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In: *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 133 (1977), no: 1, Leiden, 136-154

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The purpose of this paper is threefold: 1) to explain the process of lineage fission in a Guiana Maroon (or "Bush Negro") society, 2) to compare the native's ideal model of this process with the anthropologist's empirically-derived model of the same process, and 3) to evaluate the usefulness of such ideal/real contrasts generally. I have chosen to present data on lineage fission with the use of a real/ideal distinction because in the course of fieldwork¹ among the Matawais, I not only encountered apparent discrepancies between verbal and non-verbal behavior (or between what Matawais said and what they did) but also — and more significantly — I occasionally encountered informants who made a kind of ideal/real distinction themselves. That natives themselves seemed to be making "etic" distinctions — or those "judged appropriate by the community of scientific observers" (Harris, 1968: 575) — was only one of several field experiences that deeply impressed me with the ability of informants to understand and articulate the intricacies and the macro-processes of their own kinship system. If this sounds like a hopelessly ethnocentric or even patronizing statement, I can only offer by way of defense that my reading of certain anthropologists (e.g., Turner, 1964) had led me to expect that "natives" would lack the objectivity, the macro-scopic perspective, and the academic training necessary to abstract at certain levels and to accurately or adequately understand at least some of the important aspects of their own culture.

¹ Nineteen months of fieldwork in Surinam was supported in part by a Sigma Xi grant-in-aid-of-research. Data for this paper was gathered primarily in Posoegroenoe and Balen (see Fig. 2).

The spelling of native terms follows the orthography for Saramakan suggested by Voorhoeve (1959), but since tonal distinctions are less significant in Matawai than in Saramakan, they are omitted here.

The name Matawai refers to the language spoken and to the tribal territory, as well as to the people themselves.

An example of how my informants would occasionally make ideal/real distinctions themselves will be taken from my interviews concerning the Matawai "myth of origin". That is in quotation marks because Matawais have no specific myth of ultimate origin except that their ancestors came from Africa. Their myth of tribal origin goes back less than 300 years ago to the events surrounding flight from a coastal plantation (see Green, 1974: Ch. 2 for details). After hearing another variant of the tale of the "original mother" of the tribe and how all Matawais descend from her and her 16 sons and daughters, I asked my informant how it could be that all the other women who ran away from the plantation(s), or were kidnapped by escaped slaves, never bore any children. At this point my informant smiled and after brief reflection, explained that the story has to be told that way, "especially to the young people", even though it cannot possibly be true. Otherwise, he noted, "we could not believe that we are all members of a single clan, and this we must believe if we are to cooperate with each other and treat each other respectfully".

It is of methodological significance that most or all of my informants who made the kind of distinction just described had spent a few years living in coastal Surinam; that is, they were relatively acculturated to the national society. This may mean that they had shifted their reference group away from traditional Matawai society (including the watchful eyes of the ancestors) somewhat, resulting in a relaxation of the traditional suspicion with which whites are regarded. But this is not to say that intelligent, traditional individuals who have avoided coastal society do not make similar distinctions, at least privately.

Aspects of Matawai Culture

The Guiana Maroons are descendants of Afro-American slaves who ran away from coastal plantations in the 17th and 18th centuries and eventually established independent societies in the interior rain forest of Surinam and French Guiana (see Fig. 1). The Guiana Maroons occupy a unique place in history because the societies they established are still flourishing today, whereas Maroon societies elsewhere in the Americas were either short-lived or they have become Europeanized almost beyond recognition.² It is noteworthy that the Guiana Maroons are the only Afro-American societies that possess true lineage and clan organization.

² See Price, 1973a, for a review of Maroon societies.

FIGURE 1
Location of Maroon Groups

The Matawai are one of the smaller tribes, numbering about 1,000 in the tribal territory, and about the same number again living along Surinam's coast, mostly near Paramaribo.³ They live in some 20 villages along the Upper Saramaka River that traditionally numbered about 50-125 adults, but which now (at least many of them) are severely depopulated due to coastal emigration.

Matawais are organized into matrilineal clans (*lo*), lineages (*bee*), and lineage segments (*pisi*). A *lo* is a maximal lineage of matrilineal kinsmen whose genealogical links are more or less known. Its members are often geographically dispersed and, although the *lo* possesses no true corporate characteristics, the *lo* name and its associated oral "history" does invoke a deep sense of identification and even pride among its members. There is a weak rule of exogamy at this level.

