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CEDI - P. I. B.
DATA 08/09/86
COD. YA D73

Yanomamo regional variation

by Jeremy Narby

Since 1964 Napoleon Chagnon has been conducting extensive ethnographic research among a Venezuelan section of the Yanomamo[1] tribe. His work has become widely known in the circles of academic anthropology and the Yanomamo, in the words of Morton Fried, are "virtually in a class by themselves in the didactic literature of ethnography."[2]

Chagnon's work has been criticized by anthropologists on more than one count. My intention in this paper, however, is not to criticize his work; rather I intend primarily to show that "The Yanomamo" who emerge from his books, articles and films are not as monolithic as they might seem, and that their way of life varies considerably from one group to another across space and time.

In the pages that follow I do not intend to review Chagnon's work; rather, I will use his work in conjunction with the less-known works of Judith Shapiro and of William J. Smole in an attempt to show regional variation across the vast territory inhabited by the Yanomamo. I will focus mainly on the co-variation of three factors: production, marriage and trade. I will connect these three factors by using a theoretical framework provided by Emmanuel Terray. This framework emphasizes the ways in which different modes of production can co-exist within a given locale and in which one mode of production can be "dominant" over another. I will show how this dominance varies from one place to another within Yanomamo territory. The fact that these places are connected in time and space through migration and trade does not mean that the variation, that I will establish, merely consists in the differences that one would expect

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to find in different places; rather, it means that this variation obtains within a coherent, albeit loosely documented system. This variation will lead us to rethink some of the causal connections used by Chagnon in his explanations of Yanomamo violence.

I start this essay by situating the Yanomamo geographically and by describing the contours of ecological and linguistic variation within Yanomamo country. I go on to consider the question of how to understand regional variation in the territory inhabited by the Yanomamo. After examining problems in the received view of this regional variation, I propose an alternative model for understanding it. This model centers on the interlinked variations in trade, marriage, and production. My model combines theoretical insights about production, provided by Terray (1972), and about gender and marriage systems, provided by Collier and Rosaldo (1981).

The Yanomamo live in the dense forest region of Southern Venezuela and in the adjacent area of Northern Brazil. Their territory is more or less contained between four degrees north and the equator on the one hand and sixty two degrees east and sixty six degrees west on the other. Within this territory of approximately 100,000 square miles, two major habitat subtypes are distinguishable: riverine lowlands and tropical highlands (see map 1). The natural vegetative cover of the Yanomamo habitat is tropical rainforest.

The Yanomamo population is unevenly distributed. Their vast territory contains extensive areas that are virtually empty. These uninhabited areas are usually found in the highest regions of the highlands and in the hot, extensive swamps of the lowlands. Until recently Yanomamo have

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shunned the areas immediately adjacent to the broad rivers of the lowlands.

Within the overall Yanomamo area one can distinguish four distinct, though closely related, languages. They are spoken by four territorially coherent sub-groups (see map 2). Although precise population figures for the Yanomamo do not exist, it is estimated that there are at least eight thousand Yanomamo speakers in Venezuela and probably a slightly smaller number in Brazil, for a total of about fifteen thousand people.

Map 2 also indicates the various locations in which the ethnographers considered in this paper conducted their fieldwork. Napoleon Chagnon himself conducted his research in the lowland area at the confluence of the Mavaca and Orinoco rivers. His work focuses on two different groups of Yanomamo; his early work was done among the Waika-speaking Yanomamo who live along the banks of the Orinoco. Ecological evidence idicates that such riverine settlement is a recent phenomenon (see map 3). His later work was done among the Shamateri-speaking Yanomamo, who also live in the Orinoco lowlands, but who are settled at a distance removed from the major rivers. He considers the Shamateri to be the purest examples of Yanomamo culture.

William J. Smole, author of The Yanomama Indians: A Cultural Geography, did his work in the Parima highlands. Most of this work was done in 1970. He explores the relationship between geographical and cultural variation and he focuses his cultural investigations on means of subsistence. He sees the Yanomamo as living in stable adaptation with their traditional environment, in which violence plays a small part. However, when the Yanomamo moved to pioneer areas along the lowland rivers, he suggests that violence became more prominent.

Judith Shapiro did most of her research on Sex Roles and Social Structure

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in the Brazilian highlands. This research was conducted during 1967 and 1968; it speaks more particularly to the ongoing debates on gender within feminist anthropology. She agrees with Chagnon that violence is a significant feature of Yanomamo life and she focuses on its effects on gender relationships.

