

## FOREWORD

The Ndjuka are one of the largest of six new tribes of Afro-american Maroons which were formed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when their ancestors fled an especially ruthless type of slavery on the plantations of Surinam. Carving out clandestine villages and horticultural plots in the sanctuary of the rain forest, the groups of run-aways developed a subsistence economy which combined hunting, fishing, and slash-and-burn agriculture. They remained dependent, however, for many basic goods, on the plantations from which they had escaped: they returned for raids or surreptitious trade, carrying off guns, tools, pots, cloth, and new recruits, especially women. In the 1760's, the Dutch colony, in an effort to end hostilities with them and prevent further escapees from joining their ranks, signed treaties with what then became the Ndjuka and Saramaka tribes, legalizing their existence.

Beginning in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Ndjuka men, in quest of prized plantation goods, embarked on a series of economic careers which re-engaged their new society in ever deepening relations with the Bakaa economy which their ancestors had fought. (Bakaa originally referred to the white colonists; it is now applied to all coastal ethnic groups.) Ndjuka themselves distinguish three main economic eras: an early period of "wandering" (koi) when trade in timber led Ndjuka men outside the tribal territory and into contact with Paramaribo for the purchase of goods; a second period (bagagitin), when the discovery of gold and balata in the interior offered them lucrative jobs as canoe-builders and boatmen for thousands of Bakaa who came pouring into their territory from all over the world; and the present, since the 1950's when labor migration dominates the economic and social scene. Ndjuka now leave tribal territory in large numbers with their families to settle on the coast of Surinam or French Guyana among the Bakaa, who, many of them still fear, could re-enslave them.

Concurrent with these financial ventures, two beliefs concerning the Bakaa's wealth have evolved, from two different quadrants of the Ndjuka cosmological system.<sup>(1)</sup> One of these, the bakuu, incarnates dangers inherent in the pursuit of Bakaa wealth and the forms (such as emigration) this takes; the other, papa obia, offers a positive, traditional magic designed to seduce Bakaa into lavishing riches on emigrant men. The bakuu is defined as something new, foreign, and mostly unknown. The onus to fill in its imagery falls upon emigrant men whose work-site contacts bring them in touch with the latest coastal data on this "Bakaa" thing. Possessed Ndjuka women then select, out of this in-coming information, what is relevant for Ndjuka and elaborate by their possessions a local mythology. The bakuu expression unfolds as interpretations of illness and death, possession transe and mediumship, religious rites and witch accusations, dramatizing the ever-increasing strains that Ndjuka inflict on their culture and social group in the name of wealth.

The papa obia does not, like the bakuu, become a cult. It is the product of a cult, an unobtrusive device, supportive of daily wage-earning. Its stable use and symbolism, compared to the rich bakuu symbolism with its up-dating commentary on changing Ndjuka society, would seem to indicate that anxieties do not develop so much in conjunction with the desire to find job and money, as they do over what happens to Ndjuka society as a result of emigration, jobs, and money.<sup>(2)</sup>

## 1. The Structure of Traditional Ndjuka Society

The political framework of Ndjuka ethnicity which I have glossed as “tribe” is called by the Ndjuka “The Twelve of the River”.<sup>(3)</sup> “Twelve” is a symbolic number standing for the fourteen Ndjuka clans. The “River” is the “Ndjuka River”, known to Bakaa as the Tapanahony. It is here, somewhere around 1790, that the first of the post-treaty village (Kijoo Kondée) was founded<sup>(4)</sup>. The Tapanahony is considered the tribal heartland: Ndjuka a ini – “inside Ndjuka”. Other Ndjuka villages were subsequently founded in the following century along the Cottica and Commewijne rivers, but they do not have the same ritual weight and fall outside the ancestral domain.

The treaties ushered into being a new people who called themselves the Ndjuka, and who came to be known to the colonial government as the Aukaners (from the plantation Auca where the treaty was signed). Until then the runaways had been composed of bands that had clustered together into two unities under two chiefs – Pamo and Alabi. While both of these were signatories, Pamo succeeded a few years later in having himself recognized as paramount chief of the whole tribe.<sup>(5)</sup> The earlier division was preserved, however, and recreated after the move to the Tapanahony river, where it was marked out anew as Upper and Lower (Opo and Bilo) villages. The Opo still retains supremacy, the Bilo being slightly provincial and politically peripheral. Although its largest village, Tabiki (where I worked) possesses an old oracle of tribal importance (Gedeonsu), dominant religious institutions and prophetic cults as well as political instances usually originate in the Opo. This fact has had an influence on the development, in the Bilo region, of the negative expression of Bakaa wealth, the bakuu cult, which is non-existent in the Opo. This paper concerns beliefs and practices that belong to that somewhat more marginal region, the Bilo Ndjuka.

Ultimate tribal authority is invested in the figure of Gaanman, a hereditary position passed on within the “thirteenth”<sup>(6)</sup> matri-clan of the Opo Ndjuka. Gaanman’s village of Diitabiki is a sort of Ndjuka capital toward which flow information and ritual payments from the rest of the tribe, and visits and goods from the world outside. Problems between clans and delicate problems within clans are referred to Gaanman and his council. Diitabiki acts as court of appeal for every sort of case, and can sentence offenders brought by their matri-groups to a period of exile there. The death of any of Gaanman’s people (i.e. all adult deaths) must be reported to him. Finally, Gaanman represents the Ndjuka Twelve in relation with the national government of Surinam.

The fourteen matri-clans are called lô. Lô means “to run”: the group designated by that word is supposed to be one whose ancestors escaped together, from one plantation. In many cases, however, the lô probably sheltered refugees from several plantations, too few in number to survive by themselves. A lô is usually a large social unit, and may have several clan villages. Some, however, have only one village; some are so small that they share the village of another clan.<sup>(7)</sup> At the head of each lô is the kabitên fu a lô, whose position of authority echoes that of Gaanman, but on a lower level. He “has” all the folk of his village, and problems that concern each of them, even though first dealt with by the matrilineage, must be presented to him. His permission must be

sought for any collective religious or personal endeavor.

The quintessential social unit in Ndjuka is the matrilineage, or mbêè (belly). A lô is usually composed of several mbêè. A mbêè may be so small as to count only forty adults; or so large as to represent over two hundred! Such larger lineages are sub-divided into segments – the wan mama pikin (one mother's children). In the mbêè are invested collective land rights and village residential quarters. Positions of authority such as kabitên or basia (chief and subordinate) are passed on within its genealogies. Religious institutions, oracles, spirit mediumship and magical forces are officially handed down, or “naturally” devolve by being “in the blood” of the matrilineage. A variety of negative supernatural problems including those of witchcraft recur in generation after generation of the matrilineal relatives. Each matrilineage has its own small flags and shrine to its major avenging spirit – the gaan kunu – whose dangerous power underwrites lineage authority, uniting its members for eternity by their collective vulnerability to its wrath and responsibility for its propitiation.

Membership in the matri-group entails an on-going interaction between person and lineage: each matrilineal relative potentially shares in the material and spiritual reservoir of his mbêè, this being constantly up-dated by activity and misdemeanors of each of its members. At birth, each person has incarnated within him a nênseki, one of the souls (the akaa) of a former mbêè member. This incarnate ancestor shapes his body, influences his health and imposes food taboos. At his death, while his own akaa will eventually transform itself into the nênseki of a new-born mbêè member, his other soul, the yôoka, will be revitalized by the living blood of sacrificial animals so that it becomes a stern and protecting ancestor, wielding power of life and death among its matrilineal descendants. Illnesses and deaths, then, often trace their causes to past actions of mbêè members, and the diagnoses of these offer an opportunity to redress past social misconduct. Whatever religious authority is called in to investigate the causes of sickness, final confirmation of these must come from the mbêè, which has the last word about its members.

During one's whole adult life one remains a child of the mbêè, rising in stature and authority to become, toward the end of life, its unofficial head, as eldest member<sup>(8)</sup>. One is dependent on its members to resolve one's problems, plead one's case in councils, arrange one's marriage with the affinal mbêè, and if necessary, settle one's debts. At one's death, all of one's belongings become mbêè property and are shared out among its remaining members. Here is the way an elder expressed the importance of the mbêè in each individual life:

“You do not own yourself. You cannot live as you please. Because Ndjuka life is hard. Something happens and they beat you up. But your mbêè will come to your aid. If you have no mbêè, they'll make life miserable for you. If you once had a mbêè that stood by you so that all would go well, but you turned your back on it, then you'll have to go it alone. If you fall ill and you blame your mbêè, then you can live until you die, you can turn this way and that: just see if anyone will help you!”

The mbêè, then, is the guarantor for each of its members, in his relations with the outside world. Other Ndjuka will not take in a member rejected by his own mbêè. Ostracism becomes a

sort of capital punishment, and its unspoken threat backs up lineage pressure on individuals to conform to unpopular lineage decisions. Social control, then, is a function of individual dependency on the matri-group. It is weakened when the outside world – that beyond the frontiers of Ndjuka – begins to offer alternative living arrangements.

If I have insisted here on the importance of the mbêè as basic to Ndjuka society and personal identity, it is because this corporate group is presently undermined by the Ndjuka emigrant quest for riches. Themes of genealogical alienation and collective and individual vulnerability appear in the money symbolism we discuss below.

Obviously Ndjuka society does not lock people up in their matri-groups. Father's matrilineage may play an important role for children growing up in their father's village, and the paternal kin group is supposed to help someone in the event of contentions with his matri-group. Affinal lineages may become important social and political terrains. Polygamy, a wide array of parental and affinal relations, great availability of land, individualized production, all encourage a great mobility on the part of individual Ndjuka who not only move about, but live about – building houses in more than one village and bush camp. This fluidity is further accentuated by a system of role substitution in which practically anyone can double for an absent priest of lantiman (official head), or relevant parent, in order to expedite a situation that demands immediate attention.

Social process in Ndjuka cuts determinedly across matrilineal lines, demanding that problems be submitted to lanti: that is, the People as collective public Authority, as Witness, Judge and Peacemaker.<sup>(9)</sup> In the Ndjuka notion of lanti the highest authority is, in a sense, that person farthest removed from involvement – the visiting guest (especially when he is a lantiman, elder, or otherwise prestigious personality). Important men arriving from other villages are always invited to sit on councils and pronounce on a case. The burial of the dead, the operation of religious oracles, the hearing of spirits, and even the initiatory rites for a lineage kunu become suspect if dealt with only by members of one group. Official recognition (which guarantees against accusations of evil-doing or secret manipulation) requires the participation of representatives from other lineages or other clans.

Life in Ndjuka, then both firmly grounds each person in responsibility to and dependency on his matrilineage, and, at the same time, allows him considerable freedom of movement. Traditionally, this individual determinism was more apparent than real. It may have been that the leeway granted individuals in Ndjuka was partly a function of traditional assumptions about the great dangers of the world outside from which structured Ndjuka society alone offered sanctuary. In the new ideology of ala kon fii (unilateral trust), when the Bakaa no longer threatens, but tempts with riches, and offers refuge from in-Ndjuka constraints, this personal determinism may eventually become loosed from its lineage moorings and lead to unbridled individualism.

## 2. Historical Phases in the Ndjuka Quest for Wealth

The ambivalence and contradictions of Ndjuka attitudes toward riches are projected onto a supra-natural level where they can be worked out in symbolic activity. Before we describe these present-day attitudes, we will look briefly at the historical realities in which they are rooted: the everchanging relation of the Ndjuka to wealth and to the Bakaa (first white, later Creoles and presently multi-racial groups) who possess it.

Ndjuka Maroon society has its roots in the slave culture which evolved on the plantations of Surinam from the founding of the first important slave-using colony there in 1651 by Lord Willoughby until the last Ndjuka escapees broke away from it at the end of the 1750's. Alienated from their native African ethnic groups, those captives who survived the dehumanizing experience of the middle passage became tools in the production of a wealth they could not enjoy. This image of an alienated and enslaved being producing wealth for Bakaa is, as we will see, at the heart of bakuu imagery as the Bilo Ndjuka describe it, and might be said to constitute the original (negative) economic relationship between Ndjuka and Bakaa.

Ndjuka still recount with feeling the never-ending misery of slavery, the atrocities committed against the slaves by the Bakaa owner, and the desperate flights, often with militia at their heels. While history tells us of tortures and mutilations of slaves<sup>(10)</sup>, the stories most often told by Ndjuka concern the murder of their children by masters and overseers.

Ndjuka society was established in escape from and opposition to this situation by the lowe (flight) of their ancestors. The bush offered a natural geographic sanctuary against recapture, but the refugees were often pursued by militia who would burn their villages, kill them on the spot, or take captives whom they would try to force into betraying other hide-outs. To this day, mistrust and fear of betrayal typify relations among Ndjuka themselves, particularly where heightened affectivity would tend to reinforce trust. "Children kill parents", "Women trick you", "Friend kills friend", warn Ndjuka clichés. But behind this original fear of each other was the fear of the Bakaa. Mistrust of both have long out-lived the treaties. When Benoit met Maroons in the 1830's, they still hid their women out of fear that they might run away, or that the former master might lay claim to their descendants.<sup>(11)</sup> This 19th century traveller describes a society constantly on the alert, with spies in the city ready to pass on word of any new event. Instantly, villages could become armed camps organized for defense. All of this, commented Benoit, was unnecessary – so afraid were the colonists of antagonizing this former enemy.

Not only did the lowetin (time of escapes) ancestors flee the Bakaa, but the post-treaty period saw a continuous withdrawal of Ndjuka away from the plantation areas. From the Tempati river to Ndjuka creek off the Maroni river, the Ndjuka moved once more at the end of the 18th century to the Tapanahony river where they posted a late-coming group, the mutineer Lebimosu (Red Caps) – a troupe of Negro soldiers fighting the Boni wars who joined their ranks – as sentinels at the dangerous Poligudu rapids, entrance to the new Ndjuka territory.

Ndjuka society was thus founded in desperate flight from and militant opposition to the wealth-producing plantations. Borrowing heavily on Amerindian ecological techniques, the new outlaw society managed a subsistence economy through swidden horticulture. But as accounts of other Maroon groups demonstrate<sup>(12)</sup>, and as Price has commented<sup>(13)</sup>, they remained dependent on the very plantations they fled from for a whole quadrant of goods – tools, guns and shot, pots, needles, cloth – and even where materially they might have developed replacements, they valued Bakaa goods highly enough to take great risks in acquiring them. Their first villages were settled on the fringes of the plantation system, and they returned to capture bounty, either by having it secreted to them via the plantation slaves who stole it from their masters<sup>(14)</sup>, or by outright plunder. Some kunu (avenging spirits) in Ndjuka still bear witness to lowetin (time of escapes) thefts and murder of Bakaa.

Conversations among Ndjuka concerning present pursuit of coastal wealth sometimes bring to the fore remarkable fantasies of violence in which goods are physically ripped from Bakaa hands. This image leaps out in what would seem an inappropriate context of discussions of salaried labor so calmly sought after and highly prized by Ndjuka. While human greed may universally involve a certain factor of fantasied attacks on the holder-distributor of wealth, it seems probable that here the fantasy has been trained in historic reality, and informed a way of thinking about relations between those who have wealth and those who strive for it. Historically, Ndjuka raids naturally called forth retaliation, so that the other side of the coin was the risk of pursuit, recapture and death by the Bakaa's militia.

