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The Maxakali project: an experience in applied anthropology

NELI FERREIRA DO NASCIMENTO (1)  
 (Translated by Frances Blok Popovich)  
 Federal University of Juiz de Fora — Brazil  
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Este relato pretende mostrar os primeiros resultados de uma acção planificada junto ao grupo indígena Maxakali, localizado no Nordeste do estado de Minas Gerais, Brasil. Uma pesquisa, iniciada em 1976, mostrou que a sociedade maxakali vivia uma situação de penúria. Os índios estavam transformando-se, gradativamente, num bando miserável e marginal à sociedade nacional, entregando-se, irremediavelmente, ao alcoolismo. Alcoolizados, tornavam-se, altamente, agressivos, lançando-se uns contra os outros. As brigas e as mortes eram constantes. Famintos, estavam vivendo exclusivamente dos saques e dos roubos. Visando ajudar os Maxakali a vencer a escravidão da embriaguez, da fome e da doença, foi iniciado, na segunda metade de 1980, um plano de trabalho incluindo subprogramas de subsistência, saúde e educação bilingue. Decorridos três anos, com altos e baixos, podem ser observados alguns resultados: queda do consumo do álcool e da agressividade; interesse pela escola com a consequente alfabetização de crianças e adultos; revitalização do artesanato e dos rituais; aumento da produção de alimentos; indícios da recuperação do gosto pela vida, apesar das dificuldades advindas da situação de contacto.

Ce rapport essaie de montrer les premiers résultats d'une action planifiée auprès du groupe indien Maxacali, installé au nord-est de l'état de Minas Gerais, au Brésil. Une recherche, commencée en 1976, a démontré que la société Maxacali vivait dans un état de pénurie. Les indiens se transformaient, de plus en plus, en une bande misérable et marginale par rapport à la société nationale, se livrant irrémédiablement à l'alcoolisme. Alcoolisés, ils devenaient très agressifs, se jetant trop souvent les uns contre les autres. Les conflits et les morts étaient devenus habituels. Faméliques, ils vivaient uniquement de vols et de pillages. Dans le but d'aider les Maxacali à vaincre l'esclavage de l'ivresse, de la faim et de la maladie, un plan de travail contenant des sous-programmes de subsistance, de santé et d'éducation bilingue a été mis en route dans la deuxième moitié de l'année 1980. Au bout de trois ans, quelques résultats peuvent être observés: baisse de la consommation d'alcool et de l'agressivité, éveil de l'intérêt pour l'école et conséquente alphabétisation d'adultes et d'enfants; revivification de l'artisanat et des rituels; augmentation de la production d'aliments, indices de la récupération du goût de la vie, malgré les difficultés dues à la situation de contact.

(1) Nascimento is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF) in Brazil; formerly titular Professor of Anthropology at the Center for Higher Education of Juiz de Fora (CESJF) and currently graduate student in Anthropology at the University of São Paulo, Brazil. The research was funded by the Aid to Research Foundation of the State of São Paulo (FAPESP).

The initial purpose of my study of the Maxakali in 1976 was essentially academic. However, the circumstances in which this Amerindian group found itself were so critical that I was impelled to put academics aside in order to give priority to the survival of this tribe. This article relates my involvement in an attempt to help a Brazilian Indian group threatened with extinction<sup>(2)</sup>.

The Maxakali tribe totals 435 individuals who live on the headwaters of the Itanhaém River, in Bertópolis County (*município*), in the northeast corner of Minas Gerais State, near the Bahia state line. This group lives on a 7,742 acre (3,133 *hectares*) reservation, which consists of two separate tracts of land just under a mile apart (1,5 km). The area between these two parts of the reservation is occupied by several non-Indian families. The boundaries were demarcated in 1940 by the now-extinct Indian Protective Service (*Serviço de Proteção aos Índios*) at the time that the Engenheiro Mariano de Oliveira Indian Post was founded. Today this is called the Maxakali Indian Post, on the tract known as Água Boa. In 1980, forty years later, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) founded the Pradinho Indian Post on the tract known by that name.

The reservation is located in the Mucuri Valley where the main economic activity is cattle raising; this is gaining more prominence whereas farming has diminished in importance. Cattle raising began immediately after the extraction of lumber in the area — the first economic activity in an area only recently occupied by the dominant society.

The Maxakali Indians speak their own language which is classified as Macro-Je, and, despite having permanent contact with the dominant society, there are very few bilinguals among them.

The Maxakali formerly lived in the Upper Jequitinhonha and Prado Valleys but were forced out by the penetration of mineral prospectors; travelers and historians discovered them in the Mid-Jequitinhonha or the Mucuri Valley at the

close of the nineteenth century. There they found a relatively safe refuge but, as time went by, the area shrank and the distance between the Maxakali and the advance of the early prospectors diminished. Prospecting for gold and precious stones, extracting lumber and medicinal plants, and finally, razing the forests for agriculture and cattle ranches, the newcomers exerted increasing pressure on the refugees in the tribal territory. The encroaching society moved ever closer until — early in the twentieth century — the first settlers began to install themselves in the area and before long they surrounded the Maxakali on all sides. The farmers and cattlemen settled in the area permanently and the Maxakali realized that they were boxed in; they could no longer avoid the dreaded contact.

The encroachment by the settlers meant depopulation and submission for the Maxakali. The first impact made itself felt when the settlers took possession of the land and began to destroy the forests systematically. The nomadic hunters found themselves forced to become sedentary farmers. Even today, they consider farming an experiment in survival and not as a desirable life-style. The second impact was the progressive trend toward cattle ranches and away from farming. The remaining forests gave way to grasslands, rendering the lands uninhabitable. The Maxakali were forced to plant grass on lands that had been cleared of lumber. Today there are large areas of land on the reservation where the pasture grasses make it very difficult to grow other types of vegetation.

