Morality and Emotion in the Dynamics of an Amerindian Society (Warao, Orinoco Delta, Venezuela)

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Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text.

This dissertation is 74,467 words in length.

Abstract

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Morality and emotion in the dynamics of an Amerindian society (Warao, Orinoco Delta, Venezuela).

This dissertation is a study of the interplay of moral issues and emotional states in the daily life of the Warao of the Orinoco Delta in Venezuela.

Among the Warao, neither moral issues nor emotional processes are the subject of much explicit discursive elaboration. They usually emerge in a non-propositional or even non-verbal way as aspects of everyday and ritual interactions, and shape the course of those interactions, which are essentially dynamic processes. This dissertation is therefore essentially concerned with understanding the effect of people's actions on one another, and with elucidating the role played by morality and emotion in such processes.

The dissertation starts with a general description of interactions between Warao and outsiders, which centres on the acquisition and management of things (chapter 1) and continues with a consideration of the effects of the production and consumption of food upon such interactions (chapter 2). Both chapters stress how the moral issues surrounding such practices are central in accounting for the form taken by Warao sociality. Nurture, as a specific form of food consumption, also has long-lasting emotional effects, revealed by the saliency of childhood experiences in the definition of kinship networks, and of the schema of fosterage as an asymmetrical – yet valued – way of relating to others. Discourses and practices of care and nurture also abound around illness and shamanism, and such contexts present shamanic aggression as the archetypically immoral act. They also offer the opportunity to study how different types of discourse (ritual speech, gossip, etc.) and non-verbal acts have effects on the emotional state of those involved and on the nature of their relationships. Death offers another stage for the critical and reflexive evaluation of the behaviour of oneself and others, especially in funerary laments. But intense sorrow is not only conventionally expressed or channelled, it is also intentionally produced in circumscribed contexts, because it is a moral – albeit painful – state.

By focusing on verbal and non-verbal acts in specific contexts, this study shows how moral reflexivity can be pervasive in spite of not being explicitly theorised, and how it is inextricably linked to emotional states which are produced by – as well as productive of – interactions.

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First of all, obviously, I will never repay my debt to the Warao who looked after me during more than a year. In Tekoburojo and Domujana, some people became my friends, gave me the comfort of a home, fed and taught me. Out of respect for their privacy, and because most Warao dislike having their name written down (it reminds them both of governmental censuses and of some feared sorcery techniques), I use pseudonyms throughout the thesis, except when I refer to Warao leaders I met in official circumstances.

Without the assistance of some other people, I would never have reached and stayed in the Delta. Pedro Martinez introduced me to Tekoburojo and Domujana, and his enthusiasm was always a great comfort to my heart. Louis and Arlette Carré treated me like a son and cooked me dishes unknown to the rest of the Delta, when I needed to spend some time in Guayo. There, across the river, David spent long hours teaching me Warao. In Nabasanuka, the missionaries gave me much help and encouragement, especially padre K'okal and hermana Ivana. In Tucupita, I also enjoyed many discussions with Alexander Ramos, who first took me to the lower Delta. Many more helped me at some point, and I am ungrateful indeed not to name them all.

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patiently listened to my doubts, convinced me that I was not on the wrong path, and constantly stimulated me with his questions and comments.

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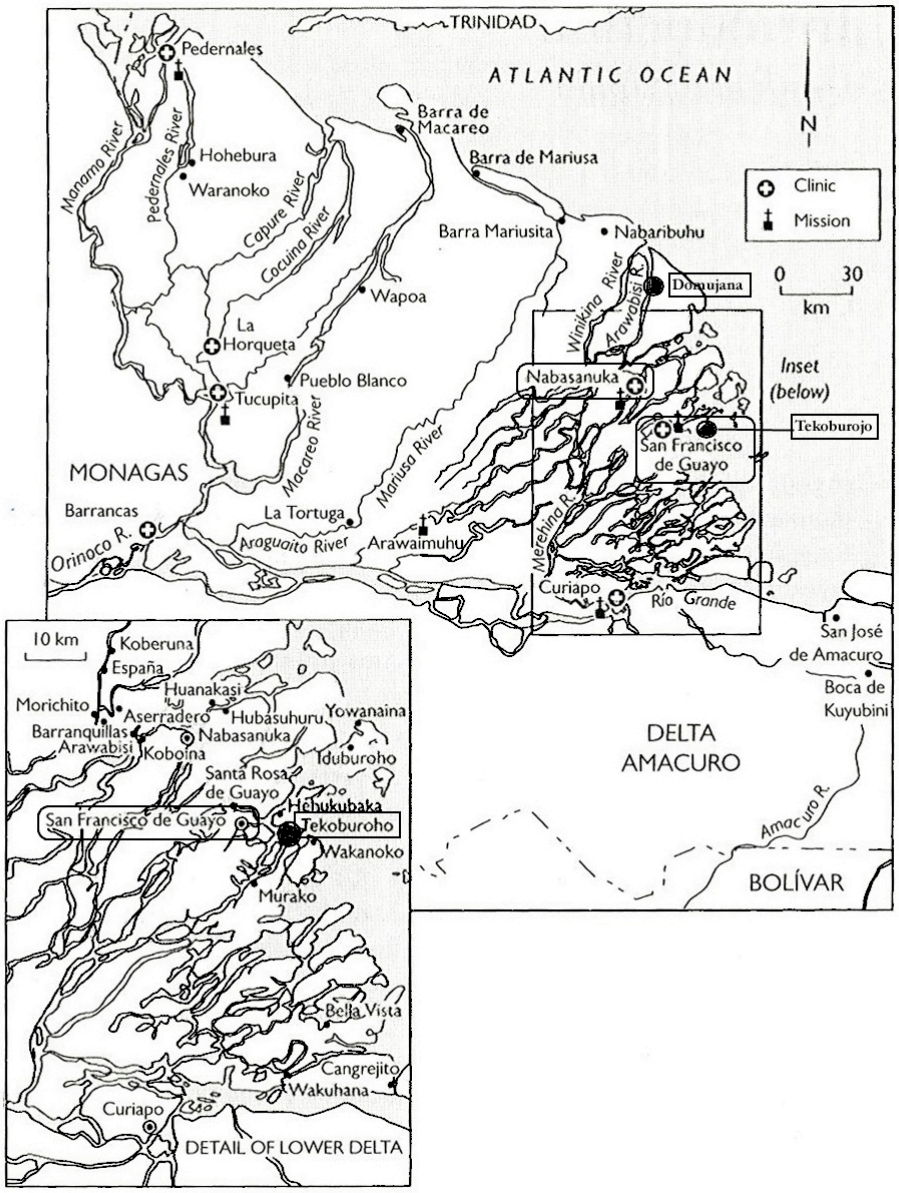
A note on orthography and the typography

The orthography of Warao is not stabilised (their name can for instance be written 'Guarao,' 'Guarauno,' 'Warrau,' 'Uaharaho,' etc.). I have adopted the orthography used by most other anthropologists, which essentially differs from that of the Capuchin missionaries (who have produced textbooks and dictionaries) and the Venezuelan state in that I chose to render the fricative by 'h' (instead of their 'j') – except in official place-names. I also render the semi-vowel by 'w' (whereas some missionaries use 'gu' or 'u'). A phonological description of Warao can be found in Osborn (1966).

All Warao words are in italics, and a glossary with the names of some vegetal and animal species I mention in the text is in an appendix.

I have otherwise tried to limit the use of italics: most words quoted in other languages are in single inverted commas, and I use the abbreviation Sp. to indicate Spanish. Otherwise, single inverted commas are used to highlight common expressions, whereas double inverted commas denote verbatim citations – in both cases either in Warao discourse or in anthropological literature.

Map 1. Venezuela.



Map 2. Orinoco Delta, showing settlements mentioned in the text.

(Reproduced from Briggs & Mantini-Briggs 2003: 2)

Introduction

"Indeed, they have very few explicit theories about anything,
and have little taste or talent for explicating the self-evident."
(Taylor 1993a: 658)

When I left Tekoburojo, where I had conducted most of my fieldwork, Adelina, the grandmother of my host family, asked me when I would come back. I said I did not know, maybe in a couple of years, and her daughter stated in a resigned voice: "he's not coming then." They pledged they would cry after I had left – but did so in a laughing voice –, and it reminded me that, the previous time I had come back after a period away, my host Jesús had told me he had 'almost died' out of sadness. Simultaneously with this sentimental effusion, Adelina and her daughter were reminding me to send them goods, asking for rolls of nylon thread, clothes, knives and pans, etc., while the latter was repeatedly calling me 'compadre.'

I explore in more detail similar incidents (although not always involving me) throughout the dissertation, but this episode condenses many themes of my research: emotion (they promised to cry), care (they had nurtured and looked after me), transfers

(they asked me to send them stuff), illness (Jesús had almost died), and kinship, which are pervasive in their dealings.

My initial project, elaborated in European libraries, was to focus on emotion, in order to contribute to this emerging anthropological field. But I soon realised that emotion is particularly difficult to grasp: the Warao laugh, cry, love, get angry or are seized by sadness, but they do not talk much about this, usually not in a very original way, and I would have needed many more years of fieldwork to achieve the fine study I had dreamt of. Yet while they seemed to be nowhere, emotions were everywhere, that is to say they appeared interlaced with many other interesting topics of anthropological investigation, for instance production, exchange and consumption, or shamanic and funerary rituals. A notable question was that of morality, which I had never studied until then, and which I recognised in the field in very basic terms as evaluating personality and actions as good or bad. I could not forgo this theme because care, for instance, simultaneously generates affective dispositions and is a moral question and because the display of grief is valued as proof of attachment, even though it is then revealed negatively.

During the writing-up of my dissertation, I subsequently tried to elaborate on these questions, to develop a more complex understanding of emotion and morality – informed by anthropological scholarship –, but I claim to achieve neither an 'anthropology of emotion' nor an 'anthropology of morality.' Rather, I attempt to offer a particular point of view on interactions and relationships, highlighting how they are shaped by emotional states and moral issues that emerge in their course, while essentially describing particular events that occurred in specific places of a lowland South Amerindian society, the Warao of the Orinoco Delta.

1. Fieldwork.

The fieldwork on which my thesis is based was carried out in Venezuela between December 2006 and July 2008, with an additional trip in August and September 2009. When I first reached Tucupita, the capital of the state of Delta Amacuro (which comprises most of the Orinoco Delta), I encountered both some impoverished and monolingual Warao begging in the street, with whom contact was not easy, and some Spanish-speaking leaders of the indigenous movement, whose links with the lower Delta (which is the heart of Warao-land) were somewhat stretched. My main problem was therefore to reach the settlements of the lower Delta, since transportation from Tucupita is only fluvial and can follow any of the numerous distributaries that form the Delta – no

one seemed keen to take me there, or they asked me for enormous fees to do so, and anyhow I did not know yet where I wanted to land. My first trip eventually took place thanks to the activities of the UCIW (Unión de Comunidades Indígenas Warao). I had met in Tucupita a young Warao journalist, César Zambrano, who had introduced me to several other leaders of the UCIW, and in particular had asked Alexander Ramos to help me with my project. On 18th January 2007, I finally embarked with Alexander and several others, in order to discuss '21st century socialism' in Araguabisi, a large and relatively wealthy community of the lower Delta – although several incidents forced us to stop in smaller and poorer settlements, giving me a first impression of the diversity of the Warao. It was a very interesting event, which taught me a lot about the interdependence of national politics and local issues, but did not provide me with any opportunity to find a real field site. I used that period to gather information about the indigenous movement and the life of the Warao in urban areas, but my research really started only when I met Pedro Martinez, a member of the Catholic institution 'Fe e Alegria,' who was running an adult education program in the lower Delta, where he had previously spent several years. In the last days of January 2007, he invited me to go with him to several settlements he was going to visit in the surroundings of San Francisco de Guayo (subsequently Guayo), a large mission-village and administrative centre of the area, offering to introduce me and to ask them whether I could stay in order to conduct my research.

When we arrived in Tekoburojo, a mid-size settlement where people were mostly monolingual in Warao, he realised that his program had difficulties because of the lack of any resident who could help teach the others (a 'facilitador' in local administrative Spanish). Judging it would be a wonderful opportunity to have a role and be useful, I offered to lend a hand: this is how I came to be the 'maestro' (schoolteacher) of Tekoburojo, and spent the first months of my fieldwork busily teaching adults and children how to read, write and count. Although I kept such a title or nickname during my whole stay, and continued to sleep in the communal day nursery (Multihogar de Cuidado Diario) that I used as a schoolroom, I progressively taught less and less (until eventually some local residents started teaching), and was integrated in the life of a particular family and of the village as a whole. A few days after I had arrived, while I was struggling to cook the groceries I had brought, Jesús and his wife Castula took pity on me: at first they cooked my food, and eventually we shared everything. Jesús was my alter-ego, his older sister Acacia and her husband Rafael became my 'commadre' and

'compadre,' his mother Adelina kept me updated about the latest gossip and his father Carlo took me fishing, treating me as a kind of foster son he had to train. In a neighbouring house was living Evaristo, the prominent shaman of Tekoburojo, who was also Castula's father and Adelina's ex-second husband… I often witnessed shamanic cures that he performed, and he was always extremely kind to me, but very reluctant to gloss his ritual activities. I admittedly obtained some information about shamanism in didactic interviews with another villager, Fabian, whose talkativeness on such topics was in inverse proportion to his renown as a shaman, but most of the data I gathered during my fieldwork came from informal conversations with non-specialists and from the observation of what happened while I was around. I am definitely not claiming a greater objectivity than if I had mostly been interviewing knowledgeable elders, but the choice – or the constraint – to talk primarily with common people about common topics contributed to the specificity of my approach, and was in line with my reluctance towards the production of overly consistent reifications of indigenous theories.

Throughout the period I devoted to fieldwork, I occasionally returned to Caracas (and to Europe over Christmas 2007), but most of my breaks from village life were taken in Guayo. It gave me emotional and physical comfort, but also enabled me to enrich my perspective. In Guayo I received language tutorials from David, a perfectly bilingual elder who had previously worked as an informant with a Capuchin missionary, but also had the opportunity to interact with the Warao as one foreigner among many (since Guayo is a mixed settlement), gained a larger perspective on the area (since it is a crossroads where most people pass), and obtained a lot of information on political processes (since it is the usual destination of politicians targeting the Warao).

At the end of 2007, I decided to conduct additional fieldwork in a smaller settlement, and therefore followed Pedro Martinez to the other area where he was running his education program, the vicinity of Nabasanuka (another large mission-village). During the first semester of 2008, I made two trips to the remote settlement of Domujana, and although I spent much less time there than in Tekoburojo, it proved to be a fruitful choice. From the beginning, I was invited to hang my hammock in the house of Justo and Celia and their already having a schoolteacher spared me this responsibility. This experience helped me to assess the diversity and homogeneity of the Warao, as well as their own perspective on their internal differences and common identity. It was also interesting – albeit sad – that the village experienced a split between my two stays, and was further divided by the local elections of 2008. Occasionally staying in Nabasanuka

with the missionaries of the Consolata was also a very productive opportunity, since the involvement of the newly-arrived missionaries and their rapport with most of the population contrasted sharply with the relations that existed at the time of my fieldwork between the Capuchin missionaries of Guayo, some of whom had arrived in the 1950s, and their flock. It provided me with yet another perspective on the interactions between Warao and outsiders, and I was emulated by the fresh interest of father K'okal for Warao culture and conduct, therefore spending a lot of time interviewing – or conversing with – bilingual local residents.

2. The Warao and Waraology.

The Warao are a numerous indigenous group, at least by lowland South American standards, with 36,028 individuals according to the 'Censo Nacional Poblacón y Vivienda 2001' (Instituto Nacional de Estadística). 83 % of them live in the state of Delta Amacuro (which comprises most of the geographically-defined Orinoco Delta), and about half of those in the Municipio Antonio Díaz – the only district which is overwhelmingly Warao. A minority of Warao are located in the state of Monagas, either along the caño Manamo (a tributary of the Delta) or in the river port of Barrancas, while small numbers live in Guyana, although they are now largely disconnected from the Warao living in Venezuela.

From a strictly geographical point of view, the Warao are therefore not an 'Amazonian' people, not even a 'Guianese' people, and it is true that their specificity within the continent has been accentuated by their having hardly any conversation with other indigenous groups for almost a couple of centuries – until encounters took place within the Venezuelan indigenous movement in the second half of the 20th century. Most of them do not seem to regret this situation, since they primarily see themselves as the prey of other Amerindians, who used to wage war on them, or to act as slave raiders, essentially on behalf of Dutch colonists: even now, other Amerindians are usually identified with cannibal were-jaguars. At least, this was their systematic reaction when they looked at pictures in my anthropology books, or happened to watch a movie set in Amazonia. Conversely, although they also experienced suffering at the hand of colonial and post-colonial authorities, their history of trade with non-indigenous foreigners seems much richer, dating back to Raleigh's expedition in 1595, and used to be directed both downriver, towards Trinidad, and upriver, towards Venezuela. Since the beginning of the 20th century, with the arrival of the post-colonial missions and the emergence of the

state, Venezuela has been a much more powerful centre of attraction than foreign countries, and the Warao have become Venezuelan, but traders and smugglers from Trinidad and Guyana still play a role in the life of the Warao who live close to the coastal area.[1]

Research on the Warao, which is essentially concentrated in the second half of the 20th century, has in fact accentuated their distinctiveness. Capuchin missionaries, some of whom have gained a deep knowledge of Warao culture and way of life, have published very valuable texts, and especially transcriptions and translations of mythical or historical narratives and ritual discourses, which however do not tend to relate the Warao to anything else than Christian theology (e.g. Barral 1957, 1958, 1960, 1964, Lavandero 1972, 1983, 1991, 1992, 1994, 2000, 2005). Capuchin missionaries have also published a comprehensive Warao-Spanish dictionary (Barral 2000, 1st edition 1957), and two grammars (Olea 1928, Vaquero 1965) – which are much more rudimentary than the linguistic analysis achieved by a Baptist missionary in the late 1950s (Osborn 1966a, 1966b, 1967). Although I benefited from such publications in order to learn and use the language during my fieldwork, it is true that none was sophisticated enough to involve the Warao in academic debates, and their language is for instance still considered to be isolated.

The first professional anthropologist to study the Warao was J. Wilbert, who carried out fieldwork in the area of Winikina in the 1950s, and later published extensively (e.g. J. Wilbert 1969, 1980, 1993, 1996). He mostly focused on the religious aspects of Warao culture, and, although his detailed descriptions of beliefs are breathtaking, he probably achieved the work of a folklorist rather than that of an anthropologist: Wilbert constantly reifies Warao culture and religion, portraying consistent indigenous theories, classes of ritual practitioners who act as priests, etc. (see discussion in chapter 4). In a way, he has made the Warao even more marginal, within lowland South America, than they were before. J Wilbert subsequently supervised research conducted by his students, most notably Olsen (1974, 1996), and Heinen (Heinen 1972a, 1972b, 1988a, 1988b, 2003, Heinen & García-Castro 2000, Heinen & Henley 1998-99, Heinen & Ruddle 1974, Heinen, Salas & Layrisse 1980). Whereas Olsen focused on the relation between music and shamanism, and spent only seven months with the Warao, Heinen's fieldwork spanned several decades and he published extensively on economic organisation, history,

1. See Heinen 1988a, Heinen & García-Castro 2000, J. Wilbert 1996. A more detailed presentation of the contemporary Warao is made in chapter 1.

and kinship. Notably, he achieved a useful reassessment of Warao kinship, which had previously been studied by Suárez (1972), but remained driven by an abstract interest in social organisation (see discussion in chapter 3). Finally, J. Wilbert also supervised the research of his son W. Wilbert, whose doctoral dissertation was a treatise on phytotherapy (W. Wilbert 1996), but who later published two books with his wife Cecilia Ayala-Laffée on women (Ayala-Laffée & Wilbert 2001, 2008), which are however not very sophisticated in terms of anthropological analysis. In this context, Briggs stands out as the only scholar who has given the Warao a wider academic audience, through his own research in linguistic anthropology (Briggs 1988, 1992, 1993, 1994, 2000), and, with his wife Clara Mantini, by achieving a political anthropology of the cholera epidemics that struck the Warao in 1992-93 (Briggs & Mantini-Briggs 2003). His work, notably on funerary laments, shamanic discourse and dispute mediation ceremony, is compelling and shows how anthropology can benefit from the general contemporary theories of linguistics.

All the researchers who have studied the Warao, without judging the value of their data and analyses, share a common characteristic: their work is entirely disconnected from the anthropology of Amazonia, or more broadly lowland South America, despite the latter's vibrancy since the 1970s, although I should mention that certain Warao myths are central to the development of the second volume of Lévi-Strauss's *Mythologiques* (1966). This fact struck me all the more that my fieldwork experience often echoed more my previous bibliographical knowledge (and first-hand experience) of lowland South Amerindians, than my readings of Warao ethnography: Warao shamans for instance seemed more similar to their Guianese or Amazonian counter-parts than to the 'priests' portrayed by Wilbert, at least in the area of the Delta where I did my research. Admittedly, the Amerindian-ness of the Warao was a salient fact for me because my training had originally been in the anthropology of the region, and I now want to discuss how my dissertation relates to various bodies of anthropological literature.

3. Regional and general anthropological fields.

I started my training in anthropology attending Ph. Descola's seminar at the EHESS in Paris, and the following year E. Viveiros de Castro supervised my research, jointly with F.-M. Renard-Casevitz and Ph. Erikson. Although my perspective was enriched by the year I spent in Cambridge as a MPhil student, where I was more exposed to wider anthropological questions than to the British school of Amazonian anthropology, I have

undoubtedly been shaped by French and Brazilian anthropologists of Amazonia, who represent my academic background.

The anthropology of lowland South America represents a relatively late development in the discipline, and eventually emerged when it forged its own conceptual tools – often reshaping old concepts –, for instance through a focus on affinity and the body, and the (re)development of the notions of perspectivism and animism.[2] In spite of its richness, this recent research also often gives the impression that Amazonia is a closed world, with its distinct ontology (although most authors do not make such claims explicitly), which additionally explains why the anthropology of lowland South America is so often exclusively self-referential. Conversely, while I am still deeply influenced by this tradition, and was amazed by the similarities between what I observed and what I had read, I believe that 'Amazonia' is an intellectual project, similar to Strathern's Melanesia according to Gell (1999: 34), and my aim is not to contribute one element in a system of transformations or gallery of types. I am therefore neither describing the fields of emotion and morality among the Warao and filling a gap in Waraology, nor describing 'the Warao' and filling a gap in Amazonian anthropology – although I hope that scholars of both fields would find an interest in my work.

In fact, I am playing with different levels. I am primarily describing specific individuals and their decisions, interactions, or comments, always in specific contexts. But I am also regularly talking about 'the Warao,' and often comparing them to other Amerindians, in order to illuminate some of my analyses. Finally, I am also trying to use my concrete descriptions in order to make more general anthropological arguments – and I therefore need to say a word about my relation with the anthropology of morality and of emotion.

To a certain extent, it can be argued that both fields share a comparable position: anthropologists have been talking all along about morality and emotion, but they have rarely problematised them as such, identifying morality with conventions and therefore making it indistinguishable from society, and treating emotion as self-evident, with at most a distinction between real and conventional feelings. Zigon for instance starts his presentation of anthropological approaches to morality in such a way: if most anthropologists have at least implicitly adopted Benedict's definition of morality as "a conventional term for socially approved habits," then they have not differentiated it conceptually (Benedict quoted in Zigon 2008: 1, see also Laidlaw 2002). In a similar fashion, Beatty stresses that "whatever one's favoured paradigm, no account of kinship is

2. See Descola & Taylor 1993, Overing Kaplan 1981, Viveiros de Castro 1996.

complete without its cast of jealous brothers, joking cousins, aloof in-laws and indulgent grandparents. Evidently, to talk of social structure is to talk of emotions. […] yet until quite recently, the two were not equally problematic: it was the social tie that was to be explained; the emotion was self-evident" (2005b: 55). Anthropologists who have tried to turn morality and emotion into anthropological questions have therefore put a lot of conceptual effort into defining such phenomena and the relevant questions. But, as a consequence, most publications are still to a large extent methodological and theoretical prolegomena; researchers keep claiming that their object has been ill-defined by previous authors, and present exemplary case-studies.

I think it would be rather sterile to repeat this process, and I therefore engage with such debates at particular moments of my dissertation, rather than through a general and abstract preliminary discussion.[3] Even then, I must admit that my own work relates only in a marginal way to either academic field, because most scholars focus on situations where morality or emotion appears in a salient way, and especially in discourse. Admittedly, only a minority claim that these topics represent objective discreet phenomena or domains,[4] but the case of the Warao is largely different from those that are usually discussed. Among them, morality does not constitute a specific field of religious or moral reflexivity, and emotions are pervasive, but not semantically elaborated.[5]

I consequently do not try to elaborate a global model (of emotion or of morality) that I would apply, test, or exemplify, in a particular setting, but instead raise some analytical questions in the course of my dissertation, in regular attempts to problematise both topics. In fact, insofar as a general perspective informs my research, it is of a different kind, since I am primarily interested in understanding how people interact, that is to say literally how people act on each other and cause each other to act. This approach often represents a way of shedding new light on old questions, as shown by Duranti's analysis of respect vocabulary in Samoa: through an elaborate study of discourses and interactional contexts, he stresses that "respect can be used as an emergent pragmatic

3. I did such a literature review on emotion in my MPhil dissertation (Allard 2003). See also Leavitt 1996 and Beatty 2005a.
4. See however Baumard who claims that a "moral disposition" is a human universal, although it has not been universally institutionalised (2007: 50). Conversely, I consider that "scientific domains are constituted not by the 'objective' relation of 'things,' but by the relationship of problems in thought" (Weber [1904], in Bourdieu, Chamboredon & Passeron 1973 [1968]: 51).
5. Whereas anthropologists of emotion have often relied heavily on the discussion of emotion terms, see Rosaldo 1980 for an example and Rosenberg 1990 for a criticism.

force that constrains human behavior and makes recipients do what they might not otherwise do" (1992: 80). Behind the relatively simple idea that "respect is something that is done to people," rather than something they "have" (ibid.: 93), there is in fact an important reformulation in pragmatic terms of the nature of communication – which I try to apply beyond language itself. This is at once a question of general theoretical perspectives, and of models elaborated for specific regional areas, and I will take this latter trend into account as well.[6] The best way to introduce my dissertation further is, however, probably to summarise it briefly.

4. The structure of the dissertation.

My first chapter focuses essentially on the way the Warao deal with things and commodities. It enables me to give an outline of the Delta, as the wider space occupied by the Warao, since the acquisition of things shape in a large part their interactions with Criollos, the state, other communities, or foreigners. But their relation to commodities is ambivalent: they value them insofar as technological or manufactured items alleviate suffering, but also use them as markers of their identity, that is to say as Warao who are not primitive Indians ('Indio,' as they themselves say in Spanish); and they consequently suffer through work in order to acquire them. In such a context, morality emerges in this chapter as a dual question. First, I stress that it is not a question of rules, but rather of performance, of compelling others to take one's own suffering into account and act accordingly. Second, whereas studies of economic morality often focus on the circulation and accumulation of goods, I show that what is at stake is the morality of visual availability, that we are faced with an economy of showing and concealing. Criollos display the goods they accumulate, and therefore offend others by displaying their stinginess, whereas the Warao are very careful in displaying only their rubbish, what they have obtained through work (i.e. suffering), or what they will give away.

My second chapter switches the focus towards the production, circulation and consumption of food, mostly within the household and network of kin. I especially engage with approaches that have stressed the role of commensality in the production of kinship, or conversely the obligation of sharing between kin, in order to argue that the link between food and sociality is of another nature. This is a moral question insofar as

6. See for instance Fausto 2008 and Kelly in press for Amazonia ; Munn 1992 [1986] and Strathern 1988 for Melanesia.

acts related to food are beneficial or detrimental to others, but also because they are always the product of dilemma and doubt. But I do not describe discursive moral evaluations of behaviour: in fact, those non-verbal acts are themselves evaluations of the behaviour of others, and they interact with verbal acts, therefore bringing out latent moral debates. Often, these escalate into disputes, and what interests me primarily is their effects, and in particular their negative efficacy: the production, circulation and consumption of food shapes sociality, because it is at the base of moral arguments that detach people from each other.

My third chapter partly leaves the question of morality, in order to focus on food, approached from the point of view of nurture and of its affective efficacy. This shift in perspective enables me to (re)characterise Warao kinship, and also to stress the role of emotional dispositions both in fleeting interactions and in more durable relationships. First, children are the archetypal object of compassion and recipient of care. Their state of helplessness is not meant to evoke some inner feelings, but rather to move others to action in a compelling way. Second, acts of nurture (typically performed out of compassion) also generate kinship itself, which is the memory of such acts. The main effect of such an affective principle is that kinship is shrunk around ego (rather than extended through genealogies or categories): the Warao turn individuals who could have been their kin, into a loose category of people who are not completely different from each other. Strikingly, they also attract others, who could have been strangers, towards this category of acquaintances. In fact, this can be seen as a way among others of dealing with the oppressive relation of asymmetric affinity, which is eclipsed when in-laws are previously known people rather than complete strangers. Engagement with Amazonian anthropology also leads me to highlight another relation, of fosterage, which is not entirely different from asymmetric affinity, but much more salient in discourse and practice. Here I try to show that it represents a 'cosmological operator,' playing a crucial role comparable to that of symmetric affinity in other areas of lowland South America, but also that care and the affection it generates are central in its definition – this is indeed the main feature that differentiates fosterage from asymmetric affinity, and it enables me to relate these wider developments to my earlier focus on children and childhood experience.

In my fourth chapter, I depart slightly from my main focus on the mundane concerns of everyday life, although this shift was initiated by my discussion of the concept of fosterage as a cosmological operator in chapter 3. Nevertheless, even when dealing with

issues that are usually studied as domains of specialised (and especially ritual) knowledge, I try to relate them to the more ordinary aspects of sociality. Here, I first discuss the category of illness, and try to dissolve it within a broader notion of unwellness or dis-ease, showing that this is an inextricably physiological, psychological and relational question, regarding both the definition of the ailment and the suggestion of its causes. From this perspective, it is possible to consider that the various types of discourse around death, illness and health need not appear contradictory, since they are alternative ways of saying that one's state (of health or dis-ease) is the product of others' caring or uncaring acts. In the second part of this chapter, I discuss this claim more precisely in relation to shamanism. Shamanic aggression or sorcery could be seen as the idiom through which moral and social issues are expressed, but I prefer to adopt another perspective. In fact, a brief description of shamanic techniques shows that shamanic discourse presents people as composite beings: not only shamans who encompass their auxiliary spirits, but also patients who are altered both by sorcery attacks and by shamanic cures. It therefore renders explicit the fact that people are constituted by others' actions, in line with my previous developments.

My fifth and last chapter also focuses on a set of extra-ordinary contexts: ritual wailing that is performed at death, in front of the corpse, and occasional binge drinking, said to take place 'in order to cry.' Here again, I try to relate these more or less ritual events to ordinary concerns, since I also describe how people refer to crying in order to extract specific reactions from their interlocutors, in interactions where sorrow is precisely absent. Sorrow is indeed a morally powerful way of influencing others, because it expresses attachment in the form of regret, as the pain of loss. This question also enables me to reconsider the question of emotion, since I describe how people intentionally produce specific emotional states (rather than behave according to conventions): they cry because they suffer from sorrow, although they organise purposefully the conditions of their own suffering, at least in circumscribed contexts. I argue that they do so because crying is morally efficacious, and therefore link more than in my previous chapters these two questions, highlighting the interplay between an emotional morality and some moral emotions.

Chapter 1
Desiring and acquiring White people's stuff

A foreigner arrives in Tucupita, the capital of the state of Delta Amacuro. Among the Criollos – the Venezuelan non-indigenous population –, it is easy to spot the Warao Indians. Some are selling their handicrafts, several are begging for food or money, while others have come to process administrative documents or to buy production tools, consumption goods and groceries from the wholesale stores that make Tucupita such a busy place. When he finally reaches the lower Delta, where most Warao live and where they form the overwhelming majority of the population, he sees them engaged in daily productive tasks, going fishing or to their gardens, and bathing playfully in the river. But he also witnesses many boats from governmental or non-governmental institutions, which aim at offering the Warao better (material) conditions of life, and, if he is lucky, a political meeting might be taking place. Hundreds of people then gather in one of the larger villages, and while the politicians try to convince them that they are the best candidates, the Warao remind the former that they are poor and need help, that past promises were not kept and that if the criollos do not help them (with goods and money), why should they help the Criollos (with their votes)?

The myth concerning the origin of the difference between the Warao and Criollos is particularly striking when seen in this light.[7] It is very similar to myths found all over native South America,[8] and its crucial episode is the choice made by the original Warao: he is offered technological goods, and especially a motorboat, but only wants a small dugout canoe; he is offered domesticated animals, and especially horses and cows, but only wants a dog; sometimes he is offered a storehouse, full of things, but only wants a rudimentary thatched hut. And "there was the origin of the poverty of the Warao and the wealth of the Criollo" (Escalante González & Moraleda 1992: 179). Because they do not have such wealth, the Warao constantly need to get it. Indeed, they nowadays spend much time trying to obtain 'non-indigenous people's stuff' *(hotarao a-bitu)*:[9] manufactured items, but also some types of foodstuff, and money so that they can buy whatever they want. At home or among the Criollos, with each other or with strangers, they almost systematically talk about the same topic: the things they want, where they can get them, at what price, how they can have money, etc. Sometimes they receive them from institutions, but often they have to engage in arduous work in order to buy what they want. Overall, the intensity of this desire for things is a salient feature of their contemporary way of life: it accounts for much of their behaviour, for the way they interact with outsiders, and for their constant comings and goings through the Delta.

I argue that this desire and its consequences are best understood in terms of a moral economy of showing and not showing, of displaying and concealing, rather than as a question of the circulation of goods, as economic anthropologists traditionally see it. Visual experiences in fact play a mediating – and therefore crucial – role in inter-actions, and their management is necessarily careful. Some aspects of my analytical approach to morality, with a particular focus on the relation between moral issues and social action, are progressively developed through this chapter, whose mostly descriptive style also offers a general introduction to the world inhabited by the Warao – the Orinoco Delta.

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7. I have heard several versions of the myth. Others can be found in Briggs 2000, Escalante González & Moraleda 1992, Garcia 1971, J. Wilbert 1996; unfortunately never with the original version in Warao.

8. See Hugh-Jones 1988 for a Tukanoan version.

9. Hotarao, similarly to Warao, is a term whose meaning is contextual: in some contexts it refers to Venezuelan Creoles (as opposed to Guyanese and Trinitarians, to Europeans, etc.), while in other contexts it means non-native (as opposed to Warao). Since the distinction between different types of non-indigenous people is only relevant in particular situations, I will most of the time use indiscriminately 'Criollos,' 'Venezuelan Creoles,' 'White people' or 'outsiders.'

1. Differential access to wealth: a sketch of the Delta.

The origin myth mentioned above posits a massive and extreme contrast between the Warao and Criollos, which is the consequence of a rather unfortunate and innocent choice. As Taylor (1996: 204) has stressed while analysing the Jivaroan myth of the origin of mortality, both the focus "on a pair of polar terms rather than on the nature of the relation between the terms" and the "monstrous disproportion between cause and effect, between an act and its consequences" are features shared with many other mythic narratives. These myths describe the world in a highly problematic way, rather than explain it, and also coexist with very different discourses, which often offer a complementary perspective on the same issue. The stark contrast between the Warao and Criollos, characterised by the latter's mastery over things and domesticated animals, and which is relevant in some contexts, should not obscure the fact that the Delta is a very differentiated and continuous space. Many complex positions exist, because of the interpenetration of Warao and Criollo worlds,[10] but they are still best described by the differential access to wealth, the varying proximity to its sources, and the effort of the Warao to obtain it.

1.1. Warao among Criollos: the mainland.

Contrasts between different ways of being Warao are certainly more marked in the mainland, for instance in Tucupita – the capital of the state of Delta Amacuro –, although they are not necessarily more visible. At one extreme are those who assert their indigenous identity, although they could easily pass for local Criollos: those I have met were involved in various native organisations (for instance the UCIW – Union de Comunidades Indigenas Warao), had official positions, or worked with religious organisations (for instance Fey e Alegria, which runs a radio and a program of adult education). They were usually representatives of social mobility projects : Anastasio, whose brother is a local deputy ('diputado' in the 'Consejo legislativo' of the state), had been educated by missionaries in Araguaimujo, but his parents moved to Tucupita so that he and his siblings could complete their education. He later studied philosophy at university in the Dominican Republic, before deciding to come back to the Delta in

10. Hugh-Jones has stressed such a point, when analysing the chain of indebtedness that, in the Colombian Amazon, stretches from urban centres to the jungle and "does not suddenly stop at an ill-defined ethnic frontier" (1992: 50-51).

order to work as a teacher and take up responsibilities in the indigenous movement. He told me, however, of people he knew who had completely forgotten how to speak Warao, or even who denied their origins. Sometimes people of his generation still understand Warao, but only their parents speak fluently: once they have passed away, children grow up as monolingual Spanish speakers. At the other extreme, Tucupita is full of Warao who are monolingual in the native language, although they sometimes have spent years upriver. They live in makeshift shelters on the riverbank or next to the rudimentary port, also in the community shelter of Yakariyene;[11] some do unskilled labour, such as cleaning the market or selling ice-cream, but most beg in the street, without otherwise interacting with the Criollos; children do not attend school, and are often as monolingual as their parents.

A striking fact is that successful Warao are almost invisible – as Warao – to foreigners and Venezuelan Creoles, whereas the impoverished beggars become the category of reference, eclipsing all the intermediary positions in the continuum that goes from one extreme to the other. Some Warao have not moved upriver because they failed to survive in the lower Delta but, quite on the contrary, because they themselves or their close relatives had become the recipients of institutional stipends or wages. Living closer to the administrative and commercial centre makes it much easier to process documents, buy groceries and goods for trade purposes, and travel between Tucupita and the lower Delta: it can be a strategic entrepreneurial decision. Many young bachelors spend a few months or years working upriver, for a local patron, or in the past for the palmito heart factory, and girls often become maidservants. Others only come for very short periods of time, when they need to apply for pensions, cash their stipends or pensions, buy goods with what they have earned downriver, or make community expenses – for instance when, before elections, politicians distribute cheques in order for people to acquire communal outboard motors. Some of them beg their daily sustenance, especially when their applications are unsuccessful or when they have little money, pointing out that it would be a waste to buy food when it is so easy to find; but others, for instance people from Tekoburojo, usually choose to put up with living off bread and fizzy drinks for a few days. Upriver, in the land of the Venezuelan Creoles, they are however quite systematically lumped together in a scornful way. Briggs & Mantini-Briggs (2003), who

11. It had been dismantled at the beginning of my fieldwork, so that it could be rebuilt, since it was said to have become a haven of destitution. I therefore never conducted research there, but it appeared frequently in discourses.

conducted fieldwork in the 1980s and 90s, describe such interactions between Warao and Criollos in a compelling way. They show for instance that a political march from Barrancas to Tucupita, conducted in order to express dissatisfaction at the way officials were dealing with the cholera epidemics, was described as "collective mendicancy" by local politicians, who assumed that the Warao can always be satisfied by goods and that, in the end, it is the only thing they want (2003: 173). Things are certainly changing with the Warao's new purchasing power , but representations are long-lasting, and most Criollos still consider the Warao to be 'natural' beggars (cf. D'Aubeterre 2007).

1.2. Mission-villages and administrative centres: mixed settlements.

The lower Delta, which is swampy ground permeated by innumerable streams, deprived of any terra firma, is considered by the Warao to be their home, where the Criollos and foreigners are mere guests. The larger villages, where outsiders are likely to arrive when they first travel to the area, and where all Warao often go for commercial or administrative motives, are however still mixed places. They systematically grew up around alien institutions which, strikingly, often tried to recreate the conditions of the mainland. The Capuchin missionaries who settled in Guayo and Nabasanuka chose the driest spots, and dredged soil from the river in order to make the bank firm enough for them to build houses without stilts, in a non-Warao way, and to walk on the ground. San Francisco de Guayo, established in 1942 and still active as a mission, has always been their main centre in the lower Delta and was originally the site of a boarding school, while Nabasanuka was a secondary centre, which they only occupied temporarily. Curiapo, on the other hand, was originally a Criollo settlement, and owes its importance mainly to its status as the headquarters of the local authorities (Municipio Antonio Díaz). Those institutions attracted larger populations thanks to the facilities offered (school, medical clinic and later hospital, electric generators, etc.), and thanks to a virtuous circle: being nodal and more densely populated places, they have more political importance than other settlements; which causes them to be privileged in the distribution of governmental and para-governmental income; which fuels trade, increases the pre-existing employment opportunities and their commercial prominence in the lower Delta… Indeed it is in Guayo or Nabasanuka – with which I am familiar – that politicians organise large demonstrations and distribute money and presents, that the largest, and sometimes only, stores of the area are located, that the 'patrons' who have Warao 'clients' in the neighbouring settlements live. Collectively, such places are rather

'Criollo' when compared to smaller settlements, which in turn are more 'Warao' in the eyes of inhabitants of the former (cf. section 3.2). Yet if large mixed villages appear as such when seen from the outside, they are not homogenous places.

The case of Guayo is quite illuminating. Around the church and away from the bank, in houses made of concrete, live the Warao who have been interns in the missionaries' boarding school – or nowadays mostly their descendants: it is called the area of the 'married ones' (Sp. 'casados'), since it was the habit of the missionaries to provide a house and a sewing machine to newlyweds who had grown up, met and married under their responsibility. On the bank itself, a bunch of stilt houses built in a typically Warao fashion is called 'la rancheria:' the Warao who live there are characterised by contrast with the previously mentioned 'casados,' since they are remnants of the formerly independent group of Osibukajunoko, and are precisely those Warao who were already living there, but did not go through the missionaries' boarding school. Finally, away from the centre of the settlement or on the other bank, live Criollos or foreigners who have moved to the area, Warao whose political and economic success translated into a more autonomous way of life, as well as some alien institutions, such as the military or the Red Cross. Their houses are usually in better condition and can only be reached by boat, which ensures that they do not face the constant demands of less well-off neighbours and relatives. They usually hold political or official positions, or work as traders, and their spatial isolation is a means of enabling wealth accumulation and economic progress. Indeed, most of the stores are located in such semi-isolated spots, where alternate movements can be observed. Boats full of commodities and grocery stuff regularly arrive from the mainland – ranging from large freight barges to dugouts powered by a 40 hp motor, depending on the wealth of the shop owner –, and most people are excited at the idea that supplies have been replenished, that new items will be available. At the same time, there is a continuous flow of customers, coming from other parts of Guayo or from neighbouring settlements, sailing, paddling, or coming in motor-powered boats, who often stare awkwardly at the accumulation of things, buy some items in cash or, if they are well-known recipients of governmental income, have their expenses recorded in an account-ledger. When they get back home, usually to smaller villages, they either discreetly hide their new possessions or conversely display them and give most away to their relatives.

1.3. Official indigenous communities: mid-size settlements.

The mid-size Warao settlements, where most of the population of the lower Delta is concentrated, can be seen as satellites of the larger villages. Although their inhabitants sometimes travel directly to and from the mainland, the closest large village is usually an administrative and commercial centre whose importance is crucial to them, and also a compulsory point of access for outsiders. Similar in that to most institutional agents, I stopped in Guayo and Nabasanuka before reaching Tekoburojo and Domujana, respectively, which are good examples of what I call mid-size settlements. They are usually inhabited by a purely Warao population, or at least any outsider is in a subordinate, encompassed, position: there was one Guyanese man living permanently in Tekoburojo, and I often met an old Criollo in Domujana, but both had married Warao women and, being isolated, were being turned into Warao rather than the other way round.

However, it is possible to see this type of settlement as a product of interactions with the nation state and its administrative apparatus. Indeed, their salient characteristic is that they are officially recognised as indigenous Warao 'communities' (Sp. 'comunidades indígenas'), and have often been so for a long time, which is a source of amenities and wealth. They are the target of programs conducted by governmental agencies (day nurseries, education, 'consejo comunal,' nutrition, etc.) or independent institutions, and receive complimentary presents during electoral campaigns. If the inhabitants of such settlements were to migrate and form a new village – as they used to do regularly in the past and are often still tempted to do –, they would lose all those advantages. This is explicitly the problem they are faced with, as appeared in conversations I had with two villagers from Tekoburojo, Fabian and Eduardo, at different moments of my fieldwork. Both were trying to attract fractions of the village, as well as others, in order to form new settlements. It is a vicious circle, for they knew that they would not convince anyone without official recognition, but nor could they obtain community status out of thin air, without a pre-existing informal settlement. Eduardo's settlement, called Mohosereina, had only a few house, and he himself resided most of the time in Tekoburojo; while Fabian was playing a double game, promising his friends and relatives that they would immediately be recognised as a 'community,' and the administration that he had already succeeded in attracting many people. When I last visited Tekoburojo, in September 2009, neither of them had succeeded. It is symptomatic of processes that have been described

by several other anthropologists of lowland South America, and Kelly (in press) has for instance stressed how among the Yanomami the civilising project of the Whites is about "making society" through the production of fixed leaders and communities.[12]

If, among the Warao, mid-size settlements are notably stabilised through communal goods and facilities, it must be noted that these are often appropriated by individuals. When everything has a master or an owner,[13] communal property represents a problem: either it is said to belong to outsiders, who have brought it and still exercise control over it,[14] or it belongs to no one, and is therefore treated in a careless way,[15] or it is appropriated by individual members of the settlement, often with complete success, as systematically happened with outboard motors.[16] Still, being a 'community' makes it more likely to be granted a school (which is owned and cared for by outsiders) or with a path on stilts linking the houses (which is usually made by local men but funded by external organisations), and, more importantly, it increases the potential for individual income, through the various government programs. Yet compared to large settlements such as Guayo or Nabasanuka, few members of Tekoburojo and Domujana receive any such income: in Tekoburojo, the leader, Javier, and his older brother Evaristo are municipal employees; a couple of elders receive a pension; four young men are teaching assistants; three women are day nursery carers – out of about eighty adults. Everyone, even those people who are the recipients of stipends, is involved in domestic production,

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12. For comparative material on the meaning of official 'Native Communities,' see for instance Killick 2008 and Gow 1991: 205-228. In some other contexts, the crucial element in the creation of fixed communities is the question of land rights and demarcation, which is nowadays mostly absent among the Warao because of the specificity of their environment – a swampy Delta that has interest for extractive activities but not for settlers. An exception is an island which is currently occupied by Criollo cattle herders, and the object of a conflict with a Warao community. Briggs & Mantini-Briggs (2003: 127-128) note that land was an issue in the 1980s and 90s. In many other areas, airstrips, schools and medical posts – usually provided either by missionaries or by governmental institutions – play a crucial role, and the situation is comparable to that of the Delta.

13. This conception has recently been put at the centre of regional anthropological debates (cf. Fausto 2008). I discuss it at various points of the thesis (see chapter 3).

14. In Tekoburojo, it was for instance the case of the day nursery building: the Warao distinguished its 'owners' *(arotu/arao)*, the Venezuelan Creoles who had commissioned it, and its 'carers' *(a-yaoromo)*, the local women who were paid to take care of children. Among the Brazilian Araweté, all 'communal' property seems to fall under this category (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 21).

15. In Tekoburojo, it was the case of a large diesel generator given during an electoral campaign in 2008: it was too big to be appropriated, and no one remembered who had brought it…

16. Fausto (2008: 355n.13) remarks that, among the Kuikuro, things "of the community" are those that "belong to the headman without being in his private domain," while Gordon (2006: 239sq) tells of the tensions between 'concentration' (appropriation by leaders) and 'communalisation' (distribution to the whole population), which shape relationships between the Xikrin and the organisation (CVRD) that provides them with wealth.

and mainly access cash by selling their work or their products. There is therefore some income inequality within a settlement such as Tekoburojo, but it does not create real wealth differentiation: no one accumulates money and things, and there is no shop to display stored goods to the eyes of everyone.[17] In order to acquire things, villagers either go to other places, which are (more) 'White' or 'Criollo' and therefore replete with goods and grocery stuff, such as Guayo or Tucupita, or they wait for itinerant traders who come either from the Venezuelan mainland or, smuggling, from Guyana, loaded with grocery, clothes, random tools and items.

1.4. On their own: remote settlements.

Such itinerant dealers are less likely to reach the more remote and smaller settlements, usually made up of a few houses, which can be seen when one travels in the lower Delta. These settlements, which are hardly ever official 'communities,' are built on much stronger consanguineal and affinal relations, and resources are more evenly distributed: they are usually limited to villagers' own work and production. Being too difficult to reach and of little political importance, small villages are never the target of political and development action, although they are sometimes targeted by health programs or independent projects. The French oil company Total, as part of its social commitment in Venezuela, started in 2006 for instance to equip houses with solar panels, in order to provide the energy necessary to operate small electrical items (radio, TV, etc.). Organisers argue that this system, which was at first implemented in mid-size settlements such as Tekoburojo, is particularly suitable for independent households and small settlements, which cannot benefit from a communal generator. However, they have not as yet reached large areas of the lower Delta, for instance the vicinity of Nabasanuka, and more generally collectives facilities are completely lacking in remote settlements where, at best, a few men have succeeded in buying an individual generator, which they operate to watch TV when they are lucky enough to have some fuel. Consequently – and this reinforces their destitution –, such settlements are also much more fluctuating and inconstant. As soon as a disagreement arises, there is no material incentive to stop the inhabitants from leaving in order to join another group or to establish themselves elsewhere. Temporary migrations are also more common, and since there are few official

17. In other Amerindian societies, the stinginess of shopkeepers is often stressed by their co-residents. See Grotti 2007 for the Trio; and High 2008, who stresses that shops among the Huaorani are usually owned by heavily criticised in-marrying Quichua women.

visits to expect, people can spend weeks or even months away, living with their relatives or exploiting different ecological niches, where they might find more fish, moriche palm groves, fruits – or money.

However, what I have described so far does not correspond to a global and one-dimensional spatial continuum: small and informal settlements can be found in-between mid-size and large villages, dispersed along the banks of the major streams, or closer to the sea, the further away from Tucupita and the Venezuelan mainland. But although inhabitants of this latter kind of settlement, who are called *waha-arao* (people of the strand) or *nabaida-arao* (people of the sea), may seem to be very isolated, they have in fact interacted constantly with professional fishermen and Guyanese or Trinitarian smugglers coming from the sea.[18] In some places, they do not cultivate gardens but live off store-bought food brought by their patrons, while in others they speak English more than Spanish: the many Warao and many Others that live in the Delta interact in very different ways,[19] and I have only attempted to outline this diversity.

