Time and Memory in Indigenous Amazonia
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Edited by Carlos Fausto and Michael Heckenberger

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Xinguano Heroes, Ancestors, and Others

Materializing the Past in Chiefly Bodies, Ritual Space, and Landscape

*Michael Heckenberger*

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name... History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past.

Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History"

This chapter explores aspects of cultural memory as expressed in discourse, material culture, and the built environment among Xinguano peoples of northern Mato Grosso state, Brazil. Xinguano refers to a plural society of closely related communities who occupy the basin created by the headwaters of the Xingu River, one of the principal southern tributaries of the Amazon. Today most of their traditional territories are included in the Parque Indigena do Xingu (PIX). Since the nineteenth century, when Kari von den Steinen (1886, 1894) first described the region, Xinguano or Upper Xingu society has been composed of nine or more single or multiple-settlement communities. This essay focuses on one community, the Kuikuro, but describes features generally shared by other Xinguano communities, which include three other dialect communities of Carib speakers (the Kalapalo, Matipu, and Nafuqua), three Arawak-speaking communities, and two Tupi-speaking communities.¹

The Kuikuro have much in common with other Amazonian peoples, as amply documented in recent (post-1880s) ethnographic history: they are fisherfolk and manioc farmers, supplementing these staples with a diverse range of other managed and cultivated plants; they have a general worldview that fits well within what is described as Amazonian animism; they bedeck themselves with few "clothes," favoring instead body decoration and colorful "accessories"; they dwell in large pole-and-thatch houses, in settlements generally lacking any permanent standing structures.

Archaeology suggests that many basic elements of agricultural and fishing technology, house manufacture, and village configuration have ancient roots and were characteristic throughout the past millennium. Correlating archaeology and indigenous history also enables accurate placement of many of the ancient settlements mentioned in Kuikuro histories radiocarbon-dated to the sixteenth century and soon after. When considered over the long term, the Kuikuro exhibit a variety of features considered common if not typical of small-to-medium-sized complex societies elsewhere in the world, although these features are underemphasized and underrepresented in twentieth-century ethnography. They live in permanent, structurally elaborate settlement areas. They are densely settled throughout much of the basin, and supported by a productive agricultural and wetland management system. They have a sociopolitical structure that is dominated or "topped" by a hereditary hierarchy. This hierarchy extends across the region within a peer society of hereditary chiefs who engage in formal exchange, intermarriage, and co-participation in chiefly rites of passage, all of which creates substantial differences in symbolic capital in the local and regional political economy. Hereditary chiefs not only mediate these rituals but, in so doing, often amass large surpluses of food stuffs and wealth for ritual payments.²

Xinguanos, in general, are thus notable among ethnographically known Amazonian peoples for the degree to which the ritual construction of persons is tied to real or imagined genealogy. History and cultural memory are activated, so to speak, by genealogy, specifically through performance of mortuary feasts and other chiefly rites of passage, which make present cultural memories of founding ancestors and "sediment" them in place. Not surprisingly, ancestor recognition and commemoration, or simply "ancestrality," is a keystone characteristic of social and symbolic reproduction and the transmission of political power. Sociality is rooted in internal hierarchies based on hereditary rank, which are legitimized within a regional structure of exchange, and local history takes on a hagiographic quality. Ranking leaders are thus current "reproductions" of recent and distant ancestors, expressed through name transmission and exclusive control over ritual narrative and performance that invokes in diverse ways more distant founding ancestors and ancient culture heroes.³

This personification of the past links living human subjects, and specifically, the hereditary chiefs, individuals marked as being anclt or "chiefly," and ancient
human ancestors (past aneti). This line extends back in time to the creation of humans by the human-form creators, who later transformed themselves into the Sun and Moon, from the first human family (and first aneti, chief's, who founded a special lineage, which corresponds to the anetav [plural] elite and their personal histories). It is also unusual in regional ethnology in the degree to which the past is "privatized," or, in other words, ancestors are exclusive "property" of living chiefly individuals. Hereditary leaders are thus uniquely historical, the products and producers of history, since they embody collective histories, identities, and cultural memory in a particularly direct way (Sahlins 1985). These patterns, although uncommon ethnographically in many parts of the Amazon, holds important clues to understanding the nature of large, settled populations scattered widely throughout the region centuries ago. This essay briefly explores two aspects of cultural memory: (1) historicity (indigenous views on history) and, in particular, how chiefly subjects are constructed both as individuals and as model persons, living exemplars or iterations of ancestors, past chiefs, and therefore stand in a sense between humans and ancestors; and (2) temporality (the way history and time are remembered or "felt" in nondiscursive ways) and, specifically, how material culture, ritual performance, and the built environment make the past present and visible as cultural memory.

Making History

The Kuikuro have diverse forms of narrative, as well as myriad ways in which daily and ritual practice are sedimented in material culture and the built environment. Therefore substantial contextual variation exists in how the passage of time and cultural memory, including narrative histories, are experienced. To some degree, narrative moods or genres reflect different conceptions of time. There are narratives internally marked as historical gravitating around historical personages, whereas others are marked as myths of "dawn time" people. Although both of them are categorized as "real narratives" (akiña hekugn), they are distinguished by a contrast between a time "when we were already people" (kugei leha kuktamini) and a time "when we were all still spiritual beings" (itikei gele kuktamini) (see Fausto et al., forthcoming). Other verbal genres contain a sense both of linear and of cyclical time. A notable example is the formal discourse (anetä itarinä) used by chief's when receiving foreign visitors. This discourse recounts collective founder genealogies that include elements of cosmogonic myths, but also the relations between language groups, through reference to common ancestors, the founders of the local group (osomo), and their chiefly peers in older times, who represent the ancestors of other osomo, as well as many specific features of landscape, social and ritual life, and nonhuman beings.4