Chagnon and Shapiro approach the geography of Yanomamo territory with a similar center/periphery model. Chagnon is the first person to define the lowland area in which he conducted his research as the cultural and geographic center of Yanomamo country. Chagnon tells us a myth that is told in the "center" of the tribal area, which holds that the blood of the Moon fell to earth in the vicinity of a mountain at the headwaters of the Orinoco River, approximately at the center of the tribe. This blood changed into Yanomamo, all of whom were males. The people born in blood were all exceedingly fierce and waged constant war with each other. Warfare was most intense in the area where blood fell directly on the earth; as it thinned out and mixed with water, it created Yanomamo at the periphery who were not so fierce as those generated from pure blood.[3]

This myth, Chagnon tells us, explains why warfare is most intense at the center of Yanomamo country: "their explanation for this [regional] variation [of warfare] is mythological, but fits the facts of the ethnographic distribution very accurately."[4] He goes on to describe the way in which the Shamateri sub-section of the tribe, the fiercest among the Yanomamo, originated at the headwaters of the Orinoco -- where "the blood spilled" -- and has been spreading out ever since. Chagnon tells us: "Should this pattern continue, then the tribal "center" would eventually become more and more "Shamateri"-like and whatever biological or cultural peculiarities they possessed intially would eventually become

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tribal characteristics."[5] It seems as though Chagnon takes the myth of the Moon's blood literally, and assumes that the true nature of the Yanomamo tribe is fierce and lies at the center of his area of research.

When I consider Chagnon's evidence later in this paper, I focus essentially on his Shamateri material. A fact that is crucial to my argument is that the Shamateri, unlike their Waika-speaking neighbors, do not have direct access to western trade goods.

Shapiro accepts Chagnon's center/periphery model and its social co-variables; she tells us:

> The picture which has emerged from ethnographic research carried out in the heart of Yanomama land is one dominated by warfare and male aggressiveness. The situation is somewhat different in those areas where I did my own work particularly in the Catrimani region which lies at the outer fringe of Yanomama-inhabited territory. It has been noted above that villages in these less central areas tend to be smaller, settlement patterns sparser and intergroup relations more stable than among the Yanomama of southeastern Venezuela. The incidence of warfare is lower and the male ethos of fierceness less developed. These differences in turn affect relationships between the sexes and patterns of intra-sexual association.[6]

Smole's study of the Parima highlands, however, challenges this model; he provides convincing evidence -- existence of human-made savannas and old gardens in the highlands, Yanomamo ignorance of river navigation in the lowlands -- that the Parima highlands are the historically longest settled area of Yanomamo country, and that the lowlands are the newly pioneered "periphery". Indeed Smole tells us:

> The second, more significant observation suggests that Yanomamo territory has a core, or heartland, different from the periphery. If there is a difference, it would appear to be that the Yanomam in the isolated highlands are in their traditional, preferred habitat, at least partially insulated from the culture shock experienced by their fellows who are on the periphery.[7]

Maps 2 shows that Smole's area of concern lies between Chagnon's and Shapiro's and his evidence therefore challenges the spatial continuum

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implied by their center/periphery model. This means that there are certain discontinuities within Yanomamo territory which Chagnon and Shapiro's model does not account for. The point of this paper is to provide an alternative model that is sensitive to these discontinuities.

Trade, production and marriage

I begin the construction of my model with a factor, the significance of which all three authors affirm: trading contacts with westerners. During the last twenty five years, westerners, mainly missionaries, have introduced a variety of steel implements (axes, machetes and knives), aluminium kettles, fish hooks and nylon cord to the Yanomamo. These new tools are gradually replacing the traditional stone tools and pottery. The gradualness of this process is reinforced by the fact that western trade goods are only directly available to Yanomamo at positions in Yanomamo territory where missions have decided to settle. These missions tend to settle in areas of easy access (i.e., along the large lowland rivers).

Smole tells us that, although the Yanomamo are not originally a lowland riverine people, "certain Yanomama groups...since the 1950s...began to move down into the lowlands in significant numbers."[8] Furthermore, he tells us that:" The Yanoama who move are frequently attracted by contact with outsiders, because they want trade goods, medicine and safety from their Yanoama enemies that such contact can provide."[9] (my emphasis).

I will return to the significance of these migrations from the highlands to the lowlands at a later stage in this paper. The point here is that there are two ways for Yanomamo to obtain western trade goods. They can either move close to a western settlement -- a mission or an anthropologist's fieldsite (Chagnon tells us that he personally distributed

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3000 machetes during his first period of fieldwork) -- and thereby obtain them directly or they can acquire them indirectly by trading with other Yanomamo. Chagnon tells us, referring to a Waika-speaking lowland group in 1964, that:" Kaobawa's group has access to aluminium pots now and uses them extensively in food preparations. Most Yanomamo groups still use crude clay pots, although these are being rapidly replaced by aluminium ware, which is traded inland to the more remote villages."[10]

By using the theoretical framework put forth by Emmanuel Terray,[11] I will show how these two different kinds of trade -- direct and indirect -- influence Yanomamo production and how, in turn, changes in production work together with changes in the marriage system. Before I do this however, I consider the nature of Terray's framework.

In his 1969 essay Terray's central purpose is to define the concept "mode of production," thereby presenting a scheme with which to analyze non-capitalist societies. For him, a mode of production is a three-part system consisting of an economic base, a juridico-political superstructure and an ideological superstructure. The economic base is "in the final analysis" the determining factor within this system and is a combination of a system of productive forces and a system of relations of production.

