The Making of Regional Systems: the Tapajós/Madeira and Trombetas/Nhamundá
regions in the Lower Brazilian Amazon, 17th and 18th centuries.

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Abstract

Building on Neil Whitehead's work in northern South America, this article considers the formations of two different deep forest regional networks. Though these Amerindian spaces have origins in the pre-colonial past, this article analyses their shaping in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period when they confronted colonial agents. There were other regional systems along the course of the Amazon and its many tributaries that were a part of a similar historical process of re-founding identities and claims on land and people involving challenges to leadership and political organization. Following Hal Langfur, we can term this general making of spaces a re-territorialisation. Critical social relations include those between Amerindian ethnic entities and their leaders, soldiers and missionaries. This article focuses on a key spatial relation between Amerindian settlements and the mission, or partially colonised village, which had an indirect or direct contact with each other.

This article will examine two contrasting Amerindian spaces, the Tapajó and Kondurí, on the Amazon River during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These areas were

shaped by Amerindian spatial and political activities as well as the Portuguese colonial world centered in Belem. A principal way these distinct spaces came to be articulated was through the *descimento*, the “descent” or relocation of Indians to colonial spaces Sommer (2005). These relocation efforts started and ended in small fragile settlements on or near the main river.¹ Colonial agents saw these places as gateways to the *sertão*, the Amerindian spaces upriver and in the forests. The relations within and limits of these Amerindian spaces, however, changed as alliances shifted and conflict erupted. Borrowing from Hal Langfur, we can characterize these native spatial reorientations as a territorialisation strategy to deal with the multiple fronts on which colonization took place (Langfur (2006: 298). These regional systems of inter-ethnic relations were made by Amerindians as they acted in response to movements of other Indians and to incursions from missionaries and soldiers.²

The two regional systems differed in historical and cultural character. One was expansive, with distinct groups attempting to benefit from new conditions amidst relations that fluctuated during war and peace. The other focused inwards and sought to limit its engagement with the colonial world after a period of contact. The aim of this article is to show why and how these two spaces differed.³

Figure 1. Map showing the eastern part of the Amazon.

The Amerindian relations addressed here grew out of a long history that lies beyond the consideration of this article.⁴ Archaeological evidence and first contact narratives support the existence of large-scale hierarchically organized societies along the riverbanks of the Amazon in the first part of the sixteenth century (Roosevelt 1993, Heckenberger and Neves 2009). However a hundred years later these societies and their impressive

structures were no longer recorded.⁵ Had these people retreated from the main trunk of the river to avoid further contact with Europeans? Or were there other reasons for their displacement unrelated to the small, irregular white presence in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries?

Archaeological studies suggest that riverine polities like the Tapajó and Marajó were already declining (Roosevelt 1993).⁶ Nevertheless, with the Portuguese drive up the river from the 1610s, a new series of spatial practices and strategies had been set in motion.⁷ Though it is well known that there were refuge zones (see Espelt-Bombín in this volume) where groups went to escape Europeans, there has been little attempt to systematically document the moves that led people to flee (Meggers 1971). Moreover, despite recent archaeological work that has begun to cast doubt on the demographic significance of the main trunk of the Amazon River, scholars have presumed that this area was the site of the largest and most significant societies in the region, relegating the rest of the Amazon basin to the status of wilderness or refuge (Heckenberger et al 1999, Heckenberger 2008, Rostain 2012). I suggest this is a European invention that obscures other spatial configurations. If reports from seventeenth-century missionaries and administrators are correct, the population was more evenly spread throughout the Amazon basin.⁸ Certainly, caution is advised in taking these sources at face value. Nevertheless, there is evidence to support the proposition that there were diverse centers of Amerindian life in the period before conquest.⁹ Thus, a regional system in the deep forest was not simply a refuge zone.

Belém was undoubtedly the center of the Portuguese world in the Amazon. Colonizing efforts brought a set of references and activities, registered by the terms *sertão* and *descimento*. Portuguese and Amerindian spatial strategies and practices comprised two

distinct spheres of activity – multiple spheres if the Amerindian category is broken down further. Villages on the banks of the river served as meeting points where these spheres converged in trade, work, settlement and kinship. The very materiality of the riverine domain shaped these interactions in a way that came to distinguish the Amazon, and the Guianas, from other colonial and Amerindian spaces of South America. This disentangling of the Lusitanian and native then involves a rethinking of the significance of rivers and the role of the sertão in Amazonian history.

By addressing the historical character of these assemblages, I seek to build on Neil Whitehead's work (e.g. 2001). He distinguishes three colonial period Amerindian formations in the northeastern Guayana-Caribbean area (Whitehead 2001: 134). A similar grouping can be made for the Lower Amazon. First are those groups that emerged directly from European categorizations. In the Amazon, these were the Tapuyas, a general term for the enemies of the Tupinambá, who spoke at least Arawak and Carib languages and mostly, but not exclusively, lived on the northern banks. The second were those that were relatively large political entities at the time of European arrival but failed to endure – perhaps because they were weakening after centuries of development or because they failed to negotiate the demands for slaves and forest products. These groups may have also fragmented and re-territorialized, like the Tupinambá. The third set were those that emerged as an indirect consequence of European contact, who may have had little interaction with Europeans until late in the colonial period. Still these groups, such as the Mundurucu, were new amalgamations of old networks (Whitehead 1993, also Farage 1992: 110-15 and Menendez 1992).