The peace treaty of 1760 brought an end to this exchange of hostilities and established new means of obtaining wealth – even though from the same sources. In Wolber's account, mention is made of peace overtures coming first from the Ndjuka – a literate Maroon named Boston leaving written messages of peace on attacked plantations in 1759.<sup>(15)</sup> The version an elder of Tabiki recounted to me credited the Bakaa with initiating negotiations. The form their peace "message" is supposed to have taken is that of presents in assorted symbolic colors: red, white and blue, deposited in the bush. The Ndjuka signaled their acceptance of peace by taking away those articles that were white. In fact, both versions are true: letters opened the way to talks, but the real negotiations began with two representatives of the colonial government bearing gifts and a draft of the treaty.<sup>(16)</sup> A new list of gifts was to be sent later, and in April 1759, ". . . the same two envoys duly set out again for Ndjuka territory accompanied by nine or ten soldiers and sixty carriers."<sup>(17)</sup> In September 1760, a government delegation left Paramaribo with two hundred and six soldiers, two surgeons and slaves carrying rations and more gifts. The tribute of gifts to the Ndjuka was to be renewed every four years along with the treaty. Benoit offers a lively description of one such exchange: the Gaanman and fourteen kabitêns examining critically the display of goods and demonstrating their dissatisfaction by almost walking off, only to be recalled by the promise of the government's doing better next time.<sup>(18)</sup>

After 1857, as growing trust of Maroons and the threat of emancipation made the former outlaws seem good prospects as laborers in the colony<sup>(19)</sup>, the delivery of gifts was abandoned

in hopes of encouraging Maroons to seek labor opportunities within the colony. However gift giving to Maroons was to be prolonged in another form: by salaries to paramount chiefs and kabitêns and gifts made to Maroons visiting town.<sup>(20)</sup>

After the 1950's, when the Ndjuka became a voting part of the new electorate, the practice of salaried positions to Ndjuka officials was extended to include hoofkabitêns, basias, and uman basias (women subordinates) in addition to paramount chiefs and kabitêns, and gift-giving now took the form of multiplying these salaried positions in politically sensitive areas. Rather than rewarding passivity the government was now said by Ndjuka to be paying them for their help in winning the election.

Gift-giving by Bakaa to Ndjuka marked the dawn of a new historical era: the end of the war and the beginning of payment for passivity. This peace offering to Maroons seems to have been a constant in their relations with Bakaa ever since, and to have given rise to expectations that carry over into all modern financial transactions with the Bakaa.

Before pursuing this account of Ndjuka economic relations with the coast, we should pause for a moment to consider the significance of the Ndjuka reception of gifts from Bakaa. While anthropological literature attests to the frequency of reciprocal hostilities ending in reciprocal presents, the case of Ndjuka and Bakaa in 1760 differed in two important respects:

(1) Warring groups that decide to put down their arms and enter into peaceful exchanges are, usually, more or less economic equals and the tokens exchanged are of like value; or one group subjugates another and receives tribute from it in exchange for peace.

But Ndjuka and Bakaa, while both equally desiring peace and sealing it with a Ndjuka vow, were not economic equals, and the great discrepancy between the boundless wealth of the Bakaa and the extreme poverty of the Ndjuka runaways (measured in coastal goods – for to this day that is the chief Ndjuka yardstick for assessing wealth), must have prompted a demand potentially greater than the response could be – attested to by the incidents of frustration in gift reception. To this day, Ndjuka expectations in gift reception from Bakaa retain a curiously insatiable quality.<sup>(21)</sup>

(2) While groups often have long histories of alternating warfare and peace transactions, in the history of Bakaa and their former slaves, there was no past incident which could serve as a model for such a peace treaty<sup>(22)</sup>, and provide the reassurance of repetition. In Ndjuka gift reception, the new relationship of peace does not seem to have supplanted the former one of hostilities so much as it overlaid it; while a general mistrust of human kind and the Bakaa in particular kept it alive in the background, ready instantly to surface. Three examples may serve to illustrate this uneasy truce sealed by gifts.

The myth of capture, which Ndjuka recount today describes the landing of Bakaa on African shores, bearing gifts, offering food and drink to free, trusting Africans whom they lulled into a drunken sleep and quickly embarked on slaving vessels for the New World.

Benoit describes how, in the 1830's, Gaanman indignantly refused the colonial government's invitation to come to town and receive their presents; his answer was that neither he nor

any of his men would ever be so foolish as to be led into such a trap!

As recently as the summer 1984, when the new trust of Bakaa has led most Ndjuka to settle for long periods on the coast, the same panic was instantly awakened when it was rumoured that the new military government of Bouterse had devised a plan to kill all Ndjuka lantiman by requiring them to submit to vaccinations before receiving their next salaries. The vaccinations would be poison and they would be dead within three days. A month later everyone laughed at their own gullibility. But at the time, not one of them had voiced a doubt that the murderous plot was real.

As Levi-Strauss once remarked, "Ce qui donne à l'objet sa valeur, c'est la relation à autrui."<sup>(23)</sup> As a culturally developed expectation, gift reception from Bakaa today may owe some of its excitement to its very ambivalence, as it vehicles simultaneously two opposite relationships: the original one of violent plunder calling forth a violent answer, and the laying down of arms, with the former Bakaa enemy sharing some of his immense wealth in exchange for peace and cooperation. These two relationships are precisely those that are refelcted in the money magic of the bakuu kunu and the papa obia, respectively.

The treaties signed with the Ndjuka in 1760 dealt above all with two colonial preoccupations: that of controlling Maroon movements to and from the plantations and city where they indulged in illicit trade with slaves, and that of using them to guard the bush against new runaways. Ndjuka were offered an occasional source of income in capturing and returning escaped slaves, and a Bakaa postholder was stationed among them to receive and pay them for this service.<sup>(24)</sup>

An important trade developed, with the Ndjuka supplying forest products in exchange for a variety of items including drum, gun powder, cloth, etc., and even such staples as bananas when crop failure threatened. The postholder Dhondt noted in 1846 that 1,949 Ndjuka (men) received passes in that year to go to Paramaribo and other ports of call along the river for purposes of trade estimated at thousands of florins!<sup>(25)</sup> Benoit mentions seeing in Bush Negro huts of the 1830's such luxury goods as a fine Silesian table cloth, a crystal vase, a gilded chair upholstered in crimson cloth, and copies of engravings by Vernet and Teniers.<sup>(26)</sup>

Some of this new wealth may have come from the opportunistic exploitation by the Ndjuka of other Maroon groups. After the combined Ndjuka and colonial forces finally defeated Boni's rebel band, a treaty, signed in 1791, placed these newly defeated Maroons under Ndjuka tutelage until 1860.<sup>(27)</sup> Less official was the subordination of another small group, the Paramaka, who, having escaped after the 1760 treaties had sealed off the bush, managed nevertheless to maintain a clandestine existence until the Ndjuka unexpectedly discovered them in 1830.<sup>(28)</sup> Since neither of these two small groups had direct access to the coast and its valuables, Ndjuka imposed on them the role of go-between, offering them needed coastal goods in exchange for considerable labor. A third group, the Red Caps stationed at Poligudu rapids served to police these subjugations by keeping watch over the junction of the Lawa, Tapanahony and Maroni rivers, thus blocking access to the coast. Finally, even Amerindian groups found their trading opportunities curtailed by the insinuation of Ndjuka into key geographic positions as gate-keepers of the rivers.<sup>(29)</sup>



The most important item of trade the Ndjuka had to propose to the colonists was timber. From 1825<sup>(30)</sup>, but increasingly after 1850,<sup>(31)</sup> Ndjuka left the Tapanahony to work in temporary bush camps along the Commewijne, Cottica, and Courmotibo rivers. Some of these later developed into new villages. As Thoden van Velzen has described this period,

“. . . (often accompanied by their wives and children) a number of matrilineal relatives made the move together because they regularly needed help for hauling tree trunks to the river banks. This was an ideal underpinning for the ideology of the corporate matrilineal group with its stress on mutual sharing and responsibility; it meant a boost for the distributive mechanisms for the leveling of income differences which had been part of the Bush Negro culture for more than two hundred years.<sup>(32)</sup>

In the 1880's the discovery of gold and balata triggered off an invasion of fortune hunters from all over the world, among them large numbers of Surinam and Caribbean Creoles. Maroon groups, knowledgeable in river navigation and expert constructors of dug-out canoes, suddenly became the highly paid specialists of river transportation. Thoden van Velzen, who has made an in-depth analysis of the effects of the gold rush on Ndjuka economics and religion, quotes prices of 32 florins per barrel (the unit of freight) paid in some years to Bush Negro navigators<sup>(33)</sup>.

The effect of the gold rush on Ndjuka society, says Thoden van Velzen, was to produce new classes of village poor (mostly old people and women) and neo-rich entrepreneurs who attempted to hold on to as much of their fortune as they could in defiance of lineage ideals.<sup>(34)</sup> But these boatmen, at the peak of their economic success, found themselves plagued by feelings of guilt for those lineage relatives they abandoned to village poverty, and by feelings of fear of their retaliation. The conviction that they would be bewitched spread among the wealthy navigators until it gave rise to a new anti-witchcraft cult, that of Gaan Gadu, financed by the boatmen, and offering them the reassurance that this deity would soon bring death to the witches.<sup>(35)</sup> The fortunes the boatmen amassed were not formed into economic investments but were spent in their lifetimes or fell to their lineage or to the priests of the Gaan Gadu oracle after their deaths. The glorious period of nouveau-riche Ndjuka ended around 1920 when gold production ended. Little by little, the boatmen reconverted to lumbering, with a resultant revival of matrilineal power. It was at this point, as we will see later, that the classificatory daughters and grand-daughters of the gold rushes' accused witches launched their first supernatural protest in the form of bakuu accusations against the taking of Bakaa wealth.

Then came the depression of 1939 and the war. Penury (of coastal goods) was severely felt by the generation of Ndjuka which had been nurtured in tales of a golden age and who came of age in a time of poverty. Adulthood, with its taking of wives and begetting of children, had to be deferred; and the Ndjuka elders reinforced their authority over the young by offering the only resource for left-over, retread articles like hammocks and loincloths.

In the 1950's, new opportunities began to open up. Surinam and French Guyana became the scene of new development projects and industries which offered employment to manual laborers. Ndjuka increasingly migrated toward the new sources of salaries. The Bush Negroes were now included in the Surinam electorate and the rivers saw renewed navigation into Ndjuka

territory, not only of politicians, but also scientific missions, medical missions, and tourists.

The emigration to the coast for jobs began to affect the Bilo Ndjuka in large numbers only in the 1960's. By 1977, seventy-five percent of Tabikan men were on the coast for most of the year – and it was there that they would spend most of their active lives. Sixty percent of the women were with them at any one time. While many drifted along the coast line in search of work, they often succeeded in finding steady employment and settled into more permanent habitations, some even purchasing house and land. Many continued to return to their villages once a year, others let several years go by, but kept contact with family in the bush via traveling relatives.

### 3. The Effects of Emigration on Social and Cultural Life

While the goal of this migration is rarely that of adventure, rather singly of a quest for wealth, it has had a tremendous impact on Ndjuka culture in the following ways:

(1) Offers of salaried jobs are addressed to the (male) individual, thus creating situations of potential competition and economic inequality between traditionally cooperative kinsmen.<sup>(36)</sup> Dispersed coastal living arrangements (see below) reduce redistribution to a minimum. Elders and lantiman, obliged to remain behind in the bush, and women, are turned into low-income groups. This unequal access to wealth provides emigrants with an economic base for politiking, helping them in their attempts to oppose, or even depose traditional and legal authority. Here old and new ambitions are further nourished by exposure to new ideologies, coastal sources of power, and new knowledge. Finally, job offerings to any male adult not only erase traditional age gradation, but often stand it on its head. They further free this generation's youth to enjoy premature financial independence at a time of life when no traditional measures exist for siphoning off some of this cash, or preventing experiments such as drugtaking.

(2) Living conditions on the coast disperse the lineage. While such dispersal is greatest in Paramaribo, even in St. Laurent, where space would allow lineage segments to form again, their members seem to avoid such residence patterns, and prefer to settle down in partnership with one or another of their close relatives, forming two cooperative households. Traditional exchange of services and goods are probably very limited under these conditions, allowing for a better accumulation of wealth by individual wage-earners.

The lineage then no longer regularly acts as an authority, problems are worked out by consulting a few on-hand relatives, or they are postponed until a return to the village. Marriages are settled by simply informing the girl's parents. Individual illness is no longer open to lineage concertation, but becomes a private affair between the individual and an available obiaman — or even, sometimes, a coastal bonuman<sup>(37)</sup>. Few ceremonies are still practiced here: the puu a doo (bringing out of the house) of the baby is considered unnecessary since the child was born in a hospital. Funeral ceremonies still include washing of the body, making the coffin, and playing for the dead, but the all-important ritual role of oloman (grave-digger) is taken over by the Bakaa.

Life here has a distinctly materialistic quality, in sharp contrast to Ndjuka life in the bush, with its constant references to, and working of the sacred. Here there are no ancestor shrines, no mortuary houses, no tabernacles of the deities, no menstrual huts to insure against the breaking of taboos, no council houses. While spirits do possess people and are domesticated in this environment, they cannot function in their usual role as mediums of communication in the absence of the relevant social group, nor can they offer important religious services (pee).

Most religious and social questions are then deferred until the bi-annual, two-week holidays reunite some of the village populations "in Ndjuka". The cramming of so much sacred and secular activity into such a small space of time has led to its abbreviation — with a considerable loss of

cultural richness and ritual complexity.

(3) New ideas, ideologies and fears are the results. In defense of this audacious migration into the terrain of the former enemy, the Ndjuka emigrants espouse and display a new ideology: fii anga Bakaa (friends with the Bakaa). It is felt to be no longer necessary to be protected from recapture by the maintenance of a geographic sanctuary: one can risk living among the Bakaa, and having them live in Ndjuka. The proof that this ideology is but superficially internalized is that people, in quiet moments, express the apprehensions of the Bakaa some day re-enslaving the Ndjuka:

“They won’t even have to chase after us into the bush. They can simply cordon off the area and we will be trapped: we’ll have put ourselves there.”

It seems likely to me that part of the mistrust formerly expressed openly toward the Bakaa is shifted onto members of the dispersed lineage whose authority no longer controls the egocentric drives (see below) of individuals. What is feared now is that emigrant Ndjuka will take over the ambivalent powers of the Bakaa – namely the bakuu. In this situation, witch fears and accusations run high – a fact that is noticed by the Ndjuka themselves.

Ndjuka world view is further altered by a new assessment of oneself in relation to the Bakaa – in this case to its closest racial and cultural representatives, the acculturated Creoles. Ndjuka-Creole attitudes have long fluctuated on a scale of compared finances, status, political power and moral integrity, with Ndjuka pleased to observe their superiority over their coastal cousins. But since the 1940’s, the developing public education system has introduced new social mobility to coastal Creoles, and Ndjuka have witnessed the development of a class of Creole Bakaa – using the knowledge, earning the fortunes, rising to the positions of power and entering the professions that were formerly reserved for the Dutch. Emigrant Ndjuka find themselves not only assimilated to the lower class Creoles, but even these openly use the type of racism against Bush Negroes which was formerly used against Creoles by the Dutch.<sup>(38)</sup> Ndjuka, in their effort to obtain some part of the coastal wealth, swallow the humiliations, and may, in part, internalize this degraded image of themselves served to them by the Creoles.<sup>(39)</sup> They can oppose no active resistance, and, in the manner typical of a people who finds itself in an unfavorable position, but whose interests are ill-served by retort, they may turn the anger back against their own group, and denigrate their own culture.

