

THE NAFUQUA INDIANS OF THE
ALTO-XINGU, CENTRAL BRAZIL

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A REPORT SUBMITTED FOR THE
"LEVANTAMENTO SOBRE A SITUAÇÃO ATUAL
DAS POPULAÇÕES INDIGENAS NO BRASIL"

JULY 15, 1983

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I. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NAFUQUA INDIANS OF THE ALTO-XINGU

The Alto-Xingu region was first explored by Karl von den Steinen in 1884 and again in 1887. At that time, the Nafuqua-Kalapalo-Kuikuru were one of the most numerous groups in the area having nine villages in all (von den Steinen, 1940). Von den Steinen published the results of his research as did Paul Ehrenreich who accompanied him on his second expedition in 1887. Ehrenreich states that one Nafuqua village was located on the Kuliseu River and that six or eight additional villages existed on the Kuluene at that time. The village on the Kuliseu had 13 longhouses placed in a circle around a flute or men's house (Ehrenreich, 1929).

In 1900-1901, Max Schmidt made another expedition into the headwaters of the Xingu furnishing additional data on Xinguano culture. In passing, he mentions the Nafuqua as being one of the few Carib tribes to make an appearance south of the Amazon River. He hypothesizes that Carib-speakers originally moved southwest from the Guiana hinterlands (Schmidt, 1926). In 1948, Claude Levi-Strauss published an article that noted two interesting facts about the Nafuqua. First, serious population decimation was already taking place early in the century although the Nafuqua still occupied a continuous territory along the eastern bank of the Kuluene. Second, Levi-Strauss emphasized the fact that the Nafuqua cited by von den Steinen and Ehrenreich were actually a diverse group which included the Kalapalo and Kuikuru (Levi-Strauss, 1948).

Between 1947 and 1949, Pedro de Lima made four voyages down the Xingu River. The Nafuqua were then located in the southeastern part of the area and had been reduced dramatically in numbers. He counted 28 Nafuqua (de Lima, 1954). In 1953, a measles epidemic occurred, and Agostinho da Silva estimates that

a minimum of 35 and a maximum of 44 Nafuqua were living in one village during that time. The situation was so bad that Gertrude Dole, in 1954, remarked that the Nafuqua were a defunct tribe (Agostinho da Silva, 1972). However, improved health care and tribal intermarriage have allowed the Nafuqua to increase once again. In 1963, 51 were counted, and in the 1960s, with the encouragement of the Villas-Boas brothers, they established themselves in their own village close to the Kalapalo. They lived in this area for eight years until a witchcraft-related murder frightened them into moving further from the Kalapalo village. In 1977, they lived on the Ipa Lagoon located southeast of the Kalapalo. About 68 individuals lived in the village.

II GENERAL DIFFERENCES DISTINGUISHING THE NAFUQUA FROM OTHER ALTO-XINGUANOS

A number of distinct groups occupy the Alto-Xingu culture area. These groups differ in a number of ways. The linguistic factor constitutes an important distinguishing characteristic of the groups. Four mutually unintelligible language families and at least twice as many dialects are found in the southern part of the reservation. Language families represented include Arawak, Tupi, Carib, and an independent language. The Nafuqua, Kalapalo, Kuikuru, and Matipu speak a Carib language. These Xingu Caribs use two distinct but mutually intelligible dialects. The Nafuqua and Kalapalo employ one dialect, while the Kuikuru and Matipu use a second one.

The growing dependence of the Xinguanos upon Portuguese as a lingua franca is slowly reducing the significance of multilingualism in the area (Basso, 1973; Picchi, 1979). Although only three Nafuqua men fluently spoke Portuguese in 1977, most people, including children, knew some words or phrases. The importance of this trend toward bilingualism grows daily as interactions between

individuals from various villages and between Indians and non-Indians increase in response to contact pressure.