This article uses a range of sources to reconstruct the two regional systems. Many of these documents date from the early to mid-eighteenth century. I draw on Jesuit and

Franciscan documents in Rome, Evora and Lisbon. In addition, I employ administrative material from Portuguese colonial archives in Lisbon and Belém, Brazil. Together, these form a diverse and frustratingly incomplete set of resources that allow us to access the events and people of the time.

Portuguese spatial settlement and the emergence of a new kind of regional society along the rivers.

The Amazon was a colonial space different to the rest of Brazil (Boxer 1962, Chambouleyron 2005, Sommer 2005). The Portuguese established a colonial presence in the Amazon later and governed it separately. The Indian presence was stronger and the region's exports derived mainly from extractive rather than agricultural activities.¹⁰ Most of all, geography – huge networks of rivers – differentiated it. Though the region was massive and poor, the Portuguese managed to draw labor and commodities down to Belém. The riverine space was critical to establishing a colonial presence; yet, as Sommer argues, “relationships, rather than the occupation of space, determined the frontier.” (Sommer 2000: 13). Throughout the seventeenth century, colonizers were dependent on Indians for nearly every aspect of life in the Amazon. By the mid-eighteenth century, a class of *sertanistas* (hinterland adventurers with a military or missionary background) had emerged with strong personal links to Amerindian groups on important tributaries. Although these people acted privately they aided the Portuguese Crown in strengthening colonial authority (Davidson 1970). Historians David Sweet and Barbara Sommer have shown how individuals used kinship connections established through marriage to travel across ethnic frontiers, reinforcing colonial authority as they captured slaves and secured goods in the hinterland (Sweet 1974, Sweet 1994, Sommer 2005). The result of these activities was a haphazard and unintentional articulation between native societies and

sertanistas, or *cunhamenas* as they were also known.¹¹ Through plundering and the strength of relations with Indians, these people established a new society that was Portuguese in name but, in practice, was something quite different. These actions shaped a unique regional society on the river and along its banks.

Riverbank forts, trading posts, and missions held special significance as entry and exit nodes from the riverine highways.¹² They opened out on to an Indian world full of economic and spiritual potential. They were also the physical and symbolic expressions of colonial authority. Given the significance of these sites, conflicts emerged as different colonial agents sought to control them.¹³ Indians likely saw these places as gateways to colonial materials and people. That provided good reason for some to avoid these places altogether.

According to Davidson, Portuguese command of the main river made integration of this vast domain possible (Davidson 1970, Gnerre 2006: 151-52). But Portuguese presence did not equal domination. By the mid-eighteenth century, a well-established network linked diverse riverine settlements with Belém. In turn, each tributary had a colonial presence at its mouth. The principal affluents – Tocantins, Xingu, Tapajós, Madeira, Negro – had a cluster of sites along their lower riverbanks. These rivers had also been explored and reported on by miners or administrators looking for long distance connections.

Crown reforms in the 1750s were designed to give order to the contingent and chaotic nature of Amazonian colonization, to integrate the region by further centralizing administrative power in Belém and establishing strong borders with other European colonizing powers to the west and north. Controlled settlement over the region was the

policies' uniting theme. One reform changed the appellation of forts and missions from native to Portuguese names adapted from the motherland. Yet in all but designation, these places remained subject to local relations as much as external forces. As such settlements could be fragile and weak or stable and productive. We can speak then of these riverbank settlements as fractures as much as frontiers between Amerindian regional systems and the colonial power emanating from Belém.

The making of Amerindian deep forest zones: Kondurí and Tapajó.

The article focuses on what archaeologist Denise Schaan terms a “regional complex” of a shared archaeological culture that spanned the Tapajó and Kondurí spaces, the north and south banks of the Amazon (Schaan 2012: 107-113). Commonalities across this area included residential patterns on lakesides, river bluffs and hills; the use of Amazonian dark earths and similar development of ceramic vessels; not to mention war, kinship and ceremonial exchanges.¹⁴ Mauricio Heriarte corroborates this archaeological evidence of regional integration in a mid-seventeenth century source, explaining that the Kondurí and Tapajó had the same idols, rituals and forms of governance (Heriarte 1874: 38). The Curiató people were part of the Kondurí province according to Heriarte and later were mentioned in the Tapajós and Madeira missions (Porro 2012, and 2007). Heriarte also notes that, lying beyond the riverbank nation of the Kondurí, there were nations who were prone to attack those in peaceful relations with the Portuguese to gain access to iron tools (Heriarte 1874: 40).¹⁵

