

## **STYLES OF MANHOOD:**

*an Amazonian contrast in tranquility and violence*

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### INTRODUCTION: MORAL UNIVERSES AND THE BOUNDARIES FOR PEACEFUL AND VIOLENT ACTION

The Piaroa, a jungle people who dwell along tributaries of the Orinoco in Venezuela, equate the value judgement of 'good' with that of 'the tranquil': both carry the label of '*adiwa*'. For them, the person of good character has what is said to be the imagination to live tranquilly, or literally the wizardry to live tranquilly' (*mariya adiunaku*). The good social life, the Piaroa insist, is the tranquil one where individuals are never coerced by or subjected to the violence of kinsmen and neighbours. Social action among the Piaroa is congruent with their discourse on harmonious existence; for their evaluative rhetoric is coupled with a social state of extremely peaceful living. Piaroaland is almost free of all forms of physical violence, a place where children, teenagers, and adults alike never express anger through physical means. The Piaroa place immense value upon personal moderation in behaviour and are therefore appalled by most display of excess, especially if violent in intention.

This is not to say that the Piaroa have formed a totally peaceful society, and I have written elsewhere (1986a) on their discourse of predation, cannibalism, and revenge. Through sorcery, the Piaroa shaman leader is highly violent on a daily basis toward the end of protecting his community from the dangers of disease and death, both being considered to be attacks by cannibalistic beings from both this and other worlds. A state of violence or peace is always relative and depends somewhat upon the boundaries of the moral universe, but also upon the nature of the moral system at hand. Violence belongs to the domain of foreign politics for the Piaroa, while for their

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neighbours, the Yanomami, close kin can easily transform into dangerous 'others'. A Yanomami may assault, perhaps fatally, a wife, brother, or cousin (see Lizot 1985: 45,68, 69ff.). The Shavante leader of the Brazilian Amazon may kill a fellow villager whom he views as an intolerable competitor (Maybury-Lewis 1971: 186ff.). In contrast, the moral universe within which the Piaroa cannot inflict violence is very wide, encompassing all of Piaroaland. The Piaroa say that all their deaths are caused by outsiders, and their own powerful revenge rituals are aimed at villages outside of Piaroaland (Overing 1986a).

The moral dogma of the Piaroa disallows, then, violence toward anyone who is part of their this-worldly political and social universe, that is, anyone who is not a total stranger. Most important, enemies are not seen. Foreign sorcerers enter Piaroaland in the guise of butterflies; thus, even those who inflict violence upon Piaroa are unseen in human form. In contrast, for the Yanomami and the Shavante the moral universe within which violence is not allowed slips and slides: today you are a friend, but perhaps tomorrow you are not. Such variation in the conception of stable moral boundaries that delimit friend and extreme otherness reflects the considerable difference between the Piaroa and such groups as the Shavante and the Yanomami in their *everyday* display of hostilities. Yanomami and Shavante violence occurs within both community and tribal boundaries.

The particular contrast between peaceful and violent action in which I am interested falls outside any simple dichotomy which might distinguish between a state of war and peace. While it is the hostility of 'outsiders' that often legitimates violence, the definition of who counts as 'outsider' is a highly relative matter, as the cases cited above suggest. Nor is the fashionable 'mode of production' argument a likely key to the matter. Despite recent generalizations about the violence and aggression which supposedly typify societies of tropical forest in South America (see, for instance, Sanday 1981: 193), these peoples vary considerably in the degree and the kind of violence allowed in everyday life. Yet most would fall into the category of 'brideservice society', a social formation that Collier and Rosaldo (1981: 280) have defined as radically different from that of the 'bride-wealth society'. These authors argue that in the 'brideservice societies', a category encompassing the relatively egalitarian hunting and gathering peoples and those that have a mixed economy of

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hunting, gathering, small-scale horticulture, the association of sexuality and violence, which is but a particular type of sexual oppression, plays a central role in all political and much social action. Collier and Rosaldo are linking a particular mode of production ('brideservice economies') with a specific type of politics ('sexual politics') and a particular theory of personhood ('Man the Hunter, Warrior, Life Taker and Giver' vs. 'Woman his Sexy Partner') (see Collier and Rosaldo 1981: 275-6, 315).

While Collier and Rosaldo have relatively successfully characterized one type of 'brideservice economy', they are too sweeping in their wider generalization; for bride service economies are not always associated with the cultural values these authors stipulate. For many groups with such 'economies', community and even intercommunity relations are conceived as properly being harmonious ones (for example, see the following literature on South America: Santos 1986 on the Amuesha of Peru, Thomas 1982 on the Pemon of Venezuela, and Overing Kaplan 1975 on the contrast in 'peaceful' and 'bellicose' peoples of the Orinoco Basin at the time of the Conquest). The sample of groups used by Collier and Rosaldo, upon which they constructed their model, skewed the data; for they were all peoples who place immense value upon 'Man the Hunter and Warrior', and who also elaborate ritually upon the violent, destructive, and fertile potential in men. Such values work at the expense of a positive evaluation of females. They also work against a high value being placed upon the creation of peaceful everyday relationships.

