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SPACE-TIME TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE UPPER XINGU AND UPPER RIO NEGRO[1]

I. INTRODUCTION

The multi-ethnic and multilingual complexes of the Rio Negro and the Upper Xingu stand out from the Amazonian landscape for some common characteristics that frequently emerge in the ethnographies. Consider, for instance, their (non-trivial) ideas about descent, the centrality of hierarchy in social organization and ritual activities, or the unequal distribution of productive and ritual specialties and esoteric knowledge. More importantly: (a) their common propensity to form relatively peaceful and open-ended social systems based on the combination of a peculiar type of political leadership with a stress on ritual and material exchange; (b) their common emphasis on conventional codes of speech, communication, use of ritual space and inter-personal relations. These characteristics of both areas as social systems eschew facile classifications based on 'cultural traits', allowing us to approach these complexes as counterparts to or consequences of shared ideas of humanity which we will discuss in this article. The image that emerges in each case is not easily aligned, in any simple way, with descriptions from other parts of Amazonia, where the salience of the idiom of affinity, equality and autonomy predominate. What, if any, is the specificity of these multi-ethnic networks?

With these questions in mind, the aim of this article is to discuss what, from the perspectives of the people of the Upper Xingu and Upper Rio Negro,

defines collectivities and their relations within heterogeneous networks. One way of approaching the matter is by investigating how the people of both regions conceive of their own humanity and that of their neighbours as variants of a shared form. This seems to be an important axis for investigation, because while other large-scale regional networks, such as the Jivaro or the Yanomami (Albert, 1985; Descola, 1993), are, in many ways, articulated by predatory alterity (whether real or symbolic), both the Upper Xingu and the Upper Rio Negro seem to stress a different dynamic, emphasizing the exchange of objects, rituals, visits, food and knowledge (without thereby completely excluding actual or magical violence). A ritual process of negotiating positions and prerogatives seems here to take the place of the latent state of war that stamps the social life of other Amazonian peoples – involving, in this case, both relations of affinity and consanguinity (we will return to this point shortly). As Hugh-Jones notes, the exchange of food, objects and knowledge as gifts, which is characteristic of these regional systems, serves to extend to those beyond local, ethnic or linguistic frontiers, those values and practices which, among other Amazonian peoples, tend to remain circumscribed by intracommunal life:

> such exchanges assume quite elaborate proportions and form integral components of extensive regional systems in which the values of sharing, generosity, peace, harmony, and mutual respect that are typical of the intra-community relations in most Amazonian societies are extended well beyond the residential group to become the foundation of inter-tribal polities (Hugh-Jones, 2013: 357).

A related point which we will address are the forms and meanings of hierarchy in these regional *polities*, since they seem to differ significantly from concepts current in the anthropological literature. While the classic Dumontian definition of hierarchy as the 'encompassment of the contrary' evokes a *spatial* and *synchronic* language that describes relations through the delimitation of an interior and an exterior domain, hierarchies in the Upper Xingu and Upper Rio Negro seem to make use of a *temporal* and, therefore, *diachronic* language. A hypothesis we want to test is whether the emergence of relations referred to as 'hierarchical' is inseparable from the extension of a common human condition to ethnic collectivities that are linguistically heterogeneous. It is interesting to add that while alterity, as classically understood in Amazonia, is a relation *between groups* with connotations of relative equality, the hierarchy of the Xingu and Rio Negro inverts this, introducing alterity as an *intra-group* relation.

In Amazonia more generally, the idea that there exists a radical discontinuity between the living and dead has become widespread. This discontinuity is seen to inhibit the emergence of institutions based on ideas of 'descent' and the hereditary transmission of status, prestige and ritual prerogatives (Carneiro da Cunha, 1978). The differences between the living would hence be of secondary importance in relation to the difference between the living and

the dead. Among the living, the main differences would be kinship differences, such as that between consanguines and affines, and so on. The homogeneity implied by such a view has been questioned, since there appears to be a *continuum* of ways of remembering or forgetting the dead, which indicates the existence of different regimes of historicity (Graham, 1995; McCallum, 1996; Chaumeil, 2007). What happens when a concept of humanity is distributed among groups of disparate origins, associated with specific places and sometimes speaking mutually unintelligible languages? The opposition between the living and dead loses some of its pertinence, since it exists alongside the equally important differences between the living. This, in turn, may generate differences internal to the dead themselves, as in 'my dead' and 'their dead'. All of this allows for considerations of a temporal nature (such as 'descent' in Upper Xingu chieftaincy, the difference between older and young brothers in the Rio Negro, and ancestrality in both regions), which become important in the production of distinctions within the limits of mutual recognition in such networks. It is no coincidence that what is generally called 'hierarchy' in both regions refers more to temporal difference (filiation, birth order, ordinal positioning of ritual roles) than to the spatial geometry of encompassment. This may be a clue through which we can pursue the correlation between regionalism and hierarchy in both cases, without, thereby, reducing them to a supposed 'ontological specificity' of 'Arawak systems', as suggested by other authors (Hill & Santos-Granero, 2002).

The differences between the living that characterize both regions do not preclude a spatial key articulating notions of time and genealogy (descent or ascent :: transmission or connection). In what follows, we seek to synthesize, for each region, the spatio-temporal processes that underlie the – evidently variable – constitution of collectivities. In the conclusion of the article we seek to identify certain elements that the two regions have in common.

II. RIO NEGRO

All of the origin narratives of the Tukanoan people of the Vaupés affirm that the Rio Negro and its tributaries – and, more generally, all of the Amazon basin – came into existence through the journey of an ancestral anaconda, which travelled upriver from the water door, situated on the mouth of the Amazon. The trajectory of the anaconda was not random, because the dendritic structure of this river system results from the felling of a large tree which the mythical ancestors had found there.[2] A great flood ensued, after which the travellers of the Anaconda-Canoe followed the path from east to west, which corresponds to the trunk of this tree and its branches; in other words, they travelled up the Amazon rivers entering its tributaries (and their tributaries) until they found the centre of the universe. It is important to point out that

this journey-gestation of humanity is carried out by the ancestors of all of the present-day Tukanoan speaking groups. This journey and common ancestrality makes all of them 'consanguines'.

