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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE MIDDLE UAUPES BASIN

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I. Introduction

It would be fair to affirm that the theoretical debate in Amazonian archaeology today refers to the impact of the European Conquest in transforming former patterns of social and economic organization of Amerindian societies. This debate is not new in Brazilian anthropology nor in archaeological research in other areas of Amazonia (Myers 1974), but it has been introduced in Brazilian Amazonian archaeology thanks to the work of Anna Roosevelt.

One of the main issues of Roosevelt's argument is a warning against the indiscriminate use of ethnographic analogies based on living Amazonian populations to interpret pre-colonial archaeological remains. This is a valid statement, mainly for the floodplain "várzea" societies of the contact period, since they were virtually decimated biologically and culturally, within the first two centuries of colonization (Porro 1993). It is thence plausible to claim that patterns of social and economic organization observed in the "ethnographic present" can be said to be related to the process of occupation of what is now Brazilian territory by the Europeans.

It would be misleading however to assume that these ethnographically documented societies are only pale representatives of former patterns of social complexity dismantled with the conquest, for we know that population displacements also happened before the conquest (Lathrap 1972), although very likely in a different scale.

The assumption of a picture of a major catastrophic rupture, although valid at a general level, underestimates the diverse possibilities of resistance and adaptation employed by native Amazonians. On the other side, there is a growing awareness that there is more spatial and temporal ecological diversity in Amazonia than what is contemplated by the heuristic distinction between "várzea" and "terra firme", employed by archaeologists and ecological anthropologists in the explanation of patterns of cultural diversity in the area (Colinvaux 1987, 1989; Moran 1990).

From this discussion I conclude that it might be profitable to concentrate on regional studies that focus on the interplay of ecological and political forces acting on the histories of the different populations that were directly or indirectly affected by the conquest.

Archaeology has an important role in these studies for at least two reasons. First because it is the basic source of historical information for the pre-colonial period. Second because the nature of the archaeological record allows for explanations of change over large periods of time. Archaeological data can be employed as a reference to evaluate the impact of the conquest and to bring other perspectives - chronologic, demographic, economic - to studies of indigenous history that have, so far, benefitted from the analysis of written documents and oral information.

II. Spheres of Integration in Amazonia

Contrary to a picture of self-sufficiency and isolation, the ethnographic, historical and archaeological literature indicate the existence of far-reaching exchange networks in pre-Colonial Amazonia and adjacent areas, such as the Middle Orenoco (Biord-Castillo 1985), the rio Negro-rio Branco basin (Farage 1991, Sweet 1974), the Solimões and Amazonas (Boomert 1987, Porro 1983-84, 1987), the Upper Amazon (Lathrap 1973, Myers 1981). Some of these networks continued to exist during the colonial period - as in the Lesser Antilles (Dreyfus 1983-84) - and the Europeans in some cases used them as an early form of economic exploitation of the colonies, as it was the case of the Dutch in the Guianas (Farage 1991).

There are also ethnographic examples of what has been called by Arvello, Morales and Biord as "Systems of Regional Interdependence". In their definition, that I quote from Vidal (1988), these systems would represent "nivel de integración extralocal en cual convergen las relaciones intertribales. En este nivel, los diferentes grupos se vinculan através de diversos mecanismos articulatorios (...) los cuales varían tanto espacial como temporalmente, e incluyen procesos de formalización de las alianzas" (Vidal 1988: 15). Systems of regional interdependence have been described in areas such as the Guiana Plateau (Butt Colson), the Upper Rio Negro and Upper Xingu.

In Brazil, the Upper Xingú and Upper Rio Negro cultural areas - after Eduardo Galvao's classification - have been pointed

out as examples of SRI that originated from the conquest. It has been suggested that the Upper Xingú is a refuge area to which converged different populations that were displaced from their territories, either directly or indirectly, by the advance of the Portuguese. These hypothesis is based on the following features: the presence of groups that speak different languages, but that are regionally integrated through trade networks and a shared ritual complex; and the development of an identity based on a sense of belonging to the regional system against other indigenous groups and the national society. Therefore, the regional system would arise as a means to promote cohesion against external forces (Galvao 1979, Schaden 1969). The case of the Upper Rio Negro will be discussed bellow, but it has also been suggested that the origin of the SRI documented there would be a historical consequence of the conquest.