The remainder of my paper will deal with the extreme contrast between two South American groups, the Shavante and the Piaroa, in their respective valuation of male maturity. The exploration will revolve around the systematic development in youngsters of the desired, and contrasting, characteristics the two valuations entail. For the Shavante, the essence of manhood is what Maybury-Lewis (1971: 268 - 9) summarizes as 'sexual bellicosity', while for the Piaroa it is the ability to co-operate tranquilly with others in daily life. The Piaroa view the arrogant and dominating character, which the Shavante would highly esteem in a mature male, as odious. What is even more striking in these contrasting evaluations of maturity is their treatment of gender. The Piaroa definition of ideal maturity for men is identical to that for women; but the Shavante define ideal manhood as the achievement of a state that is both opposed and superior to the feminine.

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Gender antagonism is, therefore, to a certain extent built into the definition of manhood for the Shavante. The flamboyant ritual celebration of male bellicosity and the male collectivity among the Shavante appears to carry with it a corresponding devaluation of women, and indeed to be built upon it. A Piaroa man, on the other hand, must, ideally, co-operate equally well with men and women, and, as is true also for women, achieve harmony in these relationships. Such a difference in conceptions of gender and gender roles has strong implications for the event of peace or friction in the play of daily life, and cannot be too much emphasized. It is this issue, the interplay of ideas about gender and gender roles with the creation of discord or harmony in community relationships, about which I shall be concerned below. The focus will be upon systems of morality that vary greatly in their images of manhood and styles of manhood.

Much anthropology has been written on the ways in which culture and social rules constrain women. A modern variant of this view is the Marxian argument of Meillassoux, who sees the formation of the sexual division of labour, itself, as entailing the socio-political subjugation of women, making 'the woman (or slave) a servant of men' (Meillassoux 1981: 21). He argues that kinship institutions, such as marriage, conjugality, and paternal filiation, were then imposed upon women by men as the means through which men constrained women to gain control over both the means of reproduction and labour (ibid.: xxi-xxiii, 20).<sup>1</sup>

My concern is to show that, on the contrary, culture and social rules may well constrain males to fit a given society's ideas about virtuous male behaviour. This is not a merely tongue-in-cheek reaction to such arguments as that of Meillassoux. When the Shavante train boys to become warriors who can both take and give orders, they systematically *constrain* the youngsters in age-set seclusion for a period of five years during which time they are trained to endure suffering (see below). In contrast to the position taken by Meillassoux above, when I speak of 'constraint' my interest is with the overt institutionalization and effects of intentional physical constraint. In a paper on peace and violence this is probably a proper focus, for it is men who are usually in charge of techniques of attack against outsiders. The treatment and definition of enemies are matters forthcoming from the domain of 'the political', which is to a large extent a male domain. Also, it is more than likely the case, however, that how a society designs manners for close personal and

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social relationships cannot be totally separated from its understanding of the 'proper' treatment of its enemies.

### AN IMAGE OF MANHOOD: THE VIRILE SHAVANTE HUNTER AND WARRIOR

The Shavante are an Amerindian group of some 2,000 people who dwell in the Mato Grosso of Central Brazil. In terms of dietary needs and actual consumption patterns, they have a gathering economy supplemented by both hunting and horticulture. However, if one looks at Shavante rhetoric and desire, they have a hunting economy. According to Maybury-Lewis (1971: 33-6), the Shavante, both men and women, have a passion for meat, and consider it the prime delicacy: in fact, however, they subsist primarily on wild roots, nuts, and fruits from the collecting trips of women.

Hunting, then, serves other needs in Shavante society than just dietary ones. Its technicalities interest the men above all else, and it is the activity upon which they spend most of their energy and about which they talk endlessly (Maybury-Lewis 1971: 33). Hunting also provides the men with a public stage for the stylized display of virility. The unsuccessful hunter is met with marked coldness by the women, while the successful hunter flings down his kill for the women to prepare, and with studied indifference goes to lie down. Such a conclusion to a hunting trip is evidence that the man is endowed with proper male virtue. Endurance, fleetness, wakefulness, watchfulness, and bellicosity, all attributes that for the Shavante lead to good hunting, are also indicative of valour, the most esteemed characteristic of Shavante manhood.

