CDU 397(811.3)

POWER AND RAPE IN THE AMAZON FOREST: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM INDIGENOUS PEOPLES?

Sérgio Neves Dantas

INTRODUCTION

The study of rape in the context of small scale societies such as Indigenous peoples diverges radically from the study of rape in our modern society. Uncertainties may arise on whether or not these findings related to tribal societies are valid to understanding the problem of rape in the modern large-scale society. Part of the problem is that rape conveys different interpretations and meanings in the context of tribal cultures. For the modern society rape is a crime; as such, its study deals with problems, like precisely defining sexual intercourse and consent, that are very unlikely to carry meaning in the context of Indigenous peoples, where rape is institutionalized.

Nonetheless, there are two main reasons that justify a study of this nature if the aim is to gain knowledge of Indian cultures and behavior to project it within a wider context such as that of our large scale societies. First, masculine defensive reactions and violence against women persist, as Gregor (1985) maintains, within individual personalities in our society, possibly due to our own tribal past. Second, as the same author notes,

> ...there are many points of correspondence [between tribal and modern cultures], some appearing just where the two cultures seem to be farthest apart... there are universalities in the male experience, and even a common symbolic vocabulary for its expression. If we

> look carefully, he continues, we will see reflections of our own sexual nature in the life ways of an Amazonian people (19).

An option to approach gender/rape dynamics which links these two assumptions: universality and inheritance, derives from the realization that rape and power coexist as a social phenomenon. There seems to be strong evidence that rape and power are interrelated and universal episodes. Power is an element present in all social relationships, and according to many it can not be studied separately from other related concepts such as authority, control, dominance and oppression[1]. Women, as an oppressed group, have been victims of male dominance over millenniums. As Susan Brownmiller (1975) puts it, "women are trained to be rape victims. To simply learn the word "rape" is to take instruction in the power relationship between males and females" (309). Or, in Armstrong's words, "it [rape] also a way that men express their power over women, a power that stems ultimately from the unequal social and economic status of men and women" (Armstrong, 1990: ix).

Thus, it seems convenient, that to deepen an understanding of the dynamics of rape we must first examine the antecedent trends of male dominance. The first part of this paper, thus, focuses on the study of the roots of men's dominance and defensive aggressive behavior. It constitutes, in other words, an attempt to understand why men need to control and dominate women.

After examining the origins of male dominance, I look, in the second part, at a number of attempts to analyze the elements of male dominant behavior, in all its manifestations, in the context of rape. By comparing data among different Indigenous traditions I suggest that men use rape in a variety of ways according to different patterns in the relationship with women.

In the third part, then, I present two cases of free-rape societies to convey final remarks regarding the primary hypothesis argued throughout the paper—that of the relationship between power and rape.

I. The origins of male dominant behavior

To indicate possible causes of male dominance and female subordination I have chosen more than one view as analytical framework.

---

1 See, for example, Stacy, M., and Price, M., 1981.

These different views, however, complement one another, while providing an appropriate theoretical base for the arguments that shall be discussed in detail in part II. The assumptions they provide establish rich parameters associated with gender relations and the study of the origins of civilization. The latter essentially deals with the notion of kinship system which constitutes the basic social structure of the tribal societies included in this study.

But to study the social structure of tribal societies we need first to consider the material conditions where they live. In a broad sense, hunting and gathering people, in contrast to agricultural societies, live in a constant conflict between the forces of nature and their own power. A community can be viewed as an ecological unity comprising a human population and the population of game. This implies dynamic resource relations between two categories of fertility: human and animal, a process of cultural adaptation in which, as Thomas C. Meredith (1992) has argued, citing Colinvaux (1982) "... cultural norms permit individuals to meet their own expectations, [and] the established cultural paradigm and the hierarchy of authority are secure " (127).[2]

These constraints between human and animal fertility create two diametrically opposing social drives: the need to multiply, in order to produce and reproduce society, and the need to restrain and limit human fertility to avoid imbalances between human population and resources.

