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Shamanic alliance in the touristic borderzone: Strategic hospitality at Surama Eco- Lodge in Guyana

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Abstract :

This article explores how villagers in Surama form alliances with outsiders through strategic hospitality within the touristic borderzone. Surama is a primarily Makushi village in Guyana. Tourism began during the 1990s and is now central to the village economy. Villagers' efforts to form relationships with certain visitors (particularly tourist leaders) as partners or yakos through hospitality reflect an ontological framework associated with shamanism. This involves relational modes of interaction that are common across Amazonia but have been underexamined in the context of tourism. However, Makushi alliances with outsiders in Surama are unique in their emphasis on mutuality and symmetry, which stems from past Makushi experiences of enslavement during the colonial encounter and antipathy towards asymmetric relations. Based on fieldwork involving interviews and participant observation in Surama, this article links debates in Amazonian ethnology and the anthropology of tourism to examine how villagers in Surama manage relations with tourists to obtain external resources.

Keywords : Amazonia, borderzones, hospitality, Indigenous people, shamanism, tourism, Amazônia, áreas de fronteira, hospitalidade, indígenas, turismo

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Welcoming Guests in Surama

During fieldwork in the village of Surama in Guyana, I was often present at the community-owned Surama Eco-Lodge when tourists and other outsiders would visit. These touristic encounters invariably began with Makushi eco-lodge staff greeting the visitors and strategically performing hospitality. At the outset, visitors were given drinks, engaged in conversation, and taken to their rooms while a meal was prepared. Engagements with tourists were friendly, but greater attention was paid to the leaders of tourist groups, who were given gifts (e.g., craftwork and coffee mugs) during visits and provided demonstrations of Makushi dances and songs by the Surama Culture Group. Over time, I came to view these encounters in Surama in relation to "borderzones" that enable the ample production of contrastive meanings.

The context of visits by outside tourism leaders was often to arrange for the arrival of larger groups of tourists. These groups varied from adventure tourists to ecological student

researchers. Visits by such leaders (e.g., representatives from companies or universities) were arranged in advance and often occurred (in the case of student research groups) prior to the start of field seasons. Village leaders made special visits to the eco-lodge to meet, converse, eat, drink, and form relationships with these powerful and resourceful guests. These visits provided opportunities to form and manage relationships through strategic hospitality with key outsiders controlling the means of acquiring desired resources.

Based on my fieldwork, strategic hospitality encompasses practices of using gifting and reciprocal exchange to create mutualistic and shamanic relations of friendship-centered partnership. It is used to form relations of symmetry and alliance with otherwise asymmetric entities with access to goods, knowledge, and power. Strategic hospitality involves identifying potentially useful outsiders and preemptively engaging them through reciprocity and gifting in order to acquire external resources. In addition to money and goods, Makushi villagers in Surama seek political capital through relations with outsiders with national and international power, as well as social capital that grants prestige to villagers who successfully maintain such relations. These forms of capital are valuable within the context of otherwise asymmetric situations and help to symmetrize relations. Knowledge is also sought from outsiders. In addition to tourists' basic needs (e.g., food and shelter), tourism operators seek "authentic" performances, experiences, and objects for tourists (see Meisch 2002, 97–100; Van den Berghe 1992), who often misunderstand villagers through external lenses (see Conklin and Graham 1995). While tourists seek "authenticity" and "nature" in Surama, villagers seek access to resources from tourists. Like shamans engaging masters of peccaries to procure herds of game, villagers hospitably engage outsiders to ensure provision of the herds of tourists that maintain the tourism economy.

In early 2020, I asked a prominent middle-aged village leader named Raphael about these interactions.[1] He told me that one must treat a "master" or "owner" (described further below) well and as a partner. He further elaborated that:

> We believe everything has an owner that is its master. Before you hunt, you leave tobacco or some high wine [a form of liquor] at the edge of the forest for the *padlru* [master-owner]. If you don't, it's not good. Might get sick or your child get fits [soul loss] or no more animals. Fisherman do the same. Some are like allies for the *piaimen* [shamans]. These tourists here, they have their owner too and we treat them, the padlru, good so they keep coming back with more. It's like their toshao that represents them. Our partners.

