

| Translation |



Bodies, kinship and power(s) in the Baruya culture*

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The themes developed in the present text, written in 1998, appeared in conclusion to an earlier piece of work on the relationship between the sexes and the different forms of power and hierarchy among the Baruya, a population living in the interior highlands of New Guinea (Godelier 1982; 1986). This was the theme of the “sexed” body, which functions as a ventriloquist’s dummy, constantly invited to speak about and to testify for (or against) the prevailing social order. The idea was that the way the body is represented stamps each person’s innermost subjectivity with the order or orders that prevail in his or her society and which must be respected if the society is to be reproduced.

A body is made of flesh, blood, bone, breath and one or more spirits, all of which are possessed by everyone, male or female; but there are also organs – a penis, a clitoris, a vagina, breasts – and substances – semen, menstrual blood, milk – which not all people have and which make individuals different or alike. All cultures have answers to the questions of where the bones, the flesh, the blood, the breath or a person’s spirit come from: from the father, from the mother, from both, from neither and in that case, from where? But not all cultures bother to account for every component of the body: some say nothing about semen, others pass over blood, or bone, ... and these silences speak volumes.

Among the many representations of the body, those having to do with the making of children – conception, intra-uterine growth, development after birth – occupy a strategic position because it seems that they usually fulfill two important functions for a society. First of all they legitimize the appropriation of each child that is born by a group of adults that regards itself as the child’s kin. And secondly, they assign this child a future destiny and position in society according to its sex, male or female, which it has from birth. It is specifically this category of representations that we will address in the following pages.

* Translated by Nora Scott.

We have therefore left to one side a whole series of details about the body which enable the Baruya explain the nature and origin of disease, death, accidents and so forth, in sum to account for evil, misfortune, illness and bad luck, which are usually interpreted as the doings of evil spirits or the results of sorcery between Baruya or on the part of enemy tribes. In this line we would have to analyze what the Baruya think about vomited blood, urine, feces, mucus, nail parings, pieces or flakes of skin, hair and so on. But we will not be doing this here.

Of course everything anthropologists place under the heading of “bodily substances” is a series of fantasized ideas and images, which refer to imaginary concepts, causes or effects, but which are important in determining the way people behave and society works. The analysis presented here must therefore be understood as part of a vast anthropological effort over the last twenty years to come to grips with the relationship between gender, forms of kinship, initiation practices, ritualized (homo- and hetero-) sexuality, found in the many social configurations encountered in New Guinea, and more generally throughout Oceania.¹

I will proceed in two stages. First, I will attempt to review the information we have on these themes, and then move on to an analysis which brings out the relations of appropriation, of domination, or simply of tribal and ethnic membership that are signified through the Baruya’s representations of the body and which are instilled into the body of every Baruya from birth. The first part therefore reiterates a good deal of information contained in earlier publications. But this has been summarized and references provided for further information. I have also added a number of new elements concerning blood, bone and Baruya names.

So we will begin with the question:

What is a child for the Baruya?

For the Baruya, children are the product of sexual intercourse between a man and a woman, combined with the intervention of the Sun, the cosmic power which, by disengaging himself from the Earth from which he had originally been indistinguishable and rising into the sky above her, followed by the Moon, brought the first period of the Universe to a close and established the cosmic order as we now know it. Moon, in the exoteric versions of the Baruya myth, is the wife of Sun; but in the esoteric versions of the shaman master, Moon is Sun’s younger brother. Both are at the origin of the alternation of the seasons and the success or failure of crops. If the sun comes too close to the earth, all growing things are scorched and they wither; and if the moon comes too close, the world grows cold and wet.

1 Among others, I would like to mention D. Battaglia (1986, 1990), A. Bensa (1990), A. Biersack (1983), P. Bonnemère (1990), B.J. Clay (1977), D.A. Counts (1983), P. Errington and D. Gewertz (1987), D.S. Gardner (1987), G. Gillison (1983), M. Godelier (1982, 1991), G. Herdt (1982, 1984, 1987), P. Hinton and G. McCall (1983), A. Itéanu (1983), L. Josephides (1991), B. Juillerat (1986), B. Knauff (1987), D. Kulick (1985), E. Lipuma (1988), E. Mandeville (1979), A. Meigs (1984), M. Mosko (1983), M. Panoff (1968, 1976), P.J.P. Poole (1984, 1985), L. Serpenti (1984), A. Sorum (1984), A. Strathern (1981, 1982), M. Strathern (1987, 1988, 1991), J. Van Baal (1984), R. Wagner (1983), J. Weiner (1980, 1982), A. Weiner (1978, 1980), M.W. Young (1987).

In the beginning, man and woman each had a sexual organ and an anus, but these were not pierced and could not be used. One day Sun took pity on them and tossed a flint stone into the fire. The stone exploded and pierced the sexual organs and the anus of the man and the woman, who ever since have coupled and had children. During one of the opening rituals of the male initiation ceremonies, all of the fires burning in the villages are extinguished, and the “first fire” of the big ceremonial house, the *tsimúia*, is lit by striking two sacred flint stones together. These flint stones once belonged to a special clan, whose ancestor received them from Sun himself together with the spell for their use. In everyday life, the Baruya light their fires by friction, never by striking.

In another version, it is not Sun, but the woman, who - indirectly - pierced the man’s penis. She stuck the bone from the wing of a bat into the trunk of a banana tree at the height of the man’s genitals, and he accidentally impaled himself. Enraged with pain, and guessing that it was the woman who had put the bone there, the man seized a sharp piece of bamboo and, with one swipe, slashed her sexual organ. Today a few old Baruya women still wear this kind of very thin bone - normally used as an awl or a needle - in the septum of their nose, like a dart. Moon is also the one who pierces young girls at puberty and makes their menstrual blood flow for the first time. According to some informants, Sun helps Moon in this task. When a girl has her first period, a man, her mother’s brother as a rule, pierces her nose without any ceremony, in broad daylight and in the village. Menstrual blood is dangerous for men. It is a constant threat to their strength and health, and sometimes a woman who wants to kill her husband by sorcery will sneak some into his food.

When a young man and a girl get married, the men of the husband’s lineage build the hearth that stands at the center of the house and which will be used for cooking. For several days, or even weeks, until the walls of the house have become blackened with soot from the fire, the young couple is supposed to abstain from making love. The young man fondles his wife’s breasts and gives her his semen to ingest. The semen is supposed to nourish the woman and give her strength for bearing children and working in the fields, but above all it is stored in the young woman’s breasts and will turn into milk when she becomes pregnant and bears a child. Semen, then, is nourishment for the woman and, when it changes into milk, for the children she will bear. Then, when the time comes, the man and the woman have intercourse. This is performed with the man lying on top of the woman. The inverse is forbidden, since the woman’s vaginal fluids would run out onto the man’s stomach and sap his strength and his health. Sexual relations take place in the women’s part of the house, between the central hearth and the door. On the other side of the hearth, the man sleeps alone or with any sons he may have. A woman must never step over the hearth on which she is cooking the family’s food, for fluids from her vagina or dirt from her skirt might fall into the fire and defile the food that goes into the man’s mouth. Were this to happen, she would be accused of practicing sorcery on her husband; he would beat her and, in some cases might even kill her.

A couple does not make love when the woman is menstruating. During these few days, the wife does not live with her husband, but stays in a hut some ten meters from the house or more often on the outskirts of the village, in a place forbidden to men, where all the women go to give birth. A menstruating woman is

not allowed to prepare food for her husband; he is given food by his sisters or daughters, or he cooks sweet potatoes for himself.

A couple does not make love when pigs are to be killed or their meat distributed, when the forest is to be cleared for the big taro fields, when the men are preparing for war, when salt is being crystallized or when the initiation ceremonies are about to begin, and so forth. In short, one does not simply make love anywhere, anytime (and with anyone), for the sexual act affects not only the reproduction of society but also the order of the universe (if sexual taboos are violated, nothing grows in the gardens, the pigs' flesh turns to water, etc.). Sexual relations are thought and experienced as dangerous *by their very nature*, and they are even more dangerous when they are illegitimate, performed in secret, in forbidden places (gardens, the bush...).

A child is conceived when the man's semen enters a kind of pouch, *tandatta*, in the woman's womb and is retained. Semen makes the child's bones, its skeleton. The blood normally comes from the man and "grows" as the embryo develops. But the Baruya say that, in some cases, the mother's blood passes into the child, and this child will look like its mother or some member of her lineage. During the pregnancy, Sun intervenes in the woman's womb and gives the embryo its final shape. He completes the child by causing its fingers and toes to grow, and by fashioning its nose, mouth and eyes. In other words, he completes the four limbs and the head.² The sun is called *Nila* in standard Baruya, but in more familiar language it is known as *Noumwe*, the term of affection used for addressing one's father and one's father's brothers.

