhere (e.g. McCallum 1989:245-6, 1990; F. Grenand 1982:20; Darwin cited in Taussig 1993:92-3, and Taussig himself, *ibid.* See too Hymes 1971:63-7 on the alternate use of one's own language and that of an alien dominant group as a type of "code switching"). Such mimicry, Taussig tells us, is a necessary factor both of the process of knowing and the construction of identity, and is thus an integral part of the dialectic between self and other. It entails explorative and, more radically, creative essays in power at a number of levels: "The power of mimesis [itself] lies in the copy drawing on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby representation may even assume that character and that power" (Taussig *op.cit.*:xiii-xiv).²⁵

Someone who believes that the mimic's actions result not in acquiring real power but, rather, solely in identifying with it, and thereby reinforcing and reproducing their own powerlessness, is Hagen (1971). Drawing on the theories of Anna Freud (1937), he argues (pp. 264-70) that the imitation of the powerful coloniser by the powerless colonised is but an expression of paranoia and ritualism (in the psychological sense of compulsive 'defensive' behaviour) in which only the outward, behavioural aspects of power but not its effective substance are attained (cf. Fanon 1952).

For my part, I propose that such appropriation of non-Indian terms as I encountered (Créole and Brazilian-Portuguese were indigenised in like manner to French) constituted the innovative, and conscious, use for political ends of a certain vocabulary of command and control in the context of the markedly egalitarian relations of the Pa'ikwené household, which either lacked its own autochthonous rhetoric of coercion or possessed but a weak one. This is not to say there are no Pa'ikwaki command words. But imperatives of the order of "Tchínahao!" (Shut up!), "Karisao" (Cool it!), "Ka dash!" (Hands off!) or "Iwohó!" (Hurry!) seemed more like grammatical expressions of emotional demand than 'authoritarian' orders as such. Borrowers perceived, so it seemed to me, that the French expressions had coercive force and to resort to them was to profit from its contagion.

By employing this language of the 'other', a person appropriated more than its immanent potency. He or she was ultimately plugging into that of the

²⁵ Taussig further argues (*ibid.*:13) that the 'sympathetic magic' of mimesis is not just to do with the appropriation of the power of the other but with obtaining power over them. Situating his analysis in a historico-cultural context, (Western) colonialism and post-colonialism, he also shows imitation to be a two-way process: not only does the (colonised) other ape us, so too do we ape them.

language's owners, the 'others' who politically and economically have power over the Pa'ikwené (the French being commonly classified as having more power not only than the Pa'ikwené but the Créoles and Brazilians as well). Thus in speaking their words one became to a degree empowered oneself. Their observable effective use in situations where it was judged pragmatically appropriate or personally advantageous, such as for example a father straining to impose his will on a child torn between his respect for elders and a tenacious and equally customary sense of self-autonomy, tended to clinch matters. A well-delivered Gallic command-word would generally produce the desired effect, and appeared to validate the extra layer of discipline and authority required (cf. McCallum 1989 on the appropriation and political application of non-indigenous language by Cashinahua chiefs).

*

Conclusion.

1. In this chapter I have shown the several ways in which Pa'ikwené speech, and notably the phenomenon of "speaking well", is a powerful action, and an effective political one.

This runs counter to Clastres who postulates the powerlessness both of political speech and the political institution in Amerindian societies. He has argued (op. cit.:7-47, 152-5, 189-218) that although Amerindian 'stateless' societies which exist without the presence of coercive power should not be termed apolitical or embryonically political, their chiefs have no political power personally. This is because power is seen by Amerindians as being extra-socially derived, and on entry into the social environment its locus becomes not the chief or any other individual but society itself as a whole. The chief is the one whose purpose it is to keep society safe from the coercion naturally immanent in power; this he does not by taking it into himself but by talking it away as it were, in the sense that speech is the "very opposite of violence" (p. 46, 154), and violence, the "essence of power" (p. 154). Thus for Clastres, the chief's duty to speak serves as the "guarantee that prevents the man of speech from becoming a man of power" (p. 154). I find it strange that having cogently argued that, for all their non-coercion, such societies are fully political, he then 'concludes' that the means whereby they are kept from being coercive is, itself, non-political. That for him "*the chief's word carries no force*

of law" (p. 206, Clastres' emphasis), and his speech is (but?) a "ritualised act" (p. 153), does not remove them from the arena of the political. It just means that the political may be effected through language in ways other than coercive ones. For if language does constitute non-violence,²⁶ then is it surely not, no less than the speaker, acting politically, and positively powerfully, when instrumentally part of the process for "neutralizing the virulence of political authority" (p. 45), in which negative power is itself negated? But then, of course, it does depend on just what is understood by the term "political", as Clastres himself stresses (see especially pp. 7-26, 41-5), which brings us around in a full circle.²⁷

In that among the Pa'ikwené 'speaking well' is not, however, the prerogative of leaders alone, a vital aspect of this form of speech is its *democratic* political function. Its use permits and empowers all the members of the community equally to create, safeguard and maintain their common sociality.

As stated, one particularly important feature, and factor, of 'speaking well' is "to speak loud-and-strong". This type of speech is eminently proper behaviour and possesses high moral and aesthetic value, and consequently a high affective one. It also constitutes an element of personhood, as a signifier and embodied expression of men and women's social and 'ethnic' identity. People refer to it in order to stress the distinction they make between themselves and other Indians.

Despite the present day erosion of so much of the ancestral Pa'ikwené philosophy, the epistemological data I managed to collect, and have drawn on throughout this chapter as elsewhere in the thesis, tend to indicate that the Pa'ikwené's conceptions concerning the subject of 'power' show certain similarities to those of a good many Lowland peoples. For all the deep inroads made by Christian notions, and coexisting with them, there is a connection in Pa'ikwené thinking between words, and their actions, and the pre-Christian supernatural sphere where spiritual power is seen to reside. As reported and will be discussed further in chapter 9, it is believed that power is the property of spiritual or divine entities, and can be solicited and introduced into the human community, for positive or negative

²⁶ Not an entirely unambiguous notion in Amazonia as Isacson reveals (1993:366) in respect of the Embera, for whom conversation is a metaphor for both marriage and war.

²⁷ For a more theoretical examination of the Clastrian claim that the chief's words are empty see chapter 7.

ends.

Pa'ikwené leaders have neither 'personal' nor physically coercive power (which does not exclude their being able to resort to alternative pressurising strategies in order to establish order). Notwithstanding this, to say that they and their words were bereft of political power would be incorrect. For to the extent that Pa'ikwené leaders have right of access to this non-personal, socially non-coercive power, then they too are filled with power, and not powerless as Clastres maintains. And through and with their words they act politically, both in regard to their society and in its dealings with others.

To the extent, too, that each 'ordinary' Pa'ikwené seems in the practice of everyday social life to assume the power of, and in, 'speaking well', then I propose that all Pa'ikwené are as an empirical reality also acting powerfully - and (as Yvette's dispute settlement shows) politically - when verbally intercommunicating.

Inasmuch as Pa'ikwené leaders do have the 'formal' obligation to 'speak well' in certain stipulated circumstances, I have said that it amounts in practice to their having to 'speak better', or, rather, more "beautifully", than the others. This might perhaps help to shed further light on why Amerindian chiefs appear, unlike leaders elsewhere, to have the duty, rather than the unilateral right, to speak (Clastres *op. cit.*:152-5). According to my data, the possession of a putatively exclusive right to words of authority by a single individual would be aberrant in a society such as the Pa'ikwené one. For, by virtue of acquiring the knowledge to 'speak well', all its members seem to be assured that selfsame right on equal terms, rather than the monopolistic ones which Clastres claims is universally the case in respect of chiefs throughout South America (p. 41). In the Pa'ikwené context, any hypothetical attempt by one individual to transfer into a sole right what is a general one, could only be regarded as a behaviour which was nonsensical and antisocial in the extreme.

Lastly, for all that political speaking involves codified and conventional forms of rhetoric, such as the homily for instance, Pa'ikwené political speaking is far from being 'formulaic' behaviour. Personal invention and artistry within the genre are much in evidence. So too is the presence of innovation and imaginativeness, as

manifested by the purposeful appropriation of non-Pa'ikwené languages for atypical ends. One dying form of the orational canon, "Kiaptúnka", has in reverse proportion to its increasing extinction become as if canonised, acquiring the status of a virtually 'sacred object' for the Pa'ikwené.

2. As a possible theoretical explanation of how their speech fulfilled the Pa'ikwené speakers' political intentions (e.g. peacemaking), I will borrow Burke's notion of "entitlement" (1966:361 *ff.*) and Crocker's elaboration of it. For the former, speech does not so much designate and label things as convey the significance or idea of situations similarly to the title of a film or book. Instead of giving a literal empirical truth statement, it sums up a situation's reality and communicates its essence. Building on this, and the further Burkian thesis (*ibid.*:361) that objects are the signs of words rather than the other way round, Crocker proposes (1977:37) that we think of things and situations as "functions of what is said about them". Consequently, in the relationship between speech and social context, "rhetorical entitlement" is a "process whereby actions attempt to provide some linguistic truth about a social situation which summarises its moral essence in such ways as to *define possible actions*" (*ibid.*, my emphasis). As a "strategy for living" in society (*ibid.*), Crocker posits that 'entitlement' relies on three interactive sub-strategies relating to (i) the speaker's motivation in respect of the addressees; (ii) the intentions of both speaker and addressees towards the matter being spoken about; and (iii) the rhetorical device used by the speaker; this last constituting a "wholly semantic strategy... a verbal codification of meaning which is part of the society's repertory of semantic techniques for expressing the 'truth of things'" (p. 38).

Relating this, for example, to Yvette's settlement of the dispute [item (v)], I would say that her motivation vis-à-vis the two rowing women was to get them to stop; that her intention toward the subject of the dispute was at odds with those of her addressees, for whereas she wanted to show it to be the cause of group disharmony, they by contrast each wished to use it as the basis of personal grievance and hostility; and that, finally, the compound of harangue, homily, and ridicule to which she resorted in order for her intention to prevail over theirs, was culturally typical and legitimate, each being a rhetorical device readily understood by every Pa'ikwené. In that for Crocker (*op. cit.*:42), the underlying aim of all rhetoric is persuasion, then the speaker's rhetorical device "must persuade people

of the truth of his position", regardless of whatever ulterior goals there might be. By jointly engaging our intellectual attention and emotional response, the persuasiveness of the rhetorical device, he goes on, reveals the true 'nature' of the thing or situation to which it is applied. This it does not by presenting any new knowledge regarding them but by letting us apprehend them afresh (pp. 42-6); after which, it is assumed, we then act in function of this new understanding. Yvette's three devices each possessed the ability to act as 'titles' summing up the essential ulterior reality both of the fight and Yvette's intervention; and to convince her addressees of the 'truth' of the former (i.e., its antisocialness and destructivity) and of the latter (i.e., the desirability and need of a return to sociability).

Furthermore, I suggest that such moral-political-aesthetic verbal action on the part of one (authoritative but not authoritarian) person managed to do this in such a way, too, as to hand back the responsibility for, and ultimate onus of, their own 'proper' conduct to two others guilty of 'impropriety' and disorder. It allowed them, if at the cost of some mockery and public ridicule, to cease their antisocial conduct of their own accord. It shows us, I suggest, another facet of the viable mix of individualist and communal behaviours to be found in such societies wherein *ultimately*, as Overing has described (1989:170) for the Piaroa, "one's mastery of sociality [is]... in inimitable Amerindian logic, also one's personal autonomy. In other words.... the weight of acting socially [is] placed in the hands of the individual and not with the corporate group or collectivity, or with a political leadership."

While believing all rhetorical devices possess this capacity for persuasion and expressing contextual truths and essences, Crocker particularly focuses on metaphor. And perhaps the homiletic part of Yvette's speech action can be said to share some of its peculiarities and powers. It, too, implicitly yet unambiguously and forcefully, proposed a likeness between two terms from different spheres: angry woman/the social and Satan/the supernatural. It entailed the interrelatedness of the speaker and hearer's thought and emotion, and the elements of morality and aesthetics. It possessed not only semantic but what Burke calls (1941:138-67) 'poetic' meaning. The one entails the objective observation of the actors, the other their subjective participation; both are mutually reinforcing and complementarily active in the structure of one's 'perspective'. There is a case to be made, then, for describing homily itself as a type of language from which tropic activity is not absent. That is to say, homilies which, like Yvette's, have analogical and

allegorical components associate in a single verbal act disparate and opposing archetypical values (e.g. the 'paragonic' and the 'sinful') in order to induce, through the transference of the 'bad' addressee into the 'good' narrated archetype, a practical situation conforming to orthodox normative ideals, whether it be the 'right' behaviour to adopt, action to take, attitude to manifest.

I submit that through its own capacity for 'entitlement', and the joint intellectual and affective engagement it solicits, homiletic action as employed by a Pa'ikwené as a political means of restoring 'order' simultaneously expresses, like metaphor, the "pertinence of... cultural axioms to given social conditions... [and] provides the semantic conditions through which actors deal with that reality" (Crocker op. cit.:46).

chapter six

"TCHIMAP", "TO HEAR-LISTEN-UNDERSTAND": THE SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF PA'IKWENÉ AUDITION.**(Continued)**

This chapter is a reprise of the subject of indigenous hearing initiated in chapter 4. In it we will see that as sociologically and cosmologically central as "Tchimap kabai" - "Good Hearing" - is for the Pa'ikwené, the opposite yet not always hostile phenomenon of "Tchimap ka kabai" - "Bad Hearing" - plays an equally important part in the process of community life; that is, the state of essentially friendly relations between people who speak together yet tend frequently not to reply (at least not immediately) and are thus said to "hear-listen-understand badly".

"Tchimap ka kabai" presented me with a problem of understanding in several ways. For one thing, if not giving a prompt verbal response was, as noted in the section on the sociopragmatics of hearing, part of the proper etiquette of sociable speaking-listening behaviour, why was it attributed to 'bad hearing'? Another difficulty concerned the withholding of the verbal response itself. In regard to its possible significations I have noted Jaworski's argument (1993:80-95 and *passim*.) that silence is a component of dialogue and its meaning interpretable in exactly the same way as that of speech, in that both follow the same theoretical pragmatic rules, although the high ambiguity of silence can make exegesis that much more difficult.

For simplicity's sake I have treated both forms of native aural conduct, "kabai" and ka kabai", as distinct actions, though not always successfully. Despite both the intended methodological division and the indigenous verbal differentiation, my separating them did not in practice always prove an easy task given that, as should become clear, 'good hearing' and (positive, acceptable) 'bad hearing' seem in practice to be morally and behaviourally overlapping phenomena which to some extent also form a continuum.

It is these and other questions that I attempt to explore below, in what amounts to an exercise in interpretation.

Affect, autonomy and the social uses of 'bad hearing-listening-understanding'.
 (Or a dialogue between A. and B.)¹

On his return to Europe from the field, the anthropologist (A.) tries to explain to his friend (B.) the phenomenon of Pa'ikwené audition. The behaviour called "Tchimap ka kabai", 'hearing-listening-understanding badly', seems in particular to exercise him; disconcertingly his manner is even more intense than usual and his demeanour somewhat feverish - a fact which B. puts down to the effects of 'culture shock' and malaria. A. tells B. first of all of the difficulty of obtaining typical and convincing examples of aural action. How, he asks, do you successfully set about capturing the hearing of others the way you can their speech? B., who is not, it must be said, immediately taken with the subject and is at this point possibly only listening with half an ear, mumbles, perhaps jokingly, about there surely existing some kind of machine capable of doing the job. "Ah, technology", sighs A. dismissively, then adds:

"There's no camera or recorder invented yet - leastways that I know of - that can reproduce my own aural activity, let alone anyone else's. No, I can't hear how you hear; all I can do is observe you hearing, and imagine what it's like."

To which B. replies:

"But why on earth would you want to in the first place?"

But A., launched now upon his theme, is not to be put off, and continues:

"A person speaks, another hears; yet how is it possible to know whether they listen or not, understand or not?"

B.: By their attitude surely, or the words they say in return.

A.: But can one be so certain? The Pa'ikwené, for instance often seem, at least to look at, unaware and uncaring of the speaker. They glance away, offer nothing but silence, and continue with whatever they were doing before being addressed.

B.: You mean, "A man may have hearing and yet not be hearing" as whasis

¹ I borrow this subtitle from Diderot's "Supplément au voyage de Bougainville", 1992 [1796]. What follows was inspired by the 18th century convention of 'philosophical dialogues', of which the aforesaid, which deals by means of a literary conversation between two friends with the moral issues arising from a contemporary account of Tahitian life, is a typical example.

face said.²

A.: True. On the other hand, he could also have hearing and yet only *appear* not to hear. I'll give you an example...

A. proceeds to recount an incident he had witnessed. His Pa'ikwené host Karinai, having something to say to his son Wahtchit, called out to him. Wahtchit, at that moment engrossed in arranging his hairstyle, is well within earshot and can plainly (in A.'s opinion) hear his father, yet gives no indication of doing so other than turning his face away from him, continuing to preen the while. Unfazed, not in the least bit irked or impatient, Karinai addresses him again, twice, without raising his voice or altering his tone. Wahtchit finally answers with a cheerful: "Ihi!" ("Yes!"). Whereupon Karinai, equable as ever, reports to him an event that had just occurred on the path leading to the creek. Wahtchit, his face still averted, waits till he has finished, nods, says "Nah tchimap" ("I hear-listen-understand"), and makes a comment about what he has just been told. Karinai leaves. "And what d'you make of that?" asks A. of B.

B.: But it's so banal.

A.: Precisely. That little scene, or variations of it, was played out repeatedly all day long in my village. But for me its very mundaneness exemplifies and characterises the use of 'bad hearing' as a marker of the state of play of relations between individuals at any given moment, in the 'conversation that *is* social life' [Ingold 1986:141 his stress]³ - or if you prefer, the myriad of everyday conversations in the plural that comprise it, as my acquaintance Rapport would have it [1987:170-1, 1997].

B.: What a curious, stilted language you do sometimes use, A.

A.: Point taken. Comes of having to frequent academics, I suppose.

B.: Another thing. That example, it shows disrespect. Just typical teenage behaviour if you ask me, turning a deaf ear like that.

A.: You're quite wrong on both counts. In the first place, relations between

² Actually Aristotle, cited in Towey 1991:9.

³ Cf. *inter alia* Hymes 1971, Ch. Taylor 1985:243, 259-60, Hagège 1991:312-3.

Wahtchit and his father were consistently *respectful*.⁴ And anyway, such behaviour wasn't taken as a show of disrespect. Secondly, what makes you think Wahtchit was an adolescent, the fact he's fiddling around with his coiffure? Well, for one thing, your Pa'ikwené male, whatever his age, tends to take great pride in his hair, and is forever grooming it. For another, Wahtchit was an "Awaig", that is, an adult man. You see, this behaviour was universal. It wasn't limited to any one category. Young, old, men, women: they all indulged in it. It occurred between husbands and wives, workmates, friends and siblings and in-laws... Children did it to grown-ups... They did it back to the children. It's like, at first glance, nobody pays attention to anyone else. But the thing is, though they're said in their language to "tchimap ka kabai"... that is: "to hear-listen-understand badly"... they themselves will tell you that on the contrary they "tchimap kabai". In other words, they claim to have heard, listened, and understood perfectly well.

B.: And the people speaking to them, they agree?

A.: Naturally I asked, and they generally did. One thing's clear, they didn't seem to find this behaviour insulting, or odd.⁵ They told me they did it too, and everyone they knew did. But they said they didn't know why. Thinking about it, the only thing they came up with, most of them, was it struck them as amusing.

B.: But what's so unique about this anyway? Isn't inattentiveness just a common human trait?

A.: Yes, we're all guilty of it from time to time. But not chronically, not systematically like the Pa'ikwené. With them it happens to excess. And where you or I may act this way more or less spontaneously... they do so with more of a... an intent behind it... though that's not quite the right word. Nor, as I'm trying to explain, is inattentiveness. Because whatever

⁴ On the occasion described above no less than during the entire time I was in their company, their relationship was warm, cordial, and caring. The wider context of their intercommunication as co-residing kin and co-workers was one of proximity, affability and mutual respect. There seemed to be no native sanctions attached to disrespect; although nowadays the Fundamentalist Church holds out the threat to the converted Pa'ikwené of divine punishment for showing any to one's parents. Such want of respect, defined mainly as disobedience, is seen as tantamount to showing none to God (see chapter 9 part 3a). 'Traditional' Pa'ikwené respect, however, should not be thought of in terms of obedience to authority or parent/child or old/young hierarchies, for it exists as it were structurally, though of course not always practically, between all members of a social unit regardless of generation, gender or 'power', rather than unidirectionally from the bottom up. It seems to be linked with 'love' and reciprocal care, though in a less explicitly verbalised manner than that described by Gow (1991) for the Piro.

⁵ As indicated above, given that Pa'ikwené society places such a high value on good, sociable interpersonal relations, I often puzzled about this reaction, hence this chapter. Nevertheless, the fact remains, as far as I could observe, that (a) addressors failed in the main to show irritation or frustration at the (apparent) non-listening of their addressees, and (b) the latter were in the main judged not to have acted anti-dialogically and anti-socially. Why this should be I try to explore and explain below.

it was Wahtchit was doing, it wasn't being inattentive.

B.: So what you're saying is, it's a formal behaviour?

A.: Yes. But no... if by this you've an acutely self-conscious and rigid sort of conduct in mind. It's more in the way of a custom, a habit, which is acquired yet at the same time appears natural.

B.: Like shaking hands on meeting?

A.: More like sitting down to eat perhaps. Or sleeping.

B.: No, there I can't agree with you. What can be more natural and unlearned than that?

A.: To sleep yes - but not the way one sleeps. On a bed, the floor, in the air in a hammock as in Amazonia, or standing up like a Masai. With a pillow for the head, or a little bench for the neck, or nothing at all. As Mauss shows [1979]... he calls them 'body techniques' by the way... these different methods, or styles, are culturally specific. And as with slumber, so with drinking... or laughing... or what have you.

B.: And hearing?

A.: It follows.

B.: Is nothing we do natural, then?

A.: Certainly.

B.: Hold on. You contradict yourself: human behaviour is natural, human behaviour is learned, so natural behaviour's learned. This, my friend, is pure syllogism.

A.: That's not what I am saying. I'm merely pointing out that the Pa'ikwené practice of 'hearing, listening to, and understanding you badly' is *jointly* what Mauss, to return to him, calls a "physio-psycho-sociological" action, of which there are a multitude.⁶

B.: So it seems. But I still insist they're natural first.

A.: That's if I may say so irrelevant, given that being human they don't happen in a vacuum, but inside the social environment.

B.: And isn't that part of nature too?

⁶ Mauss' point (ibid.:120-1) is that while starting from a natural base these actions acquire a cultural form via a socialising process of 'technical adaptation'.

- A.: A good... albeit for many a moot... point. And one which in passing an Amerindian'd be inclined to reverse, tending to see nature, rather, as an aspect of the wider social universe. An issue discussed elsewhere in my thesis. But to return to their 'hearing-listening-understanding well or badly'.
- B.: And mine.
- A.: It appears so. Well, all these Maussian biologico-sociological phenomena...
- B.: Eating... walking... dancing... crying... sighing... dying...
- A.: (impatient) Yes, yes!... Well, each of them's imbued, according to him, with "sociological causality".
- B.: And so?
- A.: And so nothing, B. I had just the one point to make: notwithstanding exceptions the Pa'ikwené's habit of not listening... or not seeming to... when spoken to is a conventionalised form of behaviour. A cultural deafness as it were. Which I often found frustrating and disorientating. Not to say downright annoying. Especially in the beginning, when I thought, it turned out wrongly, it was only directed at me -
- B.: Cultural, shmultural - I don't care what you call it, I call it rude.
- A.: So's touching food with your left hand - to an Arab. No, the point is, for the Pa'ikwené, it wasn't. Rudeness I mean. Though I did say there were exceptions, when it was.

A. now describes to B. a case of "Tchimap ka kabai" ('bad hearing') which had effectively been considered improper by the person at the receiving end. It involved a young girl, M., who having shinnied half way up an assai palm (*Euterpe oleracea*), called out to her cousin L., who was passing nearby, to help her collect the fruit. But L., like A. only a temporary member of Village Espérance 2, clearly did not want to know; he just said nothing and kept on walking. M. shouted after him, deriding him for being lazy. From her perspective, L.'s action was pointedly antisocial and insulting. To start with, his 'bad hearing' did not respect the normal criteria, as no deferred *verbal* acknowledgement or reply was offered. However, as M. later explained to A., her anger was due neither to this nor to L.'s failure to cooperate in the gathering,⁷

⁷ An 'ungendered' task for the Pa'ikwené, whose concepts and practices in regard to the partition of labour, laziness, worker's autonomy and other related matters are discussed in chapter 8.

since the Pa'ikwené individual's autonomy - their decision whether or not to participate in any activity - is virtually enshrined as a customary right. Rather, she was reacting to L.'s manner which, for us to understand properly, has to be set within the context of the prior history of their interpersonal relations. These, without going into detail, can be summed up as tense and frosty. For M., this was but one more in a series of unfriendly acts aimed by him at her. In this instance, and as far as she was concerned, the intention behind the 'bad hearing' and the silence was hostile. A.'s story is finished. B. remains silent.

A.: You say nothing?

B.: But I am listening. I was just wondering... talking of intention... what's the purpose, d'you think, of the other kind of 'bad hearing', the positive type? Or is there one?

A.: I can't pretend to know for sure, but yes, I think there is. Though how to describe it isn't easy. I can't talk of the private intention this or that 'bad hearer' may possibly have had, since obviously I wasn't privy to it. But I do feel... somehow... that the wider intent of such behaviour... its conceivable structural ability... might be to enable individual hearers to signal and control their personal space... their individualism... vis à vis speakers.

B.: What you're saying is, I think, it gives them, to use the jargon, the means to express their autonomy within an ongoing interpersonal relationship... and their agency within the web of a multiplicity of such relationships insofar as it constitutes the process of sociality?

A.: Well summarised, for all the sarcasm of your tone.

B.: I wish I knew what it meant.

A.: That their 'bad hearing' is as much a political device as anything else.

B.: Only in the widest sense, surely.

A.: You may very well be right.⁸ Of course, the 'deafness' I spoke of earlier is just temporary. It lifts... or rather the 'bad hearer' lifts it so to say... and, as convention also dictates, gives his or her response in due course. Thereby showing me they've really been a secret 'good hearer' all along.

B.: So their relationship with the speaker is reconfirmed not instantly but after an appropriate delay.

⁸ The political dimension of 'hearing-listening-understanding' is explored in chapter 7.

A.: Couldn't put it better myself.

B.: So basically... tell me if I got you wrong... Bad Hearing's simply a part of Good Hearing. If you're a Pa'ikwené person you're supposed to hold off speaking to someone who's speaking to you until the 'proper' time. It's just that with them the gaps between 'turn taking' tend to be longer than in our own conversations.⁹ That it?

A.: On the button.

B.: Can't see what's so mystifying about that. Not worth all the fuss and bother. Now for the tricky part though. You're also saying Bad Hearing's possibly something more than etiquette. It could also be a mode of autonomy, a way of regulating your relations with another person. I'll be honest with you, A., I'm not too convinced by that one. Not enough evidence, I'm afraid.

(pause. A. muses)

A.: As for the silences connected with 'bad hearing', I suggest they're "heard-understood" as an intrinsic part of the process of dialogue, not a sign of its breakdown. Wordlessness... in other words, B... need not be a lack of good relations. Merleau-Ponty proposes¹⁰ that the gaps between a speaker's words are just as expressive and meaningful as the words themselves. I'd add to that that, where the Pa'ikwené are concerned at least, the gaps between the first party's utterances and the second's response to them

⁹ For Jaworski (1993:48), the hearer's silence is an action both complementary to the speaker's speech and integrally part of verbal turn-taking.

¹⁰ 1964. Cf. Jaworski (*op. cit. passim*) for whom silence is as legitimate a means of communication as words, and as intentional, meaningful and *social*. See too Henger, Hockett & Danehy 1960, Philips 1985, Gilmore 1985, Tannen 1986, Sperber & Wilson 1986, Enninger 1987 for other linguistic, cognitive and sociopragmatic views; and Le Breton 1997 for a wider Western cultural perspective.

The subject of silence is a large one and merits a chapter to itself, but there is not the space here. For various psychosocial and/or political aspects and implications of silence refer to Freire 1972, Foucault 1981, Scott 1990, Jaworski *op. cit.*:105-36. See Steiner 1969:31-76 (for a combined political and literary perspective), also Illich 1971. Bauman 1983, Kondo 1983, Buber 1969:46, 300-02 deal with notions and uses of silence in connection respectively with Quakerism, Zen Buddhism and Hasidic Jews; A. Huxley notes (1966:223-6) its place in religion cross-culturally. Ethnographic studies of silence include K. Basso 1969, 1979 (the Apache), Holy 1985 (the Berti), Lebra 1987 (Japan), Nwoye 1985, Griffin 1991, Peek 1994 (Africa). With reference to Lowland Amerindian societies, see e.g. Seeger (1987:130-1) on the political, aesthetic and affective signification for the Suyá of silence in an oral (singing) situation, and (pp. 68-9) on its perceived negative and antisocial character; Belaunde 1992:48 on the Airo-Pai's similar view; and Lévi-Strauss (1964 myths 1, 9, 10, 69) on the symbolism of silence and noise/speech in Bororo, Apinayé, Timbira and Taurepan cosmology.

Finally, to return to the Pa'ikwené, their attribution of a positive social role to silence is attested to, I believe, by their practice, reported by Nimuendaju (1971:53) but now seemingly obsolete, of ritually burning a pubescent girl's lips with hot clay so that she may remain as silent as the earth, for "so highly do they value discretion" (my translation).

meaningfully express not disaffection but sociability.

B.: Not in M. and L.'s case they didn't.

A.: True. But for every one example like that of negative 'bad hearing' there were easily a hundred of the positive kind, like Karinai and Wahtchit's. Which brings us to another factor. Listening... 'well' or nominally but not actually 'badly', it's immaterial... to people you're customarily close to... establishes and reinforces bonds just as surely and effectively as talking.

B.: By close are you speaking of proximity or emotion?

A.: Both.

B.: And these bonds - d'you mean they're social ties in the sense of duties and responsibilities, or have they got to do with feelings?

A.: One needn't, as Malinowski'd say [1930:315], preclude the other. But to get back to my point. What we're dealing with here's a people who've not only got an ethos based on the principle of a convivial¹¹... and therefore beautiful... society. What they call "Baréúyo": pretty. But their actual relations tend in the main to be remarkably... not to say conspicuously... warm, loving, and... for the people concerned..."baréúyo" in practice. For them, listening's just like speaking... it's just like touching... it's one important expression of these not just emotional... not just moral... but also *social* facts. Hearing-understanding, d'you see, B., physically marks out and cements the community. To quote Alfred Gell [1995: 235], "Hearing is intimate, concrete, tactile whereas vision promotes abstraction." And as he goes on to say... and I paraphrase...: there seems to be an inherent link between cultures characterised by a "heightened sympathy" between its members... i.e., ones where the display of positive affectivity's typically explicit and stressed... and those that accord a high value to hearing. For Gell both things are the hallmark of rainforest cultures. And all three factors, the emotional, the ecological and, despite their *apparent* 'bad hearing', the aural, apply... I would simply say in conclusion... to the Pa'ikwené.

B.: I see. At least, that is, I've heard and listened to you with the closest interest.

A.: Then the chances are you've understood me.

At this, B. smiles and grunts somewhat cryptically. Then clasps his friend A. by the shoulder and, being not unconscious of or unaffected by the somewhat studied and quaint turn of their conversation (which as has been mentioned

¹¹ See chapter 8 section 3.

owes something to Diderot's 'philosophical dialogues'), says, "Come, let us repair to yonder tavern. Methinks we could both do with a drink." A. concurs; they both depart.

.....

I have proposed, basically, that "good hearing" and "bad hearing" are not merely complementary actions but two sides, or even better, phases, of Pa'ikwené awareness and social (dis)engagement.

Also, I have suggested among other things that for a Pa'ikwené silence is not necessarily a lack of or a breakdown in dialogic and social relations. While one type of silence can convey a negative and antisocial emotion and performatively indicate hostility, i.e., antisociality itself, as it does in some Lowland societies, such as the Airo-Pai (Belaunde 1992:48, 145), another type can incarnate their opposite. Unlike the Suyá (Seeger 1987:65-9), it is not associated with the private sphere (and the margin and women) in contrast to oral expression and its perceived association with the public sphere (and the centre and men). On the contrary, in this most vocal and loud of societies (see chapters 3 and 4), to be mute is just as much a public act as speaking.

Clastres claims (1987:37) in connection with the premise that the relations of exchange constitute society, that the latter is "defined primarily by the three fundamental levels of the exchange of goods, women and words". I would argue, on the basis of their use in Pa'ikwené social life, that an important aspect of the last-named level is the exchange of silences along with, rather than in opposition to, the words. The non-words that are silence should not be seen as anti-words hence, in Clastrian terms, asocial objects bereft of exchange value. I have tried to show instead that the non-verbal *responses* constituting silence, observable in Pa'ikwené intercommunication as the result of legitimate 'bad hearing-listening-understanding', are both 'semantically' intelligible signs and axiologically charged acts. For similarly to words they not only arise from, but have the ability instrumentally to (re)produce, interpersonal relations; they too contribute to the creation and maintenance of society.

Rather than a vacuum the silence an addressee offers as part of 'bad hearing' may, then, be said to constitute a *plenum*: an act intrinsically and substantively filled in its own way with as much sociality as a person's utterances; and with as much meaning and value. As noted in chapter 3, a speaker's

meanings entail and encompass more than the semantic content. Beyond the sign-referential value of the words, a verbal performance is tied in to a culturally constructed spectrum of intelligibility and engagement ranging from the sociopragmatic to the aesthetic to the affective, and the sensory to the moral. So too, as I have tried to make clear throughout this thesis, is the performance of the hearer. This point is central to what I have attempted to convey in my bipartite discussion on the subject of Pa'ikwené audition. Namely, that the experiential process of "Tchimap", to 'hear-listen-understand', basically and expressively embodies, it seems to me, the concept that what one perceives with one's ears is not just a sound (of a voice, a word, a 'thing') but its full, multiple meaning as described above. And the 'proper' silence one offers in the process of discourse in return for the sound is itself an inherently communicative act which, I suggest, is meant and heard-listened-understood to be similarly polyvalent.

To sum up, if some instances of silence will, depending on context, be perceived as negative by the Pa'ikwené, others are positive and in consequence eminently social. As Jaworski notes (*op. cit.*), silence is ambiguous exegetically in that it is capable of doing both 'good' and 'bad' things (p. 20). While it can signal impoliteness and hostility (as occurred above between M. and L.), it can also be a means of conflict avoidance; it can be interpreted as a sign of stupidity or, as I have proposed, express affective engagement (as with Karinai and Wahtchit); it can be used to forestall or break off communication, or serve to keep it going (p. 48).

In short, I propose, silence is the quintessential wordless 'signified' (cf. Barthes' "silent morpheme", 1977:157), and an action with as much power as the 'perlocutionary' capacity of words to produce a desired and comprehensible effect.

I end by restating an obvious but often, sociologically speaking, disregarded fact. Hearing is a fundamental and necessary component of dialogic relations, and thus of social ones. My own view, elaborated above from fieldwork data, is that together with speaking it is a creative agent in the process of sociality itself. Phenomenologically and socioculturally, it clearly seems to occupy an important place in the system of thinking and being of the Pa'ikwené. The relatively scarce and precious material on audition in regard to other Lowland Amerindian peoples, referred to throughout, suggests that this is not an isolated and atypical case. Given this, I believe that the subject requires more anthropological attention than hitherto accorded.

chapter seven

**BANANAS, SPEAKING AND LISTENING: GIFTS,
SHARES OR DUTIES?**

Basically, this chapter aims to show that Pa'ikwené political speech, be it carried out by leaders or non-leaders, does not constitute Clastrian "empty talk", but the reverse. Concomitantly, I suggest that Pa'ikwené listening is also to be seen as political and full; that is, the lack of any obligation or 'necessity' for the individual to listen to their chief (Clastres 1987:46), or anyone else, does not mean that listening does not occur nor, more pertinently, that it is unheeding. On the contrary, for all that it may appear devoid of attention and distracted often to the point of non-existent, Pa'ikwené listening is in reality active and characteristically embodies the person's comprehension and engagement with is being said. In the process I will also address the issue of exchange in so far as it has a bearing on the two other activities, speaking and listening.

The giving and the felt.

The first time I went to meet Tchikoi, the chief at Kúmené (Aúkwa region, Amapá state, Brazil), Nenel, who accompanied me, presented him with a hand of bananas. I asked Nenel afterwards if this was an obligation. He replied that people were not required to but liked to offer him gifts of food as, being chief, he did not have sufficient time for hunting, fishing and tending his garden, and therefore his family ran the risk of going hungry¹. It seemed to me that such donations were not a matter of compulsion or of a statutory *quid pro quo* in return for the chief's efforts on behalf of the community, but, rather, one of individual choice, regard, generosity and responsibility; people were forever insisting that if you gave a gift to someone it was because you wanted to not because you had to, and not because you thought you would get something in return.

That reciprocity was not obligatory according to the Pa'ikwené does not, however, mean that none occurred, though I am chary of accepting the obligation

¹ It should be noted that the Brazilian authorities pay a stipend to chiefs and the French to both chiefs and "capitaines".

to return as a universal 'law' as Mauss (1964) and Lévi-Strauss (1969) do. For this both denies the existence of 'pure' gifts² and tends to turn gifting itself into nothing but a social structural mechanism in which the volition and choice of both gifter and receiver are overlooked, dismissed, or held to be lacking.

Service holds (1979) that reciprocity in tribal societies is neither unqualifiably compulsory nor inflexible but consists of several types existing in a continuum. At one end is "generalised" reciprocity (both relatively unidirectional and altruistic) and at the other, "negative" reciprocity (a 'something for nothing', net gain-type non-exchange), with in the middle: "balanced" reciprocity (direct and equivalent exchange). There are different degrees of "generalised" reciprocity, the optimum being the Malinowskian 'pure gift', the countervalue of "negative" reciprocity. Another extreme form is (voluntary) food sharing among close kin where, in Sahlins' words (1971:52-3), "the expectation of a direct material return is unseemly, at the most implicit. The social side of the relation overwhelms the material, and in a way conceals it... [It is] not that there is no obligation to reciprocate, but the expectation of reciprocity is left indefinite, unspecified as to time, quantity and quality". Thus, for Service, a unilateral and constant flow from donor to recipient indicates not that there is no obligation or expectation of a return, but only that the donor assumes that one will be forthcoming in the fullness of time.

While in practice the two actions were clearly distinguished, as will be seen, the Pa'ikwené notion of 'giving a present' ("Kakahnhao") is conceptually linked with that of 'sharing' ("Ibakah"). This could be thought to bear out Price's thesis (1975:21) that gifting is a projection of the latter action, a way of extending the sphere of sharers to include those not normally within it, were it not for the fact that frequently, among the Pa'ikwené, the people whom individuals gave gifts to were in a lot of cases the same ones that they also shared with (e.g. co-residing siblings).³

² I use 'pure gift' in the Malinowskian sense (1922) of an altruistic one which people are not required to return. Nor for that matter, to give. It should thus not be confused with the 'free gift' discussed by Overing in regard to the Piaroa (1992:181, 194-6, Overing Kaplan 1975:63 fn. 2): while carrying no obligation or expectation of future return, giving it is mandatory for certain affines and a chief's followers (1992:63, 1975:135, 178).