I was already familiar with the contour of these ideas and have previously suggested that villagers in Surama often view leaders of tourist groups as akin to master-owner spirits (see Whitaker 2021). However, I had never before heard a villager express the connection this clearly.[2]

Village leaders and eco-lodge staff seek tourists as a central part of "development" in Surama. However, the meanings and understandings of "development" contrast in this context. For example, reflecting divergent perspectives (see Viveiros de Castro 1998), as well as potential differences in habitus (see Bourdieu 1977), tourism leaders in Surama see themselves as business partners aiding economic development while villagers often view them as akin to shamanic spirits from whom desired material and non-material resources can be obtained. To build tourism, special *yako* relations (as described below) are formed with the individuals and organizations that provide large groups, mediate access to tourist markets, and facilitate repeat

"business" at the eco-lodge. These shamanic "allies" are sought and engaged through strategic hospitality to build partnerships (see Fausto 2012b). Similar to how shamans obtain spirit allies elsewhere in Amazonia (Santos-Granero 2007, 12; see Halbmayer 2019), villagers in Surama manage partnerships with outsiders "by initial offers of gifts, and maintain their friendship through a subsequent stream of offerings" that situate them within mutualistic relations centered around hospitality. Although rarely examined in tourism contexts in Amazonia, Makushi relations with tourists resonate with regional patterns of extracting resources from outsiders (see Conklin and Graham 1995; High 2020). However, they place a higher emphasis on symmetry than some other regional groups.

In this article, I examine the ontological foundations of Makushi interactions with tourists in Surama Village using the concepts of the "touristic encounter" and the "touristic borderzone" (see Leite, Castañeda, and Adams 2019; Mostafanezhad and Swain 2019). I show how villagers conceptualize touristic interactions and work to shift these relations away from the asymmetries often found in tourism through strategies developed during the "colonial encounter" (see Mostafanezhad and Hannam 2014). Historical memory among the Makushi of enslavement during the colonial encounter influences their desire to minimize asymmetry in relations with others. During the colonial encounter, they developed shamanically-influenced strategies of attracting and forming strategic alliances with outsiders through the use of hospitality. These strategies continue today within the touristic encounter.

The "touristic encounter" and the "colonial encounter" are associated with "moments and spaces" of inter-cultural interaction that often involve asymmetries between local people and outsiders (Mostafanezhad and Hannam 2014, 2). According to Leite, Castañeda, and Adams (2019, 19):

> At a collective level, *the touristic encounter* is often used by analogy with *the colonial encounter* to refer broadly to a characteristic form of cultural confrontation between "hosts" ("natives") and "guests" (foreign travelers).

The connection between these encounters emerges when inequalities associated with colonialism persist and become reproduced in tourism. The power relations involved in tourism in Surama somewhat resemble Van den Berghe's (1992) discussion of ethnic tourism with its division of tourists, tourees, and middlemen.[3] In Surama, tourists and "middlemen" (i.e., leaders of tourist groups) are generally Europeans and North Americans and often white. The "tourees" (i.e., villagers in this case) are indigenous. In this sense, there is an "ethnic division of labor" at the Surama Eco-Lodge, which reflects historical colonial relations involving ethnically-focused asymmetries. However, although such asymmetries are latent at Surama Eco-Lodge, Van den Berghe's (1992, 247; see also Meisch 2002, 82–83) claim that "[e]thnic tourism creates highly asymmetrical and unequal relationships along sharply drawn ethnic lines..." does not entirely hold due to efforts by Makushi villagers to neutralize these asymmetries. Although the ethnic and power variables in tourism sometimes resemble those of colonialism, Makushi people have in both cases worked to create symmetric partnerships.

Although touristic and colonial relations among Makushi groups share similarities, villagers in Surama intentionally strive to create mutuality with tourists through hospitality-focused strategies developed during the colonial era. Historical Makushi experiences of enslavement have contributed to strong desires for symmetric relations with outsiders. Shamanic relational modes involving hospitality, rather than predation, and affinity are used to form such

relations, which differentiate the Makushi from many groups in Amazonia.

Conceptual Framework

This article connects debates in Amazonian ethnology and the anthropology of tourism. These debates center around how indigenous people conceptualize interactions with outsiders – whether as "tourists" in the anthropology of tourism (see Leite, Castañeda, and Adams 2019; Picard 2019) or in various other contexts described in Amazonian ethnology (see Albert and Ramos 2002; Fausto 2012b; Vilaca 2010). At a broader level, this is linked to debates concerning how indigenous people conceptualized Europeans during the colonial encounter (see Sahlins 1995; Obeyesekere 1992). Although studies of tourism sometimes assume shared subjectivities and perspectives across hosts and visitors, Picard (2019, 170–171) shows how these can diverge and how tourism-related hospitality can be used as:

> the practice of encompassing and co-opting outsiders in a controlled environment in an attempt both to neutralize their potential, unknown forces and to appropriate these forces to make them work for the hosts' own projects.

Such concerns emerge from the "touristic borderzone," which is where the touristic encounter occurs, as a space where locals and tourists interact through divergent understandings. Focusing on tourism and hospitality, Picard (2019, 170) describes how this borderzone can be:

> not only a creative space in which cultures and selves are dialogically formulated and shaped, but also a space in which the presumed spiritual powers and substances of others

are actively charmed, engaged, and appropriated in order to empower the self.

Such appropriations regularly occur at the Surama Eco-Lodge.