2. Desire for wealth as a moral desire.

The intense desire for White people's stuff in general – manufactured items, some types of food, money –, which shapes an important part of Warao life , runs counter to certain Western representations of lowland South American Indians. Living in a world poor in goods, or where the only manufactured things are either rudimentary production tools or ritual objects, they are assumed to be much more focused on dealing with animals (and other natural beings) and people.[20] Consequently, their efforts to acquire wealth and things are often seen as a symptom of destructive contamination by the modern capitalist world: Indians become trapped in a consumer culture, and their

18. Briggs & Mantini-Briggs (2003: 59-62) have noted the same for the people of the Mariusa area, who are often said to be the most 'primitive' Warao: they have had long-standing relationships with outsiders, especially professional fishermen, and it is only the economic downfall of the 1980s that forced them back to the forest, that is to say to a way of life that came to be described as quintessentially traditional. Similarly, Briggs (2000) mentions that the leader of the area wanted to learn English, so that he could negotiate prices with Trinitarian traders.

19. I therefore partly agree with Grotti (2007) who criticises Gow and Kelly for relying too much on such a one-dimensional model, whereas she stresses that in Guiana there are "many Indians and many Others."

20. It is a reason mentioned by Santos-Granero (2009: 1) to account for the relative lack of interest for things in the anthropology of Amazonia.

artificial desire for things is the means of ensuring a neo-colonial form of dependence.[21] At the other extreme, some people consider the desire for foreign items to be completely self-evident: we hardly ever question our own use of things, so why should we question theirs? Instead of confining Amerindians to our exotic and racially prejudiced conceptions, we should try to empower them and to give them the means of acting as full subjects, of achieving the conditions of their well-being, rather than treating them as subordinates whose fate depends on our good-will.[22]

Such perspectives have explicitly been argued for, or at least mentioned as possible interpretations. Their generality however also implies a lack of specificity, whereas much recent research on the topic of things in lowland South America has attempted to link this question, which has admittedly often been disregarded, with some themes that are at the core of regional anthropological debates. It is for instance the case of the volume recently edited by Santos-Granero (2009), where he integrates things and objects to the body of work developed around the concepts of animist ontology and of perspectivism. It is notable that most of the volume is devoted to 'traditional' or native artefacts (from ritual objects to baby hammocks), although some authors provide a joint understanding of both native and alien things (e.g. Erikson 2009, Guzmán-Gallegos 2009). My issue with such works is that they (overly) exoticise things, which then become persons in disguise, reifications of magical power, or devices for shamanic transformations (for a similar perspective in other ethnographic areas, see Henare et al. 2007). This kind of interpretation is often relevant and grounded in ethnographic data, but it also tends to be extrapolated from specific contexts and presented as a consistent overarching cosmology or ontology.[23] I conversely try to understand how the Warao desire and manage things by paying attention to very local discourses and practices, without portraying them as more exotic than they actually are.

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21. Gordon (2006: 38) mentions such a perspective, which is also, for instance, underlying in the work of Clastres (1974).
22. It is partly the perspective adopted by Briggs & Mantini-Briggs (2003) in their analysis of discourses held about the Warao and their behaviour during the cholera epidemics.
23. Among the Warao as among the Panoan groups of Western Amazonia, nonhuman beings and material things are in fact not "equals in disguise" (Erikson 2009: 185). Rather than full subjects, they are "fully subjected" (ibid.: 188), and dealing with them is a mediated interaction with their master (cf. also Déléage 2010). Some of my informants for instance mentioned the idea that foreign manufactured objects can be a source of illness, sent by the latter's spirit-owners as retribution if they are mishandled. I will discuss further this question in chapter 4, but I want to stress that I was told such information in didactic interviews about shamanism, but never heard the possibility evoked during the many concrete cases of illness that I witnessed, and that the only way I can relate it to their daily behaviour towards things is through the idea that "everything has a master-owner" (whether human or non-human).

2.1. Things and the fulfilment of moral concerns.

When the Warao talk about 'commodities' *(unukamo)*, referring explicitly to things that are sold in stores, or more generally about non-indigenous people's stuff, they very often describe them as alleviating the suffering involved in performing tasks, or as being an effortless (i.e. painless) source of pleasure or enjoyment.[24] This attitude cannot be reduced either to the obvious fact that things are useful, nor to the slightly different idea that they are more efficacious. Indeed, projects of all kinds implemented by foreign development agents very often aim at increasing production, whereas this is hardly ever what the Warao do. To give but one example, the National Institute for Nutrition (Instituto Nacional de la Nutrición) regularly brings foodstuffs to Warao settlements, including Tekoburojo, in order to improve the nutritional quality of their diet – especially for some specific categories of people (children, pregnant women, the elderly). It is true that part of the food is perishable and that inhabitants of Tekoburojo have no means of preserving it. It is however striking that even non-perishable food is consumed at once, in the days following the arrival of the load, and that the main effect of the policy is therefore not so much to improve the diet, but rather to offer the adults a few days of well-deserved rest.

More generally, and to focus on things, they were very often described in terms of rendering physical effort unnecessary, and conversely my hosts were stressing the 'suffering' *(sanamata)* they had to endure without them. They do not say that they could fish more with an outboard motor, fell a bigger garden with a chainsaw, or cook more food with a gas cooker, but rather that performing such tasks would take less time and involve less pain, in a word be less 'work' *(yaota)* – in a way not contradictory with Sahlin's (1972) model of the 'original affluent society.' Getting rolls of nylon thread for instance enables women to avoid the painful process of extracting the moriche palm fibre. The technical description they gave me was intertwined with a detailed account of the physical pain they have to endure in order to produce such an artefact. First they have to travel away from the settlement and sometimes walk in the swampy areas, in order to reach moriche palm groves. It is tiring and some get bitten by snakes. There, to obtain the fresh shoots, they climb the trees, which is exhausting for older women; they may always fall and break their bones. When they come back to the settlement with their

24. Remarkably, the Yanomami also systematically ask for tools so as 'not to suffer' when working (Alès 2000: 135, 2006: 164). On work as "hard physical effort," see for instance Gow 1991: 103 about the Piro.

load, the fabrication process has only just begun. They extract the fibre from the shoots and boil it in water, often burning their hands when they make sure it is thoroughly done. Finally, once the fibre is clean and dry, they spin it in a thread, using their thighs and hands, systematically scorching their skin, before they can spend days weaving the hammock – something which is tedious but rather painless. In other cases, especially when it comes to store-bought foodstuffs, they insist on the fact that those products can be consumed directly, and they contrast them to their local equivalents. Corn flour is used to make flat bread, comparable to that made with moriche sago – but the latter requires days of work. Sugar mixed with water is as good as honey – but you do not need to fell any tree.

This way of talking about commodities and White people's stuff is all the more relevant in that it relates to a central moral issue for the Warao: concern for others' well-being and suffering.[25] It is a basic principle, or a fundamental value, which in itself is not original, and can for instance be compared to developments around the concept of 'care' in Western philosophy: it involves being attentive to others' condition, both physical and emotional, and acting accordingly.[26] Throughout this thesis, I will try to show how this principle is enacted among the Warao in various ways, and, for now, I want to mention briefly how it appears as a common motive for the fabrication of things.

When the Warao talk about the production of things, they admittedly also stress the technical knowledge involved, often pointing out its unequal distribution. Saúl, a boy in his late teens whose father had died and who was living with his maternal relatives, was for instance very vocal in claiming that he was doomed to poverty in the Delta and that he would always be dependent on others because, since no one had taught him, he did not know how to build a canoe or use many fishing techniques. Conversely, it is common to see older people advise their younger relatives when the latter are at crucial steps of a difficult process, or criticise the imperfect work of others.[27] However, as I have

25. In an Amerindian context, Alès stresses how the "strong desire to prevent suffering" is the justification for most acts and conducts among the Yanomami (2000: 135).
26. In Western debates, the notion of care has been used to challenge the abstract rules of universalist ethics, with a stress on the moral values of emotions, cf. Gilligan 1982. Others, for instance Tronto 1993, have tried to develop the ethics of care beyond Gillingan's concern for gender differences. It could also be seen as a positive reformulation of minimalist definition of immoral acts, e.g. by Stuart Mill, as what causes harm to others (see Ogien 2007).
27. Another Warao subgroup, the Winikina, are even more explicit: according to J. Wilbert (1993), skilled carpenters and weavers are called by a special term *(moyotu)*, and their afterlife is said to be distinct from that of common folks. Although I doubt the generality of this last

said, much more salient in the discourse of the Warao is the physical effort put into producing things – as if they were adepts of a Ricardian theory of value –, which was specifically evaluated in terms of suffering. And if craftsmanship is a source of ownership,[28] things are also often done for others, with particular persons in mind, and a specific grammatical form is used to stress such finality.[29] It is especially the case with hammocks, which women sometimes sell to tourists, but more often make for their relatives, their children, husband, brothers, or sons-in-law. Similarly, a garden – in so far as it can be considered a material product of one's activity, and it certainly requires 'work' – is often said to belong the man who opened it, but is made for his wife, or for his female relatives if he is single. Warao individuals therefore commonly endure physical suffering out of concern for their loved ones, and seem very similar to the Yanomami who, according to Alès, are "proud […] to obtain through gathering, hunting or gardening [i.e. 'toiling'] the means of providing them with happiness and well-being" (2000: 135, 2006: 164).

This question also appears in the (mythological) narratives that tell of the origins of manufactured objects, or rather of how the Warao acquired the technological knowledge to make them.[30] Lavandero (2000: 493-507) has recorded a myth about the house which is particularly explicit in this regard. It stresses the suffering *(sanamata)* that people originally went through. The men who learned how to build houses are collectively presented as 'sons-in-law,' and a concluding remark of the tale is that the cold suffered by their parents-in-law, who are at the mercy of the rain, should encourage them to work without rest in order to build shelters for them. It is not presented as an obligation, as something they owe their parents-in-law, but rather as work they have to accomplish out of care for co-resident elders.[31] At the same time, when the sons-in-law who have gone to the forest meet the mythical being from whom they will acquire the necessary

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statement (cf. chapter 4), Wilbert's work provides evidence of the crucial importance of craft knowledge.

28. Although probably less than among the Pano, where this principle seems fundamental. See Erikson 2009 for the Brazilian Matis and Déléage 2010 for the Peruvian Sharanahua.

29. *Tane*, when it is post-posed to a substantive, indicates what it is meant to be or to become. A woman weaving a hammock could comment: *ma natoro a-ha tane*, poss. 1 sg grandchild poss. 3 sg-hammock finality, 'the future hammock of my grandchild.'

30. The narrative can be considered to be a 'myth,' since it starts with the customary mention that it is set in the times of *ka idamotuma*, our ancestors. Lavandero (2000: 507) notes that it is however very mundane, with no 'supernatural' intervention, and it contrasts indeed with myths from other lowland South American groups, where artefacts appear in myths as persons or body-parts of persons (Santos-Granero 2009: 4-8).

31. Similarly, the Pemon say that "one should take care of his father-in-law" (Thomas 1982: 101).

knowledge, a youth called Kabihibihi, they immediately and repeatedly put forward their suffering. Kabihibihi does not make any difficulty, but the implicit assumption is that he teaches them out of compassion.

This mythical narrative, although I have presented it in a very succinct way, is also useful in order to highlight two questions. First, I have suggested that the Warao often suffer to make things out of concern for the well-being of others, and in particular sons-in-law build houses for their parents-in-law, women weave hammocks for their children and relatives. There is therefore not a universal concern for all other living, or even just human, beings. But care is not, conversely, limited by essence to one's closest kin, as would explicitly be the case in ethical systems following what Weber has called "moral double standards" (1996 [1915]: 418), which differ whether one deals with one's kith and kin, or with others. In a way, it could be said that someone should be concerned for, or compassionate towards, those who are worse off than oneself. Indeed, when I was discussing the concept of 'distress' or 'poverty' *(sana, san-era)* with my host Jesús, the first example he came up with was: *nobotomo ka saba sanera*, literally 'children are poor/in distress for us,' which can more adequately be translated as 'children evoke pity in us.' It is for this reason that, if children come and stare when adults are eating, they give them something (see section 1.1 of chapter 3).[32] But the Warao also consider themselves to be poor compared to everyone else. In a volume compiling narratives made by some Warao in the 1970s and 1980s, Dieter Heinen (1988) presents a whole section entitled "We, the Warao, are poor" *(Oko Warao sanera)*, which details a visit by some outsiders who take pity on the Warao villagers and promise they will help them. The encounter is said to have taken place when the narrator was still a boy, and now that he has grey hair he is still waiting: promises were indeed left unfulfilled. This self-perception as utterly poor people is partly why most Warao essentially care for their relatives, but not for just anyone – that should be the responsibility of Criollos and foreigners, who are much wealthier. Second, the story recorded by Heinen also shows that compassion is not automatic, and is not automatically followed by actions. The concern for others' well-being and suffering is in fact not a question of 'obligations' or 'rules,' and I adopt the same perspective in chapter 2, when I argue against the rule of 'sharing.' Here, I want to stress that, especially in this context, a reaction that has to be evoked – it can succeed or fail.

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32. Similarly, among the Kalapalo, "it is considered wrong to refuse food to children" and they are always included in food distribution (Basso 1973: 53).

2.2. The performance of morality and the extraction of wealth.

The moral principle that I have introduced can be presented as a relational schema, an archetypal relation between two entities – a helpless being and a concerned being –, and it may occur in many different situations, between many different types of beings. Indeed, a classical trope is that of the fledgling crying out for help, and it echoes the relationship of subordinate fosterage that I describe in chapter 3. But, if the schema can be presented discursively in an ideal form, it is rather different in practice, in the dynamics of daily interactions. It is then best understood as a question of performance. Not as a theatrical pretence, but in terms of an action "with the intent of producing an effect on another," and whose outcome is always uncertain, as Kelly (in press) puts it in his discussion of interactions between Yanomami patients and White doctors. According to him, it is a quite specifically indigenous conception (whereas White people would see such behaviours as "false theatricality"), aiming at "compelling others into action" and relying on a particular "aesthetics" (i.e. the shared cultural schema linking for instance a helpless fledgling and a compassionate human).[33] In a way, such performances can be seen as strategic attempts to obtain things; but they are in fact much more: the outcome of the interaction is not just a thing, but also the revelation of what one is (in terms of influence) and what the other is (in terms of morality); and if it is salient in the context of things and relationships with outsiders, it is also a generalised mode of action, whose relevance is much wider.

A striking contrast between the Warao and other indigenous Amerindian groups, such as the Yanomami or the Xikrin, is that the latter often alternate between different ways of interacting with outsiders – White people or Criollos. If the Yanomami usually present themselves as being 'in need' compared to Whites, Kelly (in press: chapter 8) also describes cases of collective interactions where many of them dressed as warriors and spoke 'without fear:' in this context, it was meant to extract a reaction precisely by inducing fear (and not only compassion) among the Venezuelan officials. Similarly, Gordon (2006: 210) stresses that the Xikrin present themselves as 'wild' *(bravo)* when they conduct negotiations with the mining company CVRD, whereas they behave in a civilised *(manso)* way when they pay individual visits to the neighbouring towns. In the

33. Although the terms used often differ, this perspective can be linked to developments by many other scholars, for instance Strathern (1979), to whom Kelly (in press) refers, or Fausto (2008) who describe the relationship between master and subordinate in terms of 'impact' and of the former 'extracting an action' from the latter – I will discuss this case in chapter 3.

former case they dress as warriors and 'speak hard,' in their own language, whereas in the latter they use Western clothes and speak Portuguese. Here again, inducing fear is a way of compelling others into action and of ensuring that their claims are heard. However, there is nothing of the sort among the Warao, who never consider themselves as threatening warriors.[34] Focusing on their indigence and evoking compassion is the only schema at their disposal when they interact with Criollos or foreigners, which partly comes from the fundamental relational schema of their ontology,[35] and partly from a long history of interactions with outsiders who have systematically stressed their poverty and never their worth.[36]

This pattern also accounts for the one-dimensional aspect of Warao discourses about things that I have introduced so far: presenting White people's stuff as a means of alleviating suffering, whereas they still have to suffer without commodities, is inextricably linked to specific interactions, since I was, to a certain extent (or at least in some contexts), a wealthy outsider likely to give them stuff out of care, or maybe to obtain things from others on their behalf. It of course does not mean that such a way of describing things is false, but that it can coexist with other discourses, in different contexts (cf. section 3). First, I however want to stress how eliciting compassion and obtaining protection has been a major way of getting access to commodities and other things, since the beginning of the 20th century.

Institutions whose aim (or at least one of whose aims) is to take care of the Warao and improve their life conditions are prominent in this respect. Capuchin missionaries arrived in the Delta in the 1920s, and until the 1970s had political, economic and civil jurisdiction over the territory of Delta Amacuro, which had been delegated to them according to several contracts signed between the Order and the Government under the

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34. The Warao mayor of the Municipio Antonio Diáz organised some collective gatherings in his support, during the electoral campaigns of 2008. I could not witness them, but relying on newspapers' accounts I strongly believe that it was a question of showing mere numbers rather than aggressiveness (even an assertive behaviour was probably limited to the mayor himself).

35. From this point of view, they are similar to the Brazilian Paumari who consistently describe themselves as the prey or victims of others (Bonilla 2005), although they also indeed frequently benefit from compassionate gifts. On 'relational schemata,' see Descola 2005.

36. Cf. the narratives recorded by Heinen (1988). It contrasts them sharply to other Amerindian groups, especially in Brazil, where a different history has sometimes led to an enhanced pride in themselves and their 'culture' (see Vienne & Allard 2005). See for instance the Mehinaku, about whom Gregor says that "the flow of visitors to the Indian Post represents the most intellectually sophisticated levels of Brazilian and international society" (1977: 22) – it is definitely not the case of the Warao.

Mission Law of 1915.[37] It gave the missionaries great power, but also responsibilities in terms of 'development' and not only conversion or evangelisation. During that period, they established boarding schools (in Araguaimujo in 1925, Guayo in 1942, as well as San José de Amacuro in 1927, which was however abandoned in 1940), medical clinics, cooperatives dedicated to rice cultivation, fishing or other productive activities, and even a sawmill in Guayo. I do not want to evaluate the effects of their actions, but only to stress that, for fifty years, they represented one of the main channels of access to foreign things for the Warao: many of them learned how to use things (clothes, motors, chainsaws, alien foodstuff, etc.) with the missionaries, as is recalled in many life narratives. It was in fact a complex relationship, of control and protection at the same time (as will be discussed in chapter 3), and if the Warao often had to work – in the boarding schools, the cooperatives, or directly for the mission –, they also obtained commodities and food thanks to the compassion of the missionaries. Taking care of the Warao is sometimes presented as the general reason for their coming to the Delta, and also underlies many specific interactions. Nowadays, most Capuchin missionaries based in Guayo are very old,[38] and members from the Consolata Mission[39] who settled a few years ago in the disused mission buildings of Nabasanuka have a much lower budget. Their direct economic effect – in terms of acquisition of money and things – is therefore negligible compared to that of the governmental and para-governmental organisations.

The Warao have been 'used' by political parties for some time, since once individuals have been registered and given an ID card *(cedula)*, they represent a vote-bank that can easily be channelled in exchange for material resources.[40] With Chavez' assumption of power in 1998, and especially during the 2000s, the situation has changed markedly, in a way which bears many similarities to the processes described by Alès (2007) for the Yanomami. Supported by a discourse promising a new form of citizenship as well as the

37. In 1954, the 'Vicariato Apostólico del Caroní' was divided between the Caroní Mission (state of Bolívar) and the Tucupita Mission (federal territory of Delta Amacuro), and in 1956 the political jurisdiction reverted back to the state (Barral 1964: XIX, Margolies 2006: 157).
38. During my fieldwork, the only resident Capuchin priest was Father Damian De Lario (or Del Blanco), who had first arrived in Guayo in 1951. There were also several nuns (Capuchin Tertiary Sisters), generally younger, although their superior had arrived several decades ago.
39. The Consolata Mission was founded in Italy in 1901. The missionaries present in Nabasanuka, who were living in a mixed community (rather than segregating men and women) and in plain clothes, were Kenyan, Italian, Brazilian and Spanish. Their relationship to the local Warao population was very different from that prevailing with the Capuchin missionaries.
40. It is still common to witness people being directly paid for their vote, when they vote under the surveillance of some politicians. In 2008 I heard that the rate was VEF 100, i.e. £ 15, per person (although it varied according to the localities).

social, cultural and economic development of the country, it has led to the massive registration of almost all Warao as Venezuelan citizens entitled to vote, and to their involvement in a wealth of projects dedicated to ensuring that local populations finally benefit from national oil income. I will not deal with those projects per se, but I want to stress that, from a Warao point of view, they are mainly relevant insofar as they represent a way of obtaining money and things. The educational 'missions,[41]' through which adults can learn, interest them mostly because some students receive 'grants' (Sp. becas) and 'teaching assistants' (Sp. facilitadores) get a small salary. The institution organising communal day nurseries (Multihogar de Cuidado Diario) is not really effective in the Delta, since the Warao neither need nor want to entrust their children to the care of others, but several women are paid to run it and they control the food sent for the children – in Tekoburojo, the disused nursery was also my home. The list of similar programs is almost endless, although the most important are probably the 'communal councils' (Consejos comunales), through which the national government funds grass-root initiatives organised along collective lines: among the Warao, it is usually an extraordinary source of income for the leader and his relatives (but not much is accomplished that would not have been done anyway). I however also want to mention two other, slightly different, cases. First, old age pensions are one of the most desirable, and probably most efficient, forms of income that can be obtained in the area: they are given to those who are over sixty, and if few Warao reach that age, those who do are usually at the core of a large family that benefits from the pension. Second, local authorities, namely the state of Delta Amacuro and the Municipio Antonio Díaz, also employ Warao. Although some of them are supposed to fulfil certain duties (for instance run the collective generator), in most smaller settlement these 'employees' are local leaders who have been granted such a position as a reward for their political activity: officially because they keep order in their community, but also, more practically, because they make sure that everyone votes 'correctly.'

From an outside – or at least official – point of view, all these forms of income differ greatly: there is indeed little in common between a studentship, a pension, a wage, and project-funding, except that they all involve the flow of money. For the Warao, however, the only criteria used to distinguish between them are their amount (a studentship is much lower than the wage of an employee) and their regularity (some incomes are

41. Mision Robinson for primary education, Mision Ribas for secondary education and Mision Sucre for university-level.

monthly or quarterly, whereas others, especially funds for Consejos comunales, are granted on a yearly basis). All are usually lumped together in a single category, expressed by the verb *kobra-ta-kitane*, from the Spanish 'cobrar,' which literally means 'to cash' or 'to draw,' and are locally seen as something comparable to our concept of prebends or stipends: they are the counterpart of a statutory position. Indeed, this way of getting money is often contrasted to 'work' *(yaota)* by the Warao, since it does not entail any physical effort. Teaching or performing administrative tasks is, for instance, referred to as *teribu-kitane*, which also means 'to study' and 'to chat,' and in the end it does not really matter whether people do it or not. They do not receive this money because of what they do, as a counterpart to their work or activity, but rather because of what they are: poor people, some of whom are been successful in their interactions with outsiders.

In fact, from the point of view of my hosts from Tekoburojo and Domujana, there is a form of continuity between these kind of official incomes and programs, and what outsiders scornfully call begging. Jesús, my closest friend, for instance emphatically claimed that, if Chávez ever visited the area, he would wear ripped clothes and no shoes, so that the Venezuelan president could see how poor they are and decide to help them (or at least him). When politicians, institutional agents, or tourists visit the lower Delta, some Warao systematically try to 'extract' money and things from them: if they notice the state of destitution of the Warao and are compassionate, then they are bound to give them something. In some cases it works, and a large group of Venezuelan tourists, who came to Guayo in 2008, brought bundles of second-hand clothes and toys to distribute in the settlement, arousing the excitement of the population. Such behaviour then confirms visitors in their perception of the Warao as 'beggars,' which is grounded on their experience upriver: the only Warao they had encountered – or, rather, recognised as such – were those who had asked them for some change in the towns bordering the Delta – Tucupita, Barrancas, or even, further away, Ciudad Guayana. Historically, although it is less common now that people have more access to cash through governmental projects, one of the main reasons to travel upriver was to spend some time in the rubbish dump of Kambalache, handpicking what they could salvage, for their personal use or to sell to other Warao. Others live off begging in towns, sometimes having settled there permanently, sometimes having travelled, without enough money, to wait for their administrative documents to be processed or for the return boat to depart. As mentioned above, following Briggs & Mantini-Briggs (2003), seeing begging as deeply rooted in the nature (or the culture) of the Warao is a widespread social prejudice. But at the same

time, it is certainly true that many of them do not draw a sharp distinction between governmental funds and a few coins cadged from passers-by: to a certain extent, both are given to them as a compassionate reaction to their state of poverty and suffering. Those who are the most uncomfortable with such prejudice – and with beggars – are in fact the educated Warao who live in Tucupita: they constantly work to draw a sharp distinction between 'warao-ness' and 'begging,' so as to claim the former without suffering from the social consequences of the latter.

Other gifts however have a personal nature, very different from the anonymous interactions with passers-by typical of urban spaces. In some cases, this is a sign of political or administrative connections, but I want to focus briefly on specific interactions, during which they 'extract' things from wealthier acquaintances, especially foreigners or Criollos.[42] I experienced these very often, for my hosts, who were usually cautious to hide what I had given them, also often asked me for things in public. This was particularly so with cigarettes – a petty gift indeed, but one that I managed in a very non-Warao and stingy way: if the Warao of Tekoburojo and Domujana often keep black tobacco for their own consumption (ritual or not), those who buy cigarettes display and offer them around, emptying the pack in a short time. Conversely, I had my stock that I carefully rationed. Jesús, my host and closest friend, knew this; and he also knew that I never refused him one. But he often made a point of asking me for a cigarette when he was surrounded by friends, therefore compelling me to give one to everybody present, sometimes even prompting me to do so. In a way, what he publicly 'extracted' from me was not only a pleasurable thing, but also generous behaviour. He was publicly showing that he wielded power over me, but also had turned me into a moral person. The same could be said of items that some people keep, and that are associated with particular individuals they have met: these things are signs of a privileged relationship, but also signs that the owner has compelled outsiders to behave morally.

3. The fascination with accumulation and the necessity of work.

A crucial aspect of moral performances is that they are not automatic, that their outcome is always uncertain: this is the case among Warao, but even more with Criollos,

42. This theme has been noted by several Amazonian anthropologists, for instance J.-P. Dumont (1978: 134) among the Panare or J.A. Kelly (in press) among the Yanomami.

because in most cases they do not give away their possessions, but rather accumulate them – even though they are imagined by the Warao to have endless resources.

3.1. The immorality of accumulating and displaying.

The Warao in general are fascinated by the way White people accumulate things, and especially by their displays of accumulation, the archetype of which is the shop. All Warao have experienced many of these: supermarkets or wholesale stores in the mainland towns of the Delta, or local shops, especially in the mission-villages, which are run by Criollos or by mixed families. Their characteristic is obviously that they gather together many things and sell them, but perhaps more prominently, that they accumulate many exemplars of the very same thing and display them on shelves. The contrast between Criollo and Warao moral economies is essentially a question of visual experience: whereas the former strive towards visible accumulation, the latter try to achieve visible generosity – for instance when they come back from a successful shopping or fishing trip – or they settle for discreet (i.e. non-displayed) consumption and accumulation (cf. infra). Although it refers to an entirely different context, Munn's stress on display and concealment among the PNG Gawans offers an interesting perspective on the matter: the striking fact about Criollo shopkeepers is not so much that they are stingy, but rather that they make their stinginess "visually available to the other" (1986: 102).[43] The general term for shop[44] has therefore come to be used metaphorically to designate any displayed accumulation of similar items. When some of my hosts from Tekoburojo came back from Guayo, where they had been to the hospital, just after it had been re-supplied, they commented excitedly that it was 'like a shop' because of all the medicines on the shelves. And the same expression was applied to my belongings, when I had just arrived from the mainland and my friends noticed that I had several files, several knives, or just too many fishhooks for a single person who was not even very good at fishing.

The homes of Venezuelan Criollos and of foreigners, because they are filled with so many things, are certainly also impressive places, although less so than stores. Another

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43. In Gawa, the display of beauty and generosity are at the origin of fame, i.e. the "mobile and circulating dimension of the person" (Munn 1992 [1986]: 105), and contrasts with the secrecy of witchcraft. I quoted a truncated comment on beautification: "Adornment persuades not by detaching some desirable material thing from the self and giving it to the other (to satisfy the other's desire), but by making one's own desirability visually available to the other – in this sense, as a 'gift' in virtual form only" (ibid.: 102). See also section 1.1 of chapter 4.
44. Wabi-noko, literally 'to sell-locative.'

place plays in fact a crucial role for the Warao: the immense dump of Kambalache (cf. infra), near the industrial town of Ciudad Guayana, where they go and salvage things, clothes, toys, etc., from the rubbish of the Criollos. Most people I met had been there, some expressed the desire to go in the near future, while others had migrated definitively and established their permanent residence in Kambalache.[45] Gustavo and Lavigna, for instance, were a couple in their forties. They knew more Spanish than others; but also had a large garden and often went fishing or to gather food; and Gustavo was an expert carpenter and joiner, using his craft to build furniture for his house, new rooms, walls, etc. – things nobody else in Tekoburojo has. I was asking him about his previous trips to Kambalache, interested in the way they coped with the potent smell of the rubbish dump, and it therefore came as a surprise when he told me he wanted to go back there. He acknowledged it was an olfactory hell but immediately and simply added: "there are many clothes" *(hiaka era-ha)*. He could find almost new stuff, whereas in Tekoburojo his children had nothing to wear. His wife then told the story of someone who had fully equipped his house and family, with a TV, and gas cooker and clothes, by salvaging stuff from Kambalache. On top of that, his garden was exhausted and the new one needed a few months before being productive, which their time away would allow for. They seemed to have thought their decision through.

White people or Criollos accumulate and display new things in their stores, and they throw away things that are almost new – sometimes with the price tag on, as my friends pointed out –, and that overtly pile up in the rubbish dump of Kambalache. Both practices run directly counter to the Warao way of dealing with things and fascinate them although – or because – they are immoral. Indeed, the retentiveness and greediness of the Whites and Criollos, the fact that they display things as if they were maliciously trying to evoke jealousy, and that they dispose of new objects while refusing to give them to suffering Warao, all this reveals their inability to act out of concern for others. Hugh-Jones, in his analysis of the Tukanoan myth of differentiation between Whites and Indians, has stressed that the original choice they made was not only technological (the former took the gun, the latter the bow), but also moral: it was the consequence of the "greedy, uncontrolled and thoughtless character" of the Whites, which came with their distinct language (1988: 146). Similarly, among the Warao, language is inextricably linked

45. For more information of this topic, I refer to the thesis that C. Sorhaug is currently writing at the University of Oslo.

to identity and ethos,[46] and in the myths that I have mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the acquisition by Criollos and Warao of different languages (or the revelation that it is so) immediately precedes their diverging choices: faced with a replenished store, the Warao does not want so many things, whereas the Criollo takes everything (e.g. Briggs 2000, García 1971).[47] The latter's decision reveals or triggers his unchecked greediness, and the Warao is offered the possibility to obtain all the wealth only once: such interactions do not happen in the post-mythic world.

The Criollos are immoral because they are stingy and greedy, but even more because they are overtly so. Contrary to them, the Warao are often very wary of displaying too much. This is a general reason for caution, and for instance the usual question asked to fishermen, when one passes them on the river or when they come back to the settlement, is: "how many [fishes] died?" *(katamona wabae)*. But the fisherman often sadly says that he has been unsuccessful – his answer is taken at face value and nothing is asked from him, whereas those who acknowledge a numerous catch face demands coming even from distant co-residents. Similarly, I was surprised by the care that my friends put into concealing some of the presents I made them. They carried clothes or tools hidden under their shirts or told me they would come back at night, and then hid them at the bottom of the bags where they keep all their possessions. Yet, this is a question of discretion rather than secrecy: in small settlements such as Tekoburojo or Domujana, where houses hardly ever have walls and people spend much time visiting others and gossiping on the way, there is little that stays unknown. The distinction between what is publicly displayed and what is discreetly or secretly conducted is however central, as Basso has show about the Kalapalo: in this Brazilian Amerindian group, for instance, affairs are actually known to everyone, but people should not display presents that their lovers give them, for jealousy arises from their being proclaimed publicly rather than merely existing (1973:

46. All differences are subsumed under linguistic differences, and discussions about varying habits between Tekoburojo and Domujana were often concluded by inhabitants of both settlements by the statement without appeal that they had 'different languages' *(dibu daisa)*. Although the Warao term is not, strictly speaking, polysemic, it is similar to the Barasana situation where language *(oka)* has the wider meaning of behaviour or character (S. Hugh-Jones, personal communication), and to the Jivaro situation, where Taylor remarks that "kin are defined as people who talk in the same language" (2007: 161-162n.16).

47. The fact that the Warao myth systematically involves domesticated animals is striking. It certainly confirms how alien is domestication to lowland South American Indians (cf. Descola 1994), but it could also be suggested that it is another immoral practice: Whites and Criollos kill and eat the beings they have cared for.

103).[48] Among the Warao, this distinction may not be so pervasive, but it is certainly underlying in the behaviour of people towards food and things: displaying them might either legitimate demands or arouse envy, but the former are difficult to refuse, and the latter, being the motive for sorcery, can be lethal (cf. chapter 4).[49] Discretion is a requisite.

As a consequence, the Warao hardly accumulate things or money (though they do so to a certain extent with debts[50]). And if some people do not hide what they have acquired, it is often because they give a large part of it away: it is a question of displaying their generosity. Evaristo for instance, the pre-eminent shaman of Tekoburojo, receives an old age pension and a municipal salary, and he makes regular shopping trips upriver, to Tucupita, or more often to Guayo, systematically coming back with a load of food and goods. But being one of the core members of the settlement, at the centre of an extended network of co-resident relatives, with many grown-up children, he gives away much of the food he brings back, buys things for his children and grandchildren, and a huge crowd always enjoys his TV and sound system. Conversely, some cases show the impossibility of accumulation. In August 2009, when returned to the area, I discovered that Eduardo – a middle-age man from Tekoburojo – had become a link in a patron-client network: he had a Venezuelan boss upriver, some Warao fishermen as clients downriver, and was trading salted fish. He brought goods and food to the latter, and came back with the product, using money, as is usually the case, mostly as a unit in his account book: he credited the fishermen with the value of their fish (less than what he got upriver), and debited from them the value of what he gave them (more than what he had paid), trying to keep them permanently in debt.[51] However, Eduardo had very few material advantages to support him in his new path: in order to travel he had to borrow large dugout canoes, outboard motors and often fuel – things he systematically had to give compensation for, which reduced his profits. He was living in Tekoburojo with

48. It also echos a spatial distinction: in private areas, people "people may move without having their presence formally proclaimed," whereas in public areas they greet and joke with each other (Basso 1973: 46-47, cf. also Gregor 1977 about similar comments on the Mehinaku).

49. From this point of view, they are similar to many other Amerindians. Concerning the Panara, Ewart states that: "By carefully managing the visual availability of objects of value, Panará people pre-empt excessive demands from others and also avoid being seen to possess too much" (2008: 516); and S. Hugh-Jones notes about the Barasana that "people are cautious about what they display to whom and keep some possessions, especially stocks of Western goods, hidden away in dark corners of the house" (1992: 61).

50. Gordon (2006: 278-279) notes the same among the Xikrin: leaders never have positive bank accounts.

51. See S. Hugh-Jones 1992 and Gow 1991: 90-115 for general discussions of similar practices.

some relatives, in whose house he stored the commodities and grocery foods he was bringing back from the town: everyone in the village had taken to visiting him at that point, asking him to give or sell them (depending on their relationship) some of his stuff. When I went along with him to visit the fishermen downriver, especially on the seashore communities facing the ocean, he had little left to give them, and sometimes – an aberration of the model – he had to give them cash because he was indebted to them rather than the other way around. His venture turned out to be a failure, and he acknowledged it when we were coming back, telling me that he now merely wanted to settle his debts and stop. Living within an extended kin network, it was impossible for him to resist demands and behave like a real shopkeeper.[52]

In a way, there are also strictly speaking no 'durable goods' among the Warao, which makes their extreme acquisitive desire compatible with their limited practice of accumulation. All foreigners, whatever their origin or their relation to the Warao, spontaneously agree that they do not know how to take care of things, that they intensely desire something (an outboard motor, a TV, a generator, etc.), and break it after no time, just to ask for another one.[53] And what is not broken "falls into the river" (*honi nakae*, which is the usual answer to any inquiry about a missing object). It is true that there are some variations, depending on the object in question and on the personality of the owner. Gustavo, for instance, has built shelves and storage spaces in his house, in order to keep his things safe, whereas others just leave them on the floor or stick them in the thatch. Extra care is often given to tools that are both necessary and difficult to acquire, for instance the adzes that are used to build dugout canoes. Conversely, electronic equipment is considered much more desirable (to acquire) but also much less necessary (to keep): the old Evaristo did not hesitate to throw his DVD player on the floor, one day he was angry because the children had been watching it for too long. He merely bought another one a couple of months later.

Accumulation is both impossible and, in a way, undesirable, in most settlements. But its display by Criollos also fascinates the Warao, and can help to suggest other reasons to

52. As I noted (cf. sections 1.2 & 1.3), in the lower Delta shops are found only in the larger, mixed settlements; and even there they are often spatially apart.
53. Analysing the role of money and commodities among the Xikrin, Gordon notes that they do not accumulate the former (2006: 278-279), and that they are said to "destroy everything:" "alongside the enormous desire to obtain and consume commodities, the Xikrin do not seem to show much preoccupation in keeping them" (ibid.: 303-304).

account for their consumerism, in terms of the way they make themselves visible to others and to themselves.

3.2. The practice of an intermediary identity.

I have stressed that most Warao, and especially those whose lives I shared in Tekoburojo and Domujana, are fascinated by the display of accumulated commodities and grocery foods in shops. They also gave me as synonyms for shopkeeper the concepts of *dahotu-ida*, literally 'very wealthy,' and of *burata arotu*, literally 'owner of money.' Such figures captivate them because owning a store seems to entail a condition of pure wealth, involving no 'work.' The owner merely orders others to do the work for him or her, and is happy counting the money and displaying things in front of people who cannot buy them: it is a selfish pleasure without suffering. But this fascination is in a way perverse, it takes place in spite of – or because – displayed accumulation is utterly immoral. It arouses the desire to obtain things, but certainly not that of managing them in the same way, of living like Criollos or foreigners, of sharing their (im)morality.[54]

This question is intimately linked to the intermediary identity that the Warao strive for: whatever their actual position in the social space of the Delta, most try to imagine themselves as neither *hotarao*, that is to say Criollos or non-indigenous in general, nor *warao-witu*. This latter term, which they often translate as 'pure Indian,' is usually used in a derogatory way, to refer both to inhabitants of settlements that are considered to be more backward than one's own, and to their collective past. According to an inhabitant of Nabasanuka, the people from Domujana are *warao-witu*, whereas the latter apply this term to those who live in more isolated settlements or spend more time in the forest.[55] After all, they have an outboard motor, a small generator, a TV, they are learning how to read and write, their children have been baptised by the missionaries, they have ID cards and their settlement is an official community: they are not primitive or savage people. Such an intermediary identity is also linked to language and diet, but owning and

54. Similar observations have been made by Ewart (2008) about the Panará, and by Gordon (2006: 297-300); and it could be compared to Kelly's (in press) statement that the Yanomami want to combine White people's knowledge (in medicine, in schools) with Yanomami morality – and certainly not the other way round.

55. In other contexts, *warao* means 'human person' and is contrasted, for instance, to spirits and jaguars. As among other Amerindians, "the term functions as a generalized 'we/they' classifier" (Taylor 1996: 204) or as a pronoun rather than a noun (Viveiros de Castro 1998: 476). In the type of situation I am discussing here, the use of *warao-witu* is similar to that of the category 'wild Indian' in other parts of lowland South America (e.g. Taylor 2007), and the way everyone assumes to be in an intermediate position recalls the Piro (Gow 1991: 82-83).

knowing things is a central condition of not being *warao-witu*, in the same way that, among the Peruvian Piro, "the status of being 'civilized' is closely linked to levels of consumption of goods," which varies importantly in the area and which the 'Ancient people' did not know (Gow 1991: 114). When my Warao friends posed so that I could take a picture and bring back a portrait a few weeks or months later, they took extreme care in their appearance: they groomed themselves, but also wore brand-new clothes and sometimes wanted to be portrayed holding a newly-acquired electronic equipment. Conversely, one day Jesús was showing me some pictures of himself he had obtained before my arrival, he pointed to one and commented in Spanish: "Indio!" He then explained that, in this picture, his trousers were hanging awkwardly and his posture was shy: he was still young then, and did not really 'know' things yet. This concept of 'knowing' is in fact central, because it does not refer to an abstract process, but rather to the idea of getting accustomed to something (or someone), and therefore of feeling comfortable with it (or him). And the process of knowing things, or White people's stuff in general, is at the same time irreversible and always on-going. A common reference is the loincloth *(bua)* that the Warao used to wear in the past, although the younger generations know about it only by hearsay (older people have either used or seen it, depending on the areas). They mention the loincloth to stress their past state of destitution and ignorance, but its mention by an outsider is usually seen as insulting: they are not anymore what they used to be, and will not be so ever again.[56] Indeed, Louis Carré, the owner of an hotel located in Guayo, once told me about the Warao who come to perform 'traditional' dances in front of tourists that wearing a loincloth is the only thing that, whatever pay he offered, no one would ever do. But fashion is always changing, and new technological items are constantly produced: teenagers from Guayo now want mobile phones (even though there is no network) with cameras or mp3 players. In order not to be sent back to their original condition of 'Indios,' the Warao must constantly acquire new things.[57]

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56. Kelly (in press) makes a similar comment about the Yanomami, and compares it to the idea that animals cannot 'de-transform' themselves into ancient people (reverting the mythical process).

57. Gordon notes the 'inflation' characteristic of the relationship to things and money among the Xikrin, but explains it mostly in terms of a 'differential consumption' through which internal differences are created or maintained (2006: 341-346). Although the intimate link between identification and differentiation is very common, I believe that the Warao rather aim at conformity (cf. Gell 1986: 123 about the Indian Muria). Their problem is about not being left behind, rather than leaving others behind.

This logic explains the wide range of their desires. They not only want to acquire things that alleviate suffering or offer effortless pleasure, but also consumption items in general, especially the whole range of electronic equipment nowadays available in local Venezuelan towns. They do not merely want clothes to protect them from the cold, but also bright new clothes. They do not just want a house, but what they have come to call a 'vivienda,' using the Spanish word, that is to say a house built on a Venezuelan model (and often built by Criollos), with walls, doors, and a roof of corrugated iron. Sometimes, as C. Sorhaug (in preparation) remarks, they are very excited about getting a bike or a skateboard – even though these are completely useless in the swampy environment of the lower Delta. Such practices reveal the complexity and ambivalence of their identity and interactions. In some contexts, the Warao present themselves as utterly poor people in need of help, so that, through an expectation of complementary schismogenesis (cf. Bateson 1958 [1936]), they can benefit from their interlocutor's compassion. In other contexts, however, the interaction takes a symmetric rather than complementary form, and they will act as equals. Indeed Jesús, who claimed he would wear ripped clothes and no shoes if Chávez came to Tekoburojo, at the same time never goes to Guayo without shoes and clean clothes (for fear of being looked down upon as 'Indio' by the local Warao or Criollos). On another occasion, after people from the National Institute of Nutrition had unloaded food, he refused to go and claim his share from Javier, the headman, saying that he was not a dog, to go around begging for food. It could even be said that the Warao sometimes try to best others at their own game, for instance showing that they do not have anything to learn from the Criollos about things, without adopting their abject values.[58]

3.3. The necessity of work.

As a consequence, the Warao cannot rely entirely on others' good-will in order to acquire things. Most of them need to engage in real 'work,' either as employees of Criollo bosses, or in a more autonomous way, when they decide to sell their production. It is, in a way, an ironic twist of fate, since they have to suffer in order to acquire things whose main purpose, at least from a certain perspective, is to alleviate suffering. But it is impossible not to desire things when faced with the fascination of displayed

58. It is a claim made by C. Sorhaug (personal communication) about their consumption practices. Their habit of experimenting with technological items, which often involves breaking and then repairing them, or manufacturing new ones out of scraps, can be seen as an aspect of such attempts: technological knowledge is not only for foreigners.

accumulation: in a way, "supply creates demand," as J.-B. Say put it, although here in a very literal way. Indeed, at some point during my fieldwork, itinerant traders were visiting Tekoburojo everyday, in order to sell home-made bread and water-ice, sweets, pirate DVDs or other random items. My friends were constantly asking me for money, so that they could buy something, and they very explicitly told me: "we need money, since there are things to buy."

There are many ways of acquiring things and money that can be classified as 'work,' in the general sense that a painful effort is required.[59] First among these is the practice of gathering things from the rubbish dump of Kambalache, which I have already mentioned. In the 1990s and early 2000s, when people from Tekoburojo went there regularly, they used to sail upriver and paddle downriver: each trip took three days and nights of continuous travel. Once there, they never paused in their hunt for things they could salvage, and had to withstand a potent smell of decay that, they admit, often made them ill. But the reward was the incredible amount of stuff they brought back. Since the practice is not as common as it used to be, I will however focus on more formal or usual forms of work.

Governmental or para-governmental institutions, on top of granting regular income to many Warao, sometimes also offer them the opportunity to obtain money by working temporarily. One example is the national institution which aims at providing housing for the most necessitous of the Venezuelans (Fundación Misión Hábitat), and whose activity, in the Delta, is often replicated by independent programs at local level. It usually works in a way that creates double benefits for the population, since state or local agents bring material to a specific settlement, where they temporarily hire some men in order to build the houses: local inhabitants therefore gain both a Western-style house, and the income corresponding to the work they carried out. The latter is often as important as the former, for I witnessed several arguments when things did not happen in such a way: in Nabasanuka for instance, the Venezuelan in charge of such a program told me how he had wanted to conduct it in a more collaborative way, with the commitment of both his organisation and the local population. But when he brought construction material, the

59. The comparison with Piaroa views would be interesting: they for instance consider shopping as production rather than exchange, and Overing argues that it is a question of the types of social relationship involved (1992: 180). Among the Warao, 'work' is not a bounded category, but rather a characterisation aimed at evoking a moral reaction: although shopping is not usually considered in such a way, the headman Javier once stressed that it had been hard work to go upriver and buy a motor for the community – in order to justify that he had spent part of the money to pay for an hotel room.

Warao asked to be paid in order to unload it. He had to threaten to take everything back upriver in order to convince them to build their own houses 'for free.' Similarly, when a new hospital was to be built in Nabasanuka and a barge arrived with the material, a major argument arose because some Warao workmen had been hired for the day in another village, where the construction team had stopped on its way. Inhabitants of Nabasanuka complained that, since it was 'their' hospital, they should be the recipients of any additional income: if the work was given to others, they were being robbed of their due. As a measure of protest, they prevented the unloading, until an agreement was reached thanks to the intervention of the head missionary: it would not happen again, and in the meantime each of them received a bank note, so that they would allow others to perform the work that was rightly theirs.

Temporary work for governmental and para-governmental institutions coexists with that carried out for private entrepreneurs and individual bosses, which is however much less recent. Once again, it can take many different forms. Young men, and sometimes women, commonly spend a period of time – from a few months to several years – away from their home community, often working under the responsibility of a 'boss' and among Criollos, or fishing intensively for trade.[60] When they come home, they show off their newly acquired clothes and items, but also their familiarity with foreign things and their increased knowledge of Spanish, as well as their production skills – it is a multi-dimensional educational migration (cf. chapter 3). Adult men sometimes continue to work as 'employees,' as long as this is compatible with their family life and domestic duties: some, especially in Guayo, are available to work occasionally for local patrons; while others, especially in Tekoburojo, may have more mobile activities. The latter case is interesting, because some Guyanese traders (or rather smugglers) have established their local base there, and several young or middle-aged men from Tekoburojo work for them as deck-hands or loading and unloading cargo, usually travelling to and from the river ports of Barrancas and Tucupita, but exceptionally going as far as Trinidad. The periods they spend working as employed labourers alternate with longer shifts that they devote to domestic productive activities, in theory ensuring that they can provide their family both with a house and garden, and with cash income. Such commitment is however demanding, and can lead to conflicting tensions. This was especially the case of their then-foreman, my compadre Rafael, since both he and his son-in-law – that is to say the

60. J. Wilbert (1993: 51) mentions temporary migrations as typical adolescent behaviour, although he describes them within a purely indigenous social space.

two adult men of the household – were employed by the Guyanese, and Rafael's wife often complained about the fact that their too frequent absence made daily subsistence difficult for her family. She convinced her husband to resign after a while, and he decided that fishing was a better way to access cash (whereas her son-in-law, having resigned, eventually enrolled in the army). Indeed, most adult men do not work as employees – directly under a boss' command – but rather as 'clients' working with more autonomy for a 'patron,' or sometimes independently.

Under such conditions, the Warao do not sell their labour but rather their production, mostly fish: inhabitants of Tekoburojo usually bring what they do not consume to Guayo, where more people can afford to buy fish; and sometimes traders travel through the Delta with a cool box, in order to provide fresh fish to the mainland, and buy their products. More often, the Warao salt species of fish that they do not consume themselves, but which are appreciated by Criollos (especially catfish), and sell them to intermediaries, exceptionally bringing them to Barrancas or Tucupita themselves. In most cases, such fishing enables adult Warao to provide food for the household, and simultaneously to obtain cash, especially for daily expenses such as soap and sugar. At the same time, most of them are also indebted to 'patrons' who have given them fishing nets, nylon lines, store-bought food, etc.: though they may occasionally sell fish to others, most of their catch goes to their patrons, in order to pay off their debt – although new credit (in kind) usually ensures that a Warao client remains subordinate to his patron, as is typical of such relationships in lowland South America.[61] The Warao also gather and sell crabs during the season (August-September), iguanas when they chance upon them, or catch birds, which they sell as pets – a specialty of teenagers and young men. Older men may also build dugout canoes to trade; and women have access to their own income through the production of hammocks and handicrafts for tourists.[62] The latter can be very profitable, for a good quality hammock is worth as much as fifty kilos of fish. However, those products are much more exceptional, and the fish trade is the most regular source of income for the Warao, especially in costal areas.

