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Summary of the Yanomami Park Proposal

The Yanomami

The Yanomami Indians traditionally occupied a large tropical forest area in the frontier region between Brazil and Venezuela. In Brazil, they inhabit the areas of the Federal Territory of Roraima and the State of Amazonas. (see map on page 2) The Brazilian National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) estimated in July 1977 that there were 203 Yanomami villages with a population of approximately 8,400 people.

This area has been known by scientific missions since 1887, but it has only been since the 1950s that the first Protestant and Catholic missions were established in the region. Semi-isolated until 1973 because of the difficulties of access to their territory, the majority of Yanomami still live according to their traditional cultural patterns.

Since 1974, however, the Yanomami territory has been seriously threatened by the advancing economic fronts of Brazilian national society.

The Contact Situation

The following is a summary of events that have occurred in this area since 1974:

1974-- Opening up of the BR-210 or Northern Perimeter Highway. Construction teams without any scheme of medical control massively penetrated the area bringing with them countless epidemics of grippe, measles, tuberculosis, venereal and skin diseases.

include xerox of Map II and place in middle of page

at bottom of map, the following should be printed:

source: Ernest C. Migliazza, The Integration of the Indigenous People of  
The Territory of Roraima, Brazil (Copenhagen, International Work  
Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1978), page 10.

As a result of contact along the first 100 kilometers of the Caracara-Icana stretch of the Northern Perimeter Highway, 13 villages (mapped in 1970 by the linguist Ernest Migliazza of the University of Indiana and in 1972 by an aerial-photographic survey of Project RADAM-Brazil) were reduced to eight groups of families ( according to a FUNAI survey of 1977). These families live miserably in a state of terrible health along the edge of the highway. At Km. 145 of the Northern Perimeter Highway, one is able to provide a more detailed description of the health of the Yanomami in the region of the highway. According to the records of a mission that provides medical assistance to the Indians, missionaries gave aid to sick people on 4,596 occasions during the 38 months previous to the arrival of the first highway workers. In the 38 months following the arrival of the highway workers, the number of occasions when medical aid was given rose to 18,488.

Between 1974 and 1977, the number of virulent diseases and their complications increased by approximately eight-fold.

1975-- More than 500 mineral prospectors invaded the Yanomami territory in the region of the Serra das Surucucus, Roraima, an area of major concentration of Indians (76 villages representing 3,800 Yanomami). During this period, more than 150 tons of cassiterite-- a mineral used in the production of tin-- were illegally extracted from this area.

This contact, along with bringing grave prejudice to the health of the Indians and spoiling their patrimony, provoked serious conflicts between Indians and prospectors and caused the death of numerous Indians.

1976- 1977-- Despite a period of relative truce in the invasion of the Yanomami territory, the diseases introduced by outsiders continued to spread in the area occupied by the Indian population. Federal authorities called for evacuation of all prospectors and temporarily stopped work on the Northern Perimeter Highway.

1978-- ~~Companhia Vale do Rio Doce~~ invasion took place in the Yanomami territory.

a.) Companhia Vale do Rio Doce, the state-owned mineral company, signed a contract with FUNAI for the industrial exploration of the cassiterite reserves previously exploited by individual prospectors in the Serra das ~~Surucucus~~ Surucucus. TV Roraima publicly announced that in a short time 300 mineral-company employees were expected to enter the area without any plans aimed at providing indispensable vaccinations to the 3,800 Yanomami of the region.

b.) The federal government also made plans to resume the construction work on the Northern Perimeter Highway and to begin peasant colonization along those stretches of the highway already constructed. Topographic teams contracted by the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) began surveying parts of the Yanomami territory demarcating lots for colonization situated in areas known to be inhabited by Indians.

c.) The President of FUNAI, through a series of 4 administrative decrees, announced that the Yanomami territory would be officially delimited, but in the form of 21 minuscule and scattered areas. These areas would be true "islands" that would dismember the traditional territory of the Yanomami, liberating more than two-thirds of it for colonization and establishing corridors of settlers between the Indian groups. The dismemberment of the Yanomami territory would inevitably cause the ecological destruction of the environment which is indispensable

to the Indians' survival. It would also threaten the cohesion of Indian communities by impeding social and economic exchanges between villages.