The third impact was the necessity to acquire money in order to participate in the regional economy. There are only two ways to acquire cash: one is to compete commercially as an independent producer; the other way is as a day laborer. The first way is not viable for several reasons: 1) the Maxakali do not produce enough; 2) the competition is too great; 3) they lack the means to transport the produce to the town markets, and 4) there is discrimination against Indian produce. Working as a day laborer is also unsatisfactory because an Indian would need to leave his own fields and yet would receive only half of the usual wages for a day's work. Besides this, the principal economic activity in the area is cattle raising and this activity employs very few people. The rancher distrusts Indians and prefers to hire non-Indian labor even if it means paying more.

(2) This article was adapted from a report given in August, 1983 at the Eleventh International Congress of the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Canada and is submitted here at the request of the director of the Anthropobiological Center of the Institute for Scientific Tropical Investigation (*Centro de Antropobiologia do Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical*) of Lisbon, Portugal.

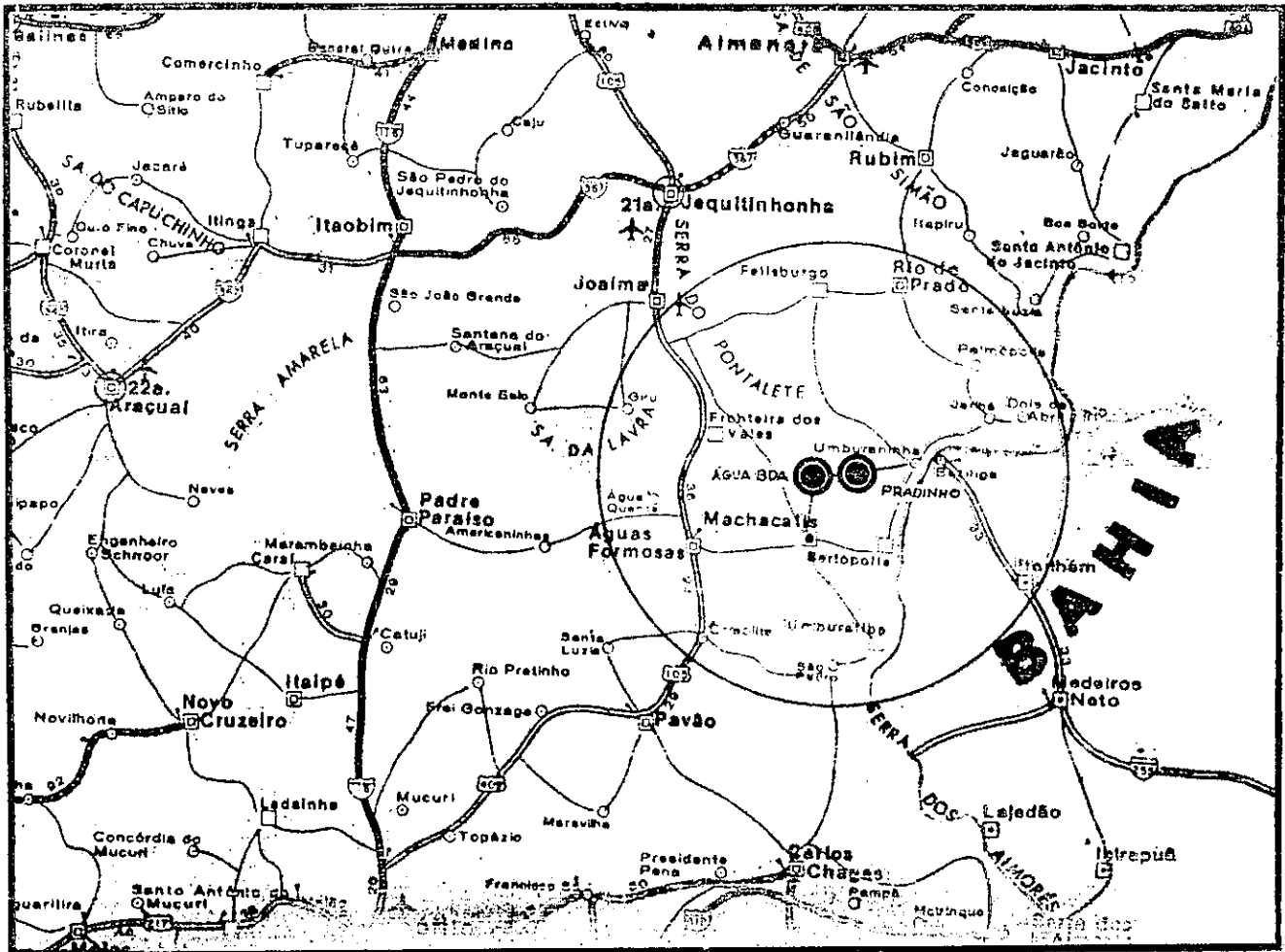


Fig. 1

Another possibility, however, and one that has been exploited, is making artifacts for sale on the weekly open market. The artifacts are necklaces, sieves to winnow rice, and bows and arrows. This offers a precarious livelihood. There is virtually no demand for these items; they only appeal to the curious buyer as something exotic and inexpensive. Occasionally the Maxakali travel to nearby cities to sell their artifacts, but the money earned in these sales is not even enough to cover the expenses of the trip. Sometimes they have the ill fortune to run into the police and, besides being detained, they risk losing whatever they have managed, with great difficulty, to acquire. They return home to the village depressed, hungry, disillusioned, and above all, resentful.

In the final analysis, the Maxakali have only two real alternatives for survival: stealing or begging. Only the first of these is really viable — stealing — because begging yields very little in the way of subsistence and it gives them

the stereotyped labels of «tramps», «filthy», «lazy», «thieves», «drunks», etc. In their poverty they could only act in a way that crystalized the stereotypes. Increasingly they found escape in alcohol. They were well on the way to becoming a band of marginals, living on the fringe of the national society although they were the rightful owners of the land.

