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# History, Ethnography, and Politics in Amazonia: Implications of Diachronic and Synchronic Variability in Marubo Politics

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# History, Ethnography, and Politics in Amazonia: Implications of Diachronic and Synchronic Variability in Marubo Politics[1]

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## INTRODUCTION

Anthropological perceptions of indigenous Amazonian political systems have been warped by the peculiar conditions prevalent at the time when ethnographic research in Amazonia was first carried out.  From the 1930s to the 1950s, indigenous Amazonians had reached what was demographically the worst point in their histories.  The initial impact of conquest, with its attendant disease, depopulation, intensified warfare, genocide, and forced migration, wrought havoc on indigenous Amazonians.  Colonialism, processes of missionizing, slavery, forced labor and relocations continued to wreak havoc throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.  To top it all off, the rubber boom generated some of the worst genocides in the post-Columbian era and simultaneously brought with it the invasion of remote zones that had hitherto served indigenous people as refuges from the initial waves of colonial destruction.  Serious ethnographic research in Amazonia began shortly after the rubber boom.  Ethnographers saw small, atomized, egalitarian societies.  Ethnologists assumed that this was the normal condition of these groups, dictated by environmental conditions or cultural predispositions. Yet their conclusions were flawed by the incorrect premise that what they saw was what had always been.  In this paper I re-evaluate our understanding of indigenous Amazonian politics in light of our improved knowledge of the history of these peoples.

In order to highlight the errors in past perceptions of indigenous Amazonian politics, I will discuss variability through time and across space in the internal politics of the Marubo of western Brazil.  First I will present evidence from oral and written history to show how the behavior of Marubo political leaders has changed over time, from the period just before the rubber boom to the present.  The rubber boom (in this area, 1888–1911) occasioned demographic losses as high as 90% for indigenous peoples of the Javari basin.  Oral histories indicate that, in the immediate aftermath

of the rubber boom, Marubo headmen were "classically" egalitarian and households were politically autonomous. Yet, in recent years, a headman with empirically observable power has emerged side by side with powerless headmen who could have leapt straight from the pages of Clastres' *Société Contre l'État* (1974). I will argue that the behavior of the powerful recent headman is consistent with Marubo ideals of political action, whereas the egalitarian politics of the post–rubber boom period were a byproduct of the demographic shock of the rubber boom. Growing population and long term settlement stability have permitted the manifestation of forms of political inequality that are consistent with Marubo cultural norms but have been impracticable for over a century.

If the political system in existence for much of the twentieth century was not their "normal"[2] system, but rather a response to extremely drastic genocidal pressures, then this may also be the case for many other indigenous Amazonians. Severe depopulation and the inability to maintain settlement stability prevented the development of culturally idealized social and political practices. Only now, with growing populations and the wherewithal to maintain stable settlements, can societies that culturally value the development of political power enact these ideals in practice. Therefore, only through contemporary ethnographic observations or through ethnohistory can we come to an understanding of Amazonian politics that takes into account the political forms favored by indigenous cultural values. Consequently, emergent forms of political inequality in contemporary indigenous Amazonia can be seen as developments of indigenous political norms and not merely as indigenous adaptations of the encapsulating state's structures.

Beyond the implications of these diachronic variations, synchronic variation in the amount of power exercised by Marubo headmen suggests a need to critique the system of categories used for labeling indigenous politics. The synchronic variation means that Marubo society, as a whole, cannot be characterized politically by a single label representing the presence or absence of power, or by the style of exercising (or not exercising) power. The implication is that efforts to characterize entire societies or ethnic groups politically with a single label, whether it be "egalitarian" (e.g., Johnson 2003:177) or "hierarchical" (e.g., Heckenberger 2003), "convivial" (e.g., Belaunde 2000) or "fierce" (Chagnon 1968), are highly problematic and require careful methodology to evaluate the level of variability across social space (cf. Kracke 1993). Efforts to characterize the entirety of Amazonia as egalitarian/convivial (Overing and Passes 2000a, 2000b) or hierarchical (Lorrain 2000) are even more problematic. If there is variation within societies, there is even more across the whole of Amazonia, and it is this variety we should be trying to understand.

## THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Against the oversimplification often implied by the use of political labeling in Amazonian anthropology, this analysis supports a position that recognizes the coexistence of egalitarian and hierarchical idioms and advocates nuanced positions on indigenous politics (cf. Picchi 2000:153–155; Santos Granero 2000:268–269). The lineage of anthropological belief in Amazonian egalitarianism has been well described (Rosengren 1987:6–15; Santos Granero 1993:213–215; Ruedas 2001:31–41). It has its source in Lévi-Strauss' article on Nambikwara leaders (1944) and Lowie's ethnological synthesis of indigenous American politics (1948), and reached its apotheosis in the writings of Clastres (1974), who argued that indigenous people of the South American lowlands consciously and actively opposed the development of power inequalities in their social groups. A strong contribution to what I have called the "hypothesis of pan-Amazonian egalitarianism" (Ruedas 2001:1) was also made by neoevolutionary classification schemes that placed Amazonia in a 'less developed' category compared to Andean polities or Circum-Caribbean chiefdoms (Steward 1946–1950; Oberg 1955; Steward and Faron 1959), by ecologically oriented theorists of culture change (Meggers 1954), and by the development of classifications for political systems according to varying levels of concentration of power (Service 1962; Fried 1967). The result of these processes is that it became common for ethnographies to refer to Amazonian societies as "egalitarian," without setting this hypothesis up for testing against potentially contradictory data (e.g., see Thomas 1982; Robarchek and Robarchek 1998).

Critiques to the notion of pan-Amazonian egalitarianism have come from archaeology, ethnohistory, and ethnography. William Denevan's research in historical demography (Denevan 1966, 1992) showed that populations in Amazonia were much higher in pre-Columbian times than had previously been believed. This undercut Meggers' notion (1954, 1971) that ecological constraints on demographic growth prevented the development of centralized polities in Amazonia. Lathrap's pioneering archaeological research (Lathrap 1970) suggested greater political differentiation in the past than was ethnographically observable in the present. He was followed by Anna Roosevelt, whose research demonstrated the existence of pre-Columbian Amazonian societies with the archaeological markers of chiefdoms (Roosevelt 1980, 1991, 1999). Carneiro (1993) presented evidence for the existence of chiefdoms in the Amazonian *várzea* and the Mojos of Bolivia. Based on ethnohistoric

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research, Neil Whitehead has argued that "we can now say that large-scale sociopolitical organization was present in Amazonia" (2003:viii; cf. Whitehead 1988, 1993, 1994). Recent archaeological and ethnohistoric work by Heckenberger (1996, 2002, 2003) and Erickson (2001) has shown that such societies were widespread in the pre-Columbian Amazon basin. Whitehead's research on indigenous lowland South American history and historicity have also led him to critique the ahistorical view of these peoples, and point out that it is a mistake to see their twentieth century conditions as unchanging environmental adaptations (Whitehead 2003:61). This paper supports Whitehead's argument.

Among ethnographers, Goldman (1963, 1993) and Chernela (1983, 1993) described hierarchy and social inequality in the Tukanoan societies of the Vaupés region. Kracke (1978) showed that leaders could alternate between forceful and consensual styles depending on circumstances. Turner (1979, 2003) laid the foundation for a new way of understanding inequality in indigenous Amazonia by analyzing exploitative relations between father-in-law and son-in-law, with the daughter/wife as a lever of power. This idea was further developed by Rivière, arguing that indigenous Amazonians had "a political economy of people" (1984:94), and by Mentore (1987). Santos Granero argued that power inequalities exist in Amazonia, "based on the leader's positive mystical intervention in productive and reproductive processes" (1986:659) and on "possession of the key mystical means of reproduction" (1993:216). Lorrain "calls into question the commonly angelic … vision of indigenous societies of the Amazon as egalitarian" (2000:293), arguing for "the hierarchical character of Amazonian leadership" (2000:303). Drawing on the work of these critics, and particularly on the concept of the political economy of people, I showed the existence of and basis for political power among the Marubo of the Javari basin (Ruedas 2001).

The debate on indigenous Amazonian politics has been well described by Santos Granero (2000:269) as a "Manichaean trap." He argues that "Amazonianist anthropologists … have shaped … an ethnographic imaginary based on two radically opposing conceptions of Native Amazonians. The first image depicts them as 'fierce' peoples who … entertain a 'macho' ideal of virility … The second image portrays them as 'gentle' peoples who value peacefulness" (Santos Granero 2000:268). He refers to this as a "bipolar imaginary" (Santos Granero 2000:268) and he names the partisans of the "fierce" label "hawks" and those of the "gentle" label, "doves" (Santos Granero 2000:269). There is a direct analogy between the bipolar imaginary of fierce/predatory vs. gentle/convivial on the one hand, and the bipolar imaginary of egalitarian versus hierarchical on the

other hand.  In either case, one-word labels applied to living social formations oversimplify the reality of social and political life in indigenous communities.

Labeling of indigenous peoples is an active and ongoing process in Amazonian anthropology.  Although Chagnon has dropped the label "fierce" from his ethnography (cf. Chagnon 1992, 1997), other authors uncritically refer to particular indigenous Amazonian groups using neoevolutionist terminology (e.g., Robarchek and Robarchek 1998; Johnson 2003).  Some authors argue that the entirety of the Amazonian region can be thus labeled. Thus, Overing and Passes (2000a:xiii) state that conviviality can be defined by "on the one hand, the psychological, moral and practical state of collective being implied by … amity and productive social play, and on the other hand, egalitarianism, co-operation, non-coercion, and freedom of personal thought and action," thus subsuming egalitarianism within conviviality. They go on to assert that "it is this particular guise of conviviality, in all its complexity, which we maintain is characteristic of so many Amazonian socialities" (Overing and Passes 2000a:xiv) and that "Amazonian peoples, who notably value their ability to be social, have as well an antipathy to rules and regulations, hierarchical structures and coercive constraints" (Overing and Passes 2000b:2).  On the other side of the debate, one can find Lorrain arguing that "the hierarchical character of Amazonian leadership is … apparent" (2000:303).  In fairness, most of Lorrain's argument is specific to gender relations ("I argue here that there is a basic pattern of cosmological, economic and political gender hierarchy throughout the Amazon" (Lorrain 2000:305)), but her argument also implies a pan-Amazonian hierarchical politics.