From the point of view of health, the ecological exhaustion of the area, the integration of the Indians into the environment of the settler population, and the impossibility of mobility would compromise the survival of the Indians by bringing to them malnutrition, infectious diseases, and a parasitological infestation of their villages.

The solution proposed by FUNAI in delimiting the area of the Yanomami Nation into 21 minuscule "islands" totally contradicts the government agency's own Indian Statute ( see Article 23, Article 2, Item VI, and Article 54 in reference to ecological adaptation, tribal cohesion, and health).

Some Arguments in Favor of the Creation of a Yanomami Park

CONSIDERING that the contact situation is extremely harmful;

CONSIDERING that the delimitation made by FUNAI in the years 1977 and 1978 is obviously inadequate;

CONSIDERING that the means solicited by numerous researchers and entities in the form of 11 different proposals between the years 1968 and 1978 were largely ignored,

the only valid solution to ensure the physical and cultural survival of the Yanomami is the delimitation of their territory in the form of a continuous area of a size proportional to their population and in the juridic figure of an Indian Park.

In fact, the area occupied by the Yanomami, although containing an Indian population of notable size, presents exceptional ecological characteristics that qualify it for the creation of a distinct area of environmental protection.

The Yanomami need an area of approximately 6.4 million hectares in order to maintain their economic, social, and cultural integrity. The evaluation of the natural capacity of the lands of this area carried out by Project RADAM-Brazil demonstrates that:

-- 2.1 million hectares of this area was classified for permanent protection under the Forestry Code; and

-- 2.6 million hectares of this area was recommended to the public power by Project RADAM-Brazil for the creation of environmental-protection areas because of ecological conditions of special interest to preservation ( Project for the creation of 2 National Parks and 7 Ecological Stations).

It is unreasonable to reduce the area occupied by the Yanomami by 75 percent for purposes of realizing agricultural or ranching projects. Furthermore, the proportion of territory occupied by the Yanomami compares favorably to the amount of territory occupied by the regional population and it is in reasonable equilibrium:

-- In Roraima, the Yanomami represent 13.6% of the population and occupy 18.5% of the federal territory;

-- In Amazonas, the Yanomami represent 0.1% of the population of the State of Amazonas and occupy 1.3% of the area.

We hope that this proposal will demonstrate the viability and necessity for the creation of an Indian Park for a large indigenous nation such as the Yanomami who require urgent and special protection.

Note: This document is a summary of a Proposal for the creation of a Yanomami Park being prepared by a committee of concerned Brazilians for transfer to Brazilian officials in April 1979.

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We consider the information here strictly confidential for the time being.  
All support will be welcome as soon as the first notice of the official  
transfer of this Proposal is made in the Brazilian press.