Different forms of income are put to different purposes, and men who regularly sell their fish surplus to nearby customers usually do so for their daily consumption: it enables them to buy a few kilos of sugar or flour, some black tobacco or a bottle of fizzy

61. For comparative material on patron-client relationships, see for instance S. Hugh-Jones 1992 and Bonilla 2005. The theme is discussed further in chapter 3.
62. Contrary, for instance, to the Piro, where women are "almost entirely dependent on their husbands for money and the goods money buys" (Gow 1991: 144).

drink, occasionally a missing tool or a t-shirt.[63] On the other hand, Warao who have access to more important amounts, either regularly (in the case of municipal employees) or exceptionally (if them have spent some time working intensively for a Criollo boss or as fishermen), tend to spend it conspicuously. The logic of display and concealment is in fact not a simple question. While some people put great care into hiding some items, or at least being tactful about them, others tend to show off what they have just acquired. I have mentioned the case of people who publicize their generosity, such as the old Evaristo. When things are acquired through work, their display is similarly much less problematic, and it is common to see young men coming back from Kambalache or from a period of intense labour away from home, who proudly exhibit bright new clothes and small electronic equipment, or older men with a TV or a loud sound-system. These items are the product of the skills but also of the suffering of their owner, similar from this perspective to a large dugout canoe or a nice hammock. The Warao who acquire things in such a way do not arouse envy, because the pleasurable possession is in fact morally compensated for by the painful acquisition. It even reveals something about the identity of the owners or consumers: the coming of age of younger people, or the 'active' personality of adults who, even though they are Warao, do not have to beg outsiders to give them what they want or need.[64] They therefore stand in marked contrast to those who are able to buy goods because they are lucky enough to draw money from the government or to have befriended the visiting anthropologist, even more to the 'owners of money' who enjoy their limitless wealth without ever engaging in any work: they are autonomous subjects rather than subordinates.[65]

3.4. The flow of things.

In part because of the contrast it makes with the characteristic accumulation of shopkeepers, it is illuminating to consider that what is at issue, in the Warao way of dealing with things, is essentially the management of a flow.

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63. In 2009, a kilo of morocoto fish was worth VEF 6 in Guayo, approximately the same as sugar, flour and pasta; a 'quarta' of black tobacco VEF 15, and a t-shirt could be found for VEF 20 (at the time, the exchange rate was about VEF 1 = £ 0.2).

64. Hugh-Jones remarks that, among the Barasana, "for adolescent men this forms part of an informal rite of passage" (Hugh-Jones 1992: 67), and Gow that, among the Piro, "he is now a lumberer" *(ya es madero)* is equivalent to saying "he is now a man" (1991: 130).
Talking about a remote setting in Sri Lanka, Gell comments that a TV can come to represent one's achievements as a fisherman – even if there is no electricity (1986: 114).

65. On the value of autonomy among lowland South Amerindians, see for instance Erikson (2009: 174-175). I describe the position of subordinates in chapter 3, section 3.

First, it can be seen as a moral question from an individual point of view. As I have stressed, the belongings of the Warao are consumed, given away or broken very quickly. However, though they are often careful to conceal their new items of wealth, they display their rubbish – and it is probably the only thing that they accumulate. It falls under their stilt houses, and everything that does not rot or that is not washed away by the river, stays there; that is to say mostly the refuse of their consumption of foreign food and goods. Visitors are always stunned at finding that what they expected to be a primeval forest is dirtier than pauperised urban spaces, and often try to react – usually to the dismay of the Warao.[66] It is possible to argue that they simply do not care, since they do not share the visitors' notion that 'we' have to 'protect nature.' It might however also be suggested that such rubbish is in a way enjoyed as a sign of one's past consumption, which seems to be explicitly the point in some situations, when rubbish is formally displayed rather than just left carelessly in sight. For instance, Javier, the leader of Tekoburojo and therefore a municipal employee, kept his broken electronic equipment on a high shelf in his house, especially his former TVs and sound systems. It is true that the Warao often repair equipment, build new devices out of scrap, and therefore keep many broken pieces for which they will find a use at some point.[67] Yet I think that displays of one's rubbish also make sense as visible manifestations of one's connections, influence, actions, especially since it contrasts with the secrecy that often characterises new acquisitions.[68] Producing rubbish is the proof that one consumes foreign food and goods, that one is not a 'pure Indian' *(warao witu)* living essentially off domestic production, but rather a Warao who 'knows' White people's stuff and is accustomed to consuming it, who has been able to secure a flow of money, commodities and grocery food. But at the same time, displaying only rubbish also precludes any demand, even envy to a certain extent: there is nothing that is retained that could be given – only plastic wrappings and broken electronic items. It seems striking to me that food as well is not

66. The Red Cross branch in Guayo organised a rubbish collection scheme in the village of Jobure, but it was abandoned after a while; and it was one of the first things that the missionaries did when they arrived in Nabasanuka.

67. From that point of view, they are certainly similar to the Barasana: "foreign items are often treated in the creative and adventurous spirit of Lévi-Strauss' *bricoleur*" and they "lurk in odd corners of Indian houses waiting each day for some as yet undiscovered use" (Hugh-Jones 1992: 58).

68. I am here inspired by what Grotti (2007: chapter 5) says about displays of food and goods among the Trio. Similarly, among the Barasana, if some body ornaments are collectively owned and work as a 'uniform,' others are more comparable to accessories (e.g. animal teeth, lizard skin bracelets, watches and hats), and display personality and connexions (S. Hugh-Jones, personal communication).

accumulated but rather produced as a continuous flow: taro, their main staple food, is kept in gardens and only 'produced' (i.e. dug up) when needed; and though fish may be salted and preserved, it is hardly ever consumed in such a way by the Warao – the undefined reluctance they express in terms of taste may also be a disgust for the possibility of food accumulation itself.[69] Controlling a flow and exhibiting only its refuse can therefore be seen as the solution to a central moral and social dilemma: how is it possible to achieve success without creating envy, without turning into an immoral person?

Second, focusing on flows is also useful in terms of social description, especially when considering the flow of people looking for things and the flow of things reaching people. Obtaining money and things is the main reason why the Warao permanently come and go throughout the Delta. Admittedly, they travel for their domestic productive activities, but it is then either spatially limited (as when they visit their gardens or go fishing) or exceptional (for instance when they look for moriche palm groves or gather crabs). Conversely, the acquisition of goods and money leads them to a greater and more frequent mobility: in order to produce salted fish, to process administrative documents, to collect stuff from the rubbish dump, to work for foreign bosses or to buy things in the shops of Venezuelan Creoles, the Warao nowadays travel further and much more often. Indeed, some inhabitants of Tekoburojo visited Tucupita more often than I did. At the same time, things also travel throughout the Delta: fish salted on the sea shore by Warao, sold to their patron in Guayo, supplies the markets of Tucupita, Barrancas or further away; while money and goods travel in the other direction. Jesús once gave me a very typical example: while describing how he used to go upriver, to the rubbish dump of Kambalache, in order to salvage stuff for himself and his relatives, he added that he would also sell some of it to the seashore communities, therefore travelling to the furthest downriver Warao settlements. Seashore or strand people live in more remote places and are poorer; they might eat more fish, but they are less used to things, therefore always keen to buy or trade the stuff brought by their acquaintances from other areas. In a way, such practices reveal that the space occupied by the Warao is not one-dimensional: they constantly interact in many ways with many people, sometimes selling fish to their patrons or buying things from the nearby shops in Guayo, other times short-

69. The only foodstuff that the Warao store for a while is the moriche palm sago – although it is kept under ritual control (cf. Heinen & Ruddle 1974). In Amazonia, it sometimes happens that bitter manioc flour is preserved as such.

circuiting them by travelling directly to Tucupita; sometimes spending their bachelor years in the mainland as hired workers, other times fishing intensively in a related community.

The flows of things reaching people and of people looking for things are in fact what binds regional space together. The relationship of the Warao to social alterity is admittedly ambivalent. On the one hand, all unknown people are considered dangerous and potential killers *(akubakamo)*. In fact, the further one is from home, the more unknown the area, the more feared it is: my hosts from Tekoburojo were quick to stress that such 'killers' lived in other areas of the Delta, while the inhabitants of Domujana precisely located them in the neighbourhood of Guayo. The importance of 'greetings' is revelatory of those fears. In lowland South America, they seem to address an ontological, as much as social, question; and Erikson has stressed in his study of the Brazilian Matis that to greet is "to lift a doubt about the threat posed by the fallacious nature of appearance" (2000: 133). In the Delta, maybe more importantly than between co-residents, people who pass each other on the river at least shout an inarticulate call or signal their direction with the hand. Conversely, in narratives of 'uncanny encounters,' the fact that greetings are not answered systematically reveals that the interlocutor is in reality a predatory non-human… Travelling is therefore always risky because unknown beings, whether human or non-human, are potentially dangerous – and greetings are only a rudimentary measure of caution.[70] On the other hand, most Warao have had intensive contacts with people from different areas, especially during their bachelor years, and continue to interact constantly with many others – members of distinct settlements, sometimes relatives and acquaintances, but often complete strangers, Warao who live in distant areas, non-native locals or visitors. In fact – and it may explain the importance of greetings with passers-by –, they constantly experience fleeting interactions with strangers: this is partly due to the fact that people mostly travel using the main streams that permeate the lower Delta, and that the area is quite densely populated,[71] but also to

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70. Erikson (2000) and Grotti (2007) focus on the more elaborate greetings exchanged between co-residents.
On 'uncanny encounters,' see the conference 'Figuring the invisible' where I presented Warao narratives (University of Cambridge, 16-18 December 2009); as well as Delaplace 2008 & Taylor 1993b.

71. The Orinoco Delta as a whole measures approximately 23,700 sq km (J. Wilbert 1996: 4), but the most of the Warao are concentrated in a costal fringe of about 7,000 sq km (Heinen 1988: 592). There are 36,028 Warao individuals according to the 'Censo Nacional Población y Vivienda 2001' (Instituto Nacional de Estadística), 83 % of them living in the state of Delta Amacuro, and about half of those in the Municipio Antonio Diáz – the only district which is overwhelmingly

their constant comings and goings, for a few hours, days, weeks or months, to obtain things and money or to bring them back.

This characteristic certainly stands in contrast to the image of the small community living in self-sufficient isolation, and the frequency of such interactions may be an original feature of Warao, as opposed to other Amerindian societies. Yet it would be wrong to see it as a recent effect of destructive acculturation and contact, for commercial ventures have a long history in the region. Raleigh already mentions that, in 1595, the Warao traded canoes "into *Guiana* for gold, and into *Trinedado* [Trinidad] for *Tobacco*" (1848 [1596]: 52); and Heinen has recorded narratives about the trips to Trinidad that people from the Winikina area used to conduct, sailing, in order to sell hunting dogs and pet birds (1988b: 29-30). The contemporary Warao admittedly have an interest in electronic items, use money to acquire them, and obtain money both through interactions with governmental and non-governmental institutions, or with Warao, Criollos, Trinitarian or Guyanese individuals engaged in trade. But this is no revolution, and trade in things has often been in lowland South America a main way of relating to outsiders – although most authors have consistently privileged interpersonal relations over the exchange of things.[72]

4. Summary and conclusions.

One of the purposes of this chapter was to present the Delta as a whole, that is to say the area occupied nowadays by the Warao. Tekoburojo and Domujana, where I conducted most of my fieldwork, as well as Guayo and Nabasanuka, where I spent shorter periods of time, are all specific settlements within a very differentiated regional space. The interpretations I offer are obviously more relevant for the people that I know most, but I try to take into account the diversity of historical and contemporary Warao experience, and I often followed my friends when they travelled upriver to process administrative documents or to buy commodities, and when they travelled to other

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Warao. It is one of the numerous indigenous groups of lowland South America, but the population size is not exceptional.

72. See Mansutti-Rodríguez (1986) for the study of intra- and inter-ethnic trade networks involving the Venezuelan Piaroa; and Renard-Casevitz (1993) for Western Amazonia (Arawak and Pano). It is obviously not an exclusive Amerindian feature, but it plays a role that, in other places, can be fulfilled by ritual or religious events, livestock trade, or purely political interactions. Some authors even note an "ethnic specialisation" in the production of manufactured objects, whose purpose is precisely to make inter-ethnic trade necessary (e.g. Renard-Casevitz 1993, after Lévi-Strauss 1943a).

settlements of the lower Delta, often downriver, to visit relatives, to fish, or to attempt to establish a patron/client network. Nowadays, the Warao spend much time and effort acquiring commodities and grocery food, as well as the money necessary to buy them, and looking at the differential access to 'White people's stuff,' and at their ways of obtaining it, is probably the most economical way of introducing the area.

This chapter is also a way of offering a first approximation of my perspective on the question of morality among the Warao. First, a central question is the value of 'care,' that is to say of the concern for others' well-being, which leads to alleviating their suffering or fulfilling their needs. It is a fairly common idea, but it is enacted in different ways and different contexts, which this dissertation tries to describe. Second, the distinction between Warao and non-Warao (i.e. Criollo, Guyanese or other foreigners) is very fluctuating. In some interactions, it is put forward as a radical contrast in terms of behaviour and morality, by all of them, and the carelessness of the Warao is often opposed to the greedy stinginess of the Criollo. But at the same time, this sharp divide is a discursive reference only valid in some situations: local identities are often mixed, to various degrees; there are continuous chains linking the most remote settlements and the urban centres; and moral systems interpenetrate each other, for instance when the Warao succeed in evoking compassion among the Criollos. Third, the outcome of such interactions is always uncertain, because morality is not so much about obligations, but rather a question of performance. People try to extract a reaction from others and, from this relational perspective, all actions can be understood as the evaluation of another's behaviour: extracting a gift from a wealthier person means that I managed to turn him or her into a moral person, and this also reveals something about me, the extent of my influence or helplessness.

I have however hinted at the importance of food itself, which is much more problematic than things. Indeed, though the Warao spend most of their time trying to obtain things, or talking about it, their incorporation into a native context almost always goes without difficulties. On the contrary, they are much more discriminating about food: they adamantly refuse to ingest certain types of food (whereas they merely lack interest in certain manufactured items). Oakdale has recently made similar observations about both first contact and contemporary practices among the Xinguan Kayabi: their willingness to accept things stands in marked contrast with their cautious towards eating foreign, store-bought foods, which are called 'smelly foods' and are said to make one weak and unhealthy (2008: 798). Looking at production, circulation and consumption of

food will therefore enable me to go further in the analysis of the way the Warao manage their identity and social interactions, especially when it comes to relationships within the household and the kin network. However, there is no division into distinct 'spheres' (for instance a sphere of close relatives defined by food and a broader sphere of non-kin defined by commodities), as will become obvious in chapter 3 with the study of the patron-client relationship, which cross-cuts all such boundaries. On the contrary, my purpose is more analytical: through a focus on food at an intimate level, I will try to reach deeper understandings about the workings of morality and emotions among the Warao.

Chapter 2
Laziness and stinginess: food, morality and social dynamics

In March 2007, a few months after the beginning of my fieldwork, I served as a rather inadequate interpreter for a French TV crew shooting a documentary on the Warao. While I was struggling with interviews, the director suddenly got very impatient with me: "they're only talking about food! Can't you get them to discuss more interesting topics?" At the time, I was only guessing what the rest of my field research convinced me of: he was mistaken, for food is a special matter among the Warao, and deserves close attention if one is to understand their sociality, and especially their concept and use of kinship relations.

Obviously, the existence of a link between food and society (or even just 'kinship') is rather universal, and I need to specify in what way it might be illuminating. Food production and consumption are not a mechanical consequence of kinship relations, as could be imagined when saying that relatives share food, or that a son-in-law provides for his wife's parents. In fact, it is above all else a question of dynamics: decisions about food generate connections and disconnections, as much as they are their consequences. Some authors, often tagged under the label of 'new kinship studies,' have stressed the

processual nature of kinship, which they have often linked to food consumption. Carsten for instance shows that, among the Malays, people who share the same food – for instance milk-siblings – become "one blood, one flesh" (1995: 228), and that, conversely, if close kin move to distant area and cease to engage in commensality, "their kinship and that of their descendant effectively lapses" (ibid.: 234). However, there is very little talk about bodies and substance among the Warao, and I argue that the question is in fact of another nature. Producing, giving and consuming food are not about symbols or substance, but rather are moral acts, first because they are directed towards others, and second because they are themselves evaluations of others' behaviour. They are therefore not incommensurable with judgements expressed through speech, although they often have different consequences. I will therefore show that we are not faced with discursive assessments of (non-verbal) behaviour, but rather with verbal and non-verbal acts, which are evaluated, and are evaluations themselves.

Morality is here analysed in very embedded situations: the moral principles, when they are expressed abstractly, may seem disappointingly simple; but I will try to show that it is illuminating to look at the social and affective effects of moral arguments that unfold in concrete interactions, and especially to see how they detach people from each other and thus shape Warao sociality.

1. The alimentary forms of social life.

1.1. The specificity of food.

Soon after I started sharing food with Jesús and his family, in Tekoburojo, he built a second hearth. This was not because there were too many of us, but rather because I often brought onions and stock cubes, which he enjoyed adding to the fish stew but which his mother Adelina did not eat. Sometimes, when there was no fish, we opened cans of tuna to eat with flat wheat bread, but then Jesús stuck to the bread, since he did not eat tuna. When I came back in 2009, and had brought some sardine cans to mix with pasta, his wife told me that her one year old son could not consume canned fish, and that she would not eat it either, because he was still small and often ill… As I remarked at the end of the previous chapter, most Warao are much more discriminating when it comes to eating foreign food than when they use foreign things, although restrictions also apply to local foodstuffs, especially fish species. There is indeed some 'harmless' stuff, which everyone consumes, such as sugar, wheat flour, taro, or morocoto fish. But, beyond there

opens a broad field of alimentary restrictions, characterised by infinite individual variations. In some cases, my friends justified not eating something because it was 'not food' *(nahoro-ana)*, although they admitted that some people mistakenly consumed it, and such qualifications are often applied to species of predatory fish, for instance caribe or payara, which Jesús was very wary of. Often, the Warao do not comment on the nature of the food itself, but rather on their own requirements, which are usually a consequence of past illnesses and shamanic cures: in such cases, each person lists what he or she cannot ingest. In spite of this individual way of describing alimentary restrictions, it is in fact quite easy to draw some general conclusions, since the question is especially linked to shamanic auxiliary spirits' tolerance of food and smell (cf. chapter 4): next to local predatory fish species, smelly foreign foods are most likely to be prohibited, and are often avoided by people who are ill or, having been ill, still follow preventive restrictions.[73] Some of my informants even stressed that this is an issue when travelling extensively upriver, because none of the food available among Criollos is harmless. With respect to contact with outsiders, food is much more problematic than things.[74]

It is also a question of taste, and subsequently of identity. The Warao often express a desire for Delta foodstuffs (especially taro with morocoto, curbinata or crabs), cooked in their own fashion (i.e. boiled or grilled rather than fried), that they miss after a while, for instance when they have been travelling or when the arrival of the boat from the National Institute of Nutrition has led them to eat foreign food for a few days. However, they never express this desire in terms of the production of bodily substance: if what they eat and desire to eat define them as 'Warao,' this identity is essentially grounded in their ethos or behaviour – and diet is a crucial aspect of this ethos. This feature would seem to put them at odds with other Amerindians who for instance stress that co-residents, because they live together and eat the same food, become "of one flesh" (Rival 1998: 621) – and regional anthropology has used the body as a core concept since the foundational article by Seeger, Da Matta & Viveiros de Castro (1979). The contrast may however be only superficial, as becomes clear if we pay close attention to Viveiros de Castro's precise definition: "what I call 'body' is not a synonym for distinctive substance

73. It is the case of Jesús, who for instance does not eat chicken (except grilled), eggs, canned tuna, and predatory fish.

74. In fact, some of my informants mentioned the possibility of an illness caused by the spirit-owners of manufactured objects, but I never heard it considered about the many cases of illness that I witnessed, whereas alimentary restrictions were a permanent question. Cf. n. 23 and chapter 4.

or fixed shape; it is an assemblage of affects or ways of being that constitute a *habitus*. […] a bundle of affects and capacities" (1998: 478). Many other Amazonian anthropologists share his analytical stance, and the originality of the Warao is probably only that they hardly ever use the body as an idiom in daily life, while giving 'ways of being' or 'affects and capacities' a crucial role in their conceptions, which makes them akin to other lowland South Amerindians.[75] When I met Warao who were previously unknown to me, they often asked me: 'what do you eat?' I proudly listed all the local stuff I had experienced or was eating regularly (palm tree grubs, sago, various species of fish, crabs, taro, honey, etc.), eliciting an appreciative reaction and the statement that I was indeed 'Warao' (people were also interested in my diet at home, but it was not what they first asked me about). Everyone is aware that foreigners deep-fry taro rather than boil or roast it, that their desire for hairy or blue crabs is never as strong as that of the Warao, or that they never consume grubs or sago – and the difference is commonly used as a marker of identity – alongside language and the knowledge of 'things.' Indeed, Gow stresses that among the Piro, if consumption of foreign goods defines levels of 'civilization' (cf. supra), eating locally produced food, which is said to be 'real food,' is crucial in asserting a native identity (1991: 114).[76] I would add that it is all the more useful in that it enables it to be conceptualised in a fluid manner. In order to change one's nature, it is to a certain extent enough to modify one's behaviour – although habits are essentially durable (even if mutable) dispositions.[77]

Among the Warao, as with other lowland South American groups, what one eats is a crucial question. Fausto (2002) is however right in stressing the dual value of food and eating, through the juxtaposition of two archetypal issues of regional anthropology, cannibalism and commensality. I therefore now want to turn to this latter theme, that is to say the analysis of the relationships through which food is exchanged, given, or shared. Indeed, when discussing the circulation of things and food, the Warao often

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75. See for instance Vilaça 2005: 450 about the Wari' and Surrallés 2003: 37 about the Candoshi. Among the Warao, 'body' *(teho)* is not used in such a way and rather has the additional meaning 'individual,' for instance when counting people. There is however an interesting play between body, behaviour and identity in mythical narratives, but I do not develop it here.

76. The link between alimentary diet and ethnic identity has been remarked, for instance, by Vilaça (2007: 175) about 'eating grubs' and 'being Wari'.' One of Oakdale's informants "explained to [her] that even though he had lived away from his relatives to such an extent that he had forgotten the Kayabi language, he had never forgotten and stopped eating Kayabi foods and therefore never ceased being a Kayabi" (2008: 798).

77. In a way similar to the habitus according to Bourdieu (2000 [1972]). Kelly (in press) argues that to be accustomed (to clothes, salt, etc.) entails the irreversibility of a process: transformations occur only in one direction.

appeal to kinship to justify their decisions; and conversely, when talking about kinship, they often talk about the fact that others give them stuff – or not. I am here concerned with the concept of kinship as an undifferentiated relation: in such contexts, people use the term *warao* prefixed with a possessive marker,[78] rather than terms for specific positions (father, elder sister, uterine uncle, etc., cf. chapter 3), and it can easily be translated by a vague expression such as 'my people.' In everyday life, although they may address them as kin, the Warao are rather stingy about granting the quality of 'relative' to others,[79] and usually use the idea of giving *(moa-kitane)* or 'bringing' *(kona-kitane)* in order to deny that so-and-so is 'their people:' *ma-saba kona-naha*, 'she does not bring me [anything],' was a common and self-explanatory answer to dismiss a relation that I was trying to establish through genealogical links.

People give things (that they bring back when they have gone upriver to shop) as well as food (that they buy or produce), but several incidents reveal that the latter is in fact the determining variable: sharing or giving food is what defines kin as such. Both in Tekoburojo and Domujana, I was closely associated with a family, whose food I shared. I brought them grocery food, also gave some to their relatives, when they had nothing, and they usually gave fish, crabs or wild fruits to my household when they had some. As a token of gratitude and closeness, I also often brought them gifts from my trips upriver. Yet I was also giving away goods to others – especially those who helped me with their research, and those who gave me handicrafts to sell and asked for specific things in return. My 'generosity' systematically created difficulties, for in both settlements several of my hosts complained about my giving to others as well. My point is not so much about the fact that I was appropriated by specific households and kin networks, or that generosity is a very relative value, but rather that the rationale they always put forward is striking: "why would [I] give to others, who are not sharing their food with us?" Still grumbling, they usually accepted my explanations when I said that so-and-so had given me baskets to sell in Tucupita, or a harpoon to bring back home, and that I had brought back a counter-gift, a compensation *(a-riboto)*, not a present. But it was not to their liking, probably because my distribution of things was always a bit ambiguous, and mainly because the circulation of food is fundamental to the definition relationships: if transfers

78. ma-: 1st pers. sg.; ka-: 1st pers. pl.; hi-: 2nd pers. pl.; a-: 3rd pers.; yatu a-: 2nd pers. pl.
79. Whereas kinship reaches maximal extension in funerary laments, when everyone gathers around the corpse and all female relatives wail, using kin terms (cf. chapter 5).

of things (as well as food) are taken into account when assessing relationships, they cannot or should not take place where there is no flow of food.

1.2. Food production and the production of conjugality and friendship.

In mid-size or remote settlements such as Tekoburojo and Domujana, villagers spend most of their time engaged in food production, although, as I have stressed, they also devote much effort to the acquisition of things. They grow taro, sugar cane and sometimes bananas and plantains in their gardens; they fish with nets, hooks and harpoons; they gather wild fruits and crabs; and occasionally they hunt game and produce moriche palm sago. Some of these activities are conducted with kin, especially gardening and gathering. Gardens, for instance, are felled and opened by a man, often with the help of his wife, and then planted and harvested by women. Although there is usually one woman who 'owns' the garden's produce, because she planted it, and although couples regularly go to gardens together, often with their children, it is usually a female group activity: it is common to pass a big canoe filled with a grandmother, daughters and/or daughters-in-law, and granddaughters. They work in the same garden, felled by a man of the household, or in adjacent but independent spaces, and keep their production separate only if there is good reason to do so – for instance if they live in autonomous households.

Gathering, on the other hand, is a more diverse activity, usually conducted in larger groups, especially when a motorboat has to be used to get to the right place. This is especially so with some kinds of wild fruits (e.g. guava), which are found only on islands facing the open sea, and with blue land or swamp ghost crabs *(motana, he)*, whose habitat is the mangroves of the sea shore: from Tekoburojo or Domujana, it takes a couple of hours to reach those places with an outboard motor – much more when one is paddling –, whereas *ibakuaha* fruits can be found much closer to the settlement. The composition of gathering parties is very fluid: sometimes relatives who live in different households will go together, whether they give each other food or not, but often anyone would go, including temporary visitors to the settlement – just because they were ready when the boat was departing and there was still some room left. If the Warao avoid going with co-residents they dislike, in order not to have to ask whether they can join in, it is not something that would usually be refused: even people who have an acknowledged strained relationship can go gathering together, and it does not change the way they relate to each other.

Food production is an integral part of conjugality, and the fact of having a joint garden, that is to say a garden felled and 'owned' by a man and whose produce is planted and 'owned' by his wife, is a crucial step in the process of forming a couple[80] – hanging their hammocks next to each other is not really enough, and it may be a few years before they have children. Similarly, the gathering of moriche palm fruits is systematically done by a couple, since it is a planned activity: once the tree is felled, the fruits are immersed in water and exposed outside for a few days, in order to soften and swell their flesh, before they are consumed. And since there is usually more than enough fruit to fill a canoe to the brim, they can be given away and sold at the same time, ensuring both the fulfilment of expectations and a small income in cash. At the same time, the fact that productive activities are performed with kin is instrumental in teaching children the different techniques used, as well as the value of being an active person. However, I consider that food production in general is not generative of kinship. There may be arguments about what someone brings to the household, about the fact that men do not bring any fish or that women do not work enough in the garden (cf. infra), but it is never a question of who someone works with, it is not a question of the sociality of production, which is almost completely disconnected from that of consumption.

Indeed, during collective gathering or fishing expeditions, it is striking that everyone has his or her own individual production, which is kept separate until everyone reaches the settlement, where it can be shared with other household members or given away to relatives. In a way, it is merely another instance of the general principle that "everything has a master." I once went to gather wild guava fruits on the island of Yoanaina, essentially with my hosts of Tekoburojo, and I managed to be slightly more productive than usual: the fruits we were looking for grow on this island precisely because it is not swampy, and has more savannah than forest, and I could therefore find my way about without trouble and pick fruit from the trees. Yet I did not pay attention to the fact that I was not filling my own basket, but rather adding to others': when we came back, they were not stingy with me, but it was clear that they were giving me 'their' fruit, and that everyone – from the children to the grandparents – had their own produce. Similarly, when some fishermen made a collective trip to the open sea islands, and returned successful, with a large canoe filled up with dozens of fish, each of them knew how many fish he had caught, of what kind, approximately of what size, and there was no argument

80. It is not different from many other lowland South Amerindians – see for instance the Kalapalo where it serves to distinguish between spouses and lovers (Basso 1973: 102).

at all about dividing them up. Once they had brought their catch to their household, then decisions had to be made about what to do with it, and some tensions arose, but that is a distinct process.

Yet at the same time, productive activities, and especially fishing, are crucial in generating other relations, most notably friendship – as an equal or symmetrical companionship – as well as the bond between a patron and his subordinate. In the latter case nurture and care are, however, as important as the engagement in productive activities, and I will therefore discuss it in the next chapter. Friendship, conversely, is entirely disconnected from food consumption, and mostly takes the form of partnership in ventures – be it daily fishing in a nearby stream, or the more exceptional investment of income and work in trading activities. This category has recently (re)appeared in Amazonian anthropology (Santos-Granero 2007), as a means of understanding binary relationships that are definitely not kinship and yet are salient in many societies where the latter is the encompassing way of conceptualising relations. In fact, the link between friendship and kinship always seems to be problematic. Some treat the former as 'para-kinship' (Viveiros de Castro quoted by Killick 2009) and therefore fail to take its specificity into account. Others define it globally as 'non-kinship,' in which case they mix in a single category the relation between co-residents who swap wives (Araweté, Viveiros de Castro 1992), between distant formal trade partners (Ashéninka, Killick 2009; Achuar, Descola 1993), or the complex and ambivalent bond which, among the Parakanã, can link same-sex close contemporaries, men who take part in the same ritual, war partners – or even enemies (Fausto in press).

I do not want to contribute to a general theory of Amerindian friendship, but rather succinctly describe the role it plays in the social life of the Warao. On the one hand, it exists not against kinship, but rather independently, on a parallel level: friends fish together, therefore making it a more enjoyable activity, but this has no consequences for the consumption of their catch by relatives. In some cases, friends are relatives, who enjoy doing things together; in other cases the term is applied to foreigners who have come to share their life, temporarily or not. On the other hand, it is still useful to understand friendship in contrast to kinship: the salient feature is that friends, *qua* friends, do not have strong expectations about each other (or, to use another semantic field, they have no obligation towards each other), which, in a way, is rather similar to the Westerners understanding of the term. It is a question of personal affinity, and it does not entail anything beyond the pair of friends themselves, unlike with kinship networks,

which are chains of inter-personal relations. A striking feature of friendship among the Warao, as in other contexts (cf. Fausto in press), is that it is a purely symmetric and dyadic relationship: the most common term for 'my friend,' *ma-raisa*, literally means 'my other' and does not really admit a plural form.[81] Indeed a Warao can have more than one friend, but then there will be several pairs rather than a group of friends. The Warao word refers to a single person, who is the friend of a specific individual, and provides the affective satisfaction of not being alone, rather than material support, during specific (productive) activities.

There is in fact an ambiguous relationship between work and sociality, and fishing, for instance, is done in a solitary way by some Warao. My host grandfather, Carlo, was such a person. He had divorced and never remarried, and his usual fishing strategy involved spending the night outside, sleeping in his canoe, and coming back with fresh fish at dawn. He did so several times a week for, as he repeatedly told me, he was not losing much by not sleeping in his hammock at home since he had no wife to keep him warm. And he went on his own most of the time, except when I came along or when a distant cousin visited him: Carlo was praised for being knowledgeable and hard-working, yet he was also seen as a grumpy old man, who could reject demands as simple as that of some *wina* palm leaves to roll a cigar – judging that others should have been foresighted. No one was really surprised that he had never remarried, or had built a tiny house where he lived alone, instead of helping his son to rebuild a common house. Being active, in the sense of being always engaged in productive tasks away from home *(du-kitane)*, is a way of escaping the pressures of everyday life.[82] Yet it can lead one to being seen as an a-social, solitary or angry person. On the other hand, being too social, in terms of spending one's time chatting, playing and visiting other houses, definitely attracts accusations of being lazy (cf. infra); while being alone and not doing anything is associated with illness (cf. chapter 3). But it is possible to be active and sociable, and such persons open themselves up for less criticism: this is true of people who go fishing with their friends, who enjoy the pleasure of not being alone, while providing for their children and fulfilling the

81. Ma-raisa or a-raisa: poss. + other. Another common and similar expression is ma-mu-a-raisa: poss. + eye + poss. + other, literally 'my other eye.' According to Pedro Martinez (pers. com.), it is used for those who go fishing together, more specifically so than ma-raisa, which can also be used between spouses (often under the variant ma-raisa-ma). It contrasts to the expression that I translate by 'acquaintance,' which is easily used in a collective or plural way (cf. chapter 3). In Barasana, the word for 'friend' similarly refers to a pair rather than to a group (S. Hugh-Jones, personal communication).

82. Gregor (1977: 211-223) has described similar issues among the Mehinaku with an acute sense of observation.

expectations of their kin.[83] Yet, whether people are solitary or have friends, they always have kin: Carlo may have gone fishing by himself, but he had located his small hut in the middle of his children's houses, and systematically brought them fish and ate with them. Such processes are much more important when it comes to understanding with whom people live and whom they relate to as kin.

1.3. Food consumption and the production of kinship.

Native lowland South America is sometimes seen as the realm of the communal house, commonly known as a maloca, where dozens of related people live together, and which is sometimes identical to the whole of the settlement.[84] Conversely, all Warao settlements are divided into a number of discrete households, whose size varies but always within similar limits: a minimal unit is a young couple with unmarried children, while an older couple can be the core of a larger household. At most, they live with some married children (often their daughters and sons-in-law) and their grandchildren, sometimes a surviving parent, and occasionally some collateral kin, for instance divorced or widowed adults, or a young couple that has argued with both sets of parents. These households play an important role as basic social units, and entail both solidarity and easiness in daily interactions. They are however covert categories: *hanoko*, which means 'house,' can be used in such a way when it is prefixed with a possessive, but then it rather means 'home,' and, depending on the context, may refer either to the household or to the settlement as a whole. Moreover, the fact of sleeping or living under the same roof is in fact only of secondary importance, as is clear when one looks at liminal cases, and the sharing of cooked food from the same pot is much more significant. When I started my research, Adelina, my host grandmother, was living with Evaristo, a man she had married quite late in life, with whom she had only one child, about ten years old, and of whom she was the second, subordinate wife *(tekoro)*. At the time, she was really ill, and could not go to dig up taro from the garden, get wood for the fire, or cook. Yet she did not eat the food that her co-wife Mona cooked for the rest of the household: her son Jesús and her daughter-in-law Candida, who also fed me, used to systematically send one of her grandchildren with a plate of food. When she got better, she left her husband, went to

83. Overing (1992: 185, 198n.9) notes that, among the Piaroa, part of the pleasure of 'wandering' activities (hunting, gathering, etc.) lies in the possibility to choose one's company (compared to gardening with prescribed kin and exchange with formal partners). Ewart (2008: 514), talking about the Panara, stresses the value of collective work that creates memories, but she essentially describes activities conducted between female relatives.
84. For instance the Tukanoan Barasana, see C. Hugh-Jones 1979 & S. Hugh-Jones 1993.

live in the house of one of her daughters, and cooked at Jesús' house. I believe it was impossible for her to eat from her co-wife's pot, because commensality implied a community of interests that did not exist between the two women.[85] And at the same time, the fact that, being ill, she had to get food from her son, was probably important in her moving away once she regained health. This case echoes many other situations in which I witnessed commensality temporarily not being in harmony with residence. Clara, Adelina's other daughter, was for instance living in the house of her parents-in-law, with her husband Marcelo and her children from a previous marriage, but her mother-in-law resented her and she was not well integrated in the latter's household. On several occasions, I saw her come back to her own relatives, to cook food on their hearths for herself and her children, while her husband, who was on bad terms with Clara's parents, was served food by his own mother. Eventually, Marcelo and Clara built an independent house, since neither could live with the other's relatives. Such examples clearly show that commensality is more important and more meaningful than the mere fact of living under the same roof, when it comes to the creation of a community of affects or interests and to the definition of those who are one's closest relatives: those with whom it is possible to live without tensions.

The significance of commensality also gains its meaning through the contrast with the sharing of raw food between distinct households, or at least between individuals pertaining to distinct households, which defines networks of close kin. One should note that taro is not given away, whereas fish, crabs and wild forest products (honey, fruits, etc.) are. This is something that has already been described for many Amazonian groups, where the reliability of tubers makes them inappropriate for reciprocal gift-giving.[86] Products that are given away are those whose unreliability works both ways: someone is very likely to get more than needed for his or her household, and other households are very likely not to have any – something especially true of honey and wild fruits. Reciprocation is indeed expected, but it is neither immediate nor balanced. When people commented to me on this topic, they distinguished households that gave when they had something, and those that did not even though they had something, but they never

85. This division of interests is not a character of polygynous unions per se, but this case was uncommon since the secondary wife was neither a much younger woman (the archetypal case according to native discourses, see Heinen 1988b: 58-61), nor a sister of the first wife (half the cases recorded by J. Wilbert 1980: 27).
86. Cf. C. Hugh-Jones 1979: 203 for similar comments about cassava (manioc bread) among the Barasana.

talked about people giving less or more than they had been given. And I believe that the giving of raw food is a defining practice because, especially in a mid-size village like Tekoburojo (and even more in larger settlements), one does not give to all individuals or households who might potentially expect to receive: Gustavo, for instance, usually gave fish to one of his sisters' household, but not to his brothers', nor to his niece Candida who, additionally, he claimed he had fathered. Similarly, Pedrito, who is Gustavo's older brother, does not give anything either to Jesús and Candida, and this is certainly related to the fact that the relationship between both households (or couples) is weak: Jesús once told me how, in the past, he had had to reprimand Pedrito's wife because she had asked Candida for food while he was away, and he then emphatically told the old woman that he was not her son-in-law.

The distinction between sharing and giving has not been much commented upon by Amazonian anthropologists, who have focused instead on generosity and bodily consubstantiality, more or less explicitly denying the relevance of the analytic category of gift.[87] Other researchers have however given a central analytical meaning to the contrast between both practices, for instance Schieffelin (2005 [1976]) in his monograph on the Kaluli of PNG. The sharing of food involves affective closeness and takes place between friends or kinsmen, whereas the giving of food to a visitor is conducted in a more formal way. Here the contrast is not between cooked and raw food – as I claim it is among the Warao – but rests on the fact that hosts do not eat at all when they offer food to guests: they watch them, and eat in private (though never from the same batch of food) if they feel hungry. In fact, "the giving of food implies precisely the social distance – or opposition – that lies between people as host and guest" (ibid.: 49); but at the same time it relates them as such, since the offering of food precludes hostility, whereas before European contact, a visitor to whom no food was offered "might legitimately have felt himself to be in danger" (ibid., cf. infra & n. 91 for a comparable distinction among the Barasana).

Such paired notions can be understood through the contrast developed by Strathern (1988) between 'unmediated' and 'mediated' relations, since the latter are 'relations which separate.'[88] Among the Warao, relationships between members of different households

87. Cf. S. Hugh-Jones n.d. Overing (1992) however distinguishes sharing (between close kin), gift-giving (between real kin and actual affines) and exchange (with formal trade partners) in her analysis of the Piaroa.

88. There is some variability in Strathern's own formulations, and applying her concepts to Amazonia obviously makes some differences: if she had distinguished mediated feeding from

are mediated by the flow of raw food, which has to be processed within each hearth, and it 'separates' these persons in the very process of relating them. On the contrary, members of the same household share the same cooked food, and I would consider this feeding to be 'unmediated:' ideally, they share the same interests, and enjoy a strong emotional closeness. This comes through most obviously in moments of absence or loss: one cries for those one has shared with, when they eventually leave or die (cf. chapter 5). Indeed, inhabitants of Tekoburojo were at first reluctant to integrate me, that is to say a stranger whose intentions they did not know yet. After a few days in the village, I was given raw food (fish and taro). Then, taking pity on me, since I was obviously incapable of surviving by myself, Jesús offered to cook that food for me, but he and his wife did so in a separate pot, not mixing their own food with mine. It was only after some more days that we started sharing (Jesús eating from 'my pot,' and Candida alternatively giving me some cooked food) and even later that only one pot was used and that I became confident that they would systematically feed me. Their initial reluctance and my progressive integration seem to me to be proof of the meaningfulness of the sharing of cooked food, whereas giving me raw products was a much less committal act.[89]

If some general principles can be outlined about commensality, its variable extent poses an interesting question. In many lowland South American societies, settlement-wide commensality is practised at least occasionally – and sometimes inter-settlement gatherings take place – with the more or less explicit aim of merging together all those who take part, at least temporarily.[90] Among the Tukanoan Barasana, for instance, members of the longhouse share food on a daily basis, which "is crucial to the maintenance of group cohesion" (S. Hugh-Jones 1993: 100), while the ritual of the "food-giving House," performed between a pair of neighbouring communities, ensures the harmony of a larger territorial unit. Guests bring meat, hosts offer them manioc beer,

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unmediated growing, while talking about the Trobriand, she remarked that "elsewhere, of course, food may work to unmediated effect" (1988: 238), and she later characterized the "dependency relations" of "domestic kinship" (which include nurturing) as unmediated relations (1997: 137-138).

89. It contrasts interestingly to the behaviour of the Kayabi, who repeatedly offered cooked food to the Brazilian first contact team members, and tried to hand-feed their leader – as a way of 'taming the anger' of the Whites and 'pacifying' them (Oakdale 2008: 798).

90. Grotti (2007) notes that, among the Trio, the entire village is merged into temporary consanguinity through the collective consumption of manioc beer. The Kayabi are even more explicit: they say that a collective meal ('eating out of one pot') is especially important after quarrels between families (Oakdale 2008: 802). On the other hand, there are exceptions, and Killick (2009: 711) stresses about the beer feasts of the Ashéninka that: "The sharing of sociality lasts only as long as the event itself."

and differences and formality are progressively erased: "Here then, it is the territorial group which presents itself as a single commensal family, the guests acting as the meat-providing husband and the hosts as the bread-baking, meat-cooking wife" (ibid.: 101, cf. also C. Hugh-Jones 1979).[91] Conversely, there is nothing of the sort among the Warao. They readily offer cooked food to visiting kinsfolk, to unrelated yet trusted shamans who have come to perform a cure, to some hungry grandchildren who live in another household but hang around, or to a son whose wife refuses to cook. But there are no collective meals spanning the whole settlement: even when, for instance, the National Institute of Nutrition organised the construction of a 'communal hearth' (Sp. fogón comunitario), the inhabitants of Tekoburojo distributed the food to individual households for them to consume privately. The only ritual event that entails a form of commensality is the *noara* (in the area of Guayo) or *nahanamu* (in the area of Nabasanuka): moriche palm sago, which has been collectively produced, is collectively consumed under the supervision of a *wisidatu* shaman who invites ancestral spirits to take part in the feast, since the main purpose of the ritual is to propitiate them (cf. Heinen & Ruddle 1974, Lavandero 2000). I however never witnessed such a ritual, which was usually considered to be obsolete, and the only time I heard about one being performed, in Tekoburojo while I was in Domujana, the way it happened is striking: the *noara* conducted by old Evaristo in 2008 precisely did *not* bring together the whole of the settlement, and only a cluster of closely related households took part in it. What might have been an instance of collective integration in fact revealed the fragmentation of the settlement, bound together by some external factors (cf. chapter 1), but nonetheless deeply divided.

Such facts are very useful to understand the shape of social life among contemporary Warao. The household has a fluctuating composition, and is not a discrete and salient linguistic category, but it certainly exists as a unit whose collective nature is produced by the daily sharing of cooked food. Members of the same household, for instance, borrow each other's tools and things without asking and without creating any tension. At the other extreme, the settlement is usually recognised by the state administration as a 'community,' which is mentioned on its inhabitants' ID cards, and the Warao talk about being 'people from Tekoburojo' *(Tekoburojo arao)*, from Guayo, from Domujana, etc. Yet

91. Such commensal merging only takes place as the conclusion of the ritual. Interestingly – and it can recall Schieffelin's distinction – the food brought by guests is first paraded within the house, and this first phase stresses the distinction between hosts and guests (S. Hugh-Jones, personal communication).

at the same time, the settlement is nowadays a basis for social action only in interactions with outsiders. In daily life, much more important are the networks of relatives, defined by the reciprocal giving of raw food. From a social point of view, their most important characteristic is probably that they are ego-centred: Nito gives fish to Mona, not because of a collective bond between households, but because he fathered her youngest child, Mona in turn systematically gives to Candida because she is her daughter, etc. – even though the food is then shared collectively within the household. Such networks can by definition never be identified with any bounded group: in a rather small settlement such as Domujana, they usually extend further, while in Tekoburojo they are always more restricted than the village as a whole.[92] But they *are* salient and, for instance, determine the lending of things and tools: depending on the item and the personality of the owner, people who give each other food may lend things graciously (a DVD player to watch a movie) or ask for compensation (a canoe to go fishing or travel upriver). Conversely, other co-residents, with whom one does not share, have the possibility of refusing, because they have their own agenda, and asking them becomes a delicate matter. People do so only when they have no other option, and my friends often prompted me to ask – using my liminal status in order to get what they could not have obtained directly. In a way, this pattern confirms that relationships forged through the sharing and giving of food determine the management of things, as I stressed in section 1.1. of this chapter, or when I presented the difficulties of the Warao who try to accumulate in chapter 1 (section 3.1).

I have so far presented my data in a very descriptive way, and now want to go further in its interpretation. My argument partly rests on the idea that the patterns described above are the consequence neither of a mechanical conception of substance, according to which living and eating together produces similar bodies (and living apart causes bodies to become different), nor of the enactment of general obligations, stating that one shares cooked food with close kin and gives raw food to more distant relatives or affines. In fact, I will try to show that households and kin networks, which are never entirely stabilised, emerge from arguments about food production and consumption, which are at the same time affective (because of the importance of nurture) and moral (because they entail statements of laziness and stinginess).

92. See Overing 1975: 82 for the distinction between discrete groupings and personal kindreds.

2. Morality in thought, word, and deed.

2.1. Values, rules, and morality.

When describing social conduct, it is possible to use the ambivalent idiom of rules, which, as Bourdieu (1980) has shown, can refer both to official statements about what should be, or to statistical patterns about what is. In small-scale societies, anthropologists have often tended to use the generalising knowledge of a handful of informants, henceforth treating behaviour as conforming (or not) to the stated rules. Indeed, when analysing the Warao, it is possible to say that people have the obligation to serve food to co-residents or to visiting relatives, that they have to give food to their kinsfolk living in other households, that men have to comply with the rule of uxorilocal residence (therefore living with their parents-in-law) for at least a few years, and that adult couples have to take in any widowed parent.[93] Such statements, which, in a way, are true, can then be presented as moral obligations imposed by society on its members, and therefore account for behaviour because of the binding force of morality – from a Durkheimian-inspired perspective.

It is also possible to focus on the values shared within a social group, therefore defining morality as the "evaluation of conduct in relation to esteemed or despised human qualities," as Humphrey has put it (1997: 25); and some recent research on lowland South America has precisely focused on the conviviality to be sustained within the local group through adhesion to moral values.[94] During my fieldwork, I was often told that so-and-so was a good person, sometimes in a particular context, but without any lexical or conceptual precision concerning his/her goodness: he/she 'has a good mind' *(a-obohona yakera)*. Conversely, there are many ways of criticizing others, and such discourses or gossip are a favourite occupation: one can be lazy *(inatoma, wakera)* or stingy (adj. *kohi*, verb *wani-kitane*) – and I was sometimes accused of both. It is also possible to be an angry or anti-social person (angry: *urisida*, anger: *yari*) – and I am proud that such a criticism was never applied to me, although it would perhaps have made my life easier. These forms of disapproval, much more common among Amerindians than praise, may

93. Heinen, for instance, talks about "the expressed rule […] of postmarital residence with the wife's parents" (1972: 63) and states that we should "direct our attention to the structure of behavioural rules instead of that of terminologies" (ibid.: 65).
94. Overing & Passes state that "Amazonian peoples adhere to a 'virtue-centred ethics'" (2000: 4).

in fact point to the associated positive antonyms, which often go unnamed.[95] Generosity with one's food and goods is a very common Amazonian ideal, and a requisite of sociability: indeed, *wani-kitane* more generally carries the meaning of retentiveness, and can for instance be applied to the reluctance to engage in social interaction. If laziness is undeniably despicable conduct, its opposite is not so much 'work' *(yaota)*, which I have shown to be intimately associated with pain and suffering, but rather the idea of being active:[96] it is expressed by the verb *du-kitane* (to leave home in order to carry out any task), and by contrast one can say of lazy men that they stay home as if they were women, since women's tasks do not imply they have to be away from home most of the day. Similarly, the Warao hold the common Amazonian view that one should awake just before dawn, and young men often go around the settlement, calling for 'sleepers' *(uba-mo)* to wake up. Finally, being peaceful, so as to ensure the absence of conflicts within the settlement, is a crucial quality that Overing (2003) has put at the core of her interpretations, criticising the usual depiction of Amazonian societies as determined by violent relations with the outside. It is obviously a matter of scale – whether the focus is on convivial interactions between co-residents, or on predation on, or by, outsiders. Anger is an emotion or a personal quality likely to be disruptive, and I have usually heard the term *urisida* (which they translate into Spanish as 'bravo') applied to people who angrily reject demands, and the term *yari* used to describe relations where people do not listen to each other. It is specifically an anti-social anger, endangering transfers and communication. Yet it is also an ambivalent question, for the assertiveness of leaders can be valued when they have to face outsiders and make claims on behalf of their followers: Javier, the leader of Tekoburojo, was much criticised within the settlement, but he was perhaps still the 'headman,' after all, because he was exceptionally getting angry when interacting with the Guyanese smugglers or with Venezuelan officials, whereas others were shy and even sheepish.[97]

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95. See for instance Erikson 1996: 280-286, who abstracts the Matis ideal from their way of criticising each other.