The foregoing is a succinct analysis of the dramatic situation in which the Maxakali found themselves up until the first half of the year 1980, when we began the Project which is still going on with some minor but essential changes. In summary, we can say that the Maxakali were undergoing a suicidal process. They had lost hope for the future, a reason to live, and were attacking and killing each other in fits of rage. Murder and mayhem with injuries were constant occurrences under the effects of alcohol. The data show an average of one murder every four months during this period.

Having failed to find a viable alternative for survival, faced with extreme hardships, and surrounded by cattle ranches, they went back to being hunters and gatherers. This time they were «hunting» the ranchers' cattle and «gathering» from the neighboring ranchers' fields. This has two advantages from the Maxakali point of view: first, it guarantees physical survival by providing a new food source, and second, it guarantees cultural survival in that it has all

Faced with this grim reality, what should I do? I asked myself the following questions:

1. Should I content myself with denouncing the situation?
2. Should I demand that the responsible Indian agency solve the problems?
3. Should I stand by and watch the Maxakali destroy themselves?
4. Should I throw caution to the winds

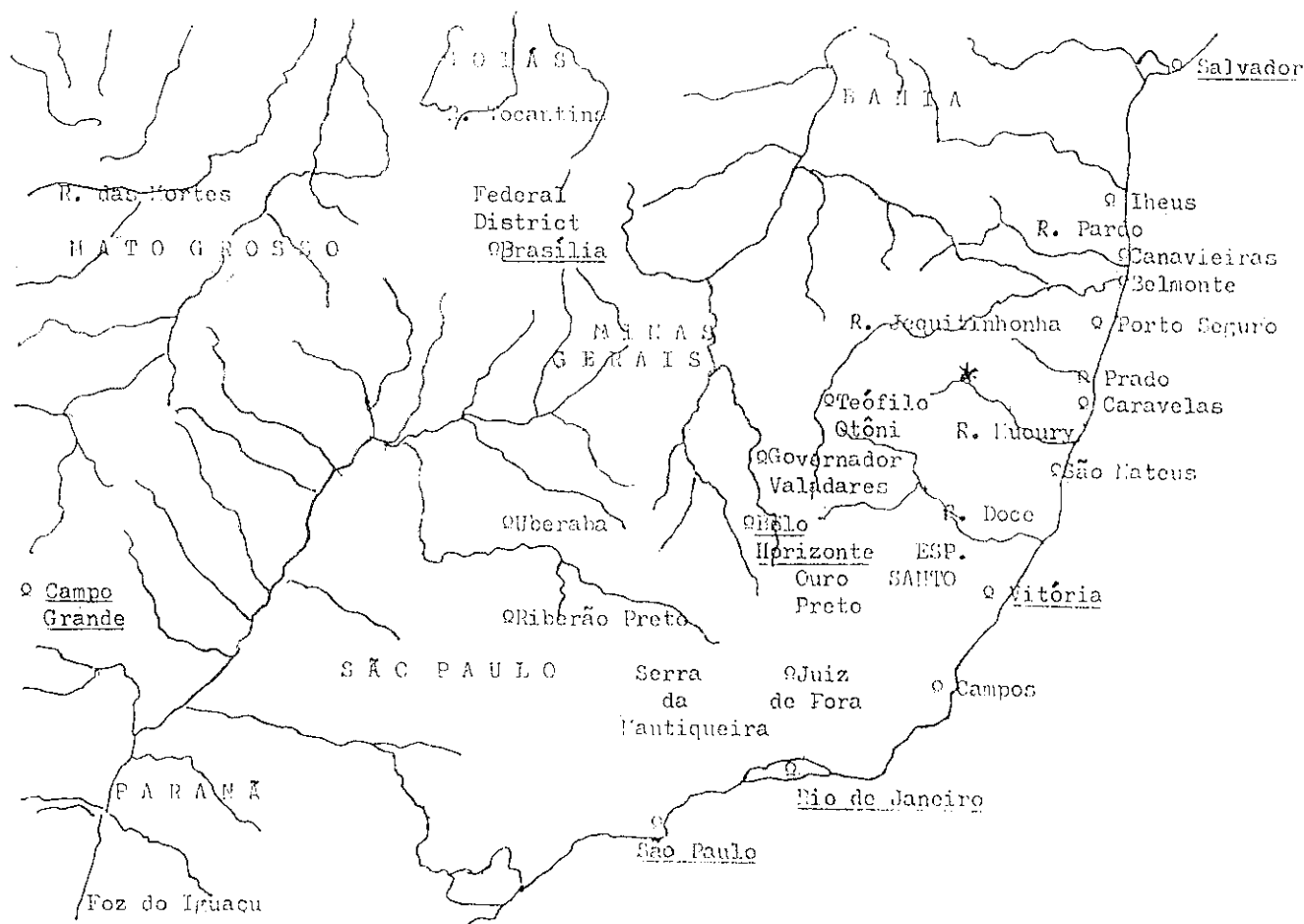


Fig. 2 — Map of East Central Brazil (adapted from Hammond's Map of L. America)

the characteristics of the traditional hunting and gathering activities <sup>(3)</sup>.

However advantageous this practice was for the Maxakali, the ranchers quite naturally objected violently to this practice and there was constant attrition between the two groups. Relations between ranchers and Indians in the Mucuri Valley became more strained with each incident.

(3) N. F. do Nascimento: *Índios e Fazendeiros: a Situação dos Índios Maxakali no Vale do Mucuri*. Master's thesis, University of São Paulo. Unfinished. (Indians and Ranchers: the Situation of the Maxakali Indians in the Mucuri Valley.)

and take the risk of trying to help the group find new alternatives for survival?