The psychological dimension related to the first needed social drive – the need to maintain human fertility – is generally associated with Freud's theory of Oedipal Stage (Craib, 1990; Johnson and Johnson, 1988). Freud's theory[3] is based on the development of human sexuality from birth to adult life. Freud argues that there are various stages in the development of human sexuality: the oral, anal, phallic, pre-genital and finally the oedipal stage – the moment when boys and girls mature and became ready to each other. At the initial stages, Craib argues, " ... the sexual instinct attaches itself to the new born baby's needs for self preservation, for food." Both boys and girls desire the mother. During the oedipal stage, thus, the boy experiences the prohibition of incest to achieve genital heterosexuality. Both requirements, prohibition of incest and heterosexuality, are believed to be driven by social

2 See also Bruce Lincoln, 1981

3 Freud's theory of Oedipal stage has been the focus of criticisms by the part of women's studies especialists. It is important to clarify that only part of his theory is been considered here, as an attempt to complement the claims related to the theory of kinship systems.

needs. " To allow incestuous relationships would be to allow society to fragment into small self-contained groups. Mother-son incest is particularly dangerous because it is unlikely to lead to the production of a new generation" (Craib, 1990: 50).

Eventually, these two driving social needs outlined before, the need to keep procreation and restrain procreation have to be harmonized. This struggle for the balance has been referred to by many scholars, as the root cause of the formation of kinship arrangements and the domination of women.

Levis-Strauss theory of circulation of women provides the basis of many arguments concerning the foundations of civilization and male dominance. Ian Craib's accounts on this respect suggests that the reasons for the subordination of women rests on many facts, including:

> ... the reproduction of the population depends upon the number of women of child-bearing age who are available to bear children. The circulation of women enables the control of this number.... Kinship rules enabling the circulation of women also ensure that if there is a shortage of women of child-bearing age, then those available are enabled to bear children, since they are assigned to a husband; and if there is a surplus, then some will lack husbands and there will not be a population increase which would strain the resources of the society.... Women [also] are more essential to reproduction than men – a society could not survive with a few women of child-bearing age; but it could survive if most men were eliminated and a few kept in a cage somewhere. Again [Craib says], women have to be controlled and circumscribed: the whole system can be seen as built upon womb envy on the part of the inessential male (Craib, 1990: 51) .

The arguments listed above, which in some way provide the theoretical foundation for many explanations throughout this paper, might or might not be true. We would argue, for example, that although they seem to explain why women need to be controlled, they are not concerned with explaining why is it that men , and not women, are the agents of such control; or, in another words, why women would not have active roles in restricting their own natural functions of childbirth to control fertility. Nevertheless, considering that kinship relations serve as referential bases for such views, these theories are appropriate to frame the discussions in this study since the Indigenous societies that will be analyzed have kin in the very core of their

social structure, constituting concrete examples to test these views.

II. Women and Men in the Forest: The Different Patterns of Power and Rape

1. Ceremonial Rape – The initialization of Men

Perhaps the most important event in the ceremonial life of many Amazonian people is the initialization ritual. For the young Shavante it is a time when he become a mature man, assumes new duties and gains some privileges as well.

But to fully achieve his maturity the initiant has to perform an extensive ritual when the whole tribe participates in some way – including the women. Shavante societies practice ceremonial aggression against women in the form of rape as part of an extensive men's initialization rite called Wai'a[4], in David Lewis' words: "A communication of power to the initiated men." This ceremonial rape of women, he continues, is a necessary step for the young Shavante to gain power and achieve his manhood. Bellicosity[5] is the most important symbolic element in the ritual, as an expression of manhood. In Lewis words, "They have to demonstrate their ferocity in three ways, by killing Simihepãri (a symbol of fierceness), by raping the women, and by killing one of their own number" (Maybury-Lewis, 1967: 265).

As Lewis observes,there are two dimensions of this power (or ferocity): the sexual aspect of ferocity – broadly

> speaking, sexual power [and] ...the non-sexual aspect of ferocity, aggressive power....The combination of sexuality and aggression [the author argues] could hardly be more aptly expressed than in a ceremonial rape (266).