Xinguano ritual cycles also reflect different conception of time. Many performances are geared toward communication with spirits, as in the case of unduhe masking rituals; others, like the chiefly rites of passage, notably initiations and mortuary feasts, reenact genealogical time and a relation with immediate ancestor figures (Franchetto 2001, 2003). Historical changes are also clear, particularly in recent times, as historical consciousness was piqued by contact with national society (see Turner 1991, 1993). Archaeology and early ethnography suggest that precolonial indigenous history was punctuated with large-sale, dynamic changes, as was true throughout the colonial and national periods. Certain aspects of historical consciousness, which have been part and parcel of Xinguano historicity and temporality throughout their history are "hot" (dynamic and historical) and/or "cold" (cyclical and mythic) depending on context and perspective (Hill 1988). Persons and their moods change as they pass through events and places and contexts, punctuating history and giving it a dynamic or deictic quality, within an overall theory of history that itself is context- or mood-oriented (Basso 2005).

Basso (1985:61) neatly captures critical elements of indigenous Xinguano history:

"history [is] a cultural form that combines narrative discourse with a theory of past events. . . . the Kalapalo sense of history is based as much upon ideas about actors, their moods, motivations, and goals, as upon events. Moreover, actors are treated in terms of their relationships to one another, the feelings they provoke within each other and the motives arising from these feelings. It is this focus that gives Kalapalo historical narrative a distinctly different character from that of contemporary European scholarship, in which personal motivation is subordinated to generalized processes, forces, ideas, or interests that are held to exist in the abstract, independently of individuals. It is similar to the "Great Man" view of history, which stresses personal motivations as pivotal, but the Kalapalo emphasis upon interpersonal processes suggests that even this European view of history, like more modern ones, is concerned with different problems and manifests differing ideas of causality.

All cultural forms of memory are also structured by basic differences between groups, whether within a community, between communities (otomo), or between Xinguanos (kuge) and more distant "others," including other indigenous people (ngikogo) or whites (kagasha) (Basso 1995; Ireland 1988, 2001). One of the most critical dimensions of Xinguano constructions of history, memory, and identity is social alterity based on rank-based distinctions. There are thus also aspects of Xinguano historicity that are deeply inflected by hierarchical notions of person-
hood, specifically of chiefs as remade ancestors. In this case, history is a mode of generalized communication or exchange not only between living persons but between types of persons, ancestors and descendants, within an ideology rooted in concepts of founder's or first-occupant identities. Although not conforming exactly to the old-style Great Man view of history, as Basso notes, this aspect of history conforms to that type of great-person history that Sahlin's (1985) has aptly called "heroic history." It is this aspect of local conceptions of history, the past as embodied in high-ranking persons and places of the present, that is the focus here.

History and Hierarchy: Personifying and Privatizing the Past

Histories are good to hear, and every Kuikuro has at least some anecdotal knowledge of history, but knowing the details of group history is the business of the chiefs. As living extensions of other chiefly persons, who are remembered in histories, they stand in a special relation to creation stories, histories of founding ancestors and their deeds. The chiefly hierarchy itself is history—defined in terms of social and spatial relations within chiefly kindreds, between rival chiefly kindreds within and between communities, and between chiefs and commoners. It is clearly marked by the transmission of names, titles, ritualized dispositions, and places—that is to say, heritable "properties"—across generations. Hereditary leaders are like living ancestors, precisely because they have genealogies and, through these, come to legitimately embody founding ancestors of the group.

History is therefore not only a critical element of sociality but an important element of political strategy and power relations among the living, since the knowledge of and right to recount group histories is a critical element in political action and rivalry. As noted, Xinguano theories of history focus on both nonlinear (cyclical or so-called structural, ecological, or mythical) and linear (genealogical and historical) conceptions of time, depending on perspective or context. Thus it is critically important to see how historical subjects, persons, are constructed in ritual and daily life and, particularly, how some maintain control over ritual spaces and elite goods—symbolic and economic capital. The question is not simply how society at large conceives of history, as a collective pool of memory and experience, but also of who history is about, who is interested in it or controls it, and how it is deployed.

The formal speech of chiefs draws its force from the legitimacy of the past and the historical relations of the people and things contained in narratives. This is a special kind of history, which focuses attention on specific individual humans, notably chiefly persons, and how they encompass larger historical personages or larger segments of society: the sum of the social "bodies" subordinate to them, framed in an idiom of descent from founding ancestors. This can be cast as a question of how high or deeply one can engage group genealogy, within a regional society of chiefs that has come down through time since the creation of humans.

In aneti itaršnu, which is spoken only by primary titular chiefs in ritual events, the otomo (entire local group) is referred to as "children" (kangamuku), a use that reciprocally defines chiefs as group fathers. Aneti itaršnu deals specifically with named ancestors, but also with relations between generations, such as inheritance of substances, places, and things, which become indelibly attached to certain individual and aggregate persons, constituting the basis of the "cosmological authentication" of social hierarchies (Weiner 1992). Through the stanzas of chiefly discourse, a series of eight founding ancestors are invoked and ultimately linked to the three chiefs that created the Kuhikugu otomo, a single-village community existing at the time Karl von den Steinen first recorded Upper Xingu society around 1880. The ancestors named in one sequence of the aneti itaršnu belonged to ancient houses of Oti otomo, a large village predating the foundation of Kuhikugu otomo, the ancestral origin place of the contemporary Kuikuro (see Franchetto 1992). The names recounted in these narratives, at least the final three, founders of Kuhikugu, remain in the Kuikuro pool of chiefly names, although the ranking family through much of the twentieth century was marked by other names (perhaps one day becoming the next in this list of specific Kuikuro ancestors).