The Baruya consider the nose and the prominent part of the forehead to be the seat of intelligence and "wisdom." It is also the passageway for the breath of life. A boy's nose is pierced at the time of the initiations, and the hole is subsequently enlarged over the years to hold the objects symbolizing the changes in the man's status (signs of the different initiation stages, the insignia of shamans, warriors, cassowary hunters, etc.).

2 In Baruya mythology, there is a character called Djoue, the ancestor of the wild dog, who is something of an anti-Sun or a negative version of Sun. His existence was revealed to me in 1974, by Inamwe, the master of the shamans' initiations; he confided to me that he regarded this as his most secret piece of knowledge. For his tale, see Godelier 1982: 243-45; 1986: 156.

In his account, which the Baruya call "a short speech" and we call a "myth," we find some of the basic Baruya thought patterns which attempt to explain the hidden foundations of the social and cosmic orders: Women appeared before men. At that time, they were able to bear children without the help of men. The wild dog put an end to this practice by devouring the woman's children in her womb. Next the woman gave birth to a normal child and had incestuous relations with her son. They had a daughter, and the brother in turn had incestuous relations with his sister. Mankind was born of two acts of incest, but thereafter incest between mother and son, and brother and sister was forbidden, even though - according to the Baruya - men still have the desire to lie with their sisters. The wild dog became the eagle, the bird of the sun and of shamans. He has remained in the service of the shamans, who secretly send him with the men when they go hunting or to war. And at the same time the dog became also all the marsupials of the forest and the source of the game men present to the initiates and to women; unlike the domestic pig, this game owes nothing to the work of women or to the cultivation of plants.

The body also means the liver. The liver is the seat of strength and life. The heart, on the other hand, does not have the same importance for the Baruya. The liver is gorged with blood. Enemy shaman-sorcerers feed on livers. The Baruya are of the opinion that their own shamans do not devour the liver intentionally (that would be sorcery). When they do, it is thought that they are driven to this extremity by hunger and are unaware of what they are doing (witchcraft). Formerly, in times of war, the Baruya used to torture some of their enemies, primarily famous warriors they had succeeded in capturing. After breaking their arms and legs, they would deck them in their best feathers. Then a band of young warriors would come running down a hill, brandishing ceremonial bamboo knives wrapped in a strip of beaten bark, dyed red, the color of the sun, and would plunge the knives into the prisoner's chest. The blood from the wounds was collected in bamboo tubes and rubbed onto the spectators – men, women and children. Finally someone would slit open the victim's abdomen and tear out his liver, which would be divided among the men in attendance and eaten raw or cooked. Nowadays, during male initiations, the men kill a marsupial with very long teeth, which is dangerous to catch barehanded; the animal is then cut open with a ceremonial knife and the liver extracted. It is cut into thin strips, which are placed between the halves of an areca nut and given to third- and fourth-state initiates to chew. They are not told what they are chewing.

Finally, the human body is inhabited by one (or more) spirits. For the Baruya, the spirit is something that dwells at the top of the head, inside the skull. Apparently a person's spirit needs some time to take up residence. Sometimes this spirit belonged to an ancestor and re-embodies itself in one of his or her descendants. About a year after a child's birth, when everyone is more confident that it will live and the father has presented a ritual gift to the child's maternal kin, that is to his wife's lineage, the child is given its first name, while the second name, or the "big" name he or she will bear after being initiated, is kept secret for the time being. This name is that of the grandfather or great uncle, or grandmother or great-aunt, depending on the child's sex. Names are handed down to individuals of the same lineage in alternate generations.

Let us pause for a moment here to take a closer look at the nature of Baruya personal names; after all, it is when a person receives a name that he or she becomes a true member of society. An analysis of over four hundred Baruya names shows that half of them (49.5%) refer to the names of trees or wild plants, especially flowers, to which must be added the names alluding to cultivated plants (8%) and those which designate different types of soil or heavenly bodies, stars and meteorological phenomena such as wind, rain and so forth (10%). Also mentioned are many species of birds and a few insects. In all, 67.5% of Baruya names have some connection with nature; and it is striking to see both the extreme importance of wild plants and the forest and, at the same time, the almost total absence of any reference to wild animals, with the exception of birds and insects, but nothing about snakes, marsupials, the cassowary and so forth.

Snakes are not game. The Baruya fear them, even the non-poisonous kinds. They think that snakes "spoil" a woman's womb and make her sterile. But at the same time, the giant python is associated with the origin of menstrual blood. Alternatively, the many species of marsupial are game *par excellence*, as well as the privileged object of exchange between men and women or young male initiates. It is interesting that Baruya are not named after marsupials, whereas they feed the

young boys their raw livers, thus making the animal on more or less the equivalent of the enemy bodies from which the livers used to be taken and eaten ritually during cannibalistic meals. The cassowary, on the other hand, represents woman in her wild state, and women may not eat its flesh. As the cassowary's blood must not be spilled, the birds are snared in a noose, which strangles them. The hunter who sets the trap does not eat the victim, which is reserved exclusively for the young initiates, who eat it in a ritual meal.

The second major category of names refers to toponyms, especially those of rivers and tracts of forest that are good for growing taro or are planted in areca or pandanus (25.8%). All of these lands and rivers are owned by the lineages of the tribe, and it is the male or female descendants of the first owners who bear their names. Most of these sites are located in Marawaka valley, where the Baruya's ancestors took refuge after having been forced to flee the Yoyue tribe to which they originally belonged. We also find the names of rivers flowing through the valleys that were once part of the Yoyue territory. A total of 93.3% of Baruya names designate some aspect of nature or cultivated spots claimed by the Baruya. The rest, 6.7%, refer to a wide variety of phenomena: a cave in a cliff, the flat roof of a house, a bird snare, an ax-handle, lizard eggs, pig names, a bowstring, perspiration, the fact that someone is the daughter of a man who died before her birth, and so on.

Thus the first major point we see in the Baruya naming system is that a very large proportion of names identify their bearer with some natural element, primarily from the plant world, except for birds and insects.

The foregoing describes the nature of Baruya personal names, but it does not tell us how these names are distributed among the lineages and individuals. There is a tendency for men to have names of trees and toponyms, while women are more often named after flowers and rivers flowing through ancestral territory. Rivers often mark the boundaries of the mountains and forests owned by a clan. In the case of individuals with this type of name, as soon as one hears the name, one knows the person's lineage, since every Baruya knows which lineages own the various parts of the tribal territory.

The essential point, however, is that each lineage possesses a stock of names (of plants, mountains, etc.) which belong to that lineage and which are passed on to every other generation, in other words, from grandfather to grandson, from paternal great-aunt to great-niece, and so forth. Names are not inherited through the maternal line (although women do pass on to their daughters both the names for their pigs and the magic spells for raising them).

Several lineages may refer to the same plant in constructing one of their personal names. In this case, each adds an element so as to distinguish their name from those of other lineages. For instance, the word *maye* means "flowers" in general and more particularly the magic flowers used to adorn the bodies of the initiates and initiators. It is used as a personal name by the Kwarandariar lineage, which belongs the Baruya clan that gave its name to the tribe. *Meyaoumwe* is another name made from the same root, but which designates members of another clan, the Bakia.

Personal names distinguish their bearer clearly then, since they indicate the lineage and clan, and also situate him or her in the Baruya's wild or domesticated

natural environment. Thus the name envelops the person as a skin encloses the body, and it seals in realities that make up the person, but only for his or her lifetime. Nevertheless, it may occur that two people from the same clan have the same name at the same time, which should not happen. This stems from the fact that the tribe is split into two subgroups, one of which lives in Marawaka Valley and the other in Wonenara Valley; the latter are the descendants of the Baruya who left Marawaka at the end of the 19th century in search of a new space. It also sometimes happens that the same name is given to individuals belonging to different clans. This usually creates a problem, and one of the clans accuses the other of having robbed them. All of these practices reflect a strong desire to distinguish individuals while at the same time thinking of the individual as the reproduction or incarnation of an entity (spirit, ancestor, etc.) that is part of a pool specific to each lineage. For the spirit leaves the human body not only after its death but also while it is alive. It can therefore go and take up residence in another person living at the same time, or skip a generation and reincarnate at some later time.