Productive forces and relations of production do not relate to two separate categories of "things"; rather, they are two aspects of one single "reality." The concept of productive forces refers to the involvement of the various factors that interact in the production process -- labour power and the subject and means of labour -- in definite technical relations among themselves. The concept of relations of production refers to the definite social relations in which these factors are involved, relations that constitute the structure of the process of

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production. The productive forces and relations of production are "two conjoint forms of one and the same process, bringing the same factors into play."[12] They are linked to each other in a specific manner within the productive process, and this establishes the identity of a mode of production. More specifically, because the instruments of labor used in "primitive" socio-economic formations are rudimentary and thus available to all, their control is irrelevant and the various labor proceses -- or forms of cooperation -- carried out within a given socioeconomic formation are the key point at which the two systems of productive forces and of relations of production are articulated (in the case of the Yanomamo, where western "instruments of labor" are neither rudimentary nor available to all, I will consider control of these tools as well as the various labor processes in my attempt to identify the various modes of production).

Terray goes on to argue that a given socio-economic formation can contain more than one mode of production and that a given mode of production is made up of one or more modes of material appropriation in combination with a political and ideological superstructure. A mode of material appropriation is, in practical terms, the economic base of the given mode of production and consists in a production unit, "the dimensions and structure (of which) are determined both by the forces of production and the relations of production."[13] The latter two, as we have seen, are articulated by the form of cooperation that links them (-- and, in the Yanomamo case, by control of western instruments of labor). This means that "(F)rom the point of view of the labor force, a production unit is defined by the form of cooperation on which it is based."[14] If a mode of production contains more than one mode of material appropriation, it is the combination of these modes of material appropriation that will

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constitute the economic base.

Terray contends that social formations operate according to a "complex causality," whereby "concrete social relations" are conditioned not only by the economic base but also by politics and ideology. Furthermore, since social formations can contain more than one mode of production, the "social relation" in question may be conditioned by many economic bases, or by many distinct ideologies.

Although complex causality operates in capitalist as well as non-capitalist societies, Terray draws a critical distinction between the two. In the latter an "element" stands between the social formation and the causal influences of the "three phases." This "element" -- kinship in Yanomamo society -- can be understood as the idiom through which all "social relations" are expressed. Since the "element" embodies the three-fold causality, the three phases tend to be relatively well-integrated. This aspect of Terray's scheme contains two mandates for the case of the Yanomamo. We are directed first, to look beyond the economic base to find the "element" through which "social relations" are expressed; and second, to trace the changes of the nature of this "element" as the economic forces, that determine Yanomamo society, change.

Terray confronts the issue of change by introducing the concept of dominance of one mode of production by another. This dominance is achieved at all three levels: economically, politically and ideologically. Here we find an imprecision in Terray's scheme: he leaves the judgment of dominance to qualitative assessment. If the assessment is inconclusive, the result is "cross-dominance." This notion is a virtual resignation to the complexity of the relationship. Despite this deficiency, Terray's concern with dominance will be a crucial starting point for understanding

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regional variation in Yanomamo society.

In his self-critical piece of 1977, Terray gives us a more precise definition of the domination of one mode of production by another. He tells us:

> The domination of one mode of production by another exists when the functioning of the former is subjected to the requirements for reproduction of the latter. In the absence of a concept of reproduction, it is impossible to conceptualize the dominance of one mode of production within a social formation.[15]

By "reproduction" Terray means the renewal of the relations of production and the renewal of the difficulties and antagonisms inherent in it. In the case of the Yanomamo the marriage system is central to the constitution and to the reproduction of the relations of production over time, because it articulates the allocation of the labor of both young men and women, it determines residence, it helps recreate the gender division of labor and it enforces male ownership of the productive forces.

I start my analysis of the Yanomamo, then, with two suggestions, that access, and means of access, to western trade goods vary across Yanomamo territory and that these different forms of trade relations can bring about changes in the realm of local relations of production. This is why using Terray's framework is important in understanding regional variation.

My hypothesis is that, by using Terray's model of two interacting modes of production, one can focus on the question of dominance of one mode by another, that this dominance is a crucial issue in understanding Yanomamo social formations, and that it can help explain regional variation. I argue that Yanomamo social formations can be characterized by two modes of production, the "cooperative hunting-gathering mode" and the "individual gardening-hunting mode;" I argue further that the relationship of these

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two modes differs in different areas and that this variation can best be understood by examining the marriage system and the ways in which it differs in its allocation of labor.

My analysis begins with an examination of the nature of production and of the relationship between the modes of production in my three areas of concern. This examination will include a survey of the nature of locally-available technology. I conclude by discussing the relationship between relations of production and trade in these three areas, and by showing how this relationship co-varies with changes in the marriage system.

Spatial variation in the relationship between modes of production

1. The lowlands

Chagnon tells us that in the lowlands, tools are very simple but that a certain amount of specialization in tool production occurs; this specialization is related to the development of political alliances.[16] He says that gardening is presently a task much less arduous than in the days when steel tools were not available. "Today, however, steel tools are quite common, being provided by several missionaries who have recently located posts at a number of locations in Yanomamo territory. The tools that they give to their local people are eventually traded inland to more remote villages so that all the Yanomamo, even those who have not yet had any direct contact with outsiders, now have steel tools."[17]

Food production in the lowlands is based on two forms of relations of production: individual and "cooperative." All individual men own gardens, in which they single-handedly cultivate plantains, some sweet manioc, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, tobacco and cotton. Individual men own their own hunting tools (women are not allowed to own hunting tools) and they occasionally hunt by themselves in the vicinity of their village.