The data presented in this paper indicate that most Amazonian "societies" can be labeled as neither egalitarian nor hierarchical (ranked), because these various modes of political behavior coexist.  Picchi (2000:153–155), drawing on Kracke (1978), Price (1981), and Hill (1984), argues that individual headmen learn to alternate between consensual and authoritarian leadership styles in different contexts.  Brown (19991:402), drawing on Clastres (1978), Kracke (1978), Jackson (1983), and Hill (1984), argues that there is a tension in native Amazonian societies between egalitarianism and hierarchy, so that these societies tend to oscillate between those two principles of political organization.  In this paper, however, I do not argue for shifting strategies by single leaders, nor that there is a tension between egalitarianism and hierarchy within Marubo society.  Instead, I show that leaders of different villages range across the spectrum from powerless to powerful, and that all positions in this range are equally acceptable to most Marubo (cf. Kracke 1993).  However, my point is similar, in that the point

of this paper is not to establish the correct label for Marubo politics, but rather to use Marubo politics as a vantage point for critiquing the entire labeling system. The empirical reality of indigenous social life demands that we look warily upon efforts to label societies (or "socialities"[3]), for such efforts may have as much to do with our own need to achieve intellectual satisfaction through the fixing of permanent knowledge (Foucault 1969, 1975; Anderson 1991:179),[4] as with accurately representing what indigenous life is like.

## DIACHRONIC CHANGE IN MARUBO POLITICS

An analysis of the last twelve decades of Marubo history, based on oral and written sources, indicates that there has been considerable change in Marubo internal politics during that time. Oral histories indicate that during the rubber boom Marubo leaders were warlike and forceful. In the half century following the rubber boom, leadership took on an altogether different quality as violence was morally shunned. In recent years, as the population has increased, new forms of inequality and power have become increasingly visible among the Marubo, much as they have elsewhere in indigenous Amazonia (Fisher 2000; Picchi 2000). Here, I will present evidence on changes in Marubo politics since the time just before the rubber boom, with the objective of showing how observers at different points in time would come to vastly different conclusions as to the nature of the Marubo political system. This will show how we have come to have an erroneous view of indigenous Amazonian politics in which very different forms of political system are lumped together as if they were all the same, and will strongly suggest the need to observe indigenous Amazonian politics from a new vantage point.

This analysis must necessarily rely on Marubo oral histories for its data, thus raising issues of reliability and empirical validity. If I am to argue that anthropological observers at different points in time would see very different Marubo political systems, how can I know that the portrayals of past political action in Marubo oral histories are representations of formerly extant phenomena that would have been observable by a scientifically trained cultural outsider? In his analysis of leadership in Matsigenka oral history, Rosengren (1987:161–162) takes the approach that "it is not necessary to get an exact and truthful picture of the historical persons behind the stories … It is presently of greater interest to see how they are described today and how these descriptions function in the present political processes." A similar, if more nuanced, approach is proposed by

Turner (1988:241) when he argues that "[indigenous oral] historical texts … are not to be understood primarily as … representations of the events of contact. Rather they must be understood as programs for the orientation of action within the situation of contact and as keys for the interpretation of interaction within that context." These positions would be satisfactory if my goal was to explicate contemporary Marubo politics in tems of Marubo consciousness of historical experience. However, this is not my rhetorical goal and so a different position must be taken that incorporates the insights of Rosengren and Turner.

It must be fully admitted that the oral histories this analysis relies upon are selective in terms of what events and situations are represented and how. It must also be recognized that the selectivity in representation has to do with the Marubo surviving the violent contact situation in the Javari basin of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, representations of historical events and situations are accompanied in Marubo oral-historical narrative by interpretations of these events, which are then linked to arguments for particular types of behavior to be practiced in the present (a process described in detail in Ruedas 2003). But selectivity is far from falsehood. It is well recognized that written history is just as subjective in the way it constructs narratives from recorded events (White 1973). Thus, while recognizing that "the historical consciousness of indigenous South American societies … often reveals itself as radically selective" (Hill 1988:7), we must also recognize that a

> … theoretical myth that comes unraveled in rethinking history and myth is the view that historical interpretations based upon written documents are necessarily more "objective" than those embodied in oral narratives … Historical "accuracy" is not separable from the specific sociocultural and linguistic traditions that both limit the range of acceptable renderings of historical processes and serve as the resources in terms of which such interpretations are created (Hill 1988:3).

There are reasons to believe that Marubo oral histories of the rubber-boom era are very accurate. Upon return from fieldwork, I carried out limited research on the history of the rubber boom in the Javari basin and found that the sequence of events described in Weinstein (1983) fits perfectly with the chronology described in Marubo oral histories. Calculations of elapsed oral-historical time, using generation counts, match written history. The events described in Weinstein not only fit the events in Marubo oral history, they also provide reasonable explanations for many of the situations described, as will be explained below. The oral histories concerning villages whose inhabitants were captured and taken away to

regions unknown also fit with historical descriptions of slave-raiding geared towards the Putumayo labor market (Hardenburg 1912, Stanfield 1998), both in terms of timing and in the description of strategy and tactics. Marubo descriptions of interactions with remaining rubber tappers after the rubber boom match oral and written histories gathered by later anthropologists from nonindigenous regional populations (Montagner Melatti and Melatti 1975; Coutinho 1993). Marubo descriptions of clashes with the Mayoruna in the 1960s are more accurate than many published accounts because the latter have been flawed by confusion surrounding Panoan ethnonyms. For example, Bodley (1999:48) confuses Marubo and Mayoruna due to his reliance on media reports, which asserted that the Marubo were attacked by the military when, in fact, no such attack occurred. Contemporary Marubo oral accounts of these events are closer to the available documentary evidence according to ethnohistorical research by Coutinho (1993). From these facts I conclude that Marubo oral histories of the rubber boom era, while clearly selective and serving a function of interpreting correct behavior in contact situations, nevertheless are reliable and accurate enough for the limited purposes of this argument, which is to suggest how an anthropologist might have perceived Marubo politics at different points in time. This is itself a rhetorical device to show how anthropologists came to conclusions concerning Amazonian politics that, while accurate for particular villages at particular times, should not be considered a generalization about all Amazonians at all times. In other words, I try to show why excellent ethnography led to flawed ethnology.

### *Marubo History and Politics*

Contemporary Marubo identity has emerged from a process of ethnogenesis that began after the rubber boom. The term "Marubo" has been applied by the nonindigenous population to indigenous Panoans of the Javari basin for over a century, without much concern as to whether the people thus labeled were in fact one group.[5] Only since the 1970s has the term "Marubo" become specific to the people discussed in this paper.

Before the rubber boom, there was no single Marubo society, nor did any of the area's Panoans identify themselves as Marubo, which at that time was an exogenous label. Oral histories indicate that there was a multiplicity of Panoan groups in the area covered by the upper Javari, the Pardo, the middle and upper Curuçá, and the upper Ituí rivers (Ruedas 2001, 2003). Though they were culturally related and linked by affinity and by various forms of reciprocity, these groups had different names, distinct identities, and at least two, perhaps three, different languages.[6]

In the oral histories that were told to me, only one leader who lived prior to the rubber boom was mentioned. This was Txoki, referred to (in Portuguese) by my informant Txanõpa as "*o rei dos Marubo*," the king of the Marubo. Txanõpa said that Txoki had the largest swidden ever cut and planted by a Marubo, even to the present day, and the outline of this swidden was still visible some way downriver from Aldeia Maronal. Txoki was successful in agriculture and hunting and held enormous feasts. He invited people to live near him and formed one of the largest villages in the Javari basin. After his death, the village dispersed. Txoki's village was probably at its peak between 1860 and 1880.

In the Javari basin, the rubber boom began in earnest in 1888, when a company from Belém was awarded exclusive rights to the rubber in this large area (Weinstein 1983:173). In 1899, the Brazilian owners sold their rights to the Javari rubber to a French company. This sale affected the organization of labor in the Javari basin. Theoretically, all the rubber belonged to the license holder. The rubber tappers were paid for their labor, not for the rubber. However, the French found that they could not control their workers and had to buy the rubber from the tappers, who thus became an independent labor force (Weinstein 1983:178–180). This may well explain the increased level of violence reported in Marubo oral histories for that time, because tappers now competed with one another. Oral histories report that tappers attacked one another, stole one another's rubber shipments, and gave weapons to indigenous groups so they could attack rival tappers. The rubber boom began to end with the collapse of rubber prices around 1911, and the rubber tappers slowly vacated the area, particularly its remotest parts.

Oral histories indicate that violence was very prevalent among the ancestors of the Marubo during the rubber boom. Whether the rubber boom was the cause of this violence or a pre-existing feature of Javari Panoan life is hard to tell, but it is clear that the boom created ample new opportunities for violence (cf. Ferguson 1995). Ancestral Marubo rubber-boom violence fits into three major categories.

In the first place, the rubber boom created the need for self-defense in the face of attacks by rubber tappers and by slave raiders.[7] In the second category—more significant for the argument in this paper—the rubber boom occasioned violence among indigenous people. Some of this was not linked directly to the nonindigenous presence. According to informants, there were some ancestral Marubo groups that engaged in the forcible capture of wives during this time. This behavior was attributed by my informants to settlement leaders, who set a path of action followed by their other male coresidents. One story telling the childhood of a man named

Tae recounts how his village was attacked by a wife-capturing party from another village. Only Tae and a pair of his sisters escaped into the forest. After surviving for a time on their own, they were found by the main post-rubber boom Marubo leader, João Tuxáua, who invited them to live with him. The story subsequently entered the Marubo oral historical corpus and was told to me by some of João Tuxáua's many sons.