Lastly, we must keep in mind that every person who lives long enough to be initiated receives two names, a “little name” used before initiation, and a “big name,” which a boy receives when his nose is pierced and a girl, when she menstruates for the first time. It is forbidden to go on calling an initiated man or woman by their “little name.” It would shame them. But this leads us to an entirely different chapter, which is the taboos surrounding names. For instance, an initiate may not call a co-initiate by his name, a wife may not pronounce her husband’s name and *vice versa*, and so on. Last of all, a great many individuals have a nickname, which is used much more often than their real name. For example, Koumaineu, a Nouguyé clansman, is called “Tsinname,” “dirty nose” because he has a big broad nose.

The spirit leaves the body when the person is asleep, whether in the daytime or at night. Spirits fly like birds and visit all parts of the Baruya territory. Many stray over the border into enemy lands, where sorcerers try to capture them. The Baruya shamans – male and female – are therefore constantly on the alert, and their own spirits form a sort of magic barrier around the territory to stop Baruya spirits as they are about to cross the boundary. The shamans drive them back into Baruya territory and into their bodies, where they once more take up residence, before dawn or before the end of the nap. But sometimes a spirit does not return to its body. The person goes on living, but now behaves strangely, until one day a shaman discovers that he or she has no spirit, and undertakes the journey that will lead to the spot where an enemy sorcerer is holding its victim captive. Following a successful battle, the Baruya shaman returns with the delivered prisoner and restores it to its body.

These are the main elements of the Baruya’s theory of how children are made. Before going on to analyze the relationship between these ideas and Baruya social structure or models of social organization, however, I would like to complete these ethnographic details by some social representations and practices that have to do with skin, flesh, bones and semen, but which are not directly connected with conception and procreation.

Flesh and bones: death, cannibalism and initiations

Before the Europeans arrived, when an important or widely respected man or woman died, it was customary to stop up the body's orifices and to leave the corpse for several days in a sitting position beside a burning fire. The deceased received many visitors, who would crowd around the body, stroking it, crying over it and insulting it for leaving them, and so on. When several days had elapsed and the body began to decompose, they would flay it and place the pieces of skin in a bark cape, which they would then take into the deceased's piece of forest or into the bushes surrounding his or her house. Then the flesh would be rubbed with blue clay, a color that closes the way to evil spirits, and the first funeral would be held. Depending on the clan and the status of the deceased, the body would be buried or placed on a raised platform.

The dead were buried or exposed in a sort of no-man's land on the side of a mountain, with the head towards their hunting grounds and streams. In most cases, the bodies of great warriors were exposed on a platform with their bow and arrows, and the platform surrounded by a fence, forming a sort of small garden. Taros would be planted beneath the platform so that the deceased's fluids would drip onto the plants as the body decomposed. At the time of the second funeral, the taros would be dug up, and the members of the deceased's family and his or her descendants would transfer them to their own gardens. The earth nourishes humans, but humans enrich the earth they leave to their descendants with their own flesh.

This is a good time to recall that the Baruya and other Anga tribes such as the Watchakes explain the origin of cultivated plants by the murder of a woman, who was killed by her husband and buried in the forest. From her corpse sprang all the plants that humans now cultivate and use (Godelier 1982: 119; 1986: 71).

While the Baruya see agriculture as a sort of transition from the savage state to a state of civilization, they make the murder of a woman the condition of this passage. Even though they acknowledge by this account that women possess a power and a fecundity that men do not, they maintain that it is by doing violence to women that this fecundity, this creative force is set free and placed, *by men*, at the service of all, of society as a whole.

And a last remark on the subject of the body and its flesh: it is important to keep in mind that the Baruya used to be cannibals, and that they ate their enemies, and not only the most valiant enemy warriors killed in battle. They would cut off the arms and legs of a certain number of bodies fallen on the battlefield. That, they said, was easier than carrying back whole bodies. They would eat the limbs either on the way back, if the expedition had taken them far from home – and in this case they would roast them; or they would take them to the village and cook them in pits, like pigs. The fingers were a favorite “delicacy.” It would be untrue to think that the Baruya ate only great enemy warriors whose might they wanted to assimilate. After several years of fieldwork, when my informants thought they could trust me, they confided that their ancestors also used to kill and eat women and children of enemy tribes when they came upon a group in the forest or in the gardens. Their flesh was highly prized. So for the Baruya, the human body is not only strong and handsome, it is also good to eat.

But flesh matters less than bone, for the Baruya, something that is corroborated by the custom of the second funeral. Some months after the body of a great

warrior has been buried or exposed on a platform, his bones are carefully recovered. The bones of his left hand are placed in a *areca* tree along with the skull. The long arm and leg bones are placed in holes in trees or rocks standing on the deceased's hunting grounds or in the forest around his house. The finger bones of the right hand are divided among his paternal and maternal relatives, or given to young boys who seem destined to become great warriors, *aoulatta*. Several years ago, Inaaoukwe, a great warrior, died. Before the European arrival, in 1951, he had single-handedly killed "dozens" of Baruya enemies. Although it had been over 25 years since the Australians had pacified the area, as soon as Inaaoukwe was dead, his close relatives cut off his right hand – the killing hand – and had it dried so as to preserve it. They claimed that they wanted his descendants to be able to show it to future generations whenever his exploits were recounted and celebrated. Another example. Until 1960–61, which is to say two years after the Australians had established the first patrol post at Wonenara and begun to pacify the tribes in the area, the Baruya had carefully kept the hand of one of their legendary heroes, Bakitchatche. Unfortunately, Bakitchatche's fingers went up in smoke when an Australian officer burned down the village where they were kept to punish its inhabitants for having taken up arms against another Baruya village. Such incidents attest the importance of certain ancestral bones in the initiation ceremonies, where they are used to pierce the nose of the young boys just taken from their mother and the women's world.

These bones are also an essential component of the *kwaimatnie*, the Baruya's sacred objects, owned by a few clans, which have the exclusive power to initiate boys and men. Two of the *kwaimatnie* are also used in the initiation of shamans, and, in this case, serve to initiate women as well as men.

A *kwaimatnie* is an oblong parcel some 40 centimeters in length and 12 centimeters across, wrapped in barkcloth and tied up in a *ypmoulie*, the headband worn by men, which is made of strips of bark died red, the color of the sun. Inside the packet, some long, sharp bones and flat "nuts" surround a smooth black stone. All the bones, with the exception of one, come from the eagle. The eagle is the sun's bird. The Baruya charge it with carrying their prayers, breath and spirits up to the sun. But alongside the eagle bones, which can always be replaced, lies a bone that is irreplaceable, regarded as sacred, a bone (from the forearm) of a famous ancestor who passed the *kwaimatnie* on to his descendants, who keep the memory of his name alive.

The word *kwaimatnie* comes from *kwala*, "men" and *yimatnia* "to raise the skin," "to make grow," "to make bigger." So the *kwaimatnie* contain the supernatural power to make children grow. The Baruya also associate the word with another, *nymatnie*, which means "fetus," "apprentice shaman" or "novice." Only certain clans and lineages have inherited such powers, and their ancestors received them directly from Sun at a time when humans were not like they are now but were *wandjinia*, spirits.

In addition to the human and eagle bones, a *kwaimatnie* usually contains the seeds of an inedible fruit found in the forest. These seeds are small, flat discs, purple or brown in color, with a design on one side that looks like the iris of an eye: the Baruya call them "babies' eyes." When the eye is "open" it is a sign of life. Men suck these seeds to purify their mouth when they have been talking about women, and especially when they have discussed subjects having to do with sexual relations, children and so forth. When sucked, these "nuts" transmit to the men

the sun's strength, which spreads "from the roots of their teeth down to their penis."

At the center of the *kwaimatnie* lies a long, smooth black stone. All *kwaimatnie* come in pairs and work as a couple: one is male and the other, female. The more powerful of the two, the "hotter," is the female *kwaimatnie*. Only the representative of the lineage that owns the *kwaimatnie* can use this one. The other, the male *kwaimatnie*, is left to his brothers or to other men from the lineage who assist him in his ritual functions. The existence of these *kwaimatnie* "couples" and the fact that the female is the more powerful are kept strictly secret from women and young boys, even when the latter are initiated.

At the beginning of the initiations the *kwaimatnie*-bearers and their assistants circle the line of boys several times, and then the *kwaimatnie*-men go down the row, striking each child twice on the chest, once on the left, once on the right, with the *kwaimatnie*. As they do this, they silently invoke the secret name of the sun and the magic spell their ancestors handed on to them with the *kwaimatnie*. At this moment, the force of the sun enters the boys' bodies and illuminates them. Then the master of the ritual goes back down the line, stopping before each child, and presses the child's elbows between his hands, then the knees; as he squeezes them, he gives them a twist. Finally, he jerks each child's arms upwards. In short, without going into further detail concerning the rituals performed on the initiates' bodies, it can be said that the *kwaimatnie*-men literally *make* the boys *grow* and *fortify* the weak points of their bodies, the joints. Of course, for the Baruya, these *are not* "symbolic" gestures. They are simply effective because they operate in accordance with a reality that is invisible to non-initiates.

