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## Conclusion

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Given the different research experiences of the authors in this symposium, the wide variety of societies under scrutiny and still incomplete ethnography, it is perhaps surprising that there are relatively few absolute contradictions between the thirteen papers under discussion. That which seems to be contradictory moreover, may be explicable in a wider, comparative overview. For example, Rivière's stress on the individualism and formlessness of Carib society, whilst corresponding to the absence of bounded, corporate groups, may also denote an essential variation between easternmost Guiana Caribs, whom he has personally researched intensively, and the western ones. Thus, my own research experience among the Wayana of the French Guiana and Surinam borders showed up some important differences between them and the Kapon and Pemon of the circum-Roraima area, and in certain respects it was possible to live a more self-contained and individualistic life among the Wayana, whom I found in many ways to be more overt and uninhibited, both individually and as a group.<sup>1</sup> A close analysis of variations in the structural and cultural underpinnings of these societies and of their historical experiences would be worth making in this context. Moreover, a people numbering several thousands and with intricate segmentation by regions and river areas, will give a very different overall impression of structure and organization from that of a residual group of a few hundreds, reduced to just two or three villages.

The degree and nature of domination by agents of the national society is another factor. Thus, Schwerin (p. 138) found no evidence that Karinya manipulate the kinship system for political advantage and perhaps this led him to stress (pp. 146-147) how little marriage alliance counted in this respect, whereas Rivière (p.

<sup>1</sup> E.g., fear of sorcery attack (*edodo: kanaima*) among Kapon and Pemon when they are alone, causes them to take a companion when outside the village confines. Despite belief in death caused by sorcery (*yolok*), individual Wayana fearlessly go off alone hunting and fishing. The effect on everyday social relations in the two societies struck me forcibly as I was also included in these different kinds of behaviour.

357), supported by evidence from practically all the papers focusing on kinship, asserts that marriage strategies are a central part of politics. He argues that this is so because the political economy of the region is concerned with the management of human resources, particularly of the productive and reproductive capacities of women, which are so very important. Schwerin (p. 137) notes for the Karinya that love is now a major motive in marriage and women move in all directions, but as Heinen documents for the Ye'kuana (pp. 280, 293), once unrestricted personal choice begins to dominate the marriage pattern then essential relationships between categories of kin, of vital importance in the structure, inevitably begin to be affected. Thus acculturation may deprive marriage of its former strategic importance, and where widespread wage employment is also introduced these will together seriously undermine indigenous forms of political organization. Such changes indicate that our contributors, notably Dole, are justified in considering the effects of acculturation, although the identification of the traditional, as opposed to modifications deriving from incorporation from Western cultures, can be extremely problematic (Butt Colson pp. 28-30).

Nevertheless, although contradictions and discrepancies may stem from a study of real variations between different Carib societies, in different states of acculturation, they may also be the inevitable outcome of looking at similar data from different perspectives. On this latter assumption, I attempt in this conclusion to harmonize some of the main conflicting views and to unify some of the major ideas put forward, with the aim of presenting a more complete and complementary set of interpretations and hypotheses as a basis for future investigation and comparative study. For baseline reference I rely heavily on the circum-Roraima peoples, but this is not just because I know them best. They are the most numerous of the Carib speakers, and as a group were relatively little in direct contact with the national societies before the middle of the present century. Moreover, they have, in the case of the Pemon of the Gran Sabana, been studied in depth and there is a wealth of published material which can be consulted. In all, therefore, they provide the optimum conditions for analysis.

### **Affinity vs. consanguinity**

A very considerable range of interpretations emerges in our papers concerning the nature and interrelationships of affinity and consanguinity. Thus the non-Carib Piaroa possess the concept of a fundamental opposition between kin and potential affines, bridged only by reciprocity which is activated through the serial and multiple repetition of marriages which create an alliance-based kinship group (Overing pp. 341-345). According to Urbina on the other hand (note 6, p. 194), in structural terms the Pemon do not recognize a kin-affine opposition. Schwerin and Dole occupy a middle ground. Foreshadowing his proposal that Carib kinship be denoted a "kin-integration system" Schwerin points out (p. 133) that in the Piaroa kin-affine system, affines automatically appear as "an inherent, structural feature" a rift, "which appears for the purposes of perpetuating the society, but which heals itself after three generations," for affinal relationships tend, over time, to be

converted into kin ties. He argues that this takes place at the +2 and —2 generations, since "both sets of grandparents are in reality kin to Ego." Dole recognizes a class of "consanguineal affines," there being certain relations who are regarded both as kin and yet marriageable, like the European and North American cousin,<sup>2</sup> for in cognatic societies such as the Kuikuru, "a consanguine becomes an affine only as a result of marriage" (Dole p. 325).

Statements concerning the role of teknonyms underline these differences. Overing (Kaplan 1972) has asserted that the Piaroa use of a teknonym serves to mark the conversion of an affine into kin, but Dole (p. 325) logically implies the opposite for the Kuikuru, for if affinity is "a de facto category dependent on marriage" it might be argued that a teknonym is more likely to confirm the affinal status rather than the consanguineal one from which the referrant has further departed.

Our problem in classifying the affinal and the consanguineal and of identifying a firm boundary between them, stems from the fact that there are no corporate groups of affines —as indeed our contributors have all noted. Instead, categories of relations, marriageable and non-marriageable from the point of view of any individual Ego, are scattered throughout the kin network, at a greater or lesser distance both genealogically and geographically. Those who fall into the cross cousin category are regarded as eminently marriageable,<sup>3</sup> but as Henley demonstrates, marriage is also permitted in certain intergeneration categories, although in abstract terms at least, they may be regarded with some suspicion. Our problem is compounded by the facility with which some Carib speakers reclassify their relatives. For example, Urbina records (p. 188) that an older sister may be regarded by her younger brother in his early years as "a little mother."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the Pemon practice of sometimes categorizing a female cross cousin (FZD: MBD) as "sister" will facilitate marriage to her daughter (as ZD) who, under a cross cousin terminology and marriage, would have been Ego's own daughter. Thus, an eminently marriageable female is transferred to a consanguineal, non-marriageable category, in order that another affinal relationship (ZD) be created in the following generation! A more extended, but nevertheless similar set of transferences occurs when, also among Pemon, ZDD marriage takes place, the husband, MMB, being in the category of grandfather under a cross cousin marriage norm. This is not just a question of the outside being regarded as remarkably close in (Henley p. 180), or even of some of the inside as being regarded as remarkably far out, but of the boundaries of categories of kin fluctuating at certain points in the system (cf. Morton pp. 246-247; Butt Colson p. 24), allowing the possibility of redesignation

<sup>2</sup> This contention harmonizes with the remark of a Makushi Pemon, resident in England from the age of 20. When asked whether he regarded his female cross cousins (MBD and FZD) as blood relations, like his sisters, or as relations to marry, he remarked after a few moments of careful thought that "they are both."

<sup>3</sup> E.g., a male Ego will use a cross cousin term for FFBDD, FFZSD, FMZDD, FMBSD, MFBSD, MMZSD, MFZDD and MMBDD in the Akawaio cross cousin marriage system of terminology.

<sup>4</sup> This is also suggested by kinship terminology. Akawaio address the mother's sister as *na'na* and Pemon may address elder sister as *na'mai*. Older sisters often carry their baby siblings in the customary cotton slings and look after them like little mothers.

and conflation of statuses, as when ZD marriage makes a man's sister also his mother-in-law.

This area of redesignation and conflation is one which Thomas, referring specifically to the Pemon, has denoted as grey and quasi-incestuous.

The actual ZD union thus represents the interior limit, not only of the continuum of affinal obligation, but also of what can constitute marriage at all. In a sense it is the precise point where consanguinity blots out the licit possibility of sexual and marital relations. Inside this point, there is incest; outside it, there are licit sexual relations and marital possibilities (Thomas 1979: 69).

ZD union therefore defines "a point at which the merging of affines into consanguines reaches its maximum allowable value" (Thomas 1973: 162). It is, of course, characteristic of cognatic systems of kinship that areas of conflation and overlap occur, creating those sectors referred to by our contributors as blurred (Schwerin p. 145) and fuzzy (Overing p. 345), where marriage is permitted but is on the border of legitimacy. In our Western system, the point of doubtful legitimacy is reached with marriage between first cousins (whether cross or parallel, but particularly with patrilineal parallel cousins because the surname held in common suggests a closer relationship). It is no accident that, until recently, church doors in England invariably displayed a table of kindred and affinity listing those between whom marriage is forbidden. The same table is printed in the Church of England *Book of Common Prayer*. Cousin marriage in Britain, although allowable, has in its closest form been regarded with such grave doubts that its projected consequences, for the sanity and health of offspring, have been subjects of comparative, scientific research. Amongst Caribs, it is the intergeneration marriage which is allowable, but if too "close" (i.e. real as opposed to classificatory), is similarly suspect. Thus, Dole's remark (p. 322) that Kuikuru may marry a niece if she is a "little distant" appears to be typical. (See Morton, footnote 9.)