In this formalized discourse, the nature of supralocal social relations is also specified, phrased in terms of special gifting relations to other otomo, specifically in terms of the unique village specialities including shell necklaces, ceramics, prized woods, salt, and other items used by Xinguanos as prestations and barter items during ritual occasions related to interactions between local groups (Franchetto 2003).

In various ways, such as by reference to and transmission of names, prestations, and place, as well as by the speech and gestures of living chiefs and by their positions in specific places (houses, villages, regions) at specific times, chiefs are linked to ancestral Kuikuro lines leading back to founding creator beings. Specifically, contemporary chiefs come to stand for, in the place of, the eight original founding chiefs of the Kuikuro who "are no more," as they say in the formal discourse, creating a past that is isomorphic with their person and "codified through the poetic resources of the aneti itaršnu" (Franchetto 1993;95; see also 2001). This genealogy of chiefs provides the grammar for the ritual legitimization of chiefly ancestors, a form of communication between humans and ancestors, but also crystallizes the social relation between and within groups based on actual social
relations between the speaker (one of principal chiefs) and listeners (the local group and representative chiefs of other omu).

The primary ritual context is the sequence leading up to the mortuary feast (egisi, or more generally known by the gloss kuarup, the Kamayurá (Tupi-Guarani Xinguano) word for feast and special wood of ceremonial trunks (made of wood of the divine human grandmother, who was created by wood of this tree by her father, the first ancestor of the human line). This ritual sequence is caralyzed by the death of a senior anetí and takes months to cycle through fully. The deceased anetí is typically closely related to the speaker, who is the sponsor or "owner" (oto) of the ritual. The ritual series confirms the high rank of egisi oto and creates a metaphorical and narrative link between the living chiefs, the recently deceased Kuikuro anetí going back to the immediate ancestors of the group at Kuhikugü, and more ancient culture heroes, principally Taogi, the creator or father of Xinguanos and other humans. At various stages, kin relations between deceased and living anetí are reaffirmed, for instance in formal wailing where mourners call out their kin relation, as children, siblings, parents, grandparents, or affines, which are then mapped onto space in ranked arrangements keyed to the movements and actions of living persons, their dwelling in space.

Prismatic History and the Dawn Time

Histories of heroes and other ancestors are not only or even primarily about chronological marking, nor do they necessarily follow a precise sequencing of events, places, and personages. Nonetheless, these discourses are imbued with a linear, temporal quality in which reference to specific events and people is critical. Even if it is not the central message in much indigenous historicity, there is an obvious linear feel to much of history, both in genealogical and settlement history. In ritual performance of the anetí iarr'hu, genealogical elements dominate not only the narrative structure but performance overall, including ritual and bodily orientations. Poetic speech and formalized actions in life crisis rituals bring about a metaphorical shift, a "prismatic effect," to a higher level of cyclical or social time.

Several major moments and performative episodes are noted that specify relations between humans and ancestors. At these times, this metaphorical "prismatic" effect turns one type of person, at least briefly, into another. Chiefly ancestors and their immediate descendants undergo a process of "transcorporeality," whereby they come to stand for specified others: as immediate ancestors of future anetí kunge and as bearers of certain goods (craft specializations) that mark basic distinctions of rank and community affiliation. Ancestors thus have agency upon the living, or social relations, in the same way spirits do in a kind of "mirror world," since it is the histories of which they form a part that provide the script for the living, for ritualized performance and daily practice. These histories provide a bridge to even older ancestors, culture heroes (ancient chiefs), back to the dawn of time, since the central ceremony of Xinguanos, what distinguishes them as kuge, the people, was given to them by Taogi.

In the beginning, when Taogi created humans, just prior to transforming himself into the sun and lighting the world, he and his twin brother, Alukuma, later the moon, took down the mummified body of their dead mother, Hsangitsegü, hanging in the rafters and brought her back into the world of the living, just for a day, before she was allowed to die definitively, marking the first death in the ancestral line of humans. Upon her bodily transformation she became ahi, a spirit, and founded the village in the sky where all Kuikuro ancestors go after death (see Carneiro 1989). This death and rebirth of the divine grandmother of humanity was the beginning of the egisi cycle. She was commemorated in the first egisi ritual.

Hsangitsegü and her younger sister were made from kuarup wood (unjgi in Kuikuro) and animated by her creator and father, the cultural hero Kwanti (Mavutinin, in Kamayurá), who was himself half tree and half bat in parentage. Hsangitsegü was made to be given in marriage to the chief of the jaguars, Nsufegü, who fathered her offspring, the twins Taogi and Alukuma. Through the coupling of the sun with his mother's sister, the great-great-grandparents of contemporary chiefs were born. Taogi made Xinguanos in the image of himself and his maternal family, and gave them their material culture, adornments, dances, and especially the great mortuary feasts, which made them human, kuge. This ritual complex of chiefly prerogatives and personhood is today the exclusive preserve of chiefs. Subsequently the twins transformed themselves into the sun (Giri) and moon (Ngune), not only providing light to the dawn-time world but also creating the origin point of birth of historical times, the age of kuge, which is marked by the first death. Hsangitsegü, after which things could die. It was also the first egisi.

Making Chiefs

Hierarchical conceptions of social relations, dependent as they are on legitimate ties with ancestors, are inevitably tied to issues of history, the inheritance of the past. As earthly manifestations of ancestral lines of power, chiefs link contemporary individuals with collective history and ultimately with the founding ancestors of Xinguano society itself. All Kuikuro have ancestors, to the extent that recent forebears are remembered in one way or another, but some can be described
as ancestors themselves, not only parents and grandparents but apical figures through which group genealogy is remembered. As apical descendants of previous chief’s, the firstborns of firstborns. anet i ekugu are apical ancestors of the living groups, and collective history becomes situationally isomorphic with chiefs, as aggregate subjects. History and subjectivity are constructed through the anet i au (plural of anet i) and the social linkages they embody.