According to Lewis, these two different dimensions of power resemble Freud's pattern of non-generative power – aggression and generative power

---

4 Its important to refer to the fact that among Xavante societies women are highly excluded from many of the rituals.

5 Bellicosity derives from the Shavante factionalism and hostility toward outsiders. Lewis notes that there is a strong correlation between ceremonial aggression against women and strong factionalism. Among societies with severe factionalism, Lewis says, " the Kaiapo have a ceremonial rape similar to the Xavante rite and the Sherente men's societies would ritually threaten the women's society and mime the killing of a woman."

– sexuality. To understand the latter, generative power, we need further explanations. The remarks made by Ian Craib[6] are very appropriate at this point. He basically claims that men are overwhelmed by the female power of fertility, over which they have no control. The continuation of society, thus, is directly associated with female power and with the need to control it. Also, he continues, "... men are afraid of female sexuality: women are capable of more and faster orgasms than men" (51). Both fertility and strong sexuality are evidences of the dangers that the creative power of women poses to the Shavante men. Given the constant threat from outsiders they need, thus, to control women in order to communicate female power toward themselves and gain bellicosity.

2. Gang Rape: Punishment of Women

Gang rape is perhaps the most common type of rape encountered within Amazonian people. It has been documented in a large number of ethnographic research from many anthropologists who worked in close contact with Indian communities from different parts of Lowland Amazon.

Among the cases included in this essay, the most striking fact is that gang rape is associated with a number of common features regardless of the cultural particularities of each individual case. Among the Indigenous tribes that practice gang rape (with the exception of the Yanomanō groups which shall be analyzed separately) I have identified the following characteristic traits in male behavior.

The first is male solidarity. Despite the fact that the total range of behavior is characteristic of kinship roles, masculine solidarity is what drives men and guides their behavior in the event of gang rape. For instance, Charles Wagley's *Welcome of Tears: The Tapirapé Indians of Central Brazil*, includes many examples of gang rape of a recalcitrant wife. Within Tapirapé communities a woman who runs away from the women's initialization ceremony will have her husband announcing publicly that she is available to all men for group rape. If she happens to be without a husband she is considered automatically available for the rape party. Sometimes the men rape a Tapirapé woman even without the husband's consent, with no subsequent retaliation from the latter. He accepts the fact as their traditional right.

6 Craib utilized Lévi-Strauss hypothesis in order to elaborate his arguments. I shall refer later to the same arguments when I describe the Tukanoan case.

Thomas Gregor (1985), while studying the Mehinaku society, has came to similar observations. He notes that when a woman enters the men's house (an act considered very inappropriate for a woman) and happens to be seen by a man, he would not tell on her closest female kin, unless other men also saw her. When this is the case, gang rape should occur. The same author states that in Mehinaku tradition, as well as among the Mundurucú (that we shall see in detail later), men justify themselves for the gang rape with rationalizations based on the existence of evil spirits that may kill them if they do not have sex with a woman who enter the men's house. The same arguments seems to be used in all communities where the men's house determines what is appropriate behavior. In all these cases, the men's house, placed in the center of the village, represents the symbol of political power and men's solidarity; man is united against a common threat – the women.

Another characteristic factor of men's behavior associated with gang rape is the idea of punishment for women. Gang rape is for the women the most terrible form of punishment and it is not difficult to understand why. As Alice Armstrong observed, "...women are raped because it is known to *hurt* women."[7] In seeking to describe gang rape from a women's point of view, Gregor writes:

> Mehinaku women, though, by our standards unclothed, comport themselves
> modestly, so that the internal genitalia are concealed. when they are raped their legs are forced apart, exposing them to the men of the village. Even more defiling, [Gregor says] according to the women, is that gang rape "fills and covers" the women with semen, which is regarded as a dangerous and contaminating bodily secretion. As one of the women explained [the author notes], 'the semen is disgusting. We can not make manioc flour, we can not make bread or get water. People don't come near us. You get sick, sick, sick, in a month you die. Disgust fall upon us.'
>
> [The author also remarks that] ... what is most painful for the women is that all of this defilement has been caused by their kin. A woman who has been raped must somehow live with her tormentors.

7 Notes on MALS 188 Class Seminar: "Violence Against Women – Multicultural Perspectives", Datmouth College, Hanover, NH, 1994

In many circumstances a woman can be punished through gang rape. A peculiar case occurs when a Tapirapé woman undergoes an attack of epilepsy. Disabilities, as with immoral behavior, are considered a woman's fault, and as so, she must be punished. Men, then, including the young ones, rush to carry her into the forest and rape her.