The *bee* is a clearly bounded corporate group which results from a rule of matrilineal descent and which usually consists of less than 100 members. *Bee* members own land collectively, "worship" their own ancestors, participate in cult activity together, marry outside of the group, "own" political offices as a group, and share common vulnerability to a number of *kunus*. *Kunus* are the avenging spirits of ghosts or gods who have committed themselves to punishing the matrilineal kinsmen and descendants of the person(s) who offended the *kunus* during their lifetimes. Offences commonly include hunting accidents which result in serious injury or death (in the case of *kunus* of human origin) or the destruction of an animal or plant "abode" of a spirit (in the case of *kunus* of supernatural origin). Since hunting accidents and the destruction of, e.g., boa constrictors, anacondas, and silk cotton trees (all of which are "abodes" of spirits) do regularly occur, new *kunus* are continually being created. The most dramatic form of punishment by *kunus* is death, but sickness and infertility (barrenness) are common punishments as well. Thus, a strong sense of collective responsibility and culpability for the behavior of *bee* members is expressed in the idiom of *kunu*.

As *bees* increase in population, lineage segments of shallower genealogical depth become identified as *pisis*. These matri-segments consist of close matrilineal kinsmen who live in the same neighborhood of a village. Two matri-segments residing side by side in a village might be of a common *bee* or of different *bees*. In the latter case, one of the

³ This large coastal Matawai population has become established only in the last 20-30 years, and this (accelerating) coastal emigration is due to the search for jobs and the felt benefits of urban-industrial life.

matri-segments is thought to be the "owning" or founding *bee* (i.e., related to the ancestors who originally cleared the land and built the village) and the other matri-segment, consisting of descendants of immigrants to the village, are considered permanent guests. At the level of *pisi*, the exogamic rule is the strongest, but matri-segments have no special corporate characteristics that do not pertain to *bees*.

A village then, may consist of a single, "owning" *bee*, or it might be a multiple-*bee* village if one or more matri-segments of other *bees* have become established. In either case, unless the village is very small, there will be a division into two or three *pisi*. The village provides organization at the supra-*bee* level and even exhibits some corporate characteristics. For example, a single *kapiten* (lineage chief) exercises authority over the village, including immigrant matri-segments, even though technically his authority does not exceed the limits of his ("owning") *bee*. Assistant lineage chiefs (*bassia*), of which there are usually four (two males and two females) to a village, are in some respects conceived as matri-segment offices (see below).⁴ In addition to being organized

FIGURE 2

Sketch Map Illustrating Three Stages of Lineage Fission

⁴ The office of paramount chief (*gaanman*) is the symbol of unity at the tribal level. See Green (1974) for a more detailed discussion of Matawai social structure.

into a single polity, the residents of a multiple-*bee* village act as a unit in many rituals and in dealings with outsiders, and to some extent they even share limited vulnerability to one another's *kunus*.

Bees and Fission

I will begin our discussion of fission by distinguishing four related concepts:

One is the *segmentation model*, the anthropologist's description of what he understands to have taken place as a type of process. Then there is a *segmentation charter*, the local type of what the people themselves, or sections of them, regard as the "historical" order of events. Then there is *operational segmentation*, the way the descent group splits for various social ends, recombining where necessary for other ends. Finally, there is what may be termed *definitive segmentation*, the irreversible process leading to the formation of new groups which do not then recombine. This process ... may also be described as *gemmation*, referring to the way in which budlike growths become detached and develop into new individuals (Firth, 1971: 200).

I will follow Firth's suggested terminology, except that I will use the term fission instead of definitive segmentation, or gemmation, following the terminology of Price (1973b) in his analysis of *bee* fission and the role of *kunu* belief among the Saramaka Maroons. I shall regard the Matawai segmentation charter as an ideal model since the term refers to the commonly held and expressed — perhaps we might say public — version or interpretation of events. My field experience showed me that not only may there be rival versions/interpretations of myths or kinship systems held by different individuals, but also the same individual may hold a non-public interpretation which more closely fits "the facts" than the public version he expresses. I also noticed that the social context often determined the kind of version/interpretation that is expressed. In fact, informants explicitly called this to my attention. For example, in traditional story-telling contexts (on Sundays, Emancipation Day, etc.) when elders pass along myths and history to a youthful audience, ideal interpretations are usually given. Likewise, in "sacred contexts" when the ancestors and deities are likely to be listening (in a sense, all conversations fall into such contexts because supernatural beings are believed to always be able to listen), care must be taken not to say anything offensive to the supernaturals.

