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Indigenous knowledge and archaeological science

The challenges of public archaeology in the Reserva Uaçá[1]

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ABSTRACT
The move towards public archaeology counsels archaeologists to work participatively, placing a high priority on educational and developmental activities with local communities in order to share the means of production of historical knowledge and promote the conservation of heritage. Describing key moments in an archaeological project which took these principles as starting points in an indigenous peoples' reserve in northern Brazil, the paper contends that public archaeology is comprised not of a series of goals and activities additional to the task of archaeology, but rather that public archaeology constitutes a wholly different approach to the generation of

research questions and the production of knowledge. Examining assumptions about empowerment, consultation, heritage, historiography, strategic essentialism and ethics as they affected decisions in the field, the case study demonstrates that, while challenging, participatory research holds significant benefits for the production of knowledge.

KEYWORDS
Brazil ● indigenous historiography ● Palikur ● participatory research ● public archaeology

INTRODUCTION

At the Fourth World Archaeological Congress (WAC4) held in Cape Town in 1999, a strong case was made that archaeologists should work in ways that might assist communities associated with their work. At the WAC4 Executive Meeting it was recommended that, among other things, WAC should engage communities in the production of archaeological knowledge. Proposed strategies included public education; professional education and training and action research with the intention of exploring issues relating to conservation and preservation; the management of archaeological resources to ameliorate poverty; and debating the ethical and epistemological frameworks as well as philosophies and principles of archaeological practices (Hassan, 1999). Collectively, these strategies form what has become known as public archaeology.

Expressed in the abstract, the above appears a reasonable set of goals that can, with sufficient commitment, be included in the pursuit of archaeological and ethnographic enquiry. Seeking to explore post-colonial research methodologies, we set out to establish a public archaeology project in an indigenous area in northern Brazil and sought to implement many of the kinds of goals that were under discussion at WAC4. During 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork combined with 2 months of site-surveying and archaeological excavation, however, the complexity of turning ideals into practice is described well in Johannes Fabian's words in *Anthropology with an Attitude*: '. . . the foremost problem . . . [is] the meeting – I prefer confrontation – of kinds of praxis, ours and theirs' (Fabian, 2001: 4).

This article describes key moments in the confrontation of practices in an indigenous people's reservation known as the Área Indígena do Uacá, in the Brazilian state of Amapá on the coast between the Amazon River and French Guiana. The argument we wish to make is that public archaeology is comprised not of a series of goals and activities additional to the task of archaeology, but rather that public archaeology constitutes a

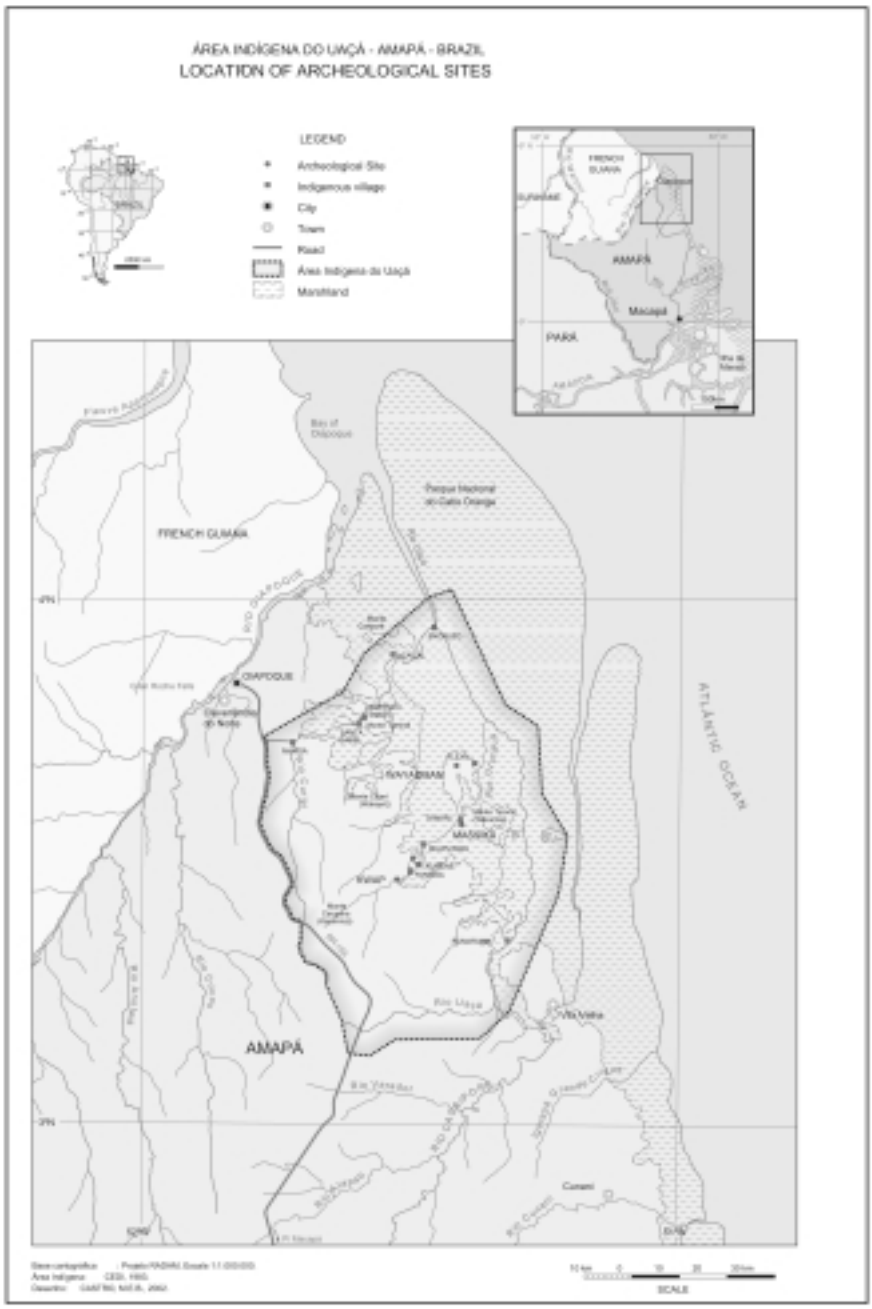

Figure 1 Map of study area

Figure 2 Public archaeology: One of the anthropomorphic urns in the Aristé style that was found by hunters in the region in 2000

different approach to the production of knowledge and one that has benefits for local and scholarly communities alike. This article aims to demonstrate that when public archaeology emerges from the interests of communities and not solely from communities of scholars, alternative research questions can develop and practices in the field are reshaped in the direction of mutuality rather than control. This has significant benefits for the production of knowledge (Funari, 1994; Kelly and Gordon, 2002; Shanks and McGuire, 1996) in that the resultant levels of trust open up a wider range of knowledge about sites; the environmental skills of people who have learned from the knowledge of many generations can add significantly to the way one reads a site and oral tradition can greatly enrich understanding of the meanings of places. Moreover, by rethinking the range of products of research, the definition and conservation of heritage can be articulated in ways that may have more local value, which ultimately is the only reason that sites in the jungle will have any protection at all.

