

Partible Objects: A Wayana Dance Costume Used as Shaman's Device (Tropenmuseum inventory number 401-86a)

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Summary

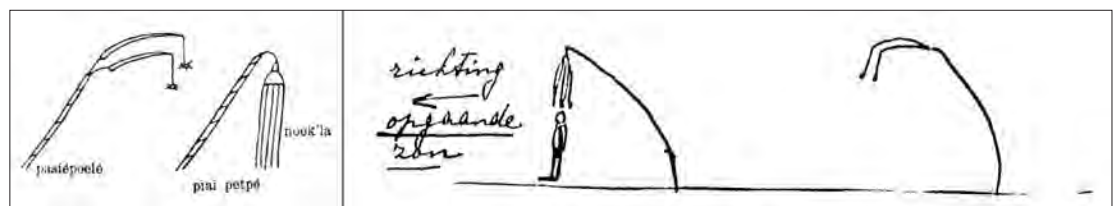
Drawing on the social-anthropological conceptualizations of “partible bodies” and “object biographies,” this article contextualizes the life history of a composite ethnographic object that was collected in 1903 among the Wayana indigenous people of the Upper Maroni River, Suriname, and of which one component (inventory number TM-401-86a) is currently curated in the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. A critical reassessment of this object is made based on published reports, the collector's unpublished notebooks and his personal diary, and almost twenty years of research by the author on the material culture and intangible heritage of the Wayana indigenous people (northern Brazil, southern Suriname, and French Guiana).

In the process of cataloguing, classifying, and labelling, some ethnographic objects may have received a description that is difficult for the museum visitor and the broader audience to understand, or which distorts the original meaning of the objects and how they came into being. This case study may also be used to reflect upon the role of the field collector, and how his or her actions or assumptions may inadvertently influence the process.

Introduction

Amazonianists in recent times demonstrate a renewed interest in the material culture of Amazonian indigenous peoples, though most of these studies situate the object or “thing” in the context of native Amazonian cosmologies and imaginaries (Santos-Granero 2009). This article (re)contextualizes the origin of an object (Tropenmuseum¹ inventory number 401-86; hereafter TM-401-86) that was collected in 1903 among the Wayana indigenous people of the Upper Maroni River (Suriname), northern Amazonia. This object and its description is critically reassessed based on the unique primary data set consisting of (a) (part of) the artifact (TM-401-86a), (b) the published report on the Gonini expedition (Franssen-Herderschee 1905:137-138), (c) the description and a drawing in *Bijdrage tot de Ethnographie der Surinaamsche Indianen* (de Goeje 1906: 26, plate VII, number 16), (d) unpublished notebooks regarding the collected ethnographic objects (RMV series archive 1443, object #49 [the last entry]), (e)

Fig. 1
Two shaman's devices as witnessed by Claudius H. de Goeje in 1903. Left: illustration with printed terms published in the report on the Gonini expedition (Franssen-Herderschee 1905: 138). Right: original drawing with de Goeje's handwritten remarks in the object notebook for ethnographic objects collected during the expedition (RMV1 series archive 1443).²



the unpublished diary of Claudius H. de Goeje (which is in the possession of his grandchildren), and (f) almost twenty years of research by the author on the material culture and intangible heritage of the Wayana indigenous people of the Upper Maroni Basin (French Guiana and Suriname) (Duin 2009, 2014).

This case study may be used to reflect upon other ethnographic objects that have been found difficult to describe, and which in the process of cataloguing, classifying, and labelling, have received a description that does not align with the object's multifaceted meaning. The cultural biography—in the sense used by Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall (cf. Appadurai 1986; Hoskins 2006; Kopytoff 1986)—of the ethnographic object discussed in this article is complex and challenging.

The cultural biography of object 401-86 spans more than a century. Gosden and Marshall (1999) focused on the life histories of objects in a museum setting, and drew upon Igor Kopytoff's *Cultural Biography of Things* published in Arjun Appadurai's 1986 *The Social Life of Things*, wherein it is argued that social valuables accumulate histories of exchange through time, and thus gain value. In this article I do not address the accrued values and the resulting "agency" or produced effects of this object, but instead I focus on its "dividuality," in the sense used by Marilyn Strathern (1988, 1992), as this object (TM-401-86) consisted of several elements that over the years circulated in divergent trajectories like a "partible person." This object, collected in 1903 by Claudius H. de Goeje—a naval cartographer with language skills and a personal interest in local cultures—is only part of a device that was, in turn, only one of two devices (Fig. 1). Furthermore, of the composite object collected, one element (TM-401-86b) has been deaccessioned. In this sense, the object under study is a partible thing with a complex cultural biography, wherein each component proceeded in divergent trajectories.