96. Among the Achuar, Descola (1986: 268) stresses that 'work,' which is explicitly conceived of as painful labour, is not valued in itself, since it is only the expected fulfilment of one's duty, and a minor aspect of productive capacities. Among the Pemon, Thomas (1982: 43) remarks that "The verb *senneka* has more the meaning of 'being active' than it does the meaning of 'laboring'."

97. Gordon (2006: 217) has noted the same feature among the Xikrin, where being fierce or wild means not opening/listening to relatives, and is valued during the negotiations with Brazilians. Similarly, C. Hugh-Jones (1979: 55-57) stresses the ambivalent appraisal of such behaviours among the Barasana: are the leaders bossy or chiefly? Are they evil-tempered or fierce? For a Melanesian take on similar dichotomies, see Harrison 1985.

On the one hand, there are some major issues both with an approach in terms of rules, and in terms of moral values. The use of a sociological concept of norms has been criticised by many anthropologists,[98] but I only want to mention one very simple criticism: the sociological approach is tautological, since one describes what more or less happens, turns it into rules, and then defines rules by the fact that they constrain actual behaviour.[99] Inspired by Laidlaw's work on ethics in a Jain Indian context, one can say that moral rules here do "no distinctive conceptual work" (2002: 313) – I would add, no conceptual work at all if one fails to engage with the specific logic and effects of official discourses, which should not be confused with an adequate description of reality (Bourdieu 1980). Indeed, the circularity of such explanations is striking in the Warao case. When I came back to Tekoburojo in 2009, a young man from a neighbouring settlement had died there, while local shamans were trying to cure him. He was related to some villagers, but not to my hosts, who therefore expressed only a mild interest in the death. The youngest brother of my friend Jesús, however, followed the grieving party to the home community of the deceased; not in order to cry, since they were not related, but rather in order to roam the neighbourhood and flirt with girls, which is a typical male adolescent behaviour. When he came back, he also commented that he had not eaten for a couple of days: since they were not his relatives, they had not given him food. Here the application of a general and objective rule seems quite simple. Yet at the same time, when I was discussing the case of another severely ill individual, Jesús sharply told me that he did not care: he would not cry upon the death of the person in question, who was not his relative, since she had never brought him anything. People feed you because they are your relatives, and they are your relatives because they feed you. Obviously, talking about rules does not bring much understanding, as Gow has recognised in his analysis of Piro kinship, stating explicitly: "I do not see the practice of native people as instances of abstract rules but, following their own conceptualization of kinship, I view concrete practice as the building of kin relationships or the failure to do so" (1991: 150).

On the other hand, there might be an interest in abstracting such values or human qualities from various types of discourses and behaviours, but, again, I doubt their analytical efficacy. In a very different fashion, in her analysis of Mongolian morality, Humphrey focuses on the concept of 'exemplar,' that is to say "the combination of the

98. See for instance Strathern 1988, Wagner 1981.
99. As Laidlaw (2002: 315) puts it : "The obligatory will necessarily become the desirable and people will act accordingly."

ideal represented by the teacher and his/her words or deeds" (1997: 37), which is in fact constituted by the disciples. It is their search for a teacher that turns mere words and acts into an exemplar (although, admittedly, they can refer to various exemplars when accounting for their conduct). It is this concept and the teacher/disciple relationship, which give an actual foundation to the study of moral values, since the latter are always embodied in particular persons who play an explicit role in discourse and action. But there is nothing equivalent among the Warao, who refer neither to historical nor to mythical ideal figures, and who do not conceive of a world of ideas to which they endeavour to make their behaviour conform: describing values does not explain much about social action or about the effects of morality on interactions and conduct.

In fact, more than inadequate explanations, I argue that talking about rules or ideals would be a misunderstanding of the logic of morality among the Warao; and I am again inspired by Laidlaw's dissatisfaction with the description of 'rules' as 'Jain morality:' "nothing in the content of the rules would make sense without understanding the ethical project from which they derive. And to think that they encompassed the ethical lives of practising Jains would be an error" (2002: 326). It is true that the Warao have very little in common with the Jains, and do not adhere to an ascetic ethical project. However, the idea that someone has obligations towards others seems to be a problematic formulation, since it offers only a passive position to the latter, whereas the former weighs up obligations and makes decisions. It might be more adequate to say that they have expectations of him or her, and that they behave so as to cause him or her to act in a certain way, that is to say to react to them and fulfil those expectations. This is why it is essentially, as I have stressed in chapter 1, a question of performance, of interactional dynamics: someone's distress may or may not cause a caring reaction, which may or may not cause a response in terms of confident loyalty – the question is one of felicity, as we might say following Austin (1962). It therefore preserves the crucial idea that nothing is ruled in the abstract, independently of specific relationships, and it also relocates at the heart of the question the "ethical complexity, dilemma, reasoning, decision, and doubt" (Laidlaw 2002: 315) which define this question as one of morality. In the context under discussion, acting in a moral way means "selecting between relationships" (Strathern 1997: 145): acts of sharing, giving, contributing, etc., which typically lead to the evaluation of one's behaviour in terms of stinginess or laziness, are not mere implementation of social rules, because it is never possible to fulfil everybody's expectations. Indeed, as Bercovitch points out in his study of the Atbalmin of PNG,

reciprocity is "a profound dilemma. People find that reciprocating a gift to one friend means failing to reciprocate other friends" (1994: 499, cf. also Robbins 2007: 309).

It is a rather commonsense statement, but Bercovitch is compellingly original in drawing out all its consequences, in focusing on the "negative *efficacy* of exchange" (1994: 518, my emphasis), that is to say what it does to people and their relationships.[100] It is certainly my main point of dissatisfaction with the perspective developed by Gow (1991) about the Piro: although most of his analyses are illuminating for the understanding of Warao kinship and sociality, he considers that the "problem of divided kin" – i.e. the fact that people do not live with all of their relatives – is a question of unfortunate yet unavoidable "abandonment," and focuses on the (positive) desire to achieve comprehensive co-residence and to overcome tensions. Conversely, I argue that, among the Warao, interactions are more influenced by negative than by positive acts, in the same way that they criticise more than they praise: it is essentially a question of depriving of and arguing about support. Detachment is therefore not a mere side-effect, but can even be considered as prior to attachment; or, at least, negative acts are those which compel people into action and are most commented upon.[101]

Since morality is usually associated with articulate debates, it is necessary to discuss to what extent it can be read in verbal and non-verbal acts, which will give us the opportunity to explore them in further detail.

2.2. Verbal and non-verbal acts.

Morality may be considered to be a sense of right and wrong that any human being possesses or acquires, especially from the point of view of developmental psychology,[102] but it is also a specific field of thinking, of highly complex reasoning, for philosophers and theologians. In a society such as the Warao, is morality similarly to be found in formal genres of discourse? There is in fact a general category of public oratory, which is usually called 'to counsel' or 'to admonish' *(deri-kitane)*. It has been studied by Briggs (1988), although the 'dispute mediation' events he details are only, according to my data, a specific instance of a more general form of discourse. Indeed, leaders or elders not only 'counsel' (since the local Spanish translation is 'aconsejar') people who have got involved

100. See also Munn about the "negative potentiality" of keeping, giving or receiving (1992 [1986]: 223).
101. It could also be linked to the idea that the main question is one of differentiation, cf. section 2 of chapter 3; see also J. Leach 2004, Wagner 1977.
102. See for instance Baumard 2007.

in a dispute, but also youngsters about to enter matrimony – to the point that, according to J. Lavandero (quoted in Barral 2000: 94), it is a synonym for 'to marry.' It typically takes the form of very general rules: do not fight with each other, be hard-working and clear a large garden, etc. Interestingly, it recalls the type of chiefly discourses analysed by Clastres (1974) after Lowie (1948): they are said to be at the same time crucially important in their formal features, but also very repetitive – and even empty – in their content, to the point that most people often barely listen.[103] Among the Warao, however, such speech is not without effects, although they are not always those that might be expected: I hardly ever witnessed leaders 'counselling' their followers or a young couple, but more often heard about it being referred to as inappropriate in other contexts. One day, in Domujana, a quite drunk old man came to talk to me, and stressed that we were going to talk without admonishing *(deri-naha)* each other, since he wanted us to talk without anger *(yari)*. What is appropriate between a chief and his followers, between elders and a young couple, is definitely unsuitable otherwise: it would be a threat to the autonomy and assumed equality of selves. Indeed, although Briggs opposes counselling discourse to speech motivated by anger or jealousy (1988: 459), he also notes that it rests on a "truly hierarchical" schema (ibid.: 468). More than the place where the moral reasoning of the Warao is be found, counselling is a particular type of speech act, existing alongside others, and characterised by specific conditions and sometimes violent effects.

There is in fact much to be gained by the comprehensive study of the various forms of discourse existing in a given society (an approach developed by Alès [2006: 129-160] for the Yanomami), and it enables to understand their relative roles. Briggs (1992: 338-339) outlines forms of discourse present among the Warao, and mentions, as male types of speech, shamanistic discourse and myths (or 'stories of the ancestors,' *dehe idamotuma*). The former is often disconnected from everyday issues but can be analysed as a social commentary, because of the link between shamanic aggression and envy (cf. chapter 4), whereas the latter can also be rooted in particular contexts and told with definite aims (cf. Gow 2001). My main disagreement with Briggs is however about the fact that he underestimates female forms of speech, in spite of his focusing on their funerary laments, for instance when he characterises the latter as "subversive" of male power and

103. Gow 1991: 227 argues that the speech of leaders is not empty but rather causes the very existence of the local group by constantly reminding people why they live together. I will not discuss his interpretation since there are no regular collective speeches among the Warao.

domination (1992: 352).[104] Although there are obviously significant gender differences, it would be too simplistic to understand the Warao through a universal assumption of male domination, and, indeed, other forms of female speech mentioned by Briggs are much more important than he seems to assume. He states for instance that: "A woman can also express a complaint by speaking loudly using pharyngeal constriction while performing a task such as chopping firewood. Without appearing to address anyone in particular, she publicly chides a family member for an alleged wrong while community members listen intently" (Briggs 1992: 339). In my experience, this type of 'loud complaint' is central, since it is used in a variety of other contexts – the common feature being that the angry, loud voice of women can be heard by anyone and that the intended recipient of the message is not identical to the obvious interlocutor of the speaker. Very often, senior women directly criticise their relatives, especially lazy husbands and lazy sons-in-law, but the men's answers are inaudible: the whole neighbourhood only listens to the woman's perspective (and men, when they are angry in a domestic context, are not so loud). Moreover, I witnessed public reunions with outsiders where the same technique was used: men talk directly to the Criollos (e.g. politicians, civil servants, or missionaries), whereas women talk to the person sitting next to them (sister, daughter, etc.), but in such a way that everyone hears their words, including outsiders who either understand the complaints, or at least become aware of the anger. On the other hand, funerary laments represent a very important genre, where women evaluate the care given and received by the deceased (cf. chapter 5), but, if they are salient because of their formal properties and their exceptional performance, it should not obscure the fact that, on a daily basis, gossip is the overwhelming form of discursive commentary on others' conduct (*dehe wara-kitane*, lit. 'to tell stories'). As Briggs notes, it can play a powerful role "by virtue of the way in which it uses reported speech and replayed action in recontextualizing discourse" (1992: 356). Most Warao constantly try to distance themselves from gossip, stating that it is only lies, that they do not know anything about anyone, that it is a bad habit of the Warao, more precisely of 'others.' But such insistence also reveals its importance, and the practical effects of gossip, which builds reputations and fuels disagreements.

All these types of discourses are in fact deeply moral, since they are ways of evaluating to what extent do people fulfil the myriad expectations they are faced with, although ritual wailing stands out as the only setting for self-criticism, that is to say moral

104. I do not discuss the 'songs of protest' that, according to Briggs (1992: 339), women perform during celebrations, since I never witnessed their performance nor heard them mentioned.

reflexivity. I will primarily focus on their effects on interactions but, first, I need to point out one of their limits. Although I have introduced the notion of 'moral sentiment' and the idea that what matters is someone's emotional reaction to another's state, emotions are in fact not a matter for much discursive elaboration. In the following chapters, I will further explore their role, and distinguish between the expression of emotion through discursive reference and its enactment through behavioural icons (cf. especially chapter 5). But for now, I want to stress that the Warao comment verbally on speech and action, but not on inner states. For instance, accusing people of lying or being a liar *(koneho, obohonamo)* is very common, but it refers to promises left unfulfilled, especially in the context of interactions with outsiders, who regularly come, promise to help, and then disappear. It is a question of what people do or will do, but never of what they think or feel. I argue that it is symptomatic of the fact that the Warao, to a certain extent, share the assumption that 'other minds' are 'opaque,' to use expressions that have recently been introduced by some linguistic anthropologists specialised on Melanesia (Robbins & Rumsey 2008). What others privately think and feel is in fact not a topic for discursive speculation, and a question such as: "what do you reckon he thinks?" is likely to be faced with bewilderment.[105] Conversely, what someone says about his or her own thoughts or feelings carries little weight, which had been recognised long before by other Melanesian anthropologists. According to Weiner, among the Trobrianders words can be deceptive, and it is even expected that they be so, because "hard words" (i.e. speaking one's mind) are too dangerous, leading to anger and irreparable splits. On the contrary, objects do not offer the potentiality of lying, but then, they are not openly hostile either. The Trobianders say that "anger may always be expressed in yams," by not working very hard, or by not working at all, in someone's garden, for instance: then "thoughts are stated without the dangers of exposure" (1983: 696-697). Munn makes a comparable analysis about Gawa. There, it concerns food transfers, because "food is the basic nonverbal persuasive medium" (1992 [1986]: 60-61). Apropos the difference between discourse and action, she notes that words can always be deceptive, whereas "acts of reciprocal long-term transmission" enable the formation of "some experience of trust or reliability" (ibid.: 68).

The same comments could be applied to the Warao, although I would say that verbal

105. Interestingly, Gow comments that: "Piro people seem much less animated by a concern for other people's utimately unknowable intentions than Melanesian people" (2000: 62n.8). Love and care are manifested by behaviour, and therefore immediately available to others.

and non-verbal acts in fact coexist, interact, and have different yet related effects. Sometimes hard or angry words are uttered knowingly, with the purpose of causing irreversible fissions, and they also can cause a change in behaviour, but, often, food is a more subtle way of conveying care, or precisely of denying it. Beyond the question of giving or not giving (some raw food), of serving or not serving (some cooked food), there is the question of what to give or serve and how much. Though people do not suffer from hunger, they are often hungry; though there is usually enough taro (or bread, or pasta, or rice), fish is more valued and scarcer: on unlucky days, a one-pound fish is shared between many adults and children. In spite of individual preferences or prohibitions, some types of fish are objectively more valued than others, and more is always better than less. One could add that it is much more difficult to complain about quantity and quality than about the fact of giving food or not: only small children grumble about what they receive, whereas a more peripheral member of the household, or a visitor, might gossip but would definitely not complain directly.[106] And yet these things make a big difference: some people receive barely enough fish to honestly say that they have indeed been given some, and others get reasonable portions; one person may send his smallest catch, or instead enough to feed a family: I myself was torn between greedy hunger and dutiful generosity, when I was asked to pick a fish to give to a woman who had asked us for some. Among the Warao, as in Melanesia, acts of giving and sharing are indexes of the giver's state of mind and affective disposition towards the recipient. For instance, a mother, by selecting her child's favourite morsels, expresses her love and care; recognition of the old fisherman's hard work is performed through giving him a large nourishing share; and uncertainty concerning a potentially parasitic visitor can lead to the pretence that there is only taro and no fish. Food giving, both in its raw and cooked forms, is therefore a powerful way of telling how welcome one is, in the household or among one's more extended kindred. And, as I have stated earlier, the advantage of expressing one's mind through acts lies in the fact that objects (here food) are both heavy and opaque, that they convey both certainty and ambiguity – compared to words. On the one hand, a single decision is of little consequence, whereas a single voiced argument might be enough: maybe there really was no fish at all, or at least not enough; maybe next time they will send us some; etc. On the other hand, this is a very processual question, for it is repetition that gives certainty, both of rupture and of care.

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106. Although the distinction between core and peripheral members is not as strong as, for instance, in North-West Amazonia, cf. C. Hugh-Jones 1979: 41

A first consequence of this perspective is that it forces us to revaluate the agency of women, for even though the capacity to make decisions belongs to the 'owner' of the product concerned, it is much more commonly and practically exercised by women. When a fisherman comes back, for instance, he puts his catch on the kitchen house floor, where women clean and prepare it, before sending bits to their relatives. They take into account the expectations that many different people may have towards the various members of their household, and sometimes ask the fisherman for his opinion, but it is only exceptionally that he takes an active part in the decision-making process. I remember only one such debate,[107] although it also happens that men who have lovers and/or love-children send them some of their catch, sometimes before coming home, especially if the commitment they have to fulfil is one that must remain discreet. On an everyday basis, women serve plates to everyone, just as they give away raw fish, eventual forest products, or large amounts of grocery food, and they therefore make the crucial decisions regarding who is going to get what, and how much. It might seem that women are relegated to the subordinate role of cleaning men's catch, to the natural role of feeding and caring for their kin, whereas men are those who produce the most valued food (fish and meat) and perform the most official and political types of discourse. But such an interpretation would obscure the fact that it is precisely in such activity that their power to shape social relations lies, that their daily decisions are often more efficacious than formal discourses.

At the same time, I want to stress that such acts are moral in two ways. On the one hand, they are enactments of care for others, that is to say that, by serving or giving food, women act upon their concern for the well-being of members of the household, of relatives, of visitors. They never perform such tasks in a careless way, and it is common to see women seated in their kitchen, with a big pot of food and many empty plates, pondering intensely how they are going to share the food out, sometimes reallocating morsels in the process so as to be fair. On the other hand, as I have hinted, the allocation process depends on women's disposition towards the recipients, which is a function of their relationship, but also varies contextually: a mother for instance does not serve

107. It happened when a collective fishing trip was organised, using a new motor acquired by the headman with money given to the community as a whole. Were the fishermen to give him part of their catch, as compensation for the use of the motor? Or was there nothing due to him, since the motor belonged to the 'community?' Jesús and Candida finally decided to send him some, not as the 'owner' of the motor (which they decided he was not), but to make sure that he did not get angry, that he would not be stingy with the motor (which was still in his custody) in the future.

equally a son who has spent days playing cards, and one who has just come back with fish to provide for the household; or she might cut her support to a visitor who has been gossiping. These acts, of giving and sharing (or serving), are therefore not only to be evaluated by others, but also themselves evaluations of the behaviour of others, and more precisely of the morality of their behaviour, since playing cards all night means being selfish, whereas going fishing means acting with others in mind. Moral judgment is not only discursive.

Qualifying acts of giving and sharing in such a way is therefore a slight transformation of the approach of Weiner and Munn, who focus on the question of strategic persuasion, since it is about affecting someone else's mind so that he or she would "act according to the desires […] of the person who has moved his or her mind" (Munn 1986: 60). The perspective of Schieffelin is certainly closer, since he stresses the affective component of such processes: "The giving and sharing of food among the Kaluli communicates sentiment: it conveys affection, familiarity, and good will." Hence one should give food to babies "so that they will know you and like you and not be afraid of you;" and "a man expressing his grief over a friend's death will say, 'He gave me pork!'" (Schieffelin 2005 [1976]: 47). But further, I do not want to dissociate these questions – persuading others to act in a certain way; acting upon certain affective states and eliciting emotional reactions; doubting and evaluating the morality of conducts – they are inextricable among the Warao. There are no different 'domains' or 'fields' (such as politics, emotion and morality), and people constantly attempt to extract reactions from others through their performance. It is "a certain indigenous mode of action" (Kelly in press), which relies heavily on emotions – whether to instil fear or compassion, to build attachment, or to induce anxiety about care –, and on the permanent and circular evaluation of people's deeds and words through deeds and words.

2.3. Moral disputes and social dynamics.

My use of morality is however very narrow, since I am more interested in concrete controversies arising from verbal and non-verbal acts, than in the refinements of abstract principles. I essentially take my inspiration from the way Gell characterised the anthropological project: "Evaluative schemes, of whatever kind, are only of anthropological interest in so far as they play a part within social processes of interaction, through which they are generated and sustained. The anthropology of law, for instance, is not the study of legal-ethical principles – other people's ideas of right and wrong – but

of disputes and their resolution, in the course of which disputants do often appeal to such principles" (1998: 3-4). Even more practically (or narrowly), I now want to focus on the effects of moral arguments on social relations seen as dynamic processes.

Both in Tekoburojo and Domujana, most changes of residence (either in terms of household or in terms of settlement) can be accounted for in terms of arguments over food production and distribution. In this respect, the Warao differ from other Amerindians, for instance the Yanomami, who mostly focus their narratives of fissions and fusions on accusations of food stolen from gardens or on conflicts about women (jealousy, marriage promises, etc.), which lead to physical violence or threats (Alès 2006: 64-71).[108] In fact, the absence of such themes in Warao discourses is even striking: suspicions of theft of food are usually directed towards residents of other settlements; physical violence is extremely exceptional and threats are even more unusual than actual violence; and conjugal splits were never discussed by my hosts, who only commented that the husband and wife "did not like/want each other any more."

In general, households are sites of reciprocal accusations that are performed via verbal and non-verbal acts. Some, especially older individuals (*hanoko arotu* or 'household owner'), may accuse others, especially younger couples, of being lazy. And the latter may accuse the former of being stingy with food.[109] This is not expressed in terms of reciprocal exchange or of gift-giving, but in terms of contributions to the household: women are accused of not going often enough to the garden (people get angry over tubers, *ure isia oriasiae*), men of not going fishing enough, of not bringing back any catch (he does not 'put' his catch, *a-harako aba-naha*). And they are served accordingly. Conversely, these peripheral members of the household, younger couples or single individuals, may complain about the senior woman (or women) being stingy with them, being reluctant to give them food *(nahoro wani-a)*. Obviously, stinginess is more fodder for gossip than the subject of a direct confrontation, particularly coming from subordinate

108. Alès (2006: 65) also mentions that, sometimes, village remodelling in the absence of some residents can convince them that they are unwanted. Analysing the Piaroa, Overing stresses that "practically all of the moves are politically motivated" (1975: 117). Among the Warao, migrations between settlements are also linked to the issue of illness and shamanic aggression, when they are narrated in a retrospective and biographical way. I discuss this question in chapter 4, showing that both perspective are not exclusive.

109. See Briggs 1988: 456-457, for a dispute between husband and wife, stemming from jealousy and other issues, but triggered by the wife's refusal to cook food and the husband's consequent accusation of laziness. Refusing to cook is a very common technique used by Amazonian wives to express their anger at their husband (cf. Descola 1993: 210).

or peripheral members of the household, whereas older women can chastise their relatives publicly and loudly.

These tensions may in some cases cause a change of behaviour, but more often, in the narratives I heard, they escalate and are presented as the cause of separation or fission.[110] Such processes can be seen as a form of 'schismogenesis' (Bateson 1958 [1936]), insofar as each reaction exacerbates the other, making open conflict unavoidable in a context where collectives are very fluid – every Warao has lived in several households and several settlements. Severance is the usual result of arguments because they are threats to two core principles: care and autonomy. On the one hand, not contributing (enough) to the household and being stingy when serving food reveal a lack of concern for the well-being of one's relatives and co-residents, since they can be read as the consequence of selfishness: a man sells his catch in order to have cash for his personal tobacco consumption instead of providing food; someone plays and watches movies instead of going fishing or gardening; a woman serves less food to some people so that she, or those she favours, can consume more. All of them fail to act with others in mind – or intentionally do so. On the other hand, verbally accusing someone of being lazy or stingy, and doing so through the non-verbal acts of serving, giving or contributing, is a serious attack on the autonomy of the self, a violence that has irreparable consequences. I do not want to claim that the Warao are a libertarian people who actively refuse any form of coercion, as in descriptions of Amazonian Indians by authors such as Clastres (1974), but rather that direct instructions or judgements are resented: they usually either take a more subtle form, not involving attempts to constrain others, or are appropriate only to specific interactions (cf. chapter 3).[111] When people are the target of such requests or evaluations, they tend above all to react with anger or with disappointment at feeling undesirable.

One example is that of my host family: Jesús told me that at first he and his wife Candida lived with his parents-in-law, but very soon, his mother-in-law and his eldest sister-in-law started criticizing him and his wife for being lazy, for not "putting up" enough work. Because of the discomfort of not feeling welcome, of the anger at being

110. As is the case in other Amerindian groups. See C. Hugh-Jones 1979: 51 on the Barasana, Rivière 1984: 26 on Guayana.

111. Killick notes that, among the Ashéninka, "children grow to resent any instruction from others" (2009: 705); Thomas mentions that "Pemon etiquette seems to go counter to any kind of direct giving of orders" (1982: 57); Overing stresses that a Piaroa leader "never gives direct commands, but only makes suggestions" (1975: 42).

the subject of such criticism (and perhaps because they were hungry…), they left and moved to the household of Clara, Jesús' elder sister, before building their own house soon afterwards. Another case is that of Clara whose mother-in-law (from her second marriage) accused her of not going to the garden – I only heard Clara's version of events, and so the accusation was obviously unfounded, a product of the old woman's bitter disposition. As I already mentioned (cf. section 1.3), their residence was very unstable during my fieldwork, and they eventually moved a short distance downriver from Tekoburojo – away from sharing and from the disagreements that arise from sociality. The constitution and the evolution of the household is therefore determined by decisions regarding food production, distribution and consumption, and even more so by moral judgements – expressed verbally or not – regarding those decisions. And by the household, I do not just mean spatial contiguity, but much more importantly emotional closeness.

Similar processes also occur within food-giving networks, although they are then less visible, since they do not necessarily have any direct spatial consequences. Because the frequency of giving is lower than that of sharing (the Warao eat at least once a day, but give away raw food only when they have enough), its effects are less immediate. Yet they are no less real, as is clear in discussions about the limits of kin. Some people are accused of not giving when they have fish, crabs, grocery food or wild fruits; and they defend themselves by saying that they had little, and that the others, because of their laziness, are always asking and never reciprocating. In both villages where I worked, although they were of a very different size, everyone was kin, at least from the point of view that, here, "there is no real other" *(daisa-witu ekida)*.[112] Yet in practice, as soon as the discussion became more detailed, things appeared rather differently.

For instance the village chief, Javier, was the paternal uncle (FB) of Jesús' wife Candida, and his wife was a first-cousin (MeZD) of Jesús' father Carlo.[113] Yet Javier's household and my friend Jesús' household never gave food to each other. And I believe that this was a determining factor in the idea that they were not really related: if Jesús knew that his father was the cousin of Javier's wife, he certainly did not consider himself to be Javier's sons' cousin. Even between Carlo and the headman (who were, by another branch, second or third cousins), all kinship was denied, both consanguineally and

112. Which is very common in Amazonia, cf. Rivière 1984: 39 on Guiana, and Gow 1991: 193 on the Piro.
113. Jesús' WFB is married to his FMeZD. Alliances are analysed in chapter 3.

affinally, to the point that Carlo once told me that he would give me the parrot he had caught, but that he would sell it to Javier. Because I shared (cooked) food with him, I was more of a kinsperson to him than someone who did not even give him (raw) food. Similarly, Jesús' mother Adelina often acknowledged that Fabian, one of my main informants about shamanism, was related to her – but in a failed way, as shown by the use of a concessive postfix: 'although he is my younger cousin, he does not give us food' *(ma rakobo sanuka rone, nahoro ka moa-naha)*. Theirs was a distant relationship, which surfaced only because I had brought some presents for Fabian, so as to thank him for the hours spent discussing esoteric topics with me, which my hosts resented. Although they were neighbours and relatives, the lack of reciprocal giving had 'deactivated' the relationship, so that Jesús denied the kinship relation. This question was at the heart of his often expressed desire of leaving Tekoburojo to settle in another village – similar to the wish of many others: living with stingy kin was similar to living with no kin at all, and what was the good of that?

The giving of raw food is therefore crucial in shaping networks of relatives within a settlement, and works essentially in a negative way: it is referred to as a motive to exclude people who are potential kin, but are denied as such because they fail to enact the relationship (i.e. do not give anything). In fact, it generates detachment as a 'symmetrical schismogenesis' (Bateson 1958 [1936]): though households are internally differentiated (nurturer/ contributor, older/ younger, etc.), seen from the outside they are equivalent to one another, and not being given to causes one not to give. Moreover, the tensions arising from this question, spread through gossip and discussions with household members, are often at the core of multi-faceted dissensions or problems *(monikata)*, since people who do not give food to each other are likely to be stingy with their belongings as well, even when what is at issue is a good given to the 'community' by an alien institution. In fact, I must admit that I never witnessed a process of division in its entirety: when I visited the Delta for the last time, Fabian and Eduardo had not left Tekoburojo (cf. chapter 1), Clara and Marcelo had not joined another settlement (cf. supra), and Salvatore had moved to Hobure, but probably because he was the target of sorcery accusations (cf. chapter 4). And fissions are often presented in different ways by the different parties: when a whole large household moved away from Domujana in 2008 (which amounted to a division of this small settlement), the old 'household owner' who moved told me that she had been 'chastised' or criticised by her relatives (a classic formula), whereas others commented that she had gone crazy, refusing to have the path

on stilts reach her house. When I heard in 2009 that the settlement had divided itself again, this was apparently linked to politically partisan fights in the wake of the local elections. Finally, some narratives stressed the crucial role played by illness in migration processes or even in the disappearance of whole settlements: I will develop this question further in chapter 4.

Though I observed a good deal of 'individual' mobility, involving single people or small families (who are not yet 'household owners'), and directly stemming from tensions about food production and consumption, the situation does indeed look different when one considers whole settlements, where disagreements take composite forms. Moreover, the relationship between forms of commensality, residence, and kinship, is in fact complex. Some authors present a concentric model of social distance, and Heinen et al. (1980) distinguish among the Warao a core of *a-warao-witu* or close kin, a second circle of *a-warao* or kin, and an outer circle of *daisa* or others. I believe that they underestimate the contextual nature of such terms, and it is for instance possible to claim at the same time that there is no 'other' in Tekoburojo, and that the co-resident girl that one married is a 'real other,' i.e. the marriage is not incestuous. But I want to stress here that this type of concentric model, especially when it is introduced through a graphic presentation, often causes an ambiguity between social, genealogical, and spatial distance – as I discuss in section 2 of chapter 3.

In many situations, the Warao precisely deny that some of their co-residents are their kin, while they keep alive relations with some of their kin who live in other settlements. Jesús for instance has cousins that he refers to as such, who live mostly in Yoanaina and Tobeina, the seashore settlements, and who both treat him and are treated by him as kin, when they visit each other, for instance on a fishing or gathering expedition – through hospitality and the use of kin terms (in both address and reference). Yet from a genealogical point of view they are not really more closely related to him than, say, the chief's family. I believe that it is not by chance. On the one hand, it is useful to have kinsfolk elsewhere, who can host you when you want to benefit from various ecological niches (e.g. crabs in Mohosereina, fruits on Yoanaina, *moriche* palm fibre in Tekoburoho, etc.). On the other hand, it is easier to welcome a kinsman once in a while than to face everyday demands from too large a village population.[114] This can be compared to the analysis by Bloch (1973) of the Merina of Madagascar: he was struck to find out that they

114. An idea that may explain why the Ashéninka have formal "friends" with whom they exchange, but live in distant houses and do not share with their kin (Killick 2009).

often call on 'artificial' kinsmen for work parties, even when there are 'real' kinsmen available. In fact, "artificial kinship [...] cannot be maintained if it is not used" (ibid.: 79), and sustaining such relations brings with it long-term security, which is possible only because relationships with 'real' kinsmen require neither much daily effort nor a perfect reciprocity. Similarly, the Warao can devote attention to some non co-resident relatives because they can rely on their close co-resident kin, and this is the best thing to do: in a large settlement, being kin with everyone is at once too much work and superfluous (although it does help reduce tensions), whereas having kinsfolk afar is easier and more useful, offering the certainty of hospitality when travelling and the opportunity of migrating if one's own settlement becomes unbearable.

Changes of residence are however more often temporary than definitive, and their effects have to be assessed in the long term. It is certainly true that the sharing and giving of food defines kinship, and is discursively presented as a synchronic fact, but I argue that it is in fact a very progressive process. First, temporary migrations may serve to defuse tensions, and therefore precisely to preserve kinship relations. Some nuclear families or single individuals often spend several days or weeks, in isolated houses, usually downriver, in order to produce salted fish. The first reason for moving is obvious: it is common knowledge that there is more fish downriver than close to the village. Yet, my informants also stressed a second reason: living at home, a big part of the catch has to be shared. Those who want to sell fish have to be lucky (in terms of catching a lot, and having others catch fish at the same time), or to cheat – first selling part of the catch, and then coming back home. Even then, money acquired through the sale of salted fish is often immediately spent on sugar or similar grocery produce, which is then shared within the household. Living temporarily on one's own, conversely, precludes expectations of sharing and giving, since one has no co-residents; and a Warao can therefore accumulate fish, before turning it into money, and turning money into goods. Such a behaviour lies within the boundaries of a morally acceptable Warao conduct only because it is temporary: selfishly working hard for a time enables one to accumulate enough money to buy a TV, a DVD player, or a powerful sound system – which will then be displayed as evidence of one's hard work, competence, and successful interactions with outsiders. Once it is done, it will be possible to resume social life as a generous, yet wealthier, Warao.

However, even when migrations are caused by tensions, people come and go. This is very typical of young couples, who often live alternatively with the parents of the bride

and the parents of the groom, or with other relatives if they have quarrelled with both sets of parents. Each time I came back to Tekoburojo, Gabriel and his wife had moved to a different house – until the young man enrolled in the army and left his wife and baby with his mother-in-law. In such situations, people can also leave a household and yet maintain a relationship of reciprocal giving, as did Jesús and his wife: they left Candida's parents because of accusations of laziness, but now live next to them, and regularly give each other raw food, fish or wild fruits. Jesús and Candida probably receive more from their brother-in-law (Candida eZH) than they give to his household, since Angel is a very active and proficient fisherman, but what matters is that they give when they have enough to do so. Both households are clearly distinct, but still enjoy much closeness.

Even if they had moved further, or if the relationship had been severed in a sharper way, the effect on kinship would not have been immediate. Decisions about food shape sociality, but they do not have automatic effects. In this respect, they differ from the Inuits, as represented by Nuttall, who argues that: "While the flexibility of the kinship system allows individuals to choose who they want to have as their relative (or who they do not wish to have as a relative), it does not give them licence to decide how they should behave with that person" (2000: 45, see also Bodenhorn 2000). Conversely, among the Warao, it is possible to be a bad or failed relative, to be reckoned as kinsfolk but to fail to fulfil expectations – as was Fabian for his cousin Adelina. But if detachment is progressive, it is no less effective for all that, and it essentially occurs through the generational transmission of kinship relations. Carlo for instance acknowledges that Rosalia (the wife of the headman) is his cousin, but Jesús strongly denies that there is any relationship between himself and her children, and I very often came across similar discrepancies. I argue – and this is a question discussed in detail in chapter 3 – that this is so because kinship relations depend crucially on one's childhood experiences. When adults do not enact their kinship, it simply ceases to exist for their children, who may have been told about it, but for whom it has no affective content. Kinship is indeed a question of morality, but also of emotional dispositions.

3. Summary and conclusions.

Through a focus on food management – production, allocation, consumption, etc. –, I have presented, in greater detail, aspects of relational dynamics that are characteristic of the Warao, especially in mid-size settlements such as Tekoburojo and Domujana. It is indeed a central issue, for sharing cooked food defines the household while giving raw

food defines the network of relatives. There is however no one-sided determination, because the link between food and sociality comes neither from the application of a given set of rules, nor from a native ideology of substance. Rather, it is a moral issue, since providing food is the primary way of caring, of acting upon one's concern for relatives and visitors.

This perspective has led me to reflect on the use of morality, which, within anthropology, is sometimes identified with social values or norms, or, conversely, restricted to religious or philosophical reflexivity. I claim that the management of food is a moral – rather than merely social – question among the Warao, because relevant acts constantly create dilemmas, and are constantly evaluated. Their fairness is however not an objective or impartial question, since the concern for others' well-being, as a central issue, entails a very interpersonal morality, comparable to the ethics of care developed by Western philosophers. What is more striking is that moral judgement appears as much in non-verbal acts as in discourse: both become almost undistinguishable, since they are at the same time acts to be evaluated and acts of evaluation that contribute to a covert and yet ever-present morality.

My main interest is not, however, in the principles of this morality, but rather in its effects: through common forms of schismogenesis, moral arguments – expressed in word and deed – escalate and cause irreversible detachment. This perspective has helped me to reformulate our understanding of Warao sociality and to stress that giving and sharing can be described without a focus on 'exchange' and the circulation of things. It should not however hide the fact that very progressive processes are involved: kinship may be shaped by dissensions coming from moral disputes, but it usually happens over a generation and not in a day, since childhood experiences are crucial in that respect.

With a specific perspective, I have developed some aspects of kinship and left others unexplored. It is now necessary to analyse in greater detail the question of childhood, which, I argue, links several of my main themes: first its role as the archetypal object of compassion and of care, and second the way the memory of relations experienced as a child gives them an affective content without which they tend to be dismissed. This argument will help me to describe an important and polymorphous relationship, which can be typically described in terms of fostering – although it also links a patron and a subordinate –, and to understand why it is only there that control can be willingly accepted.

Chapter 3
Nurture and asymmetry: kinship in the making

A grandfather telling his grandson to eat from his plate, although he lives in another household and usually eats with his parents, because he is hungry and hanging out. A woman sending pieces of raw fish to her own and her husband's relatives: although both behaviours take part in the circulation of food, they obviously differ markedly. So far, although I have hinted at the way children elicit compassion and care, I have focused on reciprocal and symmetrical relations between autonomous adults. Within the household, all of them are expected to contribute their own production, and between households, raw food circulates so that someone gives food to those who give food to him or her. In such a context, care appears as a reciprocal disposition, and it is comparable to the claim by Gow that, among the Piro, "it is only really possible to be *kshinikanu* [remembering, loving, thinking about, etc.] with other people who are also *kshinikanu*" (2000: 51), since it is first and foremost expressed in the mutual decision to be co-resident.

I however now want to stress that care is also inherently an asymmetrical relationship, well captured by the idea of nurture. Children are by definition its primary recipients, and it is necessary to pay attention to interactions with or between them, and to discourses about childhood experience. Children, being crucial in the performance of care, play an

important role in the circulation of food within the settlement. But, as Gow (1991) has argued about the Piro, memory of acts of care and nurture is also what constitutes kinship ties, and enables us to apprehend a differentiated space of kinship irreducible to a distinction between 'us' and 'them,' as seemed to be the case in the previous chapter.

I subsequently try to articulate my concern for affects with some more traditional discussions about kinship and affinity, which are still vibrant in the anthropology of lowland South America – probably because they are about more than just kinship itself. I show that defining kinship as memory (i.e. as the memory of acts of care) also enables us to make sense of marriage practices in a complex 'system,' but it will eventually give way to the idea that kinship relations do not exist as the infrastructure of the social world, but are rather performed in interactions so as to extract specific reactions from others – as are all relationships according to the approach I developed in the previous chapters.

However, my analyses of consanguineal and affinal relations precisely do not deal with the main theme of recent regional scholarship: namely that kinship is not about organising, but rather about opening, society. Following especially Fausto (2008), I therefore detail a type of fosterage (often labelled mastery or ownership), which plays such a role among the Warao and also offers the opportunity to bring together my previous discussions about nurture and about the performance of relationships. Indeed, their affective nature is essential to the understanding of asymmetrical relations in the area, which would be a mystery if one were to stick to a more formal idiom, and which are manipulated both by the weak and by the mighty.

1. Children and the generation of kinship.

1.1. Nurturing children.

Children are by definition 'helpless' or 'in distress', as appeared when my host Jesús was explaining to me the context of 'distress' or 'poverty' (noun *sana*, adj. *san-era*). The first example he came up with was: *nobotomo ka saba sanera*, that is to say 'children [are] poor/in distress for us' or 'children evoke compassion in us.' Interestingly, apart from self-claims of being in need, those expressions are mainly applied in two contexts: on the one hand in front of children, especially orphans, who are apparently not being cared for, and on the other hand during funerary laments, which can be called *sana*, a label that "points to the misfortune that has befallen the deceased" (Briggs 1992: 339). This recalls the fact that, among the Piro, 'helplessness' is a state essentially shared by babies and

mourning adults because, according to Gow (2000: 47-48), both are alone, that is to say are lacking kinspeople: little babies do not have them yet, and mourning adults have just lost them. I will discuss further in chapter 5 the funerary laments of the Warao, which are replete with expressions of reciprocal abandonment and loss, but both children and dead people certainly are comparable because of their deficiency in caring: the former are not capable of caring for themselves, and the latter cannot care anymore for their relatives, which is a central theme of funerary laments, and a fact that had previously been noted by Gow (1991: 194) about the Piro. But, contrary to the dead who become a pure object of grief, children can be cared for by others, and their distress is much more productive of positive effects.

Children therefore elicit a compassionate reaction, because of their very nature, as soon as they are not in the process of being cared by others. As a description of the Warao, such a formulation is however problematic. European languages define 'compassion' as the emotional reaction to another's state, either as symmetrical 'fellow-feeling' or as asymmetrical pity felt towards someone in distress by someone else who is free from suffering. In both cases there is a (linguistic) disjunction between the condition of one person, and the reaction of another to it: the latter is defined as emotional, and much psychological and philosophical research is precisely devoted to the exploration of the conditions under which it takes place.[115] Warao formulations are altogether different, since 'to compassionate' is not (linguistically) detached from the experience of the misery of another: it is merely expressed by the expression *saba sanera*, literally '[to be] in distress for [someone],' which the dictionary elaborated by Barral translates as "que da lástima a [alguien]" (2000: 390), in accordance with my own experience of the language. Once again, the parallel with the Piro is striking, since Gow uses 'to compassionate' to translate an expression whose literal meaning is 'to see the grief, sadness, suffering, cuteness, cuddliness of another' (2000: 47). I do not want to comment on the semantic ambivalence of the root of this word (to grieve and to be cute), but rather on the fact that, comparable to its Warao counter-part, it does not make any reference to emotion – which both the Piro and the Warao however recognise when they translate such expressions in local Spanish ('dar pena,' 'dar lástima,' etc.). There is no (linguistic) disjunction between an objective fact, the this-worldly condition of someone, and an

115. See references in Baumard 2007.

inner emotional state that, in fact, they do not mention at all.[116] In a way, it could therefore be said that to witness or to become aware of the misery of another is enough, and in the contexts in which the expression is used, it is presented as immediately causing one to act.

Yet I argue that it is still useful to talk about emotion, and to mobilise the notion of 'moral sentiments,' for what the Warao understand by *sana* is very similar to Adam Smith's definition of pity as "the emotion which we feel for the misery of others" (1761 [1759]: 1). Two important differences are that Smith aims at a generalising approach through concepts such as sympathy and identification (as universal psychological mechanisms) or the introduction of an abstract "impartial spectator" (e.g. ibid.: 286), and that his reliance on the idea of "fellow-feeling" makes his perspective suitable essentially for symmetrical interactions. On the contrary, the Warao are interested in very partial interlocutors, who are not mere spectators but rather engage in concrete interactions, and it is in a way more comparable to the perspective developed by Gilligan (1982), with her focus on emotion, interdependence and vulnerability. More importantly, the concept of 'distress' or 'poverty' also entails an essential asymmetry. Its use in reference, as when the Warao claim that they 'are poor,' is precisely aimed at creating such an asymmetry, as the basis of the interaction, since it is meant to cause a reaction from the other, as I have stressed in chapter 1. In fact, I argue that emotions are involved in so far as the experience of the distress of others powerfully moves the Warao into action, and because the relationship between discursive reference to emotion and behavioural manifestation of emotion is ambivalent – and I will discuss this question in chapter 5, on the subject of grief and crying. Here, I primarily want to suggest that 'compassion' is unnamed because the experience of the distress of someone else is not meant to induce feelings in others, but rather to compel them into action: emotion is essentially what moves us (and my use is closer to the etymological sense). It may be by-passed in Warao formulations, but it will reappear in other instances, especially in the loving tone used to describe their upbringing by those who have benefited from compassionate care (cf. section 3), and in the acute grief of those who have lost the people who have cared for them or for whom they had cared (cf. chapter 5).

Because compassionate care is essentially asymmetrical, whereas a settlement is assumed to be made up of autonomous and equal adults, children play a key role in the

116. See Surrallés (2003: 62-73) for a discussion of the field of emotion among the Jivaroan Candoshi.

circulation of food within the settlement.[117] Indeed, if the Warao are seen by outsiders as 'natural beggars' who often travel to local urban centres in order to ask for food and money, they are very reluctant to ask anything from people that they consider their peers, for fear of a rebuttal, or simply because things must be given freely, not asked for. Conversely, it is not shameful for children to ask (since they are not self-sufficient), and they are likely to be successful (since they are poor): they are often sent to other households, or go on their own will, sometimes just to wait and see[118]. I remember quite vividly, once we had bought a watermelon, that the grandmother of my host family was cutting it into pieces when many children gathered and looked at it with resigned envy. Although they were from households that were not part of her food-giving network, the old woman gave a little piece to each of them, before hiding the rest under a bowl. Managing visual availability is much more subtle than refusing directly (cf. chapter 1 on displays), and anyway, it is impossible not to act when a child is looking at oneself helplessly – the only alternative is not to give him or her any reason to look.

Interestingly, children also intervene the other way round. One day we had managed to be particularly successful in fishing, I was seated in front of the hearth with Candida, who was cleaning our catch. Her mother passed by on the path, probably returning from having visited some other houses, and she was holding her youngest son in her arms. He was not quite old enough to speak, but Candida addressed him (i.e. her younger brother) directly, asking what he was going to eat that night. He looked a bit puzzled, but his mother answered that Candida needed not worry, since they had some fish as well. I witnessed similar scenes several times, and I argue that the shape of such interactions is not innocent. Asking the adults directly would have been offensive, threateningly assuming that the other household could not provide for itself, that it was dependent on us. Some young men would sometimes precisely behave in such a way, asking people what they were eating although it was obvious, and taking a mockingly compassionate look when answered that it was "pure taro" or "pure pasta" (i.e. no fish or meat). But this was considered a highly offensive and unwelcome joke, which led to frustrated anger more than to laughter on the part of the eater.

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117. It can be compared to the explicit ideal of self-sufficiency among the Asheninka, which explains their reluctance in accepting gifts of food (Killick 2009: 703-705).
118. Among the Panara, young women are those who "go looking at things" in order to receive gifts of food, if there is not much in their household (Ewart 2008: 513), but the process is similar. Among the Kalapalo, during food distributions, "only children were actually permitted to beg," whereas adults waited in their houses (Basso 1973: 6).

Obviously, children are not only intermediaries in the circulation of food, they can also be its very motive. In some contexts, as I have outlined (cf. chapter 2), gifts of food are reciprocal and are justified by the reciprocity itself. In other situations, they take place because of children: Nito, a middle-age widower, for instance used to send food to Mona because he was said to have fathered her last son, although there was no other flow between the two households. Both concerns can be mixed, but it would indeed be wrong to assume that children are merely used in order to successfully extract gifts of food, as is sometimes suggested in the context of begging, for children are not a mere pretext: the nurture and attention that are provided to them have lasting effects.

They are in fact central in the physical, moral and affective development of individuals. A baby is never too fat, and parents often compliment happily on its growth, or try to enhance it through the use of expensive powdered formula, even when they have to fight local nurses who disapprove of their habit of using un-boiled river water to prepare the drink. Similarly, it can be argued that a baby is never too satisfied. If fatness is the opposite of illness, it is also the assurance that the baby is not growing up dissatisfied, which would turn it into a bitter, unhappy and envious person.[119] In the same way that babies are breastfed as soon as they want, and especially when they start crying, their desire is often seen as unchallengeable. When I was distributing sweets, for instance, older children (age 5-12) were always arguing that younger infants, and especially toddlers, should constantly be given sweets, as long as there were some to give: at first, I had believed that it was just a trick to have me give more sweets, but I then realized that children were very seriously concerned with the satisfaction of their younger siblings, even though it meant that they themselves got less. This example is also interesting because it reveals the striking difference between younger and older siblings, which is marked in the terminology (cf. infra), but also very noticeable when considering behaviour and responsibilities. When, and only when, a younger sibling is born, is a child definitely weaned. It is certainly a very common fact that the birth of new children displaces the parents' focus or order of priorities, that parents often try to teach the older sibling a sense of responsibility, and that he or she has to come to terms with it. However, I argue that, on the one hand, the Warao differ markedly from some other Amerindians, for instance the Yanomami who try to steer interactions between children towards assertiveness and retribution (Alès 2006: 19), and that, on the other hand, the

119. Among the Kalapalo, Basso notes that a child is fed whenever it asks, "to prevent it from becoming dissatisfied with its parents," since it could lead to suicidal revenge (1973: 62).

extent to which older siblings are made responsible for their younger siblings is very salient among the Warao. From the perspective of the moral development of children, the intervention of parents in the interactions between children certainly enhances older siblings' generosity and concern for others. Once they have benefited from the care of their relatives, they have to learn to care as well, which means protecting their younger siblings, but even more ensuring that their desires are satisfied, learning to be attentive to the needs of others and act in consequence. However, acts of care, whether given or received, are not merely constitutive of an individual whose personality and qualities could be discussed in the abstract: they also generate kinship relations, that is to say produce complete human persons, who exist as related to many others.

1.2. Kinship as memory.

Kinship relations can be understood as the memory of acts of care and nurture provided by some others, who are, or rather become, one's relatives. In a way, relationships could be understood as the sedimentation of a series of particular interactions. My perspective is here primarily inspired by the work of Gow (1991) on the Piro, since he analysed in a very illuminating way a society that shares many similarities with the Warao.