Tribal or village autonomy and geographic distance between villages represent a second set of factors that distinguish Alto-Xinguanos. Since von den Steinen's initial visit to the region in 1884, researchers have lumped linguistic groups into adjacent territories. Depopulation in this century has affected the size, and even composition, of these territories. However, they continue to be employed as at least heuristic devices. The Nafuqua as well as the other Carib Xinguanos, traditionally occupy the southeastern part of the Alto-Xingu region. Von den Steinen visited one of their nine villages on the eastern bank of the Kuluene River. De Lima found them located even further to the southeast in 1948. Basso does not mark the Nafuqua on her 1973 map, probably because they did not occupy a distinct village at that time. However, in 1977, they were located, once again, on the eastern bank of the Kuluene, south of the Kalapalo village in the southeastern corner of the region (von den Steinen, 1940; de Lima, 1954; Basso, 1973; Picchi, 1978).

The integrity of these geographic units depreciates as the region constricts in response to contact. Posto Leonardo Villas Boas, located in the northern part of the Alto-Singu, acts as a magnet attracting village members on a regular basis. Located in what was traditionally defined as Tupi territory by von den Steinen, the FUNAI Posto represents an area in which all groups can relate and interact comfortably. The Posto also minimizes the distance between villages. Nafuqua trips to the Posto occur on at least a bi-monthly basis in the dry season. Frequent visits familiarize the Nafuqua with other groups and other territories. As a result, territorial divisions dissolve to a certain extent.

Proximity to Posto Leonardo and concomitant access to non-Indian goods constitute a third, and increasingly important, factor that divides Alto-Xinguano groups. The Txicao, Trumai, Kamayura, and Yawalpiti are located relatively close to Posto Leonardo. Interactions between these groups and non-Indians take place with greater frequency than do interactions between the more distantly located Nafuqua and non-Indians. Rate of interaction affects Portuguese fluency, consumer goods acquisition, and general level of confidence in relations with non-Indians. At the Posto, the Nafuqua clearly relate to FUNAI officials, journalists, and researchers with much less poise and self-possession than do those groups who visit the Posto on a weekly or even daily basis. Once back in the village, the Nafuqua shed much of their shyness. However, a residue of resentment remains. They consider other groups to be receiving benefits and favors they are denied. This jealousy negatively affects their relations with other Indian villages and with FUNAI officials.

Finally, village specialization in the manufacturing of artifacts represents an important distinguishing feature of Alto-Xinguanos. Various groups exclusively manufacture products which are then traded within the region. For example, Tupi-speakers such as the Kamayura traditionally make black bows and flutes. Arawak-speakers manufacture pottery. The Nafuqua, like other Carib-speakers are noted for their shell necklace production. These distinctive necklaces, made from large land snail shells, have wide distribution in the region. Every adult in the Nafuqua village wears one, and many adults in other villages also own these necklaces.

These products traditionally made by specific groups assumed greater value in the past due to their limited supply and great demand. For example,

some kind of vessel is essential to bitter manioc processing. In order to obtain ceramic pots from Arawak-speakers, the Nafuqua traded shell necklaces, which lack utilitarian value but which claim prestige value. Currently, the significance of these objects is declining due to the influx of non-Indian consumer goods. More portable metal pots are preferred over heavy ceramic vessels, and colored glass beads detract from the importance of shell necklaces. Traditional artifacts are still found in the Nafuqua village. However, necklaces and hip-bands of beads and metal pots occupy increasingly important positions in the village and the Alto-Xinguano trade network.

Cultural features such as language, economic specialization, and territorial occupation have separated Alto-Xinguanos into distinctly autonomous villages in the past. Concomitant consciousness of these differences among the indigenes exaggerated their importance. Contact has to some extent minimized degrees of inter-village variability. The use of Portuguese as a lingua franca, the importance of non-Indian consumer goods, and the presence of the FUNAI Posto have lessened the importance of these cultural differences. The Nafuqua are not an exception to this rule. Although the process is somewhat retarded in their case due to the comparatively distant location of their village, the general regional trend is affecting them.