³ As an indication of the conjoining power which the Pa'ikwené probably perceive to exist in both gifting and sharing is the etymologically related word "Akak" (or "Akag"), which means "And", "With", "Together".

Another feature characterising Pa'ikwené behaviour in this respect is the fact that gifted and shared objects are often of a different kind materially; and people made presents of things (e.g. weapons and ammunition) that they would not normally be required, or want, to share outside of the circle of their close kin. According to an informant, people distinguish between giving and sharing on the grounds that in the first action the initiative comes from the donor independently, while the second tends to be initiated by the receiver's demand or request and is obligatory. Someone else explained that gifting means giving all of a particular object, whereas in sharing you give part of it only, so that both parties end up with some. This corresponds to what Ingold calls (1986:233) "sharing out", a distribution of something originally held by a single individual and divided up for use by "an aggregate of beneficiaries" including the original possessor, as opposed to "sharing in", which implies a "principle of unrestricted access whereby means of subsistence are enjoyed in common".

Granted that my observation may have been deficient, but Pa'ikwené gifting seemed notably disinterested (*contra* Mauss *op. cit.*). Although if there was any personally and materially advantageous ulterior motive on the part of donors, it was anyway well hidden from me. But as far as I could see gifting was not used in any politically strategic way; there was not for instance the least indication of it being manipulated in order to set up and maintain alliances, such as Descola describes (1996:243-6) apropos the Achuar. Neither was it like the mutual so-called gift-giving of a specific item, bread, that occurs among Airo-Pai women gift partners which actually is a 'mode of sharing out food' between households (Belaunde 1992:179-81).

For Belaunde, Airo-Pai food gifting is not to be seen in terms of reciprocity as the stress is not on any expectation of return but on the giver's generosity, though there is an "expectation of mutuality" (p. 21). I cannot even claim this in respect of the Pa'ikwené gifting, for I do not think that it was sharing under another name, though without a doubt both Pa'ikwené gifting and sharing, like Airo-Pai gifting/sharing (and also the Piaroa practice of 'free gifts' between affines, referred to in footnote 2 above, which may be said to mimic sharing between kin), did not entail an expectation of return. The Pa'ikwené themselves stated this, as I have already mentioned; and such was my own perception. This again falls between two stools as far as Price is concerned (*op. cit.*). For him, while sharing does not carry the

expectation of return (p. 6), the gifter, although free of the “pressure for returns” (p. 21), should nevertheless reciprocate with a counter gift (p. 23). It does, though, undermine Sahlins’ claim (1972:185-275) that the underlying and characterising principle of societies with ‘domestic modes of production’ is a “generalised reciprocity” which necessarily entails an expectation of return. As for the term “generalised reciprocity”, Price points out (op. cit.:5) that it is indiscriminate, since Sahlins uses it to describe actions “which [for Price] would be better considered as sharing...” Moreover, the Pa’ikwené’s gifting without an expectation of return also disagrees with Mauss’ contention (op. cit.:10 and *passim*.) that reciprocity is obligatory and his apparent conflation of reciprocity and gifting.

To show yet further the distinction between the two actions (and concepts) for the Pa’ikwené: Susana, my main informant, would often sadly make the point that sharing was steadily being replaced outside of the immediate household unit by the growing tendency of people to ‘lend’ certain items like foods even to close kin, and with the definite expectation of their replacement in kind or in cash by the borrower.⁴ This last, which she put down to the increasing influence and presence of money, was not considered selling, that being what one theoretically only did with socially remote individuals and strangers.⁵ Gifting on the other hand was still practised as much as ever, which fact gave her joy. Anomalously (?), I came across one object which while not a gift, since it was given on request, nevertheless carried no condition of return. Families who grew medicinal plants, as did Susana and her husband Karinai, let anyone have some who needed it, with not a thought of ‘repayment’ (cf. Seeger 1987:34 on how among the Suyá herbal remedies are administered similarly without anything being given in return).

⁴ Cf. von Martius’ observation, cited in Lévi-Strauss 1969:57 and made some one hundred and thirty years ago: “Although they [the Arawak] may have the idea of individual property, what each possesses is so common and easy to obtain, that everyone lends and borrows *without too much concern for restitution*” (my emphasis).

⁵ Collectively produced horticultural products, such as manioc, tended to be ‘shared in’ (Ingold op. cit.) by its co-producers; some would also be ‘gifted’ with no obligation of a return to whoever a co-producer wished to present it. However, there were a number of instances when a person would sell it intrasocially, a recent and growing practice deplored by some in the community but defended by others. Some hunters, both in Espérance 2 and Aúkwa, also sold game for cash to fellow villagers. Commercially bought ‘Western’ food items, such as frozen chickens or bread, would be “lent” on condition that a return be made in the future, although some of the purchases would invariably also be shared outside the immediate family with needy kin. (See Montout 1994:32 on the effect of money on Pa’ikwené social relations and the traditional system of distribution).

Susana not only took pleasure in the idea and custom of gifting, and from receiving gifts. She also delighted in giving them. I do not know if the gift itself was believed to contain part of its giver as it is seen to do elsewhere (Mauss *op. cit.*:8-10), but, like sharing, Pa'ikwené gift and counter-gift giving is invested with a large quota of emotion (cf. Price *op. cit.*:5, 21). Having personally been the recipient of gifts from Pa'ikwené, I can testify not only to the warmth but also the spontaneity and (I believe) uncalculating generosity on the part of givers. This again contradicts Mauss, for whom there is no such thing as the 'pure gift' or the spontaneous and altruistic one (see *op. cit.*:70-1 for his critique of Malinowski's analysis of Trobriander transactions; he judges these inspired by a "notion neither of purely free and gratuitous prestations, nor of purely interested and utilitarian production and exchange; it is a kind of hybrid." Given, he claims, the constraining nature of reciprocity, the circulation of goods only has the "appearance of generosity").⁶

Although there were no long-term female gift-giving partnerships as among the Airo-Pai (Belaunde *op. cit.*), Pa'ikwené women went in for gifting each other. This could involve either kin or friends ("kagmada"); they would also give presents to non-Pa'ikwené women friends (this is not to say that they never gave them to men). The gifts tended to be objects such as ornaments or bought goods and even flowers rather than foods, which would fall under the rubric of things shared, although sometimes 'treats', in the form of particularly delicious and much appreciated items, like the candyfloss "miou-miou" fruit, might be chosen. There was much mutual pleasure and satisfaction associated with a gift on the part of both the giver and receiver. Often it was specially created by its donor, and aesthetic delight as well as skill would go into its production (see chapter 8). According to Susana, she made some artifacts, such as necklaces and wrist bands, especially "pretty" specifically in order to give them as gifts. With the Pa'ikwené, irrespectively of gender, and similarly to the Airo-Pai female gifters, to give or not to give seemed to operate in function with mood: in the sense both of the emotional state of the giver and that of the 'political' atmosphere currently prevailing between him or her and the receiver (cf. Belaunde's observation *op. cit.*:180 that each single gift both indicates the "present state of the interpersonal relationship" between the two parties and constitutes a "means for redefining it").

⁶ Cf. McCallum (1989:260-65, 395 fn. 38) on when and whether for the Cashinahua a prestation constitutes a 'pure gift' or one amounting to a sale, and therefore entailing indebtedness.

For Lévi-Strauss (1969:12-97), the use of the gift as a “primitive form of exchange” (p. 61) between individuals is reworked as the “principle of reciprocity” which conceptually underpins the incest ban and wife exchange (in exogamic systems), and thus the viable survival of groups. Reading him, there seems to be a sense in which gifting has been transformed from an interaction between two people into a system of reglementary exchange for the establishment and maintenance, exclusively, of society as a whole: what relationships there are, that are involved with the giving of prestations and counter-prestations, occur between groups, or more precisely sub-groups; and also between groups and their leaders (pp. 43-4).

According to Overing (1983-4:346), on the other hand, reciprocity is not so much the means as a “mode of self-perpetuation, not of groups - which might entail the coercive control of both people and scarce resources - but of relationships, a perpetuation that counteracts the development of such control.” Her analysis of the “elementary structures of reciprocity” in Piaroa culture, and by extension those of the indigenous peoples of Amazonia and the Guianas generally, stresses the role of the autonomous, responsible, and interrelating individual in the process of mutual gifting. This is described as a philosophical principle which, by removing the threat of dangerous ‘difference’ from society and obviating the possibility of a monopoly of coercive power by a single person or sub-group, and with it their control over the labour and products of others, works to create and maintain the egalitarian relations characteristic of such polities. Exploring the issue further, she argues (1992) that social relations are not reducible to the process of exchange as Lévi-Strauss (op. cit.), Clastres (op. cit.), and Mauss (op. cit.) all hold. Rather, ‘good’ social relations are created not by exchange but productivity. The former in Piaroa thinking implies external relations and competitive, dangerous and potentially bellicose and ‘predatory’ individuals (including possible affines). The latter, in which are included the crucial activities or qualities of gifting (without obligation or expectation of return) and sharing, is associated on the other hand with internal relations and co-operating, ‘safe’ individuals (kin and actual affines who over time become ‘of a kind’ with kin through the process of producing food and children and eating together).

I for my part can offer no theoretical reasons or conclusions as to the structural purpose of Pa’ikwené gifting (I do not even know that it has one). Among them, as elsewhere, it can take place between individuals within sub-groups and without;

and generally, but not always, reciprocity is involved, although it does not appear to possess, as I have already stressed and for all that I tried to find signs to the contrary, an explicit obligation to, and expectation of, return. The Pa'ikwené giver's act seemed, rather, to be accompanied by an assumption of the other's desire for communion. That is, it was as if the giving constituted a "poetic" (Wagner 1991:43) overture or recommitment by one person to another, and the gift itself an expression of, a phatic state without words⁷: an affective and concrete condition of social interconnection, sociability and, ultimately, 'one of a kind-ness'.⁸ Like speech, Pa'ikwené gifting contributed to the construction of the pleasure of community life.⁹ It was also its consequence and symptom.¹⁰

As noted, Overing posits (1981, 1983-4) that the notion of reciprocity exists cross-culturally as a central plank of Lowland Amerindian metaphysics regardless of the dissimilarities in social structures between the different peoples. Although there are elements in Pa'ikwené mythology suggesting a possible cosmological schema of reciprocal dualities (see Appendix A story 3), nothing allows me to claim that their own sociopolitical thinking fitted into what she describes (1983-4) as a general Lowland "philosophy of social life". This premises (p. 333) as its "unitary" principle that the "contact and proper mixing among entities and forces that are different from one another" can only be practically "acted out through the 'elementary structures of reciprocity' ", whose function is, as cited above, to neutralise the danger for society attaching to such 'difference'.

If such a rationalisation does exist for today's Pa'ikwené as for the other

⁷Cf. Malinowski's notion (1930:315) of "phatic communion", according to which the exchange of words functionally "serv[es] the direct aim of binding hearer to speaker by a tie of some social sentiment or other".

⁸ Cf. Firth for whom some gift giving "is in a way an invitation to an act of social communion..." (quoted in Price op. cit.:21).

⁹ Cf. Ingold's thesis (1993b:440) that, as agents of practical action, the word and the gift (and also the tool) work identically to mediate a purposive and meaningful engagement between persons and their (natural and social) environment. See too Koestler (1964:301) for whom the underlying motivation of telling a story is not only to communicate but to *share* with others, and "thus overcome the isolation of the self."

¹⁰Cf. Sahlins' notion (1987:xi-xiii) of "performative" and "prescriptive" social structures. In societies with the first kind, among which I would include the Pa'ikwené and others in Amazonia, practice takes priority over precept, and it is the act which performatively creates an "appropriate relation": thus, typically, "gifts make friends" (p. xi). In the latter type, where the stress is on "institutional forms over their associated practices", conduct tends rather to ensue from a preexisting social relationship (see too Overing 1996:8).

societies, then it is most likely to be unconscious. What I did tangibly perceive, however, beyond the articulating features of their social organisation, was the explicitly recognised importance for them of reciprocity at the level of the *'felt'*. If I concentrate on one-to-one gifting in order to illustrate this, it is because it seems free of the intra-group prescriptions inherent in sharing, and also without its routineness and 'expectedness'. It is precisely due to the qualities of spontaneity, lack of compulsion, and generosity apparently characterising it, that Pa'ikwené gifting stands out for me as a prototypical (and ever-renewable) manifestation not so much of the structural but emotional necessity of social relations. I suggest that for a society which sets as high a store on individualism¹¹ as on communality, to make a gift is, again somewhat similarly to speaking, an act whereby each person rather than the group can recommit to, and even create, a relationship with each 'other'.¹² In so doing, he or she reaffirms, reproduces, and re-celebrates the very actuality of communality insofar as society is composed of a series of singular interpersonal relationships (see Overing 1992), mutually created by individuals on a one-to-one basis; and is phenomenologically experienced as such in the everyday living of one's social existence, whatever the structural mechanisms which may or may not underlie it. I believe this to be just as true of the Pa'ikwené, whose clan society seems more in line with those of Central Brazil and North West Amazon in that it possesses formal social groupings, as of the other indigenous peoples in its own region of the Guianas, whose societies tend generally not to possess them (see Rivière 1984:4).

Our failure to perceive sufficiently the indigenous ideology and epistemology relating to gifting-sharing, such as the distinction made between gifts to which there is attached an obligation to return and those to which there is not, might perhaps tend to mask the (possible) real nature of the thinking behind, and actual practical dynamics of, the relationship between leaders and led among the Lowland peoples, which could be characterised as one that was generally not only negotiated and freely entered into, but jointly and actively produced, by both

¹¹ Similarly to the Cubeo (Goldman ¹⁹⁷⁹~~1963~~), Piaroa (Overing 1988, 1989, 1996), Pemon (Thomas 1982) and others in the Guianas (see Rivière 1984:4, 94-100).

¹² The link between gifts and words, and indeed the idea that words are gifts, has been mooted by Lacan among others. He points out (1975:35) that in Antiquity gifts "were so much part of the Word that they were designated by its name". Similarly, Leenhardt reports (1947:167) that for the Houailou of Melanesia the discourse which accompanies the giving of gifts is itself another gift.

parties, rather than imposed by one upon the other.

It seems to me that Lévi-Strauss' perception (1969:43-4) of the relationship as a structural opposition between a solitary and a collective unit - chief : band - fails to see, if I can flip the adage, the trees for the wood. That is, by designating the group an assembly of undifferentiated individuals, he necessarily but conveniently ignores each specific individual who, together with the others, including the chief, instrumentally helps create it in practice. But is it not just a partial truism to say that the relationship in respect of a chief is between him and his set of followers? For just as logically, at a prior and, for each party, *personal* level, it is between him and a series of single, separate others. A fact that Lévi-Strauss categorically overrides (in connection with chiefly entitlements):

“In exchange [for wives], he [the chief] gives a guarantee against want and danger, certainly not to the particular individuals whose wives or daughters he has married, and not even to those perhaps condemned for ever to celibacy by the exercise of his polygamous right, but to the group as a group...” (ibid.:44)

Thus on one side, the group; and on the other, the chief. And the thing that creates the dichotomy is polygyny (on which more later), which acts, according to Lévi-Strauss, not to unite all individuals, the chief included, but all individuals bar the chief into a singular entity in relation, and opposition, to him:

“...[M]onogamy and polygamy correspond to two types of complementary relationship. On the one hand, there are systems of prestations and counter-prestations which bind together the individual members of the group, and on the other hand, there are systems of prestations and counter-prestations which bind together the group as a whole and its chief.” (ibid.)

However, as noted, Pa'ikwené society may be said to be just as 'individualistic' as others in the region despite the formal social grouping of the clan and the fact that membership of the current multiclans communities tends to be laid down on Christian sectarian lines (see chapter 9). While clan and ideological affiliation may 'determine' the wider web of social relations, they do not also automatically construct the ones associated with the circle of people with whom one is on mutually sociable, pleasurable and intimate terms. These can only be produced and maintained over time on a one to one basis by autonomously thinking and

acting, and also *gifting-sharing*, individuals in a manner and with a result agreeable and valuable to both parties. This applies to relationships between affines and between friends. I suggest that it might also pertain to those between an individual 'follower' and his or her chief.

But what, then, of Nenel and his own gift of bananas to Tchikoi? What was he giving (as it were) transubstantially with it? And what, despite the stated lack attaching to gifts of an obligation to return, was he counting on in exchange from his leader? I can but surmise; but could it not be that, at the simplest (and extra-structural) level, what he offered with care for, and generosity towards, Tchikoi, was precisely that: these selfsame qualities as not just signifiers but meaningful gestural expressions, as Merleau-Ponty might put it (1945), of his recommitment to their relationship; and thus of his continuing good-will, political support and endorsement, themselves metonymically represented, and incarnated, by the fruits?¹³

Asked by me to say what it was she thought Tchikoi did for the Pa'ikwené, a woman replied, "He is kind and intelligent. He "speaks well" with the Brazilians. He looks after us with medicines [as noted above, Tchikoi had received paramedical training and assisted in the small state-funded infirmary at Kúmené]. He protects Pa'ikwené land in Aúkwa. He cares about traditions. He works for us a lot."

This was just as much a summary of his mental and moral attributes as of his responsibilities and functions, and makes it clear that the 'way he is' was felt to be as important as 'what he does'. It was also, I believe, a succinct report of what he 'gave' .

According to Clastres (and *contra* Lévi-Strauss), the exchange which occurs in the context of leadership is unique in regard to other exchanges among Amerindians in that it amounts to a negation of reciprocity. Let me explain more fully:

¹³ Again I would like to stress that the fact that the lack of an obligation to return a gift does not necessarily mean that none takes place. In the Pa'ikwené context, it was clear that it generally did. That it was non-obligatory seemed to enhance the quality of the relationship between giver (follower) and receiver (chief) and also, I conjecture, embodied its voluntariness for the giver (which is why I have not defined these gifts as 'tributes').

The chief's words are political; political speech is 'full' speech: a theoretical view. Clastres argues (1987:27-47, 152-5, 189-218) that the phenomenon of the chief's duty to speak is bound in jointly with the Amerindians' conception of power as a natural force which is highly dangerous for humans and their basic structural dynamic of reciprocal communication. Since, he says, this violent power is perceived as inimical to, and potentially destructive of, the tripartite 'relations of exchange' (entailing as signs: women, goods and words) which both define society and constitute its political sphere (p. 37), Amerindians have accordingly devised the means for nullifying the negative potency of power by keeping it outside society and the polity. He proposes that the process relies on a particular and negative type of exchange which, as it is alien to "the province of communication" (p. 41) and without the usual reciprocity, is tantamount to a non-exchange: structurally, this involves on the one hand the polygynous presentation of women by the community to the chief; and on the other, the latter having to supply it both in goods, in the form of boundless generosity with his time, labour, services and possessions, and words in the form of his oratory used towards the specific end of peacekeeping and otherwise ensuring the community's well-being and survival.

According to this thesis, and in contradiction to the Lévi-Straussian one (1967, 1969:43-4), the exchange is asymmetric. While Rivière (1983-4, 1984:87-94) and Santos-Granero (1986) agree with Clastres about the inequality of the exchange, they refute his other contention that the Lowland society does not have a political economy. Overing argues (1983-4) that for Amerindians power is identified not with the external forces of nature but the internal forces of culture; these are seen to derive from supernature and the danger immanent in their potency can only be preempted and domesticated through the means of reciprocal - and equal - exchange.

I oppose Clastres' argument, as summarised above, from another angle, believing it to be based on a number of disputable assumptions. The principal among them to my mind are that (a) despite the (he claims) universal mutually interdependent relationship between power and speech wherein each owes its existence to the other and "is the *substance* of the other" (p. 152, my emphasis), and although the chief's speech is the "means the group provides itself with to maintain power outside coercive violence" (p. 46), this speech paradoxically is itself not powerful but powerless (for while connected with an institution of power, it carries no authority since Amerindian chieftainship, "this institution without

‘substance’”, needs to be seen in terms of a ‘power that is powerless in practice’) [p. 29]; (b) this ‘powerless speech’ must for its survival depend on an exchange of the kind postulated, i.e., the supposedly unequal one of the community’s women to the chief in return for his services to it; and (c) women are the “most essential value” (p. 38-9) that groups can exchange.

This is in disagreement, however, with the following empirical facts relative to the Pa’ikwené. Firstly, not only do the ~~the~~ leader’s words, and words more generally, have authoritative power in their social life, but they hold the notion that power can inhabit a speaker’s breath and very words, as reported in chapters 4, 5 and 9. Certain supernatural entities, and most notably the spirit-divinity Wavitché (now seconded to the Pa’ikwené Christian *dramatis personae* to play the part of the Devil wielding unconditionally evil power), are seen ‘traditionally’ to possess a single power whose potency is expressible in the social sphere (very often but not exclusively via human conductivity). In shamanic logic, it is not the human who speaks the words of power obtained from the spirit but the spirit who speaks its power through the human. The Pa’ikwené do not seek to control and domesticate supernatural power as the Piaroa do (Overing op. cit.:340-1, 1988). Pa’ikwené shamans seemed, rather, to seek to put themselves under its control, to be its instruments, so as to fulfil the objectives they desired and requested of it. Violence, coercion and destruction, then, would not be the unique characteristics of power inside society; depending on the intentions of the person soliciting that power, it can also present diametrically opposing ones for peaceful and creative ends (e.g. peacemaking, healing).

The link between words and the productivity of supernaturally derived power would seem to be prevalent in Amazonia. Isacson, for instance, reports (1993:346-73, 397) that the Embera see themselves as ‘words’, manifestations of the creator god’s speech. Social man is Man the Speaker, the “anthropomorphised structure of the divine intention” (p. 361); his speech recreates the divine order. Not only do the Embera chief and shaman create society cosmically with their speech on ritual occasions, but the household, community and cosmos are remade daily through the proper behaviour, which includes speaking as well as working and knowing, of ‘ordinary’ people (Isacson, in a workshop at St Andrews University, 31st May 1996). Thus every Embera individual ‘possesses’ the divine and creative verbal power.

Secondly, polygyny is not practised by the Pa'ikwené (as Clastres himself points out, op. cit.:33). Their chiefs do not therefore exercise the prerogative of having many wives since they do not possess it; and the community, it follows, does not donate its women. However, despite the apparent lack of such exchange, the chiefs nonetheless give their words to the community in order to safeguard and reproduce its well-being. Further, as mentioned before, the Pa'ikwené have female as well as male leaders, and there seemed to be not one whit of difference, where speaking is concerned, between their respective duties, responsibilities, and 'gifts' to their people. As far as I could see, the only thing that chiefs got in return for working through their speech and other actions to maintain the group's security and survival was its continuing support and good will. My use of "only" does not imply a negative meaning.

As is well known, Clastres' argument runs counter to that of Lévi-Strauss, for the latter holds (op. cit.) that the relationship between a chief and his followers *is* one based on the principle of reciprocity, and that the exchange is equal and comprises a "perpetual balance of prestations, privileges, services and obligations" (1967:59): essentially, through granting the privilege of polygyny to the leader, the group members swap their individual security, which purportedly accrues from the 'monogamy rule', for collective security.¹⁴ However, and discounting the absence of institutional Pa'ikwené polygamy, the fact that their chiefs may receive certain goods such as food items does not necessarily indicate, I suggest, the existence of reciprocity if by this is meant solely the principle of obligatory return. The Piaroa chief, for instance, while receiving 'payment' for his services to the community¹⁵ is also presented with a "constant flow" of gifts which, as already mentioned, are explicitly free of any obligation or expectation of a return (Overing Kaplan 1975:63-

¹⁴ Clastres and Lévi-Strauss nevertheless concur in their belief that collective security is only acquired by the relinquishment of an individual one, the medium of exchange being women. However, the Pa'ikwené obtain their collective security (as we saw in chapter 5) *even though the (male) individual does not give up his individual security (if represented by 'his' womenfolk) in return*. Could it be, then, that polygamy provides us with a false scent in our attempts to trace a general sociological rule for the relations connected with Amerindian leadership? And should we not, rather, consider the situation as possibly an interactive one where a chief gifts his love, care, and skills to the individual follower, both male and female, and by extension the group; and the follower responds not with an 'item of exchange', which has connotations of trade, but also with a 'gift' (like Nene's bananas) reciprocally embodying their 'good' feelings for him; and where, finally, both sets of 'gifts' performatively constitute the continuous and *co-operative* production by the two parties, the 'leader' and the 'led', not of 'his' group but their joint one conceived of as a n assembly of one- to-one relationships?

¹⁵ Its womenfolk would not seem to constitute the payment, whether in whole or in part: although polygyny exists among the Piaroa, it is rarely practised and no correlation is made between a man's status and the number of wives that he has (Overing Kaplan op. cit.:143-4).

4, Overing 1992:195).

Thirdly, and very briefly, however highly valued Pa'ikwené women undoubtedly are, I find no grounds for accepting as a given, let alone a universal one, that they are the most essentially valued of the three communicable things that Clastres claims them to be. The Pa'ikwené provided no indication that they were for them more essential or more valued than men; or for that matter, words. All three - women, men and words - were valued highly and, it seemed to me, equally.

It is true that Clastres says (*op. cit.*:46) that in the given context of power, when used for the express purposes of keeping it non-violent and uncoercive, the chief's words, like the group's women and like goods, do not act as communicable signs with an exchange value but, rather, as "pure values". This is precisely the reason why, for Clastres, the 'language of authority' meets with such indifference on the part of the chief's followers. Relying on an 'unconscious structure' argument (p. 42), he theorises that since the cultural basis of the Amerindians is exchange and they perceive power to be its antithesis, then their rejection of it entails the very nullification of exchange. Given this absence, and by virtue of the non-communicative character of words in the process of non-exchange, it follows that "there is so little necessity for the chief's discourse to be listened to." (p. 46). So, he has the obligation to speak; his followers on the other hand do not have the converse one to listen.

For my part, however, I would argue on the basis that power is not an exclusively one-way process¹⁶, that the political speech of the Pa'ikwené does, on the contrary, involve both the communicative value of words and (non-obligatory) reciprocity. The latter occurs not just intra-socially but also between humans and the place which is seen as the natural matrix and home of power, and from where society takes power into itself: the so-called supernatural sphere. In this exchange, words do not as values relinquish their function as signs, which thus permits the communication. Tchikoi did not speak in order to get anything back from the group, whether in the form of material objects or continuing support, but, as it were, from power itself. The words of chiefs are offered, I suggest, with the specific intention and in the hope of obtaining not for themselves personally but for the group that

¹⁶ Cf. Foucault 1979:93 (also Sheridan 1980:184); and Black 1977:147 on Ojibwa concepts of power.

power's agency in the shape of its non-destructive, life-giving properties and effectiveness.

For Clastres, developing his logic further, Amerindians not only do not have the duty to listen to their chief's speech, they also ill attend to it in practice because, being without authority, it is "empty"; and it "is empty precisely because it is not a discourse of power" (p. 154), but its opposite. Santos-Granero and Gow have both rebutted this.¹⁷ The first writes (1991:302) that the "Amuesha demand from their leaders words full of meaning and persuasion. An empty discourse cannot be a political discourse", and that the speech of their leaders is morally charged and "carries the weight of an order (without appearing as such)". The second holds (1991:127, 226-8) that the rhetoric of Piro chiefs is filled with moral and emotional, thus aesthetic, meaning for his people. I would similarly describe the words of Pa'ikwené leaders as full, and precisely because they are a discourse of *uncoercive* power. Accorded by people the description of "Kibeiné" ("Good"/"Nice" and also the word for "thank you") and "Baréúyo" (Handsome"/"Clean"), they hold within them the positive moral and creative element of power; and contain meaningfulness, value, artistry, beauty, and affective mass (see chapter 3).

Given that an Amerindian leader's speech can sometimes have the weight of a command for all that it does not seem like one, being "grounded in moral conditions shared by both leaders and *followers*" (Santos-Granero op. cit.:302, my emphasis), I have argued throughout that this should be extended in respect of the speech of Pa'ikwené non-chiefs. The resolution of a dispute by Yvette, to which reference was made in chapter 5, shows that on the same grounds, and because, too, of the immanent presence in the words of the properties I have just listed, the voices of 'ordinary' people can indeed be "heard-understood" to carry the same authority in 'stateless' societies as those of chiefs in situations where sociopolitical action is necessary for the reproduction not so much of order as of 'good relations' characterised by the factors of friendliness, peacefulness, and mutual pleasure and satisfaction. They can thus be actively instrumental in daily recreating the community itself as an entity at once cohesive and sociable.

Yvette's speech, motivated by righteousness and indignation, and delivered with energy, humour and brio, demonstrates how the 'political communication' of a

¹⁷ See too Belaunde op. cit.:97-8, McCallum 1989:394 fn. 30

Pa'ikwené non-chief can be succinct, forceful and to the point. It also possessed *spontaneity and effectiveness*. All these features are in complete contrast with the customary monologic set-pieces of leaders as described by Clastres (op. cit.), for whom they are (as if lifelessly) repetitive (p. 153), and impotent and incomprehensible because "uttered harshly so as not to be understood" (p. 46). Gow reports (op. cit.:227-8) apropos the Piro that, on the contrary, the leader's talk is banal and platitudinous in appearance only. As for its supposed powerlessness and incomprehensibility, this was not an issue with the Pa'ikwené who "heard-understood" its meaning, and recognised its power, full well.

As explained in chapter 5, I witnessed very little formal politics. I saw no 'ceremonials' and heard no political rhetoric of a declamatory nature. Neither, apart from the instance of the aforementioned public report given by Tchikoi, can I give any detailed examples of how a Pa'ikwené chief's utterances were listened to by his followers. Unlike the leaders of some other Amerindian peoples (Gow *ibid.*, Clastres op. cit.:31), neither Tchikoi nor the two "capitaines" of Village Espérance 1 were in the habit of giving evening or dawn harangues to the community in order specifically to broadcast its moral standards and exhort it to follow its traditions. But it is my impression that in his periodical rounds through Espérance 2, also described earlier, and perhaps almost by virtue of residing outside it, a "capitaine" appeared to act through his speech in such a way as to get the community to see itself objectively as a community. He did this, however, not by addressing them as an assembled group but by greeting and speaking to (or *with*, rather) each family in turn, mostly outside their homes, in view and within earshot of their neighbours. Occasionally, he would be invited inside to partake of some food. The talking which took place was by no means a one-way affair. Formal only insofar as it was more 'polite' and more respectful of the demarcations of turn-taking than an ordinary conversation between familiars, its subject matter tended to be about the general well-being of the family in question and the village as a whole. (Politically critical issues would be dealt with in collective forum. During my stay, for instance, one such meeting concerned the effect of the presence of so many uninvited Brazilian incomers in their midst, and another the fights between the young males of the two villages). Despite the heightened politeness, it would be wrong to assume that the "capitaine's" verbal input was bland and his interest perfunctory or feigned. These two qualities, his words and concern, were seen as not only

reflecting but constituting his care and love for the people with whom he stopped to speak.¹⁸

As he moved from household to household and conversed with its members, the “capitaine” seemed in my mind to run like the dark fibre often woven through the series of spaces on a pale Pa’ikwené basket or manioc press, not with the purpose of binding the families tightly together but so as to highlight the pattern linking each different and autonomous unit. While their talk, a combination of the conventionally ‘loud-and-strong’ and the informally low-key and calm, did not explicitly name the jointly moral and aesthetic values of community life, it nevertheless in my opinion referred to them implicitly. In so doing, it both reaffirmed these values in the listeners and performatively enabled them to recreate the community life itself. As it did too the beauty and pleasure of living it, similarly to the Piro (Gow op. cit.) but unlike them without recourse to constantly reiterated homilies or haranguing.

Such speech by Pa’ikwené leaders, then, was far from empty, harsh and unintelligible as Clastres would have it, nor was it directly didactic. It proceeded interactively. To the outside observer like me, it had aspects of the casual interpersonal chat as well as the more ‘formal’ monologue. Eliciting and obtaining response, it constituted one of the threads of the unceasing dialogues of social relations. It was, in manner, expressive of conviviality. Its substance not only affirmed the values of the social, it in effect caused sociality to be; and to be seen, and felt, to be.¹⁹

This brings us to the subject of listening to political speech:

¹⁸ Needless to say, this depended to some extent on the individual. “Capitaine” Louis, for example, was generally regarded as being less self-serving and having, and displaying in his words, a more sensitive concern for ‘his’ people and their well-being, than his fellow “capitaine”, and rival, Auguste.

¹⁹ Cf. Clastres’ antithetical perception (op. cit.:46-7) of the “isolation” and “solitude” of the chief’s discourse due both to the “impotence of the political institution” itself and the lack of response from followers because such speech is delivered in such a way as to render it incomprehensible (and thus unanswerable). For Lacan (1975:10), conversely, monologue itself is “a mirage”; “every word calls for a reply” (p. 9) and only in madness is there “Language without dialectic” (p. 43; see too pp. 129-30 note 102).

Full and political listening.

“... Sounds whose *reality* depends on the listener.”
(Villiers de l’Isle Adam 1992 [1885]:112, his emphasis, my translation.)

As I have said, the Pa’ikwené “heard-understood” political speech actively. The process entailed not only one’s capacity to listen and apprehend the semantic content but also one’s conscious decision to do so. That is, it was not enough that the speaker wield persuasive power, whether in the sense intended by the Amuesha (described above) or Crocker (see chapter 5). The Pa’ikwené listener had also to consent to being persuaded: a far from passive action which involved interpreting, understanding and deciding about the intention ‘behind’ the speaker’s words.²⁰

This relates directly to another factor of their social life, personal autonomy, and the right of the individual to possess it. As Thomas describes (1982) in respect of the Pemon, personal autonomy has such high value that one extends the desire for it to the ‘other’. Thus the wish to convert an individual’s ‘wrong’ conduct (disorder) back into ‘right’ conduct (order) by indirect means which allow the wrongdoer’s own autonomy to remain unviolated. And measures preventing or stopping conflict (such as Yvette’s rebuke) are as important as those applied after conflict, as they may “preclude the use of sanctions... and preserve personal autonomy” (p. 9). In the Pa’ikwené context, ‘compliance’ seems to be more a matter of free agreement than of obligation. This is consistent with what seems to obtain among the Lowland societies more widely, where authoritarianism is atypical (Rivière 1984:73) and orders and obedience, in the sense of submissive behaviour, are virtually non-existent.²¹ In Pa’ikwené terms, not to ‘behave properly’ when exhorted to, either directly or indirectly, is not due to any failure to ‘hear-understand’ (“Tchimap”) what is being said - a state of affairs covered more extensively in chapters 4 and 6. Rather, it may be seen as the intention, having ‘heard-understood’, to continue to act unconsensually: a rightfully individualistic choice not to ‘fall into line’. It is interesting to note in this regard that Seeger reports

²⁰ See Sperber & Wilson’s ‘hearer based’ theory (1986) of language processing and understanding utterances. Also Grice 1975, Derrida 1967, Hymes 1986 (on how in Ojibway intercommunication the onus for the attribution of the speaker’s intention and meaning falls on the hearer). For more refer to my discussion on Pa’ikwené “hearing-understanding” (chapter 4).

²¹ See Thomas 1982, Clastres op. cit.:5, Goldman 1979:253, Overing 1989:162, and also the various other places in this thesis where the matter is discussed with reference to the Pa’ikwené.

(1981:85) that the Suyá appear in contrast to have a notion of obedience somewhat more coincident with our own: when the chief speaks “everyone else in the village is supposed to ‘have heard it all’ “, and those who do not act in accord with his words are said “to have not heard/understood/know”.²²

Pa’ikwené and Suyá behaviours tally in one respect, however. They both weaken Clastres’ position further by indicating that his claim that political speech is not listened to is as fallacious as the one that such speech is empty.

However, if listening to Pa’ikwené political speech events is not to be seen as a function of coercion (there being none), neither is it the mere reflexive result of non-coercion. It derives rather from the actors’ exercise of their customary right of personal choice and volition, which is itself a political fact in that society. For Clastres (op. cit.:41-7), it bears repeating, there is virtually no attentive listening to the chief in Amerindian societies because there is no obligation to do so as a consequence of his words (supposedly) not constituting communication and, therefore, falling outside the framework of reciprocal exchange. But in Pa’ikwené society, I submit, things do not work according to this model. On the contrary, there listening does happen because political speech does comprise communication, as I explained earlier, and precisely, also, because there is no obligation either: be it to listen, or to reciprocate in the exchange. (To repeat the typical Pa’ikwené attitude to gift-giving: “We give not because we have to but because we want to”.)

Thus a Pa’ikwené, I propose, ‘hears-understands’ political speech basically because, finding it relevant and meaningful, he or she wishes to and is in agreement with it morally, intellectually and emotionally. Doing so, however, does not demand or necessitate the actor’s exclusive and unswerving concentration. Behaviourally, Pa’ikwené ‘hear-understand’ in a markedly different manner to the ideal one conceived by the eurocentric mind, for which listening to authority seems to be equated with dutiful, totally focused attentiveness, and the condition of impotent, immobile and unthinking ‘captive audience’ (cf. for instance Bloch

²² The purposive and volitional nature of hearing is discussed in chapter 4.

1974).²³

Clastres' depiction of the listening of Amerindians to political talk as desultory may be (qualifiably) correct in superficial descriptive terms (see for example Campbell 1995:115-6 on the Wayapi).²⁴ He is however wrong as regards its cause, the purported absence of communication and exchange and the speaker's lack of coercive authority. This is because, it seems to me, he fails to perceive the central, and crucial, factor of audition in the process of Amerindian political speech, and its interrelatedness with understanding and knowing.

As noted in chapters 4 and 6, Pa'ikwené people frequently tend not to look at each other when conversing but keep their eyes, or face, turned away. Along with this goes the sociopragmatic habit of meeting an utterance with a (sometimes exaggerated) temporary silence often accompanied by an *apparent* disinterest in your addressor as you continue busying yourself with whatever task you happened to be occupied with before being spoken to, like Wahtchit absorbed in grooming himself during Karinai's communication (described above). As stated earlier too, while I am not implying that this conduct is a hard and fast rule binding on all Pa'ikwené people and never deviated from, it occurred often enough to pass for 'customary practice'. From my point of view, such 'indifference' and 'inattentiveness' often masked the addressee's actual engagement with the speech and their understanding of, and agreement or otherwise with, the speaker's meanings.²⁵

The casual- and unconcerned-seeming audition, then, of the Pa'ikwené hearer-listener-understander, as well as the silence characteristically connected with it, is not, I propose, the result of the supposed non-communication assumed by Clastres. Rather, it is integrally and conventionally part of Pa'ikwené

²³Bloch argues that the more formal the rhetoric, the more authoritarianly it acts upon the audience which, consequently, has less and less freedom of autonomous action in respect of it. However, his thesis not only dismisses the notion of the individual's free will and capacity for autonomous action, political or otherwise. It also ignores research in experimental psychology which demonstrates the "psychological and biological reality" of the listener's voluntary attention (Moray 1969b:92), an issue dealt with in chapter 4 section i.

²⁴For a diametrically opposed portrayal see Seeger (op. cit.) on the Suyá; and in a less specific but directly pertinent way, Isacson (1993:346-73) on the primordial importance of listening, cosmologically and sociopolitically, for the Embera.