Another rarely cited source reveals strong connections between the north and south bank areas of the Lower Amazon. Conrad Pfeil, a German Jesuit who spent about 20 years in the Amazon, recounts a story told by Tupinamba chief Thomas Jagoaratiara of

the Turiguara nation.¹⁶ According to this story the “The Tapuiuço was one of the largest Tapuya nations.” Their grand chief was called Cuiy’ba and their lands ran from the Tucuju province at the Parú River westwards to the Trombetas River where they bordered those of the Konduri.¹⁷

The Tapuiuços had peaceful relations – though revenge attacks frequently occurred – with the Tapajó people on the opposite river bank. After one episode of war, relations were cemented with marriages where husbands took honorary wives (*cunhaamendares*). Pfeil suggests that honorary wives might be the offering of a woman in compensation for loss or the capture of a female slave.¹⁸ One marriage was different though as it united the first Tapuiuçu with Maria Moaçara, a Tapajó noble woman who governed the Tapajó as their queen. After the measles epidemic of 1693 killed many, the Tapajó were reduced to four houses in the mission and two others remained of the Tapuiuço. Though the Tapajó and their leader reappear in the record, there is no further mention of the Tapuiuçu. In sum, up to the late seventeenth century, there was a conglomeration of peoples whose relations alternated between divisive war and a commercially rich peace. What made this episode difficult to recover from were two factors: Western disease and the demanding presence of whites.

Based on mid to late seventeenth century texts, then, the main societies of the northern riverbank of the lower Amazon were Arawak, Kondurí and the Tapuiuço. On the southern side, there were the Iruri, Tupinamba and the Tapajó. In Whitehead’s terms these societies belonged to the second kind of ethnic formation – those dominant in the early phase of European encounter. Due to a range of factors, these people ultimately gave way to those who pressurized them from the deep forest. In the next section, we encounter other formations that arose through strategies to deal with the Portuguese.

The Kondurí regional complex.

Early colonial agents in the region included the Jesuits who tried to set up a mission in Muruapig, a Kondurí village.¹⁹ Bettendorff stopped in Muruapig long enough to perform baptisms shortly after Manoel de Souza, one of the first Jesuits to go the region, died in a remote upriver spot in 1661. Thirty years later, he checked on the mission and reported it was mostly abandoned. His description indicated a small population and an agreeable location with “beautiful beaches and pretty hills”. He wanted to explore the river’s headwaters but the Indian leader was away on an expedition with canoe boss João de Seixas. Most likely they had gone up the Trombetas in search of people and trade (Bettendorff 1990: 499, Leite 1943: 274-78). The Portuguese set up a network of strategically located forts along the river at the end of the seventeenth century and, thus, Muruapig became predominantly a military site and the “stronghouse” of the Trombetas.

Figure 2. Map of Trombetas and Nhamundá regional system.

Dutch goods followed a indigenous trade circuit from the north along the Essequibo River to the Branco and Negro Rivers in the seventeenth century (Farage 1991, Guzman 2006). Though trade along the Nhamundá and Trombetas rivers could have been linked to this route, it likely enjoyed its own connections with the north through the Courantyne River since its headwaters were very near the mountainous watershed.²⁰ What is clear is that the Dutch became part of these networks and the Carib peoples on the coast provided slaves in exchange for guns, tools, cloths and beads.

Father Manços started missionizing in the region in the mid 1710s. After some years his superior, the president of the Piedade missions of the Franciscans, requested royal permission to resettle Indians from the sertão. The area was unspecified but, given where the missions were located, the Indians must have been from the north bank in the Lower Amazon. The request indicated that some of the Indians would end up in Belém making manioc flour to support the seat of the Franciscans there.²¹

Around this time, the casa forte on the Trombetas saw an upgrading of its military personnel and acquired a new name, Pauxis. Ignacio Leal Moraes was appointed captain and came with a small band of soldiers. Leal's father had died and he needed to raise funds to maintain his mother and family. The captain's obligations to the Crown included the maintenance of the fort, defending the conquest and treating Indians well so they would not flee and encourage others to attack. Unfortunately, Leal was already known to mistreat Indians, having failed to pay their wages on his farm (Seixas 1718, in Leite 1943: 387-97).

While Leal was trading for slaves and products, Manços was making connections with the Indians in the same upriver region. In 1725, Manços had managed to bring to Pauxis 162 people of the Babuhi (Uaboy) nation who lived in the lower part of the Trombetas River and a further 70 of the Nhamundá nation.²² Already the lower courses of these rivers were vacant, so Manços set about "the discovery of the Trombetas River" (Porro 2008: 388). Because of Leal's misrule, the Indians ultimately deserted Pauxis. Leal and his soldiers refused to cooperate with the Franciscans. Manços complained in a 1727 letter to his superior; he accused Leal of wanting to be a "*senhor absoluto dos sertões*", a lord of the backlands seeking to control colonial efforts in this region.²³ Leal's behaviour towards

the missionaries, his illegal enslavement of Indians and his encouragement of Indians to desert the village of Pauxis led to his removal and imprisonment in Belém.