It remains however to be verified whether these systems were already in operation before the arrival of the Europeans because, as outlined above, the existence of regional systems based on trade networks has been document for the pre-colonial period. The plain assumption that regional forms of social interaction once more reproduces the assumption that the history of Amerindian societies started only in the colonial period.

Since SRI include the circulation of diagnostic goods that have a potentially high archaeological visibility, it is possible to identify some of these items in the archaeological record, as it is the case of ceramic remains.

The following discussion represents an attempt to illustrate the points sketched above with examples drawn from an ongoing archaeological research in Brazilian Northwest Amazonia.

III. Rupture and Continuity in the Upper Rio Negro

Under the denomination "Upper Rio Negro" we include here the area comprised by upper course of the Negro, and the Uaupés, Içana and Xié rivers. National boundaries between Brazil, Venezuela and Colombia do not preclude the flow of people and goods but it would be misleading to assume that the Upper Rio Negro regional system is a cohesive, unified, well-delimited system. What we found instead is a conjunction of localized, small-scale spheres of interaction that are integrated from the bottom to the top and whose cohesiveness would shift according to changes in political alliances.

Roughly speaking, the distinctive features of the Upper Rio Negro SRI are the following: multilingualism; linguistic exogamy; patrilineal descent; patrilocality; hierarchical segmentation into phratries and sibs; specialized production and exchange of commodities (Bruzzi 1962; Chernela 1983, 1992; Goldman 1963; C. Hugh-Jones 1979; Jackson 1983; Milton 1984; Ramos, Silverwood-Cope & Oliveira 1980; Ribeiro 1980; Silverwood-Cope 1990). The system of specialized production and exchange allows for the circulation of commodities so that goods that are only available locally circulate over a wide area.

The rule of linguistic exogamy was important in establishing and maintaining the links among the different communities of the

area. Due to patrilocality, women were moving from their communities of origin to live at their father in law's malocas. The archeological implication of this is the following: pottery making is a traditional female occupation that is learned at the early ages. It was also a skill brought by the women from their communities of origin. It is then probable that this would preclude the development of particular local ceramic styles for each community. Therefore, we can employ as a working hypothesis that the archaeological correlate of the rule of linguistic exogamy - and therefore of the SRI - would be a stylistic and technological patterning of the ceramics along the region.

Together with the Cassiquiare and the Upper Orinoco, the Upper Rio Negro was part of an important way of communication and circulation of people during the pre-colonial period, as it is attested by archaeological and linguistic data (Oliver 1989, Rouse 1985, 1986, 1992, Vidal 1988, Zucchi ms, Lathrap 1970). I have met people in the Uaupés who have lived as far upriver as Miraflores, near the Uaupés' headwaters, or in the Guainía or the Infrida to work on "piaçava" extraction. By the sixteenth century, the main course of the Negro in Brazil was occupied by Arawak speaking populations such as the Baré and Manao (and Taruma?). Up until the eighteenth century, the Manao still controlled part of a trade network that encompassed part of the Negro and the Branco rivers and that had connections with the Rupununi and Essequibo rivers in the Guianas. Currently, the descendants of the Baré still live along the Negro, although they have lost their lan-

guage and now speak nheengatu or the "língua geral" (Meira 1991). Thence, although the conquest undeniably promoted a major rupture on these ancient networks (Farage 1991, Sweet 1974), there is at least a measure of some biological continuity between pre-colonial and current populations in the area, a very different situation from other parts of Amazonia where native societies have been completely exterminated. An important question to be investigated in is the tension between continuity and rupture. In other words, the regional system might be ancient, it was very likely disrupted by the conquest, but it also could have incorporated newer groups as it changed during the colonial period.

Linguistic evidence provide valid clues to the study of the ancient history of the region - keeping in mind the dangers involved in assuming a plain association between language and material culture.