This is a highly relevant theme for all the region's peoples, who, through it, inscribe their origin in the natural landscape. More specifically, the process, as it is elaborated in the narratives, establishes the fundamental association of human genesis and geography, revealing a social memory inscribed in channels, waterfalls, outcrops, petroglyphs, beaches, backwaters, reaches, floodplains and so forth – all features which one encounters when travelling through the rivers today. It is these paths that circumscribe the movements and cycles of the contemporary world (registered in ecological-cultural calendars), and stand as evidence of the process that led to the emergence of a true humanity in the mythical past – a process generally conceived of as a gradual transformation or passage from the subaquatic world of the 'fish-people' to the fully human world. These narratives are structured through the emergence of the *pamüri-masa*, the so-called 'transformation people', an encompassing category which includes all of the Tukanoan and Maku speaking peoples of the Vaupés river – Tukano, Desana, Pira-Tapuia, Cubeo, Wanano, Tuyuka, Makuna, Bará, Barasana, Tatuyo, Taiwano, Carapanã (Tukano, river people); Hupda, Yuhup, Dow, Nadeb, Bara (Maku, people of the interfluvial zone).

Each one of these people possess their own more or less detailed version of this story, culminating in the description of their own settlement, situated in a given territory. This is generally a segment of a river occupied by a set of exogamous and named patri-clans, which spread out from the lower to the upper course of the river (east-west) according to a hierarchical order determined by the relative age of the ancestors. When these stories are narrated or explained in Portuguese, the auto-designation *pamüri-masa* tends to be glossed as *humanidade verdadeira* (true humanity); in other words, it refers to those people who today exchange sisters among themselves or call each other younger or elder brother, who traditionally lived in collective longhouses composed of a group of brothers and their wives (who come from other groups), who keep the ceremonial ornaments and instruments, with which they carry out great initiation rituals and exchange feasts. This extensive social network is hence the result of the saga narrated in Vaupés origin myths, through which myriad positions come to be determined. The vantage point from which narrators tell the story is the one that their ancestors occupied at the end of the narrative.

These narratives, while dealing with the processes of speciation – the passage from the continuous to the discrete (Lévi-Strauss, 2004) – unfold as the definition of the terms and conditions of the possibility of sociality and human kinship, the latter understood as a continuous and expansive process of self-configuration (or self-extraction) from a cosmic backdrop of non-humanity. This fact is peculiar to the region, and it demands an integrated ap-

proach to kinship and mythical narratives.[3] This can be investigated further through an analysis of a mythical narrative of the Tukano Yeparã-Oyé clan (see Maia & Maia, 2004). This narrative culminates in an exposition of the internal composition of the 'Tukana ethnic group', divided in over forty hierarchically ordered sibs.

An analysis of this narrative reveals a sequential scheme of cosmological differentiations, which connect the time of mythical transformation-emergence to the histories of clan dispersal and settlement in their respective territories (Andrello, 2006). This scheme can be deduced from an extensive set of mythical episodes linked to the narrative of the journey of the ancestral anaconda (referred above). The differentiations schematized in the narrative occur before, after and during the journey-gestation of humanity (C. Hugh-Jones, 1979; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1971), originating in various of the exogamous groups of the present. As a set, these differentiations, which range from the primordial gender differentiation to those which separate close and distant brothers-in-law, as well as younger and elder brothers, compose a relational field for which the exchange of sisters and the *dabucuri* (rituals of ceremonial food and artefact offerings) are the main post-mythical expressions. It is important to note that the differentiations of mythical time are carried through when certain material operators appear in the narrative, such as sacred flutes (stolen by the first women, who thereby acquire specific reproductive capacities), ceremonial ornaments (obtained by the ancestors from the divinities, enabling true humanity to differentiate itself from the fish and animals), manioc beer and the *caapi* hallucinogen (the different varieties and potencies of which, differentially acquired by the exogamous groups, will distinguish between them).

Narratives of this type generally provide particular versions of an extensive, shared, mythical cycle. In its final segments, the narratives become particularized. After carefully detailing the common origin of all of the groups in the region, narrators begin to tell the history of their own sib or clan, of how they became established in a territory, of their dispersion and political relations. In this way, the material that we have already gathered point to a temporal structure in which what we usually call 'myth' is in strict continuity with 'history'. We are dealing with a sequence of sociocosmological events in which differentiations concern both what we would usually qualify as 'myth' (female/male, animality/humanity, whites/Indians) and what we would characterize as 'history' (Arawak/Tukano, distant brothers-in-law, *yupuri/yeperã*, different Tukano clans).[4] The Tukano myth in question is hence both the 'myth of myth' and the 'myth of history' (see Gow, 2001); that is, it establishes a continuity between the transformations that mark pre-human time and those that occur in human time. But what do these times have in common?

To answer this question, we must turn to Lévi-Strauss *The Story of Lynx*. We are here dealing with the concept of 'dualism in perpetual disequilibrium', which the author suggests is an intrinsic characteristic of the dichotomic model of Amerindian thought, according to which the process of organizing the world and society depends on a chain of bipartitions the resulting parts of which are never perfectly symmetrical. Effectively, as the first bloc of oppositions in this transformational system is linked to the second bloc, we can observe the same principle, or mode of operation, present from top to bottom – a state of dynamic disequilibrium (Lévi-Strauss, 1993: 60 ss.).

The figure can be divided into two blocs, each one made up of three oppositions. Notice that first opposition of the second bloc (Arawak/Tukano) is connected to the last opposition of the first bloc, in the same way that the oppositions of each bloc succeed one another. In other words, the Arawak/Tukano opposition corresponds to a division that is internal to the second term of the opposition between whites and Indians.[5] Thus all the oppositions correspond to a bipartition of the second term of the opposition that precedes it, which suggests an analogy between cosmological and sociological differentiation.

The diagram recalls a model proposed by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2002), which adds precision and refinement to his earlier concept of 'potential affinity' (Viveiros de Castro, 1993). This concept was originally developed from the concentric dualism of affinity and consanguinity, and it accounts for a range of phenomena which are external to kinship proper, such as warfare and cannibalism, but which are nonetheless central to the social reproduction of Indigenous groups in the South American lowlands.[6] In this model, affinity is the central cosmological operator, the idiom for supra-local relations. In its more recent formulation, concentric dualism has been substituted by a recursive dualism, which is intimately related to Lévi-Strauss' concept of dualism in perpetual disequilibrium. The relation between affinity and consanguinity is here reformulated as a relation between affinity and non-affinity, to the degree that consanguinity – kinship – is derived from affinity by being extracted from a virtual background of potential affinity, as expressed in myth (Viveiros de Castro, 2002: 419). If, in the earlier model, the exterior was a condition for the interior, now the exterior is one of its dimensions, since there is no greater totality that can encompass both the interior and its exterior: exteriority is itself an internal relation.