One thing was certain amid all the uncertainties, and that was that someone needed, urgently, to do something by way of creating new conditions for the group's survival. Convinced of this fact, I chose to join the Maxakali in the search for these new conditions.

The first meetings with the Indians were hampered by the constant drinking. I kept meeting with small groups of Maxakali during intervals between sprees until we arrived at a consensus about the most urgent of their claims.



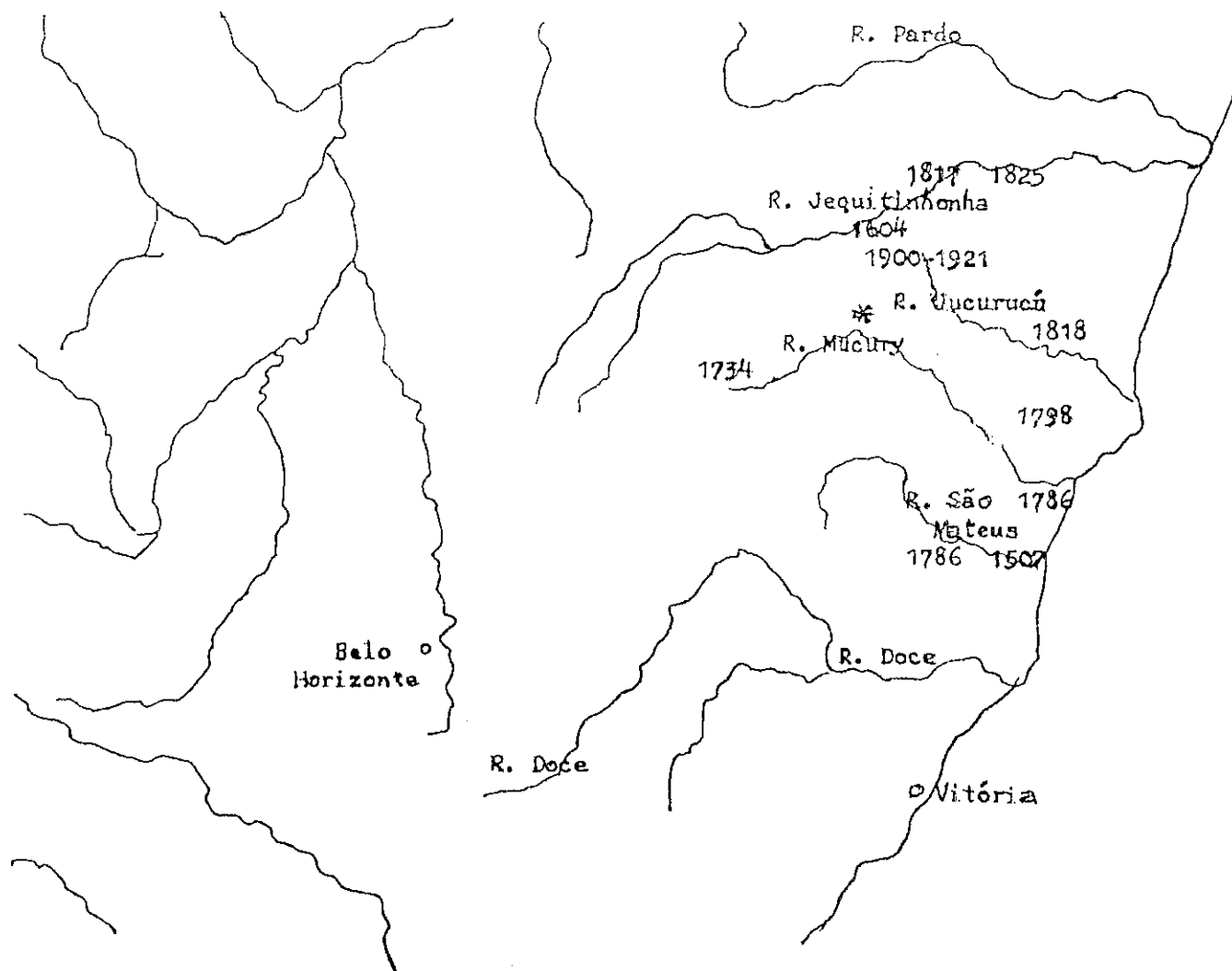


Fig. 3— East Central Brazil. Dates Maxakali located in specific areas (adapted from *Handbook of South American Indians*, vol. 1, p. 382. Compiled by Curt Nimuendajú)

The list was not very long. They wanted funds to plant fields of beans, corn, rice, sweet potatoes, and manioc. They wanted medicines and a school. With this information in hand, we decided together that the first solution would be to launch a community development project that would attend immediately to these claims. We needed willing people, hired and trained, and the necessary funds. Where could we find them? This need sparked the idea to involve the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF) in furnishing the personnel and the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) in providing the necessary funding and support personnel. The idea took root and culminated in April 1980, with the signing of a contract between the University and the FUNAI.

In August of the same year, I began the community project as its coordinator. The goal of the project was to help the Maxakali in their search to improve the conditions for physical

and cultural survival. In order to do this, we first needed to control the outside forces that were trying to subjugate the Indians<sup>(4)</sup>. Secondly, we needed to avoid any type of intervention in the internal affairs of the Indian community.

Our plan of action was subdivided into three distinct programs: the subsistence program, the health program, and the education program. We chose five UFJF students to launch and carry out the Project. They were selected

(4) This was done by exploiting the Indians economically and by illegally supplying them with alcohol. Products and labor were poorly reimbursed, often by serving them drinks. The intoxicated Indians provoked street riots at the weekly town markets, and this outraged the non-Indian residents. The main idea of the populace was that the government should transfer the tribe to the Amazon Valley. The reasons given were, precisely, the drunken disorders and thefts from the ranchers and townspeople.

according to the following basic criteria, imposed according to the work each would be expected to do on the field:

1. Be a registered student in the social sciences or social work;
2. Have completed at least one term of anthropology;
3. Have completed a normal school program (secondary school equivalent);
4. Have completed a course in accounting/bookkeeping;
5. Have experience in office work;
6. Have completed a psychology program;
7. Be available to stay at least six months on the Indian reservation;

8. Be of legal age (18 or older);
9. Demonstrate ability to get along with people, to facilitate relating to the other members of the field team.