Linguistic boundaries in the area are geographically well marked. Along the Xié and Negro there are mostly nheengatu speaking people (but former speakers of Arawakan languages) such as the Werekena and Baré. Along the Içana there live diverse phratries of the Baniwa (and Curripaco?) which all speak Arawakan languages. In the hinterlands between the Uaupés, its tributaries and the Negro, there are the semi-nomadic Maku, subdivided in at least five groups. In the Uaupés there are populations that speak languages belonging to the Eastern Tukano family - Tukano, Dessano, Pira-Tapuyo, Tuyuka, Uanano, Kubewa, Tatuyo, Barasana, among others. However, there are also groups - such as the Dessana, Tariana and maybe Arapasso, that have been "tukanized",

i. e., that have lost their former non-Tukanoan languages and now speak Tukano.

Language distribution follows the hydrography. Linguistic evidence points to the fact that the Arawakan occupation of the Içana/Aiará is probably very ancient, dating from one of the earliest branchings of this linguistic family (Vidal 1988). In the same way, the occupation of the Upper Rio Negro by the Baré precedes the colonial period. On the other side, observing the distribution of riverine groups one verifies that the languages currently spoken in the Uaupés seem to represent an intrusion of non-Arawakan speaking populations into an arch composed by Arawakan speaking populations settled along the Upper Negro, the Içana and the Xié (Nimuendajú 1983).

We do not know however how to account for the presence of this intrusive Tukanoan block into an almost continuous distribution of Arawakan speaking groups. We also we do not know how ancient is the occupation of the Uaupés and its tributaries by the Tukanoan speaking groups. Would it be possible to correlate such occupation with the European conquest or was it a process of cultural change during the pre-Colonial period?

IV. An Archaeological Survey Design for the Middle Uaupés

There is a wealth of literature on the language, mythology, social and economic organization, history and adaptive patterns of the Uaupés' societies (Buchillet; Bruzzi 1962; Chernela 1983; Goldman 1948, 1963; C. Hugh-Jones 1979; S. Hugh-Jones 1979; Jackson 1976, 1983; Koch-Grunberg; Ramos, Silverwood-Cope &

Oliveira 1980; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971; Ribeiro, Sorensen 1967, among others) and the archaeological survey design is partially based on data on settlement and subsistence patterns derived from such literature.

Until the arrival of the Sallesian missionaries in the 1920's, longhouses were still built and occupied in the Brazilian Uaupés. Thanks to the rules of patrilinearity, patrilocality and linguistic exogamy each longhouse was occupied by women that were born and raised in other, sometimes distant, communities.

There is in the Middle Uaupés a tendency towards the continuous occupation of the same loci since at least the end of the eighteenth century (Coudreau, Wallace). A number of the current communities of the area are located at the same spot where there were formerly longhouses. The analysis of landsat data and field observations indicate that these loci are associated with either high banks of the river that are not inundated by the annual floods, or with river rapids.

The Uaupés is a blackwater river and blackwater ecosystems are known as oligotrophic because of their low nutrient levels (Moran 1991). Such rivers are significantly different from the estuarine or floodplain areas of Amazonia, where nutrient rich whitewater rivers sustain a diversified aquatic fauna and allow for the continuous fertilization of the extensive floodplains due to annual rises of the water levels (Junk & Furch 1985).

Fishing and manioc cultivation provide the bulk of the diet and manioc accounts for nearly 70% of the carbohydrate intake (Dufour 1983). Local populations developed adequate ways to

maximize fishing catches, based on the knowledge of the behavior of the fish populations. A settlement's location will represent an attempt to optimise fishing catches by including a number of productive fishing spots within a given territory, if there are no main ideological or political constraints. Well located settlements will have access to igapos, cataracts and near the confluence of streams (Chernela 1983: 109).

There is evidence that settlements located close to optimal fishing spots tend to be occupied for long time spans. In the Middle Uaupés, sites adjacent to the major cataracts, such as Ipanore, Iauarete and Caruru have been continuously occupied since the end of the eighteenth century (Bruzzi 1962, Coudreau 1886, Lopes de Sousa 1956 (c. 1928), Nabuco 1903, Rodrigues Ferreira 1983 (c. 1781), Wallace 1903 (c. 1850)).

