

COEXISTENCE IN THE XINGU NATIONAL PARK THROUGH TRADE
THE NAFUQUA CASE

Marshall Sahlins has developed a model of primitive economic exchange. Essentially this paradigm is a typology of reciprocities in which distance, expressed in terms of kinship-residential sectors, and sociability, or relative behavioral standards that dictate conduct, are correlated with certain kinds of exchange. Sahlins hypothesizes that three types of reciprocity exist: generalized, balanced, and negative. He predicts: 1) that types of reciprocity are correlated with genealogical distance and with relative behavioral expectations; 2) that balanced reciprocity is unstable and that it moves to generalized or negative reciprocity over time; and 3) that this same kind of reciprocity constitutes the main support of the political alliances that are present between primitive societies.

In order to test these hypotheses, economic exchange between the Nafuqua Indians, a Carib-speaking group, and other groups currently residing in the Xingu National Park of Central Brazil will be discussed. These Indians were selected as a case study for a number of reasons. In the first place, they are a group of subsistence horticulturalist-fishermen that live in close proximity to a number of other culturally similar but linguistically distinct groups. These tribes coexist with each other in a generally peaceful manner. Through economic exchange as well as through intermarriage and ritual festivities, the area is linked into one culture area. Furthermore, since 1946, these Indians have been in permanent contact with non-Indians. The Xinguano trade network has expanded to include these non-Indian groups and to incorporate them peacefully into the region.

Although relations between groups and within groups are generally good, potential dissension could evolve on a number of different levels. In the Xingu Park as a whole where a variety of linguistic and ethnic groups coexist, traditional enemies now live in the same area. In addition, a number of demographic and ecological problems have arisen fairly recently. For example, the population of the Park in 1977 was approaching 2000 Indians. Currently, there are fears that the Park's fish, the main protein source, are being dangerously depleted. This fear comes when a number of outside groups are being moved into the region in order to protect them from unsupervised contact with personnel working on the numerous projects that are

taking place around the Park in Mato Grosso. Besides demographic and ecological pressures and the presence of traditional enemies in the Park, many sources of conflict emerge from the simple interaction of villages. Witchcraft accusations and broken marriage agreements are just two examples of this.

Sahlins's theory on reciprocity provides a framework in which the peaceful adaptation of the Xinguano groups can be better understood. He suggests that peacefully coexisting primitive societies often are involved in balanced reciprocity because the nature of this kind of transaction makes it ideal for the successful formation of alliance contracts. He also posits that balanced reciprocity is inherently unstable and that it moves to generalized or negative reciprocity over time. In this paper, we will address these hypotheses by investigating whether a correlation between different kinds of economic transactions, and normative behavior and socio-geographic distance exist.

GENERALIZED RECIPROCITY

Generalized reciprocity is defined by Sahlins as material assistance that is freely given where the returns need not be immediate or equivalent in value. In order to examine its occurrence in the Nafuqua village, a number of different spheres of exchange are considered. These spheres include the nuclear and extended families, the household, the village, and the inter-ethnic group. Goods traded are here defined as food-stuff, non-food items, and services.

Generalized reciprocity within the nuclear and extended family was found to occur frequently, though to different degrees dependent upon the value of the exchange commodity. For example, large amounts of food stuff, non-food items, and services pass between members of families. However, the range of distribution varies. Traditional Nafuqua subsistence products, like manioc and fish, have a large range of distribution while non-Indian goods such as sugar and salt have a small range of distribution. This is due to the limited quantities available and their great demand. Non-food items such as spun cotton, clay pots and griddles, have a smaller range in general than do food stuffs, and non-Indian non-food items such as flashlights and blankets have an even more limited range of distribution. Labor, especially in subsistence activities, is freely exchanged. As such, the Sahlins model seems to apply to the Nafuqua nuclear-extended family although exchange values do affect the range of distribution.

