



“Engendering Warriors: Reproductive Imagery in Enemy-Killers’ Rituals”

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What motivates a man to go out and kill an enemy? What are the things for which people are willing to fight and risk dying? In native lowland South America, the answers to these questions are seldom the concrete, collective gains commonly sought in wars elsewhere: land, resources, control over foreign populations.¹ On the contrary, inter-tribal warfare in Amazonia has proven stubbornly resistant to broad materialist models. Scholars have debated how certain local conflicts interact with population dynamics, game resources, or access to trade goods, but attempts to explain larger regional patterns of warfare in such terms have proven inconclusive so far. Even where there are strong arguments for interpreting specific local warfare patterns as societal-level responses to ecological, epidemiological, or material pressures, the individuals who actually do the fighting seldom voice such motives. Instead, other, less tangible, ideological incentives—ideas, symbols, cultural logic—come to the fore as immediate motivations that make native Amazonian men willing to leave their homes to seek enemies to kill.² Regardless of the eventual conclusion of debates over the material dynamics of Amazonian warfare, it is clear that ideological factors have had profound importance in motivating individual warriors and the communities that supported them to make war against their enemies.

Warfare traditionally has occupied a key position in many native Amazonian ontologies as a prime channel through which human beings access productive bio-cosmological energies. To kill an enemy and appropriate and transform elements taken from the enemy is widely recognized as one of the most powerful forms of human action in the world. The practice of war

¹ “The internal wars waged by the Indians of South America against one another have always exerted an ambiguous fascination upon Western observers,” Philippe Descola writes. “From the earliest chroniclers of the conquest down to contemporary ethnologists, they all manifest a similar perplexity faced with the intensity of these clashes, their apparent lack of motives, and the macabre rituals by which they are often accompanied” (1996: 436).

² On debates over material motives for native Amazonian warfare, see Albert 1989; Beckerman 1991; Bennett Ross 1984; Chagnon 1988, 1989, 1990b; Descola 1994; Divale and Harris 1976; Ferguson 1989a, 1989b, 1995, 2001; Robarchek 1990. For arguments in favor of non-material, ideological motives, see Albert 1990; Fausto 1999; Lizot 1989; Whitehead 2002: 224-225.

feeds dynamic processes that contribute to the making of men and the reproduction of society. In the past when warfare was more widespread than it is today, many native peoples considered enemy-killing essential to male development, a prerequisite to achieve manhood and develop an individual man's physical, spiritual, and moral capacities.

In this article, I examine one complex of lowland South American war rituals that exemplify this idea of warfare as an essential way to enhance human agency through engagement with the powers embodied in enemy outsiders. I focus on the ritual seclusion of warriors in various native societies in Brazil, a practice based in the belief that when a man kills an enemy, the victim's blood and/or spirit enter the body of the killer and the killer must go into ritual seclusion to deal with this alien substance in his body. While in seclusion, the killer lies in a hammock, abstains from sex, does not speak to others who are not in seclusion, and observes stringent bodily disciplines directed toward neutralizing and expelling or transforming the enemy blood. In the twentieth century, this set of beliefs and practices was found among various Gê speakers in central Brazil, including the Xavante (Maybury-Lewis 1967: 282), Xerente (Nimuendaju 1967[1942]: 78-79), Apinayé (Da Matta 1976: 86-87), Krahó (Carneiro da Cunha 1978: 105), and Suyá (Seeger 1981: 167-168), as well as among the Araweté (Tupi-Guarani) of the middle Xingu River region (Viveiros de Castro 1992) and the Urubú (Tupi) of eastern Brazil (Huxley 1957). My analysis focuses on the two groups for which we have the most detailed ethnographic data: the Wari' of western Brazil (Conklin 1989, 2001a, 2001b; Vilaça 1989, 1992), and the Yanomami of northern Brazil (Albert 1985).

A number of ethnographers have noted that these native Brazilian warriors' seclusion rituals involve cultural ideas and practices similar to the ideas and practices surrounding female reproductive processes in the same societies. For example, killers of enemies observed rituals or restrictions similar to those observed by girls during their first menstruation among the Apinayé (Da Matta 1976: 86), Suyá (Seeger 1981: 167), and Urubú (Huxley 1957: 260). Although ethnographers have noted such male-female parallels in some individual ethnographic cases, there has been little recognition of this as a regional pattern, nor consideration of the implications for understanding lowland South American warfare. My goal is to call attention to this complex of native Brazilian warriors' rituals and explore how the gendered notions of human agency and bio-social generativity that they express fit into native Amazonian cultural systems in which relations to others are a key point of orientation.