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Women gather firewood and do the majority of the cooking for the "nuclear family" unit. Both men and women, during their perambulations in the forest, will gather whatever foodstuffs they can (grubs, honey, wild fruit etc.). Gardening, however, seems to be, above and beyond hunting and gathering, the most important productive activity; indeed, Chagnon tells us that "(P)erhaps 85% or more of the diet consists of domesticaated rather than wild foods -- plantains are by far the most important food in the diet."[18] In Terray's terms one would say that the economics of the "individual gardening-hunting mode of production" consists in three separate modes of material appropriation, the most important of which is gardening.

"Cooperative" relations of production in the lowlands centers around the headmen. I say "cooperative" but coercive might be a more appropriate word. Nevertheless, one finds both "cooperative" gardening and "cooperative" hunting. Of the former Chagnon tells us: "The headman of the village generally has the largest garden as he must produce larger quantities of food; he is obliged to give them away at feasts. He can frequently enlist the aid of other men to help him make a large garden."[19]

"Cooperative" hunting is also a question of the headman "enlisting the help" of other, usually younger, men in order to provide food for feasts. Chagnon tells of the organization of a particular feast for which...

> ...Kaobawa [the headman] and a few of the older men commissioned a hunting party comprised of young men, several of whom were Kaobawa's brothers, whose responsibility would be to obtain a large quantity of fresh meat to give to the visitors on the day after the feast. Most of them were reluctant to go, as their feet were still sore from the trip to the Shamateri village. A few of them claimed to be sick and managed to escape recruitment into the hunting party in this way (my emphasis)."[20]

An indication of the importance of this "cooperative" brand of

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production is the fact that Chagnon tells us that "(G)ame animals are not abundant and an area is rapidly hunted out, so that a group must keep constantly on the move,"[21] and that, although the bulk of their diet comes from gardening, "the Yanomamo spend almost as much time hunting as they do gardening..."[22] This, of course, could merely be attributed to Yanomamo appreciation of meat, but the importance and frequency of feasting and alliances, which we will come to, make it clear that the "cooperative hunting-gardening mode of production" plays an important if not dominant role in the lowlands.

2. The highlands

Smole tells us that steel tools first reached the highlands through trade with other Indian groups in the 1920s and that they have become increasingly widely diffused in the last two decades.[23] Men own all the traditional hunting and cooking gear (bows, arrows, arrowpoints, quivers, and cooking pots) as well as all the steel tools (machetes, axes and knives). Women own calabashes for water, smaller gourd utensils, baskets, cotton spinning gear and straps for carrying babies.

The new technology has had little effect on the number of acres that people clear for their gardens; it seems merely to have facilitated the task of the men who do the clearing.[24] Gardening and hunting are, as in the lowlands, male dominated activities. Unlike in the lowlands, however, women are involved to a certain extent with harvesting. Individual men[25] own their own gardens -- in fact, when a man dies the growing plants of his gardens are destroyed[26] -- in which the principal crops are plantains and sweet manioc. Smole tells us that the plantain is the most "prestigious" of all plants by far and that it provides up to 70% of the total caloric intake of the population.[27] Certain plants which do not appeal to the

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Yanomamo and which are therefore considered "useless", such as tomatoes, squash and hybrid corn, are grown to be exchanged with missionaries, who "have some interest in obtaining squash and tomatoes,"[28] for steel tools. This kind of bartering is done on an individual basis.

In addition Smole tells us that "one of the clearest indicators of acculturation is a prevalence of bitter manioc in Yanoama gardens."[29] The importance of this statement will become clear when we turn to Judith Shapiro's area. For now it is sufficient to note that bitter manioc is not an important crop in the highlands.

As in the lowlands, hunting and gathering complement gardening. The latter remains the central productive activity, however; centrality is defined in relation to both labor time and caloric production.

Hunting is a strictly male activity and it is usually carried out in hunting parties from three to twelve men. "In theory the man who kills the animal owns it, and he will carry it home. However this is not always practicable, since several men might have participated in the kill, or the animal might be a large tapir that is too heavy for one man to carry. In such cases, the owner, or owners, divides it up as he chooses."[30]

Brief hunting trips are undertaken by small groups of kinsmen: however, "(T)hese brief hunts provide little more than occasional meat for individual households."[31] Hunting parties are only expressly constituted for the purpose of providing meals for the reajo, a mortuary ceremony. Smole does not specify what the other sources of food are for these ceremonies, but it is clear that the latter are quite distinct from the feasts of the lowlands, if only because they occur much less frequently (i.e., when someone dies).

To conclude, Smole tells us: "economically, hunting is entirely

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subordinated to both horticulture and collecting. It is not unusual for days on end to pass during which no men from a shabono are hunting, and when little or no meat is being eaten."[32] In further contrast to the lowlands, Yanomamo villages will not move to new areas once on old one is hunted out. Instead they will stay put and merely send hunting parties further afield.

