

Activo  
CEDI - P. I. B.  
DATA 10 / 10 / 66  
COD. T. K. D. 008

Progress Report :

Preliminary Findings and Conclusions

## I. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

A. Social Structure and Organization. The Eastern Tukanoan speakers of the Brazilian Uaupes are unusual among native Amazonian peoples in having organized rigidly bounded and ranked social groups.

Every Tukano individual has a unique, ranked placement in a context of social positions fixed by patrilineal descent. By virtue of birth, he or she belongs to a series of increasingly inclusive membership groups. The most embracing level is the "phratry," consisting of five language groups whose members consider themselves to be siblings and do not intermarry. From the point of view of the three study communities, the phratry bisects the social universe into classificatory brothers (agnates) and in-laws (affines). The categorization is exhaustive and unambiguous. Each person then belongs to a named language group called a "tribe" in the literature, whose members consider themselves to be descended from one major creator or First Ancestor. The tribe is then divided into sections, called Nituriaka'ansa by the Tukanos and which I will refer to as sibs, following one anthropological convention. Each sib bears the name of a mythological ancestor, who is thought to be a direct descendent of the First Ancestor. Finally, the narrowest unit of affiliation is the Mahsankuduri, a group of descendents of a remembered, deceased ancestor of two or three generations before. Within each level, groups are ranked according to relative prestige. All individuals are ranked in relation to all others by calculation of group placement.

B. Greeting. When two people meet, they greet one another in their respective languages. The speakers must find mutual forms of address which define their relationship to the mutual approval of both parties. To greet is to name the structural relationship between the groups of the two speakers. In order to greet properly, the speakers must be aware of one another's fathers, the fathers' sibs, sib rank, and the marriage histories of the respective groups. These factors define the relative status of the individuals and the correct greeting. When agnate greets agnate (even in the broadest sense of phratry members) the address always expresses the superiority of one and the relative inferiority of the other. Only when affines greet can the respective terms be status-free.

C. Marriage and Language. Because the language group is exogamous, a husband and wife are speakers of different languages. A husband and wife may understand one another's languages but normally do not speak them, for language is used as an emblem of group identity. With father's-sister's-daughter marriage a man is assured a wife whose mother spoke his own language. With mother's-brother's-daughter marriage a man is assured a wife who is a member of his mother's language group. These two types of cross-cousin marriage are preferred.

Because of strict adherence to rules of patrilocality, males inhabiting the same settlement are members of one language group. In contrast, because of the rule of linguistic exogamy, all in-marrying females are necessarily speakers of other languages. It is quite ordinary for two speakers to be engaged in a conversation

in which each is speaking his (her) own language. Both females and males are multilingual. Females vary language with context, especially in the company of other females who are speakers of different languages. A child learns the languages of both his mother and father but is discouraged from speaking his mother's language as he matures.

D. The Local Group. There are approximately sixty Brazilian Tukanoan settlements on the margins of the Papuri and Uaupés Rivers above Ioiro. Each settlement contains 1 to 20 houses and from 2 to 160 people. Settlements are located between five and forty minutes apart by 15 hp motorized canoe.

Oral histories show that local settlements fragment frequently. As groups grow in size, the general tendency is for a sub-group to leave the original unit and establish a new settlement. One of the goals of this research is to suggest immediate and long-term causes of group fission.

The local group is the only working unit whose membership can be acquired. Members can join, leave, and change locations.

E. Local Group Composition. Ideally, a local group is one sub-section of a sib. That is to say that the Tukanoans conceive of it as a localized unit of the descent system (a "local descent group"). This will be automatic if rules of patrilocality are maintained. However, the ideal of complete patrilocality is not fully realized. I am presently testing certain hypotheses to determine under which conditions descent group and local group are likeliest to coincide. Data show that deviations from the ideal of total coincidence are patterned. In the dissertation I shall try to suggest reasons for tightening and relaxing rules of recruitment, resulting in the varying degrees of correspondence of the local group to the unilineal descent group.

F. Corporateness. The local sib or sub-sib is a property-holding unit. The property limits are known and thought to be inherited. The property is river property containing fixed fishing locations. These fishing locations are named, are limited in number, and are inherited. They vary according to value and kind (kind referring to the Tukanoan system of categorization based upon the type of fishing technique the spot is best suited to). There is intense competition for a limited number of fishing sites. Disputes over property are common and will be treated in the dissertation.