Alterity and the Agency of Predation

An outward-looking perspective is a basic cultural principle in much of lowland South America. Native peoples tend to look beyond the bounds of

their own local community for resources to sustain and revitalize human life. They find such vital resources in the realms of nature, animal spirits, non-human beings, and human foreigners. Alterity -a cultural emphasis on how others' differ from one's own group- is treated as a source of potentially productive differences that may be appropriated to enhance one's own group or self.

Predation is a prime mechanism for bringing valued outside elements into society, and killing human enemies is widely equated with hunting animals.³ Just as hunters bring home life-sustaining meat, successful warriors capture vital elements of enemies. In the cases with which I am concerned, the desirable things taken from enemies are generative elements-that is, they infuse life-giving vitality into the group that incorporates them. Rather than being wealth items or material possessions, these tend to be aspects of the victim's personhood, such as the enemy's soul, head, blood, flesh, or children. Headhunting by Jivaroans in eastern Ecuador and Peru, the adoption of orphaned enemy children by the Mundurucu of central Brazil, and the capture and subsequent cannibalism of enemy warriors by the Tupinamba of coastal Brazil, are well-known historical examples. The Brazilian warriors' seclusion rituals are another distinctive expression of the dynamic in which predation nurtures procreativity.

Over the past two decades, the intertwined themes of predation and relations to enemy outsiders have become a major emphasis in the work of a number of South Americanist scholars who see these as central tropes and points of orientation in the construction of native Amazonian self-identities (cf. Clastres 1977, Overing 1986, 1993; Taylor 2000; Viveiros de Castro 1992, 1998). Recently, Carlos Fausto (1999: 934) proposed an insightful model that locates warfare and predation within a broad ontology that, he suggests, underlies a number of native Amazonian systems that treat warfare/predation as a key moment in processes of social reproduction. Although Fausto is not explicitly concerned with gender issues, his work points to resonances between warfare and other forms of human reproduction, between the transformation of enemies and the making of kin.

Fausto emphasizes that Amazonian societies tend to be focused primarily on the production of persons, not material goods. The symbolic work of rituals, festivals, seclusions, and displays "are all means for producing persons, for conferring on them singularity, beauty, fertility, agency, and the capacity to interact with external entities, like spirits, deities, animals and

³ Among the Wari' of western Brazil with whom I work, the equation between hunting animals and killing enemies is quite explicit. Warriors honed their skills for an attack on an enemy by hunting together during the week before a war expedition. After killing an enemy, they took body parts and roasted them in the same manner that they roast game. The enemy flesh was later consumed (by others who had not taken part in the kill) in the same manner that Wari' eat animal meat. This contrasted directly with the very different, respectful manner of roasting and consuming the flesh of fellow Wari' in funerary cannibalism (Conklin 2001a: 33).

enemies." In many Amazonian cultures, relations to the outside world and to beings external to one's own society are essential for producing fully realized persons and for reproducing society. An individual develops his or her agency by appropriating the surplus of agency that exists in the outside world.

Predation is one mode of appropriation. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro has emphasized that predation is not just a negation, a destructive wiping out of the other. Rather, for many native Amazonians, predation is a creative social relation between subjects. The enemy's subjectivity must be affirmed so that vital qualities of the enemy—names, songs, enemy souls, and body substances—may be captured and used to constitute persons within the killer's group. One form of this is what Fausto (1999: 949) calls "familiarizing predation:" processes that make enemy captives, enemy spirits, or other alien beings into kin who can be incorporated into the killer's group. Alien subjects are appropriated, controlled, and transformed (by being killed, consumed, adopted, or tamed) in order to produce new and enhanced persons inside the group.

Fausto sees this dynamic of familiarizing predation as a broad relational structure that recurs in a variety of contexts: in kinship practices that turn affines into consanguines; in shamanic systems in which animal prey become the shaman's familiar companion; and in conceptual parallels between the abduction and adoption of foreign children and the taming that makes a wild animal into its master's pet. The hunter, shaman, and warrior occupy key positions as mediators and transformers of relations between the outside and inside of society.