Let us turn now to the Matawai segmentation charter, or ideal kinship model. The model to be described is derived from statements made by a number of informants in both formal and informal interview situations. Unlike Saramakas, who "in their ideal model go so far as to deny that it occurs at all" (R. Price, 1973b: 95), Matawais have a fairly "accurate"

model of *bee* fission. They understand that the pressures of increased size and residential dispersal lead to greater functional autonomy of the various matri-segments, the relaxation of *bee* exogamy rules, and eventually to the formation of two or more functionally identical units, that is, to new descent groups that act as and are called *bees*. In fact, their segmentation charter commonly identifies "bad ways" (*taku fasi*) and trouble over women (*mujee toobi*), as primary mechanisms in the segmentary process. The reference here is to the common occurrence of strife and feuding between matri-segments that sometimes results in the relocation of a dissident (but not expelled) group in another village (the dissidents may move to an already established village or they may start a new village of their own). Matawais acknowledge that natural population increase alone (i.e., without the mechanism of strife) can lead to the emigration of individuals to another village and hence to the establishment of a new matri-segment.

In addition to emphasizing the causal primacy of residential dispersal, two other aspects of the local segmentation charter should be noted. One is that the reinforcing role of *kunu* proliferation is generally ignored or even denied. Just as in Saramaka, it is both inferable and observable in Matawai that *kunus* are not eternal, despite a formal doctrine of *kunu* eternity.⁵ Moreover, despite an ideology of *bee*-wide vulnerability to *kunu* punishment, actual (measurable) vulnerability is usually restricted to those of closer genealogical range, i.e., to a matri-segment. Thus, the creation and proliferation of new *kunus* make it difficult for Matawais to "keep up" with all of these (i.e., to attribute sickness or death to them, to adhere to their taboos, and to do all the obeisance necessary to placate them), so that older *kunus* are continually supplanted by newer *kunus*. And as matri-segments become increasingly involved with new *kunus* that more genealogically distant *bee* members are only marginally concerned with, this process in itself leads to or aids the fission of *bees*. Although the role of *kunu* proliferation in *bee* fission is ordinarily ignored or denied by Matawais, it seems clear that at least some understand the process. Several reflective and thoughtful

⁵ An ideology of *bee* solidarity discourages a Matawai from discussing *bee* fission with outsiders, but this does not necessarily mean that he is not aware of the process. And a Matawai is even less likely to discuss *kunus* with outsiders, because 1) Christian missionaries have made him ashamed of *kunu* belief, that is, vis-à-vis the outside world, and 2) he is afraid of punishment from *kunus* themselves for speaking about them to outsiders. It was only after I had achieved a sufficient degree of intimacy with a few informants (during my second year of fieldwork) that I began to hear expressions of *kunu* emperality.

elders explained their matri-segments' gradual shift in obeisance from older to newer *kunus* in terms of the older *kunus* retiring to inactive status, losing potency (*kakiti*) as they (the *kunus*) grow older, and in general becoming increasingly otiose and unconcerned with the *bee* members. Thus, through the device of shifting the responsibility from themselves to their *kunus*, thereby making themselves rather than their *kunus* "victims" of non-concern, Matawais are able to reconcile a formal doctrine of *kunu* eternity with the fact that *kunus* are supplanted and lost.

The other aspect of the segmentation charter is that a number of Matawais can be found who describe a process of operational segmentation (at least when *bee*-division is discussed with outsiders). That is, an ideology of *bee* unity and solidarity permits the recognition that descent groups divide in certain contexts so long as they recombine in other contexts and retain their original corporate identity. The Matawai distinction between *bee* and *lo* permits a belief that this occurs: Matawais from *bees* A, B, and C, which developed from the fission of *bee* X in former village Y will all insist that as members of a common *lo* (named, most likely, after village Y), the original *bee* (X) "is not lost" and its members will always belong to a common descent group. While this belief is true so far as it goes, it is also true that the original descent group is virtually lost — that is, as a corporate group. As we noted earlier, what remains is a sense of pride of common descent and shared history, and a weak rule of exogamy. In addition, *bee* members of a common *lo* have certain privileges or prerogatives in each others' villages and gardens, but these are not considered inalienable rights. Thus, when Matawai descent groups split, there is no real recombination of the parts: matri-segments develop into new *bees* which become functionally independent of one another⁶; the new *bees* share few, if any, corporate characteristics as a common group.

Having seen that the segmentation charter is somewhat at variance with certain ethnographic observations (i.e., our segmentation model), let us turn to some actual cases of fission in order to better assess the adequacy of the native model. The cases to be presented concern *bees* in the village of Balen and they illustrate the progressive stages of the fission process as it operates on Matawai descent groups. Balen has two distinct *bees*, 1) Valenten from the *lo* Alembaka, or Alalapau, and 2) Sedney (some carry the "family name" Sallons) from the *lo* Piki

⁶ A reversal of developing fission with resulting refusion of matri-segments can occur with population loss in one or more of the matri-segments through a high birth rate of males, emigration, etc.