Distance and proximity are therefore very important factors in the cognatic kin network, as comments made in a number of papers have suggested. Indeed, Dole asserts (p. 324) that it is not kinship status or membership of a particular category which determines affinity among the Kuikuru, but: "Rather it is determined on the basis of a variable concept of social distance measured in part by supposed or stipulated genealogical links, but also to some extent by interpersonal relations, place of residence and tribal affiliation." She further says (p. 315) that kinship is quantifiable, being "close-up" and "far-away." Thomas too, for the Pemon, made similar assertions, contending that "genealogical criteria for classification must be considered in interaction with other criteria (relative age, spatial proximity, frequency of interaction, etc.), to find out which criteria are being brought into play in which situations." He notes the Pemon tendency to reduce the strain of affinal relationships by emphasizing consanguineal relatedness wherever possible (Thomas 1979: 62, 69; 1978: 64), and thereby might be said to support Schwerin's denotation of the Carib system as a kin-integration one, with "suppression of the quality of being an affine."

With so many variables in play and no firm boundaries, the use of the terms

endogamy and exogamy, whether in a genealogical or geographical sense, must be problematic. This is inevitable when an individual's eligible spouses are scattered throughout a cognatic network. I therefore support Thomas' ultimate statement (1982: 84) that "there is *no endogamous unit* in Pemon society" and that, "to speak of endogamy and exogamy in a society like the Pemon is simply superfluous and to a large extent misleading, since neither one of the two terms can be attached to any definable unit (above the household) with any accuracy."

A concern with distance is especially pronounced in a system in which young men are mobile, for the relationships they may forge outside their natal families offer considerable choice and are those on which they will found their personal happiness, future status and political careers. However, instead of applying a concept of bounded units, we may more profitably adopt the notion of a continuum of relationships in which relative distances, both genealogical and geographical, are endowed with strong qualities or values of the kind which are expressed in the Maichapi myth among Pemon and Kapon.<sup>6</sup> At one end of the scale there arise all the potential problems associated with dangerous strangers, in an uxorilocal situation a cause for considerable individual and family concern; at the other there are the points where conflation and redesignation occur even within the domestic unit, and where both genealogical and geographical distances are nullified in the interests of unity. In the general sphere of "social amity" Overing (pp. 342-344) has much of value to say concerning a Piaroa classification of this kind, of relationships "on a continuum that moves from danger to safety, and from difference to identity," and she describes the classification of others through categories that denote varying degrees of social distance and social nearness. Beginning with their most dangerous and distant relationship, that with animals and members of other ethnic groups or tribes, there follow in order: Piaroa in other territories, regional groups which contain potential allies and finally, those within the local group, where people are actual kin and affines and reciprocity is fulfilled. But it is the community in the large house which approximates ideologically to an "endogamous kindred" representing an association of safe consanguines and attained "by both keeping everyone at home with close relatives and by making fuzzy the distinction between 'kin' and 'affine'" (Overing p. 345). In the house, affinity is suppressed.

However, the notion of a continuum lends itself to a further development of ideas. May we not also be confronting a scale of structural relationships, with variations in the bases of power and political organization along it and to which the incidences of different kinds of marriage are linked since they relate, at any one time, to different patterns in the consanguineal and affinal interconnections? That is, we must consider a complex of interrelating and variable factors, along a continuum, and it is the operation of these and their constant fluctuations which explain a seeming political chaos amongst Caribs and similarly organized neighbouring groups. It may be, therefore, that the discrepancies in explanations

<sup>5</sup> Schwerin's observation (p. 150) that among Caribs endogamy is "not a rule, but a preference or a value which occurs often enough to be statistically predominant," well expresses the approach in most of our symposium papers.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas 1982: 214-226 relates the myth and analyses it.

put forward in our papers are largely resolved if they are viewed as stemming from considerations of different sectors of such a continuum.

Investigating these, it seems to me to be particularly important not to conflate the different unities in Carib structure, for they represent several sets of interrelationships and different levels of organization, deployed and operating dynamically. The endeavour is not easy because of the extensive spread of the cognatic networks and of the fluctuations within them, allowing for constant realignments. Nevertheless, apart from the nuclear family of procreation, we can detect through our contributors' research, two different building blocks on which settlement relationships and interrelationships are based. These are the extended and the joint family units, which provide an interlacing of vertical and horizontal ties respectively.

### The extended family

Akawaio say that "women cannot move." That men should circulate and women should not, is important structurally and in the political process.<sup>7</sup> I therefore attach very great value to Adams' analysis showing the vital importance of the continuity which female consanguineal and solidarity relationships represent: those of mother and daughter and of sisters (both real and classificatory—especially mother's sister and female parallel cousins). The equality and informality of their relationships which form the core of the female work team (described by Mentore for the Waiwai), and the central importance of the young, marriageable female immobilized in her natal group and who serves as a lure to bring in the dependent son-in-law (Morton for the Waiwai), are crucial aspects of this structure. Indeed, Pemon tales suggest that a young woman should be fully aware of her obligation to attract a male partner into her natal group, for although the heroine may indulge in a temporary liaison outside her settlement with a potential spouse of her liking, she soon insists on bringing him home. Invariably she presents him with the formal phrase: "Father, I bring you your son-in-law:" (*payun*, son-in-law, is literally grandchild, *pa*: father, *yun*).<sup>8</sup> As Adams shows, in certain circumstances this localized group of close female blood kin can be used politically to provide a power base for leaders, and it may also be a basis for stability and continuity, certainly at times of disruption but, less obviously perhaps, as an essential part of the total structure.

The contrasting mobility of men, the formal and asymmetric quality of their interrelationships, their differential ties to women which cause cycles of interactions, emerge clearly from our papers. Indeed, as Urbina (p. 189) shows, the circulation - exchange of men among different units is vital among the Pemon, not

<sup>7</sup> Compare for example, Villalón p. 61, when she refers to the "place of residence" (*patan*) among the Eñapa as a recognized social unity with a shifting, male, membership, whereas women overwhelmingly prefer to stay close to their mothers or sisters.

<sup>8</sup> For example, see Armellada 1964: 94 (para. 10). Contrary to what Schwerin (p. 143) states following Thomas, the Pemon clearly do not lack teknonymic usages. Sister's son is *peitori* and this can be employed for son-in-law where cross cousin marriage occurs. *Payun* is the more specific usage, as its meaning indicates. Interestingly, *yun* in Akawaio means penis.

just for the developmental cycle of the nuclear family but for the reproduction of a bigger unit, that of the extended family.<sup>9</sup> This stress on male mobility should be noted in the context of the general literature on kinship, which has consistently emphasized exchanges of women, notably in a two-section system.

The paradigm we arrive at on uniting the two complementary parts of the structure, the male and the female, is that of a three generation line of localized female consanguines with strong informal ties of collaboration under the aegis of the most senior woman, a mother or grandmother, whilst men move in (as spouses and sons-in-law) and out (to become spouses and sons-in-law), and circulate among localized groups in accordance with the requirements of uxori-locality, or at least according to periods of visiting and service with their wife's natal group. Adams unites these two halves of the structure when she asserts (p. 300) that men's relations are formed and dissolved in each generation, conforming to and promoting the continuity among women. The essential complementarity of the halves may be summarized thus:

*Men:* short-term mobility, sinuate with disconnection between proximate generations: uxori-local, with formal asymmetric relationships of service and collaboration: representing the "outside."

*Women:* long-term stability, lineal with continuity of proximate generations: matrifocal, with informal symmetric relationships of cooperation: representing the "inside."

In such a system we may perceive a unity through duality, but it is not the duality of a two-section system, whereby two groups exchanges wives, for we are confronted with a cognatic network of kin in which there are no corporate groups. The line of females, for example, is not a corporate lineage. It is not named: it has no formal organization nor joint property.<sup>10</sup> Yet the female group can be seen to be important as an informal matriline, vertically connected to preceding and succeeding generations of women (as mothers and daughters) and horizontally attached as groups of elder and younger same-sex siblings. These women are not just producers and reproducers, but series of essential links through which the allegiance of incoming men is obtained and retained (Rivière: Abstract).