Gender and the Agency of Predation

Warfare and hunting are overwhelmingly male activities, and so is shamanism in most Amazonian groups. When women are discussed at all in analyses of warfare and hunting, they tend to be relegated to supporting roles. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1984: 144-145), for example, noted that women played a role in several aspects of Amerindian warfare rites: as spouses of enemy captives, as future mothers of warriors, and as recipients of the life-force taken from the enemy. Other scholars have emphasized women's roles in urging men to hunt game and kill enemies, and in receiving and processing the meat or human trophies that men bring home. But women consistently appear as mediators or recipients, not active agents.

Given the scholarly view of predation as an activity unique to men, it is perhaps not surprising that the literature on alterity has a pervasively masculine orientation. When predation is taken as *the* salient focus of native ontology, there is a tendency to treat male identity and male relations to enemy or animal outsiders as *the* primary cultural model for the development of persons, their identities, and capacities for agency. However, when male rituals and symbols are considered not in isolation, but in relation to

domestic rituals and female symbols, a different picture emerges. One begins to notice how closely the ideas and symbolism surrounding warriors, enemies, and killing are linked to their seeming opposites: birth, kinship, and domestic nurturance. Although warfare is a quintessentially male activity, cultural ideas about men's agency as warriors often parallel ideas about women's agency in human reproduction. Many South American peoples traditionally treated a young woman's first menstruation and a young man's first act of enemy-killing as structurally equivalent events in the social passage to adulthood. They also often saw parallels at the bodily level: in a number of groups, female physiological processes serve as a kind of symbolic template for conceptualizing the transformations that males undergo after killing an enemy.

Taking a view of social reproduction that encompasses both sexes' agency, the relational principle of familiarizing predation can be seen as one expression of a broader cultural dynamic that operates in relations *inside* as well as outside native Amazonian societies. This is the basic principle that human agency—the ability to access creative, productive, generative powers—develops through interactions with others who are different from oneself (Conklin 2001a, 2001b). By engaging with the otherness of difference and by transforming elements appropriated from others into positive, nurturant forms, women and men develop their potential for socially productive action. One way that women accomplish this is by engaging with men and the biocosmological forces that grow and nurture children. One way that men accomplish this is by killing enemies and transforming foreign enemy elements into new forms of nurturant vitality. Giving birth and killing enemies are very different forms of human action, but they both sustain and regenerate society, and some native symbolic systems recognize this by representing warfare as a reproductive activity.

Generativity and the Cultural Control of Blood

Although at first glance, it may seem paradoxical to emphasize parallels between predation and nurturance, enemy-killing and human reproduction, many native Amazonians highlight the similarities between them. A key link between the experiences of women in menstruation or birth and the experiences of warriors in killing enemies is that these all involve blood flowing across body boundaries and concerns to control blood properly.

The act of killing an enemy immerses the killer in an intimate encounter with the material reality of death. Throughout lowland South America, a newly returned, victorious warrior is widely recognized to be in a dangerous state, and cultural images of this danger focus especially on the enemy blood with which he has come in contact. (The essence of the victim's blood is widely believed to enter the killer's body even if he does not actually handle the corpse). Some groups emphasize the danger of harmful effects from this

intrusion of "bad" or foreign blood, or the risk of absorbing an excess quantity of blood. In its "raw" -that is, untransformed, unregulated- state, enemy blood is a vehicle of anti-vitality, causing illness, debility, and even death.

Some groups see close associations between the victim's corpse and the victim's blood in the killer's body. By absorbing this blood, the killer takes into himself the biological forces of decay affecting the corpse, and the state of his blood is linked to the state of his victim's corpse. Among the Yanomami, Araweté, Krahó, and Apinayé, the alien blood in the killer's body is thought to be directly connected to the putrefying liquids of the rotting corpse. The Araweté killer with his belly full of enemy blood is said to "die" himself and enter "a state in which he actually becomes a corpse...He feels as if he is rotting...and his bones become soft" in close association with the rotting of his victim's corpse (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 240, 247). Apinayé warriors consumed large amounts of hot pepper because the heat drives away the enemy spirit (which likes cool places) and causes the dead person's corpse to be consumed more quickly, thereby getting rid of the contaminating fluids (Da Matta 1976: 87). For similar reasons, the Krahó sometimes burned the corpses of enemies and witches to eliminate the blood so that the killer would not have to remain in seclusion so long (Carneiro da Cunha 1978: 105).