This ongoing concern about conceptualizations of outsiders in the anthropology of tourism connects with a debate among anthropologists over how ontology positions encounters between indigenous people and outsiders (see Descola 2013; Vilaca 2010; see also Tym 2020). "Ontology" refers here to frameworks of "reality" (see Kohn 2015, 312–315), which include both Western scientific "naturalism" and contrasting frameworks (e.g., "animism" and "totemism") (see Descola 2013).[4] The debate has largely overlooked contexts of tourism. This provides an opportunity to put these fields into dialogue in the context of the touristic encounter and borderzone. The central question in this article is how do Makushi people in Surama ontologically conceptualize their interactions with outsiders in tourism? My argument is that they draw upon frameworks involving shamanism and kinship, as well as historical experiences of enslavement during the colonial era, and work to create mutualistic relations with tourists through strategic hospitality.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Methodology

I conducted fieldwork in Surama – a primarily Makushi village in Guyana of around 314 people – for approximately six months from 2012 to 2020.[5] This was divided into five separate research visits ranging from two weeks to two months each. However, although it was central to the context, the fieldwork focus was not always specifically on tourism, but on broader relations and ontology among the Makushi. The fieldwork was ontologically-oriented in the sense that it

was focused on local concepts regarding "reality" (particularly shamanism), which were treated as irreducible to the categories of Western scientific naturalism (see Kohn 2015). As such, the research aimed for ethnographic understandings of indigenous conceptual frameworks rather than positivist explanations.

The research combined ethnographic methods (e.g., participant observation and semi-structured interviews) with ethnohistorical methods (e.g., archival research in Guyana and the UK). Participant observation was conducted with villagers who were tourism workers at Surama Eco-Lodge during day-to-day activities, such as office work, cleaning, tour-guiding, and food processing, as well as with villagers engaged in non-tourism activities, such as hunting, fishing, and cassava work. I also participated in and observed a range of social and community activities unrelated to tourism or subsistence practices. I interacted with several tourist groups and their leaders, although systematic data collection was not done with tourists. Using snow-ball sampling, fieldwork-based interviews included men and women. There was a focus on villagers with extensive "cultural" and historical knowledge – particularly concerning shamanism. Between 2013 and 2015, 144 interviews were conducted with 80 persons. In 2019–2020, 100 shorter interviews were conducted with 100 persons. These methods allowed for extensive and longitudinal immersion within the tourist encounter with a focus on Makushi concepts and understandings. This combination of interviews and participant observation provides data concerning the touristic encounter examined in this article.

Tourism in Surama

Although student groups often visit during June and July, tourism in Surama generally peaks before (April and May) and after (August and September) the main rainy season (late May

through early August), but it occurs year-round. Group sizes range from single travelers to groups of twenty or more. Since Surama developed tourism in the 1990s, villagers have had intensive interactions with tourists. In 2019, the Surama Eco-Lodge accountant provided rounded figures for the number of annual visitors paying head tax, which refers to a fee (1,500 Guyana Dollars or $7.50 USD in 2018) owed to Surama by outside visitors.

[Insert Table 1 here]

The total number of visitors is higher, since visitors from other villages do not pay head tax, but the figures above include conventional tourists. Tourism capacity at Surama Eco-Lodge is 30 persons, but this can be expanded when necessary. For visits by large groups of research students, special structures are sometimes built that can accommodate up to 50 people.

Relations with visitors are formed through strategic hospitality. For example, in 2016, Prince Harry (UK) visited Surama as part of a regional diplomatic mission. A video on Surama's Facebook page depicted him sitting at the Surama Eco-Lodge wearing a feathered headdress and engaging with village leaders. I was later told that he received unspecified gifts from village leaders to establish an ongoing relationship. Reflecting efforts to build political and social capital, some believed he would return if Surama needed his help. In 2019–2020, I saw the following photograph in the Surama Eco-Lodge Office.

[Insert Figure 2 here].

Within Surama's touristic borderzone, Harry perceived himself as furthering international diplomacy while villagers perceived themselves as making Harry a shamanic ally through strategic hospitality (see Leite, Castañeda, and Adams 2019, 34–35; Fausto 2012b).

Prince Harry was not the first dignitary to visit Surama and receive strategic hospitality. The British High Commissioner to Guyana visited the village during previous years and was

similarly given gifts implicating him in shamanic webs of mutuality. Many of Surama's visitors are well-heeled and confer social and political capital. Among those I met were Belgian and Dutch doctors, a British investment banker, an Australian lawyer, and a UN representative. International consultants also visited Surama Eco-Lodge to advise on tourism. There is some tourism from Guyanese living on the coast, but foreign tourists constitute the primary market. Visiting groups vary from bird-watchers to fishing enthusiasts, biological researchers, and backpackers. Hospitality is used to establish commensality and enable a "horizontal relation of mutual exchange" (Meiser and Dürr 2014, 161). Offerings of food and drink transition to gift-giving, cultural demonstrations, and reciprocations in goods, knowledge, and connections.