Public or group memory is enacted in ritual performance, spatial orientations, and practice, though the mediums of the human body and material culture, as much or more than it is remembered in discourse. Temporality, in large part, refers to how history and time are remembered or "felt" in nondiscursive ways or ways not explicitly conceived as history. It insinuates itself into every aspect of life as well, in elements of feeling, dwelling, and perception. Material culture, ritual performance, and the built environment all make the past present and visible as cultural memory, and ritual contexts are "turned on," so to speak, by the certain individuals who animate and are animated by the major ritual events.

In a local sense, space and society come to a point in many ritual occasions, the center of a concentric circle (the plaza), the axis mundi and center of public life, and the tip of a pyramid embodied in the great chiefs. As I have argued, this interplay creates historical links between current and ancient chief’s, the symbolic rebirth of Xinguano society, which mythically "naturalizes" hierarchical social relations. It does so by bringing the historical process under direct scrutiny in the context of "making" chiefly sons and daughters into chief’s and chief’s into ancestor’s. These ritualized actions reproduce and redefine space through the structured movements of people, and notably those of high rank; specific places are personified, and the people who occupy them become, or come to stand for, fathers, representatives, ancestors— in other words, founders— as well as leaders; the words and bodily deployments of the chief’s performance draw history onto their person; there are no other great chief’s, they are all gone, as the anet i ha t i s states of recent ancestor’s, so that just the speaker remains, in place, the chiefly or "heroic" 1 (Franchetto 1993, 1996a, 1996b; see also Rumsey 1999; Sahlins 1985).

Changes of body or person, social and symbolic construction, are most directly at issue. In the case of high-ranking persons, this includes not only direct exchange between things and persons of similar proportions but also more generalized exchange between social beings of all kinds, including ancestors, other human communities, and nonhuman beings. The interactions between past and present ancestor’s, like that between the generations of parents and children in initiations, involve the "replacement" of old ancestor’s (older chief’s) with new ones. The immediate sons and daughters of the founding Xinguano chief’s— and, through them, of the founding Xinguano ancestor’s—are the anet i ekugu, the "true" male chief’s, and the itan g o (singular and plural), or high-ranking women.

Of Heroes and Houses

In complex Kuikuro conceptions of personhood, hierarchy is rooted in the distinction of seniority, temporal precedence. In social settings, this distinction is often expressed as "shame" (h i s e n e), being in a state of humility, deference, or respect to a social superior (elder): to parents, older siblings, and chief’s, as well as affines. This extends to the temporal sequence, encoded in the complicated Xinguano naming systems, which sequentially juxtaposes parents, children, grandparent’s, and grandchildren. These names embody not only individuals but social personages.

Formalized rank distinctions and defined elite status, wherever they are widely recognized as legitimate, depend to a large degree on actual genealogy. Social rank is framed in an idiom of descent, but requires little depth of actual genealogical knowledge: legitimacy is tied to specific recent ancestor’s. In these societies, descent—being one step closer to founding ancestor’s—becomes a primary dimension in the definition of social identities and boundaries. Actual genealogical links are often lost after three or four generations, but only the relationships with immediate predecessors are needed to establish linkages with deeper genealogies, which over time are pruned down to a few critical individuals, as is common among societies without written records.

Individuals reckon descent differently based on their position in the existing chief’s hierarchies: high-ranking individuals place far greater emphasis on issues of genealogy and birth order than do most people, and are able to recount genealogical relations to specific chiefly figures going back more than a hundred years (Franchetto 1992; Ireland 1996). Lower-ranking individuals often place so little emphasis on genealogy as to be characterized by a "genealogical amnesia" (Gregor 1977). The historical result on the ground is the definition of a hierarchy of individuals of greater and lesser substance—great chief’s, recognized already as part of a historical "society" of chief’s; other chiefly persons, who may be inaugurated based on relations to the great chief’s; and commoners. The step closer to true ancestor’s thus means that chief’s are the ancestor’s of the local group, and through them more comprehensive sociohistorical partitioning is mapped over communities.

The pyramidal structure, although complex in terms of historical performances and social dynamics, can be viewed as an extension over time and space of a simple separation of elder (superior) and younger (inferior) siblings, based on primogeniture, since strong anet i are ideally the firstborn sons and daughters of
firstborn parents, traced cognatically. The hierarchy thus relates to the depth one engages history as expressed in group genealogy (the founder's principle). This is defined by who can know, speak, and perform histories. Thus, an older sibling is closer to forebears than a junior and a senior line (firstborns) closer than a junior line, leading back to the founders of the village, the local group, and broader population clusters. This temporal succession is also implied in spatial and ritual arrangements of houses, settlements, and small regions.

This creates an upper tier of high-ranking individuals, a peer community of men and women who are unquestionably strong in chiefly blood and are separated (aneti) from the rest of society. These individuals inherit names and positions directly from ancestors and, through the course of their lives, come to "own" communal and sacred things—objects, structures, spaces, ritual knowledge, language—as they attain political stature. Principals among titled or "sitting" chiefs are aneti ekuga ("true" or "great" chiefs; and female iankgo), notably named "owners" (oto), the hugogo oto (the "owner of the middle") and the eti oto (the "owner of the village"), and, by extension, their heirs and coleaders: younger brothers, nephews, and especially sons and daughters. These men should have mastery of the full complement of chiefly knowledge and demeanor and be able to conduct the principal chiefly rituals; those who have learned to perform the chiefly discourse (aneti itaririñi) have to formally receive the messengers of peer communities.

A second tier is composed of weaker and ascendant political figures, "smaller" chiefs (aneti iswoni) who, while having special rights and prerogatives—sponsoring rituals, labor projects, oration—are subordinate to primary chiefs. These secondary figures achieve prominence and move toward greatness (aneti ekugi) by acting as the temporary sponsors of lesser rituals such as men's masking and flute rituals, and female rituals, based on the inclusive hierarchy, including men and women, that relates to the strength of one's claims to aneti status.

