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C H A P T E R   T H R E E

Deep History, Cultural Identities, and  
Ethnogenesis in the Southern Amazon

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Ethnogenesis is a widely discussed aspect of cultural change in indigenous Amazonia, generally taken to mean the emergence of a discrete "ethnos" through the mixing of two or more distinctive cultural groups, particularly within the context of European colonialism (Hill 1996). However, little is known in most cases about the actual processes of change, particularly over the long term, including different perspectives on change and continuity operating at multiple scales. Processes of cultural transformation, including major changes within societies and across regional systems, as well as cultural pluralism, are particularly poorly understood for pre-Columbian periods. This is due to a lack of well-documented long-term trajectories of socio-historical change in discrete regions, especially such that can be linked to specific ethnographic cultural groups.

This chapter discusses the southern Amazon periphery and, particularly, the upper Xingú region of the southern Amazon. The Xinguano regional culture has long been known as one of the best cases of ethnogenesis in Amazonia, since peer communities in this regional society speak diverse languages, including Arawak,

Carib, and Tupían languages, yet share the same basic cultural pattern.<sup>1</sup> Recent research demonstrates that, while post-contact changes, particularly during the period from 1700 to 1800, were critical in the genesis of the plural society known today (composed of Arawak, Tupí-Guaraní, or closely related Tupían- and Carib-speaking peoples), pluralism has been part and parcel of Xinguano society and culture throughout much of its long history. This culture history, which extends from before ca. AD 500–800 to present times, is discussed in relation to several major periods, each of which can be seen as representing different aspects of “ethnogenesis”: (1) the early emergence of settled, hierarchical, and regional social formations and the spread of these cultural features, related specifically to ancestors of Arawak and related ethnolinguistic groups, in the lowlands and, particularly, southern Amazon periphery; (2) colonization by early Arawak agriculturalists, ca. AD 500 to 800 or before; (3) development of the regional social formation, characterized by the integration of small territorial polities within a regional peer-polity, by ca. 1250; and (4) post-contact development of the multilingual Xinguano society documented ethnographically, particularly after 1650–1750.

### THE ARAWAK DIASPORA

The dispersal of major language families, notably Arawak, Tupí-Guaraní, and Carib, across tropical lowland South America is a topic that has long interested culture historians. Max Schmidt (1917) was the first to grapple with the question of Arawak distributions and their implications, which historical linguistics and archaeology suggested represented an early dispersal of agriculturalists across the lowlands (Lathrap 1970). The Arawak language family, subdivided into ten major branches, was the most widely distributed language family in 1492, extending from the northern Caribbean, perhaps as far north as Florida, to the southern Amazon and upper Paraguay River and from the western montaña (eastern Andes) to the mouth of the Amazon (Aikhenvald 1999).<sup>2</sup>

Across the Arawak diaspora, certain features are common and suggested to be characteristic of proto-Arawak peoples: a techno-economic system focused on root-crop agriculture and related ceramic artifacts, settled circular plaza village organization and associated plaza ritual, hereditary social hierarchies, and integration within regional societies (Heckenberger 2002, 2005; Hill and Santos-Granero 2002). The Arawak and other linguistic diaspora involved more than a simple “wave of advance” across the lowlands—that is to say, site diffusion through expansion of a single language family—but involved complex patterns of migration, cultural sharing and trait diffusion, and pluralism. This included the development, in late prehistoric times if not before, of regional trade languages, such as in the southern Caribbean and Orinoco (Arawak/Carib), along the Amazon (Kokama and later Nheengatú), and the multiethnic regional system of the Llanos de Mojos (Renard-

Casevitz 2002), as well as complex systems of regional sociopolitical interaction, including elite exchange (Hornborg 2005). In this sense, the choice of the term “diaspora” draws attention to the diversified cultural processes involved, including the historically specific conditions of intersocietal interaction, rather than a simple dispersal or radiation of a singular cultural pattern or bounded, genetically discrete populations.<sup>3</sup>

The early diaspora (ca. 2500–2000 BP) likely involved substantial expansion of actual Arawak speakers across the lowlands. The best and earliest case for this expansion of Arawak-speaking groups, with characteristic ceramics (Saladoid/Barrancoid) and circular plaza communities, is from the Lesser Antilles, based on early dates on the ring village site of Trants on Montserrat by ca. 500 BC, as well as other early examples of circular villages in the Caribbean (Petersen 1996). This site and others of early (Cedrosan) Saladoid in the southern Caribbean suggest an early migration or series of migrations from mainland South America (lower Orinoco), and these people then entered into diverse relations with existing pre-ceramic or early ceramic populations and, in some cases, pluralistic relations with Carib speakers in the southern Lesser Antilles (Wilson 2007).