III SIMILARITIES OF THE NAFUQUA AND OTHER ALTO-XINGUANO GROUPS

Many researchers have commented on the cultural similarities of the various Alto-Xinguano groups. They share a number of different socio-cultural institutions which facilitate their interaction and which offset them from groups inhabiting the northern part of the National Park.

A. Subsistence

Subsistence practices of the various groups resemble each other. Slash-and-burn horticulture, fishing, gathering, and hunting are listed in decreasing order of importance to the population's diet. They supply the necessary foods for the indigenes' consumption. Non-Indian foods do not figure significantly into indigenous diets at this time although salt, sugar, rice and beans are consumed at the Posto. Some groups, such as the Nafuqua, have stores of salt in their village. They prefer it to the indigenous version which is composed of potassium chloride. However, they lack regular access to other non-Indian food stuff and thus only sporadically consume these products while at the Posto.

In the case of the Nafuqua who occupied a new village in 1977, horticultural activities took place on lands adjacent to the village. The indigenes recognized two types of soil: rich land located close to the lagoon on which the community was settled, and more impoverished land set further back from the water. Manioc and fruit were grown in the latter while cultivation of other products took place in the soil near the lagoon. Slash-and-burn was accomplished with the use of steel machetes and other tools secured from FUNAI officials at the Posto. Every household did not control a set of implements so the tools were loaned out freely. Slashing of underbrush and trees took place in May and June after the rains stopped. Burning occurred in late August and in September prior to the advent of the new rainy season. Gardens were planted in September, depending upon the crop in question. Men were responsible for this activity as well as for slashing-and-burning while women weeded and harvested. Sexual division of labor was not firmly drawn in any of these activities, and women frequently assisted in clearing gardens while men helped in harvesting.

Levi-Strauss (1948) lists a large number of crops cultivated by the Alto-Xinguanos. Bitter manioc, yams, cara, abobora, mamona, peanuts, peppers, sweet potatoes, maize, piqui, beans, palm and banana are included in this list. Other plants are urucu, gourds, calabashes, tobacco, and cotton. The Nafuqua did not cultivate all of these crops in 1977 possibly due to the fact that they had not finished preparing their first year gardens. Furthermore, they planted other types of crops not mentioned by Levi-Strauss. For example, pineapple, sweet manioc, and sugar cane were cultivated by the Nafuqua, while yams, cara, abobora, mamona, and maize were not planted. Clearly, bitter manioc and piqui were the two most important staples at the time of the study.

The Alto-Xinguano preference for fish is widely recognized. However, the Nafuqua like other groups in the area hunt to some extent with shot guns and bows and arrows. Monkey, iguana, turtles, and birds are hunted and consumed especially when it is culturally prohibited for the people to eat fish. For example, upon the birth or severe illness of a child, at least the mother and sometimes the father and siblings avoid eating fish for extensive periods of time. In these cases, manioc alone or combined with monkey meat are consumed.

The Nafuqua fish with bow and arrow, fish hooks and line, or fish nets. During the dry season, they form small parties which are responsible for beating vines in slow-moving water. The vine secretions permeate the water, asphyxiating the fishing and allowing the Nafuqua to easily scoop them into baskets. In addition, gathering constitutes an important supplementary source of food for the Nafuqua. Turtle eggs, in particular, provide high quality protein as well as calories. The Nafuqua eat these eggs raw or

smoked. During the egg season, small parties of Nafuqua leave the village for several days in search of turtle eggs. They bring back large baskets of these foods which are then distributed in the village.

Nafuqua subsistence patterns are very similar to those practiced by other Alto-Xinguano groups. The reduced number of kinds of crops cultivated by this group in comparison to other villages in the area is attributed to the newness of the village. Furthermore, the Nafuqua may have less access to metal implements than other people due to their location. However, this lack of access does not affect the type of subsistence pattern on which they depend. Rather it necessitates increased sharing of the tools that already exist in the village.