None of this was easy to implement: the task of understanding and exposing the relations of power in the production, circulation and consumption of archaeologically-produced knowledge requires a willingness to engage with that which is by definition contested. Some of the issues we encountered (and discuss later) include the reality that empowerment activities will always be unevenly implemented; that archaeological work almost inevitably promotes the commodification of artefacts; that some

historical mythologies about particular sites would make participatory archaeology difficult, if not impossible. Self-consciously working in the domain of the politics of knowledge engendered many inner struggles as we began to question every aspect of the way in which we were working. Donna Haraway describes the process well: 'claims that all knowledge is socially constructed lead to a kind of epistemological electro-shock therapy, which far from ushering us into the high stakes tables of the game of contesting public truths, lays us out on the table with self-induced multiple personality disorder' (Haraway, 1991: 186). Yet only through confronting different practices – theirs and ours – could we proceed and, difficult as it might have been, that confrontation was ultimately what produced the qualitatively different knowledge that we believe emerges from participatory work. To cite Fabian again: 'There is an agonistic connotation to 'confrontation' that we need to maintain for at least two reasons: (a) to counteract the anodyne, apolitical, conciliatory aura that surrounds 'communication' (and for that matter 'dialogue') and (b) to indicate the 'move toward ethnographic knowledge' can initiate a process only once it encounters resistance in the form of incomprehension, denial, rejection, or, why not, simply Otherness' (Fabian, 2001: 25).

Public archaeology as a methodology generated an engagement in the field that, while tough, was more productive than an alternative could have been. While the question of ethical practice in post-colonial archaeology came into a relief that was sharp enough to be uncomfortable, perhaps, as Martin Hall suggests in a paper on the topic, the resolution of many of the dilemmas we faced is necessarily situational (Hall, 2003).

BACKGROUND

The understanding of the impact of European colonisation on Amerindian pre-colonial patterns of socio-political organisation is one of the most important topics of contemporary Amazonian archaeology. Indigenous oral tradition and early historical reports both attest that, during the last 500 years, native Amazonian societies were deeply transformed, if not exterminated, due to slavery, diseases or displacement, but the archaeological data on which to base such claims is still ambiguous (Brochado, 1980; Lathrap, 1968, 1970; E. Neves, 1999b; W. Neves, 1988; Roosevelt, 1991). Given such a picture, it is important to identify areas in the Amazon where there is a minimum of discontinuity between contemporary societies and pre-colonial occupations, as they can be understood through archaeological fieldwork. In situations such as those, archaeological information can be combined with ethnography and Indigenous oral tradition (E. Neves, 1999a,b; Posey, 1994; Wüst, 1994).

The Uaçá Indian Reservation seems to be one of the few areas of the

Brazilian Amazon where a task such as this could be accomplished. Early historical reports indicate that the Oiapoque and Uaçá basins were occupied, in the sixteenth century, by the ancestors of some of the contemporary Indigenous societies who are settled in the region (Arnaud, 1971, 1984; Coudreau, 1886; Gallois and Ricardo, 1983; Grenand and Grenand, 1987; Harcourt, 1613; Keymis, 1596; Nimuendajú, 1926; Williamson, 1923). Among these are a group known contemporarily as the Palikur.

Archaeological work in the region was previously conducted by Hilbert (1957) based on the work of Meggers and Evans (1957) and preliminary explorations by Goeldi (1900), Nimuendajú (1926) and Nordenskiöld (1930). More recently, Rostain (1994a,b) has studied the material record of indigenous settlements on the French-Guianan side.

Palikur populations along the Urucauá River in the Uaçá basin had been decimated by the mid-1920s when, according to Curt Nimuendajú's records, only 238 survived (Nimuendajú, 1926: 22). Four hundred years earlier, Palikur Indians had been numerous enough at the mouth of the Amazon for the early Spanish explorer Vincente Yañez Pinzon to testify, according to a deposition made to a Spanish court in 1513, that in 1500 he found the lengthy coastline west of the Amazon to have been known to Indians as 'the Province of the Paricura' (Williams, 1975: 6, citing D'Anghiera, 1612: 85–6). Based on this information, many early maps labelled it thus. Indeed, the Amazon River itself was called the 'Rio Paricura' by one of Pinzon's companions who testified to this in court in 1515 (Williams, 1975: 6, citing De Navarrete, 1954: 321). Ethnohistorical research by Grenand and Grenand (1987) paints a picture of a populous alliance of clans that consolidated under the name of Palikur; these settlements stretched the length of what is today the state of Amapá and adjoining French Guiana.

Contemporary Palikur speakers number approximately 2000, with approximately one half living in semi-urban settlements in French Guiana and the other half resident in villages along the upper reaches of the Urucauá River on the Brazilian side of the border: a landscape that is regarded as home-land and heart-land. With such small numbers, the Palikur language remains a vulnerable one. Literacy levels are relatively good, particularly among the younger generation, although since schools are in Portuguese on the Brazilian side and French in French-Guiana, few can write in their first language.

Near the confluence of the Urucauá and the Uaçá is the small village of Flexa, home to people self-identified as Galibi-Marworno Indians, but who have been considered by some Palikur as 'the false Galibi' (Passes, 2002) who speak a French Creole. Some Palikur have settled in Flexa but little Palikur is spoken in the village despite the dominance of the Palikur language on the Urucauá. Palikur numerical dominance is supplemented by a notion shared by many that to be a real Indian is to speak the language of one's forebears. On the rivers east and west of the Urucauá, however,

Palikur speakers are outnumbered by Galibi-Marworno living on the upper reaches of the Uaçá and the presence of several Karipuna settlements on the Curipi River. Soccer, history and hunting rights remain the only significant sources of rivalry between these groups who have relatively little day-to-day contact within the Reserva, although they share clinic facilities in the nearest town where they are represented by the same NGO, the Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the Oiapoque (APIO).

Relations between Palikur and Galibi-Marworno are in some respects strained as the Arawak-Carib wars that ended in the seventeenth century played a significant role in the decimation of both groups. There is a complex historical connection between Galibi-Marworno and Galibi, with the former disclaiming connection to the latter. This may be because contemporary relations of power on the Urucauá constrain the Galibi-Marworno to distance themselves from any historical enmity with Palikur society. Nonetheless, cultural essentialisms became, at times, a source of difficulty in relation to archaeological sites.