However, even if women were to be seen as forming a localized corporation of a loose kind, or an association based on consanguineal ties, men certainly cannot be

<sup>9</sup> Urbina's discussion of the extended family takes in the horizontal unities which I have distinguished as joint family ones (pp. 18-23). I have followed Heinen's definition (p. 266) in his discussion of the Ye'kuana "extended household" as including parents-in-law, their daughters, granddaughters, the spouses of these and any unmarried male children and grandchildren, forming a unit which is visible through its occupation of hearths in a sector of the outer ring of the Ye'kuana roundhouse.

<sup>10</sup> In certain circumstances this line might easily transform into a corporate lineage, such as the matrilineage which the Arawak-speaking Guajiro (Venezuelan - Colombian border) possess, and which they may have developed formally on adopting a pastoral economy and the holding of property in livestock. Wilbert 1970 gives an interesting account of their kinship system. Armellada (private communication) gives the etymology of the Pemon *pachi*, a woman's elder sister, as *pai*, head, and *-chi*, possessive suffix, and this same designation is used by both men and women among the Akawaio to refer to elder female siblings. If this is correct then a person so addressed might appear as the head of a line of women.

so denoted—except perhaps where leadership may be vital, (Dreyfus pp. 43-44, has shown us the circumstances in which a limited virilocality resulted in a male power bloc among the Kalinago), or where manipulation may allow a generation of brothers to remain with their father to form a temporary association through time. In the main, men can be imported from any part of the kin network, regional or ethnic, provided that they can conceivably fit into a category which has an affinal potential, normally that of cross cousin, or are strangers who can be adopted into this status. Thus, relationships between brothers may gradually weaken as they grow older and they often have to separate (Urbina p. 188 for the Pemon; Schwerin p. 133 for the Karinya), and since leadership is not necessarily inherited, the males in each generation have to build up their political status from scratch and, often, in an unfamiliar, predominantly affinal, environment. Necessarily therefore, we have to dispense with the concept of any formal lineage organization. Instead, if we take the male and female *lines* together, and the structural implications of a cross cousin marriage pattern is combined with an uxorilocal norm, we arrive at a formal model which consists of a male line describing a mobile, sinusoidal curve about a stable female axis (see Fig. 1). To comprehend the system and its implications further, we must view this structure as a dynamic process, involving crucial patterns of interaction between certain categories of kin.

Our contributors have mainly focused on the importance of the wife's father-daughter's husband (WF-DH) relationship and the obligations of the latter, which traditionally he could escape or seriously modify only with difficulty. They note its asymmetry and, although no-body refers to her, we should also include the strong obligations to the mother-in-law, especially if widowed. Rivière has emphasized (p. 352) that the WF-DH relationship in Guiana is a major, if sometimes uncertain, prop in the political economy and, as Urbina comments (p. 185), it is structurally important since "marriage of a daughter consolidates the status of a mature couple with grown children as an autonomous domestic unit, formally separated from the former domestic unit and on its way to becoming a discrete unit." The son-in-law not only has a vital role in bringing into existence a new nuclear family, but he also initiates another phase in the succession of extended families and will gradually replace his wife's father as his own children grow to adulthood and he acquires sons-in-law of his own. This process is fundamental in settlement organization and leadership, whether we are considering the larger or smaller communities, as can be seen through the descriptions of the composition of the extended family given by several of our contributors. Thus, Dreyfus (p. 43) refers to the Kalinago local group as constituted by one uxorilocal, extended family, whose headman was the father of married daughters; Heinen (p. 266) describes the Ye'kuana "extended household" as formed by a parent-in-law couple together with their daughters, granddaughters and the husbands of all these, as well as unmarried sons and grandsons, and he notes that this unit is also visible in the layout of the settlement, formerly occupying one of the sections of the outer ring of the roundhouse and today forming one of a cluster of houses around the house occupied by the elderly father-in-law.

However, apart from the WF-DH relationship, we should also examine the core relationship from which it ultimately derives, which is that of brother and



sister (real or classificatory). This may be considered a complementary one, where difference is inherent, that is, of male versus female, but where there also exists the possibility of reciprocity. Every sphere of life witnesses this differentiation, from the division of labour, the alignment of economic activities and the relevant education of boys and girls, to the reinforcement of the distinctions by religious concepts and ritual. The separation and complementarity of the division by sex is fully apparent in the *couvade* practices of parents towards their children.<sup>11</sup> It appears in traditional concepts relating to the subordination of natural species and products to spirit masters and mistresses. The same orientation appears in syncretic religious cults among Kapon and Pemon in which there is a strong notion that Christ is in charge of men and men's work whilst the Virgin Mary cares for women and women's work. Differentiation by age is also important in the sibling groups. For example, *Akawaio yakon* refers to younger sibling of the same sex as the speaker and has the meaning "another" of the same kind, a younger version which is a replication. Elder brother has special primary status, as mythology depicts, whilst elder sister is often synonymous with "woman." Same-sex sibling groups thus appear as solidary within themselves, whilst different-sex sibling groups seem to represent the male and the female respectively, via the use of the terms for elder brother and elder sister.

The children of those in the categories of brother and sister to each other have grandparents in common, whether real or classificatory. When these offspring marry each other under the cross cousin marriage norm, they can be conceived to be repeating in the —2 generation the union which their grandparents made in the +2 generation (Schwerin p. 133). This is terminologically recognized by Pemon and Kapon, for *tamopui*, husband, consists of *tamo*, grandfather, and *-pui*, a suffix meaning a sprouting, offshoot or reappearance of, the grandfather. Similarly, *no(k)pui*, wife, consists of *no(k)* and *-pui*, a budding or reappearance of the grandmother, *no(k)*. (See Armellada and Gutiérrez Salazar 1981: 189, referring to *tamopui*.) Husband and wife are therefore offshoots or reappearances of a grandparental set which they hold in common.<sup>12</sup> A three generation cycle is thus set up (Fig. 1), in which a male grandchild returns to a father's natal group to join grandparents and also a mother-in-law (father's sister) and her husband who is classified as a mother's brother, or he goes to grandparents and a father-in-law (mother's brother) and his wife, who is classified as a father's sister. Either way, in accordance with the kinship categories, a Kapon or Pemon son-in-law re-unites, or at least confirms, a brother and sister relationship by making it reciprocal through mutual visiting and collaboration in a number of economic pursuits. However,

<sup>11</sup> Butt Colson 1975, section 12. Thomas 1982: 91-92 relates an amusing incident which portrays the inexhaustible complementarity of the male and female relationship among the Pemon.

<sup>12</sup> The Quiché Maya name their children after the grandparents and it has been asserted that they are thereby expressing their belief that the child is the actual replacement for the grandparent —and that this makes sense in the context of a belief in souls which are constantly being recycled by the ancestors (Mondloch 1980: 9-11). Note also, Overing's reference (pp. 335-336) to research findings (C. and S. Hugh-Jones) among the Pirá-Piraná of the North-West Amazon. The set of personal names owned by each clan is recycled each alternate generation along with souls who live in the clan's "Waking-up House."

distance, both genealogical and geographical will often determine the quality of that relationship; thus a union of "distant" cross cousin will realize the potential of a "distant" sibling relationship hitherto dormant.

In his relationship to mother's brother a young man is *peitori* (*peito*, son of opposite sex sibling: *-ri*, possessive suffix), which apart from denoting nephew, means assistant and helper (Butt Colson p. 10). Subsequently he will become "father of the grandchild," *payun*, the role of this teknonym being, perhaps, a recognition and therefore a reinforcement of the three generation structure.

The relationship between grandparental and grandchild generations is, in my opinion, a vital one for the understanding of Carib kinship and political structure, and one which has been greatly neglected. The data which we have from Kapon and Pemon are certainly sufficiently provocative to suggest need for careful investigation in other Carib societies. For example, the basic meaning of *pata*,<sup>13</sup> the apparent ubiquity of which has been commented on by Villalón (p. 61), seems to be, in Pemon and Kapon, *pa*, grandchild, and the suffix *-ta*, a place where something is found, usually in quantity, so that it may translate as "place of the grandchildren." Effectively, this would be a place in which the extended family resides, containing the three generations: grandparents, their daughters and daughter's husbands, the children of the latter (the grandchildren) and any husbands and children of these, (great-grandchildren are also *pa*). When an elderly couple has several children they will, naturally, head several extended family units and have multiple grandchildren. The structural importance of this relationship is also suggested by Heinen's remark (p. 269) that the formation of a new Ye'kuana settlement is preceded by an intensive interchange of grandchildren by individuals. It is perhaps, additionally significant that Dole's information on Kuikuru leadership suggests a tendency towards selection from alternate generations (pp. 310-312), with personal qualifications being vital in the success of particular individuals. In the economic sphere, there are indications that Akawaio ecological cycles may sometimes be calculated on a three generation basis, grandchildren re-cutting the forest where grandparents had formerly cultivated, whilst the death of parents or parents-in-law frequently precipitates a move back to the grandparental locality of childhood.