As part of the investigation into Leal's crimes, some soldiers who were involved in a Trombetas expedition were interviewed.²⁴ Their testimony offers a fascinating insight into what Sweet calls a "chain of aggression": Indians in this deep forest region linked the Portuguese at Belem to the Dutch at coastal Guiana. Testimony reveals that a group of Indian rowers and soldiers from Pauxis, accompanied by Principal Iqueteara, went to the first rapids on the Trombetas to reach the land that Iqueteara shared with another principal called Uapore. The main group waited at the rapids while the principal walked many days to fetch his kinspeople from their village. Iqueteara's party found a burnt-out village with no inhabitants and, thus, returned empty-handed. When the soldiers questioned Iqueteara, he admitted that his kinspeople had burnt their own village down and were another ten days deeper into the forest. "Did they not respect you enough to do what you order?" he was asked. Principal Iqueteara related that he had many kinspeople in the forest but, fearing being made into slaves, they had moved on. In the past, he said, he had raided his enemies' villages, killed the men and took the "mothers and daughters". They were sold to the "compadres dos olandezas", the co-parents of the Dutch, in return for tools.²⁵ This was common practice in "his forests" where wife givers were superior to recipients.

An aggressive chain linked villages and forts to this northern sertão of rivers and forest paths, transforming indigenous kinship and alliance.²⁶ At either end lay a European partner who intensified interethnic relations with the demand for labour and products. The resulting competition between leaders led to fragmented communities and migration. The Kondurí space, then, was a conflict-laden environment dependent on a

community's internal response to contact with whites. Most wanted little engagement to protect their space.²⁷

In October 1726, Manços went on his own expedition guided by a Parukoto Indian who had descended to the Nhamundá mission with this wife. This couple, Mascolmim and Mascotu, were both children of important principals of the Parukoto (Paracuato). In the words of Manços, they had “chosen to descend”, a move that could have been ordered by their parent chiefs as a preliminary test for further descents. The Parukoto homelands were further upriver, on the edge of the sphere of Dutch influence. The Parukoto were likely seeking to move away from the Kalina war parties from the Atlantic coast that gathered slaves to trade with the Dutch (Hulsman 2012). This approach to the whites was more guarded than Iqueteara's.

Manços selected Mascolmim to serve “as the guide to their territories and experienced leader of their sertões; without any fear that he might introduce bad rumors among his relatives and friends, or that he might commit some treachery”.²⁸ Manços's words draw attention to the fragility of the enterprise, the precarious nature of descimentos. He set out with his assistant, a soldier and forty-one Indians for the round trip that would take five months. After a week, they reached the first rapids on the Trombetas River, roughly where the Trombetas and the Mapuera rivers meet.²⁹ Travelling further up river, Mascolmim pointed out the rivers on the eastern side from which their enemies launched their war parties. These were the Cereu (Xereu) and Carabeaná (Caripuna) people, whose chiefs were Amagoá and Clixá. They had recently fought and, indeed, there were many burnt out villages on the riverbanks. Mascolmim told Manços that the Caripuna did not have any European tools, suggesting the Caripuna were victims of raiding for women and children. Overall, indications in the report point to native borders based on the

rivers and rapids. For example, Mascolmim described how one territory ended at the junction of two rivers and on the opposite side were their enemy's villages, which had been destroyed. There were also distinctions between riverine territories and those in the interfluvial areas.³⁰

As they continued up river, Manços learned names of the people and their chiefs who lived on each affluent. All these people were part of the Parukoto with their shared chief (*principal mayor*) Teumige. Mascolmim and Manços sought to unite the council of elders, so they could decide if the Parukoto would become Portuguese vassals and the sons of God.³¹ In the end, forty Parukoto decided to descend to Nhamundá with Mascolmim and the missionary's crew. There is no further news of those who descended; however, in villages where different ethnic groups resettled, conflict, absenteeism and poverty were the usual outcomes. The fort at Pauxis remained largely abandoned with only a few soldiers and a captain for another twenty years.³²

Amongst those recorded as residing on the far side of the Parukoto and the headwaters were the Paranakiri people. The Paranakiri were, in fact, the Dutch, or "yellow people from the sea". The closest river beyond the watershed in the Tucumaque mountains is the Courantyne, which flows into the sea where Dutch coastal settlements were.³³ Thus, perhaps it is unsurprising the Paranakiri were named among other groups; they were after all another people, with an ethnic identity, located in space and time (Farage 1991, Dreyfus 1992: 84, Raleigh 1997: 134).

Manços's account described a huge region with many different peoples. In their attempt to keep Europeans at a distance, Indians provided what was required of them: slaves, forest products and a few people to settle in the semi-colonial villages. The rapids of the

Trombetas provided a natural barrier to the whites as much labour, knowledge and care was needed to carry canoes and equipment across the white-water. In the north, on the other side of the mountainous watershed, runaway slave communities settled from the eighteenth century and may have acted as another kind of barrier (see Price 1984). That left an Amerindian space in between where interethnic relations had their own life, yet influenced by the wider context.