On the Urucauá the economy is a mixed one – based on plentiful fish and manioc crops as well as hunting of birds and mammals and gathering of fruits and turtle and alligator eggs. Limited cash-cropping and pastoralism generate the income that buys commodities ranging from clothes to plastic buckets, chainsaws, boat motors, shotguns and the occasional refrigerator – all of which are altering people's skills in relation to the watery landscape. Loss of skill in the technologies of this environment looms large in local historical consciousness and became an important topic in discussions on heritage. Metal tools and salt were identified by several Palikur speakers as the two commodities that have caused the loss of skills and strengths that used to distinguish 'real Indians' from the rest. By contrast, loss of a belief system and associated dances, so important to cultural anthropology, merited much less discussion in the context of an evangelicalism in which many believe Christ has replaced the shamans as the one who has closed the holes between underworld and surface world. It is out of these holes in the landscape that it is believed the *axtigs* (malicious underworld spirits) used to wander into the human world. With the idea that Christ himself has closed these holes, a contemporary Christian-based belief system appears to provide many with a sense of agency over the landscape. Nonetheless, intense fears remain that the land will be lost to corrupt politicians who are widely believed to be in alliance with gold-seekers and loggers who want access to Indian areas. So great were these fears that they became expressly millennial and many Palikur fled the Urucauá over New Year 2000 for the relative safety of a Palikur Pentecostal gathering near Cayenne in French Guiana.

Oral history research among the Palikur, by David Green (a fluent Palikur speaker) with Lesley Fordred in 1997, brought up a wealth of narratives about the past with many references to places with archaeological

significance, including boot-shaped caverns similar to those described by Emílio Goeldi in 1895 in the region of the Rio Cunani (Goeldi, 1900) and sites that were landmarks in wars with Galibi Indians that occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Harcourt, 1613; Keymis, 1596; Leigh, in Williamson, 1923). On survey it was apparent that several sites had been damaged, reportedly both by some looking for commodities to sell and by others who saw no value in ceramic or stone artefacts and destroyed them for the 'no particular reason' that is indicative of little sense of heritage.

The cause of the apparent sense of the worthlessness of the sites was one of the major reasons for pursuing this project. We hypothesised that a lack of a sense of history and heritage derived from a pervasive sense of disempowerment related to political change, as well as to religious change. Believing that the sites were worth investigating further for these reasons as well as their archaeological value, Fordred and Green met with Neves during WAC4 in 1999 to discuss the beginning of an interdisciplinary collaboration. Fieldwork took place over a total of twelve months in three separate excursions to the region in 2000 and 2001, thanks to generous grants from the Wenner Gren Foundation, the National Research Foundation of South Africa and the World Archaeological Congress. In the course of research, we found that skills of dwelling on this landscape best approximated what we would identify as 'heritage' and that material artefacts have relatively little value except when placed within this context. There is also an uneven survival of a value placed on the ability to forget the dead: thus, memory and forgetting are frequently constellated in ways that value the latter (Green and Green, 2000).

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Ethnographic enquiry – the responsibility of Green and Green – had the goal of collecting a comprehensive set of oral-historical texts and information about possible sites, as well as seeking to understand local power and practices that would need to be accounted for in any archaeological work. An ethnographic understanding of local lifeways proved vital, particularly with regard to the articulation of landscape, historiography and myth, sociality and approaches to power and the production and appropriation of local identities.

Over a dozen storytellers were interviewed in seven Palikur villages along the Urucauá River, with multiple versions of particular stories sought for comparative purposes. These were transcribed and translated into Portuguese by first-language Palikur speakers. Currently, some 230 performances of stories on digital video are in our database. Stories were grouped into 'chapters of a canon' in a meeting with a number of Palikur

elders and a poster display in Palikur formed the basis of a wider public communication about the nature of this analysis. Since the majority of stories refers to particular places in the landscape – of particular interest in an archaeological enquiry – a number of people were invited to participate in the production of a large-format memory map of contemporary Palikur lands.

For several months in 2001, a programme of public education included setting up the poster display and a small library; as well as a television and video player powered by a solar panel to show videos on related subjects as well as footage from the sites.[2]

After several months it was field-making season and people began to visit carrying fragments of pots, whole pots and stone axes that they had found in the ground where new fields were being planted; this was material that usually would have been thrown away. Among the most interesting finds was an ancient wooden paddle, the size, shape and decoration of which no-one remembered but which was remarkably similar to a sea-faring paddle drawn in 1743, by P. Barrère (illustrated in Rostain, 1994a, Vol. II, Fig. 209). Photographs of ceramic figurines also elicited much interest, with indications from some that they had found similar items before but simply thrown them away. The number of visitors and the range of artefacts they offered was in marked contrast to sentiments in the early days of the work where secrecy and suspicion had been prevalent.

Archaeological investigations were directed by Eduardo Neves. The major goal in 2000 was to investigate sites that were identified in popular memory as those at which key events in ethnohistory took place. We sought to visit these and assess the conditions for further, systematic, research in the area. Recognising that the only way to ensure the preservation of remote sites would be if local people attributed value to doing so, we sought a process that would integrate archaeological research with indigenous ways of doing history, including local people in decisions and research activities. A key issue was that informed consent was almost impossible to assure in the absence of any prior exposure to archaeology. For that reason, three Palikur – Avelino Labonté, Tabenkwe Manoel Labonté and Ivanildo Gômes – were invited to attend three weeks of an archaeological field school near Manaus in July 2001 and on the basis of their report-back to local leadership, permission was granted to proceed with the first formal excavation work in November 2001. Accompanying Neves for the excavation work was a team of three Brazilian archaeologists who worked both as excavators and trainers. The location of the work was decided in conjunction with leaders and in consultation with residents at a public meeting.

At that meeting interested people were invited to sign up to work on an excavation of a large site at a place called Kwap. We sought to train as many people as possible and brought in a fresh crew of four every three days, with three working the entire period in order to provide some continuity.

Figure 3 (a) Manoel Tabehkwe Labonté, (b) Ivanildo Gômes. Two of three Palikur who attended an archaeological field school near Manaus, July 2001, in order to be able to make an informed judgement on whether or not an excavation should proceed on home ground

Figure 4 November 2001: En route to the excavation at Kwap, the day's team of participatory archaeologists. In the foreground is Eduardo Neves (left) and Avelino Labonté (right)

It was hoped that they could be trained well enough to join contract archaeological projects elsewhere, in the future. When the excavation was completed we held an Open Day. Four boat loads of people – about 100 in all, or one in 10 of the Palikur population on the river – made their way upriver to visit Kwap and were guided by Neves from test pit to test pit as he explained the soil profiles and described artefacts found and suggested links with oral history. The degree of interest and enthusiasm far outweighed our expectations.

Rethinking research questions

The research questions with which we began fieldwork asked whether the Aristé-style artefacts found on two of the sites were more widespread, whether additional styles could be located at deeper levels on particular sites and whether archaeological research, supported by oral-historical research, could illuminate questions of the complexity of occupation in this part of the coastal Amazon region. In particular, we were interested in the possibility of anthropogenic landscapes that might indicate that complex societies had existed some 500 km north of the moundbuilding investigated by Roosevelt (1991) at the mouth of the Amazon. An additional interest

was whether rumours of a shell-mound (known in Brazil by the Tupi word *sambaqui*) were true. Of all of these sites, we were interested in whether and how they are present in memories, their particular histories and whether they could be said to constitute heritage to local people.