Clearly the "individual gardening-hunting mode of production" not only insures the majority of the total production output in the highland; it monopolizes most of people's labor time. I include the production of vegetables for barter in this mode. The "cooperative hunting-gardening mode of production" operates mainly at the secondary level of hunting and, more particularly, of cooperative hunting for the infrequent mortuary ritual. In contrast to the lowlands, this form of cooperative activity does not take on the coercive aspect that "cooperation" did in the lowlands; indeed, Smole reports no cases of Yanomamo men complaining of "sore feet" before a cooperative hunt.

3. The "periphery"

The area in which Shapiro did her initial research, the middle Catrimani region, "lies at the very outskirts of Yanomamo-inhabited territory."[33] This area presents an interesting twist for the "modes of production hypothesis": indeed, one of the two villages in which she resided, Wkata?ut'eri, was inhabited by people who had abandoned their former inland location at Himara?amohipit'eri in order to live next to the mission. The latter employed the men of the village of clearing and maintaining the mission airstrip. The wages they received for their labor went towards the purchase (from the mission) of the usual western trade goods. Shapiro tells us: "Members of all these local groups were to

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be found in the mission village at various points in my stay there since they were eager to obtain axes, machetes, matches and other items with which the priest paid for their labor."[34] This situation of wage labor also obtained at Surucucu, Shapiro's second fieldsite, which is located in a more mountainous area of the same region: "Once again, the most important work revolves around the airstrip...(I)n addition to performing this labor, Yanomamo also do a number of old jobs around the station and sell garden produce and artifacts to the mission."[35]

The most noticeable effect that this change in the productive process has had is that one finds women (who do not work clearing airstrips) in charge of an important part of food production: the growing, harvesting and preparation of bitter manioc and of other root crops. It is interesting at this point to remember that Smole said that the cultivation of bitter manioc was "one of the clearest indicators of acculturation." Men still plant plantains, but both men and women harvest them. Shapiro tells us that women's control of root crops is such that men, as a rule, do not grow them, and that "young unmarried men, and men in the initial stages of marriage, often have gardens that contain only plantains, bananas, tobacco and bamboo, but no manioc, sweet potatoes or taro."[36]

The processing of manioc, which is a long and tedious process, is a specifically female task. Hunting, meanwhile, is a specifically male task. In considering all these various productive activities, Shapiro tell us one thing of relevance to my hypothesis, namely that" (T)he various activities mentioned so far and which go to make up the daily round of Yanomama life are for the most part carried out in a highly individualized manner. This is true of both men's work and women's work. Men usually go out singly to hunt, work in their respective gardens, or

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pay an informal visit to a neighboring village. (my emphases)."[37]
It seems, then, that the "cooperative hunting-gardening mode of production" has all but disappeared; even hunting, which, in both lowlands and highlands, is performed at least in part cooperatively, is an individual activity in this "peripheral" area. The "individual gardening-hunting mode of production," which co-exists with the new "wage-labor mode of production," indeed which supports this new mode of production with the products of subsistence, is characterized by the fact that women have taken over a large sector of production. This latter occurrence can be understood as a necessary response to the fact that men have vacated that sector of production in favor of wage labor. Indeed, Shapiro notes that men are willing to drop work necessary for both shabono projects such as house building and individual needs such as garden clearing in order to take advantage of opportunities for wage labor.[38] The conditions of wage-labor themselves augment the needs of cash income: missionaries require workers to wear western clothes for example. Men's abilities to maintain flexible schedules and to respond to sporadic wage opportunities put an increasing burden of the subsistence sector on women's labor.

Trade

These spatial variations in production gain significance when viewed in the context of varying trade relationships in different sectors of Yanomamo country. In Shapiro's area, western trade goods are obtained directly by men through wage-labor. In the highlands, trade goods are bartered for garden-grown goods. Obtaining trade goods does not involve the sale of labor in the highlands. In the lowlands, by contrast, and more particularly among the Shamateri sub-section of the tribe, "the fiercest among the Yanomamo" (and thus, according to Chagnon's understanding

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of things, the "purest" Yanomamo), there is little direct contact with source of western trade goods. The latter are obtained at feasts, during which they are exchanged between villages for locally-produced goods in long local cycles of reciprocity.

These differences in trade influence local production in different ways. We have already seen in Shapiro's area that the fact that men "trade" their labor for trade goods means that the sexual division of labor within the subsistence sector of the economy is radically altered. In Smole's highland area, on the other hand, it seems that the bartering of vegetables for tools only means that male gardeners grow plants, that they otherwise consider to be "useless", for exchange. In other words, the presence of barter merely reinforces the "individual gardening-hunting mode of production." Finally, the Shamateri, because they cannot obtain western tools directly, are dependent on feasts for their acquisition. This economic importance of feasts supports their political importance -- which is to create alliances -- and it helps explain the dominance of the "cooperative hunting-gardening mode of production."