The qualities associated with the status of grandparents are significant for an understanding of structural and political organization. In a variety of Pemon and Kapon tales, the grandmother emerges as the saviour of her local community and as "the provider" par excellence. In the former role she confronts man-eating jaguars, fierce Caribs (Kariña) and child-snatching eagles, whilst she may be sent to reconnoitre areas infested with raiders, or used as ambassadress to obtain vital information from potential enemy groups.<sup>14</sup> She can rely on the fact that she is not overtly dangerous, being female, and yet is not sexually attractive, being elderly. She

<sup>13</sup> The number of contexts in which *pata* may be used (Butt Colson p. 114), does not necessarily contradict a basic meaning of this kind, any more than, for example, does the English concept of home, referring primarily to the nuclear family house and hearth, but which can be extended to cover a number of unities, from village to nation state.

<sup>14</sup> See Butt Colson and Morton 1982: 241 and note 115 for an example from the Taruma, former neighbours of the Waiwai and intermarried with them.

uses her cunning and relative immunity to outwit the enemy and may even sacrifice her life. Male defenders of the group, on the other hand, are usually portrayed as clubbing together as warriors. She is the giver of sustenance,<sup>15</sup> having in her charge the labour force of younger women, her daughters and granddaughters, because of her experience and knowledge of household production and of the entire realm of the female half of the division of labour. She is, appropriately, Noah (Adams pp. 304-306). This significance of the female sector, headed by the mature women, has not been readily apparent since, as Adams perceived, men's activities and political machinations are much more overt and dramatic and, moreover, the data have been viewed ethnocentrically by Western investigators.

Kapon and Pemon grandfathers have religious importance. This is implicit in the concept that age is accompanied by wisdom derived from knowledge which is acquired by a special relationship with the invisible world of the upper cosmos. *Amoko*, old man, and *tamo* (*t-amoko*) are both terms of reference for grandfather. Such a person is addressed as *papa*. The twin culture heroes, ancestors of their Pemon "grandchildren" are sometimes referred to in this way, and so often is the shaman in seance by his spirit assistants. These same assistants may refer to the shaman's patient and the people in the community as *pa*, grandchild. The wise man-prophet (the "possessor of wisdom") is addressed as *papa*, and so is God in the syncretic cults. The term for father is not used in this context except where mission influences have become so strong as to cause a revision of some of the chants and prayers.

Thomas has referred to a certain solidarity between Pemon grandparents and grandchildren, implicit in the plural term *padan*, grandchildren,<sup>16</sup> whilst we should also note the duplication of syllables which converts grandchild (*pa*) into the address term for grandfather (*papa*). The use of such duplication, seeming to indicate seniority and importance, is a feature of Pemon and Kapon kinship terminology. It appears in a father's term for son (*mu*) and eldest son (*mumu*), and in a woman's term for younger brother (*pi*) and her elder brother (*pipi*).

The composition of the holy family in Christianity, as opposed to that portrayed in the adapted, syncretic religion of Hallelujah among the Akawaio, perhaps best illustrates the essential nature of certain Carib categories of kinship in the Guiana Highlands. Instead of "God the Father" we find "God the Grandfather" (*papa*): Christ is God's eldest son (*papa mumu*) and is addressed as "elder brother" (*u-wi*, my elder brother).<sup>17</sup> Mary, mother of Christ, is addressed as *mama*,<sup>18</sup> a term of respect for women who are non-Indians but which Akawaio use as the customary

<sup>15</sup> Armellada 1973: 260-263 recounts the evocative Pemon story of "El Cocuyo y la Mora" in which the old and ugly blackberry bush yields a comfortable resting place for the journeying insect, who scorns her love but takes the proffered fruit. She is regenerated after a savanna fire, and has beautiful flowers. He returns and this time offers love, but the young blackberry scorns him and gives him no food.

<sup>16</sup> Armellada and Gutiérrez-Salazar 1981: 143, note that this is an irregular plural. Thomas 1982: 62 asserts that *u-pa-dang* is a self-reciprocal term. See note 12 on the Quiché Maya system of naming.

<sup>17</sup> The term *u-wi* (*u-rui*), my elder brother, is a male term, but in the religious context it is used also by women, who among the Akawaio otherwise address their elder brothers as *pipi*.

<sup>18</sup> Although, for reasons too complex to embark on here, I consider *papa* to be an indigenous term, I am not sure of *mama*.

address for grandmother. Quite clearly, the Western nuclear family does not figure as a ritual entity and, important as it may be in core relationships of reproduction and production, it is not, among Caribs, God-given. Instead, the relationships depicted hark back to the traditional ones of the mythical beginning of time, in which the twin heroes, elder and younger brother, (conflated as the twin male innovators and equated with Christ early on in contact with Christian teaching), represent a fraternal unity as children of the sun father, whilst the status of the people of the ethnic group is as "descendants" (*padan*).<sup>19</sup> The portrayal is not of an actual family therefore, but of a nexus of essential interconnections which certain kinship categories are used to model and express.

The movement of men thus initiates a repetitive three generation system hinging on an essential identity in the structure between grandparents and grandchildren, which is thus a point of union. The point of fission on the other hand, is located in the relationship between different-sex sibling groups.<sup>20</sup> There is little genealogical depth in this system of a three generation roll-over (Fig. 1). Schwerin (p. 135), encountered Karinya who could not name their own grandparents and this was a characteristic feature of my own research among the Akawaio. However, this is also the case in Britain, for many cannot recall the names and places of residence of grandparents they never personally knew. With shorter average life spans, a recent literacy only, a widespread use of kin terms rather than personal names, this genealogical amnesia (a felicitous phrase recently coined by Rivière, p. 357), is even more comprehensible. The Carib reckoning of collateral ties is normally far superior, on the other hand. The real difference in structure between the two systems, both cognatic, is, in my opinion, that the Carib one is cyclical, in which +2 and -2 generations fuse repetitively. Moreover, any tendency to lineality is in the matriline, for it is the continuity in women's relationships which provides the links between generations within the extended family and it is the matri-group which is grounded. Thus Mentore (pp. 211, 213) refers to Waiwai women's land ownership, perhaps meaning right of usufruct.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, it is the patriline which emerges formally in Western Europe, as can be seen in the system of inheritance of surnames, honours, status and in the entailment of property such as landed estate, and the fact that the female sector has tended to be merged in the all-important nuclear family structure in which the father is traditionally, in law, the dominant figure.

The three generation, extended family is thus a structure in which operates a strategy for obtaining successive generations of sons-in-law, so that the command

<sup>19</sup> This also harmonizes with a fundamental concept of life on earth being an inferior reflection of life in the upper cosmos.

<sup>20</sup> This structure harmonizes with a concept of duality and of the complete and incomplete which marks Pemon and Kapon thought. The notion of a pair, a complement or equivalent, is very strong and is implicit in the numerical system. A third factor refers to something different, inserted between a pair. I am grateful to the Rev. Fr. Cesáreo de Armellada for drawing my attention to this.

<sup>21</sup> Related to this continuity perhaps, are reports that a woman should bear her children in her mother's settlement and be attended by her or her sisters (classificatory mothers). Akawaio women, visiting their husband's parents, would travel back to the parental home to comply with this expectation. Dole p. 314 records the same custom among the Kuikuru.