Within days of arrival, in May 2000, we had learned the awkward truth that however important and relevant our research questions had seemed, the scholarly debates from which they emerge are worlds apart from everyday life in the Reserva. There, dominant concerns are the daily struggle to produce enough food; protect access to Indian lands; ensure health and, at least in 2000 in the biggest Palikur village, keep right with God in preparation for a Pentecostal rendering of Y2K and its possible apocalyptic outcomes (Capiberibe, 2001; Passes, 1998). In that context, our interest in the past and in ceramic shards that we claimed were worthless in monetary terms proved difficult to explain – especially given that we had money for wages, solar panels and an outboard motor. The constant fear of many Palikur that Brazilians were going to come and take their lands made some doubly suspicious. Thus, one of our biggest challenges was to develop research questions that have resonance and interest to local people, while trying to explain archaeological work.

One of the ways we chose to do the latter was by bringing with us a large-format full-colour book on Brazilian archaeology, which we acquired at the exhibition known as the Brasil +500 Mostra de Redescobrimento, which had opened in São Paulo in 2000 as part of Brazilian celebrations of the 500th anniversary of its 'discovery' (despite protestation from some of the more vocal indigenous groups that they had been there all along). Part of a celebratory discourse of the state's capacity to collect, the archaeological exhibition focused on the most prized ceramics in Brazil, most of which were labelled by place of origin, the contemporary collection from which they were sourced and, for the most part, the culture which they were purported to represent. Unfortunately, in this context the collection of photographs of urns and ceramics in the book (Scatamacchia and Barreto, 2000) was interpreted as proof that archaeology was a seeking after treasures: implicitly promoting the idea of artefacts as commodities and undermining our claims that we were not there to collect pots or make a profit. Reflecting on our idea of archaeology, the phrase we came up with to describe archaeology, in conjunction with local leadership, was '*ikiska anavi wayk*' or the study of 'things left behind in the ground'. Eighteen months later when 22 people had been trained in excavation techniques and were learning to read soil profiles at the test pits, the dialogics of reciprocal learning had produced a very different phrase: '*ivegboha amekenegben gidukwankis*' – 'reading the tracks of the ancestors'.

The switch of explanatory terms for archaeology reflects the extent to which participatory and ethnographic research had shifted our focus from material culture and ceramic types to questions of what it means,

historically and contemporarily, to dwell in this landscape. This was far more than a learning of a new phrase. It marked a different understanding of a local way of doing history in which past and present are part of a continuous sequence of actions and in which history is a form of mapping and geography is stored in narratives.

Ethnographic data supported an approach to heritage that was rooted in ways of dwelling, rather than focused on things that were made. While 'storytrekking' – going with storytellers to the places mentioned in stories – in June 2000, an elderly man, Ixawet Labonté, took David and several others to a large rock shelter near Karumna mountain. The shelter was reputed to once have been the home of a clan of giants, known in Palikur as the Kurumsuk. Lying in the sand on site was a hand axe or '*migu*'. Its discovery, recorded on video, prompted a comparison of what it meant to dwell in this landscape, in the past and in the present:

Ixawet: A migu . . . the Old Ones' axe. It's a Kurumsuk axe because it's from here. Did you find it here?

David: I found it here.

Ixawet: Then it's true. It's a Kurumsuk axe. It's to chop with . . . Tah!

David: Don't you think the Old Ones made this?

Ixawet: Also, the Old Ones made ones similar to this. Another style . . . prettier . . . narrower. This is a pretty one. They would chop large trees with it . . . Ga! Ga! Ga! Boh! [He makes the sound of chopping and tree falling down.] Now we who have come later do not have the stamina for this, no endurance. They were very strong. They didn't eat salt [to stop meat from rotting]. They didn't eat pepper. They ate no seasoning. They would eat meat just as it is. Ah! They were very tough. So then they would chop trees like this. If I tried now I couldn't chop [a tree down]. They would chop . . . Ga! Ga! Chop! [Ixawet hears a noise and looks up.]

Ixawet: Is it them? [possibly thinking sound is an approaching Kurumsuk, Ixawet looks back at David]

Ixawet: That's truly how it is. This migu is a Kurumsuk axe. If you found it at his home then I think it's a Kurumsuk axe. Just as a Kurumsuk had strength and endurance so also did the Old Ones. We who come later have none like this. It's a beautiful axe. We who come later, clear our fields with metal. Long ago it was done with something like this, to chop the trees and their fields with. We who come later have no strength for this. We don't know how to make this . . . nothing at all. We have lost the knowledge among the days. If we don't buy metal axes then we don't make a field. If we don't

> have a machete, we don't chop. They would even make clay axes. They would chop with them. They had machetes, knives, pans, everything. They had pots. They would cook with pots. The Old Ones didn't buy pots like we do now. You would make ceramic pots, beautiful ceramics. They would make *darivwits* [pots], *tukutgus* [double-necked pots], [and] all kinds of urns to hold a dead person's body in when they burned the body and put it inside. They didn't make them [coffins] out of wood. We who came later made wooden ones to carry the dead. The Old Ones didn't make them like that. It is good! It is good, the story of the Old Ones who were here first. But – they weren't afraid to roast a person [for secondary burial]. They would roast them. If a person died they would roast them. They weren't afraid. We who come later don't have the courage. We don't have the knowledge to roast. They would roast and put it in a *tukutgu* . . . about this [little] size . . . and put a person inside. A big person, like you, a big one, a holder they would make a beautiful one with markings. They would put you in until you [your ashes] filled it up. Ga! Then they would bury you at Kwap. . . . We, who come later, use boards. Beng! Beng! Teng! Teng! with nails. Understand? Because they were tough. They had lots of endurance/knowledge. They had much strength. *Giwegamni* means strength. Understand?

His nostalgia for lost skills was echoed many times in the course of conversations about the past and indicates that insofar as heritage is concerned, skills, strength, courage and endurance were far more important than material culture that has been left behind. Thus, archaeological research questions could both be contextualised and directed by an interest in past ways of relating to the environment.

Similarly, much ethnographic data indicated that local ways of presenting history decentred chronology in favour of pursuing a spatio-temporal history (Green and Green, 2003). In the latter approach, archaeological questions can be formulated around the traces that people have left in the landscape; the focus is therefore on people and space – in Tim Ingold's phrase, histories of dwelling in a landscape (Ingold, 2000: 189ff). Chronologies and dating are de-emphasised.

Such emphases have many connections with kinds of landscape archaeology that have become dominant in contemporary Brazilian archaeology – in particular, Roosevelt's work on moundbuilders (1991) and Heckenberger, Neves and Petersen's project in the Central Amazon that focuses on terra preta soils (2000). That work asks whether pre-colonial Amazonian societies were simple bands of hunter-gatherers, or large-scale, complex societies with high degrees of skill in managing soils. This emphasis on complexity also found great resonance for many contemporary Palikur

speakers. One of the most important of all of our fieldwork encounters took place around a large map, put together by Grenand and Grenand (1987) to indicate where in contemporary Amapá and French Guiana various historical sources had placed a range of indigenous populations including those identified as Palikur and associated clans. One evening in January 2001, shortly after Green and Green had recently arrived for the second of three field trips, the then-cacique Emiliano Iaparrá (the elected headman) and then *chefe do posto* Nilo Xikoy Martiniano (Chief of the Post, a government appointee) were invited to examine the educational materials that had been brought along. Once the data on the map had been explained their excitement was palpable. The *cacique*, normally demure, was animated: 'I always thought it was just stories', he said, 'but this shows the Palikur really were very many'. A sense of a minority having been a majority, of social organisation having been complex and of having had claim to a much wider territory than is presently the case had touched on something that seemed to locate contemporary marginalisation in an historical context.