The following students were hired by the FUNAI on a year's contract:

1. As teaching assistants:
  - a) Maria Perpétuo de Oliveira;
  - b) Lucy Maria Caputo;
  - c) Jorge Quirino de Araújo Campos;
2. As administrative assistant:
  - Geraldo Mantiole;

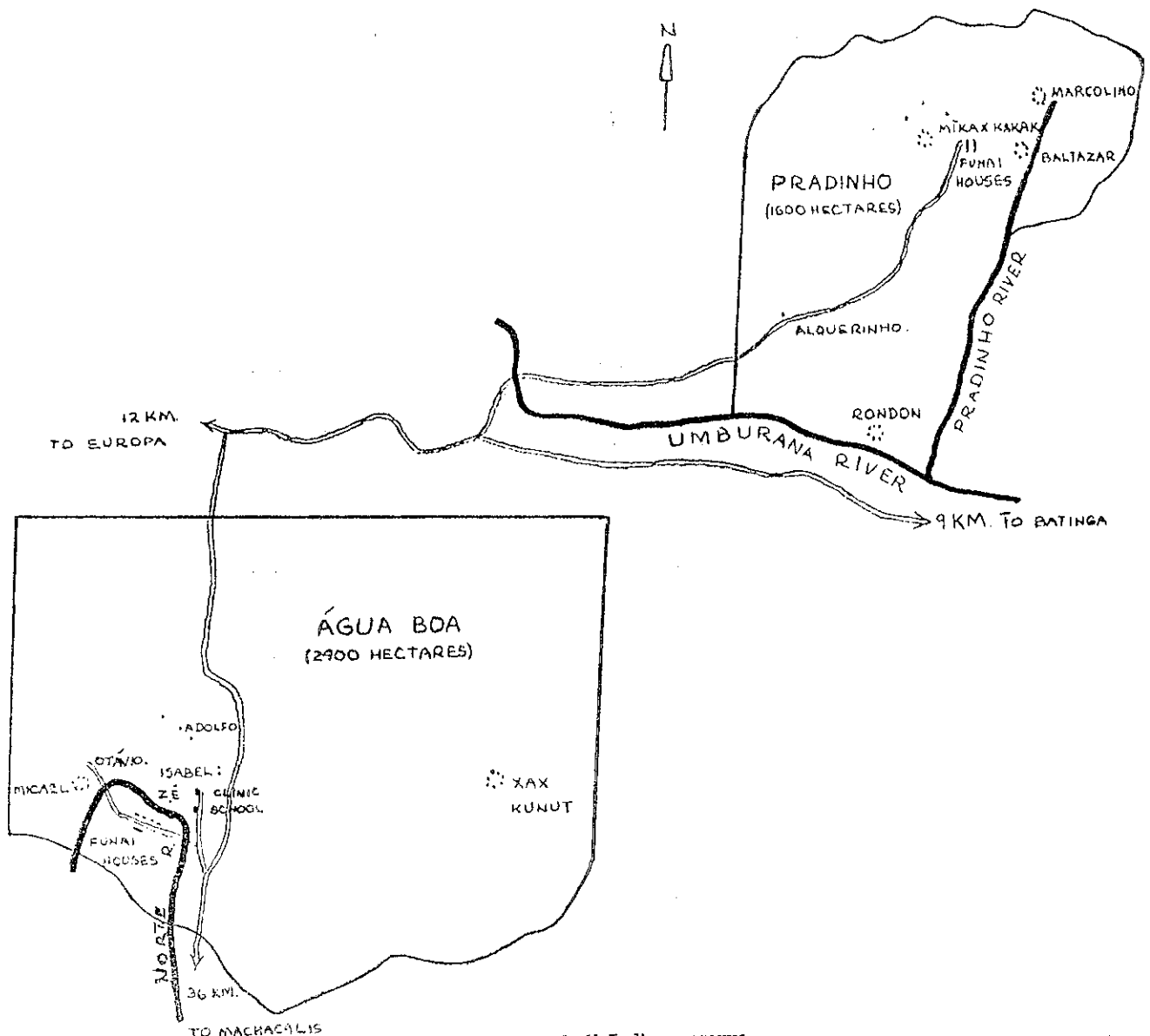


Fig. 4 — Maxakali Indian reserve

3. As psychologist (for a period of six months):

Maria Terezinha Barra Mattos  
Filha <sup>(5)</sup>.

The team received five months of special preparation: four months in Juiz de Fora and one month on the field. This preparation consisted of readings and discussions from a selected bibliography about simple societies in general and about the Maxakali society in particular. They studied about Indian education and community development. In the field, they received training on bilingual education with linguist Harold Popovich and with anthropologist-linguist Frances Popovich. As a matter of fact, Harold Popovich was — and continues to be — responsible for the technical orientation of the education program and the preparation of didactic materials <sup>(6)</sup>.

During the first month in the field, the team did a genealogical survey to get acquainted with the tribespeople and to establish good relationships with them. The remaining time was spent in meeting together to study and discuss the project, to plan the activities, to discuss what to do and who should do it. The responsibilities of each person involved in the project, directly or indirectly, were clarified and the team discussed the viability of the project in terms of the stated goals, planned the use of the facilities, and discussed, the Maxakali situation among themselves, with the government employees, and with the Indian people to increase everyone's awareness of the problems.

The reservation personnel have complemented the work of the special team in the field. They are: the indigenist technician, the agricultural technician, the chauffeur, the tractor driver, the paramedical attendants, and others.