If a killer did not expel the victim's blood from his body or transform it in another manner, his abdomen would swell up huge with blood and he would die. Uncontrolled by cultural disciplines, the enemy blood would lead to a kind of deadly negative pregnancy. In all but one case (that of the Wari', discussed below), the disciplines of the warrior's seclusion had the goal of purging the enemy blood. Urubú and Gê warriors bled themselves with incisions that left lines of raised scars on their chest, back, arms, or legs. Suyá warriors also pierced their penises (Seeger 1981: 168). Among the Yanomami, Araweté, and some of the Gê groups, warriors vomited to rid themselves of the enemy blood and related substances.

While enemy blood itself was widely regarded as dangerous, the warrior's act of exerting the self-discipline required to deal with it was seen as extremely positive and health-promoting. A man who completed this ritual process gained a degree of immunity for his own body. The Xikrin-Kayapó thought that such men became "hard," enjoying long life and physical vitality (Vidal 1977: 157). The Urubú thought that the ritual seclusion made men hard, strong, and impervious to pain, with a sexual virility that women found extremely attractive. Wari' think that it enhances physical growth, strength, longevity, resistance to disease, and courage. Yanomami believe that it confers long life.

In one way or another, all these societies saw the warrior's act of killing an enemy and ritually managing the physical and spiritual elements acquired from the enemy as a way to control the forces of weakness, illness, aging, or death. Given this concern with growth, health, and biological transcendence, it is perhaps not surprising to find these transformations of men's bodies

conceived in terms similar to cultural images of female blood and reproductive physiology. Because the ethnographic data are sketchy in many cases, it is impossible to know whether this was true in all the societies that shared such beliefs about enemy blood. But some peoples clearly did emphasize parallels between the experiences of women and the experiences of warriors. Two of the best-documented accounts come from the Yanomami of northern Brazil and the Wari' of western Brazil.

Reproductive Parallels in Yanomami and Wari' Warriors' Rituals

Bruce Albert has studied the Yanomami of northern Brazil, who are one of four subgroups of the larger population generally referred to as Yanomami or Yanomamo. The Yanomami draw a direct equation between menstruation and the incorporation of enemy blood: both menstruating females and killers with enemy blood in their bodies are said to be *unokai*, "in a state of homicide" (Albert 1985: 604). Men may become *unokai* both through killing by direct physical violence and through killing by sorcery. Blood is a key element in Yanomami concepts of growth and decay, health and illness, maturation and aging, and it is closely linked to cosmo-meteorological rhythms (Albert 1985: 607-608). When blood is uncontrolled and displaced outside the body, things fall apart: people, society, and the universe enter an irreversible process of entropy analogous to organic decay.

When a Yanomami girl has her first menstrual period, she must seclude herself in a hammock behind a screen in her home and lie, naked and immobile, without speaking and or eating. A girl who failed to seclude herself properly would quickly experience premature aging and become an old woman (Albert 1985: 583). In addition, if her blood were to flow uncontrolled (that is, if it were not ritually contained by her self-discipline in seclusion), the world would be plunged into perpetual darkness and violent rain storms.

The killers of enemies confront identical dangers, and must observe a strict seclusion virtually identical to the practices of girls during their first menstruation. If a killer did not do so, the result would be the same disordering of biological and cosmo-meteorological rhythms caused by uncontrolled menstruation: he would age rapidly and storms would inundate the world with constant rain and darkness in the daytime.

The Yanomami killer's seclusion lasts until his victim's corpse has rotted, its fluids are gone, and the bones are dry (Albert 1985: 362-363, 374). He then purges the remnants of putrid enemy elements by vomiting into running water and bathes. If he did not, his abdomen would swell, bringing violent pain and death, whereas the killer who properly completes the seclusion and purging will enjoy good health and long life (Albert 1985: 375).

The Wari', who are also known as the Pakaas Novas, are a population of about 2,000 Chapakuran-speaking people who live in the rainforest of the western Brazilian state of Rondônia, near the border with Bolivia. Warfare

among the Wari' ended in the 1960s, when the various Wari' territorial subgroups were contacted, pacified, and brought under the authority of the Brazilian government. The contact and the establishment of peaceful relations with the national society was a gradual process that began in 1956, affected most of the population in 1961-62, and was completed in 1969.