Birth order is critical in households, composed of "heads" and their local kindred ("bodies"), or what Seeger (1977) termed corporeal descent groups, "substance lines" based on parentage and residence. Birth order is itself a form of temporal marking, which over time exalts certain "lines," but these do not correspond to a narrow definition of lineages, nor do they depend entirely (or even closely in some contexts) on actual biological relatedness. Such social logic or configurations are more commonly known today as House societies, following Lévi-Strauss (e.g., 1987; see Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995).

The chiefly House is organized around a core group of high-ranking men and women linked through common descent, which men and women share equally although they differ significantly in political and economic terms. Hierarchical relations are based on the bilateral (cognatic) transmission of names, titles, and ritual prerogatives. In the Xinguano case, titles and prerogatives are not controlled by individual aneti families, but can pass between high-ranking families, depending on actual social relations and who holds power and authority at any given time. Over the long term, there is no single dominant lineage, but instead competing Houses that at any moment in time are themselves reoriented into internally hierarchical social bodies.

In the present case, this has added significance in light of the regional and hierarchical nature of descent of all kinds: the self-scaling and metonymical qualities of Xinguano social formations, or, in other words, the iteration of cultural systems through time or across space. Thus we find households combined into Houses, which compose parts of peer communities that are still greater Houses, extending on up to the whole of the Xinguano people, the maximal "moral person," which is thus organized on basic principles grounded in family and domestic life.

At one level, the chief is primus inter pares among the household heads of multiple, chiefly nonchiefly, Houses, but at a higher communal level, the chief is symbolically situated at the apex of a pyramid, as head of the village, village clusters, or even the region, within a society of chiefs that includes all apical ancestors (founders), including the first (dawn-time) kindred. While the local group (otono) is the equivalent of the chief's maximal house, it is also highly factionalized and multicentric. Thus, what at one level or in one context seems fairly crystalline, pyramidal, and centric evaporates into a more amorphous, multicentric, and "flat" arena of competing interests and interests groups by changing the scale, perspective, and time frame. This does not negate, however, the underlying hierarchical organization of social relations.

The Morruary Feasts

People are not simply born into or positioned along a developmental line, but are socially constructed through discourse and performance. People are reborn or "grow" by dwelling in and animating certain spaces and objects, and high-ranking people in particular are specially marked through chiefly life-crisis rituals, exclusive to the aneti and conducted each year. The process of chief-making and the reproduction of hierarchy begins through birthright, but it is in ritualized actions that hierarchy is most clearly expressed and negotiated—in ornamentation, bodily and spatial orientations, and demeanor. History is most visibly "calibrated" to changing contemporary social and political conditions and group composition through the performance of chiefs in rituals, particularly those that commemorate or "replace" ancestors (see Wagner 1989). Individual status is constructed or augmented in an indelible way. Exclusive wealth items, including objects, designs,
spaces, structures, narratives, chiefly dialect, and even corporeal dispositions in
formal settings, become the property of specific persons, in their lifetimes, and
are exclusive to the anetei elite. These items become inalienable possessions
of chiefs that both represent and perpetuate social hierarchies, which are reinvented,
although not "zeroed," with each passing, each ritual birth and death.

In ritualized discourse, as noted, at certain moments in the ritual cycle the
founding ancestors are invoked as key founding figures when chiefs literally come
to stand in their places—in houses, villages, and ritual spatial organizations—and
speak for or represent them. As community "representatives" they form or em-
body a critical strand of composite history, being seldom absent from discursive
and spatial group memories, and history is a primary focus of their knowledge.

They are specialists in group history and the conduct of rituals that reproduce
the collectivity, since it represents their legacy and the reason they deserve to have one
in the first place. In the most exemplary of these rituals, chiefly mortuary feasts
(egini) and initiations (tiponbi), distinctions of rank and ancestry are emphatically
and graphically represented throughout the year-long cycle.

Chiefly performance is as much corporeal and spatial as spoken, and com-
bines diverse repetitive and serial elements (see Bourdieu 1977). This materiality
focuses attention on successive reorientations of specific social bodies in place
and material culture, particularly when the social body itself is rejuvenated in
rites of passage, particularly the death of chiefs. In the kuarup, history is literally
written onto the bodies, choreographed by and embodied in chiefs and their
movements and actions in structured space—or, in other words, how they dwell
in or inhabit the world. In fact, chiefs are paraded before all. The old chiefs (now
true ancestors) and the living chiefs (newer versions of the deceased ancestors) are
situated in ritual spatially and socially. A temporal order, a procession of "owners"
(the founders of the otomo) represented as owners (oto) of rites of passage, is also
perpetuated, as is the geography of the spaces through which they flow. These
spaces, in turn, can be defined by successional "offices" that chiefs hold through
their lives, including being oto of formal structures, such as major roads, bridges,
communal weirs, the doors of the ceremonial house and the central house, the
plaza center, the chief's house, and the village itself.