Cultural demonstrations are often provided for dignitaries and large tourist groups. These events present Makushi identity in ways that play to visitors' expectations and desires for perceived authenticity. Such demonstrations involve performances of Makushi songs and dances by villagers wearing "traditional" dress (e.g., loincloths, beads, and feathered headdresses) that are otherwise uncommonly worn. These performances are given by members of the Surama Culture Group who say that they "share culture" with visitors as part of an exchange, which seeks to obviate the "asymmetrical sharing of cultures" found in many tourism contexts (Mathis and Rose 2016, 67; see Whitaker 2016, 334). Visitors are often asked to reciprocate. On one occasion, a group of U.S. students selected a member of their group to play guitar and sing a country western song. These exchanges facilitate partnership in the touristic borderzone. (Picard 2019, 170–171).

Tourism began in Surama during the 1990s. According to Raphael, the earliest visitors were U.S. university students who got lost and were found by a villager. They were given food and hammocks for the night. Before they left, the group's leader asked village leaders for an

invoice. The Surama Village Council met and discussed this request. They had never heard of an "invoice" and thought it might mean one's inner voice, so they said to pay whatever the visitors thought was fair. Although hospitality is "traditional" among Makushi groups in Guyana, receiving cash for it is not. Surama soon received a surprising (to them) amount of money (Whitaker 2016, 46–47). Afterwards, with help from a British ex-pat who is an affinal relative (a yako as discussed below) of a village leader in Surama, villagers built a lodge for accommodating future visitors. Surama also received assistance from the Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development (also discussed below) (Dilly 2003; Funnell and Bynoe 2007). Surama's tendency to attract well-off tourists stems from these early connections and the high cost of travel. Touristic hospitality resonates with Makushi efforts during the colonial era to acquire resources (Whitaker 2020b; see Leite, Castañeda, and Adams 2019, 19–21).

At present, tourism is central to livelihoods in Surama. It is the largest employer and provides welcome alternatives for some to other forms of paid employment, such as cattle work, logging, and mining in Brazil and Guyana (see Dilly 2003; Funnell and Bynoe 2007). Although these other options sometimes bring larger wages or profit, they often involve time away from family, include risks (e.g., wage theft and unsafe conditions), and are seen as environmentally damaging in the case of logging and mining.

Surama Eco-Lodge is owned collectively by the village, which differentiates it from tourism elsewhere with more asymmetric relations between locals and outsiders (Funnell and Bynoe 2007). However, the provision of tourists often depends on outside companies and individuals who facilitate visits. Day-to-day operations at Surama Eco-Lodge are controlled by a managing villager. Employment at the eco-lodge is on a rotational basis (see Dilly 2003). The

number of such rotational employees fluctuates depending on need. There are also higher paid full-time employees, which include a primary manager, communications secretary, and finance secretary. Although I do not have up-to-date figures, I was told that part-time employees receive between $10 and $20 per day of work – the number of days worked depends on visitor demand – while full-time employees are paid a monthly salary of $200–400. Although these salaries were increasing in 2020, day-laborers (overwhelmingly men) can earn more (roughly between $15 and $40 per day) in logging. Logging operators make even greater profits.

Occasionally, I heard villagers express displeasure with hiring-related decisions, which are mostly decided by the manager, and distribution of tourism resources. Although these were mostly individual complaints, I sometimes sensed broader envy and resentment surrounding such decisions. For example, Mary complained to me one afternoon about how the manager had not re-hired her daughter for a tourism job. She suggested that the manager and the manager's family, which is prominent in the village, benefited much more from tourism than other families. Surama is somewhat divided (socially and geographically) between a number of key families, but one family has more economic, political, and social capital than the others. This family has also been more successful in forming strategic relations with outsiders. Envy is sometimes directed towards this family, which has generally also maintained some control over tourism and directs who benefits most from related external resources. I only experienced a few incidents where this was mentioned, but the potential for envy and resentment lingers under the surface. However, although tourism has increased inequality between villagers, I surprisingly never saw these tourism-related divisions break out into significant in-fighting or result in sorcery accusations. This is due to efforts to provide some distribution of benefits across Surama.

Concerning Makushi hospitality, a middle-aged Makushi man named Louis said that

being Makushi means "doing the traditional things. Being kind to people. Accommodate, appreciate. One of the things about the Makushi is that we have always been known as very hospitable, kind." He added that "hospitality is two-ways. We give and receive" (see Picard 2019). Another middle-aged Makushi man, Leflore, elaborated:

> And when the people [Europeans] found us, when the white people came, we were the friendly and most hospitable, but other tribes never used to accept other people coming in their territory. They don't want the whites or others in some of their areas.