For generations before the contact, Wari' had been under attack from neighboring groups. In the nineteenth century, their enemies were mainly other Indians such as the Karipuna and Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau. In the twentieth century, Brazilians and Bolivians invaded their territory in search of rubber, Brazil nuts, and other forest products. These non-Indians settled along the main rivers and became the main enemies of the Wari'. Hostilities intensified during and after the World War II-era "second rubber boom". In the 1950s, local businessmen eager to exploit the rubber resources in Wari' lands hired gunmen whom they armed with repeating rifles and submachine guns and sent into the forest to kill Indians. Wari' warriors retaliated with guerrilla-warfare tactics, striking isolated Brazilian homesteads and killing strangers who ventured into their territory (Conklin 1997: 70; Conklin 2001a: 28, 33).

When I arrived to work with the Wari' in 1985, all of the older people had vivid memories of the time of precontact hostilities. During two years of fieldwork in 1985-89, I interviewed the heads of 198 households in five communities (about 80% of the total population) and collected accounts of 399 deaths of Wari' family members in the four decades immediately prior to contact. 108 (27%) of those deaths were killings by Brazilians or Bolivians (Conklin 1989: 529). Wari' men who killed enemies or accompanied war expeditions, and women who waited at home for the warriors to return and cared for them during their ritual seclusion, still speak with pride of those events, for they were among the most valued contributions an individual could make to his or her community. Although warfare ended four decades ago, younger men are still fascinated by stories of wars past and present. The following description of precontact warfare and warriors' rituals is based on interviews with several dozen older Wari' men and women, as well as a re-enactment of the warriors' seclusion rites that they have staged to teach both the anthropologist and the younger generation of Wari' about these now-abandoned traditions.

Wari' believe that when an enemy is killed, the victim's spirit enters the killer's body along with the victim's blood. This is thought to happen to everyone who witnessed the killing, regardless of whether they actually took part in shooting the enemy. (This applies only to killing enemy outsiders; unlike the Yanomami, Wari' do not consider killing by sorcery or the murder of fellow tribesmembers to have this blood-transforming effect.)

In contrast to most other Amazonian peoples, Wari' see the invisible enemy blood/spirit absorbed into the warrior's body as a very positive substance that promotes growth and health when properly transformed. Whereas men in other societies tried to get rid of the enemy blood as soon as

possible, Wari' tried to keep it in their bodies in order to absorb its vitalizing properties. To accomplish this, warriors in seclusion drank copious quantities of sweet maize chicha, a food symbolically identified with blood, breast milk, consanguinity, and nurturant domestic relations. By drinking chicha, the killer "fed" his victim's spirit, thereby taming it so that it would remain in the warrior's body as his companion for life and even after death. This process of feeding and taming civilized the enemy spirit so that it lost its foreignness and "became Wari':" in its killer's body, the enemy spirit learned to speak the Wari' language, eat Wari' foods, and decorate its body in the Wari' manner. In a classic example of the principle of familiarizing predation, this "Wari'-ized" spirit was said to become the "child" of the killer in whose body it resided.

The tangible evidence of this transformation of the enemy blood/spirit was that the Wari' warrior grew fat and his belly swelled. Wari' say that the infusion of vitalizing enemy blood stimulated the production of fat in the warrior's body, which enhanced his health, strength, and erotic attractiveness. Afterwards, when the warrior had sex, the enemy fat was said to pass into the body of his female partner, who absorbed some of its vitality. Thus, enemy-killings revitalized not only the bodies of warriors, but a larger social body that included women as well. Some older people say that today, when men no longer kill enemies, they grow smaller and weaker than the tall, strong warriors of the past.

Wari' considered the stimulating effect of enemy blood on male bodies to be similar to the effect of semen on pubescent girls. The first time that a girl has sexual intercourse, the infusion of semen is said to strengthen her blood and cause a growth spurt, so that she grows fatter, taller, stronger, and able to do women's work. This enhances her reproductivity as well as her productivity, for Wari' believe that semen forms menstrual blood, which is essential for making babies. When boys participated in their first war expedition, they experienced a similar, growth-promoting fusion of blood and semen, for the enemy blood was said to enter through the genitals, where it alternated in layers with semen. Like semen's effect on girls' blood, enemy blood made boys grow taller, fatter, stronger, and capable of doing the work of men. For an older, seasoned warrior, each new act of enemy-killing brought a new infusion of enemy blood/spirit that enhanced his strength, vitality, courage, and resistance to disease.