In terms of the oppositions deduced for the Tukano myth, all of the terms that figure on the right side of the sequence of bipartitions (the downward line) correspond to increasingly more local instances of kinship (*pamüri-masa*; *yepa-masa*, *yeparã-oyé*: true humanity, the Tukano, a specific clan); in the opposite direction, all of the terms on the left side of the bipartitions (the upward line) correspond to widening spheres of alterity, the most general of which concerns the distinction of the sexes, which is anterior even to the
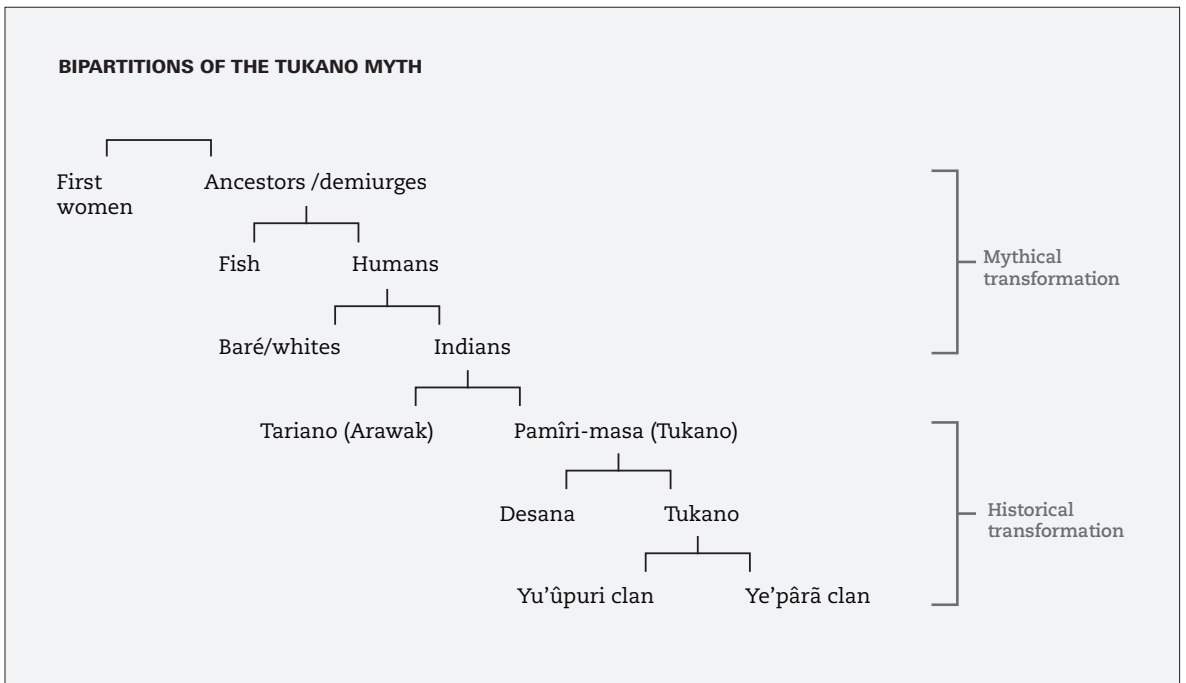
BIPARTITIONS OF THE TUKANO MYTH

First women — Ancestors /demiurges

Fish — Humans

Baré/whites — Indians

Tariano (Arawak) — Pamîri-masa (Tukano)

Desana — Tukano

Yu'ûpuri clan — Ye'pârã clan

Mythical transformation

Historical transformation

Figure 1
Bipartitions of the Tukano Myth

differentiation of humanity from animality. At the origin of everything is the infinite background of intensive difference, the source of all of the extensive states of the present. Every step of the process relies on recursion, in manner analogous to the step which precedes it. But there is a specificity of the Tukano scheme that warrants attention: the constitution of the contemporary consanguineal collectivities of the Vaupés depends on the institution (so to speak) of effective affinity at a specific moment in the past. At the end of the mythical era, when the final transformations of protohumanity take place, brothers become distant brothers-in-law (Tariano, Arawak) and, later, close brothers-in-law (Desana). This is a central feature of the human condition, for it follows that the reproduction and growth of the groups will occur through the exchange of sisters. Potential affinity, in turn, concerns the differentiations of a more remote period (women, fish, whites).

Although this model frames Vaupés groups in a general way, it also points to certain specificities. The main one of them is the fact that, in the Vaupés, potential affinity is inscribed in the order of diachrony, which means that it concerns temporal, rather than spatial or genealogical, distance. This is associated with a set of mythical events that will determine the character of the relations between different groups in the Vaupés at the end of the mythical era. As we have mentioned, the relations between, on the one hand, the Tukano and, on the other, the Tariano and Desana, are thenceforth preconceived as relations of actual affinity: they will exchange sisters and be brothers-in-law to each other. Prior to this, through the long journey of the ancestral anaconda, each one of these groups was gradually constituted as a series of siblings who will generate their respective clans, which will be ranked hierarchically. It thus seems plausible to claim that the Tukano myth develops the process of producing kinship, determining positions in both directions: affines in different degrees of distance and consanguines positioned along a hierarchical scale. These positions are occupied and reiterated as groups undergo a process of humanization, and they are the very condition for their continued growth in human time.

The mythical narratives determine the terms of the continuity between pre-humanity and humanity, but there is nonetheless a clear difference between these two times. In the first time, the ancestors emerge and gradually acquire the force of primal life (*katishé* in Tukano), which they will bequeath their descendants. Contemporary humans, however, have ceased to share the condition that demiurges and spirit animals (in particular *wa'i-masa* fish-people) had retained since mythical time: as children of the ancestral anaconda, their ancestors were also fish. Humans are hence those who were transformed in certain rapids of the Vaupés and they are called *pamüri-masa*, literally 'transformation people'. This transformation establishes a distinction between the times, the resulting stages or conditions of which are connected through a vital force that passes from one to the other.