Makushi hospitality is historically described in terms of reciprocity. Foreshadowing today's eco-lodges, Robert Schomburgk (1848, 267) wrote of a "house exclusively dedicated to the reception of strangers" in Makushi villages during the colonial encounter in the nineteenth century. Although guesthouses are found outside Makushi villages, Makushi groups are regionally somewhat unique for their historically-driven emphasis on hospitality. Villagers in Surama view tourism as a continuation of “traditional” hospitality. Touristic and colonial encounters emerge as partial continuities here (see Leite, Castañeda, and Adams 2019, 19; Mostafanezhad and Hannam 2014). Strategic hospitality among the Makushi is first documented in the colonial encounter as a way of curbing predation and acquiring political capital. Historical memory of enslavement during colonialism drives Makushi desires for symmetry in the touristic encounter.

In 2020, Leflore explained that: "With master of animals, the padlru, you got to watch out, but these tourists have leaders too and can be friends and partners to us." However, he emphasized that it is important not to let outsiders dominate. Although asymmetries exist with the "master-owners of tourists" at a political-economic level, villagers strive for mutuality. In

Surama, as with the Trio (Rivière's 2009, 100), relations with master-owners (at least those of tourists) center around trade-like partnerships (see Fernández-Llamazares and Virtanen 2020).

Alliance in the Borderzone: Encounters with the Iwokrama International Centre (IIC)

Surama Eco-Lodge is situated within a regional and international tourism network. Staff members work with international tour operators, such as Wilderness Explorers and Evergreen Adventures Guyana, and research-based organizations, such as Operation Wallacea (OpWall), to attract tourists. Regional partners include Rockview Eco-Lodge (run by a British ex-pat) near Annai Village, Caiman House in Yupukari Village (supported financially by a benefactor in the U.S.), and Atta Rainforest Lodge at the IIC (coordinated internationally with Commonwealth and EU support). In these cases, there are one or more foreign individuals who provide support and exert a measure of control over the supply of tourists. Although there is potential for asymmetry and resentment, Surama aims to symmetrize these partnerships.

One of the largest and most powerful of these partners is the IIC, which was formed in 1996 as a joint project of the Guyanese government and the Commonwealth Secretariat and manages a 371,000 hectare section of forest near Surama (Whitaker 2020a, 853–854; Whitaker 2020b, 890). It promotes conservation, sustainability, and climate change mitigation and seeks with governmental support to restrict various uses of the forest (e.g., farming, fishing, hunting, logging, and mining) within this reserve area. The IIC emphasizes tourism as an alternative form of "development" and a partial replacement for subsistence activities. IIC restrictions have meant the loss of some territory for subsistence, although the impacts of this in Surama are unclear. There is ambiguity about whether "all" such practices are prevented by the IIC. Although such land-use restrictions resonate with worldwide tensions between indigenous rights and

conservation policies (see Dowie 2011), Surama's relations with the IIC differ from those found elsewhere. Rather than resistance, villagers strive to establish mutuality with the IIC and co-opt it into serving their interests. For example, in exchange for cooperation with conservation, the IIC provides political capital in relation to keeping extractivists off Makushi land and social capital for seeking international tourists. Despite some resentment over restrictions, which reflects occasional envy of outsiders' influence, villagers mostly have a positive view of the IIC. Although possessing more restrictive power than other master-owners of tourists, the IIC similarly provides a conduit for attracting tourists and resources. In a sense, it has become an enhanced version of traditional shamanic master-owners.

Villagers in Surama have worked to establish partnership and symmetry with the IIC through strategic hospitality. This is mostly through the cultivation of relationships with key leaders who are fêted by village leaders who then seek favors and policy input in return. Reflecting the social and political capital gained through its relationship with the IIC, Surama has managed to get one of its leaders on the IIC's Board of Trustees. Despite the restrictions, the IIC has been partially transformed into an ally through shamanic efforts, relational management, and strategic hospitality. As with master-owners, Makushi leaders, eco-lodge workers, and regular villagers strive for mutual relations with this powerful and potentially dangerous entity to ensure continued provisions of tourists. Strategic hospitality facilitates relations of symmetric partnership within a borderzone that reveals multiple and competing meanings and interests.

[Insert Figure 3 here]

Experiencing Strategic Hospitality

I personally experienced strategic hospitality in December of 2019 while conducting

fieldwork in Surama in connection with Operation Wallacea on perceptions of landscape use and conservation. The Guyana Tourism Authority was a partner in the project. These connections altered my positionality in the field. Soon after my arrival, Robert, an older village leader, met me at the Surama Eco-Lodge with a glass of soursop juice, a plate of fish and cassava, some *parakari* (cassava beer), and a broad smile. He also presented me with a craftwork piece (a cassava fan) that his wife had made. We had a friendly chat about our experiences together over the past several years. He then asked me about the new project. He was excited about the village gaining new conservation knowledge, but he mentioned some concern about the possibility that the government or outside groups might try to impose controls in the future. He expressed resentment over perceived past actions by the IIC, but said that he saw Operation Wallacea as a beneficial partner for the village that brought income and opportunities. He also mentioned that village leaders would like to strengthen relations with the Guyana Tourism Authority. Notably, Robert is a member of the family with considerable influence and control over tourism in Surama, so his interests were village-oriented and perhaps also personal.