To express the concept of kin in general, people prefix *warao* with a possessive marker. The meaning of *warao* itself varies contextually, and refers potentially both to a human person or to a 'Warao Indian' (cf. chapter 1, n. 55), and comparable variations happen with 'kin.' At one extreme, in some contexts it is said that 'everyone here is related' (*yori-warao*, *yori-*: reciprocal), when emphasising that the settlement is a good place to live (cf. section 2.3 of chapter 2). At the other extreme, the same expression (poss. + *warao*) is used in a strict sense to refer only to the sibling set: several of my hosts or informants, having said that they had no kinspeople living in the village, listed their siblings residing in other communities, excluding their children, grandchildren, and cousins; while others answered to my question by listing their siblings but not their parents.[120] This emphasis

120. Among the Piro as well, *familia* or 'real kin' includes neither spouses nor children (Gow 1991: 162). Among the Warao there is also a focus on uterine siblingship, which has been noted in other societies (e.g. Alès 2002 for the Yanomami, Bamford 2004 for the Kamea of PNG): answering my question about his 'true relatives' (*a-warao-witu*, poss-warao-intensifier), a boy spontaneously cited his uterine half-siblings, but only acknowledged his agnatic half-siblings after I had prompted him to do so, adding that they had 'different mothers' *(dani daisa)*.

on the sibling set is in fact not particularly original within lowland South America.[121] I want to stress here that Warao adults, when they talk about the relations they have with their siblings, often refer to their memory of childhood interactions. When I asked fifty-five year old Adelina about her forty year old brother, she only answered: "Basilio, my little brother, he was in my care, we used to sleep together [in the same hammock].[122]" As I suggested at the end of the previous section, the care she provided him not only shaped his personal feelings, but also generated the relationship that continues to prevail between them as adults. Adelina and Basilio are both living in Tekoburojo, although not in contiguous households, but adults often focus on their siblings who live elsewhere, enumerating in a sad voice the settlements where they reside, in order to stress their own solitariness in the village: they miss their siblings, who are their only true kin, and here they are deprived of support and emotional comfort, alone among strangers. Although changes of residence are essentially caused by the negative forces of discord, as I have stressed in chapter 2, siblings who reside in other communities always offer a possible destination, the certainty of being welcome and hosted, even if they have not been seen for a long time.[123] At a time when he was annoyed by the behaviour of his children and children-in-law, Carlo told me he wanted to abandon Tekoburojo and live with his older brother in Tucupita – although he had last seen him more than fifteen years ago. It is striking here that, even though the desire to move was motivated by arguments with his co-residents, he was turning towards his brother as a possible destination, but even more that he had not been in contact with his sibling for such a long time. In such a context, kinship cannot be identified with (current) co-residence, as is true in other contexts. In fact, much more important are the relations that have been experienced as such as a child, and I will develop this perspective further in the following section.

However, if siblingship is at the core of Warao kinship, parenthood is the other crucial tie, which can be defined by the fact of raising children, that is to say of providing them with care and nurture. This theme calls into mind some debates that have agitated

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121. Thomas for instance argues that "Pemon society can be thought [...] as sibling sets trying to recreate themselves down through the generations" (1982: 70); Gow stresses that among the Piro "the realest of real kin are siblings" (1991: 163); and Fausto that "in Amazonia, siblingship, particularly same-sex, is often taken to be the core of identity" (2008: 349). See also C. Hugh-Jones 1979 for a completely different case (Tukanoan Barasana).

122. Ma rakobo sanuka, tai ma yaoro-bita, siko uba-bu-ae.

123. Thomas notes the tendency of the Pemon to reside with their siblings, but also to have siblings scattered all over the tribal territory, since it gives them residential options (1982: 74).

anthropology in the 1960s and 1970s about the nature of fatherhood,[124] and, to use a contestable term, it is admittedly true that the Warao recognise what we would call a 'genitor,' that is to say the bond stemming from sexual reproduction. Usually, the people I knew used to refer to such bonds to discuss marriageability and incest, as happened in Domujana. Justo was the young man with whom I was staying there. On one side of his house, a few dozens yards away, was his parents' house, and contiguous on the other side, was his wife's parents' house, with whom Justo was sharing a single hearth. But soon I learned that the two old heads of the households flanking his own were brothers: could it be that Justo had married his first cousin? When I raised the question with his father-in-law, he answered that, in fact, his younger brother was not Justo's father but rather his step-father *(dima tahã)*, so that Justo and his wife were unrelated – which he immediately contrasted to an unquestionable case of incest that had happened nearby. Much later, when I discussed Justo's relations directly with him, he straightforwardly stated that his mother's husband was 'actually [his] father,' since he had brought him up and fed him, adding it was something that his 'father' (the other one) had never done – he died when Justo was still a toddler. After a second, he added: "so would I say, when people were telling me 'he is not your father'." Fatherhood thus alternates between a bond stemming from sexual reproduction, a 'state of being,' and a relationship built through daily acts of caring and feeding, a 'state of doing,' as Schneider (1984) would have it – and the same could be said about motherhood. The same person can use both models in different contexts, for instance referring to one in order to decide who is marriageable, and to the other in order to justify on whose death she would cry – in a way, it would make them similar to us, since neither do we always follow a single logic when thinking about relatedness or kinship (cf. Carsten 2004).

Their ambivalent use of 'father' and 'mother' with regards both to the person who begot them and to the one who raised them, is however interesting because it is not symmetrical. They call the former father *(dima)* or mother *(dani)* in reference, but not in address, since the relation is not lived as such. Conversely, there is a variety of terms and expressions used to refer to a step-father or step-mother *(dima/dani tahã)*, to someone who is like a father or a mother *(dima/dani monika)*, who has raised one *(a-ida-tu)*, in whose hands one has grown up *(a-moho eku ida-e)*, etc., all of which signal explicitly that the parent in question is not the birth parent. Following Gow, I argue that "this overt

124. See for instance Barnes 1961 & 1964, and obviously Schneider 1984.

identification as 'adopted child' highlights the care given to it," for to raise a child is "a supreme act of love" (1991: 159). It is therefore probably more adequate to talk about 'fosterage' in contrast to adoption. Its wider meaning for the Warao and other Amerindians is discussed further, but it already enables us to stress the relevance of care and nurture in the definition of parenthood.

However, if foster children only occasionally refer to such a person as 'father' or 'mother,' they systematically address them as such (*dima* or *papa*, *dani* or *mama*), and emphasise this in their narratives, often as a conclusive statement used to stress the true nature of the relationship. The use of kin terms is in fact the recognition of the acts of care performed by the parents and other relatives (cf. Gow 1991: 161), and, indeed, it is central in the Warao view of child development, which centres on the concept of *obohona*. Barral translates this very polysemic term generally as "will, desire, passion, intention, knowledge, reason, judgement, etc." (2000: 361).[125] An important feature is however that it is a faculty progressively acquired or developed by children: life narratives often start with the expression 'when I did not have *obohona* yet' *(mate ma obohona ekida kore)*, to mention a couple of facts that happened when the narrator was too young to remember them personally, and that he or she therefore only knows by hearsay. Beyond the general meaning of the word, I want to stress its particular link with kinship. In both villages where I conducted fieldwork, when I asked my friends about it and whether their children 'had it' already, they phrased their answer in very similar terms, in spite of a different age limit. Jesús, in Tekoburojo, told me that his six year old daughter Yolanda did not really have *obohona* yet. If she left now and grew up in the hands of other people, before coming back as an adult, she would not know who her parents are, she would not recognise her father and her mother. Justo, conversely, claimed that the *obohona* of his seven year old son Andrés had already come on *(doku-kitane)*, since he was able to identify his parents, was not calling random people 'dad,' would say 'no, he is not my dad' if someone else was introduced to him. These examples show clearly that it is not an abstract capacity to think that is at stake, but rather a very embedded and specific knowledge or discriminating faculty, built up by acts of care and nurture, whose memory is the basis of parenthood (cf. also Taylor 2000).

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125. "Obojona. Voluntad. Deseo. Ganas de… Capricho. […] 2. Pasión. Iracundia. Sentimiento. Instito. Arrebato. […] 3. Intención de hacer algo. Designio. Proyecto. […] 4. Conocimiento. Lucidez mental. Uso del conocimiento. Razón. Juicio. […] 5. El espíritu. El alma (considerada en sus operaciones y también como principio de vida). […] 6. Corazón (en sentido moral). […]" (Barral 2000 : 361).

Kinship relations – here siblingship and parenthood – are essentially the affective products of caring, and this definition stands out because of the striking lack of discourses about bodily substance or bodies, which I discussed in section 1.1 of chapter 2. But kinship extends beyond the intimate ties of the nuclear family, beyond siblingship and parenthood. Does a focus on the memory of acts of care and nurture still enable us to understand wider networks?

1.3. The limits of memory and the limits of kinship.

The Warao have at their disposition an extended ego-centred kinship terminology that they commonly use, although some of them tend to favour Spanish terms in certain contexts. It is mainly identical in reference and in address, since the former is built by adding a possessive prefix,[126] and its most salient feature, compared to the majority of lowland South America, is that it is very much non-Dravidian. At G+1, it could be called Sudanese,[127] with a differentiation between parents, parents' parallel siblings, and parents' cross siblings.[128] At G0, it is Hawaïan or generational, with no distinction between siblings, cross-cousins, and parallel cousins.[129] At G-1, we find a merging terminology for a female ego, and a bifurcate merging terminology for a male ego.[130] Finally, there are specific terms for a large set of affines, which I will discuss later, and a few homogeneising terms at G+2 and G-2.[131] Kinship, as approached through its terminology, therefore extends beyond the primary relations of parenthood and siblingship, even more since all terms, except those for 'father' and 'mother,' are classificatory: *daku* can refer to a MB, but also to anyone referred to as 'brother' by ego's

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126. Adding a prefix usually causes a allophonetic change, *daka*, 'younger brother/cousin,' *ma-raka*, 'my younger brother/cousin,' *a-raka*, 'his younger brother/sibling,' etc. The only exception is the widespread use of *papa* (or *baba*) and *mama* as terms of address for 'dad' and 'mum,' instead of *dima* and *dani*.

127. Heinen & Henley are mistaken when they write that "most groups of Warao have a system of kinship and marriage that conforms in most regards to the canonical iroquoianate type" – although they are right to criticise "earlier reports that they have a dravidianate system in the process of transition into something else" (1998-99: 29). An Iroquois or iroquoianate terminology merges siblings and parallel cousins (but, contrary to a Dravidian or dravidianate terminology, has specific terms for affines), which, among the Warao, is only the case at G-1 for a male ego.

128. F: *dima*, M: *dani*, FeB: *dehota*, Fyb: *dimuka*, FZ: *dakatai*, MB: *daku*, MeZ: *danihota*, MyZ: *danikatida*. (In reference.)

129. Male ego: eB: *dahe*, yB: *daka*, eZ: *dakoi*, yZ: *dakoi sanuka*. Female ego: eB: *dakobo*, yB: *dakobo sanuka*, eZ: *daiba*, yZ: *dahia*. (In reference.)

130. Male ego: S & BS: *auka*, D & BD: *auka tida*, ZCh: *hido (sanuka)*. Female ego: S & BS & ZS: *auka*, D & BD & ZD: *auka tida*. (In reference.)

131. G+2: male (e.g. FF): *nobo*, female (e.g. FM): *natu*; G-2 (e.g. ChCh): *natoro*.

mother, that is to say male cousins of ego's mother, for instance MFZS, MMZS, etc.

The formulation that I have adopted so far is probably the most economical and common way of presenting a kinship terminology. It is however very problematic from a theoretical point of view, and its consequences have been severely criticised by many authors. When defining a native term by the genealogical position that is closest to ego (e.g. *daku* as MB), and later stating that it is also extended to other, more distant, positions – which are still defined in genealogical terms (e.g. MFZS) –, I immediately adopted the assumptions inherent to the concept of 'descriptive terminology:' namely that there is an objective genealogical grid, that each culture or language partitions in its own way, as Schneider (1984) exposed when he criticised the method founded by Rivers (1910). But several authors – whose work has not been taken into account by Schneider –, have shown that local conceptions often run against such a logic. Such is the case of Hocart (1937), Leach (1958), and most notably Dumont, who stresses that we deal with 'classes,' and that it is a mistake to "substitute the idea of a dyadic relationship for that of a class, as we do if we suppose, for example, 'mother's brother' to be the basic meaning, and the others to be extensions" (1953: 35). More recently, Viveiros de Castro has similarly criticised the assimilation of consanguine and affine to 'parallel' and 'cross,' since the latter are "concepts that presuppose an ultimate genealogical referent" (1998b: 344), whereas this is not what is at stake – and in Dravidian systems in Amazonia, both a consanguine and an affine could be either close cognates (e.g. FB and MB), or unrelated (Viveiros de Castro gives the example of a WBWB who is a 'brother' without being a 'true relative').

However, such analyses have essentially been developed about Dravidian systems, where a 'calculus' enables the terminology to work in a purely categorical way (an affine of an affine is a consanguine, an affine of a consanguine is an affine, etc.). But Warao kinship is not Dravidian at all – then, what is their use and conception of kin terms and relationships? The Warao very often refer to usage in the previous generation in order to justify their own use.[132] Jesús for instance says that Manolo is *daku*, MB, because his own mother called Manolo's mother *dakatai*, FZ; and Adelina that Encarnación and Maria Milagrosa are her *dakoi*, sisters/cousins, because their mothers called each other in such a way (and the same is true with patrilateral relatives). Such practices tend to support the

132. Similar in that to the Pemon, cf. Thomas 1982: 64.

idea that their use of kin term is essentially categorical.[133] Yet a striking fact is that these categories do not extend very far, that the kinship terminology does not span the whole social world, not even the whole settlement. If the Warao often stress that "here everyone is related," they are also adamant in denying that so-and-so is their kin, when they consider specific relationships.[134] In some cases, it is said that the kin term is used although people are not really related, and Jesús, after saying that Manolo was his 'uterine uncle,' added: "although [he is] different, [I] say 'uterine uncle'" *(daisa-rone, waraya daku)*. Indeed, in line with the argument I developed in chapter 2, it is certainly linked to the fact that Manolo never gives anything to his household, as Jesús' mother Adelina often complains. In other cases, the kin term that could be applied to distantly related people through an abstract calculus is completely denied, either because the relationship itself is rejected or because another relationship prevails.

From this perspective, Warao kinship appears to be purely cognatic and concentric: those who are close to ego are his true relatives, some are just called by kin terms or are somewhat relatives, while others, who are more distant, are not kin at all. Indeed, it recalls the idea put forward by Viveiros de Castro & Fausto (1993) that, in lowland South America, most Dravidian systems are modified by a principle of distance, making them concentric rather than symmetric:[135] in practice, "if at the local level consanguinity encompasses affinity, at the supra-local level affinity encompasses consanguinity" (1993: 148), that is to say that distant affines of affines are affines rather than consanguines (because they are distant), and close affines tend to be 'consanguinised' (because they are close). The Warao do not share the Dravidian dichotomy, but a comparable concentric principle is at work, making them appear partially similar to other lowland South American societies – at least at the local level. I however want to discuss more precisely what is meant here by 'distance.' Viveiros de Castro & Fausto (1993) rely explicitly on the concentric model developed by Albert (1985: 193-194) to describe the socio-political space of the Yanomami, which is in fact a spatial model: there is a homology between

133. This idea is supported by other types of data. In a myth recorded by Lavandero (2000), for instance, the *daku* or uterine uncles exist per se, they stand in a certain relationship with the hero, as an undifferentiated class, and neither their sister nor the hero's mother is ever mentioned.
134. Overing (1975: 71), talking about the Piaroa, similarly distinguishes the use of the vague concept of 'kinsfolk' (which is applied extensively) and of a specific kin term (which is only applied to true relatives).
135. The case of the Chimane described by Daillant (2003) would therefore be exceptional.

social and spatial categories, which is well captured by graphic representations.[136] This perspective relies heavily on the idea typically present in the Guianese area that residence determines the conception of kinship relations, so that all co-residents are treated as consanguines whereas non-coresidents are 'forgotten' when people list their kin (e.g. Overing Kaplan 1975: 80). However, although such a logic is present in certain contexts among the Warao, it is certainly not the only one at play: they often stress that some of their coresidents are not their kin, and that their true kin, or at least some of them, live in other settlements (see chapter 2, section 2.3.). Kinship networks have wide-ranging ramifications, sometimes reaching the world of the Criollos, and they cannot be reduced to the instantiation of a one-dimensional spatial model.

Is it then a question of genealogical distance? In order to justify their definition of other people as kin (or not), the Warao do not only refer to the use at the previous generation, but also produce genealogical chains – or at least use a seemingly genealogical logic –, articulating it with a categorical use of kin terms.[137] The case of Adelina is once again very interesting. While she was talking about her former husband Evaristo, she commented: "although [he is] my brother/cousin, he married me" *(ma rakobo-rone, ma nisanae)*. When I questioned her further, she first added that he is the 'child of [her] paternal aunt' *(dakatai a-noboto)*, and later that this 'paternal aunt' was in fact a cousin of her father (the daughter of his maternal aunt). In such a case, it could be said that this marriage was acceptable because Evaristo, in spite of being a 'brother/cousin,' is merely a second degree cousin (her FMZDS); and genealogical distance would be used as the principle defining people as true kin, distant kin, or unrelated individuals. I however believe that it would be a misunderstanding of what the Warao mean when they use kin terms and justify them through such 'genealogical' chains.[138] Adelina did not justify her marriage by saying that Evaristo was only distant relative, but by stating: "[we] didn't know, only when [we] were told did [we] know" *(namina-naha, wara-kore seke namina-ya)*. It is a question of knowledge, more precisely of the kind of knowledge involved, and the crucial opposition is epistemic. The relationship has merely been 'told' to them. Conversely, when she commented on her relationship with Encarnación, she did not

136. For a comparable analysis of another Yanomami group, see Alès (2006: 15-48), although her graphic representation is not concentric.
137. Thomas (1982: 63-64) shows the same ambivalence among the Pemon.
138. I therefore disagree with Heinen et al. (1980: 51), who offer a concentric representation of Warao kinship which is superficially similar to that of Albert (1985), but in fact based on genealogical (rather than spatial) distance.

detail it further, and simply said that she had never 'seen' *(mi-naha)* her mother, and therefore did not know. Many anthropologists have stressed the privilege of visual over aural experience in Amazonia (cf. Déléage 2010), and, among the Warao (as in other societies), it is particularly salient in the context of kinship – and can also recall the importance of managing the visual availability of things that I described in chapter 1. People dismiss their relationships with others when the connection goes through people that they have not 'seen,'[139] in the same way that they cannot talk about ancestors that they have never known personally,[140] and that they have to 'see' the corpse of their dead relatives (i.e. of those they have 'seen' alive) – as I describe in chapter 5.

From such a perspective, Gow's arguments concerning the Piro are particularly relevant for the Warao. When they describe someone as a 'uterine uncle's son' in order to justify the relation, they do not describe a genealogical connection (in a Riversian sense), but rather a chain of "known links of caring between known people" (Gow 1991: 168). In fact, the stress on visual experience should not hide that it is a question of experiencing the relationship, of living it as such. Indeed, Adelina and Evaristo grew up in different settlements and only met after they had reached adulthood, when Adelina and her then-husband were migrating in search of a shaman who would cure her (cf. chapter 4), and this situation contrasts them to those who have childhood memories of being cared for by their older relatives, of taking care of their younger kin, as I have described in the previous section. The concentric principle is therefore not the socio-political translation of a spatial distribution. At least in the case of the Warao, it would be more adequate to say that affects constitute its experiential basis, since the personal memory of acts of care defines real kin, those who are merely called by kin terms, and others who are not kin at all.

I have so far followed very closely the analyses that Gow (1991) devotes to the Piro, showing the interest of stressing the place of children and of childhood, first because they play an important role as the archetypal objects of compassion and the primary recipients of care, but also because the memory of such acts of care and nurture is the very essence of kinship relations, which accounts for the concentric nature of Warao kinship. This perspective is however unsatisfactory with respect to the scope of kinship,

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139. Thomas (1982: 63) and Gregor (1977: 274), make similar observations, respectively about the Pemon and the Mehinaku.
140. Gow similarly criticises the notion of "genealogical amnesia," saying that: "the ancestors are not forgotten, for they were never known in the first place" (1991: 168).

because I have only dealt with consanguinity.[141] Gow, it is true, describes conjugality and interactions with direct or real affines (e.g. parents- or siblings-in-law) in a very interesting fashion, but he is too quick in dismissing alliance as a more global phenomenon, on the basis that the Piro only stress personal qualities and desires in their choice of marriage partner (rather than preferences or imperatives in terms of kinship categories), that is to say that they constitute an open or complex system (Gow 1991: 146 & 198). Or at least, I will show that the Warao – who behave similarly to the Piro in so many respects – differ markedly from them when it comes to affinity and alliance. This change of perspective will also enable me to question some underlying assumptions in my description of kinship relations, which seem to be harmoniously generated by acts of care, and in my analysis of kinship terms, which seem to describe pre-existing relations.

2. Alliance and other ambivalent interactions.

2.1. Approaches of Warao kinship and the focus on affinity.

Taking alliance into account helps to make sense of some Warao practices, and to integrate them within the field of comparative discussions of lowland South American societies. Indeed, their position within that field is slightly marginal because their kinship 'system' – if it may be called in such a way – is complex: there is a negative statement about relatives who cannot be married, but no positive statement about who should be married (or, at least, not in kinship terms). This feature is however not very obvious in previous studies of Warao kinship, which have adopted very narrow perspectives. Suárez, inspired by Needham, for instance tried to prove that "Warao society would have changed gradually from a 'two-section' system of prescriptive alliance, to a cognatic and non-prescriptive system" (1972: 96). The statistically high proportion of 'symmetric alliance' is evidence, according to her, that the Warao come from an elementary system of restricted exchange, although there is now no matrimonial preference or imperative expressed in discourse. Apart from the fact that such a perspective is very out dated, the main problem lies in the way she builds her evidence. Suárez reformulates genealogical relations between husband and wife *as if* there were a two-section system (and for instance classifies a MHZSWBD as a ZD, ibid.: 91), and concludes that her data supports

141. Dumont (1997 [1971]) has argued that the typical focus of British social anthropologists on filiation is linked to the narrower meaning the English term 'kinship,' compared to the French word 'parenté' that also includes affinal relationships.

the idea of an original two-section system: anthropological analysis could hardly be more tautological.

Heinen, who has conducted extensive fieldwork in several areas of the Delta, is less imprisoned in a single theoretical model. He suggests at some point that "matrimonial alliances entail the exchange of spouses between three or more bands of the same sub-tribe" (1988a: 632), in direct opposition with the binary model of Suárez (1972), but does not pursue this line of thought.[142] In most of his publications, he simply stresses the prohibition of marriage with 'direct relatives' (*a-warao-witu*, for which he gives a genealogical definition), and the reluctance towards marriage with outsiders, that is to say people who are not members of the 'sub-tribe' (Heinen et al. 1980: 51, see also Heinen 1972b, Heinen & Henley 1998-99). It is true that he keeps looking for 'groups,' although it has been shown that lowland South Amerindian kinship is best approached from an ego-centred perspective,[143] and, when he talks of 'sub-tribe endogamy' while admitting 'boundary permeability" (Heinen et al. 1980: 54), it seems obvious that the Warao would be better described in terms of "endogamous nexus," to use a concept that Descola (1986: 19) suggested for the Jivaroan Achuar. Warao kinship is therefore a complex system characterized by ego-centred cognatic networks but, contrary to the assumptions of Gow (1991), I argue that it does not entail random matrimonial practices, restricted to a question of personal desire.

This is admittedly not the perspective of Heinen, who is rather driven by the study of social organisation. Since he cannot found it on cognatic 'groups,' he highlights the affinal ties between parents-in-law (WF and WM) and son-in-law (DH), which he describes as the main "organizing principle" (Heinen 1972b: 63). He stresses the rule of uxori-local residence (Heinen 1972a), which places the young man under the control of his parents-in-law, and the economic obligations of the former towards the latter, which are often fulfilled through cooperation with co-affines (e.g. Heinen 1988a: 627). Although he does not claim such an anthropological affiliation, Heinen is therefore very close to the perspective of Rivière (1984), and more generally to what Viveiros de Castro has labelled the "political economy of control" (1996: 188). I do not share his concern

142. In another publication, he concludes that "a three-section system is not inconsistent with the Winikina kinship terminology and that the Warao could have activated corporate unilineal descent groups by making cross-cousin marriage prescriptive should the need for such an organizing principle have arisen. The Warao, however, have not done so" (Heinen 1972b: 39-40).
143. Cf. Viveiros de Castro & Fausto 1993, who refer to the Dumontian opposition between local and global formula, and to the Lévi-Straussian opposition between the method of relations and the method of classes.

for social organisation, which implicitly recalls the notion of "kinship-based society," but his focus on affinal relationships can be useful in understanding marriage practices, and I will therefore develop it further.

The relationship between a man and his parents-in-law is consistently presented as difficult or uncomfortable, even more so since it contrasts to all other relations. I have already shown the strong affective ties and expectations of support that link consanguineal kin. Relationships between co-affines are also characterised by a sense of solidarity and the practice of daily cooperation: it especially concerns the men who are married to a group of sisters and live together with their parents-in-law (called *harayaba*, Heinen 1988a: 627, Heinen & Henley 1998-99: 58). Finally, when it comes to symmetric affinity, Heinen stresses the "strong obligation" (1972b: 38) of a man towards his brother-in-law, more precisely of a ZH towards his WB, commenting that the latter might give his daughter as a second wife *(tekoro)* to the former, and is therefore a potential father-in-law. There may have been a change because polygyny has become very uncommon, but interactions between brothers-in-law were overall very relaxed in my experience, involving much joking.[144] Such behaviour is completely unthinkable between in-laws of different generations, and previous anthropological literature about the Warao emphasises this point strongly.

Suárez (1972: 79-80) and Heinen (1988a: 627, 1988b: 52-64) both stress the economic obligations of a son-in-law towards his parents-in-law: he has to build a house and a dugout canoe for them, which are presented as "payment" (*ka auka-tida ahoronobe*, cf. Heinen 1988b: 52, Heinen & Henley 1998-99: 52), as well as to provide for their daily subsistence. Such obligations, which turn sons-in-law into the "workers" of their fathers-in-law (Heinen 1988a: 627), are fulfilled in a context of affinal "taboos" (Heinen & Henley 1998-99: 52): in a compilation of Warao narratives about their way of life, Heinen describes in detail how the orders of the father-in-law are transmitted to his sons-in-law through his elder daughter, since respect or shame between affines of different generations is so strong that "the mother-in-law cannot address her sons-in-law" (1988b: 62).

My own fieldwork experience however challenged the expectations I had built through

144. A common situation is that of a married man residing with the unmarried younger brother of his wife, in which case they often go fishing together without tensions. Regarding teasing, I witnessed once the very common play called 'grabbing the penis' between two old men. The victim commented: "he is really an invert" *(tai seke tida-wina)*, but the other immediately reacted by saying: "he is really a brother-in-law" *(tai seke cuñado)*.

reading previous literature on the Warao: the relationship between parents-in-law and sons-in-law, which is often presented as the salient relationship and the organising principle, was either conspicuously invisible, or referred to as a failure. How is it possible to account for such ambivalence?

2.2. Invisible affinity and patterns of alliance.

The relationship with one's parents-in-law, because of the 'obligations' and the unease, is not a pleasurable one, and living mostly among affines, in a settlement where one lacks relatives, is a very undesirable situation – as I stressed when mentioning people who miss their siblings. In a fashion which is very typical of the Guianese area of South America, the Warao therefore tend to conceal or repress affinity, putting the emphasis on consanguinity and co-residence, so that "in the ideal settlement affinity does not exist" (Rivière 1984: 71), and they have various techniques at their disposal.

First, as Heinen & Henley (1998-99: 53) have noted, they tend to replicate or reiterate marriages (which Gow [1991: 198] apparently mistakes for reciprocation). It can be a horizontal replication, when a group of siblings marries another group of siblings or close cousins. In Tekoburojo, it was for instance the case of Jesús' kin: his brother, one of his sisters and one of his paternal cousins were married to first-cousins of his own wife; and this situation, consistent with the data of other anthropologists, was in no way exceptional. Replication can also, more exceptionally, be of a vertical kind. In Tekoburojo, Jesús' wife is the daughter of his mother's second husband; and in Domujana, Justo's wife is the paternal niece of his mother's second husband as well. In both cases, husband and wife were unrelated (therefore making them marriageable), but also replicated the second marriage of their parents. I argue that it is a question of replication rather than reciprocation (cf. Rivière 1984: 51), because at no level is marriage conceptualised as an exchange: the point is not to reciprocate a woman, it is to avoid being isolated – and from this perspective whether two brothers marry two sisters or two men 'exchange' their sisters is equivalent. Indeed, the cases of vertical replication that I have outlined solve elegantly the issue of residence: neither spouse had to move, both could live close to their parents. Interestingly, it is often how the issue is presented: not as an obligation or as a rule (of uxori-matri-local residence), but as the desire of people to

live with their kin, to keep their children with them.[145] It is for instance the rationale behind the ideal of 'sub-tribe endogamy,' according to some Warao interviewed by Heinen: "We Warao want to see our children quite close to us. That way it is very good. If a son were missing like a dead person, this we do not want. Quite close to us he should find a woman, a woman from around here" (1988b: 52-53).

The other technique ensuring that affinity is suppressed is therefore the practice of marrying 'close,' which means (in spatial terms) marrying "a woman from around here" or (in kinship terms) marrying cognates. This is also a recurrent theme in the anthropology of the Guianese area, and more generally of lowland South America (Viveiros de Castro & Fausto 1993). The idea that affinal obligations increase with distance, i.e. are maximal when the husband is completely unrelated to his parents-in-law (Thomas 1982: 103), even led Rivière to state that it may be strangeness rather than affinity that causes restraint (1984: 64-65). It explains why most people try to marry relatively close cognates, to the point that the Pemon favour marriage with the sister's daughter, although they acknowledge it is 'too close,' because it spares them the ordeal of having a real father-in-law: a WF who used to be a cross-cousin or brother-in-law will never be a real father-in-law (Thomas 1982: 109). Indeed, this practice mostly rests on the fact that, in Dravidian systems, there are 'affines' who are 'close cognates' at the same time (i.e. a ZD). In contrast, the Warao do not have such a possibility, since they are essentially non-Dravidian. It is not merely a question of their having a Hawaïan or generational terminology at G0, since it is often the case in Amazonian Dravidian systems, where matrimonial preferences are therefore expressed by referring to the previous generation, stating that one should marry the child of a parent's opposite sex cousin (Dreyfus 1993: 127, Thomas 1982: 101). But the Warao do not in fact have any preference in terms of the spouse's kinship category. Their only imperative is 'not to marry too close,' which is obviously a relative question, confronts their desire 'not to marry too far.'

The Warao manage to fulfil both requirements partly thanks to the way they shrink the scope of kinship by reckoning as 'true kin' only people they are connected to through known ties of caring between known people, as I described in the previous section. In practice, if I make it explicit in terms of genealogy and residence (which they do not do

145. Rivière (1984: 40) stresses such a point and, from the perspective of social organisation, shows that the strength of the mother-daughter tie can explain the common matri-uxori-locality. See Gow (1991) for a different take on the same question.

spontaneously), it means that they tend to marry either unrelated people with whom they have grown up, or more closely related people who have never been their co-residents: in Tekoburojo, many people have married first-cousins, but stress that they come from different settlements, that they have never experienced the relation as such, which enables them to downplay it, to consider that they are merely loosely related. But kinship is not an all-encompassing idiom among the Warao. I have already mentioned the concept of friendship as a binary partnership (cf. chapter 2), and I now want to describe another category, which could be translated as 'acquaintances' (*ori-namina-bu-ya-ha*).[146] Contrary to many instances of friendship in Amazonia (and elsewhere), it has nothing formal, is not dyadic, and it could even be said that it is not chosen and does not require constant work. But at the same time, it is not a vacuous relationship, it is not a question of merely knowing of someone, since the very root 'to know' *(namina)* also means 'to get used to' and 'to recognise' (cf. previous developments on the idea of 'knowing things,' chapter 1): it carries connotations of familiarity which are reinforced by the reciprocal prefix *ori-* and the reiterative infix *-bu-*. On the one hand, in interactions with acquaintances, there are none of the expectations that shape relations with kin. On the other hand, such interactions are also deprived of the fear that permeates those with strangers, and one can exceptionally rely on them. When we found ourselves short of gas on the way back home, it was at a settlement where my companions had acquaintances that we stopped to ask for help: they measured exactly what they gave us so that we could pay them back later, and would certainly have rejected any unsubstantiated demand, but they could be trusted in case of need. Conversely, Adelina was very alarmed that her little brother Eduardo (a middle-aged man) decided to travel upriver with a complete stranger, whereas he could have asked distant relatives or acquaintances: someone that no one knew could well turn out to be a 'killer' *(akubakamo)*, since anyone is in fact assumed to be a dangerous predator, as I mentioned in chapter 1.

Such buffers of acquaintances are needed to give the Warao enough confidence to interact with others in a world where they see themselves as prey, but they also represent a minimal requirement in terms of marriageability – not that they are forbidden to marry complete strangers, but rather that they would be afraid to do so.[147] In practice, however, they tend to marry closer, to marry people who are – albeit distantly – related to them,

146. It is often expressed more succinctly as: *ori-namina-ya*, 'we know each other.'
147. Mythical narratives confirm this idea: fathers-in-law, when they are others or non-humans, systematically predate on their (human) sons-in-law.

because it is the best way to suppress and limit affinity. When asked in the abstract, for instance, most Warao acknowledge that the close relatives of one's affines are also one's affines: adults would call 'son-in-law' the husband of any woman that they call 'daughter,' that is to say of their own daughter, of the daughter of their siblings, maybe even of the daughter of their cousins. But in practice, those terms are hardly ever used in such a way because "affinal ties are often duplicated by distant or fictitious consanguineal relationships" (Heinen 1972b: 33). In fact, people play with their relationships, alternatively concealing and revealing them. When marrying a distant relative, a man treats her as unrelated, as 'other,' and her parents become his parents-in-law (and her siblings his siblings-in-law), but he enjoys two benefits. First, the affinal relationship tends to be less oppressive, since his parents-in-law are not complete others. Second, this quality does not extend to his wife's other relatives: her uncles do not treat him as a son-in-law, but as a distant cognate, and he is lucky to have only a pair of parents-in-law. Yet even with the WF, whom the husband would always acknowledge as his 'father-in-law' if asked about it, the affinal relationship is downplayed, and it happens notably through the use of kin terms. G+2 terms, *nobo* (grandfather) and *natu* (grandmather) are commonly used within the settlement to erase all distinctions between older residents, and especially that between affines and consanguines, implicitly using children as the point of reference – a practice that resembles the use of tecknonymy among the Piaroa (Overing 1975). A man refers to his parents-in-law – and addresses them, if need be – as 'grandfather' and 'grandmother' (but not as 'my grandfather' or 'my grandmother'), therefore minimising a relationship that I have shown to be strenuous. As I will point out later, when affinal terms appear in discourse, it is generally because the relationship fails, whereas it needs to be eclipsed in order to work. In a way, it is consistent with the data presented by Heinen, according to whom respect or shame prevents parents-in-law from giving direct orders to their son-in-law (1988b: 62). It also supports the idea that, at the local level, consanguinity encompasses and eclipses affinity (Overing 1975, Viveiros de Castro & Fausto 1993). At the same time, I have hinted at the fact that kinship relations are manipulated, especially through the use of kin terms, and I now want to pursue this perspective further: kin terms are not simply descriptions of relations, which may, anyway, be challenged by any interaction.

2.3. Manipulations and performances.

Whether with a categorical or genealogical definition (cf. supra), kin terms have consistently been viewed as describing the relations that people have with one another. It is true that informants often define them as such. They explain *daku* as *dani a-rakobo*, 'mother's brother,' or state: "I call him *dehota* [G+1 patrilateral relative older than ego's father], because my father calls him *dahe* [G0 relative older than ego]." Bloch (1971) has however pointed out that such definitions never enable us to understand the *uses* of kin terms in a given situation. In a way, it could be said that the uses of kinship terms during interviews with the anthropologist do not offer the master-key to all other uses of the terms. They are just utterances among others. Bloch therefore stresses that a kin term is not understood by the list of all the people that it 'denotes,' in the same way that we do not understand the word 'wicked' "by attempting to list all the people who can be so described" (1971: 82). He chooses this comparison because he claims that a kin term is best understood as "a judgement on people rather than a label" (ibid.), and as a tool serving to achieve a "transformation in the social situation" (ibid.: 80) – those are respectively the moral and tactical meanings of kin terms, which are to be studied pragmatically or situationally. I argue that his perspective is very illuminating but that it is even possible to go further. Bloch focuses on kin terms and concludes that "the non-kinship components are as important as the kinship components in understanding a word's moral meaning and hence its tactical uses" (ibid.: 85), but he sticks to a limited definition of kinship as genealogy. It may be more fruitful to modify not only our understanding of kin terms but also our understanding of kinship itself, and to see the former, to a certain extent, as performatives rather than descriptives:[148] as J. Leach (2003: 86) has argued, we assume that kin terms group (i.e. classify) together people who are already sexually and genealogically differentiated, whereas they may also differentiate people and make them appear in a certain relationship towards ego. Bloch is right in saying that the use of kin terms transforms the social situation, but then this transformation does not only affect the non-kinship aspects, whereas kinship would enjoy a prominent status granted by genealogy (as Schneider [1984] made explicit when he criticised such a position). Kinship as well is modified because all interactions have the potentiality to challenge and transform relations.

148. See Austin (1962) for my use of a linguistic idiom.

The terms that are defined as 'denoting' relatives of one's generation present a rather common peculiarity: the more they are used in address, the less they are used in reference, and vice-versa.[149] When they are used in reference (with a possessive prefix), they only denote true siblings, those that I have shown to represent the core of one's kin, and it is ironic that the same terms (without prefix) are used to address unrelated people, in fact whoever cannot be addressed by another term. Compared to others, G0 terms only mark sex and relative age (e.g. *daka* is a younger man, relative to a male ego), and I argue that this limited differentiation makes them particularly apposite for the creation of a loose sense of relatedness or reciprocal benevolence compatible with the concept of acquaintances, a move away from both binding obligations and threatening otherness. When we stopped for gas on our way back to Tekoburojo, even though everyone was aware that there was no kinship relation at all (they were acquaintances), visitors and residents were repeatedly calling each other 'elder brother' and 'younger brother' in a very conspicuous way. They are also the terms used to address unknown individuals, with whom one wants to preclude hostility – in contrast to the 'brother-in-law' address which is more common in Amazonia (Lévi-Strauss 1943b, Viveiros de Castro & Fausto 1993: 150) –, and I suggest that the frequency of interactions with outsiders is a determining factor: in Domujana, a small and remote settlement that outsiders rarely reach, G0 terms are still commonly used to address one's actual siblings; whereas in Tekoburojo, where interactions with unrelated or unknown people are much more intense, people were using nicknames rather than kin terms to address their true siblings.

But are G0 terms systematically used with strangers? Although kin terms often have a perlocutionary force (i.e. effects produced *by* language), for instance inspiring benevolence, they may also have an illocutionary force (i.e. effects directly produced *through* language), and this distinction is useful when considering the potential for sexual relationship. Jesús once told me how he had spent a dreadful night, lying next to an unrelated girl that he could not touch, only because she had called him *dakobo* (brother), and he was therefore frozen by shame (although they were unrelated): the term precludes sexual relationship. On the contrary, when I was taught how to flirt, it always involved *iboma* (girl) rather than *dakoi* or *dakoi sanuka* (elder/younger sister) as a term of address – and Jesús admitted that it was still possible to challenge the use of a term, for instance

149. Bloch (1971: 81-82) shows that it is the case of *havana*, 'kinsmen;' and Gow (1991: 170-171) that terms for grandson, granddaughter, nephew, niece, brother and sister are used exclusively in address for 'distant kin' and in reference for 'real kin.'

answering: "I am not your brother! Come here, girl!" To a certain extent, the relation is not described by the use of specific terms in the interaction, it is actually enacted, and interactions are negotiations about the definition of the relationship, where one's performance is an attempt at extracting a complementary reaction from the interlocutor, as I have shown in chapter 1. Here, the choice not to use a kin term differentiates the other from oneself, and illocutionarily or performatively creates the potential for a sexual relationship.[150]

At the other extreme, G+1 (and G-1) consanguineal terms are much more discriminating, since they distinguish according to sex, to relative age (compared to ego's parents) and also between patrilateral and matrilateral kin: *danihota* is for instance a female matrilateral relative older than ego's mother. They are therefore used to perform a specific relationship rather than loose relatedness, usually when support is expected. One day I had gone fishing with Carlo far from the village and we had been unlucky, he decided that we would spend the night at his nephew's who was nearby, because he did not want to come back empty-handed. When we arrived, late at night and while everyone was asleep, he addressed them emphatically as 'my children,' calling for a reciprocal *dehota* (FeB), since it was a very intrusive hospitality we were claiming. Similarly, in a myth called 'the death of the uterine uncles' (Lavandero 2000), the reciprocal terms for MB/ZS are repeatedly used in address at the beginning, both as a convincing and justifying device, when the main character decides to follow his uncles in the forest. However, soon it becomes a rationale for anger, since the uterine uncles have failed to provide the expected support and care, leading to the death of the man's younger brother: the outrage was caused by the fact that they were *daku*, and that in spite of such a relationship they had behaved as if they were only vaguely related or mere acquaintances.

Terms for G+2 and G-2 relatives occupy a median position, since they are not used for complete strangers, but are very indiscriminating. There are only three terms: *nobo*, 'grandfather,' *natu*, 'grandmother,' and *natoro*, 'grandchild.' First, they can be used to respectfully integrate someone unrelated yet familiar: Kiko, the shaman from another settlement who had been curing for years most members of my host family in Tekoburojo, was addressed and referred to (when he was there) as 'grandfather.' Second,

150. Similar practices have been described by Gregor (1977: 279) about the Mehinaku: a boy realised he had nothing to hope when the girl he was flirting with called him by a kin term. (See also J. Leach 2004: 86 about PNG.)

as I have already mentioned, G+2 terms are used within the settlement to erase all distinction between older residents, and especially between consanguines and affines.

They therefore contrast with the specific terms which exist for real affines of one's own and adjacent generations, and which, as I have hinted, only appear when the relationship fails. It happened for instance between Carlo, Jesús' divorced father, and his son-in-law Marcelo: the latter first told me angrily that, 'although [his] father-in-law' *(ma-rai rone)*, Carlo had asked him for compensation if he wanted to use his large canoe to build his new house; and the problem resurfaced in the other direction, when everyone in Carlo's family was shocked that, 'although his son-in-law' *(a-rawa rone)*, Marcelo had asked him for a payment when he organised a collective journey upriver.[151] Another example is provided by the case of Jesús telling Encarnación, the FBW of his own wife Candida, that he was 'not [her] son-in-law' *(ine hi-rawa-yana)*, and that she had nothing to expect from him: he was angry because she had been asking Candida for some of the food he had left her, while he was away. It is striking that in the first case affinal terms are suffixed with a concessive *(rone)*, and in the second with a negative *(yana)*: they are too strong to be used for positive effects, but they can be used, in the negative way I have described, to enact the failure or the refusal of an affinal relationship.

On a couple of occasions, I did however hear affinal terms used in affirmative statements. These essentially concerned the relationship between Javier, the headman, and Alex, the boss of the Guyanese smugglers. Javier considers that one of his daughters is married to Alex, and therefore constantly tries to 'perform the father-in-law,' referring to Alex as his *dawa*, to the house used by the smugglers as his daughter's house, and so on. But such conspicuous references to affinity are probably accounted for by his failure: Alex is behaving as the boss, treating the Warao as a lumpen proletariat, and his 'wife' at best as a mistress – and so, in their conflicting attempts to define the relationship, he clearly has the upper hand. This example reveals the limits of affinity among the Warao – and my perspective is here different from Heinen's focus on social organisation. Affinal relationships are deprived of any plasticity. They only work when they go without saying – both in a literal and metaphoric sense –, which means that they do not offer room to any adaptation, that they fail when they appear in discourse, and appear in discourse when they fail.

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151. Thomas (1982: 113) gives a comparable example of an argument between a father-in-law and a son-in-law, when the latter tried to introduce a concept of strict reckoning in the relationship, claiming that the former was not his real father-in-law.

Within discussions about wider application of kinship relations, Fausto suggests that asymmetrical affinity is limited because the father-in-law is a one-dimensional figure of control and predation (2008: 350), and puts forward the relationship of fosterage between a master-owner and his pet-children as an alternative. In Tekoburojo, when I was fishing with Carlo, people often joked that I was a *dawa*, son-in-law. One day, when his daughter Acacia made the same comment, Carlo only stated that I was in fact his *neburatu* – which designates a subordinate foster child. Among the Warao, the *neburatu* works for his leader, and is therefore comparable to the son-in-law who works for his father-in-law. But, following Fausto's perspective, I will show that fosterage is here a more salient relational schema, and is used to conceptualise the articulation between self and other is the only acceptable asymmetrical relation, thanks to its deeply affective nature, lacking between father-in-law and son-in-law.

3. Mastering alterity.

3.1. Cosmological operators.

Affinity has been described in Amazonia as a cosmological operator that plays a crucial mediating role in the conceptualisation of all sorts of relations between "us" and "them" (Viveiros de Castro 1993). Affinity is encompassed by consanguinity at the local level (cf. section 2.2.) –, but at the global level it is the encompassing concept. It is usually recognised that Lévi-Strauss (1943b) already had an intuition of the wider meaning of the brother-in-law relationship: in one of his early publications on the Nambikwara, he noticed that two separate groups, which had merged because of demographic issues, related to each other as brothers-in-law – more precisely, all the adult men of one group became the brothers-in-law of all the adult men of the other group, and vice-versa. The idea that symmetrical affinity is the default mode of relating in Amazonia appears implicitly in this incident, and it has been taken further by Viveiros de Castro. But it is true that, at least at the time, Lévi-Strauss limited his conclusions to a very sociological point of view: the solution adopted by the Nambikwara was meant to ensure intermarriage between the two groups, and therefore to achieve social integration, to "turn them into a new homogeneous unit" (1943b: 407).

Conversely, Viveiros de Castro stresses that, since the affinity of actual affines is concealed ("affines without affinity"), it allows the emergence of a much more salient "potential affinity:" the affinal relationship is used to conceptualise relations with

strangers, enemies and non-humans with whom everything *but* women is exchanged – names dead people, rituals, etc. – it represents an "affinity without affines" (Viveiros de Castro 1993: 179, Viveiros de Castro & Fausto 1993: 149). This focus on potential or meta-affinity (as Taylor [2000] calls it), represents a departure from the usual assumption that kinship is totalising,[152] since here affinity precisely opens society up. And it has been shown that the "opening to the Other" (Lévi-Strauss 1991: 16) is a central characteristic of lowland South Amerindian societies, where alterity is not merely necessary for the definition of the self, but more literally for its constitution (Erikson 1986).

I have already mentioned that, among the Warao, affinity does not seem to play such a role: the symmetrical affinity of brothers-in-law is of little importance compared to the asymmetrical affinity of a father-in-law and his son-in-law, which is a particularly difficult and non-negotiable relationship. It serves to refer to actual affines, but fails as soon as it is articulated, while mythical narratives systematically present affinity in terms of the unilateral predation of a son-in-law by his wife's father. Does this mean that the Warao occupy an original position within lowland South America? Does their limited use of affinity suggest a social and cosmological self-sufficiency?

Several authors have in fact developed another salient relational schema, between a master-owner and his foster child or wild pet, which might be more apposite to understand the Warao. It has recently been systematised by Fausto (2008), although earlier studies had already suggested the wider significance of the relation, especially his own previous work on warfare and shamanism, where he introduced the concept of 'familiarizing predation' (1999), as well as analyses of pet-keeping (Erikson 1987) and of adoption (Menget 1988). Fausto points to several reasons why it has been underestimated so far, and stresses that it represents a 'cosmological operator' that can play as important a role as symmetrical affinity: it is "a type of cosmopolitical and interspecific filiation (a meta-filiation) in which adoption rather than the vertical transmission of substances is the crucial element" (2008: 349). To take a specific case, Menget has stressed about the Txicão that the abducted child is '*egu*,' a word that also designates pets, animals in relation to the master-spirit of the species, war trophies, bamboo flutes, and the melodies played on them (1988: 67-68). In Fausto's terms, all these entities have been predated and familiarised by their master-owner, and detailed

152. The adjective 'usual' might seem over-generalising, but I only want to refer to the implicit or explicit idea that kinship is above all a question of social organisation, and it is usually presented in such a way in (old) textbooks presenting the history of the field.

ethnographies show that it is much more than polysemy, that analogous relations apply to different domains, therefore supporting the idea of a 'cosmological operator.'

This variability of the schema probably played a role in obscuring its importance, but it also accounts for its success: compared to the relationship between a father-in-law and his son-in-law, that of a master-owner and his pet-child is marked by its plasticity and its wide range of instantiations. Common to all is, however, the asymmetry, since "the owners control and protect their creatures, being responsible for their well-being, reproduction and mobility. This asymmetry implies not only control but care" (Fausto 2008: 333). This dual aspect of the relationship reveals that it has little in common with the Hegelian Master who, according to Kojève (1980 [1947]: 23), enjoys an "immediate" mastery. Conversely, in lowland South America, mastery is mediated by the work of nurture and care, and, among the Warao, it is crucial for shamans to feed their spirits tobacco and *moriche* palm sago, to watch over them and sleep with them – especially when they have not been completely pacified yet.[153] This dual aspect of control and care in fact defines several types of relations, which are therefore similar under this respect, in spite of slight differences in their nature and in the way they are referred to: between a shaman and his auxiliary spirits, between an owner and his pets, between a foster parent and his foster child, between a boss and his workers, between a headman and his followers, between the spirit-master of an animal species and the individual members of the species, etc.

The main terminological ambiguity is the fact that there are two distinct terms in Warao to refer to a master-owner (*arotu* and *aidamo*), which points to an interesting question, that of alteration and alterity. Fausto stresses that mastery-ownership is the typical relation between very alien beings: for instance, it does not always apply to a father and his son, but more often to foreign foster parents and children, and systematically to those abducted in war (2008: 333). Through familiarisation, the pet-child, i.e. the subordinate being, progressively becomes akin to its master, owner or foster parent, and the process turns (potential) affinity into consanguinity (Fausto 1999: 939). But Fausto also stresses that "the very essence of the owner is to be altered" (2008: 341), since he encompasses his pet-children and becomes an "internally composite" subject (ibid., 1999: 949, see also Losonczy 1990). The point is that the submission is never complete, or more precisely that pet-children are only interesting in so far as their

153. J. Wilbert (1996: 147-148) conversely recounts a case where they failed to "pacify" the spirit.

subjectivity is preserved, which also means that they always threaten to overwhelm the subjectivity of their master-owner. It therefore appears that, compared to other types of relation, this one is essentially transformative: it is a question of (partially) turning the other into oneself, of (partially) becoming the other – through encompassment.