On December 16, 1903, during the Dutch Gonini expedition (Fransschen-Herderschee 1905), this object (TM-401-86)—part of a shaman's device (Figs. 1 and 2)—was collected in the indigenous Wayana village of Panapi, Aletani, Suriname.³ Together with other ethnographic objects collected during this expedition, it was then transported to Paramaribo, the capital of

Suriname, from where it was shipped to the Netherlands. In 1904, the ethnographic objects of the Gonini expedition, together with objects from two other expeditions in Suriname, were sent on temporary loan to the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum in Leiden (today: Museum Volkenkunde) pending a definitive decision about the future of this collection.⁴ In 1908, while selecting objects for further study, de Goeje noted the presence of fungus on several objects that he had so painstakingly collected and brought across the Atlantic Ocean.⁵ Twenty years later, in October 1927, the ethnographic collections of the 1903 Gonini expedition, the 1904 Tapanahoni expedition, and the 1907 Tumuc-Humac expedition were handed over to the Koloniaal Instituut in Amsterdam (today: Tropenmuseum). Although de Goeje's complementary notebooks containing the descriptions of each ethnographic object collected were promised to the Tropenmuseum in a letter dated September 13, 1927,⁶ these notebooks remained in the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum (Museum Volkenkunde, Leiden: series archive 1443). In 2014, the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam (KIT), and the RijksMuseum Volkenkunde, Leiden (RMV)—together with the Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal—merged into the Dutch Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (NMVW) and the inventory numbers at the Tropenmuseum received the prefix TM.

Tropenmuseum Object With Inventory Number 401-86

The online collection database of the Tropenmuseum (<http://collectie.tropenmuseum.nl/>; accessed May 28, 2012), and more recently the online collection database of the new Dutch Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (<http://collectie.wereldculturen.nl/>; accessed Nov. 28, 2015), provide the following information on the object under study:

Accession number: TM-401-86a

Provenance: Gonini (sic.: Aletani), Suriname

Date: before 1903 (sic.: 1903)

Name: a tree-bark cloak for spirits incantation as part of a *pono*-dance costume (my translation).⁷

Indigenous name: *Pidaie pitjoe* (sic.: *pījai pitpë*)

Dimensions: circa 95 x 14 centimeters (37 3/8 x 5 1/2 inches)

And I would like to add:

Material: inner bark of the Tauari (*Couratari guianensis*)

Field collector: Claudius H. de Goeje

Provenance: village of Panapi, Aletani, Suriname, South America

Culture: Wayana

There is no simple way to explain object TM-401-86. Of this artifact there remains only the cloak of bark streamers (401-86a; Fig. 2C), as the double-chambered bottle-gourd (*tutpë*; *Lagenaria siceraria*; Fig. 2B) with inventory number 401-86b, has been de-accessioned. Both the cloak (TM-401-86a) and the gourd (TM-401-86b) are depicted in de Goeje's (1906, plate VII, number 16) *Bijdrage tot de Ethnographie der Surinaamsche Indianen* (Fig. 2A). This illustration offers an impression of how the cloak was attached around the constricted joining between the two chambers of the bottle-gourd. TM-401-86a is referred to in the online collection database as "a tree-bark

cloak for summoning of the spirits as part of a pono-dance costume" (my translation), the enigmatic meaning of which will be explained throughout this article.

Based on the original drawings (Fig. 1), this cloak attached to a bottle-gourd was only part of the shaman's device and hung from a supporting stick: a three-to-four-meter long debarked sapling that was decorated (black with red spirals). The drawings and descriptions further state that there was a second shaman's device (named *pasiépoele* by de Goeje; *pasik epule*): consisting of a similarly debarked and decorated stick (*epule*), surmounted by two red tail-feathers from a macaw (*pasik*), to which tips were attached, by means of a cotton string, pieces of bone, or crab carapace. It appears that neither the supporting stick of the cloak-and-gourd device, nor the entire second shaman's device with macaw feathers, was collected.