I realized that my position had changed and that I was now perceived as a potential broker for knowledge and political capital, although not necessarily major resources. I was experiencing strategic hospitality due partly to external connections. Afterwards, I further realized that Surama's interest in strategic hospitality goes beyond merely increasing tourism. It also involves desires for social and political capital, territorial autonomy and control, and external knowledge about things like conservation. These variables shape hospitality in relation to who is incorporated as a yako (partially through parakari as further described below) and what quality and quantity of attention visitors receive. While seeking strategic alliances, villagers manage worries about potential asymmetries in these relations.

Relations with "Others" in Amazonia

Villagers' relations with visitors at Surama Eco-Lodge resonate with broader debates in Amazonian ethnology concerning "insiders" and "outsiders" (Rivière 1984), as well as asymmetric relations of "mastery" and "ownership" (see Costa 2017; Fausto 2012a). These debates have remained little examined in the context of tourism. Although ontological conceptualizations change over time (see Cepek 2016), which is reflected in the influence of historical experiences of enslavement on Makushi preferences for symmetric relations with outsiders, many regional indigenous groups speak of "masters" or "owners" of certain species (e.g., peccaries). Mastery is rooted in asymmetric relations of control and protection (Fausto 2012a). Although villagers recognize mastery between tourists and tourism leaders, they emphasize mutuality in their relations with these individuals. They minimize asymmetry and work to circumvent predation.

Mutualistic relations are not new and have been documented regionally in northwestern Amazonia (particularly among Tukanoan groups), the upper Xingu region, and the Guianas (Descola 2013, 351–352).[6] Such relations are found in contexts of trade and characterized in the literature in terms of friendship. For example, among Cariban societies in the Guianas, the *pawana* relationship refers to trade-oriented "friendships" (Santos-Granero 2007, 4–5). Makushi alliances with outsiders partially resemble such reciprocity-focused and exchange-oriented "formal friendships" (Killick 2009; see Fausto 2012b). Santos-Granero (2007, 2) defines such "friendship" in terms of cases where people "seek out each other's company, exhibit mutually helping behaviour, and are joined by links of mutual generosity and trust that go beyond those expected between kin or affines." Such relations extend into shamanic relations involving non-

humans in Amazonia (see Santos-Granero 2007, 4).

The Makushi term for "master" or "owner" is *putorï* (or *padlru* in Surama). This refers to beings who control and protect animals, fish, cassava, and other aspects of the landscape and also to village leaders, who were historically called *toye-putori* (Schomburgk 1848, 267; see Butt-Colson 2001, 229–233). Human relations with a non-human putorï, as with village leaders, are often asymmetric (see Whitaker 2021). Although similar power asymmetries (and envy) often exist in political-economic terms in tourism (see Hutchins 2007; Stronza 2001), villagers work to build symmetry-oriented friendships with leaders of tourist groups (as master-owners of tourists) and minimize asymmetries in these relations in which they seek positions neither as predators (i.e., asymmetric takers) nor as prey (i.e., asymmetric forced givers) (see Fausto 2012b; Rival 1998).

The history of Makushi relations with outsiders influences their differentiation in debates concerning master-owners and relational modes regarding others. During the colonial encounter, Makushi groups were raided by Brazilians and Dutch-aligned indigenous groups (see Santilli 2002; Whitaker 2016), which enslaved Makushi people and sold them to Europeans. These indigenous groups also sometimes kept Makushi slaves themselves. This positioned many Makushi as *poitos* (sons-in-law or slaves) with human masters. Makushi villagers in Pirara used hospitality to ally with Anglican missionaries as a curb against such external predation, since a missionary presence would presumably generate caution against raiding. Elsewhere, I have described these efforts to draw in and create strategic alliances with missionaries (Whitaker 2020b, 885–887; Whitaker 2021, 72–73). After prior interactions with the missionaries, the Makushi in Pirara visited the Reverend Thomas Youd and announced that they had prepared fields and buildings in advance of his arrival. They claimed these would be destroyed if no

missionary came. This strategic use of hospitality echoes presentations of gifts and offerings upon arrival of tourists. Such alliances during the colonial era were key to Makushi survival (see Whitaker 2016). One measure of their success is that the British government eventually sent troops to Pirara. This action was partially intended to stop the slaving. The Makushi case was also discussed in the British Parliament. However, historical memory of enslavement and being "poitos" continues among Makushi villagers in Surama and influences their efforts to create symmetric relations with outsiders and to neutralize asymmetries. Although some other groups in Amazonia also prefer symmetric relations, the Makushi are notable in ontologically positioning such relations within shamanic alliances in tourism.