Sao Paulp  
22 February 1979

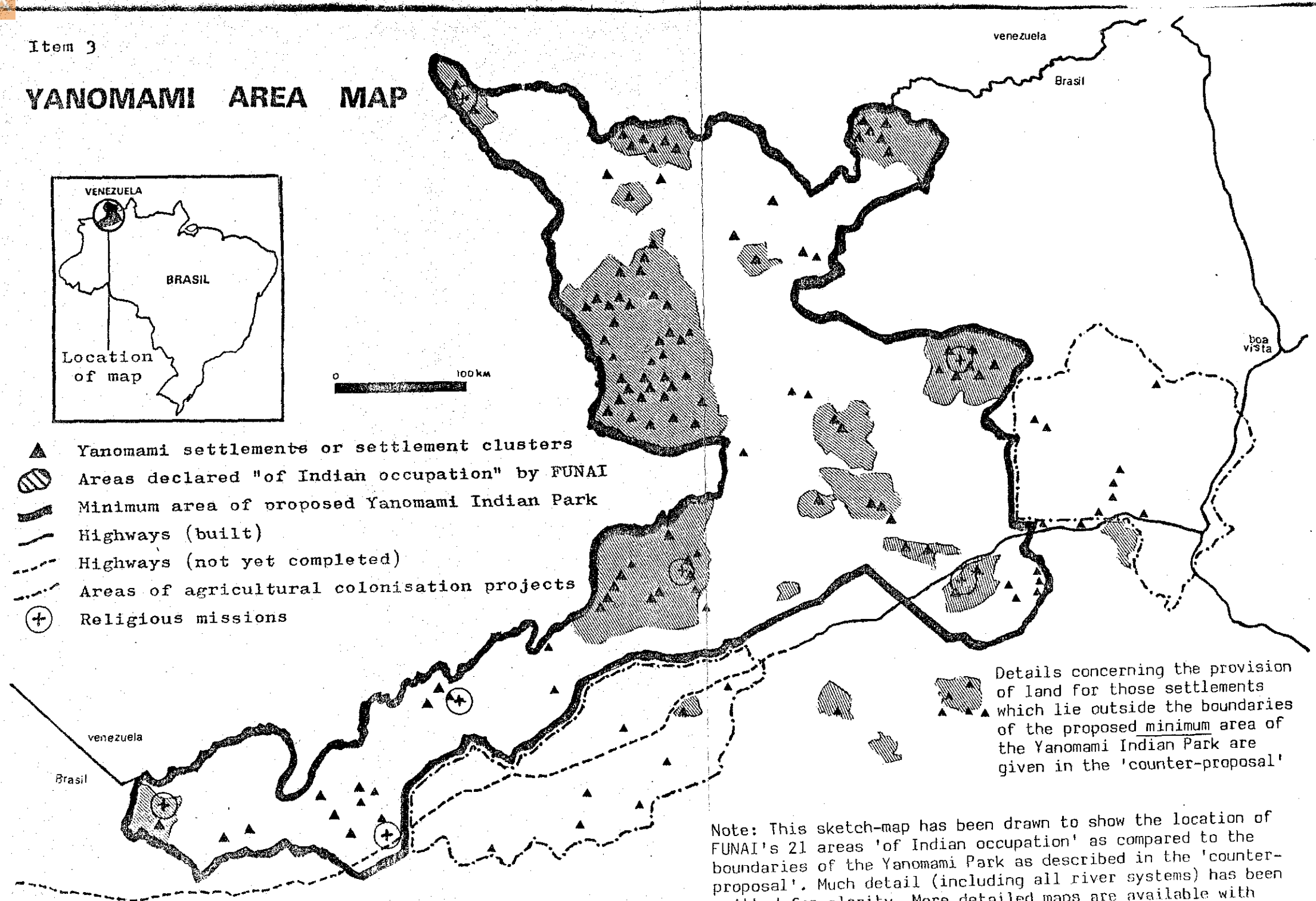
translated by: Anthropology Resource Center  
P.O. Box 90  
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6 April 1979

Item 3

# YANOMAMI AREA MAP



- ▲ Yanomami settlements or settlement clusters
- ▨ Areas declared "of Indian occupation" by FUNAI
- ▭ Minimum area of proposed Yanomami Indian Park
- Highways (built)
- - - Highways (not yet completed)
- - - Areas of agricultural colonisation projects
- ⊕ Religious missions



Details concerning the provision of land for those settlements which lie outside the boundaries of the proposed minimum area of the Yanomami Indian Park are given in the 'counter-proposal'

Note: This sketch-map has been drawn to show the location of FUNAI's 21 areas 'of Indian occupation' as compared to the boundaries of the Yanomami Park as described in the 'counter-proposal'. Much detail (including all river systems) has been omitted for clarity. More detailed maps are available with the full text of the 'counter-proposal'.