By emphasising environmental skill and social complexity, our questions about indigenous history became of greater interest to local people. After reviewing the oral historical data that had been collected during two field trips in 2000, we chose to focus archaeological research on the long war between what are now identified as the Palikur (Arawak) and the Galibi (Carib) and their complex allegiances with European forces (particularly English, Dutch, Portuguese and French) that were contesting the Oiapoque region. These questions (together with practical considerations concerning access to sites afforded by the low water level in November and December) made the old village of Kwap a logical choice for the first excavation work. Kwap was, according to oral history, a very big village ('like a city', said many) that on survey had yielded up to 1.8 m of terra preta (black soils) that, in a landscape of soils that are otherwise a deep orange, was indicative of either lengthy or intensive occupation. The settlement was destroyed in the final battle of the war, which the Palikur won against the Galibi. Oral tradition holds that so many died that they were buried where they had fallen and a portion of the site is today the main cemetery for settlements on the upper reaches of the Urucauá. One of the leaders' conditions for excavation was that it be outside the known cemetery area.

Using a theodolite, the area was mapped and systematic augur tests conducted; thereafter a number of locations were selected as test pits of which soil profiles were examined. In addition, a profile was dug across what appeared to have been a defensive ditch and a wide pathway going up a steep hill to the old village site: features that were detailed in oral histories collected prior to the excavation.[3]

Figure 5 On the Rio Urucauá, Manoel Tabehkwe Labonté points out the limits of the old village of Kwap to Eduardo Neves

Figure 6 Kwap, November 2001: After augur tests came the task of delineating test pits. In the team, left to right: Geo Iôiô, Juvenal Felício, Lega Labonté, Matias Labonté

Reworking research practices

Mutuality, rather than control, is a delicate matter not easily achieved. This is particularly so when the goals of scholarship require methodologies that produce valid results. A number of issues became particular challenges that needed careful resolution: questions of power and empowerment; notions of consultation, debate and mutuality; the difficulty of essentialist histories and the encounter of archaeology with mythological historiography.

Power, empowerment and 'community' The notion of 'community' has been deconstructed by many scholars as well as several Urucauá residents who are all too familiar with the use of the word in development discourse. Some were quick to challenge our occasional use of the term, asking who within the community would benefit the most from the work we proposed. The questions pointed to an awareness that the power that comes with empowerment cannot be considered neutral or without a context. An entire community cannot be empowered simultaneously; certain individuals will be more empowered than others, with the implication that empowerment activities alter the social landscape as they proceed.

Over time, a series of difficult interactions with one particular individual who had initially become central to our work taught us that empowerment activities all too readily benefit individuals. This dynamic is exacerbated in a context where participating in paid archaeological or oral historical work is inevitably constructed as a route to the prized goal of sharing in the benefits and skills of what is spoken of as 'outside': that is, modernity. A modernist version of individuality – of the individual as 'an homogeneous, bounded, unitary entity' in Brubaker and Cooper's words (2000: 17) – is a highly desirable way of being for some who prefer to replace relations of reciprocity between household and/or kin groups with waged and hierarchical relationships that affirm individuality. In this context waged labour such as that practised in archaeological work tends to atomise people. Status accrues with wealth and, as a corollary, status accrues with the ability to become appointed to community development projects run by outsiders. If a person has an agenda of becoming a power-player in local society, participation in a project such as ours becomes a means to an end that can be disruptive to local social relations.

Notions of empowerment that are implicit in many models of participatory research rest on an assumption of the zero-sum model, where power is transferred from powerful to powerless. Stated thus, the naïveté is all too obvious. Yet only in-depth, long-term fieldwork can acquaint practitioners with the complexities of local power dynamics in a village setting, for very little of this is available to outsiders as discursive knowledge; it can only be discovered through observation and experience. Thus, without long-term fieldwork, one's inability to navigate networks of power makes hazardous

activities such as public archaeology. It can take months for outsiders to understand local politics well enough to see how one's interests are being manoeuvred to serve particular agendas. To paraphrase the biblical injunction, public archaeologists should be as harmless as doves and as spry as snakes.[4]

Consultation, debate and mutuality Participatory action research (PAR) appears to be the most useful strategy for pursuing a public archaeology project of this kind. Yet PAR assumes that a style of vigorous public debate is possible. In the context of our work, however, vigorous debate is frowned upon, as is argument, and both are generally thought of as a disrespectful way to approach matters (Passes, 1998, 2000). By contrast, public agreement is valorised. In Kumenê village where we lived, public meetings generally go on for many hours, during which many people step forward one by one to reflect on the topic non-confrontationally, after which a recognised leader would propose a way forward, initiating a fresh round of opinion-offering. Difficult issues might be considered for several evenings over several weeks. In our case, attempts to make decisions collectively with fieldworkers when site-surveying in 2000 were problematic, as pretenders to power could and often did seize the moment to claim to speak for all, while those who had been present but had not spoken their disagreement aloud would discreetly offer their opinion privately in the days that followed. After a while, it became clear that, even with a small group, achieving consensus was a complicated matter.

In 2001, the second phase of the work, we adopted the strategy of seeking advice from a smaller group of respected people who were collectively known as a council, prior to major decisions and to advise as many as possible that the meeting was to be held with an open-door so that those who wished to listen or join in could do so. It was also important for us to listen to privately offered counsel, after meetings and publicly-offered gossip (the latter being difficult to deal with, but a primary mode of censure if people disapprove of or are uncertain of one's actions) – and take both into account in our decision-making. Thus, key decisions effectively remained ours, with a high level of consultation and accountability to the people of the region. It was not the total mutuality we had hoped for, but given our experiences we would doubt any claim made of complete mutuality in a comparable project. A research team with a cargo of expensive goods has tremendous power, however delicate their reflexivities.

Identity claims and essentialism Archaeological and ethnohistoric work is inevitably drawn into questions of 'beginnings' and 'authenticity' – and easily complicit in the formation of narratives of ethnicity that are by definition exclusionary (Brown, 1993; Jackson, 1994). In this context, the histories offered to researchers tend to reproduce identity-based

animosities and plays for power. These mask the hybridity of the present and the heterogeneous origins of contemporary identities (Dreyfus, 1983: 39; Nimuendajú, 1948: 197).