Lembe, or Posutu. Each *bee* has its own section (*pisi*) of the village. The Valenten *bee* "owns" the village because they founded it. Two matri-segments of the Valenten *bee* (Valenten and Twelling) are in the early stages of fission.

Case 1. The Valenten-Twelling split can be traced back four generations from the youngest Twelling to a certain Agago who "church-married" ⁷ his wife Waimbo. All of their children (three females and two males) assumed their paternal name Twelling. After this first descending generation, the name Twelling became transmitted both patrilineally and matrilineally, but with the latter occurring more frequently.⁸ A "matri-segment" (but one which includes "fathered children" or descendants of *bee* men) has developed whose members carry the name Twelling and who have their own section in the village (about half of what was once the Valenten section).

The exogamy rule in the wider *bee* has become relaxed and it is now permissible for Twellings to marry Valentens. The Twellings have their own "office" of assistant lineage chief (*bassia*); that is, one of the village *bassias* must be a Twelling. The lineage chief's office remains with the Valenten matri-segment. The institutionalization of political office within a matri-segment, which amounts to the simple acknowledgement that a matri-segment must never be without its own *bassia*, is a more or less formal acknowledgement that "the *bee* is dividing" (*di bee ta paati*).

The wider *bee* still propitiates essentially the same *kunus* at the same ancestor shrine (*faaka pau*), but informants admit that a new *kunu* provoked by a Twelling would affect Twellings more than Valentens.

Case 2. The "immigrant" (i.e., non- founding) *bee* of Balen, the Sedney *bee*, provides an example of a matri-segment at a further stage of fission. People of this *bee* consider themselves a matri-segment of the Sedney *bee* in the upriver village of Tivrede. About 45-55 years ago a woman named Maija left her *bee* village, Piki Lembe (the former

⁷ There are three types of marriage in Matawai: traditional marriage (*da mujee*), marriage in a mission church (*keiki tolo*) and legal marriage (*lanti tolo*). Traditional marriage is the commonest form, although a survey in 1973 showed that about one third of all current or recent marriages of adult men were "church marriages". Legal marriage accounts for only two to three per cent of current or recent marriages.

⁸ Genealogical inquiry in Balen among Twellings reveals that last names were transmitted matrilineally in 54 cases and patrilineally in 23 cases. Patronymy, considered a European custom (*baka libi*) by Matawais, tends to be practiced by "modern", Christian tribesmen — the same people who might choose to sanctify their marriage in a church.

village of people now in Tivrede) and came to live in her husband's village, Balen. Balen had already been built by a break-away group of kinsmen from the former village of Alembaka (Valenten *bee*), which was adjacent to Piki Lembe.

Maija made Balen her permanent home (for reasons unknown to me) and she bore three daughters: Ataampu, Mbata, and Lemenki. Thus, the three daughters were raised in their father's village; even after the death of their mother, they remained in Balen instead of returning to their *bee* village, as "fathered" children normally would do. By this time they had achieved status similar to that of *bee* members in Balen.⁹ They later took husbands from nearby villages (Njukonde and Misa Libi) and by the second descending generation from the "founding mother" (Maija), a new matri-segment of the Sedney *bee* was developing in Balen. Thus, the three determinants of the establishment of the new (immigrant) *pisi* in Balen were 1) virilocal residence (rather than normal duolocal/uxorilocal residence), 2) the adoption of the three daughters into the host *bee*, and 3) the accident of female births in the first generation. Had the children of Maija been all or mostly boys, their future children would have gone off to be raised in their mother's village, and the new *pisi* would not have developed.¹⁰

To some extent, the existence of the Sedney *pisi* has depended, and still depends, on the continuing decisions on the part of individuals to remain there, rather than returning to the "true" *bee* village of Tivrede. For members of the new *pisi*, there have always been some "pull" pressures from the Tivrede *bee* to return to the "mother village", especially with the continuing depopulation of Tivrede. There have additionally been "push" pressures from the host *bee* (Valenten) to leave Balen. Although members of the Sedney *pisi* and members of the two host-*bee* matri-segments act as members of a common group in many ritual contexts (e.g., funerals and prayers to *kunus*), and although social relations between them are generally harmonious and the two *bees* are cemented by the fraternal feelings of common-village "member-

⁹ Children, who because of fosterage (*kiija*) or legal recognition (*erkenning*) are raised primarily in their father's village, are in later years considered adopted *bee* members. With this status they can be privy to *bee* decisions, they can rely on (father's) *bee* for aid and support, they can officially carry the *bee* name as their surname, etc. This and other evidence of significant cognatic structures in the Matawai kinship system is discussed in Green (1974).