The quest for money has become a dominant interest to which the rest of Ndjuka culture and society are subordinated and has spread across the social scene, replacing older traditions of sharing among villagers. Many Ndjuka project this concern into the future, and, in hopes of assuring their children a better position with regard to the coast, its wealth, and its populations, they send them away to schools –unintentionally guaranteeing their acculturation in the direction of the Creole society. Yet Ndjuka are aware that the early emigration of impressionable youth and the coastal schooling of children prepares for new generations of Ndjuka who “do not even know how to say the greeting any more” – i.e. who are no longer culturally Ndjuka.

The new preoccupation with riches, and admiration of the Bakaa who produce them, the internalized racist image of themselves with which they must live on the coast, the rapid erosion

of rites that are too lengthy to perform for a society that is not back home to perform them, of esoteric knowledge – particularly that of the lowetin (time of the escapes) – which takes too long to acquire<sup>(40)</sup>, of myriad magical recipes which disappear with the death of each elder, the lessening importance of the traditionally central Komanti cult whose precepts clash with emigrant living conditions, and whose ideology re-establishes former relations of dominance now unpopular among the young, all combine to impoverish Ndjuka culture; and this impoverishment then justifies lack of confidence and interest in it.

(4) From pacification to loss of social control: The situation is further aggravated by an increasing incapacity of Ndjuka society to defend itself against outside enemies or interior delinquency. Not only have Ndjuka long put aside any military readiness such as Benoit described in 1830, but the causes of war are hard for them to imagine. The coast, however, has undergone the opposite development— becoming more powerfully armed as it moved toward nationhood. Its present government is selected by the military clique that came to power in the coup of 1981.

With regard to social control, Ndjuka at one time backed up lineage authority by stern measures. The parent generation of today's grandfathers made liberal use of the whip to keep adults in line, and mobility was tightly controlled. Today Ndjuka feel inadequate to discipline even their own youth, and look to the strong arm of Bakaa justice to punish the worst misdemeanors.

In spite of all this, and although Ndjuka society may be preparing its own cultural extinction, it remains at this moment still deeply committed to things Ndjuka, with older ideologies strongly ingrained. "They live like Bakaa until something goes wrong, remarked an obiaman, "then they come running back here."<sup>(41)</sup> For most, the lineage – however rarely called upon on the coast – is the strongest social referent. Unless raised on the coast, most emigrants plan to return to their villages at sometime, and define coastal living as temporary. They build prestigious houses in their native villages, in preparation for their retirement, or to spend their vacations. The commitment, in this generation, is still not to foreign coastal ideologies, but to coastal wealth and goods. In the name of these, two modes of living are simultaneously experimented by the same people: one structured, traditional, official, coherent, in constant reference to the sacred, the other temporary, opportunistic, unofficial, in reference to the materialistic. While the first reunites the villagers again and again, with the proud, free ancestors around the ancestral flags, the second disperses the group's members in houses considered as slums, as people considered backward and assimilated to the lowest ranks of coastal society on a terrain which is that of the former enemy, the one on which one's ancestors lived as slaves.

#### 4. Wealth and People

“Suppose they offer you the choice between a living person, a fowl, a kilo of gold, money – (although a kilo of gold is really money) – which would you take? Well, if it’s me, I’d take the living person. Because the living person can make the gold, can make a village, can make the fowl. . . So the living person is more valuable than anything else in the world. He is king of the world.”<sup>(42)</sup>

In order to understand how the two money magics operate, we must start with the idea that wealth is produced by people. Its raw materials – such as land or gold – may be embedded in cosmological systems which bring the human producer into relation with deities and spirits. But these are only the raw materials: it is the human being who realizes their potential by their transformations into wealth.

Wealth (gudu) in its most general sense includes both commercial goods (and money) and the products of local manufacture, especially houses. But much of the indigenous production uses and even depends on coastal goods: machetes, axes, recently buzz-saws, and other tools are used in felling trees and gardening; plane saws, knives, nails, tacks, paint and tin are employed in construction of houses; rifles and shot, and hunting dogs bought from Wayana Indians for cash are necessary for the hunt; hooks, fishing cord and nets are used by women and children; iron baking discs, pots, pans, dishes, cutlery, buckets, basins are necessary for the preparation and service of food; needles, thread and cloth for the traditional decorative sewing. Each household further includes a large number of basic consumer items such as hammocks and mosquito nets, chamber pots, lanterns, trunks; salt, sugar and soap are used in important quantities.

Almost any adult possesses more than these, but the above list contains those goods felt to be essential to keep body and soul together. Without them one would be a pinaman – living in poverty. Wealth, then, in its more restricted sense, means commercial goods and/or the Bakaa money to buy them. In fact the Ndjuka term for wealth – gudu – is a creolization of the English word “goods”.

Production in Ndjuka is individual, not collective. It may incorporate voluntary help at moments and its products are, to a certain degree, shared with immediate neighbors – affines and lineage mates. A woman, after she has fed her husband and children, shared with close relatives, fulfilled affinal obligations, contributed a share to food offerings for mortuary ceremonies, religious rites, and various feasting “payments” in exchange for services rendered to herself and her husband, may then choose to sell some of her produce (kwaka<sup>(43)</sup> seasonal fruits, peanuts, vegetables, fish, etc.) to fill out her own small savings. Men, likewise, now sell a part of a successful hunt, and sometimes go on a hunt for game to sell.

Ndjuka show very little ambivalence about wealth or money: both are good, highly and universally desirable. Prayers accompanying most ritual herbal baths to mediate with the spirit world precise “children, wealth, and love,” or “health, Bakaa money and clothes”. Parents some-

times name their children “Moni, Gudu, or Tjowa” – all names for wealth. The nearest I heard to ambivalence expressed about money was a comment on the great desire it is capable of inciting: “This thing they call money is a terrible thing. As soon as you see it, your whole body starts to tremble!”

Likewise, any job that pays in cash is welcomed with as much delight as the salary itself: “Money works is sweet work.” Everyone seeks wealth and loves money, and to love money is good and natural. It is supportative of Ndjuka society and, as we have seen, of Ndjuka local production. Since to acquire it means applying one’s particular talents to the task, wealth is an emblem of natural capacities and native intelligence. It is also a sign of a certain purity of heart, for the evil-minded are too full of murderous intent to entertain such positive desires. Thus an obiaman wishing to make a complimentary speech on my behalf encapsulated the goal of my research as “because she loved money above all else, she came to us.” (Although my impecuniousness and theirs would belie such a statement.) To take another example, Ndjuka shop-keepers are often regarded with a certain ambivalence, for their trade usually makes them bad kinsmen – withholding rather than sharing – while the prices they ask are felt to be too high and exploitative of their clientel. Yet the most successful of these shop-keepers, a man whose boutique is well-placed on Stoelmanseiland<sup>(44)</sup>, has become so wealthy that Ndjuka feel he should be feted for his success: for being the first Ndjuka to have entered the category of a truly wealthy man!

Like Saramaka<sup>(45)</sup>, Ndjuka define human beings as essentially self-interested, manipulating personal and social relationships to their own advantage, promoting their own position in the community and their material gain. This is tempered, however, by moral ground rules of how this should be done (i.e. by seducing a person or outwitting him in such a way as to put him in debt to you, rather than by violence). To work without payment out of love of the work or to share out goods without advantage to oneself, one would have to be a fool. To claim to do either, one would have to be a liar. Altruistic ideologies find no echo in Ndjuka. Redistribution occurs either through personal affection or social constraints. It is love that pushes men to share with wives and children; it is society which constrains his natural egotism to contribute labor and goods to fulfill public and private obligations.

We have said that wealth comes from people and that it is normal for them to play their relations with one another to reap material advantage when they can. Where commercial wealth is concerned, there are two main categories of couples in which this wealth changes hands: from the Bakaa on the coast who possess it to the Ndjuka men who work for it; and from these male laborers to Ndjuka women. Since the two money magics reflect both sorts of relationships we will discuss each in turn.

### **Wealth between men and women**

Sexual division of labor in Ndjuka has prepared individuals for complementary tasks in the couple. Men cut and burn fields, occasionally give a hand with the harvests if they choose,

supply women with houses, canoes, carved wooden implements and coastal goods. Women shoulder the burden of agricultural production and its transformations into edible and elegant meals, supply husbands with decorated loincloths, and assume domestic chores. In marriage no goods are owned jointly: each partner retains and accumulates for himself or herself during marriage, making presents to the other. At the death of either, that wealth reverts to his or her lineage, not to the spouse.

Relations between the sexes are strained by the following economic asymmetry: the husband may be easily satisfied by his wife's contribution of cooked groundstuffs, sewn cloth and domestic entretien. His further desires carry his attention away from her, toward commercial goods and cash (which marriage would not, under any circumstances, entitle him to expect from her savings), and sexual favors from other women. His wife, however, in her role of agriculturist, finds herself in constant need of extra help in the fields, in her role of mother in constant need of someone to hold the baby, in her role of cook in daily need of something to put in the cooking pot. But most important, her husband is for her the principal source of coastal goods. Marriage entitles her to certain expectations with regard to her husband's earnings, some of which will be transformed into food and presents for her. A woman's economic anticipations toward her husband, then, are by definition, unlimited.

If we place ourselves in the skirts of a Ndjuka woman, her principal source of wealth is through men as sexual partners. Sex, love, and marriage are indelibly linked with desires for coastal goods in her feelings and calculations. Whether referring to lover or husband, Ndjuka women of all ages state bluntly, "Cunt is money" and "If they want it they must pay for it." Men remark without a trace of bitterness that no woman could love a poor man; if you want a woman you must have money. The desire to take a wife is then one reason that a Ndjuka man must leave her to earn riches on the coast. This implies no lack of reciprocity of feelings on the part of the woman, but simply an insistence on enjoying the benefits of a role which is otherwise felt to be largely disadvantageous.

Although what men are specifically paying for are her favors, what they are paying for in a more general sense is the advantage of being men: of being able to enjoy the freedom to move about, live about, seek employment, and earn salaries without answering to anyone, and of being free to enjoy sexual promiscuity and multiple marriages. What they are in a broad sense paying women for is her subjection to a double standard that limits her freedom of movement<sup>(46)</sup> and her economic activity to the fields and obliges wives to remain sexually faithful to husbands away for sometimes a year at a time without a return, who are off indulging in other relationships and other matches. The differing versions of the bakuu (the Bakaa money magic) of men and women, seem to reflect this optic, for the women hallucinate this money-making creature as teasing and blatantly seductive females; men describe it as aggressive, masculine, and devoid of sexual attitudes.

In some ways, male economic success and women's roles may be on a pendulum. Thoden van Velzen hints at this in his article<sup>(47)</sup> à propos of the early 20th century renaissance of Ndjuka possession cults. Where (men's) salaries become high, access to wives is easy and women's



agricultural produce is expendable – money being able to purchase substitutes for it, so that both of these female roles suffer a certain devaluation. Where increased mobility and new settlement patterns allow people to live much of their lives outside of lineage authority, the social significance of maternity – that of recreating through one's issue the on-the-ground corporate lineage (meke pansu), decreases.<sup>(48)</sup> Furthermore, these traditionally essential roles that women have filled with pride now become contradictory in the emigrative situation. A wife whose husband goes to a large urban area without access to land has a choice between conjugal living in complete economic dependency, or living without him and farming in Ndjuka. Most wives alternate between the two. A wife whose husband is working in an area that does have access to land, finds her roles of producer and mother in conflict, because in the emigrative environment she is deprived of the traditional cotery of elderly relatives (especially her own mother) to care for her young children while she goes to the fields.

We might suppose (and women's letters to husbands on the coast provide vivid proofs of this) that the lavish display of coastal goods in city markets, on traveling sales boats that dock at villages, and in the homes of neighbors, must sharpen women's desires for them and increase their anticipations with regard to their husband's generosity. Ndjuka men, however, as wives often remark, have other things they want do with their money: motorcycles, outboard motors, hi-fis, and new marriages tend to take precedence over domestic implements, dresses and gold earrings. Realization of this is often expressed by embittered wives, especially where polygamy has further decreased her share in her husband's resources. Increased riches may aggravate traditional competition between co-wives. In short, while women are, through their husbands, enjoying much more wealth than before, there is no doubt now a relative impoverishment of their situation as a whole. This may be one factor of their incarnation of the bakuu spirit which demonstrates the evils of money and emigration (see below).

### **Wealth and the Bakaa**

The primary source of wealth is the Bakaa. All commercial goods must be purchased through the medium of money, which can be obtained only from the Bakaa who create it. In 1984, the disturbances to economic life caused by the political problems in Surinam so frustrated Ndjuka that they wished to become economically free of the coast by having their own money. "If only Gaanman had the stamp to print money, we would not have to depend on the Bakaa!" Since this is not the case, Ndjuka still have to deal with the coast to obtain money to buy these goods.

### **Two relations to riches: Ndjuka versus Bakaa**

The money magics we are about to speak of are the supernatural tools that earn money for two different peoples: Ndjuka and Bakaa. The Bakaa, too, must come by his money; and he,

too, must obtain it from other Bakaa. But the Bakaa's relation to money is quite distinct from that of the Ndjuka, so it is not surprising that the means he uses to amass it are different too. This is the way the Ndjuka contrast the two economic situations.

The Ndjuka readily wax nostalgic about life in Ndjuka: "It is free, everything is free, you never lack anything." Of course today this evokes mostly an idyllic past, a time before the intra-village commercialization of local produce. But it still remains true, within the boundaries of close kinship ties, and its persistent ideology certainly helps to contrast Ndjuka life with that of the coast, where everything must be paid for.

At the same time, Ndjuka consider themselves one of the nation's forgotten poor, living on the "river of poverty" far from the monied center of the Bakaa.

Bakaa, on the contrary, are born into a world that is the Alpha and Omega of riches. (It's production center is in Europe and America – Gaan Bakaa Kondees – but it overflows onto the shores of Surinam and French (Guyana.) Being raised surrounded by wealth, Bakaa are supposed to be even more strongly motivated to establish personal fortunes.

"What do Bakaa think about? About money! Bakaa don't do things for nothing. Whenever you see a Bakaa doing something, it's for money!"

The incessant activity of Bakaa industries, the long working stints Ndjuka knew from bauxite mining with the Americans –

"They worked until pitch dark. They didn't even take time to eat: just swallowed something in a bit of bread as they stood there on the site!" –

do seem to confirm that making money for Bakaa is not just an occupation, but a preoccupation. Even my modestly financed research was instantly interpreted as a new fortune-making device:

"You see how she's come here? It's money she's after! She'll learn the language and then go back to France and they'll pay her a fortune to teach it to them! Look, it's our language, and it's the Bakaa who'll make money out of it. Ndjuka are dumb: we never even knew it was salable!"