The Uaupés is a meandering river. As a result, a diversity of landscape features have been formed, including oxbow lakes and old meanders that have been filled by vegetation. Old meanders are easily in the analysis of the digital images because they present distinctive vegetation patterns from other landscape features. In Marajo Island it was verified that archaeological sites from the archaic are associated with abandoned meanders now filled with sediments (Brochado 1980, Roosevelt 1991). Such association has also been found in Yarinacocha, in the Central Ucayali, Peru.

Both the old meanders and the loci of continuous occupation have a distinctive spectral signature that could be recognized in the analysis of the satellite data. Based on this, we selected

The Tariana affirm that their traditional homeland is at Apui cachoeira in the Aiari river, a tributary of the Içana. From Apui they crossed the watershed Aiari/Uaupés until reaching the area of Caruru cachoeira, already in the Uaupés. The varadouro Apui/Caruru is still employed as a trading route today.

From Caruru they started to settle discontinuously the Uaupés downriver in an West-East migration. Currently, the Eastern limit of predominant Tariana settlements in the Uaupés is Taracua, at the mouth of the Tiquié. It is interesting to point that Tariana oral traditions indicate that formerly there had been wars against the Uanana. The current distribution of predominant Uanana settlements is upstream from Iauarete, and it includes Caruru cachoeira. Thence it might well be that the wars against the Tariana are related to the crossing by the Tariana of the Uanana territory.

Four archaeological sites were identified in Santa Maria, all of them with oral information. The participation and interest of the inhabitants of Santa Maria was fundamental. Three of the sites are around the current location of the village, and they were probably occupied at the turn of the century. The fourth site is located around 5 km. from Santa Maria, and it can be reached through the "varadouro" that goes from Santa Maria to the Tiquié. There are also the remains of what I believe was the mission of Santo Antonio de Iauarete, built by the Franciscans in the 1880's.

We have done collections in the two of the sites, denominated "Santa Maria" and "Fortaleza". The goal was to assess whether the ceramic remains could be used as ethnic indicators for the establishment of a relative chronology of the occupation of the area. This question is still open, since I am only starting to work systematically with the ceramic remains excavated.

The SM site was chosen because we wanted to obtain a sample of ceramics made, used and discarded in a nineteenth century Tariana community. The underlining idea is that this sample can be used as reference to which the other collections eventually obtained can be compared. I estimate that the site was occupied around the 1870's. This is based on the fact that SM was the oldest of the three malocas still remembered by the current inhabitants of Santa Maria. The occupation span of each maloca can be estimated as of one generation, since the malocas were abandoned after the death of the tuxaua. If we project then 50 or 60 years back from the destruction of the last maloca, which happened in 1929, we arrive to the 1870's.

Work at the site involved the opening of a trench of 2x4 m (see fig.), in what we believe to be the former discard area of the maloca. The archaeological deposit was very shallow, being never deeper than twenty cm. We collected all the ceramic fragments found in this trench and such material has not been analyzed yet. However, a brief examination of it revealed the following: the ceramic was tempered with caraipé and made by coiling; apparently, there were no decorative techniques applied to it, contrary to the resistive painting currently employed by potters

in the area; most of the material was burnished and thanks to that the ceramic has a shiny glaze; there seems to be a reasonable variation of artifacts in the collection, including griddles ("fornos"), supports for cooking ("trempes"), and different types of containers for water and caxiri ("camotís"). These very preliminary observations led us to believe that such ceramic was used for domestic needs and that it is very similar to the utilitarian ceramic still used in the area. However, only further analysis with the material will enable solid statements about it.