²⁵ See footnote 15 chapter 4.

intercommunication, as described in chapters 4 and 6. There I have tried also to show the vital agency of the Pa'ikwené hearer as equal prime mover with the speaker in a dialogue. It is this, I propose, which acts to ensure the very existence of political speaking, be the 'voice of authority' a chief's or a non-chief's like Yvette's (chapter 5 item v). For in a very real way the listening sustains the speaking. Without the first, the second could not continue; and since in stopping speaking, leaders would be made bereft of what power they had been given, it is not too farfetched to say that not listening to them may be said to undermine the existence of the community itself.

So, while the Pa'ikwené may bear out Clastres' claim regarding the lack of obligation to listen, it does not follow that what listening there is, is irrelevant. Nor does it mean that, being characterised by a conspicuous 'lack of attention', the listener's conduct in relation to political speech is anarchic. Rather, in its guise of "hearing-understanding", Pa'ikwené listening, no matter how apparently distracted or half-hearted to the anthropologist, and always operating in accord with the principles of autonomy, seemed actually to imply a thought-full and feeling-full engagement²⁶ with the spoken, resulting in the listener's endorsement or non-acceptance of it, each actively and freely given. A Pa'ikwené who "hears-understands" a political communication, be it in the form of a report or a homily and uttered by a leader or a non-leader, may be said not only to judge but 'absorb' the moral-intellectual-aesthetic substance embodied in it. Inasmuch as this substance fills the speaker's words, then it fills the listener's ears also (again something dealt with more fully in chapter 4).

Theoretically, the Pa'ikwené listeners' agreement and endorsement, insofar as it is (voluntarily) forthcoming, could be said to form part of a vital integral component of the process in which political speech conceivably persuades the listener to fall in with the speaker's ulterior intention, namely 'identification'. Crocker, basing himself on the work of Kenneth Burke (1969:20-2), who in his turn draws on Aristotle, offers (1977:60-4) a cogent explanation of this phenomenon. Briefly, political rhetoric must not be seen in terms of its semantic dimension alone. It, and indeed all political behaviour, should also be understood in those of its ('poetic') performative, contextual and moral ones. By means of their multi-faceted exegesis, and through

²⁶ Cf. William James' view (1966 [1890]:5) of 'distraction' as vacancy whereas its antithesis, 'attention', implies a *conscious* "withdrawal from some things" in order to focus on and deal with others.

the 'entitling' effect (see chapter 5, Conclusion) of the speaker's words, listeners can be drawn to understand the 'truth' of, and identify with, the common substantiality (of beliefs, notions, sensations and attitudes) which they share both with the speaker and among themselves, without for all that sustaining the loss of their own individual distinctiveness. There is thus a simultaneity of identity and difference, and with it the realisation of a purpose which Aristotle ascribed to rhetoric: the reconciliation of opposites (see Crocker *ibid.*:62).

Political speaking further works in such a way that, once persuaded of the moral essence of a context by the performance and the words, and given their consubstantiality, the identifying listeners perceive that it is in their joint interests to act together towards the same end: hence, the speaker's intended objective has in the process become theirs.

While Crocker seems to concentrate on the political speaking of leaders (actual or aspiring), I believe his argument to be equally applicable to that of non-leaders such as 'ordinary' Pa'ikwené villagers like Yvette.

*

Conclusion.

I described above the interconnection among the Pa'ikwené of reciprocal exchange, political speaking and listening. In the process I examined various elements of the former, gifting, sharing, obligation and non-obligation to return, and the character and function of the latter two in social life.

1. I argued against Clastres that political speaking does not entail a rejection of reciprocal exchange, but that on the contrary it is one. I strove, too, to show that among its other properties as a producer of sociality, speaking and talking together (and listening) also generate polity. For the Pa'ikwené, speech having this intrinsic and instrumental political function is not the meaningless or "empty" behaviour which Clastres would have us believe (*op. cit.*:152-5), a claim already refuted by others, notably Santos-Granero (*op. cit.*) and Gow (*op. cit.*), as we have seen. Political speaking, whether by Pa'ikwené chiefs or non-chiefs, not only has a semantic content but also an extra-semantic one shared by speakers and listeners alike. The latter component, or 'load', comprises moral, aesthetic and affective aspects which act inter-constitutively. Neither is political speech powerless despite Clastres' claim that the typically harsh style of the rhetoric of Amerindian leaders

“does not compensate for the impotence of the political institution” (ibid.:46). Rather, as the potent agent of (non-coercive) power, political speaking can have practical effect in the social world of humans.

2. I proposed too that Clastres' conclusion (ibid.:31-2, 46), that due to its 'emptiness' people barely attend to it if at all, does more than misinterpret the reality of Amazonian 'political' rhetoric. While his premise, the lack of personal power and legal authority in non-coercive stateless societies, is arguably valid as regards the political side of Lowland life, it fails fully to take account of, and undervalues, the act of listening-hearing in native discourse, both in terms of social practice and the systems of indigenous logic in which it is embedded. Pa'ikwené 'hearing-listening-understanding', together with the data cited in this chapter and earlier ones on the Amuesha (Santos-Granero op. cit.), Suyá (Seeger 1981, 1987), Wayapi (Campbell 1989), Achuar (A-C. Taylor 1993), Embera (Isacson 1993), Yagua (Chaumeil 1993), Desana (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1981:86-8), and Kalapalo (E. Basso 1985, 1995), all attest that in Amazonian Amerindian cultures, hearing, acting in complement with speaking in its many forms, fits into a philosophy at once sociopolitical, moral and aesthetic. And that, like speaking, it is an explicit expression of the ideology. By which is meant that Pa'ikwené aural conduct expresses - i.e., conveys and embodies - indigenous notions about relating to, and communicating and living with, others.

I contended that in the egalitarian framework of Pa'ikwené society audition in relation to political speaking, which encompasses much more than the speech events involving leaders, is not a matter of 'to hear is to obey'. But nor, on the (correct) premise that there is no obligation to listen and the (wrong) one that what is said is powerless, is it a question of not listening at all. The characteristic cultural trait that we tend ethnocentrically to see as a disinclination to pay attention and listen turns out in reality to be a sociopragmatic technique which does signify not in Pa'ikwené terms that 'no hearing' is happening. Rather, I have suggested, hearing actually and actively occurs; as does comprehension, since, as amply noted, "to hear" ("Tchimap") simultaneously also means "to listen and to understand". On this basis, 'hearing-understanding' in a political context can be interpreted not as passive compliance but an autonomous act which entails the hearer's voluntary participation.

I argued, therefore, that no matter how desultory and fitful the listening of a

Pa'ikwené in respect of the speech of leaders and others, it does not necessarily imply unconcern, disaffection or disengagement. Nor can it be regarded as apolitical, which is how Clastres considers (op. cit.:31-2, 46) the reportedly characteristic 'poor listening' of the Lowland Amerindians in respect of their chiefs' utterances (see too Campbell 1995:116). On the contrary, I interpret it in the light of my data as behaviour seemingly paradoxically acknowledging, understanding, and evaluating the potency and authority of the chief's words; and thereafter enabling individual listeners to act in line with their comprehension and evaluation.

To sum up. In this chapter I have suggested (*contra* Clastres) that a genuine and equal exchange takes place in respect of political speaking; and that it is a non-obligatory one. I also proposed that notwithstanding the absence of (Weberian) state authority and coercion in Pa'ikwené society, and for all the seeming non-listening, neither the chief's speech, nor the political speech of others, nor their listening, is empty. The speaker's action is full of moral and practical authority; the listener's, of autonomy and freedom of choice to concur or not; and both, furthermore, carry a shared semantic, aesthetic and affective 'content' understood and valued by the two actors alike. In this society, then, listening, in the sense of 'hearing-understanding', has just as much an instrumental political role as speaking. Working in complementarity with one another, and in like manner to gifting, each helps to ensure the very survival of the society, and hence also that of the polity insofar as I believe the two to be one and the same, as discussed in chapter 5.

PART TWO

MAKING and BELIEVING.

“La théorie c’est bon, mais ça n’empêche pas d’exister.”
 (“Theory is good, but it doesn’t prevent things from existing.”)
 (Charcot cited in D.M. Thomas 1982:142)

chapter eight

**“ANIVIT”, THE PA’IKWENÉ SENSE OF PRODUCTION: WORK¹,
LANGUAGE AND THE MAKING OF CONVIVIALITY.**

“Only sleeping is not work.”
(informant)²

I begin with a description taken from my fieldnotes (February 1994):

Sohol, the baby in ‘my’ house [she was born about a month and a half before my arrival], is bathed some five or six times a day in a store-bought plastic bowl - and each time subjected to the same mixture of tender, rough handling. The aim is not just to clean and cool her, but to mould her through a process of manipulation at once physical and social. To this end, the adult (her mother or father or grandfather or aunt) or older sibling (she has four brothers, and also a sister aged five) pat, pound, press and generally knead her limbs, shoulders and back, and gums and skull, using the water as lubricant. The purpose of this is to strengthen the child, straighten its legs, and, most crucially of all, encourage and shape the round head which for the Pa’ikwené represents the ideal form aesthetically and in terms of ‘ethnic identity’.³ So intent are they on turning her into a healthy and proper and beautiful⁴ little Pa’ikwené person, the bather will pointedly disregard Sohol’s cries of protest and pain. It’s not that they treat her in this way despite the fact that they regard their family’s newest member with the utmost love and devotion, but *because* they do so. Another feature of the process is that care is taken always to wash Sohol’s face before her body; for to do the reverse would result, I was told, in her marrying a much older spouse in later life.

¹ By ‘work’ I mean (and will mean throughout except when stating otherwise) more than just the labour involved. Rather, I use the term as a gloss to cover and signify not only productivity and production (including distribution and consumption), and the various elements these entail, but also very often the product itself.

² On sleep as the alternative and complement to work in native societies see Sahlins 1974:19-20.

³ See Clastres 1988:15 on the similar Guayaki concept and practice.

⁴ As noted, the Pa’ikwené word for “beautiful” (or “pretty”), “Baréúyo” (fem.), also means “clean”, with the latter being used both in the literal sense and to signify “proper”. I discuss in chapter 3 the jointly emotional, moral and sociopolitical aspect relating to the aesthetics of the Pa’ikwené baby’s round head.

This is an example of what the Pa'ikwené call "Anivit", which they themselves translated as 'travail', that is to say, in English, 'work'. As can be seen, the particular activity just depicted comprises elements relating to the practical and the social, the moral and the aesthetic, and to notions of personhood; as well as to nature (the water), history (plastic bowl), and gender. I wish below to consider some of these multiple aspects, and others, insofar as they are integral to Pa'ikwené 'work' more generally.

What follows does not pretend to be an economic study as such. It is more in the way of a descriptive and explorative piece in which so-called economic factors are of necessity included, but only as part of the wider process of social life. In the section on 'good hearing' above, I described and examined some of the aspects connected with another "anivit", hunting (in respect especially of the dialogic relations between the human and non-human spheres). In the present chapter, apart from the aforementioned instance of childcare I will also write about the processing of the manioc crop, though not in any technical or purely economic sense, but, like Sohol's bath, as a further example of the ultimate and main product of Pa'ikwené 'work', sociality.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first I discuss in a general way the native organisation and classification of work and consider some of the concepts and practices involved. The second, which is mainly theoretical, deals with the differences in the evaluation of work between the Pa'ikwené and ourselves. The last examines the interconnection between different but complementary forms of productivity (namely tool use, physical exertion and speech) and society seen as a set of relations at once dialogic and convivial.

*

1) Work(s) and working.

On one level, and at a cursory glance, the Pa'ikwené attitude to work, or "anivit", could be said to be straightforwardly and uniformly negative. It comes over in short like a vindication of the once widespread claim, famously attacked by Sahlins (1974:1-39), that the economic existence of 'primitive', or as he calls them, 'paleolithic', societies is not only precarious and minimal but one of unremitting

drudgery.⁵ Thus, ask an informant, any informant, about “anivit”, and you will immediately be told it is “mahiko”, that is to say, “hard”. You will further learn that it includes all and any activity requiring a sustained effort and, regardless of the degree of exertion and mastery of skill involved, commonly characterised as difficult, arduous and dirty, very often painful, and sometimes dangerous as well. And, moreover, and revealingly, that it pertains to tasks which we ourselves would not think to classify as economic - e.g. childcare, already referred to, healing, and exercising the function of chief or ‘capitaine’.⁶

“Anivit” was categorised for me into the following types:

(table 2)

- (a) garden work.
- (b) the processing of the garden crops (and chiefly manioc) into foods.
- (c) hunting.
- (d) fishing.
- (e) gathering.
- (f) tool/implement/ornament-making and any other kind of craftwork.
- (g) building.
- (h) housework (including washing clothes).
- (i) cooking.
- (j) childcare.
- (k) curing and making plant remedies
- (l) being chief.
- (m) working in the 'market economy'.

The first three of these, garden work, manioc processing and hunting, were spoken of as not just hard but “very hard work” (“anivit kaïnsima mahiko”). So,

⁵ Granted that Sahlins’ critique concentrates on nomadic hunter-gatherers, whereas the Pa’ikwené are much more sedentary and engage in horticulture as well as hunting/fishing and gathering, and also, increasingly and in parallel, in the ‘market economy’, as will be briefly described below.

⁶ It is highly significant that many anthropologists seem to need to stress, I believe correctly, the fact that outside of ‘Western’ culture the economic aspect tends not to be conceived as basic to and distinguishable (let alone separate) from the other activities and, especially, relations constituting the overall sphere of social life. See e.g. Malinowski 1922, Firth 1929, Radcliffe-Brown 1959:197-8, Nash 1967, Forde & Douglas 1967, Sahlins 1971, Schwimmer 1979, Dilley 1992 for various ways in which this has been expressed. Schneider points out (1974:1-21) the difference between the “formal” economy of societies such as our own, whose exchanges are primarily of a materialist nature, and the “substantivist” one of so-called primitive societies, where they are chiefly social and moral.

Examples of anthropologists who, taking the marxist ‘economic base’ as a given, hold the view, however differently constructed, that indigenous social systems are political-economies operating universally under a ‘mystificatory’ ideological cloak, usually religious or relating to notions of kinship and gender, include Meillassoux 1964, Bern 1979, Terray 1984, Godelier 1984, Bloch 1984. For some different perceptions and interpretations, both marxian and non-marxian, with specific reference to Amazonia read Lizot 1973, Rivière 1983-4, Santos-Granero 1986, Descola 1986, Overing 1983-4, 1989, 1992, Viveiros de Castro 1992:119-41, Belaunde 1992, Århem 1996.

notwithstanding the Pa'ikwené's noteworthy, and typical, loving care and devotion for their children, and especially the infants, was childcare. Given this, and the very real positive value that was attached to these and the other activities listed above, we should perhaps try to understand the Pa'ikwené notion of hardship in relation to work in terms other than the ones we ourselves tend to.

Regarding the last item on the list, working in the 'market economy': many Pa'ikwené I met, both male and female, were keen to find themselves a "petit job", to use the Créole expression they had borrowed, in the outside world. Perceived as distinct from "anivit", this would include a variety of activities in both the 'formal' and 'informal' sectors, such as labouring and construction work; serving as a general 'dogsbody' for shopkeepers in the nearby town; hiring oneself out as a guide and hunter either to tourists or to commercial or governmental concerns; selling surpluses (notably manioc flour), making and peddling fruit juices, and manufacturing craftware for non-indigenous private customers⁷ and, in the case of some items, such as woven fibre hats, for urban entrepreneurs. This last amounted to a veritable 'cottage industry' for a number of households in Village Espérance 2. A few people had received training allowing them access to more skilful and fulltime employment in the non-Indian world. Thus, for instance, 'Capitaine' Louis of Village Espérance 1 worked as a nurse in the local health centre, and a woman was hired in an administrative capacity in the town school. While such positions conferred relatively high social status in a 'Western' context, in view of the skill entailed, they did not seem to do so in the Pa'ikwené one. That is, neither of the two people in question was regarded by their co-villagers as being of a superior 'class' by virtue of these jobs.

It is interesting, in passing, to note that while a Pa'ikwené will tell you that he or she has, or yearns for, "un petit job", the same sense of possession and reification of work does not seem to apply where "anivit" is concerned. "Anivit" is clearly not an object to be owned, and certainly not personally. Rather, it is an *action* which is at once individual and collective in that it is engaged in by the person usually, though not always, working in concert with others and towards a common end. In brief, though it notionally exists as a substantive noun, work for

⁷ The Pa'ikwené have long enjoyed trading relations with the outside world, in particular Créole society, as noted in chapter 1. Recently, however, it seems that Karipún manioc flour is being preferred to the Pa'ikwené's.

the Pa'ikwené tends to be more a matter of practice and thus of verb: one works ("Kanivwié") rather than 'having', 'owning' or 'giving' work.⁸

An informant cited "*Pa'ikwené* work", with the emphasis very much on the modifier, as one of the three things she teaches her children in order that they should always remember who they were, that is to say, Pa'ikwené people. The other two were cooking and eating Pa'ikwené food and speaking Pa'ikwaki. A similar conceptual link between skills and personhood seems not uncommon in Lowland Amazonia; it is held, for example, by the Pemon (Thomas 1982) and the Piaroa (Overing personal communication). "Anivit", then, not only represented but constituted, and in a sense determined, Pa'ikwené-hood. "Jobs", in contrast, were patently not seen as being able to accord that intrinsic personal and 'ethnic' identity.⁹ My informant went on:

"I can learn, and I can do, other [i.e., non-Pa'ikwené] ways of cooking and working and speaking, but I am still Pa'ikwené and will remain Pa'ikwené because I was born Pa'ikwené and remember the Pa'ikwené things my parents taught *me*."

However, as meaningful as the 'old' ways indubitably were, the 'new' ones are not to be thought of as having a superficial and merely utilitarian worth for the Pa'ikwené. I have not the space here to enter more deeply into this aspect of the Pa'ikwené's social existence, other than noting a parallel with what Gow has shown (1991:90-115) in connection with the Piro. They, like many others, and to a greater degree than the Pa'ikwené, are also inserted into the 'free market' economy, while continuing at the same time to practice their original 'subsistence' one. Gow argues that such a condition is not necessarily posed in terms of hostility for those who participate in it. Instead, for all the tension between them, the two systems seem to operate with a large degree of harmony, each fulfilling indigenous needs in different but complementary ways. The societies in question may be said

⁸ Cf. Illich who notes (1973:89-90) that in Latin America "peasants say that they *do*" work but that "people who speak a nominalist language [e.g. that of Western industrial society] habitually express proprietary relationships to *work* which they *have*... This shift from verb to noun [experienced by modernised peasant societies] reflects a transformation in the idea of ownership" (his stresses). For more on Illich's view of commoditisation in respect of work and other things, see section 3 below.

⁹ Cf. Schwimmer (1979:294) on how 'Western artists', Amerindian hunters, and Melanesian cultivators also perceive the difference between 'real work' and 'jobs' in terms of (marxist) identification/alienation.

to work both systems to their advantage. Neither, stresses Gow, is the situation to be seen as one in which the original economy is in the process of evolving into the second. Rather, the two are partners in, and joint sub-systems of, a single combinatory economic system. This runs counter to the view that exposure to the alien economy leads inevitably to the wipe-out and replacement of the prior, indigenous one and the culture in which it is embedded (see for example Wolf 1971).

I now move on to describe and discuss a number of issues relating to 'work', in terms both of concepts and practice, and also briefly to delineate the indigenous partition of labour. My data is based mainly on conditions existing in the family of Susana and Karina Labonté and their six children with whom I lived, and to a lesser extent on those of the other households to which I obtained access. No great discrepancies were noticeable among them in respect of the work they did and the ideas they had about it.

Work or labour?

Schwimmer warns us (1979:287-9) against applying to all cultures the specifically European concept of 'work'. Far from being universal, he argues, this idea is a historical product of the 'Industrial Revolution' and pertains essentially to economic activities alone (unlike in Pa'ikwené thinking, as already mentioned). Furthermore, he shows apropos the Orokaiva (Melanesia) that 'work' is itself not a universal concept. To this end, he cites an informant as stating that his people "did not take up work... [until] Jesus Christ... gave them work... to take up" (p. 287).

Although it is of course not possible to ascertain for sure, I am disinclined to accept that the Pa'ikwené's own notion of work, as presented to me, was borrowed from, let alone identical with, the Protestant one which, as converts, they had been taught. It too, as is well known, stresses hard work both as an ideal and a practice (see Weber 1971:95-183, particularly 158-9).¹⁰ Whereas both ideas have to do with difficulty, strenuousness, and indeed pain, the indigenous one posits work

¹⁰ Be it of the mental or physical kind, work is in effect tantamount to the adoration of God, according to certain Christian theologies, such as those of the (Protestant) Puritans and Lutherans (Weber *ibid*:262 note 16). This idea is not unique to Christianity. In Hebrew, for instance, the word "Avodah" jointly means work and worship, and in Jewish kaballistic mysticism "its use... expresses the combined and conscious intent that goes into every action; everything outwardly done has an inner content which makes the act itself sacred..." (Halevi 1995:81).

very much as an activity aimed at obtaining 'this world' results, both material and social. The alien one has also to do with laborious exertion in 'this world', but as an ascetic practice to be directed not just toward a material end but, beyond that, at a spiritual one, to the point indeed of conflation. Added to which, the first emphasises and valorises the collective aspect of work (while not for all that devaluing the 'individualistic' one); the second, the individualistic aspect over the collective.

As I have already said, the Pa'ikwené themselves translated "Anivit" as "Travail", that is, "*Work*". However, given their description of it as something thoroughly hard and irksome, it could very well fit a certain (and bleak) English definition of the term '*Labour*'. As Firth has pointed out (1979:178) in his analysis of the Marxist 'Law of Value', the English language, unlike German apparently,¹¹ possesses two terms to denote, more or less, what is basically one and the same activity; albeit not to connote an identical meaning. He writes that though the pair are semantically close, "work" (and "worker") tends to have a less negative significance than "labour" (and "labourer"), in terms of skill, status and expenditure of energy. This is true as far as it goes.¹² But to my mind, Firth, concerned though he is to interpret the sense of the German word "Arbeit" (as used by Marx), omits mention of the perceivably more positive notional aspects which "Labour" coevally possesses. Thus for example the expressions "labour of love" and "the dignity of labour", and the idealised aura attaching in traditionalist left-wing circles to "The Labouring Classes", which has not less status than, and affectively just as much value as, "The Working Class". Along the same lines, Parsons, in his translation of Weber's "The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism" (1971), renders a more favourable version of "Labour" than does Firth. For he uses both that word and "work" in a synonymous fashion, and does not demur at according it (pp. 158-9, 262-3 notes 16, 18, 19, 20) the same, and highest, positive signification that Protestant conceptualisation intends .

¹¹A claim not borne out by my German-English dictionary (Collins 1985:308).

¹² Some other negative connotations, not mentioned by Firth and relating to notions of punishment, suffering and lack of reward, are "hard labour", "slave labour" and "labour camp".

As regards "Travail", it too possesses a negative conceptual aspect, as Illich shows (1973:30). Deriving from the Latin word, "Trepalium", meaning a specific type of instrument of torture (through impalement), the term came by the 12c to signify a painful experience, then some four hundred years later took on the sense by which we continue to understand it today (work).

This said, I return to my first claim: that “Anivit” smacked more of “Labour”, in its negative sense, than “Work”, in that it was, at least descriptively, an activity assessed by the Pa’ikwené in terms of difficulty, pain and tiredness-factor. This makes it somewhat like the Tikopia’s ‘work’ described by Firth (op. cit.:192), though without its element of coercion (Cf. Schwimmer op. cit.:299 and J. and J. Comaroff 1981:196-9 on, respectively, Orokaiva and Tswana distinctions between ‘work’ [positive] and ‘labour’ or ‘toil’ [negative]).

Schwimmer shows (op. cit.) that whatever the pain associated with (gardening) work it was resolved for the Orokaiva by being “sacramentally transformed”. That is, the productive process and the eating of the product (taro) were ideologically understood, and experienced, as religious acts, wherein the individual “feels his unity with the Taro goddess and also with the garden and crop” (op. cit.:302). In such a schema, horticultural work is not a matter of transforming nature to human ends (as it is in ‘modern’ Western thinking, see for example Freud 1928). Rather, it is a question of human involvement in the simultaneously natural and supernatural order.

Schwimmer draws theoretically (pp. 289-94) on Vernant’s investigation of Ancient Greek notions of Work and ‘technical’, or practical, Thought (1965; see too 1996). The Hellenes, it seems, used a myth of divine conflict (between Zeus and Prometheus) to explain hermeneutically the ‘trouble and toil’ of human life, the products which enabled, both materially and supra-materially, its existence, sustenance and survival, and the relationship between the two. As a growing literature testifies, many Amazonian peoples also understand human ‘work’ as an aspect of a wider, cosmogonic process of productivity, whereby it is similarly given a ‘religious’ explanation which posits a dialectic, or a continuum of interactivity, between relations between people and between people and the non- or extra-human world (see *inter alia* Overing Kaplan 1982, Overing 1883-4:337-41, Descola 1986, Belaunde op. cit., Viveiros de Castro 1992:92-141, Århem 1996, Ellis 1997, on the Piaroa, Achuar, Airo-Pai, Araweté, Makuna and Tsimanes respectively; also see chapter 4 section iii).

Unfortunately (and I cannot stress the word enough), I for my part did not come across any data permitting me to claim that the Pa’ikwené also held an ideological agenda according to which their own work (“anivit”) and working relations were integrated into a unitary cosmology involving not just the human but

the natural and supernatural worlds as well. However, while not encountering any such explicitly described metaphysical relations of production, I did witness the practical manifestation of dialogic, and thus I assume essentially 'social', relations between humans and animals in one type of "anivit" which we would call 'economic' (hunting), and between humans and supernatural entities in one which we would not (healing).¹³ This leads me to suspect, albeit cautiously, that for the Pa'ikwené human work was in fact part of a more complex and overarching 'religious' process of productivity involving the supra-human, and in a manner other than as its mere exploiter.¹⁴

The work of men and women.

The widespread equality between Pa'ikwené men and women, of which I have given several examples in previous chapters, extended into the sphere of work (*pace* Nimuendaju's assertion that in the economic sphere, and thus the social one more widely, the women exercised ascendancy over the men [1971:54-6]. This claim was repeated by F. and P. Grenand [1979] but is contrary to the views held by Fernandes [1948] and Arnaud [1968:10-11, 1984:34-5] according to which it is the men who are the dominant ones. I have already treated the issue in more detail in chapter 5 item [vi]).

The sexual 'division of labour' existed but was not very marked. While some tasks were taxonomically held to be the preserve of one sex they were in practice engaged in by both. 'Male' tasks consisted of clearing the forest in order to make the garden sites, basket weaving, weapon making, and fishing with arrows and rifles. Fishing with a line, on the other hand, was a jointly male and female activity. In the 1920's Nimuendaju established a table of work activities along somewhat more demarcated gender lines (*op. cit.*:24-5). Several which he classed as exclusively male were nowadays also being carried out by the women in Espérance 2: meat roasting, house building, making feather ornaments and working for strangers. Manioc flour making, reported by him as 'female', is today done by the men as well, as is manioc processing generally (see section 3 below).

Hunting presents an interesting case in that while also classed as 'men's work' by

¹³ For details of the first see my discussion on 'good hearing' (chapter 4 section iii); for those of the second, chapter 9 part 2.

¹⁴ See chapter 9 part 3 (c) for data on this.

both Nimuendaju and 'male' discourse, the reality turned out to be much more equivocal. Although I never managed to verify it in person, I was informed by Chief Tchikoi in Aúkwa that the women of the small community of Yakot hunted on a systematic basis. I wondered if this might be a recent innovation. On questioning Susana about it, I learned that she and her sisters, as well as other women I knew, had hunted when younger. That they no longer did so, she said, was not because of any ban but because they no longer had the time to. Elaborating, she explained that Pa'ikwené women had "always" actively participated with men in the killing of animals¹⁵ (as their slayers, that is, and not simply as helpers or beaters), but did not accompany them on the long hunting trips involving the use of dogs, although apparently the Yakot women hunters did do so.¹⁶ While some of the men corroborated this, many more seemed patently reluctant to. A few openly denied it; especially, interestingly enough, the younger ones, who mocked the very idea.¹⁷ Thus a certain 'male ideology' may be said to hype hunting as an exclusively male 'thing' irrespective of what appears to be the case in actual (or reported) practice.

The only 'female' tasks would seem to be the supervision of the making of manioc bread, but not the actual making itself (a process in which men and boys take part along with the women), the manufacture of bead ornaments, cotton weaving, pottery and cashiri making (the last three being no longer carried out in Espérance 2 but still engaged in by women in other settlements).

Most tasks were ungendered. This included gathering, healing, and being chief (as noted above Pa'ikwené women can become shamans and leaders). Apart from clearing the sites (male activity), all other horticultural work was done by men

¹⁵ For the native classification of prey refer to Appendix B.

¹⁶ See Montout 1994:63-4 for data on Pa'ikwené hunting dogs.

¹⁷ This turned out to be virtually the only time I encountered male bias in respect of anything female.

and women jointly.¹⁸ Domestic chores were done in the overwhelming majority of the families I saw by both women and men, and girls and boys: cooking, baby care, cleaning, and clothes-washing. Apparently in the past, that is, one to two generations ago, the domestic sphere was more 'female' than 'male' but, one woman informant told me, the women got the men to change their ways. Childcare, though, has customarily always been jointly male-female, then as now.

As is clear, Pa'ikwené women are not confined to the 'domestic sphere', a claim made by Montout who describes it (1994:62) as one of the three comprising the "traditional Palikur universe". The others are the "abattis [i.e. horticultural] sphere" and the "forest sphere". As I have shown, the women not only actively but instrumentally participate as productive, autonomous and co-operating agents in these last two; as do the men in the first one.¹⁹

Unlike the men's involvement in the 'domestic sphere', however, the extra-domestic one on the part of the women should not be considered a modern innovation. The fact that they not only hunted but were said to have hunted in the past, and that, too, they fulfil the tasks of healing and being chief, suggests otherwise.

Informants, both male and female, were not only conscious of the development of the organisation of labour, from the relatively more gender demarcated system which existed in the recent past to the minimal one that it now is. They were fully aware also of their own instrumentality in bringing it about. Someone commented

¹⁸ Espérance 2 households cultivated garden plots called "wass" or "bati" (Créole term from the French "abattis" meaning cleared land). The sites were situated on forest land acquired from the government, initially freely for a period and then subject to rent. Of inferior quality to those in Aúkwa, they were located some distance from the village and reaching them involved a long trek, itself part of the "anivit", with the result that one was already tired before getting down to the day's main task proper. Originally given to Susana's father, she and Karinai considered their "bati" to be communally owned by the whole family. As mentioned, their main produce was (bitter) manioc ("Kaneg"). They also grew pineapples ("Kwawú"), bananas ("Pilatnú"), oranges ("Úwass"), *avocados* ("Avúk") and small crops of sweet potato ("Kaïg") and pumpkin ("Yú'úm").

¹⁹ For similar examples in respect of other Lowland women, see Belaunde (1992) and Viveiros de Castro (1992:43-7) on the Airo-Pai and Araweté respectively. Moore offers (1988) a thorough critique of the Eurocentric contention, but recently prevalent in anthropology, that (a) women are universally tied to the 'domestic sphere' and (b) the activities they carry out there are not 'work'; cf. Strathern 1987:1-32, Sacks 1979:66-95.

that the only really woman's work left was that of giving birth.²⁰

Taxonomically, however, giving birth was not considered to be "anivit"; and the "pain and suffering" associated with it was likened to that connected with illness ("Kagait") rather than work. People did not accept the analogy, when I tried it out on them, between manioc growing in the ground and a baby growing in the womb.²¹ It is only in regard to the stage when, the child being born, the process of raising it begins that there was any acknowledgement of a similarity, and indeed equality, with that of raising a crop, and with all the other activities seen and classified as "anivit".

A woman possesses the right of decision over the destination of her own personal products, and also about what she wants in exchange for them, even, as was noted by Arnaud (1984:35), when the actual transacting is done by the husband. According to him (*ibid.*, also 1968:10-11), it is the men who dispose of the household's products, i.e, those that are collectively produced, in the manner which he thinks best. My own observations disagree with this, for whether it was the husband who did the trading or not, the wife's decision making in their connection was certainly as great as his; in sum, in most cases it was a truly joint-decision. Furthermore, since the wife had a control over the distribution²² of some products, including those produced by her husband (e.g. game), and also took charge of the money he earned from 'jobs' in the 'market economy', a case might even be made for arguing that she in effect had a greater economic 'say' than he did. I would not,

²⁰ Said as a 'joke', this revealed the widespread cross-cultural connection made notionally between work and giving birth, both activities of course being by definition productive ones. The English expression 'going into labour' conveys a not dissimilar linkage. In the Ancient Greek world, according to Hesiod, fecundity and work constituted opposing if complementary functions (see Vernant 1965:188, Schwimmer 1979:288). Testart puts things slightly differently again, postulating (1985, 1986) that universally in hunter-gatherer societies, through an ideology based on the symbolism of blood, the woman's ability to give birth is, in terms both of 'power' and economics, necessarily different from but equal and complementary to that of the man to produce game through hunting. On the way(s) in which 'work' seems to be productive for the Pa'ikwené, see below.

As for giving birth itself, it might be said to be a joint female and male activity for the Pa'ikwené anyway, notionally speaking, in that according to Arnaud (1984:47) Pa'ikwené men practised *couvade*. The custom seems to have died out now, at least I neither came across it nor heard tell of it.

²¹ I was 'inspired' by Belaunde's data (1992:155 *ff.*) on the Airo-Pai for whom sexuality, parenting and horticultural cultivation are not just interrelated processes but conceptually parts of the same process. Thus the perceived correspondence and interaction between the human parent's relationship with their child and the one between the 'supernatural' master/parent of the vegetable world with a plant (pp. 162-4).

²² Regarding the impact of the 'market economy' on the Pa'ikwené's traditional practices of distribution, sharing and gifting, see chapter 7.

though, go so far as to equate that with greater economic power than the man, and even less so with social ascendancy over him (as F. and P. Grenand do [op. cit.]).

The work of children and adults.

The Pa'ikwené are patently unfamiliar with the concept of 'not sending a boy to do a man's job'. For it seemed as if there was virtually no 'economic' task undertaken by a male adult that a male child did not also do, from hunting to tree felling, and from craftwork to cooking to making manioc flour. As mentioned above, the latter, in contrast to what seems to obtain in most other Lowland groups, was not 'woman's work', though it used to be (Nimuendaju 1971:24). The same may be said of women and girls, and indeed, in view of the above-mentioned gender equality in this area, of men and girls in many, though not all, of the above examples. There appeared, then, to be no categorisation of "anivit" in terms of 'adult work' and 'children's work'.

Pa'ikwené children ("Bakimni") were regarded from their earliest age as fully fledged co-members of the domestic production unit. This also applied in respect of the larger cross-family 'teams' which, sometimes spontaneously and sometimes not, formed either on a one-off basis (in order, for example, to go gathering or build a house) or on a periodic or seasonal one (to harvest and process the manioc crop, say). Acquiring the various skills involved in a task through emulation and practice, children started to engage in the above-listed forms of "anivit", barring being chief, around the age of four or five. His or her labour was valued on the same level as an adult's for all that the quality of the former's product may be held to be less in view of their relatively inferior skill. Skill, however, was judged on an individual rather than a class basis, and in my village the ability of one particular thirteen year old boy, whom I will call Tchúri, to make and use tridents was openly admired by many of the men as superior to their own. With both children and adults, skill was considered of more worth than productivity in terms of hours or effort spent, and certainly not commensurate with a greater amount of hours of someone else's unskilled labour, as Marx would have it (see in Firth op. cit.:184-5). Furthermore, as with the Cubeo (Goldman 1979:52-67) and Piaroa (Overing 1989), no matter how satisfying and appreciated the amount of products an individual or a group produced, such as, say, a rich haul of forest fruits, the material abundance was not

counted a greater value than the well-being, measured in sociability and good humour, which was intrinsic to their production. It was as if the payoff to 'good' productivity lay not so much in the end result (products obtained) as in the very process itself.

If disposed of outside the family, the price for, and income from, a child's collective as opposed to personal product would not be set lower than that of an adult producer and co-worker, whether it took the form of reciprocal services, goods exchanged, or cash.

Here though I am running slightly ahead of myself, and will curtail further talk about 'value' until later.

As a member of the household production unit, the productivity furnished by a child whether on his or her own or in company with others characteristically results, like that of an adult, in the production of a *collective* product, be it in the form of a caught fish, a cared for younger sibling, or a cooked meal. This does not exclude anyone, whether adult or children, from also producing and owning personal objects, like arrows for fishing, nor from having control over their disposal.

The autonomous worker.

Although parents will, though by no means always or systematically, 'direct' a child to get going on some task, and an older sibling somewhat authoritarily delegate one, the ultimate decision to work or not, and for how long and with how much exertion, remained with the individual non-adult in question. A Pa'ikwené will typically stop or lay aside work as the mood takes them. Children were no exception to this 'rule' and frequently walked away from a directed task, no less than from a self-chosen one, if and when they felt like it; on occasion a child would even decide not to begin a directed task at all. In both cases the idea of constraint or enforcement was uncountenancable. While it was not unknown for Pa'ikwené children to be hit, I never saw this happen in connection with work. As with the Cashinahua (McCallum 1989:240), corporal punishment was used as a corrective, but only by the parent and in a controlled manner. I have already noted in chapter 5 item [v] how a mother was prevented by her siblings from beating her daughter excessively.

In short, regardless of their age, the Pa'ikwené producer's productive input

was very much subject to their own personal autonomy. It is true that the significant charge of laziness, of being “mabip”, was often levelled, usually more in a teasing or mocking way than a directly accusatory one, at those people who exempted themselves from work. Moreover, it was sometimes resorted to as a means of compulsion in respect of someone whom we in our terms might judge to be a chronic malingerer or ‘lead swinger’. This did not seem to be an effective tactic however, for I never saw a single individual ever giving in to it and setting to work when they did not want to.

There was a subtle line between not working and being called “mabip” and not working and avoiding being thus labelled. That is, not everyone, be they child or adult, who was disinclined to take up a task, or who stopped in the midst of one in order to go and do something more attractive, was necessarily accused of being lazy, since it was appreciated and tolerated that individuals had the freedom and right so to behave. Furthermore, the indigenous perception (i.e., minus the Evangelical-Pentecostalist overlay described in chapter 9) was that laziness was not so much a moral fault as a behavioural and affective symptom of bad social relations, a sign of a state of unsociability or disaffection existing between the ‘lazy’ person and the others comprising his or her environment.²³

Being lazy, therefore, was not itself seen as being unproductive economically but being unhappy, which could be more correctly interpreted as being unproductive socially (for more on ‘social productivity’ see below). In essence, what underlay your choice to work or not, and coloured your fellows’ acceptance or non-acceptance of that choice, was a question of mood (On the one hand: ‘Do I feel like working?... Is this task boring or do I like it and, at this particular moment in time, these people I’m doing it with?’ And on the other hand: ‘Do I mind that this person does not want to work with me? Am I insulted and aggrieved or sympathetic and understanding?’).²⁴

Basically, then, in this area, and like the Cubeo, Piaroa and others, Pa’ikwené ‘work practice’ seemed to bear out Overing’s point (1993b) that a fundamental principle of the economically autonomous household unit is the personal autonomy of each of its constituent parts, and the respect of all parties for such autonomy.

²³ Cf. Goldman 1979:53 on ‘lazy’ Cubeo women being viewed primarily as ones who have bad marital relations with their husbands.