The third category of violence was violence among indigenous people directly instigated by nonindigenous people. Rubber tappers exploited conflicts among ancestral Marubo groups by forming alliances, arming allies, and encouraging them to attack their rivals. João Tuxáua's son José told me of an incident in which a group of tappers hijacked a rubber shipment from rivals. This event involved indigenous people from both sides. The victims went down the Curuçá in canoes loaded with rubber, accompanied by indigenous allies. The hijackers, with their own indigenous allies, waited in ambush on the shores at a narrow spot in the river. The attack resulted in the capture of the rubber shipment and a large number of deaths on the victims' side.

The demographic impact of the rubber boom on the Javari basin Panoans was disastrous. Those oral histories that allow numerical estimates to be made uniformly indicate depopulation rates in the eighty to ninety per cent range. During the rubber boom a small group of Wanĩvo and Inonáwavo (ancestral Marubo) led by a man named Tama, more commonly known by his Portuguese name of Tomás, fled their village between the Javari and Curuçá to a remote area near the headwaters of the Arrojo River and of the Igarapé[8] Maronal. There they lived when the rubber boom ended and the rubber tappers vacated the area.

After the rubber boom, Tomás' son João Tuxáua devoted many years to traveling around the Javari basin, seeking out remnants of the formerly linked Panoan groups. He found a number of small groups, in some cases isolated families, in one case a single individual. As long as they were people who were not overtly violent, he invited them to live in his village. With his father's death, it became João Tuxáua's village.

While I have not attempted a detailed calculation, it is evident from genealogical data and oral histories that the rubber boom survivors who gathered to live in João Tuxáua's village numbered less than one hundred, and probably less than sixty. It was in this village that these formerly diverse groups of Javari basin Panoans began to acquire the single Marubo identity they now share. They adopted the language of one of the groups, the Shaináwavo. At first only one longhouse, over time the settlement expanded to become a group of five longhouses (*shovo*). Following the terminology of Julio Cezar Melatti (1977, 1983), this group of longhouses is best referred

to as a local group rather than a village, for they were near but not immediately adjacent to one another.  The five longhouses remained in complete isolation in the rainforest until the start of contacts with missionaries and regional merchants in the early 1950s.

João Tuxáua was the main leader of the Marubo during the period of isolation.  Since several of his sons were among my main informants, I heard many stories about his leadership style.  João Tuxáua was a shaman, a prophet,[9] and a healer who was expert in the various types of Marubo healing rituals and in botanical healing (see Montagner Melatti 1985).  He had the mythological corpus memorized and was an expert in the discourse genres associated with leadership.  João Tuxáua taught all these specialized forms of knowledge to his children and nephews, and thus it was through his efforts that much of the rubber boom Panoan culture survived.

João Tuxáua focused much of his energy and his moral teachings on ensuring the survival and expansion of the Marubo population.  In his performances of the specialized discourse genre known as *tsai ĩki* (Ruedas 2003:59–60), he taught that the violence of the rubber boom had nearly led to their extinction and had caused them to live in hunger, ill health, and fear.  He advocated a lifestyle—reminiscent in many ways of the history of Txoki—focused on agricultural production, hunting, continual invitations to meals and feasts, and the practice of healing techniques to ensure a healthy and growing population.  He had six wives and over twenty children.  With his fellow rubber boom survivors, he presided over a demographic rebound and also led a change in emphasis in the value system away from violence and warfare, and toward feasting and healing.

An example of the difference between João Tuxáua and the violent leaders of the rubber boom is his role in the clash between Marubo and Mayoruna in the 1960s, alluded to above.  After an initial encounter in which a Marubo youth was killed and several Marubo women kidnapped, the Marubo decided to stage a raid on the Mayoruna village.  According to his son José, while João Tuxáua accompanied the raiders in an advisory and support role he did not participate in the actual violence in which a number of Mayoruna were injured and killed.  In contrast to the warrior leaders of the rubber boom, João Tuxáua did not like fighting.  He led by example and advice, not forceful authority.

João Tuxáua had an enormous impact on the contemporary Marubo. Many Marubo agree that they would be extinct if it had not been for his efforts, and their culture would lack its rich mythological and shamanistic components if he had not preserved and taught these.  Several informants stated that he was selective in terms of who was invited to live in his village

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after the rubber boom, excluding those with the worst reputation for violence and inviting only those he thought he could get along with.  He taught religion, mythology, healing, cosmology, and social ethics to the new generations of Marubo growing up in his longhouse group during the period of isolation.  Father, uncle, or father-in-law to many of the current Marubo elders, he shaped the worldview and ethics of today's Marubo political leaders.  João Tuxáua died in 1996.

The Marubo remained in the remote area they had fled to after the rubber boom until shortly after the clash with the Mayoruna in the 1960s.  Contemporary Marubo population nuclei all have their origins in migrations from João Tuxáua's longhouse group.  In the mid-1960s, several groups of Marubo moved to the Ituí River.  In the early 1970s, the Brazilian federal Indian Foundation, FUNAI, invited the Marubo to move downriver to FUNAI posts.  Some Marubo moved to the middle Curuçá, others to the middle Ituí.  The Marubo who remained in João Tuxáua's refuge area moved to the main course of the upper Curuçá in the mid 1980s.

The Marubo population has steadily increased since the end of the rubber boom.  The first census carried out by anthropologist Julio Cezar Melatti in 1974–1975 counted 397 Marubo (Melatti n.d.a), indicating that the population had at least quadrupled since the rubber boom.  In 1978 he counted 462 Marubo.  In 1985 their population was 594, and in 1995 it was 818 (Coutinho 1998).  According to the Javari basin indigenous political organization, CIVAJA, their population in 2002 was 969.

The increase in Marubo population has been accompanied by the emergence of large villages and has permitted the development of several different varieties of leadership.  João Tuxáua's local group could hardly be called a village (as I will argue below), and, extrapolating present demographic growth to the past, had a population of less than 200 in 1955 and of less than 300 at the time of the split that occurred in the 1960s.  In contrast, at the time of my fieldwork in 1997 the village of Aldeia Maronal alone had over 200 inhabitants.  There were also two other villages with populations between one and two hundred, and eight smaller villages.  The significance of this for understanding Marubo politics will be discussed in the section below on synchronic variability.

### *Effects of temporal position on anthropological observations and conclusions*

If anthropologists had observed the Marubo during their period of isolation in the forest, there would have been little reason to question their similarity to the general model of lowland politics proposed by Lowie

(1948): small, atomized groups with powerless leaders. But anthropologists would have been succumbing to an important fallacy of anthropological observation, that is, that indigenous societies are out of the mainstream of time and are changeless (Fabian 1983). In fact, the period of isolation was the demographic nadir for the Marubo and for many other indigenous Amazonians as well. Attempts to deduce their essential political nature from observations taken at that time can only lead to erroneous conclusions, because conditions at that time were atypical.

The only evidence we have as to "Marubo" politics prior to the rubber boom genocide is the scant oral history of Txoki. If we accept that the history of Txoki is accurate, as are most Marubo oral histories of that time period, we must also accept that it is "radically selective" (Hill 1988:7). This raises the possibility that the stories about Txoki represent contemporary ideals of leadership rather than a "real" person. However, this does not invalidate the use of these data in this argument. Firstly, Txoki's historical existence is sufficiently demonstrated by the continued identification of his swidden. Marubo can identify the locations and owners of very old swiddens quite readily and there is no reason to suspect that this particular identification is a fabrication. Furthermore, no stories of similar leaders are told for the rubber boom itself, contrary to what one would expect if these stories were mere idealizations and not based on real individuals. Finally, the fact that contemporary leadership roles are supported by citing a leader of such antiquity, and that this leader is contrasted with historically intervening leaders, rather than placed in a chain with them, supports my argument that change through time has occurred in Marubo leadership styles, but that contemporary styles are rooted in "Marubo" cultural patterns.

Txoki was an exceptional leader. As mentioned previously, he had at least one swidden so large that (according to informants) it is still unmatched among the Marubo, and must have had other swiddens coming into use and falling out of use as well. In addition, he is said to have organized large feasts at which hundreds of people were invited to eat. He issued invitations to other ancestral Marubo to move to his village, and many people did in fact move there, so that it became the largest Panoan village in the four rivers area (Javari, Curuçá, Pardo, and Ituí).

If we plug the data on Txoki into our anthropological frameworks, we can say that there was one "Marubo" leader that was much more prominent and important than any others. He organized his labor force to generate surplus production, he engaged in redistribution of surplus, and he utilized this redistribution to expand his village by inviting others to live with him, thus expanding his base of influence. If, as among the current Marubo,

not only the feast organizers but the entire village contributed to the feast, then Txoki engaged in genuine chiefly redistribution in the sense that he received surplus agricultural production from other residents' swiddens and redistributed them in such a way that he benefited politically. The throwing of successful feasts enhances the reputation of the village leader for wise organization of labor in food production, rendering that village more attractive for prospective coresidents (Ruedas 2001:613–637).

The available data permit at least a reasonable debate as to whether Txoki's village represents a simple chiefdom. Unfortunately, I have no data that would permit me to posit ranking or to interpret how much power Txoki had. However, thinking in terms of the political terminology elaborated by Morton Fried (1967:109), wherein "a rank society is one in which positions of valued status are somehow limited so that not all those of sufficient talent to occupy such statuses actually achieve them," it can be said that Txoki's position as the most prominent leader is one that not every person with the simple ability to exercise it could have entered into. Txoki's position depended on his having invited numerous other families and groups to move to his village. Since the total population was limited, this represents a restriction on how many people could occupy the position of "paramount" leadership, a restriction beyond simple limits of age, gender, and ability. Thus, Txoki's comportment relates to Fried's definition of ranking rather than egalitarianism. This is, of course, far from a bullet-proof conclusion, but even the fact that the point can be reasonably debated suggests that Txoki had more prestige, power, and prominence than the generalized indigenous leader portrayed in Lowie (1948), or later in Clastres (1974).