Regarding the indigenous Wayana name of object TM-401-86, there is a discrepancy between the primary sources and the online collection database. The 1903 object notebook—in the handwriting of the field collector Claudius H. de Goeje—listed this object as *piaiepitpë* and specified that the cloak of bark streamers was named "noeklah" (in his diary, de Goeje wrote "noeclat"). The report on the Gonini expedition (Franssches-Herderschee 1905: 138) named this instrument *piai petpë* (Fig. 1). The entry in the online collection database reads *Pidaie pitjoe* which in all probability is a double typographical error.⁸ The report of the Gonini expedition (Franssches-Herderschee 1905: 138) stated that the cloak of bark streamers is called *noek'la*. Wayana today name this cloak of bark streamers *okalat* after the *okalat* tree (*Tauari* or *Ingi-pipa*; *Couratari guianensis*), from which the inner bark streamers originate. *Noeclat*, *noeklah*, and *noek'la* are variations of the same word, and share its root with *okalat*. This variation is common in the process of transcribing spoken indigenous

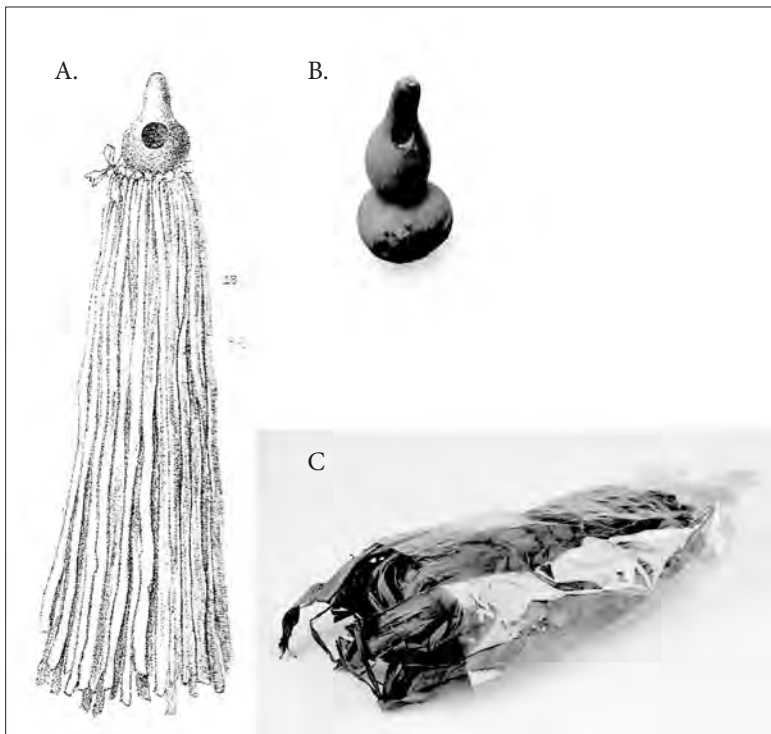


Fig. 2

Partible objects: a dance costume used as shaman's device. A: Drawing (Goeje 1906, plate VII, number 16). B: Double chambered bottle-gourd (in Wayana: *tutpë*; *Lagenaria siceraria*) with a diameter of 8 centimetres (private collection of the author; 1998, Pilima, Aletani, French Guiana). C: Original cloak of bark streamers (in Wayana: *okalat*; *Couratari guianensis*; TM-401-86a; courtesy of the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam).

languages. *Piai* [p̄ijai] is the indigenous Wayana term for “shaman” and *pitpé* (pitp̄ë) means “skin” or “bark”; hence *p̄ijai pitp̄ë* means “the bark—designating the okalat bark streamers—of the shaman.” *Piaiepitpé* or *piai petpé*, is thus a description of this device rather than its proper name, which may explain why in his personal diary de Goeje did not write down the name of the complete device.

In addition to “tree-bark cloak” (as discussed above) there is another enigmatic element in the description in the online collection database, namely that it is “part of a *pono*-dance costume.” To understand the meaning of this reference to the *pono*-dance, we have to go beyond the information provided by the report of the Gonini expedition, the 1903 object notebooks, and even beyond the diary of C. H. de Goeje. This reference to the *pono*-dance costume can be understood by drawing on my in-depth and long-term study of Wayana history and social memory related to this *pono*-dance (Duin 2014). In a moment, I will discuss this *pono*-dance costume and its relation to TM-401-86.