Nevertheless, there remained some contact between the upper parts of the Trombetas and the fort. In 1740, a principal named Caboré promised to descend with a group of his people.³⁴ The outcome of this intention is fully known but, a few years later, the fort was attacked and five soldiers were killed. The principal must have made it and survived any attacks because when Mendonça Furtado visited the fort in 1755, Caboré made a poor impression as he complained about the conditions and wanted to return to the forests (Mendonça 2005: vol. 2, 528). In other words, Caboré's was part of a list of unsuccessful descimentos, which nevertheless allowed leaders to make complaints and threats to leave. In turn, these may have led to an improvement in indian living conditions but outcomes were often messy.

In the absence of records, we cannot know the effects of the 1720s Parukoto move or Caboré's intended descimento on the deep forest. The conflict between missionaries and soldiers continued into the 1750s.³⁵ It seems likely that Nhamundá, renamed Faro in 1757, remained a small outpost with limited upriver contact. Canoes from Belém in search of forest products and labour made occasional visits. On the other hand, Pauxis grew in significance and size, becoming a locus of Portuguese power and attracting soldier colonists to settle nearby.

Sommer's and Roller's work has shown the enduring links between villages and the sertão in the second half of the eighteenth century, the period known as the Directorate, when the Jesuits were expelled and former missions were run as secular villages with indigenous and colonial leadership. Yet in the Kondurí complex, there is little evidence to support the continuous traffic of indigenous people and goods during the rest of the eighteenth century. There were, for example, no reported descimentos to Faro and Óbidos (the renamed Pauxis) from the Trombetas or Nhamundá. Rather the previous connections between the deep forest and villages were broken. These lower parts came to be filled with Indian and Brazilian families seeking good land outside of the missions and, from 1757, by the state villages, escaped slave communities (*mocambos*), and a short-lived Mura settlement in the 1780s. In turn, these communities formed their own connections to the indigenous people in the higher parts of the river system (Ferreira Penna 1869: 175; Barbosa Rodrigues 1870: 28). These riverside hamlets proved crucial for the making of regional society.

Originally a multi-ethnic space linked to the north and south, Amerindians in the Konduri complex became concentrated in the upper parts of the river network. Slave-raiding practices carried out by Dutch allies coupled with an aggressive, unfocussed Portuguese-led drive up river from the late seventeenth century produced this self-imposed isolation. Social entities went from being relatively open and large to smaller and flexible groupings, less capable of incorporating outsiders. The impact of the colonial world, direct and indirect, was harsher than in the zone to the south of the Amazon River.

The Tapajós and Madeira deep forest complex.

Larger than its northern counterpart, the Tapajós river basin is flanked on the west by the Madeira and, on the east, by the Xingu basin. Trails connected these river basins during the colonial period.³⁶ The center of the ancient Tapajó polity was in what is now Santarém. It occupied a site of about four square kilometers and consisted of various ethnicities (Roosevelt 1999, Gomes 2017).

Figure 3. Map of the Tapajós and Madeira Rivers

When the first Europeans arrived in the early seventeenth century, the Tapajó were asked to supply trade goods and slaves. Though they had slaves, the Tapajó refused to relinquish them, even for valuable European items (Berredo 1988: 151). Their reluctance to comply led the Portuguese to see them as enemies. The Tapajó were attacked a year later in the 1620s, when the Portuguese forced the men into a maloca and raped the women. Survivors were taken to Belém as slaves; it is not clear how many were taken but the village survived with the Tapajó at its head (Acuña in Markham 1859: 125-7; Lorimer 1989: 437).

A generation later in 1662, the Jesuit Bettendorff disembarked on the white sandy beaches. He was received by a gift-bearing Tapajó overlord. Over the following days, principals from other nations arrived, each with his family and an entourage of servants offering fruit, meat and beautiful craft objects (Bettendorff 1990: 164). Their villages must have been on nearby riverbanks, rather than in the forest or plateau areas, as archaeologists have found no sites indicating large settlements (Schaan 2012: 113-5, see also Gomes 2017). The description of these visits suggests that these other nations were obliged to welcome the guests of their Tapajó masters.³⁷

Ultimately, the Tapajós became a prized Jesuit mission but it was not solidly established until the 1730s. By then, it served as head of a cluster of strongly-connected missions and villages in an enormous and diverse hinterland. Before 1730, however, disease, attacks and movement between the deep forest and the mission contributed to its fragile position (Harris 2016). In this situation, leaders became delegitimized by their association with the Jesuits.

In the 1660s, the Tapajó leadership started to break down. Maria Moaçara, a Tapajó leader, noble woman and oracle, attempted to balance obligations to colonizers and her people. Though she was concerned it might provoke an uprising, Maria sanctioned a missionary to destroy the ancestral remains after her marriage to a Portuguese soldier. A year or so later the mission was attacked by a Tapajó rival based in a village at the mouth of the Arapiuns. Maria called on allies and her rival was repelled. Still, Maria's daughter, also married a Portuguese man, was poisoned by one of their people and, thus, the line of prophetesses died out when Maria fell ill in 1678. From this point, the Tapajó became one people among others, their village reduced in size and ethnic formation weakened by their alliance with whites (Harris 2016).