Arotu designates primarily the owner of a pet or a thing (and never of a human person), and *aidamo* a political leader, a boss, a foster parent, or the master-spirit of an animal species.[154] From this perspective, I argue that the question is one of differing alteration of the master-owner. The *arotu* is an unaltered owner, whose possessions or pets are fully subjected, whereas the *aidamo* is turned into a composite being by his encompassment of other subjectivities. Indeed, a wild animal is subjected to his spirit-leader in the same way that a human follows his leader or his boss, but it does not compare to the strict control exercised by someone over his pets or his inanimate possessions[155] – and there is some morphological evidence supporting such a distinction.[156] We can therefore adopt Fausto's idea and say that the *aidamo* is "a singular image of a collectivity" while all distinctions between his subordinates are temporarily obviated (2008: 334).[157]

Considering such an interpretation, and the general idea that preserving the subjective condition of their auxiliary spirits is necessary to the shamans' power, it might be surprising that the general term for 'shaman' in Warao is *hebu arotu*, literally 'owner of spirits,' and that the spirits are sometimes referred to as his pets, as if his control were

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154. It contrasts interestingly with the case of the Brazilian Matis, who have only one concept for owner or master, *igbo*, but make a distinction with the regard to the other term of the relation: *wiwa* is a morpheme that describes the state of being subjected to an *igbo*, but it applies only to animates, whereas *chu*, 'possessions,' is only used for inanimates (Erikson 2009: 182-183). The Warao, on the other hand, obviously do not distinguish between animate and inanimate subjected entities, since the concept of *arotu* applies both to the owner of a pet and to that of a thing.

155. Pets are designated by the prefixing of a possessive mark to the noun 'bird' (*ma-romu*, 'my pet'), and indeed they usually are birds tied to a pole in the house or the kitchen house.

156. In Warao, *arotu* is essentially a singular form, which cannot be properly pluralised: its plural, according to Warao morphology, is *arao*, but this has the common meaning of 'people of' (e.g. *tekoburojo-arao*, 'the inhabitants of Tekoburojo'), and although it is sometimes given as a translation of 'owners', it never unambiguously has such a meaning (see Barral 2000: 27). On the one hand, this feature points to the fact that ownership is never collective, as I mentioned in chapter 1, but on the other hand, it also reveals that owning a fully subjected entity, whether thing or pet, does not alter the owner: an *arotu* remains a pure singularity. Conversely, *aidamo* appears as an essentially plural concept, since the suffix *-mo* is an 'agentive plural nominalizer' (whereas *-tu* is an 'agentive singular nominalizer', cf. Osborn 1966b: 254), although the notion of a multiplicity of leaders can be expressed with the plural marker *-tuma* (e.g. *ka-aidamo-tuma*, our leaders).

157. *Nebu*, the word used by a headman calling for a meeting, is locally translated in Spanish as 'la gente,' and entails a (temporarily) complete lack of differentiation.

complete, as if he were not altered by the relation. First, it must be noted that previous ethnographers of the Warao have mainly failed to see this question, because they were trying to present shamanic and ritual practices in very classical religious terms.[158] Second, I want to stress that it is however an ambivalent relation. Calling the shaman *hebu arotu* can be seen as a kind of wishful thinking, precisely stressed because the danger is never absent. When Adelina told me that her ex-husband Evaristo referred to his auxiliary spirits as his pets, she immediately added that she had answered him: "although [they are] your pets, they will eat you!" *(hi romu rone, hi nahoro-te)*, before bursting out laughing with me.[159] It shows that shamanic spirits are not systematically seen as fully subjected entities, which would defeat the point, and that they are often extreme others. Although shamans have to deal with beings that are sometimes presented as ancestral spirits called 'our grandfathers' *(ka nobo-tuma)*, as J. Wilbert (1993, 1996) stresses in his descriptions of Warao shamanism, their relation to their spirits is never one of immediate identity. It has to be built progressively through familiarisation and, in the area where I conducted my fieldwork, auxiliary spirits were consistently described by my hosts and friends as belonging to a category of cannibal beings, and as being for the shaman 'like his children.'[160]

Because of this dual status, the auxiliary spirits protect a shaman from other predators, and they are sometimes referred to as his 'care-takers' *(a-yaoro-mo)*. Usually, this term is used when the relationship of ownership is exceptionally distinct from the relationship of

158. See J. Wilbert (1993, 1996) and his former student Heinen (1988b: 72-75), who offers a translation of the myth of origin of shamanism which is typical of their approach: grieving because of the death of too many of his villagers, a Warao headman once decided to visit a spirit residing at the extremity of the earth. The latter asked for two Warao to die, and in exchange promised one of his own followers, to become the protective spirit of the Warao. Whereas Heinen claims that the expression "two 'pets'" that it is the "shamanic language for the sacrifice of two human beings" (1988b: 73n.1), I argue that it can be taken literally, and that it is more apposite to talk of an exchange of relatives, who are to become the subordinate foster children of the other. Briggs (1994), in his linguistic analysis of shamanic ritual discourses, does not deal with this question either.

159. Similarly, one of my informants once told me that his late father-in-law used to tell his wife not to wear a red shirt when they were going to the forest, since he was a shaman and could always be overcome by the jaguar inside him. This theme of the shaman being overwhelmed by the perspective of the beings he harbours in him is common in Amazonia.

160. Such beings are capable of assuming both human and jaguar shape, and are alternatively called *tobe* (jaguar or predator in general), *namoni-tuma* (literally 'transformational beings'), and *musimo-tuma* (usually translated as 'Carib Indians,' i.e. cannibals). The idiom of filiation is present both in common and in ritual discourses, where auxiliary spirits are alternatively treated as 'children' (reciprocal: *hoko rima*, 'radiant father') and as fostered dependants that the shaman can 'order about' *(inataba-kitane)* (cf. Lavandero 2000). It is indeed very common in Amazonia: for some comparative references, see Fausto (1999: 938), for a detailed ethnography, see Chaumeil (2000 [1983]: 115sq.) on the Peruvian Yagua.

care.[161] Here, however, both relations are not distinct, but rather reciprocal: the shaman looks after his spirits because he is their owner, but they also keep him safe – because they are powerful beings that reciprocate the care of their master with their own. The condensation of various relations and identities turns the shaman into a complex being, who is therefore capable of interacting with other complex beings such as the spirit-masters of animal species and other pathogenic beings. This statement is in fact consistent with the findings of detailed analyses of shamanic discourses. Severi (2002), most notably, has shown how such a complex identity is generated through ritual discourse, more precisely through the definition of the enunciator, and is at the source of the efficacy of shamanism.

I return to the question of shamanism in chapter 4, and try to make new uses of the complex identity of the shaman. My aim so far was mainly to stress the saliency of a general schema of fosterage, which appears in various contexts as the main form of asymmetrical relation, and emerges as a cosmological operator articulating the inside and the outside. Describing the relation between a shaman and his auxiliary spirits also helped showing that all relations of this kind are to a certain extent homologous. I however now want to focus on some of its aspects and effects in the field of socio-political relations, and to stress that this relation plays a mediating role between Warao and Criollo worlds.

3.2. Identity, power, and affect.

When it comes to relations between humans, there is some terminological ambivalence as well. First, it concerns the subordinate term: *nebu* is collectivising and primarily refers to the employees (of a boss) or to the followers (of a political leader), whereas *neburatu* is individualising and primarily refers to a foster child (cf. Lavandero 1992: 59n.6). Second, the term for owner-master, *aidamo*, is sometimes expressed, but it then stresses the control and asymmetry,[162] and it can also be substituted for by other expressions that focus on the relationship of care and nurture, for instance *ma-ida-tu* (literally 'my

161. It applies for instance to the women who run the communal day nurseries that I mentioned in chapter 1, since the real owners are the Criollos who sponsored the project.
162. When prefixed with a plural first-person possessive mark, *aidamo* usually means headman or political leader, whereas it has the meaning of patron or boss when prefixed with a singular first-person possessive mark (*ka-(a)idamo*, 'our leader,' *ma-(a)idamo*, 'my boss').

raiser').[163] Such an emphasis is even more pronounced when various circumlocutions are used, which are variations on the image of 'growing up in someone's hand.'[164]

In general, these types of relationships always represent a tool for transformation, especially changing the identity, ethos and capabilities of the subordinate foster child or employee. Similar phenomena have been noted in other areas of lowland South America, often in the context of a formerly 'wild' people being 'civilised' and 'pacified' by its collective relationship with some foreign bosses,[165] or with another native group.[166] In the Delta, similar situations existed in the past, since some settlements were said to be under the authority of a Criollo boss, but such situations do not play any role in narratives of civilising processes and I only heard about such facts from outsiders.[167] In fact, the Warao only mention a collective bond of fostered dependence when they describe their past experiences as boarders in the Capuchin missionaries' schools. This only concerns the older generation, since they stopped accommodating boarders decades ago,[168] but this relation is salient in their narratives. Older people stress that they 'grew up in the missionaries' hands,' who used to feed and take care of them, but who also controlled their behaviour and made them work: this alternation is explicit in the life-narrative recorded by Lavandero (2005), and is typical of the general relation between masters-owners and their pet-children. It transformed the life habits and capabilities of the Warao: they often stress that it is how they discovered clothes and tools, learned how to write and speak Spanish, got accustomed to rice or beef – implicitly contrasting themselves to Warao who are more primitive or 'Indio,' as I shown in chapter 1. The transformation enacted by the missionaries was even broader, for they also produced

163. It is possible to interpret *aidamo* as the plural form of *a-ida-tu*, and it would support my interpretation of mastery-ownership as a dual tie of control and care. This is however only a possibility, none of my informants ever suggested that it was the case, and *aidamo* is not used to designate a collectivity of 'raisers.'

164. Always variations on: *a moho eku ida-e*, although *nohoto-kitane* is sometimes used as a synonym for *ida-kitane* (to raise, to grow).

165. The Piro consider themselves to be civilised because they went through several periods of submission to foreign bosses, during which they discovered things, acquired surnames and learned Spanish (Gow 1991).

166. The Trio and Wayana have a responsibility towards the more recently contacted Akuryio (to turn them into a civilised and peaceful people), but they also keep them in a state of subjugation (Grotti 2007).

167. Digna Sucre, the current mayor of the Municipio Antonio Díaz, is said to be the daughter of such a boss, which explains why she understands Warao. The missionaries who told me so also considered ironic that the governmental coalition decided to support her, therefore reproducing old structures of domination in spite of revolutionary discourses. For other sources, see the narratives recorded during the 1970s by Lavandero (1992).

168. In Guayo, the male boarding school closed in 1972, the female one in 1990 (Lavandero 2005: 282).

new kinship. The missionaries used to encourage marriage between their pupils, without taking into account their settlement of origin, and therefore led to creation of new villages, peopled by Warao coming from various areas of the Delta, and it gave birth to the area of the 'casados' in Guayo and to the main neighbourhood of Nabasanuka. This represented a temporary deviation from the habits of marrying cognates and of replicating marriages, which I describe in section 2.2 of this chapter, but the students had time to become accustomed to each other and they married under the custody of the missionaries.

Lavandero (1992: 59n.6) notes that he would call any of his pupils *ma neburatu*. The term is, however, essentially applied to an individual relation of fosterage, and seems all the more adequate when the distance is great. My compadre Rafael, for instance, was an orphan raised by a Criollo couple in the lower Delta. He never referred to the relationship as one of control or asymmetry, but placed emphasis on the care he received (he 'grew up in their hands') – which he reciprocated addressing the old couple as 'papa' and 'mama' –, and on his mixed identity. He knows how to castrate and butcher a pig because he has been raised by Criollos, and he sometimes presents himself as mixed, as both Criollo and Warao, stressing that he speaks both Spanish and Warao. Interestingly, in his case the relation also transformed his foster parents. They have a Warao (foster) son, Warao grandchildren and even great-grandchildren. Even though they are described as Criollos, they have become mixed as well: they know how to speak Warao and they form part of a native kinship network – recalling the idea that the master-owner is altered by the relationship.

Much more common is however a less long-lasting but markedly asymmetrical relationship: most boys, and some girls as well, spend some time working away from their settlement, usually before getting married. Cornelio for instance spent several years as an employee of the palmito heart factory that used to be located at La Horqueta, while Jesús worked for a Criollo fisherman, therefore travelling throughout the Delta under his responsibility. Girls, who admittedly move less often, usually become maidservants of Criollo families – the Spanish terms 'criada' or 'criado' are probably the closest equivalents to the Warao term *neburatu*, since they entail the idea of fosterage and nurture as well as that of asymmetry and control of labour. Alanza had left Tekoburojo and was holding such a position in Ciudad Guyana during the second half of my fieldwork. Her case is particularly interesting because her step-father Gustavo was emphasising that she had left in order to become Criollo, in order to be perfectly fluent in Spanish and at ease

out of the Delta, even though he was not expecting this migration to be definitive. Some people never come back, but most of the people I met presented such work as a temporary experience that transformed them, accounting for the fact that they are not 'pure Indians' *(warao-witu)*, as I outlined in chapter 1: this trans-ethnic temporary fosterage, although it has been less a focus of attention than the trans-specific fosterage practiced by shamans, seems to be very common feature of lowland South Amerindians who have regular interactions with the surrounding non-native populations.[169]

If the young man is only one among many employees, as was the case of Cornelio, the term *nebu* is usually used, which they translate in Spanish as 'obrero' (worker). But the same categories are applied to adults, who either work only intermittently, or as clients rather than employees. They refer to themselves as *nebu* and to the boss as their *aidamo*, although it seems to be radically different from the personal relation of subordinating fosterage that is also designated by those terms. I have argued that this schema owes its success and wide range of application to its plasticity, but why do the Warao extend it so widely?

My first argument, which is at the heart of the analyses by Fausto (2008) and Bonilla (2005) is that the master not only controls his pet-child, and especially appropriates his work or productive activity, but also protects and nurtures him or her – it is a personal relationship of trust, which stands out against others. Jesús was for instance telling me about his days as the employee of Cristos, a fisherman and trader, and mentioned that he once had to travel downriver with two Criollo employees that he did not know. During the journey, happy to laugh at the expense of the 'Indio,' they (jokingly?) threatened that they were going to kill him – Jesús took the threat very seriously, since he did not know them and, for the Warao, all Criollos are potential murderers. He did not say a word during the whole trip, jumped off the boat when they stopped at the settlement of Jobure – although he had no relatives there –, and told the Criollos to continue on their own. Since they did not know the lower Delta at all, they erred until their boss eventually arrived. It was not a question of personality, but rather of their relation with Jesús: Cristos as well could potentially be a threat to some unknown Warao, as the two employees were to Jesús, but Cristos was Jesús' boss, he was trusted by his employee and protected him. As Fausto underlines, the master appears to this followers as a protective father, and to others as a predatory affine or a jaguar (2008: 335). This ambivalence is even more striking in some tales recorded by Lavandero (1992), where the Capuchin

169. See Gow 1991: 130, Hugh-Jones 1992: 67, and Bonilla 2005: 45.

missionaries occupy changing positions. The first narrator – a man who was already middle-aged when Lavandero did the recording in 1975 – tells about the era when the missionaries were searching for children to bring to their boarding schools, when he was still a little boy. The missionaries are presented as predatory beings, and it is even suggested that the children in fact constitute their food – but in this case the Warao are protected by their Criollo boss, Ramón Quintín, who tells the missionaries that they cannot take away the children of his people *(nebu)* (Lavandero 1992: 85-93).

Other stories of the same volume are of a quite different nature, presenting the missionaries not as predatory but rather as protective beings. They are told by the son of the first narrator, that is to say a man who grew up knowing the missionaries, and was even a student of Lavandero (who had settled in their community of Ajotejana). No term for master-owner or child-pet is used in the narrative, but the relations are unmistakable. The narrator has gone to Tucupita because his wife is ill, and he does not really know what to do while she is at the hospital. Someone sends him to the house of the missionaries, who welcome him with a hammock and some food, but also ask him to do some (light) work for them – to prune the mango trees. More importantly, the crucial turn in the story happens when the nurses tell him that there is no more medicine for his wife. The other Warao advise him to go and look for 'Padre Juan,' who is said to be a paramount chief of the area (*kokotuka aidamo*, lit. 'the headman of everyone'), but also that they refer to as 'our father' *(ka rima)*. Indeed, when they complain about being discriminated against, the head missionary becomes enraged, dismisses the nurses at fault, and orders that the Warao be treated as well as the Criollos (Lavandero 1992: 165-199). Here the missionaries antagonise others, but protect the Warao who are like their children. What is at stake is therefore not so much their nature, but rather the specific relation that has progressively developed: through 'familiarizing predation' (Fausto 1999): they have turned from dangerous cannibals to protective fathers.

In their discourses about people who occupy such a position (missionaries, foster parents, patrons, etc.), the Warao usually stress the protection and care they receive, which is salient when they use terms constructed on the verb 'to grow/raise' *(ida-kitane)*. They admittedly express satisfaction at having reached a state of autonomy, of not being constantly subjected to others,[170] but they hardly ever appear resentful of any 'labour

170. Although it is not such a salient theme among the Warao, it can recall the stress of the Piro on their present 'time of freedom,' in contrast to earlier eras of subjection (Gow 1991: 59-71).

exploitation:' it is eclipsed by the care provided by the patron or father,[171] and this relationship represents the only way asymmetry is acceptable, in stark contrast to the WF/DH relationship, which is one devoid of care.

But relations do not exist in a static condition, they are rather 'performed,' as I argued in section 2.3 of this chapter and in chapter 1. Fausto starts from the idea that "the master's potency is the capacity to extract an action from his wild pet" (2008: 343), before stressing that this is an ambivalent relation, where the master is altered as well, where it is sometimes impossible to know who caused the action and who is acting. But in the field of socio-political relations, the problem is sometimes slightly different. Bonilla for instance shows that the Brazilian Paumari, who consistently represent themselves as prey, precisely try to turn others into protective patrons or masters (rather than predators) by behaving as good employees (or pets). In her words, "the self-positing of the Paumari in a position of domesticable prey compels the stranger to adopt a corresponding position of pacifying domesticator" – i.e. they avoid being devoured (Bonilla 2005: 58). Using the terminology of Fausto (2008) and Kelly (in press), it could be phrased in terms of someone 'extracting' a specific reaction from others, since it is the general mode of action in lowland South America – here the weak compel the mighty to act as good patrons rather than voracious enemies (Bonilla 2005).

The Warao are to a certain extent similar, although they do not explicitly share the Paumari distinction between (exploited) clients and (protected) employees, and sometimes perform symmetrical relations. In 2007, while I was paying a short visit in Guayo, the French owner of a hotel had hired a Warao, who had his own boat, to take some extra tourists around. But the Warao did not do what the Frenchman had asked him, and the latter shouted angrily at the former, whose reaction was, however, not one of submission. He had his own boat, and therefore was not an employee *(nebu)* to be ordered about, but rather an autonomous adult *(daomata)* expecting respect. Through a symmetrical schismogenesis, the foreigner's anger evoked his own anger, and he cancelled the agreement. Conversely, when some Warao are undoubtedly in a subordinate position, they want the relationship to be on their terms, which means that they want the other to behave as they consider a good patron should. It does not

171. Lavandero makes a similar observation when presenting a narrative told by Evaristo about his late foster father, a Criollo named Jesús Infante: "Evaristo always remembers with gratefulness and adoration the memory of *natu Arelaida* and *dima Jesú Infante* who raised him in his own settlement of Ajotejana, living in the fishing and agricultural station that this Criollo family kept there for many years" (1992: 49).

necessarily mean a long lasting personal relation of fosterage, but even in shorter lived work contracts, they attempt to extract a crucial element: food – that is to say nurture. This feature is never given much attention by foreigners and bosses, or it is interpreted as a very practical question (you need to eat in order to work). But the fact that it appears systematically, that the Warao always ask to be fed as an absolute requisite, that they discuss how much they were fed sometimes more than how much they were paid, all this reveals that food is much more than mere fuel – as I argued in chapter 2 about relations between kinsfolk. When they work as employees at someone's place, they want to be served a meal. When they travel with a boss, they often complain about having put up without real food (i.e. only bread and fizzy drinks). When they are contracted to perform some work within their own settlement, they ask for additional money to be spent on food, and for some women to be hired as cooks as well – as happened when they rebuilt the path on stilts in Tekoburojo, as part of a social program conducted by the French oil company Total. Crucially, this is not payment for their work, but rather the necessary counterpart of their being in subordinate position. This distinction surfaces strikingly in a story recorded by Lavandero, where the narrator complains in an astonished manner that his boss has discounted the price of the food from his wage (1992: 243-250): nurture is a duty of the patron, not something earned by the employee.

In this context, the Venezuelan state, through its myriad of programs that I outlined in chapter 1, has produced particular effects. The current ideological emphasis on direct democracy and self-management (e.g. with the 'Consejos comunales') has not so much led to a world without bosses, but it has enabled the Warao to set the terms of the relationship with their bosses. When they work for governmental or para-governemental institutions, they for instance have a decisive say in the allocation of the budget, can organise their being fed and not just their being paid. They often ask political leaders to provide them with work (using alternatively *yaota* and 'trabajo'), but this also means they want to be taken care of: is this a paternalist dream?

4. Summary and conclusions.

My conductive idea in this chapter was the concept of nurture and its affective effects, through which I have tried to understand the Warao conception of kinship relations. I have presented them as known ties of caring between know people, extending from ego and forming his or her consanguineal kindred. But it would also be possible, as was implicit in section 2, to see the problem from the other way round, from an affinal

perspective: their conception of kinship relations is an answer to the necessity of differentiating people, of turning their neighbours into non-kin, in order to marry them. Indeed, if the Warao, who cannot marry their relatives, do not want to marry strangers either, it is because asymmetrical affinity is an oppressive or burdensome relation. It exposes by contrast the relationship of fosterage, where appropriation and control are eclipsed by care, and which therefore plays a crucial role in many contexts and especially in the conceptualisation of relations between Warao and outsiders. This relation indeed does not leave people intact: it appears as a tool for transformation, and my interlocutors often used it to account for what they were when I did my fieldwork, both as a group and as individuals – Warao Indians who also knew, to different extents, how to deal with outsiders. It could lead to further fruitful investigations in political anthropology, if one were to follow some of Fausto's suggestions about the way the Amerindian concept of mastery helps us to think power without being constrained by our Western model of "social control" (2008: 342).

My interest, however, does not lie in such a direction. This chapter offered a more detailed description of the relational space of the Warao, but also enabled me to present a homology between shamanism and daily kinship practices. I now want to pursue further the analysis of the link between these two fields, through a return to the issue of morality, which was mostly absent from this chapter. It will at the same time offer the opportunity to approach shamanism from the perspective of the non-specialists (contrary to what is usually done), but also to rethink the link between kinship and morality – this time through discourses about illness and health.

Chapter 4
Illness and shamanism: care under various guises

In his book *Mindful of Famine*, the anthropologist Johannes Wilbert recounts experiences of illness and death that he witnessed during his first months of fieldwork among the Warao, in 1954. In this vivid narrative, he shows the anxiety of people whose relatives were dying, stressing how they were envisaging many different potential explanations, and hence trying different solutions at once. Whereas an old shaman was convinced that "all the gods are evil," and chose to revert to living in a true Warao style, without clothing, salt or cigarettes, performing rituals of offerings to the ancestors (1996: 116), many were spreading rumours about sorcerers who were causing the diseases. Indeed, when a young man was dying, his father's last question was: "who killed you?"; and the moribund named a shaman living in the neighbouring village, who had however tried to cure him (ibid.: 124). This accusation resurfaced later, when everyone gathered for the funerary rite. At the moment he died, however, it was eclipsed by another accusation: his mother attacked her co-wife and screamed: "It is your fault! You never fed him when he was hungry!" (1996: 125).

This account reveals the variety of discourses about illness and death, which belong to different contexts and different positions. The bulk of J. Wilbert's book is, however, much more straightforward since the author dismisses witchcraft accusations as a

sociological artifice, and the mother's attack as an anecdote. Instead, he focuses on an array of 'religious practitioners' who almost seem to form corporations, having distinct apprenticeships, deriving their power from opposite 'cosmic sources,' manipulating different aspects of the supernatural, etc. He mostly describes three main categories of shamans (*wisidatu, bahanarotu, hoarotu,* see section 2.2), but also lesser specialists, for instance the rain shaman *(naha arima)* or the player of sacred trumpets *(isimoi arotu)*, who control the weather. Although Wilbert recognises that all members of the former categories can both cause and cure individual illnesses, he focuses on the *wisidatu*, whom he describes as a 'priest-shaman,' because of his role in performing rituals in the course of which the ancestor spirits – personified as stones kept in a temple – are fed tobacco smoke and moriche palm starch. Privileging information that comes from ritual specialists, and decontextualising it so as to present a consistent theory, Wilbert builds a native theory of the world, describing in great detail a very complex etiology, in terms of relations with the gods or of magical operations performed by a shaman.

Indeed, Wilbert's work would appear to us to be that of a folklorist more than of an anthropologist; yet I believe that much Amazonian anthropology adopts the same posture in decontextualising native statements in order to give consistency to a native world view – or world. On the contrary, I argue that different types of discourses on illness and death are only relevant to certain contexts and certain positions, and they need not appear contradictory anymore. Grieving relatives do not detail etiologies, but focus on grief-inspired accusations, and a shaman talks about nurture only to describe relationships between humans and spirits. Yet these types of discourse can be read in comparable ways, offering an understanding of health and illness in terms of one's insertion in a relational space – although with different pragmatic assumptions. From this point of view, illness and health are not so much a question of esoteric processes, but rather the outcome of acts of care, and of their lack, which I have shown to be central in the definition of kinship.

In anthropology, witchcraft has often been interpreted as the ideological reification of all the anti-social vices (greed, stinginess, violence, etc.), therefore providing an idiom for moral comments, and even fulfilling a normative function in society. The same could be said of shamanic aggression among the Warao, but I want to question precisely the analytical nature of the link between morality and shamanism. I therefore argue that curing and predatory shamans do not represent the embodiment of the social values and anti-social vices that govern daily life, but rather that talking in shamanic terms reveals

people as being composite, more precisely as being constituted by caring and uncaring relations.

1. Unwellness: body, mind, and society.

1.1. Vitality and Morbidity.

The Warao have a myth concerning the origin of death that follows a typically Amazonian pattern (Lévi-Strauss 1964). In a group, the headman says that no one should sleep, but an Indian falls asleep anyway. Then the headman says not to answer the first call that they will hear (coming from a malevolent spirit), but only the second call (coming from a benevolent spirit). However, the Warao who had fallen asleep is waken up by the first call and answers it: it is death, and this is why people do not live forever (Barral 1960: 149-150). Taylor, in her analysis of the Jivaroan myth of the origin of mortality that I mentioned in chapter 1, points out that this kind of myth says nothing about death itself, and that there is a huge disproportion between a "trivial deed of transgression" and the origin of death: the myth "presents sharply defined terms in a paradoxical and therefore undefined relationship" (1996: 204). But this is only one aspect of native conceptualisations, for everyday understandings, focusing on the relationship between unmarked poles, present death as a process. It is a very common conception in native Amazonia, and the Warao give semantic evidence of it: only one word *(waba-)* is usually used to express both being ill and being dead in most contexts,[172] tenses making the difference. In the present, it means to be ill, or rather to be dying *(waba-ya)*, whereas in simple past, it means to be dead *(waba-e)*. One can therefore only say that someone has been ill by saying that he almost died *(waba-turu-ae)*. If there is no doubt about a dead person *(waba-ha)*, someone ill is called a dying person *(waba-ya-ha)*. If there is continuity between life and death, what matters is rather the contrast between two prototypical states: one of enhanced vitality, and the other of complete morbidity.

Enhanced vitality is represented by the youth or the adult who, at sunset, after a day of productive work or an afternoon of playing on the beach, is more beautiful than ever because he or she has just bathed in the river, with some perfumed soap, and has dressed in his or her finest colourful clothes. It is a moment when people make themselves

172. There are other words, but which have more specific connotations: *moana-* refers to collective dying (epidemics or slaughter), and I mostly heard it in myths, or talking about villages being wiped out in the past. *Nobara-*, for illness, is more technical, and would be used in an abstract way rather than to refer to a concrete experience.

visible to others, and therefore available for interaction,[173] for most villagers eat their evening meal in their kitchens – an open space along the bridge that links all houses – and those who have just finished or who have not yet started walk along, gather with their friends, joke in a playful manner about the desirability of teenagers, gather one moment to smoke while telling stories with others, or congregate in a house to watch a movie or dance. In both cases, density is at its maximum, for those who watch TV are piled on each other, in hammocks or on the floor – a static version of the bodies dancing. This latter situation is the most valued, linked to the central concept of celebration *(ori-waka)*, which can be used to refer to very profane parties, for instance the heavy drinking and dancing that take place around New Year's eve, but also to celebrations linked to the Christian calendar, and to the traditional *noara* ritual. The latter is an invitation of 'ancestral' spirits to celebrate with the living, eating their food, so that they would protect them. The ritual discourse itself explicitly contrasts this celebration *(ori-waka)* and the feelings of happiness and well-being it is meant to create among divinities and humans, with the sufferings of daily labour *(sanamata)* and with death *(waba)* (Lavandero 2000: 185-208). The concept itself is essentially linked to the idea of visibility and interactional density, as shows its metaphoric use to refer to the crab season *(he a-oriwaka)*, when swamp ghost crabs come out of their holes to gather on the ground, running in a frenzied manner. Moreover, as Briggs (1992: 349) underlines, it is a context of shared emotional states, of "relationally based emotions," and the reciprocal prefix *ori-* (rather than the reflexive *yori-*) is central in building this meaning.[174] At the other extreme, there is the no less common case of the elderly dying. A woman, crouched in her hammock all day long, to whom food has to be brought because she doesn't have the strength to go and interact with others – she is not eating much anyway, and her body is becoming thin. She is prostrated most of the time, for her relatives sometimes come, showing how much they care, but she hardly answers. She feels weak, cannot work, cannot dance either. Who would want to dance with her anyway? – she smells of death.

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173. We could see this as the modern and mundane equivalent of usual beauty accredited to youth or adults who have adorned themselves for rituals. Among the Kalapalo, Basso for instance describes the washing and painting rituals that mark the end of mourning and allow mourners to appear in public again, since before then they were "unwilling to show themselves" (1985: 125-126). About the beauty of young initiates among the Xikrin, see Gordon 2006: 320-321; and Munn 1986 about 'beautification' in Gawa.

174. We could note that this prefix is present, even more than in everyday language, in the ritual language of the *noara* (Lavandero 2000).

From this sketchy vignette, a few characteristic features can be put forward. Firstly, the state of health or illness has to do with the way people make themselves visible to others – which recalls the discussion of visibility in previous chapters – and consequently engage in interactions: intensified sociability on the one hand, withdrawn prostration on the other. Secondly, it is defined by a bodily state which is at the same time external (beautiful and clean vs. ugly and dirty) and internal (energetic vs. weak and painful). A central concern here is smell. Indeed, it has been argued that the Warao have a "pneumatic theory of illness," where fetid and lethal smells are the cause of illness and death, and have to be fought with therapeutic scents in order to restore health (W. Wilbert 1996: 201-208). I believe that the notion is much more widespread than a mere 'native theory of illness,' since scent is for instance central in fishing techniques as much as in cooking. I also believe that it is a much more messy concern than the concept of a 'theory' would lead us to believe: it was also, for instance, a common motivation to bathe in the river. Men would joke daily about each other's penis smelling of rottenness and attracting vultures, making fun of those who were waiting too long after waking up or coming back from a fishing trip. Rather than a magical force or entity (as in the Greek theory W. Wilbert refers to), smell works as an index of one's state, and as a particularly important communication channel (women's blood attracts water spirits and freshwater dolphins, as human smell would repel fish, etc.). Finally, the emotional state of mind is also an integral part of it: a healthy person is playful and caring at the same time, in contrast to those who are sad or do not have the energy to care for others – and indeed the dead are those who cannot look after their relatives anymore (cf. chapters 3 & 5).

1.2. Body and mind.

Instead of illness, we could speak of a generalised unwellness, of an undifferentiated suffering, of a dis-ease. Of course, it is possible to offer a detailed taxonomy of pathologies among the Warao, based on symptoms (e.g. *diara-obo*: fever-cough) and on mystical causes (e.g. *Hebu tororo*: spirit tremble, malaria?), as did W. Wilbert (1996). However, I believe that such a classificatory system never exists in such a way in native practice and thought, and what Taylor said of the Jivaroan Achuar can easily be extended to the Warao: "any affliction regardless of its origin and apparently benign character, turns into a symptom of bewitchment if it lasts for more than a few days or even hours" and "the relatively detailed taxonomy of pathologies that Achuar informants develop in the abstract […] rapidly breaks down to a single, massive contrast between 'health' and

undifferenciated suffering" (1996: 207). In an actual case of illness, for those that are involved (esp. the moribund and his close kin), what really matters is a limited set of symptoms, which are purely descriptive and can be easily combined: fever *(diara)*, cough *(obo)*, pain *(ahera)* in any part of the body, diarrhoea *(soho)*, vomit *(dokohi)*. However, at any moment, most Warao experience some kind of suffering or pain, and it is crucial to establish the seriousness of the affliction through two simple expressions: *wabaya* – he is dying/he is ill –, and *hebu* – spirit. The gravity of the situation can then be assessed by vague qualifications concerning the body getting weak *(botobotera)* and thin *(botuka)*, in contrast to the fatness of babies that I mentioned in chapter 3.

This type of discourse is very often directed towards kinsfolk and foreigners, for compassion regarding others' suffering is a main motive for action. When adults are severely ill and incapacitated, their relatives know they cannot let them suffer hunger, they have to be caring and provide material support. Foreigners living in the lower Delta are also the recipient of such discourses. J.A. Kelly (in press) has dealt with an interesting contradiction among the Venezuelan Yanomami: why would Western doctors and medicine matter that much, if they cannot cure the real causes of illness? His answer is to stress that it is an ethical obligation to reduce people's suffering: here lies the power of Western medicine, and this is why the Yanomami are at the same time so keen on obtaining it from outsiders, and so reluctant to entrust their healing only to physicians' hands. The same is essentially true among the Warao: stressing their suffering, their 'dying' *(wabaya)* is necessary to elicit compassion in others and extract medication; but underlying that it is a 'shamanic illness' *(hebu)* at the same time reveals that the seriousness of the matter places it beyond Westerners' power to cure.[175] When etiological categories are mobilised, they are only tentatively put forward, as possibilities among others, and never have the certainty of objective description (symptoms) or personal experience (suffering). It can recall Taylor's idea that, among the Jivaro, illness "is the experience of the symptoms themselves; it is suffering as such rather than its presumed cause" (2007: 152). One day, my friend Jesús was suffering a twist in his knee, which incapacitated him for a couple of weeks. Uncertainty worked at two levels. First,

175. The polysemy of the word *hebu* will be dealt with in section 2.3. One of its uses is to point out illnesses that have been caused by an intentional agent, and therefore can be cured neither by Western medicine nor by phytotherapy (contrary to cases of debilitating contact with menstrual blood), and it is very often used by Warao to deny doctors' power in specific cases. I therefore strongly disagree with Briggs (2003) who criticises its adoption by Venezuelan officials as a racialisation of the Warao, who would be driven by their primitive beliefs.

following a very common therapeutic itinerary, Jesús called on most of the available shamans, who tried all the possible techniques, and even non-shamanic therapies – he bathed his leg in a decoction of mangrove bark, thinking he might have inadvertently stepped on menstrual blood. Second, the seriousness of his ailment was itself challenged. He told me of his being very angry at the old shaman Evaristo, who, at first, had discarded his affliction as being non-*hebu*, and therefore not requiring shamanic intervention. Jesús never was assertive about the specific origin of his illness, stressing that there were probably many pathogenic entities in his knee, to be extracted progressively, therefore accounting for his persisting pain even after successful shamanic cures. When I asked him whether a particular shaman had succeeded in extracting some of the pathogenic entities, he answered positively, but using an evidential denoting supposition or suspicion *(-kata-)*: it was beyond his capacities to know for sure. However, he had no doubt about his own suffering, and Evaristo later decided to attempt to cure him. This generalised unwellness or undifferentiated suffering is therefore the only element that really matters for close kinsfolk and that can be asserted without doubt; and I believe that the indistinctly psychological, physiological and relational nature of any affliction is its counterpart.

Indeed, the same expression can be used for what we could consider a physiological disorder (e.g. diarrhoea) and a psychological matter, for instance the experience of the intense sadness experienced because of the absence of the loved ones: my host Jesús told me he had almost died, or that he had been ill *(waba-turu-ae)*, when I had been away for some months, because he had missed me. But a semantic conflation is not enough to claim a conceptual undifferentiation. I therefore want to give a more precise example sustaining my claim. *Hoa* is a form of illness, or a shamanic technique, which is intimately related to the notions of ownership I have developed in chapter 3. Everything that does not already have a master *(arotu)*, or that is an orphan, can be potentiated as *hoa* by being named and then used by a knowledgeable shaman: my informant mostly gave me examples of animals or objects, but Olsen stresses that *hoa* can come from "intangibles, such as the type of odour that passes over the earth at night, smoke from the cigar on the hill on the other side of the sea, silence of the early evening which rises in Hokonemu, opening of an umbrella", etc. (1974: 97). The shaman uses the smoke of his cigar as a vehicle for the *hoa*, and sends it to strangle the victim or penetrate his body. Fabian, my main informant on such questions, then went on to describe a more original type of *hoa*: it comes from a walkman, or more generally a music player using headphones. Someone

who has such an item, even when he or she stops listening, stays sad *(arawanera)*, melancholic, with a headache – he is ill or dying *(diana wabaya)*. The music one listens to is itself a *hoa* that enters the head… It has to be identified by its name and by its father's name (i.e. the name of the malevolent shaman who sent it), in order to be extracted, as is the case with any *hoa*. I want to stress two features of this story. First, this sadness or melancholy is associated to the fact of listening to music privately, we could even say stingily: it represents the opposite of sharing it, and especially of the very Amazonian practice of turning one's sound system up so loudly that every one in the community can enjoy the music… Listening to music through headphones is the exact contrary of having a party or a celebration, and this anti-social practice produces the opposite effects: sadness instead of joy, prostration instead of dancing. Both the cause and the symptom are relational by nature. Second, there is no discontinuity between what we would call somatic and psychological matters, in so far as exactly the same shamanic technique can cause diarrhoea, respiratory issues, muscular pain – and, here, sadness.

I have given an example taken from a discourse about shamanism performed in a didactic situation (a shaman giving me an interview). I now want to show that we can make comparable analyses about spontaneous comments made in an everyday context. One evening, my host grand-mother was complaining about the behaviour of her daughter-in-law towards the latter's children (her own grandchildren): she was chastising them when she got angry. I tried to assess further the reluctance of Warao adults to hit children, and I elicited a horrified reaction: of course it was unthinkable to hit children, otherwise they would fall ill. Obviously, she was not talking about the direct, immediate consequence of a blow (as in a broken limb). To my repeated questions, she only added that it would happen *hebu isia*, through spirits. In a way, I believe she was not saying that spirits would strike the child because of the chastising – it would indeed be a strange system, where the victim suffers retribution instead of the perpetrator –, but rather meant that it would be a real illness (and not a mere temporary bad mood) happening as a direct (and yet non-physical) consequence of mistreatment. And this is so because physical punishment is an absolute negation of caring.[176] It is interesting to note here that, in many an Amazonian society, acts of stinging (tattooing, ornaments, injection of venom), of whipping, of scratching, etc., are central to rituals of coming of age: they cause children to grow in a beautiful and energetic manner (Erikson 1996: 252; Basso

176. Daillant makes a similar comment about the Chimane, and notes the "psychosomatic rather than supernatural nature of this danger" (2003: 140n.6).

1973: 82). However, the importance of this type of pain-inflicting act during rituals does not make physical punishment acceptable in any way, and Basso underlines that, although angry Kalapalo parents could inflict harsh scraping on their children, they would never beat them (1973: 82). The Warao may differ from many Amazonian societies insofar as painful rituals of growing are absent among them, but their views on child beating are a radicalised version of ideals shared in the whole region. If, among others, it is reprehensible to punish children, among the Warao it is in itself a cause of illness. As we saw earlier, a boy can die because his step-mother was not caring enough (not feeding him when he was hungry), here a child can fall ill because her mother is particularly un-caring, and this theme also appears in the self-criticising statements made during funerary laments (cf. chapter 5).

That the Warao explicitly make this connection reveals the inextricability of the physiological, the emotional and the relational. Not being cared for sufficiently by one's relatives, that we could see as the cause of a sadness or anxiety comparable to that of an orphan, can for the Warao be the direct cause of severe illness, precisely because we deal here with generalised suffering and unwellness, because being sad *is* being ill, and being ill *is* being sad – and both come from one's insertion in a relational network. Similarly, in the myth called 'the death of the uterine uncles' where a young man dies in the forest, his older brother retaliates in two ways: first he kills the jaguar, which has eaten his younger brother, and then he slaughters the uterine uncles, who have failed to look after his younger brother (Lavandero 2000: 345-396). From this perspective, actively killing and passively neglecting someone do not really differ.

A malevolent sorcerer is just an uncaring mother under another guise.

1.3. The contexts of healing and dying: illness and social space.

I have stressed that illness is indiscriminately physiological, psychological and relational, therefore talking about undifferentiated suffering instead. This perspective is useful to challenge the (admittedly old-fashioned) interpretation of illness as the idiom through which social relations are expressed, which most notably appears in the work of Marwick (1965) on African witchcraft. He argues that beliefs in sorcery "provide a means by which tense relationships may be formulated, and sometimes redressed," since the "imaginary sorcerer-victim link" is "a pointer to the estimates the people themselves make of the incidence of tensions in their society" (1965: 283). The former is 'imaginary' whereas the latter is 'real.' There are indeed many ways of criticising such a perspective,

but I merely want to stress that, in order for one (illness or misfortune caused by witchcraft) to be a metaphor for the other (social relations), they need to be conceptually distinct levels, which is precisely what I challenge here. I now want to give further evidence of this claim by showing how the state of health or illness is inextricably related to the space occupied by people. While I was in the field in Tekoburojo, as often happened, a boat arrived to bring a very sick Warao to be cured *in situ* by the old shaman, Evaristo. He was one of his relatives, a distant cousin, and because his morbid state would require a long treatment, he settled in Evaristo's house with his mother. He was completely emaciated, ate little, left his hammock only to go and defecate at the end of the pier. After a couple of weeks, he however went back to his own home, in Guayo, apparently feeling better; and yet, I learned a bit later while travelling there that he had just died, and informed Evaristo of his relative and former patient's demise. His answer struck me, for he stressed that there was too much hatred in Guayo, that if he had stayed in Tekoburojo, where there is no such thing, he would have lived. Although it could seem the easiest explanation, it cannot be a matter of technique: aggressive shamanism (contrary to the cure) can be done at a distance, and it is common to suspect or accuse shamans from other villages when someone is dying. I was therefore left with only one solution: I did not need to mobilise 'magic' as an explanation;[177] Evaristo was saying precisely what he said, that the relational context – caring or conflictual – was determining for health and illness.

It is possible to characterise in greater detail how illness and health are tied to specific contexts by describing two contrasting extremes: hospitals and homes. In Tekoburojo, I was surprised to witness that adults living with their affines would temporarily go back to living with their kin (i.e. in their parents' house) when suffering a severe affliction. It happened twice with women who had been, in one case stung by a ray, in the other case bitten by a snake. Although considered different from a proper *hebu* illness, these were serious ailments, incapacitating them for several days. Both women were living among their husband's kin, one in the husband's parents' house, the other in a separate house within a cluster of houses peopled by her husband's kin. Since these were village endogamous marriages, they were easily brought back home by their mothers, meaning the husband would have to be fed by his own mother or sisters, and the children would roam freely in the village, eating with the grandparents they favoured or had more food

177. Similarly, interpreting cannibalism, Viveiros de Castro (1992: 286) criticised our temptation to use "magic" as a short-cut.

at the time. Indeed, a mother-in-law can never be as caring as a mother, and a proper home is the right place to heal.[178] Conversely, it is interesting to focus on a particularly un-homely environment, the hospital, which is often visited by ill Warao. When there are enough beds available, resident doctors usually try to have their patients stay, especially if they want to provide treatment through IV, or to make sure that antibiotics are not discarded as soon as symptoms disappear. On top of medication, they would feed the patient, and often a relative as well. But in spite of these relatively good conditions, the Warao are always very reluctant to abide.[179] One theme was recurring in scenes I witnessed at the hospital in Guayo or in chats I had with the resident physician: some Warao came from a rather distant village, bringing an ill relative, but they would go back the same day, arguing they could not leave the moribund at the hospital because they had not enough fuel to come back and get him or her. Doctors would then be struck by anger and despair at the same time, for these difficult patients would ask for them, but not let them do their job (cf. Kelly in press). They were ready to travel a long distance, but would not stay long enough for it to be worth, or seemed to try to trick the Criollos in giving them fuel. It was a contradiction they could not make sense of, and they then felt they would never understand the Warao.

Before going further, I think it is necessary to describe what kind of social space is a hospital for the Warao. Two different types are available to their experience. First, hospitals on the mainland (esp. Tucupita), where they would be sent from the lower Delta if their health condition were considered very serious, or where they would arrive directly if falling ill while travelling or working among Venezuelans; second, hospitals located in the mission-villages of Guayo and Nabasanuka, which I will see from the point of view of the Warao living in smaller, neighbouring communities. These two types of environments could seem radically different, insofar as the former are usually completely unknown, full of strangers, and only Spanish is spoken there; whereas the latter are located in villages often visited by the Warao for commercial purposes, where they have acquaintances and sometimes relatives, where nurses are Warao, etc. However, I believe the difference to be in degree rather than in nature. As Kelly (in press) has shown about the Yanomami, and as I stressed in chapter 1, being 'White' is essentially a contextual position, and Yanomami from Ocamo, when they travel upriver, are White *(napë)* insofar

178. It is the same among the Wari' (Conklin 2001: 66-67).
179. Among the Wayampi, not to be hospitalised alone but with close relatives was precisely what patients required (Gallois 1991: 202). Contrary to the Warao, they seemed to consider it enough to create a positive environment.

as they dress up as if to maximise the contrast with their more backward relatives, and give whatever goods they have to the latter. Similarly, doctors residing in Yanomami land are considered 'domesticated versions' of the real thing, the Whites living in Criollo settlements who are characterised as dangerous thieves (Sp. 'malandros'). The situation is very similar in the Delta. For inhabitants of neighbouring villages (e.g. Tekoburojo and Domujana, where I did fieldwork), Guayo and Nabasanuka are certainly not 'home;' they may not be as dangerous as the mainland, but are definitely White or Criollo in comparison to their own settlements. Population is mixed and, if incoming Criollos become somewhat Warao, local Warao become markedly Criollos; communication is often in Spanish rather than in Warao and schools ensure that locals master Western language and knowledge; people are wealthier and stores make visible the abundance of goods, etc. The hospital itself may occasionally be an exciting place of contact for Warao living in different communities, but this interactional aspect is strictly limited to the waiting room or the outside. Its real owners are the doctors, who are either Venezuelan graduates doing their compulsory year of social work (Sp. 'año rural'), or Cuban doctors dispatched there through a bilateral project, that is to say outsiders who never stay long enough to be known and trusted – and it is even worse with Venezuelan interns staying only three months. Local nurses may indeed be well known, and they speak Warao, but they 'perform White' in the context of the hospital, adopting a rough and patronising behaviour towards the patients and their kin (even though they are more relaxed and on an equal footing in other situations). In that sense, upriver hospitals are not entirely different from lower Delta hospitals, they are just a step further in the same direction – places a bit more foreign, more White, more threatening.

Western medicine and medical practices are considered powerful, even if this power is in general limited to alleviating pain and symptoms, and differs greatly depending on the (formal) technique used. In practice, any Western treatment is not be believed to do much for a patient who is not being cured by a shaman at the same time, and any IV injection (even normal saline) is considered more efficient than any pill or ointment (even antibiotics). The Western physician's power to cure is inseparable from his power to kill, a feature shared with shamanism. In narratives about hospitals and medical treatment, there is therefore considerable interrogation over the real nature of the substances administered: is it medicine *(ibihi)* or is it venom (*waba*, Sp. 'veneno')? Indeed, a scandal happened one day when I was in Guayo: a mother accused the Venezuelan doctor of having murdered her child, because the little girl died precisely when she was

being administered oral medication. This kind of event is uncommon in lower Delta hospitals, because nurses and local politicians can act as intermediary in case of crisis, controlling what is being done or vouching the doctor's act. But there is no such process upriver, among the Criollos. A friend from Tekoburojo once told me he would never go to the hospital there, where one was more likely to die than to recover, because the physicians could always be criminals (Sp. 'malandros') giving death instead of health. As evidence, he was stressing cases of Warao who had entered the hospital healthily and died there, or of nights when many had died at once (cf. Kelly in press, for similar comments among the Yanomami). This pattern probably accounts for the central role of exemplarity in medical treatments. Briggs (2003: 121) quotes a comparable case, where some Warao villagers only started taking medication against cholera after witnessing medical officials swallow their own pills, but he dismisses it as evidence of the patronising and racialising behaviour of the Venezuelan doctors (who told him about it). I however believe he misses the point by not taking seriously the Warao's doubts about Criollos' acts. As Kelly stresses, convention (i.e. the use of well-known techniques) is a major aspect of Yanomami control over Whites; and exemplarity complements it among the Warao.

Such a situation accounts for the mixed feelings harboured by most Warao regarding the hospital. On the one hand, it is a place full of medicine, which appears as a counterpart to the local stores that are full of goods (*wabianoko monika*, lit. 'like a store,' as I mentioned in chapter 1), and these medicines are considered powerful. On the other hand, the hospital is the antithesis of what the Warao consider to be the best place to heal: a place full of strangers whose intentions are unknown, instead of a 'home' where the patient is surrounded by caring relatives. Warao reluctance to stay at the hospital can also be explained by how it would make it much more difficult to be treated by a shaman at the same time: I never heard of any doctor refusing to treat a patient who went to a shaman (as used to happen fifteen years ago according to Briggs 2003), but I never witnessed either a simultaneous cure performed by doctors and shamans (as reported by Kelly among the Yanomami). Indeed, most shamans do not live in mission villages, and they would not follow a patient there, except if he or she were a very close kin. There is therefore an obvious practical motive, for staying at the hospital makes multiple therapies difficult to follow. I however believe it is not contradictory with another rationale: how can one imagine getting better if one is to live in the permanent anxiety of being murdered? How can one imagine getting better surrounded by strangers? Warao favour

short trips to the hospital, so that they can control the administration of the treatment, and, even more importantly, so that they are permanently surrounded by caring relatives. We can then account for this strange behavioural pattern: the Warao are ready to travel long distances to obtain Western treatment at the hospital, and yet are more than reluctant to stay there.