Generalized reciprocity between households was found to exist in terms of food distribution and large scale labor exchanges at critical times of the year. A definite decrease in the frequency of these exchanges was noted. Food distribution between households may take the form of giving extra food to friends after kinship obligations have been discharged or through the channeling of extra food through the men's house. Short-term loans of extra-food items also occur, but infrequently among those who are not somehow related.

Generalized reciprocity between villages and ethnic groups was directly affected by geographic and genealogical distance. That is, near by villages like the Kalapalo and Kuikuru villages were visited more frequently than villages like the Waurá and Aweti which are located further away. In addition, Post Leonardo was visited more often than the Brazilian Air Force ^{base} or the PARASAR survival camp because they, in turn, were located further from the Nafuqua village.

Thus, in generalized reciprocity a flow of goods along kinship lines is noted. This flow extends from the nuclear family, to the household, through the village, and outward to other villages where inter-marriage has occurred. Inter-marriage and the trade responsibilities that accompany marital ties have served to solidify linguistically similar groups such as the Kuikuru, Kalapalo, and Nafuqua that remain in autonomous villages with independent tribal identities. This has also been instrumental in creating a strong sense of commitment toward peaceful relations between these groups. Generalized reciprocity has also extended outward toward the ever-increasing number of non-Indians who have penetrated the region. Though reciprocity with these groups is often of a balanced or negative variety, small-scale gift giving does exist in certain cases.

BALANCED RECIPROCITY

Balanced reciprocity is defined by Sahlins as direct exchange. The returns on a given object are equivalent and are presented at once. In the case of the Nafuqua, the genealogical or kinship factors are minimized in the economic transaction as one would anticipate. One example of balanced reciprocity is an aluki, or inter-household trade game. In an aluki, direct trade can take place between kinsmen who are distantly related. However, it does not occur between those in nuclear families, and it seldom occurs between extended families living in the same longhouse. The importance of behavioral expectations is also downplayed, as is predicted by the Sahlins model. The obligation to give without immediate, equivalent return

no longer exists. Therefore, close and friendly relations can develop between those who exchange goods on a regular basis. However, non-related individuals lacking the obligation to make generalized exchange do not do so as frequently as do related kin who are obliged to observe this rule.

Moreover, as was found in generalized reciprocity, the commodity value affects the range of distribution. Within the balanced reciprocity sphere, traditional Nafuqua subsistence products and labor are not exchanged as frequently as non-Indian products. In fact, valuable non-Indian items can be said to dominate balanced reciprocity. For example, in the establishment of sex partners, in an aluki, or in festival participation, non-Indian goods take on added importance. This also occurs in exchange between ato. Ato are sex-specific friends or contacts in other villages who provide hospitality for their visiting friends and will help secure particular trade items. Usually, one ato will exchange a non-Indian item, like a radio, for an Indian item, like a clay pot.

It should be noted here that both the aluki and ato institutions are very old traditions that were previously used to facilitate the exchange of specialized village goods. Since village specialization is less pronounced than it was before, non-Indian goods are currently taking the place of the village-specific ones. In fact, it may be possible that these institutions are growing in an attempt to expand the trade network. This idea is supported by the fact that the Nafuqua have developed ato at the Air Force base in the Park in order to facilitate the procurement of non-Indian goods.

Sahlins posits that balanced reciprocity is unstable, and indeed this seems to be reflected by the Nafuqua system. It has been noted that after frequent exchanges have occurred, and a certain amount of trust and even affection has evolved, generalized reciprocity behavior begins to enter into the balanced exchange event. Although this situation is unlike kinship-based trade in that the social factors are still a function of the economic ones, this type of balanced reciprocity can come to closely resemble generalized reciprocity.

NEGATIVE RECIPROCITY

Negative reciprocity is defined by Sahlins as trade directed toward net utilitarian advantage. The maximization of returns is central to these proceedings. Like balanced reciprocity, this type of exchange is unstable.

It can develop into balanced reciprocity over time if trade occurs repeatedly to the mutual satisfaction of both parties. According to Sahlins, negative reciprocity takes place between groups who do not have a great deal of social intercourse. As contact is limited, relations are founded on economic interests rather than socially determined necessity or compatibility.