In the Orinoco, evidence of settlement form associated with earliest Saladoid/Barrancoid peoples is scant, but later groups show the characteristic central plaza orientation. Notably in the Barinas region a sequence of occupations from ca. AD 300 to 1200 are assumed to be ancestral to historically known Arawak speakers in the region, specifically Achagua and Caquetio (Spencer and Redmond 1992; Gassón 2002). In the upper Orinoco and Negro Rivers, Arawak speakers were widely spread if not dominant across the broad northwest Amazon region and were apparently present for several millennia (Zucchi 2002). The central Amazon was also dominated by Arawak speakers historically, with evidence of related circular village and Amazonian Barrancoid (Incised-rim) ceramics at the Osvaldo and Açutuba sites, 200 BC or earlier (Neves 2006; Moraes 2007). Lathrap's (1970) reconstruction of culture history in the upper Amazon represents another case of early plaza-based settlements with Amazonian Barrancoid ceramics, associated with early Arawak speakers (the Hupa-ya complex, ca. 200 BC), followed by a complex history of cultural interaction.

The southern Amazon has a well-known cluster of Arawak-speaking peoples, the southern branch of the family. Steward and Faron (1959) called these societies “theocratic chiefdoms,” although, unlike Schmidt's (1917) idea of an Arawak “high culture,” they attributed highland-lowland diffusion as the major impetus for cultural development of chiefdoms throughout the lowlands. They compared these societies, distributed across the borderlands between the Chaco, central Brazil, and the southern Amazonian forests, with sub-Andean areas in northwestern South America and the circum-Caribbean area, notably coastal areas from Guyana to Amapá, occupied by Arawak-speaking Lokono, Palikur, and related peoples and the



western llanos of Venezuela, dominated by Arawak-speaking Caquetio, Achagua, and related peoples.

### THE SOUTHERN AMAZON PERIPHERY

The southern Amazon transitional forest region extends from the upper Xingú headwaters in the east to the Guaporé in the west. It is a complex ecological transition between the high evergreen forests of Amazonia and the wooded savannas and open forests of the central Brazilian highlands (*cerrado*).<sup>4</sup> The overall topography can be characterized by pockets of flat, low-lying, and tropical forested areas, corresponding to the headwater basins of the major rivers (erosional basin formed on the northern flanks of the central Brazilian plateau, 300–600 meters above sea level, which is predominantly *cerrado*, or wooded savanna and scrub forest, vegetation) historically dominated by Arawak-speaking peoples. These basins are separated by rolling topography and more open *cerrado* forests in highland interfluvies between the headwater basins, dominated by Tupian- and Gê-speaking and other peoples.

The southern branch of the Arawak family can be subdivided into two principal groups, one composed of western and southern languages, notably including Bauré, Mojo (Ignaciano and Trinitario), Terena/Guana, and likely Chané and Apolista, and the Paresí-Xingú subgroup, composed of Paresí/Arití, Salumã/Enawenê-nawê, Saraveka, and upper Xingú languages (Waurá/Mehináku and Yawalapiti) (Aikhenvald 1999). The historical relationships among these languages are not well understood, although preliminary studies suggest significant divergence and, hence, long-term separation, particularly between the two groups (Payne 1991). The Paresí-Xingú subgroup, the focus here, clearly reflects a closely related group of societies, both linguistically and culturally.

Features such as settled agricultural and fishing economies, plaza village organization, and ritual complex, among other things, are shared with other groups in the broad region but are notable as typical of all Arawak groups. This distribution must be considered against the backdrop of European colonialism, decimating many societies and obscuring patterns relative to earlier periods, which includes different strategies and histories relating to Spanish and Portuguese colonial interests, as well as the history of independent nation-states in more recent times, notably the recognition and protection of indigenous groups in the southern Amazon from the 1920s to 1960s. Nonetheless, the distribution of Arawak-speaking peoples and headwater basins is fairly clear, notably in the Xingú (Xinguano), Tapajós (Paresí and Salumã/Enawenê-nawê), middle Guaporé (Saraveka, Pauneca, Bauré), as well as upper Paraguay (Terena/Guana), associated with the critical importance of their agricultural and fishing economies.

In the southern Amazon in Brazil, four primary groups can be noted: the Arawak, Carib, macro-Tupí, and Macro-Gê. Of particular interest here are the

related groups historically glossed as Paresí (e.g., Paresí/Arití, Salumã/Enawenê-nawê, and Saraveka) and upper Xingú peoples, with three primary subgroups, the so-called Paresí subgroup of southern Arawak. These two groups were so close in many respects that Schmidt (1917) referred to Xinguano as a subgroup of what Pires de Campos (1862) had referred to as the "Paresí nation," which forms a nearly continuous distribution in low-lying riverine areas from the upper Xingú to the upper Paraguay and eastern Bolivian lowlands.