The Bakaa's pecuniary motivations and innate flair find tools at their service: a secret knowledge of the world of riches, a sense of market forces, solid preparation by education, and modern technology.

Given the contrast in Ndjuka ignorance of market forces and lack of access to capital and technology, we might expect that the sort of wealth earned by Ndjuka and Bakaa are also different. Bakaa, coming in from the center, establish solid fortunes that put them forever in safe prosperity. Guduman – tuu-tuu guduman, gaan bigi guduman – designates this privileged position. The only Ndjuka who has come close to this is the shop-keeper mentioned earlier who some felt should be congratulated – not because he was dimes and cents richer than other Ndjuka, but because his wealth had taken on a permanence that accorded him a different status in life.

Ndjuka pursuit of wealth is best described, by comparison, in the modest local cliché,

“Looking for one’s daily bread”. The best that most Ndjuka can do is regularly set aside part of their salaries until, after a few years, they can buy goods and luxuries. They may then return for a couple of years to Ndjuka river – if they had grown up there – to enjoy the quiet life and try to stretch out their savings as long as they can. When that is gone they must return to the coast and start all over again. For them is the ephemeral wage; only for Bakaa is reserved the untouchable, ever-lasting fortune.

Ndjuka realize too that social pressures upon them do not bother the Bakaa. “Look at all the money we throw away on funerals! Bakaa don’t waste money so.” If a Ndjuka did achieve prosperity, how long could it last? It could not out-last him so long as he lives in Ndjuka. Bakaa men found families and pass their fortunes on to their children: the established prosperity continues on into the next generation. But a Ndjuka does not found a paternally recognized unit. He (and his fortune) are set in a wider social group, the matrilineage; and if at his death all this reverts to his mbêè, even during his lifetime, his wealth is part of the wealth of the matrilineage. “Who is the wealthiest in the world?” asks a Ndjuka moral tale, and it answers thus:

A mother raised three children: Foot, Hand, and Belly (Mbêè). When they grew up they went off in different directions. Eventually the mother became too old to survive on her own, and she set out to look for her children. The first one she found was Foot, who gave her a plantain to eat and let her sleep by the door. Next, she found Hand, who fed her with a banana and made a place for her in a corner of the room. Finally she found Belly, and between Belly and her husband, they gave the mother more than she could ever eat, a house to live in so splendid that it was almost a palace, and clothes to wear in such abundance that they outnumbered the days she had left to live.

The mother was so troubled by this that she could not enjoy the luxury – she was so troubled that she could not even eat. Belly, worried about her mother, insisted that they take the case to God. So the mother and her three children appeared before this Ultimate Authority. God asked Foot and Hand in turn what they had given their mother, and they answered truthfully. But God did not ask Belly, for He already knew. Then God pronounced His judgment: Belly was the wealthiest, and He would put Belly above all the others. From now on, Foot would walk for Belly, to carry her wherever she wanted to go. Hand would work to feed Belly, and wipe away her excrements.<sup>(49)</sup>

Mbêè is both the womb, from which society is born, and the bread basket which ingests food and stores it for use by members. No single individual can ever be as wealthy as mbêè because the lineage “has” all its individual members, and can call upon the wealth of all of them. While this is often demonstrated by collective contributions to settle one member’s debts or court fines, it is most dramatically expressed during mortuary ceremonies, when it is not the living but the dead one cares for. By calling on contributions from all mbêè members and their male affines, the bereaved lineage harvests a lavish spread of goods which it offers to this new ancestor, while the deceased himself leaves behind the sum total of his possessions to be shared out to mbêè members. The Ndjuka lineage is the encompassing whole in which a member’s fortune is but a small and in alienable part. Were, then, a member to succeed and establish fortune in Bakaa style, the lineage itself would guarantee the impermanence of this personal wealth.

The distinction between ephemeral wealth and established fortune is captured in the differing qualities attributed to the two money magics: the papa magic of the Ndjuka has no power to protect his earnings, but only helps him to acquire them from the Bakaa; the bakuu used by the Bakaa, on the other hand, mounts an armed guard over the Bakaa's possessions – often, in context, defending them against the greedy assaults of Ndjuka.

In one respect, only, are the financial ventures of Bakaa and Ndjuka felt to be similar: the wealth they desire can be gotten only from other people. Money is not a natural resource; it is man-made, it can never be found in a detached state and can therefore never be obtained except in a relationship with another person. Even money found lying in the street is someone's money and to take it means initiating a negative relationship with its unknown owner.

For Ndjuka the "other person" from whom one must obtain money is always the Bakaa. This is done by working for him, but the work itself does not produce money: it is remunerated by highly variable sums according to the type of work, or the type of company. The unpredictable component in this relationship is the human heart.

#### **The two money magics**

The money magics of papa and bakuu both seek to sway the human heart: instead of producing money from some anonymous void, they work on its owner, persuading him (papa), or tricking him (bakuu) into opening his heart and his purse. In the case of papa obia, the line followed is seductive. The relationship sought is a bond of affection. One hopes to receive even more than is owed in the form of bonuses or presents. In the case of the bakuu, the magic is aggressive, creating confusion in the mind of the person paying so that he over-pays.

Throughout the Ndjuka tribe, it is held to be true that Ndjuka never make money with a bakuu: the bakuu is a source of wealth solely for the Bakaa. As far as Ndjuka are aware, Bakaa are unfamiliar with papa obia (since it is not made by them). The two magics are strongly linked to their points of origin: the papa to the interior villages, the bakuu to the coastal boutiques and markets. The two money magics are then associated in Ndjuka thinking with the cultural, economic, and geographic dichotomy of Bakaa/Ndjuka. Only the physical or cultural interpenetration of each other's territories lead to incidents of these magics' crossing the boundaries between the two. We might suppose that they help reaffirm these distinct identities in a situation where Ndjuka participation in Bakaa economy, their selective imitation of Bakaa culture, and their occupation of Bakaa terrain tend to erode the frontiers between themselves and this historic enemy.

Those separate magics accumulate positive and negative values: the papa obia develops relationships of harmony; while the bakuu is at best a highly ambivalent, aggressive means of obtaining wealth. When it is taken over by Ndjuka it ceases to be a source of wealth at all and becomes an instrument of destruction. Papa obia and bakuu offer distinct symbolic containers for separating out positive and negative relationships between people that are engendered in the quest for and acquisition of wealth. These will be compared in detail later.

### Positive and negative feelings inspired by wealth

We have already discussed the positive value placed on coastal riches, and on the successful acquisition of them by peaceful means. Such wealth is felt to be beneficial not only to the individual who earns it but also to the larger society, since (as lineage ideology would have it), the successful fortune hunter's social obligations will ensure the redistribution of wealth along genealogical and affinal lines. The wage-earning emigrant worker is then the main-stay of his group, and is generally beyond reproach. It is with his quest that papa obia is identified. And his use of papa magic, as we will see, reactivates all those relationships basic to Ndjuka society and guarantees returning gifts.

Another person's wealth, however, inspires overwhelming feelings of greed. The relationships that may result from this greed – outright aggression (theft) on the one hand, and witchcraft on the other – become the domain of the bakuu.

Witchcraft is greed that becomes envy; envy that becomes so poisonous that it corrodes even the original desire for wealth and replaces it with a desire to destroy. The heart of the person who loves wealth is "soft" and pure. The heart of the witch is "thick" and delights only in the suffering of those he or she should love. Originally the "wealth" that could inspire such feelings of envy was of two kinds: children (a woman's wealth) and riches (wealth of a man). The agents of the resulting witchcraft were of many sorts – mostly spirits from the bush. By 1984 Ndjuka stated that wealth-inciting envy was that of city goods, and the sole agent of witchcraft was, by then, said to be the bakuu.

To minimize the threat of being bewitched, people reduce the number of exchanges (especially where food is concerned), limit their social intercourse, and restrict geographic boundaries. They not only hide their goods, so as not to share them with others, but those who have discovered incidents of witchcraft affecting them may practice a style of living called "hide thyself" (kibii i seefi) – adopting such a low economic profile that they cannot enjoy the wealth they possess.

Relations between Ndjuka and Bakaa can likewise be seen to arouse greed on the part of the Ndjuka confronted with the sight (or even thought) of Bakaa fortunes. The Bakaa, however, does not become the object of witchcraft, but of the fantasied attacks on his riches. The aggressive element of the desire for riches appears so indelible that reference to it surfaces metaphorically in relation to the ordinary pursuit of coastal jobs, as though requesting a share marked a design to take over the whole:

"What do you (emigrants) want to do? Surpass the Bakaa? Pull out from under him the bench on which he sits and seat yourself in his place?"

Since the Bakaa is, in his person, a source of wealth, a Bakaa settling among the Ndjuka will find himself besieged with demands, his person becomes a contended spoils, fought over by factions in the village, watchful of any goods passing to other people or crossing kin group lines.

This tendency to farm and harvest the Bakaa's personal wealth is referred to in Ndjuka as "Eating off your body". But tactics used vary from trickery and occasional theft, through daily small requests, to elegant gestures of friendship and the sharing of one's produce and gifts in the cultivation of a long-term relationship. The more real the affection that develops, the stronger grow the anticipations of more significant material rewards, initiating a spiral where love begets gifts of ever-increasing value, which in turn give rise to greater love.

The papa obia is a magic which symbolically works in imitation of the latter love relationship. It simultaneously tames the aggressive component of Ndjuka greed and alleviates the mistrust and fear of the Bakaa. By pacifying oneself, one becomes lovable; one becomes someone the Bakaa showers with gifts – encapsulating an attitude which 220 years ago supplanted naked aggression between Ndjuka and Bakaa.

### Papa Obia

Papa obia is a magic produced from quadrant of the cosmos that loosely relates the earth divinity, Gōnmama ("groundmother") to the possessing Papa spirits and a class of spiritual entities known as Bon gadu or Toné or Peesi pe a sama e komoto ("place a person comes from") which affect each person from the moment of conception.

If we imagine the Ndjuka cosmology in rough outline, we have the familiar pyramid with a creator god (known as Kediampo, Nana, or Saanta in the different spirit tongues) at the apex who had retired from active interest but remains the ultimate reference for all spirits and deities. When this god withdrew he left the running of the earth to the human lanti. This worldly lanti is under supervision of the celestial lanti – the ancestors. Some versions place the ancestors – gaan yōoka – directly below the creator god. Others say they share this position with the great tribal divinities of Gaan Gadu and Gedeonsu. Of lesser importance are the various village oracular gods, and finally the four principal spirit cults which stand as models for the classification and domestication of a wide array of possessing spirits. While all the above (with the obvious exception of the creator god) may enter into dialogue with humans through human vessels or other material supports they can animate, the important divinity of the Gōnmama does not communicate directly with people, but hears their prayers, receives their offerings and guarantees their safe access to her plants for magic and medicine (obia) and the use of her earth for agricultural production.

Papa obia is a magic derived from the Papa gadu cult of possessing spirits. The Ndjuka of Tabiki site have three original spirit cults, brought from three different countries in Africa. (A fourth cult, that of the yōoka – possessing spirits of ancestors apparently developed spontaneously without requiring specialized knowledge from any one ethnic group.) The three original cults are pictured as seated in a canoe: at the prow is the Komanti-Komadja: warrior cum doctor spirits, said to have been brought by the ancestors from Fanti and Binja. These spirits played an important role in fighting off the Bakaa and in making magic for defense and the healing of wounds. Today they are felt to be the best tamers of evil spirits. At the stern of the imaginary canoe sit the

Ampuku: anthropomorphic bush spirits, said to have been introduced from Loango. These are inherently ambivalent spirits and may often be bribed to bewitch. The earliest version of the bakuu were probably associated with these, for, on rare occasions, possession bakuu spirits arrive speaking “loango”.<sup>(50)</sup>

The cult of Papa gadu occupies the middle of the imaginary celestial canoe. Their worship is said by Ndjuka to have been introduced from “Omeme” (perhaps Weme, above Whydah). The name Papa has been traced to Popo.<sup>(51)</sup> It seems likely that the nucleus of the cult was introduced in the early eighteenth century by the capture and enslavement of large numbers of Hueda (a division of the Popo who migrated to the south) under the attack of Dahomean armies.<sup>(52)</sup> The costume of present Papa mediums resembles that described in Verger (1957) which was in use in Whydah.<sup>(53)</sup> Possessed individuals often shout out the name Dahomey in trance (“Mi na dagowé! Mi na wodu gadu si Dahomé!”). The star of this category of spirits, the Papa gadu itself, is the boa constrictor. It appears to have retained a relation to riches reported for its African counterpart, Dan<sup>(54)</sup> and these may take the form of cauri shells and brightly colored cloths.

The Ndjuka adopted and adapted the Christian creation myth and recognized among its primary characters the Papa snake in the Garden of Eden. Their version states that it was the snake that told Adam and Eve how to reproduce without God’s aid, thus rendering further divine creation unnecessary. Papa spirits are said to be givers of children.

When one mentions Papa gadu to Ndjuka the term instantly conjures up the boa constrictor. However this category is enlarged to include other snakes, among which the anaconda (wataa wenu) occupies a prominent position. The caiman is equally important as a Papa spirit. The category further expands to include the favorite haunts of these, which are sometimes disturbed by careless human beings: paths, stones, ponds, creeks. Finally, other spirits of vegetation, peculiar spots and small mammals may be classified under its broad heading for purposes of identification and domestication when they possess a person.

The majority of Papa possessions refer to an incident of accidentally killing a snake or caiman during the burning of a field. If subsequent mourning rituals for the animal have not succeeded in calming its spirit (or – more frequently – if such rituals have been neglected), its spirit may avenge by illness and possession. Such spirits may become the major kunu (avenging spirits) of a lineage. When only disturbed and not killed, Papa spirits may also sicken and possess, but they affect a more limited social group and are known as toobi gadu (“spirits of disturbances”). Papa gadu can also possess out of love for a person, or be intentionally given as a protecting spirit to someone victimized by witchcraft in order to keep the bewitching spirits at bay. All of the above can come into the head of a human being and be easily domesticated. The mediumship they offer is less geared to magic-making than the Komanti and more to aesthetic performances of dance and song in transe states. While Komanti is predominantly a masculine cult, Papa, as in Africa, is more usually feminine. The two together are the central performers in theatrical religious services (pee), singing and dancing together with mortals in what is considered the ultimate of harmonious human-spirit relations.

Another type of spirit, said to be the same as the Papa spirits, do not possess, but are in intimate relation with people. These are the Bon gadu, Toné, or Peesi pe a sama e komoto. We noted in passing that each person is marked from conception by the incarnation of an ancestral akaa which becomes his nênsêki. A person is also marked from conception by the spirit of the “place where he came from” – a spirit disturbed by the person’s mother who in her wanderings inadvertently fouled a waterhole, or bothered a spirit-inhabited spot. Instead of making her ill or possessing her, the spirit enters her womb and makes her pregnant, becoming the Bon gadu of the child she bears. Sometimes the effect of this conception leaves indelible marks on the infant – mongolism, deafness and other debilities.<sup>(55)</sup> But even normal people have Bon gadu and quickly learn of its identity during an early childhood illness.