Collier and Rosaldo (1981: 276) have noted that in societies where valour in men is associated with the role of hunter, there is often an ideological linking of hunting, killing, and male sexuality. This is no less the case for the Shavante, as evidenced by their great *Wai'a* ceremony which, as Maybury-Lewis describes it (1971: 243ff.), is a ritual representation of the sexual aspect of male ferocity. Shavante men in this ceremony act out the glorification of the essence of manhood, comprised for them of both the bellicose, destructive aspect of male power and its sexual/generative side (ibid.: 266). Ferocity is demonstrated, and the force of it received, through: (a) the ritual killing of a mythical, fierce and excellent hunter, (b) the ceremonial (and actual) rape of women, where a woman from each clan is chosen

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as object, and (c) a ceremonial pantomime of attack which opposes the moieties one to the other: one side in fierce, scowling stamping dance moves against a man of the opposite moiety who must not flinch, even if trampled (Maybury-Lewis 1971: 257). As Maybury-Lewis remarks (ibid.: 66), 'the combination of sexuality and aggression could hardly be more aptly expressed than in a ceremonial rape'. The women are also warned by the men that if they, the women, should set eyes on the masks of the ceremony, the men would manhandle, rape, and disfigure them. The ceremony is at its base one that celebrates opposition and division, the division between the genders, between the clans, between the moieties. Through such opposition, men both act out their power and receive it.

The institutions of Shavante society are such that women are usually excluded, except as 'objects', from its public aspects.<sup>2</sup> In adulthood, spouses spend little leisure time together: men in leisure, if not at their parental home, spend most such time in the men's house. Women are prohibited from approaching the mature men's council, which takes place daily in the men's house when most decisions about the affairs of the community are made. Women are also excluded from most features of the highly elaborated age-set system. Women have no say in their marriages: often they are married when still babies, or at least by the age of five in a group ceremonial marriage, for youths, held for them at the close of their bachelor hut initiation period. Older men are usually polygynous; thus a youth rarely has available for marriage an age-mate female, and he must wait for a younger generation of females to mature before cohabitation with them. Much of Shavante life, in Maybury-Lewis's words (1971: 104), 'is a function of politics, and Shavante politics is based on competition between groups of males'. Or, as Lopes da Silva observes (1986a), the Shavante conceive of society through the male model.

The characteristics of Shavante leaders are also telling of the value placed upon ferocity in the Shavante ideal of manhood. As is true in general for lowland Amerindian leaders, the Shavante leader has no power of coercion for the organizing of daily economic activity. He can make suggestions and harangue in the man's council meeting, but he cannot order people into action. His qualities, nevertheless, are those of the successful hunter/warrior: he must demonstrate his ideal manliness through self-assertiveness, forceful oratorical skill, athletic prowess, and ceremonial expertise (Maybury-Lewis 1971: 198; also see Seeger 1981: 183 on the Suyá leader whose temperamental

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characteristic is that of 'uncontrolled belligerence'). As is also the case for other Amerindian leaders, he has the responsibility for peace-making. However, if he is a particularly strong leader, the Shavante chief has no compunction in killing factional opponents within his own village. Should he go too far, the only repercussion, so long as he remains powerful, is for some of the village members to leave the village.

Belligerence is systematically instilled in males as proper behaviour from a very young age (the information on the training for proper female maturity is unclear), and boys and girls at a very young age are separated from one another as playmates (also see Lizot 1985: 39 on the Yanomami, and Seeger 1981: 155ff. on the Suyu). Small children are encouraged to be small tyrants, to react violently if thwarted. Yet the scolding and punishment of children are rare (see Lizot 1985: 73 on the Yanomami). Tantrums by small children are frequent and condoned by parents: Shavante fathers encourage their children to displays of violence against the mother (Maybury-Lewis 1971: 71). Children are taught to retaliate any hurt, a 'blow for blow' principle (see Lizot 1985: 74 on the Yanomami).

Shavante youths are trained not simply to be warriors, but also to learn co-operation with other men as a group in adversity against other groups of men (see Seeger 1981: 155ff. on the Suyu). To instil the characteristics of the co-operative warrior, the Shavante seclude boys as age-sets for at least five years, during which period they undergo continual harassment and daily haranguing by older men, suffering endurance tests, such as all night exposures and duels at dawn. The boys during this period of seclusion learn athletic prowess and how to display belligerence. Through the lengthy and arduous training during seclusion, they are: (a) to develop a lifetime corporate spirit within the group, (b) to learn to accept the dominance of older men, and to be prepared in general for (rather violent) dominance relationships among men, and (c) taught to act violently as a group.

This seclusion period is closed by an elaborate ceremony that emphasizes the spatial and emotional removal of young men from the world of women. After this stage, the young men, who are the warriors *par excellence*, are relatively free of obligation until mature. These young warriors are characterized by Maybury-Lewis (1971: 140-2; also see Seeger 1981: 162 on the Suyu) as exceedingly vain, proud of their bellicosity and beauty. The training for bellicose action nevertheless continues: the mature age grade of men imposes anger

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and ferocity upon these young men, goading them continually into violent action.