Various authors have noted the similarity of cultural features among diverse groups across this broad region as reflecting a common history (Schmidt 1914, 1917; Métraux 1942; Oberg 1949, 1953; Denevan 1966; Oliveira 1968). In the southern Amazon, the best evidence for this is ethnological, a core of shared cultural elements, but archaeology in these areas also reveals common features. Each of these areas is culturally diverse, but Arawak groups show notable similarities in terms of subsistence and technology, social organization, house and settlement form, and ritual. The southern Arawak and related groups are a fascinating example of how related groups expand into areas with select ecological conditions (forested bottomlands) and diverge over time as they orient themselves to distinctive social, ecological, and historical conditions (Heckenberger 1996, 2002, 2005). These characteristics are shared with other languages in the southern Amazon but are far more variable.<sup>5</sup>

In the southern Amazon, early ethnohistoric accounts (1600–1750) describe the Bauré peoples of the middle Guaporé, the Paresí, of the Tapajós River headwaters, and the Terena/Guana peoples of the upper Paraguay River as large, densely settled populations, with complicated settlement patterns, developed agriculture, and regional sociopolitical organization. Settled agricultural economies were supplemented primarily by fishing, as the principal source of animal protein. Fish weirs and traps, dunk baskets, and poisoning are features shared by several groups. In two ethnographic cases least impacted by outside influence, Xinguano and Enawenê-nawê, hunting was extremely limited and fishing provided the almost sole source of animal protein. Of particular interest in these two groups is that the construction of large community fish weirs, also reported archaeologically in the Bauré region of eastern Bolivia (Erickson 2000), was a strictly male activity accompanied by sacred flutes that are not allowed to be seen by women.

Bitter manioc was the primary staple crop among Xinguano and Enawenê-nawê, whose traditional subsistence is better known because of its isolation from Western influences, but this also seems to apply to the Paresí (Campos 1862) and Terena (Oberg 1949). The Paresí are noted to process manioc in a manner similar to that used by Xinguanos, unique in Amazonia today, notably using large, low pots and flat mats, and processed manioc was stored in hardened disks, made from the fine-grained sediment in the base of processing vessels, a technique that is also known among Xinguano peoples, who pulverize these disks and store them in bas-

kets and silos within houses (Schmidt 1917; Dole 1978). The Enawenê-nawê use an hourglass-shaped wooden manioc grater with palm-fiber teeth very similar in form and construction to those of Xinguanos. The twined hammocks made on frames of the Paresí and Xinguanos are likewise almost identical. Notably, basic features of basketry and cordage spin/twist show clear correlations to language group, which is important since these features (especially cordage spin/twist) relate to basic motor habits rather than material practices that are discussed by craftspersons (Petersen, Heckenberger, and Wolford 2001).<sup>6</sup>

Equally telling as general subsistence, as settled agricultural fisherpeoples, settlement patterns are also widely shared across the southern periphery, notably circular plaza villages with central ceremonial structures documented ethnohistorically for the Moxos and Bauré (Block 1994) and Paresí (Campos 1862), and ethnographically among the Enawênê-nawê and Xinguanos. This appears to be a feature of early Arawak proto-culture, as known from earliest plaza villages associated with Saladoid in the Caribbean (Trants) and Amazonian Barrancoid in the central Amazon (Osvaldo) and upper Amazon (Hupa-iyá), 500–200 BC. Associated with the central plaza organization, these groups share a plaza ritual complex, referred to by Steward and Faron (1959) as a “temple-idol-priest” complex characteristic of the “theocratic chiefdoms” of the southern Amazon region.

The central ceremonial structure (“temple”) is another feature that links these groups. While a central structure or “men’s house” is common among other circular plaza groups in the southern Amazon periphery, the nature of the house, as a repository for masks/flutes (“idols”), is more exclusive to Arawak groups, which is the basis for exclusion of women, who are not permitted to see certain flutes. The ball game is a commonly shared feature of the Arawak groups, but not widely shared among other circular plaza communities in the southern Amazon. Roads and integration of networks of communities are known archaeologically among Bauré and Xinguanos and ethnohistorically among the Paresí (1720s). The Arawak societies, in general, show clear hereditary rank distinctions between chiefs or nobles (“priests”) and commoners, with achieved prominence based on warfare, shamanism, and ritual specialization, and a subaltern or even incipient “slave” class, often composed of foreigners. Persons of chiefly rank are marked with special houses; body adornments, including the yellow feathered sun diadems made with harpy eagle feathers, shell and stone valuables, special wooden objects, and other things, as well as bodily dispositions in ritual and domestic spaces.

Pires de Campos’s (1862:443–444) description of the “kingdom of the Paresí” in the 1720s is particularly revealing:

These people exist in such vast quantity, that it is not possible to count their settlements or villages, many times in one day’s march one passes ten or twelve villages, and in each one there are ten to thirty houses, and in these houses

there are some that are thirty to forty paces across . . . agriculture is based on manioc . . . their weapons are bows and arrows . . . [they] also have idols [that] have a separate house with many figures of varied forms, in which only men are allowed to enter . . . even their roads they make very straight and wide, and they keep them so clean that one will not even find a fallen leaf . . . [they] make objects of stone like jasper in the form of the Malta cross, an insignia only used by chiefs.