There is a spatial dimension to this which is as relevant as the temporal dimension. It is along the course of the rivers – more specifically in the 'transformation houses', those places where the Anaconda-Canoe stopped – that the agnatic relations between the clans that constitute an exogamous group are permanently actualized. This permanent process of producing kinship is directly related to the stock of ancestral names continually recycled through the generations. In the case of the Tukano, the origin of the names corresponds to the successive emergence of the clan ancestors in the subaquatic houses, each one at the origin of different collectivities. The three first ancestor-names (Yepâra [Yepa himself], Yuupuri and Doé) appear in the far east, where the Milk Lake is situated. A further ancestor-name will appear in the lower course of the Rio Negro, in a place called Temendavi, an important 'fish house' situated just downriver from the city of Santa Izabel (Seripihi). The three other names (Akito, Buú and Kimaro) appear on the Vaupés River, in places near the Ipanoré Waterfall, the bedrock of which contains the *Pamüri-Pee*, the 'hole of emergence', from where the first human beings emerged after removing their fish clothing. These names are associated with fish or with the hydrological regime (dry season, floods).

Since there are only seven, the names of people and collectivities are often repeated. Individuation thus crucially depends on the attribution of a nickname, through which the Tukano clans are more widely known. What both names seem to share in common, is that neither of them are determined by their bearers. Although this may seem somewhat paradoxical for a clan system based on the ownership of names, endonymy is here modulated by exonymy, since even those names conferred through chanting and attributed by a *kumu* (shaman-chanter) from the fixed stock of names has to be 'activated' (so to speak) in the distant subaquatic houses situated along the path of the Anaconda-Canoe. Nicknames, in contrast, are explicitly conferred by elder or younger brothers (that is, from other clans) or brothers-in-law in human time (on the contrast between endonymy and exonymy, see Viveiros de Castro, 1986; see Hugh-Jones, 2002 on the pertinence of this opposition in the Vaupés).

Despite scarce information on the internal composition of Tukano clans, the dynamic relation of names and nicknames makes comparison difficult, giving rise to frequent inconsistencies (compare the data in Fulop, 1954 and Bruzzi, 1962). However, the available sources point to an extremely variable number of clans in the interior of each exogamic group – which contrasts significantly with the Jê-Bororo pattern. Since Tukano clans possess emblems, such as names, songs, narratives, ceremonial ornaments and territory as items of wealth (material items which accompany the bipartitions traced above), they also recall the concept of the House as defined by Lévi-Strauss (Hugh-Jones, 1995), even though this concept was originally intended for cognatic contexts. The patri-character of these clans, however, is not automatically assured at

conception or birth. It is not an *a priori* fact, but a quality propitiated by the recycling of ancestral names. This is evident when we consider the children of white men with Indigenous women, a trend that has been growing in the region as a whole. In these cases, it is common for the attribution of a name, and thereby the incorporation of the child into a clan, to be effected by the maternal grandfather. There are also cases of whole clans adopted by the attribution of a name.

Instead of a descent rule, it is perhaps more accurate to refer to the production of ascent: that is, we are not dealing with a something given, but with something that has to be permanently constructed.[7] This disposition is activated by the shamanic management and allocation of the originary life force, *katisehe*, in the interior of bodies. The transmission of this life force connects non-human time with human time. It is, furthermore, the regularity of the process of recycling this life force that comes to distinguish people and collectivities as elder or younger brothers, because the names that transmit it are associated with these positions, even if rather loosely. Since names are intrinsically tied to different places along the path of the Anaconda-Canoe, they can also be distinguished according to distance: those which are farther (and hence older) and those which are closer (and more recent). Tukano life force thus appears with different degrees of intensity, resulting from a modulation of the originary space-time. The social differences that it gives rise to are thereby grounded in variable metric spaces and durations. The hierarchical social relations between people and collectives, so frequently reported in the ethnographies of the people of the region, would hence only be one of the effects of these cosmic and vital processes.

III. UPPER XINGU

The Upper Xingu provides a good example of one of the characteristics of Amazonian regional systems highlighted by Hugh-Jones: the amplification, on an inter-ethnic scale, of values such as generosity, peacefulness and mutual respect, which elsewhere characterize intracommunal sociality. In her approach to Kalapalo oral history, Ellen Basso also argues that the production of Xinguano society demanded an 'amplification of the field of moral judgement' (Basso, 1995), expanding towards enemies, usually through the medium of people in liminal situations (affines, orphans, rejected children), modes of relating reserved for kinspeople, especially affines. Basso specifically refers to 'shame' (*ihütisu*), an ethical disposition typical of the relations between affines and foreigners, which is responsible for imbuing values such as generosity, peacefulness and hospitality. The Xinguano network thus presupposes a particular concept of humanity. In a manner that recalls certain themes from the Upper Rio Negro, this concept seems to be linked to considerations of time

and space, which are also expressed in mytho-historical narratives about the occupation of specific geographical areas by the upper Xingu peoples, and in rituals that commemorate deceased chiefs (the famous Quarup).

The Kalapalo consider themselves and other peoples of the Upper Xingu to be *kuge*, 'people'. According to Bruna Franchetto (1986), the word could be glossed as 'we-I'. According to Acácio Piedade, true humanity for the Wauja is qualified by the gift: their term for 'Xinguano people' is 'people who exchange' (Piedade, 2004). Those groups who do not fully share the ritual complex and its associated ethic are called *ngikogo*, or simply índios (Indians) in Portuguese. For people of the Upper Xingu, índios *mesmo* (true Indians) are always others, even when they are speaking directly to the *kagaiha*, or *caraíba*, i.e. the 'whites'.