It is possible to link this theme with migrations, which are – in narratives – linked both to relational issues and to illness. I was indeed faced with a strange paradox. When people were telling me about their desire to move to another settlement, or when they were accounting for an on-going move, they were mostly phrasing it in moral and emotional terms, pointing out tensions with co-residents: they had become angry over accusations of stinginess or laziness, they were tired of living in a village where people did not live as kin (cf. chapter 2). On the contrary, I got a very different picture when listening to biographical narratives. Although they were often very sketchy, my informants stressed the different places where they had lived and frequently made an implicit connection with a history of illnesses, or phrased their spatial mobility in terms of a therapeutic itinerary. It might seem surprising, and illness and migrations can be linked in many ways, but I want to suggest that explaining migrations by social tensions and explaining them by stories of illness are alternative versions of one another. The case of Carlo – Jesús' father and Adelina's ex-husband – is interesting because he never had a very stable residency. Contrary to others, he spent years not living in a Warao settlement, but as a professional fisherman on the island of Baroko sanuka, under the authority of a local boss who had gathered there his employees and their families, Warao from different origins and Criollos as well. I cannot recount all the details of his trajectory, but when he explained why and how he had come to live in Tekoburojo, his wife's illness became the central theme. When he told me his story another time, in 2009, he even stated explicitly: "we came here because of the *hebu* [illness], without it we wouldn't have come" *(hebu obonona oko tamate yaru-nae, ekida-kore yaru-naha)*. In his case, migrations were subordinated to the search for a cure – with shamans in Winikina, with doctors in Tucupita, with a Criollo 'sorcerer' in Curiapo –, and Evaristo was eventually successful. Treatment was long, they settled permanently in Tekoburojo, and when his wife left him to marry Evaristo, he decided to stay so that he would be close to his grown-up children who had married in the village. In other stories that I heard, illness happened while being away, and, even when an initial shamanic treatment had been performed there, health was only regained through a return home. In Carlo's case, the quest for a shaman and the quest

for a salutary context are not distinguishable, for focusing on the former led to finding the latter. He had some distant relatives in the village, as did his wife, and Evaristo himself was her distant cousin. Her real siblings only settled later in Tekoburojo, but still, at least she was living with her kinsfolk and not with complete strangers.

A similar link with illness can be highlighted in narratives of collective migrations. If we take the stories about villages disappearing because everyone left them at once, it is possible to follow Briggs (2003) and put forward the understandable fear that seizes people when an unknown epidemic spreads in a village, when local healers are overwhelmed or die, when all traditional solutions have been tried in vain. The story told by Briggs is compelling because of its tragic aspect – the cholera epidemic had deadly effects in the Delta –, but we may perhaps use it differently. The villagers were fleeing because of their fear, the immediate fear caused by these deaths, the fear that they would be the next victim of a suspected sorcerer, foreign spirit or angry ancestor spirit. Distress was such that most Warao fled directly to the mainland, to look for support among the Criollos. That the survivors scatter when an epidemic happens, or at least many die at the same time *(muana-kitane)*, does not seem to require any explanation: it is what people do all over the world, and it is certainly rational from an individual point of view (if not from a global point of view concerned with the spreading of the epidemic). Collective migrations and death are also linked insofar as settlements were usually abandoned upon the death of the leader (Heinen 1988: 637).[180] However, in Brigg's account, the Warao were also fleeing the context that made it possible for such things to happen. If a context of conflict makes any illness suspicious (Taylor 1996: 214n.13), a context of epidemics makes any conflict suspicious: villagers were quick in pointing out all that could have gone wrong, relationships with co-residents, with other villages, even with traders from Trinidad or Venezuelans (Briggs 2003: 227-246). In that sense, the explanation put forward here does not differ from that which I tried to develop accounting for individual

180. The process is at least partly sociological. Since units are bound together by the leader, the death of the latter may result automatically in the dispersal of the community, as I was told by Manuel, an elder of Domujana, when he was explaining to me how the village of his wife's father disappeared when the old man died. In other cases, for instance Tekoburojo, the children of the dead founders became the core of the village, which stayed essentially the same. Everything thus depends on the state of relationships, for in some cases only will the death of the leader, who acted as a harmonising principle, destabilise the relational network enough to cause the scattering of the community. In other cases, the village will survive, and it is no surprise that Tekoburojo was organised around the founders' sons rather than sons-in-law, affinity being a much more fragile relationship (Rivière 1984). See also chapter 1 about the way settlements are stabilised by their official status of 'community.'

migration: the state of the relational space is central to understanding how migrations are linked to illness, death, and health. Indeed, when I asked about Sakupana, a village that had disappeared but from which some inhabitants of Tekoburojo had come, I was told both that people were fighting or arguing with each other, and that they were dying there. The two causes had become undistinguishable.

In the first part of this chapter, I have tried to dissolve illness – as a matter either of elaborate taxonomies or of shamanic aggression – within a broader perspective in terms of care and neglect. In the following section, I conversely want to focus on shamanism, in order to explore the relation between its concrete practice and morality issues.

2. Shamanism and morality.

2.1. Sorcery as the implementation of immoral values.

J. Wilbert, in his account of Warao shamanism, systematically puts forward cosmological causes: the *hoarotu* shaman, for instance, has the heavy task of providing the gods of the underworld with fresh blood from their victims, since the conduct that provided them with their food had been severed in mythic times – or else the world would end (1993: 97-99). Aggressive shamanism – or sorcery, since the Warao usually use the Spanish word 'brujo' to refer to a malevolent shaman[181] – therefore appears as a dark yet necessary sacrifice. My informants also recognised the practice, and described how the sorcerer's *hoebo* (double, or special soul) goes to the grave of its victim in order to suck its blood; and it is why they cover graves with smoothly spread mud, in order to detect its tracks. However, they never linked this to any cosmological necessity. If they ever mentioned reasons for aggressive shamanism, they were moral or psychological causes: in general, shamans who use their knowledge for predatory ends are just considered bad people *(asida)*. Very often, either explicitly or as the underlying reason of particular incidents, this question was linked to the notions of envy and jealousy, or, from the opposite point of view, of stinginess and retention: sorcerers are those who are prompt to anger when denied something, when they feel that others have been stingy with them. This was the most common motive according to my informants, and indeed also appears in other anthropologists' accounts (e.g. J. Wilbert 1996: 117, Briggs &

181. A shaman can be 'good' or 'bad,' depending on his relation with ego. I therefore call 'sorcerer' a shaman seen as the author of an aggression, thus opposed to the 'curing shaman,' and use 'shaman' as the encompassing term for both.

Mantini-Briggs 2003: 226-231). There was one shaman in Tekoburojo – Salvatore – who was the target of most accusations. One day, I had come back to the village, bringing some gifts to my informants and friends, and especially a pair of rubber boots for Evaristo. Salvatore then reacted angrily towards me, stressing that the old man received a salary from the government, as a municipal employee, and therefore could buy boots, whereas he had nothing. When I told the story to my close friends, they were quick in stressing that Salvatore did have sources of income, but that he was driven by envy, which is why he was dangerous. This example is typical of all the evidence I gathered, where there is both the idea of an envious personality, and of an incident that caused the sorcerer to believe he was the victim of others' stingy behaviour. Talking about shamanic aggression is then also a way of talking about envy and stinginess.

This question is pervasive in ordinary comments on the questions of illness and shamanic aggression, but, in anthropological literature, it dates back to the first studies of African witchcraft. Evans-Pritchard, above all, writes explicitly that: "The notion of witchcraft is not only a function of misfortune and of personal relations but also comprises moral judgement. [...] The Zande phrase 'It is witchcraft' may often be translated simply as 'It is bad'. [...] witchcraft tends to become synonymous with the sentiments which are supposed to cause it, so that Azande think of hatred and envy and greed in terms of witchcraft and likewise think of witchcraft in terms of the sentiments it discloses" (1978 [1937]: 48). From such a perspective, the person of the sorcerer epitomises immoral behaviour – which is described in strikingly similar terms all over the world –, and "moral values" are consequently expressed in "the idiom of witchcraft" (ibid.: 51), though this admittedly happens through their antonyms, the anti-social vices of envy, greed, and hatred. In fact, sorcery can even be seen to fulfil the function of repressing such vices and of encouraging a virtuous behaviour (cf. Rivière 1970: 248). One evening, while I was smoking with Jesús, another villager came by and stayed there, looking at me. I did not particularly like him, so I did not react, but Jesús soon prompted me: "Give him [a cigarette]! He's a shaman! He'll kill you [if you don't]!" In such a case, sorcerers almost appear as scarecrows, since Nito, the villager in question, was not a shaman at all (at least to my knowledge): Jesús' comment was probably more a reminder that generosity is a requisite of convivial relations, than that death might be the retribution for my stinginess.

This therefore seems very similar to the situation described by Munn about Gawa, where she stresses that the "witch," because her envy is driven by others' stinginess, can

be identified to the victim's "own retentiveness […] acting back upon him or her" (1992 [1986]: 224). Yet Jesús' comment was rather exceptional, and, among the Warao, the connection between the victim's behaviour and his or her affliction is, at best, left implicit: I have never heard someone's illness explained by his previous moral faults; only the sorcerer's wrong desires were mentioned when discussing concrete cases – rather than jokingly in order to convince me to give a cigarette.[182] The moral or emotional aspect of sorcery is admittedly complemented by a more socio-political side, as stressed by Hugh-Jones (1994: 35).[183] But this latter question, which is a central theme of African anthropology and often appears in Amazonian ethnography, is less easily described among the Warao: shamans from unrelated settlements are systematically considered to be dangerous sorcerers for ego, but co-residents can be accused as well, as shown by the example of Salvatore. I therefore claim that, among the Warao, talks of shamanic aggression highlight more the danger of selfish desires, the dilemmas of daily life, and the fact that people's feelings and behaviour towards one another is constitutive of everyone's health, rather than patterns of socio-political alliance and hostility.

Anthropologists have also tried to show that witchcraft or sorcery could be read in the same way, even when departing from the 'traditional' contexts of rural villages: when it is related to modernity, it becomes an idiom for the ambivalent outcomes of neoliberal capitalism and globalisation.[184] Among the Warao, a characteristic example of such a logic is a case detailed by Briggs, who collected many alternative explanations for the 1993 cholera outbreak that struck the Delta. Contrary to other Warao, Romero, one of his informants, "places the epidemic in the context of transnational commerce" (2003: 237), by underlying the difficult commercial relationships with Trinidadians. He alludes to a long-standing conflict concerning the price paid for each sack of crabs, that the Trinidadians repeatedly refused to increase in spite of the threats of strike made by Warao leaders. Other leaders had already told Briggs their conviction that cholera – so deadly a disease even compared to what the Warao usually suffer – could only come from the outside, linking it to Venezuelan nationals or to Trinidadians, their main

182. It may be the case because, as among the Kalapalo, it would be unacceptable to criticise in such a way the morality of one's relatives (Basso 1973: 127).
183. Tukanoan shamans attack enemies and protect co-residents, but it can also be stressed that: "shamans who master their emotions and aggressive desires use their power to cure, and others who fail to exercise self-control become sorcerers" (Hugh-Jones 1994: 35).
184. It is for instance possible to interpret the work of the Comaroffs in such a way (e.g. Comaroff & Comaroff 1999).

commercial partners. But Romero goes further, in making explicit the link with a "transnational" economic conflict.

During my fieldwork, no epidemic struck, and the often difficult relationships with resident Guyanese smugglers were never explicitly linked to illnesses. Yet I was told of an interesting possibility, although, I admit, it happened in a purely didactic situation. Illness can be caused by a *hebu* spirit which is not an ancestor or the auxiliary of a sorcerer, but the spirit of an object. Fabian, my informant, used the word *makina*, borrowed from the Spanish for machine, but his examples revealed that he was referring to a broad category of objects alien to the Delta: he started with a doll, and although he classified in this category, during a second interview, both a frying pan and metal or stones, it must be noted that neither of those is to be found naturally in the Delta.[185] These foreign objects are dangerous because they have a *hebu* spirit that acts as their owner (see section 3 of chapter 3), and Fabian stressed the connection between these two aspects, stating that: "the frying pan has a spirit because it is not made by us." Illness would then happen because of the mistreatment suffered by these exceptional objects when they are discarded, which is replicated mimetically in the body of the victim. More than the technical details of this category, I want to stress the connection made between illness and objects which, even though they are not always manufactured, have to be acquired through relationships with outsiders; and indeed, the Warao's intense desire for Western goods is a major aspect of these relationships that are often conflictual or dangerous (see chapter 1).[186]

Illness and sorcery can therefore be seen as a specific idiom, which serves to express or epitomise the antisocial desires, to encourage virtuous behaviour, to highlight the moral dilemmas of daily life and the ambivalent consequences of the insertion in a globalised economy. Yet I want to express a dissatisfaction with this approach, which sees witchcraft as a concrete idiom (in terms of personal ailment and inter-personal relations) for abstract issues (moral values or global socio-economic conflicts). Among the Warao as among the Azande (Evans-Pritchard 1978 [1937]: 49), it is recognised that anyone may harbour negative feelings and that, everyday, people are accused by others of

185. Stones can be found in the lower Delta, but only exceptionally, which accounts, according to J. Wilbert (1993: 21-22), for the special religious status stones always enjoy as an icon of divinities or spirits. Nowadays, they are more common, but still considered exceptional, even when they are used for a profane purpose.

186. This case could also be compared to the process described by Albert (1988) among the Yanomami, who link Western goods and epidemics, and more generally to the common category "White illness" (see Gallois 1991).

stinginess or laziness. But their reaction is usually at worse to withdraw from some relationships, to sever the links with another household or to move to a different settlement (see chapter 2). Conversely, a shaman has the power to seek revenge and retribution, to obtain by direct predation when he was not freely given. Even though the practice of the *hoebo* double vampirizing the victim is specific to the *hoa* type of shamanic aggression, I believe it is very representative of the idea that sorcerers are predatory people, who take selfishly instead of waiting to be given caringly. This feature therefore points to the fact that sorcery is not only a question of moral sentiments or values, but more precisely a mode of action.[187] Yet our understanding is limited by the fact that this is by nature a secret subject matter, the realm of gossip. However, among the Warao (and contrary, for instance, to the Gawan islanders), everyone knows who is a shaman – there is only a mystery as to whether particular shamans use their powers to attack people as well as to cure them. But then, it offers the possibility to gain a better understanding of the question by studying more in detail shamanic curing practices (rather than secret aggression techniques), since they are public and official.

2.2. The shaman as a carer.

A shaman cures his patients, but this is essentially an expression of his care, and the two concepts (caring and curing) cannot therefore be opposed the way they are in debates about Western medical practices. When attending a patient, the shaman spends hours in a dyadic relationship with him, engaged in an intense physical interaction that, although different from it, recalls the caring behaviour of relatives, whereas the latter are, at best, gathered around looking at them. Moreover, whereas relatives, if moved by compassion, can only try to commiserate with the moribund and provide him or her with food, the shaman will actually go as far as experience physical pain in the process of curing, especially when extracting pathogenic material entities glossed 'arrows' *(hatabu)* through his hands *(moho isia)*. Although this is typical of the *bahana* type of shamanism, it was systematically put forward by my informants and friends as characteristic of the fact that a shamanic cure is a painful physical activity, that it is 'work' *(yaota)*, and not just talking. The compulsory payment for the cure is therefore, at least partly, a compensation for this work (see chapter 1). But it is not enough, and I was told that Salvatore, in spite

187. In Melanesia, similar analyses can be made, for instance when sorcery is explicitly contrasted to exchange (A. Strathern 1982: 112), or defined as "male potency gone destructive" (Schieffelin 2005 [1976]: 126n.4). See also Munn 1992 [1986]: 215-233.

of being an efficient practitioner of this technique, refused to perform it precisely because of the pain – which obviously played a role in defining him as an uncaring sorcerer. The curing shaman is therefore someone who accepts to endure pain out of concern for others' own suffering – it is a supreme act of care.

It is remarkable that the shaman is also inserted in the daily relations of care that define ordinary sociality. First, he is fed by the family of his patients, especially if he comes from another community and, sometimes, spends several days curing patients. Second, he has to be paid. My informants mentioned money as an appropriate payment, but what I witnessed or heard in the context of specific cures were payments in food (store-bought food, or a sack of taro), clothes, and hammocks. Indeed, these are the archetypal products meant for one's relatives. Although both food and hammocks can now be sold to outsiders, the primary role of economic activities is to provide one's kin with such items (see chapters 1 & 2). As a consequence of this whole process, the curing shaman becomes a quasi-kin, if he is not already related to the patient, as is often the case. Indeed, the shaman Kiko, who lived independently and was not related to anyone in Tekoburojo, came to be called 'grandfather' by members of my host family, with the meaning that I have mentioned in section 2.3 of chapter 3.

It can also be illuminating to discuss briefly the detail of the shamanic techniques. In didactic interactions, knowledgeable Warao can describe many of them. One is usually far from the fixity of the picture presented by J. Wilbert (1993, 1996), who describes Warao shamanism as being divided into three main professional orders of shamans, but the complexity of his minute descriptions is confirmed by anyone having a long discussion with a local shaman: I merely want to present a rudimentary outline. On the one hand, there are material entities (stones, glass fragments, darts, nails, etc.), which are sent and retrieved by the *bahana-rotu* shaman, and can be called 'arrows' *(hatabu)* as a whole. According to some of my informants, it is an altogether different category when the pathogenic entity – still material in spite of not being visible to most – is a hair *(hio)* or a thread *(hutu)*, or when a shaman turns the smoke of his cigar into a rope that will encircle and suffocate his victim. But the difference is much more striking when shamans do not deal with material entities anymore. The *wisi-datu* type of shamanism, for instance, mainly has to do with illnesses caused by *hebu* spirits, which appear as 'pains' *(wisi)* that are treated as agents. *Hoa*, which I have already alluded to, could be described as the essence of anything, which, on being named, become a lethal potency (*a-waba*, Sp. 'veneno,' poison) (see also Olsen 1974: 97). However, beyond this great ontological

diversity of the entities considered, didactic discourses by shamans revolve around a very simple pattern. All these entities, whatever their nature, have to be extracted *(nisa-kitane)* by the curing shaman, and this concept reveals that shamanic aggression is conceived of as an intrusion in or an invasion of the body of the victim, by a pathogenic entity that can be material or immaterial.

The inverse also exists: one of my informants, while telling me about illnesses coming from foreign objects *(makina)*, added in Spanish that the spirit of the latter could "take the soul" of the victim ('quiere llevar el alma'). However, it seems much less common than in other Amazonian societies where it appears as the main pattern of shamanic illness (e.g. Vilaça 2005), since it is the only time I heard about it among the Warao. I consider it can be interpreted as an inversion of the more usual intruding entities since, among the many terms available for 'soul,' which are inter-changeable up to a certain point, my informant used in the same interview the word *hokaro*, which comes from the stem *hoka*, meaning something contained in something else (e.g. passengers in a boat, foetus in its mother's body, etc.).[188] Instead of having an external entity invading the victim's body, which has to be extracted by a curing shaman, here it is the victim's soul, conceptualised as what is contained within his body, which is 'extracted,' stolen, and has to be brought back by the shaman. In fact, there is a common shamanic preventive practice that obeys the same logic, since it rests on the idea that the shaman inserts a care-taking entity in his patient's body, in order to enhance its health and growth (see infra).

I want to stress that, from a formal point of view, shamanic aggression and shamanic cure are strikingly similar. A victim of sorcery suffers a bodily intrusion (by *bahana* darts, *hebu* spirits, *wisi* pains or *hoa* poisons) or extraction (of his 'soul,' and of his blood when vampirized); whereas a curing shaman removes the pathogenic entities, and inserts a care-taking entity (or the stolen soul). The main difference is in fact that the former are techniques of protection, and the latter of predation: the shaman acts out of care, whereas the sorcerer acts out of envy. Yet, it is possible to go further than saying that such acts are the instantiation of moral dispositions ('good' or 'bad'), since the logic of

188. Other words usually translated as soul are: *mehokoi* (meaning also 'image,' 'reflection'), *hebu* (meaning also 'spirit'), *sita* (meaning also 'replication,' 'reflection'), etc. David, my tutor in Warao language, once detailed to me all the other meanings of such words, before adding in Spanish: "all this, talking about dead people, means soul" ('todo esto, hablando de muertos, significa alma'). It could support the idea that the 'soul' is not a component of the person, but rather a specific and extraordinary capacity: healthy living human beings have no soul (see Vilaça 2005: 452).

extraction and insertion is in fact consistent with the schema of encompassment, which I have shown to be central in the definition of shamanism (see section 3 of chapter 3). The cure can therefore be seen as an interaction between 'masters,' which are defined by the fact that they encompass other beings: it is a question of relations, not of embodied values.

2.3. Masters in action.

I want to focus on two institutions that are relatively original and play a crucial role in the perspective I have adopted. The first one is rather exceptional: when a patient is unable to pay the shaman who cured him, it is said that he would literally 'sell himself' *((y)ori-wabi-kitane)*, and repay his due throughout his life. At one extreme, it could be interpreted in terms of debt-slavery; and at the other, it is possible to interpret the tie as a form of 'fictive kinship,' as did W. Wilbert, who stressed that the shaman would call his patient 'son' *(neburatu)* or 'daughter' *(ukatida)* and be called by them 'father' *(dima)* (1996: 24). In fact, rather than as plain filiation, my informants consistently described the relation as one between *aidamo* and *neburatu*, that is to say the specific type of fosterage that I have described in section 3 of chapter 3. They were laying the emphasis on the asymmetry, on the fact that the patient has to give his 'boss' a share of everything he obtains – fish, clothes, or money –, and to help him whenever asked to, for instance if the shaman wants to rebuild his house. But, as I have shown, this control or appropriation is only one aspect of the relationship, and it coexists with the care given by the boss to his subordinate: here it is not really a question of nurture, but rather of ensuring health and therefore growth. A patient becomes the *neburatu* of a shaman because the latter has cured him, which I have described as a supreme act of care. At the same time, following the arguments I put forward in chapter 3, I claim that the relationship between them is one of encompassment: as any other master, a renowned shaman is a magnified person because he encompasses not only his auxiliary spirits, but also his human patients. He is enhanced by care rather than by predation (contrary to the sorcerer). Admittedly, my hosts could not tell me of anyone who was currently a shaman's *neburatu*, and described it as a practice of the past; but they also added that Flavio, Jesús' brother, was 'like a *neburatu*' to Kiko, because he was serving food to the latter (as a service rather than as nurture), whenever the shaman came to Tekoburojo. It seems that this institution, although it is exceptional in itself, represents the typical way of characterising the relationship between a shaman and his patients in general.

The second institution that I want to describe is that of providing the patient with a protective entity. This practice is meant to take care *(yaoro-kitane)* of the patient's body, more precisely to ensure its healthy growth *(ida-kitane)*, and this is therefore often (but not exclusively) done to children. People describe it in terms of an insertion: the shaman 'insufflates' *(esemohi-kitane)* the entity to the patient, and David translated this expression both as 'to give strength' (Sp. 'poner fuerza') and 'to put the god within' (Sp. 'poner el dios adentro'). It is indeed sometimes depicted as a *hebu* spirit (for which they use 'dios' as a synonym), more precisely an auxiliary spirit of the curing shaman, and people often say that they have so-and-so's spirit as their protector. But the relation is strikingly different, almost completely inverted: whereas the auxiliary spirits of a shaman are like his children (although they are admittedly also his care-takers), here the patient was described by my informant Fabian as being like the child of the spirit, as being 'in its hands.' The relation of encompassment is therefore replicated in a complex, and almost fractal, way: the patient is like the child of the spirit he encompasses, which is at the same time encompassed by a shaman who is its father and owner. Once again, I claim that, through such an institution, the shaman is magnified as a complex and encompassing being (Losonczy 1990, Fausto 2008).[189] These relations are then made visible through alimentary prohibitions, which is the topic that led me to discover the institution of care-taking spirits: many people do not eat certain types of food, especially foreign or 'non-traditional' (e.g. onions, stock, chicken, piranha fish, fried food, etc.), because so-and-so's spirit, which is in their body, would not stand it. Sometimes it is phrased in terms of smell, which plays a crucial role in shamanism, or in terms of respecting the protective spirit's own alimentary diet. It is as if the patient had another perspective being superimposed on his own, and was therefore becoming a complex person himself – an echo of the personhood of the shaman who cured him, and who also has to respect alimentary prohibitions because of his auxiliary spirits.

As I have shown in section 3.2 of chapter 3, the shaman is defined as a complex or magnified person because of the beings that he encompasses (he is *hebu arotu*, an 'owner of spirits'), which in turn alter him; and this complexity is particularly enacted during the cure itself, where the enunciation of a ritual discourse turns him into "a complex figure, made up by the condensation of contradictory identities" (Severi 2002: 37). The way he

189. Using another idiom, it could also be said that his personhood is extended through his auxiliary spirits (cf. Gell 1998). See Fausto 2008 for an assessment of the possibility to apply this idiom to lowland South America.

subsequently has effects on people can also be understood through a discussion of the word *hebu*, which is central in Warao shamanism. In fact, similar in that to kin terms (see section 2.3 of chapter 3, cf. Bloch 1971), the definition that people usually give of the term, 'spirit,' does not enable us to understand its uses. In the context I am discussing, it can mean 'illness' in general, which for instance serves to stress that someone did not die by accident. But conversely, it can also be used to specify that one is faced with a type of disease that doctors cannot cure. In other instances, it seems to be granted agency, being the subject of verbs of action (e.g. *hebu ma oanae*, 'a *hebu* grabbed me'), or conversely to be an inanimate thing to extract: in both cases, it is *hebu* as a pathogenic entity, often as the auxiliary of a malevolent shaman. Furthermore – and it does not make things more simple – the most common Spanish words they use as synonyms for *hebu* are 'prayer' ('oración') and 'god' ('dios' or its distortion *dioso*), and in all cases it is often said to be 'of' a particular shaman. Finally, the more the shamanic discourse becomes specialised, the less it is used, being replaced by more specific words. It would certainly be very interesting to proceed as Boyer (1986) and Déléage (2010) and to study how such a concept is acquired through different contexts and in particular ritual initiation. It is unfortunately beyond my means, and I hope that, for the present work, another solution can be more useful. When my informants say that the care-taking *hebu* is 'another soul' ('otra alma más'), it can recall the statement by Taylor that: "when the Achuar speak of the *arutam*'s message as a kind of 'soul' which will become henceforth a part of themselves, they are evoking a reification, projected in the future, of an image of the self rooted in a special kind of intersubjective relation" (1996: 208). I am obviously not claiming that these 'souls' are similar, but rather that it might be more interesting to translate such an empty concept by an abstract gloss, rather than by 'stuff' or 'spirit:' not respecting our informant's translation, maybe we can account for their uses of the word. Among the Warao, in the context of discourses around illness, I simply suggest that it is probably adequate to interpret *hebu* as the reified agency of a shaman,[190] incorporated in a distinct body. From the point of view of the victim or the patient, it is within ego, but belongs to alter. This situation means that ego is being subjected to someone else, and, depending on whether we consider a predatory or curing shaman, it may be a relation of predation (enacted through a pathogenic *hebu*) or of protection (enacted through a protective *hebu*).

190. I use 'reified' in its strong meaning, since a shaman can – although he hardly ever does – extract visible stones from a patient's body, for everyone to witness.

I argue that what is at stake is a question of reified agency, rather than reified values, because it is a question of people having effects on each other, rather than of social values imposing themselves to individuals. If shamanism does not provide an 'idiom' for the expression of moral issues, then why does it stand out as a salient question when talking about morality? I claim that it is so because adopting the point of view of shamanism means seeing everyone as composite beings, constituted by the caring and predatory acts of others.

3. Summary and conclusions.

This chapter has represented a departure from my previous focus on the ordinary concerns of daily morality, but at the same time, I have precisely tried to relate them to the more extra-ordinary contexts of illness and shamanism. In the first section, I have dealt with the coexistence of many types of discourse, which may appear contradictory, around illness and health. Rather than privileging the point of view of ritual specialists, or a sociological interpretation in terms of sorcery accusations, I have tried to show that these discourses can be seen as alternative versions of one another, and that the relational context and the daily acts of care (or, conversely, of neglect) are constitutive of everyone's health (or, conversely, at the origin of their dis-ease). In the second section, I have explored why shamanism nevertheless stands out as a very salient type of practice and topic of discussion. Predatory shamans or sorcerers are driven by envy and attack people they believe to have wronged them – as is very common in witchcraft all around the world. But I claim that it would be misleading to treat shamanism as an idiom for moral and social issues. Conversely, I have tried to describe in more detail some shamanic practices in order to show that shamans are composite beings, because they encompass auxiliary spirits, and that common people are made composite as well by their history of illnesses and cures, that is to say their progressive involvement in a web of relations of predation and protection. In a way, shamanic talk is a moral discourse because it makes explicit the fact that people are constituted by their relations, that health is the product of acts of care, neglect, or aggression.

Unfortunately, death is often the outcome of illness, and the study of funerary rituals and of occasional re-enactments of grief offers another opportunity to analyse the relation between extra-ordinary contexts and events, and the common practices of daily morality. The emotion of grief will be the salient element in the following chapter, and it will enable me to relate again, but in a different way, the topics of morality and emotion.

Chapter 5
Grief and its value: emotion, ritual, and relatedness

In Tekoburojo, where I used to bring back and give away the photographs I had taken of the villagers, Jesús once told me he wanted to keep a picture of me – so that looking at it would make him nostalgic, so that he would suffer from sadness, get drunk and cry. I was already used to their passion for photographic portraits, and although they were mostly enjoyed in a narcissistic way, I was not really surprised to learn the photos could also be linked to absence and longing. The association between sadness and alcoholic consumption was quite typical, for I had witnessed on numerous occasions drunken Warao crying over their feelings of loss. And I had already been the recipient of promises to cry when I was about to leave the settlement. However, what struck me was the idea that sorrow could intentionally be sought after: in his statement that he wanted a picture of me in order to be sad, Jesús used a suffix marking finality *(arawa ta-miaru*, 'in order to be sad'*)*, repeating emphatically what he had already said with the simpler use of the infinitive (*arawanera waba-kitane*, 'to suffer from sadness'). He wanted to keep a picture *in order to* feel sorrow, *in order to* cry.

This little episode is not merely anecdotal, for the association between a physical reminder of an absent person, drunkenness and sorrow, is echoed in many other

contexts, even though it mostly concerns death.[191] More importantly, I believe it offers an original perspective: the emotions of grief are not only conventionally expressed or channelled, but can also be actively produced, and it does not make them less genuine. The anthropological study of emotion has always had difficulties with a very Western binary model (one expression of which being that natural, universal emotions are expressed and channelled in a culturally particular way),[192] and I believe that looking at how emotional states are intentionally produced could prove to be a refreshing perspective on the topic. It is easy to understand that one would want to create a religiously esteemed piety or to induce anger before a war party.[193] But how is it possible to account for the fact that sorrow and sadness are actively pursued?

I argue that these emotional states are intentionally produced because they are morally valued, and that they are morally valued because of their essential link with relatedness. Obviously, this latter link is essentially negative, since sorrow happens precisely when it is not possible anymore to provide care to one's relatives, but this is precisely what gives saliency to the underlying principles of everyday morality. I therefore use some extraordinary events – here funerary laments and binge drinking, which both lead to sorrow – to shed light on the more ordinary practices that I have described previously, and it is an analytical device. At the same time, the Warao themselves refer discursively to crying in order to influence or manipulate interactions, and I claim that such uses offer further evidence that the emotional state of grief has a moral value, but also compel us to pay attention to the various contexts in which emotions are enacted, expressed, evoked, or referred to, rather than to reify grief.

1. Dying and wailing.

1.1. A death in the village.

Even though accidents happen, most deaths are the culmination of a long process of illness characterised by the care provided by the relatives of the patient, the repeated attempts at curing him or her, and the pervasive accusations of sorcery. During my

191. From a psychological (rather than ontological) point of view, "the feeling of separation and loss […] is canonically associated with death" (Urban 1988: 392).
192. See for instance Leavitt 1996. Other authors study "emotion as discursive practice" (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990: 10), but I argue throughout this chapter against such a disembodied perspective. This is the recurring debate in any anthropological publication on emotion.
193. See for instance Mahmood 2005 (on piety); Descola 1993: 424 and Surrallès 2003: 192 (on anger and aggressiveness).

fieldwork, only small infants had died, and reactions to the death of an adult are likely to be significantly different; yet they were mourned, being around one year old.[194] The case I remember most vividly is that of the son of Flavio and Olinda, who were related to my host family. While a shaman was still trying to save him, the realisation of death caused the mother and grandmother to burst out in shrieks. The little corpse was immediately carried to the neighbouring house where it was displayed on a low table, wrapped in a cloth and surrounded with the deceased's possessions – some toys, a few clothes, and bottles of medicine. His female relatives gathered around and started wailing, while men asked me for coffee in order to keep awake. Some, especially children, played dominos and cards throughout the night, although in a non-competitive way,[195] and several men built a small coffin. Women's wailing subsided after a while, but most stayed next to the corpse, prostrate.

At dawn, when time came to bury the child, all relatives gathered again, the women's wailing resumed, and a grandmother who had been in reclusion the evening before, since she was menstruating, finally cried for her grandson. When it happened, some women joined in and all the other villagers shed tears, until some men closed the coffin and a party went to bury it in a small cemetery located downriver. Without the corpse, there was no more wailing, and the entire village became lethargic: even those who were not related to the deceased did not leave to perform any productive task, making a point of not doing anything, laying in their hammocks, and since it was the third death in a week, the whole village was particularly gloomy.

Normal life then resumed progressively. Conversely, in the other village where I did some fieldwork, Domujana, I first arrived a week after a three-year old girl had died, and there mourning was still in process: close relatives of the deceased (her mother and her grandparents) went to visit the grave several times, notably to build a small thatch over it. In some cases, these subsequent visits have the purpose of checking whether tracks are found on the mud spread smoothly on the surface of the grave or the coffin – it would be the sign that the *hoebo* double of a sorcerer has come to suck the blood out of its victim. But often, as happened in Domujana, it is also an occasion for further wailing and drunken crying.

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194. When newborn babies die after a few days, there is neither wake nor wailing; they are simply buried, and mentioned only when women talk about their pregnancies.
195. The presence of games of chance during funerary rituals, which seems common, has also been recorded in the Bolivian Andes by Harris (1982: 51), who sees it as echoing the arbitrariness of death.

1.2. Ritual wailing.

When a Warao dies, what is most striking for a foreign observer is the ritual wailing performed by women, called *sana* (distress) or *ona* (cries), which is centred on the closest relatives of the deceased, while the men cry silently or accomplish their other duties. It has been studied in depth by Briggs (1992, 1993), and here I only want to stress some of its main features, which it shares with funerary wailing in many other societies (see Berthomé & Houseman in press).

On the one hand, wailing is a conventional genre. It is a musical form, and the alternation between refrains and textual phrases is marked by both content and tempo. It is also characterised by a low pitch register and the absence of 'bright timbre.' While there is some variation, pitch and timbre are essential to the coordination of women's voice, since wailing is a collective performance. Briggs, however, does not treat it as the 'conventional' expression of some 'natural' or 'spontaneous' emotion, as seems to be more or less explicitly the case among other anthropologists,[196] but notes the oscillation between some moments when "the musical dimension of sana empowers it in affective and social terms" and others when "the emotional power seems to burst through" (1993: 935), an unresolved tension that has been shown to be constitutive of ritual wailing itself (Berthomé & Houseman in press). The textual content of Warao wailing is also conventional. The refrains are particularly formulaic, since they mostly consist in the repetition of kin terms followed by expressions of abandonment and loss (e.g. "Brother! Oh pitiful you! Brother!", Lavandero 1972: 340); and if textual phrases offer more room for creativity, women essentially use them to recall acts of care and nurture, given and received, and past activities, especially those productive of food.

On the other hand, wailing is characterised by a specific interactive pattern. Women's participation depends on their closeness to the deceased: a mother, grandmother, sister or wife spends the whole time next to the corpse, and wails the longest periods, although this subdues from time to time, while more distant relatives only take part for shorter periods, and sometimes do not spend much time next to the corpse. In their lament, women also switch between different kin terms, often alternating between their own perspective and that of the deceased (e.g. "my little brother"/"your sister-in-law", Lavandero 1983; "my brother"/"your wife", Lavandero 1972; "my child"/"your aunt",

196. See for instance Basso, who describes how wailing among the Kalapalo progresses from "an experience of spontaneous grief and anger" to "focused, planned, goal-oriented participation in complex, collective work" (1985: 140).

Briggs 1992). It enables them to envisage different aspects of their relationship, or different ways of recalling it, and is a way of commenting implicitly on their behaviour towards the deceased.

The interactive pattern of ritual wailing is also defined by more formal properties. Among the Warao, only women wail, while men shed tears, talk, or remain silent. But maybe more importantly, funerary lament is focused on the corpse and addressed to the deceased: I will show that it plays a role in the efficacy of the ritual performance.

1.3. Creating emotions.

Anthropological study of grief started with the analysis of its expression as a social obligation rather than a spontaneous emotional experience (Hertz 1907: 83-84, Mauss 1921), and many later scholars have adopted the same perspective. Others, conversely, have tried to take more seriously the psychological experience of grief into account and to reconcile it with social and cultural patterns, rather than dismissed it in favour of sociological concerns. It can therefore be argued, for instance, that the conventions of the ritual shape the emotion of grief. If anger is a cross-cultural reaction to death, Warao laments acknowledge it by directing accusations towards suspected sorcerers and uncaring kin; and, by giving it musical form, they turn a raw impulse in an aesthetic performance. Further, many anthropologists have claimed that, by doing so, funerary rituals channel grief, and therefore help to overcome it. Briggs for instance argues that Warao laments enable mourners to return to their subsistence tasks by transforming "these emotions [produced by a person's death] from internal and individual into relational, interactive, and collective ones" (1992: 350). Indeed, the content of textual phrases deals precisely with the relationship between the deceased and the wailer, and wailing is a collective and coordinated activity among the Warao.[197] Through wailing, those who are struck by grief can overcome the risk of estrangement or alienation inherent in the states of sadness and anger.

These perspectives – in terms of conventional expression and of channelling or transformation of emotion – have certainly proved to be very fruitful, and have helped us to understand many aspects of grief and funerary rituals. However, they rely on the implicit assumption that emotions are something that pre-exists society, culture and language, an aspect of a universal human nature that is triggered by some universal

197. Contrary, for instance, to the Xavante, where wailing is an anti-social activity, performed in isolation from the sleeping mat, i.e. the least public place (Graham 1986: 88).

events – and is the object of a cultural or social treatment post-hoc. While this is not necessarily a reason to reject these analyses, they obscure the important fact that ritual lament *produces* powerful emotions among the wailers and in the audience, and that native evaluation is precisely in terms of the efficacy of the wailing. The Warao never comment that a wailer has adequately expressed her feelings, or that a good performance had helped them resume daily life; they rather consider whether it was moving. In most cases, their crying is enough to show it was so, but in one instance recorded by Briggs, the performance failed, and his informants said that the wailing "came out just like it was something to be laughed at" (Briggs 1993: 936). A successful funerary lament is one that moves everyone to tears, and under this respect it is similar to the Gisaro ceremony performed by the Kaluli of PNG, as described by Schieffelin (2005 [1976]).

In my own experience, moving others was precisely one of the most striking aspects of wailing. As soon as a woman starts, others soon join in, while little girls cry openly and men weep silently or mutter angry accusations. When I came back to visit Tekoburojo after a year of absence, my friends were very excited when they learned I had the recording of laments for Flavio's baby, whose mother had died as well since then. The grandmother of my host family immediately sent for the other grandmother of the deceased baby, and asked me to play it. But after less than a minute, with distraught faces, they asked me to stop because it was too sad to listen to. This kind of event has been recorded by many other researchers, but precisely, it has always been noted in passing, without being given much importance.[198] Conversely, I claim that moving others is a defining feature of ritual wailing, and from this perspective, comparable to that of Duranti (1992) on respect, grief is primarily something that is 'done' to people.

1.4. A technology of emotion.

There are several ways of accounting for the powerful emotional effects of this funerary ritual. First, the funerary ritual as a whole is a highly salient perceptual experience. I take here my inspiration from the compelling work of Beth Conklin on the Wari'. Describing their experience of death, she argues that: "The sound of the death

198. Among the Warao, it has been noted by Briggs (1993: 933) and Julio Lavandero (personal communication). However ritual speech is inextricably linked to a particular relational setting: among the Warao, it is focused on and addressed to the deceased, and therefore listening to a recorded wailing can cause extreme sadness, but only in front of the corpse or the grave do other women join in (contrary to the Shokleng case mentioned by Urban 1988: 394). Lavandero (1972: 346) mentions that women sometimes wail on their own, after the burial, but I never witnessed such behaviour, which is not mentioned by Briggs either – I assume it is exceptional or atypical.

keening is another powerful stimulus to memory, evoking other times when one has keened one's own sorrow. The conventionality of the keening […] connects each new episode of keeping to each one that has gone before" (2001: 72). The same is essentially true of the Warao, where wailing possesses musical properties that distinguish it sharply from ordinary crying, from other speech genres, and from singing. It is therefore instrumental in moving even distant relatives of the deceased. But death is the occasion for a more global experience, visual and olfactory as well. The practice of the wake implies that mourners spend at least a whole night in the vicinity of a smelly corpse, which is the focus of everyone's gaze. The visual experience of death is explicitly central, for all relatives of the deceased have the obligation to 'see' him dead (see section 3.2 of this chapter).[199]

Second, ritual wailing has a specific status in native language ideology. This question has been developed by Briggs, who quotes his informants stating that lamenters "only sing [literally, 'cry'] the truth, they would be unable to sing lies", and often interjecting: "those are strong words!" when he later played the recordings (1992: 341). Such statements are particularly important when contrasted to comments on other genres of discourse, especially ordinary and drunken talk. Everyday talk is indeed commonly equated with gossip and lies, and the expression *dehe waraya* (literally, he or she tells a story), is usually used to stress that someone is propagating unfounded gossip, which is precisely a major subject matter of laments, being recontextualised as quoted speech in order to accuse others of sorcery attacks or uncaring behaviour (Briggs 1992). Moreover, this ideology is not without practical consequences, for the accusations made by women in their wailing can cause the exclusion of members of the settlement (ibid.: 347). Wailing is therefore a highly marked type of discourse because of its maximal truth-value.

Third, the specific interactive pattern of ritual wailing plays a central role. The laments are systematically addressed to the deceased, and it makes members of the audience the 'overhearers' of the wailers' discourse.[200] Urban (1988) consequently argues that the

199. The Warao do not elaborate much on the olfactory experience, contrary, for instance, to the Wari' (Conklin 2001: 78). Scent is however an important index of personhood among them, and I think they are reluctant to comment on the strong smell of the corpse, rather than unimpressed by it. When some children started giggling at a funeral wake because it had reached us, they were sharply reprimanded by the adults.

200. Briggs (1993: 946) argues that this is not the case among the Warao, for they "do not construe their participation in this fashion at all," and he refers in a note (1993: 954n.5) to a small excerpt he had published in another paper, where the audience was directly addressed by the lamenter (1992: 354). All evidence however suggests that this later case is very exceptional, and I

pragmatic nature of wailing enables it to iconically index emotions, without stating them referentially: "Ritual wailing is precisely not talking about feeling. That is what makes it convincing" (1988: 397). Voiced inhalation, raspy and hoarse singing, sobbing, etc., which constantly threaten to disrupt speech and melody, have been highlighted as such "icons of crying." The refrains and textual phrases also contribute to such a process. They are replete with direct complaints ("you abandoned me!") and frustrated hopes ("it is as if you were going to appear"). This "unilateral interlocution," which is never answered, exhibits a pitiful state of abandonment rather than tells it to the living, by highlighting the paradoxical nature of the corpse, the simultaneous presence and absence of the deceased (Berthomé & Houseman in press). Referring explicitly to certain emotional states in a dialogue has other consequences on the interlocutor, as I will show later, whereas wailing produces emotional effects by exhibiting sorrow in a non-referential way.

Because it is a perceptually salient event, because of the interactive pattern and of the language ideology that define it, ritual wailing has powerful emotional effects, and is a highly marked activity. However, it is not the end of grief, which is not supposed to radically disappear or be repressed once the funerary ritual is over.[201] It certainly wanes over time, which is not unexpected. But crying also periodically takes place in other contexts, during which grief is re-enacted, and it is referred to in statements made with other intentions: what is at stake is therefore not a ritual catharsis, but rather a form of moral action.

2. Crying as an emotional behaviour and a moral act.

Why do the Warao want to cry and to move others to tears? I argue that the experience of intense sorrow reveals one to be a moral person, since it represents the other side of the concern for relatives and co-residents which defines morality – here we have morality in hollowed-out form. It is, indeed, a very general idea that can be found under various guises in many societies (cf. for instance Flora 2009), and that makes the trope of abandonment pervasive as a motivation or incentive to provide care, as I showed in chapter 3, but I want to describe how the Warao concretely put it to use.

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believe he mistakes comments on how men are touched by wailing for the formal characteristic of the genre.

201. Such seems to be the case in many societies, or at least in the writings of many anthropologists, since the seminal work of Hertz (1907: 88) and his presentation of ritual acts that formally end the period of grief. See for instance Basso 1985: 125-126; Carneiro da Cunha 1978: 60; Shepard Jr 2002.

2.1. Laments and moral reflexivity.

Among the Warao, ritual wailing is 'moral' in a very specific sense, through the content of the textual phrases sung by women. They certainly do express a certain social ideal, that of a person who is the subject and the object of a deep attachment, especially when they recall acts of care and nurture given and received by the deceased, which I have shown to be constitutive of kinship (chapter 3) and health (chapter 4). It could be for instance a step-mother telling how she fed her step-son (Briggs 1992), or a widow stressing the productive activities of her late husband and how both herself and their children will suffer now that he is gone (Lavandero 1972). Moreover, the link between crying and care is made explicit. In a lament recorded by Briggs, the woman says: "Although I, your aunt, am a person who criticizes people, although I criticize people, I cry for you" (*Hi dakatai warao asabahitu-rone, warao sabahia-rone, hi onaya ine*, Briggs 1992: 357, modified translation). The use of a concessive suffix *(-rone)* implies that these two practices, criticizing and crying, are radically opposed and present her moral personhood under different lights. Her sometimes uncaring behaviour (which she details in the lament) would portray her as a person incapable of attachment – but in the end her crying redeems her.

However, there is more to it than that, and lamenters usually perform a critical reflection on the behaviours and actions that led to death, through the use of grammatical forms specific to ritual wailing. Some phrases express the frustrated desire that the deceased would still be alive and about to appear, or recall his or her past activities, using a subordinator marking a past continuous action with a yearning tone *(tekore)*. However, these hopes or longings are always disrupted by interjections ("my son, oh pitiful you!") or statements in simple past ("brother, you have left for good!"), which usually close the stanza and stress the irreversible event of death. They also alternate with mentions of uncaringness – in terms of stingy behaviour, gossip, threats, etc. – or even direct accusations of sorcery, using either simple past or reported speech. The use of these distinct grammatical forms constructs the (discontinuous) hostile acts as putting an end to a (continuous) life, and, through marks of yearning and frustrated desire, expresses the idea that it could and should have been otherwise – had everyone, including the wailer, behaved differently. A strong moral critique is performed in a very implicit way, through grammatical forms rather than propositional statements, and leads to the idea that other paths were possible. Laments also represent the only setting for moral reflexivity, since wailers detail their own faults when they cry, often promising to

amend themselves. In line with the approach I developed in the previous chapters, it is therefore not a question of expressing some social ideals or encompassing values, but rather of suggesting the dilemmas inherent in ethical life. I, however, want to go further, and to stress, like I did in section 2.2 of chapter 1, that morality is also a question of performance, that is to say, of extracting a specific reaction from others. Here, the extraordinary act of crying is articulated with the mundane concerns of ordinary sociality.

2.2. Pledges of sorrow and their efficacy.

The small scene that I described at the beginning of this chapter shows that crying can be referred to in contexts independent of grief and with other effects. It happened several times in interactions with members of my host family: Jesús and his mother Adelina, most notably, promised that they would cry for me after I had left, when drunk, that they would cry for me upon my death, or that they had already done so when I had gone home. Indeed, when I came back after a year, Adelina told me her son had been drunkenly crying and repeating my name, saying I had abandoned him. In all these cases, crying was mentioned in an affectionate or loving tone, even though they were referring to past or future sorrow, and my pledging to cry for them elicited happy laughter.

However, this theme was not a product of my interaction with them, and it appeared in several other cases, with yet other emotional tones. Clara, a daughter of Adelina, had been left with two small children by her first husband, and had remarried Marcelo, a younger man with whom she was still childless. Their life in Tekoburojo was replete with tensions (see section 1.3 of chapter 2), and it came as no surprise to learn that Clara had had a fight with her mother. What was more unexpected was to learn that it had been an actual physical fight, rather than a mere argument, to the point that they went to seek mediation from the leaders of Guayo, the neighbouring mission village. It had left their relationship slightly scarred, but Adelina told me how the *borisia* from Guayo[202] had convinced them to make up, and in her narrative one argument emerged from this process of counselling. He had simply reminded Clara: "when your mother dies, you will cry." Crying was here still referred to as a proof of attachment, but now in a context of angry tensions. It certainly relies on the intimate link between sorrow and relatedness,

202. The Warao have adopted some terms from Spanish in order to designate officially recognised leaders: *kobenahoro* (from 'gobernador'), *borisia* (from 'policia'), etc. See J. Wilbert 1996. The *borisia* mentioned by Adelina is therefore a leader from the neighbouring – and larger – settlement, who is therefore considered a legitimate mediator.

but at the same time, it is necessary to ask why this type of manipulation, more than others, is compelling among the Warao.