Campos goes on to note that the “kingdom is so large and extensive that we know not where it ends; it is very full of people and very fertile due to the richness of its lands.” What he describes is a large nation of related peoples who were settled across the bottomlands of the Tapajós River headwaters. His description refers to a time when peoples across the southern periphery had already witnessed significant depopulation from disease, and slaving, missions, and colonization had further decimated regional populations (Denevan 1966, 1992).

Linguistic data suggest a fairly ancient split between eastern and western groups of the southern branch of the Arawak family, while relationships within each group are closer, particularly between Paresí and related languages (Enawenê-nawê and Saraveka) and Xinguanos languages (Payne 1991; Aikhenvald 1999; Facundes 2002). In the upper Xingú, extant Arawak speakers represent the remnants of diverse dialects but can be divided into a southern (Mehinákú/Waurá) and northern (Yawalapiti) language. The Xinguanos regional cultural tradition shares basic characteristics with other Arawak-speaking populations in the southern Amazon, notably Paresí, Bauré, Terena, and related groups, which suggests that the earliest ancestors of the contemporary plural society were Arawak groups who colonized the region from the west.

#### DEEP HISTORY IN THE UPPER XINGÚ, CA. AD 800 TO 1650

The upper Xingú is the farthest eastern extent of the Arawak speakers in the southern Amazon. It preserves a sequence of occupations from early agricultural Arawak-speaking groups who colonized the region before AD 500–800 to contemporary Xinguanos peoples (Heckenberger 2005; Fausto, Franchetto, and Heckenberger 2008). The upper Xingú is perhaps the best context in Amazonia to apply direct historical comparisons that span from prehistory to the present, as Xinguanos peoples preserve traditional subsistence, settlement, and land-use patterns; sociopolitical institutions; and ideology, and it is one of the best-known examples of pre-Columbian complex societies in the broad region.

Archaeological studies (1992–2005) have concentrated on the traditional territory of the Kuikuro Amerindian community, an area that covers some 1,200 km<sup>2</sup> (see Heckenberger 2005; Heckenberger et al. 2008). The three primary Kuikuro villages form part of the larger Xinguanos society, today composed of nine subgroups



(three Arawak-, four Carib-, and two Tupí-speaking groups), living in fourteen villages of almost 2,500 people, within the Parque Indígena do Xingú (PIX). Based on these studies, the cultural sequence can be broken into four distinctive periods, representing an evolving regional cultural tradition: (1) early occupations by Arawak agriculturalists, who colonized the region from the west (likely the broad Paresí area) by ca. AD 500–800 or before; (2) a “galactic period,” from ca. 1250 to 1650 or soon thereafter, marked by networked clusters of villages and towns, representing small territorial polities;<sup>7</sup> (3) a proto-historical period, dominated by adaptation to the indirect and direct effects of Western expansion, from ca. 1650 to 1884, and the development of the pluri-lingual Xinguano society; and (4) the ethnographic period, from 1884.

The formation of the plural Xinguano society has interested ethnologists since Karl von den Steinen’s expeditions in the 1880s, but there is general agreement from archaeology, ethnohistory, and oral history that progenitors of the regional culture were Arawak (see Heckenberger 2005:152–162; Fausto, Franchetto, and Heckenberger 2008), including, as noted above, the marked similarities with Paresí and related groups. It is unclear when exactly early ancestors of the Xinguano cultural tradition colonized the region, although radiocarbon dates from intact occupational deposits document that by AD 500–800, early plaza settlements had been established in the study area, near the eastern boundary of the tradition.<sup>8</sup> It is unclear whether these colonizing populations entered the area when Carib populations were already present or whether the Carib entered the area after the Arawak groups, but by AD 1500 both were present in the upper Xingú basin and enmeshed in an integrated cultural system into which later Tupían immigrants were integrated.

In the study area, these earlier occupations underlie major earthworks constructed ca. 1200 to 1300. This represents a major reconstitution of the overall regional settlement system, including earlier earthworks, whereby settlements were formally linked into galactic patterns of nodes and roads across the area through the construction and/or elaboration of linear village earthworks. The galactic period is characterized by integration of regional social clusters into small polities, organized and planned within small, well-defined territories and within a regional peer-polity that encompasses the majority of the forested upper Xingú basin. The regional society was minimally spread over an area of 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> in late prehistory based on known archaeological distributions.

Twenty-four residential sites have been identified in the Kuikuro territory. Most or all of these were occupied and interconnected in late prehistoric times (AD 1250–1650) and were organized into two integrated and ranked clusters of multiple (eight to twelve) settlements. The establishment of discrete regional polities in a late prehistoric peer-polity system marked another era of ethnogenesis, as formerly more autonomous groups became integrated in territorial polities. The

actual planning that went into these regional constructions is well-known from the Xingú. There are large walled towns, 15–50 ha, small non-walled villages (less than 15 ha), as well as short-term hamlets. In galactic clusters, both internal and external relations were hierarchical. Internally, the plaza ritual complex is a nested hierarchy of plazas and, by extension, the living descendants of elite ancestors. In other words, the ancestors buried at small (non-walled) communities were encompassed by medium and large communities, and all were subordinate to the ritual political centers of each cluster, the “theater capitals” of these small polities.