¹⁰ There are at present eight adult "native sons" of the Sedney *pisi* residing in Balen, most with their spouses and children. This *pisi* has been considerably larger in the recent past.

ship", nevertheless, members of the Sedney *pisi* are reminded in various ways that they are not true native sons of Balen and that their village is Tivrede. For example, in theory, the wider Sedney *bee* has one lineage chief (*kapiten*) and three assistants (*bassias*); the *kapiten* and two of the *bassias* reside in the "mother village" and one (female) *bassia* resides in the Sedney *pisi* in Balen. The absent *bee* leaders are said to have full authority over the Sedney kinsmen in Balen, while the Valenten-Twelling *bee* leaders should have no authority over them. In fact, however, the various *pis* of Balen act as a single polity, with the (Valenten) *kapiten* and the four *bassias* settling disputes, making decisions, and playing other leadership roles for the whole village — all this, it should be noted, with the advice and consent of the council (*lanti*) comprised of elders from all *pis* of the village.

Moreover, the "true" ancestor shrine (*faaka pau*) of the Sedney *bee* is in Tivrede. There is a single ancestor shrine in Balen, described as a surrogate shrine by all matri-segments (see below), which is in fact used by everyone in the village for prayers to ancestors and to *kunus* of the various matri-segments. In spite of this, Sedney kinsmen tell outsiders that they pray to their *kunus* at the "true" shrine in Tivrede.¹¹

Informants in both Tivrede and the Sedney section of Balen agree that both matri-segments recognize the same principal *kunu*. Every *bee* has a principal *kunu* (*gaan kunu*). This *kunu* is referred to by Matawais as the "head of the household", which describes its position as manager of "newer" *kunus*. The principle *kunu* is the active *kunu* which was provoked before all the others in a particular *bee*; its seniority allows it to enlist the aid of lesser *kunus* in a coordinated plan to punish *bee* members. It is perhaps noteworthy that the medium of this *kunu* resides in the capital city, as does the majority of the (wider) *bee*. Kinsmen who wish to communicate with the principal *kunu* must either make a trip to Paramaribo or wait until the medium is visiting either of the Sedney villages. The only other Sedney *kunu* that I learned of was provoked rather recently in Balen and informants in Tivrede claim that this *kunu* has never bothered anyone in Tivrede. This would mean that if this case can be taken as representative, the same principal *kunu* is propitiated by both matri-segments at this stage of fission, but lesser (i.e., more recently-prvoked) *kunus* are propitiated only by the matri-segment of the provoker.

¹¹ I discovered through interviewing that a number of Sedneys had only visited the parent village once or twice, briefly, on ceremonial occasions. A few had never been there at all.

In spite of the geographic dispersal of the *bee*, there are no recent cases of intermarriage between the Upper and Lower River matri-segments, at least for Sedneys residing in the tribal territory. This is undoubtedly due to the dwindling populations of both matri-segments (but especially that in Tivrede) as a result of labor emigration. The preservation of exogamy in the wider *bee* may signal a reversal of developing fission: there is an awareness that both matri-segments have become too small to survive alone, that is, without the other segment, and so the preservation of *bee* unity is sought through exogamy in the wider *bee*.

Case 3. The relationship between the Valenten-Twelling matri-segments and the original *bee* village of Soekibaka illustrates a still further stage of fission. This case also illustrates "vertical" interpolity relations, i.e., the relationship between the Matawai and the national polities and the process of incorporation of the former by the latter. About 65 years ago a group from Soekibaka migrated downriver and built Balen. (This group may not have come directly from the Upper River parent village but may have lived for a while in the former village of Awookonde. See Fig. 2). Informants disagree as to whether strife or mere population increase led to the initial emigration from Soekibaka. Even though Balen grew into a populous village over the decades, it was always considered a broken-off section of the "real" village of the *bee*, Soekibaka. The "real" ancestor shrine was in Soekibaka; only a substitute pole was used in Balen. The lineage chief's staff of office (*kapiten pau*) remained in Soekibaka, and the Balen matri-segment was under the authority of the Soekibaka *kapiten*.