Wari' elders commonly describe the appearance of warriors' fattening bellies as "like pregnancy," and they use the verb *munu* ("to swell with blood") to describe the fattening of both pregnant women and warriors. Like pregnancy, the Wari' warrior's physiological transformation produced a parent-child relationship: a Wari'-ized spirit-child who addressed its killer as "father."

Underlying the marked differences between Wari' and Yanomami beliefs about enemy blood is a shared conception of the warrior's ritual transformation as a mechanism to transcend the forces of bodily deterioration, enhance

male vitality and gain long life protected against illness and debility. Seen in this light, the pervasive analogies to female reproduction, fertility, and procreation in the warriors' rituals make metaphysical sense. The imagery and practices surrounding women's roles as producers of children and men's roles as producers of life-enhancing vitality draw on a common symbolic vocabulary comprised of ideas about human agency in acquiring biological and spiritual energies from others. Such energies are embodied in blood and swelling bellies, and mediated through cultural practices that transform "raw" energies from the outside world into culturally controlled generativity.

Cannibalism and Incorporation

The native Brazilian warrior's transformation plays another role in some native Amazonian cosmologies, where it is equated with the metaphysical process that transforms a dead person's spirit into a perfected immortal being—a process also equated with cannibalism. Among the Araweté, for example, the enemy-killer's ritual transformation exempts his soul from being cannibalized by the gods. When a warrior who has undergone the belly-swelling transformation dies, his corpse does not decay and his soul immediately becomes an immortal god. In contrast, the souls of non-warriors become immortal only after being eaten by the gods, who were once Araweté themselves.

The Wari' believe that when someone dies, his or her spirit goes to the underworld, where it temporarily becomes a predator that kills enemies or birds and goes through the ritual belly-swelling experienced by warriors. The bloating of the rotting corpse is said to be tangible evidence that this is happening in the underworld. When the process is finished, the spirit becomes a beautiful, perfected, immortal being. In a myth called "Hujin" that describes the origin of this arrangement, a man named Hujin arrives in the underworld and is killed and eaten by a giant predator who is master of the underworld. In some versions of the myth, it is the Wari' ancestors who live in the underworld who eat Hujin (Conklin 2001a: 214). This act of cannibalism effects the same transformation accomplished through the warrior's belly-swelling experience. Thus, both the Araweté and the Wari' equated the warrior's transformation with the experience of being consumed and regenerated by immortal ancestors, and both groups believed it confers immortality on the one who is consumed. The Yanomami also equated the killer's transformation with a kind of cannibalism, in which the killer in seclusion "ate" the slain enemy's blood and vital image in his intestines (Albert 1985: 351).

In the past, Araweté and Wari' warfare included the practice of cannibalizing enemy body parts, and their ideas about incorporating enemy blood should be considered in relation to that other mode of incorporation. The Araweté believed that enemy flesh conferred health benefits, so that "an

eater of enemies lives a long time, is immune to disease, and is physically strong" (Viveiros de Castro 1992: 256). The Wari', however, considered only the blood/spirit, *not* the flesh, to have such effects. Eating enemy flesh conferred no special benefit, and it was done only by individuals who did not take part in the kill (Conklin 2001a:153-154; Vilaça 1992: 47-130). The fact that Wari' warriors did not eat their victims' flesh is consistent with a basic principle of Wari' cannibalism, that one does not consume the flesh of one's own consanguines. Just as a father does not eat his own offspring, the Wari' warrior who had absorbed his victim's blood did not eat the flesh of the enemy whose blood he had absorbed.

The incorporation and transformation of enemy blood was one native Amazonian mode for appropriating outsiders' vital energies and transforming these into new forms of fertility. Other modes include the Mundurucu war expeditions that acquired enemy children for adoption (Murphy 1958, 1960), and Jivaroan headhunting, in which the trophy head was "adopted" into the group (Descola 1993) and ultimately became a fetus (Taylor 2000). In ways specific to each culture, elements captured from enemies -captive children, trophy heads, blood, flesh, or souls- were taken into individual or social bodies and transformed into new forms that enhanced individual agency or collective (re-) productivity. Accomplishing this through the killing of enemy outsiders and the ritual transformation of enemy elements, such practices exemplify what Maurice Bloch (1992) calls the "conquest of external vitality"-the ritual appropriation of elements from beings or forces outside one's own group to create in oneself a state that transcends (at least temporarily) the constraints of ordinary biological degeneration. The native Amazonian warrior emerging from seclusion after killing an enemy represented the highest and healthiest state to which a man could aspire. Ideologies that cast enemy-killing as a self-transformative experience gave individual men powerful motives to risk their lives in war.