It is clear that leadership and politics took on an altogether more atomized and agonistic character during the rubber boom. Prior to the rubber boom, relations among the Javari basin Panoans involved various forms of reciprocal exchange: the formation of affinal links, mutual invitations to feasts, and changes of residence. However, oral histories of the rubber boom do not mention any of these phenomena. On the contrary, they indicate that generalized reciprocity was replaced by negative reciprocity as a main mode of intergroup relations. For example, instead of marriage exchanges there were wife-capturing raids in which entire villages were killed except for the women. The warfare rendered agriculture precarious. Oral histories indicate that raids were so common that frequent shifting of residence was necessary in order to evade enemies. Thus, it was difficult to plant and maintain swiddens. Many ancestral Marubo relied on hunting and gathering for extensive periods of time (cf. Balée 1992 on "agricultural regression"), suffering from hunger and poor health. The

feasting practiced during the time of Txoki was out of the question. Many village leaders were primarily warriors who regularly used force to achieve goals, political or otherwise. Villages formerly linked by a web of reciprocity split apart and many waged war on one another.

Anthropological conclusions about the rubber boom Marubo depend on our interpretation of the use of force. On the one hand, rubber boom Marubo politics could be considered more egalitarian than in the time of Txoki. The regional integration disappeared, villages became autonomous, and the formation of large villages ceased. Thus, power bases as relatively large as Txoki's became impossible to acquire. On the other hand, the organized exercise of force became an accepted practice of Marubo leaders and a primary path to prominence for them. The enforcing of political authority through physical coercion is a distinctly nonegalitarian practice. Therefore, rubber boom Marubo politics cannot easily be placed into our ethnological categories.

The end of the rubber boom occasioned another shift in Marubo politics. As explained above, João Tuxáua changed the style of leadership to one that resembled that of Txoki more than that of the rubber boom war leaders. According to his sons, João Tuxáua placed great emphasis on economic production, physical health, and plentiful reproduction. João Tuxáua was an assiduous holder of feasts. He would invite all the other *shovo* to eat at his own, and would then lead both hosts and guests in various forms of singing and dancing. In his performances of *tsai ĩki* João Tuxáua highlighted the prosperity that was on display at the feasts he organized, and contrasted it with the hunger experienced during the rubber boom. His sons explained to me that because of the violent relations between ancestral Marubo groups, it was difficult to maintain adequate agricultural production and that this led to increased reliance on more time-consuming and less rewarding gathering activities. João Tuxáua told his sons that during those violent times children went hungry and health was poor. Violence among ancestral Marubo groups was thus explicitly blamed for hunger and poor health. The new ways of mutual invitations to feast and the satiety and good health derived therefrom were exalted as superior to violence in João Tuxáua's ethical formulations, encoded in performances. Feasts thus became contexts in which the negative consequences of intra-Marubo violence were verbally and ritually expressed (Ruedas 2003).

In addition to his moral interpretations, João Tuxáua's selection of who to invite to join him at the headwaters refuge—along with the actual impact of the rubber boom in terms of Marubo mortality—had a major effect on the use of force among Marubo. His sons explained to me that all the *Marubos bravos*—those who used force on a habitual basis—disappeared.

They did not survive the rubber boom.  Whether they really all died, or whether João Tuxáua's selection resulted in their exclusion from what would become Marubo society, cannot now be known.  The fact that they died, however, entered into the Marubo interpretation of events throughtout the rubber boom era.  Violence was linked to extinction, peace to survival.

The leadership of João Tuxáua during the Marubo period of isolation resembles closely the type of leadership reported by ethnologists for other indigenous Amazonians at that time (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1944, Lowie 1948).  João Tuxáua was not authoritarian and did not employ physical coercion as a means of control.  He was a consummate orator, influencing the other Marubo through his *tsai ĩki* through reports of his experiences in shamanic trances, through prophetic dreams, and through his performance of myths.  He led by example and advice, without bullying or coercion.  He influenced the beliefs and behavior of all Marubo, but his direct authority was limited to his own household.   He was known for continual feasting and thus earned a reputation for generosity.  Importantly, he was a man of peace.  He advocated nonviolence in his *tsai ĩki* and when war was absolutely necessary, he left the fighting to others.

These qualities make João Tuxáua a typical indigenous Amazonian leader according to Lowie's ethnological synthesis.  The perception that this is the standard form of indigenous Amazonian leadership led to the conclusion that indigenous Amazonians were fundamentally egalitarian, a point of view most eloquently popularized by Clastres (1974).  It also underlies evolutionist perceptions of Amazonia's place in relation to other South American societies—the belief that power inequalities did not exist in Amazonia and that this radical difference between lowlands and highlands must be explained (cf. Meggers 1954, 1971). There is no question that an anthropologist equipped with the concept of egalitarianism, observing the isolation-period Marubo, would come to the conclusion that they were egalitarian and that they provided further evidence to support the ethnological conclusion that all indigenous Amazonians were egalitarian.

If João Tuxáua's leadership differed from that of the rubber boom war leaders, it also drew on the pre–rubber boom cultural framework.  João Tuxáua's invitations to people to join his village, and his emphasis on feasting, paralleled the behavior of Txoki.  However, Txoki had a larger population base to draw on.  João Tuxáua's focus was on the survival of his people, not on obtaining prominence in Javari basin politics.

The rapid increase in population, the multiplication of villages, and the increase in the size of villages, as well as the stability concomitant with the general absence of genocidal pressure and of contact-related epidemics,

have contributed to the emergence over the past twenty years of new forms of Marubo politics that involve inequality in power and competition for influence to a degree that would have been impossible under the demographic stress of the period of isolation. Details of these changes will be presented in the following section on synchronic variation in Marubo politics. It should be clear, however, that observations of Marubo (or ancestral Marubo) politics at different points in time would lead to very different conclusions.

## SYNCHRONIC VARIATION IN MARUBO POLITICS, 1997–1998

In addition to the above-mentioned diachronic variations perceptible in Marubo oral histories, observations of political processes in different Marubo villages in 1997–98 revealed that there was considerable synchronic variation in political organization. In particular, I found variation among villages as regards the role of the leader in village decision-making processes. Some leaders fit classic models of powerless Amazonian headmanship while others decidedly did not. The determinant factor in this sense was the way in which the village had been formed. Villages that formed when Marubo settled around a nonindigenous habitation tended to have either powerless leaders or no village leader at all. Villages that formed around an indigenous founder tended to have influential and even powerful leaders. There is thus a correlation between a village's formation process and the extent of its leader's power. In order to understand the differences among villages in political decision making and in the leaders' roles in these processes, it is necessary to understand the different Marubo village formation processes.

### Village formation processes and variations in the role of headmen in village-level decision-making

Marubo villages differ in terms of the role of indigenous leadership in village formation. I will discuss the three largest Marubo villages at the time of my fieldwork: Aldeia Maronal and Aldeia São Sebastião on the Curuçá, and Aldeia Vida Nova on the Ituí. Vida Nova was formed in the 1960s when several different Marubo groups moved away from their mid-century refuge to be near a New Tribes Mission on the Ituí. The result was a village in which each of the several longhouses had equal authority and influence relative to one another, and no overall leader existed for the village.

São Sebastião was formed in the 1970s when several Marubo groups moved to be near the FUNAI post on the middle Curuçá. These several groups appointed a village headman by consensus. Aldeia Maronal was formed when Alfredo Barbosa, the son of João Tuxáua, started a new residence with his brother, and over the years successfully invited other groups of Marubo to move to that location. Alfredo, as founder, was headman of Aldeia. The correlation between formation process and political style in these three villages illustrates contemporary variation in Marubo village-level politics.

In the 1960s, New Tribes missionaries settled on the Ituí River in an effort to attract the Marubo. At the same time, some Marubo moved away for the first time from the Arrojo and Maronal headwaters where they had lived since the end of the rubber boom, to the Ituí River that was an ancestral Marubo territory (Ruedas 2001, 2003). Some of the relocating Marubo established themselves away from the mission, but a number of them decided to settle close to the mission. The decision to establish a *shovo* near the mission was taken separately by three leaders: Kẽxõpapa (Paulo), Kamãpa (José Nascimento), and Mayãpapa (Raimundo Dionísio). These leaders and their followers rendered decisions independently of one another but all ended up settling near the mission. Their three *shovo* became known as a single village called Aldeia Vida Nova. At the time of Melatti's fieldwork in the 1970s, there were still three *shovo* at Vida Nova, as well as a separate agglomeration of smaller houses, with a total population of 108 inhabitants (Melatti n.d.a). By the time of my fieldwork, there were five *shovo* at Aldeia Vida Nova, with a population of 152. This village had no single recognized leader. Leaders in each of the main *shovo* considered themselves equal to one another, refused to agree on an overall headman, and met as equals at decision-making councils.

In addition to Vida Nova, there were seven other villages on the upper Ituí in 1997–1998. None of these had more than two *shovo* apiece. Each village had a single recognized leader except for the village furthest downriver, Aldeia Alegria, which had two *shovo*, owned by two brothers, where each brother claimed leadership of the village. The total population of the upper Ituí in 1978 was 222 (Melatti n.d.a). It increased to 370 by 1998.

In 1974, FUNAI established a post on the middle Curuçá River. This post became another point of attraction for indigenous resettlement since FUNAI promised access to the Brazilian health care and education systems and to material goods. A number of *shovo* in the upper Curuçá area broke up as some of their residents chose to accept FUNAI's invitation to move. Again, decisions to move were made independently by a number of

subgroups, each of which established its own *shovo* near the FUNAI post. Since the village had no indigenous founder, each founding *shovo* had equal status. In this context, a village headman was appointed by consensus from among the older men. After about twenty years on the middle Curuçá, the FUNAI post was moved to the upper Curuçá, so that when I arrived in the field there was no longer a nonindigenous presence in the village, though originally it had formed around the post. However, the context of its formation still affected the internal village politics since this was the reason there had been a consensus-appointed headman. In 1997–1998 there were seven *shovo* with 115 people there, and the village was named Aldeia São Sebastião.