Contemporary humanity was created by the Sun, one of the twins born from the marriage of a tree-woman with Enitsue gü, a Jaguar-Person, chief of all of the land animals. This woman was mortally wounded during pregnancy by her jaguar-mother-in-law, and the twins, removed from their mothers' womb, were raised by their father and stepmother (mother's sister). The Sun, first-born, was called Tau gi, 'Liar', and spoke a Carib language; Moon, which was born afterwards, was called Aulukumã, 'Hyper-Fox', and spoke an Arawak language. The linguistic difference between the twins reproduces the main difference in the Upper Xingu matrix, that between the Arawak groups, settled in the western portion of the region from the 8th-9th centuries A.D.; and the Carib speaking groups, initially settled east of the Culuene, possibly from the 11th century (Heckenberger, 2005). Jaguar and his wife hid their mother's fate from the twins. When they found out, they stopped calling them 'father' and 'mother' and began calling them 'chief' (*anetü*) and 'chieftess' (*itankgo*). Humans were created by Sun to fight against his Jaguar father and 'his people' (*isandagü*). Placing bamboo arrow shafts on the ground, Sun created all humans. According to a Wauja version, humans were created from two types of bamboo: a more resilient variety, which became the hereditary chiefs, and a softer variety, which became ordinary people (Barcelos Neto, 2008). Sun also places an arrow shaft close to his stepmother, in order that she become pregnant. When she stepped over the shaft, her belly magically grew and she soon gave birth to Kagahina (Carabina; 'rifle', 'carbine'), the ancestor of the whites.

According to a well-known narrative (with variants found in other regions of the Americas), Sun offered the newly created humans a choice between weapons and objects. The whites chose the rifle, thus becoming the most dangerous enemies, moving far away and transforming into malevolent spirits (*itseke*); the others chose the club, becoming Indian warriors; others, still, chose a range of beautiful and valuable objects, both ritual and mundane, and became peaceful. The latter would make up the 'moral community' of the Upper Xingu. Despite the pan-Amazonian theme of this myth, what the Xinguano variants share with those of the Upper Rio Negro is the fact that

the 'beautiful', materialized as objects, also stands for a particular code of 'beautiful' conduct, founded on respect and shared values of moderation and modesty. Just as aesthetically valued objects codify social norms, so are the latter aesthetically valued.

The offer of objects in myth introduces three differences in the world of humans: a dual opposition between Indians and whites; another dual opposition, this time between Xinguano Indians (pacific) and non-Xinguano Indians (warriors); and, finally, a series of differences internal to the people of the Upper Xingu, based on the distribution of beautiful objects. This distribution also tends towards a form of dualism: the Kalapalo version of the myth distributes the specialities into 'Carib objects' and 'Arawak objects'. On one side, there are the Arawak people who produce ceramic; on the other, the Carib, who produce shell belts and necklaces. The difference is also one of gender: while the production and use of ceramics are female activities, the gathering of shells and the production of necklaces are male activities. The gender dualism also replicates a distinction in modes of sociality: one based on kinship, in which ceramic is used to prepare food; and another based on ritual, in which necklaces and shells are fundamental aspects of the public garments used in ceremonies.[8] It should be further noted that the opposition between Carib and Arawak can be considered analogous to the opposition between Tukano and Arawak in the Upper Rio Negro. In the latter case, the Arawak (Baniwa) are the only producers of manioc graters, as well as of fine ceramics (as in the Upper Xingu, both are objects associated with the feminine universe and the production of food). The complementary products which the Tukano exchange, such as *carajuru* (red pigment for facial painting), baskets, canoes and benches, all have masculine and ritual connotations – just like the Carib shell necklaces.

In the Xingu, we find an open-ended 'dualism in perpetual disequilibrium', which allows for the incorporation of new elements. The Tupi speaking Kamayurá and Aweti occupy an ambiguous position, as do the Yawalipiti, who arrived late in the region, some time in the 18th century. Due to their warring past, the Kamayura became owners of the finest bows in the region (also produced by the Waujá), which are held by chiefs making a speech. More recently, the Aweti became the owners of vegetable salt, through the intervention of a PDPI project (*Projeto Demonstrativo dos Povos Indígenas*). The Yawalapiti, because of their central role in contact with non-Amerindians and the amount of foreign objects in their village, are seen to be the 'owners of the things of the whites'.

After this choice, Sun determined that they should live peacefully in the Xingu valley, exchanging their specialties in rituals that are sponsored by (and in honour of) their chiefs. The myth thus traces two further series of material and sociopolitical distinctions: certain objects (the rifle and the club) would be appropriated for warfare, while others would have the capacity to prevent

or substitute for it through the ritual exchange of gifts. More than once during fieldwork I heard that while other Indians have clubs and fight, the Kalapalo have shell necklaces and engage in sporting ritual combats. From the Indigenous point of view, ritual, along with its sponsoring chiefs, sporting events and exchange of specialties, 'takes the place of war'. It should nonetheless be stressed that the Xinguano world has not always been as peaceful as the people of the region (and many of their anthropologists) would like (Menget, 1978).

As in the anthropology of the Upper Rio Negro, one of the pressing issues in the Upper Xingu is understanding the means for constituting and articulating collectivities. In the period in which the classical monographs of the region were written, the 'one people, one village' equation was predominant, which seemed to square with the descriptive models then in vogue. Rafael Bastos' (1995) study of the Kamayurá was one of the first to tackle the problem head on, showing how what is at present called 'Kamayurá' is the crystallization, in a specific place, of a more extensive and heterogeneous network of kinship and marriage. In his Master's dissertation, Mutua Mehinaku argues that *mixture* is the basic condition of all people, villages, languages and knowledge in the Upper Xingu, and that part of the ritual effort is directed at the production of differentiations against this common background (Mehinaku, 2010).

These perspectives reveal that the Xinguano complex is not the result of a mere 'collection' of peoples, nor is it a society formed from an *a posteriori* reunion. On the contrary, at least some of the efforts of the people of the Upper Xingu seems to be concentrated on the extraction of collectivities of singular people from a situation of 'mixture' – one which ensures that they all mutually recognize each other as *kuge*, 'people'. A way of understanding this differentiation is through the existence of the emblematic objects of each group, as defined in mythical times. But the Xinguanos also have other thoughts on the matter.

An important moment in the passage from mythical to contemporary time was the dissolution of a village, called Kuakutu, located at the confluence of the Rio Culuene and Rio Sete de Setembro. This used to be the only existing village, where all of the people of the Upper Xingu lived, each one speaking their own language. The proximity of warring groups in the vicinity caused fear in the villagers, resulting in their dispersion downriver, thus giving origin to the different peoples of the Upper Xingu. The only person to remain put was the old chief of the village, one of the main ancestors of Kalapalo chiefs mentioned in ceremonial discourse. Kuakutu is also the name of the men's house. It is interesting that a village that once contained all Xinguano humanity should share its name with the men's house, since the latter gathers all the men of the village, and even, during ritual times, all people. Kuakutu village was also situated between the two extreme points of the north-south axis of Xinguano geography, so that it was 'at the centre' of their traditional territory – just as the men's house is at the centre of each of village.