The relationship between production and trade illuminates the systematic nature of regional variation in Yanomamo country. Unlike Chagnon's model which explains regional variation in terms of a "pure" isolated center, the social forms of which are watered down as they approach an acculturated periphery, my approach locates the Yanomamo in a wider regional system in which Yanomamo social life depends on interaction with non-Yanomamo. The terms "center" and "periphery" have been misused in Chagnon's model: they conflate a genometrical definition, according to which any area would have a center and a periphery, with a political and economic definition of what center and periphery might mean. My

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economic and political analysis does not privilege the Shamateri as the "purest" among all Yanomamo. In this analysis, all of Yanomamo territory is a distant periphery to national and world centers -- where the machetes and missionaries come from. Variation in Yanomamo country is understood, then, as a varied adaption to this larger system, which itself depends on regional relations to arteries of trade, missionization etc.

Marriage

Trade, as shown in the last section, has a direct influence on production. A fuller analysis of this influence shows that it is articulated through the system of marriage arrangements; the latter organize the allocation of labor. Terray himself suggests this direction of analysis, when he notes that one mode of production dominates another when the functioning of the latter is subjected to the requirements for reproduction of the former. While he concedes this, his work has not followed up the significance of marriage in the allocation of labor. Claude Meillassoux has done this kind of analysis in his work on lineage modes of production; Collier and Rosaldo have taken Meillassoux's work and expanded it in new directions in their work on "simple" societies, like the Yanomamo.

Marriage has received considerable attention as a central institution of Yanomamo society in the classical anthropological literature. Marriage among the Yanomamo never involves bridewealth; rather, it is based on relationships between men which seem to take on the form of sister exchange. Brideservice is a central part of these relationships. Marriage arrangements are central to settlement patterns across the entire Yanomamo territory, and are, therefore, also central to village political relations.

The terms I use in the above two paragraphs are very general. A

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closer examination of the three areas on which this paper has focused reveals significant regional variation. Even though the authors from whom I draw my data do not concentrate on the specific relationship between marriage arrangements and politics, it is possible to extract from their accounts various implications concerning this relationship.

In his classical accounts of Yanomamo society, Chagnon identifies lineages as exchanging women. These exchanges are central to Shamateri politics and to the construction of male communities within Shamateri villages; they privilege headmen, by turning younger men and women into their dependents, and they also privilege large descent groups over small descent groups, as the latter are forced into providing women to the former in the name of alliances.

One finds a similar structure of marriage arrangements in Smole's highlands. The implications of his account, however, suggest that the basis of communities does not consist in groups of men exchanging women, but in groups of siblings staying together.

In Shapiro's area, the group disposal of unmarried women no longer exists. Individual relations between brothers-in-law emerge as the central feature of social organization. This organization is, in a sense, more "egalitarian." The political importance of women varies in each of the three areas: in Chagnon's area, women are important as daughters, in Smole's area they are important as sisters, and in Shapiro's area they are important as wives.

Chagnon identifies the groups of men who exchange women as lineages. This means that women do not belong to lineages -- according to Chagnon -- and this is borne out by his kinship diagrams, which omit women, "for simplicity's sake." I suggest that a "lineage," or a "descent group" is

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actually a political group acknowledging a single leader -- rather than a homogeneous kinship group. Women become dependents on men, particularly through marriage. I would argue that men also become dependents, of other men, through marriage, as juniors performing brideservice for headmen of other "lineages." As junior agnates in their own "lineages," they also start from a position of dependence. Dual organization, which characterizes Yanomamo villages, reinforces the dependence of juniors on village headman because it adds the allegiance of junior males in brideservice to the allegiance of junior agnates in a single village social system.

Marriage, therefore, organizes the dependence of both women and young men and the allocation of their labor in different ways. Headmen are privileged by this marriage system as they control the labor of their dependents. This privilege manifests itself in headmen's unique access to polygyny and incest. Headmen, who set up feasts, acquire power and goods from these occasions, which are thus not just reciprocal exchanges between groups. I have shown that trade supports the political aspects of feasts. Now it is also clear that the importance of feasts is linked to the control of labor through the marriage system.

Marriage, in Smole's area, bears strong resemblances to marriage in Chagnon's area. However, Smole's account of marriage organization is an interesting reversal of Chagnon's; while the latter shows that a village is composed of 2 lineages that exchange women, Smole discusses marriage strategies in a way that sees siblings as trying to stay together in order to form the basis of a community. It is likely that both Chagnon and Smole followed their informants' interpretations of marriage strategies. These different interpretations point particularly to differing local

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emphases on endogamy and exogamy; in terms of both kinship and shabono, all arrangements occur. In Chagnon's area, groups of men claim women as pawns through kinship, while in Smole's area the emphasis on exchange of women is downplayed; in this area, women are less regarded as "goods" to be exchanged, and less violence against women occurs. Siblings try to stay together in order to form communities that define themselves in relation to old gardens.[39] This is understood not as an exchange of women, but as an attempt to draw them into the community. The point, therefore, is not to get rid of sisters, but to hold on to them. In Smole's area, there is no communal control of women; the point of brideservice, in this area, is to use the garden labor of sons-in-law (unlike in Chagnon's area, where the point is for headmen to use the labor of juniors). Marriage, which helps sibling unity, helps communities define themselves in relation to garden areas -- which are bigger than in the lowlands and thus need to have more clearly defined ownership.

Finally, in Shapiro's area, one finds individual arrangements like in Smole's highlands. This system is more egalitarian than the Shamateri system, because a lot of people have a lot of brothers-in-law. Shapiro reports that even male outsiders like her American research assistant are called "brother-in-law."