For the Baruya, then, the men's power is an accumulation and a combination of two kinds of power, men's and women's. An essential part of the men's power lies in their semen, which makes the bones and imparts strength. But it is in women's wombs that children grow, and it is women who bring them into the world and raise them. The Baruya recognize the woman's absolute right to kill her child at birth. And many do. As a rule, when his wife comes back from the birthing hut without a child, a man refuses to believe it was stillborn or died shortly after birth. He accuses his wife of having killed it, especially if he learns that it was a boy.

The men endeavor to bring the boys into the world a second time when they are old enough to get along without their mother. They do this by tearing them away from the world of women and initiating them into the secrets of men. The young initiates are regularly nourished with the semen of older boys, third- and fourth-stage initiates, who are already young men but have not yet had sexual relations with a woman and are not yet married. In this manner, the life-giving substance circulates, nourishing and fortifying each new crop of men from one generation to the next. But it circulates among young men and boys who have never had sexual contact with a woman and who are therefore free of the pollution necessarily involved in sexual relations with them.

These gifts flow in one direction only, however: those who receive the semen cannot give their own back to the givers. Unlike what happens when men exchange women, here the takers cannot in turn become the givers. All married men are excluded from giving semen, for actually putting a penis that has entered a woman into the mouth of a boy who has just been separated from his mother and the world of women would be the worst kind of violence and humiliation for a Baruya. Young men of an age to give their semen and who are related on their father's or

mother's side to the initiate are also excluded.³ And so it is beyond the bounds of kinship, beyond the circle of relatives that men act as a group to produce and reproduce their strength, their identity, their superiority over women.⁴ The generalized exchange of semen begins beyond the sphere of the restricted exchange of women. But the collective effort of the men alone could not accomplish the goal were it not for the force of the sun, mediated by the *kwainatnie* owned by the lineages that hold the right to initiate the boys and to make shamans.

It is only by combining and conjoining human and superhuman powers that the men are able to separate the women from their creative capacities and to expropriate these. Men's power therefore is necessarily ambivalent, since it rests both on the explicit denigration of women's powers and on the implicit acknowledgment of their existence. Men can exercise power only by keeping women in ignorance about their own powers.

For the most part, we have seen that these female powers exist only in and through the Baruya's mind and thought processes; and the violence which enables men to appropriate these powers is perpetrated in their minds, it is first of all a conceptual or mental violence [*violence idéelle*]. But this is, in fact, the source of the real ideological violence that men impose daily on women. This original violence, which founded men's supremacy, is continually rehearsed in the tales they hear during the initiation ceremonies. They are told that, long ago, women invented the bow and arrow, but they held the bow backwards. They shot at anything that came along and, in particular, killed too much game; this continued until one day a man stole the bow and turned it around. Since that time, men kill as they should (what they need), and women are forbidden to use bows and arrows. They are also told that women used to own the flutes that are now used in the initiations and which they now may not see on pain of death.

The secret name of the flutes, as revealed to the initiates, is *namboula-mala*. *Namboula* means "tadpole," *mala*, "fight." One Baruya "myth" tells that women existed before men. One day the men appeared to them in the form of tadpoles; the women made them loincloths and miniature bows; later these tadpoles turned into men. But the word *namboula* is also used by men to designate the woman's vagina. It would seem that, for Baruya men, the flutes represent the power contained in women's vaginas and associated with tadpoles, which look like children in their initial, incomplete fetal form. What the men tell the women, on the other hand, is an entirely different story. They say that the sounds they hear in the forest during the initiations are the voices of spirits conversing with the men. Of course young initiates are forbidden, on pain of death, to tell the women that the men produce these sounds using the flutes.

3 Alternatively, among the Sambia, an Anga tribe studied by Gilbert Herdt, maternal kin are reported to give their semen to initiates born to women of their lineage (Herdt 1987: 145-59).

4 It is important to remember that, at the time of the female initiations, during which hundreds of women from the surrounding villages spend several days and nights gathered around the girls who have just menstruated for the first time, one of the most important rituals - unknown to the men - is, I was told, the giving of milk to the initiates by young mothers who have just given birth to their first child and whose breasts are swollen with milk.

In addition to the flutes, the Baruya use bull-roarers to produce frightening noises unlike anything that can be heard in nature. The Baruya say that these bull-roarers were given to men by the *yimaka*, forest spirits, in the shape of “arrows”, which their ancestors found sticking in the trunks of certain trees. These “arrows” are one of the sources of the men’s fighting powers, of their death-dealing powers. When the bull-roarers sound deep in the forest, the initiates’ sponsors go to gather the sap (semen-milk) of a particular tree and come back to place it in the mouths of the young initiates.

In this combination of two opposing powers, a life-giving power and a death-dealing power, one of which was originally in the possession of women, who were dispossessed of it, and the other, from the beginning given to men by the spirits and therefore exclusively theirs, we find the perfect formula for male domination in Baruya society: the accumulation, in the men’s hands, of both the powers that belong to them and those they have stolen from the women.

In short, women, believed by the Baruya to have invented the bow, cultivated plants, the flutes, life, initiations and so on, are seen as having greater creative powers than men. But when the women are left to their own devices, these powers engender chaos. The men were forced to step in and restore order, and to do this, they had to inflict violence on the women, kill them, rob them and so forth. In sum, force or cunning was required to separate the women from the sources of their power so that the men might capture and harness it for the benefit of all.

However, according to the Baruya, male supremacy is never definitively acquired because the women’s powers were *not* destroyed by the acts of violence committed at the beginning of time. Even though they have been appropriated and held captive by men, these powers still exist. That is why chaos would once again erupt if men were ever to relax their hold. The men’s struggle against the women is never-ending. If the order of society and that of the universe (as the rite of the primordial fire at the beginning of the initiation ceremonies testifies) are to be preserved, they must be recreated, as it were, by each generation. And this is precisely what the Baruya are doing when they initiate their boys and build the big ceremonial edifice, the *tsimia*, to house them.

Each pole of the *tsimia*, planted in the ground by a married man, stands for an initiate. Each pole, the Baruya say, is like “a bone,” and the frame of the house is like a huge “skeleton” that they cover with thatch, which they call “the skin” of the *tsimia*. The thatch is brought to the site by hundreds of women of all ages, and laid on and attached to the skeleton of the house by the men, standing on the roof and protected by the shamans from the pollution of the women who have gathered and transported the shocks of thatching material. The *tsimia*, they say, is the body of the Baruya tribe; it contains and represents them, everyone, men and women, young and old, all of the villages and lineages, without distinction. The towering center pole upon which the whole edifice rests is called “Grandfather.” It is the link between the dead ancestors and the new generations of their descendants.

All of this is done in full view of visiting crowds from (temporarily) friendly tribes, who are left to judge for themselves the Baruya’s strength and might, and to understand the wordless message being sent.

The Baruya and their neighbors understand each other not only because they speak the same or closely related languages but also because they share the same culture, the same social representations, the same symbols. They and their neighbors fight each other or make peace, but they all know that they wear the

same ornaments, and that, to be handsome, they do not need to rub their bodies with melted pig fat like the tribes on the other side of the Lamari River, the Awa, the Tairora, and so on. For this fat makes their bodies stink and in a few hours they are even dirtier than before. One does not marry such people.

The Baruya way of existing together is deeply buried in the body (intimacy)

Is it possible for a non-Baruya, without betraying them too much, to examine their ideas about the body and their bodily practices using analytical categories already developed by anthropologists in order to discover some meaning that would permit cross-cultural comparisons (with Melanesian or other cultures)? I believe it is, although I know that, for some of my colleagues, like David Schneider, such an undertaking can only reflect back, indefinitely, through the image we have of others, our own image of ourselves as Westerners and anthropologists (Schneider 1984).

First however, and in support of David Schneider, I would like to make the trivial remark that we must bear in mind that many of what appear to us to be symbols and “symbolic” practices are not symbolic for the Baruya. If a symbol is a *sign* (a sound, a gesture, a natural or man-made object, a substance or whatever), which designates and stands for a thing, a reality other than itself, then the Baruya know as well as we do what a symbol is, and they use them liberally. The ornaments that mark the various stages of initiation, the objects worn in the nose and which tell us that a man is a shaman or a cassowary hunter, the scenes acted out in deep silence before the initiates by two men, one of whom squats in front of the other, head lowered, representing a woman, are a world of signs, of symbols pointing to ranks, powers, rules of conduct, which are thereby constantly held up to be seen and recalled to mind.