<sup>(5)</sup> The psychologist — also a social science student — was expected to promote good relations among the members of the team, between the team and FUNAI employees, and between the FUNAI workers and the Maxakali. She was also required to listen to the Indians in order to understand their urge to destroy themselves.

<sup>(6)</sup> Linguist Harold Popovich accepted the author's invitation to orient the team and to participate in the work. Since 1959 — with his wife — he has completed the following research: a) linguistic analysis and socio-cultural studies, b) an orthography, and c) preparation of provisional didactic materials with Indian participation: primers, a social studies manual, and a reader.

Early on, when the program was first introduced, I made a determined effort to increase the awareness of the local populace in relation to the Maxakali situation. I talked with the nearby ranchers, met with the local authorities, and spoke in the schools. I tried to present the Indian as a person, and consequently, as one who had a right to the land and a right to five. I those meetings, I also reminded them of the law that prohibits selling alcoholic beverages to Indians.

### SUBSISTENCE PROGRAM

#### a) Canteen

We introduced a canteen to provide the community with essential goods. This canteen also helps support the family farms by lending seeds and distributing sprouts for re-planting. In addition, the canteen buys artifacts from persons who cannot work in the field, more specifically, from widows. The canteen holds a weekly market every Saturday for the Maxakali and these are occasions in which the Indian is trained in the use of money and in simple arithmetic. The goal is to prepare them for commercial transactions with people from the dominant society.

The canteen operates with internally-issued paper currency to reduce the exploitation by the non-Indian society and to cut down on the purchase of alcohol <sup>(7)</sup>. We plan to substitute official currency gradually as the Maxakali begin to control the commercial value concepts. When the Maxakali have sufficient marketing skills, the canteen will come under Indian control or will cease to exist because there is no more need for it.

The more advanced teacher trainees do an internship in the canteen, weighing the food staples and selling across the counter. The FUNAI regional office buys the merchandise the Indians have on order and pays wholesale prices. The goods are transported to the Post in an old government truck.

<sup>(7)</sup> Generally the Maxakali spent the little money they managed to acquire on alcohol instead of buying food. The children were starving because their parents neglected them while in an alcoholic stupor. Often the author met small children on the roadside, sitting around the sprawling bodies of their drunken parents, and crying with hunger.

### b) The communal farm

We introduced a communal farm and planted corn, beans, manioc, sugar cane, and fruit trees (banana, papaya, pineapple, and citrus fruits) <sup>(8)</sup> with a view to improving their subsistence and inculcating good work habits. Those who wish may receive weekly pay for services like clearing the land, preparing the soil, fertilizing it, planting, and harvesting. The crops are divided among those who work on the farm. An agricultural technician orients the communal project <sup>(9)</sup>.

### c) Family farms

Family farms are planted where, when, and how each family desires, following tribal customs. The canteen furnishes the seeds on a loan basis; they must be paid back at harvest time. Plant cuttings for transplanting are distributed free of charge as requested in accordance with the size of the land cleared for planting.

The Maxakali are encouraged to save part of the harvest for their own use. Some do this and others sell everything cheaply at the nearby town markets or to the ranchers. Whenever the canteen has funds, it buys up the surplus produce for prices that are more equitable.

## HEALTH PROGRAM

Principal health problems are intestinal parasites, undernourishment, and excessive alcohol consumption <sup>(10)</sup>.

Stool tests for parasites were done on the population of both tracts of the reservation. The laboratory tests were followed up with appropriate treatment for all positive results, especially in case of a positive for *Schistosoma Mansoni*. The mobile health team and the Maxakali project team cooperated in the campaign to vaccinate the Indian population. The stool tests

and sputum cultures are repeated as often as needed <sup>(11)</sup>.

Dental treatment has been less adequate, both because of the expensive equipment required and because of the lack of electric power to run the motor. Treatment is limited to the extraction of decayed teeth. A dentist from the Mobile Health Unit and a team from the College of Dentistry (Faculdade de Odontologia) in Governador Valadares made several visits to the reservation. They extracted teeth and surveyed the needs in the area of dental hygiene.

During 1982, the University (UFJF) College of Medicine had an agreement in which students in their last term of study spent a thirty day internship on the reservation. The medical students were not interested because of the distance involved (533 miles or 859 km) and so the agreement was not renewed.

The health team consists of two fulltime paramedical workers, a doctor who makes weekly visits to the reservation <sup>(12)</sup>, another doctor from the FUNAI Mobile Health Unit in Governador Valadares who makes occasional visits, and one professional nurse, also from the regional office.

The Indian Post has a small pharmacy, an outpatient clinic, and a small infirmary. Serious cases are taken to the Águas Formosas municipal hospital which is two and one half hours by jeep from the Post. A jeep and driver are available fulltime to transport such patients to the hospital.

Some customs make it difficult to give the Maxakali adequate medical attention. For example, even sick adults kiss children on the mouth; the family sleeps in one bed; they share leftover food and even pre-chew food to give to the younger children. It is impossible to control reinfection by schistosomiasis in that the women remain in the creek to fish during the hottest parts of the day. Bowel eliminations are simply left on the ground. These habits are very resistant to change. Attempts to teach them to build latrines and the reasons for doing so have been ineffective.

<sup>(8)</sup> All these crops were requested by the Indians because they are a part of the ordinary Maxakali diet.

<sup>(9)</sup> We allow them to divide the crops among themselves and inevitably someone complains about the distribution.

<sup>(10)</sup> The Mobile Health Unit has eradicated infectious diseases such as yellow fever, measles, and small pox by mass immunization programs.

<sup>(11)</sup> The Maxakali dislike collecting stool specimens; some went so far as to charge a fee for collecting them. The psychologist found it necessary to go from house to house, explaining the necessity and importance of stool tests. To give due importance to the tests, the team later showed the test results from house to house even though the Indians could not read them.