In conclusion to this section, the factors internal to Shavante society that contribute to the formation of a particular type of hunter/ warrior complex, one similar to that described by Collier and Rosaldo (1981), and to the playing out of violence within the community on a more or less daily basis, and indeed which build such violence into everyday life, can be summarized as follows:

1. the image of ideal manhood is that of the bellicose and handsome hunter/warrior;
2. political leadership corresponds to this image;
3. public leadership in general is associated with the principle of male dominance, of men over men, of men over women;
4. political ideology is male-biased and associated with the values of male supremacy and ferocity;
5. women are disallowed from participating in most public decision-making and from the political process in general; they are associated with the domain of the domestic;
6. most public co-operation is between men, and not between men and women, or between women;
7. the genders are systematically separated from an early age;
8. children are trained into violent reaction;
9. initiation is focused upon the lengthy constraint of boys, during which period the boys are separated off from female society, taught male solidarity, bellicosity, and endurance, and trained to accept the dominance of older groups of men;
10. ceremonial displays of male virility, ferocity, and sexuality are highly elaborated, as too is ritual violence against women;
11. the ritual celebration of fertility focuses upon male generative abilities, and not female ones;
12. male economic activities and the products of male labour are prized over female economic activities and the products of female labour.

In short, the Shavante image of society can almost be equated with the social organization of men, and their notions of personhood with 'manhood'. Such an image fits well with the Collier and Rosaldo characterization of a 'brideservice society'. *None* of the above summary statements applies to the Piaroa.



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### AN IMAGE OF ADULTHOOD: PIAROA TRANQUILITY AND THE MASTERY OF EMOTIONS

For the Piaroa, the ideal of man the hunter and sexy warrior is not culturally elaborated, nor is the value of male political supremacy. They do not associate valour with the handsome and arrogant hunter, and young men are taught to pity such evidence of 'lack of control'. The Piaroa attitudes toward food reflect their devaluation of the status of the practical hunter. They rely on four food sources, that from garden cultivation, from collecting, from hunting, and from fishing. With respect to desire, they insist on the equal value of products of the hunt and products of the garden. A proper meal, they say, should be comprised of both meat (the product of men's labour) and manioc bread (the product of women's labour).

For the Piaroa, the ideal of social maturity is the same for men and women; it is one of controlled tranquillity. The individual, both male and female, is responsible for mastering emotions and the poisonous creative powers within the person which come from the crystal boxes of the *Tianawa* gods (see below). Through such mastery, the individual can achieve the moderation in behaviour to allow him/her to lead a tranquil and therefore moral life within a community of relationships. It is through this mastery that one achieves ideal manhood and womanhood in Piaroland, and through it one can then creatively participate in the building of community. The arrogant and handsome hunter is an image seen to be as disruptive to community relations as that of the 'promiscuous woman'. The image that a Piaroa wishes to present to the world is that of 'dignified difference'. The Piaroa judgement about the 'handsome hunter' is a complex one which can be understood through their theory of knowledge and personhood, a topic for below.

Today there are approximately 7,000 Piaroa living in the Amazon Territory of Venezuela. Until about 1970, the population was highly dispersed with great distances separating both houses and territories. In contrast, life within the multiple-family house was carried out within densely populated spaces. If antagonisms or competition became overt within the house, it disbanded into separate units (Overing Kaplan 1975). Since 1970, the Venezuelan government has encouraged the Piaroa to form larger communities in downriver positions closer to the administrative centre. Thus, although I use the present tense, the physical organization of communities and the

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economic organization that I discuss are more relevant to the pre-1970 period.

Each territory, comprising six to seven multiple-family houses, has its own 'master of the territory', who is the *ruwang* that holds the supreme position in a loose hierarchy of *ruwatu* (pl.) within it. The *ruwatu* are politico-religious leaders who are basically 'men of knowledge' who deal with forces of destruction and regeneration from other worlds. The politicking between the *ruwatu* is kept at a relatively low-key level, for they rarely meet as a group. Competition among *ruwatu* between communities is usually expressed through the accusations of sorcery attack, often in the wake of marriages which shift the residential alignments within the territory, and thus respective follower size. While the drama of such shamanic battles can be high, there are many mechanisms that allow for their peaceful resolution (Overing Kaplan 1975; Overing 1985). Competitors are rarely accused of deliberately killing a kinsman, though they might well be accused of inadvertently doing so.