Among the Nafuqua, it was observed that only certain groups were the target populations for negative reciprocity. These groups are non-Indians with whom the Nafuqua have little or irregular trade. As Sahlins hypothesized, geographic distance is an important factor in these cases. However, it is not the sole factor. For example, only negative reciprocity takes place at nearby fazendas while at Post Leonardo or the Air Force base, balanced and generalized reciprocity commonly occur. What appears to be even more critical than distance is the repeated transactions and the familiarity with trade partners. For instance, as already mentioned, ato emerged at the Air Force base when the Nafuqua traded consistently with one man whom they eventually felt they could trust. When the opportunity for this kind of evolution in relations does not exist; that is, when there is a quick succession of visitors or soldiers in and out of the social universe of the Nafuqua, negative reciprocity is solely employed in trade relations.

As Sahlins would predict, negative reciprocity is absent in relations between groups of Indians who live in the Park and with whom the Nafuqua have a great deal of contact. Over the years, even those groups that live at a distance from the Nafuqua have been bound to them through the establishment of ato. In addition, those that live close by are also linked through inter-marriage, which requires generalized and balanced reciprocal relations.

Negative reciprocity is also absent in the village and in the longhouse house, where the economic maximization inherent in negative reciprocity would be inappropriate. The duplicity and ensuing conflict that can result would be disruptive in the village leading to tension that might trigger violence and aggression.

Sahlins hypothesized that negative reciprocity, like balanced reciprocity, is unstable and that it can eventually come to resemble balanced reciprocity. That is, after political and social relations between groups stabilize, and contact is more relaxed and frequent, balanced reciprocity and even generalized reciprocity can emerge. This seems to be supported by the negative reciprocity that exists along side of the balanced reciprocity both at Post and at the Air Force base.

CONCLUSIONS

Sahlins devised a model in which kinds of primitive exchange can be characterized by the presence or absence of certain key variables. While examining patterns of Nafuqua trade, certain discrepancies were found to exist between this model and the data in terms of these variables.

In generalized reciprocity, Sahlins's model predicts that economic relations are ordered by behavioral expectations as well as degree of geographic proximity. In actual trade events, it was found that an obligation for generalized reciprocity to occur exists between kinsmen who live in the same village, but that these obligations are less binding when kin live in other villages. In addition, although no obligation exists for trade with non-Indians, personal likes and dislikes as well as the desire for consumer goods and exotic foods can stimulate trade relations.

In balanced reciprocity, certain discrepancies also emerge. Sahlins posits that the behavioral expectation variable is absent, but that the genealogical and geographic distances are both present. According to the data collected on the Nafuqua, the obligation to trade does not exist although affection, trust, and regular contact with groups can create such a relationship that would require trade. Genealogical distance appears to be present as predicted. That is, those who are kindred do not participate in balanced reciprocity. However, geographic distance may be present or absent, as in the aluki where distance is absent compared with ato trade between village and between ethnic groups where it is present.

In negative reciprocity, Sahlins states that behavioral expectations are absent while genealogical and geographic distance variables are present. This is consistent with the findings. Genealogical and geographic distance were both found to be present although examples of negative reciprocity in the village or even between villages were not found.

Therefore, types of exchange are not perfectly correlated with those variables as defined by Sahlins. Their presence or absence is not as clear-cut as the model would suggest. In addition, overlapping occurs in certain geographic zones. Rather than a continuum of generalized, balanced, and negative reciprocity existing as one moves further away from the nuclear family, these types of reciprocity exist in the same spheres.

However, in general, the Sahlins model is useful to understand the Nafuqua exchange system and its adaptive value in the Xingu Park. The inconsistencies with the model have been of particular value in highlighting these economic, political and ecological forces that exist in the Park and that have affected the general outline of the typology. They suggest that

through exchange, an economic infrastructure has been established for the peaceful integration and coexistence of large numbers of groups in the Park.