In prehistoric times, “polity” rather than “society” may be the appropriate term, since it was not a confederation of peer villages but instead a confederation of peer clusters. Roads and settlement nodes, marked by large ceremonial plazas surrounded by residential areas, are archaeologically visible as linear earthworks in the form of curbs and ditches. Settlement hierarchies were defined by an exemplary center and four major satellites and smaller peripheral plaza settlements and hamlets within territories of approximately 250 km<sup>2</sup> or more. My educated guess is that clusters ranged from under 1,000 to over 2,500 persons. There were at least fifteen, and likely more, over the territory of the Xinguano nation in 1492.

The domesticated landscapes of the upper Xingú basin provide a particularly striking example of the self-organized built environments of the southern borderlands. Descendant Xinguano populations, well described since the 1880s, continue to practice basic cultural patterns documented from prehistoric times, notably in terms of techno-economy, house and village spatial organization, and general settlement locations (Heckenberger 2005; Fausto, Franchetto, and Heckenberger 2008). The galactic clusters apparently continued well after initial European contact in South America, but archaeological evidence from Nokugu and oral history suggest that significant change occurred between ca. 1600 and 1700, which suggests abandonment of major earthworks or settlements at about this time. Of note, Pires de Campos’s description of Paresí settlement patterns in the 1720s does not mention palisade walls and indicates settlements much smaller than those associated with late prehistoric (galactic period) settlements in the Xingú. In fact, it would make sense as a description of declining populations between galactic period polities and the heavily depopulated settlement patterns described in the upper Xingú in the late 1800s.

In late prehistoric times, several sites at the eastern boundaries of the two galactic clusters date to the 1500s and 1600s and relate to the Carib-speaking groups who occupied the area in historical times, as described in oral history from the distant past (Franchetto 1992; Basso 1995). What is unclear is whether these Carib groups were the autochthones of the Xingú basin, at least in the eastern areas, when the Arawak-speaking groups colonized the core area of the basin, or whether they moved into the area afterward. In other words, Arawak/Carib pluralism may well have been characteristic of the late pre-Columbian peer polity, with individual

polities composed of both diverse Arawak and Carib dialect groups. By the mid-1700s, these groups expanded west into areas formerly occupied by Arawak groups. At about this time, the Tupí-Guaraní-speaking Kamayurá appeared in the region, first in the eastern headwaters of the Suia Missu River, near the eastern headwaters of Lake Tafununo, and later at the mouth of the river at Diauarum, an area formerly occupied by large ditched villages with ceramics quite similar to those found in early Xinguano deposits.

### CONSTRUCTING PLURALISM

Early proto-historic (1650–1750) occupations are only vaguely remembered in oral traditions, which describe walled communities, but do not situate galactic clusters or the major walled towns in local histories, except as very ancient settlements viewed as components of “dawn time” villages, before or at about the same time as human groups, including Xinguano peoples, were born. Oral tradition recounts several major subgroups: Mehináku, Waurá, and Carib groups (four primary dialects), referring to the autochthonous headwater groups, and the Yawalapiti, who represent a northern complex that moved from their original homeland in the upper Xingú River proper. Later immigrant groups, notably Tupían peoples (ancestral to Kamayurá and Auetí), arrived before 1750. Post-Columbian changes, including depopulation and reduced territory due to outside encroachment, were driven by the expanding colonial frontier beginning in the late 1600s. By the mid-1700s, Xinguano peoples became more concentrated in the central portions of the basin, roughly from the confluence of the Xingú River and just south to the southern boundaries of the PIX, which represents a substantial reduction of occupied areas to the north (below the confluence, formerly occupied by ancestors of Yawalapiti) and south among Carib-speaking Xinguanos, as well as western areas.

Regional ethnohistory shows diverse migrations and episodes of ethnogenesis as new groups entered the basin in response to Western frontier expansion over five centuries, which helped fill the gap of declining population, but by 1950 the regional population was a mere 500, perhaps less than 5 percent of its pre-Columbian size (Franchetto and Heckenberger 2001). Population collapse resulted in a process of landscape “fallowing,” as settlement after settlement was merged and whole areas were abandoned. It is an exemplary case of what a large, settled pre-Columbian polity looks like after five centuries of decline, but remarkably many basic cultural patterns have been resilient through the time, such as the circular plaza village form and general landscape orientations.