The most significant cultural characteristic of this area, according to Menendez, was the movement of people tied to the launching of revenge attacks and the making of allies linked to exogamous marriages and seasonal gathering expeditions (Menendez 1981/2: 377, also 1984, 1992). After the first Portuguese attack, survivors would have sought new allies. Thus, the arrival of the whites added a new dynamic but did not fundamentally alter these indigenous circuits until later. Indians wanted to avoid confrontations with whites so the presence of colonial agents made it difficult to use the main trunk of the Amazon River, especially between the north and south banks. As a result, the Tapajó

broke up into large family groupings and moved towards the Madeira via the Arapiuns. Similarly, the Tupinambarana and the Iruri, the other dominant south bank groups, fragmented and moved away from the banks to protect themselves against Portuguese slavers and those attacking from behind.

Menendez notes that this prompted those in the hinterland and tribute villages to move into the riverbank residences of their former masters. There, newcomers sought the advantages of contact with whites: access to guns and tools, and protection from enemies (Menendez 1984: 280). So long as they could provide slaves they might maintain some autonomy since whites would not interfere with those who complied. The capture of slaves by people who were once the enslaved begat a new dynamic. Menendez argues the societies that came to prominence in the eighteenth century, such as the Mundurucu, Mawé, Parintins and Mura, were those that had earlier emerged as dominant in this deep forest zone, following the rearrangement of inter-ethnic entities. These people controlled access to European goods and individuals, even if their own relations were not always peaceful. They came to occupy the frontiers between the contact zone and the deep forest with their bellicosity effectively acting as a barrier to entry by whites and other Indians (Sweet 1992, and Santos 2002).

In contrast to the Trombetas/Nhamundá zone where natural barriers formed gaps between the colonial and the Amerindian, there was greater demand on space and intense pressure on the groups in the Tapajó/Madeira complex. The focus of aggression was in constant rotation as new alliances drew recruits from outside the area. A dynamism was caused by shifting allegiances between peoples as they sought to defend themselves against incursion from whites and to access products and privileges that came with interethnic relations.

A remarkable report by another Jesuit, Manual Ferreira, affords a rare insight into the regional system of a river basin from a missionary perspective.³⁸ He opens his account, partially based on details from a miners' descent of the river in May 1742, by mentioning a cluster of five missions established on, or near, older Indian village sites. Past the dangerous rapids known as Coatá³⁹, the Jacarecuaras lived on the western bank across from the Cupari. The Jacarecuaras had attacked the fort and were hiding from the Portuguese to avoid further reprisal.⁴⁰ Upriver was a huge inland province of Tapuyas who shared a lingua geral. These people could have been the last of the Tapajó, now identified as Sapope and Camondis (see Figure 4). Beyond this region were the remnants of an old village (*taperá*) that belonged to the Periquitos and Apencurias (Semcurias).

On the opposite bank lay the land of the Jaguarins (Jaguaim) who were in the process of upheaval. They had lived on the banks of a Tapajós tributary and decided to descend and be part of a mission but, after a while, they returned to “find their forests” again.⁴¹ On the other side of the tributary were Guarupas, the enemy of the Jaguaim, who were considering entering a mission. These people had been part of a large kingdom that was reduced to 10-12 villages after attacks by the Manucuru (Mundurucu) who lived on the next river down on the left bank. As was the case in the northern Trombetas area, a tributary to a main river marked the border between indigenous territories.

The Mundurucu on the eastern tributary marked the farthest extent of Jesuit work by 1750. The remaining information was supplied by goldminers looking for the best route to the Atlantic. The Arinos River had a kingdom of people who spoke lingua geral but not the same as the Tupinamba. Beyond this river was the Tabucuru nation. The people who lived at the headwaters were the Membarés (Nambikwaras?). Here there were

several villages, extremely large compared to both historical and contemporary Amerindian settlements, of 2500 people with 80 houses.⁴² In sum, colonization took place on multiple fronts. As such, this deep forest region of the Tapajós and Madeira was under pressure from the south and the north. This was a region of ongoing movements, war and alliance, as people continually adjusted to new spaces opening or closing.⁴³

Figure 4: Map by Manuel Ferreira the lower and middle parts of Tapajós River as far as Jesuits have worked.⁴⁴

Ferreira's report makes certain kinds of Amerindian spatial practices visible. Great attention is given to the rapids and their successful passing. Archaeologists have suggested that rapids were congregating points for people, rather like Thomas Oles's notion of a wall as both barrier and meeting place (Rocha and Honorato 2016: 396, Oles 2015: 64-5). Additionally, various forms of movement stand out in the Jesuit document: the descimento from homeland to colonial space, the return to the forests and the attack on a neighbor followed by relocation. The descimento and return create a circular motion while the impact of an attack is explosive, setting off movement in random directions. Both have the capacity to create disorder and reorient groups.