²⁴ Again see Goldman *ibid.*:52-67, Overing 1989.

I have digressed somewhat from my main concern which is at this juncture to examine further the idea of “anivit” itself. It has been established thus far that the actual activity of work was thought of by a Pa’ikwené as something necessary but particularly onerous and ungratifying. Confusingly, but I also believe significantly, this was notwithstanding the very real pleasure often observable in it. I think especially of the joy most Pa’ikwené seemed, most of the time, to take in fishing, and also of the fun characteristically experienced and expressed when out gathering - and here I do not distinguish between enjoyment and satisfaction associated with and ensuing from the physical, mental, and technical side of the activity (the keenness of eye, manual dexterity, and interpreting and gauging of signs, the knowing, the ‘tool use’) and that deriving from the social one (the companionship, joking, laughter, reliance and interdependence, and also friendly rivalry). While we frequently tend to separate the two aspects, or regard the ‘social’ dimension as but a minor factor of working, it is in Pa’ikwené terms just as much an active and constituent part of the process as, and I suspect maybe even a greater one than, muscular power, sharp vision or prowess with a weapon or tool. It is this very issue of the ‘social-ness’ of work that I intend to deal with in section 3.

I have tried to indicate that a Pa’ikwené’s characteristic way of seeing ‘work’ in negative terms was but a partial one; and also, though real, a somewhat superficial one. For the same Pa’ikwené, while complaining daily about the irksomeness of “anivit”, also at the same time valued it ~~it~~ positively, and not just for the material things obtainable through it and their uses.

But just what is it that I - or a Pa’ikwené - mean by ‘value’?

*

2) The value of the value of work.

“Things may just perhaps be signs, but their value is more than mere appearance” (Franz Werfel quoted in Lanners 1975:5, my translation).

With regard both to the indigenous understanding of work and more generally, the issue of ‘value’, and indeed its own value in the dictionary sense of constituting a

“precise meaning or signification”²⁵, is a complex one. Where theory is concerned, it is also a potentially thorny one.

That the Pa’ikwené have a concept of ‘value’ is certain. It was never explicitly formulated to me however, and what the term for it is I am unable to say. Nor do I know if there is one.

Nevertheless, I do ‘know’ that there is a value given by the Pa’ikwené to their own products. I pointed out in the foregoing section that it was not gauged in terms of the productivity that went into creating an item if we calculate this solely in terms of the amount of hours or effort spent. One definite yardstick was the skill which went into the production of something; I cited a trident as an example. Another was the quality of the article which the skilful worker achieved relative to that attained by a less skilful one. (Very important, too, as a measure of value, was what I choose to call the conviviality factor involved, of which more later).

It might be thought I would be better advised to employ less subjective and more empirical, and sociologically rigorous, criteria, such as ‘use value’ and ‘exchange’ value.

However, these concepts, commonly and even automatically applied in anthropology to economic studies, which the present chapter does not in any serious technical sense aspire to be, are not ones I feel overly comfortable with. For one thing, I am sceptical that they would be totally apt in relation to the Pa’ikwené, at least not in the marxist guise which they have acquired.²⁶ As is well known, Marx bracketed these preexisting terms with a third of his own devising, ‘surplus value’, to form the basis of his ‘theory of value’ which, incorporating the key postulates of ‘exploitation’ and ‘alienation’, relates *specifically* to capitalism, seen as a system of ‘commoditisation’ (Marx 1978, Section IV:343-522). Although not

²⁵ Collins Dictionary of the English Language 1989:1674 (“Value”, 4th definition).

²⁶ I do not intend to suggest it is the only one. Marx in fact borrowed the terms from the ‘bourgeois’ economic theories of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, whom he criticises (1978:343-522, particularly 393-414). But, as the financier George Soros points out in his own, and non-marxist, critique of capitalism (in the Guardian 18.1.1997), it is not the terms as such which are the problem but people’s view of them in the light of historical change. Thus it is, he writes, that as the ‘market economy’ has spread so non-market (i.e., moral) values have proportionately vanished, till now the only one left is the economic one, incarnated by money, for “what used to be a medium of exchange has usurped the place of fundamental values, reversing the relationship postulated by [laissez- faire] economic theory.”

the only version of 'use-value', a notion which predated capitalism, or 'exchange-value', his one (and the subsequent resort to it by people concerned to analyse non-capitalist societies²⁷) has, as it were, locked the terms into a particular pre-defined orbit which I am not equipped to pursue. Nor do I want to, for finding and presenting 'proof' of indigenous, as opposed to imported, socioeconomic exploitation and alienation in 'Pa'ikwené-land' is not my intention. Assuming, that is, that these exist in the first place, which, in my view, they do not.

It is incumbent upon me however to present the marxian understanding of use value and exchange value, if only in order to eliminate it from the Pa'ikwené's own interpretation of these same concepts. For Marx (ibid.:421-35), the first of these values constitutes the utility which a product, that is, "commodity", is judged to possess by (and this is the crucial point) the consumer. He does not say that a useful article has a use value but that it "*is...* so far as it is a material thing, a use-value..." (p. 421, my emphasis, his hyphen). Thus, a useful article and a 'use-value' are one and the same. Value, then, at least in the context of actual or potential usefulness, is, as I read it, not a quality but a palpably reified 'thing'; it does not represent so much as present itself as a material substance, so to speak. The second value, the exchange-value, is simply the price which a commodity, that is, any product destined for exchange, will realise in the market (ibid.:421-35).

The part reifying, part 'metaphorising' tendency, present in Marx's writings on the economic system he himself charges with objectifying the human being, finds further expression in his qualification of 'independent' value. That is to say, value as it exists outside of use- and exchange-value and which attaches to their "one [and only] common property... that of being products of labour" (1978:422-3). This value is perceived as, and I paraphrase though the words are his, the 'embodiment of the homogenised crystals of the social substance which is human labour power' (p. 423), which labour, he stresses, is itself measurable in terms of time (pp. 423-4); that is, the number of hours "socially necessary" to produce an article (p. 424). Thus, essentially, the 'values' of products are for him "only [the] definite masses of

²⁷ For examples of anthropological writing where this is the case refer to the marxist anthropologists listed in footnote 6. Some others (not all necessarily marxist) would include Rivière 1983-4 and Josephides 1985 (on the 'exploitation' practised by men over women in Amazonia and Melanesia respectively) and Schwimmer op. cit. (on how, *contra* marxist dogma, there can be 'alienation' in regard to use-value but not necessarily in all its forms in regard to exchange-value). Note too Firth's view (1979:201-2) that while fertile as a theoretical model for anthropology, Marx's 'law of value' is ultimately inadequate .

congealed labour time” that are embodied in them (ibid.).

Another theoretical aspect of ‘value’ in its relationship with European conceptualisations of ‘work’, and highlighted by Weber this time (op. cit.), is the religious/moral one, which I touched on earlier. According to this, work is seen as a worshipful, god-orientated activity, or even as a godly act *per se*; and as such is held to be a virtue, spiritually, personally and socially. For Marx, of course, such a value is part of the ‘ideology’ used by the ruling class to keep the working one in its place.

Yet a further point of interest for the present discussion concerns the relationship between mental and physical work, and the typological distinctions pertaining to each. To take the last aspect first: Vernant’s material (op. cit.) suggests that it was the Ancient Greeks’ prioritising of ‘abstract intelligence’ (the property of the commissioning rich customer) over ‘technical intelligence’ (the property of the commissioned artisan) which is the source of the still active overvaluing of the former and undervaluing of the latter found in present day ‘Western’ culture (see in Schwimmer op. cit.:292-3).

Again in our own culture, there exists a hierarchical evaluation of ‘work’ premised on a slew of other dichotomies, mostly relating to status. Two common ones are: ‘skilled’ as opposed to ‘unskilled’, (which broadly means ‘technical’ versus ‘manual’) and ‘male’ as opposed to ‘female’ (with the latter still often considered not to be work at all).²⁸ While, as shown above, the Pa’ikwené recognise, if now somewhat feebly, the notion of gendered work, they do not do so on grounds either of social status or any other kind of hierarchy. Skill is greatly prized, as was noted above, but again not in terms of social status.

Regarding the issue of physical and (or in contradistinction to) mental work, Marx criticised ‘bourgeois’ materialist culture for abstracting abstract and theoretical thought from the exercise of “*practical, human-sensuous activity*” (1968:29, his

²⁸ To cite a few others: ‘scientific work : artistic work’; ‘manufacturing work : ‘service’ trade’; ‘factory work : office work’; ‘formal sector : informal sector’; ‘salaried : waged’; ‘boss : employee’. I would also include ‘wealth : lack of wealth’ on the grounds that, as Soros argues (see footnote 26), money has historically transcended its function as a medium of exchange to become, in the ‘market economy’, not only a value in its own right but indeed the only one.

stress).²⁹ He proposes (1978.:568) that in that value inheres in all labour (-time), then there is as such no distinction between one kind of labour and the other.³⁰ He himself avoids overvaluing (or undervaluing) mental labour in relation to physical labour. Yet it is arguable that he does tend overall to idealise the latter kind, though not so much at the expense of the former, but in such a fashion that it, mental labour, seems to become subsumed in the physical, rather than each being interconstitutive of the other. The question is, do Amerindians also conceptually prioritise one over the other? As I intend discussing below, my belief is that they do, and in a way which is opposite both to his and 'Western bourgeois' thinking.

Essentially and briefly, the Amerindians' evaluation of 'mental capacity', and especially that aspect of it we call knowledge, often contains a perception of it as something not human in origin at all but deriving from a supra-human source. Thus it is not a natural personal property; rather it is a gift bestowed by the supernatural entities. The Pa'ikwené say that intelligence/knowledge/wisdom, "Hiyakimniyé" ("Hiyak" = "to know"), is given to you by "Ohokri" (God); a Piaroa person obtains his or her various knowledges from the creator gods who alone, as owners of the productive but dangerous 'forces of culture', can bestow them (Overing 1982, 1988). Such high stress and value are placed in some of these societies on the mental aspect of existence (including in the area of work) that, conceptually speaking, it may tend to overshadow the physical one. Thus, again among the Piaroa, a person's physical 'life of the senses' has to be mastered in proportion to, and as a condition of, getting a 'life of thoughts', thanks to which the human can be

²⁹ He for his part amply demonstrates the use of what he would qualify as 'unabstracted' abstract thinking in relation to certain aspects of that selfsame praxis: notably, for instance, the pertinent one of value in its relationship with labour. See his explanation (1978:423) of how in order to understand 'value' we must "make abstraction from" a product's use-value, by "put[ting] out of sight" both the usefulness of the product (in terms of the materiality and the specific type of labour embodied in it) and the concreteness of that labour, and consider the latter, rather, *in the abstract*. (For, he concludes, it is as an abstraction that human labour is materialised in a product, which fact alone gives it value).

³⁰ However, though he recognises (*ibid.*) that a person may be physically or mentally superior to another, and so furnish more labour either in the same time as or for a longer time than someone else (and thus, and I extrapolate for he does not say so, command more value), this poses something of a problem for him. For he considers that what he characterises as this 'bourgeois equal right' is in reality an unequal one; and in a just, i.e. communistic, society, the physically or mentally superior worker must not receive more recompense for their labour than any other, and the inequality of the "equal right" will have to be rectified. He does not explain how in this passage, but only goes on to add (pp. 568-9) that in the ultimate phase of communism, the antithesis existing in capitalist society between physical and mental labour will be resolved.

productive in society - and without which there can in fact be no society (Overing *ibid.*)

Another similarity with the Piaroa is that, while, as has been noted, 'individualism' is an intrinsic factor rather than a contradictory aspect of Pa'ikwené social life, it is not considered proper to use one's intelligence/knowledge/wisdom for self-seeking ends. It is seen, rather, as an attribute whose function, essentially, is to serve the common good. (This may be why someone perceived as having much "hiyakimniyé" in certain fields, such as speaking or hunting, gets elected chief; see item [j] chapter 5).

As mentioned, the Pa'ikwené's ideology in connection with 'work', and also in the non-marxian sense of the term, would appear to be no longer extant. It is not possible therefore for me either to trace with any certainty the same lines between their notions and practices as Overing has done in respect of Piaroa 'productivity', or to draw the same cogent conclusions. I would nevertheless suggest that a certain well-known indigenous tendency to place a low value, though not I stress in social status terms, on the physical aspect of work,³¹ and a higher one on knowledge in respect of 'productivity', might be the key to understanding the Pa'ikwené's own apprehension of "anivit" as something so negative (dirty, tiring and painful being the most common epithets employed).

I said above that a Pa'ikwené does not prioritise skill over lack of skill on grounds of social status. However, in that it is an aspect, a manifestation, of knowledge, the skill exercised in work could be said to be valued over the 'purely' physical input. This ^{is} a delicate matter to explain, for it must first be understood that unlike the situation in 'Western' culture, the opposition between mental and physical labour does not seem to be posed by the Pa'ikwené in terms of moral and/or social superiority-inferiority. In *one* sense, what we term 'abstract thought' does not exist for them, since intelligence/knowledge/wisdom, while 'supernaturally' derived, is fundamentally a practical quality given that it is by and large associated with, and used in, pragmatic activities, be it raising a child, harvesting a crop, healing an affliction, or being leader. In that, as I report elsewhere, the native term for 'to think', "Ivegmin", is formed by adding the morpheme '-min', meaning 'beyond', to the verb

³¹ See e.g. Clastres 1987:193-4 on how it was noted by Europeans from the earliest moments of contact.

'iveg', 'to look', then thought itself is literally not regarded³² as something detached from practice, or to be more precise, social and moral practice. Thus one in which *regard* for others, in the sense of care and concern for them, is critical both ethically and, again, pragmatically, for it is only by virtue of each person's uncoerced and autonomous thought-action that the society is constantly recreated (again see next section).³³

Secondly, if our understanding of practical work precludes intellectuality, not to mention artistry, ritual and sociability, then to describe the knowledge possessed and wielded in the context of Pa'ikwené production as (merely) 'technical intelligence' is insufficient. For it is that, but more than that too (for a deeper consideration of 'technical' see next section). All this, I hasten to add, is not to say that the Pa'ikwené are 'savages' who just practice the 'science of the concrete' and ignore 'abstract thought' (Lévi-Strauss 1962b). On the contrary, and for all that they are not as intellectualist as the Piaroa seem to be, it is highly developed among them, as their mathematical and geometrical conceptualisations, such as, for example, the recognition of a fourth physical dimension, demonstrate.³⁴

Skill, then, was for the Pa'ikwené, a definite measure of the value of a product, *and also of the whole process of production implicated in it..* It was assessed in terms of quality of work, which entailed mental, moral, technical, aesthetic and, above all, social considerations, rather than of quantity of hours.³⁵ The material and utilitarian worth (for others) of products was understood, and its criterion taken into account,

³² A further association between sight and thought could exist in that, as proposed in chapter 4, 'to know', "hiyak", might be related to 'to see', "hiyap".

³³ Cf. Santos-Granero 1991 and Belaunde 1992 on respectively the Amuesha and Airo-Pai, for whom cosmologically the social model is one of 'parenting', also McCallum 1989 on the Cashinahua and Gow 1991 on the Piro.

³⁴ See D. Green's appreciative exposition (1995) of the Pa'ikwené's abstract analytical skills in these fields. As stated elsewhere in this thesis, "Púkúh", their word for 'to count' also means 'to understand' (and is virtually synonymous with "tchimap", 'to hear-listen-understand'). I suggest a link with the word for 'to blow', "púh", which may point to a perceived, and not so abstract, interrelatedness between cerebral and somatic activities, and also between these and the 'supernatural' sphere, insofar as one's breath is held to derive from a godly source.

³⁵ Cf. Weber op. cit.:59-60 on the phenomenon of piece-rate work as opposed to that measured in hourly rates, and how (like the Amazonians) "traditionalist" European peasantry preferred the former. This was because it allowed them to decrease rather than increase the amount of their work since in practice "[t]he opportunity of earning more was less attractive than that of working less."

when applied to items earmarked for 'exchange' in the 'market economy', such as certain foods surplus to the producer's (i.e. the household's) requirements, or 'goods' produced specifically to that end, either by the domestic unit collectively or by a single individual independently; and also in respect of a person's labour when sold (as an exchange value in its own right) for cash in the accomplishment of a "petit job". The Pa'ikwené had to that extent assimilated the notion of the commoditisation of both the self and one's creations.

As regards another kind of product destined for others, namely prestations, they may be said to possess more than one value for both donor and recipient. For typically, as I discuss in chapter 7, you not only made a gift to a person, you also very often made it *for* them; and the latter 'making' simultaneously involved your greatest mental-aesthetic-technical-manual artistry and emotion. This combined input was matched by that attributed to the item by the recipient in respect of its practical, affective, and aesthetic worth for them. But it was not only gifts which were perceived as more than merely utilitarian in design and purpose. The humblest handmade broom or bowlful of manioc flour seemed possessed of the same multiple value for their makers and consumers.³⁶

Finally, the notion of 'use value' needs careful reappraisal in connection with the Pa'ikwené (and Amerindians more generally). It is important first of all to reclaim the value of the usefulness of things produced as distinct from things simply considered as material (and as) commodities. We need, too, not merely to show the protagonistic importance of the consumer in the process, as characteristically happens in the 'market economy', but to bring that of the producer more into relief also.

We saw earlier that in the pervasive but culturally and historically specific sense described by Marx and others, a 'use-value' is, virtually axiomatically, held to reside in any item deemed to possess a usefulness by the consumer (as purchaser who agrees to its attached 'exchange-value') as distinct from its producer. This presupposes a radical separation between the two parties not just at the level of economic relations but also social ones. However, use value itself is not a condition unique to our system, and can exist in those where the relationship between maker and user is of quite another order. Where, to be more specific, in

³⁶ See e.g. Rubin 1989:49 on how the multi-functionality of indigenous articles confutes the Euro-American division of material culture into art or craft, and 'high' or 'low' art.

the first place no transaction involving an exchange value occurs between them, whether in the form of money or goods or services; and where, secondly, they are very often likely in any case to be one and the same person. Both of these circumstances apply to societies which practice, as the Pa'ikwené still do to a significant extent, the 'domestic mode of production' (Sahlins 1974). That is, one in which, among other things, the actor's relationship to a product is simultaneously one of co-production, co-ownership and co-consumption. As regards certain products which are the result not of collective but personal production, such as, say, an individual's weapons, ego is not only their sole owner, but also their prime rather than exclusive user, for a Pa'ikwené will sometimes lend them to others, as opposed to share them. (It should be pointed out, however, that the products attained through the use of personally made and owned instruments tend themselves more often than not to end up in the 'collective' fold. For instance, while it was your right unilaterally to sell or exchange the fish caught with your own spear and keep the accruing proceeds for yourself, it was more common either for the catch to be given to and consumed by the family, yourself included, or for the proceeds to become the household's.)

The crux of the issue, then, that which underlies, and underlines, the social relational division present in our society, is not that any item constitutes a product *per se*. Rather, that it is one which serves as a commodity: that it is, in other words, exchangeable in the market. While an article does not have to be a commodity in order to have/be a use value, in order to be a commodity it must as a product, to the extent that it is a material thing, have/be a 'use-value' (Marx 1978:421).³⁷

The essential difference therefore between Pa'ikwené society and our own, where use value is concerned, is the lack of distinction in the former between product makers and users. Another and equally crucial one, following from this, is that the very thing which converts an article into a use value, i.e., its utility, is not a matter of

³⁷ Consider the 'problem' in 'Western' culture about the nature of art insofar as it is a product (Does it or not have a 'use?'), and also its commoditisation and the way its sale is 'market-led'. For some implications of this product's relationship with the market, which considers it to have no 'use-value' yet to be a strong 'exchange-value', see Schwimmer 1979:294.

the consumer's assessment only³⁸; it is also the producer's. Indeed the latter's predates the former's. As self-evident as it might be, in Pa'ikwené society, where, as we have seen, producers and consumers are typically one and the same people, the perceived need for a 'traditional' utilitarian object, be it a basket or bow, can still now only be fulfilled by actually making, or co-making, the thing first before getting to partake of its usefulness (which one has in effect also produced in the creating of the object, along, it must be said, with its other attributes, such as beauty or exchangeability).

In Ancient Greece, it was the aspiring consumer (that is, the craftsman's commissioning client) who was, so Vernant tells us (1965), the main actor in the production process (see in Schwimmer op. cit.:292). In contemporary³⁹ Village Espérance 2, in contrast, the user of objects did not get star billing so much as share an equal one with their maker - or more precisely even, play both lead parts.

While we can readily understand that the maker of a spear, such as the above-mentioned Tchúri, can also be its user; and the co-producers of the manioc crop equally be the consumers of its various by-products; and while we can, too, accept a non-"market economy" notion of use value in their regard, how are we to respond to other products of Pa'ikwené "anivit" (work) which are not seen to be possessed of a materialistically or mechanically functional use either by their producers or anyone else? An example would be the 'cared for' child, such as Sohol, of whom I spoke earlier.⁴⁰ Another would be the 'product' achieved by the "anivit" of a chief, like Tchikoi in Aúkwa.

.....

When one considers the subject of work/production in connection with many of the peoples of Amazonia and the Guianas, a different aspect and understanding of value tends to emerge than the non-indigenous ones described above. Goldman (1979), Overing (1983-4, 1989, 1992, 1993b, 1996), Belaunde (1992), and Gow

³⁸ See for example Collins Dictionary of the English Language (1989:1674) where the third definition of the word "value", unconsciously focusing on the perceived primacy of the consumer-customer, reads: "Reasonable or equivalent return; satisfaction: [as in] value for money."

³⁹ 1993-5.

⁴⁰ Some might like to argue that like the market economy's view of works of art (see footnote 37) she possibly constitutes an 'exchange-value' (convertible in the future).

(1991) have each posited, in respect of the societies they have studied, the existence of a 'moral economy'⁴¹, which prioritises production above exchange, be it in the economic sense or the structuralist one intended by proponents of the 'symbolic economy', such as Viveiros de Castro (1992) and Descola (1986). While each type of 'economy' works to resolve the problematic issue of alterity, the former stresses the creation and maintenance of the *peaceful* intrasocial ('domestic') life, seen in terms of practical mutual caring and intimacy.

The chief substantive products of a 'moral economy' are not the functional, material articles and edibles of life but the yet more vital, and no less concrete, ones of social persons and relations; and also the conditions of sociability (and, as Overing stresses, safety) which do not so much ensue from this sociality as enable its creation.⁴² For example, Belaunde describes (op. cit.:108-211) the manner in which an Airo-Pai community's 'food production' effectively produces not only food but people, and in the process constructs the individual's person-, gender-, and parent-hood. Overing shows (op. cit.) that for the Piaroa the daily acts of working, eating, and sharing/gifting, and also producing children, together result over time in the conversion of affine/difference/danger into kin/identity/safety, and thus in the generation of society itself.

These societies, and also, I propose, the Pa'ikwené's, may be said to share a similar understanding of 'work'. As I have tried to relate, it is one in which 'work' has, and is, a value in terms significantly broader than those relating to numbers of

⁴¹ From E.P. Thompson 1971. Goldman, Overing, Belaunde and Gow also perceive these societies to be political rather than (as Clastres posits 1987) apolitical, yet not for all that to constitute 'political economies' (as Rivière 1983-4 and Santos-Granero 1986 argue). They are especially not so in the marxist sense: i.e., a 'class' structure consisting of an 'infrastructural' economic base and a 'superstructure' and possessing, as an aspect of the latter [or so it is more commonly claimed], an 'ideology', the function of which is to mask and legitimate the 'exploitation' and 'alienation' of the dominated class by the dominant one. 'Values', it should be noted, figure for Marx in respect of the 'ideology', too, in that they form one of its two components, the other being 'morality'.

⁴² Santos-Granero is often also considered a member of the 'moral economy' school in view of his work on the Amuesha's sociocultural stressing of Love (1991). I exclude him here however as, although their ethos is constructed in terms of parental caring like that of the Airo-Pai and Piro, the Amuesha, as a 'priestdom', have notions of institutionalised hierarchy and also a certain formality strikingly absent from the much more egalitarian, informal and intimate lifestyles of the other peoples listed. Also, unlike the Pa'ikwené and Piaroa, they may be said to possess the concept of self-serving thought in that shamans typically seek communication with the sacred beings in order to obtain knowledge and mystical powers for personal purposes. This is in opposition to the priest/leaders who employ their own similarly acquired knowledge-power expressly for the benefit of the community. For a leader to exploit such knowledge-power to his own political ends is considered immoral and illegitimate (pp. 126-9, 300-303).

'labour time' hours alone⁴³, in that it conjoins the practical, the social, the aesthetic, the affective and the moral.

A final and hitherto unaddressed aspect of value, which has to do directly with the creation of sociality and conviviality, is the psychological one.

Marx, to return to him, berated (1978:368-70) Adam Smith for merely considering work from the personal psychological viewpoint of the individual in relation to the pleasure it might or might not give one. But work, elaborates Marx, is something else too (and it is clear that the something else is more important for him): it is relationship with others (and also with the object one makes and one's talents for making it, for "work is a positive, creative activity").

While Marx's point is valid (and shows that he recognised the role of the subjective in the process of production), that of Smith, who apparently considered work to be a curse inflicted by God on sinning mankind, should not be written off altogether. For although arising from another world-view and couched in a different rhetoric, the thoughts, and feelings, of many Amerindians in regard to labour seem if not to echo his then to chime in to a degree with them. I have already described how a Pa'ikwené will characteristically portray "anivit" (work) as something physically hard, irksome and unpleasant. The Cubeo, according to Goldman (1979), will cease working at any task the instant they become bored with it or tired (p. 87). They will also autonomously decide not to work if they are unhappy (so too, as noted in section 1 will a Pa'ikwené). There being no coercion in respect of work, it is the individual's mood, operating in function of the quality of his or her relations with others, which determines whether he or she will work or not. Thus, productivity depends vitally on the healthy morale of a group's members, which morale is enhanced not by workers working, but by workers working happily. The Cubeo assess (and value) production in terms not of material plenitude and expansion but of the producer's affective well-being (pp. 52-67).

The Pa'ikwené's 'mood' should not, however, be seen only in terms of work. Being happy and affable appeared not so much a goal as a constituent feature of their social life more generally, something they shared with the Cubeo and others in Amazonia (see e.g. Huxley 1963, Overing 1989 and Viveiros de Castro 1992 on

⁴³ On the dubiousness of computing indigenous work in terms of time and other 'Western' measurements, see Schwimmer op. cit.:228-9 (cf. Firth op. cit.:202 note 1).

respectively the Kaapora, Piaraa and Araweté). While not immune to bouts of seriousness and even sullenness, most Pa'ikwené people are definitely 'into' sociability in its various forms, including notably joking, laughing and having fun together, though perhaps not as 'deliriously' as the Araweté (Viveiros de Castro op. cit.:9). Like them though (ibid.:335 note 6), the Pa'ikwené disliked and condemned the characteristic 'moodiness' of whites (yet overall reacted courteously and even sympathetically to my own 'down' periods. These they mostly attributed to my being "kadni" - sad - because away from my family.)

What is at issue here, then, is not just a person's psychological feelings about work *per se* (à la Smith) but, more significantly, about people: your co-workers and, it follows, fellow community members.

Overing reports (op. cit.) a similar philosophy of work in connection with the Piaraa. Building on Goldman's insight that personal emotion and autonomy are constitutive of indigenous economic behaviour, she stresses the two properties, good mood and autonomy, as the key elements of an Amerindian "Aesthetics of production". This itself relates to the native "sense of community", which, underlying their practice and notions of work, is to be seen as a Vicoesque 'aesthetics and metaphysics of action at once moral and political' (p. 159). Production, insofar as it is an expression of morally good and aesthetically beautiful, and affectively pleasing, behaviour, is "conducive to the creation of community" (ibid.). Morally bad, aesthetically ugly, and displeasing, behaviour, on the other hand, is not. Demonstrating how such an emotionalist and independentist ethos underpins the very act of self-creation and self-maintenance of the group, Overing argues against Sahlins (1974) that it is neither the cause of these societies' 'under-production' nor proof of their supposed anarchy, if by this is meant (Eurocentrically) anti-society, the state of being asocial. Rather, it is for the people concerned the very embodiment of sociality itself: the community as an egalitarian, tranquil, good humoured and productive entity; and thus a truly beautiful and desirable one.

This brings me to my next, and last, section, in which I discuss the production of Pa'ikwené sociality, the part played in it by technology and language, and the nature of the product.

3) Conviviality: living-working-speaking together: making a sociable sociality.

According to Goldman (op. cit.:66), a defining principle of Cubeo production is that work is a group activity and, as such, a pleasurable and recreational one. It was my observation that the Pa'ikwené, for all their constant complaint about the unpleasantness of its physical aspect (and notwithstanding my prior stressing of this fact), did in fact largely hold the same view. For they too greatly prized sociability as a vital component of the productive process. This they did primarily in terms of the cheerfulness and agreeableness of the people involved. The more one could interrelate in a friendly manner with one's co-workers, and chat, joke, laugh and, thus, relax while working (no contradiction in terms intended), then the more the experience was enjoyed and valued. And the more, too, one's physical productivity increased rather than the reverse - or so, because I was not of a mind to measure it objectively, it seemed to me. The more cheerful one was, the more companionable the atmosphere; and the more literally dialogic the event, the greater one's zest for work itself seemed to grow, and the longer one kept at it.⁴⁴

However, while it was work ("anivit") it was more than 'just' work. For, as is clear, it was social living as well. As noted earlier, work and social life were not held to be distinct and opposed 'things' for the Pa'ikwené as they are for us; and in this intrinsically social act, which was constituted by sociable working, their production did not only turn out 'economic' products. In a very concrete way, it seemed to me and, I believe, to the Pa'ikwené themselves, society itself was being produced at the same time, and performatively so, through the process of "anivit". Ultimately, it was not only recreational in Goldman's paradoxical sense of virtually amounting to a 'leisure activity'. It is also to be seen as having the ability directly to re-create, through its very sociableness, the sense and *state* of sociality itself. To clarify what I mean, I turn to an incident from my fieldwork involving the processing of the manioc crop.

⁴⁴ This is in strict opposition to a certain 'Western' (Protestant Puritan) ethic which enjoins one to work in silence and in, or as if in, isolation. It views such congeniality as both immoral and inimical to work insofar as that it is equated with 'time wasting' (and thus *not* working), which is held a great sin, as Weber shows (1971:157-8): "Loss of time through sociability [and] idle talk... is worthy of absolute moral condemnation... [since] every hour lost [in this way] is lost to labour for the glory of God" (see too pp. 260-1 notes 10, 14).

Tools, talk, and the construction of society.

The Pa'ikwené, like a good many other Lowland Amerindians, accord great symbolic value to manioc, its production, and the principal by-products: 'flour', "Púveyé" but more frequently called "Kwak", the common name for it in Guyane; bread, "Búgút"; and beer, "Wonska" (despite the ban imposed by conversion to Protestant fundamentalism, a situation described in chapter 9). Much affective meaning and power are invested in manioc, "Kaneg", which along with their language is reckoned a mark of their culture and identity both as a people and as "Indians" (cf. Campbell 1995:50). The "anivit" connected with the processing of the plant necessitated a more than average commitment in terms of effort, time and multiple skills, from harvesting to washing to grating to toasting, from all the members, male and female, of the several households involved: the one which owned the manioc crop and those which, collaborating in its 'manufacture', were entitled to part of the finished product.

Although the Pa'ikwené once categorised this elaborate technical and social procedure as 'woman's work' (as mentioned in section 1, Nimuendaju listed it as such during his visit in the mid 1920's), it seems nowadays to have deviated in this respect from the apparent norm applying to most of the other indigenous peoples of the Guianas (see, for instance, Overing Kaplan 1975:37 on the Piaroa, Campbell op. cit.:49-57 on the Wayapi, and Rivière 1984:92-4 and, especially, 1983-4 on the Trio and more generally). According to the last named authority, the phenomenon, and in particular one aspect of it, the beer making, supposedly constitutes a means in these otherwise highly egalitarian societies of female economic and political alienation and male hegemony. For Campbell, too, the "complicated [Wayapi] arrangements for the processing of manioc reinforced a status quo where any imbalance of gender status is weighted in favour of men" because the biggest share of the "drudgery" involved falls to the women (op. cit.:50).

I was present one day when the Brazilian (Assembleia de Deus) pastor visited the Labonté family as, together with a group of relatives and neighbours, they were hard at work processing their own manioc crop. He proposed that Karinai invest in a machine which could turn the raw product into "farinha" (flour) in a single day instead of the four or so back-breaking, labour-intensive ones the operation now took. Karinai and the others with him flatly turned down the suggestion. I was surprised, given what I knew of their, and most other Pa'ikwené's, appreciation of

and appetite for labour saving devices like rifles, outboard motors and chainsaws. It seemed to concur with Julio Cortazar's observation (1967:105) about the encounter between the 'common man' and technology: "Exactly where one would imagine a cultural shock, there is, on the contrary, a violent assimilation and enjoyment of the progress". Why, then, I asked, given both this predilection and indeed passion for other Western technology and the constant grumbles about the drudgery of "anivit", did they regard the idea of a manioc-machine so unfavourably? Karinaï explained that although it could certainly do the work faster than the Pa'ikwené, it did not do it as well. However, what he really did not want to lose, it transpired, was the communality characteristic of, and inherent in, the indigenous way of manioc processing: the singing, joking, laughing, talking, eating and drinking together which were an integral and defining aspect of work. I suggest that for Karinaï, and his people in general, work was seen not so much as an economic and technical activity as, primarily, dialogue and sociality itself in action; and was valued as such.

Campbell, speculating (op. cit.:50) about the more than probable negative impact of the hypothetical introduction of a "futuristic manioc-processing machine"⁴⁵ on Wayapi life, concludes similarly that it would entail the disappearance of "all sorts of aspects and nuances of art, ceremony, technological knowledge, role activity and daily rhythms".

There are two issues I wish to explore more closely here: the link between working and speaking, and the perception that productivity results in more than just tangible material products; that it can itself, in short, *essentially* constitute self-realising society.

Firstly, the above case bears out something which I constantly observed with the Pa'ikwené, but about which I was unfortunately never able to get an explicit statement from them. Namely, that work and dialogic situations did not merely coincide or provide actors with the opportunity for an alternative and 'secondary' activity between getting on with the 'main' one, whichever it happened to be. For in everyday Pa'ikwené life, work and intercommunication do not seem to constitute two separate and distinct modes of behaviour. Rather, they form a unitary process

⁴⁵ I do not know for sure whether such a machine as the pastor described actually exists. But since manioc 'flour' is now being produced industrially for the Brazilian and Créole market, I imagine the appropriate gadgetry has been devised.

in terms of the *interconstitutive and social* nature of 'economic' and communicational productivity. (And one also, as the section on 'Good Hearing' shows, in which people's listening plays as intrinsic, important and creative a role as their speaking, and their muscle power, manual dexterity or good humour).

The particular interrelationship between work, or tool use, and language as the distinctive way by which humanity historically attained and continues to maintain social relations has been studied by others. The conventional wisdom, as proposed by Western Darwinian thinking, seems to be that speech is the evolutionary outcome of prehistoric hominids banding together to pool their labour, developing directly from the process of collective tool making and use, and as a consequence of the need to communicate within that process. Over time, it is believed, the inarticulate vocalisations accompanying such activity transformed into syllables, words, language (Montagu 1976, Isaac 1976, Hewes 1993, Toth and Schick 1993). This view is quintessentially the one proffered by Engels (1968:358-68): "First labour, after it and then with it, speech." (p. 361). These are, he asserts, the two stimuli by which the ape mutated into the human being and human society evolved.

Reynolds' 'complementary theory of language and tool use' (1993) does not so much consider speaking a function of tool use as suggest a co-evolutionary correspondence between them. He argues that the latter activity entails "heterotechnic cooperation", that is, the contemporaneous use of different tools and skills by different people, making for a complementarity of social roles. Such heterotechnic activity is universally manifested by a distinct form of social organisation, "defined by the shared intention to transform matter and energy through the cooperative and complementary use of tools and tool-using skills by a group of people in face to face *contact*" (p. 413, his stress). Pa'ikwené manioc processing, where each participating individual and sub-group does a specific task *together* with the other individuals and sub-groups forming the co-operating work group, would constitute a typical example of this social structuring. Such a base, continues Reynolds, parallels linguistic exchange, wherein each interlocutor's action is complementary to, and supportive of, the other's. In this way language and heterotechnical co-operation are co-evolutionary phenomena, and human tool use, like speaking, is an "intrinsically social process" (p. 426).

But, while noting the equivalence between and complementarity of speaking

and technical activity, Reynolds, it seems to me, overlooks their interconstitutivity.

Ingold has stressed both the instrumentality of speech in the making of social life (1986:144ff., 202-3, 244-92) and the “embeddedness of technical relations in social relations” (1993b:439). Outside of the latter relations, tools are devoid of use value and words of their meaning (p. 440). (On the affinity between speech and tool use in understanding, knowing, and making the world, see *ibid.*:431ff.). Ingold argues against Durkheim that technical action (tool use) is neither non-social nor merely practical. Nor is it as a purposive and physical action predetermined by an anterior act of cognition. Rather, in the same way as speaking, it should be seen as an autonomous and intelligent act of personal agency which is simultaneously an engagement with nature and an act of sociality: both actions, tool making/use and speech, being instrumental not only in the perception but the creation of the environment, including the social one. Moreover, he posits (p. 442), in opposition to the Western conception of tools as the means enabling mankind to achieve mastery over nature in the purported struggle of the social world of persons against the material world of things, the hunter-gatherers’ use of technology aims at “drawing nature into the nexus of social relations” as in a “dialogue” with it.⁴⁶

Regarding the notion of ‘technical’ itself, it seems still to be in need of reclaiming from that of the ‘merely practical’. The use of technology, its very nature, clearly possesses more than a banalistic, i.e., mechanical and utilitarian, purpose alone. As is well known, Leach’s work on the Kachin revealed (1986:10-16) how the most mundane economic and functional technical act may simultaneously contain a ritual-aesthetic-ethical component. Technical *action* should also be seen as a form of intelligence and knowledge. According to Heidegger (1975:15-87), the Ancient Greeks did not distinguish between craftsman and artist, using one and the same word, “Techne”, for both craft and art. Originally, however, “Techne” signifies neither, nor is it ‘technical’ in the modern sense in that it

“never means a kind of practical performance. The word... denotes rather a mode of knowing. To know means to have seen, in the widest sense of seeing, which means to apprehend what is present... For Greek thought, the nature of knowing consists in the uncovering of beings... ‘Techne’... is a bringing forth of beings... [it] never signifies the action of making...” (p. 59. Cf. Vernant 1965).

⁴⁶ For the Pa’ikwené’s own dialogue with nature, and more on Ingold’s and other theories in this respect, see chapter 4iii.

In this, then, tool use may be said to be akin, for Heidegger, to that of language, which is to be seen as more than merely a means or expression of what 'intends' to be communicated. Rather,

“Language, by naming things for the first time, brings beings to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates beings *to* their being from *out of* their being” (ibid.:73-4, his stress).