Among the most frequently told historical narratives on the upper Urucauá is that of a long war between 'the Palikur' and 'the Galibi'. However, several scholars, notably Françoise and Pierre Grenand (1987) and Lux Vidal (1999), argue convincingly that the identities indexed by these names now are significantly different to those that carried them in the 1600s and 1700s, in terms of social organisation, ancestry, cultural activities and language. Grenand and Grenand make a strong case that contemporary Palikur identity emerged out of alliances between many groups against common enemies.

The disruption of settlement in this area in the past 300 years has been severe. In 1723, for example, the Aruã at the mouth of the Amazon were routed by Portuguese military and they fled to the Oiapoque River, closer to their allies the French and to the Palikur (Nimuendajú, 1948: 196). In 1729, the Palikur were reported by French sources to have been reduced greatly by war with the Caribs and their size was estimated at 160 families (Gallois and Ricardo, 1983: 21). In 1791, the authorities in French Guiana granted citizenship to all Indians (including mestizos up to the seventh generation). So many Indians migrated to the territory that the Portuguese feared that the liberty given to Indians would soon 'render [the state of] Para without slaves or Indians' (Coudreau, 1886/7, cited by Arnaud, 1984: 15). Meggers and Evans note, 'most of the Aruá migrated to Cayenne and the Rio Oiapoque, where the French aided and abetted their quarrel with the Portuguese. After trying by "royal decree" to bring the Aruá back, or get the French to send them back, the Portuguese between 1794 and 1798 bodily removed all Indians between the Amazon and the Oiapoque and deposited them at Belém' (1957: 562). Arnaud notes that in those four years the coast between the Amazon and the Oiapoque was completely depopulated by the Portuguese, who intended 'to create a desert between Guiana and Para' (1984: 15). Villages were ransacked and Indians enslaved, killed and driven out – or underground, into the many cave systems of the coastal landscape that, in millennia past, housed their ancestors or other groups of indigenous people. Nimuendajú describes the hybrid cultural situation that resulted from the widespread dislocations of the time:

> A nucleus of Aruã and Galibí however, settled in Uaçá, completely under French influence. With them were also some Maraón, Palicur and Ititan and French Creoles, Chinese, Arabs and Brazilian Mestizos. . . . When the Galibí and Aruã gathered on the Uaçá River, they probably brought very little of their own culture, for both had been influenced for nearly a century by the missionaries and other civilised people. In consequence, they were greatly influenced by the Palicur, a still relatively strong and intact tribe who had become their neighbours. The little Indian culture that they possess is

> practically identical to that of the Palicur. Otherwise, their culture is adopted from the French Creoles of Guiana and, to a lesser degree, from the Brazilians. (Nimuendajú, 1948: 195)

Despite this extensive disruption of societies and associated identities and in response to it, contemporary Palikur identity can be characterised as strongly felt. In large measure this is due to the survival of a language now known as Palikur, in contrast to many other Indian groups in the region which use Creoles and have lost the languages of their forefathers. Palikur-language oral testimony recalls the formation of alliances of what are now known as 'clans' and the decision to adopt the dialect of a dominant group now known as the Kamuyune, or the Sun Clan[5] (Grenand and Grenand, 1987; Passes, 2002).

Historically, there is no doubt that there was a protracted period of warring between Arawak, Carib and Yão in this region, aided and abetted by English and Dutch settlers who attempted to explore or settle the Oiapoque River on several occasions in the late 1500s and early 1600s. Alliances between settlers and local people appear to have been sought by both sides as part of their strategies to out-manoeuvre their respective enemies, all of whom sought to secure dominance over the region (Harris, 1926; Williamson, 1923). Thus, for this series of battles to be described as a war between the Palikur and the Galibi is a clear example of the ongoing reinterpretation of history in terms of contemporary dilemmas. In Rappaport's words, 'The magical power of history lies in the contrasts and contradictions between the past as it was experienced and the structure of the present world. . . . History has a power in newly-formed nations because it fuels the creation of non-European definitions of society' (Rappaport, 1990: 15).

A major challenge, then, for a public archaeologist is to find context-appropriate ways to distinguish between the historical emergence of identities and the appropriation of history to support contemporary structures of social power. For many politically engaged scholars there is, in the words of Brubaker and Cooper, '. . . an uneasy amalgam [in scholarship] of constructivist language and essentialist argumentation . . . [reflecting] the dual orientation of many academic identitarians as both analysts and protagonists of identity politics' (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 12).

In exploring sites that relate to the war, instrumentalist renderings of the war story began to emerge. Conventional wisdoms regarding the contemporary allocation of hunting rights between Palikur and Galibi-Marworno were thoroughly imbricated in the narratives of the war, even in sites that had little to do with it. In a world in which cultural authenticity (nationhood) has become the primary arbiter of land rights, archaeological and historical research is readily appropriated to such a purpose. In some contexts this is useful, but the risk is that cultural borderlines which have

historically been permeable (in the sense that refugees or marriage partners could acculturate) may begin to be constituted as fixed and static, in line with modernist notions of cultural identity, with destructive effects on relationships within families and among neighbours. Thus, the articulation of historical research and the production of contemporary identity remains one of the most challenging aspects of our work. One has to ask the question: if essentialism has local meaning, how is one to avoid appealing to it? In the context of working with a group whose numbers have dropped below that which is considered viable for the survival of their language, should one seek to work against essentialisms, even if they elide the complexities and contingencies of historical processes of identity formation?

During fieldwork our strategy was to identify our work as recording the histories of the river (which includes settlements from both sides) rather than a history of 'the Palikur' or 'the Galibí'. Yet essentialist sentiments were a frequent undercurrent in our river of fluid identities and, as one of the anonymous readers of an earlier draft of this paper pointed out, people are not going to give up the histories that are constitutive of strongly-felt identities in favour of telling stories about a river.

The two issues, then, are how to speak of these matters in analysis and how to speak of them in the field. Discussing the analytical use of the term 'identity', Brubaker and Cooper offer a way forward:

> The point is not . . . to turn from commonality to connectedness, from categories to networks, from shared attributes to social relations. Nor is it to celebrate fluidity and hybridity over belonging and solidarity. The point . . . is rather to develop an analytical idiom sensitive to the multiple forms and degrees of commonality and connectedness and to the widely varying ways in which actors (and the cultural idioms, public narratives and prevailing discourses on which they draw) attribute meaning and significance to them. (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 20–1)

This suggests that research products that are intended for people in the villages along the Urucauá would do well to pursue connections and commonalities between the two identities as they exist in contemporary historical narratives. Such a strategy is not as etic as it may seem as the narratives themselves contain strands that emphasise connectedness. Besides the already-mentioned story of the clan alliances and the decision to adopt one dialect, the war epic itself contains rich resources for exploring connections that contrast with contemporary renderings of the story as a tribal feud. It begins with a story of a young girl called Kwewka who marries a man who is really a spirit being. Her brother is incensed and tries to kill the spirit-man, but his arrow kills his sister instead. From the body of the woman come thousands of maggots that turn into Galibi people and warn the brother – calling him 'uncle' – that he should prepare as they are

coming to avenge their mother. Such metonymic images are invested with a multi-layered understanding of ethnogenesis. The narrative also marks what one Palestinian graduate student called 'a tender hatred' – feuding across ties that bind.