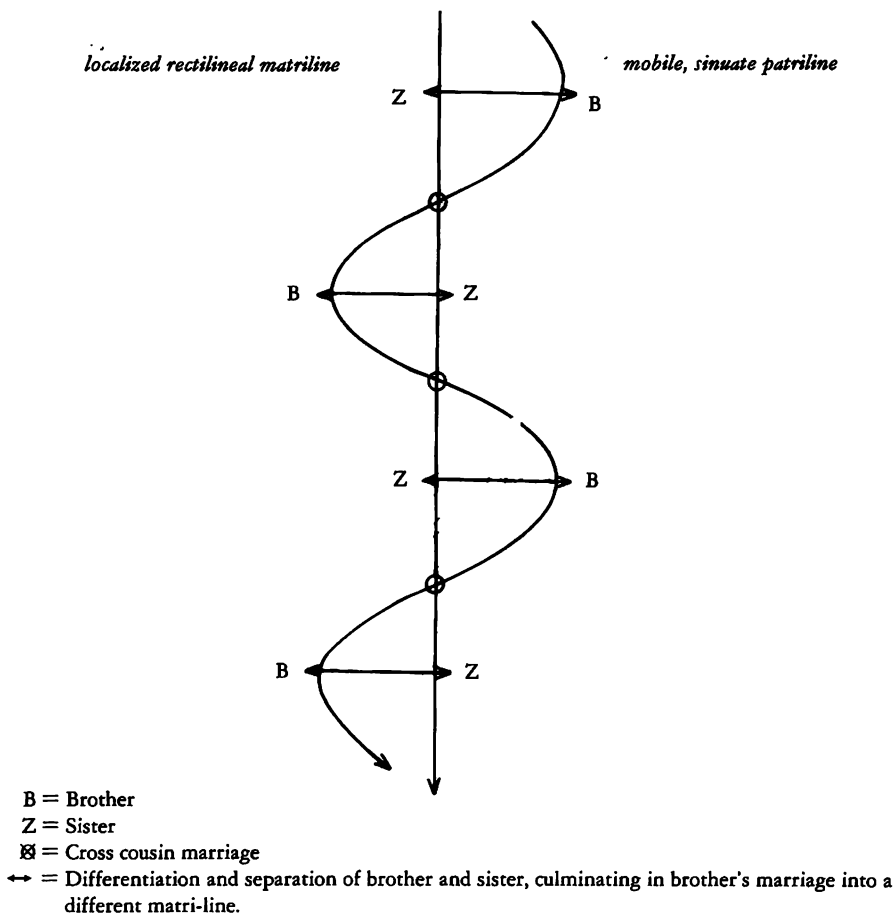


FIGURE 1

of a small estate of people, sufficient for carrying on the task of everyday life, is achieved via males married to daughters and granddaughters. Authority exists between proximate generations, father —unmarried son and father-in-law— son-in-law, but grandfather is a figure of ritual power, who is completing the three generation cycle and is in a special relationship with grandchildren, who are beginning it afresh. Grandmother is at the head of a female line which regresses into the distant past; granddaughter's marriage will mark, not just the beginning of another nuclear family, but an incipient extended family phase which materializes with the birth of children who, in the case of females, will carry the matriline into the future. Although the point of greatest fission lies in the sex distinction of unlike siblings (reinforced by relative age), this is also the point where there is the potential for reciprocity and reunion. This occurs via the preferential cross cousin marriage of their children, each of whom converts the parents of the other into parents-in-law, endowing them with special rights to respect and service and,

ultimately, with the status of grandparents which is marked by a teknonym which refers to the realization of an extended family cycle.<sup>22</sup>

The maintenance of the male and female parts of the total structure, as a dual system of different but complementary halves, is vital in this society. If marriage into specific categories with affinal potential should cease, through the operation of personal choice which may include traditionally non-marriageable categories (parallel cousins for example), and if extensive neo-locality, virilocality, or the repudiation of son-in-law service, should occur, it can be seen that the complementarity of the structure will be destroyed. The result will be fundamental changes in basic relationships, in the economy, in the education and discipline of young adults, and in the wider structures of the extended family and joint family groups which make up the authority structure of settlements. A further repercussion would be the disjunction between social reality and the traditional conceptual and ritual system, for stereotype relationships are reinforced through these and evaluated in myth.

### The joint family

Under uxorilocal custom sisters have a strong tendency to stay together, or near each other, after marriage. Next in co-residence and proximity, among the Pemon at least, are brothers and sisters, but with the tendency to remain together being "in markedly lesser proportion." Lastly comes the fraternal relationship.<sup>23</sup> Overall, Thomas (1973: 124) found for the Pemon that "Sibling ties are very strong and represent a countervailing tendency towards concentration in the face of the necessity to marry out."<sup>24</sup> Schwerin notes comparable evidence from the Piaroa (p. 133). From these core relationships, of brother and sister and of sisters, derive the politically important horizontal relationships between the respective spouses. These are, in the former case, the wife's brother-sister's husband relationship, that of brothers-in-law. In the latter case there is the mutual, wife's sister's husband relationship which, if not that of real brothers, nevertheless falls into this — the fraternal classification. The traditional ideal was that of sororal polygamy whereby a man married two or more sisters, and even today among Akawaio a sister is regarded as the ideal replacement in the event of a wife dying. Similarly, on the death of a husband, his brother should replace him. A tradition of adelphic

<sup>22</sup> Thus the difference, but potential for reciprocity, which Overing (p. 337) notes as marking affinity, seems among the Caribs to be located in the male - female relationship, typified by brother and sister, leading us to pinpoint it as structurally basic to the social existence of the groups we are investigating. The potentially marriageable address term among Akawaio is *wörichi* (*wöri*, woman: *-chi*, a suffix indicating belonging). Addressing a marriageable male, a woman uses *waraito*, incorporating *warai*, man. Similarly among the Pemon, *wirichi* is the male term for addressing a marriageable woman and she reciprocates using *kurai* (see Urbina pp. 197-198 who notes that these are basically cross cousin terms). *Kurai* means male, man, husband: *weri* means female, woman, wife, according to Armellada and Gutiérrez Salazar 1981: 111 and 124. Thus from the brother and sister dichotomy comes the marriage of their offspring, under the cross cousin marriage norm, who epitomize male and female (see Fig. 1).

<sup>23</sup> Thomas 1973: 134. Compare Schwerin p. 133, on sibling solidarity among Piaroa.

<sup>24</sup> For detailed discussion and information on the Pemon concerning residence and settlement composition, consult Thomas 1973: 124-149 and Thomas 1982: Chap. 3.

polyandry also harmonized with this concept, but is stronger still among the Wayana. The ideal in the brother-in-law relationship is that of a brother and sister pair marrying another brother and sister pair, so that there is a direct exchange of a son for a son-in-law between two families. The brother-in-law relationship is likely to be exceptionally close in these circumstances.<sup>25</sup> If the fraternal ideal of co-residence is to be achieved (Dole pp. 313-314), then it must, in an uxori-local society, be attained through brothers (either real or classificatory) clustering round the sororal group in a localized female unity.

It follows from this that fraternal and brother-in-law relationships are both vital at the horizontal levels of political organization, notably in creating and sustaining the larger units of either village or dispersed settlement neighbourhoods. As I have already remarked (Butt Colson p. 29) the twin hero myths of Guiana suggest that fraternal collaboration is the ideal. Where it is broken up, at least temporarily through marriage out, then the brother-in-law relationship ought to approximate to it as nearly as possible. The fraternal relationship is meant to be a caring, mutually supportive one, especially that of older to younger sibling, although a degree of "subtle competitiveness" has been noted for the Pemon (Urbina p. 188). The brother-in-law relationship is a mutually obligated, equalitarian one. It is clearly more formal than the fraternal relationship, at the beginning at least, and for the Pemon it has been characterized as one of balanced reciprocity centred on "exchanges of aid in subsistence tasks and small favors, exchanges that more or less balance out over the long run, whether or not a sister exchange has been effected."<sup>26</sup> Akawaio say that the two are obligated "to agree with each other" because of their mutual sister-wife connection, whilst Schwerin (p. 138) states that it is not unusual to find a special and close relationship between brothers-in-law among the Karinya. There is little doubt that elements of competitiveness and hostility are also implicit, and that sometimes these are points of absolute fission in the group when their subordination and indebtedness to wife's father ceases with the death of the latter. In the value system, the anticipation may be that one competes politically in an affinal category, but never with one classed as a father, brother, or son (Overing p. 342); nevertheless, where brothers-in-law do adhere they frequently form joint family units of considerable strength within the local group. The Kapon and Pemon mode of address between brothers-in-law seems to emphasize a fraternal element of companionship: *yako* is the address term for brother-in-law and *yakon* is same-sex, younger sibling who is "another of the same kind," a replica and companion, bearing out Thomas' assertion that they are supposed to act like brothers.<sup>27</sup>

The more or less symmetrical and equivalent relationship meant to characterize dealings between men of the same genealogical generation, certainly contrasts

<sup>25</sup> Thomas 1973: 157. We may compare the use of "compadre" in Spanish, as a reciprocal term of address between men whose children have married each other. Here it is between WB and ZH (see Schwerin p. 127).

<sup>26</sup> Thomas 1979: 68. Compare Mentore's depiction of the Waiwai brother and brother-in-law relationships (pp. 208-210).