In regional systems, the upper Xingú was an enclave, which, although subject to several early *bandeirante* expeditions in the eighteenth century (Franchetto 1992), remained isolated from colonial activities. In part, this was due to the presence of fairly bellicose peoples surrounding the basin, including Gê-speaking groups to

the east and south and northern Tupí-Guaraní groups. This notably included the southern Kayapó and Xavante on the margins of the Brazilian *cerrado*, the route of primary access by *bandeiras*. Not surprisingly, the area was a refuge for diverse populations during the period from 1700 to 1900.

Arawak populations descended from the galactic clusters retained essential characteristics of Xinguano culture, including settled agricultural lifeways, fishing, plaza ritual complex, and regional social organization, which newcomer groups adopted as they became integrated in the regional society. Proto-historic (ca. 1650–1884) occupations are poorly known but can be considered transitional between the well-established galactic clusters and the reconstituted Xinguano society known from 1884 onward, which had lost the tightly integrated and highly planned aspects of earlier regional clusters and entered a period of major depopulation, geographic compression, and ethnogenesis. In early late Xinguano times, coincident with the historical period, the movements of people into the Xingú are well-known, including Tupían groups, most notably the Kamayurá, Auetí, and others, as well as Carib-speaking (non-Xinguano) Bakairí (early 1800s), Suyá (mid-1800s), Trumai (mid-late 1800s), and other, later groups.

Roughly 250–300 years seems to be the historical “cutoff” for full integration into the regional society, which relates to sponsoring chiefly mortuary feasts and maintaining certain cultural values, bodily dispositions and treatment, and technologies (such as flutes and masks) (see Basso 1995, this volume). The critical component of Xinguano identity is adherence to the plaza ritual complex and associated political economy, but basic subsistence patterns (fishing, manioc, and *pequi*), domestic architecture and social organization, and general animistic beliefs are also important elements of regional cultural identity. Intergroup interaction is choreographed against the built environment of major ritual, including ritual participation in other political groups, as well as distinctions of minor ritual within individual communities.

Today, daughter communities, which have split over the past decade or so as regional population has rebounded, celebrate the primary mortuary feasts (*kuarup*) in parent communities, but over time these often develop, or at least can develop, into independent ritual entities. However, chiefly discourses, including chiefs’ lists and shared names and places that bridge to present communities, referring to locations occupied no later than the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, express continuity between the galactic clusters and groups of people present in the historic period Xingú. Population compression continued through the mid-twentieth century, but more recent subgroups, which moved into the area after 1800, later moved out of the area (Bakairí, Trumai, Suyá, among others).

Hostilities between established and newcomer groups were not uncommon, as described in oral histories (e.g., Basso 1995), but ultimately accommodation of diverse groups was achieved, supporting Schmidt’s observations regarding acculturation of



foreign groups by Arawak groups generally. In the upper Xingú case, in contrast to Schmidt's general model of cultural conquest, it was cultural choice rather than conquest or incorporation of captives that lay at the root of cultural pluralism. In the southern Amazon, the relationship between Arawak and other groups is complex and ancient but appears, at least in the case of the Bakairí and upper Xingú Carib, to have been one of symbiosis rather than acculturation until after 1492 in most cases.

In the regional system, this was characterized by the centripetal force created by large-scale depopulation in the Xingú and the centrifugal force created by colonial centers, pushing indigenous groups into isolated refuge areas. This resulted in greater social and cultural sharing and, ultimately, incorporation in the regional cultural system, which was further impelled by population loss in individual villages. Three conditions prevailed throughout the colonial period: (1) the dominant "Xinguano" cultural pattern established during the preceding prehistoric period; (2) the presence of foreign, "wild Indian" (non-Xinguano) groups, geographically and socially peripheral to the Xinguano groups, perched at the margins of the basin; and (3) territorial compression across the region and depopulation in the Xingú, progressively drawing groups into the existing Xinguano society (these groups include the pre-1500 incorporation of the ancestors of Xinguano Carib-speaking groups and the post-1700 incorporation of Kamayurá and Auetí and the partial incorporation of Trumai, Bakairí, Suyá, Yaruma, and other groups).

Incorporation of outsiders into the Xinguano system involved more than acceptance of outsider groups as social kin or affines through social interaction, or as a subaltern class of persons, as suggested by Schmidt (1917). In the upper Xingú, immigrant groups retained their cultural identities as distinctive language groups, which is the primary distinguishing characteristic of Xinguano subgroups today. Newcomers became Xinguano but also had to be accepted as "us" by Xinguano communities. Sustained interaction, exchange, intermarriage, and visitation provide entrée into the regional system, but what distinguishes Xinguanos from non-Xinguanos is not the degree of exchange but the degree to which groups share underlying systems of meanings, values, and practices (such as nonaggression, generosity, diet of fish and manioc, fixed circular plaza villages, and associated plaza rituals, among other things).