But, for the Baruya, something quite different is going on, it seems to me, when the *kwaimatnie*-man strikes the chest of the young initiates with this sacred object, when he pulls their arms and squeezes and twists the weak points of their limbs, when he has them swallow bits of food in which he has concealed leaves from magic plants that he has personally gathered from the ancestral territory at Bravegareubaramanduc. These gestures, these acts performed on the initiates’ bodies are not “symbolic”; they are not images or play-acting. These gestures *really* transmit to the initiates’ bodies the *real* powers contained in the *kwaimatnie*, the force of the ancestors, of the sun, and so forth. They make the officiant the indispensable mediator between human beings and the powers that rule the universe.

These potent gestures full of meaning are performed in an atmosphere of profound silence. Afterwards, the master of ceremonies directs the sponsors to place on the heads of the *tchouwanié*, the third-stage initiates, a headdress made of the beak of a hornbill, mounted on a reed band terminating in two wild-boar tusks, which are dug into the initiate’s forehead. Then they are told the *meaning* of these objects. The hornbill is the man’s penis, the tusks are the woman’s vagina and the placing of one upon the other symbolizes man’s superiority over woman and at the same time the suffering he must expect to undergo from the woman’s vagina, from their future heterosexual relations. This revelation is accompanied by long lectures on the initiates’ new duties to their elders, their wife, their children, interspersed

with accounts of great moments from Baruya history. They are promised – if they live by the Baruya ethic – victory over their enemies, a life of plenty and so on.

It is clear, then, that inasmuch as these conceptions of life and power form a coherent picture and are shared by one and all, men and women, old and young – or at least the portion of this knowledge that each one is supposed to possess in accordance with his or her gender, age and functions –, inasmuch as these ideas have become gestures, actions, ways of organizing relations between individuals, in short, the social “order,” the strongest force maintaining this order is not the violence, in its various forms, perpetrated by men upon women and the young. It is the belief, the subjective acceptance by one and all of these representations; it is this approval that gives rise to the various degrees of more or less profound and sincere consent, to the various ways the initiates have of cooperating more or less voluntarily in the reproduction of an order that humiliates and segregates them temporarily, in the case of boys, or definitively, in the case of women, and may even oppress them.

To the extent that these social representations – which add up to a sort of profile of the individual as seen by the Baruya – are buried deep in each living, concrete individual from his or her birth, they become for each person the objective, a priori social condition of the experience of self and others; they are the paradoxically impersonal, cultural form of the individual’s intimacy. A form that encloses and encompasses this intimacy in a ring of “Baruya” norms and constraints, which mean that the individual can exist and develop only by reproducing, in his relations with himself and others, the organizational and thought patterns upon which the society rests.

What, then, are the organizational principles of Baruya society that are expressed in their ideas about the body and buried deep within the child from infancy.

The relations of appropriation, belonging and domination entailed in the Baruya’s ideas about conception

The Baruya father is represented as the “genitor” of the child, and the mother as the “genetrix.” The father contributes his semen (in Baruya, *lakala alyeu*: “penis water”) to the child’s conception. The mother makes her contribution with her uterus, her womb. Semen produces bone, the bodily framework, that which persists the longest after death. Semen also nourishes the fetus in the woman’s womb. What these social representations tell us is that sexual union is necessary to make a child, but that the man’s role is by far the more important.

The dual role attributed to semen seems to legitimize the fact that from birth the child belongs potentially, through the father’s semen, to his kindred (the child’s patrilineal kin). In short, there is a connection between these representations of semen and the Baruya descent rule, which is the patrilineal principle. In fact, if we also take account of the Baruya’s relative silence on the role of the woman in conceiving a child, we find we are dealing with a veritable primacy of semen. The mother is merely a womb in which the semen is deposited and will develop. Sometimes, however, the mother’s blood enters the fetus and molds it partially in her own image or in the likeness of some member of her own lineage. But without the man’s repeated contributions of semen and Sun’s intervention in the woman’s womb, she would be incapable of bearing a normal, whole, living child.

The primacy of semen does *not* seem to be founded *only* on the patrilineal descent rule governing kinship relations, though. For the Baruya, semen also serves another purpose, that of constructing and legitimizing the simultaneously collective and individual supremacy of adult men over women and over young men; and this domination springs from *somewhere beyond* kinship relations. It is there that we will find the reasons for the positive emphasis placed on men's semen and the negative emphasis on women's menstrual blood: opposite but complementary ways of establishing the same thing: male domination.

None of this prevents the Baruya placing great importance on a person's relations with his or her mother and maternal kin. The mother's sisters are regarded as other mothers, and her brothers are called *api aounic*, "uncles of the breast," to distinguish them from "classificatory" maternal uncles, *api*. Throughout his or her life, a Baruya can count on the affection and protection of his or her maternal uncles and aunts. We might almost speak of a sort of "complementary filiation," to borrow Meyer Fortes' expression. It used to be customary, for a year or so after a child was born, for the mother to keep its face hidden from the father if he was around when she was nursing or washing it. At these times she would wrap a loosely crocheted stringbag around the baby's face. But these precautions were unnecessary in the presence of her brothers, who could look directly at the faces of their nephews and nieces. This taboo was lifted when the child looked like it was going to live, and the father was to give him or her its first name, the name used before initiation. At this time a ceremony was performed in which the father presented the child's maternal kin, his own affines, with gifts of pig meat, salt and sometimes even shells. The father's rights over the child, which up to that point had been only potential, then became "real", without cancelling the privileged ties or the rights of the maternal kin with regard to the child. However, if the child happened to die before this time, it was buried by its mother without ceremony, in an uncultivated spot not far from the village but not on land belonging to its father's kin.

The strong ties between a Baruya boy and his mother's brothers extend to the latter's children as well, to the matrilateral cross cousins. But he is forbidden to marry his matrilateral cross cousins, with whom he has a joking relationship with strong sexual overtones.

The Baruya marriage rule says that a man may not repeat his father's marriage by taking a wife from his mother's lineage. Furthermore, two brothers may not marry two sisters, in other words take women from the same lineage. Marriages are thus governed by two rules, which oblige each generation to contract and multiply new alliances. Two brothers therefore marry in different directions, which means that they often find themselves on opposite sides of a conflict, out of solidarity with their brothers-in-law. It also means that their children, who are parallel cousins, can find themselves opposing each other out of solidarity with their mother's lineage. I think it is probably for this reason that relations with maternal kin tend to grow weaker the further one moves away from the circle of the mother's direct brothers and sisters towards "classificatory" uncles and aunts. In the end, far from strengthening the internal solidarity of the patrilineal lineages that make up Baruya society, this marriage policy undermines and weakens it. But as far as I know, no part of this marriage policy is actually formulated or legitimized "in the body."

Alternatively, a Baruya may not marry his father's brothers' daughters because they are said to come from the same semen as he does and are therefore his sisters.

Such a union would be seen as incestuous and be punished by death. He may marry his mother's sisters' daughters, though, because they do not come from the same semen as that from which their mother and Ego's mother were conceived, even though the Baruya, who use Iroquois kinship terminology, call them "sisters" as well.

His father's sisters' daughters, his patrilateral cross cousins, are considered to be potential wives. Like his matrilateral parallel cousins, they do not come from the same semen as he, and so they are eligible. But in addition, he has rights over them because they come from the womb of a woman of his lineage. And he can exercise these rights if the lineage that took his father's sister has not yet given a woman in exchange. In this case, the young Baruya may ask for one of his father's sisters' daughters, and she will be given. In short, among the women he calls "sisters, not all are prohibited, and among those he calls "cousins," not all can be married.

A child is not merely the product of the union of a man and a woman and the result of an exchange of women between two lineages, however. To be born as a finished human, it needs the intervention of Sun, which completes its feet, hands, eyes, mouth and nose while it is still in its mother's womb. In short, a child is the product of a man, a woman and a supernatural force, Sun, which adds its power to that of Moon, Sun's wife/younger brother. It is therefore the product of an exchange between two groups of humans and of a gift on the part of Sun-Moon, with apparently nothing in return from the human side, except perhaps the many ritual prayers they say. This representation of Sun's role in a child's conception bespeaks its membership in another relationship distinct from the relations of descent and filiation, which are transmitted by the father and the mother. It makes a child a member of the Anga people, or more accurately - because not all Anga groups have the same representations or institutions as the Baruya and their neighbors - it makes the child a member of a set of tribes whose specific cultural world is characterized by this emphasis placed on semen and the importance of the sun, by the strict segregation of boys, who spend years of their life separated from the world of women and outside the village, by the construction of a large ceremonial house, the *tsimia*, for the initiations, which represents the union of all the villages and lineages of the tribe in the initiation of its boys, by the generalized practice of direct sister exchange between men and, last of all - but this is the least widespread feature - by the existence of female initiations.