Each Xinguano local group is considered, by all the others, to be the *otomo* of a place. *Otomo* is the collective term for 'owners'. The name of the place, followed by *otomo*, is how most village names are formed, and these often become the names of 'people'. Each village is relatively autonomous – though not at all times nor for all things. Small villages that do not yet have a central plaza prefer to bury their dead in villages that do have a plaza. These villages tend to not sponsor rituals for the spirits, and those who need or want to hold one must sponsor rituals in larger villages. Sponsorship of regional rituals is even more complex, since in order to hold one a village must have a chief buried in its patio. Without meeting this condition, it is impossible to send out or receive ritual messengers. Even when the condition is met, a larger village may question the pertinence of sponsoring a chiefly ritual in a more recent village.

These characteristics point to the existence of forms of regional asymmetry, centred on the idea that some villages are the 'mainstays' (*iho*) of others. *Iho* is a concept that denotes asymmetrical forms that are replicated at different scales. *Iho* means 'support' or 'mainstay', such as the wooden post on which one ties a hammock. But the concept is also used to describe relations based on care and feeding. The owner of a house is also the *iho* of the people who inhabit it, for he is expected to care for his coresidents, to guide them and organize the collective activities of the house, and to support them when they encounter problems. A husband is also the *iho* of his wife and children, for he should supply them with food and protect them. Likewise, the man of the house is the *iho* of the women who live there. *Iho* thus designates any person that is a *protector of* and *provider for* others. It can perhaps be said that the *iho* is someone who is bound to 'offer support', which would be the more literal description of the function of a mainstay.

A chief is a 'mainstay of people' (*kuge iho*) because he is a father in relation to his people, who are his sons or children. He should protect, educate and feed his sons, guiding them in the use of true speech (*akihekugene*), always offering fish and manioc bread in the centre of the village and never withholding any object that others ask of him. A *kuge iho* should care for his village and its residents much like the owner of the house cares for its residents. It is said the *first* and *second* chiefs of a village are like the two central posts, also called *iho*, that sustain a house. Due to their good speech and generosity, chiefs are seen to be the reason that people live together in a village, the only reason that a local group does not fission indefinitely. When a village starts to fragment, the process is blamed on a lack of chiefs capable of keeping people united.

Villages can also be the *iho* of other villages. Whenever old villages are spoken of, some are referred to as 'those who were divided' (*agaketühügü*) and others as their *iho*, suggesting the existence of asymmetries in the regional relations between groups resulting from the process of fissioning. For instance,

during a long time, Kuapügü (the main village that the Kalapalo associate with their origin) coexisted with the Kalapalo villages of Apangakigi, Angambütü and Hagagikugu. These local groups were not, however, in a situation of equal standing, because Kuapügü was considered to be the *iho* of the others. A village-*iho* is capable of exerting a centripetal force on the villages that originated from it, providing a limit to the fissioning process as a means for creating new identities.

The Kalapalo say that a person's body is their *iho*, just like the trunk of a tree. The arms, in turn, are like the branches, which require a body or trunk to stay together. A small village is considered to be the branch or arm (*ikungu*) of the larger village from which it originated, which is its mainstay. Likewise, any small village which is at the origin of other villages can be seen to be its *iho*, and so on. This difference is replicated in the interior of each village, where the main chief is considered to be the *iho*, while the lesser chiefs are his 'arms', *ikungu*. This image is again replicated when we move to the relation between chiefs and non-chiefs, where the first are all *iho* and the latter *ikungu*. A village with no *iho* is like the fallen branches of a tree.

This difference also applies to the relations between men and women: the former are the *iho* of the latter, their arms/branches. Among women we find the same opposition, with chiefs (*itankgo*) being treated as *iho* in relation to non-chiefs. A male chief may include among his *ikungu* all women chiefs, but an *itankgo* can never be considered the *iho* of a male chief. In conjugal relations it is also possible to say that a man's first wife is his *iho*, while her sisters-in-law (WZ, *upahene*) are her *ikungu*. The Kalapalo explain this by saying that the while first wife is the 'support' of her husband, he can also marry his sisters-in-law. In theory, a woman may also consider her husband *iho* and her brothers-in-law (HB) kungu, but she cannot decide on taking a second husband. The symmetry between masculine and feminine views is hence only apparent.

The word for 'root', *intsü*, also has a wide semantic field. A child's grandparents are its 'roots', *intsü*. Someone who takes care of something or someone is also its *intsü*, such as a child's parents. An esteemed girlfriend or boyfriend is also one's *intsü*, because, like a plant without its roots, without that person 'we do not stand still'. In certain contexts, this term is close to the meanings of *oto*, 'owner'. The person responsible for the village tractor, for instance, is the 'tractor *intsü*', and the storytellers are also the *intsü* of their narratives, because they 'care' for them when they narrate them well.

In sum, a certain vegetal language is widely used to think relations of possession, property, care, responsibility and convergence. For there to be collectivities at various scales, from conjugal nucleus to regional nexus, there must be an asymmetrical relation between a trunk/mainstay/body that unifies and supports the people that live around it. A chief is like the trunk that sustains the growth of a body of kinspeople, just as he is a mainstay against

which they can lean. However, instead of configuring a global hierarchy, the *iho / īkungu* opposition is replicated at every scale, maintaining a fractal and non-totalizing form. There is no absolute *iho*, nor one that can serve as a standard for the rest.