But the most common reason for punishment, present in many tribal villages, is based on the prohibition upon women of seeing the sacred musical instruments (flutes). The flutes belong to the men and it is a symbol of their power. The woman who see the flutes is gang-raped by all of the men other than her closest kin. As I shall be explaining later in detail, the flutes possess sacred spirits that demand that the transgressor be raped.

Finally, another factor associated with men's behavior in gang rape is tradition. As Gregor says, "raping women who sees the flutes... [according to the villages] was a part of the life way of the Mehinaku grandfathers. As such, it is correct today." The author also remarks that, although woman resent rape, they accept the group disciplinary procedure as it is, and even enforce it[8].

To further investigate the dynamism of gender relations in the context of gang rape, I will explore, in the rest of this section, the case of the Mundurucu societies. Such groups have been the focus of many ethnographic investigations; they may provide us, thus, with valuable information as study case.

According to Yolanda and Robert Murphy, married anthropologists who lived with the Mundurucu, although the status of women is undoubted inferior to that of the men, "...the relation between the sexes is not one of simple domination and submissiveness, but one of ideological dissonance and real opposition" (Murphy, 1985: 113).

The Murphy's observed that sex roles are well grasped by the understanding of a simple myth involving the invention of the flutes – sacred musical instruments. The flutes are believed to have supernatural power – the spirits of the ancestors – which is extended to those who possess them. In contemporary Mundurucu society, these sacred instruments are taboo

8 There seems to have some variations, though, in terms of female responses to gang rape. Mundurucu woman, for instance, regard the punishment of gang rape as cruel, arbitrary and unnecessary (Murphy, 1985:113-120).

for women to see, but it was women, according to the myth, who first discovered them. As far as the myth goes, men took the flutes from the women and then gained dominance. Since then, as Murphy noted,

> the very fact that the women were believed to have once been dominant bespeaks a latent fear that they can become dominant again....Women, as a people, are not inferior, for otherwise the rebellion of the males would have been unnecessary (117).

This constant fear explains the rather radical attitudes of men toward women which eventually leads to violence and rape.

Men were able to take the trumpets from women and gain ascendancy for only men can hunt and offer meat to the ancestor spirits. The latter, the native Mundurucu believes, demands ritual offering of meat in order to ensure fertility of humans and animals. The male ascendancy in today's Mundurucu society is maintained by strict control over the women in all aspects of life. In fact, the dominance of men is manifested through Mundurucu rites and ceremonies and by rules governing female conduct. Women are supposed to act passively toward men, to not look directly at a man, to travel in bands, and of course, as Murphy says, to not "spy the sacred instruments". When a woman violate these roles she poses a threat to male "superiority", and the control mechanism comes in the form of punishment – gang rape. As the Murphys describe it:

> On these occasions, up to twenty or more men will drag the women outside the village and violate her. Rules of moiety exogamy are suspended, and we even heard of cases in which first degree parallel cousins participated in the rape. The punishment is as interesting as the crime. After all, the women could be just as easily beaten or subjected to some other physical abuse, but it will be remembered that the men consciously state that they use the penis to dominate their women. This is a textbook instance of phallic sadism (117).

In short, the maintenance of the dominance of men, Murphy notes, through a number of devices such as male rituals, ceremonies, men's house rules, and gang rapes is a proof of the fragility of their own superiority. " If the men really were all that powerful, they wouldn't need such rigmarole"(117-120).

So far we have seen that the motive behind dominance of men is

masculine insecurity which is manifested in the form of defensive aggression towards women. A number of researchers who focused their analysis on the Mundurucu society have suggested that the patterns of inter-sex relationship and male insecurity can be seen as governed by social and psychological needs. What follows is a synthesis of such views, a combination of Freud's theory of Oedipal stage, modern anthropology and contemporaneous women's studies discourses.