In other Anga groups, such as the Ankave, who have been studied by Pierre Lemonnier and Pascale Bonnemère, descent reckoning, while still patrilineal, has a much more pronounced bilateral character; boys are initiated but not systematically cut off from the world of women, and so forth. In the Ankave's representations of the body, there is no special emphasis on the role of semen. No mention is made of Sun helping make the child. Red, the color of the sun for the Baruya, is the color of menstrual blood for the Ankave (Pierre Lemonnier, pers. comm.). A study of these transformations in the social organization is in progress.

* Since this article was published, we know now much more about the Ankave thanks to the publications of Pascale Bonnemère and Pierre Lemonnier who have spent many years among them.

By tribe, I mean a local group constituted by the temporary association of a number of lineages living side by side in villages or widely dispersed, who have joined together to occupy and defend a territory, which they have divided among themselves, and to practice among themselves, rather than with other tribes, the exchange of women; or to put it more succinctly, groups which have temporarily united in order to reproduce themselves together. Each of these local groups has its own name - a "big name" - which its members use to designate themselves and which is also used by members of neighboring tribes to refer to them: Baruya, Andje, Usarumpia and so on. These local groups are divided into lineages, which have distinct names, but the same lineage names may be found in other tribes, neighboring or not, friendly or hostile. This is both the result and the evidence of the constant fission and fusion ever at work under the surface.

The existence of lineages of the same name in different tribes probably indicates a remote common origin that underwent numerous divisions and dispersions. In no case, however, do the members of these lineages get together and act in common. Which means that they never come together in a clan as might be supposed from the fact that they bear the same name. The reference to Sun's participation in the conception of the child thus testifies that this child belongs to a given Anga tribe through its father's lineage. If the father is a Ndelie from the Baruya tribe, the child will be a Baruya; if the father is a Ndelie from the Andje tribe, the child will be an Andje and an enemy of the Baruya. But whatever tribe they belong to, all these children know that they wear the same body ornaments and share the same secrets, the same "culture."

Summing up: social representations of the process by which a child is conceived present themselves first of all as a *relatively succinct* "explanation" of this process: semen makes the bones, the blood comes from the father or sometimes the mother, and so on. The Baruya "theory" of the process of child conception seems to aim less at "explaining" this process than at formulating and "legitimizing" two types of relations that are imposed on the child - relations of appropriation and relations of domination.

It is important to note here that, in this vision of the world, so-called "kinship" relations alone *do not suffice* to make a child. Even before its birth, the child is enrolled in a universe that extends beyond its relations with its father, its mother and the groups to which they belong, a universe which points to (and transcends) the limited capacity of mere kinship to constitute society as such and to reproduce it. This becomes even more evident when we analyze Baruya representations no longer of conception now but of the child's development and growth from before birth to adulthood and marriage.

Baruya representations of intra-uterine growth and subsequent development

It is in this area that the fact that the child is a boy or a girl takes on its full significance. For the Baruya believe that a girl grows more easily and faster than a boy. Proof of this, they say, is that, when a girl has her first period, her body is already developed, while boys of her age are still small and skinny. Boys and girls would seem to be engaged in a sort of "race," and it is the girls who win. It is for this reason that a boy does not marry a girl of his age and that two co-initiates always exchange their younger sisters (or two of their patrilineal parallel-cousins), the one directly behind them in order of birth.

Unlike girls, who give the Baruya the impression that they grow up nearly unaided, at their mother's side and within the family circle, boys, in order to become men and ultimately stronger than women, must be separated from their mother and receive enormous quantities of attention and strength, which are lavished on them by the men's group and, owing to the intercession of the *kwaimatnie*-men, by Sun and other supernatural powers, Moon, the Pleiades, and so forth. In fact, boys must be literally "re-birthing" by the men. The Baruya regard this process of re-engendering as a *waounie nanga*, a major undertaking (*waounie*), which begins when the men take the boy from his mother to pierce his nose and begin his initiation. It is a task that will last more than ten years.

In the case of both boys and girls, however, it can be said that the conditions of their growth are established even before their conception. Immediately after marrying, the future father begins storing up in his young wife's body the food she will turn into milk. This semen also nourishes the future mother and makes her strong enough to bear children.⁵

- As soon as the woman realizes she is pregnant,⁶ she tells her husband, and the couple then increase their sexual relations so that the man's semen may nourish the fetus in its mother's womb and make it grow.⁷

- When a pig is killed, it is baked in an earth oven; the fat is fed first of all to the children. The liver is cooked in a bamboo tube and, after a portion has been sent to the men's house for the young initiates, the rest is divided among the men present. Women are not entitled to any.

But all this care, this work, the nourishment provided by the father, the mother and the lineages of both *still do not suffice* to make a child grow. *Additional* forces must contribute, those of *all* the men and women of the Baruya tribe, working together to initiate their children, the forces of Sun and Moon, which are showered upon everyone by the effects of the ceremonies and the efforts of the *kwaimatnie*-men.

5 Despite the importance of the representations of semen as food for men and women, it seemed to me on several occasions that the Baruya women felt ambivalent about the idea of mother's milk being a metamorphosis of semen. Some women, who emphasized the foods to be eaten by nursing mothers, did not seem altogether convinced that their milk owed everything to their husband and nothing to themselves. Perhaps it is because the bodily representations used to validate male domination do not coincide *entirely* with individual experience or perhaps it is due to the transformations of the Baruya ways of living and thinking under the colonial and postcolonial orders. This breach - if breach there be - may be the refuge of the tensions between the two sexes so prevalent in this society.

6 If a woman cannot have children, it is always her fault; for a man, according to the Baruya cannot, as a principle, be sterile.

7 As soon as the baby is born, the woman's husband, her brothers-in-law and her cousins go hunting and, a few days later, return with a large quantity of game, of which she redistributes a portion to the girls and boys of the village and consumes the remainder over the two or three weeks she spends in the birthing hut. The meat is given to her so that she can "replenish the blood" she lost in childbirth. When the period of seclusion comes to an end and the woman returns home with her child at her breast, her husband gives her his semen so that she may recover her full strength and feed the child well.

If the child is a boy, there is first of all the force that comes from the repeated gifts of semen from *older initiates*, who nourish him in the men's house. If the child is a girl, this force will come from the milk the new mothers give her to drink. There is also the tree sap (semen-milk) that the male initiate's *sponsor* sucks up and gives him to drink. The sap gives the boy the strength of the big trees whose crowns reach towards the sun. In passing it should be pointed out that every young initiate has two sponsors of different ages, chosen, as a rule, from his mother's lineage; one of these is said to be "like his mother," and the other, "like his sister." The maternal functions are thus transferred to the sphere of the male initiations and transposed into a masculine mode.

Last of all, there are the magic foods gathered from the now-abandoned ancestral territory, which the *kwaimatnie*-men have the initiates swallow. But these men do more than simply nourish the boys, they transmit the full force of the sun (and the moon) to the boys when they strike them with the *kwaimatnie*, pull their arms and squeeze their joints. The force of the sun and the force of the sacred foods fill the body and make it handsome and glowing. These forces collect in the liver, which explains why, at a number of points in the ceremonies, the *kwaimatnie*-men take bamboo torches and inspect the abdomen of the initiates. This is to see if their liver is black, if illness or evil forces are eating away at them, if they are going to die a premature death. In this case, without a word to the initiate concerned, the *kwaimatnie*-man will then alert the shamans, who will perform the appropriate ceremonies to restore the initiate's strength and health.

But the *kwaimatnie*-men do much more. For the duration of the ceremony and only during this period, they have the gift of "seeing": as they inspect each initiate's body, they discern *what he will become*, a shaman, a great warrior, a cassowary hunter, or nothing at all, a *wopai*, a sweet potato. It is they who, over the course of the ceremonies, search for and find the signs the spirits have sent men to indicate the destiny of each initiate. A splinter of black-palm wood, from which bows and arrows are made, means the child will become a great warrior, while a piece of eagle feather is the sign of a future shaman. The *kwaimatnie*-man will then tell the initiate's father and brothers as well as the shamans. This gift of "seeing" comes from Sun, who bestowed it on one of their ancestors as he gave him a *kwaimatnie* and the spells to be uttered when they are used.