The principle of centrum permeates all ritual arrangements. Take, for instance,
the benches stretched in a line when the kindred of deceased chiefs, for whom a
kuarup is called, are bathed by the community to wash away the sadness of the
death, thus releasing the community from formal mourning. The principal or
principals sit in the middle, with the ranked order of their kindred(s) on either
side, an order that will be duplicated in the placement of the kuarup trunks, with
the one or two principals in the middle and a ranked order on either side. This
order is also replicated in the order of boys' initiation. In the tiponbi, boys sit
on stools, oriented hierarchically out from a center, proportioned to their social
"size." They wear the oinale pe and full-feather headdresses, unlike the rest of their
cohort of initiates. These headdresses, the sunlike yellow and red diadems, and the
oinale pe are also placed atop the kuarup trunk representing deceased chiefs.
The resemblance between the initiate chief and the initiate ancestor (the deco-
rated kuarup trunk) is striking, and in these rituals of passage these hierarchies
are inscribed on the ground and in materials, perhaps the most graphic being the
form, size, and uniqueness of the things placed on and around chiefly bodies. An
example is the set of small, medium, and large yanapi, ceremonial pots used in
the ear-piercing festival among the Waura, Arawak-speaking Xinguano. Similarly,
the three benches of chiefs that sit before their people, the guest otomo, during the
culminating wrestling matches, are a graphic representation of hierarchy. In short,
the deployment of chiefly bodies and, through them, all other bodies is always a
critical aspect of the rituals. The sites of these rituals, of social and symbolic repro-
duction, are critical nodes not only of space but cultural memory, as places.

The way visiting participants in these rites are also precisely partitioned into
pie-shaped configurations around the plaza circle is another example of how social
relations are inscribed in place, in this case reflecting the necessarily supralocal
(inter-otomo) character of these rituals. The outside is taken here to have diverse
meanings: ancestors and their in-laws, other Xinguano groups, or potentially even
more distant "others," meaning "fierce Indians" and, today, "white people"
(who have diversified extensively over the past two centuries and include numerous
and varied members of nonindigenous cultures). Gifting is an important
element of these diverse external relations, and chiefs also mediate the outside
through gift-giving. Ritual or economic exchanges of prestige goods, including
necklaces, headdresses, benches, and particularly such chiefly trappings as jaguar-
roothoof necklaces, jaguar-skin diadems, certain special earrings, and communal
symbols like the blackwood bow, are a critical manifestation of chiefly authority
and political power.

Today the wood idols stand above the recently buried chiefs. They are dressed
as living huge should also be, wearing belts, necklaces, headdresses, and paints,
and they are given food, participating one last time in the world of the living.
The body of the divine mother, so to speak, is consumed productively by each
subsequent generation not only through the kuarup idol, occupied briefly (one
night) at the culmination of the egisi, but in all chiefly constructions, including
the men's house and particularly the house of the chief (tajibe) and the house of the
dead (tafisi), an hourglass-shaped structure over the special grave, which
itself contains diverse symbols of chiefly rank. Chiefs bring certain objects and
substances onto themselves, which reflect an ancestral power that only chiefs can use. Chiefs are positioned in the place of these ancestral beings, and exclusively use not only the kuurup wood but also the body parts of jaguars, the paternal kin of the creators, as well as the spaces where these things are placed.

In Xinguano society, wealth items are generally not passed from generation to generation as heirlooms, and thus hierarchical kin relations are defined, as often as not, by inheritance of the past (history) rather than vice versa—that is, by who actually inherits general chiefly prerogatives, such as objects, spaces, ritual orientations, and manners of speaking, rather than who could or should. In performance, and through objects and body design as well as names and allusion to founding ancestors of the local group, and through exclusive use of ritual knowledge and objects handed down from ancient ancestors and ultimately from creator beings, high-ranking persons come to embody ancestors. What is privatized, however, is not things but historical persons and living individuals who, through social and spatial proximity, come to control or otherwise occupy chiefly status in the historical group of "great chiefs."

Access to wealth is a function of prestige, first and foremost, and diverse specialists are required to meet the demands of ritual and daily consumption, including not only chiefs (aneti) but shamans (biati), artists and skilled craftsmen (oloti), singers, dancers, and others. However, without a surplus of symbolic capital, inalienable properties such as names, titles, and esoteric knowledge, it is impossible to command or even strongly influence the primary cycles of socio-symbolic reproduction, and thus the collective identity and memory. Specialties can provide the means to mobilize alternative political strategies, but these must be legitimized through ritual recognition of degrees of chiefliness to enter into the dominant political flows of competing houses. Wealth items, especially prestige goods, are not the exclusive property of elite persons, only rotating between ranked chiefs, but clearly chief's have an advantage in the quantities and qualities of goods they control. We can expect that even greater exclusivity was present in the past, in both spatial and material dimensions, given the much larger populations and the lack of industrial tools, notably metal, guns, bikes, and motors, among other modern luxury items.

It is not only in the context of chiefly life-crisis rituals that these distinctions are important. The chief also delivers oraitory discourses, meant to cajole or praise basic Kuikuro values, which are not so much preached as performed through appropriate deployment of his body and his voice—for instance, late at night in the plaza, all alone, when only he can be heard. The commanding directionality of political oration and the authority of myth-history most eloquently express themselves, discursively, in chief's language and, corporeally, in ritual orchestration (Franchetto 1993, 1996a, 1996b, 2001). Ancestors thus ultimately define what are traditional values, or the "right" and "wrong" way to be a person, since chiefs are refractors of ancestors who act the way they do because important personages did so in the past.

Making Landscapes

The way corporeal, social, ecological, cosmological, and ritual time combine to precipitate cultural memory is both situational and structured by tradition. It involves both present actions and their articulation with the residues of past action (material culture and built environment). Extending histories beyond the specific memories of living persons hinges on questions of practice and landscape. In this scale, the focus changes from what is said to what people do, to their lived experience. This temporality is suggested in Seeger's 1977 benchmark article on
Suyá conceptions of space and time, framing the issue of personhood in ways not anticipated by either the eco-functionalist or the structuralist tendencies that had dominated regional anthropology. In particular Seeger points to the contextual, processual, and historical elements of the built environment and, notably, suggests the importance of "body language" or corporeal deixis. Specifically, he notes situational differences in ceremonial settings and at nonceremonial times when divisions of space exercise less rigid control over individual activities. This cartography graphically represents a unique cultural history (Santos-Granero 1998). As Seeger recounts, part of being educated as a novice was to learn the names of the places he visited (1977). This knowledge is learned as much from dwelling as from hearing, and common experience links people (including researchers) with other people, from any time.