B. Political Organization and Economic Exchange

The level of socio-political organization in the Alto-Xingu is such that "chiefs" with coercive power do not exist. The institution of capitão present in the region continues to represent an imposition of European culture on the population. In the village, the capitão, who is responsible for dealing with non-Indian officials, exercises little authority. For example, in 1977 the Nafuqua capitão negotiated with non-Indians while at the Posto. However, in the village, he clearly had a limited power base and was responsive to the demands of the village headman. This headman who had an extensive kin network worked extremely hard and controlled the products of the largest gardens in the village. Those families whose gardens were not producing yet were dependent upon his, and his sons', goodwill and energy. However, this headman, in theory, had little more power than did the capitão. His ability to influence decision-making in the village was primarily based upon his personality and his family.

He held no office or position of authority as a non-Indian from a state society would define it. Rather, he tried to persuade families in the village to perform certain tasks or to follow specific policies; however, they in turn often opted to ignore his suggestions.

Thus, Alto-Xinguanos and specifically the Nafuqua are egalitarian. Economic exchange between social equals consists of a complex system of reciprocity. Principal items exchanged include high-quality protein such as fish and turtle eggs, carbohydrates and fruits such as manioc and pineapple, manufactured goods such as manioc processors and benches, and non-Indian goods such as soap and fish hooks. These goods are exchanged within three different social spheres. In each sphere, exchange is organized according to various obligations and expectations.

The first sphere of exchange encompasses the household and the village. Indigenous foods such as fish and manioc are widely exchanged with little attention paid to exact repayment schedules. Non-Indian foods such as sugar and salt have a more limited radius of distribution indicating greater demand and less supply. Following the same pattern, indigenous manufactured goods such as clay griddles and feathers are widely exchanged while non-Indian goods such as guns, beads, and flashlights are loaned on a short-term basis. Payments to shamans for curing services rendered are substantial. Metal pots, fish hooks, and dyed cotton (items of great value) are given to shamans.

The second sphere of exchange consists of intra- and inter-village areas. Within these areas, a more balanced form of reciprocity occurs in that a return is expected upon a gift that is given. Within the Nafuqua village, a male gives a female sugar, rice, beans, soap, beads, or fabric in return for sexual relations. Balanced forms of reciprocity also occur

mocks, and clay pots are not normally exchanged within the negative reciprocal sphere.

The negative reciprocal form of exchange is of particular interest because social responsibility between the trading partners is absent. Aggressive trading, trickery, manipulation, and resentment are characteristic of this type of exchange and serve to offset it from those kinds of trade that take place between Nafuqua or between the Nafuqua and other Alto-Xinguanos. The trust and social expectations inherent in the latter imply on-going relationships which the Nafuqua often fail to recognize as existing between themselves and some non-Indians. These relationships could and sometimes do form between Alto-Xinguanos and individuals who regularly visit the area. However, FUNAI officials, researchers, and FAB personnel frequently come and go preventing the formation of strong bonds and the dependence upon other kinds of economic exchange. This situation has the potential of negatively affecting the quality of contact relations.

C. Social Relations

Alto-Xinguanos share a system by which they define and relate to socially significant groups. Categories of relationships with kinsmen, with potential marriage partners and their families, with traditionally hostile Indians, and with non-Indians are evident in their behavioral patterns. However, this system of categories is not rigid. Flexibility is possible, and apparent rules are frequently broken.

Nafuqua kinship nomenclature is referred to as bifurcate merging-Iroquoian. An individual calls the male siblings of his father by the same term as the father. However, he distinguishes them from the male siblings of his mother. In the same way, the female siblings of the

individual's mother are called by the same term as the mother and are distinguished from the female siblings of the father. In the individual's generation, children of mother's sister(s) and father's brother(s) are called by the same term as are his siblings. That is, siblings and so-called "parallel cousins" are lumped into one category. On the other hand, children of mother's brother(s) and father's sister(s) are called by a different term. These people are referred to as cross-cousins. In Nafuqua society, cross-cousins are preferred marriage partners.