IV. CONCLUSION

One of the first things that stands out in this preliminary and partial presentation of the two areas is how the crystallization of conceptual languages (some Indigenous, others anthropological) in the ethnographies of each one can either favour approximations or inhibit the perceptions of parallels on a more abstract level (one, therefore, distant from particular ethnographic traditions). For instance, while the literature on the Upper Xingu has practically naturalized the use of the concept of 'shame' to refer to the ethic of social relations in the region (whether in inter-personal or inter-group relations), this concept can reappear under the banner of 'respect' in the Rio Negro ('shame' being absent from the local lexicon). Another example is the categorical claim, of both the Xinguanos and their researchers, that 'ritual takes the place of war' – something which, although it is not explicitly said in the context of the Rio Negro, nor is it an issue in the ethnographies, is certainly applicable to the region. This seems to be the message of the origin myth of the ceremonial exchanges of the Barasana. Furthermore, the term 'owner' is common in the Upper Xingu, but practically absent from the Rio Negro. However, the 'owner' position and the relations that it implies, which are salient in the ritual life of the Upper Xingu, would also be pertinent in the Rio Negro, above all in quotidian life, such as, for example, in the role of the 'owners of the longhouse' in the organization of cultivation, fishing and construction. These agents also act in the organization of feasts, but with the aid of other ritual specialists, such as chanters, dancers and shamans. In sum, themes that are important in the ethnology of one region drive us to inquire into their relevance for the other, and to shed light on the questions that, in theory, may not have held the same interest in each one. One of the challenges, then, is to relate these vast regional systems through the different narrative styles through which they have been described since the 1960's, and to develop a conceptual language that can account for their differences and similarities without, thereby, remaining stuck within the terms of one ethnographic region.

   In this sense, in what concerns the matter of the social units that compose these systems, it is notable that both manifest similar 'illusions': in the Upper Xingu, that one people can be reduced to one village; in the Upper Rio Negro, that to each language there would correspond one people. Again, some of these illusions have been sustained, to different degrees, by anthropologists

as much as by the native populations. It can even be observed in the titles of many of the available ethnographies, dedicated to 'the Makuna', 'the Cubeo', 'the Kalapalo' and so forth. In lieu of reifying these differences, it may be necessary to reinforce and extend discussions such as that of Mutua Mehinaku: that the common problem seems to be how to produce or maintain differences against a backdrop of similarity (see, also, the constant interplay of similarity and difference among the Tukano; S. Hugh-Jones, 1979). In this way, a theme that initially seems to emerge and, hence, connect the two regions is that of the secondary character (so to speak) of affinity/alterity in relation to consanguinity. The complement to the classic view of the process of 'making kin out of others' (Vilaça, 2002) is here, perhaps, the problem of 'making others out of kin' – an idea which evokes Wagner discussion of 'analogic kinship', which, unfortunately, we are unable to develop here (see Wagner, 1977).

Let us note, first of all, that this theme is explicitly enunciated in the Tukano origin myth. Here, the ancestors of the Tukano and Desana first appear as a pair of brothers who, later, in the moment immediately prior to the emergence of humanity, become brothers-in-law to one another. In human time, they are those who will exchange sisters. In a certain way, the same could be said of the demiurge-twins who will create Xinguano humanity, since Sun, the first of them, is associated with the origin of the Carib speaking people, while Moon, the second, is associated with the origin of the Arawak speaking people. In other words, we also have the origin of people who will potentially be affines to each other. Interestingly, the original pair of Desana/Tukano siblings are respectively associated with the sun and the moon and, as in the Xingu, the former is initially the more prominent, being responsible for guaranteeing the course of developments that lead to the emergence of a true humanity. However, in both cases, things never occur as they should, mostly because of the excessive and immoderate character of the sun. This results in an inversion of the order of seniority, moon coming to the fore, taking it upon himself to do those things that his brother was unable to do and which he can because of his restrained and serene ethos.

It can thus be suggested that, for both regions, the attributes of demiurge and trickster (Lévi-Strauss, 1991) undergo inversions. For the Rio Negro more specifically, the originary exchange of roles – with the ancestral Desana taking command of the Anaconda-Canoe from the ancestral Tukano at a particular moment in the mythical narrative – seems to point to an instability that is always present in the context of the hierarchical relations between clans and exogamous groups. It is thus possible to imagine that these differentiations hypothetically share an eminently ambiguous character – simultaneously prescriptive and performative, given and constructed – since the attributes associated with the ancestral pair of siblings encode both the behaviour of chiefs and elder siblings.

While the classic Amazonian 'Other' (such as the Araweté enemy-gods, Jivaro head-supplying groups, Tupinambá *tovajara* brothers-in-law) is some-one who is (and must be) like 'us', that is, someone who is not completely unknown, completely different, for the peoples of the Upper Rio Negro and the Upper Xingu shared humanity seems to have its own nuances: its internal differentiation appears to operate on the basis of a gradient of positions, or else along the same scale, guided by a relation that is internal to the original and asymmetrical pair of siblings. This is evidently more prominent in the Up-per Rio Negro, where, furthermore, the figure of the 'included third' (Viveiros de Castro, 2002) is the 'mother's son', a son of the mother's sister who stands between an actual brother and a brother-in-law. In the Upper Xingu, these positions bring into relief the language of filiation. If in the Rio Negro it is movement along an east-west axis in mythical times that anchors the divi-sion between elder and younger brothers, in the Upper Xingu it is growth and division from a centre, a village-mainstay, that bridges the gap between chiefs and non-chiefs, central villages and satellite villages, making them analogous to those between parents and their children. While the model of hierarchy in the Rio Negro seems to be linear and directional, the Xinguano version of hierarchy rests on a concentric and non-directional model (hence *multicentric* – there are as many centres as there are possible *iho*). In both regions, however, forms of consanguinity (such as that between elder and younger brothers), or that recall consanguinity (such as that between parents and children, grand-parents and grandchildren), are used to describe relations that are exterior to the local group, but internal to each of the regional networks.

There is, furthermore, a common vegetal metaphor that seems to cir-cumscribe a field of interiority in the Rio Negro and the Xingu: that of the felled tree which constitutes the fluvial hydrology of the Rio Negro, according to the Tukano origin myth, and that of the erected tree in the Xinguano mor-tuary ritual, which takes the form of an effigy of the illustrious and honoured dead. In the Xingu, as we have seen, the image further codifies the relations between a chief-mainstay and his village, between the former and the lesser chiefs and even the relations between the genders. Although the Tukanoan peoples do not use the word 'mainstay' (*bote* in their languages) in this way, the notion nonetheless has certain resonances in the region, specially at the level of certain longhouses and their chiefs which emerge as political-ceremonial centres for a set of smaller longhouses that orbit it. It also resounds with the idea of the elder brother of a longhouse as a protector of his coresidents. In any case, and despite the fact that the mainstays of longhouses in the Rio Negro are frequently referred to with the names of mythical ancestors, the Xinguano figure of the trunk-mainstay and its branches recalls, more directly, the image of the Rio Negro fluvial network as a tree, with younger brothers situated upriver and elder brothers downriver. The main point is that both im-

ages seem to feed an understanding of the internal differentiation of humanity as based on distinctions of a temporal order, expressed, in the Rio Negro, in age differences between siblings, and, in the Xingu, in generational differences. A hypothesis which may be pursued is that, it seems to us, the political relations between collectivities emerge from the process of producing kinship, particularly of constructing ascendancy – noble ascent in the Xingu, and the connection between elder brothers in the Rio Negro.