However, the unity of the *bee* was weakened over the years by the increase in Balen's population (which grew quite large before recent emigration to the coast), especially when it became larger than the parent village. The *bee* was further weakened by the degree of geographic separation: the one to two days' of motor boat travel or four to six days' of paddle-boat travel between Soekibaka and Balen has made it difficult for *bee* members to fulfill the usual obligations and duties expected of them, that is, to kinsmen outside the local matri-segment. This led to a relaxation of the exogamy rule between the two matri-segments¹² and to the provocation of new *kunus* which "do not

¹² Matawais acknowledge that it is more acceptable to marry a member of your *bee* who lives in a different village than one who lives in your own village, because "you're less accustomed" to the person from a different village. See Green (1974: Ch. 4) for the ways endogamy threatens *bee* and village solidarity.

touch" those not of the matri-segment of the provoker. With regard to the latter, Matawais explain that some of the *kunus* originally provoked in the Upper River have "moved down" to Balen to be with the close kinsmen of the provoker, and these *kunus* have ceased to be a threat to *bee* members in the parent village. And at least two *kunus* which were provoked in Balen have "remained there" and never bothered anyone in Soekibaka. In spite of this, the principal avenging spirit for the *bee* remains the same for both matri-segments.

Some 20 years ago, the *kapiten* (lineage chief) of the wider *bee* (who was born in Balen but belongs to the Soekibaka matri-segment) took a wife in Njukonde, adjacent to Balen. This meant that, thereafter, he was unable to spend much time in the parent village, Soekibaka, because of his uxori-local residence. Thus, it developed that the "true" village of the Valenten *bee* only had a visiting lineage head. Moreover, it had a dwindling population, and the break-away segment of the *bee* was growing more powerful and populous over the years. Soekibaka *bee* members felt increasingly anxious that their village would "dissolve" and this became clearly enunciated when the *kapiten* recently made a trip to Soekibaka and informed the matri-segment that he wished to bring the staff of office downriver to Balen. The *kapiten* felt that the staff should be where the *kapiten* chooses to live. The Soekibaka matri-segment, however, feared that the removal of the staff would mean that Balen would then become the "head village" of the *bee*. Specifically, Balen's "ownership" of the staff would mean that upon the incumbent's death, Balen could dispute the legitimacy of any successor to the *kapiten*-ship who was from Soekibaka.¹³ Since the Surinam government pays a salary to *kapitens* (as well as to assistant lineage chiefs and to the paramount chief), it wishes to maintain accurate records of who the *kapitens* are and where they live. Since the Valenten *bee kapiten* has lived primarily in Balen and in Njukonde (his wife's village), the Soekibaka matri-segment fears that the government may already assume that the office of *kapiten* belongs to the Balen matri-segment. In tribal politics, such an ambiguity would not ordinarily arise: wherever the staff is, there the political office is, and it is for this

¹³ As matri-segments become increasingly independent of one another through the fission process, the rule of succession to political office by close matrilineal kinsmen (sister's children of the incumbent, usually) means that only one of the matri-segments will possess the prestigious and prized office of *kapiten*. Thus, a contributing factor to *bee* fission is the desire on the part of the office-less matri-segments to establish a new *kapiten*-ship for themselves.

reason that the Soekibaka matri-segment refused to let their *kapiten* remove his staff and take it to Balen.

In a series of palavers that followed his attempt to remove the staff of office, the Soekibaka matri-segment decided to formally become a separate *bee* by officially changing their "*bee* name" ¹⁴ with the Districts Registry. The theory is that with the death of the incumbent (a man in his 60's), both matri-segments can claim *bee* status on the basis of residence in geographically separated villages and possession of different "last names". Then, presumably, a new staff of office will be established for the Balen matri-segment and everyone will be satisfied. Soekibaka will not yield their staff to Balen and apply for a new one themselves, because its population has dwindled so much that its elders fear that the government might refuse to recognize the matri-segments as a separate *bee*.

Accordingly, in late August 1972, the Soekibaka matri-segment officially applied through the Districts Registry of Brokopondo to change their *bee* name (or collective "last name") from Valenten to Monkei, a name which derives from a recent (male) ancestor of the *bee*. Members of both matri-segments acknowledge that a definitive step toward formal fission has been taken, but that fission will not be complete before the establishment of two separate staffs upon the incumbent *kapiten's* death and before the establishment of two separate ancestor shrines (*faaka pau*). The latter is accomplished by a ceremony known as "burying the ancestor shrine" (*bei faaka pau*). When this takes place, the old (surrogate) pole that has been in use in Balen will be uprooted, taken away and buried elsewhere. A new, more elaborate pole will be made and it will be uprighted in the center of the village. The paramount chief will be present, women will sing, rum libations will be poured to the ancestors, and guns will be fired.¹⁵

The *kapiten* staff and the ancestor shrine, then, are the two main symbols of *bee* unity; when new symbols are created for a matri-segment of a dividing *bee*, the fission process is complete.