Last but not least, there exists a discrepancy between the online collection database and the primary sources pertaining to the provenance or place of origin of the ethnographic objects collected and discussed in this article. The original aim of the Gonini expedition, as its name implies, was to explore the Gonini, a tributary of the Maroni River. However, because the Gonini did not have its sources in the Tumuc-Humac Mountains, as was assumed, the expedition went subsequently up the Maroni River to explore and map the Aletani, the boundary river between Suriname and French Guiana (Fransschen-Herderschee 1905). After mapping the Tumuc-Humac Mountains (the watershed and border between Suriname and Brazil), the expedition members had returned toward the coast of Suriname. On December 16, 1903, the expedition reached the indigenous Wayana village of Panapi, where the expedition members would stay the night. The village of Panapi was located almost 200 kilometer south of where the Gonini enters the Lawa (stretch of river between the Maroni and the Aletani; all belonging to the main course of the Maroni River). Claudius H. de Goeje, the cartographer of the expedition with language skills and a personal interest in local cultures,

entered the village and coincidentally witnessed a healing ceremony. TM-401-86a was an element from one of the devices used during this healing ceremony, and it was acquired on this occasion. So, and this is important to note, although the name of the Dutch national geographic expedition was the Gonini expedition, the actual objects were collected not along the Gonini, but instead along the Aletani.⁹ For a curator recording the provenance of the object under study, it would have been easy to assign this particular object to the Gonini, rather than the actual location near an indigenous Wayana village located about 200 kilometers south of the Gonini. In outlining the similarities and discrepancies in the primary sources—beginning with the expedition report, the object notebook, and finally the field collector’s personal diary—I will explore how this intriguing cloak made from bark streamers and used during the *pono*-dance became an element in a shaman’s device.

Costume for the *Pono*-Dance

Because of the reference to the *pono*-dance costume, which is not further elaborated upon in either the object description or in the primary sources related to this object, I will briefly discuss the *pono*-dance and its costume (for more, see Duin 2014).

Jules Crevaux (1883: 258-59) witnessed this dance performance in the Wayana village of Canéapo, Paru de Este, on October 28, 1878 (Fig. 3). Prior to his departure from this village, Crevaux purchased one of the dance costumes, which is currently curated in the collections of the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, France (MQB inventory number 71.1881.34.389), and this object indeed resembles TM-401-86a. The object curated in the Musée du Quai Branly is described as a “costume de danse en lianes,” although this dance costume does not consist of liana vines, but of *okalat* inner bark streamers, analogues TM-401-86a. Its length of 90 centimetres is about the same as the length of the cloak at the Tropenmuseum.¹⁰

Crevaux described this dance, and wrote that in the village of Chief Canea “all men wear long bark streamers beginning at the neck, and a kind of robe similar to that used by judges. A single man is standing, holding in his hand

a whip of which the cord is eight meters long; he turns upon himself and hits the ground with his right foot, then, lifting his whip, he bends his body backwards, and, with a sudden move, projects the cord that cracks like a gunshot (see Fig. 3). At each person their turn to produce these bangs. This dance is called the dance of the pono” (Crevaux 1883: 258; my translation).¹¹ The man standing in the row of squatting people has a large feather headdress (*olok*) that Crevaux (245) had described earlier. It was, as I will address in a moment, this monumental feather headdress that de Goeje was eager to see.

The description by Crevaux, the accompanying engraving (Fig. 3), and the object collected (MQB inventory number 71.1881.34.389), do indeed bear resemblance to the object that was described and collected about thirty years later by de Goeje during the 1903 Gonini expedition, and which is discussed in this article. However, in 1903 this cloak of bark streamers was being used in an entirely different context: not in a dance but instead in a shaman’s session. This brings us to the question how this part of the *pono*-dance costume became part of a shaman’s device.

Extracts from the Gonini Expedition Report¹²

In order to answer the question how a part of the *pono*-dance costume, became part of a shaman’s device, it is necessary to know the context in which this object (TM-401-86) was collected in the field. The diary and the object notebook—both written by Claudius H. de Goeje, and discussed in a moment—form the basis of this section of the Gonini expedition report written by expedition leader Alphons Franssen-Herderschee (1905), although there are some additional elements. In the afternoon of December 16, 1903, the expedition arrived in the indigenous Wayana village of Panapi, and initiated an exchange of ethnographic objects for Western trade goods, such as glass beads, knives, mirrors, and fish hooks. Meanwhile,

de Goeje had visited the village and witnessed the exorcism of a patient by the Indian *piai* [*pijai* or shaman], Jaloe. [The patient], a brother in law of the *piai* suffered severe malaria attacks for which Versteeg [the medical doctor of



Fig. 3
The *pono*-dance performed in 1877 among the Wayana of the Paru de Este, French Guiana (Brazilian Amapá after the settlement of the boundary dispute in 1900), drawing by Edouard Riou after a sketch by Jules Crevaux (Crevaux 1883:259).