The Pa'ikwené's use both of their own technology in the manioc processing (or in any other activity) and speech leads to my second concern. This is the indigenous understanding of how such use within the social field of “anivit” effectively generates both the necessary products for the maintenance and well-being of society and, just as substantively, the society itself. Is it not possible that, in a Heideggerian sense, one of the 'beings' Pa'ikwené tool usage and speaking jointly 'brought forth' was the state of being of social-ness? And a social existence of a particular, and characteristically Lowland Amazonian, kind it was at that; that is to say, as Overing has already pointed out (1996:6) with regard to the Piaroa, one defined by *conviviality*. The rest of this section will be devoted to developing this claim in more depth.

About conviviality: manioc and the making of a meaningful life together.

What at the deeper level, both structural and existential, is the connection between the good humoured and joyously felt experiencing by a Pa'ikwené person of what is physically the very demanding, laborious, and tiring operation of processing the manioc crop, and the elements which I have just raised: tools, language, and the quality of the social relations deriving from their use?

Picture, to start with, the 'collective effervescence', the truly party atmosphere, of the event itself; the participants high, as it were, on themselves, on their being together, on the united release of their energies; their ceaseless comings and goings; the picnicking 'on the job'; the laughter and banter, good natured gossip, grousing and teasing, the recounting of past times and swapping of tales: work as play. The 'organised chaos', in short, of a dozen or so men and women and assorted children gathering together for the best part of a week to engage in jointly preparing several months' supply of “kwak” (flour), and a smaller one of “kayút”

(tapioca), “búgút” (bread), and other gastronomic delights such as various “matchit”, that is, mashes, purées and creams, from a vast mound of manioc tubers which first had had to be picked then toted back home the considerable distance from the ‘garden’. All have to be washed and detoxified, peeled, grated, ground, sifted, pounded, pressed, and then toasted or baked according to what is required. Each of these stages requires a specific implement and technique, and people’s skill in them. A crucial aspect of the process seemed to be that while the tools, with but very few exceptions, were not privately owned but the property of the household, the *control* over their use and the technical knowledge entailed remained the individual user’s at the same time as they were deployed toward a collective end, and for the ‘common good’. The tool, be it machete, grater or oven, and one’s use of it were not only the instruments of a set of social relationships; they in practice, by their very use, continuously brought that state into existence. Likewise with the speech one (loudly in typical Pa’ikwené style) engaged in during the work event -- the jokes and repartee, the exchange of news and views, the story telling, singing, instructing, and plain general chatter...

I believe it reasonable to propose that, for the Labonté family and their helpers, working together contributed to a Malinowskian state of ‘phatic communion’ (1930:315) in the very same way as, he considers, speaking together can do, where there occurs between people a bond of “social sentiment” which is “created by the exchange of words, [and through that] by the specific feelings which form convivial gregariousness, by the give and take of utterances which make up ordinary gossip.”⁴⁷

As Karinai’s reaction to the suggestion of a modern and apparently ‘better’ machine illustrates, both of these acts, the (traditional) tool use no less than the talking, were seen to counterweigh and in a real sense nullify the indisputable drudgery and sheer hard slog involved in many ‘economic’ tasks. They were, rather, determining and interactive factors of the condition of shared enjoyment, amicability, excitement and indeed fun, which comprises Pa’ikwené manioc processing,⁴⁸ and for which I use the gloss of ‘conviviality’. That is, a distinct

⁴⁷ This in no way implies that I accept Malinowski’s other claim (ibid.:311-12), that since it “functions as a link of concerted human activity”, language in ‘primitive societies’ is solely “a mode of [emotive] action, not at an instrument of reflection”.

⁴⁸ Another likely and enhancing factor of the positive mood and value attaching to this work is the above-mentioned intense symbolic and emotional power of the plant and its by-products.

manner of, etymologically speaking, *living together*.

For Illich, in his trenchant analysis of the industrial mode of production (1973), the construction of a 'convivial' society depends, necessarily and fundamentally, on a person's rightful and free access to, and autonomous, creative manipulation of, the community's tools. And "everyday language", the interlocution of ordinary people within and as part of that process, can itself amount to one of the tools in question inasmuch as it, too, essentially has a "convivial function" (p. 91). His interpretation of "conviviality", and of tools, being quite specific, I will allow myself to present it in some detail, for I believe it to be more than pertinent to the subject under discussion. It also serves as an appropriate description both of the 'traditional' Pa'ikwené reality (as I encountered it) in respect of technology and their own society, and of the threat to the latter perceived to be posed by the introduction of an alien technology beyond a certain practically - and ethically - acceptable level.

Notionally, Illich draws (ibid.:xii-xiii) on the Aristotelian and Thomist understanding of 'austerity' to attach to 'conviviality', a virtue nowadays considered its opposite, the very qualities of "*friendship*", "*joyfulness*", and "*creative playfulness*" in personal relations which I have tried to describe with regard to Pa'ikwené working life in general, and, most representatively, the informal celebration which is the manioc processing. He uses the term emblematically in his critical portrayal of the 'unconvivial' modern industrial universe as one where people, historically dispossessed of and alienated from their 'tools for conviviality', are likened to prisoners, lacking either control over their environment or creative input into its construction: "[D]egraded to the status of mere consumers" (p. 11), they have no effective say in the various 'commoditised' areas of their own lives (education, health, communication, transport, food production and so on). He contrasts this with, and urges a return to, the 'convivial society', "in which... technologies serve politically interrelated individuals rather than managers..." (p. xii). He elaborates:

"I intend it [the term 'conviviality'] to mean autonomous and creative intercourse among persons; and the intercourse of persons with their environment... I consider conviviality to be individual freedom realised in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value..." (p. 11)

"[A convivial society entails] the protection, maximum use, and the enjoyment of the one resource that is almost equally distributed

among all people: personal energy under personal control (pp. 11-2)... A convivial society would be the result of social arrangements that guarantee for each member the most ample and free access to the tools of the community and limit this freedom only in favour of another member's equal freedom..." (p. 12)

"A convivial society... allow[s] all its members the most autonomous action by means of tools least controlled by others. People feel joy, as opposed to mere pleasure, to the extent that their activities are creative; *while the growth of tools beyond a certain point increases regimentation, dependence, exploitation, and impotence.*" (p. 20, my stress)

In Illich's view (pp. 88-91), language does not so much accompany economic and technical, and therefore social, activity as reflect and normalise it. He argues that the transition from process to reification, subsistence to commoditisation, attendant on the industrial mode of production produces a conceptual and linguistic shift in our relations with the world and, necessarily, one another. This change basically expresses a "transformation in the idea of ownership" (p. 89), in which the individualist control over tools has usurped the collective one. By 'tools' he means:

"not only simple hardware such as drills, pots, syringes, brooms... or motors, and not just large machines... [but] also... productive institutions such as factories that produce tangible commodities like corn flakes or electric current, and productive systems for intangible commodities such as those which produce 'education', 'health', 'knowledge or 'decisions' " (p. 20).

He goes on:

"Tools are intrinsic to social relationships. An individual relates himself in action to his society through the use of tools that he actively masters, or by which he is passively acted upon. To the degree that he masters his tools, he can invest the world with his meaning... Convivial tools are those that give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision. Industrial tools deny this possibility to those who use them and they allow their designers to determine the meaning and expectation of others." (p. 21)

"Tools foster conviviality to the extent to which they can be easily used, by anybody... for the accomplishment of a purpose chosen by the user. The use of such tools by one person does not restrain another from using them equally... Their existence does not impose any obligation to use them. They allow the user to express his

meaning in action.” (p. 22)

So once again we see the special resemblance and rapport, within the creation of their society by its members, between the use of ‘technology’ and language,

“which is used by people jointly claiming and asserting each person’s right to share in the shaping of the [convivial] community” (p. 91).

.....

As noted earlier, both Rivière (1983-4, 1984:92-4) and Campbell (op. cit.:50) charge manioc processing with possessing a function beyond that of the purely technical and nutritional, namely the sociopolitical one of instilling unequal gender relations. Insofar as the Pa’ikwené are concerned, I would for my part describe this type of “Anivit” as a medium, rather, for the playing out of equal gender relations; and more than that, for the creation and sustainment of community relations pure and simple. In and through the work entailed in the collective process of turning the manioc into tangible and valued foods, and by virtue of the labour, skills and speech the co-producers deploy, sociability and sociality are both expressed and made; possibly, I like to think, the most vital, if non-edible, of that plant’s by-products, and for the people concerned as equally meaningful and conducive to well-being as the “kwak” (flour), the “búgút” (bread), and the “chibé” (porridge).

chapter nine

THE PA'IKWENÉ AND RELIGION
the ambiguity of 'simple' belief

“Almost without effort, the new worlds were co-opted [in the 16th and 17th centuries] into a style of thinking as if they had been part of the argument from the beginning. The easy comparability of heathen gods, and by extension heathen customs, was possible in part because they all came from a common source - the *devil*... His role in the assimilation of new peoples should never be underestimated” (Ryan 1981:530, my stress)

A)

INFORMANT: We don't go to the ihamwi (shaman) now.

ME: Why not?

INFORMANT: Because he deals with Wavitché (the Devil).

ME: Does the ihamwi use magic?

INFORMANT: Yes.

ME: Is it good magic?

INFORMANT: No, it's bad magic because it comes from Wavitché.

ME: If the ihamwi cures you when you are ill, is that magic?

INFORMANT: Yes.

ME: Is it bad magic?

INFORMANT: No, good magic.

ME: Where does that magic come from?

INFORMANT: Wavitché as well.

ME: The Devil?

INFORMANT: (laughs) Yes.

ME: But I thought only God did good things and Wavitché bad ones.

INFORMANT: Oh no, he can do good ones also!

B)

Pa'ikwené history, in the view of the Pa'ikwené Evangelicals with whom I lived, is a four-tier structure:

The time of ignorance and sin, when there was no religion and Ohokri (God) was not known.

Catholic time. During this period, the Pa'ikwené were revealed God but there was worship of idols, dancing, drinking and other licentiousness, fighting and schism.

Evangelical time, which began in 1966 and continues to the present: the Pa'ikwené are granted “the word of God” and lead their lives in respect of it. All things associated with the sinfulness of the two earlier times

are prohibited and forsworn. There is concord where before there was division.

The time of heaven on earth, which will be installed by Jesus Christ (probably and hopefully in the year 2000) and will in effect be a timeless and sinless utopia without hardship, illness or want for all Evangelicals.

Basically, this chapter deals with Pa'ikwené religion. In this I include their old and new belief systems and ritual practices; the spiritual, the supernatural (so called) and the magical. *Contra* Mauss (1972:18-24) and Malinowski (1954), I do not distinguish between magic and religion any more than the Pa'ikwené seem to do.

The chapter is divided into the following sections: (1) Introduction situating the religion of Village Espérance Deux within a broad historical and sociopolitical context; (2) the pre-Christian base of present day religious ideology and behaviour; (3) their Christian aspect in terms, mainly, of the native epistemology and exegesis, and (4) my conclusion. Although I shall not concentrate particularly on the theme, attention will be given to the interrelationship of language and Pa'ikwené religious philosophy, which runs like a thread through the entire subject .

As should become apparent, the religious dimension of the Pa'ikwené's contemporary social, cultural, intellectual and affective life is fundamentally and intrinsically ambiguous. Essentially, my objective is to isolate, examine and, insofar as I am able, unravel two paradoxes. The first consists in this, that while shamanism, as a practical religious system, seems in terminal decline due to the adoption of a new, and Christian, religion, it nevertheless remains very much alive, in the form of certain notions and beliefs, in the discourse and, to an extent, behaviour of the very people who claim no longer to follow it. The second, and connected, paradox is that while at one level the two belief systems are mutually exclusive, they are, at another, very much intertwined.

Lastly, while one may in the abstract, in academic as well as Christian thinking, suppose a clear dividing line between the two, as will be seen below my own approach to the subject manages no similar neat cleavage, anymore than there existed one in the actual day to day life of the Pa'ikwené converts.

The community I stayed with in Guyane was by its own account, and with but very

few exceptions in reality, an “Evangelical” one, and attended on a near daily basis the fundamentalist, and technically Pentecostal, *Assembleia de Deus* church, which was located in the village (together with a sizable Brazilian contingent consisting of a ‘live in’ Pastor, his wife, children, sundry other relatives, and a retinue of aides and adherents). Rather than struggle with the minutiae of the doctrinal and other differences between the two sects, I will from here on in use the gloss ‘Evangelical-Pentecostalist’ to refer to the villagers of *Espérance 2* and the non-traditional component of their religious faith. My residing among them was not preplanned but a sort of facilitated serendipity;¹ had things turned out but slightly differently I might have made my base instead in the neighbouring community, who were converts to Seventh Day Adventism. Equally, I could have ended up elsewhere, among Pa’ikwené Catholics, or those who follow a hybridised form of Catholic and Afro-Brazilian influenced religious rites such as the small group of Pa’ikwené half-castes reported by Montout (1994 Annex 4),² or even among the few, like those I met in *Aúkwa*, who have chosen to reject alien religious encroachments and steadfastly continue to practice their ancestral faith.

I must at this point admit to encountering some difficulty, philosophically, practically and emotionally, in regard to the (intense) nature of the adopted beliefs and ways of many of the members of my host community, which resulted in a certain (often acute) friction between me and the aforementioned Brazilian presence in their midst; though not, I am glad to say, with my Pa’ikwené fellow villagers themselves.³ They, while experiencing sadness at my resolutely unrepentant non-Evangelic state, and never quite desisting from exerting pressure on me to see the light, so to speak, were always much too courteous, diplomatic, wise, and, I suppose, culturally conditioned to recognise and respect a person’s right to personal autonomy, to allow any serious rifts or bad blood to develop among us on this score.

¹ By chance more than actual design I had, just prior to going into the field, made contact with Diana and Harold Green of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, who had lived for some fifteen years with the Pa’ikwené in *Aúkwa* and, as I eventually came to learn, converted many of them to their brand of Protestantism. Now based in Belém, it was they who suggested, and made possible, my staying with Susana and Karinai Labonté, who lived in the region I had intended as the main centre of my research anyway.

² At *La Chaumière*, near Cayenne.

³ I shall leave it to the reader to judge to what extent, if any, this factor impinges on the present work.

THE PA'IKWENÉ AND RELIGION

1. Introduction.

Susana and Karinai, in whose house I lived in Deuxième Village Espérance, and who along with four others founded the community in 1980 (see chapter 5), had prior to their 'emigration' to Guyane participated in the large-scale conversion to Evangelicalism which occurred among the Pa'ikwené some fifteen years earlier in Aúkwa (Brazil). It was carried out by North American missionaries, chief among whom were the Greens referred to above. Due to a concatenation of internal circumstances and external influences then in play in Pa'ikwené society, the details of which need not concern us here, many of the inhabitants in the homeland region were caught up in, and responded positively to, the determined missionary campaign waged by the fundamentalist Protestant groups. After an initial and unsuccessful attempt in 1954,⁴ the (SIL-backed) Evangelicals gained a foothold in Aúkwa in 1965. They subsequently made deep inroads before being followed, eleven years later, by the Pentecostalists in the shape of the Brazilian branch of the Assembly of God movement acting, unlike the SIL venture, with the authorisation of FUNAI, the National Indian Agency (Ricardo 1983:28). In contrast, conversion to Adventism occurred outside the homeland, in Guyane; the community of Espérance 1 adopting it more or less collectively in the late 1960's.⁵

In either case, the adoption of the new religion resulted in a fundamental restructuring of Pa'ikwené life in more ways than one. Historically, the clans possessed separate territories. But while the present and now customary phenomenon of living in multi-clan communities was reported by Nimuendaju in 1925 (op. cit.:17), the size of these increased after the conversions described above, as people who shared a new faith founded and collected together in relatively greater settlements distinguished, and in a significant sense separated,

⁴ The same year as a devastating measles epidemic caused many fatalities.

⁵ See Dreyfus 1981:308; also Montout 1994:95-8, Arnaud 1984, and Ricardo op. cit. for a fuller account of the historical roots of Pa'ikwené-Protestant Fundamentalist interaction; and Othilly 1979 on the implantation and activity of the Protestant sects in Guyane.

by Christian denominational factors (Dreyfus op. cit.).⁶ The sectarian differences between the Adventists and Evangelical-Pentecostals of the neighbouring communities of Espérance 1 and 2, and similarly the two adjacent settlements at Macouria, have made for some tension which on occasion translates itself into actual physical confrontation. Thus, for instance, the fights at Macouria in late 1994 between the two groups over the possession of their (in principle) jointly owned communal hall; the Adventists having accused the Evangelical-Pentecostals of appropriating it for their exclusive use as an *Assemblée de Dieu* place of worship (Emmanuel Montout, personal communication).

Converts to Evangelical-Pentecostalism did not, it seems, merely, or even primarily, apprehend their new faith in terms of religious salvation *per se*. According to the people themselves, it was seen and welcomed as the answer to the deep seated sociopolitical divisiveness rife among the community at Aúkwa at that time: a situation which to hear it described constituted a virtual anomie, in which there was, in the words of an informant, “much fighting and killing... even between brothers... much drinking...” This theme was stressed repeatedly. Chief Tchikoi, for example, spoke of life before Evangelicalism as hard and unhappy and full of internecine strife and endless fissioning, and also wars with other tribes; after though, everything apparently - and quasi mythically - became all harmony and peace.⁷

What Evangelical-Pentecostalism did, then, I was told, was to put paid to this anti-socialness, the cause of which people directly ascribed to their previous “sinful”,

⁶ E.g. by my own count (February 1994) Village Espérance 2 had 163 inhabitants, excluding Brazilian residents. But this figure is unsafe, and not only thanks to my probable shortcomings as a census taker. For the population fluctuated daily because of temporary (both short stay and long stay) incomers and absentees. Thus a fraction of the 163 were visitors from other communities. There was much coming and going of this kind, and especially a ceaseless two-way flow between Espérance 2 and Aúkwa, involving people from one village taking up co-residence with kin in another for various lengths of time. Sometimes, too, families had more than one ‘address’. I know of one woman who preferred (“Because my sisters, brothers and father are here”) to live for most of the time in Espérance 2 together with her three children, while her husband, from whom she was not estranged in any other way, spent most of his in Macouria (for work reasons). This family owned two houses and each spouse would periodically go and stay with the other. Needless to say, each had numerous kin in both places.

⁷ In the early 1960’s the community in Aúkwa was in fact riven by events involving the hostility between two shamans. It culminated in the murder of one (Ti Boug Narcissio) by the aggrieved brother-in-law and father-in-law of the other (Payúyú), for the death of whose wife the first was held responsible. Payúyú and several others fled to Guyane (see Arnaud 1970:14-5, 1984:46; Dreyfus op. cit.:306-8; Ricardo op. cit.:23). Hostility and actual warring between shamans seems to have also been prevalent at other times in Pa’ikwené history (Arnaud 1984:45-6; P. Grenand 1987:78)

i.e., non-Protestant, lifestyle. For my Espérance 2 informants, it was not Christianity as such that was correct and proper and godly, but specifically Evangelical-Pentecostalism itself; for while their pre-Christian existence is characterised in negative terms, so too is Catholicism, which not a few of them followed previously. Thus you will hear a Catholic typically described as “someone who drinks [alcohol] and dances”, both of which are proscribed behaviours for the Protestant fundamentalists.⁸ Central to the movement’s philosophy in regard to native peoples seems to be the concept that the prior belief system is by definition immoral and godless. This satanisation, which underpins a puritanical ethos, logically extends to all cultural behaviours and features associated with it, such as, for instance, cashiri, tobacco, and ritual song and dance events.⁹

In practice, however, the old customs and concepts were not that neatly and comprehensively done away with, even among the staunchest Evangelical-Pentecostalist Pa’ikwené. I found a lot of individuals, especially those of the younger generation, to be extremely disparaging of many traditional beliefs and customs, yet at the same time was more than once the recipient of confidences in which I learnt from X that he had enjoyed himself last night on manioc beer, from Y that she yearned to dance, and from Z that he consulted a “blower”¹⁰ for a snake bite. People tended not to admit to these things too openly, for they ran the risk of being condemned publicly both in the community and in church. Yet neither did they speak of them with guilt but with an attitude which, while admitting that these activities and thoughts were ‘heretical’ according to the standards of their Christian faith and modern lifestyle, also expressed that they were nevertheless still meaningful and valuable, and worth retaining if in a somewhat covert (perhaps

⁸ For an account of Catholic missionary efforts among the Pa’ikwené in Amapá state on the part of Portuguese then French Jesuits, an activity first undertaken in the 1680s and sporadically continuing for the next hundred or so years, see Nimuendaju 1971:5-10, P. Grenand 1987:75-6. Renewed Catholic proselytisation in the late 19c and early 20c finally led to some success, and in the process “repulsed shamanism to some extent without really changing it” (Montout op. cit.:95; see too Arnaud 1970:20, Ricardo op. cit.:28).

⁹ See Townsend 1963 and Slocum & Holmes 1963 for the Fundamentalists’, and specifically SIL’s, own explanation and justification of this policy; and the apologia by the anthropologist Merrifield (1976). From an opposing anthropological perspective, an investigation and cogent critique of the impact of SIL on indigenous peoples in Latin America is provided in Hvalkof & Aaby (1981).

¹⁰ A magical ‘specialist’, called “aviri” in Pa’ikwaki and distinct from the shaman (“ihamwi” - healer), and whose technique likewise consists in part in blowing tobacco smoke. See part 2 below for more on both types of practitioner of the curative-spiritual arts.

partly protective, partly embarrassed) way.

Thus the new sociomoral order did not so much replace as repress the old one. Nor was it just imposed from without; to a very large extent it had to be, and in the event was, readily accepted and absorbed from within. An important ideological plank of Evangelical-Pentecostalism is the concept of 'Brotherhood'. This principle was one of the main messages of the Pa'ikwené pastor-chief Paulo Orlando, who led a large community of *Assembleía de Deus* followers in Kúmené (Aúkwa) for several years in the late 1970's.¹¹ Many of my informants considered it the theme that spoke to them loudest and the most powerfully; the element that clinched their conversion for them, as it were. It is my feeling that this idea of *communitas* possibly chimed, and overlapped, with a certain prior indigenous notion of sociality as both a highly valued and desirable state. As Heelas writes (1984:9): "New religions... are held [by converts] to appeal because they reflect and so tune in with socioculturally acquired expectations, values, interests, and rationalised emotions or needs." More specifically, S. Hugh-Jones also considers (1994:73) that the switch to Evangelicalism by (Arawakan) converts is in significant measure due to the new religion's promotion of a return to traditional moral values within the imported cultural framework.

P. Grenand (op. cit., and also with F. Grenand 1990:32-3) pronounces the effects of the new religion on Pa'ikwené culture and society to have been radically and unqualifiably devastating. Thus, in direct opposition to the emic explanation that Evangelical-Pentecostalism was subscribed to as a means of ending a socially negative situation, he cites (op. cit.:76) Protestant fundamentalism specifically as the cause of the deep intra-social crises, schisms and murders which befell the Pa'ikwené during this period, and holds it responsible for their "casting doubt on [their own] traditional values" which had thus far managed to survive previous indigenous adaptations to external influences.

By contrast, Arnaud judges (1984:42-3) the influence of Catholicism to be comparatively much less invasive and far-reaching, and considers that despite the introduction of features such as baptism, it allowed the Pa'ikwené to 'continue to regulate their lives on the basis of their old, shamanic religion'.

¹¹ For further facts about this charismatic and autocratic religious and political leader, who destroyed the pre-Christian religious artifacts and 'idols', and preached brotherly love and respect for authority; his being toppled from power and replaced by another; his reverting to the old religion then back again to the new one, and his eventual leadership of a new group of followers and their settlement in Guyane, see Montout op. cit.:96; also Arnaud op. cit.

Montout, establishing a decade later the fact of the widespread entropy of that ancestral religion, views things from yet another perspective. The correlation between the implantation of the new belief system and the entropy of the previous one seems to be drawn not in terms of a historical, and indeed political, process of cause and effect, but in those of a natural progression: “[T]he vacuum left by the absence of shamanism has been filled to the benefit of the new Western [i.e., Protestant] religions” (op. cit.:103, my translation). He focuses on the latter as the means tactically resorted to by the Pa’ikwené for dealing with the problems brought about by their induction into the new and alien social, cultural and economic universe resulting from increased contact (p. 97); rather than as a contributory factor to the problems and an integral part of that universe.

My own belief is that for both all the indisputable destructive consequences of the new (Protestant) religion and its purposive use, the old one, *or, more precisely, aspects of it*, still survives ‘under the surface’ of daily life, perceptible in the discourse and behaviours of converted Pa’ikwené. P. Grenand is of the opinion (op. cit.:76) that there is an “operculation [or shuttering off] of certain rituals surviving in the [Pa’ikwené] memory, as if people wanted to keep them in reserve for better days” (my translation). During my stay with them, the shutters would occasionally fall open and one could get a glimpse of what lay behind. It was as though a certain ‘old’ religious behaviour, or belief, allowed itself to be seen: sometimes clearly, sometimes in a more shadowy, and mysterious, way. This could occur as the result of an individual intending it to; or else by accident as it were: as if happening by surprise and catching the person unawares, so that the action or the spoken idea popped out into the daylight before he or she was fully conscious of its existence. This may account for the often startlingly paradoxical, and seemingly schizophrenic, statements of people who in the same conversation simultaneously denied and affirmed the existence of witchcraft, say, or repudiated then averred a belief in the benign power of spirits (when according to Evangelical-Pentecostalism it could only be malign), as illustrated in the dialogue prefacing this chapter.

This contradiction is not, I suggest, an index of irrationality and confusion on the part of Pa’ikwené followers of Evangelical-Pentecostalism. Yet neither should it be thought that the presence of such alternative, or, rather, parallel, thinking, which

involves two co-existing belief systems, one of which explicitly and emphatically excludes the other, constitutes the basis of a syncretic approach to their faith. That Jesus Christ is referred to as the “greatest shaman”, and Pa’ikwené spirits replaced by Christian entities in songs (Montout op. cit.:97),¹² is not really evidence of an integrated and coherent unitary system.¹³

If there are ancestral religious elements in the Pa’ikwené’s practice of their Christian faith, then they are both a residue and a reminder to them that their past not only existed but lives on; and must continue to do so. Responses to this are, once again, ambivalent. On the one hand, there was a definite spurning of, and embarrassment at, old religious beliefs and ways. On the other, numerous informants told me of their sadness at the destruction of the traditional culture, their apprehension about its complete loss for the young and the generations to come, and their desire to remember and rescue, and in some cases resurrect, some of its features. Thus while shamanism, and resort to it, were no longer sanctioned behaviours on the grounds of its perceived satanic nature, many in Espérance 2 expressed not only a fear of, but beyond that a deep interest in, its practical workings.

This was not mere uninformed curiosity or attraction to the forbidden. The pragmatic effects of shamanic practice were known and valued, and continued to be believed in and held in respect. The spiritual cosmos associated with them, while condemned, was not dismissed but regarded with awe and, as I have said, a continuing if often uncomfortable attachment. The middle-aged and Evangelical son of Waptchi and Ovayan, the shamans in Village Espérance 1, seemed to sum it up when he informed me that though he would never become a shaman himself, because it was ungodly, he was heartsick that the songs and dances and skills would disappear with his parents;¹⁴ and that he will never forget the songs and dances and will teach them to his own children (towards which end he requested a taped recording of his parents’ singing from me, which I gave him).

¹² On the appropriation of indigenous sacred beings by SIL and their use under Christian guises in the transition from a pre-Christian to a Christian mode of thinking, see Smith 1981.

¹³ I would similarly describe as non-syncretic the performance, in Aúkwa and Macouria though not in Espérance 2, of traditional ritual dances during Christian festivals such as Easter.

¹⁴ Waptchi and Ovayan, on whom more later (see too in chapter 4 section iii and chapter 5) were both elderly and on the point of retiring. The former was chronically ill with a lung disease, which affected his use of tobacco and thus his healing powers and the capacity to pursue his shamanic calling. This factor was yet one more nail in the coffin of the practice of the indigenous religion.

In a sense, this could be described as an attempt at sanitisation: to extract the practices from their spiritual and cosmological matrix in order sentimentally to preserve them. I prefer, though, to see it as part of a continuing, inevitable process of change and synthesis: a rational and historical compromise by an individual who, finding himself astraddle between two worlds and, to a very real degree, psychologically and sociologically torn between them, finds a way of committing himself to the old one while at the same time choosing to embrace the new one. This is a situation experienced by all of today's converted Pa'ikwené who on a daily basis have, both as individuals and as a group, to continue existentially and culturally to 'resolve' it .

In the following section I look at the religion of the first era, the ungodly and godless "time of ignorance and sin" (according to the Pa'ikwené Evangelical-Pentecostalist 'calendar'), elements of which continue, as I have already stated, to underlie the actual perceptions and practices of these same fundamentalist Christian Pa'ikwené who, in their own words, have heard and follow the "Word of God".

THE PA'IKWENÉ AND RELIGION

2. The non-Christian religion.

Cosmology.

I once asked Kamavi, a noted story teller,¹⁵ to tell me about the origin of the Pa'ikwené. He promptly set about recounting the story of Adam and Eve. Although I did eventually get a non-biblical tale from him (which is presented in Appendix A [story 2] and had in the event less to do with creation than Pa'ikwené perception of their own impotent power), this incident, like their view of the four phases of history, reveals the extent to which the indigenous thought and speech of Protestant converts have been infused with an alien world-view in the space of several decades. But does the process just work in a single direction, or is it not, rather, a dialectical one?

Nimuendaju writes (1971:61-74) that the Pa'ikwené's indigenous religion was still going strong when he visited them in Aúkwa in 1925. Dubbing it a "sorcerer's religion" (p. 61), he gives many interesting details relating to shamanism and to rites and ceremonies which have now all virtually disappeared (see too Arnaud 1970, Montout 1994:59-93). But he (no more than the other two) does not provide any idea of the underpinning ideology as system, presumably because, like me, he failed to work it out. He found that aside from the Pa'ikwené's adoption of two features introduced by Catholic missionaries, namely the Christian form of burial and baptism,

"their Christianity goes no further than that... they've not the slightest notion of the Christian doctrine... [and] God's name is used as [no more than] a rhetorical ornament... " (1971:61).

¹⁵ And indeed perhaps the last one, so far has the once customary practice of story and myth telling fallen into disuse. My own shopping around for stories caused something of a revival, with many people expressing regret at the passing of the habit and pleasure and excitement at hearing the old tales again (or in the case of many children, for the first time). As for Kamavi himself, or Léon Orlando to give him his Western name, he was a pastor at Kúmené and half Brazilian. Possessing the face of a Japanese woodcut, he had by his own account just turned eighty when I first met him in January 1994 and was the oldest living Pa'ikwené, and also the only bald one I remember ever seeing.

However, Nimuendaju goes on to state that they also held God to be responsible for the flood whose traces were still to be seen on the slopes of a local mountain where the survivors (ancestors?) found refuge, and believed he dwelt on “Inolliku”, the lowest sky in the native cosmos. This to my mind clearly indicates that no matter how marginal his influence in their lives then, as opposed to his centrality now, the Pa’ikwené had already actively knitted “Ohokri” (the Christian God) into the fabric of their own pre-Christian universe, in terms of both the cosmological and topographical environment; and thus, I suggest, their sociocultural one.

According to Nimuendaju (*ibid.* 62-3), Inolliku was one of three skies; the other two being Mikene and Ęna. There are also several nether worlds, two of which are called Minika and Wainpi. Between the sky worlds and underworlds is our own, which is also peopled by spirits (whom Nimuendaju calls demons in accord with the Pa’ikwené’s own Créole, and Christianised, translation). The first kind, “Yumawali”,¹⁶ of whom there are specific types, inhabit the mountains and are considered malign and harmful to humans. Against them are arrayed the undifferentiated benign spirits, “Wilaulá”, who reside in lakes and rivers and whose aid and protection can be procured through shamanic action, as can the powers of the evil spirits. Both the Wilaulá and the various Yumawali typically take the form of certain birds (e.g. the macaw and hawk respectively); the latter can also incarnate themselves as other creatures, such as the alligator (the spirit Ulupli) or a snake (Mahipokli). There are also other supernatural entities, among whom there is Maipoko; a “powerful demon called Kamubalu” (p. 62); Tukumaka, the bird(hawk?)-spirit whose form is ‘adopted’ by dead shamans, and Kalumaira. The last lived in a “little secondary sky” called Yinoklin, which lies beneath the first sky; deciding to come to earth, he had himself born of a woman and was in his terrestrial existence a powerful and famous shaman.

Today, much if not most is missing of the Pa’ikwené’s pre-Christian system of beliefs and rituals (which seems broadly similar to those of other indigenous groups in the Guianas, see Roth 1915). And, regrettably, the above can be but a superficial - and tantalising - glimpse of what must be both an exciting cosmology and an impressive intellectual construct. However, apart from fragments, it seems

¹⁶ The cosmology of the Akawaio, a Carib people, possesses a (forest) spirit called by the similar sounding name of “Imawali” (Butt 1962:29). It is not possible that either the Pa’ikwené borrowed a Carib word or the Akawaio an Arawakan one? The first hypothesis is more likely to be correct as informants told me it was not a Pa’ikwené word but a Galibi one (thus Carib).

fated to remain largely unknown to the non-Pa'ikwené world. Can one say the same in regard to the present day Pa'ikwené themselves? Montout, who carried out research in 1994¹⁷, notes (op. cit.:59-60) a continuing traditional belief in the presence of good spirits (“Anamapti”) and bad ones (Atimpekevunim”), who live in the natural elements of water, sky and forest and assume different animal forms. The bad spirits are said to metamorphose into humans in order to deceive men and women and eat them; the good ones watch over humans and are benevolent. Life, he reports, is seen as a state both of rivalry and complicity between the supernatural and human realms, and nature and “man’s space”, and that there is no boundary between the spheres, the spirits are present among humans and the latter can enter the domain of the former. He also describes a belief in metempsychosis, wherein dead people are reincarnated mostly in the form of birds.

Apart from Nimuendaju’s claim that the ‘good’ spirits are undifferentiated, and his view of a particular being called “Wavitché”, to whom I devote the next section, my own research data (given below) more or less coincides with Nimuendaju’s original findings. However, observation of, and talks with, the shamans Waptchi and Ovayan, provided further details about the spirit world. So too did stories and myths collected from various individuals, and, most of all, perhaps, the ordinary everyday utterances and actions of Christian Pa'ikwené people behind which there often seemed to lurk, and linger, the shadowy presence of ‘old’ ways of thinking and being. To all of which I shall refer in due course.

“Wavitché”: the unqualifiably satanic... or not?

It is not inconceivable that the division into good and bad, as represented above (and as presented by Nimuendaju), might not be a purely indigenous concept. It could, rather, be an amalgam, the consequence of a certain Christian influence predating that of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, not merely through prior contact with the Jesuits (as tenuous as it was, it must still have produced, I propose,

¹⁷ Indeed our paths crossed several times, and it is through him that I found out about the existence of the shamans Ovayan and Waptchi, for which information I record my thanks. (My fellow villagers in Espérance 2 had till then sidestepped my questions about shamans and denied all knowledge of their whereabouts, insisting that since the coming of God’s word, there were none left. In the event Ovayan and Waptchi turned out to be living literally next door: the house I resided in was the first one in Espérance 2; the shamans’, certainly no more than two hundred metres away, was virtually the last one in Espérance 1; the only thing dividing us was a little stream, and a significant measure of fear and protectiveness.)

some cultural impact), but also with the Créole world.¹⁸ As Montout “venture[s] to suggest without too much risk” (1994:61), but a touch too simplistically perhaps, the Pa’ikwené’s continuing ‘traditional’ and Manichean-like belief in the existence of good spirits and bad spirits at a time when their ancestral magico-religious system seems to be in decay, could be the result of Christian influence effectively stretching back many centuries.

On the other hand, the case of the supernatural entity known as “Wavitché” might indicate that endogenous Pa’ikwené conceptualisation not only was not, but indeed still is not, necessarily split along the irreconcilable lines of Judeo-Christian ‘good versus evil’ morality -- which does not mean that it does not have its own dyadic notions of, and attach its own particular values to, good and bad, negative and positive, as Rosengren has shown (1996) for the equally Arawakan Matsigenka.¹⁹

Nimuendaju classifies (op. cit. 61) “Wavitché”, which the Pa’ikwené translate in Créole as the Devil (‘le Diab’), as a thoroughgoing Christian construct and the opponent of the equally completely Christian “Ohokri”/God (see too Arnaud 1970). A number of Pa’ikwené converts presented it as a spirit existing in polar opposition to “Ohokri Gitchip” (The Holy Ghost, literally “God’s Spirit” and on whom more below) rather than to “Ohokri” *per se*. However, in contrast to this, both shamanic discourse and the speech and ideas of ordinary Pa’ikwené, including converts, reveal “Wavitché” to be a more ambiguous entity with links to, and probably its provenance in, the pre-Christian cosmology, a matter already discussed in chapter 5. As reported above, the shamans Waptchi and Ovayan described ‘him’²⁰ not in terms of an antithetical God-Satan principle but as a superspirit whose great power can be invoked, and used, by humans alternatively for good or bad ends.

It seems, then, more likely that it was co-opted into the Christian Pa’ikwené

¹⁸ With which, as noted, the Pa’ikwené have long maintained commercial, and wider, relations (see Arnaud 1984:42, Nimuendaju op. cit.:9, 80-82, P. Grenand 1987:75-6, Ricardo op. cit.:22-3).

¹⁹ I do not wish it to be thought that I am arguing that ‘Christian’ and ‘pre- or non-Christian’, ‘contact’ and ‘pre-contact’, ‘indigenous’ and ‘alien’, can coexist inside the individual’s mind, and also the collective culture, as if in discrete and separate compartments with impermeable boundaries. Of course a mutual flow exists between them, and they have to an extent coalesced.

²⁰ The suffix ‘é’ in the word “Wavitché” denotes the masculine gender, spirits being categorised by the Pa’ikwené as belonging to the class of items held to be male.

cosmos from the ranks, both demonic and non-demonic, of their preexisting spirits, each of whom possesses and embodies some form of power.

In regard specifically to the notion of 'good' and 'bad', Rosengren points out (op. cit.:19) that the ways in which Western and Amerindian conceptualisations both organise the world in terms of a duality²¹ are only (apparently) similar at the structural level of form. We should beware, he says, of assuming, or concluding, that the same holds true for their content (cf. Ryan 1981:530-1). Thus, for instance, among the Matsigenka, while each of the two creator gods created all that is 'good' and 'not good' respectively, they themselves are not thought of as moral personages or archetypes. Rather, it is their knowledge/power which is good or bad; as is, crucially, the intention behind the human being's invocation and use of it, and the purpose to which he or she puts it (pp. 5-7).

Similarly, while there is a group of 'good' spirits and a group of 'bad' ones, they are not seen to constitute or represent moral standards as such. For in that it is the person's agency in resorting to either set which in effect both practically and morally triggers the spirits' capacity for good or evil, then the responsibility for, and enactment of, moral behaviour is not the supernatural entity's but the human social actor's (pp. 9-11).²²

Very much like those of the Matsigenka, the Pa'ikwené's own conceptions of good and bad seem to be more pragmatically based than metaphysically constructed. They arise in other words from active sociological praxis rather than derive from cosmological example and legitimation. There does not appear to exist any pre-Christian mythology serving specifically as a blueprint or Malinowskian 'charter' for formal norms and actual standards of sociomoral conduct. Unlike their Judeo-Christian counterparts, actions and thoughts which are "kabai" (good, right, nice, fine, well etc.), and also "baréúyé" (beautiful, clean, proper, pleasing), are not reflections and projections of an intrinsically divine nature. On the contrary, they are primordially human states. Thus, moral behaviour is grounded in, reproduced by, and, essentially, an embodiment of, the practical everyday process of social

²¹ On the widespread governing principle of duality in the philosophy and social organisation of the indigenous (so-called) "dialectical societies" of South America see *inter alia* Maybury-Lewis 1979, Crocker 1985, Lévi-Strauss 1945, Overing Kaplan 1975.