Conclusion

The Yanommo are well-known for their "fierceness" and for their violence. This analysis not only changes the way one understands this violence, it also shows how violence varies in different areas. Chagnon understood the Yanomamo sub-group among whom he conducted his research to be the fiercest and purest Yanomamo. Shapiro subcribed to this model, as

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she saw herself to be working among a peripheral group of Yanomamo, who constituted a "diluted" version of the pure and violent Yanomamo. Instead of this model, I would say that one finds different configurations of violence in different areas, and that these configurations are based on differences in trade, relations of production and marriage arrangements. In an earlier paper[40] I discussed how violence and marriage must be considered in reference to specific, rather than universal, politics. That discussion owed much to the theoretical framework put forth by Colier and Rosaldo (1981). In this paper, I have revised that discussion to see how production, trade, marriage arrangements and politics work together in different ways in different places.

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NOTES

[1]The Yanomamo are also referred to as the Yanoama, Shiriana, Xiriana and Waika.

[2]Chagnon 1974, preface.

[3]See Chagnon 1968 pp. 126-127.

[4]*ibid*. p. 126.

[5]Chagnon 1974 p. 78.

[6]Shapiro 1972 p. 170.

[7]Smole 1976 p. 47.

[8]*ibid*. p. 43.

[9]*ibid*. p. 51.

[10]Chagnon 1977 p. 108.

[11]See Terray 1972 and 1977.

[12]Terray 1972 p. 99.

[13]*ibid*. p. 101.

[14]*ibid*.

[15]Terray 1977 p. 34.

[16]See Chagnon 1977 p. 21.

[17]*ibid*. p. 34.

[18]*ibid*. p. 33.

[19]*ibid*. p. 34.

[20]*ibid*. p. 105.

[21]*ibid*. p. 33.

[22]*ibid*.

[23]See Smole 1976 p. 102.

[24]See *ibid*. p. 30.

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[25]See *ibid*. p. 141.

[26]See *ibid*. p. 191.

[27]See *ibid*. p. 117.

[28]*ibid*. p. 126.

[29]*ibid*. p. 103.

[30]*ibid*. p. 183.

[31]*ibid*. p. 175.

[32]*ibid*.

[33]Shapiro 1972 pp. 24-25.

[34]*ibid*. p. 29.

[35]*ibid*. p. 42.

[36]*ibid*. p. 129.

[37]*ibid*. p. 130-131.

[38]See *ibid*. p. 30.

[39]See Smole 1976 pp. 94-95.

[40]See Narby 1983.

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Map 1 The two major Yanomamo habitat subtypes.

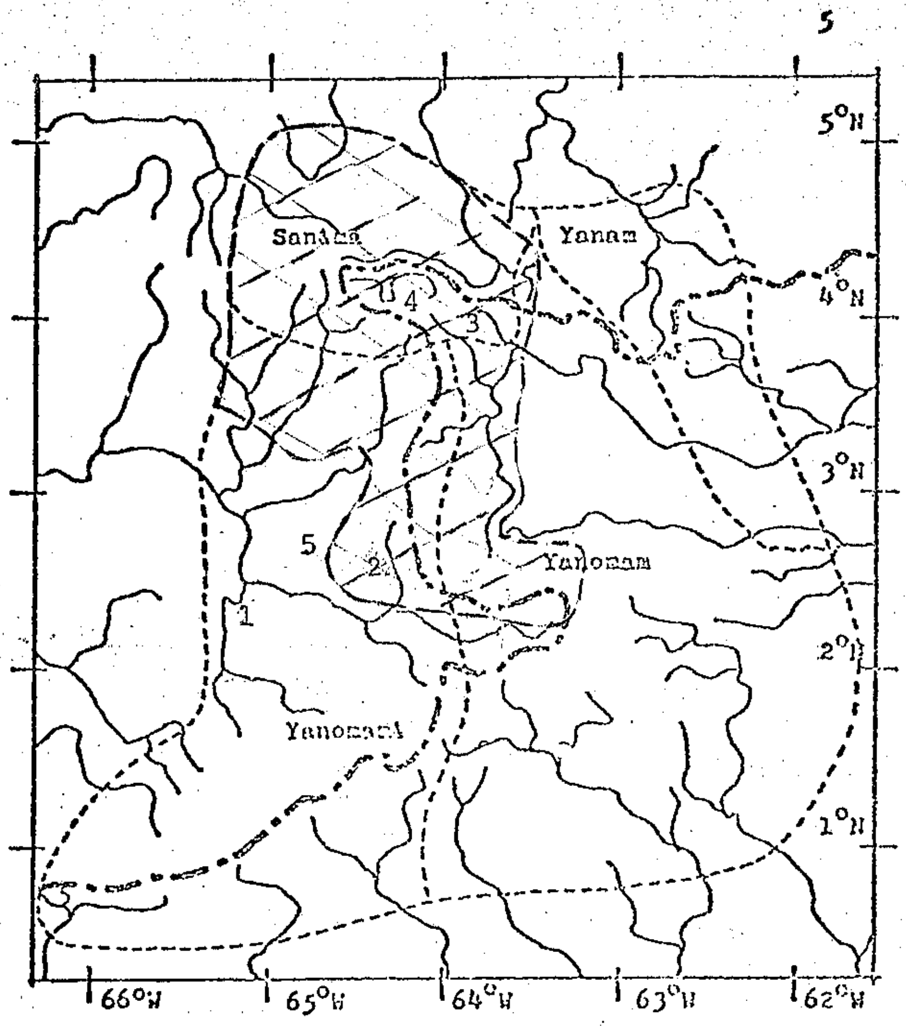
[hatched box] = Highlands, as defined by the 1,000 ft contour.