We are faced here with a situation which is almost the opposite of that discussed in the case of funerary rituals. An emotional state is not exhibited, but explicitly referred to when it is assumed not to be experienced, since it is described as a past occurrence or pledged as a future event. It is quite obvious that it is aimed at manipulating the disposition of others in interactions, for instance restraining anger in a dispute mediation ceremony so that a mother and her daughter would not be completely estranged from one another, or ensuring an incommensurable affection in a friendly context, maybe so that material gifts would confirm that attachment is not one-sided. This situation could interestingly be compared to those described by White (1990), who shows, in the context of a Solomon Islands society, how emotion talk (especially referring to 'anger') is a means of ensuring reconciliation, or by Beatty (2005a), who stresses that, in Java, emotion terms are not used to refer to what people feel, but rather to what they should feel, or, perhaps more adequately, do. He consequently argues that it would be more appropriate from an analytical point of view to talk about "the mutual adjustments of conduct and the mediation of conflicting wishes" rather than emotional states (ibid.: 29). He is right to stress that we should not conflate data coming from the various contexts in which emotions are expressed or referred to, since it would lead to an unfounded reification of the 'emotional realm.'

However, I argue that, among the Warao, discursive references to crying work precisely because they refer to a painful and visible emotional experience,[203] whereas mentions of indiscernible inner states have little effect. It partly comes from the fact that among the Warao 'other minds' are 'opaque' (see section 2.2 of chapter 2). People are especially reluctant to speculate discursively about the inner states, ideas or desires of others – even of their closest friends and relatives. The other side of this reluctance is that statements about oneself carry no weight if they refer to invisible inner states. References to crying are therefore a specific instance of a more general principle, namely that the Warao mostly talk about themselves and others in terms of behaviour. They say that people cry or behave angrily (verbs of action), and commenting that one is sad leads

203. In a way, I want to extend beyond ritual, and put to a different use, the distinction put forward by Urban (1988) between iconically exhibiting and referring to emotion.

to description in behavioural rather than psycho-physiological terms:[204] a sad person certainly is 'weak' *(botobot-era)*, but above all is depicted as eating, talking and moving little, in a word as being prostrated.

In spite of this focus on behaviour, I argue that at the heart of the question is emotion (see section 1.1 of chapter 3). Wailing, for instance, is not a mere question of dramatic performance, of a "communicative function," expressing a covert desire for sociability, as seems to be implied by Urban in his study of ritual wailing (1988: 392). It is true that what is called 'ritual wailing' covers a wide range of practices, and Urban for instance deals with the 'welcome of tears' first described by explorers who visited the Tupinamba in the 16th century: it is a form of greeting for those who come back after a long absence, and the wailer "may suddenly upon its completion reveal a smiling and seemingly untroubled face" (ibid.: 393). Similar situations have often led the observers to doubt the genuine character of the emotions displayed, and to describe such practices in terms of behavioural conventions and social norms; and Urban's achievement is certainly to integrate in a single model, along a continuum, the more 'conventional' and the more 'spontaneous' forms of wailing. It would, however, be misleading to adopt this perspective when dealing with the Warao, where wailing and crying can be adequately described neither as conventional nor as spontaneous activities: they are not the latter because they are intentionally produced; and they are not the former because people's behaviour is inextricably linked to their intense experience of sorrow. The Warao do not cry because they have to cry (as a conventional rule); they cry because they suffer from sadness – something I have heard a few times (*arawana waba-kitane*, lit. 'to die from sadness') –, even though they intentionally create such suffering in specific contexts. Similarly, contrary to the Javanese case described by Beatty (2005a), the Warao do not use a word referring to what their interlocutor should feel or do; but rather refer to the fact that they did or will exhibit certain emotions: we cannot do without the idea of sorrow as an emotional experience exhibited by uncontrollable crying. Hence the specificity of this emotional morality: I have shown that it is partly defined by the emotional response to others (see for instance chapter 3), and therefore exhibiting specific emotions is a moral performance that influences others.

But then, because of this wider significance of sorrow, it is not something

204. It contrasts the Warao to many other societies, for instance the Javanese who describe many states that can affect the heart – although Beatty warns against literal interpretation of these expressions (2005a: 23-24).

circumscribed to the immediate vicinity of death, which would otherwise be suppressed. I will therefore show how grief is periodically re-enacted among the Warao, which might seem surprising in the context of lowland South America, where the dead are often said to be actively forgotten as soon as possible.

3. Fragments of memory.

3.1. Cutting off the dead.

Most anthropological investigations on the question of death in Amazonia pay little attention to grief[205] and only stress that people are quite systematically cut off by their living relatives as soon as they die, especially through the erasure of material and immaterial reminders of the deceased. Indeed, it seems that the Warao are no exception to that. When someone dies, his belongings are mostly either buried with him, destroyed, or abandoned.[206] In the case of an adult, the house is abandoned, and often, in the case of old leaders, it is the whole settlement that is left, so that survivors form a new village or join other groups.[207] Finally, the names of the deceased are hardly ever spoken anymore, and when referring to them an expression stressing their dead status (*waba-ha-kotai*, 'he or she who has died') is systematically postposed either to the appropriate kin term, or to the personal name – should it be uttered.[208]

The usual explanation for such practices is that the dead are turned by death into 'others' (H. Clastres 1968, Carneiro da Cunha 1978), and therefore that continuing to remember them is problematic both from a psychological and from an ontological point of view. He or she who used to be a living relative is now a dangerous other, sometimes explicitly seen as an enemy: among the Wari', for instance, death creates "distortions of perspective" that cause the deceased to perceive his grieving relatives as angry affines,

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205. Some striking exceptions are the works by Kracke 1981 & 1988 and Conklin 2001. This situation contrasts to the attention devoted to grief in other parts of the world, see for instance Delaplace 2009, or the papers brought together in Robben 2004.
206. On the Warao, see Barral 1964: 237 and Ayala-Lafée & Wilbert 2001: 245; on the Yanomami, see Albert 1985: 391-393; on the Krahó, Carneiro da Cunha 1978: 131-134; on the Aché, H. Clastres 1968: 65; on the Wari', Conklin 2001: 83-84; on the Sharanahua, Déléage 2007: 119; on the Piro, Gow 1991: 184; on the Kagwahiv, Kracke 1981: 262; etc.
207. On the Warao, the Aché, the Wari', the Sharanahua, the Piro and the Kagwahiv, cf. n. 14; on the Achuar, see Taylor 1993a: 662; on the Araweté, see Viveiros de Castro 1992: 49 & 200, on the Guarani-speaking Paraguayans, see Boidin 2005, etc.
208. On the Yanomami (prohibition), see Albert 1985: 399; the Sharanahua (avoidance), see Déléage 2007: 119; the Kagwahiv (grammatical modification of kin terms), see Kracke 1988: 214-215.

and the living to see a homesick spirit as a frightening ghost (Conklin 2001: 199). At the same time, native informants often stress that a complete erasure of all traces of the deceased is necessary because, since she is no more a living person, remembering her can be lethally painful: as a Wari' once told Conklin, "if you really miss someone, you *die*!" (2001: 143). Among the Warao as well, different justifications are offered for these funerary practices. Some say that they just do not like to utter or hear the names of dead people, others that it makes one 'weak,' and one of my informants, while admitting without doubt that people do not like to pronounce such names, only suggested very tentatively that it could be so because people are afraid of being seized by the deceased's spirit. Similarly, Barral remarks that all belongings (including the house) of the deceased are destroyed "so that the soul would not suffer remembering those things" (1964: 237), whereas my own experience shows that it can be an emotional matter – or, to put it in another way, a question for the emotions of the living rather than of the deceased. When I came back to Tekoburojo in 2009, Adelina described to me the death of her daughter-in-law Olinda, keeping a sad and monotonous voice (which contrasted sharply to the enormous variation of pitch marking excitement), and stressed that they still had the pictures I had taken of her, and then, signalling towards Flavio and Olinda's abandoned house, added that it was "still standing there" – regretting this painful yet daily reminder. However, although these alternative explanations are offered in the abstract and can be seen as complementary,[209] in practice I have never heard of any Warao haunted by ghosts: the encompassing question, the real danger, is to be overwhelmed with sorrow.

Many anthropologists, writing from such a perspective, have subsequently stressed that lasting grief, because of this dual danger, can only be exceptional or pathological. It may be that a proper funerary ritual could not be held, preventing the 'work of mourning.' Conklin for instance mentions the case of a girl who had died in Rio de Janeiro, at a hospital, and whose family kept her possessions intact and continued to speak directly about her, using her name and calling her by kin terms: compared to the usual practices, it was a 'horrendous anomaly' (2001: 114). The absence of the corpse prevented a funerary ritual from being held and from achieving the desired

209. This question is usually discussed on the topic of ghosts, and many authors have stressed that a way to overcome this difficulty is to consider that the ghost is quite literally the embodiment or the shadow of memory – it threatens only those who have known the deceased, and disappears progressively as memory fades (Albert 1985: 393-394, Gow 1991: 185, Viveiros de Castro 1992: 206-207). Kracke considers that they are "different ways of phrasing the same thing" (1988: 213).

transformation of memory or 'un-remembering' – the lasting grief that resulted was certainly not a desired state.[210]

3.2. Preserving reminders.

The approach I have outlined so far however obscures the fact that, even in Amazonia, material reminders of the dead are often retained by their surviving relatives. They are however usually given a sociological or cosmological, rather than psychological, significance;[211] or are described as a recent change, for instance when these reminders are photographs of the deceased kept by the living.[212] Anthropologists, who have usually played a part in such a process, quite systematically seem at pains to account for these new practices: they record them without comment, relegate the information in footnotes, or suggest a universal tension between remembering and forgetting.

The Warao do retain some particular reminders of their dead relatives, namely pictures and graves, which stand out since everything else is disposed of and the deceased are not talked about. I further argue that these reminders are meaningful as the preservation of a grief-causing memory among the living, more than anything else.

First, these reminders are meant to last, at least within the temporal scale of biographical time. The Warao are not interested in preserving things beyond their generation, and very little endures in the Orinoco Delta, but they still make efforts to preserve tombs and photographs, rather than to ensure their progressive disappearance.[213] Their photographs are stored with their other precious administrative documents (essentially I.D. cards), but it is more striking in the case of graves. The region where I worked is made of swampy islands, divided by large streams and also permeated by innumerable streamlets. However, being located downriver enables the inhabitants to have easy access to areas of firm land (*waha*, Sp. 'playa'), which are characteristic of the littoral Delta. There, the Warao are able to bury their dead in designated spaces called *hoita-noko* (lit. 'burial place'), which are only loosely connected to

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210. For those who consider that rituals 'channel' emotion, grief is meant to be overcome; for those who consider that funerary ritual is defined by a "mandatory expression of emotion" (Mauss 1921), such obligations stop when the ritual is over.

211. See for instance Agostinho 1974, Chaumeil 1997, and Goldman 1963.

212. On the Warao, see Ayala-Lafée & Wilbert 2001: 245; on the Wari', Conklin 2001: 128, 257n.1; on the Xavante, Graham 1986: 88. Conversely, Kracke remarks that the Kagwahiv precisely did not want to look at the pictures of those who had died since they were taken (1988: 214).

213. Again it contrasts the Warao – at least those of the area where I conducted fieldwork – to other lowland Amerindian groups, who often, for instance, display the corpse until the flesh has rotted. See Albert 1985: 390 on the Yanomami.

specific settlements: all inhabitants of the surroundings of Guayo for instance have relatives buried in the large cemetery of Burojoida. The main purpose of such places, which are located on terra firma, is to preserve the graves. Indeed, the bane of a small cemetery located next to Tekoburojo was that part of it was being eroded by the river, and an old man told me in tears that water-beings *(nabarao)* were devouring the corpses of his children – precisely what they were trying to avoid.[214]

Second, we deal here with reminders of the dead person *as a dead person*.[215] It is obviously the case with graves, which recall the event of death and the subsequent burial. But it also strikingly appears in the case of photographs. The people I met during my fieldwork, in all areas of the Delta, have a general passion for portraits: there are some 'professional' itinerant photographers, who use small boats to visit all settlements and take pictures, coming back weeks later to sell them. But since I was doing that for free, everyone constantly asked me to take pictures of them. Grooming would go on for hours, they had very strict conceptions of how they wanted to be portrayed, and became extremely excited when I would distribute the dozens of portraits I had taken.

However, it coexisted with a particular interest in the pictures of dead people. They did not destroy photographs of those who had died, and kept them carefully. In another village, a middle-aged woman similarly expressed her satisfaction at having a portrait of her late mother. What surprised me even more was the late discovery that they not only wanted to keep pictures of those who had passed away, but also wanted to have pictures taken of the corpse. It first happened when Flavio and Olinda's child died, and I took pictures of the displayed corpse surrounded by grieving relatives, at the very beginning of the wake. During my last visit, when a young man I did not know personally had died in Tekoburojo and I had gone to 'see' him, everyone asked me whether I had photographed the corpse – as if it were the only thing I could have usefully done –, and to my negative answer they concluded that the boy's parents probably were not aware I always carried a camera and obliged with demands. But they were pleased when, a few days later, I took a

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214. In the region of Winikina, a dug-out or hollow trunk can be used as a coffin, and is placed on trestles and covered with layers of mud and palm leaves. Some sources mention that bones were retrieved after a while, in order to be kept by the living or to be buried definitively, but data is rather imprecise and inconsistent on the subject (cf. Barral 1964: 247-249). In Yorinanoko, where I witnessed part of a funerary ritual and whose inhabitants are related to those of Tekoburojo, people do not have access to terra firma, and therefore practice a form of overground burial in a small cemetery located across the river from the village. They build four walls of planks, so that they can put the coffin there and fill the empty space with mud: it is a way of preserving the grave in a swampy environment.

215. The opposite of what Delaplace 2008 shows to be the case among the Mongols.

picture of the mother in front of her son's grave, as if it were a weak but acceptable substitute. It therefore seems that the Warao essentially want to remember dead persons specifically as dead persons, rather than as former living relatives, that through these reminders they want to be able to evoke death rather than past life, and this process can be compared to some compelling studies on the memory of the dead in Amazonia.

Taylor (1993a) and, after her, Conklin (2001), have shown that it is impossible to reduce the question of the relationship with the dead to one of 'forgetting' if one wants to have a realistic view of psychological mechanisms and to account fully for native practices. Instead, what is at stake is an active process of 'transforming memories' (Conklin 2001) or 'disremembering,' which led Taylor to focus on "the cognitive operation whereby the image of the deceased, memory, is made to 'die', in other words made to be recognizable as the representation of a dead person rather than that of a living one" (Taylor 1993a: 655).[216] Among the Wari', mortuary cannibalism had such an aim, since watching one's loved one being butchered, roasted and eaten had considerable effect on the way she was remembered by her living relatives (Conklin 2001, Vilaça 2000). The Warao do not possess such exotic and powerful rituals, yet the obligation to 'see' the deceased is particularly strong: in a case I witnessed, a father did not hesitate to undertake a costly and strenuous trip upriver to fetch his two sons who had enrolled in the army, so that they could arrive in time to see their cousin who had just died. The practice of paying a visit to the house where the corpse is exposed is literally called 'to see the deceased' *(waba-ha-kotai mi-kitane)*, and this stress on the visual experience recalls its importance in many other contexts (see for instance chapter 1 on accumulation and generosity), and most notably the fact that kinship is defined in the same way (section 1.3 of chapter 3). The Warao must see the corpse of all their relatives – that is to say people that they have seen alive. Be it through direct experience or through a preserved photograph, the mental image of a corpse has to replace that of a living relative, it must be the last visual impression kept from a now deceased relative.

Finally, both graves and photographs are only mobilised in "materially and temporally discrete dramatic settings," as says Basso about Kalapalo mourning rituals (1985: 91). Cemeteries, for instance, are visited only in the days following a death, and on 2 November (cf. infra). As for pictures, they are systematically stored away. Many villagers

216. It is possible to trace this interest back to Hertz, who mentioned in his famous essay the "painful psychological process" through which "the image of the recently deceased is transformed," since "we cannot think of the dead person as a dead person from the beginning:" it requires "a double mental work of disintegration and synthesis" (Hertz 1907: 129-130).

exhibit pictures in their house, pinning them on posts or composing collages on cardboards hanging from the beams: they mostly present current members of the household, but also those who are only temporarily absent. When I came back in 2009, it did not really surprise me to see some empty areas in the collages of my hosts: the pictures showing the deceased daughter-in-law of Adelina had been removed. They would only be taken out on specific occasions and, as my friends pointed out, those who did so would then cry.[217] This exceptional mobilisation of reminders of the dead, the fact that precautions are taken so that people do not daily contemplate them, seem to serve to avoid constant grief, which can be lethal, but also to retain the capacity to evoke exceptional grief, which otherwise would wane too quickly – even then, after a while it is said that the memory has eventually 'dried up' *(obonobu ekoro-nae)*.

Contrary to other Amerindian groups, the traces of dead people that the Warao preserve are linked to memory and to the mundane or ritual evocation of grief.[218] From such a perspective, they are similar to the Araweté, who keep relics of their dead 'in order to weep' (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 200), although it is striking that Viveiros de Castro, while mentioning these practices, does not grant them much attention, focusing instead on the cosmological or ontological significance of the dead and of their relations to the living. Conversely, I chose to follow the other path, maybe influenced in such a decision by the Warao themselves, who show little interest in eschatological matters and seem more concerned with their affective experience (cf. infra). And in fact, they do mention a practice, other than keeping relics, with the finality of crying: they get drunk. Indeed material reminders of the dead are almost always mobilized in contexts of drunkenness – I will now turn to this other 'device' which is central in the production of grief.

4. Drunken emotions.

Ritual wailing irrepressibly causes the audience to cry and related women to join in the lament; but it only happens in the vicinity of death itself, when the corpse is displayed

217. Such habits can interestingly be contrasted to the use of photographs of dead people in Greenland (Flora 2009) and in Mongolia (Delaplace 2008).
218. For analyses of rituals involving dead people that play a socio-cosmological role and have little to do with grief, see for instance Agostinho 1974, Goldman 1963, Harris 1982. The Warao do indeed perform shamanic rituals involving spirits of the dead in order to ensure the well-being of the living (Lavandero 2000), but they precisely make no use of the material reminders of those who have passed away, and involve anonymous, forgotten 'ancestors' rather than identified dead individuals (see section 5 of this chapter).

during the wake, when it is buried, and sometimes during subsequent visits to the cemetery. After that period, there is hardly ever crying caused by spontaneous memory, or at least I have never witnessed it nor heard it mentioned:[219] it can be triggered by graves and pictures, whose sight I have shown to be deeply moving. However, material reminders of dead relatives are hardly ever mobilized on their own: the case of Flavio who, according to his mother Adelina, cried when he received the pictures of his late son, is exceptional; and her own statement that she would get drunk, look at photographs, and cry, is much more typical of what I heard and saw. Alcohol is omnipresent in the evocation of grief.

4.1. The Day of the Dead.

Nowadays, the Warao only consume alcohol of foreign origin, mostly sugar cane alcohol (Sp. *caña*), but also Venezuelan beer or Guyanese 'wine' (based on sugar cane, with an artificial claret coloring); and I have never heard of anyone producing either manioc beer or moriche palm 'wine' (or rather fermented sap), as used to be the case, at least in specific areas. The link between alcoholic consumption and death is however likely to have many cultural ramifications. On the one hand, it could be related to the ancient practice, mentioned to Barral by his informants from the Amacuro area, of preserving the manioc plants of a deceased person in order to perform a memorial ceremony where they are entirely processed into beer and consumed at once – by the living and the dead, until all are drunk and satisfied (1964: 198-199). On the other hand, alcoholic consumption in grieving contexts is no Warao specialty, and is a main feature of Latin American funerary practices:[220] the consumption of rum during the wake itself, which occasionally happens, or the celebration of the Day of the Dead, could indeed be seen as signs of acculturation (Briggs 1993: 929).

I will focus on the way alcohol was used and referred to in the settlements where I conducted fieldwork, in order to understand its meaning and effect rather than its hypothetical origin, and deal primarily with the 2nd November, the Day of the Dead. It is alternatively called 'day of the candles' (*vela a-ya,* from Sp. 'vela,' candle), 'celebration of the dead' *(waba a-oriwaka)* or 'celebration of the souls' *(mehokoi a-oriwaka)*. The pattern

219. Contrary to what is reported about other Amazonians, e.g. Viveiros de Castro (1992: 201).
220. See for instance Allen 1988, Harris 1982. Other parallels can be drawn with Amazonian beer festivals (see Erikson 2006).

seems very stable in the area where I worked, and my informants confirmed what I had observed when I took part in such a celebration, in 2007.

I first went with some inhabitants of Tekoburojo to the island of Burojoida. When we set out, in the afternoon, many boats were already coming back, and they greeted each other, often showing an empty bottle of rum. On the island, we went looking for the graves of my friends' relatives, who did not remember exactly where they were. Luckily, the whole area had been cleaned by previous mourners, and we quickly found them. The whole atmosphere was very surprising for me: we conscientiously drank some rum, as something to be done, but women also went to look for mangos, and we relit the extinguished candles that people we did not know had put on the graves of people we knew even less.

When we came back, we were already tipsy, but we had another cemetery to visit, a short distance away downriver, where most children and some adults from Tekoburojo had been buried. The same process was repeated, but since everyone had travelled at the same time, the cemetery was quite crowded, and everyone was cleaning the area, discussing where exactly had so-and-so been buried, in order to put a cross or some candles in the right place. It seemed to be a very collective ritual, since we went to the cemetery as a group, but it was also very individualistic, everyone doing the same thing at the same time, but for him- or her-self.

We were again drinking rum and beer, purposefully, and soon some were very drunk. Nito, a middle-aged widower, was crying and kept telling his son: "your mother is here, your mother is here Marco." When we left, two of his brothers fought, and one had to be tied and forcefully carried to the boat so that we could go home. It was dusk already, the bottle of rum brought by the leader was empty, and we had to start the party. We danced in couples in old Evaristo's house, since he had a sound system playing Venezuelan music, but everyone was drunk; Evaristo himself had already been seized by fits of drunken crying during the afternoon, many were staggering, some were fighting but their state prevented them from hurting each other, and luckily, when a young man fell from the stilts, he landed on a patch on sand. Those who could still talk were often asking me for cigarettes, complaining about their pitiful state, or insulting each other. As many others, I went to sleep, while some kept fighting. In the morning, the sober ones criticized those who kept on drinking, but they only joked about their own behaviour.

The Day of the Dead is indeed a Catholic date, and in most of Latin America people visit cemeteries and perform various forms of commemoration. But my hosts only

considered it to be part of normal human behaviour. When I questioned Jesús about the habit of placing candles on the tombs, and commented that 'we' did not do so, he almost reacted angrily: "are you not persons *(warao)*? Jaguars [the antithesis of 'persons'] are those who don't put candles!" For him, there was nothing else to add, it was assumed to be a universal rather than socially distinctive practice,[221] and 'authenticity' was never a question for my hosts in the context. Others gave me some explanation, but I never recorded a consistent discourse about the celebration. Fabian for instance put forward the fact that it was a party *(oriwaka)* for the souls (of the dead): they gather, rejoicing at the idea that the living will bring them alcohol to drink with them. Conversely, David, while acknowledging that it was the 'celebration of the dead,' only explained it by its finality for the living: this commemoration, with all its drinking, takes place so that they cry.

Providing the dead with alcohol is in fact neither mentioned nor apparently done during the celebration, and is therefore soon eclipsed by the production of highly emotional states among the living: the sadness, experienced through fits of weeping, and the anger, which leads to insults and physical fights, exceed everything I have otherwise witnessed among the Warao. Even though – or because – it is overall a very chaotic celebration, these highly emotional behaviours stand out as its defining features. Sexual innuendo is conspicuously absent, anger breaks out in spite of being undesirable, and weeping is omnipresent.[222]

4.2. To drink in order to cry.

Many of these features could be related to some universal effects of binge drinking, to Amazonian beer festivals, or to Andean ritual drunkenness. However, this configuration of a specific set of emotional behaviours appears original, and even more the fact that

221. Harris has similarly noted that, among the Bolivian Laymi, All Saints and Carnival are said to be celebrated in the whole world (1982: 59).

222. Drinking is at the heart of other festivities, most being Catholic holidays as well (Christmas, Easter, New Year's eve), which enables partying to be a collective phenomenon. This desired and valued unanimity partly explains their issues with Evangelical missionaries who advocate abstinence from alcohol and tobacco. At least it would be acceptable if everyone converted at once, as I was told several times, but what they cannot permit is that conversion to Evangelical churches creates divisions within the village, especially during collective festivities. In these celebrations, which are 'parties' rather than 'parties of the dead,' crying is not an explicit purpose. The Warao of different settlements gather, but they do so on a beach in order to play football rather than in a cemetery in order to adorn the graves of their dead. Drinking does not seem to be done out of duty. But it usually degenerates into extreme drunkenness and the associated states of sorrow and anger, so that their outcome is often similar to that of the Day of the Dead.

crying is the stated aim of the celebration, of the alcoholic consumption, as it was the motive for keeping a picture of me. While most of my hosts made a connection between drinking and crying, it was David – an old man from Guayo – who developed it in the most explicit way. According to him, "it is for this very reason that the Warao drink, [in order] to cry" *(tai saba seke waraotuma hobia, onakitane)*. Moreover, he went on to describe alcohol as a device to produce grief: whereas remembering spontaneously a dead loved one causes only subdued weeping, alcohol 'triggers' *(dokia)* the memory and enables one to yield to immoderate crying. Indeed, when the Warao think of someone who is missing or who has died, they usually become melancholic or sad. It is essentially a passive state, since it leads to prostration, and can appear as a dis-ease, as I stressed in chapter 4. Indeed, this passivity is also marked morphologically, and in Warao, as in other languages, 'to be sad' contrasts sharply with verbs of action such as 'to cry' and 'to become angry.'[223] It seems that drinking, as much as material reminders, is needed to turn a passive state of sadness into an active experience of sorrow.

From the point of view of emotional efficacy, drunken crying could be compared to ritual wailing: in both cases, what matters is to cause an experience of intense sorrow exhibited by crying. They however differ on many respects, for instance that of their interactive pattern. Drunken celebrations are necessarily chaotic, since drunk people have no interactive competence and systematically turn away from the living (through sadness and anger), whereas the corpse gives an essential focus to funerary lament, and women's voices are coordinated by pitch, timbre and content, making it a highly relational activity. Moreover, drunken crying, contrary to funerary lament, does not evoke grief in the audience, but rather pity or concern. But the contrast is even more pronounced when one considers speech. The textual content of women's laments is taken very seriously and has maximal truth-value, as I stressed in section 1.4 of this chapter. On the contrary, drunken discourses are brushed away by the assumption that drunk people simply 'don't know' *(namina-naha)*, and everyone, once sober, is likely to joke about what happened during the celebrations. Arguments or insults are said to be meaningless, and, in themselves, have no 'real' consequences.[224] Precisely for this reason, I claim that such practices are useful in that they offer another interesting perspective on crying.

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223. *Arawana* + *era:* 'sadness' + stative verbalizer.

224. The behaviour or the discourse of a drunk individual have no consequences as soon as everyone has sobered up. However, the fact of getting drunk too frequently – which, in a way, is a decision that one makes when sober – can cause households or settlements to split. It may be

4.3. Drunken speech, drunken emotions, drunken interactions.

This configuration makes the status of drunken speech very problematic, for how is it possible to accept that such an omnipresent and emotionally loaded speech is said to be pointless? Penny Harvey, in a compelling study of drunken speech in an Andean community, precisely asks this question: if their speech is "not heard," then "what exactly is the power of the drunk?" (1991: 22). It is very tempting to answer that it "resides in the ability to become explicit about the contradictions inherent in power relations and the tensions that exist in the community" (ibid: 23-24), and that the ideology according to which drunken speech is meaningless is in fact necessary for contradictions and tensions to be voiced.[225]

I however refuse to adopt this perspective, for I consider it possible to take at face value the comments of the Warao, and at the same time to treat drunkenness as a meaningful behaviour. I argue that its meaning does not lie in the words then spoken, for what matters is not the drunken speech, but rather the non-verbal behaviour, the act of crying without restraint. The fact that, although drunken speech is not paid attention to, the emotional experience of drunk people is taken seriously, is confirmed by the nature of the highly asymmetrical interactions which take place when only some get drunk, while others stay sober.

It happens quite frequently that the Warao consume rum outside of celebrations, although it is much more common in the large mission villages than in remote settlements, where it may happen only once a month, when some villagers receive money from government agencies. In such cases, there is often no partying at all, because people drink on their own or in small groups. They only get drunk, and soon are in a very expressive state, alternating between fits of solitary weeping, angry quarrels that may degenerate into fights, and complaints about their pitiful state that are mixed with demands. Others are usually disapproving: most of my hosts and friends emphasized that drinking was enjoyable only during celebrations, and were quick to stress that those who still had money to buy a bottle of rum often did not have any left to buy food. However, such configurations may tell us more about drunken crying than the socially approved forms of collective celebration.

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why some authors chose to discount the "popular wisdom" that drunken arguments have no consequence (e.g. Shepard Jr 2002: 216).

225. A comparable 'cathartic' interpretation has been offered by Shepard Jr (2002). Following this line of thinking, it however becomes impossible to understand why the Warao would refer to their crying in order to influence others (cf. infra).

Those who stay sober are in fact extremely caring towards their drunk relatives: they try to cajole them into sleep, or at least into being quiet, before they can hurt themselves or others (often women take care of men, but there is no gender exclusivity about drunkenness). It might seem ordinary, but the contrast is striking with the Andean case discussed by Harvey: she notes that confrontations between sober and drunk individuals can lead to the police being called, even though it is an exceptional and last resort, and that systematically sober people would make sharp reprimands towards their drunk relatives, or try to silence them through shame or ridicule (Harvey 1991: 20). No such thing happens among the Warao, and it would even be inadequate to talk of 'confrontations:' all the efforts of the sober ones are focused on not antagonizing drunk people.

I therefore interpret this interactive pattern as a way of drawing back to proper humanity those who are becoming others – and seeing alcoholic intoxication as other-becoming enables to draw parallels with other contexts.[226] Kelly (in press) has shown that among the Yanomami sick people require as much moral interaction as therapeutic intervention, because they are 'becoming ghosts,' and it is the main issue in their dealings with 'White' doctors. In the same way, drunk Warao must be humanized by an archetypically moral behaviour. Their relatives hold them in their arms. They do not answer directly what the latter say (usually in Spanish), therefore avoiding confrontation, but try to convince them (in Warao) that they should calm down. They try to provide what is demanded, for instance cigarettes, but conversely never straightforwardly refuse demands that are impossible to fulfil, merely avoiding to answer or offering something else instead, for instance food or coffee (which are very social consumptions). Indeed, what would be acceptable in everyday interactions, for instance refusing a cigarette or scolding a relative or spouse, is impossible here because of the liminal state of drunk people: it would not end in fission and migration, as in sober conflicts (see chapter 2), but in death – since it is what they are turning toward.

I claim that these asymmetrical interactions reveal the value of drunken crying, for if there is no truth in the words then spoken, the extremely considerate attitude displayed by those who are sober towards their drunk relatives shows how seriously is taken the

226. First, a drunk person turns towards dead people, and it is the nature of melancholia or sadness to be unable to stop thinking about who or what is missing. Second, drunkenness is characterized by angry behaviour, often leading to fights when many have been drinking. Antagonizing their living relatives and instead turning towards the dead, drunk people are becoming others.

sorrow experienced by the latter. Their weeping is not 'fake' *(obohonamo, koneho)* – which is conversely how are characterized the tears of the *hoebo* double of a sorcerer, which pretends to cry whereas it is in fact rejoicing at having killed a victim. That drinking is explicitly aimed at reaching a state of intoxication is often the case among Amerindians, but here it does not enable communication with divinities or social release. Rather, it is a way of intentionally provoking an emotional experience, and it is because this emotional experience is valued in itself, even though drunk people 'don't know' what they say or do, that the Warao can claim that they 'drink in order to cry.' The words may be irrelevant, but the emotional experience of drunk people is true – otherwise it would not be necessary to be so cautious with them.

However, only collectively drinking is unanimously considered to be proper.[227] It does not necessarily come from a generous ideal of sharing alcohol, as seems to be the case in the Andes, but rather, I claim, from the fact that it is too painful or uncomfortable to be sober and to watch one's relatives become drunk, i.e. 'others,' in the same way that it is painful to stay alive and watch others die – and I therefore want to link the experience and use of grief that I have described to the relationship between the living and the dead.

5. From objects of grief to partners in ritual.

5.1. The problem of death.

A classic focus of the anthropology of death is the study of how the living imagine the afterlife, which is often assumed to be a universal concern.[228] J. Wilbert (1993) has adopted such a perspective among the Warao, to the point of saying that they spend an important part of their life trying to ensure post-mortem happiness. However, I never heard spontaneous references made to the afterlife during the course of my fieldwork, and although the soul (or souls) of the deceased were mentioned in some contexts, my questions concerning what happened after death were met with wonder: "I don't know," "nothing," "you should ask the missionaries, they know about that" – were the usual answers in the different settlements where I conducted research. I imagine that I could have found a ritual specialist or someone enough interested in such matters to give me more articulate answers, but these kinds of interaction also convinced me that

227. Although lethal accidents are more likely to happen during collective celebrations, when no one is sober enough to take care of those who put themselves in danger.
228. See the studies brought together by Bloch & Parry 1982 and Humphreys & King 1981 – although they do not generally keep to such a narrow perspective.

anthropologists frequently favour the perspective of specialists without making explicit that they are such, and reify those discourses in ways that show little respect for the experience of ordinary folk (cf. Delaplace 2008).

The idea that death is an issue for the living as living (and not as dead-to-be) has been stressed by several anthropologists working in Amazonia or elsewhere, but this view can be held from different perspectives. Taylor for instance states that "the dead in fact take up an inordinate amount of metaphysical and material space in the Amazonian world" (1993a: 653), but argues that the real issue is the sociological or cosmological relation between the living and the dead (who are 'others'), "rather than the fate of the dead as such" (ibid.: 654). Carneiro da Cunha (1978), Overing (1993) or Viveiros de Castro (1992) have offered similar analyses, showing that a great interest in the afterlife finds expression in various types of discourse (mythology, shamanic discourses, etc.). Yet it is in general not a question of one's own destiny when one dies, as would probably be the case in Christian traditions, but rather of establishing the adequate ritual relationships, and from that perspective the dead are similar to masters of animal species, water-beings, or other powerful non-humans.

I however claim that this is not the case of the Warao. Most of them are silent on the afterlife in everyday conversations (or interviews with anthropologists). Even though the dead play a role in rituals to a certain extent, ritual discourses in fact provide very little information on what the dead have become and how they 'live.' J. Wilbert (1993: 87-111), who tackles the issue of eschatology, does not reflect on the nature of the knowledge he transcribes. He says he obtained his information "by interviewing many different religious practioners" (1993: 87n.2), although in previous publications he acknowledged that he only worked with one of them (e.g. 1969: 13), and I admit that it might be a valuable form of information. However, there are obvious contradictions in what is presented as a consistent worldview, which is enough to reveal the limits of such an approach. The central argument presented by J. Wilbert is that the Warao have different post-mortem destinies, and particularly that members of the three shamanic orders that he distinguishes *(wisidatu, hoarotu, bahanarotu)* have cardinally opposed fates, since they are bound to join their respective god's abode. Yet, what always troubled me is that my own data, as well as numerous other sources (e.g. Briggs & Mantini-Briggs 2003: 186), stress that the same individual often masters the different techniques: then how could one's soul go to different places at the same time? It might be a detail, but I believe it shows how misconceived is the attempt to give consistency to discourses that are not

produced with such a purpose (cf. Bourdieu 1980). Indeed, other anthropologists have stressed similar attitudes, for instance C. Hugh-Jones whose Barasana informants answered her questions about post-mortem destiny by saying: "I haven't died yet; have you? How should I know what happens?" (C. Hugh-Jones 1979: 108).

Both the contradictions in J. Wilbert's presentation, and these comments showing that a lack of interest in eschatology is not exceptional, comfort me in arguing that their post-mortem destiny is not the main concern of the Warao. Even though it is necessary to take into account the existence, in specific contexts, of diverse discourse about the dead, their main or encompassing issue remains grief, and they are similar to the Kaluli described by Schieffelin: "When Kaluli speak of death, they speak less of the fear of dying and more of the sorrow and anxiety of losing someone and being left alone" (2005 [1976]: 156).

5.2. Slipping into oblivion.

The dead as individuals have an existence among the Warao only (or essentially) as memories in those who have known them, and even more, only as grief-causing memories. In a way, they could be compared to the ghosts that, in many Amazonian societies, are perceived only by their former relatives (cf. supra, n. 209) – but the fact that people are faced with ghosts, even if these are a mere emanation of memory, at least gives them some ontological autonomy. But there does not seem to be any similar process among the Warao, or then in very subdued forms: it is true that the 'day of candles' can be presented as a celebration for the dead to party, but then no reference is made to this aspect during the ritual itself. In most contexts the dead appear as memories, but it is also worth stressing that they are specifically remembered as dead people.

The mental image kept by living relatives is not that of a former living individual, but rather that of a corpse, which all of them have to 'see.' When individual dead people are mentioned in discourse, nothing is said about what or how they were when they were alive. This kind of information is only mentioned during ritual wailing, but then each stanza abruptly ends with an outcry of grief and a statement that death occurred: the acts that the deceased used to performed when she was alive are mentioned only as acts that she will never perform again since death took her. After that, very little is said about the dead – except that they die and that those who remember them are seized by sorrow. On a rare occasion, when we were visiting the little cemetery on 2 November, I witnessed

my host Jesús ask the leader Javier whose grave he was adorning. But his question was in fact only about the age of the dead child, who had died when she was already six years old, whereas his own children had died when they were toddlers: the information transmitted was only about the deceased as a cause for grief, not as a former living person: the older the child, the more painful the sorrow. It is indeed a very solipsistic view of the dead, who exist only in so far as they cause grief.

After death, no information is transmitted about those who have died: neither their name nor their biography.[229] There is therefore no contradiction between the importance of the dead in many contexts, and the striking genealogical amnesia of the Warao. It is impossible to cry for a deceased that one has not known personally, and this is the main, or only, form of existence of the dead. Relatives have to 'see' (the corpse of) someone that they have 'seen' (i.e. known personally) alive, and it plays an central role in their grieving. Conversely, my hosts and friends systematically explained their lack of knowledge in kinship matters, whether about great-grandparents or about genealogical connections with distant relatives, by the simple fact that they had never 'seen' the persons involved, as I stressed in chapter 3.

When those who have known them alive die as well, dead individuals are turned into generic ancestors, who are collectively called *ka nobotuma* (lit. 'our grandparents') and mostly appear in rituals, especially the *noara* and *nahanamu* celebrations that are concerned with the health and well-being of the living. I must grant that it is a progressive process, and both points of view on the dead somewhat overlap. I have heard it mentioned that known dead people, referred to as such or as 'spirits' *(hebu)*, can cause illness among the living, who have to be cured through the provision of food.[230] Yet the only concrete case that I witnessed involved the late father of Carlo, the grandfather of my host family, that is to say a deceased who had died a long time ago, and who was about to become a generic ancestor, since those who had known him were not far from death themselves.

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229. Taylor writes about the Achuar that "testimonial narration can only be in the first person. It is unthinkable to tell a story in the voice of someone else, or indeed about someone who is not the speaker" (Taylor 2007: 148). Among the Warao, it may be a tendency rather than a strictly enforced rule: stories that are not about the speaker would be about no one in particular, and take the form of mythical narratives.

230. I admit that, in such a case, the dead are represented as almost humanoid intentional agents (they have desire, eat, etc.), rather than as "pathogenic causal agents," which is the case in ordinary discourse among the Sharanahua (Déléage 2007), or as causes of grief, which I have tried to argue so far. The context for such discourses is however disconnected from those where the enactment of grief takes place, and seem to me to be preliminary to the conversion into generic ancestors.

Carlo was not grieving his late father anymore, and I could almost say that the potentiality for a deceased to become a ritual partner increases as grief and memory fade. When I discussed the *noara* ritual in the abstract, my informant Fabian strongly stressed that the 'spirits' involved, although called 'our grandparents', were in fact those who came before them, *ka nese-nobo* ('our great-grandparents'), *ka rima arima akuatukamo* ('beyond the parents of our parents'); and he distinguished them from those who had died recently. Although he did not express it explicitly, the necessary implication is that the dead people involved are unknown as individuals – I never met anyone who had knowledge of his ascendants beyond the second generation. The *noara* and *nahanamu* are essentially rituals of commensality between the living and their ancestors, so that the latter can ensure the well-being of the former. However, these spirits are at the same time 'ancestors' and 'others.' The qualification of 'grandparents' should not be misleading, for it also appears in mythological narratives about the origin of shamanism, where the spirits so-called were obtained under the shape of stones from the divinities living at the edge of the world (J. Wilbert 1996: 147). Continuity (through kin terms) seems to be eclipsed by this original otherness, and indeed the spirit-grandfathers alternate between predation (causing illness) and protection (ensuring well-being).

A striking feature of this process is however its progressive nature, since it is completed only when no one is left to remember the deceased. In a way, the actions of the dead could be interpreted as claims to be acknowledged once they are not remembered anymore: it is indeed how I was described the particular interaction between a pathogenic spirit and a shaman (the spirit says it causes illness 'in order to be known,' *ma namina-miaru*). Yet this process also shows how different the Warao are from, for instance, the Jivaro. The former are not faced with "contradictory psychological processes: forgetting the dead as familiar persons, on the one hand, while still being able to think them as social partners, on the other" (Taylor 1993a: 655) – since forgetting is not ritually performed right after death, but rather a progressive slip into oblivion that lasts the whole life of those who have mourned the deceased. Similar, in that, to the Araweté, the Warao "decidedly abhor drastic cuts in the flow of things" (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 201).

6. Summary and conclusions.

I have tried to bring together, around the question of grief, most of the recurring themes of my dissertation, by showing how moral issues and emotional states emerge in

the course of interactions, and assume different forms according to the context considered.

The emotion of grief can be intentionally produced – it is the point of funerary laments, of material reminders, of binge drinking – because it reveals oneself as a moral person: being capable of crying means that one is capable of loving. I therefore hope that I have been able to describe emotion in a way that avoids some common traps of the field, especially the feeling/meaning dualism, and, at the same time, I have stressed how grief is both a means of moral reflexivity (through funerary laments) and of moral performances (through the extraction of specific reactions in ordinary interactions). However, although I hope to have contributed to both questions, it appears that an approach in terms of pragmatics and a focus on perceptual questions may have had a greater influence on my perspective.

Finally, the fluidity of social relations that I have described in the previous chapters is 'frozen' at death, since during funerary laments kinship reaches its maximal extension – all relatives have to see the deceased, and to call him by kin terms, even when it was not the case during their life, presenting the picture of an 'absolute' kinship. But this fixity is only temporary, and soon afterwards the dead are once again taken into the flow of things – until they are progressively forgotten.

Conclusion

From a certain point of view, it could seem that I have provided an old-fashioned monograph on the Warao: I first describe subsistence, then kinship, and later shamanism and funerary rituals (although 'material culture' is notably absent from my description). Nevertheless, I hope that this dissertation will not have been read in such a way. First, I have not attempted to describe 'the Warao,' but rather to analyse specific processes and events that I witnessed in particular places, although variations in scales helped me to enrich my interpretations. Second, I did not study such topics as kinship and shamanism for themselves, but always from a general perspective focusing on the role of morality and emotion in interactions.

I have indeed dealt with several questions successively, in order to analyse various instances of the way people inter-act, that is to say have effects (or 'impinge') on each other, or try to extract specific reactions from each other. And within such a perspective, I have particularly tried to explore the role of emotional states and moral issues. It is primarily a question of the way people use both during interactions, for instance when they stress (in discourse or behaviour) their state of distress and appeal to others' concern for their suffering, in order to extract a compassionate reaction (and not just a compassionate feeling). This mode of action can be said to rely on some general schemata that are 'culturally' salient, which, in the case I have just mentioned, define

both fleeting interactions (for instance between Warao and foreigners or state agents) and a more durable relationship of fosterage. Admittedly, there are few real cases of such fosterage, where someone would unequivocally be called a *neburatu*; but it serves as a constant reference to which people implicitly or explicitly compare their interactions and relations. In a similar fashion, emotions play a crucial role when immoderate crying reveals people as being loving relatives, even though they have to suffer a loss in order to make it a salient and public fact.

The tie between emotional states and moral issues on the one hand, and interactions and relations on the other hand, is in fact one of mutual constitution. I for instance show, in chapter 3, how kinship in general, and the relation of fosterage in particular, are not merely enriched by affection (which would flesh out the skeleton of kinship structure or genealogy), but literally constituted by the affect-loaden memory of acts of care and nurture. If such a memory is not generated by nurture, then there is no kinship at all. In a different fashion, I make a similar claim when I stress that intense grief is produced only within specific interactional patterns: it happens when everyone focuses on the corpse at death, or conversely enters into solipsistic drunkenness on 2 November. But not when dealing with a drunk relative whose cries only cause pity.

My analysis of emotion and morality is informed by anthropological scholarship on both these topics, but primarily (inter-) action oriented. Emotion is traditionally defined as a phenomenon that articulates feeling and meaning, whereas I argue in favour of a partial return to the etymological sense of the word (which was originally used in socio-political contexts). Emotion is not a quiver in the soul, but rather what moves us, what compels us to act in a certain way, as appears for instance in my analysis of compassionate reactions, when I stress that it is a question of evoking "feelings and attitudes that trap recipients into behavioral patterns that they might not otherwise endorse or sustain" (Duranti 1992: 94). Conversely, my approach also leads me to stress that emotion is not merely expressed or used as a discursive phenomenon, but can also be acted upon, for instance when sorrow is intentionally produced. In this context, I have shown that it is not a question of genuine or conventional behaviour, but of producing suffering itself, through different, more or less formalised, devices.

The question of morality is markedly different, and I have tried to take into account recent anthropological works that stress that, in order to perform a "distinctive conceptual work," morality must be distinguished from social values and norms (Laidlaw 2002: 312). It for instance means reintroducing reasoning and decision, that is to say a

form of exercise of freedom, and highlighting instances of ethical reflexivity. In my research, although it could seem that people have to weigh obligations, I argue that such a formulation would be deeply misleading. On the one hand, people face expectations rather than obligations, and this is therefore not a question of duty, but rather of how they want to relate to specific people. On the other hand, the metaphor of 'weighing' is all too mechanical, as if decisions were determined by the objective state of the world. Conversely, I try to describe how people have choices to make, not so much about what kind of subject they want to be, but primarily about the concern they give to others: indeed, it leads to disputes, anger, and henceforth detachment, precisely because it is conceptualised as a choice – as a decision to care or not to care. The effects of moral issues, and especially their negative efficacy, represent my main interest, insofar as I try to understand how they shape Warao sociality. My focus on action, and the specific setting of my research, also led me to describe how morality is not just a field of discursive reflexion. In fact, I have shown that discourses can be analysed as a type of act among others: non-verbal acts, for instance the mundane serving and giving of food, and emotional states, for instance the intense grief experienced during funerary and memorial rituals, also take part in Warao morality. Similarly to speech acts, they are evaluations of others' behaviour, acts to be evaluated by others, and sometimes also entail forms of moral reflexivity. Finally, when I talk of morality as a question of performance, I take my concern for interaction further, in that I describe how people use certain 'cultural' schemata in order to extract a moral reaction from others, that is to say in order to compel them into action. I use the notion of 'performance' because there is no automaticity in such attempts, which often do not express explicitly what is expected from others, therefore respecting people's autonomy: here lies the difference between 'you should feel ashamed,' as Javanese parents tell their children (Beatty 2005a), and 'I will cry when you die,' as the Warao often say. They are opposite ways of trying to become the object of other's concern.

Summarised in such a way, my approach is indeed very general. On the one hand, I could be accused of sometimes bordering on trivialities. On the other hand, I could face the reproach of not having made more use of general approaches akin to my perspective, for instance, to name but one, interactionism (which has informed anthropological works such as that of Gregor [1977] on Amazonia, and, more recently, Bonhomme [2009] on Africa). Interactionism certainly influenced my analyses implicitly, but I argue that, even when I develop questions that are echoed in many other parts of the world, the

phenomena I describe are rooted in a particular setting. Evoking a compassionate reaction is for instance intimately tied to the crucial institution of fosterage, as a pervasive cosmological operator, and to the role of nurture in the generation of kinship relations, and can therefore not be reduced to a universal emotional logic.

But conversely, I could also be accused of having essentialised the Warao, because I mostly describe their involvement in global historical processes in the first chapter, as if I were trying to brush this question aside. And, for instance, instead of focusing on shamanism, I could have discussed the significance for them of acquiring not only a protective shamanic spirit, but also a baptism certificate and other administrative documents. The choice of events that I describe comes partly from my own interest in questions that are not directly political, and also from the particular places where I carried out my research, that is to say two relatively remote settlements, whose inhabitants were not particularly interested in historical change and had a very personal take on political processes. The fact that the Warao are by no means a 'pristine tribe' therefore mostly appears in my dissertation in a rather discreet way, when I talk about the particular ties they try to establish with their bosses, or the fact that grief is periodically re-enacted on a Catholic date, the Day of the Dead – but it does not constitute my research topic.

I have tried, in this dissertation, to render intelligible in anthropological terms the very emotional and moral sensibility of life among the Warao. Admittedly, this is a very Western project. On several occasions, I have thought about some of my friends or colleagues' concern for knowledge restitution, and wondered whether I could ever bring a copy of my work and explain to my hosts and friends what I had tried to achieve. But then, I always remembered what repeatedly happened when I was reading anthropology books in my hammock. They would come in, look at me disapprovingly, and say: "Maestro! You already know how to read! Come and play or chat with us instead!"

Appendix: glossary of botanical and zoological terms

This table presents, by alphabetical order, some terms mentioned in the text with their Venezuelan Spanish translation and some other common vernacular terms. The Latin names given do not constitute a guaranteed identification.

Warao	**Venezuelan Spanish**	**Other vernacular terms**	**Latin**
Anare	Manaca	Açai	
Basi	Payara	Sabertooth characin, cachorra	Hydrolocus sp.
Buhu	Mangle boton	Button Mangrove	Conocarpus erectus
Ehe	Caribe		Serrasalminae
Goyave	Goyave	Guava	Psidium sp.
He	Cangrejo peludo	Swamp ghost crab	Ucides cordatus
Hue	Raya	Sting-ray	
Ibakuaha	Cartuche	Wild Guanabana	Annona sp.
Motana	Cangrejo azul	Blue land crab	Cardisoma guanhumi
Nahi	Curbinata	Silver croaker, corvina	Plagioscion squamosissimus
Ohidu	Moriche	Moriche palm, buriti, ita	Mauritia flexuosa
Osibu	Morocoto	Paku	
Ure	Ocumo chino	Taro	Colocasia esculenta
Wina-moru	Manaca	Açai	

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