²² Cf. Overing 1985b.

relationships as experienced and *engendered* by humans living together not merely interactively, which should go without saying, but above all convivially.²³ The indigenous morality, then, should, to quote Rosengren (op. cit.:16), “sooner be seen in terms of an innate quality of human relations than as god given rules of behaviour”.

“Wavitché” - its presence and potency - was constantly in the background of life in Espérance 2. People thought of it, and feared it, as Satan, holding it to be the motivational force behind an individual’s anti-social and immoral acts, such as fighting or getting drunk, and the instigator of negative emotions.²⁴ Reference to “Wavitché” tended to make people nervous. It could even sometimes provoke you to laughter at someone else’s expense, for it not only perpetrated evil acts but mischievous, mysterious ones like causing a needed tool to go missing or parking an object in an unfamiliar place.

Yet, conversely, “Wavitché”, it was seen and admitted, also had the ability to do good: it could, above all, not only bring illness and affliction but remove them. Its power, then, was not uniquely malign and harmful. Rather, its unique power was, when mediated through its proper agent, the “ihamwi” (shaman), morally and practically capable of double, or alternative, effects (cf. S. Hugh-Jones op. cit.:35-6 on the ambivalence of the shaman’s use of spiritually derived powers for either good or bad ends).

However, in contrast to either this view or the one reported by Nimuendaju (namely that “Wavitché” is unilaterally a bad spirit), other informants had yet a third interpretation. It was their understanding that “Wavitché” was not a singular spirit at all but the name of a certain supernatural genus of which there were two species, one benign and the other not.

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²³ By which I mean well/sociably/peacefully/satisfyingly and also productively (See chapter 8, also Overing 1989, 1996).

²⁴ Those quoted to me were anger, irritation, jealousy, envy, and “nastiness”. I was also told that sadness (“kadni”), which comes from both the head and the heart, is like intelligence and volition in that it can be either good or bad. The former kind is “put into” a person by “Ohokri” (God), the latter by “Wavitché”.

A supernatural typology.

“... [A]n extensive taxonomy of the spiritual world (not easily reducible to homogeneous principles), an active presence of that world in daily life...”
(Viveiros de Castro 1992:2)

(a) Different spirit entities.

Like the Araweté (Viveiros de Castro *ibid.*) and others, but with the extra factor of their present adherence to the new and superimposed belief system, the Pa'ikwené possess a large taxonomy relating to the spirit world. That world is not so much contiguous with their everyday one as 'as if' permanently inserted within it. It was less a matter of the supernatural sphere being potentially and at times actually in 'this world', than of its being invisibly or visibly (and aurally) so; and its presence, whether unseen and unheard or seen and heard, was as equally, though differently, active within this one as that of the Araweté's spirit world in their own daily life²⁵ (See Goldman's observation [1975:8] that in Amerindian societies there is “no demarcation between the natural and the supernatural... [and] no oppositional vocabulary to separate religious from non-religious”. Cf. Soyinka [1978:1-36] apropos the 'Western' Platonic-Christian splitting of the “cosmic totality”).

Apart from “Ohokri” and Jesus Christ (and also “Ohokri Gitchip”, ‘The Holy Spirit [or Ghost]’, of whom more later in section 3 below), “Wavitché” was, as we have just seen, the spirit entity most often in the Evangelical-Pentecostalist Pa'ikwené's thoughts and on his or her lips. Yet there also existed a number of others, both autochthonous and imported, to whom reference was made (with varying frequency).

Pa'ikwené Spirit Entities:

Imaowi (possibly Nimuendaju's Yumawali, which he says are mountain spirits). According to numerous informants these entities live in the forests, are very beautiful and “not bad but very kind”. One specified that an Imaowi “is not a ‘Wavitché’ (evil spirit) but a ‘Ohokri’ (god)”.²⁶ They are said to lure and seduce young men and women, assuming the guise of a pretty young

²⁵ While Pa'ikwené cosmology, for instance, gives some evidence of the common Amazonian theme of cannibalism, it does not make such a meal of it, as it were, as the Araweté's more systematic conceptual schema. The ‘Yumawali’ were believed, as mentioned above, to catch and eat the odd unfortunate human, yet that is the inescapable fate of all Araweté who at death are devoured by the “Maï hete” gods in order to be turned into gods themselves (Viveiros de Castro *op. cit.*:58-91).

²⁶ See Viveiros de Castro (*op. cit.*:343 n. 17) on whether or not the term ‘god’ is applicable to the spiritual entities of Amazonian peoples.

woman or a handsome young man in either case, and to take them off to live in the forest with them. They use Imaowi language between themselves but can also speak in all other languages. The Imaowi do not eat fish but only birds and animals (There is a 'correspondence' here with the "ihamwi", for he or she is not allowed to eat fish when in a shamanic session "because the spirits don't like them to and would be upset and angry if they did"). There are several types of Imaowi, such as:

Marivoka (or Maripoka; possibly Nimuendaju's Maipoko). According to Waptchi the shaman and others, it is the Master and Mother of water. A myth, collected by Nimuendaju in the twenties (op. cit.:78) and still recounted today (see Appendix A story 5), tells of how, as a water snake spirit who transforms into a handsome young man and impregnates a Pa'ikwené woman, Marivoka is also the father of their traditional enemy, the Galibi people.

Panamik, another forest spirit, but a bad, anthropophagic one. It has the ability to change its appearance not only into human or animal form but also into an object, e.g. a spear. It is further distinguished by the lack of an anus.

Abès are a type of forest spirits, both male and female, which, again, are "very kind". They look and dress like Indians and are normally invisible. If caught sight of they will then appear as "little people", though in their natural state they are said to be taller in fact than humans. While they usually disappear when approached by a person who does see one, contact can occasionally be established. Male ones sometimes seduce Pa'ikwené women. It is said that the child born of such a union is more likely than not to have a twisted foot.

Avakni (also known in Créole as Pagani): the harpy eagle-spirit: "It's a devil... he can fly... it's a very bad spirit with seven heads." For all his malignity and hostility to the Pa'ikwené he was also said to act at times on their behalf. I was told a story in which he in effect proved to be their saviour by fighting, killing and eating a certain nameless White chief who was stealing gold from their land. He was once killed himself but later resurrected.

Masitwak, a "foreign devil-spirit" and guardian-master of the forest where he lives with his wife and son. Very strong and tall. He wears iron clothes and as well as a bow and arrows has a rifle "like a White man"; his "teeth are like a White man's" too. Indeed I was told that the Whiteman and Masitwak were brothers and enemies. (cf. Overing 1995 on the Piaroa's 'conquistador Master of the Jungle'). He is able to metamorphose into a human being of any race or nationality; speaks all languages; "never ever eats jaguar" but attacks and devours humans who venture into the forest without first obtaining his permission and protection; and never goes near to villages: "he is in disagreement with humans". There exist several stories of Pa'ikwené confronting, outsmarting and defeating Masitwak, e.g. the hero **Maniga**. As one informant said, "Before, Maniga beat Masitwak so the Pa'ikwené were stronger than the Whites, but now they are stronger than us." In view of Masitwak's many post-contact features, I tried to discover if there was another (and perhaps pre-Masitwak) master of the forest, and was given the name **Yadris**. Other than this, however, no one seemed to know anything about him.

Súyen and Kaú: two bird-spirit brothers (the first a species of small parrot; the second possibly the blue macaw or else a small black bird), born of separate spirit mothers and a Pa'ikwené father. Totem-like²⁷ creatures for the Pa'ikwené who once went to war against the Maraón people who had dared to poach them (see Appendix A story 3).

Wamwi, a water-snake spirit, and **Wanésé**, his water-snake spirit wife (who in one story attacks the Pa'ikwené in order to avenge his death at their hands and is killed herself. Their son is helped by **Mainai**, a Pa'ikwené man whom Wamwi had once captured (Appendix A story 4).

The following are all spirits²⁸ resorted to and communicated with by the shaman Waptchi:

Kamúyoné, the sun spirit and perhaps the greatest spirit of them all (cf. Montout's Kamouyounim [op. cit.:71], and possibly Nimuendaju's Kamubalu); **Kaigévinié**, the moon spirit: "Very powerful"; **Taowené**, spirit of the "taoni" tree (? *Brosimum acutifolium*) from which the "ihamwi" gets the hallucinogen used for establishing communication with the spirit world. Also "very powerful"; it has the jaguar spirit incorporated in it as well as that of other natural species); **Kaúmaiyé**, the ancestor/creator spirit of the Pa'ikwené (see Appendix A story 1); **Haokiné**, the master and mother of the air; **Atiúwiné**, the spirit of Créoles; **Kaia**, a spirit of hunting and fishing (According to Montout [ibid.], the Pa'ikwené say that it is sometimes white and sometimes black, and travels through the air in a big canoe accompanied by a horde of subaltern spirits which are called 'Doctors' in Créole because they intercede for the good of humans; **Iwiv(r)ayené**, the bamboo spirit; **Arawyéné** (Kiptúnka word), the wild pig spirit; **Konopo**, a lake spirit; **Waukma**, a star spirit; **Issúvinyé**, the crow spirit; **Kamiki**, a bird spirit (I know not what kind); **Warayéné** (or ? Wakayéné), the flamingo spirit. This is also the name given by Arnaud's informants to a powerful shaman of the past remembered for his many malign deeds (1970:9, 1984:45. Also possibly P. Grenand's Wepkune [1987:79]); **?**, the colibri spirit; **?**, the crab spirit.

²⁷ Mattioni proposes (1975:75) that the Pa'ikwené's ancestral 'naturist' religion was in all likelihood originally totemic as well. Nimuendaju, who found evidence of it in the clan names, concluded that it could only be "totemism in the most primitive sense of the word" (op. cit.:17). Montout states (op. cit.:53-4) that though the clans may once have been totemically linked with the natural species designating them, no belief in totemism exists among the Pa'ikwené today. This coincides with my own findings in respect of conscious totemic conceptualisation.

For different theoretical approaches to totemism see principally Durkheim 1971:102-239, Radcliffe-Brown 1959:117-32, Malinowski 1954:44-7, Lévi-Strauss 1962a. Viveiros de Castro's rejects (1992:3 and throughout) the universal application of the structuralist 'totemic model' to all Amazonian societies. The postulation that Amerindian society socialises nature and is thus 'animic' rather than 'totemic, which would conversely infer a naturalisation of society, is made by Descola (1986). Århem however argues (1996) regarding the Makuna that the relationship between humans and nature is conceived not in unidirectional but reciprocal terms, and Amerindian society is consequently both 'animic' and 'totemic'.

²⁸ I was given to understand that the word "Wavitché" can itself also mean spirit in the generic sense. Another word used is "gitchip" (as in "Ohokri Gitchip", the Christian Holy Spirit [see section 3 (b) below; "gi" being the masculine prefix "his"). Two further terms are "anmaptchi", somewhat incompletely translatable as soul and ghost or spectre, and "aonparinen", again signifying soul.

(Spirit) birds are a core aspect of the shamanic religion, as Nimuendaju noted, and the “ihamwi” seeks frequently possession by, and a trance communication with, them. According to Waptchi, not only birds but all fish and animals are spirits, we just see their (‘natural’) terrestrial forms. Sometimes, like the aforementioned Imaowi and Abès, they present themselves to us in human guise; at others in that of plants. Some further spirits (provided this time by Montout’s research [op. cit. *ibid.*:71]) are:

Miko, a spirit specialising in problems relating to love; **Waché-anakig**, the death spirit; **Kousouvi**, the master of the stars; **Yaóúweni**, a spirit resorted to in conflicts between shamans.

There is another entity who possesses a mythological status (like the aforementioned hero Maniga) and a near supernatural one; and also a species of beings who possess a fully supernatural one. Namely:

Tchalbé, a powerful Pa’ikwené chief who abandons them to become the “chief of foreigners” (including White people).

Both Tchalbé and Pagani, the alternative name for Avakni (the harpy eagle-spirit), seem to have a Créole connection or, possibly, origin. A Pa’ikwené story about Tchalbé slaying Avakni in order to win the hand of a king’s daughter is apparently identical to, if not based on, a Créole one (personal communication from Franck Compper).²⁹

Úgúkú (from the verb “úgúh”, to light or set fire to), a being lamely translatable as ‘werewolf’, which equivalent Créole term (Loup garoup) is used by the Pa’ikwené themselves. It most typically metamorphoses into a will o’ the wisp. Other distinguishing marks are its jaguar teeth and the ability to fly. Úgúkú are said to change at night into animals and birds and even into airborne canoes. Of a necrophiliac disposition, they frequent cemeteries, and also attack living humans and eat them. They can be killed, and will stay dead once shot. There are a number of techniques for combating them (e.g. trapping them inside the sheath-like woven fibre manioc press; either sticking an upended blade into the ground, or concealing an upturned hat under its flight path, while uttering the “right” incantations, will block the Úgúkú’s nocturnal journeying: rendered immobile, it cannot escape and dies at daybreak. In the daytime the Úgúkú can pass for an ordinary human being. I was told of the presence of one in my village, though informants said they were

²⁹ A Créole primary school teacher in St. Georges de L’ Oyapock who, when I recounted several Pa’ikwené stories to him, commented on their similarity to the traditional oral tales told in his own community. For him there was no doubt that Tchalbé was originally the Créole folklore hero ‘Ti Albè’ (Petit Albert).

too afraid to reveal which of our fellow villagers it actually was. You can tell if someone is really an Úgúkú “if they are always in disagreement with other people”. Also, anyone who refuses to shake your hand after you have secretly made the sign of the cross in your palm with a red pepper, is (purportedly) an Úgúkú for sure.

According to one informant, the Úgúkú possesses inhamwi-like abilities in that he also can both send afflictions and cure you of those imposed by another úgúkú (cf. P. Grenand [ibid.] on the Úgúkú’s manipulation of magical plants and strong tobacco-y breath; and Fernandes [1950] who says they send illnesses. He seems to conflate them with sorcerers whereas I found that they were in fact said to act like them.

Arnaud claims (1970:17-18, 1984:47) that the “Úgúkú” is a Western cultural import (“according to the Palikur themselves”), a notion rebutted by P. Grenand (1987:79). He suggests instead that it is of joint Créole and pre-contact indigenous origin and thus a “syncretic phenomenon”. My own informants dismissed both ideas, insisting on the ‘ethnic’ purity of the “Úgúkú”. Although they acknowledged the existence of the aforementioned Créole “Loup garoup”, and another (?) species called “Baclou”, defined as an “Atiwi (Créole) spirit”, they nevertheless distinguished between their own and the other two. The only difference I found in their descriptions of them was that, unlike the “Úgúkú”, the “Baclou” have a tendency to change into dwarfs. Other than that and the “Úgúkú’s” pharmaco-medical skills, all three entities, the Pa’ikwené and the non-Pa’ikwené, seem to possess identical attributes and powers.

(b) Different human agents of the spirit world.

Ihamwi (masc.), **Ihamwú** (fem.), the “healer”. Essentially a shaman. Also known in Pa’ikwaki as “Hiyepwené”, a term reserved for shamans of the past says Nimuendaju (op. cit.:65), who translates it as sorcerer, and Arnaud (1984:44), but now fallen into disuse according to my informants. The latter sometimes also employed the word “Pajé” (a regional appellation of Tupi or Carib origin, see Métraux 1967:81) and “Gado” (Créole). Both Nimuendaju and Arnaud also refer (ibid.) to a third term, “Akúmnairi” (or “Akúmari”), and its likely association with the word “airi”, which they say means tobacco. I think it possible there is a misapprehension or a confusion here. My own data revealed that the tobacco aspect related to “Akúm” which means to smoke, and that probably the suffix “-airi” or “-ari” is, rather, “aviri”, the name given by the Pa’ikwené to a specific practitioner of the wizardly arts (see below) and distinct from the “ihamwi”. (“Akúmnairi” or “Akúmari” was not recognised by my informants as a word let alone as an alternative title for a shaman).

Now held to be an agent of the Devil (“Wavitché”) and therefore, according to the

new orthodoxy, a perpetrator of evil, sinful acts, the “ihamwi” and his or her craft continue to maintain an important place in the minds and discourse of the Evangelical-Pentecostalist Pa’ikwené (as well as in the thinking and actual life experience of many non-Evangelical-Pentecostal ones). I will deal in fuller detail both with the “ihamwi” and the shamanic religion he or she is part of, and also their meaning and relevance to others, in the next two sections.

Aviri (or avi’i), a sort of *wizard*. (While I did not come across or hear about a female one, there have been some). Called a “*sorcerer*” and a “blower” by Arnaud (1984:46), the last term because of the Aviri’s technique of blowing tobacco smoke (and with it spells and imprecations). A Christian convert explained that the aviri “sings magical words [which are] like prayers in order to send illness or kill someone” (“avi”, which was translated for me as prayer, seems linked to “avat” [= song]). They are, however, also capable of good and benign acts (as already noted by Arnaud *ibid.*:47), and “suck out” certain types of pain and illness, which may partly be why Arnaud defines them as ‘specialists’ (*ibid.*). Likewise, they remove the danger which may, as the result of a curse, be present in foods (see Montout *op. cit.*:64-5).

Outside observers (Fernandes, Arnaud) have tended to accord the “aviri” a lower status than the “ihamwi”. The Pa’ikwené I spoke to appeared to apply no such grading. Rather, the distinction they drew was one of a degree of function. The two roles or ‘jobs’ would seem to serve a complementary purpose, and to act in complementary ways. For Arnaud, their association is not always a positive and peaceful one, and he gives both an example of murderous rivalry between them (*ibid.*: 45) and one of alliance and co-operation (p. 47). An informant (Alphonse Y.) said that the “aviri” could also cure you like the “ihamwi” did, but only of certain things which the “ihamwi” does not (or is perhaps not allowed to) handle, such as afflictions non-ascribable to witchcraft (see Montout *op. cit.*:64-5); and that the two were basically the same: “only the name is different”. Both worked through the medium of tobacco and words: the “ihamwi” with songs, chants, and dialogues in Kiptúnka with the spirits, and the “aviri” with sung magical words; both types of communication being unintelligible to ordinary people. For Alphonse, the “aviri” was but a type of alternative healer to the “ihamwi” and, no more than him or her, was not just a doer of malign deeds (see Arnaud *ibid.*). For while each could act malefically through the use of ‘bad spirits’, both also used ‘good spirits’ for opposite ends. His daughter (S.) disagreed in terms of the new and Christian doxa: even if it cures you, the healing by both parties is evil because it comes from a satanic source.

She and many of the other villagers I spoke to expressed at times a paranoia-like fear that, as Evangelicals, they were targeted by the shamans who were (supposedly) out to kill them all through black magical means. It was only thanks, they said, to the eternal vigilance of God and his love and care for Evangelicals that they were protected. S. reminded her father that he had once survived a death curse put on him by an “ihamwi” only because he prayed to God and was saved. If a cursed person is not an Evangelical-Pentecostalist (the thinking goes) then they are not under God’s eternal protection and will surely perish. And yet (and thus), as ever, the two discourses and belief systems existed and expressed themselves coevally, neither quite ever submerging the other.³⁰

Pa’ikwené shamanism: the world and work of the “ihamwi”.

Having placed Pa’ikwené religion in its contemporary and broad context, I turn now to look at shamanism. First, some givens, assumptions and surmises:

(i) There has not only been an impairment to belief in shamanism, as discussed above, but, as a probable consequence, a fall in the actual numbers of shamans. P. Grenand notes (op. cit.:78 fn. 2) that (in the mid 1980’s) there were four shamans “still practising openly”, which implies there were others doing so in secret. I have no way of telling whether there were ‘clandestine’ “ihamwi” during my time in the field (1993-5), but it was more than once stressed that Ovayan and Waptchi were the “last two shamans”. Overlooking Ovayan, Montout describes (op. cit.:70) her husband and religious co-worker as the “last Palikur shaman on French territory”. It is true however that Ovayan professed to no longer be practising her skills, because of her old age. As for Waptchi, who, as reported in footnote 14, is an ill man, he was doing so less and less. (By contrast, the “aviri” are not only surviving but numerically flourishing; they are to be found in both the French and Brazilian sectors of the Pa’ikwené world, at Village Espérance 1, Macouria, Régina, Kúmené, and several of the other settlements in Aúkwa.)

(ii) As mentioned, there are female as well as male Pa’ikwené shamans (see

³⁰ Montout mentions (op. cit.:69) further human agents of the Pa’ikwené’s supernatural world. These are “Pirekevumin” and “Caveyavouwié”, two types of sorcerers (or perhaps two names for the same type) not encountered by me. They are said to deal with evil spirits and cast spells but not to have access to the full range of powers at the disposal of the “ihamwi”.

Arnaud 1984:44, and also Nimuendaju op. cit.:64 who reports that there were not any when he went to Aúkwa [1925] though they had existed in the past). It is worth noting that while Waptchi was known and feared by everyone as the "ihamwi", his skills were rated less favourably than those of his wife, Ovayan; she was said to be more powerful than him. Women shamans are by no means unique to the Pa'ikwené. Métraux's study of shamanism in the Guianas and Amazonia (1967) reveals that their existence is quite widespread. It concludes however that, overall, the practice is male dominated: "[Though] the profession is virtually masculine in essence, it is not closed to women, who, however, play an important role in shamanism in but a very small number of tribes" (p. 81, my translation). One other Guiana Lowland society where women do occupy that role is the Piaroa, who have joint male and female political-religious leaders (Overing Kaplan 1975:51). Viveiros de Castro reports (op. cit.:237, 369 note 16) the existence of the conjugal "shamanic unit" in eastern Amazonia, among the Araweté and other Tupi-Guarani peoples.³¹

(iii) Pa'ikwené shamans are categorised into three classes: "Born" ones: those seen innately to have certain 'mystical' powers and a disposition for shamanism, as if having been selected by the spiritual forces themselves; "Called" ones: those who have been called by a given spirit or combination of spirits; "Formed" ones who learn the practices from either of the other two, who transmit 'their' powers to him or her (see Montout op. cit.:72-3). Waptchi was an "ihamwi" of the last type, and was trained by Ovayan, who apparently learnt the shamanic rituals and formulae, both verbal and medicinal, from her own parents (who were, I was told, not Pa'ikwené but Kúma-Húmac, i.e. ? Aúra).

(iv) As well as his or her curative role, the "ihamwi" (invariably translated in Créole as 'healer' by the Pa'ikwené) has divining skills and, it is said, the power to control

³¹ However, unlike in Pa'ikwené shamanism, the Araweté woman's function is seen as inferior to the man's. Notwithstanding which, "Even if Araweté shamanism is an exclusively masculine attribute - the woman being a mere assistant or a patient - such a position... is relatively feminine... due to... the very nature of the relationship of the shaman to the gods." (Viveiros de Castro *ibid.*:237). And even despite odd cases of women shamans, the function is an "eminently masculine" one among the Guarani in general (p. 260).

Overing shows (1986:148-9, 1988) that for the Piaroa, too, the granting of productive knowledge from the spirit gods to the shaman is seen in terms akin to the process of (female) fertility, itself held to be a knowledge obtained by women from the same divine source. See also, as yet further evidence of this connection, Belaunde's data (1992:119-20) on how Airo-Pai men protect both their manly health and capacity for being good shamans by 'acting like a woman' in taking over the cooking duties from their wives when the latter are menstruating.

the natural elements, such as the rain and storms (Arnaud 1984:45). The “ihamwi” also mediates with the spirit world in order to obtain success in the hunt (not in terms of charming game but, rather, of establishing communicative contact with them via the spirit guardian-masters and securing safe-conduct from the “protector animals”, the jaguar and [I believe though am not certain] anaconda). Payment for their services (traditionally) took the form of cashiri.

(v) Lastly, many observers talk of Amerindian shamanism and shamans in terms of ‘specialisation’ (see e.g. Rivière 1984:12, Fernandes op. cit., Arnaud op. cit.) and even ‘profession’ (Métraux op. cit.:81).³² It is ultimately more helpful, however, to view the “ihamwi”, and the subject generally, more as a process and an existential condition which are not limited to certain named experts. I suggest that, for the Pa’ikwené, to be shamanic is primarily, to use Campbell’s words (1989:106), a “quality or attribute rather than a role or an office’. That not only are the “ihamwi”, or the “aviri”, able to attain to that quality, but others, for all that they do not fill the ‘official’ post, may too, if in varying degrees. And that, furthermore, the quality exists in the spiritual-material environment about one, and, for example, *still* finds expression in the nowadays “ihamwi”-less activity of hunting (see chapter 4 section iii) and also in the sphere of pharmacology and medicine, as I intend showing below. To that extent, then, Pa’ikwené shamanism could perhaps be said to belong to the “democratic” or “horizontal” type common to egalitarian societies in Amazonia, as opposed to the “vertical” one associated with ranked societies, according to the classification established by S. Hugh-Jones (op. cit.).

The spirit breathes, the spirit sings, the spirit speaks: an encounter with (possibly) the last Pa’ikwené shamans, Waptchi and Ovayan.³³

This encounter, already briefly referred to in chapter 4, effectively amounted to an interview-cum-staged séance.³⁴ While contrived, it was also nevertheless genuine to the extent that Waptchi went into a possession trance; but whether out of reflex

³² Cf. Mauss who, though stating (1972:26) that “as a general rule, magical practices are the prerogative of specialists”, also says (p. 25) that he uses the term ‘magician’ “to apply to any practitioner of magic, whether or not he considers himself a professional. In effect, we maintain that there are magical rites which can be performed by others besides specialists”.

³³ See Montout op. cit.:71-2 for the account of his own meeting with Waptchi.

³⁴ For a description of an actual one see Nimuendaju op. cit:65-6.

and long habit, or because he had hallucinogenically primed himself to some extent beforehand, I could not say. It took place in public in Espérance 1, on the platform of the shamans' house amid the usual disparate, mix-and-(mis)match effects and trappings, the usual part 'Western', part indigenous décor, of the modern Pa'ikwené household: a radio-cassette player, a zoomorphic (macaw) stool, and a Brazilian political poster, calabashes, aluminium pots and Chinese enamel mugs... In a corner, as if nonchalantly secreted behind the domestic clutter until they were eventually pulled out and explained and, some of them, put to use, were the paraphernalia of the "ihamwi's" calling: magical arrows, feather head-dresses, dance neck- and breast-plates, little pouches of cloth, several long, plumed, long thin wooden wands topped with gourd rattles, a monkeyskin drum, and bamboo and bone flutes (see Montout op. cit.:90-1 on Pa'ikwené shamanic implements and musical instruments). Waptchi at that time (March 1994) was sixty seven years old, frail and tuberculosis-ridden, subdued and without any discernible aura. Ovayan, bent and gnarled and amuleted, and with piercing yet guarded eyes, was, by contrast, a woman of palpable charisma. Their middle-aged son Tchig, not a shaman himself but an Evangelical-Pentecostalist convert, warded off my more awkward questions, attempted to clarify my multiple moments of confusion, and oversaw my efforts at translation. I was also helped, as so often, by Karinai, in whose house I lived and who had accompanied me out of a very real interest, for all his professed Christian disapproval.

At the age of about forty five Waptchi became an "ihamwi" under Ovayan's supervision, for, as mentioned above, she already was one. When, hoping for details of the "difficult and dangerous [shamanic] apprenticeship" (Rivière op. cit.:12), I asked if the training had been long and arduous, he replied, "No, it took just one week!"³⁵ He told me that his ability to heal is not his but belongs to the spirits. He calls them up through songs, playing the musical instruments, and the inhalation of the smoke from tobacco and the bark of the "taoni" tree (see above). Then, in his own words, "My memory engages with the moon, sun, forest, sea, river, all the places where the spirits live. They enter into me, come into the house in my head." While mostly the spirits come to him, he is also able at times to 'journey' to their various realms and visit with them, as well as with the spirits of dead people.

³⁵ On the in reality more complex subject of the initiation of Pa'ikwené shamans, see Arnaud 1984:44, 1970:4; Montout op. cit.:72-5. Karinai, whose own late father had been a shaman, also supplied me with data showing initiation to be a gruelling and testing process. However, I do not have the space for it here.

These are not all Pa'ikwené; there are Brazilian, French and Créole ones too, and also Portuguese, from when Brazil was a colony. The most powerful spirits are the masters and mothers of the air, water, sun, and moon. There are numerous other ones too (see list above).

Describing all this to me, Waptchi started physically to enact it and in the process gradually became more and more immersed in the actual performance. Shortly, having been called, “Maripoka”, the master-mother of water in his-her guise of watersnake spirit caused a song to “rise” in the “ihamwi”, who, after singing it, explained that *it is the spirits who sing and talk through him*, who “breathe” in his voice and in his breathing and the musical instruments. For instance, it is “Iwiv(r)ayené”, the bamboo-spirit, who inhabits the flute and breathes itself out through the instrument’s sound. The summoned spirit also fills the other sacred objects, such as his zoomorphic stool and the items used in curing. The spirit it is, too, who, having filled the “ihamwi”, effects the healing through the medium or conductivity of the human being in a state of shamanic receptivity. Thus, I was told, it is not the healer’s own suction which directly draws out an ill person’s affliction, but the spirit sucking with and through the healer’s mouth.

Many of the songs and chants which Waptchi and Ovayan, who had now decided to participate, performed were not in Pa'ikwené but Kiaptúnka, the special “speech of respect” (see chapter 5 item iv). I was told that this was not the spirits’ language as such, but that of the “old ones”, which the spirits knew and generally preferred to communicate in. Partly because of the present widespread unfamiliarity with this tongue, and partly due to the way in which a lot of the singing and chant-conversations tended to be mumbled and hard to hear, most of the onlookers deemed it unintelligible yet not for all that without a significance. Waptchi and Ovayan also said that they themselves could not always understand it fully, but that the spirits could.³⁶

At another level of comprehension, whatever reservations they might have felt as

³⁶See Tambiah 1968:177-88 for whom ‘unintelligible’ sacred languages constitute a system of communication (between the human and the supernatural spheres) which is qualitatively the same as that of intelligible ‘ordinary’ languages, and are both powerful and (*contra* Malinowski 1965:235) rational. Rothenberg believes (1968:i-xxiv, 385-519 *passim*) that ‘meaningless’ archaic language, as well as all the other types of magical and religious language, such as invented sounds, distorted everyday syntax and sounds, and borrowed syntax, are aspects universally of a sacred “poetry”.

Christian converts all present ‘heard-understood’ that the “ihamwi’s” words possessed the ability to heal or to afflict and destroy, to have, in short, magical power. More than that, they seemed in some sense to consider the words themselves to be that power. As already reported, they were thought not to be Waptchi’s own ones, but those of the spirit inside him - yet they were not the spirit’s words so much as the spirit itself, its concrete living form. To explain, I would suggest that when “Iwiv(r)ayené” or “Maripoka” or any of the other summoned entities spoke ‘out of’ Waptchi, their words were not just hypostatically correlated to the substance of the things spoken about.³⁷ The speech was also perceived and experienced as its speaker, the latter’s embodiment: the word-thing is the sayer, the sayer is the word-thing.³⁸ Waptchi and the others would not, I feel, endorse Tambiah’s view (op. cit.:176-85) that the power attaching to magico-religious utterances lies in their being the “most realistic representations of a [human] concept of force which is... not directly observable” (p. 184), and acting as the signs, reminders, and re-enactors of the authority of an original powerful and empowering Word, be it the ancestors’ or a god’s. Rather, the Pa’ikwené’s thinking appeared in line with Stoller’s notion (1984:569) about the magical power of words: that they intrinsically “*are* power, energy... action” (my stress).

Whether in arcane Kiptúnka or demotic Pa’ikwaki, the songs often had sequences of dialogue, either interwoven throughout or occurring as a sort of coda, between spirit and shaman. These were sometimes conducted by the tranced Waptchi with his spirit-possessed self (like a ventriloquist’s act without a visible dummy), and at other times occurred between himself and Ovayan as the spirit’s mouthpiece. On one occasion, for example, a bird spirit asked if “this man” (that is, me) had come to ask the “ihamwi” to sing. When the “ihamwi” answered that this was indeed so, the spirit commented, “There were many songs once, but no longer.” When it was its turn, “Waúkma” (star spirit) stated, “Someone has come, I’ll make a song for him”. “Kamiki” (a game bird [?]-spirit), on the other hand, told Waptchi it had come to hear *him* sing (on the aural aspects of the “ihamwi’s” world chapter 4 section iii).

In a number of other such conversations, different spirits (flamingo spirit, lake

³⁷ ‘The word is the thing, the thing is the word’, Cassirer 1953. A “theory which appeals [says Tambiah op. cit.:187] to shaky ethnography.”

³⁸ Cf. Leenhardt’s description (1947:164-97) of the Melanesian Houailou’s understanding of ‘Parole’ as the “manifestation of a being... an existent... of the human in all its aspects, from the life of the psyche to manual work to the expression of thought... [The conception reveals that] little differentiation is made between being and thing [i.e., word]” (p. 172, my translation).

spirit, wild pig spirit), asked him how he was, if his family were well, and what could they do for him. In the prelude to a healing song, “Issúvinyé” (crow spirit) announced: “I have come because you call me to help this sick person”. I do not know what it made of being called out on false pretences as it were.

The “ihamwi’s” songs were not always the creation of a spirit acting singly. He performed a cashiri-drinking dance and song in which many spirits joined together to give multiple voice. “All the spirits are friends,” said Waptchi. But then later added: “Some spirits fight each other. Some are good and some bad.”

For Métraux (op. cit.:100-1), a shaman’s influence and power is quantifiable, being determined by the number of spirits he ‘controls’. Regarding Pa’ikwené shamanism, and the “ihamwi” in particular, Waptchi and Ovayan seemed themselves to have no power as such. Neither were they said to have any: if they were an object of fear for my fellow villagers (and I have already indicated they were seen as more than *just* such figures), it was not only as a result of their satanisation according to Protestant fundamentalist ideology; nor indeed because of any supposed possession of evil powers. Rather, I propose, it was because the powers of the spirits, both good and bad, with which an “ihamwi” deals, and with which he or she is therefore by extension filled, are (held to be) intrinsically, ‘naturally’ dangerous. What power pertains to Pa’ikwené shamanism, then, is not human but numinously extra-human. It belongs to, inheres in, *and derives from*, the spirit entities which enter into the human being and, from that temporary base, continue to wield it. Thus, it is not the “ihamwi” who controls the spirits so much as they who are in control of him (which fact effectively confers his dangerousness, and ‘causes’ the fear others have of him). What the “ihamwi” seeks is not power over these entities but contact and communication with them, and their incorporation (and thus logically that of their power) into his or her self in order to become the instruments and transmitters of the spirits’ effective physical and oral acts in the human social sphere. Essentially, the “ihamwi’s” function is conductive. He or she serves as the channel between humans and spirits. It is through him or her that the latter’s always dangerous (now destructive and harmful, now productive and helpful) potency, and the former’s needs and dependency, are conveyed.

Waptchi appeared resigned to the fact that after him “there are no more ihamwi to

draw the illnesses out of people” and that the “spirits will have no more [human] head houses to go into”. As I have already said, tuberculosis is forcing him to call it a day; that and the increasing fall in numbers of people actually resorting to him. This is only partly due to Evangelical-Pentecostalist condemnation. While, unlike them, the Adventists, who form the overwhelming bulk of the population in Waptchi’s own village, impose no prohibition in regard to shamanism, many now preferred to attend a non-Pa’ikwené shamaness, a Galibi called Cécile, living in Oiapoque, the Brazilian town on the other side of the river. Also, the younger ones tended increasingly to no longer consult the “ihamwi” as it did not fit in with their adopted modernist lifestyle.

When I asked Waptchi what he thought about the Evangelical-Pentecostal church’s role in the destruction of his way of life, he closed off his face, averting it from me in the common Amerindian way, and impassively replied, “I think nothing.” Perhaps I should have asked him instead what he felt.

Finally, a word concerning the tobacco which figures so centrally and instrumentally in the native religion of the Pa’ikwené and others throughout the Guianas and Amazonia³⁹, and which neither Waptchi nor Ovayan used during our session. Judging from his state, though, it is not inconceivable that he may have taken some just beforehand. The traditional ‘cigars’ which the Pa’ikwené “ihamwi” and “aviri” confect are not made from *Nicotiana* but *Brosimum acutifolium* (the “taoni”), and also the bark of the “wachak” (?) tree (Montout op. cit.:71). It is in the “taoni” especially that the “very powerful” Taowené spirit is believed to be located, an entity which, as stated above, incorporates the jaguar spirit and that of other animals. In a sense, this plant is the spiritual being(s)’s corporeal form, and its smoke is not only the means whereby the human makes contact with the spirit. In like manner to the ‘possessed’ ihamwi’s words, as described above, it is also, substantively, the spirit itself. As Gow, writing (1994:95) about the use of herbal drugs for healing purposes in Western Amazonia, has explained, “these plants are themselves [seen to be] spirits, and by ingesting them, the shaman... becomes like a spirit [himself]... and the spirits reveal themselves to him”.

Inhaling the “taoni” smoke, then, is the way for the “ihamwi” to take a spirit into his or her own body (and thus its power: a concept existing elsewhere in the region, Métraux op. cit.:90). In expelling it onto objects or an ailing person’s body,

³⁹ See Wilbert 1987, Métraux op. cit.:86.

or into food and drink, the “ihamwi” communicates the spirit’s power and (as it were) touch. The juice is similarly believed to contain the spirit’s power, which could explain the “aviri’s” use of saliva reported by Arnaud (1984:46).

“Akúmna-iri”, the alternative name collected by Nimuendaju (op. cit.:65) for the “ihamwi”, may shed some light on the Pa’ikwené’s perception between the link between blowing tobacco and uttering magical words, for while the root “Akúm” means to smoke (as already described), the word “Akúmvina” means the voice.

A key instrumental component, then, of Pa’ikwené religious conceptualisation and practice is that of orality as a spiritual expression, with human speech and song, and also breath and spit,⁴⁰ being seen as manifest concrete aspects of the spirits’ power, and of themselves capable of effective action, be it deadly or healing.

This in effect now brings us by way of introduction to the next matter I wish to consider.

Healing.

Despite the fall in the numbers of “healers” (“ihamwi”), traditional Pa’ikwené medicine, which enjoys a widespread reputation regionally, is a feature of the ‘old’ lifestyle which may be said to have not only successfully weathered but also resisted the great revolutionary changes brought about by the adoption of Protestant fundamentalism. We should not, however, ascribe this survival solely to the “aviri’s” own. Although we have seen that the latter customarily handles afflictions deemed to be outside the “ihamwi’s” province and, unlike them, continues just as much as ever to be resorted to by patients, knowledge of and expertise in pharmacological and therapeutic matters are not limited to these two practitioners. For there also exist many ‘ordinary’ people, so-called laypersons, who possess the necessary science and skills; and collect and process the various vegetal substances, and who on a daily basis diagnose, prescribe for and treat a wide range of ailments in the family and wider community.

This ‘lay’ knowledge is highly valued and passed on from adults to children. There were to my knowledge two individuals who cultivated medicinal plants in

⁴⁰ See, for example, Malinowski 1965:215-6, 260 on the magical agency of breath, and Luna 1986:110-14 on Amazonian ideas about the magical nature and potency of phlegm.