In the mid-1980s, Alfredo Barbosa, a son of João Tuxáua, moved from the area of his father's old longhouse group at the headwaters of the Igarapé Maronal to a new location on the main course of the upper Curuçá. After a few years, his father and several of his brothers joined him, creating a settlement with two *shovo*.[10] In the mid-1990s another of Alfredo's brothers and Alfredo's wife's father moved there, each building their own *shovo*. With all this available labor, Alfredo directed the building of an airstrip and invited missionaries to establish themselves in the village. Over the course of the next few years the settlement expanded to twelve *shovo*, with a population of 220 in 1998. When I arrived, the village was named Aldeia Maronal. Alfredo was the headman because he had founded the village and everyone else had moved there.

In forming his village, Alfredo drew on cultural traditions exemplified by Txoki and João Tuxáua. Initially forming a small village with his brother's family, as soon as his swiddens were productive he invited his father and other brothers to join him at the new site, arguing that by living on the main course of the Curuçá they would have easier access to trade and medical attention. His organization of labor to cut an airstrip and thus make possible the invitation of missionaries was explicitly formulated as a plan to make the village more attractive to potential coresidents. In an interview, he told me that he had thought that, with the improved health care available courtesy of the missionaries, he would be better able to successfully convince people to move there. In this, he was right. After the arrival of the missionaries, he issued an invitation to his brother José, who moved to Aldeia Maronal with his family and his brother's family. Alfredo's father-in-law was also convinced to move there (for a detailed description of these events, see Ruedas 2001:220–297). Alfredo did more than merely start a new residence. Through his strategy of organizing labor to make it an attractive option for potential coresidents, and through his successful issuance of invitations to move, he expanded its population

until it was the largest Marubo village by a considerable margin (cf. McCallum 2001:109–111). He thus replicated the process described for Txoki in the oral histories of the previous century.

Linked to each type of village formation process was a different kind of leader with different roles in village decision making. Aldeia Vida Nova had no indigenous leader. The position of village founder was held by John Jansma, a missionary from the United States. The Marubo *shovo* had settled around the mission separately and never recognized an overall leader among themselves. At Aldeia São Sebastião there was a leader named Shetãpa who had been appointed by consensus among the original Marubo settlers. Only at Aldeia Maronal was there an indigenous man who was the founder of the village. Alfredo, the founder of Aldeia Maronal, was also the village leader.

My method for evaluating the extent of the power of leaders was etic. Rather than asking informants, I observed conflicts of will and recorded their outcomes. I concentrated my attention on relationships with nonindigenous people (Ruedas 2001:374–581). I started by observing the range of possibilities for such relationships, and then noted what choices individuals make within that range of possibilities. I noted what goals were being pursued through relationships to nonindigenous people, and what strategies were being used to pursue those goals. A number of situations arose in which individuals and groups with different goals or with the same goals but different strategies came into conflict with one another. I carefully observed these conflicts and their results. I paid particular attention to where leaders stood on conflictive issues and if, how, and to what extent the leader controls outcomes. These methods were based on action theory in political anthropology as described by Vincent (1978) and exemplified in the work of the Manchester school (Turner 1957; Middleton 1960; Van Velsen 1964).

After observing political processes at Aldeia Maronal over the course of eleven months, I found that the result of decision-making events in which Alfredo had real interest was always that Alfredo's opinion prevailed over that of dissenters. One example that illustrates this process occurred in January 1998. The regional administration of FUNAI asked the Marubo to decide whether they wanted to have nonindigenous workers manning the FUNAI posts or if they would prefer that indigenous people be hired. Each village was asked to render an opinion. The interesting thing about this situation is that, in accordance with FUNAI's request, each village could render only a single opinion, so that if there was any village-level disagreement it had to be resolved at that level. Interviews with Marubo who followed this process from Atalaia do Norte (site of FUNAI regional

headquarters) indicate that the FUNAI authorities considered that if there was no unified opinion coming from a village, there was no need to heed opinions from that area because they "could not make up their minds." At Aldeia Maronal a segment of the village had formed a close, materially beneficial relationship with nonindigenous workers. If an indigenous man were hired, the material benefits of alliance to FUNAI would shift to a different social sector within the village. The headman and his kin would benefit from hiring the indigenous candidate, while other individuals in the village periphery would benefit from retention of nonindigenous workers. Before being resolved, this conflict required very delicate political maneuvering in numerous meetings and councils spread over six months' time. The result, however, was that Alfredo's opinion prevailed over that of his peripheral coresidents and that Alfredo's brother's son was hired as the FUNAI worker (Ruedas 2001:559–573).

The village-level decision-making process that resulted in Alfredo's opinion prevailing for the hiring of a FUNAI worker was similar to other such processes observed at Aldeia Maronal in 1997–1998. At least three other village-wide decision-making events and two smaller-scale events had the same outcome (Ruedas 2001). These were all situations in which conflicting opinions existed. In all these cases, the decision-making process, observed by myself in a series of meetings both formal and informal, resulted in Alfredo's opinion prevailing. On the other hand, I never observed him to lose a serious village-level conflict of will. Based on these observations, I concluded that Alfredo has real power to determine the outcome of decision-making processes in his village.

Alfredo's ability to control outcomes of decision-making processes is in large part premised on his role as village founder. Over the radios that allow long-distance communication in the Javari basin, FUNAI had asked for the opinion of "Aldeia Maronal," expecting a single answer in return. Aldeia Maronal responded to these requests by holding meetings at which elders and a few young activists expressed their opinions and worked towards a consensus. In the case of the FUNAI post official, complete consensus could not be reached, and so the issue was, who could express the opinion of "Aldeia Maronal"? While the series of meetings to decide this issue were still going on, a conversation with an informant gave me a strong clue as to how it would be decided. "Maronal is Alfredo's, not [the dissenters'],"
he said. This indicates that since Alfredo had founded the village, it was considered "his," and ultimately he was the legitimate mouthpiece for "the village's" opinion. By this time, six months into this decision-making process, Alfredo had gained the consensus of all but one important elder, and the decision as to which one would express the village's "decision" came

down to legitimacy.  As founder, Alfredo is the legitimate spokesperson for the village, and he is recognized as such by outside agencies who request "village" opinions.  Being the founder of a village that other people had moved to (a headman role I call "founder-attractor") gave Alfredo power in certain spheres of decision making, including the highly important area of relations to nonindigenous people.

The role of the leader in decision-making processes at aldeia São Sebastião was quite different.  I observed the headman, Shetãpa, participate in political meetings three times, and and followed decision-making processes in his village through informants.  Each time I observed him at a meeting he was an active speaker, occupied a significant proportion of the speaking time, and made forceful points to his listeners.  However, on at least one major issue the actions of much of his village varied from his own opinion.  In December 1997, a debate arose at Aldeia São Sebastião over whether to allow the nonindigenous river merchants called *regatões* (singular *regatão*) into the restricted indigenous area.  While illegal in principle, if the inhabitants of Aldeia São Sebastião themselves took no action there was no one else to stop them.  The indigenous political organization, CIVAJA, opposed the entry of *regatões* on the grounds that they depleted scarce resources of game, fish, and chelonians.  The head of CIVAJA at the time was Clóvis Rufino.  Clóvis' brother owned a *shovo* at Aldeia São Sebastião, and Clóvis was the headman's son-in-law.  During the December 1997 village debate on the *regatões* issue, Clóvis spoke to his wife's father over the radio, urging him to take action to prevent the *regatões* from entering the area.  Shetãpa later told me that he himself opposed the entry of *regatões* because they were depleting the riverine resources.  Thus, a significant sector at Aldeia São Sebastião, including the village leader, was opposed to trade with *regatões*.  Despite this, in December 1997, according to informants from Aldeia Maronal who were present there, *regatões* visited Aldeia São Sebastião and went some distance upstream into the restricted area. Although a sector of the village, tied to CIVAJA, opposed this, an equally important sector had ties to *regatões* and wanted immediate access to nonindigenous goods rather than the more intangible future preservation of riverine resources. Interestingly, Shetãpa could have called FUNAI over the radio and Brazilian federal police or environmental protection agents would have quickly been on the scene.  However, he did not.  This shows that at Aldeia São Sebastião, decision-making processes can result in everybody doing what they want, independently of what the headman advises. This type of result is far more consistent with received notions of Amazonian headmanship (see Lowie 1948, Clastres 1974) than were the

results of decision-making processes at Aldeia Maronal.

At Aldeia Vida Nova and the other villages of the upper Ituí, a third type of outcome—mutual neutralization by leaders with opposing points of view—was noted. Aldeia Vida Nova, as explained previously, had no leader beyond the heads of each individual *shovo*, and sometimes the *shovo* leaders' uxorilocal sons-in-law. On several occasions, representatives of multiple villages on the upper Ituí came together in attempts to reach a common opinion. Thus, at least three of the upper Ituí villages (Alegria, Vida Nova, and Liberdade) were more than once linked into a single decision-making process. One of the main leaders at Aldeia Vida Nova, Benedito, told me that FUNAI had, not long before the start of my fieldwork, decided to build a post on the upper Ituí. FUNAI had asked the upper Ituí villages to decide where the post should be built. According to Benedito, the post was never built because the separate villages could not agree in which village it should be located. Other informants mentioned this episode, and some informant statements suggest that this process of mutual neutralization occurred internally at Aldeia Vida Nova as well as when multiple Ituí villages were linked into one process. This result is different from those noted above for Aldeia São Sebastião and Aldeia Maronal in that the outcome of disagreement among individuals involved in a political process was that nobody's opinion prevailed and no action was taken.