The excavation made in the Santa Maria site was visited by people of the community and a number of persons showed great interest with our work. As a consequence, we were informed about the existence of other potential archaeological sites in the area. Mr. Pedro de Jesus, one of the leaders of Santa Maria, told us about a site that would have been occupied by the Tariana right at the time of their arrival in Santa Maria/Iauaratê, when they were migrating from Apuí. According to the tradition, when the Tariana arrived in the area, they were fighting against the Uanana, and they built a fortress to defend themselves in a place called "Serra do Juruparí". Mr. Pedro knew the location of this ancient fortress and he took us there. The Serra do Juruparí is in fact a steep hill covered today by high secondary growth and surrounded by two "igarapés". To get there one has to walk roughly one hour from Santa Maria, following the "varadouro" that leads eventually to the Tiquié river. Contrary to the Santa Maria site, there was not in this place any indicator in the surface of former human occupations in the area. The only reference we had

at the time of our first visit seemed to be a circular depression surrounding the top of the hill, which according to Mr. Pedro, would be the line of the palisade around the former village. However we could not even know whether the depression was continuous or not, since the extensive vegetation cover precluded a general view of the site.

We decided to work systematically at the Fortaleza site with the goal of getting materials that can be dated and in this way, to estimate the timing of the arrival of the Tariana in the area. The Tariana are now fully integrated in the system of regional interdependence of the Uaupés. Oral tradition indicates that their integration in the system happened through intermarriage with Tukanoan women. Can it then be plausible to affirm that the rule of linguistic exogamy was already prevailing at the time of the arrival of the Tariana? If so, it is possible to have a minimum age for the system if one can date the arrival of the Tariana in the Uaupés.

The fortress built by the Tariana in the serra do Jurupari had already been mentioned by other authors. Prof. Robin Wright of UNICAMP called my attention for a number of myths collected by Antonio Brandao de Amorim by the end of the nineteenth century where the fortress and the war against the Uanano are mentioned. It was interesting to verify how little the narratives about the war and the fortress have changed in one hundred years, since Brandao de Amorim travelled in the Uaupés by the 1880's. For instance, one day, during the excavation, Arlindo Maia, a Tukanoan indian living in Iauarete that has worked with us on both

field seasons, made a comment on the name of one of the igarapes that surround the serra do Jurupari. According to him this igarape was known as igarape Tapuru (Tapuru is a larva) because the bodies of the Uanano killed in the war were thrown in the creek and as a consequence, tapurus came to feed on the decomposing carcasses. Brandao de Amorim tells this history in the following way (pp. 18):

"Depois de matar todos os seus inimigos Buopé mandou jogar o corpo d'elles no Ygarapé do Tapuru (o Ygarapé do Tapuru corre ao lado da Serra do Jurupari), onde apodreceram.

Tapuru, tapuru, contam, se gerou logo d'elles.

Quando veiu chuva esses tapurus correram para o rio a ponto de cobri-lo."

Work on the Fortaleza site took three weeks. We performed a controlled collection of ceramic samples (see map and report) and this collection is now been analyzed. As stated above, there were no surface ceramic remains at the site, but there was a high density of subsurface remains. The minimum depth of the ceramic was around 15 cm. This is an important clue about the antiquity of the site, since it is located at the top of a hill and it is therefore less exposed to the deposition of alluvial deposits. In other words 15 cm. of sediments at the top of a hill indicate a higher time span than 15 cm. of deposits in a floodplain. Some of the ceramic samples, obtained at a depth of 60 cm., have been selected to be dated by termoluminescence. With these dates, one will be able to assess objectively the age of the occupation of the Middle Uaupés by the Tariana, if the working hypothesis that

the Fortaleza site represents the earliest Tariana settlements in the area is indeed correct.

At a first glimpse, the ceramics from Fortaleza look similar to the ones collected at Santa Maria, and to some of the utilitarian ceramics I've seen in use today. If this is the case, it will be difficult to employ ceramic remains as of ethnic indicators, at least to identify the groups that compose the system of regional interdependence of the Uaupés. On the other side I believe that the ceramic remains will allow us to identify different horizons of occupation in the area, prior to the crystallization of the regional system.