¹⁴ In recent years, the Surinam government has attempted to register all Maroons and Amerindians in order to achieve an accurate national census, and to begin taxing the "bushland peoples" and conscripting them into military service. The government is accordingly persuading Matawais to legally assume "last names". To date, the pattern among Matawais is for all *bee* members to carry the same "last" — or *bee* name.

¹⁵ This ceremony also takes place when a *bee* moves *en masse* to a new village site, or simply when an old ancestor pole breaks or becomes rotten.

Discussion and Conclusion

Three progressive stages of fission can be derived from the cases of *bee* division just cited and, together, the stages represent the (anthropologist's) segmentation model. Let us summarize the essential facts in order to identify the primary mechanisms, or causal factors, in the fission process. In the first stage there is the establishment of a second or subsequent matri-segment. This can be due to population increase. In Case 1 we saw the transmission of a new "last" name within a *bee* and we can presume that increasing autonomy of the resulting matri-segment was due in part to the population increase that resulted when "fathered children" (children of *bee* men) were included in the new matri-segment through the device of patronymy. In addition to population increase or intra-*bee* strife (a possible cause of matri-segment formation in Case 2) a new matri-segment can result from a combination of demographic and (post-nuptial) residential factors, as Case 3 illustrates. Once a matri-segment is established, we note certain factors that contribute to its becoming autonomous: the relaxation of exogamy in the (wider) *bee*, the establishment of an office of assistant lineage chief for the new matri-segment, and what we might call differential *kunu* vulnerability. This last mechanism refers to a situation where some *bee* members are more likely to be victims of a recently-provoked *kunu* than are others, even though all *bee* members are thought to be possible or potential victims.

In the second stage, residential dispersal of *bee* members seems to be the primary causal factor in developing *bee* fission. This leads to the incorporation of an immigrant matri-segment into the polity and cult life of the host *bee*, as Case 2 illustrates. Moreover, with residential dispersal, recently-provoked *kunus* may be restricted in their "striking range" to the matri-segment of the provoker. This means that two matri-segments of the same *bee* begin to propitiate different *kunus*, which in turn means that the duties, responsibilities, and even inter-*bee* alliances¹⁶ may be different between the two matri-segments. This leads to greater autonomy of the two matri-segments than we find in a situation of mere "differential *kunu* vulnerability" (Case 1).

¹⁶ If a (ghost) *kunu* is provoked when, e.g., someone from one *bee* accidentally shoots someone from another *bee*, then the various obligations that fall to the "guilty" *bee* (ranging from rum payments to the *kunu* to supporting the other *bee* in its disputes with other *bees*, all in the name of keeping the *kunu* mollified and non-punitive) keep this *bee* in a client relationship vis-à-vis the "victim" *bee*.

It is noteworthy that the one exception that we find among the mechanisms of developing fission in Case 2 (a mechanism that might even signal a reversal of the fission process), i.e., the preservation of exogamy among members of the wider *bee*, seems to be due to recent population loss, thus giving further evidence that population growth is an important causal factor in the fission process.

In Case 3, a somewhat longer period of residential dispersal than was the case in the previous example (70-80 years versus 45-55 years) has led to increased *bee* endogamy and to the increased propitiation of different *kunu*s by the different matri-segments. Fission reaches an advanced stage when, as we saw in Case 3, rivalry develops between two matri-segments over who "owns" the office of lineage chief. Note that this rivalry is exacerbated by population increase in one (but not both) of the matri-segments.

The establishment of a new ancestor shrine and lineage chief's office marks the creation of a new *bee* or *bees* and the end of the fission process. Note that in Case 3, the dividing matri-segments still recognized the same principal *kunu*. To those familiar with the Guiana Maroon literature, the point at which dividing *bee* segments cease to recognize the same principal *kunu* would seem to be critical in determining the ultimate stage of fission — Saramakas, for example, are said to *define* a *bee* as that group of kinsmen vulnerable to a single principal *kunu* (Price, 1973b: 90). However, in Matawai it is possible for two recently established *bees* (that developed from a common former *bee*) to continue recognizing the same principal *kunu*, at least for some time. Matawais simply explain that two *bees* share the same principal *kunu* because "we are of the same clan (*lo*)."¹⁷ This difference between the "function" of the Saramaka versus the Matawai principal *kunu* suggests that *kunu* belief plays a less important role in Matawai *bee* fission than in Saramaka *bee* fission.