A public archaeology process with a deep investment in oral historical research provides the resources that enables one to debate, with research participants, contemporary versions of a story that promote the reification of identities and minimise the appropriation of archaeological work to essentialist ends.

Archaeology and mythological history: Confronting the question of historiography The question of historiography was a constant challenge, not least in that the distinction between history and myth is not an emic one (Passes, 2002). In this corner of the Amazon as elsewhere, history may take very different forms from those of the West. Perhaps one of the main reasons for this is that 'we commonly define historicity as embodied in chronological or linear narratives, without accepting that these are characteristics of the European theory of time, inextricably bound up in the process of the European conquest of the globe. . . . [W]e have come to accept our own temporal framework as natural and given, according second place to the historical schema of the conquered' (Rappaport, 1990: 11).

Over time, we began to grasp the tenets of a way of speaking about the past that cohered neither chronologically nor around historical figures, but around spatiality – constituting a spatio-temporal history (Green and Green, 2003).

Such a historical vision is primarily about place and place-making and thus principally about a dwelling – present-continuous – of the land (Ingold, 2000). At the same time, such a notion – or cultural history – of a landspace includes the underworld and the upper-worlds and all the spirits and shape-shifting creatures that move between them and the surface world. An historiography of this kind poses significant challenges for an archaeology in which the fantastical and the fabulous are generally excluded from explanations (while archaeological finds are all too readily appropriated to fabulous ends in nationalist myth-making).

While there are several sets of stories that might approximate the 'chapters' of the canon of Palikur oral history, they should not be understood as a consecutive chronology, although some clearly refer to earlier times than others. Rather, they may be seen as comments on a range of issues that are considered important in times past. These narrative sets or chapters within the canon appeal to different conditions of truth; to put it another way, they constitute a range of historical principles. For our purposes what was important to recognise was that the histories of different sites draw on different historiographical forms, some of which pose greater challenges for archaeological work than others. The issue is best illustrated

by a discussion of the challenges of doing archaeology on a sambaqui at Ivegepket.

Ivegepket was a site of specific interest because it is reputed to be the home of Waramwi, a legendary snake whom the Palikur fought against and eventually defeated, and Waramwi-givin (Waramwi's home) is marked by a mound of seashells known as Waramwi-giyubi (leftovers or garbage) that we suspected might be a shell midden or sambaqui having similar origins to other sambaquis along the coast of French Guiana and northern Brazil.

The journey to Ivegepket took most of a day, by dugout canoe and amid much banter about whether the old people were telling the truth or not; it took another two-and-a-half days of searching by foot before one of our party stumbled on the seashells. We measured the length and breadth of the mound and took a few samples for testing and made our way back to the village.

On our return to Kumenê, people were amazed that we had found Waramwi-givin – and in contrast to the relative disinterest that had characterised our return from prior jungle trips, there was intense interest in the small bags of shells that we had gathered for the laboratory. Everyone wanted some. People came to visit our house especially to see them. That we had found 'Waramwi's garbage' was, paradoxically, confirming the myth for some, but for those with whom we had worked closely, it gave the lie to it. A day later, from Lesley's notebook:

> I got back to the house an hour or so after feasting on pakig at the church festival. Found Nenel (Ivanildo's step-father) and Ivanildo in quite an earnest conversation. Couldn't understand exactly what was being said but they were talking about Waramwi and the ancestors (amekenegben) and their stories.
>
> The feeling of the conversation was of consternation. Nenel sighed, 'Yuma Waramwi!' (No Waramwi). His tone indicated the conclusion of the conversation; the summary; the finding. A sense of surprise and dismay. I asked – piwewken henewa yuma Waramwi? (Do you truly think there was no Waramwi?). Yuma (none) he said. Mmahki? I asked (why?). Ivanildo started to explain. When he got to the shell mound yesterday and saw there was no hole (i.e. cavern, or route into the underworld), he was intensely disappointed. There was no Waramwi hole at the shell mound at all. So how could it be true? It is a myth, he said, 'like the story that the whites discovered Brazil 500 years ago.' So the stories that the old ones tell, are just myths, with no truth in them at all.

Clearly, the established archaeological interpretation of sambaquis was at odds with the local narrative.

In this case, Waramwi is a type of cherished felon of the jungle, one of the most important of the axtigs (ferocious spirit-creatures) of the jungle to have been conquered by the Palikur. The story of his conquering is one of the foundational stories of Palikur identity, in that it memorialises the

Palikur capacity to outwit the jungle creatures that made areas in their landscape dangerous.

A paradox: archaeology seeks to understand cultural meanings of places, yet in contexts where a single site has multiple appropriations, excavation can dismember some meanings at the expense of others. Histories based on laboratory results and soil profiles are meaningful in a particular context and are not unencumbered truths that make sense universally. If heritage is ultimately a cultural construction, one route for public archaeology here would be to prioritise local versions of history over professional assessment of the material record. Yet such an answer is unsatisfactory given the importance of the historical realities to which sambaqui sites in the region attest. The question becomes this: is it possible to proceed on such a site with as much caution over narratives and sensibilities as artefacts?

Such questions are pertinent to several sites that mark mythical and sacred stories about the past and for that reason are worth pursuing. Unthinking excavation can bury these meanings. Ivegepket establishes that multiple histories attend archaeological sites, of which the authorised archaeological version is but one. Recognising this forces one to accept one of two conclusions. The first possible conclusion is that where radically opposed understandings of the past surround a particular site or series of sites, one should retreat from further work there. The second is more delicate: to explore the values of opposed historiographies. This entails recognising that archaeological scholarship is a valid enquiry into past human activity on a landscape, yet a more powerful one because it is more readily accepted in the wider public sphere. Ethnohistory is equally valid in that it is grounded spatio-temporally rather than chronologically and memorialises the skills that continue to enable the mastery of a landscape. In this sense, the Waramwi narrative marks something of great importance. The recognition, on the part of scholars, that mythical ethno-histories have validity on different grounds to those of archaeology provides an opportunity for empowerment of indigenous people in the wider public sphere.

Rethinking the outcomes of research

Research products are always both tangible and intangible. The tangible research products of a public archaeology project are in progress and include the creation of an oral history archive; educational materials based on archaeological, ethnographic and oral research; and contributions to archaeological debates. In several respects the intangibles are ethnographically more interesting: the consequences of the verification of oral history; the consequences of training three people from the Urucauá in the craft of archaeological work well enough to participate in contract work elsewhere; the possibility that the work might contribute to the independent effort to establish a community museum and assist in creating the conditions for

Figure 7 Zecão Iôiô with a tiny urn found in an underground cavern

Indians to be more respected in the public spheres of local towns; the question of what notions of heritage will emerge in relation to the work and the question of the commodification of archaeological artefacts.

While comment on many of these issues can only be speculative, the case of the pots found in an underground burial cavern with no attached oral history, near to a Galibi-Marworno settlement, brought the twin issues of heritage and its commodification into sharp relief.