G. Descent and Locality as Principles. At every social level, descent and locality are seen by the Tukanoans as transformations of one another. At the level of the village the distinctions between lineal and local principles are particularly obscured by the Tukanoans in manipulating privileged access to resources and rights. In the dissertation I intend to discuss the different circumstances in which claims of legitimacy call on lineal or on local criteria.

In the processes of settlement relocation and fissioning, the equation of descent with locality breaks down. In settlement relocation lineage and locality realign themselves to one another, revealing some of the mechanisms which contrast and underly the two systems.

With regard to lineality and locality, the female point of view is the inverse of the male point of view. Because of linguistic exogamy and patrilocality, a woman is wife to and mother of members of a different descent-language group (tribe) than her own. Group allegiance and associated sentiments are very different for women. A woman's marriage to her mother's brother's son, the preferred form of marriage, reduces this conflict more than does any other marriage choice, because she will then be marrying into her mother's own descent group. The conflict is reduced even further if that type of marriage is part of a sister exchange between the two families, a prevalent practice and stated preference.

## II. EXCHANGE

Ceremonial Food Exchange. The Po-ôye is a ceremonial exchange of food between two classificatory brother or in-law groups. The items exchanged are not identical, yet the rules are such that payment must balance. The Tukanos have a shared, formalized scale of food values and equivalencies. Furthermore, the Tukanos have an exhaustive typology of debit relations. (The models for these typologies will be presented in the dissertation.) Incidences of dissatisfaction with ceremonial repayment occur. In these cases, the dissatisfied partner calls for a compensatory payment, and an additional Po-ôye is held. (This occurred during my visit and will be discussed in my dissertation.)

Although the Po-ôye exchange is reciprocal, the offerings are separate, with each donor community determining the timing of its own offering. A duration of "debit time" lapses until the owing party balances its payment. The amount of permissible debit time is closely related to respective rank and the degree of calculated descent distance between the exchanging groups.

My findings suggest that these Po-ôye co-occur with periods of short-term and localized abundance and are (inadvertently) instrumental in distributing resources from areas which have them in abundance to areas which do not. This tentative observation will be tested further in the following two seasons.

## III. PRODUCTION

Resource Use and Technology. The Tukanos use an unusually intensive form of fishing technology centering on the permanent weir and organized by means of descent groups. The fishes swim into the weir and there become entrapped. The weir site is said to be owned by the oldest member of the patrilineage who controls access to the harvest. The sib owns the river territory in which the weir sites are situated. Only sib members are permitted to utilize fishing sites within their river territories; transgression is cause for combat.

A salient feature of permanent weir technologies is the advantage derived from strategic placement. In general, weirs furthest downstream are the most desirable. A weir is a fence which covers the full breadth of a canal. Migrating fish returning to spawn arrive at the downstream gates before reaching those upstream. Where consecutive weirs are set across the full breadth of the river, enough traps and closures may be set by the downstream weirs to

block a significant percentage of the fish from proceeding upstream. The downstream weirs thus have a decided advantage in much the same way as irrigated farms closest to a water source have an advantage over sites progressively further away. Placement is significant in other ways. For example, locations in deep water or near the center of the stream are usable year-round, while those nearest the high-water margins are land-locked for several months twice a year when the waters lower.

Since neither fixed river weirs nor corporate segmentary descent groups are found among indigenous groups in the Amazon Basin to the south, these unique features may be related to one another. Since hypotheses explaining the presence of these groups only pertain to land-scarce agricultural societies, they cannot explain the presence of unilineal social groups in the land-abundant fishing societies of the Uaupés. Perhaps competition for a limited amount of suitable weir sites gave rise to these resource-controlling units.

The Tukanoans supplement weir fishing with the same fishing techniques used elsewhere in indigenous Amazonia: hook-and-bait fishing, spear or arrow fishing, and poisoning. My findings to date suggest that the weir is more productive than other Tukanoan fishing modes used in the same rivers but its success is highly dependent upon placement. In the black-water Uaupés River 1) many fishes are detritus-eaters and, having sieves rather than teeth, do not respond to bait, 2) visibility in the water is low making projectile fishing impractical, and 3) the river is too deep for poisons to be effective. I suggest that the water quality in the Uaupés and other black-water streams may render these methods unproductive relative to the fixed weir. Data which I gathered between October and February suggest that the ratio of yield to time and energy, once the weir is installed, is high and may be higher than that of any fishing mode known among other aboriginal groups of Lowland South America. This mode of production may have permitted the long-term self-sufficiency of the riverine Tukanoans.