In Tabiki, the Bon gadu not only influenced the baby’s natal state, but it could cast a shadow over his destiny as an adult. It is particularly cited as responsible for sexual deviations in adults and for success in love and marriage, in fertility and in productive pursuits of men – hunting and earning money.<sup>(56)</sup>

Relations with the Bon gadu, then, need readjusting at the onset of adulthood: for women when her deflowering spoils her relation with this spirit, for men when it becomes apparent that the Bon gadu is responsible for ill health or other misfortunes. The rituals of “washing” for this spirit take place at the spirit’s residence in the bush. An altar is erected, decorated with brightly colored cloths for flags, and a cooked meal is arrayed upon it. This is consumed simultaneously by the Bon gadu, its protégé, and the participants, and the human and spirit assembly bathe in macerated papa plants, calling on the spirit to provide “clothes, Bakaa money, children”. The ingredients of the offering (brightly colored cloth, eggs, parrot feather, liquor) and the plants used for the washing confirm that the Bon gadu is of the same sort as the Papa gadu. It never comes into the head, for it is already “in” the person as his spiritual genitor.

In short, from the restricted notion of Papa gadu as snake and reptile deity, the class enlarges to an everwidening cluster of spirits associated with vegetation and small mammals. A man is first influenced by them at conception, then throughout his life whenever he or close matrilineal relative disturbs one of these spirits. Papa spirits influence sex life, fertility and productive activities that give rise to wealth. The idea that they influence a man’s finding, holding and succeeding at a job and the salary he obtains simply extends this notion into the types of activities he now pursues.

### Gônmama

The Gônmama is particularly important for agriculture and each small bush camp has a shrine. It is certainly related to the spirits of place, vegetation and the ground-hugging reptiles: it sustains them, they evolve out of her, and return to her, “the Earth is the boss: it gives food and accepts food offerings.” Its position makes it necessarily a participant in any libation. All the plants that cure and domesticate spirits belong to the Gônmama and permission must be asked



of Her before picking them. All deposits of gold or kaolin, although often belonging to a spirit of that place, are within Her realm. The Gôomama, then, is a divinity already in relation with the raw materials of certain types of wealth. Her influence is now said to extend further: she can, if properly begged, bring money. The offerings used to pray to her are the same as those preferred by Papa spirits. In fact, one informant called her the great Papa Winti.<sup>(57)</sup> Among the Para, this divinity (Aisa) manifests its self in snakes. (Wooding, 1981, pp.92–5)

### Gedeonsu

This is an old divinity “discovered” by the fleeing ancestors in the area of Mama Ndjuka but said to have been known on the plantations as well. It has its tabernacle in a giant silkcotton tree in Mama Ndjuka (site of the first settlements), and secondary shrines at the mouth of Ndjuka Creek, at Kijoo Kondee, and in Tabiki. It is pictured as a giant white male and its speciality is in facilitating the hunt and increasing human and animal fertility. In the area sacred to it, around Ndjuka Creek, it is said by some to possess gold deposits, making their human exploitation impossible.

Gedeonsu is said to be the boss of the Papa spirits for all of Ndjuka river. It is an oracle of tribal importance before whom major ceremonies are held; it is at the same time the village god of Tabiki, hence the spiritual head of all obia in that village.

One Papa medium claims that the use of Papa magic to earn money is a recent innovation, an application of the talents of Papa spirits to produce the biological wealth that are children. This is a tempting idea, for it would suggest that bakuu and papa obia made their appearances simultaneously. If, as we will see later, we can first identify the bakuu from King’s mid-nineteenth century writing, we might suppose that the money obia he speaks of city people trying to buy from Bush Negroes might have been (where Ndjuka were concerned) papa obia – and might even have been “invented” then to comply with their request.<sup>(58)</sup> Unfortunately many facts argue against this theory. As we have seen, the relation of the papa snake to wealth was already established in Dahomey, and although it may for a while have been irrelevant to raiding Maroon groups, it was probably never lost as an idea. Secondly, I have been unable to find any example of a papa obia being specifically made for fertility.

Papa obia may be made by any medium of a Papa spirit. In practice, however, I have only seen it made by men, and not necessarily those who are mediums of Papa spirits. In Tabiki it was made by all the important obiaman (magicians) and even by those practitioners who were neither priest nor medium. As is typical in Ndjuka, each specialist had his own recipe, and some had several, but they are roughly similar, in that they combine the favorite magical ingredients beloved of Papa spirits: parrot feathers, cauri shells, tiny bells, red, white and blue cloth and a maceration of several types of papa plants<sup>(59)</sup> all this in liquor and kaolin and kept in a white china bowl. Seven ten-pence pieces are set around the rim of the bowl, and the user rubs or dabs a bit of the mixture on his “heart” (sternum), nape of the neck and knees. The liquor, kaolin, and papa plants may alternately

or conjointly be mixed in a bottle for rubbing on the body, particularly the face and hands, and for drinking. Neckties are also made.

The Ndjuka in his quest for wealth moves outside his kin and even his ethnic group, and into relations with the Bakaa. The papa obia helps him to recreate magically in the Bakaa those positive feelings that are supposed to operate between kin. The papa obia transforms its user into someone so attractive that all he has to do is to open his hands and the Bakaa will cross his palms with silver, spoil him with presents, open new opportunities for him. "Everyone will love you, give you money, everything you want," advertise its makers. Coastal anonymity is transformed into welcoming faces. References to papa obia repeat the gestures of the hands: the Ndjuka opens his hands to receive; the Bakaa opens his hands to give.

Since the preparation of papa obia is not a guarded secret, one can apply to any of a number of obiaman or male papa mediums to order it. In the five actual cases known to me where men sought this magic, four chose an obiaman of his own lineage, while one called upon the aid of a brother-in-law. As with other magical and medical treatments, one tends to work through already-established social relationships which are usually kin or affines. The requesting, confectioning, and repayment of papa obia adds to the series of exchanges between kinsmen and affines, strengthening the basic ties of Ndjuka society. The practitioner who makes up the papa obia for his client offers this service gratis. Just as medical treatments are traditionally paid for only if they have been found to be effective, so papa obia is only remunerated by the emigrant who has already profited from the results. The deferment of recompense projects relations into the future and strengthens the bond between the emigrant worker leaving for the coast and the village practitioners.

Furthermore, the magician to whom one goes owes his power to forces inherent in the matrilineage, or to a personal spirit possession that has been assigned a place in the hierarchy of village divinities, and human lanti. The fact of seeking papa obia is then supportive of the traditional religious institutions.

Productive of non-dangerous and harmonious relations with the Bakaa, supportive of matrilineal and affinal ties and of central magico-religious institutions, the quest for papa obia, although it addresses individual ambitions, is a positive social act. Like much that is unproblematic in Ndjuka life, it is unobtrusive and passes largely unnoticed.

## 5. The Bakuu

### Differing versions

The bakuu (or bakroe or bakulu) is presently known throughout the three Guyanas<sup>(60)</sup> and appears to have been heard of as a Surinamese money magic in other places in the Caribbean, for Wooding<sup>(61)</sup> recounts an incident in which a Hindustani came to Surinam for the purpose of buying one. It is not possible to say for sure if knowledge of the bakuu had spread widely across the colonial plantations of the Guyanas or whether it was during the gold rush, with its influx of fortune-hunters and mobility of the newly emancipated Creole populations that the belief became so widely diffused. The latter seems the more plausible, especially since before the gold rush the bakuu seems to have been of minor importance. While on the coast the bakuu is considered a ubiquitous tool of wealth and sorcery, actual possession transe by bakuu spirits has so far been reported only for Bush Negroes – among the two small, more acculturated Christianized tribes of the Paramaka and Matawai, and among the unevangelized Bilo Ndjuka. Of these, only the Matawai and the Bilo Ndjuka have developed these possessions into cults.

Different versions of the bakuu throughout Surinam, attribute to it a large range of characteristics. The present Tabikan version describes it as a doll-like creature, about half a meter high, made half of flesh and half of wood. The wooden half serves as a shield to ward off its enemies, and it is armed with a stick to attack them. It has, in fact, been manufactured by a Bakaa magician and animated with the soul of a dead person.

Other versions compare it to a two-year-old child (Matawai), to a dwarf (Aluku), to a baby (Para). It is sometimes simply a small black bush spirit (Opo Ndjuka) unrelated to money, and can be confused with Ampuku (Paramaribo).<sup>(62)</sup> Some versions say it is hydrocephalous (Bilo Ndjuka 1920). In Tabiki Ndjuka claimed it resembled a Creole, burnished skin and city clothes. In Paramaribo of the 1920's Herskovits was told it was coal black like Bush Negro children. It can metamorphosize into a cat, a hen, a giant bull-frog, a crab, etc. It is obviously a composite image woven of many inter-related African beliefs. Other configurations recalling the bakuu, or number of its aspects, can be found throughout the Caribbean.<sup>(63)</sup>

Authors have tended to describe the Surinamese bakuu as though the version they came across were the immutable one of a given ethnic group. This is all the more curious since the bakuu is perhaps the belief which is the most obviously in flux. Shifts in its definition can easily be recognized by comparing the different versions noted by different authors at different moments. From what was probably a fairly minor position in the slave cosmos, the bakuu has recently come strikingly to the fore in almost all Maroon groups, although these unanimously claim it is foreign to their cultures – a Bakaa device. Even Amerindian groups are now familiar with the bakuu, though it has not been reported as operative in their belief system.<sup>(64)</sup> For any of the Bush Negro societies, and even for some Creole ones (i.e. the Para described by Wooding), the money-making bakuu

appears to be a highly accurate barometer of acculturative leaps – whether through religious conversion or important socio-economic changes.

One author, C.J. Wooding, who worked among the Para Creoles in 1961–2 and 1969–70, may have been the unconscious witness to a change of definition in the bakuu during that time.<sup>(65)</sup> References to and descriptions of the bakuu appear throughout his doctoral thesis presented in 1972. In presenting the bakuu as a minor deity belonging to the forest pantheon, Wooding capitalizes its name; he cites songs sung to it, and says it is one of the gods brought from Africa by the ancestors. In other places, where reference is made to the bakuu as a witchcraft device, Wooding uses the lower case, but inconsistently. There appear simultaneously – sometimes capitalized, sometimes not – remarks about the bakuu which townspeople buy to earn money, and bakuu dolls (kartiki-bakru) which the Para make to oblige this urban clientel. But, says Wooding, the Para avoid using the term Bakru because of the confusion (this is my term not his) between the magic money-making, bewitching device this signifies for city folk, and the positive worker-spirit it means among the Para. In an article which appeared in the same year, Wooding speaks again of the bakuu, repeating some information from his thesis. But in his article, the bakuu is suddenly absent from the forest pantheon among the Para Creoles. It is discussed solely as a money-making, bewitching device, and is consistently uncapitalized. One can only regret that Wooding, who worked and lived among the Para on and off for over a decade, and who assumes an interest in “evolving culture”<sup>(66)</sup>, collapses material dating from different periods into a single, timeless version, behind which, one can still glimpse the passing of an older deity, the bush bakuu (or Bakru), ambivalent, but nevertheless a spirit brought by the ancestors, into a new definition – that brought from the city – of a magic for money.

#### **The historical evolution of bakuu belief**

My own review of the literature on Surinamese bakuu suggests that the change in definition we can detect among the Para is not unique to them, but has touched most, if not all, Afro-Surinamese bakuu beliefs. I would propose the following hypothesis: that instead of many versions of the bakuu, what we have are two distinct beliefs, evolving at different periods, masquerading under the same name. The earlier version – which must have developed on the plantations of the 18th century and passed into the culture of the emancipated Creoles such as the Para on the one hand, and been carried into the bush by marooning slaves on the other, seems to be that of a free, black, dwarf-like or child or baby-like bush spirit of high ambivalence. We find this version still operative among the Para, among the Aluku of the late 1950’s, in the Bilo Ndjuka in the 1920’s, and in the Opo Ndjuka in the 1960’s. Except among the Para it is everywhere evil, or at least frightening, and can often be engaged for witchcraft. But it is not bought, nor owned; it cannot bring or guard wealth.

Somewhere in the second half of the 19th century a new version appears: a bakuu which is really a dummy (in some versions animated by the soul of a dead person), and used specifically

to earn money and mount an aggressive guard over one's fortune and avenge its theft. Sometimes, like the infernal pact of Martiniquan engagements, it ends up taking the lives of children and relatives of its owner in return for the riches. It is bought and sold out-right, and only at the death of its owner does it go off to live on the roads or in the bush.

The earliest mention of this "second bakuu" is in the writings of Johannis King, the Matawai Christian prophet who spent his early years with his mother in and around Paramaribo and later in Wanica and Maripaston. His paths crossed those of Ndjuka and Saramaka working timber there (it was the period of Ndjuka "wanderings") and those of Creoles who came to buy obia from the Bush Negroes.<sup>(67)</sup> It is this bakuu – a doll on whose head an egg is broken – which kills King's brother Natanel in revenge for his theft of a smith's glass.<sup>(68)</sup>

Where did this new version come from? It is possible it evolved independently in the city of Paramaribo, with which Maroon and other Creole groups alike associate it. It is also possible, I suspect, that its development there owed a great deal to ideas introduced by West Indian immigrants brought in after emancipation in 1863 to bolster the labor force.<sup>(69)</sup> These immigrants are said to have come in the main from Barbados. I have been unable to find any relevant literature on Bajan beliefs. But Verin describes a money-making device called the ti-bolom (little man) or lekelom (like a man) known to the St. Lucians which is strikingly similar in almost every particular to the modern bakuu.<sup>(70)</sup> In French Guyana, where the St. Lucians have migrated in waves at different periods, the modern French version of the bakuu quoted to me was in every detail that of the ti-bolom. It seems to me likely that West Indian workers brought with them beliefs for which they sought an equivalent in the local Surinamese cosmology and settled on the highly ambivalent, anthropomorphic bakuu. Through their attempts to purchase one, to intimidate others into thinking they had one, or in accusing others of working with one, they added to the bush bakuu special features which altered its definition. Within the next twenty years, other traits were probably credited or accentuated in this new bakuu<sup>(72)</sup> by new immigrants – as fortune-hunters poured into Surinam and French Guyana from Martinique and other islands, and Maroons and Creoles alike began to associate the revised bakuu of mysterious fortunes to the balata bleeders and gold diggers.<sup>(73)</sup>

The belief in this money-making bakuu probably evolved in the contact area in and around Paramaribo, and diffused from there along by the exciting and danger-ridden adventure of gold. Wherever this new belief – of a trumped-up living-dead money-maker was felt by a local population to be relevant to its situation (for instance to its evolving economic relation to those Bakaa who were said to use bakuu), the new version began to overlap with the older definition<sup>(74)</sup>, and shortly eclipsed the older one altogether<sup>(75)</sup>. The Bilo Ndjuka offer an example of a people who, in 1920 were still familiar with only the bush bakuu and by 1984 declared that such a thing had never existed; that the bakuu was something only bought in the city. The bush bakuu seems to have melted into a general class of busi gadu (bush spirits), and relinquished all rights to its former name.