Heritage, its ownership and commodification While beginning an oral history project in the area in 1997, David Green heard about a man who, some years before, had found a small cave in which were lodged about nine beautiful pots. The man had taken them to his home. By 1997, only four remained. David visited him, filmed the pots and went with him to the cavern in which they had been hidden. Study of the photographs suggested that they were very similar to the Rio Cunani style found some 200 km south by the Swiss naturalist Emílio Goeldi in 1895, in one of the more celebrated finds of Brazilian archaeology.

At the beginning of this project, we sought to make contact with the man once again. Circumstances had changed, however, and he had left his village. His brother and father controlled the site and wanted to limit access to it. After protracted negotiations they were persuaded to let the three of us and four field guides visit the site to photograph and sketch it and take

a few samples for ceramic analysis. While walking to the site, three of the four field guides engaged us at length on what we – the researchers – would do in the hypothetical situation that whole pots were found. Would we take control of them? Would we take them away? Would we tell the government? Could anyone still sell them?

Some weeks later a story emerged that two of the field guides had found four pots on the same island a year before, when lost while hunting. It had been an El Niño year with very little rain and in the darkness, they said, they had crossed the dry creek that separates the islands without realising it. Under a rocky outcrop they discovered four extraordinarily beautiful pots, but had never found the place again. To prevent anyone else taking the pots, they had hidden them under a tree, where they had remained for a year. When we journeyed to the island, they said, they had recognised the area, searched and found them. They described beautiful painting and anthropomorphic features on the urns, similar to the Aristé-style urns depicted in the archaeological book we had brought with us.

The pots and the manner of their discovery presented a series of ethical dilemmas. The two Palikur hunters wanted to return secretly to collect the pots and pre-empt their being found by the family of the man who had found the first set of urns here. They wanted the right to sell them themselves if they wanted to and they wanted an assurance from us that we would not tell the authorities – neither of which could we offer. Much of this was discussed without our knowing exactly what artefacts were under discussion, where they were, or who had found them.

They decided to go and collect them and, as Eduardo, the archaeologist on the team, had had to leave by that time, we (Lesley and David) felt it wise that the hunters collect the pots without us: we had no particular expertise to offer and our presence would be a liability, in terms of relations with the nearest village and in that we were not able to take care of ourselves in the jungle. We offered the use of our stores of gasoline to avoid the longer and more precarious canoe journey and lent the team of four a video camera for the day so that they could film the journey and the site. Fortunately, the pots were successfully collected. Their video is a great piece of community theatre and was a hit when screened in the village some weeks later at a meeting to present our findings.

In that series of events, the question of rights over heritage is paramount. People who find artefacts want the individual right to dispose of them as they please; in addition, there were competing senses of entitlement to sites. The field guides felt entitled to the pots because they found them and because historically they believed their ancestors had made them (although we were not able to find any oral history teller with any knowledge of them). By contrast the family who had discovered the urns earlier felt entitled to the site because it was close to their settlement, on an island where they had hunting rights. This series of events brought into focus the

ethics of practice in public archaeology, in the context of the consequences that we could foresee of possible courses of action.

Our first question to ourselves was that if our archaeological work is committed to the furtherance of scholarly debate (which it is), could we find ways to address the question of the production of knowledge from such urns without seizing them in the name of science? We believed that photographing and sketching was sufficient in the short term and believed that the social network around the pots was unlikely to lead to their sale to an unknown buyer.

A second question was whether public archaeology ought to be focused on the mobilisation of cultural material for the advancement of indigenous people and the creation of 'subaltern publics' (Hall, 2003: 16, 20) or whether the material ought to have been considered national patrimony and crated immediately for dispatch to an archaeological storage facility. If the latter were to be a course of action, the consequence would be the closure of access to similar sites and the promotion of artefact commodification. In the situation we found ourselves in, the beginnings of a community eco-museum in the region offered the possibility of an acceptable location, although as there was no immediate plan to equip it with humidity-control it could not yet offer the appropriate storage environment, making the museum at Macapa, 500 km away, the nearest facility. One of the team of field guides suggested that the urns be returned to the underground cavern from which they had come. But, if they were to do so, there was little guarantee that others would neither take them nor break them. If, on the other hand, the advancement of indigenous people was a goal, who would define 'advancement'? Clearly, some among the team of collectors saw advancement as an individual matter.

Rightly or wrongly, we felt we had to hold to the principle that we were not there to buy pots. We would also not seize any artefacts, as that would destroy relationships and frustrate further archaeological work.

Recognising that both ethical practice and commodities are defined by social consensus, our decision was to seek to protect the urns through establishing a network of social relationships around them. We informed the *Chefe do Posto* and the *Cacique* of the situation and asked that they consider the matter. Both expressed the opinion that whole urns ought not to leave the Reservation, although as per our prior agreements, shards could be taken away for analysis and returned at some future date. We also sought to build appropriate relationships around the urns beyond the Reservation by introducing the individuals who controlled the urns to officials of the museum who visited the region and suggested that the former consider involvement in the museum.

Public archaeologists, ourselves included, need to debate these questions with the publics we seek to serve and with national statutory bodies that control material heritage. For ethics in such situations are, we believe,

necessarily situational and need to be decided in terms of the primary purposes of each project. In our case one of the primary purposes of the project was to foster a sense of the importance of material heritage – a principle shared directly with the Brazilian Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artistico Nacional (Institute of National Historical Patrimony and the Arts, or IPHAN), which is in charge of archaeological licensing in Brazil. In choosing not to take away the urns we were protecting many more sites in the region than this one, yet that course of action risks censure.

In considering the question of ethical practice in politically engaged archaeology, World Archaeological Congress President (1999–2003) Martin Hall concludes: 'If one accepts the case for situational ethics and the inevitable alignment between the researcher and one or more reference groups within the society that is being studied, then it follows that ethical research will recognise the nexus of knowledge, power and politics and declare its alignments explicitly. . . . Recognising the role of power and politics in research is, then, central to an appropriate ethics' (Hall, 2003: 18).

CONCLUSIONS

While many archaeologists remain dismissive of public archaeology, in contexts like the jungles on an indigenous people's reservation in northern Brazil the only practical means by which archaeology might be pursued is via a process of public participation. Participatory research shifted our understanding of heritage from one that focuses on material culture to one that focuses on the heritage of skills that are required, historically and contemporarily, to dwell in this landscape. In our experience, this shift enabled an engagement with different ways of understanding time and land and compelled the rethinking of the production of archaeological knowledge. The work challenged notions of heritage, ethics, historiography, practices of research and assumptions about community participation. Such an approach to field research is challenging, but in the process both ethnography and archaeology can begin to engage in the production of knowledge that is grounded in principles of archaeological science as well as in indigenous knowledge.

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2 The library resources and solar panels with television were donated to the village.

3 Laboratory work on soil samples and ceramic fragments is in progress but was delayed by a range of factors, including the political question of in which Brazilian state such work should proceed.

4 From Matthew 10:16.

5 Told by one of the leaders of the church in Kumenê village, João Felício, in 2001.

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