<sup>(12)</sup> The doctor lives in Machacalis, one half hour by jeep from the reservation.



The administration of medicines is another serious problem. The Maxakali dislike small doses of medicine. If given a bottle of any kind of medicine, they will swallow it all at once. The paramedical worker needs to be alert at all times and must be able to stay calm under stress.

Things get even more complicated when someone dies. The medical worker or the medicine are blamed; people begin to reject the medicines and the person who administered them. If the medical worker keeps his head the problem can be controlled. The most critical situation is when a father of a sick child gets drunk; he may threaten the life of an attendant with a bow and arrow or a machete if the child should die.

Faced with these and many other problems, the health program continues. Medical treatment is given only by request. The Maxakali first try tribal medicines: potions, massages, and ritual expulsion of the spirits causing the disease. Having exhausted these resources, he goes to the infirmary on the Post and receives medical care.

### EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Maxakali are in permanent contact with the national society and this makes it important that they be literate. Their relations with the surrounding society are handicapped by their inability to read. With literacy, they can learn the national monetary system and mathematical skills; these can resolve some of the problems that result from intercultural contact.

Social scientists and educators seem to have arrived at a consensus that learning to read in the mother-tongue is the most effective way to become literate. Without a doubt, every ethnic group has a right to learn to read in its own language. Early attempts to teach reading in Portuguese were unsuccessful. In 1979, two FUNAI teachers attempted and failed. They could not even get the Indians to attend classes.

The main advantage to literacy is as a reinforcement of the value of their ethnic identity, lost in the inter-ethnic contact. Recovering their ethnic pride, their lives once again have meaning for them.

In the 1951 «Report» on *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education* (1953), UNESCO

emphasizes the psychological, sociological, and educational factors of this practice:

Psychologically, it is the system of significant signs that (in the child's mind) function automatically in expression and in understanding; sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which the child belongs. Educationally, he learns faster through the vernacular than through a language which is not familiar to him (11).

The FUNAI recognizes the value of bilingual education and includes it in its educational norms for Indian groups, but, unfortunately, the agency does not have a sufficient number of linguists available to be able to put this in practice. Most of the bilingual programs among Brazil's Indians were begun on the initiative of the linguists of the Summer Institute of Linguistics or with their collaboration and they have contributed much of the didactic material and scientific framework for bilingual education in Brazil.

The guiding principle of this education program is gradual indigenization, to the point where they become self-sufficient. The Indian community must be persuaded to assume the entire responsibility of the literacy program. For this reason, local people are included in all phases of the program, not only as native authors and teachers but on the decision-making levels as well. This independence should be put into practice from the beginning so that the literacy program can go on without dependence on outside direction. In this way the Maxakali are not helping the technical team to do the work but, to the contrary, the team is helping the Maxakali to do the job.

The first obstacle to attaining this self-sufficiency is related to the financing of the project: the one who pays is the one who decides, is the rule. In this case, however, the one who pays is the guardian agency responsible for the protection of the tribe and the Maxakali are accustomed to receiving donations from the FUNAI. Consequently, the first step was outside financing but the next steps could be financed by the community itself through various contributions, such as offering services and other means.

(11) See Kindell & Jones, p. 8.

An education aimed at the self-sufficiency of the learner does not expect to replace a society's own education system but to complement it, as a parallel practice. We do not want to introduce a rift but an innovation that is consistent with the tribal method of education; then education will cease to be a vehicle for domination and will become a means to raise the tribal ethos. Education will become an instrument of change in the search for better conditions of interaction, of relations with the encroaching society that are less unequal.

Education, by itself, cannot achieve all these objectives. What is needed is to employ all the available means to raise the Indian community as a whole to a more adequate subsistence level. This can only be done by simultaneously introducing an overall community development project. The activities of this project are educational in that they lead the Maxakali to the point where they assume the responsibility for their own socio-economic development and gradually eliminate their customary paternalistic dependence on the national society. These convictions caused me to introduce the subsistence and health programs simultaneously.

### Accomplishing the program

The pilot education program in Maxakali could not be introduced immediately for four reasons:

1. The school building needed to be renovated;
2. The canteen had not yet been introduced and it was the canteen that would provide the scholarships for the trainees;
3. The linguist was out of the country at the time;
4. The planting of the communal farm required all available hands.

In the past, education in Portuguese had been attempted without success because of lack of interest and because the children did not control the Portuguese language. The children who did attend were attracted by the school lunches. In spite of this, we began to teach the children

in Portuguese and without the school lunches. Three classes were begun and they became laboratories in practice teaching for the future Indian teachers. The children were divided according to sex and bilingual ability; they were taught by teaching assistants of the same sex, following the tribal standard.

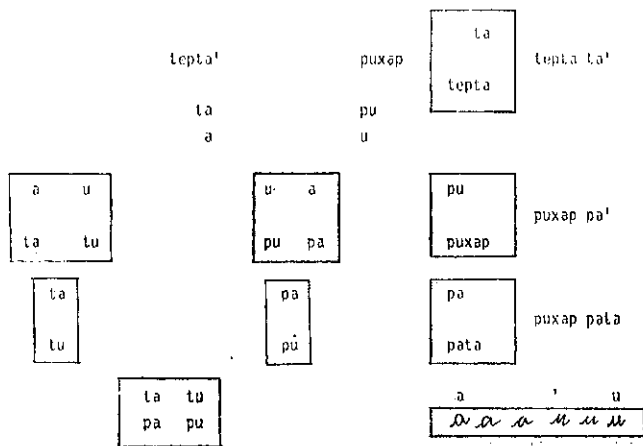
In the early months we were able to hold their interest to some extent and attendance was fair; but when the novelty wore off, and as difficulties arose, they lost interest. The linguistic barriers became insurmountable. Only five pupils out of the thirty-six enrolled managed any kind of satisfactory progress in literacy, and these all had relatives who were native speakers of Portuguese. The experience was valid because it proved again the importance of literacy in the mother-tongue. We continued to teach these five students who are now ready to be promoted to the second year in elementary school.