Despite the fact of achieved *ruwangship*, the Piaroa are relatively speaking highly egalitarian, for they place great value upon personal autonomy. The status labels of '*ruwang*' and '*ruwahu*' are the only ones used in reference by the Piaroa outside of kinship terms to think about and to classify social relationships. Typical of Amerindian groups of the Guianas (see Riviere 1984), Piaroa social life is very unformalized. There are no age sets, no descent groups, no warrior societies, no formal council of mature men, no moiety organizations for the playing out of community life. There exist no mechanisms for corporate group decision-making with regard to disputes or economic matters. Riviere (1984: 4) has argued that such informality is a product of the emphasis by the Guianese Amerindian upon the value of individualism. I wish to add, at least for the Piaroa, that their 'informality' is also a product of their high valuation of peaceful living.

Unlike the Shavante case, leadership pertains not to 'manhood', but to the role of *ruwang*. In other words, an adult man does not automatically assume a political role on the basis of his gender, any more than does a woman. If one wishes to speak of specifically 'political' roles, the divide is between the individual *ruwatu* and their wives (*ruwahutu*), on the one hand, and everyone else, on the other (Overing 1985). However, power in Piaroa social life, as for the universe in general, is highly dispersed and individualized.

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The community does not hold land in perpetuity: no Piaroa can 'own' land, nor can the community. No one, no leader, and no group can order the labour of another, or demand the products of it (Overing Kaplan 1983/4). All products from the jungle are shared equally among members of the large house, while garden products and artifacts are privately owned by the individuals whose labour produces them (or literally creates them; see below). Loosely organized work parties (all male, all female, male and female) within the community characterize economic life. Each woman is mistress of her own fertility for which she alone is responsible: the community has no legal right to her progeny; nor does her husband if they should divorce.

The Piaroa are as allergic to a notion of social 'rule' as to the idea of 'the right of command'. While there are proper ways of doing things, it is up to the individual to *choose* or *not to choose* to do them. The Piaroa emphatically told me that there was no residence 'rule'. Although there are kinsmen and in-laws with whom it is proper to live, the final choice is always left to the individual as a private decision. The Piaroa daily express to one another their right to private choice and their right to be free from domination over a wide range of matters, such as residence, work, self development, and even marriage.

For the Piaroa, coercion has no place within the domain of the social, including any power a 'collectivity' might have. The notion of giving up one's rights to a 'whole community' or of submitting to a decision forthcoming from the community or a portion of it would be a strange and abhorrent idea to them (Overing, in press). Sovereignty is in large part in the hands of individuals. Even the gods have no powers of coercion over individuals.

Despite the fact that any notion of 'the will of the collectivity' would be alien to the Piaroa, the ability *to be social* is considered to be the most important *and valued* characteristic of humans living on this earth. According to Piaroa theory, the human condition is unique in that humans are the only beings that are today able to achieve a social life and to live in a community. The Piaroa live on earth beneath 'the sky of the domesticated', and it is the sociality of living in communities beneath this sky that sets humans apart from all others. Only humans can acquire the capacities for creating tranquil and moral (non-competitive) relationships of co-operation which allow for the forming of a moral community. Both sociality and the powers to

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transform the earth's resources for use, powers upon which sociality depends, are capabilities distinct to earthly humans. *Achieving the social*, then, is the primary goal of the Piaroa community. In great contrast to that type of political thought which equates 'the social' with the constraint of a collectivity and with relations of domination, the Piaroa insist upon the opposite where 'the social' is viewed as the means through which humans could actively prevent the establishment of (immoral) relations of dominance (Overing, in press).

The work and the skills for building community are considered to be skills of wizardry (*maripa*), and each individual acquires such skills, as appropriate to gender, through 'lessons in wizardry' (*maripa teau*). Such skills, which fill one's 'beads of knowledge' within the person, are the poisonous creative powers for transformation that come from the crystal boxes of the *Tianawa* gods. All powers for building community, for reproducing and producing, come, then, from another world, that of the gods. *This earthly world was depleted of all powers* at the end of creation time history; after that time the community could only be achieved and continuously recreated through individuals carefully taking, with the help of the *ruwatu*, limited amounts of transformational forces to do so from the gods.

In contrast to peoples who believe that their communities have existence through time through rules of corporation, the Piaroa do not understand 'community' and the relationships of which it is comprised as a political given that allows for continuity through time. Rather it is for them a process of existence that has to be daily achieved by individuals through work, that is through the individual mastery over emotions and the skills of wizardry. The Piaroa, for instance, place emphasis upon marriage ties in the development of community rather than upon the ties of descent. Through marriage and affinity the work of reproduction and production can be achieved.

For the Piaroa the social can only be created through the skills and the personal autonomy of individuals. Humans can act as moral, social agents because unlike all other present day beings they acquire both a 'life of the senses, or desires' (*kaekwae*) and a full 'life of thoughts' (*ta'kwaru*) to be used on earth. Moderation in behaviour, which allows for the ability to interact tranquilly, is achieved by attaining mastery over one's 'life of senses' and one's 'life of thoughts' (Overing 1985).