In fact, precisely because Xinguano society is necessarily regional in nature, this meant that established communities suffering from severe depopulation may have been especially willing to assimilate newcomers. The centrifugal forces created by Luso-Brazilian colonialism, including the demographic vacuum created by catastrophic depopulation, combined with the centripetal acculturative forces of Xinguano society—a force that Max Schmidt long ago noted was common among Arawakan-speaking peoples—created conditions for the ethnogenesis of the pluri-ethnic pattern documented ethnographically in the upper Xingú.

## DISCUSSION

The upper Xingú provides unique insights into ethnicity in Amazonia, both past and present. It bespeaks that different approaches to deep history and the intersection of archaeological, linguistic, and ethnological datasets reveal different patterns, or identities, relative to different temporal and spatial scales. It also shows the interplay of phylogenetic and reticulate phenomena. Rather than a simple either/or contrast between an essentialist and anti-essentialist or constructivist view, the present case suggests long-term identities and essential differences at varied scales of analysis. In other words, rather than one essentialist perspective, different types of essentialism are deployed relative to different spatial and temporal scales, such that Amazonian peoples, language groups, culture areas or smaller regions, communities, and persons are seen to share certain basic features. To this we might add the application of analogies from the present, which are seen to apply, based on historical or uniformitarian principles, to the past, which is indeed another form of essentialism. The task, therefore, is not to determine whether one or another perspective is essentialist, usually for the purpose of general critique rather than a nuanced engagement with specific contextualized cases, but instead to see how commonalities and essential differences are apparent at one scale or another, how these perspectives relate to one another, and how these, in turn, reflect views on multiscale and dimensional sociohistorical entities or identities.

At the broadest level of abstraction, Amazonia as a distinctive culture area is often characterized in terms of an essential difference between Amazonian and Andean peoples or perspectives or, more generally, according to the classic distinction between "cold" and "hot," "primitive" and historical societies. Thus, basic patterns and properties from one region or time period are applied to others, within the broadly defined context of "tropical forest culture." These differences represent cultural and sociohistorical outcomes and alternatives, rather than strict ecological or evolutionary imperatives, but obviously gloss over substantial variation at smaller scales of analysis, which can in discrete subregions be viewed as essential differences along diverse ecological, social, political, and symbolic dimensions, the most notable of which is the dichotomy between floodplains and uplands. It should be noted that such differences can be recognized within smaller regions and social formations, and indeed, some aspects of these differences can be linked to distinctive strategies of communities and persons.

Within Amazonia we can note a difference between settled and regional social formations, some of which were organized in hierarchical political organizations, and more mobile, egalitarian or heterarchical, and autonomous social formations. To some degree this difference between settled riverine agriculturalists and upland societies correlates crudely with essential differences between different sociohistorical macro-groups, that is, language groups and culture areas. The basic premise is

that early proto-Arawak and proto-Tupí-Guaraní (and likely proto-Carib) represent distinctive cultural systems—a difference between settled agriculturalists oriented to rivers, associated with the former, and the more mobile, less focused on agriculture and fishing, and upland in orientation, related to the latter. These groups began spreading sometime in the third millennium before present and expanded rapidly across the lowlands. The Arawak diaspora, in particular, may have reached its near-maximal extent already by 2000 BP, during and particularly after which cultural groups in discrete regions developed into plural and sometimes multilingual systems, as characterized many areas in historic times. This dichotomy obviously glosses over substantial variation and the unique social and ecological conditions of individual regions.

In the southern Amazon periphery, this pattern of settled riverine Arawak in headwater basins, one of the last prongs of the diaspora, surrounded by upland macro-Tupí and Macro-Gê peoples, is particularly clear. In this sense, the history of the Xingú extends deep into the roots of Amazonian prehistory, tied to large-scale historical entities and processes associated with the lowlands' major linguistic diaspora and essential cultural differences between them, including regimes of dwelling, sociality, and worldviews. Paresí and Xinguano Arawak and closely related populations of the southern Amazonian periphery settled the riverine bottomlands of the Xingú and Tapajós headwater basins, in the low-lying Paresí plateau, as well as those of the upper Paraguay (Terena/Guana) and Llanos de Mojos (Bauré, Mojos, Chané). Diverse processes were involved, but the cohesion of Arawak speakers in this area suggests actual population movements and development of regional language clusters, glossed as the Paresí and Xinguano nations. These groups entered into diverse social relations with surrounding groups and witnessed substantial internal transformation, such as the rise of the late prehistoric peer polities of the upper Xingú.

This can be characterized as an essential difference between Xinguano peoples as a group and outsiders, but also between settled territorial, hierarchical polities in late prehistoric to early proto-historic times and more mobile upland groups. In the Xingú itself, the essential difference is between aboriginal Xinguano peoples, who in prehistory appear to have been a relatively homogenous Arawak group but with relations to peripheral groups, notably Carib speakers (upper Xingú Carib, Bakairí), and diverse later (post-1700s) others. A similar pattern can be noted among the Paresí, who formed an internally diverse but linguistically coherent group of Arawak speakers, with diverse relations with groups on the peripheries (Bakairí, Umotina, Bororo, Erikpatsa, Nambiquara, among others). The upper Xingú, in particular, provides one of the clearest historical cases of ethnogenesis, highlighting the fact that identity is not fixed but constructed through social interaction. What is perhaps even more remarkable, however, is that during various episodes of "ethnogenesis," including early colonization and cultural mixing, late prehistoric

peer-polity formation, and post-contact cultural amalgamation and pluralism, basic elements of the Xinguano cultural pattern have persisted for over a millennium in the area, some of which preserve traces of patterns broadly shared across the southern periphery and Arawak diaspora.