### **The bakuu in Bilo Ndjuka**

For the Bilo Ndjuka, the new money-magic bakuu is said to have first been provoked during the period of “wandering” around 1850–80, when Ndjuka men began to leave tribal territory to visit the city, plantations, and cut lumber for the Bakaa. It was no doubt through their contact with city Creoles (it is the city that is stipulated, rather than the plantations), that Ndjuka first heard of this Bakaa bakuu. Early incidents of bakuu vengeance are presently traced back to thefts committed then against Bakaa. But these crimes may represent myth-making more than remembered history, for the effects of the bakuu vengeance were not felt until almost a century later!

The bakuu doll is said unanimously by Ndjuka to have been brought into their territory during the gold rush (bagagitin) between 1880 and 1930. King in 1870 mentions fortune-hunting Creoles of dubious morality boasting to Ndjuka in the interior of buying bakuu to commit all sorts of mischief. The most significant purpose of the bakuu, from the Ndjuka’s point of view, was its ability to make fortunes for the Bakaa and avenge the theft of his gold. Despite the general knowledge that Bakaa never travelled without bakuu to guard their wealth, some pragmatic Ndjuka did take the risk and stole. But it was only at the end of this period – in the late 1930’s – that the theft occurred which brought on the first case of bakuu vengeance in the village of Malobi. The thief and as many as fifteen of his lineage members died from the fury before the spirit decided to possess a woman in transe, thus paving the way toward bakuu mediumship and propitiation which could save the rest of the lineage from the new death-dealing kunu<sup>(76)</sup> This first mediumship must date from somewhere in the 1940’s. The new bakuu precedent once established, this avenging spirit reared up in a number of Ndjuka villages, exposing crimes of the bagagitin. They also began to flare up and trace thefts back before this time, to the time of wanderings: the first serious re-engagement of the Ndjuka in the Bakaa’s money economy.

Why did bakuu possessions suddenly appear in the late thirties and forties, when its dangers had so long been known and vengeance felt to be so long over-due? The possessing bakuu rose up to expose cases of dangerous immorality of boatmen who had made fortunes during the gold rush. During the heyday of river transport, the very wealth of these navigators had allowed them to manoeuvre free from lineage control. They had further assured their invulnerability by elaborating an anti-witchcraft oracle defending their interests against their envious poor relations in the villages. The witchcraft dimension fostered by this oracle reaffirmed in its revelations the essential integrity of wealthy boatmen, and the wickedness of the wretched.<sup>(77)</sup>

But by 1930 the fortunes of the boatmen had melted away; gold and the Bakaa diggers it attracted all but vanished; and Ndjuka men returned to their former occupation of lumberers, and to their social position of matrilineage-dependent members, hauling logs through the bush with the aid of the kin group. It was now the turn of the lineage, in typical Ndjuka judiciary style to “catch up” on past grievances against this recently wayward class of boatmen, and reassert its inescapable importance. It was now the turn of those classificatory daughters and nieces of the

bagagitin's accused witches to point to the moat in their uncle's eye. They incarnated spirits that were proof by possession of the collective vulnerability of all members to the fault of one, and the necessity to assure the health of each by collective lineage rites. But the spirits they incarnated now were not traditional kunu, but a new spirit, that of high finance, the bakuu.

We might view this communal responsibility for individual theft in another way as well: as symbolic confessions by the village community (especially in the persons of women mediums to these spirits) of aggressive greed shared by those who had not been beneficiaries of the gold rush fortunes. In a Durkheimian vein, we might say that it is the echo of these collectively shared feelings of aggressive greed that transforms an individual incident into a case of supernatural vengeance affecting the entire lineage. Or, in a Freudian vein, we could say that each individual projects into the discovered theft his own anxieties about his desire to steal and realizes, with relief, that it was not he but a lineage brother who committed the crime. This is a process similar to scapegoating in witch accusations. But here the accent is on collective vulnerability and responsibility. The resultant activity is not that of punishing a guilty individual, but of rallying lineage cooperation in propitiatory rites, thus reaffirming the matrigroup and the interdependence of its members.

And so, in the 1940's appeared a new avenging spirit: the bakuu: the powerful, dreaded money magic of the Bakaa, protecting his fortune against the thefts of Ndjuka boatmen. Now, the spirit itself was an old one flourishing suddenly into something new and foreign to Ndjuka. And the situation, too, was extremely old – perhaps eternal to Ndjuka-Bakaa relations. It was a return to the life-and-death struggle in Ndjuka "economics" of the lowetin – of Ndjuka attacks and Bakaa vengeance before the peace treaties. And, as in these historic incidents where raids carried out by a few men could bring military reprisals on the whole group back home, now, as then, the entire matrilineage is shown to be threatened through the fault of a few.

### **Emigration and the bewitching bakuu**

The bakuu as kunu (avenging spirit) expresses first of all something about relations between Ndjuka and Bakaa over wealth; and only secondarily something about relations between Ndjuka. It continues to produce new spirits as reduced social control on the coast opens the way to more and more crimes.

At the same time, the bakuu appears in yet another role: that of bewitching spirit. In this form, its message is specifically concerned with intra-Ndjuka relations. Emigrant Ndjuka are "discovered" to have bought bakuu to kill lineage mates or affines. Illnesses and deaths are diagnosed as due to bakuu witchcraft; and bakuu "victims" frequently become possessed, their possessions being ritually translated into mediumship in imitation of bakuu kunu possessions.<sup>(78)</sup>

Bewitching spirits are not new to Ndjuka: as far back as one can go this seems to have been a witch-ridden society, though Ndjuka believe there was a time when there was little witchcraft, and some can still remember when a whole village dared to share food. But the symbolic references are new: emigration, riches and amoral human relations operating on the economic scene are themes

actually dramatized by mediums in transe, despite the fact that the bakuu bought by Ndjuka is not used for wealth, but only for murder. The appearance of this bewitching bakuu can be independently dated, by matching incidents of possession to historic events, as occurring in the second half of the 1960's. This was, for Bilo Ndjuka, and particularly for Tabiki, the period when emigration suddenly became a mass movement. Ndjuka themselves cite this free-for-all race to the coast as responsible for the introduction of bakuu witchcraft: releasing in a coastal environment untempered youth who could buy indiscriminately anything they found for sale.<sup>(79)</sup>

In addition to the fears of direct Bakaa vengeance from the bakuu, Ndjuka society now lives in fear of its own members' enjoying free access to such dangerous Bakaa power. The motive of bakuu witchcraft is still the eternal problem of envy, but here the envy is specifically engendered by coastal wealth. New inequalities between Ndjuka increase envy of one another, and this envy becomes murderous in a new, uncontrolled social scene where members are felt to take advantage of anonymity and economic independence to give free range to their interpersonal hostilities. The violation of lineage obligations increases guilt, hence fear, of lineage members. The absence of lineage authority on the coast aggravates mistrust of one's own kin, who become the more feared the more they move toward sources of Bakaa power. This transfer of fear from the Bakaa himself to the acculturating emigrant matri-kin using Bakaa power (metaphorically the bakuu) is expressed in situations other than bakuu witch accusations.<sup>(80)</sup>

#### Papa obia and bakuu compared

Bakuu witch accusations allow Ndjuka to distill a complex and paradoxical reality (where the positively defined search for wealth leads to social and cultural destruction) into age-old oppositions of good and evil, good Ndjuka versus witch, parading now under new guises. The models for good and evil are provided by the good and bad financial magic: papa versus bakuu, and the human relations these represent. Two of these we have already discussed at length and will briefly summarize here. These are the relationship between fortune-hunter and manufacturer or owner of the money magic, and the relationship between the fortune-hunter and the holder of wealth:

<u>PAPA</u>	<u>BAKUU</u>
A. Relations between fortune-hunter and manufacturer of magic:	
a. Emigrant and <u>obiaman</u> are matrilineal kin or affines.	a. Emigrant and owner are totally strangers, ethnically different.
b. No outright purchase is made: one of many exchanges between kin or affine.	b. Outright purchase.
c. Return on magic is deferred, creating one more link between emigrant and village <u>obiaman</u> , by anticipation of thank offering.	c. Relation ended — no further contact presumed.



PAPA

- d. Return gift in proportion to effectiveness of magical aid: when effective, handsome present, if ineffective, none.

B. Relations between fortune-hunter and fortune-holder:

- a. Magic which changes its user: taming aggression, sweetening, producing charisma.
- b. Attitude of passiveness, palms open.
- c. Magical instantaneous reproduction of warm feelings and exchanges associated with kin; positive relationship hopefully projected into the future.
- d. Relationship potentially very personal.

BAKUU

- d. Cash payment without relation to effectiveness or worth: absurd payment of a few copper pence.

- a. Magic which changes the other, breaking through his autonomy, attacking his mind, creating mental confusion.
- b. Mask of passiveness disguising aggression aggression committed by the bakuu.
- c. Negative relationship, putting future of kin into jeopardy.
- d. Examples of negation of any relationship at all: the bakuu may produce treasure from nowhere, slipping in to make encounter between fortune-holder and fortune-seeker unnecessary. An extreme limit of amorality is reached.<sup>(81)</sup>

When we speak of magic, we necessarily invoke the spirit world. Both papa and bakuu operate on the basis of a third relationship, that between the manufacturer/user of the magic and the spirit animating the magic.

C. Relations with the spirit of magic:

We have seen that papa obia is not a spirit itself but the magical product that channels powers derived from Papa spirits responsive to the great, benevolent god Gedeonsu, through a category of plants (papa uwii) which are in the keep of the Gõonmama. All of these inter-related deities and forces are life-giving, life-nurturing: papa spirits are intimately related to human conception, Gedeonsu is generally responsible for fertility of all living things, and the Gõonmama is, as her name suggests, the nurturing base out of which all life evolves, and to which it returns.

In a loosely structured cosmic hierarchy, relations of dominance guarantee that the renowned capriciousness of lower spirits remains within predictable bounds. Materialization of these supernatural entities in human society is securely locked into time-honored relations of lanti with ancestors and village deities. Production of papa obia depends on lineage magic or on the validity of a personal possession state given official village recognition.

None of this can be said of the bakuu. The bakuu relates money and death, rather than money and life. The bakuu was created out of death, by an original witchcraft which brought to

an end the life of a human being, then trapped and enslaved his soul (yôoka). What is most terrifying to Ndjuka about the bakuu is that it is a ghost. And what is most poignant about this ghost is its loss of personal human identity and its estrangement from its genealogy. It has no place in human social relations, nor any niche in cosmological hierarchies. It harks to no persuasion but that of its possessor. Bakuu mediums dramatize this aspect of the bakuu, crying out that they cannot name a mother or father, not one sister they can name!<sup>(82)</sup> Although the manufactured bakuu are able to reproduce themselves and “must have families and villages of (their) own, but I don’t know how that works” says the medium.

The bakuu is something which was once human: it should have continued its destiny after death, becoming (someone’s) ancestor, guiding, dominating, protecting its descendent generations which in return would have offered it food, prayers, libations, and white cloth. Instead of this, the yôoka was ripped from its genealogical roots, from its personal identity and from its spiritual destiny, enslaved, and transformed into a character of a child – a thing in a doll, fed like a pet, and manipulated by a single member of the descendent generation for his own material gain. If money is earned by the bakuu then it is gained through death and chaos.

This is powerful imagery for a society whose ancestors fled the trauma of capture, alienation and exploitation in slavery. It does not have to call forth collective unconscious fantasies: Ndjuka, as other Maroon groups<sup>(83)</sup>, still live in each era with the conscious fear that “those times could come again”. Their coming again, as we remarked, is specifically predicted in relation to modern times and the relaxation of mistrust which leads Ndjuka to settle among the Bakaa. The theme of alienation is openly expressed in terms of the dreaded future acculturation of Ndjuka generations.

These relations between humans and spirits, symbolized in the fabric of the enslaved bakuu are for the Ndjuka “prehistoric ones: a return to their very first, negative economic relationship with the Bakaa, where the slaves who were later to become the Ndjuka were themselves humanly and spiritually alienated tools for the production of Bakaa wealth. The transformation of human spirit into a bakuu conjures up a world of captive ghosts, a world without ancestors!”

Despite all the respect outwardly accorded the Bakaa for his triumphant production and technology, despite the very positive value set by Ndjuka on the jobs Bakaa offer, and their eagerness to share in his wealth, the bakuu imagery reveals that the mechanism on which these riches rest is some form of slavery.

Ndjuka, however, long ago ceased to be slaves of the Bakaa. Their concern with the bakuu, then, is a function of their chosen involvement in the coastal economy and life-style. The criticism implicit in the bakuu constellation of human and spirit relations is not so much directed at the Bakaa as it is at Ndjuka themselves. The bakuu conjures up the dangers that threaten Ndjuka if they violate ancestral precepts and abandon their own culture and society in favor of creolization. For in their culture and society is rooted not only each individual identity, but the very freedom to have an identity. Against Ndjuka morality and continuity as upheld by papa obia, is opposed Ndjuka amorality, identified as non-Ndjuka or Bakaa and embodied in the bakuu.

The bakuu is a coastal product and its manufacture remains a secret of the coast. Each case of bakuu revelation traces each individual bakuu back to its foreign origins – sometimes as distant as China. The bakuu becomes a specific threat in only one of two ways: either because a Ndjuka resorts to the earlier mode of obtaining wealth from the Bakaa through violence and theft, or because the Ndjuka take over the bakuu themselves – an imaginary act which I see as a metaphor of acculturation. In the latter case, its the Ndjuka themselves who kill their own kin and affines with the bakuu in deliberate witchcraft.

### **The role of bakuu witch accusations**

As we have said, in the face of the insoluble dilemma of modern wealth-seeking, and the fundamental contradictions this raises, bakuu witch accusations abstract the affect from this situation into simple oppositions of good and evil, then anthropomorphosize these into relationships between destroyer (witch) and victim (of bakuu attacks). The over-all threat to Ndjuka society is personalized into specific examples of individual members' obtaining powerful Bakaa magic to inflict illness and death. In the resulting cathartic drama, the rich symbolism of bakuu and papa are mobilized to exteriorize feelings of greed, envy, guilt, anger, fear and insecurity, humiliation, and loss engendered in the emigrative quest for riches.

But the bakuu accusation renders another service: by identifying emigrant “witches” as being the opposite of emigrant wealth-earners, it white-washes the emigrant quest for riches. The fatal paradox to be unravelled, as we remarked, is that the goods which Ndjuka seek and that are necessary for the maintenance of society demand migrant labor and lead to the development of a marginal life-style and that destroys the society and culture they were presumed to uphold. But since the quest is an individual option, no collective decision can stem this tide. Nor are there any members of society who really wish to, since most, one way or another, profit indirectly or hope to, from the new emigrant wealth. The problem is how to restore to wealth-seeking its positive valence, how to purge it of its responsibility for destruction so the quest can be pursued in good conscience.

This is done by opposing to the good emigrant (who may use papa obia) the bad emigrant who buys the bakuu. Of the first, village obia is behind him in his quest for wealth; of the second, he is against the village in his desire to murder, and he buys the bakuu NOT to get rich. Over and over again, by Ndjuka up and down the river, by those in waking state and those in transe, it is stated that Ndjuka never make money with a bakuu.<sup>(84)</sup> Some say they don't know how; some say they don't want to. When the accused is a woman, there is no need to insist that she went to the coast NOT to earn money: women normally go to visit, to be with their husbands, or for medical treatment, not for wage-earning. But when the accused is a migrant worker, his emigration was, like that of others, in search of a job. And individual cases of accusations show that the accused was financially no worse off than those who are not accused. His disinterest in riches is then a fiction that must be specially written into the text of the accusation: the bakuu winti (possessing spirit)

speaking through its medium proclaims that it offered the bakuu buyer jewels, treasure, and he refused. The witch, as we said at the beginning, cannot love anything as positive as money.