<sup>27</sup> Compare the reference to *yako* and *yakon* in Armellada and Gutiérrez Salazar 1981: 231, and that to *yese*, in the same work p. 235, the latter term being one of both reference and address.

with the recognized and socially stressed asymmetry of proximate generations, notably the authority of wife's father with respect to daughter's husband. It is the symmetry of the former which led Thomas (1979: 68-69) to consider that it might be an important element in sister's daughter marriage, as constituting a strategy for eliminating the father-in-law by substituting a cross cousin/brother-in-law (i.e. sister's husband). In such a marriage a conflation of statuses occurs, whereby ZD becomes a wife and MB becomes husband; sister becomes WM and her husband becomes WF. The latter is already obligated to, and in collaboration with, his wife's brother through his marriage with the sister, so that reciprocity is achieved through his giving a daughter in marriage instead of a sister (see Henley Fig. 2). The bonus for the mother's brother is that he can continue working in his natal group with his sister and parents, in collaboration with sister's husband. The benefit for the family group at large is the immediate achievement of a very closely knit, enduring set of relationships through the conflation of categories caused by a son/brother maintaining continuous residence whilst adding another reproductive unit. This confirmation of an extended family cycle and initiation of a new one is achieved through a reshuffling of female relationships. This process induces horizontal, equalitarian relationships among men which are of the joint family kind. Under cross cousin marriage Akawaio men frequently wish to marry their son to father's sister's daughter, so that through his uxorilocal residence and the mutual visiting and collaboration which take place they "stay as one big family," as they themselves express it. What takes a genealogical generation to accomplish under this system can be attained immediately through ZD marriage, for the resolution of asymmetry between Carib men via "generational change-over" (Adams p. 300), is bypassed through this form of marriage which, as Schwerin notes (p. 141) in the case of the Trio, does not rely strictly on "the march of time through generations." Whilst the equality which Adams (p. 304) notes as characterizing women's relations seems to be transferred into the male sector by ZD marriage, an increase in hierarchy occurs when a man not only gains sons-in-law through his marriageable daughters, but also manages to keep his own sons and even have access to wives or daughters-in-law from outside—that is, if he can achieve virilocality for his sons through forming alliances or importing female orphans. A considerable degree of productive and reproductive power is concentrated when an extended family becomes a multi-cell unit through keeping both its men and its women and maximizing its human resources in this way (cf. Morton p. 233).

Affinal relationships do not have purely ephemeral effects, for although marriages in the younger generation serve to knit family groups together, where new unities form, they are also the means of reinforcing the ties of previous generations where such ties already exist (see Urbina pp. 189-191). Effectively, they initiate the collaboration between age mates via the wife's sister's husband (in the fraternal relationship) and the wife's brother-sister's husband (the brother-in-law) relationship, though there is no formal age set system—as our authors note. At the same time, these marriages bring about a repetition of the three generation, extended family cycle, so that the extended and joint family unities interlock. Where this takes place within a local group of limited geographical extension, then



a kindred node, or core (Butt Colson p. 19), might be said to have formed.

The intergeneration marriage may be seen as a reinforcement of a system with a strong tendency for males to cluster round a local grouping of solidary female kin. This is most intensely realized in the real ZD c: FZ marriage, whilst there is a case for regarding alternate generation (grandparent-grandchild) marriage as modelled on these.<sup>28</sup> In posing the question of the kinds of circumstances in which these "close" marriages occur, we should look beyond the probability that some individuals may be exploiting "the system" for their own ends exclusively. Demographic circumstances (Morton pp. 245-246) have been stated as a cause. Dole (p. 322) has argued that among the Kuikuru proximate generation marriage may be an adjustment to the occasional scarcity of cross cousins or other eligible mates, and both she and Adams have referred, in this connection, to problems of depopulation and fragmentation consequent on contact situations. Thomas has stated (1973: 135) that if a male Pemon has no sisters to be exchanged then he is often forced to look outside the zone (neighbourhood), and even further afield, for a wife. An alternative is to look inside, and to marry a sister's daughter in preference to distant kin or strangers (Urbina p. 198). This stress on the demographic factor leads me to think that local settlement size and the nature of the settlement pattern are crucial. Certainly a small settlement cannot afford to lose, even temporarily, any of its able-bodied males, or risk having females attracted away, as occasionally happens. It is safer to marry in a way which will annul mobility of any kind—it may, indeed, be vital to do so.

When a small settlement is under threat from its nearest neighbours then marriage with these neighbours is inhibited. Elderly Pemon have explained a small incidence of real sister marriage as taking place in times of conflict with neighbours. If demographic circumstances and social friction in combination provide a root cause for close, in-marriage, then we can put the hypothesis that a pattern of dispersed, small settlements should provide the best circumstances for discovering a higher incidence of this type of union, in which all the potentials of a system hinging on the concept of a fundamental rift between male and female siblings are fully exploited. The Pemon formerly had an average settlement population of 7-8 people, occupying one or two houses, in a dispersed settlement pattern in extensive areas of savanna, and they are an extreme case in point.<sup>29</sup> They contrast with their

<sup>28</sup> Schwerin p. 137, records that among the Karinya of Cachama, MMB = MB and FFZ = FZ and he notes, p. 143, for the Ye'kuana that they continue to apply the principle of opposition between adjacent generations in their treatment of the +3 level, where affinal categories from +1 generation reappear. That is, *yawo*, MB, is any male of the third ascending generation; *waiñe'ne*, FZ, is any female of the third ascending generation. Thomas records (1982: 103, 160, and see also 1973: 159-160) that Pemon FZDD is *upase*, which translates "my sister's daughter." Refer also to Henley p. 167, discussing ambiguities which arise following the superimposition of ZD marriage on a system of bilateral cross cousin marriage. He states: "Another is the conflation of the category of male grandparent with the category that includes a mother's brother, who under the principles of a bilateral cross cousin marriage system, is usually a real or potential father-in-law as well". In ZD marriage Ego's mother's father is also Ego's father's sister's husband, i.e. a mother's brother in a cross cousin system of reckoning.

<sup>29</sup> This calculation derives from a variety of literary sources, dating from 1838 at Roraima, and including the period up to the 1940s. During this time Pemon have always maintained a few larger, nucleated settlements, or villages, consisting of some 4 - 6 houses and over 40 inhabitants. Nevertheless,

Kapon (Akawaio) neighbours who live in a forested area with but small patches of savanna, who tend to congregate more in villages and to interact in greater numbers. Intergeneration marriages appear to be found mainly among Akawaio who have had most contact with Pemon neighbours. Mostly they regard it as "too close," and they tend to be contemptuous of its practice among Pemon when they encounter it and to persist in thinking in terms of, and applying, the terminology of the cross cousin marriage norm. Nevertheless, they too have stressed the advantage of ZD marriage as a means of avoiding conflict by marrying in, and their first prophet of the syncretic religion of Hallelujah is recalled as having recommended its practice to his fellow villagers on these very grounds.

If the incidence of intergeneration marriage is affected by the settlement pattern and its demography, then ecological considerations are also ultimately implicated, not only in the extremely impoverished, highland savanna area of the Gran Sabana where the majority of the North Pemon lives, but also wherever there is infertile grassland subject to extremes of rain and drought, as in the Rio Branco savannas of the South Pemon (Makushi) and in the eastern llanos of Venezuela in Karinya country. This conjunction of ideas requires further research. Certainly the implications of the brother-sister dichotomy which marks the point of maximum fission in the structure we are considering, still requires a great deal of comparative analysis in order to understand more fully its ramifications in political organization.<sup>30</sup>

Considering types of Pemon marriage, Thomas (1973: 162) postulates a continuum with the cross cousin marriage norm being a mid-point between those who are maximally related, as ZD-MB, and those related only affinally (with no recognized genealogical relationship). We thus return again to the importance of distance, having meanwhile tentatively linked the incidence of certain kinds of marriage to inter-settlement relations as part of overall demographic and ecological circumstances. As I have argued already, this surely points to a need to identify carefully, the different structural levels and social unities in the societies we are studying. In a dispersed settlement system in which the extended, or small joint, family must aim at harmonious unity (demographic, social and psychological) in order to survive, the intergeneration marriage of MB-ZD is a strategic advantage.<sup>31</sup> The comparatively large village (over 60 inhabitants) will inevitably incorporate generation hierarchies and near strangers (male-in-laws), and will be "based more upon ties between affines" (Schwerin p. 134), but can employ an administrator-mediator, i.e. a leader, with the task of holding together and attaining the collaboration of joint family heads as well as representing them as a unit against

Urbina's depiction (p. 198) of a Pemon "social-spatial system characterized by scattered settlements organized in a neighbourhood, which is an efficient way of solving problems related to the ecological conditions and distribution of resources in the area," is most appropriate.

<sup>30</sup> Although a point of structural division, the personal relationships between real brother and sister is often a very close and affectionate one. This is maintained if, in cross cousin marriage, their children unite, so converting their parents into affines.

<sup>31</sup> Kapon and Pemon followed the custom of "minding" a girl. This is where an alliance cements friendship between two families, one handing over a girl to the other. She is cared for until old enough to be espoused. In this kind of virilocal practice, it is said that the girl "grows used to" her designated husband's family from an early age. (See Morton p. 227 referring to the *anton* custom of the Waiwai.)

outsiders. Even in this instance, alliances which are too distant from the leader's personal network may lead to fission (Rivière p. 353).