The unequal distribution of the *kwaimatnie* among the clans attests a military past and a "political" history, which has present-day repercussions, a relationship between refugees who subsequently became conquerors and who were conquered in turn. Thus, by compounding all these forces, the Baruya reproduce the structure of their society and that of its hierarchies, hierarchy between men and women, between great men and the rest; and this structure is embedded in the body of each and every Baruya.

But the formidable conceptual difference, the ideological barrier erected between the sexes, does not account for the whole distance separating the destiny of a Baruya boy from that of a Baruya girl. Because they are female, girls will be excluded from owning ancestral land (but not from using it). They may neither own nor use steel axes, as formerly they were not allowed to use stone tools. They will not have the right to manufacture or use weapons, which excludes them from hunting, warfare and recourse to armed violence. They will not be allowed to manufacture salt or trade it with neighboring tribes. They will be dependent upon men for the bars of salt that, on the other hand, they may use as they wish to buy

clothing, ornaments and so forth. And above all, they will be excluded from owning and using *kwaimatnie*, in other words, they will be denied the means of communicating with the supernatural forces which control the reproduction of the universe and their society. Last of all, they will be dispossessed of their own children, in particular their sons, although they will always have a say in the decisions made by the father and his lineage concerning the child's future (marriage, etc.).

So what, for the Baruya, justifies such a difference in status and destiny between men and women? I was given two reasons: women have no semen, and menstrual blood flows from their bodies at regular intervals. Both reasons are negative, but they are different. The absence of semen negates by depriving; the presence of menstrual blood negates by its very action. We have not said much about this bodily substance particular to women. The word for blood in Baruya is *tawe*, but menstrual blood is designated by another word, *gamie*. Baruya men become almost hysterical when they talk about menstrual blood: their reaction is a mixture of disgust, repulsion and, above all, fear. It is a substance they compare with blood that is vomited, urinated or found in the feces of those who are soon going to die, of victims of sorcery whose liver is being devoured by a spirit. Instead of bringing about the death of the woman's body, though, menstrual blood merely weakens it temporarily. Its deadly power (its destructive force) seems in fact to be directed at men. It poses a permanent threat to their strength, to their life-force, to the roots of their superiority. Menstrual blood is, in a sense, the rival of semen, it is *anti-semen*. But at the same time, it is the sign that the woman has been pierced by Moon and is now ready to be fertilized by a man, that she is capable of bearing life. Hence the Baruya's ambivalence.

Baruya men, however, emphasize what they see as the dangerous nature of menstrual blood. They accuse women of killing them with sorcery by mixing menstrual blood with the food they prepare. And it is true that women sometimes deliberately use a bit of their husband's semen to drive him to suicide. After making love, the woman takes the man's semen and, before his eyes, deliberately flings it into the fire. Confronted with such a gesture, by Baruya rules the man is supposed to commit suicide. He hangs himself.

Representations of menstrual blood play a key role in legitimizing male power. Through these, women, who are clearly treated as inferior beings in the Baruya social order, are made the *guilty parties*. Here is an anecdote to illustrate the point. When I asked why women were excluded from owning land, weapons, salt, and so forth, an old man, exasperated by my (voluntary) lack of comprehension, shouted: "Can't you understand? Haven't you seen the blood running down between their thighs?" We may suppose that the more these ideas about the body are shared by both men and women, the less women find in their own minds the reasons and means to question the social order that weighs on them and which is embodied in them. Ultimately, it could even be said that the more successfully this order is inculcated and embodied, the more consent leads to silence. Each man or woman has only to live as the body dictates and to look at him- or herself to know what he or she may or may not do, may want or must avoid desiring.

This analysis brings us face to face with a fundamental fact. In Baruya culture, as in no doubt all cultures, the anatomical and physiological differences between men and the women - presence or absence of a penis, a vagina, semen, milk, menstrual blood, in short all those organs and substances connected with sexuality

and the different role each sex plays in reproduction and life - are used to formulate and to seal the social destiny of every individual.

The sexed body is asked not only to bear witness *to*, but to bear witness *for* the order that prevails in society and the universe, since the universe, like society, is divided into a male and a female part. The body works like a ventriloquist's dummy, always holding forth in silent discourse on the order that *must* prevail in society, a discourse which not only legitimizes the appropriation of children by adults regarded as their kin but also dictates the child's pre-ordained place in society as determined by its sex.

In conclusion, I would like to make several remarks, which will bring us back to some current theoretical discussions in our field. As we saw in the case of the Baruya, depending on whether one is male or female, lands, ranks and powers do or do not circulate from one generation to the next. This transmission is effected primarily through kinship relations, which provide the supporting structure and preferential channel. I suggest that everything which insinuates itself into kinship relations in this manner, for purposes of circulation, is *metamorphosed* into an *attribute* of kinship, into norms which "characterize" certain kinship relations: those between father and son, for instance, which are different from these between father and daughter, those between two brothers or between brother and sister, and so forth. And I will advance the complementary idea that everything that is changed into kinship attributes is ultimately changed into gender attributes, rights granted or refused an individual *on the grounds of his or her sex*. It is therefore a series of metamorphoses which link and enable power structures, kinship structures and representations of the body to act upon each other and within each other.

But if this is the case, if (economic, political or other) realities that are not necessarily directly connected with a particular mode of descent reckoning or marriage rule, in short with a particular kinship system, if these realities insinuate themselves into this system and circulate through certain ties or channels that the system privileges (between father and son, or mother's brother and nephew, for instance), it might well be that within this system these realities appear in a form which encodes their meaning in a different way. Land problems become kinship problems, and difficulties with production ultimately appear as signs of sorcery between affines or consanguines. We are now talking about the daunting problem of explaining the way in which societies apprehend their own reality, the problem of the genesis of native forms of consciousness (the emic analysis of representations). For if we are to go beyond so-called emic and etic analyses of native representations, we will sooner or later need to reconstruct the process which gave rise to these representations among the autochthonous inhabitants, and this process often takes place in the unconscious part of the actors' minds.

Another theoretical debate might be engaged on the relationship between the features of the kinship system found in a given society and the latter's representations of the body, and more specifically representations of how children are conceived and grow. These representations are not simply tacked onto a kinship system which may well have emerged before these representations and without their help. I think that a kinship system always includes among its components a series of representations concerning the bodies of men and women and the process of making children. It could not emerge and crystallize without them. But a problem is created, as the Baruya example clearly shows, by the fact

that representations of the body are linked not only to the society's prevailing kinship system but to other social relations as well, which these representations are also called upon to express and legitimize. Hence the polysemic character of such representations, which are not "overdetermined," for there is nothing excessive about their significations, but instead, as certain theoreticians suggest, "pluri-determined" by different fields of social praxis. And this is why they are so difficult to analyze.

But if such is the case, if certain realities act upon and interact with others and in part become these other realities, if the actors' own representations of these realities is polysemic, it is clearly not possible that the various material, institutional and conceptual components of society are linked by linear, one-way relations of cause and effect.

So how are we to think of these relationships? For instance, if Baruya representations of semen say something about both kinship relations (patrilineal descent reckoning) and about power relations (the mechanism of initiations), we must ask ourselves what is the relationship between kinship and initiation. Was it by chance that they grew up side by side in the same society? Or is there an element of necessity in their co-existence?

I would like to take the time here to refine the hypothesis I advanced in *The making of great men*, which suggested a fairly direct cause-and-effect link between the practice of exchanging women and the existence of an initiation mechanism. The effect of the Baruya's initiations is to mold all of the men into a collective force, each generation forming a bloc, which transcends their divisions (e.g. belonging to different lineages or to villages with sometimes conflicting interests). This collective male force is clearly turned both inward, towards Baruya society (their women, their young people), and outward, towards neighboring tribes, enemies and alien groups. It is therefore likely that several, mutually non-exclusive reasons worked together to produce these male initiations, and that the fact that there were several explains their influence on the workings of Baruya society. The initial reason may have been the need to gather a common military force for the purpose of conquering and defending a common territory. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the Baruya were in effect actively engaged in expanding their territory. After having gradually settled Wonenara Valley and driven back or expelled two local groups, the Baruya virtually constituted one of the frontiers of Anga expansion.