Espérance Deux. The growers (one of whom was Karinai) did not regard themselves as the products' exclusive owners. Rather, these seemed to be viewed as a communal property to which was attached the right of usufruct, and I would often see the other villagers helping themselves to them at will as and when they were needed. People were exceedingly health conscious, which is not surprising given the notorious insalubrity of the Oyapock region (see Nimuendaju op. cit.:10, 19) and the fact that the community members seemed permanently afflicted by some "ka[ga]it" ("illness") or the other. The Pa'ikwené had a tendency to lung diseases and chest infection like all the Amerindian societies in Guyane (Fribourg-Blanc and Bois 1988), as well as sundry marsh and river fevers, malaria, influenza and some diabetes⁴¹. They were particularly prone to "múktchi", i.e., colds. In effect, what with their own system of health care and the treatment available in the excellent government dispensary at St Georges, the Espérance 2 villagers enjoyed double protection.

"White" medical knowledge, products and skill are greatly respected and admired (As noted above, Chief Tchikoi and Capitaine Louis both trained as Western-style nurses). But they are not seen as superior to those pertaining to traditional folk medicine. Whereas Arnaud reports [1970:20] that the Pa'ikwené prefer the modern, imported kind, I found they placed a greater affective value on their own system. As regards the pragmatic side of things, the two systems are held to be equally powerful and, by and large, efficacious (in some afflictions a treatment from one system may be preferred to that from the other since it is seen ultimately as being that much "stronger"), and they tend to be used together in a complementary way on the premise, so I was informed, of a doubling of potency and effect. Thus, for instance, when a young boy broke his arm and had it set in a cast at the clinic in the nearby town, his mother and aunt applied their own cataplasm of leaves and grasses over it for curative reinforcement.

Conversely, the Pa'ikwené placed great faith in the power of aspirin and I was frequently asked for a gift of a pill or two by people who swallowed them irrespective of whether they had an ailment or not. Likewise, trips to Oiapoque, on the Brazilian side of the river, were often considered incomplete without a call on the pharmacist by the men for an injection which, they claimed, was "good for their muscles". Pa'ikwené people also sometimes adapted Western non-medical goods to their own healing ends: toothpaste was recommended as a salve for burns, and

⁴¹ Re. the latter see Arnaud 1984:29 fn. 17

Coca-cola deemed good for cleaning and staunching wounds and teeth extractions, but not as good, ultimately, as the traditional remedy (“éveitchi”) of boiled and macerated red bark from the trunk of the mahogany (“méhetwi”).

Lastly, the Pa’ikwené also prized Créole traditional remedies and commercially available Chinese ones.

For P. Grenand (op. cit.), the Pa’ikwené’s continuing adherence to, and reliance on, their native medicine, for all that it is increasingly practised without benefit of shamans, can be put down to the following:

(a) the fact that the indigenous notions of causality do not ascribe all deaths and illnesses to supernature as Fernandes (1950) and Arnaud (1984:39-40) wrongly claim.⁴² Some are categorised as “Normal” in contrast to those that are “Sent”. The first, which includes phenomena like stings, certain bites, fractures and malaria, are held to be the result either of the patient’s ‘wrong behaviour’ or an accident; the second, of negative spirit action induced by witchcraft, which generally and typically targets the innocent family members and co-villagers of warring shamans. (There is too a third class of illnesses, called “Imported”, which derive from contact with Whites, e.g. measles, whooping cough, influenza);

(b) the continuing daily, influential interaction with Créole society whose own phytotherapy (system of herbal medicine) is rich and culturally valued;

(c) the probability that the indigenous pharmacology and phytotherapeutic process has managed to co-habit smoothly with Western medical inputs since the former was not seen by Whites to present any threat to their economic and religious objectives; and

(d) “Lastly, and very subtly,” writes Grenand (ibid.:85), “*it is through the use of medicinal plants that the Palikur have been able to maintain a host of domestic rituals which link them in spite of everything [i.e., radical Westernisation] to the civilisation of their ancestors*” (my translation and stress).

For my part, this last statement (unfortunately Grenand does not develop it further)

⁴² Cf. Métraux 's warning (op. cit.:93) against assuming that the Indians in the Guianas attribute all death and illness to malign witchcraft and supernature; also Campbell’s critique (1989:94-101) of anthropological writings that do.

not only confirms that today's Christianised Pa'ikwené manage still to keep one foot very much in their pre-Christian past. It also suggests that, *at the level of therapy*, even in respect of the so-called "normal" afflictions, for all that these are considered etiologically to be of non-supernatural origin, they (continue to) conceive of a certain 'spiritual' dimension to medicine. Let me explain. I showed above that my Evangelical-Pentecostalist co-villagers' desertion of the shamans (and the latter's corresponding decline) has not resulted in a complete loss of belief in the concepts and principles underlying shamanism itself, no matter how ambiguously (and at times guardedly) expressed. This being so, I would suggest that, for them, medicine has not become a totally secularised process. Their therapy and pharmacology are based on a principle of natural identity and difference.⁴³ Many people informed me of their conviction that spirits inhere in the plants grown and used for remedies. And their practical preparation and application are not distinctly and solely 'profane' actions but contain an element of the 'sacred' in that, following Leach's thesis (1986:13), they may be said to belong to the "great majority of social actions which partake of the one sphere and partly of the other". They are acts, in other words, which while technical and materially functional nevertheless also have other aspects which he chooses to "describe as ritual whether or not they involve directly any conceptualisation of the supernatural or the metaphysical" (ibid.). It seemed to me that as far as the Pa'ikwené medical layperson's and patient's actions, and their understanding of them, were concerned, this 'involvement' still existed in a direct, if mostly implicit, way, and was ritualistically enacted and embodied. It shows too how in Pa'ikwené society not only shamans but 'ordinary' people shamanise (see Campbell op. cit:3).

In this respect it is worth noting that for the Pa'ikwené curing is less related to physical and pathological conditions as such than to the psychosocial, moral person, and can cover 'non-medical' states. An "éveitchi" (remedy) for laziness, for instance, consists of having it beaten out of one with vines. Another treatment, for lethargy and dispiritedness, entails the subject being scratched with a thorn on the forearms and lower legs, after which he or she is bled then has salt and chilli peppers rubbed into the cuts. It would seem that some sort of magical contagion is seen to be at work here. Moreover, although remedies are typically plant based in practice, and also etymologically (the word "éveitchi" deriving from "avéia", a small

⁴³ All vegetable elements are deemed to have their animal counterparts; and each element its antithesis both in its own sphere and the complementary opposite one (see Montout op. cit.:64-5).

plant), the term has been extended to non-herbal treatments for some problems which, again, we would consider to fall outside the strictly medical sphere. Thus, both preventively and curatively, the “éveitchi” against fear is to consume the heart of a fearless and strong animal, such as a wild pig or a jaguar (normally a proscriptively non-edible item, as stated elsewhere).

I now move on to describe the character of Christian (Protestant fundamentalist) thought and action in contemporary Pa'ikwené life.

THE PA'IKWENÉ AND RELIGION

3. The Christian religion.

(a) The 'Word of God' in the words of its Pa'ikwené followers.

Some beliefs, tenets, rules and practices: The Christian Pa'ikwené of Espérance 2 live in the third and penultimate phase of their four-tier calendar: Evangelical-Pentecostal time. The Assembleia de Deus church which they attend is prominently situated in the village and, as noted earlier, under the pastorship of a Brazilian, a fact resented by most people in the community who would rather that a Pa'ikwené were in charge. Among other things, the language of public worship would then be Pa'ikwaki rather than Portuguese as it mainly is at present. In accord with Protestant Fundamentalist principles there was no religious iconography in the church itself, the sole ornamentation being a wall clock and a handpainted slogan "Jesus Vem Breve" (Jesus will be coming soon). "Ohokri" (God) did not want idolatry⁴⁴, I was told, as it was satanic. So too was shamanism and other aspects of their sinful pre-Christian past like drinking and dancing, both of which were now a metaphor for, and synonymous with, Catholicism (see above). The other great radical sin was "talking bad against Ohokri" (blasphemy), which is believed to be literally pardonless. Other sins were adultery, homosexuality (which informants denied ever existing in Pa'ikwené society), and disobedience. Heavy stress in particular was placed on children's obedience to parents, for "to obey your father and mother is to obey Ohokri". The same rationale applied in regard to obedience to the chief and the state authorities, and to the wife's obedience to her husband. Not unnaturally, there was a yawning gulf here between practice and ideology, for it runs counter to the traditional core Pa'ikwené ethos of personal autonomy and egalitarianism, already referred to above, in which respect is not predicated on obedience but care, concern and love. As a woman put it, Pa'ikwené spouses have always been obedient to each other, for if such a mutual arrangement did not exist then marriages would be unviable; however if a husband's conduct makes the relationship unworkable, the wife can always divorce as a last resort. Such a relationship was described as one, for instance,

⁴⁴ As reported in Appendix C, religious visual imagery was replaced by a vocal one.

where a parent, be it the father or the mother, did not love the children, i.e., did not work enough to feed them and thereby realise proper caring-loving. The reason she gave for such a situation was the failure of one spouse to obey the other. The customary right to divorce, then, was still exercised by female Pa'ikwené Evangelical-Pentecostals for all that it, too, was contrary to the church's rules.

The 'Protestant work ethic', instilled jointly by the church and the state school system, was interpreted in terms, essentially, of "Ohokri does not want you to be 'lazy'". Working for money was, the villagers were taught, a "better kind of work". This was utterly in opposition to the traditional communal 'domestic production' ethic which the Pa'ikwené still largely engaged in and socially and affectively valued over the new one (see previous chapter). Although people hired themselves out as waged labour whenever the opportunity arose, it was for pragmatic, economic reasons rather than moral ones. If wage earning, one must pay a tithe to the church. The only communal work the church enjoined was the collective construction of a place of worship.

Evangelicalism and nature: The church's view is the classical Judeo-Christian one of God made nature and the species therein, then man whom he placed above it with the right if not the duty to kill and feed on it in order to live (see Willis 1994:6). Pa'ikwené hunters were now supposed to dispatch their prey along the lines laid down in Leviticus, to slit its throat and bleed it; although I never saw or heard of one who did. This is hardly practical in the forest for obvious reasons. Also, as Karinai told me, even if one were to slaughter it in this way, the job of carrying back the catch would be a very messy one. While the Evangelical-Pentecostals Pa'ikwené do not class any animal as inedible, unlike the Adventists whose dietary laws are Jewish based, they still to some extent, and depending on the individual, follow the traditional proscriptions in regard to food. Thus, for instance, the jaguar is 'non food' (see Appendix B), and an expectant mother will not eat "red fish" (deemed bad for pregnancy as it "gives too much energy") or macaw (causes "sickness of the blood") or sloth (the baby will become lazy, prolong its mother's labour and increase her pain).

(b) The Evangelical-Pentecostal Pa'ikwené cosmos.

"Ohokri" lives in the sky with Jesus Christ and "Ohokri Gitchip" (the Holy Ghost,

literally “God [his] spirit”): the Pa’ikwené Evangelical-Pentecostal converts’ third fundamental Christian spirit. According to my informants this was a virtually embodied, incarnate divine force which was described thus: “It is God’s father, just like God is Jesus Christ’s father”. All three are seen to form a unitary and omnipotent whole. “Ohokri” can see us all, and everything we do, but only protects Evangelical-Pentecostals. All who live on earth live in sin since we are all guilty of having killed Jesus. It is only through prayers and talking with God that one’s sinfulness departs; and one can only talk with him by becoming an Evangelical-Pentecostal. Jesus’s blood bought, and continues to buy, the sins of mankind, and that is why we owe it to him to love, worship and obey him, and always beg his forgiveness. He will only grant you this personally if you live “in his way” which, again, only Evangelical-Pentecostals can do. If you do so, he will grant you Eternal Life when he returns to earth. If you don’t then he won’t. At death⁴⁵ all good Evangelical-Pentecostals go “in the sky”, to Paradise (“Inúgik”), and all sinners (bad Evangelical-Pentecostals and everyone else) to hell where they die a second and final time and then burn. They will remain in hellfire until Jesus returns to earth and reverses time. At this point, he will destroy the earth as it is now, with fire. (In spite of this millenarian tendency, the majority of Pa’ikwené Evangelical-Pentecostals to whom I talked did not seem to pin their hopes on the ‘second coming’ occurring literally in what was then five years time; leastways, very few of them did so explicitly to me.) After Armageddon, when evil and sinning will be defeated, everything will be as at the pristine beginning when “Ohokri” first created the earth, but only for those reborn to God in Evangelical-Pentecostalism. They will inhabit this remade, rejuvenated and purged sky-earth in peace, harmony, joy and freedom from want and illness. Until such time, however, dead Evangelical-Pentecostals will live in sky-heaven, the place where absolved sinners (i.e., Evangelical-Pentecostals) live in eternal happiness: that is, with lots of food and drink and you will be reunited with those of your family who before dying had also accepted Evangelical-Pentecostalism. “It will be like living in a rich and beautiful city, like in America and France, with beautiful streets and buildings... Not like here [Village Espérance 2]”. Non-Evangelical-Pentecostals, however, will not be granted any of this, even if they believe in “Ohokri”, but shall go straight into hellfire. In the chronological and cosmological restructuring brought about by

⁴⁵As noted, the Pa’ikwené have adopted Christian funerary practices. I managed to collect some data on the material aspects of their pre-Christian ones, which agrees with Nimuendaju’s (op. cit.:60; see too Arnaud 1984:40, F. & P. Grenand 1987:49-50), but unfortunately none on their pre-Christian eschatology.

Christ's second coming, the dead sinners already in hell and the living ones on earth will be relegated materially and as it were geographically to nothingness. There will be no more hell and no more burning of sinners since Christ's return will have uncreated sin and its perpetrators.

(c) "Inúgik", paradoxical paradise.

At death, then, and until Jesus realises his second coming and earth and sky become as one, the sinless (Evangelical-Pentecostalist) elect will ascend to the heavenly afterworld, "Inúgik" described as akin to the one presently enjoyed by the living rich White 'Other'. The following is an itemised breakdown of that celestial utopian existence made at my request by a group of informants:

Clothes will be "White" clothes and food, "White" food. E., a great eater, said he would not be sorry about this because in heaven he will not be able to remember Pa'ikwené food so will not miss it. Both the White clothes and food will be provided by "Ohokri" and were said to be "better" than their own. So good is this food indeed that "Ohokri eats it himself, and so do the angels". Since it will all be laid on for free, there will be no need to hunt, fish, or do garden work in heaven. There will thus be no more work, no more 'hard slog'; as mentioned in the previous chapter the Pa'ikwené were always very vocal about the backbreaking effort entailed in food production. Houses, furniture and household objects: "Ohokri gives you a beautiful house like White people have, all filled with White things"; informants were referring here to the houses and accoutrements they have seen on their travels to Cayenne and Belém and also on television. Language: "Ohokri" speaks all languages, including Pa'ikwaki and White languages, since it's he who made them and gave them to people. On earth, him and Jesus speak Pa'ikwaki to Pa'ikwené people, but in heaven he'll speak to us in the 'language of the angels', and that's the one we will use among ourselves too." Age: Everyone will be young in heaven. Old people will become young and beautiful "like angels". Kin: You will meet up again with "good" dead kin (i.e., Evangelical-Pentecostalist ones). But you will not see the "bad" ones because they have been sent to hell. S. expressed her regret that one of her brothers will not make it to heaven because he drinks and is "bitter with Ohokri", she will not therefore see him in heaven unless he changes his ways before he dies. Another informant was sad that his mother will not be in heaven when he gets there for she had died before the conversions hence "without

knowing God”.

For all of the virtual monopoly of White things in heaven, the Pa'ikwené do not equate God as such with the Whites: “The Whites are stronger than the Pa'ikwené, but “Ohokri” is stronger than the Whites”. In parallel with this there seems to be a rationale whereby Pa'ikwené things (food, clothes, speech etc.), as well as those belonging to all the other races, are seen to be of ‘this world’. As they do not apply to the ‘other world’, they will be discarded there. Then how come, I asked, that the Pa'ikwené will receive White food, clothes, houses and so on? This is because they were perceived to be the “best”; yet informants told me time after time that they preferred Pa'ikwené food to White. Clearly, affective attachment was not the criterion for an object's attaining heavenly status.

Although I will not attempt an in-depth interpretation of the Pa'ikwené's perception and construction of this ‘White’ heaven, I think it would miss the point to analyse it solely in terms of ‘acculturation’ or ‘dominant culture theory’. I would suggest that, on at least one level, ‘White’ should not be read as indicating racial supremacy and moral superiority. It could, rather, symbolise the existence and maximisation of the ‘spiritual’ as seen from within an indigenous cosmogony. Thus two of the key heavenly conditions cited above, the receiving of free (White) food and the absence of the need for human productivity, might reflect more than a simple phenomenon of cause-and-effect or a native interpretation of an essentially alien (Christian and utopian) afterlife. As Viveiros de Castro notes (1992:201-18) regarding Araweté ideas on death, the idea that the acceptance of food from spirits marks the “definite entrance of the soul into the beyond” (p. 213) is common to many Amazonian eschatologies (if not the Araweté's own, wherein death itself is a production process in which it is the human being who is turned into a godlike and immortal ‘product’ through being consumed by the cannibal gods). According to Overing (1993a), the concept is associated with a belief in the loss of a person's powers of productivity/fertility at death (see too Carneiro da Cunha 1978 in respect of the Krahó). To this extent, then, the Pa'ikwené were perhaps expressing something similar to what may be found in the world-views of the other Amerindian peoples mentioned above.

THE PA'IKWENÉ AND RELIGION

4. Conclusion.

The issue of simultaneously parallel and contradictory discourses:

The way Alphonse Y. and others spoke about the shamans and shamanism is indicative, I believe, of the way in which the new religion, and the native epistemology about it, has not totally usurped and supplanted the old. Very evident in Pa'ikwené discourse were the dual and contradictory positions and conversations vis à vis each (and indeed the double valuing of both, even if the value put on the older, earlier system seems counterbalanced at times by a measure of fear). Without a doubt, in Espérance 2 Evangelicalism *is* the new faith, and its world-view, creed and pronouncements firmly believed in. *And yet*, the old cosmological and theological vision and beliefs, while at one level explicitly condemned, disparaged and refuted, are not for all that utterly repressed in, and by, the individual Evangelical-Pentecostal Pa'ikwené. Thus he or she will speak of the functions and abilities of the "Ihamwi" and "Aviri", and of the powers and character of "Wavitché", the "Úgúkú" and "Imaowi" in the present tense; will specify that good magic exists as well as bad, that while it is true the spirits and their human agents can act with evil intent, they also are capable of the opposite, benign behaviour; and then in the very next sentence inform you that God, Jesus and the church has uncreated and replaced them, that they are now non-persons and non-spirits, and their powers are *just* evil and at the same time *relegated to the past* .

My encounter with the two "ihamwi" (shamans) should be seen as an event occurring outside of its natural context, though not entirely so. It was a display, in part didactic lecture with props and in part show for tourist (which, for all that I was an anthropologist, is what I felt like), of a feature which was once an integral, vital, meaningful part of the cultural and social process, and indeed constitutive of it. But which is now increasingly on the way to being an atrophying relic; an offering of fragments and glimpses, of bits of form with much of the substance removed, and in which the spiritual essence has all but congealed... That, at least, is what I

concluded immediately afterwards. However, my subsequent fieldwork led me to revise this initial reaction. While it is true that Waptchi and Ovayan were 'out of it' for the reasons given above, and that there may be no more Pa'ikwené shamans, either in Guyane or perhaps even Aúkwa, my research shows that belief in the philosophical, cosmological underpinnings of shamanism, and the following of certain practices associated with it, definitely still existed. Not even the Evangelical-Pentecostalist Pa'ikwené's collective (and declared) apostasy in its regard was in reality as complete or firm as people often tried to make me, and themselves, believe.

Such 'double speak' as was evinced by the religious discourse of the Pa'ikwené may appear muddled, schizoid, even at times almost duplicitous; or suggestive of an informant's own confusion and inconsistency (and, supposedly therefore, unreliability). However, Rapport argues (1997), and indeed demonstrates, that a less negative stance is called for. Rather than insisting on the (fictional) single coherent, and generally reductionist, explanation of society and culture from either the outside observer or the observed subject, we should admit to and embrace interpretational and epistemic plurality and contradictiveness, given, he says, the complexity and diversity (and, I would add, 'ever changing-ness') of social life itself. Thus, to hold as my Pa'ikwené co-villagers did two or more views on one subject at the same time, and to express now the same and now a different epistemic reality than one's fellows in our running conversation with them, is intrinsically human and, it follows, an inescapable factor in the creation of the social milieu as something rooted in cognitive and exegetic ambiguity and contrariety (Fernandez 1985:750).

Having adopted Evangelical-Pentecostalism, the Pa'ikwené of Village Espérance 2 did not appropriate or assimilate it unconditionally. Rather, their approach seemed pragmatic, self-benefiting and sometimes even sceptical. Above all, it was a considered one, like the initial conversion three decades ago, reported in the first section. As Heelas points out (1984), whatever the reasons people may have for taking up a new religion, they are not to be seen as either irrational or prompted by emotion alone. The same applies, I suggest, to what they do not embrace in the new religion: those aspects and features which are sifted out and otherwise found wanting and inappropriate by, or only partially acceptable to, the new followers. Thus it was that the Evangelical-Pentecostalists endorsed some (e.g. the notion of

'Brotherhood') but not others (e.g. the anti-divorce rule).

What is salient, then, and worthy of our deeper attention, is not so much the (obvious) divergences between the ideologies, principles and practices of the new, imported order and old, native one, as the retention of a number of features belonging to the latter that were judged and valued as worthwhile: that is, more meaningful, practicable, efficient and suited to the community's actual historical and sociocultural circumstances. Whatever fundamentalist Protestant orthodoxy may teach or impose, it is clear that its Pa'ikwené converts took from, and processed and adapted, it in an active manner advantageous to themselves, both on a group and individual level. The overwhelming majority of the community were strongly committed believers in the new faith, yet concepts, attitudes and behaviours in respect of certain important structural and cultural features remained fundamentally, even steadfastly, indigenous and pre-Christian. The examples I have given were the egalitarian relations between the sexes and generations; relations between humans, supernature and nature (and as part of this, diet and medicine), and the communal work 'ethic'.⁴⁶ These were thus not only outside the Christian system but also incommensurate with the socioeconomic framework in which it is set, and in which the Pa'ikwené were also to an increasing extent incorporated.

At this juncture, a word needs to be said about the latter aspect. For the Protestantism which the Pa'ikwené converts embraced operated in tandem with (and in its ancestral form arguably was, as Weber claims 1971, the ideological germ of) the type of market economy which impinges more and more on their existence (cf. Arcand 1981 on the 'hidden' economical and political agenda of SIL in respect of the Cuiva).

Historically, as noted above, the Pa'ikwené have for several centuries been active in relations of trade with the non-Indian world, and mainly with Créole society, as both buyers and sellers (of certain surpluses, most notably manioc 'flour'). It would appear that it is only in the last thirty or so years, however, that their systems of distribution and consumption have undergone radical and deleterious changes, as a consequence of the introduction and spread of fundamental Protestantism and, too, the increasing adoption by many of them of a proto- or peri-urban and 'consumerist' lifestyle. Remarkably, though, notwithstanding the increased and (presently) ideologically legitimated selling of their labour and, in

⁴⁶ Another example, not dealt with by me, would be the kinship system (Arnaud 1968).

Guyane, the erosion to and alienation from their traditional ecological and 'economic' habitat (see P. and F. Grenand 1988:27-31, Dreyfus 1988:22, Montout op. cit.:30, 102), the Pa'ikwené of Village Espérance 2 still maintained to a markedly high degree the old system of production. I showed earlier that this was basically due to the fact that those who engaged in the 'subsistence economy' did not want it to change, and consciously chose to remain in it, while sometimes *also* choosing to work in parallel as it were in the new system of production when the opportunity arose (and specifically for the purpose of earning money and thus being able to buy 'Western' goods). For as arduous as the former type of economy was said to be, and no doubt was, it constituted not so much a way of working as one of continuing to live collectively in a sociable, pleasing, sharing and more meaningful manner. *However*, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, Gow has argued (1991:90-115) à propos the Piro, who similarly resort to both the old and new economies, that from the perspective of those who live it such a condition can be seen in terms not of hostility but complementarity.

That the villagers of Espérance 2 clung to and valued a number of their ancestral pre-Christian ways of thinking and behaving, including some magico-religious ones, does not imply that the adoption of new and Christian ones was superficial, nor that these had but a weak purchase on the 'heart and mind' of their indigenous adopter. I have striven throughout to describe how the opposite was true. Thus a claim such as the one made by Montout (op. cit.:61) that despite the importation of the alien morality, the efforts of Christianisation have shown themselves to be "without deep results", seems to me invalid, or at the very least partial, given the undeniably strong hold of Protestant fundamentalism on, and its very real and radical consequences for, a large section of the contemporary Pa'ikwené population. It does serve, however, to help us focus in on an important point. For, I propose, what is noteworthy is not so much that the new belief system and the traditional one (for all that certain aspects of its practice might or might not be ~~by~~ on the wane) co-exist, but that the latter, at some profound level of their Pa'ikwené psyche, ethos, culture, and social life, more than holds its own with the former.

Noll, writing (1985) on the cross-cultural phenomenon of shamanic visions, has ascribed a functional role to the shaman by proposing (pp. 449-50) that his mental imagery and journeys to the spirit realms, and his recounting of these to his

audience, serve a crucial didactic and mnemonic purpose. They provide a means whereby a non-literate society remembers, transmits and reproduces its cultural belief system. If we accept that each of the shaman's trips constitutes a "collective rehearsal of cultural memories" (p. 450), then logically the demise of the Pa'ikwené "ihamwi" should not only have resulted in a corresponding decrease of these rehearsals, which is what has occurred. There should have also been a forgetting of the very things, namely "mythological beliefs and other cultural relevant materials" (ibid.), being reenacted, remembered and reproduced; leading, one would infer, to their eventual disappearance. For the moment, though, and for all that it might be 'illogical', this has not happened. Despite the decline of the shamans and the traditional 'collective rehearsals', and the corresponding spread of the new mythology and the participation in new 'collective rehearsals', such as church services and the reproduction thereby of the new belief system, elements of the old one continue vigorously to live on, as I have reported.

One of the other important customary means by which that prior system manages to persist in such societies is 'oral tradition'. Yet the issue of this cultural feature and of its maintenance in present day Pa'ikwené life is itself an ambiguous one. F. and P Grenand (1987) and Petitjean-Roget (1993) assert that their rich oral tradition is thriving. For my part, I found it generally the case in Espérance 2 and Kúmené that while the tradition was in a healthy condition among the older and middle generations in terms of their knowledge of the stories and their protagonists, things were less rosy with regard to their recounting of them. The demise of the story teller seemed to echo that of the shaman. The 'old tales' tended no longer to be communicated in any great extent to the young, who seemed to know more about Jesus Christ, King David and the Devil, and also (through television) Superman and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle, than their own historical heroes, mythical figures, and spirit beings.⁴⁷ Thus I would maintain that though these stories continued to figure in the lives of the people of Espérance 2, their

⁴⁷ Of course there were exceptions: both of parents who determinedly made a point of recounting the 'traditional' stories and children who had heard them. What was not in evidence, however, was the once widespread and endemic custom of public story telling, or the presence within the community of a new generation of narrators and, therefore, listeners (or in Pa'ikwené terms: 'hearer-understanders'). Which is not to say that the young did not know of the existence of (some of) the old heroes and other beings. They invariably responded with pleasure and interest on the few occasions these were given an oral airing (mostly at my request but sometimes, too, in an unsolicited and impromptu fashion). They also relished the humorous aspect of the old tales, finding some elements very funny indeed, e.g. the fact that the forest spirit Panamik is bereft of an anus (see above). Above all, they enjoyed the adventures of the trickster Turtle (Ong) and his endless tangling with, and besting of, his hapless tormentor, Jaguar (Kaokwiné).

transcendent cultural significance, as opposed to the purely anecdotal one, was growing progressively less and less. Their presence, certainly at the level of public life and performance, and conceivably as part of the mental baggage of the young (impossible though it is to judge for certain), was no longer very visible or strong, and increasingly threatened.

The traditional oral literature, then, still had a powerful affective value for the Pa'ikwené of my community, but possibly a decreasing moral and didactic role. However, although the old myths and stories were a once vital repository and transmitter of the collective conceptions, norms, attitudes, and all the other intangible, indescribable qualities underlying and, effectively, constituting Pa'ikwené-hood, they were not the only means whereby that culture is stored and passed on. And despite the loss of this and other customs, such as dancing, the daily process of practical living continued still to reproduce those traditional structural and cultural features that the Pa'ikwené insisted on, and actively worked at, maintaining, such as, for example, egalitarian social relations, a communal work ethic, and the other elements listed above. Thus here too, as with shamanism, the old ways actively survived without the need for 'specialists'.

Lastly, I have described and stressed the paradox of the relationship between the Pa'ikwené's old and new religions. I do not believe that the issue is to do with its (ir)reconcilability but very existence. The Evangelical-Pentecostalist Pa'ikwené themselves were not unaware of the ambiguity and, for all that it caused them to be pulled in two directions in their daily existence at the level of religious beliefs and lifestyle ('progressist' versus 'traditional'), it seems to me that they accommodated it in the smoothest possible manner cognitively, to the extent of taking it untroublingly for granted most of the time. It is we, the outsiders, who have a problem in its regard, and who need to acquire, in the words of Campbell (1989:121 on Western academic interpretations of shamanism):

“a tolerance for ambiguity and vagueness where we will learn not to force an either-or question... and to appreciate a ‘both is and is not’ answer.”

chapter ten
CONCLUSION

Considering just over a decade ago the research undertaken this century on the Pa'ikwené by a relatively small number of investigators, himself included, P. Grenand attributed (1987:76-7) a certain perceived vagueness in their accounts¹ to, above all, the 'difficulty of establishing with any precision the vital leads linking the old society to today's one since whole panels of it remain obscure.' This, according to him, impeded the task of building up a comprehensive picture. But is not such incompleteness unavoidable, given not only this lack of available details but the selectivity of observers? As in the story of the blind persons and the elephant, each palpates a different piece, the ears, trunk, tusk, tail, pronouncing it the essence of the beast. Me, I felt the Pa'ikwené, and the parts I was drawn to can of course neither objectively encompass nor fully represent that people; but they are, from my perspective, expressive of their intrinsic, unique being. So I offer my own findings, as submitted in the present work, in the hope of contributing, however slightly, towards shedding further light on, and increasing our understanding of, this still largely unknown entity. I must though stress again that they constitute but a personal and, of necessity, inherently subjective view.

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As will have been noted, a number of chapters have their own separate conclusions. With reference to my main theme of interpersonal communication, the fifth, which looks at different types, informal and demotic as well as formal and rhetorical, of communication in various political situations, proposes that in a Pa'ikwené context, and perhaps, I would suggest, among Lowland Amerindians more generally, the speech and through it agency of 'ordinary' people is as sociopolitically vital and 'powerful' as that of leaders in that it can carry as much moral and aesthetic weight.

¹ To re-cite the major ones: Nimuendaju 1971 (1926); Fernandes 1950, 1963; Arnaud 1968, 1970, 1984; Dreyfus 1981; P. Grenand 1987; F. & P. Grenand 1979, 1987. Since 1987 they include Dreyfus 1988, Montout 1994.

In chapter 6, a deferred extension of chapter 4 where the process of “Tchimap, ‘to hear-listen-understand’ is explored, I concluded that the Pa’ikwené’s culturally specific and customary style of listening, and the silence characteristically associated with it, possess a defining instrumentality in social relations, epistemologically, ethically, affectively and pragmatically. This was developed further in chapter 7, which posited a correspondence between intercommunication and gifting as building blocks of sociality. From this base, arguing against Clastres’ contention (1987) that among Amerindians virtually no one listens to a chief’s speech on the supposed grounds that it is ‘empty’, I declared the individual’s audition to be no less ‘full’, i.e., in its own way as politically and morally authoritative, than the speech in fact is.

In summation, both facets of the Pa’ikwené’s dialogical relations, speaking and hearing, are, and are seen by them to be, *equally* active, meaningful and socially regenerative aspects of the continuing creation and maintenance of the viable, which is to say sociable, peaceful and productive, community and, I further indicated, of its relationship with nature.

The crucial complementarity of ‘good’ speaking and hearing for the well-being of Pa’ikwené social life is also the subject of chapter 3 which, among other things, tentatively addressed the phenomenological and performative dimensions of the indigenous language and speaking together. One of the issues raised concerns the combined emotivity and aesthetics inherent in intercommunication and, as part of this, in the process of hearing-understanding.

As stated, the interpretation of what a Pa’ikwené speaker says is not only tied in to the sign-referential value of his or her words but also to a wide spectrum of intelligibility and engagement on the part of the Pa’ikwené hearer, ranging from the pragmatic to the aesthetic to the affective, the sensory to the moral. This point is central to our comprehension of the experiential process of “Tchimap”, for to ‘hear-listen-understand’, basically expresses, it seems to me, the concept that what one perceives is not just a sound (of a voice, a word, a ‘thing’) but the full, multiple significance of the event and its context. Beyond, then, the processing of the semantic meanings and the wider cultural “implicatures” (Grice 1975), there occurs a psycho-phenomenological making of sense which, both objectively and

subjectively,² socioculturally and biologically, simultaneously entails sensations, feelings³ and thoughts⁴, and involves axiological values.

The cultural phenomenon of "Tchimap" is more than just an interesting addition to the data on South American native discourse; it is also relevant to the debate on 'individualism-collectivism'. The supposed incompatibility for the 'Western' mind of the individual and the group (see e.g. Durkheim 1947, 1951; Weber 1978; L. Dumont 1985), seems not to exist in Lowland Amazonian thinking, and living. Goldman (1963) and Overing (1988, 1989, 1996) show that the Cubeo and Piaroa prize personal self-autonomy and sociality equally and see no tension between them. There would appear to be space in the one for the full and successful realisation of the other, and collective behaviour, far from being imposed on the individual by the group, is, instead, a matter of personal choice. As is its opposite. Possessing the freedom and right to act independently, ego acquires the power, and the responsibility, to decide to act collectively. Thus, to requote Overing's words (1989:170), is "one's mastery of sociality... in inimitable Amerindian logic, also one's personal autonomy. In other words.... the weight of acting socially [is] placed in the hands of the individual and not with the corporate group or collectivity."

In essence, among these peoples, among whom, for reasons provided above, I include the Pa'ikwené, individualism is as social a form of conduct as collectivism. The two seem to be regarded not as hostile states but alternately friendly ones; alternate, that is, in the chronological rather than an ideological

² As Volosinov convincingly argues (1986:85), subjectivity and objectivity are necessarily, simultaneously, and equally at work in the speaking and hearing social actor (cf. Freire 1977:26-9).

³ Cf. Merleau-Ponty's thesis (1945) that meaning is perceptible from the emotional essence of words, and that it in effect reveals itself to us: "Language unveils its secrets itself" (1964:43).

While recognising the cultural construction of emotion (see e.g. Harré 1986; Scherer, Wallbott & Summerfield 1986; Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990), I see no need here to particularise Pa'ikwené emotion but choose instead to see it in terms of a general human given.

In respect of the difference between sensation, feeling and emotion, Eitchinger Ferro-Luzzi notes (1995) that such a distinction is not made universally.

⁴ See Leavitt's critique (1996) of the 'Western' tendency to dichotomise meaning and feeling and, in anthropological studies of emotion, the sociocultural and the biological. Also, as noted above, Burke argues (1941:138-67) that meaning is itself divisible into the "semantic" (designative) and the "poetic" (emotional), both aspects being mutually reinforcing and complementary rather than oppositional. Cf. Condillac's assumption (1754) that sensation constitutes the sole source of mental activity, so thoughts are basically senses anyway.

sense. For the Piaroa, the power referred to above is obtainable from an extra-social source; and both their autonomous and collective conducts are ideologically validated, as Overing reports (*ibid*). Unlike her, however, I was not able to find the ontological templet of, and (assuming it ever existed) mythic 'charter' for, the joint Pa'ikwené behaviours of individualism and communalism which, in practice, they observably share with the Piaroa, Cubeo and others. The failure was due less to a want of seeking on my part than to the radically attenuated state of the Pa'ikwené ancestral cosmology, and today's generation's impaired and incomprehensive knowledge of it. Nevertheless, a philosophy or ethic of mutually reconcilable individualism and collectivism is inferable from their complementary - and valued - presence and usage in contemporary, pragmatic daily life. With each equally highly esteemed and both esteemed equally, their (largely frictionless) co-existence is manifest in the different spheres of the social process, particularly, as we saw, in the domain of work -- and in one activity common and integral to all: namely, speaking. Or to be absolutely correct, speaking-hearing, since among the Pa'ikwené, choosing to hear or not - and thus to speak or to be silent - can respectively be (though not in all cases) both an autonomous and a social act, which I have sought to show.

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I end this conclusion with the knowledge, one of the surest acquired through living with the Pa'ikwené, of the impossibility of ever fully encapsulating their society and culture in a neat, tidy packet. That these defy any lifeless reductionist model, no matter how bright, seductive and reassuring, is proof not only of their natural human complexity but their richness and ultimately ineffable vitality, and is thus, as far as I am concerned, a cause for celebration. However, my inability to see let alone provide a more comprehensive picture may be put down by some to inadequate scholarship. They may well be right. For my part, it is due more to a shortfall of imagination.

"Sixteen thousand leagues from my birth...
 And my eyes lit up ancient paths...
 Yet I was so poor a poet
 I didn't know how to go to the very end..."
 (Blaise Cendrars 1913, my translation)

APPENDICES

A. “Minikwak” (“A long time ago”)

The once customary practice of story and myth telling had fallen somewhat into disuse among the Pa'ikwené of Village Espérance Deux. Most of my examples were obtained in the village next door from the shamans Waptchi and Ovayan, and, as reported above, from Kamavi, an old man living in Kúmené (Aúkwa). In both cases the tales were recounted in contrived and unnatural circumstances, though not strictly speaking in private, for the performances always drew an appreciative and active audience. Nonetheless, it is worth heeding F. Grenand's warning (1982:25) to beware the myth told privately to the anthropologist, for though it may have all its elements structurally, it will be but a poor, thin thing as “in terms of the richness of language, literature and life, all will have been lost” (my translation).

If today the old tales are told less and less, it is not just that the tellers are dying out but that there are increasingly fewer ‘hearer-listener-understanders’ like Karinai, “Capitaine” Louis and Tchig the shamans' son seeking actively to keep them alive for the next generations.

(1) Pa'ikwené creation myth

In the beginning there was one Pa'ikwené.

A man.

His name was Kaúmaiyé.

He was also a spirit.

He was the only Pa'ikwené.

There were no others.

One day he started to play his flute, to dance, and to sing.

He played his flute and danced and sang for two days.

After two days by his playing and dancing and singing he had created all the other Pa'ikwené.

(as told by Waptchi, Premier Village Espérance, 19-3-1994, translated from Pa'ikwaki into French by Edison Labonté, and collected by me).