This hypothesis may become more plausible if we consider the relations external to each of the systems, which also display similarities. The Kalapalo opposition, mentioned above, between *kuge*, 'people', and *ngikogo*, 'Indians', clearly separates Upper Xingu peoples from those situated to the north and south of their territory – that is, beyond the fluvial network of the headwaters of the Xingu (namely Jê speaking peoples, such as the Xavante, Kayapo, etc.). The same seems to occur with the term *mashã*, 'people', in the Tukanoan languages. In this case, the Barasana, for instance, oppose this term to others, such as *gawa*, applied to the whites and to Indians considered 'wild', such as the Karijona. In this context, the term takes a complement, *mashã-goro*, 'true people'. From the point of view of the central Tukanoans, this notion of a true humanity seems to be subsumed by the expression 'transformation people', *pamüri-mahsã* (literally 'fermentation people'), which designates all of the passengers in the ancestral Anaconda-Canoe. Significantly, the Tukano tend to oppose this expression to 'people of the headwaters', *poetri-khana*, a designation which they often translated into Portuguese as *os índios*, 'the Indians'.

Finally, we hope that these considerations provide a bare outline, or a parameter, for more in-depth comparisons of these two ethnographies regions, which have thus far resisted theoretical generalization. Our aim has not been to refute other positions, but to try and widen the scope of the conceptual languages forged from Amazonian ethnography, and hence contribute to our understanding of the transformations that are ongoing within these social topologies. It is an effort that requires the participation of the various researchers who study the themes that we have here only begun to organize.

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ENDNOTES

1 This text was originally prepared for the Thematic Symposium 'Comparative approach to the regional systems of the Upper Rio Negro and the Upper Xingu', held in the 55th International Congress of Americanists (San Salvador, El Salvador), on the 14th of July 2015. Written by three people and flirting with heterogenous questions of different ethnographic/ethnological traditions, the article evidently raises more problems than it can answer, and includes many loose ends. Conceived as an attempt to guide the debates of the Symposium, this work does not deal with a particular ethnographic or theoretical problem, limiting itself to pointing towards possible articulations and strategies of comparison between the systems of the Upper Rio Negro and the Upper Xingu. The names of the authors has been arranged alphabetically according to surname.

2 Simlarly, the Kalapalo of the Upper Xingu (and the other Carib speaking peoples of the region) narrate that the lakes they inhabit originate from a tree opened up by a man.

3 Despite sharing the common Amazonian theme of the passage from the continuous to the discrete, what makes these myths differ is that they are clanic myths with a political-genealogical character, similar to some of the myths analyzed by Lévi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind*. This point merits further development in the future.

4 The order of the terms that make up these various pairs is not random. Those that occupy the first position of each pair are connected, just like those which occupy the second position.

5 According to Lévi-Strauss, it is precisely this dichotomic model that contained a position for the whites in Amerindian thought. It enables the transposition of the opposition between Amerindians and whites to a system in which the position of the latter was, in a way, already anticipated. The origin narrative of the Vaupés Amerindians confirms Lévi-Strauss intuition, since it also included the origin of the whites.

6 Briefly, Viveiros de Castro argues that predation has an ontological status in Amazonia, corresponding to a 'positive and necessary use of alterity' (Viveiros de Castro, 1993: 162). Enemies are 'potential affines' – that is, they

are those with which one does not exchange women, but other things. Potential affines are partners in symbolic exchanges who guarantee social reproduction, even if the relations established involve agressions, violence and cannibalism. They are exchanges which translate into a movement of capture and appropriation of capacities, such as names, songs, ceremonial ornaments and even body parts, such as Jivaro head trophies (Descola, 1993). This model articulates local (or internal) relations with supralocal (or external) relations, since, at the local level, consanguinity encompasses affinity to the degree that actual affines are consanguinized in behavioural terms, while in ever-wider spheres consanguinity is encompassed by affinity, which, ultimately, assumes a generic value that determines the Other (the enemy) as an affine.

7   It is possible to speak of 'ascent' instead of 'descent', stressing the little importance oconferred on notions of shared substance, blood or lines of blood.

8   See Coelho de Souza (2002) on the differences between kinship and ritual in Amazonia.

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TRANSFORMAÇÕES ESPAÇO-TEMPORAIS NO ALTO XINGU E NO ALTO RIO NEGRO

Resumo

Os complexos multiétnicos e multilíngues do Rio Negro e do Alto Xingu apresentam alguns aspectos comuns que emergem com frequência em suas etnografias, tais como noções sobre descendência, hierarquia na organização social e nas atividades rituais, valorização de formas de exogamia, ou a distribuição desigual de especialidades produtivas, rituais e conhecimentos esotéricos. Neste trabalho investigamos como povos de ambas as regiões concebem sua humanidade e a de seus vizinhos como variações de uma forma compartilhada, pois nos dois casos processos rituais de negociação de posições e prerrogativas parecem fazer as vezes do estado latente de guerra que marca a vida social de outros povos amazônicos. Buscaremos sintetizar os processos espaço-temporais que subjazem à constituição, eminentemente variável, dos coletivos de cada região buscando, ao final, isolar alguns elementos em comum.

SPACE-TIME TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE UPPER XINGU AND UPPER RIO NEGRO

Abstract

The multi-ethnic and multilingual complexes of the Upper Rio Negro and the Upper Xingu share common aspects that frequently emerge in ethnographies, including notions of descent, hierarchical social organization and ritual activities, as well as a preference for forms of exogamy and the unequal distribution of productive and ritual specialties and esoteric knowledge. In this article we investigate how the people of both regions conceive of their humanity and that of their neighbours as variations on a shared form, since in both regions ritual processes for negotiating positions and prerogatives seems to take the place of the latent state of warfare typical of the social life of other Amazonian peoples. In this article we will synthesize, for each region, the spatio-temporal processes that underscore the eminently variable constitution of collectivities, seeking, in conclusion, to isolate those elements that the two regions have in common.