Dole (1969) suggested that the distinction between cross and parallel cousins, or marriag^eable and non-marriag^eable individuals, is disappearing in the Alto-Xingu region due to depopulation and a shrinking marriage pool. Basso (1970) examined this problem among the Kalapalo and found that the distinction continues to be made between these two groups. The Nafuqua also employ the cross-cousin term and use it to differentiate marriageable and non-marriageable groups. However, the system tolerates flexibility. For example, the Nafuqua practice matri-patrilocal residence. That is, a newly married couple lives with the wife's family for the first year and then moves to the husband's household. If the husband is from a different village, this entails the wife eventually leaving her kinsmen. Flexibility in the system becomes important if the wife's family does not want the woman to leave her village. They have the option of insisting that their daughter marry one of her parallel cousins who lives in the same village as she does. This effectively eliminates the need for the girl to eventually leave her kinsmen.

Relations between the Nafuqua and other groups in the area are generally good inspite of the long history of hostility that exists between

some of these tribes. For example, the Txicao and the Nafuqua have warred against each other since von den Steinen first explored the region in 1884. In fact, the decimation of the Nafuqua population, shrinking from nine villages as counted by Ehrenreich (1929) to the one village that exists today, has been attributed to intertribal conflict as well as to diseases introduced by non-Indians (de Lima, 1954). Poor relations also exist between the Txukarramae and other groups in the Alto-Xingu, including the Nafuqua. The Txukarramae are a relatively large group who speak a Ge language. They were contacted by the Villas-Boas brothers in 1953 and moved, in part, to the Xingu National Park in 1963. The Nafuqua do not understand their language and have had little opportunity to interact with these people regularly. Thus, they are viewed fearfully and distrustfully.

Relations between the Nafuqua and non-Indians are also generally good although on occasion some hostilities flare up. For example, many of the non-Indian consumer goods such as metal tools flow from the Posto into the region. The Nafuqua frequently object to the distribution of these goods or of other favors. They contend, as do other groups in the area, that their particular needs are not being met. Other Nafuqua who trade illegally with the fazendeiros who surround the Park complain of their poor treatment by these non-Indians, feeling that they are bullied and exploited by these men. Short-term visitors who come to the Park primarily to observe the Indians and to trade are also a source of controversy. These people are not accustomed to the relaxed manner in which the Xinguanos in general trade and often intimidate them with their comparatively aggressive manners. Also these non-Indians do not understand the value system of the Xinguanos. Beads

of particular colors, hammocks, steel tools, etc. are highly valued by such groups as the Nafuqua, but often times the non-Indians will try to foist objects off on the Indians that they do not want or value. Bad feelings result.

FAB maintains a base in the Park and annually trains groups of soldiers there. The Nafuqua illegally trade with these men and even order goods such as radios through them. There have been instances, however, where the soldiers take the Indians' trade goods and leave the area without sending back the desired item. The Nafuqua have had good luck in the past obtaining restitution. However, they realize their vulnerable position, knowing FUNAI cannot protect them from this type of exploitation since what they themselves are doing is against the expressed wishes of FUNAI. Finally, researchers who visit the area regularly bringing gifts and trade items with them pose a problem. The Indians are extremely possessive of their researcher seeing the individual as a source of great wealth. No amount of goods brought is enough. Further demands always ensue, a refusal of which is seen as bad manners or selfishness, the worst possible behavior among these Indians. To complicate matters, if the researcher tries to visit or trade with other groups, a reaction in the home village over the alleged betrayal can result.

In summary, the Nafuqua maintain good relations with other Indians and with non-Indians in the Alto-Xingu area despite an occasional flare-up. Gossip and criticism may flow outward toward other groups; however, the Nafuqua generally visit, trade, and interact with other peoples on a regular basis.