An important factor in the lack of leadership in Aldeia Vida Nova was the presence of a very forceful and authoritarian missionary, John Jansma. By the time I met him, he had been working among the Marubo for four decades and had been established at Vida Nova for over three decades. He had settled on that site first, and the Vida Nova Marubo had moved to where he was. Jansma was therefore the individual occupying the position of founder-attractor at Vida Nova, and we have seen in the case of Maronal how significant this position is in the distribution of authority in a Marubo village. According to informants, Jansma called decison-making meetings that Vida Nova Marubo leaders attended, advised the Vida Nova Marubo on what to do, and in some cases vetoed their opinions. He took a very active role in the internal politics of the village. He also practiced other forms of control, such as the formation of ties of economic dependence with prominent Marubo, and of course the systematic practices of proselytization and conversion. Given this situation—a nonindigenous man with unequal access to economic, symbolic, and information resources, occupying the position of founder-attractor, and maintaining an active leadership role in the village—it is unsurprising that Vida Nova should

remain politically segmented, with a balance of power maintained among the Marubo longhouses.

These data show that Marubo political processes differ considerably from village to village. The role of leaders in these processes differed, and the type of outcome also differed across the Marubo area. At Aldeia Maronal, all village-level decision-making processes that I observed ended with Alfredo's opinion prevailing. At Aldeia São Sebastião, some decision-making processes ended with everybody doing whatever they wanted independently of the headman. On the upper Ituí, some decision-making processes ended with nothing being done at all. I argue that the differences in political process can be explained by reference to the differences in village formation processes and their effect on leadership type.

The upper Ituí never had a single leader. Aldeia Vida Nova formed around the mission. Each *shovo* moved there independently of the others and no overall leader was ever agreed upon. The other Ituí settlements, short distances up and downstream from Vida Nova, were smaller but had their own headmen and recognized no authority above their local leadership. Thus, the upper Ituí consisted of multiple villages with multiple leaders who considered themselves of equal status with respect to one another. In this context, no leader could impose his point of view on the others, and disagreements could end in mutual neutralization.

Aldeia São Sebastião formed around a FUNAI post, but the founders of the village appointed a headman from among themselves by consensus. Since he had been appointed, he could advise and represent the others but had no basis for imposing his point of view. In this context, the leader expressed his opinion but allowed everybody to do what they wanted anyway.

Aldeia Maronal was unique in this sample of villages, in that it was founded by an indigenous man where there was no nonindigenous presence. The village grew around its founder and his efforts to render his village attractive by inviting missionaries who could provide health care and education. In this context, the founder had legitimacy *qua* founder and was the uncontested leader of the village. His legitimacy as founder, both in the eyes of his coresidents and in the eyes of outsiders, made Alfredo the only person who could speak in the name of the village. The strategies he used to translate his social position into real power cannot be detailed here, but the results are clear. Unlike the other leaders discussed, Alfredo repeatedly succeeded in having village decision-making processes end up favoring his suggestions exclusively, and this was something no other Marubo leader (among those I was able to observe) accomplished during my fieldwork.

### The historical context of political inequality

In order to see the connection between the historical timing of ethnographic observation and the conclusions that are derived therefrom, it is necessary to understand how the inequality in power at Aldeia Maronal is connected to the current Marubo historical context. Alfredo's power is based on his position as founder-attractor of a relatively large village. Hence, his power is also premised on the steady demographic growth that preceded the foundation of Aldeia Maronal, resulting in the existence of a population base sufficient for him to found a village and expand it by accreting other population nuclei. Of the village formation processes I learned of in 1997–1998, this type was the only one that resulted in a headman that had empirically observable power. This process would have been impossible during the period of isolation because the population was insufficient to permit it. Yet it is not an aberration or a product of interactions with the Brazilian state, for similar processes are described in oral histories of the time before the rubber boom.

The data on Marubo village formation processes and associated types of headman roles indicate that a certain population level is necessary before power inequalities can emerge. Power inequality is associated with the founder-attractor role. The emergence of this role requires that a man build a village and attract other groups to live in it. In the case of Aldeia Maronal, this occurred in the mid-1980s when the Marubo population was approximately 600 (Melatti n.d.b). Over the following fifteen years, up to the point of my ethnographic observations in 1997–1998, Aldeia Maronal grew to 220 people. In 1997, this represented nearly one fourth of the total Marubo population.

It is safe to assume that no one leader is going to be so magnetic as to attract the entire population, once it has grown beyond the point at which it is too small to be gathered in one village. This is because contemporary Marubo are divided in terms of their ideas about ideal residential context (see Ruedas 2001). Some people are willing to live with a powerful headman in order to enjoy the benefits of his public works, such as the health care, electricity, television, and labor exchange network. This is particularly true of people with little personal political ambition. But autonomy is also a frequently expressed value. The latter is particularly significant because Alfredo endeavors to balance missionary presence with Marubo cultural autonomy (Ruedas 2002). Thus, household heads that want either more traditionalism or more Christianity, or simply more autonomy, can move a little ways off and declare political independence. It is simply not realistic

to assume that the valuation of autonomy found in Marubo cultural values can be sufficiently overcome by a public works program so as to induce all Marubo to reside in one place at one time.[11]

The success of the invitations of João Tuxáua, which resulted in the formation of his longhouse group during the Marubo period of isolation, is a phenomenon different from Alfredo's village formation process. João Tuxáua's efforts resulted in the development of a politically segmented longhouse group, not a unified village under one authority. The oral-historical evidence indicates that the various longhouses were not joined into a single decision-making process in which one person had the last word. On the contrary, although close enough together to be considered a local group in Melatti's terminology, the separate longhouses were politically autonomous. João Tuxáua exhorted people to behave "correctly," but did not make decisions that everyone had to conform to.[12] In the classic Amazonian headman's style, João Tuxáua had influence, not power. Thus, his case should not be considered as evidence that powerful founder-attractor roles can emerge at low population levels.

The available evidence thus suggests that, in the Marubo sociocultural context, a population between 600 and 800 is necessary for the emergence of founder-attractors and the concomitant development of power inequalities. The reason is that this is the level at which a settlement leader can issue invitations to move to a substantial number of groups. When successful, this may result in the movement of entire longhouses with populations between twenty and fifty, thus accumulating a large following, even in the context of a political value system in which autonomy is favored. Indigenous Amazonians have been subjected to so much demographic pressure over the last five centuries that we must assume that conditions prevented steady demographic growth for much of that time. However, the *Pax Brasiliana* in effect for the past half century has permitted some groups to enjoy a demographic recovery, particularly where, as in the Javari basin, there are no known mineral deposits to attract invaders. The Marubo reached these population levels only after seventy years of demographic recovery following the depopulation of the rubber boom. These seventy years of demographic growth are a rarity in the historical record for indigenous Amazonians.

In addition to demographic growth, the emergence of Aldeia Maronal has required settlement stability. During the rubber boom, oral histories indicate that settlements could not stay in one place for long, because enemies would find the location and start raiding it. Conditions of warfare, violence, and genocidal pressure that prevented settlement stability, have been quite common in Amazonia in historical times (cf. Balée 1992). The

stability of Marubo settlement growth over the past few decades is a relatively new phenomenon made possible only by the protection of the Brazilian state, which has been relatively successful in the Javari area (unlike certain other well-known indigenous areas of Brazil).

Despite the relative rarity of conditions permitting the emergence of political inequality, in the Marubo case oral histories do indicate that it has happened before. Prior to the rubber boom, the Javari basin was largely unpenetrated by nonindigenous people (Coutinho 1993). Relations among the Javari basin Panoans may not have been completely peaceful, but we may assume that oral histories of Txoki's village reflect a population above the minimum for the emergence of founder-attractors (> 600 people) and sufficient settlement stability for the growth of a large village (>15 years, and probably more, without the need to move). However, the demographic disaster of the rubber boom led to over a century in which such phenomena were impossible, until the right conditions presented themselves again in the 1980s.

## *Marubo political ideals and contemporary variability in headman roles*

It is essential to the validity of my argument to establish that the headman role that has developed at Aldeia Maronal is normal by Marubo standards. An argument could be made to the contrary. There were eleven Marubo villages in 1997–1998. Of these, four were single-*shovo* villages, and therefore could not have the multiple-*shovo* type of leadership exercised by Alfredo. There were two two-*shovo* villages in which each *shovo* was independent, with no recognized village headman. A larger example of this phenomenon was Aldeia Vida Nova, a village of five *shovo* with no headman. There were three villages, including Aldeia São Sebastião, which had consensus-appointed headmen with representative authority but no real power. Only Aldeia Maronal had a founder-attractor with real power. Therefore, it could be argued that Aldeia Maronal is an aberration. However, a look at Marubo political ideals and oral histories indicates that it is not so.

The highest political position in traditional Marubo social structure is that of *kakáya* (Melatti 1977, 1983; Ruedas 2001:960–971). This refers to a prominent traditional leader with authority over multiple *shovo*. Below the position of *kakáya* is that of *shovo ivo*, longhouse owner/guardian. All *shovo* have a *shovo ivo*. There were thirty-seven of these individuals in 1997–1998. However, there was only one person, Alfredo, who was recognized as *kakáya*. The role of *kakáya* is individually constructed, not

an inherited role. It is not necessary that there always be a *kakáya*; there may be none, one, or several at any given moment. Nor can someone appoint himself *kakáya*: it is a title assigned by public opinion. A man must work to fit the public perception of what a *kakáya* is, and only slowly is recognized as such by broad sectors of the Marubo population. The fact that Alfredo was recognized as *kakáya* indicates that his actions fit generalized preconceptions of what a traditional leader should be like.