[blank box] = Lowlands.

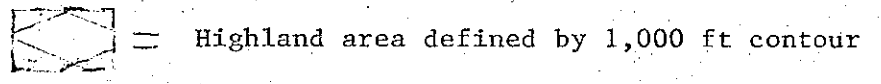
Source: William J. Smole 1976

Map 2

The Four Yanomamo Language Areas
and the Research Sites of Yanomamo Ethnographers



1. Chagnon
2. Smole
3. Shapiro
4. Taylor
5. Lizot



Source: Kenneth Taylor 1972.

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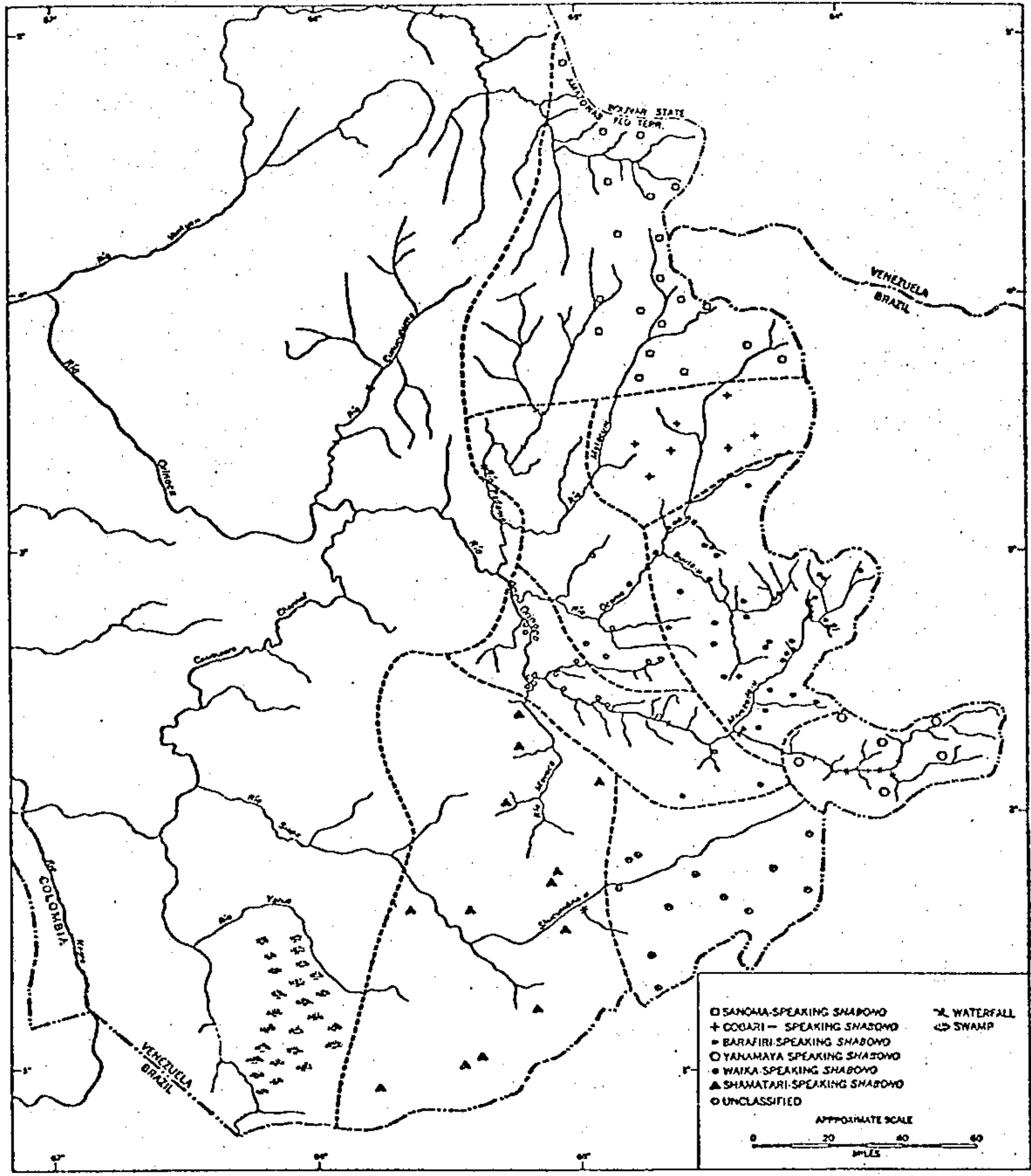

Map 3: Location of Yanomamo tribal sub-sections.

Source: Smole (1976:53).