We began a pre-reading course for the other pupils with the help of a native speaker of Maxakali, to implant an idea of a schedule and behavior appropriate to a classroom as well as to develop motor skills.

The linguist returned in March, 1981, and we began the pilot literacy program to train native teachers and authors. There were twenty pupils: eight women and twelve men, chosen by the Indian community. They were separated into two groups by sex and as they progressed in their study of the five primers, they practiced teaching the children and their own colleagues, receiving lessons in Portuguese and arithmetic as well. In addition, they are trained to work in the canteen, to clean the school and the infirmary, to prepare the school lunches, and to work on the training farm. They receive a weekly maintenance grant. Classes are suspended during peak farm labor periods at planting and harvest times, and during peak periods in the ritual calendar.

The Maxakali primers were revised with the help of the pupils in an attempt to adapt them to national education programs and to the Maxakali situation. The linguist reproduced each lesson in poster form to aid teaching. Every pupil, in addition to notebooks, has an individual slate to practice writing words and to work out his sums. This method helps erase any errors. They love to use chalk and colored pencils.

The «key word» method is used in the primers, as shown in the sample taken from the first page of Primer One:



Among the results, we would like to underscore two as being the most significant:

1. It was possible to hold a two-month long Indian Writers Workshop from March 29 to May 21, 1982, after only one year into the pilot literacy program. Seventeen of the twenty participants succeeded in producing about thirty-one booklets and the first little newspaper.
2. Two Indian teacher trainees started up literacy classes on their own initiative in their own villages, building the classrooms, the benches, and the blackboards needed to hold the classes.

The experiment continues with the introduction of new courses for the newly-literate pupils, such as sewing hints, nursing, carpentry, fish and goat raising. This is done in the Maxakali language by class handouts on the various subjects and by practical experience. The Maxakali society can use these somewhat familiar skills because of the long period of contact with the dominant society.

#### OTHER ACTIVITIES

We wanted to provide pleasant and interesting ways for the Maxakali to use their idle hours so we introduced activities such as dancing, music, sports, rituals, artifact production; and some more traditional activities such as hunting for small game animals, gathering some fruits, and fishing in the streams on and off the reservation. The dances are held on Saturday nights,

in the school house. The objectives are entertainment, occupation, and developing of good relationship.

Vocal and instrumental sessions are held on the veranda of the team's residence; they are held almost daily in the late afternoon, after working hours. These occasions are used to teach spoken Portuguese through singing folk music. The goals are entertainment, occupation, learning, and development of closeness between team members and the Indians.

The soccer/football matches have been stimulated several ways. The Indians practice during the week; on Saturday afternoons the two soccer teams compete, representing the two tracts of the reservation. On Sunday the teams play against different local teams.

#### REFLECTION

The project has been in force for three years and we would like to bring up several points for special consideration.

We ran into several problems, some we had anticipated and others we had not. For example:

1. Insufficient funds;
2. Delay in release of funds;
3. Frequency in which team members rotated;
4. Disparity between the technical team and the support team;
5. Linguistic barrier;
6. Climate variations (drought in the first year, floods in the second);
7. Previous paternalistic treatment;
8. My return to UFJF after eighteen months of coordinating the project (14).

On the other hand, there were some advantages, such as the efforts and dedication of the team members, the support and autonomy of the regional government official, and the friendship of the Indians.

One of the objectives is the growing indigenization of the project but it has not been possible to break with the old paternalism in this first phase. Some attitudes of independence have been noted, however: the Maxakali expelled

(14) After the first year and a half, the author's supervision of the project became restricted to periodic visits to the reservation.

two non-Indian families from the reservation and they managed to pressure the FUNAI into removing an Indian agent and a medical worker with whom they had clashed. Another evidence of growing independence is the establishing, on their own initiative, of a weekly market at Micael's village, to sell and exchange their own produce<sup>(15)</sup>.

In conclusion, we would like to list some results that are obvious to those of us who witnessed the previous situation:

1. The Maxakali are able to support themselves with help, by means of the family farms and the potatoes, manioc, corn, beans, rice, and fruits from the communal orchard that has already begun to produce;
2. There was a revival of artifact production<sup>(16)</sup>. When the project began, Água Boa had only two ceramists, two elderly women: Isabel and Alcina. Today, all the women are making clay pots;

(15) These markets are held on Saturday, following the market held at the canteen.

(16) We have encouraged the people to produce artifacts by buying them or trading used clothing and other commodities for the artifacts. In 1981, the author organized an artifact exposition at the UFJF administration building; the exposition broke a record in number of visitors. Some Maxakali were present.

3. Maxakali religious rituals had fallen into disuse and were revitalized. The male initiation ritual was held again last year;
4. The general consumption of alcohol was lowered; this reduced the number of violent deaths from one every four months to one in three years;
5. The experiment in goat-raising, introduced in November, 1982, has been successful to date<sup>(17)</sup>.

These results are most encouraging but many problems remain and much still needs to be done. Some persons involved in the project have recently been replaced, including the regional FUNAI official, Carlos Roberto Grossi, who greatly motivated the project team. In April, 1984, the contract between the FUNAI and the UFJF will expire and we fear a possible reversion. Notwithstanding, what we have achieved so far leads us to believe that the Maxakali have recovered a taste for living. If this proves to be true, the experience will have been well worthwhile.

(17) The Maxakali were unsuccessful in raising animals. Traditionally hunters, they believe that wild animals belong to them but domesticated animals belong to the outsiders. In addition to this belief, they lack the patience to wait for the animal to mature and fatten up. They promptly butcher it for the pot.

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