the expedition] had provided him with the necessary quinine. [The indigenous people] had no confidence in this treatment, so a spirit incantation was preferred. For this, a *noek'la*, the costume intended for the *pono*, an Indian dance, was brought forward, which consisted of long streamers of thin tree bark, that are above attached to a circular strap; this strap will be placed onto the head and onto this is placed the feather crown. The strap was placed over a hollow gourd and this [gourd] along with the tree bark streamers were covered on several places with *roucou* [*Bixa orellana*], onto which flocks of cotton were glued. Two long debarked sticks, dyed with *roucou*, were wrapped in a spiral fashion with thin liana vines and placed in a fire, and then the liana vines were removed. These were then long sticks with red spirals. On one the *noek'la* was attached, on the other a few macaw feathers, from which were hanging cotton threads, a few pieces of crab carapaces and bone, glued with white down feathers. Next, both poles were planted into the ground, oriented towards the rising sun. The fever sufferer now had to sit under the *noek'la*. Jaloé's wife brought a calabash dish with fire, onto which pits were scattered, that spread a very sharp smoke. While pronouncing some magic words, the incense vessel was carried around the patient, and was subsequently placed right in front of him, while some bird feathers were placed on it as well. Now, Jaloé lit an Indian cigarette, first blew smoke on the patient and subsequently both devices, and with that the ceremony had ended. The sun set at that moment. (Franssen-Herderschee 1905: 137-38)

The details deemed necessary by de Goeje, such as the black red-spiraled sticks and the calabash dish with fire, unto which "pits" (sic.: smoked peppers; in Wayana: *takupi*) producing an eye-tearing smoke,¹³ are repeated in this expedition report, but seem rather convoluted and are difficult to understand when one is not familiar with Wayana indigenous practices. Noted in this expedition report, and not mentioned by de Goeje, is that Versteeg—the medical doctor of the expedition—had concluded that this patient

suffered from malaria. The quinine treatment provided by the medical doctor of the expedition was not deemed adequate by the indigenous people and as they preferred a traditional treatment by the *píjai* (shaman). (Even during my fieldwork among the Wayana, about a century after the Gonini expedition, the traditional treatment by the *píjai* was preferred over a quinine treatment.) The drawing in the Gonini report (138) is inspired by the drawings and descriptions by de Goeje; other than that, the figure representing the patient is not depicted (Fig. 1). Franssen-Herderschee wrote that the patient was sitting under this device, whereas de Goeje's drawing in the notebook depicts the patient standing under this device. No further explanation is provided as to why a costume intended for the *pono*-dance was brought forward.

From the Notebook on the Ethnographic Objects Collected During the Gonini Expedition¹⁴

The object under study (TM-401-86) was entered as the last entry (object number 49) in the notebook on the ethnographic objects collected during the 1903 Gonini expedition (RMV series archive 1443). These entries were handwritten by the field collector Claudius de Goeje.

Instrument, used for spirits incantation, called *piaiepitpé*.

Consists of a small cloak of tree bark, *noeklah*, attached over a small gourd. On the gourd and the cloak are blotches of *roucou*¹⁵-dye onto which are glued flocks of cotton. Furthermore, for the spirit incantation, two circa three meter long debarked saplings were painted red with *roucou* and subsequently wrapped in a serpentine manner with thin liana vines. Next, these sticks were placed over a fire. The liana vines removed, these are black with a red spiral [sketch]. Later, the *piaiepitpé* was attached to one stick, and to the other stick the device shown below [Fig. 1, left *pasiépoele*]. [To the stick are attached] two red macaw [tail] feathers *koenoeloewatké* [*kunolowatké*], [to which tips are attached] cotton strings, [to which other extremity are attached]

pieces of bone, hide, or crab carapace onto which are glued white down feathers koeloea [*kuluwa*]. The name of the entire [instrument is] pasiépoele [*pasik epule*]. These two devices were now (at sunset) positioned and the ill brother-in-law of Jaloe [Jaloe is the brother of Panapi], the pijai [*píjai*; shaman], was placed under the piaiepitpé. [Fig. 1, right; a hand written note in the drawing explicates: “facing the rising sun”].

Jaloe’s wife brought a calabash dish with fire [burning charcoal]; onto which some pits were placed that delivered a very sharp smoke [*takupi*, toasted peppers, evil spirits *jolok* do not like the eye-tearing smoke of toasted peppers]. Under the proclamation of some spells, this fire was carried around the patient, and subsequently put right in front of him, whereby some bird feathers were placed on the fire. Jaloe took a cigarette and first blew smoke on the patient, and then both devices, with which the ceremony had ended.”