Although villagers in Surama today are largely unaware of past Makushi encounters with Thomas Youd, Leflore told me a little about broader historical shamanic engagements with missionaries. He said that sometimes a piaiman would "fetch" missionaries when they were in need. He was vague about what kinds of needs this entailed, but claimed that they would put out a call and sometimes missionaries would come. When I asked him more about this call, he told me that "piaiman always making new connections. Forest spirit come to him and white man. Always getting what we need." He went on to say that piaimen give and receive.

In the past and present, Makushi groups have strategically used hospitality to attract outsiders with access to key resources (including social and political capital). In the context of tourism, visitors and villagers perceive these relations through different lenses. Surama's borderzone is a space of encounter in which tour group leaders are seen by villagers as spirit-like shamanic beings and villagers are perceived by these outsiders as market-minded economic developers. Such diverse understandings draw influence from colonial encounters while enabling contemporary appropriations of resources.

Friendship beyond Potential Affinity: Shamanic Alterity in Surama

Makushi villagers' encounters with powerful outsiders akin to shamanic master-owners also resonate with idioms of affinity and friendship. Specifically, the Makushi term yako, which refers to a brother-in-law or cross-cousin but can also be used between friends, is significant for relations with leaders of tourist groups. Yako relations often imply normative reciprocity based on affinity, which is centered in this case on historical practices of cross-cousin marriage, but these relations can go "beyond potential affinity and its underlying notions of predation."[7] Potential affinity or broader relations of friendship can exist between yakos who engage in exchange (see Brightman 2016, 64–67), as well as sometimes envy. The central feature of yako relations among the Makushi is their symmetry, which may include predation in contexts of potential affinity but not necessarily in mutualistic relations involving friendship.[8]

I was occasionally informally addressed as "yako" when speaking with villagers around my age, but I also heard people refer to actual brothers-in-law and cross cousins as yakos. Louis (quoted above) told me in 2019 that:

> My yako can be my friend, like you, James, or my family, but yako also sometimes is like a partner you deal with or someone you need for something. Doesn't have to be a cousin. Yako can be from far. And maybe sometimes work with them to exchange.

I was occasionally called yako in contexts where I was going to be asked for something. I also occasionally heard tourist group leaders informally referred to (but generally not addressed) as yakos. Villagers use the term to connote a warm relationship that can be flexibly applied in

situations ranging from friendship to actual kinship. It often involves a degree of mutual obligation. Similar to a shamanic spirit, a yako is a being from whom one obtains things, which could involve spouses, trade items, or merely a friendly sharing of resources. The term's applications create both exchange-oriented and shamanic meanings within Surama's touristic borderzone.

Although there is not a specific number of visits that makes a visitor a yako, it seemed that a yako-like relationship was often forming after two or three visits. For example, I was at the Surama Eco-Lodge when a leader of a prominent conservation-related organization visited for the second and subsequently third times. During the second visit, there were discussions about potentially bringing other visitors, which he did on the third visit. This was seen as a successful reciprocation for the hospitality he had received. He was welcomed and given drinks and food on both occasions, but on the third occasion the warmth of the interaction increased and he was invited to visit the home of one of the village leaders. This opening of the household space seemed to mark the deepening relationship. However, the relationship almost faltered at this point. Upon arrival at the house, the village leader's sister offered the guest a bowl of parakari, which he politely declined. Although generally unknown to most non-Indigenous visitors, offerings of cassava beer are central to Makushi hospitality. Refusal implies rejection of friendship. Nevertheless, many villagers are aware that outsiders do not understand this, so they smiled and offered him a fruit drink as an alternative, which he fortunately accepted. Parakari is generally not offered to first or second time visitors, who are presented with other drinks instead, but it is sometimes offered to those who are becoming yakos. Although this visitor had failed to follow expected norms in becoming a yako, such a relationship was still achieved through villagers' agentive intervention. In such contexts, cassava beer facilitates commensality and

transformation from being an outsider to a partial insider (see Grotti 2012). It loosens asymmetries and facilitates equivalency. Furthermore, sharing of drinks and other substances is often understood to enable consubstantiality (see Vilaça 2010).

This episode recalls Makushi efforts, as described above, to draw Youd into their territory in the nineteenth century as a potential ally. Youd was told that the fields and buildings that had been prepared for him would be destroyed if no one came. In both cases, potential partners and yakos were strongly expected to accept the offerings being given to them. Refusal risks being seen as an enemy, which I was told has occasionally happened to those who refused parakari. Although I never observed or heard of outsiders giving too little in exchange, which is reflected in the episode described above concerning the invoice and giving what one sees as fair, failure to accept offerings widely considered a cause of potential offense. The transformation of an outsider into a yako-like strategic ally is thus fraught with the potential for failure and sometimes requires interventions from villagers to be successful.