*Ta 'kwanya* and *ta 'kwakomenae* are the two components, or forces, of

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*ta'kwaru*, 'the life of thoughts', both of which come from the crystal boxes of the gods. *Ta'kwanya* refers to all those particular cultural capabilities a specific type of people have that enable them to live as they do: it is their means of living and fulfilling their material needs; it is their way of doing things in the material sense. It is a category that includes both reproductory capabilities and the knowledge and abilities to transform the earth's resources for use: for acquiring food, for making tools, for processing food, for being fertile, for doing ritual. It also includes language and social norms. There is a strong sense of violence attached to the notion of *ta'kwanya*; for this category of creative, cultural capability is comprised of poisonous forces and carries with it the idea of *predation* (see Overing 1986a). For the Piaroa, reproduction, production, and language are all placed on the same level as basically predatory capabilities, or the means for predation. Thus, the transformational capabilities for fulfilling material needs are dangerous to the self if one takes too many of them, and they can be dangerous to others in contact with one. For instance, the transformational forces of men are dangerous for women, and vice versa; both are dangerous for children. Each person is responsible for preventing his/her danger to others (Overing 1986b).

It is through the other aspect of one's 'life of thoughts', i.e. *ta'kwakomenae* (will, rationality, consciousness), that a Piaroa acquires the autonomy to 'master' within one's self both the dangerous *ta'kwanya* and one's 'life of the senses'. It is through this mastery that one achieves ideal manhood and womanhood in Piaroaland, and can then creatively participate in the building of community.

The Piaroa leaders, the *ruwatu*, take more skills of wizardry within themselves than normal people. They therefore have greater responsibilities than the layman for the building of community. They, for instance, display in self-deportment great tranquillity, or mastery of emotions; for one of their greatest duties is to create the tranquil relationships which would allow for the work of building community, and therefore for its wealth. Because the *ruwang* takes more creative capabilities within himself, he is also the most productive member of the community, and the most dangerous. It is he who brings into this world all the powers to be used in it; at the same time it is he who could become predator through sorcery of his own people (see Overing 1985). A tranquil demeanour then is also *required* of the powerful *ruwang* by the members of his community as evidence of his

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mastery over his powers and his emotions. A display of too much arrogance or 'excessive' behaviour leaves a *ruwang* sitting alone, with no followers.

To sum up, *Ta'kwaru*, 'the life of thoughts', is a concept about human agency that conjoins within the person a specific culture and the autonomy to use this culture socially in a moral or immoral way. *Ta'kwakomenae* (will, etc.) is that crucial aspect of *ta'kwaru* that allows for responsible or irresponsible behaviour. It is one's motivation or intentionality in using one's customs (i.e. one's poisonous capabilities); it is one's comprehension of them, and one's responsibility or irresponsibility for their use, power, and force. Virtue for the Piaroa demands the mastery through the will of both emotions and cultural capability toward the end of achieving social responsibility.

## LESSONS IN WIZARDRY

The skills of wizardry to build community are acquired gradually through life. A child's first lessons occur when she or he is 6 or 7 years old when the *ruwang* gathers a group of boys and girls together to teach them *ta'kwakomena* (consciousness, will, responsibility), or basically social morality. They are taught what our moral philosophy calls 'the other-regarding virtues', those that enable one to take responsibility for one's actions towards others (see Overing 1985). The Piaroa see the virtue of living peacefully with others as more important than 'the self-regarding virtues' (which in contrast the Shavante favour), such as personal courage, ambition, talent, and industry. The *ruwang* also teaches the children what the Piaroa view as social deficiencies: such traits as ferocity, ill-nature, cruelty, malice, arrogance, jealousy, dishonesty, vanity. The teaching *ruwang*, then, in these first 'lessons in wizardry' teaches the value of mastery over the emotions. However, *ta'kwakomena* not only refers to responsibility, but to personal autonomy in general. It is therefore the children's own decision which virtues they develop, as too it is a personal decision later which other aspects of knowledge, types of capabilities, one develops (Overing 1985, 1988).

Before the child is 'tamed' through its first *ta'kwakomena* lessons, it plays with a mixed-gender pack of free-roaming, small children. Since the Piaroa totally disallow physical violence, and children are never physically punished, the children have no model of such action. Their play, although robust, is accompanied by very little obvious

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dissension. Temper tantrums are discouraged, met by mocking and teasing, and strong anger is expressed by both adults and children through pointed silence (Overing Kaplan 1975; Overing 1988).

After the initial 'lessons in wizardry', the child is expected to take increasing responsibility for its actions and to co-operate with others in everyday activities. As children begin to participate in daily tasks, they gradually leave the mixed gender pack of children to join the company of young people who are of their own gender.