Whereas wealth and life were associated in papa obia and wealth and death in the bakuu used by Bakaa, when we exclude the Bakaa himself from the picture, we find that only he was able to earn money through death. For Ndjuka riches can only be on the side of life – of papa obia. Those who truly go to the coast in quest of wealth do not bring death.

In witch accusations, sources of destruction are identified, distinct from the wealth-earning emigrant. Symbolically purged of the ambivalence of their migration, the fortune hunters can return to the coast, with the blessings of obiaman and the encouragement of their wives.

But the dénouement of the bakuu accusation takes an interesting, positive turn. Having gone as far as present morality allows in castigating the witch (publicly denouncing the latter by name, physically mounting attacks on him or her that sometimes barely miss ending his or her life), the community then sets about repairing breaks created in the social fabric by the accusation, and breaks created in the spiritual realm by the manufacture of a bakuu. The ruptured social relations between accuser and accused are restored – the two parties sometimes being made to embrace in council. Lineage unity is then reaffirmed, triumphing over interpersonal hatreds and fears. The essential humanity and lineage membership of the witch is restated, to avoid his becoming a living incarnation of Evil.

At the same time, the cosmological distortion of the bakuu spirit is readjusted: the estranged yōoka is reintegrated into a spiritual hierarchy. The possessing bakuu spirit is “washed” of its evil parts and its good aspects are trimmed for propitiation and mediumship. During this process, two problems inherent in its definition are solved: this foreign spirit undergoes an acculturation: he learns to “speak Ndjuka”<sup>(85)</sup>. From a dislodged spiritual entity, he is integrated into the village community, assigned pseudo spiritual kin in the form of paternal figures of kabitên and basi (domesticating priest). Alien, he has been assimilated; alienated, he has been adopted, spiritually desecrated, he is reinstated as a positive, revered spirit.<sup>(86)</sup> By these reparations of social and spiritual hiatus, dangers are avoided on two levels: the danger of spreading and sharing in the witches’ evil nature by returning evil for evil is stopped; the danger of allowing the bakuu to continue behind one’s back as a silent, hostile, disconnected being, is warded off by establishing a new identity, relations, dialogue, and exchange.

#### Papa and bakuu: Whose expressions?

Papa obia is a magic arising from the worship of Papa spirits within a possession cult. Mediums of Papa spirits are predominantly, but far from exclusively, women. Papa obia, itself, however, is manufactured only – as far as I can tell – by men and for men. This male-centered property of papa obia is contrasted with the exclusive femininity of bakuu possession states. The ideological opposition we discovered between papa and bakuu is reflected in a perfect dichotomy

of their on-the-ground social situations. While this may seem reasonable to us, given the polarization of the moral code into the two money magics, Ndjuka are surprised and disturbed by it. If it is perfectly understandable to them that papa obia be made by men and for men, it is incomprehensible, and even suspect to see spirits choose to incarnate themselves into only one sex. No other spirit possession cults in Ndjuka are sexually exclusive.

Since the bakuu is defined as a foreign magic, Ndjuka possess a limited amount of normative data about it. Empirical evidence, furnished by the incarnation of bakuu spirits in Ndjuka women is only slowly assimilated into the local theory. Certain constants in bakuu possessions that were evident to me in 1977 were at that time explained away by Ndjuka as deviations from the rule of spirit possession – deviations which they did not attribute to the possessing bakuu spirit, but to human manipulation of the transe media for political purposes. By 1984, however, these characteristics had entered the village theory of bakuu possession. Among them were: 1) the fact that bakuu spirits were unruly, even when tamed, and insisted on breaking the censorship imposed on domesticated spirits of witchcraft by revealing the identity of the witch and mounting an attack on this guilty party; 2) that bakuu spirits possessed only women, 3) that they were ubiquitous, cropping up everywhere and denouncing witches outside the social framework of sickness and diagnosis (see p.4). While women and other people who felt themselves victimized by bakuu witchcraft maintained that these peculiarities were attributable to the nature of bakuu spirits themselves, barassed lantiman bent on keeping order in the village were beginning to become skeptical about some of these trances. By then the very popularity of bakuu possessions had begun to throw discredit upon them and threatened to invalidate the cult. The fact that they manifested themselves only in women awakened the Ndjuka male mistrust of the opposite sex. (see p.6)

Is the bakuu cult the expression of one part of the society more than another? Thoden van Velzen, researching the origins of the Gaan Gadu cult which appeared during the gold rush, discovered this deity to have been ushered into power and maintained by the new entrepreneurial class of boatmen, reflecting their fears and catering to their needs. It developed into a major ecclesiastical institution operating a carry-oracle, which diagnosed and treated illnesses, dispensed blessings, detected witchcraft and exorcized ambivalent spirits. It obviously occupies a very different religious status from that of the dispersed, bewitching manifestations of bakuu spirits “screaming off the tops of women’s heads”.

Lewis’ opposition of central versus peripheral cults would seem to provide a fitting model for determining whose voice is screaming most loudly through bakuu possession. Furthermore, the example of bakuu possessions offers an appropriate test for Lewis’ thesis: that such amoral, religiously marginal spirits are the expression of marginalized social groups who, through their possessions, call attention to themselves without actually over-throwing the established order, give vent to their frustrations and manage, in varying degrees, to obtain material and social concessions from the central group in power. Of these inferiorized social groups, Lewis pays particular attention to that of women, who recur consistently in anthropological literature in connection with such cults. Examples (perhaps more true in Somali than universally) of women falling ill from

domestic pressures, of their complaints being attributed to possession, of these possessions becoming chronic and the women joining curative cult groups – these are seen by Lewis as a “stratégie universelle employée par les femmes pour parvenir à leurs fins quand elles ne peuvent y arriver plus directement.”<sup>(87)</sup> Do Ndjuka women seize on the bakuu expression to break through the marginalization of their sex and the depressing cycle of domestic problems?

From all that we have said about the symbolism of bakuu, it is obvious that the problems it addresses are of concern to the whole society, not just women. Yet it is solely women who incarnate the bakuu (although men may also be victimized by it). This special relationship between women and bakuu needs to be explained.

The most delicate problem is determining to what extent women can be considered marginal in this matrilineal society. Certainly the role they play is marginal to the judiciary process: they rarely are called to sit on clan councils, although they participate in reunions at lower levels. They are eminently capable of jural reflection and exposition however, and may take over this role in the absence of an appropriate male figure. They may also play important behind-the-scenes roles in making interpretations which are later stated by the men. I once saw a woman cooking a meal as she advised a kabitên from another quarter as to what stand he should take on a particular issue. While women no longer occupy important posts in the secular lanti<sup>(88)</sup>, they are central to the oracular direction of Gedeonsu<sup>(89)</sup> and may assume virtually any sort of possession state that they can handle convincingly. Sometimes very young women become possessed of spirits – particularly benevolent ancestor spirits – of such magnitude that they become full-time specialists, earning significant sums of money and playing politically interesting roles. At this point prestige, power and financial return fall to them.

Women are traditionally forbidden to roam in search of employment or markets for their produce as men do; however all agricultural produce belongs to them, and they are free to dispose of the surplus at will. Women are obliged to be more obedient to lineage authority than are men, and to their husbands when they are married. They usually take a back seat to men, their artistic creations are given less consideration, their sexual freedom is more curtailed and taboos exclude them from circulating in the village during menses and after childbirth. They see themselves as put upon by the rules of society and openly say that it is easier and more fun to be a man. But I have not found that they internalized an inferior image of themselves but simply submit to a set of rules which they must respect if they are to create a good reputation for themselves. This means that at any change or suspension of the rules, at any absence of male figures, women can easily step into roles from which society normally barred them.

Most important, women are central to the reproduction of the social group. Girls are roundly seen as more important to have than boys, for, as one Ndjuka man expressed it, “they make society and care for the world”. Men, though they may play the leading roles in its direction, are incapable of replicating the social group. Here, the complaints of male members are numerous: they must pay to raise children that are not really theirs and whom they may not raise as they wish, direct or punish as they see fit unless this coincides with the view of the children’s lineage.

Their children may be taken away from them at any time if the matrilineage obliges the wife to divorce, or if she chooses to leave her husband: the children, even though by then they may be adults who have grown up with their father, are supposed to follow her.

Certainly it is possible that women express, through their personal spirit possessions, frustration with their meager, indirect part of the coastal riches which their husbands enjoy freely. It is possible, too, that modern erosion of the importance of female roles and contradictions between them raised by present emigration also give rise to frustration and confusion which can be sorted out and blasted away in extatic bakuu accusations. But why these spirit possessions become meaningful to women appears to relate to her CENTRAL position in society which is being jeopardized by the race for riches, rather than her essential marginality.

Undoubtedly, too, the bakuu must become personally significant for a woman if she is to incarnate it in transe. Yet in Ndjuka the bakuu transe does not seem to be born out of a personal domestic crisis as Lewis suggests. The personal histories of bakuu mediums show too wide a variety to be able to single out any common characteristic. Nor does the proposition of conscious manipulation or unconscious strategy appear appropriate to female bakuu possession. The very fact that in the last year Ndjuka have suspected cases of exaggeration or imposture is the exception that proves the rule: these are possessions judged as "false" and thrown out of court, not listened to or turned into mediumship. They are possessions expressing issues or feelings too personal to the possessed, rather than ones that incarnate a social consensus.

Rather than reacting, through bakuu possession, to the marginalization of her sex, Ndjuka women may be sounding cries of alarm over a threat to the fundamental matrilineal structure of society to which they are consciously and proudly central. To the extent that central figures (including men) feel as they consciously do – that the basic social group is being eroded in the process of masculine emigration, who better to represent the dangers to it than its female reproducers? Such an interpretation would suggest that it is not the possessed woman alone who defines her bakuu victimization. Rather that the diagnosis of a bakuu attack arises from a complex consensus of the possessed, the lineage group, and professional interpreters of the supernatural who officially pronounce the verdict of suffering. Reviewing the eight cases I know from Tabiki in which bakuu possessions were awarded mediumship, I find that six of them began with a chorus of voices murmuring over a sick-bed. Far from being a personal stratagem of an individual woman, successful bakuu possession is rarely on the initiative of the possessed only.<sup>(90)</sup> More often it seems that the bakuu results from the diagnosis of an illness, when a spiritual cause has intentionally been sought, or proposed by an inspired priest or medium. The treatment of herbal baths designed to "cool the heart" of the attacking spirit leave it the option of rising to the head (in transe) of its victim, and becoming a possessing spirit.

The myriad communications between members living in a small group, and the low profile adopted by the sick individual usually mask (especially to the outsider) how much that sick individual may have done to influence the diagnosis. But even in those cases where she may have voiced strong personal convictions that she was indeed bewitched by someone sending

something<sup>(91)</sup> such an opinion must receive support from prominent personalities in her matri-group or it will be quickly dismissed. The diagnosis of bakuu carries this one step further, defining precisely what kind of witchcraft was sent against her. The bakuu definition represents a finality, reached by a collaboration of the possessed and her matri-group, and capped by the pronouncement of an obiaman, priest, or medium. It seems that it is more often this latter who takes the responsibility for singling out a specific spirit of witchcraft – in this case the bakuu. These interpreters of the supernatural would seem to play an important role in the development of the bakuu cult; who are these men?

It is interesting to note that only two types of obiaman actually handle cases of bakuu possession. In most of the cases known to me these were the ones originally treating the victim and who first pronounced the diagnosis. These are mediums (or medium-priests: basi) of either Yôoka or Komanti. Mediums of Papa and Ampuku are considered to have spirits too weak to deal with the bakuu. So it is the most central and strongest of cults that define and domesticate the bakuu! They tap the deepest spiritual roots of the society: the Komanti cult that “heads the canoe” and the ancestors who direct all relations between spirits and humans. But by defining the bakuu as the cause of an illness priests of these cults take the first step toward bringing about bakuu possession. By a strange paradox, it would seem, it is these most traditional obiaman who are the instigators of bakuu possession. It is, furthermore, they who have defined bakuu possession as too dangerous (once it has risen to the head) to exorcize.

By their own definition of the situation, and by their handling of individual cases, these ideologically conservative priest-mediums usher the new bakuu cult into being, and at the same time deplore it. Why this discrepancy between their avowed religious affinities and their aberrant new religious creations? These artisans of the supernatural, as representatives of traditional lowetin ideologies find themselves in positions, vis à vis their cults, similar to women’s position in relation to the weakened matrilineage. The Komanti cult and the values it represents are presently losing importance, eclipsed by the focus on coastal materialism. The Komanti disciple must undergo a lengthy subordination to his initiating basi: this is onerous to the newly emancipated Ndjuka youth and the adoption of Bakaa living styles on the coast make Komanti taboos hard for emigrants to keep. Komanti mediumship, according to the cult priests, is then considerably less sought-after than it used to be. Cult knowledge is eroding rapidly, withheld by embittered basi. Incarnated ancestral spirits do not impose the same rigors as Komanti, and their cult is not suffering the same fate. But, as we have seen, the values and esoteric knowledge to which ancestry refers are seriously neglected by a generation which itself begins to turn Bakaa.

Contrary to Lewis’ thesis that marginal, amoral spirits represent marginal groups, here we find that the bakuu are being defined, interpreted and trimmed for mediumship by those people whose roles are most central to traditional Ndjuka society. But, in support of Lewis’ theory, we observe that these central figures are witnessing the decline in the social and sacred values they represent. So, in what seems to be an angry demonstration of the dangers ahead, and a cry of alarm, Yôoka mediums and Komanti mediums collaborate with women to fashion a being that



represents the polar opposite of all they stand for.

This promotion of bakuu spirits works against the traditional cults, for it momentarily withdraws candidates from Papa and Komanti mediumship. Traditionally, someone found to be bewitched, often had the evil spirit exorcized and was given mediumship to a Papa or Komanti to protect him from further ravages. Traditional cult membership was thereby augmented as a bulwark against witchcraft. The defining of possessing bakuu as too dangerous to exorcize means that obiaman are inadvertently producing membership to spirits that stick in their craw, at the expense of the traditional cults they uphold. They become responsible for the proliferation of spirits incarnating the weaknesses, hatreds and vulnerabilities of their society instead of promoting those positive, transcendent spiritual forces. These obiaman or priests or mediums foster anti-cults, bereft of any guiding inspiration, of any hope or renewal or spiritual purpose.

By so doing, obiaman and possessed women reproduce, in the form of a spiritual paradox, the social contradiction in which they find themselves with regard to men's emigration and quest for riches: they deplore the acculturation but they love the wealth, and aspire to keep it flowing in profiting from it themselves. Despite the inherent contradiction, by elaborating and animating the opposing magical categories of papa and bakuu, women and obiaman are reducing stress and maintaining the psychological (if not the social) status quo, allowing the society to indulge in a race for riches that is constantly justified and reaffirmed as necessary and positive to Ndjuka life.