The notebook entry for “object number 49” concludes with the statement that

The noekla is also the costume for the pono-dancers. See the illustration and description by Dr. Crevaux [Fig. 3], and the statue at the Trocadéro in Paris.¹⁶

This *noekla* or cloak of bark streamers used during the *pono*-dance has been discussed earlier, yet the reason why it was included in this shaman’s device is not explained either in this notebook entry. Most important in this notebook is the detailed description of the sticks that were not collected, the deaccessioned gourd, the decoration of both sticks and gourd, the use of the device, and the orientation of both instrument and patient toward the rising sun. The concluding statement on the *pono*-dance costume confuses rather than clarifies the meaning of this device.

From the Original 1903 Diary of Claudius H. de Goeje¹⁷

“Wednesday December 16. [...] we were able to leave at 08:15 AM [...]. At 12:30 PM we had arrived at Panipi [*sic*]. [...] After I had hung my hammock and had

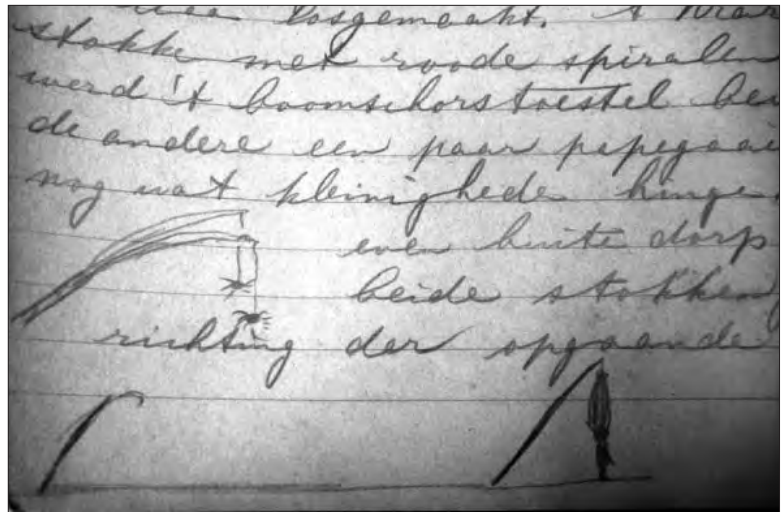
drunk some tea, I returned to the village with my language notebook. Meanwhile, Fr[anschen-Herderschee] had taken some snapshots. Jaloe, Panipi’s brother, thought me some more Trio words and he liked it a lot when I had him write his name on paper. I [de Goeje] asked him [Jaloe] to show me the dancing gear [most likely de Goeje asked for the *olok* feather headdresses], though he told me that these were not here. A little later, they brought forward a noeclat. This is the costume for the Pono; it consists of long streamers of thin tree bark that are attached above to a circular strap. [Image of cloak with on the top black, next white, next black, next white, next black, according to *okalat* cloak]. This strap is tied around the head, and above this is placed the large feather crown [*olok*]. A similar device, tied to a stick, results in the pono-whip or tiai [see: *tamok tain*; Duin 2014]. But now, they were going to do something different. The strap was slipped over a small gourd, and this, even as the tree bark streamers, was dotted on several places with roucou [*Bixa orellana*]. And on this were glued flocks of cotton. Two long sticks, painted red with roucou, were in a spiral fashion wrapped with thin liana vines, and placed in the fire. Subsequently, the liana vine was untied. Now these were black sticks with red spirals. To one the tree bark device was attached, to the other, a couple of macaw feathers from which some trinkets were hanging. Now we went just outside the village, and there both sticks were planted into the ground, in the direction of the rising sun [image: Fig. 4].

Now appeared the ill brother-in-law of Jaloe, who was placed precisely under the nouclat. Jaloe’s wife brought some fire on a calabash dish, onto which one placed several pits that provided a sharp smoke. While pronouncing some words, the fire was carried around the patient, and subsequently placed in front of him at a short distance, whereby also some bird feathers were placed on it. Now, Jaloe took a cigar and blew smoke first the patient, and subsequently both devices. This concluded the ceremony. The sun was setting and we

went to the waterside. There, around the table was a large gathering. The Indians had arrived with all kinds of luxuries, and all our trade items were displayed on the table. Awensai [a Boni Maroon who would later marry a Wayana woman] translated and the workers were bystanders. [...] Tomorrow morning the trading will continue. When it was entirely dark, the Indians went to sleep. (Excerpt from Claudius de Goeje's 1903 diary).