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All wars contain heavy doses of the symbolic, but the social uses of war's symbolism vary widely. One striking difference between native Amazonian warfare and the "modern" warfare waged by nation-states in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is the difference in the cultural weight given to the act of killing.

Native Amazonian societies tend to extract maximal symbolic value from the killing of a single enemy. The act of killing is elaborately ritualized and treated as one of the most significant and powerfully transformative experiences in a man's life. In contrast, the armies of contemporary industrial societies kill masses of people, but derive minimal symbolic value from the slaughter. Victory over the enemy is celebrated in the abstract, in images of

battle and rhetorics of heroism and nationalism that deflect attention from the reality of killing. Ideologies of modern warfare deny that experiences of killing change the killer in any deep or lasting way, and the welcome-home rituals that greet returning warriors take little account of their relations to the specific enemies whose lives have been taken.

In contrast, throughout native South America, killing another human being has been widely recognized to have profound and tangible effects on the killer and his community. In the past, many native peoples saw warfare as essential for the well-being of their society, not just because it furthered the group's material or political interests, but because it was an essential channel for human agency in a cosmos in which people grow and thrive by appropriating vital energies from the world outside.

Abstract

In the past, many native Amazonian societies considered the act of killing an enemy a prerequisite to achieve manhood and develop men's capacities for physical, spiritual, or moral agency. Warfare also was essential to the reproduction of society as a whole, for the killing of enemies was understood as a prime channel to access and appropriate bio-spiritual powers from outside society. This article explores how ideas about the (re-)productive agency exercised by men in killing enemies resonate with and parallel ideas about women's agency in human reproduction. One complex of war rituals practiced in the twentieth century by some native peoples in Brazil were based in the belief that the killer of an enemy outsider absorbs the victim's blood and/or spirit into his own body. To transform these alien elements, the killer entered ritual seclusion, lying in a hammock, abstaining from sex, and observing bodily disciplines to neutralize, expel, or transform the enemy blood or spirit. Cultural ideas about this male ritual process often parallel ideas about female physiology and human reproduction, with symbolic equivalences between menarche or first childbirth and a young man's first act of enemy-killing. Warriors' ritual transformations, in turn, are models for other fundamental biosocial transformations, particularly the human spirit's passage from mortal life to immortality after death. Gendered imagery and notions of fertility and human reproduction and growth are interwoven with native Amazonian notions of death and warfare.

Resumen

En el pasado, muchas sociedades amazónicas nativas consideraban el acto de matar a un enemigo como un prerequisite para alcanzar la masculinidad y para desarrollar las capacidades masculinas para las acciones físicas, espirituales o morales. La guerra también era esencial para reproducir

la sociedad como un todo, ya que la matanza de enemigos se entendía como la vía primaria para acceder a los poderes bio-espirituales de la sociedad externa y apropiarse de ellos. Este artículo explora cómo ideas en torno a la acción (re)productiva llevada a cabo por los hombres al matar a enemigos, corren paralelas a ideas referentes a la acción femenina en la reproducción humana. Un complejo de rituales guerreros que practicaban varios grupos aborígenes en Brasil en el siglo XX, se sustentaban en la idea de que el matador del enemigo absorbía en su propio cuerpo la sangre y/o el espíritu del fallecido. Para transformar estos elementos ajenos, el matador entraba en una reclusión ritual, acostándose en un chinchorro, absteniéndose de relaciones sexuales y observando una disciplina corporal con el fin de neutralizar, expulsar o transformar la sangre o el espíritu del enemigo. Ideas culturales en torno a este proceso ritual masculino corren a menudo paralelo con ideas en torno a la fisiología femenina y la reproducción humana, estableciéndose equivalencias simbólicas entre la menstruación y el primer alumbramiento, y la primera vez que un varón joven mata a un enemigo. Las transformaciones rituales de los guerreros constituyen, a su vez, modelos para otras transformaciones biosociales fundamentales, en particular el paso por el espíritu humano de esta vida mortal a la inmortalidad después de la muerte. Imágenes masculinas y femeninas, y nociones de fertilidad, reproducción y crecimiento humano son estrechamente entrelazados con las nociones nativas amazónicas de muerte y guerra.

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