Boys undergo no period of constraint, in contrast to their lot among the Shavante. The Piaroa have no competitive sports, or ones that require endurance: there is no duelling, wrestling, or log races. Shuttlecock is the only sport I saw teenagers playing. The leisure time of teenage boys is spent wandering in the forest, from house to house, and in hammock gossip. By working unsystematically with adults of their choice, they slowly learn the skills of their choice, those of hunting, fishing, or the making of artifacts. Girls have less leeway than the boys. A young daughter will help her father distribute game or follow her mother into the fields, but by the age of 9 or 10 girls are participating in the total range of tasks normal to female status. Unmarried young people, male and female alike, provide a labour force upon which all adults of the communal house may draw, a preparation for the general co-operation upon which the Piaroa place such value among adults within the community.

It is particularly the case with men that they slowly over time increase their knowledge and mastery over self. Many ceremonies for both males and females are privately conducted, often at the most in the company of a *ruwang*. Marriage as a ritual is a private one between bride and groom, who are usually of approximate age. That such stages in development go relatively unmarked in community ritual is significant as one of the factors contributing to the peacefulness of the Piaroa.

Both boys and girls continue their 'lessons in wizardry' at puberty. For a woman, her most important acquisition of wizardry are her 'beads of menstruation'. The *ruwang* chants to fill her beads of knowledge with the knowledge of fertility. Menstruation, and the fertility with which it is associated, form a woman's 'thoughts' (her *ta'kwanya*), as similarly hunting and fishing capabilities are the 'thoughts' of a man. When a girl receives these 'beads of knowledge' from the gods, she then has the power to master her own fertility. It is understood, in Piaroa thought, that women have control over their

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own biological processes and must take responsibility for them.

All boys when about 12 undergo a great increase festival, the *Sari*, their second 'lessons in wizardry', which gives them the internal clothing of the hunter and fisherman. Far from being distressed by the initiation of the boys, the women as a group ritually congratulate each boy at its close, and praise him. The *Sari*, however, is not primarily an initiation ceremony; for it will be held by a great *ruwang* and his wife (the *ruwahu*) regardless of whether there are boys of appropriate age for initiation. It is at this ceremony that the sacred instruments, which the women must not see, are played. The *ruwang*, who is with the men outside the house, chants with the *ruwahu*, who is inside it with the women. In such chants the two leaders re-enact the roles of the creator god of the Piaroa and his sister.

Typically for the Piaroa, the women are not warned against seeing the instruments with a threat of rape; rather, it is said that if a woman should see the flutes, the entire village must commit mass suicide by joining hands and jumping *off* a cliff (and I must admit that their reasoning on this is not clear to me). However, the *Sari*, as a great increase ceremony, is one of the most dangerous rituals the Piaroa perform, and, as such, only a great *ruwang* and his wife may present it. Through his powers, he makes fertile the jungle and rivers: he travels to all the sacred homes of the 'parents of the animals and fish' beneath the earth, and transforms the inhabitants of these subterranean villages into the form of animal and fish. He then transports them to earthly space for human use. The ceremony is, then, a demonstration of the 'fertility' of the *ruwang*, and not of Piaroa men in general. The great 'secret' of the rituals is that the Piaroa are cannibals; for the meat they eat each day is human in its origin.

After their first 'lessons in wizardry' for the hunt, men may undergo, if they wish, more powerful lessons to slowly increase their internal 'beads of knowledge', their source of power as hunter, fisherman, chanter. The most powerful 'lessons in wizardry' are those taken for the learning of shamanic powers, and in the Piaroa theory of knowledge, men who do undergo them are the best hunters in Piaroaland, even if they rarely hunt (Overing 1988).

The excellent, practical hunter who has had no further lessons in hunting-wizardry than his introductory ones as a teenager is said to know little about hunting. Thus, for the Piaroa, 'hunting' includes all capabilities for acquiring animal meat and for making it edible for human consumption. The hunter who strikes down a wild peccary



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with a blowgun dart is participating in only one aspect of this process, and the critical role is played by the *ruwang*. It is the latter who has the transformational capabilities for the very creation of animal meat. The Piaroa consider the most powerful creative capabilities to be those of the woman, who bears children, and those of the *ruwang*, who transforms humans to animals (Overing 1986b). Thus, the *ruwang*, who transforms human to animal flesh, who transports it to earth, and then, after earthly kill, transforms the animal flesh into edible vegetable form (see Overing Kaplan 1975), is the greatest of all hunters.