The present case resonates particularly strongly with the Suyá, not just because southern Arawak and Gê speakers share central plaza organization, generically, but since the Suyá are a so geographically and historically close. Among Xinguano, specifically, Basso notes: "Stories about ancestors and ancestral places constitute a narrative bridge leading from actual experiences in recent times to the stories of the very distant past" (2001:296, my translation). The split that gave rise to the Kukuro, for instance, is well remembered in a variety of stories, some of which are related to chief's named in chiefly discourse. Other chiefly names pertain to older times, in the mid-eighteenth century, when the white men were "ferocious" and attacked various Xinguano settlements ancestral to the Kukuro, and others go back yet farther, to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when even older ancestral villages were occupied and abandoned (see Franchetto 2001; Heckenberger 2005). These names of persons and places not only are recounted in the chiefly discourse, the anesti itarim, but are permanent markers of past settlements, whereby the memory of the settlement is, to some degree, isomorphic with the major chiefs of that place. These stories and names from the past also form a pool of historical resources that chiefs draw from to make points about the past.

Ancestral places and the historical figures and events they emplace not only frame historical consciousness but also constitute a kind of cultural language of history, analogous to the utterances, stanzas, and sequences of narrative history. In Xinguano systems of language and knowledge production, one can get virtually anywhere, and by extension to anyone, by following out the logic and architecture of landscape. History is thus expressed, produced, and reproduced in a historically defined landscape of greater and lesser places, special settings, and locales, tied together through time and space by the specifiable actions of discrete human and other beings.

Social relations are not based only on who persons are bur also, and perhaps more importantly, on who they were, where they came from in terms of ancestors, and what places they’ve been. Equally critical is who they will be, or should become, because of how they replace, fall short of, or exceed the ancestors of old, preserved in narrative memory: chief’s, shamans, bowmasters, and other great persons. Chief in particular are always remembered in place, like creation-story heroes. Chiefs are chiefs precisely because they are oto, owners of public architecture and works and ritual, and because they are in or even "of" these special, ritualized places—the tajip, the kuakuru, the huygo, the kwarp wood trunk—where they are legitimated and divided further by use or not of special ornaments and designs such as the blackwood bows, the jaguar-claw necklaces, and jaguar-skin and sunlike feather diadems.

The plaza settlement is the most explicit text or manual of group history and its making, as the positions manifested by different social bodies define history to make it conform, in fairly exact terms, to the relations between the living. The places of ancient occupations are remembered, not only by physical relationships, nor by the communities who inhabit them, but particularly by the critical events and individuals who lived there, remembered in chiefly discourse and narratives (see Basso 1995). The greatest among these places, these passages of Xinguano history, are the plaza villages, remembered by the chief who reigned and died there, the chiefs for whom the elaborate mortuary feasts are held.

Hierarchy, in particular, is always linked to spatial distributions, such as where one walks, talks, sits, sleeps, or eats. Like persons, not all houses are constructed the same: some are larger, more finely constructed, and more elaborate. Design decisions have much to do with personal preferences or motivations, as well as the support available to any individual building a house. Not surprisingly, however, the houses of principal chief families, headed by the primary village chief, are typically bigger and better. They are also positioned in key areas of the domestic ring, corresponding to cardinal points and the orientation of the plaza and its formal causeways. This is important because positioning is as much a community as a personal decision.

The Xinguano "true" house (sine) is also a history, and it is made according to very exacting building standards: each space, each post, beam, stave, and door has a name, and each is positioned in a highly standardized way. The layout of a truehouse likewise follows a highly regular pattern, with specific domains marked according to gender and functional differences, notably a central public area and a peripheral domestic area. It also marks the hierarchical relations that characterize all houses: expressed in where one sleeps or stores one's things. The hammock of the highest-ranking individual in each of two household divisions is situated...
along the long axis of the house, the one on the right, as one comes through the front door, is the higher ranked of the two—house, front room (lama, lama). As noted, the most sacred of all village spaces is the plaza core (lago), which is in the center of the village. As in most Xingu villages, one finds a ‘house’ (the translation is probably inadequate to convey the meaning), serving as a center for social, political, economic, and other activities. The plaza is open to all, both men and women, and serves as a place to meet, socialize, and engage in other activities. The plaza is also a space where important events are held, such as ceremonies and festivals. The plaza is the heart of the village, and its layout and design reflect the social and cultural norms of the community. The layout of the plaza is usually determined by the location of the village and the orientation of the houses. In many cases, the plaza is a rectangular area surrounded by houses, with a central courtyard or open space. The design of the plaza is often influenced by the local environment, with features such as trees, rocks, and water bodies incorporated into the layout. The plaza is a vital space for the community, providing a place for socializing, ceremonies, and other important activities. The design and layout of the plaza reflect the values and traditions of the community, and it is an important symbol of the village's identity.
easy to envision that, in the past, prime lands and resources, as well as labor and the flow of material wealth, would have been more tightly controlled by elite groups, creating the conditions for a fully political economy.

That time, space, and elements of personhood are inscribed in spatial organization and landscape, and in very precise ways, does not require that there be formalized units of measurement. The focus on material culture and the built environment is thus strategic, since these are essential if we wish to validly assign meaning to the archaeological past. The house, the mortuary feast, or the village is an iteration of this materiality, each choreographed with meticulous attention to partitioning space—who sits, sleeps, walks, and talks where, and with whom—creating a map of the Xinguano landscape of great detail, infusing the landscape and ethnocartographies with self-scaling cultural properties in diverse ways. Everywhere one looks, one sees pattern and regularity, the reproduction of relationship and proportion as well as distance and angle. For instance, the way rafters are twined, the "weave" of the house, like that of the hammock, net, and basket, or the common linear and geometric designs, all encode mathematical and social principles.