The riverbank view offered by Ferreira creates the impression of a regional system, structured from headwaters to mouth. This framing forms a sociological, as well as narrational, unity along the river and prevents other spatial strategies and practices from being made visible. We must question whether indigenous people understood the space similarly. Likewise, Menendez argues there was a unity of the Madeira and Tapajós river basins and that this was a culturally dominant Tupi area, especially once the Tupi groups moved down stream and broke up the non-Tupi riverbank societies. Certainly, the report

highlights interethnic conflicts, rather than alliances, up and down the river. A 1762 report from Villa Franca appears to confirm this, remarking on the reluctance of noble Indians to marry their equivalents from other Indian nations in that particular place.⁴⁵ Mainly Tupi societies managed to push out Arawak and possibly Carib societies living in the Lower Tapajós region with strong links to the north bank. The three kinds of societies identified by Whitehead are clearly present in the Tapajós and Madeira area. Compared to the north, ethnic solidarity was much stronger in this area since the pressures at the margins were more pronounced.

Conclusion

The two deep forest zones examined here differ in their histories of ethnic configuration. The specific relations between groups and their spatial strategies for defensive or offensive maneuvers were critical to shaping the boundary between Amerindian and colonial spaces. While this form and its limits were both time and locale specific, by the end of the colonial period, the Amazon was integrated in a network of towns, villages and riverbank settlements. A regional culture and society had grown out of the conflicted interactions of the past. This was riverine Amazonia, a third space that emerged in the middle of the eighteenth century. Different kinds of Amerindian spaces lay in the hinterland on one side and on the other sat the Portuguese colonial administration in Belém. Over time the limits between riverine and Amerindian spaces grew more distant as fewer native groups moved into the colonial sphere – and those settled on the rivers lost their cultural and individual connections to the sertão. Nevertheless, Amerindian spaces in the Tapajós/Madeira and Trombetas/Nhamundá areas managed to maintain their independence through the nineteenth century (Barbosa Rodrigues 1875, and Coudreau 1900). Indeed, the defense of these spaces permitted Amerindians an

independence. Different spatial strategies in the two regions developed as an outcome of indigenous responses to their own practices and to European incursion. The northern zone was unable to recruit from outside; it could only supply slaves for external allies. The southern zone was a more offensive space and able to recruit allies and subjects into its numbers, whether this was from war and individual incorporation or ethnogenetic movements.

This article has provided a spatial analysis to offer an understanding of the Lower Amazon during the colonial period. The attention to space highlights the significance of the rivers and their shaping of social life. The main Amazon River was a front for the series of regional systems that interacted through war and exchange of people and objects. Although these systems were hierarchically organized, they do not appear to have had fixed centers over time. Rivers had a double character: they both united and divided. The main tributaries of the regions were the spine along which social units placed themselves while the smaller tributaries separated different peoples, who then made their own relations of war and peace. Rapids and rocky waterfalls provided pauses in the flow of people and goods up and down watery courses. Temporary encampments and meeting places, perhaps for ritual purposes, occurred at these moments. Indeed, with the constant running of the rivers, the creation of good stopping-off points was a major concern for all who made their homes in the Amazon. These places had a social and geographical character as they were located at the junction of different thoroughfares, doorways from one set of relations to another. The Portuguese wanted to keep these doors – villages and towns – open to maintain the flow between the capital and the sertão. The governing of the main rivers was another way for the Portuguese to achieve their objective of controlling truculent Indian labor.

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BPE, Biblioteca Pública de Evora, Evora.

BAL, Biblioteca da Ajuda, Lisbon.

AHU, Arquivo Histórica do Ultramarino, Lisbon.

APEP, Arquivo Público do Estado do Pará, Belém.

BNP, Biblioteca Nacional do Portugal, Lisbon.

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¹ Roller argues that the descimento was more than a state-run enterprise because it involved Indians, particularly leaders, convincing people to move. It was often a protracted struggle as different parties attempted to secure their interests, Roller (2014: 92-3).

² See Lefebvre (1991) where human intentions shape the space lived and known.

³ Historical understanding of the Brazilian Amazon has developed significantly in the last twenty years and the critical appreciation of the sertão has been at the heart of this work, for example, Chambouleyron (2008).

⁴ The importance of enduring histories is underlined by Hornborg and Hill (2013).

⁵ See Cruz (1900) who documents settlements in 1650 along the main course of the banks already affected by trade and enslavement.

⁶ For Carvajal's account see Medina (1988), and on the gaps Boer (1981)

⁷ There was a significant presence of other Europeans until the 1630s in the Lower Amazon, and their role in transforming native societies should not be discounted, Lorimer (1989), Hulsman (2011).

⁸ See, for example, Antonio Vieira in Azevedo (1971: 545) where he estimated there were 100 thousand in the sertão of the Tucujus. It is worth reflecting on how Vieira arrived at his sum. The easiest way would have been to ask a leader the number of villages, malocas, and then families within each maloca. A rough total could be derived from these figures.

⁹ See Boer (2013) on the primordialist and the instrumentalist positions, arguing for a place in between them.