## NOTES

1. In contemporary Xinguano society, major subdivisions are based on linguistic distinctiveness, including language family (Arawak, Carib, Tupí-Guaraní) and dialect differences within languages, with each major dialect group forming a politically autonomous or "peer" community within the broader Xinguano society. Several dialect groups are composed of two or more villages, such as the Kuikuro (upper Xingú Carib), with whom the author has lived for over two years over the period 1992–2007, although there is one politically dominant community. Of particular note, linguistic distinctiveness is the primary means of differentiating subgroups, although over time there has been a "creolization" of cultural practices (see Basso, this volume).

2. Here I follow the suggestion of an Arawak language family with uncertain supra-family affiliations (Aikhenvald 1999) rather than the idea of an Arawak trunk or stock, broken into Arawakan and Maipuran families. Arawak in this sense corresponds to the Maipuran family (Payne 1991), and Aruán, Guahibo, and other languages are not grouped with Arawak/Maipuran into a supra-family group. Proto-Arawak here refers to early members of the Arawak language family. The origin region of proto-Arawak is not well established, although three primary areas have been suggested: the southwestern Amazon, the western Amazon, and the northwest Amazon.

3. The use of the term "diaspora" diverges from widespread use of the term, ultimately derived from Greek for dispersion, such as Clifford's (1994) definition as "expatriate minority communities." It follows usage in other world contexts for the early dispersions of linguistically related groups, such as Austronesian and Bantu languages in tropical regions (e.g., Simanjuntek, Pojoh, and Hisyan 2006). It is important to emphasize that the idea of an Arawak dispersal or "diaspora," as I have proposed it, does not envision ethnolinguistic groups as bounded, genetically distinct populations or that migration was the only factor involved in the widespread sharing of cultural patterns, including words and gestures, or technologies of the body, although diverse aspects of migration were critical, particularly in early diaspora times, roughly 2500–2000 BP (Heckenberger 1996, 2002, 2005:48–49).

4. The Pantanal, Llanos de Mojos, and Chaco are low-lying seasonally inundated wooded savanna in western and southwestern portions of the region.

5. Notably, the macro-Tupí and Macro-Gê groups that most obviously share these cultural features are precisely those that live in areas adjacent to the Arawak speakers, such as Mundurucú, Tapirapé, Kayapó, Karajá, and Bororo, which may represent trait diffusion from Arawak groups to these others through diverse processes of cultural interaction.

6. Cordage spin/twist is divided into S-spin/twist, or slanted down to the right, which is typical of Arawak-speaking peoples, and Z-spin/twist, or slanted down to the left, which is common among Tupí-, Carib-, and Gê-speaking peoples (Petersen, Heckenberger, and Wolford 2001).



7. As described in more detail elsewhere (Heckenberger 2005; Heckenberger et al. 2008), galactic clusters refer to integrated regional networks of settlements that "orbit" around an exemplary plaza settlement, four major nodes (30–50 ha) positioned roughly equidistant to the north-south and east-west of the exemplary center, which defines the core area of a territorial polity with peripheries defined by smaller plaza settlements (less than 10 ha).

8. Several radiocarbon dates from disturbed contexts suggest even earlier occupations, but the cultural affiliation of these is unknown.

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C H A P T E R   F O U R

Deep Time, Big Space: An Archaeologist Skirts the Topic at Hand

Warren DeBoer

Polarities are falsehoods that focus debate. At the risk of losing focus, this chapter scouts a middle ground between so-called primordialist and instrumentalist views of ethnic groups. The primordialist argues for deep-seated continuity of the kind implied by the continental terms *Bauplan* and *Volksgeist*, the *longue durée*, and those enduring dispositions of *habitus* and *hexis*—an argot referring to what Latour (2007) dubs the ethers of social science. In contrast, instrumentalists (many of whom unknowingly employ a primordialist vocabulary) emphasize the mercurial and fleeting character of ethnic identities as they are asserted, resisted, or otherwise strategically reworked by social agents. Running against primordial fixity and the shackling burden of history, the instrumentalist party probably would win in an election and would certainly carry the vote of the American academy. The actual world of ethnic phenomena ranges between these opposing caricatures.

Dealing with palpable traces of both process and event, archaeology ought to play a role in this discussion, albeit in the idiom of material culture. Certainly the archaeologist is accustomed to enduring traditions. It is such continuity that makes