D. Ideology

Alto-Xinguano ideology is discussed in a now-extensive literature. Rituals, rites of passage, shamanism, mythology, body perceptions, and food taboos have been the subject of numerous books and articles. The information which has accumulated over the past century, and especially over the last 50 years indicates that the Alto-Xinguanos share a common perception of their bodies, phases of physical and social development, community and inter-community ritual, sickness and curing, and cosmology (Basso, 1973; Dole, 1973; Gregor, 1979; Menget, 1981; Seeger, et al., 1979; Villas Boas, 1976; and Viveiros de Castro, 1979).

The Nafuqua, like other groups in the Alto Xingu, perceive body emissions as being potentially dangerous. Blood, especially menstrual blood or blood from child birth, is particularly problematic. For example, when a village woman gave birth, the researcher found other Nafuqua women willing to instruct her in facilitating the delivery of the child. However, no one would touch the woman in labor or the infant because the body secretions would endanger the individual in question. When the researcher asked if the blood would also harm her, the Nafuqua women responded that it would not because she was not Indian.

Phases of development among the Nafuqua are marked in the same way as they are in the general area. For example, hair cutting, scarification, puberty seclusions, and earpiercing figure heavily into social recognition of individual status changes. However, once again, flexibility characterizes this perceptual system. One young girl was in seclusion for only a few weeks before her frequent complaining convinced her parents that she

could prematurely be released into normal village life once again. At the same time, a young man was undergoing a rather rigorous puberty seclusion. He had been confined for over four months and his father did not foresee his release for several more months. If the youth left the seclusion area or behaved inappropriately, his father severely beat him. The degree to which the individual is encouraged or forced to submit to passage rites, and the severity of these rites themselves are subject to modification.

The Nafuqua participate in the same regional rituals as do other groups in the area. The javari, quarup, and wrestling competitions are ritual commemorations as well as an important aspect of inter-village relations. Nafuqua men regularly practice wrestling and javelin-throwing in order to excel at these meets. However, ritual participation is affected by political relations. During the 1977 dry season, a wrestling competition at the Kalapalo village took place. Only one Nafuqua participated in that meet due to the strained relations between the two groups. The rest of the village seemed unenthusiastic about attending the event.

Shamans or curers practice in all Alto-Xingu villages. Three older shamans are active in the Nafuqua village. They cure by removing pathogenic objects from their patients' bodies. Removal by sucking and massaging is effected. Tobacco smoke and chanting are also integral parts of the curing process. The shamans not only provide important health services but they also wield political power. Nafuqua shamans are divided on the issue of inter-ethnic contact. Two men prefer to limit the amount of interaction between Brazilians and the people of their village. The other man encourages his kinsmen to learn Portuguese and to visit the Posto as frequently as possible. The problem of power occupies a central position in the conflict.

Prior to the arrival of Brazilian officials in the area, shamans effectively influenced their populations. Subsistence patterns, inter-village politics, rituals, and inter-personal relations were subject to their manipulation. However, the constant presence of the non-Indians in the area coupled with their economic and medical leverage in the form of trade goods and medicines have diminished the shaman's power. Some men like the two Nafuqua shamans described above follow an isolationist policy. They advise withdrawal into distant areas hoping to be able to retain some control if they can only minimize contact between the two groups. Other men attempt to channel the non-Indian's power through their own institutions so that they can control it to some extent.

A great deal of past research done on ideology in the Alto-Xingu focuses upon either the relationship between the Indian's social and physical perceptions or upon socio-religious institutions which facilitate inter-personal and inter-group contact. This research demonstrates the important role that ideology plays in the peaceful coexistence of a large number of groups in a relatively small area. Shared perceptual categories enable these people to live together and to interact in a productive manner. Furthermore, aggressive behaviors are carefully channeled through institutions such as witchcraft. Although individual murders may result in extreme cases from witchcraft accusations, violence such as non-Indians know it, or even raiding such as is found in other groups such as the Yanomamo Indians on the Venezuelan-Brazilian border, does not exist.

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