¹⁰ Figures exist only for the Jesuits but their example gives an insight into a general pattern. In 1730 there were 21,031 Indians in the Pará and Maranhão missions (ARSI, Bras. 10, II, f. 338, and Alden (1996: 599) with 125 Jesuit missionaries. In the rest of Brazil in 1739, there were 14,129 Indians and 387 missionaries, Alden (1996: 599-600).

¹¹ The term *cunhamenas* refers to men who married indigenous women to establish wider alliances, Sommer (2006), Roller (2014). It is likely derived from the practice mentioned below of male leaders taking honorary wives to indicate their relative importance.

¹² Manuel de Seixas [1718], in Leite (1943: 387-97), see also Bettendorff, ARSI, Bras 9, f. 259, 1671.

¹³ Roller has shown that these places were sometimes located on old Indian village sites or were chosen specifically by Indians themselves as a condition of resettlement (2014: 16-56).

¹⁴ The products exchanged included precious stones in the form of green frogs, jaguar skins, ceramic and stone idols, possibly shells, and stone axes. Given these long-distance links, these polities were probably multilingual, Heckenberger and Neves (2009), Schaaf (2012: 106).

¹⁵ Other sources point to hostilities between the north and south bank peoples, such as Acuña and Fritz in the seventeenth century.

¹⁶ BAL, Cod. 51-V-22, f. 128, para. 12; on the leader see Leite (1943: 285), 'Principal Tome'.

¹⁷ Note that *Cuparipusu* is indicated on Fritz's map of 1707. Pfeil says Cuiy'ba means the place in front of Curupatuba, which in turn means the place of cuiera, calabash, trees. See definition by Curt Nimuendaju cited by Ibáñez-Bonillo 2015: 344.

¹⁸ BAL, Cod. 51-V-22, f. 128, para. 12.

¹⁹ João Bettendorff, Maranhão, letter to superior, Rome, 28th August, 1671, ARSI, Bras. 9, 285v, 286 and 286r (Latin).

²⁰ Schomburgk (1845: 96) wrote that the Courantyne was the river down which slaves were taken to Surinam. A path connected the Surinam and Courantyne rivers that the Macushi called the *tuari yemor*, the slave path, Bos (1998: 63). A Dutch map of 1718 of the upper Courantyne located a village of Indians that had run away from the Portuguese (Bos 1998:80), pointing to the disruptive incursions from the south from the end of the seventeenth century at least. Thus, the Trombetas Indians were squeezed from above and below.

²¹ ABN (1948: 204).

²² AHU Pará avulsos, doc. 964, 23rd March 1728.

²³ ABAPP (1902: 246-249); AHU Pará avulsos, doc. 963, 17th March, see also BNP, Fundo Geral, cod. 4517, f. 283.

²⁴ AHU Pará avulsos, doc. 963, doc. dated 27th September 1727.

²⁵ Pawana is the carib term for relations who exchange on an equal basis. This would make it roughly similar to atoussap in Tupi.

²⁶ See Farage (1991) for a similar analysis of the Branco River area.

²⁷ See Riviere (1984) for a similar analysis of village formation in the indigenous Guianas.

²⁸ AHU Pará avulsos, doc. 964, 23rd March 1728, f. 4v.

²⁹ Porro writes that it was Mapuera River that was discovered, not the Trombetas (2008: 390).

³⁰ AHU Pará avulsos, doc. 964, 23rd March 1728, f. 5v.

³¹ Mueller (1955:131), which is a poor transcription of AHU Pará avulsos, doc. 964.

³² AHU Pará avulsos, doc. 2616, 1745.

³³ Dreyfus comments that the watershed between the Trombetas and the Courantyne was in no way a barrier for indigenous people, (1992: 76). See also Hulsman (2012).

³⁴ APEP cod. 25, doc. 341/287, 11th November 1740.

³⁵ AHU Pará Avulsos, doc. 2588, 2nd January 1745.

³⁶ For example, a path from the middle of the Xingu River went to the lower area of the Tapajós river. A journey of about 15 days, it was a regular route during this time.

³⁷ Pagan (1660, chap. 30) who confirms that the Tapajó were dominant in the region.

³⁸ Manoel Ferreira, 'Breve Notícia do Rio Topajós, BPE CXV/2-15 n. 7, f. 51r-54r, 14 de Agosto de 1751

³⁹ These waterfalls are just upriver of Itaituba.

⁴⁰ The ethnonym according to Queirós means eaters of jacaré, the Amazonian caiman (1847: 96-7).

⁴¹ See Daniel (2003:379) for a description of the Jaguaim.

⁴² This site parallels the sedentary settlement with high regional population density in non-floodplain zones that Heckenberger et al (1999) found in the upper Xingu and lower Negro River.

⁴³ The ethnonyms are also mentioned by Queirós in 1762 (1847: 96-7).

⁴⁴ BPE cod. CXV 2-15 P7A.

⁴⁵ AHU Pará Avulsos, Cx. 53, doc. 4839, 15th September 1762, Pará.