But it is quite possible to build a common military force and organize defense or attacks without necessarily using collective initiations to prepare young men for warfare. Therefore it seems to me that military needs must have played a role in organizing society into age grades and giving rise to initiations only insofar as they were articulated with something else, with the organization of male-female relations. And first of all in response to needs arising from the kinship system. The reasoning would go as follows: In a classless or a casteless and therefore relatively egalitarian society, in which marriage between lineages is based almost exclusively on the direct exchange of women, men would have needed to construct some kind of collective force, an always potentially threatening presence, to back up each man when he was called upon to decided the personal fate of his sisters or their daughters. To this, Baruya society adds the need to ensure that another principle of organization is respected; this is the exclusion, to the men's benefit, of women from controlling territory, weapons, salt-money and means of communication with

the world of the supernatural. In these areas, all women stand on the same unequal footing with men.

But here, too, the hypothesis must be tempered: there are societies which practice direct exchange of women but do not have an initiation system. However this is often the case when the direct exchange of women is merely *one of a number* of rules for contracting alliances and marriages. Alternatively, in New Guinea, wherever bridewealth dominates marriage exchanges, there are as a rule no elaborate initiation rites.

It seems that the link between kinship and initiation system, by way of the requirements of warfare, may have been the existence of an ideology in which women represented a constant source of danger for men, and especially a danger for the reproduction of society itself, because of their regular flow of menstrual blood. It is this representation of female pollution which legitimizes the segregation of the two sexes, particularly that of boys, which gives rise to the systematic denigration of women, the "theft" of their powers, and so on. This perhaps was the kernel around which all the institutions co-existing in Baruya culture crystallized and became bound up with each other.

In short, these remarks lead me to conclude that it would be altogether fallacious to regard Baruya society as *kin based*, whatever the importance of their kinship system founded on the generalized direct exchange of women among men. One does not become a man or a woman in Baruya society until one has been initiated; initiation makes each person a member of a community which extends far beyond the family, the lineage and the zone of kinship relations that every individual entertains with a number of members of his or her tribe and of neighboring tribes.

As to why all these different forms of social organization can be found in Melanesia, I think it would be useful to make a systematic comparison of the relationship between representations of the body, kinship systems and forms of power in these societies. Unlike Edmund Leach (1957: 50-55), who ironically wondered whether the idea that one society is "more patrilineal than another" made any sense at all, I believe there are wide variations in the application and the signification of a descent rule, be it patrilineal or other. And I think that representations of the body reveal these variations quite explicitly. I am referring, for instance, to Erik Schwimmer's highly evocative article in *Man* (1969: 132-33) in which he introduces the case of the Orokaiva into the debate opened by Leach's text on "Virgin Birth" (1966: 39-46).

According to Schwimmer, the Orokaiva think that a child is conceived when an ancestor's spirit wants to reincarnate itself in a new human body. If the child is a boy, the Orokaiva believe it comes from the sexual union of the father and the mother, each of whom has given it their blood. If it is a girl child, they believe the spirit entered the fetus when the woman was alone. At that point the father has not yet transmitted his own "strong blood," which enables boys to transmit in turn the clan blood to the next generation. Nevertheless, he does contribute to the development of all his children, boys or girls, in their mother's womb, since his semen is believed to nourish the fetus; therefore the couple increases the rate of sexual relations once the woman realizes she is pregnant. But in every case, if the man has made a payment of bridewealth to his wife's family, he is deemed to have priority to the children he brings into the world.

The key element in this theory of how children are conceived is the idea that a spirit enters the woman in order to be reincarnated. Blood – and not semen – plays an essential role in justifying men’s superiority over women, for a man’s blood also carries a special power, *ivo*, which is not found in the blood of women. Girls, deprived in their fetal state of their father’s “strong blood,” are therefore incapable of reproducing the clan. Their blood is “weak.” Baruya women lack semen. Orokaiva women lack their father’s blood. In both societies, semen plays a nurturing role,⁸ but for the Orokaiva, it does not have a fertilizing role. Fecundation results from an ancestor choosing to reincarnate him or herself. For the Baruya, semen fertilizes and links the child to its patrilineal ancestors, but alone cannot make a child. A spirit must intervene which is stronger than the ancestor’s spirits in order for the child to assume its final form and be viable. This spirit is the sun. But the fact that they are the son or the daughter of the sun makes all Baruya children alike, regardless of their belonging to this or that lineage, regardless of their descending from this or that ancestor.

For the Orokaiva, on the other hand, a child’s identity is not as straightforward as it is in Baruya culture. If the child is a girl, there is no problem. It is one of her mother’s ancestors, who has decided to be reincarnated. But in the case of a boy, there is always some doubt as to the identity of the reincarnated spirit: it may be an ancestor from the father’s side just as well as one from the mother’s. Because of this doubt, a shaman, *sivo embo*, must be consulted to determine from which side the boychild’s spirit has come. It is only then that the child will receive its name, which is given either by the paternal kin or by the maternal kin, depending on the identity of the in-dwelling spirit. Such practices are unthinkable for the Baruya, just as it is impossible for a young Baruya to lay claim to land belonging to his mother’s clan and cultivated by his mother’s brother and his children. This is perfectly possible in Orokaiva, however, and a maternal uncle’s sons live in fear that their father’s sister’s sons will ask them to share their lands.

If we wanted to go beyond Melanesia and compare the Baruya and the Orokaiva with the Yap Islanders, we would see – without going into the polemics raised by Schneider’s “radical” theses – that one more step had been taken along the path already traced by the Orokaiva in thinking that girls receive their spirit from their mother without any contribution from their father. On Yap, where descent reckoning is supposed to be matrilineal, it is the men of the domain, *tabinau*, where the newlyweds live who pray to the ancestors of the matrilineages that preceded them on this land to intercede with Marialang, a spirit considered to be the master of the fecundation of women, to give the woman a child as a reward for her devotion in maintaining the fertility of the *tabinau*’s lands (cf. Schneider 1984).

On Yap sexual relations are therefore not supposed to play a role in the conception of the child, whether it is male or female. Here, too, however, the idea

8 The emphasis Melanesians place on the nurturing role of semen seems quite alien to the traditional ideas Westerners have about the substance. One must bear in mind that distinguishing the fertilizing and the nurturing roles of semen by opposing them may mask the fact that, for some cultures, *that which nourishes also engenders*; that what you eat *makes* you what you *are* and ultimately determines to whom or to what you belong (to a lineage and to the land that feeds you, etc.). In short, the nature/nurture distinction must be handled with extreme care.

reported by Schneider has been contested by other anthropologists like David Labby and S. Lingenfelter, who worked on Yap some twenty years after Schneider.

Whatever may be the case on Yap, we may conclude from this outline of Orokaiva representations of the body, that the “patrilineal” aspect of descent and membership in a single kingroup is much less clearly established here than among the Baruya. This is probably one of the reasons for the sometimes-sharp discussions between the anthropologists who have observed this society, from William’s first description, to Schwimmer, Rimoldi, Iteanu and more recently Lanoue.⁹ Do the Orokaiva have “patrilineal” leanings, or is this an anthropologist’s deformation of empirical reality?⁹ Perhaps the answer lies in an even more detailed analysis of Orokaiva ideas about the process of conception and of the indications these provide about the right of the adults who call themselves the child’s father and mother, and the kinship groups to which they belong to appropriate this child – ideologically – in other words in their minds, by their thought processes, even before it is born.

However, we must keep in mind that, while the body speaks, testifying for or against the social order, it also does this by its *silences*. The fact that the Orokaiva say next to nothing about semen, that in New Caledonia nearly no mention is made of it in certain groups studied by A. Bensa,¹⁰ in which the name and the land come from the father, the flesh and the bones from the mother, and where the child ultimately still belongs to its father’s group, remind us that there are many ways of manipulating and legitimizing the descent rule when one is faced with problems that ultimately have nothing to do with kinship (appropriation of land, religious status, political function, etc.).

Perhaps when semen no longer enters into the making of the child and when society professes to be “patrilineal,” then the mind must ascribe a more important role to spirits and ancestral spiritual forces, which can exist apart from or mingled with the land on which their descendants live and which provides them with their living. But to what extent can logic actually account for the interplay and variety of the symbolic, social and material “logics” that make a society?

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9 Schwimmer, Rimoldi, Iteanu, Lanoue [Editor’s note: the original text contains no specific references]; see also *Oceania*, vol. 60, n° 3, March 1990, pp. 189–215.

10 See A. Bensa, regarding the Paici, in *De jade et de nacre: Art canaque* (Paris: Réunion des Musées de France, 1990); specifically the chapter “Des ancêtres et des hommes: introduction aux théories de la nature, de l’action et de l’histoire.”

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