The role of *kakáya*, first described in detail by Melatti (1983), involves a number of expected behaviors. Among these is regular organization of feasts, as described for Txoki, but also the organization of labor within the village. This does not mean micromanagement of individual tasks, but rather the ability to organize the village for major communal tasks. Substantial benefits are thought to accrue from the presence of an individual who can organize multiple *shovo* to work together on selected occasions. The large feasts made possible by this type of cooperation are considered displays of superior ability in food production, and superior food production is linked to health, happiness, and general prosperity. In addition, Alfredo organized labor for projects that brought some nontraditional benefits to the inhabitants of his village. He organized work groups to cut one thousand segments of wood that he traded for a generator, making his the first Marubo village with electricity. As mentioned previously, he organized work groups to cut an airstrip that permitted a missionary presence and the consequent access to western medicines and to immediate evacuation by air in medical emergencies. Interviews with inhabitants of Aldeia Maronal and of the Ituí River indicated that the presence of a leader with this type of ability in multiple-*shovo* organization of labor was broadly considered to be a beneficial phenomenon. Inhabitants of Aldeia Maronal were proud of their headman's achievements, and some inhabitants of the Ituí also stated they would prefer it if they had a leader who could organize labor on a larger scale than was possible for them at that time.

In the preceding sections of this essay, I have taken care to mention that Alfredo's role is comparable to that of other leaders mentioned in oral histories. His actions have parallels in the actions of his father, João Tuxáua, and of Txoki, the great pre–rubber boom leader. This is further evidence that Alfredo's behavior is neither an aberration nor a product of exposure to the Brazilian state, but rather is rooted in tradition.

My observations and interviews suggest that the inhabitants of Aldeia Vida Nova were not content being without a headman. This was not a condition that was generally accepted as beneficial in that village. On the contrary, there was continual competition among prominent leaders, many

of whom engaged in strenuous efforts to occupy a *kakáya*-like role. However, these efforts always came to naught due to the aforementioned process of mutual neutralization, whereby the efforts of any one leader to accumulate unequal power relative to others were neutralized by the combined efforts of these others. This resulted in a balance of power among *shovo* that prevented the emergence of any single overall leader (other than the missionary, John Jansma). The discontent extant at Vida Nova indicates that the presence of a headman in a multiple-*shovo* village is considered normal and beneficial, whereas the absence of a headman is thought of as a problem that needs to be fixed. Statements of informants from Vida Nova confirm that this is an emically held view.

We are left with the problem of distinguishing between the two types of multiple-*shovo* headmanship that were observed among the Marubo in 1997–1998. Consensus-appointed headmen, associated with egalitarian internal village politics, emerged in two distinct situations. Where numerous groups moved independently to one location, they could appoint a headman by consensus, as in the case of Aldeia São Sebastião. Additionally, when a headman died in a multiple-*shovo* village, a successor could be appointed by consensus, particularly if the dead headman's sons were too young and there were other men of higher status in the village. On the other hand, founder-attractor headmen with real power could only develop by the lengthy process of founding a village and attracting coresidents. Alfredo was the only such person in 1997–1998. Which one of these modes of headmanship is normal by Marubo standards? The answer is that both are normal. There is not a single type of accepted Marubo headman. The process of consensus appointment of a relatively powerless headman was quite common among the Marubo. But the emergence of a founder-attractor, while less common, was rooted in history and tradition. Marubo political ideals do not determine one "correct" way of doing things, but rather created the possibility of selecting from a variety of options and ideals.

Alfredo's role at Aldeia Maronal, despite its uniqueness at the time of my ethnographic observations, is considered normal by Marubo standards. His actions fit into the role of a traditionally recognized social position, that of *kakáya*. The presence of a *kakáya*, and particularly his role in organization of labor, was considered valuable and beneficial by broad sectors of the Marubo population. Alfredo's role was consistent with that played by other prominent leaders described in oral histories. For all these reasons, I must conclude that Alfredo's role is consistent with traditional indigenous Marubo ideals of political behavior.

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## CONCLUSIONS

Observations on variability in Marubo politics lead to two major conclusions.  First, observations on diachronic change in Marubo politics suggest that observations taken during the first eight decades of the twentieth century cannot be considered representative of the type of political systems that indigenous Amazonians would have if they were not busy rebuilding from a period of intense depopulation and genocidal pressure. Second, observations on synchronic variability in Marubo politics during my fieldwork suggest that assigning to an entire society a single label to represent their political system, particularly in terms of the presence, absence, and extent of power, is a problematic act that oversimplifies a complex reality.

Contemporary Marubo society is one in which ideals of political action permit and advocate individual construction of power.  By founding a village, attracting others to live there, and successfully satisfying the expectations linked to the role of *kakáya*, a man may exercise real power in village-level decision-making processes.  I have argued here that this mode of political action is rooted in Marubo traditions as expressed in oral histories of the time before the rubber boom.  However, the emergence of a powerful founder-attractor requires a minimum population level of approximately 600, and settlement stability lasting at least fifteen, and probably more, years.  Hence, it is only since the mid-1980s that some Marubo have been able to practice the political ideals embedded in cultural conceptions of the *kakáya* role.

João Tuxáua, the main Marubo leader during the period of isolation, engaged in the practice of inviting others to move to where he lived, but was not a founder-attractor headman in the sense that Txoki and Alfredo were.  According to oral histories, the group of Marubo that gathered together in the headwaters of the Arrojo River after the rubber boom initially consisted of one *shovo* only, since survivors were few and in many cases were from isolated groups too small to form their own *shovo*.  However, shortly after the initial gathering in João Tuxáua's father's *shovo*, prominent Marubo men began founding their own *shovo* some distance away.  The result was not a single village but a group of independent *shovo*.  João Tuxáua was headman only of his own *shovo*, and while his influence and leadership were recognized by all rubber-boom survivors in the area, he had no direct authority in other *shovo*.  Furthermore, these *shovo* were not united into a single decision-making process, as are contemporary Marubo villages.

If anthropologists had observed the Marubo during the period of isolation, they would have seen a small, isolated, atomized, politically

segmented and egalitarian society. This would fit in with observations of other indigenous Amazonians and might have contributed to the generalized conclusion that Amazonian leaders had no power (Lowie 1948), and that Amazonian societies were culturally predisposed to reject power inequalities (Clastres 1974). But, any such conclusion regarding the Marubo would have been incorrect. My observations indicate that there is only one means whereby a Marubo can put himself in position to exercise power, and that is by becoming a founder-attractor.[13] During the rubber boom, lack of settlement stability prevented this, and during the period of isolation that followed the population was too low to permit it. Therefore, only egalitarian headmanship existed among the Marubo from the rubber boom until recent times. But this does not mean that the Marubo were culturally predisposed to reject inequality, or that they had no notion of a powerful leader. On the contrary, a consideration of Marubo ideals of political action, through their statements on the ideal role of *kakáya*, their oral histories of past leaders, and general reactions to Alfredo's behavior as headman, indicates that the Marubo have a cultural predispositon towards developing political inequality. When conditions once again permitted it in the 1980s, a powerful headman emerged, following traditional ideals of leadership.[14]

The Marubo case suggests that the anthropological belief in pan-Amazonian egalitarianism is based on a mistaken inference. The Marubo historical trajectory is by no means unique in Amazonia. Many other indigenous people emerged from the rubber boom demographically battered. Their condition as small, atomized societies with weak leadership was not the result of ecological limitations, nor of cultural mistrust towards power, but rather of centuries of genocidal pressures culminating in the horrors of the rubber boom. Ethnographers were observing indigenous Amazonians at their demographic nadir, the lowest point in their post-Columbian history, after one of the worst of a long series of disastrous and violent interactions with nonindigenous people. Yet many ethnographers inferred from their observations that this was the normal condition of Amazonian peoples. This mistaken inference led to the belief that political egalitarianism is the norm for indigenous Amazonians.

The argument presented here stands in opposition to those that explain inequality in Amazonia as a result of contact with the state (e.g., Werner 1982). Kracke (1993) has argued that the *Pax Brasiliana* favors development of consensual rather than forceful leadership, but he argues for the causal primacy of historical and political conditions. In contrast, I argue here for cultural causation. My analysis of the data on Marubo history and politics indicates that isolation from the state after the rubber boom resulted in atomization and political egalitarianism. Furthermore, among

contemporary Marubo, more intensive contact with the state (in villages formed around state outposts such as Aldeia São Sebastião and Aldeia Vida Nova) has resulted in more egalitarian leadership.  In contrast, where headmanship has developed independently of intensive state contact (Alfredo's invitation of the missionaries occurred many years into his village formation plan) and in accordance with indigenous politico-cultural values, power inequality is observable.  Nor is Alfredo's role an adaptation of state power positions, since it is rooted in Marubo cultural tradition.  Neither the state nor demography is the cause of Marubo political inequality.  Both demography and the state, through its imposition of *Pax Brasiliana*, are enabling factors that permit cultural ideals to be developed in practice.

If the Marubo had cultural predispositions toward inequality that were prevented by adverse conditions from emerging into practice until the late twentieth century, one can wonder to what extent other indigenous Amazonians were prevented from pursuing their ideals of political organization during the early twentieth century.  I would argue that recent descriptions of developing political inequality among the Kayapó (Fisher 2000) reflect precisely such a phenomenon.[15]  Fisher (2000:21–22) states that the ancestral Xikrín Kayapó village had a "population probably numbered in the thousands," but the violence of the rubber boom caused a regional shift to small, isolated groups hostile to one another (2000:45).  After the rubber boom, they spent a period of isolation in the forest (Fisher 2000:46) before entering into the extractivist economy.  Involvement in the extractivist economy has created the opportunity for an expansion of chiefly power.  The Bakajá Xikrín chiefs have inserted themselves as mediators between sources of outside goods and their villagers, thus forcing other men to work in chief-led groups in order to obtain the goods controlled by the chief.  Although this developing inequality is based on access to nonindigenous goods, it "is itself shaped by Xikrín organization and values, which determine how implements are incorporated and circulate within the community" (Fisher 2000:95).  Thus, the development of politico-economic inequality, while related to participation in the world system, is a manifestation of indigenous social and cultural values.  In particular, the lines of cleavage reflect Kayapó distinctions between "common" and "beautiful" people, or commoners and chiefs (Turner 2003; Fisher 2000:66, 85–86).