This section from personal diary of the field collector Claudius de Goeje, together with his description in the object notebook, was used by expedition leader Franssen-Herderschee to write the section in the official report of the Gonini expedition (as discussed earlier). There are, however, some obvious discrepancies that need to be addressed. First and foremost is the dissimilar attitude towards the indigenous people. De Goeje seems more engaged with the local indigenous people and he is interested in their native language and customs. Whereas de Goeje stated neutrally that some words were pronounced by the *pijai*, Franschen-Herderschee stated that these were “magic” words (*tooverwoorden*). Furthermore, de Goeje mentioned that *pijai* Jaloe was the brother of Panipi (or Panapi?) and that he spoke Trio (both the Trio and Wayana language are of the Carib stock). There is also mention of an Emerillon woman in the village. Emerillon or Teko (who are Tupi-speakers), Trio (Tiliyo), and Wayana are neighboring indigenous peoples. Additionally, de Goeje stated that these shaman's devices were positioned *outside* the village, and based on his concluding paragraph it can be deduced that the devices were not placed on the water side, but rather towards the forest side of the village.

Most significant, and not mentioned in the other sources, is that de Goeje in his personal diary noted that he asked his informant about the dancing gear. Most likely he was eager to see a monumental *olok* feather headdress, emblematic for the Wayana, but instead a cloak made from bark streamers was retrieved. De Goeje was familiar with this kind of object through his studies of *Voyages dans l'Amérique du Sud* in which Jules Crevaux (1883: 258-59) described a similar object in the context of the *pono*-dance (as discussed earlier). It was this object (*okalat*; de Goeje wrote



noelat and *noekla*) that was subsequently used by *pijai* Jaloe during his session. That de Goeje requested to see dancing gear explains his references to the *pono*-dance that are mentioned in his diary, the object notebook, and the expedition report, but these brief references are not further elaborated upon. Awareness of this request could be instrumental in understanding how a cloak characteristic of the *pono*-dance became, in 1903, part of a shaman's device.

It was only after de Goeje had asked to see dancing gear that the cloak used for the *pono*-dance was brought forward. De Goeje most likely discussed the *pono*-dance with *pijai* Jaloe which brings forth the question: did *pijai* Jaloe, after this discussion on the *pono*-dance, decide that this trapping of the *pono*-dance costume could aid him in his search for the spirit responsible for the patient's illness?¹⁸ (Which was actually malaria, according to the medical doctor of the expedition.) I have argued elsewhere (Duin 2014) that the condition in which the *pono*-dance functioned was during times of widespread disease and pandemic death, so we see that the connection with illness was already there. But, prior to his discussions with de Goeje, had the *pijai* intended to use this object for his upcoming session? Or did the discussions of the *pono*-dance bring forth the idea for this unintended use of the cloak? We will never know if it was de Goeje's request to see the dancing gear that prompted the use of TM-401-86a during the shaman's session he witnessed and described, but it was so used, and then added to the expedition's collection of ethnographica, and subsequently brought back

Fig. 4
Drawings of the installations in Claudius H. de Goeje's 1903 diary (see also Fig. 1).

to the Netherlands, where it is at present curated in the Topenmuseum, Amsterdam.

Object Biographies, a “Dividual” Body, and Partible Objects

According to Kopytoff (1986), objects have a constantly emerging cultural biography in which non-commodities can become commodities, and later a non-commodity again. The original dance-costume (non-commodity) was traded to the Dutch during the 1903 Gonini expedition (commodity), and is currently curated in the Tropenmuseum (non-commodity). The biography of this particular object is however more complex. Regarding this object, there are various original sources that describe this object, notably the report of the Gonini expedition, the original object notebook, and the original diary of de Goeje. Based on the detailed descriptions of the black red-spiraled sticks (not collected), the double-chambered bottle-gourd (401-86b, deaccessioned), and the cloak from inner-bark streamers (TM-401-86a), this shaman’s device (*pījai pitpē*) can be reconstructed and provides a very clear image of the complete device. Nevertheless, even these primary sources only provide a partial understanding of the object, unless we pair the description of the object with a comprehensive understanding of the relevant indigenous culture. Without a proper background on the *pono*-dance, as briefly outlined in this article (it is outside the scope of this article to properly discuss this whip-dance in detail; see Duin 2014), the discussion of this object remains rather enigmatic. The description: “a tree-bark cloak for spirits incantation (summoning of the spirits) as part of a *pono*-dance costume” (my translation), although rather enigmatic at first, is actually very accurate, though it needs the further contextualization I have provided in this article.