Such an assertion is still frail and only further fieldwork will assess its validity. It is based on the brief verification and surface collection made at a site located at the village of Marabitana, downstream from Iauarete. The area around Marabitana was chosen as field study unit because it is associated to an abandoned channel of the Uaupés. The reasoning here is that there is a good probability of finding more ancient occupations associated with these ancient meanders. Marabitana is located on high ground, above the reach of the annual floods of the Uaupés. Although located at the edge of the current course of the river, Marabitana is also associated with the ancient channel mentioned above, as it is indicated by the satellite images.

The village is being occupied since 1967. The soil there is sandy, and as a consequence of these 26 years of occupation -with the removal of the former vegetation cover - wind and rain erosion washed around 2,5 m. of sediment. The erosion revealed an

archaeological level with high concentration of ceramic remains that can be seen on the ground of the central plaza. Lack of time and adequate technical support precluded a careful work on the site but I decided to do a collection of the ceramic remains of the plaza and also to open a 1x1 m. test pit to assess the depth of the deposit.

The ceramics of Marabitana appear to be different from either the ceramics of Fortaleza and Santa Maria or the utilitarian ware still made and used in the area. The major differences I have noted so far are two: presence of red slipping and presence of nail incisions on the rims. However the sample is too incomplete, and only systematic excavations at the site - planned for next January - will provide a controlled collection for the establishment of sounder hypotheses.

Given these considerations, the following ideas about Marabitana should be taken cautiously. I believe that the ceramics found there might represent an ancient horizon of occupation probably linked to Arawakan-speaking populations. Jose Oliver has associated the expansion of Arawakan-speaking populations through northern South America with the diffusion of the Amazonic Polychrome Tradition. One of the characteristics of these ceramics is the presence of decoration over red slipping. It is obvious that this consideration alone does not mean anything, but I believe it is an interesting path to follow.

Other clue to postulate a former Arawakan occupation of the Uaupés relates to the toponymies, since several of the names of

landscape features are Arawakan: Caiari, Papuri, Querari, Cuduarri, Iauaiari, etc.

A third clue comes from the oral histories of diverse Tukanoan-speaking populations of the Uaupés, Papuri and Tiquié. According to these histories, the center of dispersion of these groups is located at places at the headwaters of some tributaries of the Papuri. The Tukanoan say that they used to live in the Turi-igarape before coming to the Papuri, Uaupés and Tiquié; the Pira-Tapuyo say that they come from Ituim, at the Papuri, the Dessanos from the Macucu igarape, a tributary of the Papuri. Thence, very cautiously I would like to advance the following hypothesis, based on the fragmentary data presented above: the Tukanoan speaking groups now settled along the Uaupés, Papuri and Tiquié were formerly settled around the Papuri and its tributaries. It is likely that they were regionally integrated with a population settled along the Uaupés, probably an Arawakan speaking population, and it is also possible that this integration was asymmetric. For one reason that is still not clear, these former inhabitants of the Uaupés - maybe the people who settled at Marabitana - fled the area or were exterminated. Could one relate this process with the replacement of the Manao by the Portuguese as the slave traders of the rio Negro Basin after the 1720's ? This remains to be investigated, but the important thing is that a population vacuum was created in the Uaupés and maybe in the Tiquié. As a consequence, the groups settled along the Papuri and its tributaries started slowly to occupy the Uaupés and the Tiquié, employing in this process the probably very ancient

varadouros. It is also likely that this occupation of the Uaupés was stimulated, if not enforced, by the missionaries in the nineteenth century.

The above hypothesis is maybe too simplistic or mechanic and it does not account for the groups that were probably settled in the Uaupés before the arrival of the Tukanoans, such as the Anapasso, or Cubeo. It also generalizes about a "Arawakan speaking population settled along the Uaupés", providing maybe an erroneous idea of a cohesive, unified, politically well bound population. Given the intrinsic problem of working with the archaeological record as a document for reconstructing historical processes, it will be very difficult to actually indicate in detail which groups were occupying the Uaupés before the Tukanoans. Finally, it would be important to obtain data on the Western Tukanoan languages, spoken by groups such as the Siona-Secoya to estimate the time depth of the branching of this Tukanoan linguistic family.

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