Following up the notion of a continuum, I suggest that Overing's emphasis on a fundamental dichotomy between consanguines and affines might turn out to be, in the case of our Carib societies, the end of a continuum which begins with the conflation and overlap of categories, stressed in Henley's work on intergeneration marriage. Schwerin's and Dole's positions on kin integration and consanguineal affines can similarly be validated. Contrasting views on the location of power may also be harmonized. Most of our contributors stress the hierarchy contained within the extended family, with power in Guiana being to a large degree dependent on the manipulation of the affinal relationship, which creates and sustains leadership (Morton p. 236), but as Adams shows, leadership and its power base can also be developed in the brother-in-law interrelationships (and the fraternal one of WZH), and these do not depend on generation difference and asymmetric obligation, but on equivalence and balance, and on obligations of mutual collaboration characteristic of friendly, joint family heads.

Thus, as I have already suggested a number of propositions contained in our papers harmonize if they are seen to refer to different sectors of a continuum of fluctuating unities, operating in the network of overlapping kindreds. Perhaps too, a correct understanding of such a continuum will ultimately provide the answer to the final problem which Dreyfus poses (p. 54) as to how "the semi-hierarchical and inter-twined systems of the past have become transformed into the egalitarian, atomized, and often closed small units of today." Certainly a detailed and careful assessment of the interchange between the horizontal (sibling set) and the vertical (WF-DH) relationships is requisite. Perhaps there is a real variation in the balance between these two within the variety of traditional Carib societies. However, we may also speculate as to whether, under modern conditions of change at least, the authority implicit in the extended family unit, with its core in-law relationships and intergeneration asymmetry, has not been eroded in favour of the symmetric, joint family and sibling set relationships, which favour collaboration between generation equals and which more nearly approximate a cooperative ideal.

### The village

The extended family, of parents, daughter and daughter's husband and their children, is a basic one in Carib structure, being in major part an independent entity in both reproduction and production. Nevertheless, it is ultimately dependent on other, similar units for the importation of procreating males and for economic and social welfare in times of economic stress and, in times past, for aid in defence and offence. The building block for increase in settlement size is the joint family, formed by horizontal links between siblings and their spouses. Where social relationships and personalities are compatible, and where also ecological conditions are favourable, joint families may combine to form a village; Urbina for example (pp. 190-191), describes the basic composition of a small Arekuna Pemon village of four domestic groups, showing the interlocking of joint and extended families (the

—2 generation is not inserted). In the case of an artificially large, mission village, he found that organization was based on clusters of domestic units, each occupying a discrete part of the village compound, which he likens to separate and defined "quarters." The internal relationships within the unity of the quarter (those of the extended and joint family kind), remain the same, but a set of inter-quarter relationships have come into being through intermarriage between young generation members.

Urbina considers the institution of quarters to be an innovation due to new, national influences deriving from the establishment of a mission and creation of an abnormally large population of over 200 people. I do not myself believe that this structure is novel. In the 1950s I encountered Akawaio villages of some 80 inhabitants composed of several joint family houses, periodically occupied, grouped round the dwelling of the village leader and his joint family cluster and a ceremonial dance house. These existed before non-Indian settlement took place. The first explorers in the area of Roraima (before the mid-19th century), found a few large settlements or villages established, before any major changes in culture could be detected. Moreover, Thomas' demographic research shows that where there has been population growth among the Pemon the tendency is towards settlements composed of an agglomeration of households, grouped round that of the settlement head, whilst household size and composition have remained relatively constant. The kinship composition of the settlement he found to have remained roughly as before increase in numbers of surviving progeny. It seems from his work that replication, not alteration, in the basic structure of settlements, has been taking place in recent times (Thomas 1973: 78-79, 110-112). Archival evidence presented by Dreyfus certainly supports the existence of indigenous large villages among the Kalinago, whilst comparative evidence from the E'ñapa given by Villalón (p. 62) shows that the spatial distribution of their households in "mega-villages" in many instances reflects prior local group membership, for their composite nature and their major social divisions are discernible. It seems, therefore, that family groups have a strong tendency to "combine" rather than "fuse" and this fact may well be important, both for understanding processes of fissioning and the nature of the growth of population in and around resource centres —those provided by the government with school, water supply, access road, housing, clinic, etc.

Nor do I agree with Adams (pp. 300 and 306) that Miller's "political brinkmanship is an anomaly" and his leadership "atypical." There are good reasons for asserting that a specific terminology is in use, at formal village organization level, which transcends genealogical relationships. Thus, among both Akawaio and Waiwai (Morton p. 235), the village leader is addressed as "father," whilst the term he uses to denote the senior men and women of his community (heads of extended and joint families) is that for sister's son and son-in-law, which also has the connotation of helper, assistant, follower. The combination is of the authority of a father (nuclear family) with that of maternal uncle and father-in-law (of the joint family). Both stress asymmetry between generations, even if it should be a fictional generation difference, at the expense of the equalitarian collaboration implicit in fraternal and brother-in-law relationships. This system was also extended by

Akawaio when greeting and formally addressing a Governor of British Guiana (now Guyana) when he visited their territory. An oration began with *papai* (address term for father) and he was petitioned by his *peitoridong* (the collective plural for sister's sons/sons-in-law) who were his "Captains," the village leaders.

Whereas a father and a father-in-law in genealogical terms have inbuilt authority, due to generation difference and specific moral duties owing them by sons and sons-in-law, a village leader has no such overall advantage. His status is achieved and ascribed in a situation in which there are most likely others in the enlarged community network who are also well placed in the kinship nucleus. Thus he has to possess personal ability and, ideally, charisma, in order to attain his ascendancy. At the least, he has to be endowed with great patience and a sense of duty if the position is "wished on him" as Pemon leaders sometimes claim that it is. Thus we arrive at an appreciation of the instability which Rivière notes with regard to the likelihood of fission of distant and peripheral relations of the leader, and which Schwerin specifies (p. 147) for populations in excess of 100, when ties of kinship and affinity, with their loyalty and mutual support, begin to weaken.

### Intermittence and recurrence

In the absence of corporate groups, the kind of organization we have been considering has been variously characterized as chaotic, atomistic, ephemeral, individualistic, flexible and fluid (as discussed by Rivière pp. 355-357). Yet further investigation reveals a strong continuity in organization and culture, and a repetitive patterning in essential relationships. In the case of the Akawaio, for example, many local groups have been in continuous occupation of specific settlement sites for as long as we have a record (well over 100 years in some instances) and family continuity in such places is asserted by today's inhabitants. When a favoured site has become untenable, because of raiding, for example, the inhabitants or their immediate descendants have returned later in more propitious times (Butt 1958: 76, 78-83). Contrary to what has been customarily asserted in popular accounts, the Kapon and Pemon peoples at least, have a tenacious affection for their homeland and for family settlement areas—even specific sites—and this is often transmitted from generation to generation. Dole (p. 311) shows that as leadership is mostly achieved and not inherited among the Kuikuru, it takes time to get a new leader going, but certainly leaders, more or less outstanding, are a constant phenomenon in Carib political organization and were probably even more vital in the warlike past. Adams (p. 306) refers to generational sequencing in male relationships undermining political careers and continuity at village level, but we can refer to localized female continuity and the three generation cycle with its unity at grandparental and grandchild levels. Although there is a great deal of movement and change continuously taking place, does this really amount to chaos, a freedom from group restraints in perpetuum—or even an excessive flexibility?

The system we have been studying is at base constituted by overlapping, cogantic kindreds, which provide the necessary framework for cohesive social relations and an ideology of consanguinity (Urbina pp. 194, 197). In itself, this

system with its far-flung network of classificatory relations, is one which allows for many viable alternatives for residence and alliance provided that the factor of distance is not too detrimental for the individuals and families concerned. As Thomas remarks (1982: 84), each adult Pemon "no matter how concentrated his relatives are in one area, will almost always have a sibling or parallel cousin outside his or her own neighborhood and often outside the region as well." He attributes this not just to demographic time and chance but to pushes and pulls between different sibling sets over the course of several generations and he concludes that the personal kindred acts towards the end of dispersion, even in the face of an ideal concentration of near relatives. The existence of this personal network should not cause us to forget that close kin form tight cores of interrelationships which are institutionalized as the extended family (the expected norm being a parental couple, daughter and daughter's husband and their children). With the interacting developmental cycles of several extended families and their conjunction through affinal ties (mainly via sibling relationships), we arrive at the joint family unities of varying sizes. Members of these share common residential places and common areas of cultivable land, and periodically combine their labour and social activities (for example, Urbina p. 194). Although the extended family, and indeed even the nuclear family, may be economically self-contained in most daily subsistence needs, in that a male and female pair can between them perform all necessary tasks to maintain themselves and children, they are socially interdependent with others if only because they are linked by multiple social ties for the purpose of reproduction and hence the maintenance of their developmental cycle.