Discussion

Although beyond the scope of this essay, which, in keeping with other volume contributions, focuses on ethnographic patterns, a look farther into the past suggests that the patterns noted here of exclusivity and power would likely have been even more rigidly defined and enforced, making the gap between elite and common all the more obvious and difficult to resist. While change occurred, the highly repetitive and precise orientations of east-west, right-left, center of a circle, and center of a line, bespeak a discipline associated with the movements of the body in ritual and domestic life that are also clearly visible in archaeological contexts. Large and densely distributed settlements of the deep past, some more than ten times the size of current villages, make likely that many of the relations described here were more accentuated and elaborated. Likewise, there were at least eight times as many of them, ordered by a clear, almost crystalline division into graded centers or nodes.

Xinguano communities and regional clusters are hierarchically ordered, according to genealogy, works, gender, and age, and we see that ancestors or, more precisely, ancestral places are likewise arranged according to these social principles. The regular placement of settlements, of central plazas, of all the residential areas, houses, roads, gardens, of all the estates across the region, only dissipates any lingering doubt that ethnohistory was every bit as complicated as ethnoecology among Amazonians. The historical outcome is both a hitherto unsuspected

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Fig. 9.3. Overview of Kukuuro village area in the Parque Indígena do Xingu (PIX), Mato Grosso, Brazil. Note: Overlain on Landsat 7, 8/03, with high-resolution contemporary community of Iparar with radial roads/paths leading from it in upper right (light-colored) and prehistoric towns and road systems (darker) lines based on detailed ("real-time") GPS satellite image survey.
times, one of large, settled agro-fisherpeople who were integrated in hierarchical regional polities.

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Notes

1. The acculturation of outsiders into regional society—“becoming human,” as Coelho (2000) puts it, paraphrasing an Aweti chief whose people had, in fact, been acculturated into Xinguano society some centuries ago—and permeable cultural boundaries have characterized regional interaction into recent times. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century the Bakairi (Carib), Trumai, Suyá (northern Gê), Ikpeng, and others have become enmeshed in the sociopolitical orbit of the Xinguano nation. The nation of related Xinguano peoples has included peripheral groups who have come into the now PIX territory within the past century or so and entered into relations with established or “core” communities who have traditionally occupied the headwater basin of the Xingu River, or upper Xingu, since at least 1,250 years ago (see Franchetto and Heckenberger 2001).

2. Certain characteristic features widely agreed upon by specialists, notably regional sociopolitical integration, hereditary leaders and social hierarchy, settled village life in plaza communities of numerous large longhouses, and productive agriculture and fishing technologies, can be inferred from archaeological data leading back a thousand years or more. These features are similar to those of culturally related Arawakan societies along the southern margins of the forested Amazon basin and beyond (Heckenberger 1996, 2005; Hill and Santos-Granero 2003).

3. See Foster 1993 and Wagner 1989 for an interesting comparative example from New Ireland. In the present case, names are transmitted from grandparents to grandchildren, along gender and age lines, and include several names for each person, related to the mother’s and father’s affinal name restrictions (and the ban on speaking names), but also related to life histories. Cycling names across generations is an ongoing process, and the current chief has already cycled through several names, although he retains the name of his own grandfather as his primary name in supralocal public interactions.

5. Amatuagu, one of the eight Oti otomo chiefs who helped found Kukikuku otomo—the Kuikuro, ancestors of the current village of Ipase otomo—was also a chief of an even more ancient, seventeenth- or eighteenth-century community, Tafununu, of ancestral Carib sites around the largest lake (ipa) in the region, also called Tafununu, the [ipa otomo] (see Basso 1995).

6. Carneiro’s 1993 article on the kwarup ceremony touches upon many things mentioned here, and Agostinho’s (1974) and Basso’s (1973, 1985) descriptions give further detail and variation on the ritual. The author has participated in six kwarup, once (1994) as an adopted kinsmen, two other times in the Kuikuro village (2001, 2003), and, as a visitor camped out with the Kuikuro contingent, twice in the Yawalapi village (1992, 2003) and once (1993) in the Kamayura village.

7. Hítiem is the Kuikuro variant of a term that has equivalents in the other Xinguano languages. Camapra, to refer to nonchiefly individuals, is likely derived from the Brazilian word camarada, but the critical issue is that elite status, high rank, is marked and named.

8. Adams and Kasakoff (1986:64) note that oral societies seldom "record reasonably full genealogies back more than three generations" and those that do go back farther in time are/were "invariably of the descendants of a tribal hero or demigod, pruned of any links that were not necessary to tie the living into a web of nameable relationships."

9. This is shown when representatives are chosen from the ascet ranks to mediate or participate in chiefly rituals, which marks them graphically. In a recent "democratic" move, the kindred hierarchy of the principal chief was reproduced in the recently formed community organization: the eldest brother (1), who is the principal chief, became honorary president; the second-eldest brother (2) became president; their brother-in-law became vice president; the youngest brother (half brother to 1 and 2) became secretary; and the eldest son of 2, the oldest male child of r and z combined, became treasurer.

10. Ellen Basso’s discussions (1985, 2005) of discourse, performance, and specifically "deixis" are particularly critical here, since the Kalapalo are members of the same language "cluster" in the regional Xinguano culture/nation. See also Franchetto 1986, 1993, 2001.

11. It is often difficult to elicit a concrete answer, let alone a formula or formalized unit, regarding the designs on bodies, and things, and across places that instantiate Xinguano mathematics. The principles are, however, encoded in virtually everything: counting lines, making tokens, wefts, house posts, carefully measured distances the size of a blade of grass, an arrow cane, or even a long, extended cord, which may then be graduated by the measured distance from chest to outstretched hand of the person responsible for doing this: the chiefly "eubit."

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