## NOTES

- (1) Ndjuka religion is a composite system of beliefs and practices synthesizing contributions from a large number of ethnic groups of West and Central Africa. For speculations on contributing groups see Price (1976); on these groups with specific reference to religion see Wooding (1972-a) and Price (1973-b); for considerations on the process of synthesizing see Mintz and Price (1976).
- (2) This report is based on research carried out between 1976 and 1978; in 1979; and finally in 1983–4 thanks to funding from the Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo.
- (3) Traditional secrecy, high mobility, and lately emigration, have prevented any accurate census being established for Bush Negro tribes. Thoden van Velzen (1977) noted a rough estimation of Ndjuka at 15,000 for 1970. Ndjuka are in demographic expansion.
- (4) De Groot, personal communication.
- (5) De Groot, (1969), p.14.
- (6) Like the number twelve, thirteen is of purely symbolic value. In relation to the clan of Gaanman, it emphasizes the apartness of this somewhat “royal” clan.
- (7) Pakosi (1976), pp.21–22.
- (8) The position of eldest member is not sex-specific. Its importance comes from the accumulation of knowledge and the retention of this for the use of the mbêê. This knowledge and wisdom make the eldest mbêê member its ultimate authority.
- (9) Lanti – as neutral public authority can be instantly and momentarily invested in any of the eldest and most prestigious figures present, including women. However, each village counts a certain number of officially recognized latiman salaried by the national government of Surinam. Important issues are discussed in councils called kuutu which, convoked at appropriate levels of the social structure, select relevant lantiman, lineage elders, representative adult males and sometimes women.
- (10) Wolbers, (1854), p.167.
- (11) Benoit, (1839), p.62.
- (12) Parris, (1981), p.175.
- (13) Price, (1973-a), p.12.
- (14) Lenoir, (1973), pp.20–21.
- (15) Wolbers, (1854), p.176.
- (16) de Groot, (1977), p.10.
- (17) *Ibid*, pp.10–11.
- (18) Benoit, (1839), p.60.
- (19) de Groot, (1977), p.66.
- (20) *Ibid*, p.67.

- (21) This is true whether the Bakaa in question be a government official or a personal friend or client: to what is requested, to what is received, more is asked.
- (22) This is, of course, from the Ndjuka point of view. As for the colonial government, it had modelled its peace treaty on that signed in 1739 with the Jamaica Moroons (de Groot, (1977), (1977), p.11).
- (23) Levi-Strauss, (1967), p.100.
- (24) de Groot, (1977), p.15.
- (25) *Ibid*, p.44.
- (26) Benoit, (1839), p.62.
- (27) de Groot, (1975), p.47.
- (28) Lenoir, (1973), p.25.
- (29) Vidal, (1862), p.255.
- (30) Thoden van Velzen, (1983), p.13.
- (31) Kobben, (1967), p.14.
- (32) Thoden van Velzen, (1977), p.96.
- (33) *Ibid*, p.97.
- (34) *Ibid*.
- (35) *Ibid*, p.101–2.
- (36) Thoden van Velzen, (1977), p.113, speaks of a “labour aristocracy”. It should be noted, however, that of all the evils of emigration cited by the Ndjuka, this is the only one on which they are silent.
- (37) Obiaman is the Ndjuka term, bonuman the Creole term for what we might gloss as “magician”. The obia – a magic or magical medicine – channels powers from outside – from special forces or highly charged plants, or spirits or deities into use by human being. Obia is never bad magic. Obiaman may also be basi – priests of spirit cults, and medium.
- (38) van Renselaar, (1963).
- (39) Self-deprecating comparisons with Bakaa are constantly repeated by Ndjuka.
- (40) Also see Price (1983) for discussion of esoteric knowledge among the Saramaka.
- (41) What “goes wrong” usually takes the form of an illness.
- (42) Part of a prayer made as a libation in the bush during the “washing” rites of a possessing spirit not yet officially identified as a bakuu.
- (43) kwaka is bitter manioc that has been prepared as a dry, instant cereal.
- (44) Stoelmanseiland is a settlement including hospital, clinic, airstrip, guest house, army barracks, etc, founded in the early 1950’s at the junction of the Lawa, Maroni and Tapanahony rivers.
- (45) Price, (1975), p.32.
- (46) Villages differ in the self-determination and mobility they allow clanswomen. A certain laxity in some villages during the 1970’s had resulted in single women moving to the coast and supporting themselves by prostitution. Tabiki, the village where I worked, did not allow

- single women to go for more than a three-month visit.
- (47) Thoden van Velzen, (1982).
- (48) Young Ndjuka mothers in their early twenties are beginning to show a disinterest in the abundant progeny that was the great ambition of their mothers. Some living in coastal areas now use contraceptives.
- (49) I would like to thank Da Amsoi for this story.
- (50) I came across this phenomenon only in the last days of my stay in 1984. I do not know if this tongue is similar to that spoken by mediums of Ampuku. My single informant reported that “loango” is also called, “booko-afiikan” (broken African) and that it was a tongue which evolved through the wanderings of African peoples – i.e. a pidgin or creole. The few examples he could reproduce for me in a waking state contained a majority of French words.
- (51) Wooding, (1972-a), p.46.
- (52) Medeiros, (1984), pp.67–70.
- (53) Verger, (1957), p.105.
- (54) *Ibid*, p.233.  
Among coastal Creoles in Surinam, one finds the belief in Papa snakes used in precisely the same way as the bakuu is reported to be used. See Herskovits and Herskovits, (1936), and Wooding (1972-b).
- (55) An example of a relationship between the abnormally born (Tohossou) in Dahomey and Dan appears in Verger, (1957), p.1.
- (56) Although it is the most frequently blamed for problems in productive and reproductive life and for aberrant life-styles, informants say that these can also be produced by witchcraft. In the Opo, where Thoden van Velzen worked, these same problems are more readily attributed to Ampuku spirits: Thoden van Velzen, (1982), p.63.
- (57) Winti is really a possessing spirit – the term here is being used lightly.
- (58) King, (1864), p.16.
- (59) Four categories of plants exist, corresponding to the four spirit cults. Their use, however, is not limited to operations concerned with the spirit world. See Vernon, “Ndjuka Medecine”, n.d.
- (60) I found French Guyanese of various ethnic groups familiar with the bakuu. As for Guyana, mention is made of a bakoo in *A Man Come Home* by Roy Heath, p.68.
- (61) Wooding, (1972-b), pp.62–3.
- (62) For the Matawai, where the bakuu is designated by the word bakulu see de Beet and Sterman, (1981), pp.299–301; and Green (1977), pp.261–2; for the Aluku, see Hurault, (1961), p.253; for the Para, Wooding, (1972-a), pp.347–8; for the Opo Ndjuka van Wetering, in *Maroon Societies*, p.370; for Paramaribo in the 1930’s, Herskovits and Herskovits (1936) pp.106–9. For the Bilo Ndjuka of 1920, see van Lier, (1944).
- (63) The belief in djumbis in the Leeward Islands, baka, zombis and Bakulu Baka in Haiti (Courlander and Métraux), duppies in Jamaica (Leach, 1961), gardiens d’argent, esprits libres et

esprits engagés de la Martinique (see Laplante et Revert). Herskovits relates the tar baby of American Negro lore to the Surinam bakuu (Herskovits, 1958).

- (64) Among the Amerindians of the Corentyne river, see Sanders, (1982) p.154. Among the Caribs of Bigi Poika, Lesley Forrest, personal communication.
- (65) Although Wooding's formal fieldwork was conducted during the aforementioned dates, Wooding had a longstanding familiarities with Para culture, being himself a Para.
- (66) This is the title he gives his thesis in its English publication.
- (67) See King (1981) and de Ziel, (1973).
- (68) King, (1981), pp.54–5.
- (69). van Lier, (1971), p.183.
- (70) Verin, (1963), pp.175–6.

Le ti-bolom est un feotus provenant des premières grossesses d'une femme et qui, peu avant la naissance, a été volé par des gens gagés. On peut aussi le créer à partir d'un oeuf mie à couvrir le vendredi saint. Le ti-bolom dort désormais sous le lit de son maître, est emporté par celui-ci dans son sac, et nourris d'aliments frais. Le ti-bolom nécessite la fabrication préalable d'une poupée de cire. Les propriétaires des magasins les utilisent pour surveiller les gérants et dans des buts lucratifs. (Les gens gagés sont dits avoir le pouvoir de mystifier les gens avec lesquels ils ont des relations d'affaires et de leur rendre des sommes inférieures à ce qui leur est dû.) Insatisfait, un ti-bolom peut chercher à tuer son maître. A la mort de celui-ci il retourne sur les routes en compagnie des gens gagés et des zombis.

- (71) A review of the literature suggests that the bakuu was always an ambivalent spirit – and the closest to witchcraft in the bush pantheon. It seems to me possible that this greater ambivalence might have to do with a particularity which the bush bakuu may have lost, but which is present in the modern bakuu – that of being a dead soul. In fact, while it is obvious that many similar, interrelated, and synonymous beliefs from Africa accreted to form the bush bakuu, its name probably comes from the two Dahomean words: ba – to bring into contact with – and ku – death. (*Manuel Dahoméen* – Delafosse). In Spieth, p.110, we find mention for the Anlo of Gbaku – as the spirit of an ancestor. Was the bush bakuu originally a dead spirit that (in a manner known throughout West and Central Africa) returned to the bush? Such dead souls that deviated from ancestry were frequently employed by sorcerers (see Herskovits, – *A.A.A. Memoirs* 41 – p.33; or Balandier, p.251).
- (72) While the original bush bakuu could have been a dead soul, it was essentially one which was free-roaming like other bush spirits. With the new version of the bakuu, we have the development of the idea of a captive soul (see Herskovits & Herskovits, p.106), which may simply be an extension of the preference by the Greoles of using the yôoka (ghost) as a witch device (Herkovits and Herkovits, p.103). This aspect may have evolved under the inspiration of such West Indian ideas as the djumbi (captive soul in a bottle).
- (73) The Matawai prophet King, the Para, and the Bilo Ndjuka all credit the fortune-hunters with its use.

- (74) I think this is the sense we should make of a curiously “mixed” version which appears in van Lier (1944) of a bakuu made half of wood and half of flesh. Ven Wetering (1973) remarks in a footnote that such a belief is denied by her informants in the Opo as being a Ndjuka belief. The present reference of the incarnate money bakuu to various bush themes and animals in Bilo Ndjuka may also represent such vestiges.
- (75) This belief has actually passed out of existence in some people’s lifetimes. I presume that a bush bakuu may similarly have been known to the Paramaka, and been eclipsed by the financial version early in the 20th century when this small tribe threw open its doors to acculturating influences.
- (76) See Thoden van Velzen (1966) and Vernon (1980) for two versions of the Malobi kunu.
- (77) See Thoden van Velzen, (1975), (1977), (1978).
- (78) As far as we can tell, from van Lier’s description (1944), the bush bakuu did not give rise to possessions, or at least not to formal mediumship. The precedents for modern bewitching bakuu spirits’ being elevated to the rank of purged, respectable spirits is probably on the one hand, their earlier treatment as kunu, and on the other, the occasional custom in the Bilo region of transforming bewitching Ampuku spirits into household protectors through purification rites. This technique appears to be applied in the Opo only Ampuku spirits that come for reasons other than witchcraft. The decision to keep and tame a bewitching spirit and train it for proper mediumship seems to be related, both on an individual level and on the level of large collectivities, to the absence of prominent or relevant transcendent forces which can take the risk of exorcizing the evil. I find the practice of “adoricism” for bewitching spirits most prevalent in the Bilo (far from the protection of Gaan Gadu), among minor basi, and in relation to the new and more dangerous bakuu spirit.
- (79) This indigenous illustration of how the new dangers are introduced in no way reflects bakuu (or any other) witch-accusations, which never, to my knowledge, incriminate the young. A personal vulnerability to witch accusations develops with age, based on the reputation one makes for oneself. Suspicions may be murmured about people as young as thirty, but I know of no case of accusations voiced against anyone under forty.
- (80) In 1983 the news that Ndjuka men living in the city could be drafted by the new military government elicited in the river villages the horrified reflection that they would be armed and sent “home” to take over and impose their own army rule. “Bakaa don’t have to come after us to kill us any more,” said one elder, “they can just give us guns and we’ll kill each other for them.”
- (81) Wealth becomes something alienable from its human owner. As Taussig demonstrated for Columbia and Bolivia, this sort of imagery may represent a recognition by peoples of pre-capitalist economies of the commodity fetishism they sense to be inherent in capitalism. (Taussig, p.124.)
- (82) A new possessing spirit must present itself and its parents by name.
- (83) For the same predictions among the Saramaka see Price (1983).

- (84) Thoden van Velzen was told the same thing in the Opo, where witchcraft by the modern bakuu was not practiced. (Personal communication)
- (85) In fact, it is not really Ndjuka he speaks, but a Ndjukaized Sranan (city creole).
- (86) That this regretted, negative worship must nevertheless be considered a spirit cult comes across clearly when talking to Ndjuka. It is stated that the final, purged bakuu spirit stands as a positive oracle which can be called on in need by anyone – even the witch originally responsible for having sent it to kill! This is ample demonstration of how far removed the domesticated bakuu spirit is from his first evil employment. Thoden van Velzen (1983), emphatically states that no bakuu cult exists, that cleansing processes for bakuu such as practiced for Ampuku do not exist, that there is no social utility for bakuu spirits (although their purification leads to the same minor, positive mediumship and magic-making as other Ampuku spirits incarnated by women). We contest his point of view; our data contradicts it.
- (87) Lewis, (French translation, 1977) p.90.
- (88) The present kabitên of Tabiki told me that his grandmother was offered the position of kabitên (lebi-jaketi), and the more minor-kabitênship went to a man; however, this was subsequently altered, with the more prestigious lebijaketi (red-jacket kabitênship) going to the man, and the woman trading down for the blaka-jaketi kabitênship. There are no women kabitêns at present as far as I know in the Bilo region.
- (89) Although knowledge of this god is said to have been brought from the plantation, and its first appearance cited at Mama Ndjuka in the bush, its first great possession transe is said to have been that of a Tabikan woman, Asafé, sometime during the 19th century. Since that time, its priesthood has passed to female inheritors, working with a male team and other female subordinates. Today the priesthood is held by a triumvirate, one of whom is a woman.
- (90) I know only two such cases: in one, the woman was never sick, but simply was carried off into the forest by the spirit. The bakuu revealed itself to be that provoked by a theft committed by the girl's uncle. The other case occurred in 1976, and represented the extension of that year's crisis bakuu witch accusation into another lineage. The medium was therefore sure in advance of the "rightness" of her incarnation.
- (91) Causality, in illness, when a serious diagnosis is sought, identifies a spirit responsible for the illness, and a human fault or act that has activated the spirit. When there is no very obvious cause pending in the social context, the interpretation must be sought, tested out, and the social and spiritual components are then produced piecemeal. In the case of someone who is convinced he is being bewitched, he may bear a heavy responsibility for the general witchcraft definition, but he will most likely leave its specific spiritual definition (i.e., Ampuku, bakuu, poisoning, etc.) up to the "neutral" obiaman or basi, who is best armed for distinguishing the exact nature of a spirit.

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