2nd Creation Story

A long time ago, God made a man who was a little bit white and very strong and the king (*sic*) of all the Pa'ikwené. Next God made a chief of the whites, of the French. He was strong but not as strong as the chief of the Pa'ikwené. Then God made another chief, of the Americans. Then another, the chief of the English. Lastly he made the chief of the Brazilians. These kings were strong too but not as strong as the French one and even less strong than the Pa'ikwené. All these chiefs told chief's stories. Then God wanted to test the French chief's strength, he asked him

to cut a rock with his knife. He did the same with the chiefs of the Americans, the English and the Brazilians. They all cut the rock, but only a little bit. Then he got the chief of the Pa'ikwené to test his strength too. The Pa'ikwené chief exerted his strength... not all of it, just a little bit of it... and cut the rock in two. Then God said to the Pa'ikwené chief, "You're the strongest chief but I can't have you staying here for you'd take command of all the other nations." So God sent him away, far from all the others, to Aúkwa.

(Told by Kamavi [Léon Orlando] at Kúmené, Aúkwa, 26-1-1994, translated into Créole by Alfred Norino, collected and adapted by me).¹

(3) "2x2x2" Story

A long time ago Avakni, the evil harpy eagle-spirit had two sons. Their mother was also a spirit bird (type unknown). One day, while hunting in the forest, two Pa'ikwené brothers encountered Avakni's two sons. The older Pa'ikwené brother said he was going to stay in the forest and live with the older, and more beautiful, bird-spirit brother. The younger Pa'ikwené brother was angry, he wanted the older handsome spirit brother for himself. He went back to his village, taking the younger spirit brother with him to raise as an Indian. Hearing of this, Avakni flew into a terrible rage. He invited all the birds of the forest and all the animals, even the jaguar, to a feast where they would devour all the Pa'ikwené in revenge for taking his younger son.

Avakni's mother wanted to eat the older Pa'ikwené brother who had stayed behind in the forest to live with her grandson. But he gave her the slip and went back to his village. Three months had gone by from when he went to live in the forest with Avakni's older son until his return. During this time the Pa'ikwené had been hunting two particular "kohivra" ('game birds', see section on natural taxonomy below). One was Súyen (a type of small parrot), the other Kaú (? blue macaw). These two birds were half spirit, half human, and brothers. Each had a different spirit-bird mother and shared the same father, a Pa'ikwené man. Now, when they learned about Avakni's feast and his intention to kill and eat all the Pa'ikwené, they were very concerned.

"What are we going to do about our father?" asked Kaú. Súyen said, "Let us tell him about Avakni's plan, and escort him and guard him when he comes into the forest." And so they saved their father, and Avakni's bid to kill him and eat him and all the other Pa'ikwené was foiled.

Now in their land were many "kohivra" for the Pa'ikwené to hunt, a lot of birds to eat. And they held feasts and sang songs to them. But the Maraón people came and killed and ate Kaú and Súyen. The Pa'ikwené were angry and left that land and went to another one where there was a lot of "Puigné" (animals) to catch, and they stayed there. This place was called Mapérepkit. It is not here... it is far from here (Aúkwa)... in the south. The Pa'ikwené built a village there and called it Wainli. But Kaú and Súyen's father did not stay in this new country because there

¹ Cf. F. & P. Grenand 1987:18 with reference to a similar account in which an old Pa'ikwené clan chief states "I can't go to war, I'm so powerful I would win and then there'd be no other nations [i.e. clans] but mine" (my translation).

weren't many "kohivra" there, though there was much fish. And he went back to live in the old country, the name of which was Úméyoni. It is even farther away from here than Mapérepkit... a long way away... far, far in the south (Cf. F. and P. Grenand 1987:23)... And the time that had gone by from when Kaú and Súyen's father came to the second country until he went back to the first was three months.

(Told by Kamavi at Kúmené 26-1-1994, translated into French by Edison Labonté, collected and arranged by me).

(4) The Story of Wamwi the water-snake spirit, Wanésé and Mainaï

When it's full moon Wamwi seeks out men to eat. He calls his wife, Wanésé, and tells her, "stay here while I go catch us some meat". He waits till men and boys go to wash in the river then changes into a large water-snake and goes looking for them, to kill them. He takes his rifle and shoots three, four men and hauls them back home. The Pa'ikwené are disturbed. "Why are we being killed like this?" they ask themselves. They don't know it's Wamwi who's the culprit, they think it's some other water-snake.

One day, a Pa'ikwené man, his name was Mainaï, falls very ill and goes to bathe at the river, and Wamwi attacks him. There are many people there who see it. Wamwi seizes Mainaï and drags him off to his home in the forest. Wanésé asks, "What's this you've brought me?" Wamwi answered, "I only found one man today, but he's no good to eat, he's too ill." Then Wamwi goes into the forest to find a remedy for Mainaï who is really very ill indeed, he gives it to him and nurses him back to health. Then one day he tells him, "I'm going on a journey with my wife, you shall stay here with our son." And he warns Mainaï: "While I'm away you're not to go down the path which lies on the right but you may use one on the left." For if he were to take the right-hand one he'd end up back in his village and Wamwi doesn't want Mainaï to go back and tell people where he lives. Wamwi scatters sand on the path to see if Mainaï disobeys, for if he does he will leave tracks.

Wamwi and Wanésé set off on their journey. They go to the sea. They fish for a week. They fish for two weeks... After three days, Mainaï tells Wamwi's son he's going out to pick some flowers for him. The son replies, "Don't forget what my father told you, don't go down the right-hand path." Mainaï says "Don't worry, I'm just going to look for some flowers for you, that's all." And he leaves and picks some flowers and brings them back for Wamwi's son. A little while later, the son says he needs a rest and goes to sleep. Seeing him thus, Mainaï says to himself, "I'm going to take that right-hand path, I want to see why Wamwi's forbidden it me", and he sets off along the right-hand path. He walks and walks till eventually he reaches the end and finds he's at the outskirts of his village. There's a woman there, working in her garden. When she sees him the woman is very afraid and screams: "Mainaï! But aren't you dead, Mainaï?" "No", says Mainaï, "I'm not", and he tells her all that's happened to him and that she's to go and let everybody know that Wamwi's away on a journey and that he, Mainaï, has come to warn them. They're to build seven dams to bar Wamwi's way and lay in a stock of arrows to attack and destroy him because he is very bad. "But now", says Mainaï finally, "I'm off back to Wamwi's house before his son wakes up and realises I'm missing."

The woman goes and tells everyone what Mainaï said. They held a meeting

and decided to do as he asked. They built seven dams and prepared lots of arrows to kill Wamwi. For one whole month they worked on this task.

Wamwi and Wanésé return. Wamwi asks Mainaï if he used the right-hand path, and Mainaï says no, he only stayed at home. Wamwi goes to check if he's telling the truth. There's no sign of Mainaï's footprints for he's just as clever as Wamwi and he covered them up with sand again on his way back from the village. One month later, Wamwi absents himself again and Mainaï returns to the village to see how work is progressing on the dams. They are ready. They are very big, very solid dams. People ask him about the best time to attack Wamwi. He tells them to lay a bait of some game to lure him. Then he goes back to Wamwi's house again.

Although attracted by the bait, Wamwi realises the Indians are out to kill him. He returns home and asks Mainaï, "Is it you who's been inciting them to kill me?" Mainaï says it isn't. Wamwi tells his wife, "I'm going to take a closer look. If you hear thunder on the left, it will mean that I have won; if you hear thunder on the right, that I've lost and will already be dead." Then he leaves. The Pa'ikwené attack him with their arrows. Wamwi breaks through the first dam.... He breaks through the second dam... He breaks through the third dam... and then Wamwi dies. Wanésé hears thunder on the right and cries, "My husband is already dead, I'm going to go and avenge him." She changes herself into a large water-snake and swims off to attack the village. The Indians fight back. Wanésé breaks through the fourth dam... She breaks through the fifth dam... She breaks through the sixth dam... and then Wanésé is killed too.

Mainaï goes to see Wamwi and Wanésé's son because he fears he will try to get revenge. One dam remains standing and the son has already transformed himself into a water-snake and is just about to set off. Mainaï stops him and says, "If you attack the Indians they will kill you as they killed your father and your mother. On top of that, you're too young and not strong or intelligent enough to defeat them. I will help you get away from here and reach the sea." And he does so.

(Told by Kamavi at Kúmené, Aúkwa, 25-1-1994, translated by Alfred Norino, arranged by me).

(5) Story telling of the connection between the Pa'ikwené and the Galibi

The first Pa'ikwené all had spirits in them, men, women, even children. This was in Aúkwa, that's where the Pa'ikwené started.² A long time ago, in the beginning, the Pa'ikwené and Galibi were one. Then they split. The Galibi are spirits. Their mother was a Pa'ikwené woman, their father Maripoka, the guardian of water³, who seduced her. What happened was: one day her brother went fishing, leaving her to work in the garden. On his return he found her with a man, it was Maripoka in human form. Her brother was jealous and angry. When he saw she had become pregnant he decided to kill his sister's lover. He prepared some arrows and next time the two were together he shot one at Maripoka. But Maripoka deflected the arrow then vanished into thin air, and the arrow hit the sister and killed her. A lot of

² As noted, many Pa'ikwené believe that they actually originated much further south, a claim seemingly borne out by ethnohistorical research (see chapter 1).

³ In a version of this story told to Nimuendaju (1971:78) the father is Yumawali, the mountain-spirit.

blood gushed from the sister's body. After three days her brother went to look and found there were many worms and flies in the blood. He boiled up some water to throw on the blood, to wash the worms and flies away. After three days more he returned for another look. The blood was still there and there were even more worms and flies and he saw they were bigger. So he prepared more water and threw it on the blood to wash them away. After another three days he went to look again and saw that the flies and worms were still there and had grown even bigger. Sitting among them, in the middle of the pool of blood, was a little boy, who called out to him: "Uncle, Uncle, do not kill us, Uncle, let my brothers and sisters be!" Then all the worms and flies turned into children. And a week later, when the brother came, there was a host of children there, boys and girls, with little bows and arrows and living in little houses. When they grew up, these children, who were the Galibi, made war on their uncle. And since that time they and the Pa'ikwaki have always fought. In the beginning they spoke the same language, but not any more.⁴

(Told by Waptchi, Premier Village Espérance, 19-3-1994, translated from Pa'ikwaki into French by Karinai [Felisberto] and Edison Labonté, and collected and arranged by me).

⁴ Traditional enemies, the Galibi and Pa'ikwené are "now friends" according to informants (cf. Nimuendaju *ibid.*:78-9). However, some said they were suspicious of the Galibi and uncomfortable in their presence. Linguistically, the Galibi are not Arawakan like the Pa'ikwené but Karib-speaking.

B. The PA'IKWENÉ TAXONOMY of FAUNA

The Pa'ikwené arrange the animal world into three main classes, one important factor of which is (in)edibility. The first, “Puigné”, essentially comprises land-based animals, including tree-dwellers. “Puigné” is translated in Créole as “animal” and also as “chair”, i.e., ‘flesh’. This is distinguished from “viande” - ‘meat’ - as denoted by a further term, “Intchi”, used in respect of the (dead and cooked) species one may eat. So while all animals are “puigné”, proscriptively inedible ones like the jaguar (on which more below), dog and cat are not “intchi”.

The second class is “Kohivra” and relates to birds, both edible and non-edible. It is translated in Créole as “gibier”, i.e., ‘game [birds]’, but contains members such as the domestic chicken which do not fit a Western definition of the term. Bats also belong to this class. Predators such as crows and eagles are not eaten.

The third class, known as “Ihm”, means ‘fish’ and incorporates shellfish and some other aquatic creatures as subclasses. A small number of species are assigned simultaneously to this class and “Puigné”, e.g. caiman, turtle, frog. Notwithstanding Douglas (1988:41-57), such ‘anomalousness’ did not prevent them from being considered edible. “Ihm” has acquired the virtually generic meaning of “food” *per se*. It was common for any comestible item of whatever nature (a fistful of tapioca, a fruit, a chocolate bar, or a strip of tapir crackling) to be referred to as “ihm”.

Poisonous snakes (non-edible) belong to the “Kaibúné” class; non-poisonous water-snakes to that of “Datka”, and non-poisonous grass snakes are “Datka washúné”. There is no general class for insects; they are not eaten.

Some examples (*table 3*):

<u>Puigné:</u>	
tapir:	aodik (‘intchi’, i.e., edible)
peccary:	kaviné (‘intchi’)
deer:	karikú (‘intchi’)
armadillo:	tatú (Portuguese, ‘intchi’)
agouti:	búgútrú (‘intchi’)
iguana:	yúan (‘intchi’)
sloth:	waikwi (‘intchi’)
tortoise:	méoka (‘intchi’)
caiman:	púnumna (‘intchi’)
macaque:	wakúkwa (‘intchi’)
squirrel monkey:	akama (intchi’)
frog:	shahnk (‘intchi’)

Puigné (cont'd):

jaguar:	kaokwin (non-'intchi', i.e., non-edible)
cat:	kúskús (non-'intchi')
dog:	péú (non-'intchi')

Kohivra:

duck:	ovayan (edible)
parrot:	jako (Créole, edible)
toucan:	yaok (edible)
macaw:	a'ara (edible)
blue macaw:	ka(r)ú? (edible)
colibri:	túkús (edible)
chicken:	taka'ahk (edible)
crow:	issú (non-edible)
harpy eagle:	avakni (non-edible)
owl:	shúwet (from Créole, non-edible)
bat:	missibiú (non-edible)

Ihm:

bass:	kúnan (edible)
piranha:	omaien (some types edible)
ray:	húb (edible)
eel:	waptchi (edible)
crab:	kúa (edible)
shrimp:	takès (edible)

The reason usually given for the jaguar being a prohibited food was that it is “ka kabaí”, i.e., “not good”. This I interpreted as having a similarly ambiguous meaning as in English and French: either it tasted bad or else consuming it was wrong. The (mainly) Protestant Pa'ikwené of my village denied the latter case applied. However, my interview with the shamans Waptchi and Ovayan, described above, revealed that in common with many other Amerindians, the Pa'ikwené hold the jaguar an exceedingly powerful spirit being. This concurs with Montout (1994:63) who further tells me in a personal communication that outside of a shamanic context the eating of this animal is indeed forbidden (and dangerous) on magico-religious grounds. According to informants raw jaguar heart was an efficacious cure for fear and used to be given to people before going into battle; and some hunters kill it for its coat and fangs, objects thought to possess *mana*, to borrow a Polynesian term, and which also fetch a good market price for all its being a legally protected species in Guyane. Shamanic initiation and practice seem also to involve the consumption of at least two more prescribed species, colibri and anaconda.

Whether due to a taboo or not, the disinclination to eat jaguar was shared by Christian and non-Christian Pa'ikwené alike. Other than this one instance, the

native system of zoological categorisation gave little sign of having a moral basis (or of necessarily being part of a comprehensive symbolic classificatory structure à la Lévi-Strauss 1962b; cf. Morris' critique 1976). Overall, rather, discounting the Adventist Pa'ikwené in the next village who had their own biblically sanctioned dietary ethics, the division of animalkind seemed eminently practical - and gustatory. Species were thought and *known* either to be nice to eat or not nice to eat, and people would decline certain fare simply because they did not like the taste. For instance, whereas everyone I met relished tapir, deer and crab, the same was not true of sloth or lizard. Also, for no reason I could discover apart from that they said they found them delicious, women seemed particularly to enjoy monkey heads.

By and large, then, animal killing and food were a matter of personal choice, preference and opportunity, not doctrine (cf. Nimuendaju 1971:49-51 on Pa'ikwené hunting and fishing). Even for items proscribed in connection with menstruation, the rationale tended to be explained in pragmatic and even 'medical' terms, though a possible covert religious motive cannot be ruled out. Thus at her first period, a girl must avoid "red fish" and only eat "a special white fish called waiyabra (?)" as at this time her body "is soft" and the latter food will "firm it up". For the same reason, menstruating women refrain from grilled red fish and meat and eat boiled white ones instead. As noted in the section on healing (chapter 9), "red fish" is also considered bad for pregnancy and women who are breast feeding on the grounds that it gives too much energy. I mentioned also that expectant mothers should not partake of macaw or sloth, the first being said to induce a sickness of the blood, the second to cause a long and painful labour by making the child lazy in the womb. Likewise it will have trouble exiting if its mother eats tapir, which "makes the baby grow too big inside her", or monkey, "because it clings on by the tail" (Montout op. cit.:62). Lastly, the old pubescent rites for boys entailed their having to show their bravery by killing a particularly dangerous type of wild pig, which was then communally eaten.

C. MOUTH MAGIC

a) From my fieldnotes, 19th December 1993.

“It’s noteworthy that the pastor and other *Assembleía de Deus* officiants constantly use a microphone - in a church building whose size permits the voice to be distinctly heard unaided. What power, what transcendence, the microphone is supposed to effect is not difficult to imagine. The voice of authority - of “Ohokri” (God) - is simultaneously, by its use, at one remove and that much more present. The microphone is more than a voice amplifier, it’s a sacred object in a cult without it seems any others (apart from books: the bible, prayer books and hymnals). It’s the spoken Word made not merely loud but tangible. It has become a metonymic object, not merely the conveyor of the voice but the divine VOICE, concretised and visible to the believer, and thus the divinity itself. Also, the physiological and affective symptoms of the speaker, his sighs, groans, warbles, tremors and other vocal and respiratory effects, are translated through, and because of, the microphone from the natural expression of the religious experience into the signs, the stigmata, of its source. Thus enhanced, they symbolise and in essence actually manifest godhood. They both represent and present to the participants, the hearers, the presence of the deity they have invoked in their prayers and songs and by their own individual and joint presence. In this sense, the microphone is also mask: though the speaker’s face is perceptible behind it, he is at the same time occluded by its use; for behind, and immanent in, his face, and filling more fully the space where his is, is another, the godhead itself. And the energy concentrating in his face and issuing from his mouth, and making a force-pump out of his phonemes, reveals the power in the holy sound which is emitted by that godly and as if more present Other. Like a mask, too, the microphone imposes an order, separating wearer from non-wearers and thus the sacred from the profane. It also binds them to him. At one level, this assembly, the congregation, the officiants and god, is exclusive and hierarchical; at another, and through the medium of the voice-tool, VOICE-mask, it is inclusive and egalitarian, in that all the humans present are equal in the sight - and within the vocal range - of the deity.”

b) The Protestant fundamentalist emphasis on the voice and sound referred to in a number of chapters was not just a compensation for the absence of visual iconography (which is associated with idolatry and Catholicism, regarded as one and the same).⁵ It was ideologically legitimated; literally, as it were, theologically decreed. As noted in chapter 4 (section i), a certain Christian teleological view

⁵ A lack, it must be said, more virtual than complete, as some households displayed images of Biblical scenes. ‘My’ family for instance had a large framed picture of the Parting of the Red Sea.

categorises hearing together with sight as one of the superior moral senses proper to humans in that our eyes and ears are made, it is written, in the image of God. And as an instrument of the soul, the body (and as part of it the sense organs) is designed by a divine intelligence (an idea shared with the Ancient Greeks) whose 'vocal' manifestation is perceptible to us: thus it is that 'God speaks to man, and man through his ears hears His Word' (Sears 1991). Given this divine validation, it is not surprising that the Voice plays such a significant role in the religious life of the Pa'ikwené converts who customarily, as noted, greatly value "loud-and-strong speaking" in their everyday one anyway.

GLOSSARY (some key terms)

anivit, work.

ash, to eat.

Aúkwa, Pa'ikwené homeland on the river of the same name (Urucauá in Brazilian) in Amapá State.

auna, to speak.

Atiwi, Black man, Créole.

awaig, man.

baréúyo (fem.), **-yé** (masc.), pretty, beautiful, handsome, clean, proper.

batek, to like, love, be pleased/happy

éveitchi, remedy.

hiyak, to know.

hiyap, to see.

hiyaptihi, chief.

ihamwi, healer, shaman.

ihm, fish (class); food generally.

intchi, meat (edible).

kabai, good/well.

ka kabai, not good, bad, wrong.

kanivwié, to work.

Kiaptúnka, literally “the speech of respect”, moribund ceremonial language.

kohivra, bird (class).

kwak, (Créole) manioc flour.

mativwé, to be hungry.

mabip, to be tired/lazy.

mwaka, to want.

Ohokri, God.

Pa'asi, the French, Whites.

Pa'ikwené, Palikur self-appellation, literally “People of the middle”.

Pa'ikwaki, the Pa'ikwené language.

Palikur, term most often used by outsiders to designate the Pa'ikwené.

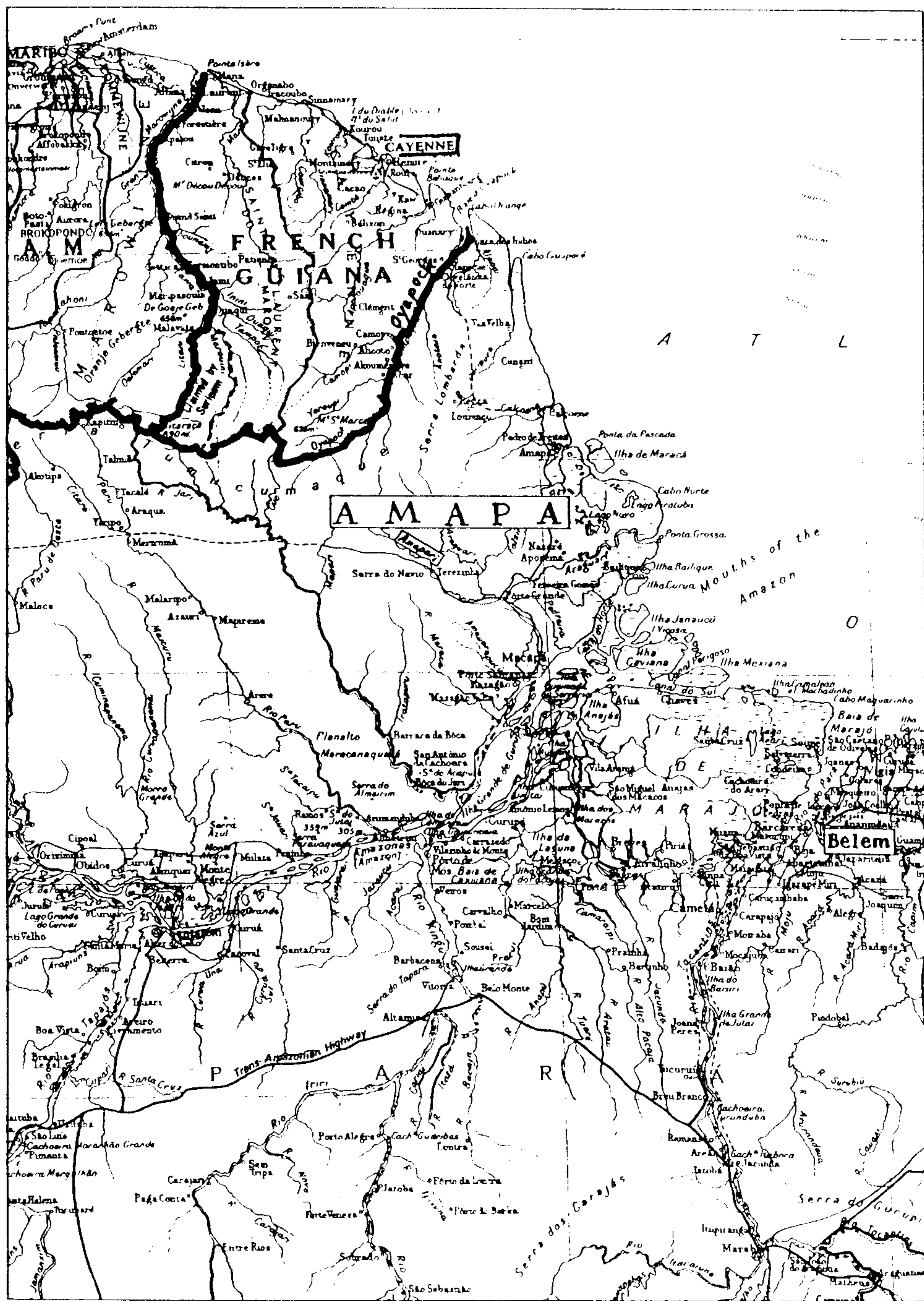
Parana, Brazilians.

puigné, animal (class); flesh (not necessarily edible).

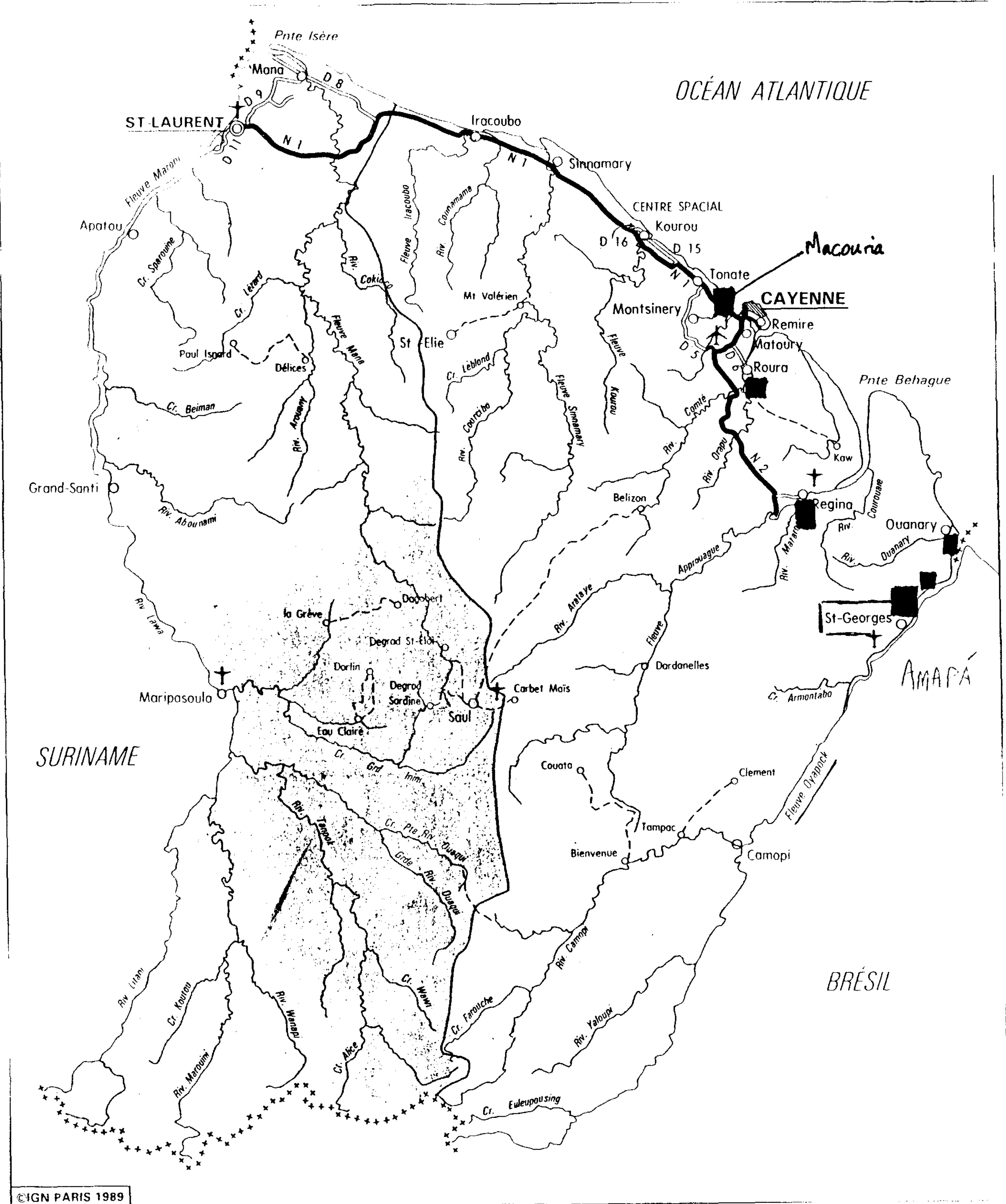
tchimap, to hear-listen-understand.

tchino, woman.

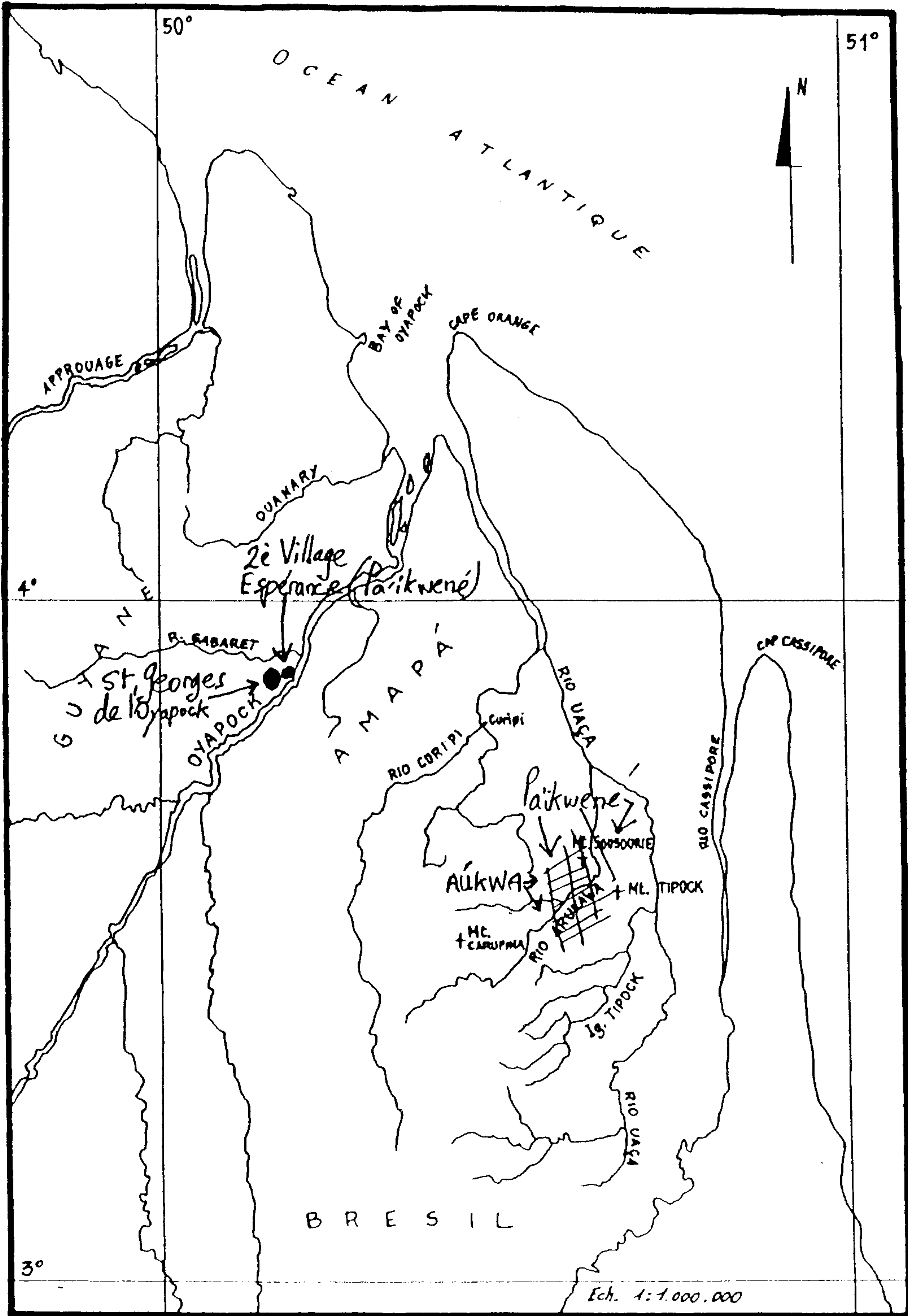
Wavitché, Pa'ikwené superspirit, diabolised since conversion to Christianity.



1. Guyane and Amapá State, Brazil.

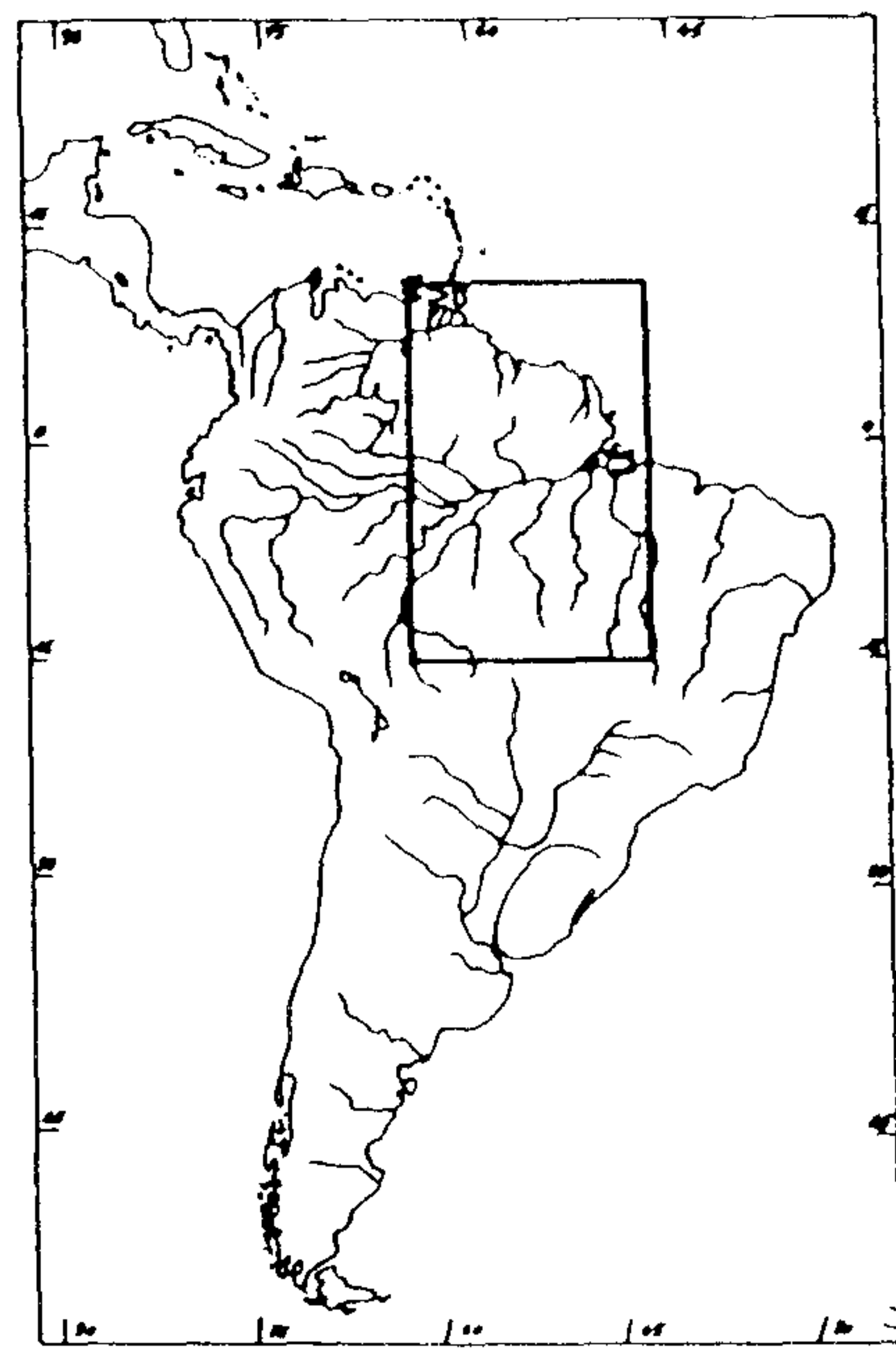
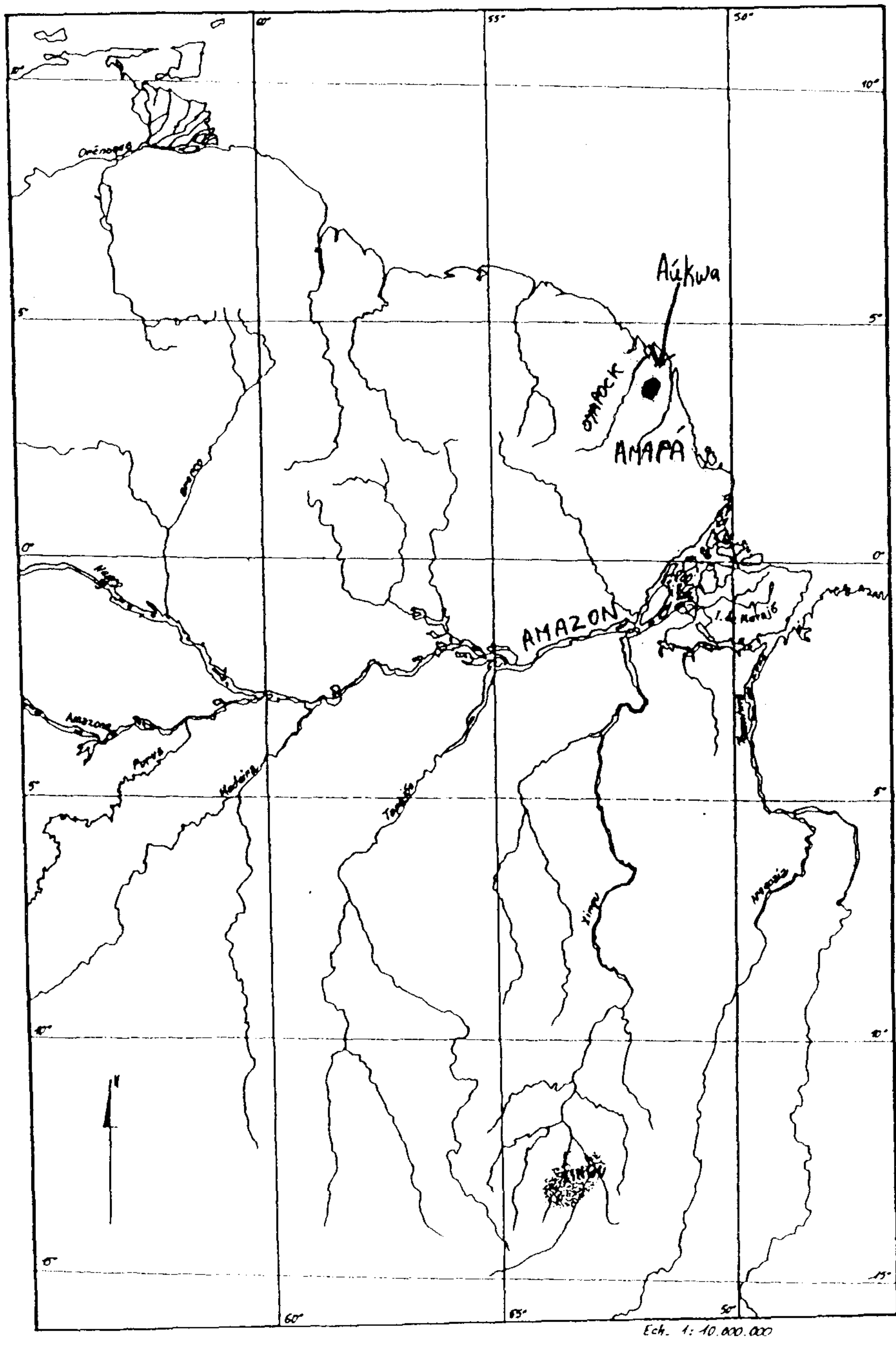


2. The Paikwené presence in Guyane, indicated by



(in DREYFUS 1981)

3. Lower Oyapock and Northern Amapá



4. The Oyapock and Amapá in relation to the rest of Amazonia.

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