Cases similar to those of the Marubo and Kayapó are probably common in Amazonia given the shared historical trajectory of indigenous Amazonians.[16]  Manifestations of political inequality would have been present but muted for much of the early twentieth century as demographic conditions and the lack of settlement stability impeded the unfolding of

the long term processes that lead to increasing political inequality. The increasing population and the long term settlement stability since the later twentieth century have made political inequality much more evident.[17]

It is clear that historic contextualization is necessary in order to understand inequality among indigenous Amazonians. Political anthropology in Amazonia should be diachronic and historically sensitive. The presence or absence of political inequality in indigenous Amazonia is not an essential characteristic of culture nor society, it is an interaction between culture and history. We must understand twentieth century ethnographies of Amazonia for what they are: not observations of people in their normal condition, but of people recovering from near-extinction, prevented from fulfilling their own cultural ideals by the difficulty of maintaining settlement stability in the face of violence, and by the lack of sufficient population necessary for culturally endorsed social and political practices. In order to understand indigenous Amazonian internal politics, it is necessary to observe them now, as they achieve sufficient population and settlement stability to pursue their long-repressed cultural ideals.

This line of argumentation should not be taken to imply that egalitarianism does not exist in Amazonia. On the contrary, I have argued that power inequality is only one mode of Marubo headmanship, and that several important Marubo villages have egalitarian headmanship and decision-making. The implication of this is that one must be very careful in deciding to label an entire society as "ranked," "hierarchical," or "egalitarian." Different segments within a particular society or ethnic group may have different modes of political action. Therefore, the utmost methodological rigor is necessary if one is to assign political labels to indigenous Amazonians. If fieldwork is carried out mainly in one village, it is necessary to test one's conclusions against data on other villages. This rigor is lacking in the work of the ethnologists most responsible for the belief in pan-Amazonian egalitarianism (Lévi-Strauss 1944; Lowie 1948; Steward and Faron 1959; Clastres 1974). I believe that investigation using better methodology will reveal that many Amazonian groups display internal variation in their political practices, just as the Marubo do. Inequality and egalitarianism coexist in single societies as different, equally acceptable modalities of leadership and decision making.

If attempts to label entire Amazonian societies or ethnic groups according to the presence or absence of power are problematic, attempts to label the entirety of Amazonia as egalitarian or hierarchical are bound to be inaccurate oversimplifications. There is variation among Amazonian groups as to their attitudes and practices relative to power and inequality. Some groups may indeed be Clastrean rejectors of all power, others may be

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adherents of hierarchical sociality (Turner 2003, Heckenberger 2003), others may display internal variability as the Marubo do. The debate on power in Amazonia should be redirected, away from efforts to classify the entirety of Amazonia, towards efforts to understand Amazonian groups on their own individual terms. We need detailed case-by-case ethnographies using methods adequate to the task. Only once this is accomplished can we return to discussions of Amazonia at the ethnological level.

## NOTES

1. This paper is based on research carried out among the Marubo from July 1997 to July 1998. Results of this research, as well as the methods of inquiry employed, are described in detail in Ruedas (2001). Research focused on understanding Marubo politics and was carried out primarily in one village, Aldeia Maronal on the Curuçá River. However, I visited other villages and actively followed political processes outside Aldeia Maronal through interviews, brief observations, listening to radio communications, and examining documents at the headquarters of the indigenous political organization of the Javari basin, CIVAJA.

2. By "normal" I here refer to the system of social organization the Marubo would choose to enact, in accordance with their cultural value system, if they were free from violent outside pressures such as invasions, massacres, and epidemics, which have caused repeated demographic, social, and cultural destruction among indigenous Amazonians in general for at least four centuries. This concept is premised on the notion that indigenous cultural value systems contain ideals of political action. However, these ideals are related to pictures of a prosperous society where everything is going well and where villages and leaders are able to develop unimpeded by periodic decimation. When cultures are subjected to rapid drastic depopulation, cultural ideals may be preserved but the people who hold them will be unable to carry them out in practice. Thus, the actual social forms observed for

a decimated society are not the "normal" condition that would exist if the people in question could create a social system in accordance with their cultural values.

3. Although Overing and Passes (2000b) critique the concept of society as a western imposition, and advocate instead the concept of sociality, their application of this latter term generates no significant distinction with respect to the paradigm they claim to critique. Thus, Overing (2000:64–81) applies her statements of fact to a construct she refers to as "the Piaroa": "the Piaroa highly prize convivial friendship" (2000:68); "the Piaroa do not like out-of-control laughter" (2000:70); "the Piaroa recognise an illness of minor madness" (2000:71); et cetera. This construct, "the Piaroa," is fundamentally no different from "Piaroa society" because both are reified abstractions extant not in empirical reality but in the author's intellect. To really go beyond the concept of society, authors would have to abjure the idiom of "the so-and-so," limiting description and discussion exclusively to specific people in specific villages, and how these specific people engage in empirically observable actions and interactions. This would eliminate the possibility of ethnology as we know it, and would certainly bar the application of labels to all indigenous Amazonians.

4. Foucault (1975) has argued that the development of social sciences as a means of defining the nature of individuals and groups, i.e., of arriving at a judgment as to what they are and what adjectives can resume their essence, was part and parcel of the overall development of the political technology of the modern state. Anderson (1991) gives examples of the ways in which the urge to place "natives" in neat categories with simple labels forms part of the ideological apparatus of colonial rule, exemplified in the production of censuses and museums.

5. This has created considerable confusion. For example, a 1965 article in the *Eugene Register-Guard* reported that the Marubo had "attacked settlers who had invaded their territory" (Bodley 1999:48), and that the Brazilian army was conducting punitive raids against them. However, the people who had attacked settlers were actually those now known as "Mayoruna" or "Matses" (Coutinho 1993), but since at that time "Marubo" was a cover term for any Panoans in the Javari basin forests, it was simply reported that the Marubo were at war. In fact, the contemporary Marubo recall that in 1965 they too were at war with the Mayoruna and, far from fighting the army, they hosted troops in their main village and requested their protection against the Mayoruna.

6. Since the groups that are ancestral to the contemporary Marubo had no single identity, I will refer to them as "ancestral Marubo" or "ancestors of the Marubo," or put the ethnonym in quotes, to avoid the anachronism of referring to the Marubo at a time when the group did not exist as such.

7. Rubber tappers who felt threatened by an indigenous presence repeatedly attacked indigenous communities, forcing them to move away from the exploited areas and causing deaths with every assault. Slave raiders supplying the Putumayo labor market were less frequent visitors but even more devastating. An oral history tells of one such raid that resulted in the kidnapping and disappearance of all but three people out of a community with a probable population of at least sixty people.

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Marubo oral histories record incidents in which communities organized for self-defense and fought back against the nonindigenous people, usually by setting ambushes and occasionally after capturing firearms.

8.  *Igarapé* is a Brazilian Portuguese term for a relatively small river or creek.

9.  Both through prophetic dreams and shamanic trance.

10.  *Shovo* is both plural and singular in most contexts, though occasionally plural can be expressed by adding a pluralizing suffix, yielding *shovorasi*. In this paper, *shovo* is used as both singular and plural, with number supplied by context, as in everyday Marubo linguistic usage.

11.  However, very large proportions of the Marubo population occasionally gather together for feasts (Ruedas 2001:613–637; Ruedas 2003).

12.  Nor did João Tuxáua ever threaten to expel someone from his village, since it was not a unit from which someone could be expelled. Those outside his longhouse were already independent and could go wherever they pleased. Alfredo never made such threats, either; compliance with decisions was based on his legitimacy as founder and spokesman, and the recognition residents had that the village was "his."

13.  One traditional means, that is. In 2002, a Marubo was a city councilman for the municipality of Atalaia do Norte and was considering a campaign for mayor. Also, the head of the indigenous political organization, CIVAJA, is able to exercise power in some situations by using connections to the Brazilian state.

14.  When I argue for a cultural predisposition towards inequality, I do not mean towards an all-encompassing hierarchical social structure. The Marubo have a flexible political value system, within which one of the favored modalities of headmanship, alongside the consensual and consensus-appointed, is the powerful founder-attractor. Given sufficient population and settlement stability, the idealizations present in cultural conceptions of *kakáya* behavior will result in powerful headmen, but will not result in all headmen being powerful.

15.  The argument presented here is not Fisher's, but rather my own interpretation based on Fisher's data.

16.  For an opposite case, however, see Kracke (1993).

17.  If instability and demographic pressure cause groups that would otherwise be ranked to become, at least temporarily, egalitarian, there are serious implications for the evolutionist perspective in anthropology. It has become commonplace to assume that political inequality is a result of processes subsequent to the development of sedentism and agriculture. Contemporary foragers are seen as egalitarian, and since prior to the neolithic all humans were foragers, all humans prior to the neolithic are considered to have been egalitarian. However, we know of at least two groups of sedentary nonagriculturalists, the Calusa (Marquardt 2001) and the Northwest Coast Indians, who were ranked societies. Furthermore, we know that contemporary foragers have been pushed into undesirable areas of the planet, and that prior to the neolithic, foragers had access to areas, other than the Florida Gulf Coast and the Northwest Pacific Coast, with sufficient productivity to support sedentism. There is no reason to believe that such hypothetical groups were egalitarian. I believe that the notion that all humans prior to the neolithic were egalitarian is illogical and inconsistent with our

knowledge of human behavior.  This hypothesis—that sedentism and hence inequality were present long before the emergence of cities and states—could be confirmed should archaeologists investigating areas that were sufficiently productive during the Ice Ages find evidence of long term habitation of small areas by single groups.

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