The dynamic element is, throughout, constituted by the movement of men who, by realizing their affinal potential (which varies in degree according to genealogical and, or, geographical distance) link themselves to localized female nuclei of kin. This dynamism yields to the requirement of less mobility and a greater internal unity and solidarity in certain circumstances (which I have suggested might be demographic and ecological, linked with localized conflict, and is achieved most notably by ZD and other intergeneration marriages). In the uxorilocal situation a new extended family is normally initiated by marriage of a daughter and confirmed by the birth of the grandchildren. Although fissioning within the extended family is sometimes achieved early, the horizontal ties between siblings and their spouses will in each generation tend to re-create joint family unities, and so multiple social links will be formed between these and across generations. (See for example, Urbina pp. 189-190 and Fig. 5, where he depicts the major interrelationships of the small Pemon village of Anonte and its satellites.) Nevertheless, although a close association of joint families in a particular neighbourhood may constitute a village (nucleated or dispersed), each joint family retains its essential identity within the community. New alignments are constantly taking place inside and out, as marriages and deaths occur and friendships and enmities are formed, but each extended and joint family group retains a certain inalienable autonomy within the community at large. They do not merge, but might be said to form a federation.

Thomas asserts (1973: 148) that it is the continual interplay of sibling ties and affinal ones over two generations which determines the cycle of development of

settlements among the Pemon. Certainly the process of cyclical change which occurs through the formation of new male interrelationships in each generation has repercussions throughout the society. It creates relations of asymmetry (between parents-in-law and sons-in-law) and symmetry (between brothers-in-law) and will, at senior level, affect headmanship, leadership, and the continuity, size and configuration of local group unities within the network system.

Urbina (p. 185) remarks that Pemon settlements are supposed to split from time to time and to give place to new settlements. Pemon describe these movements to other sites, accompanying fissions and realignments, as a process of "renewing themselves." It may also be significant that Ye'kuana possess a great number of concepts and designations which have been described as "processual" (Heinen p. 267). Linguistic forms and phraseology seem therefore to suggest that regular change occurs, but that it is structured as a repetition of processes, or cycles. Although the break-up of village communities and fissioning of units may cause personal chagrin, hostilities and trauma (as described for the Ye'kuana), there is nevertheless a decided preference for realignment and renewal via periodic fragmentation rather than a steady continuity of comparatively large, internally divided factions.<sup>32</sup> There does not seem to exist a fear of periods of abeyance in leadership or of structural devolution leading supposedly to fragmentation and ultimate anarchy, which centralized systems cope with through a variety of devices for ensuring immediate succession to office, or through the creation of intermediary councils and emergency transfer of power. If Carib societies have a focus for this kind of anxiety it seems to be at the extended family level, or that of the small, joint family group, for this is where the effects of male mobility and demographic imbalances may threaten the independent existence and continuity of the three generation cycle—and this is where, we may postulate, the female backbone of the community may be used to keep the structure intact and turning over.

The circulation of young men, processes of change and renewal in the overlapping cycles of the extended family, the periodic formation and fragmentation of joint family unities and alliances in the village context, the intermittent nature of local leadership and of prophet-led enthusiastic movements—all occurring within the acephalous segmentation of the regional and ethnic structures—inevitably produce an organization which looks chaotic to us, who are accustomed to institutionalized continuity of a formal and immediate kind. To these indigenous circumstances we have also to add the increasing pressure of forces from the national societies for extraordinary and rapid change. However, although the exact configuration of the social unities may vary and fluctuate along a continuum of structural possibilities, when Carib societies are put into a time perspective then the fragmentary and ephemeral image is dissolved into patterns of transformations and continuities, characterized by recurrence and intermittence.

I have already remarked on the significance of the grandfather and his religious importance among circum-Roraima Carib speakers. When father/father-in-law of a married couple becomes "old man"<sup>33</sup> he nevertheless continues to have a

<sup>32</sup> Rivière 1970, is an important work on this theme.

power base. He has completed a three generation cycle and, through his special relationship and near identity with the grandchildren, he counteracts the divisive forces which are located in the relationship of unlike siblings. The children of those siblings, epitomizing the male and the female, are those grandchildren who will repeat his former act of unity with one of a female nuclei of kin and so re-create the basic structure of society. Physically inactive, even passive, he is conceived to be in possession of superior knowledge. He is a thinker-dreamer and from this rank emerges the occasional, outstanding man (and sometimes woman) as a generally recognized prophet-seer, possessed of insight derived from the soul's contact with the illuminating forces of the upper cosmos.

Although the Piaroa are classified as non-Carib, their word *ta'kwari*, defined by Overing (p. 340) as a force to give life, the "life of thoughts and culture," coincides with Pemon and Kapon concepts, expressed in Akawaio by the same word, *akwaru* (*akwa*: radiant light of the sun giving strength for life and for knowledge; *-ru, -ri*, a possessive suffix). Among the circum-Roraima peoples, every living being in society and nature possesses *akwaru* (Pemon: *ekaton*), which is also thought of as infusing communities, their dwellings and possessions.<sup>34</sup> Morton reminds us (p. 247) of the Durkheimian proposition that a society creates its own image through the sacred. Ye'kuana society and roundhouse symbolism seem to illustrate this very well, for the layout of this traditional communal house reflects clearly the internal social organization of the Ye'kuana community, which Heinen describes (pp. 265-267 and Figure 1) as being composed of a number of extended households, each formed by a parent-in-law couple with their daughters, granddaughters and the husbands of these, plus unmarried sons and grandsons. Each extended household (or family), with its component hearth groups, occupied a sector of the outer ring of space in the house. Overall there is a suppression of differentiation within the walls of the Ye'kuana house, and the model is not of two structures exchanging wives but of a group which, clustering around its female core, maintains itself through time as a consanguineal unity by tending to restrict exchanges to within itself whenever possible (Schwerin pp. 151-152). Arvelo-Jiménez states (1971: 171-172 and Chap. 3 on the Ye'kuana village), that Ye'kuana say that fellow villagers are like real close kin, and they are "very particular about maintaining the belief that a village is a consanguineal unified and solidary whole," although she also adds that "the actual composition of a village nevertheless is a compromise solution which almost always disregards the ideal."

Whereas the spatial layout of the Gê village shows bisection in a moiety system (Overing p. 332), the Carib shows a village roundhouse unity (or, in modern conditions, the clustering of the extended family components round a ritual house and the house of the village or settlement headman). The Carib ideal is therefore of a family-like, consanguineal unity, undivided. This unity is believed to be a source of

<sup>33</sup> Kapon *tamokori* and Pemon *tamo*, grandfather, have the same stem as *amoko*, old man. It appears to be related to the verb *amokoma*, meaning coiled, circling (Armellada, personal communication: see Armellada and Gutiérrez Salazar 1981: 10). The same form for grandfather is to be found in other Carib-speaking groups, such as the Wayana.

<sup>34</sup> For further details on the Akawaio and Pemon usages and meaning of this word see Butt Colson and Armellada 1983: 1232-1233.



strength in relation to the outside world, for above all the roundhouse is a cosmological image linking its inhabitants, as a group, to the form of the universe as it was transformed and made by its culture hero ancestors at the beginning of time, and receiving the illuminating strength for life which is derived from the sun's radiant light (Wilbert 1981: 37-70). Thus the *pata*, community place of residence of the three generation unity comprised within the grandparent-grandchild relationship, ideally represents the undivided society, under one roof and within an all-embracing wall, supported by a headman-leader, related to and receiving the life forces of the universe which solar radiance represents, and which Ye'kuana roundhouses are constructed to receive within.

We may recall Dreyfus' remark (p. 53), that Amerindian societies provide us with a very large sample of different kinds of political organization, some of which, as she says, have never been "imagined" in European political science. We can certainly place the Caribs and their neighbours firmly amongst those who have a great deal to offer us concerning the nature of social and conceptual structures, their dynamics and their symbolic projections. I also hope that this collection of papers, deriving from the symposium held at the 44th International Congress of Americanists at Manchester, England, in September 1982, will truly have set us on the road to solving the enigma which their political organization has presented, knowing that there remains a very great deal yet to be discovered, unravelled and learnt from these indigenous South Americans, who still manage to live daily, often against great odds, a life which, when properly understood, ought to evoke intense interest, general admiration and, above all, respect.