How adequate, then, is the native model of *bee* fission, the segmentation charter, when compared to our segmentation model? Matawais, we recall, identify residential dispersal and the feuding or population increase that leads to residential dispersal, as the primary causal factor in *bee* division. Other contributing factors such as the relaxation of *bee* exogamy, incorporation into the polity and cult life of a host *bee*, etc.,

¹⁷ *Los* that consist of *bees* with a common principal *kunu* (I am familiar with two or three such *los*) probably exhibit a greater corporate character than *los* that do not consist of such *bees*.

are also recognized by Matawais as such. One informant, noting the preservation of exogamy in the Sedney *bee* (Case 2 example), reflected that this might mean that “the *bee* won’t be able to divide. It’s too small”. On the other hand, Matawais tend to believe that former *bees* still exist as something like corporate groups and they tend to ignore or deny (especially to outsiders) the role of proliferating *kunus* in the fission process. Thus, we might conclude that where the native model of *bee* fission conflicts with ideology, there might be some “blind spots”, or distortions in the model. I would suggest, however, that this does not necessarily mean that real (i.e., observable and inferable) facts or processes are misunderstood. It may simply mean that for the sake of not offending supernatural beings, exhibiting a united front to the outside world, or perpetuating socially useful myths, certain elements of the native model will be rearranged.

Implications

Following Firth’s terminology, an essentially methodological problem in Matawai ethnography has been presented in terms of an ideal/real (or ideal/actual) contrast. This research strategy “assumes that there is one set of patterned regularities consisting of what people say or believe about what they do or should do and another set of patterned regularities concerned with what they ‘actually do’ ” (Harris, 1968: 580). As we have seen, the situation is not quite so simple. The same individual may say a variety of different and even mutually contradictory things about the same phenomenon, depending on who his listener is, the general social context, etc. And we can usually expect to find rival or otherwise incompatible statements by members of a given group or community, at least if we take the time to research or question thoroughly. What does it mean, therefore, to talk about an “ideal” native model? I suggest that at best it implies something like, “most of the people who talked to me privately and who are not afraid of X’s witchcraft said this about that.”

Following conventional usage, our “ideal” model was constructed largely from verbal behavior and our “real” model was constructed largely from non-verbal behavior. However, both models are ultimately derived from the same behavior, and so, as Silverman and Brown (1972: 1) have noted, “any contradictions between these different abstractions exist at the level of analysis itself, and not in the empirical

situation". Where does this observation lead us? To the conclusion that there is only one process of Matawai lineage fission; any discrepancies between normative/ideal formulations of this process (whether from the ethnographer or the informant) and statistical/behavioral formulations of the same process must be regarded as a methodological problem. If we find, as I did, that a certain type of formulation tends to be presented to outsiders, then explaining to outsiders is one of several contexts that must be specified and analyzed in any presentation or formulation of a "native model". Ideals, as Silverman and Brown further note, are "situationally specific and the study of them must include their context" (1972: 6). Likewise, psychological factors that seem to operate in certain situations must also be included among the relevant variables in a contextual analysis: Matawais ignored (in their verbal reporting) the role of avenging spirits in the lineage fission process because they feared punishment from the spirits themselves, since recognizing the role of spirits meant acknowledging the vulnerability of spirits. The fact that I encountered informants who were able to explain the need for distortions in their own explanations/conceptualizations by reference to ideological or psychological (supernatural) factors emerging in situational contexts can only lead me to conclude that real/ideal contrasts such as Firth's segmentation model versus segmentation charter are somewhat naive — especially when one encounters natives who, in a sense, have long been "into" a more sophisticated ethnography of behavior based on contextual analysis.

In conclusion, I would suggest that while there may be a place for simplistic dichotomies in anthropology, use of a real/ideal contrast is somewhat dangerous because it affords a false sense of security, based as it is on the questionable assumptions that 1) natives have fixed and usually homogeneous ideas about things in their cultural sphere; 2) prevailing values, superstitions, etc., often prevent (all) natives from seeing things as they really are; and 3) anthropologists, being outsiders and trained in objectivity, can see the way things really are by observing behavior. One of the main thrusts of the so-called new ethnographers has been to question the relative perspectives of natives and anthropologists, right to the level of epistemology. It might be argued that the question of relative perspectives is such an abstract and philosophical question that to become concerned with it would be to inhibit the procedure of ethnography. Even if we grant that, we should note, as has Harris (1968: 580), that "In the ideal/actual contrast, the problem of specifying the operations by which one gets to know what people

'actually do' is not even broached..." Since the real/ideal contrast obscures both the complexities of human nature (and human societies) and the problems of obtaining valid ethnographic information, I suggest that the contrast either be abandoned or used only with specific qualifications and with acknowledgement of its shortcomings.

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