It is through the power of his 'thoughts' that the Piaroa *ruwang* is their great warrior and hunter, while the physical prowess of the practical hunter is considered to be a minor capability, not one to place much value upon. Danger, from the Piaroa point of view, is from the predatory activities of beings from other worlds, and the responsibility for protection from them is in the hands of the shamanic *ruwatu*. Dealing with outsiders, with the enemy, is the duty of the *ruwang*, and not of men in general. Therefore, Piaroa boys are not constrained into learning the aggressive stance of young warriors to fight men of this world; they do not learn to accept the dominance relationships of groups of men over other groups of men. Males are not placed in age sets to mark their development and to rank their status as men: beyond certain learning, all maturity is both a relative and an individual matter. Nor do Piaroa young men learn the self-regarding virtues of manhood that would set them as males against females, and, as such, superior to them.

The Shavante have no shamans, and the duty of protection, fighting, and hunting in Shavanteland is carried out through group debate by men and through their physical violence. In Piaroaland, the *ruwatu*, individually, have the power that men as a group have in Shavanteland. All protection is carried out through the power of the 'thoughts' of individuals, and not through the physical bellicosity of men in groups. It might be added as an aside that it probably takes much more cultural energy to teach bellicosity and to produce warriors (with spears as arms), than to teach co-operation and to produce shamans (with 'thoughts' as arms).

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### PEACE AND THE DEMARCATION OF 'THE OTHER': A CONCLUSION

I began this essay by noting that the moral dogma of the Piaroa disallows violence toward anyone who is part of their this-worldly political and social universe. Beings having the sufficient characteristic of 'otherness' to warrant an attack should only be those from other lands or worlds. Indeed, an important aspect of the Piaroa 'complex of peace' is the erasure of most marked divisions among people in the playing out of the social life of the community. Their ideal of endogamy, which treats the marriage exchange as if it were non-existent, is an example of such a mechanism for achieving peace. The Piaroa recognize marriage exchange as an exceedingly dangerous principle to act upon, a lesson they receive from the events of the mythic past which was a time when each marriage alliance between strangers carried in its wake a deadly competition for the poisonous cultural capabilities of predation. Through the endogamous marriage the very notion of marriage exchange, and especially its dangerous mixing of strangers, has been masked (see Overing Kaplan 1972, 1975, 1984).

There is very little idiom through which a Piaroa can demarcate another Piaroa as 'other' than self, and therefore as 'outsider'. Although all Piaroa are considered kinsmen, division does exist, of course: there is the factional politicking of the *ruwatu*; each individual has dangerous affines, even if they are also kin; men have different roles to play from women, and because of their difference in cultural capabilities the genders are dangerous for one another, a difference somewhat marked in ritual. However, unlike the Shavante, whose ritual and rhetoric sets into opposition groups and categories of people, and indeed celebrates separation and opposition, Piaroa institutions downplay, ignore, and mask the principles of separation and opposition, principles they associate with relations of dominance and tyranny (see Overing Kaplan 1981). 'Difference' for the Piaroa always signifies a danger: it can easily lead to violence between individuals and therefore be a deterrent to the possibility of creating the sociality necessary for the creation of community.

Much of the bread and butter of anthropology, the description of elaborate group organization, rites of initiation, networks of marriage exchanges, the hierarchy of groups, and the ranking of men over women are all mechanisms for stressing the 'otherness' among people

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who daily interact, and, as such, they mark the boundaries within which, and outside of which, daily aggression and domination are played out. Thus, in conclusion, I would like to remark that one reason that descriptions of exceedingly peaceful societies are relatively 'thin on the ground' is most likely because the institutions of such societies are not congruent with the Western (and anthropological) notions of 'the social'. On the other hand, the institutions of the Shavante are but grist for our mill. Their rituals, their rhetoric, their values, and their group organization are familiar to us, while those of the Piaroa are not.

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## NOTES

- 1 An assumption in much of the recent literature on gender is that male obligations give men status, while female obligations constrain women. For example, it is argued that boys in initiation receive esoteric privileged knowledge, but girls only suffer prohibitions and restrictions at puberty (see Bamberger 1974: 277; Ortner 1974: 69). This is an example of what I have labelled a 'Catch 22' clause that is unfortunately very general to interpretations in gender studies.
- 2 It must be admitted that to a certain extent I am presenting a caricature of the Shavante, if for no other reason than I do not know them as well as the Piaroa. The picture I give, however, is, according to a Bororo expert, Sylvia Caiuby Novaes (personal communication), one to which the Bororo, neighbours of the Shavante, also subscribe. In other words, the image I present of the Shavante is the one they choose to present to the world. However, Aracy Lopes da Silva, who has recently done research with Shavante females, tells me that: (a) Shavante females have considerable strength within the 'domestic arena', and (b) Shavante males are often gentle with women and children when interacting within the domestic field. On the other hand, as Lopes da Silva herself comments (1986a), with the exception of the public bestowal of the 'woman's name' upon the female, women are tied to the domestic, the private, and the individual, while men are associated with the public, the ceremonial, and the political. Also see Lopes da Silva (1986b).

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