Villagers' partnerships with outsiders constitute yako-like relations that overlap with shamanism. Tourist leaders as yakos are expected to engage in non-predatory exchange similar to master-owners. Although a master-owner is not always a yako, the latter can be a master-owner in the sense of having guardianship over others. This traditionally involves exchange with ego or ego's village. Similar exchange-oriented relations with outsiders (sometimes involving asymmetries) are found among other regional Cariban societies, such as the Trio (Rivière 2009, 100; see Brightman 2016), who also form affinal and friendship relations with outsiders (see Fausto 2012b, 198). Villagers in Surama strategically form and manage partnerships with tourism leaders resembling relations found among yakos and between shamans and their allies.

Although leaders of tourist groups are positioned as master-owners in relation to their

control over and provision of tourists, they are also treated like non-kin yakos as friends of villagers. Such leaders are fêted with hospitality when they visit Surama to sustain the supply of tourists. These yako relations are initiated and maintained by the eco-lodge manager, other eco-lodge workers, village leaders, and regular villagers. Although any villager can form such relations with outsiders (see Funnell and Bynoe 2007), more prominent villagers and males more often do so. Villagers seek strategic allies as yakos through mutuality with master-owners of tourists. Unlike processes among many other regional Indigenous groups of "familiarizing" outsiders and other beings, which involve predation (Costa 2017; Fausto 2012a), Makushi villagers emphasize mutuality in forming alliances. Influenced by historical experiences of enslavement, they seek to avoid and neutralize predation and to minimize asymmetries whenever possible in relations with outsiders. Villagers use hospitality to encompass visitors as strategic yakos in Surama's touristic borderzone.

Conclusion

I have examined in this article how Makushi villagers use strategic hospitality derived from shamanism and kinship-related concepts to form mutualistic partnerships with outsiders in the context of tourism at the Surama Eco-Lodge. The article helps to articulate a debate within the anthropology of tourism concerning how locals and tourists contrastively conceptualize tourism and hospitality (Leite, Castañeda, and Adams 2019; Picard 2019) with a debate in Amazonian ethnology concerning the ontological underpinnings of interactions between indigenous groups and outsiders (Albert and Ramos 2002; Fausto 2012b; Vilaca 2010). This growing debate in Amazonian ethnology has had minimal engagement with the anthropology of tourism. However, these fields share an interest in conceptualizations of relations with outsiders.

The ethnographic context of Surama Eco-Lodge reveals a partial equivalency between tourists and shamanic spirits. It shows how the ontological positioning of the touristic encounter between the Makushi and outside visitors resonates with comparable frameworks found in tourism contexts elsewhere (see Picard 2019). This context further reveals the broader significance of conceptualizations of visitors, hospitality, and even tourism itself. Within the touristic borderzone of Surama, realities starkly diverge between the largely animist perspective of villagers for whom tourism is a shamanic practice for obtaining resources from outside partners (see Conklin and Graham 1995) and the more naturalist perspective of visitors and organizations like the IIC for whom tourism represents economic development and a means for forest conservation (see Whitaker 2020a, 853–854; Whitaker 2020b, 890). These differences reflect the contrasting realities of Makushi people and tourists visiting mostly from Europe and North America. Within this borderzone, visitors become yako-like shamanic partners to villagers while villagers become service providers and savvy developers to visitors. This contrast highlights the touristic borderzone as a place of fertile meaning production and incongruity, as well as a space rife with the creation of meanings and appropriations from others (Leite, Castañeda, and Adams 2019; Picard 2019). With divergent realities meeting at the cusp of contrasting aims, the touristic borderzone in Surama further reveals the plurality of ontological worlds that collide in past and present contexts of colonial and touristic encounter.

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[1] All personal names herein are pseudonyms.

[2] Most Surama villagers speak English, but younger villagers have limited fluency in Makushi.

[3] Meisch (2002) contrasts Van den Berghe's concept of an "ethnic division of labor" with findings from his research on tourism in Otavalo, Ecuador. Within the context of Otavalo, "indígenas are involved in every aspect of tourism, owning hotels, restaurants, tourist

agencies, yarn stores, the vast majority of artesanías stores and kiosks in the market, and other businesses" (Meisch 2002, 113). However, ethnicity still plays a role in the textile market, since tourists often want to buy Indigenous-made and sourced products, and Indigeneity is a focus for many tourists. There is an ethnic difference between tourists and tourees similar to Van den Berghe's description. In Otavalo, tourism has partially contributed to increased social status for Indigenous people.

[4] Kohn (2015, 312–313) differentiates the ontological focus on "reality" from concept-focused metaphysics and knowledge-centered epistemology.

[5] Surama is primarily Makushi, but some villagers are non-Makushi or non-indigenous.

[6] See Halbmeyer (2021, 16–19) for a unique conceptualization of mutuality with dependency in the Isthmo-Colombian region. However, the asymmetry of the "hierarchical symbiosis" he describes differs from what villagers in Surama seek with outsiders.

[7] Many thanks to the reviewer who suggested this phrase and conceptualization of yako relations.

[8] See Fausto (2012b) for contexts in which friendship can involve predation.

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