During the last decades a large body of literature has accumulated on the personalities,

agency, and the biography of objects. Of particular interest to the present article is Marilyn Strathern’s (1988, 1992) socio-anthropological conceptualization of “plural personhood,” whereby intersubjectivity emerging in social interaction is twofold: it is a particular “partible body” in interaction with other bodies; and it is a collective “dividual body” encompassing multiple bodies. The “shaman’s device” *pīaiēpitpē* (*pījai pitpē*) is a “dividual” body encompassing both the cloak of bark streamers (TM-401-86a), the deaccessioned gourd (TM-401-86b), and the red-and-black supporting sticks (not collected). The cloak of bark streamers is a particular partible body in that it also served as part of a dance costume (whereby the *pono*-dance costume engenders another collective “dividual” body). The intersubjectivity and plurality of this cloak of bark streamers collected by de Goeje and currently curated on site at the Tropenmuseum (inventory number TM-401-86a), is, I argue, a result of the request by de Goeje to see the local dance gear—as is mentioned only in his personal diary. Albeit this object was used in a shaman’s ritual, we cannot assume that it was normally used so. This may even have been a one-time event. The primary sources referring to this object, combined with a comprehensive understanding of the relevant indigenous culture, provide an exceptional opportunity to re-contextualize the object biography of this partible object. This case study on partible object TM-401-86a demonstrates that it is of utmost important to be familiar with the details of the interaction and context in which took place the collection of an ethnographic object. Yet decisive moments—as demonstrated in this case study—may not have been published or available in the ledgers or object note books, but only available in the personal diaries of the collector. This case study further demonstrates the field collector’s influence, unintended or not, on the process of how a particular ethnographic object was brought together.

Notes

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1. In 2014, the RijksMuseumVolkenkunde, Leiden (RMV), the Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam (KIT), and the Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal, have merged into the Dutch Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (NMVW).
2. “*Richting opgaande zon*” is Dutch for: “Towards the rising sun” (all translations from Dutch are mine).
3. Series number 401 refers to the objects collected during the 1903 Gonini expedition. These are a total of about 100 objects, of which 30 ritual objects. Object 401-86 is one of the few objects collected in or near the village of Panapi, as most ethnographic objects were collected a little further upstream, in the indigenous Wayana village of Jamaiké, Aletani, Suriname. The suffix TM—was added in 2014 when the Tropenmuseum was incorporated in the Dutch Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen.
4. *Tijdelijk in bruikleen* (on temporary loan). Letter from Bakhuis dated May 4, 1904, in the archive of the MuseumVolkenkunde, Leiden.
5. To find these unique objects in such a deplorable state resulted in an exchange of letters in March 1908 with the museum director, Mr. Schmeltz (archive MuseumVolkenkunde).
6. Letter in the archive of MuseumVolkenkunde.
7. The online collection database reads: *Boombasten mantel voor geestenbezweering als onderdeel van een pono-danskostuum*. *Geestenbezweering* can be translated as “exorcism” or “conjuring up of spirits”, yet I choose “spirits incantation” and “summoning of the spirits.”
8. The “*d*” in *pidaie* is a typographical error, and “*jo*” in *pitjoe* must be a misreading of the “*p*” in the manuscript.
9. Most ethnographica were obtained in the village of Jamaiké, though some objects—including the object discussed in this article—were collected in the village of Panapi; both villages are located along the Aletani (or l’Itani).
10. The dimensions other than length depend on the method of measurement (laid out flat, or kept in a bundle).
11. Jules Crevaux described the feast at the village of Canea on October 28, 1878, as follows: “Tous les homes arborent de longues lanières de toque semblable à celles de nos magistrates. Un seul home est debout, tenant à la main un fouet dont la corde a huit mètres de long; il tourne sur lui-même en frappant la terre avec le pied droit, puis, soulevant son fouet, il penche le corps en arrière, et, d’un mouvement brusque, projette la corde qui claque comme un coup de pistolet. A chacun son tour de produire ces détonations. Cette danse s’appelle la danse du *pono*” (Crevaux 1883:258).
12. All translations from Dutch are by the author, as are the notes in square brackets.
13. This practice of burning smoked peppers (*takupi*) is still used today to chase away the evil spirits.
14. The underlining and brackets (not the square brackets) are present in the original notebook.
15. *Bixa orellana*; in Wayana: *onot*.
16. It is unknown what happened to this statue of the *pono*-dancer in Paris (André Delpuech, 2012).
17. The underlining and brackets (not the square brackets) are present in the original diary.
18. The term “*geestenbezweering*” (“conjuring up of spirits,” “exorcism,” “spirits incantation,” “summoning of the spirits”) in the object description of TM-401-86a, is a remnant of how colonial forces perceived indigenous practices.

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