An interesting and deep analysis of the sexual antagonisms within Mundurucu communities was made by Peggy R. Sanday. In her article "Rape and the Silencing of the Feminine" she basically argues that rape "...can be understood as a form of silencing or concealing male vulnerability and maternal dependence"(Sanday, 1986: 85). Men's insecurity, she says, is rooted in the boy's early dependency – both physical and psychological – of the maternal body. In order to overcome this natural feeling, he resorts to symbolic artifacts (such as trumpets) to recreate the female maternal body under his control. To suppress dependence and insecurity the Mundurucu men resort to the control of trumpets and by ritually performing with them he experiences independence and autonomy. In Sanday's words, "...the maturing male must reject part of himself that developed as a natural consequence of maternal nurturing. In doing so, he suppresses his own vulnerability and the knowledge of his body experienced while suckling at his mother's breasts." (86).

The psychological dynamics behind gang rape of the Mundurucu women must also be interpreted in symbolic terms. Gang rape is a punishment over female body, the body that makes him vulnerable and insecure. As Sanday explains, "...The male punishes that which he imagines holds him and entraps him: he punishes the female body." (86).

Another dimension on the dynamics of rape that seems to be implicit in Sanday's arguments is that men's insecurity is associated with his anxious feeling towards the forces of nature. Men, as well as the community at a large, primarily depend on fish or game – resources from the world of nature – for the continuation of human life and culture. As I outlined in part I, survival for hunting and gathering societies depends on the balance between human and animal fertility. As also mentioned before, women, because they give birth, are " perceived as closer to the state of nature than men" (Craib, 1990: 51). Fertility is necessary to keep the continuation of society but overpopulation can became a threat for the adequate supplement of game and fish. Consequently, their natural functions of childbirth, menstruation, etc., have to be controlled. In seeking explanations for the men's feeding the

trumpets, Sanday concludes:

> The trumpets must be properly played and "fed" with meat from the hunt to please the ancestor spirits that dwell within the trumpets and to ensure the fertility of humans and animals. Thus, the playing and feeding of the trumpets constitutes a fertility rite, the only ceremonial activity in this society (Sanday, 1986:87).

It is convenient at this stage, before going on to look at the Yanomamö example of gang rape, to summarize the points already made from the previous cases. We have seen that gang rape among Tapirapé, Mehinaku, and Mundurucu societies can be explained as associated with certain constant features of masculine solidarity, punishment of women, and tradition. These communities also share another common characteristic: the existence of the men's house. Placed in the center of the plaza, the men's house is the residence of all adult males, a symbol for men's power and of the radical opposition between the sexes, in Murphy's words, "... a relation ... of ideological dissonance and real opposition"(113).

The case of Yanomamö groups however, shows quite distinct standards in the relationship between the sexes and gang rape and it will provide valuable material to compare with the examples analyzed previously.

3. Gang Rape and Yanomamö Societies – The Aggression on the Other

Contrarily to the Mundurucu-related cases[9], the Yanomamö dwellings are not built around a men's house but they constitute a common roof organized internally of a series of individual family houses. The relationship between the sexes is not governed by a strong opposition, but it is illustrative, as Napoleon Chagon (1992) describes it, "... of the strong masculine role and feminine submissiveness". Women is decidedly disregarded in Yanomamö societies. "Men are more valuable than women or boys are more valuable than girls."(111). Yanomamö daily life is very oppressive to women. From an early age they are taught to work hard in the household (even more than boys) and to be prepared to marry well before they reach puberty. Contrarily to men, they have no say in terms of their preferences and wishes; their kinsmen make the decision of promising them to some husband.

9 In order to facilitate the exposition, from now one the term Mundurucu stands for all three societies: Tapirapé, Menihaku and Mundurucu.

Women are expected to serve men and submit to them in all matters of daily life. As Chagon tells us, when the men arrive from hunting, the women,

> ... no matter what they have been doing, hurry home and quietly but rapidly prepare a meal. If the wife is slow about it, she may be scolded or even beaten ... Although husband's reprimands are consistent with the perceived seriousness of the wife's shortcomings, his more drastic measures are reserved for infidelity or suspicion of infidelity. It is not uncommon for a men to seriously injure a sexually errant wife, and some husbands have shot and killed unfaithful wives (111-113).

To some extent we may see woman in the Yanomamö society as an object, an article through which the needs and desires of men are met. Such an article serves also to perpetuate or establish power among enemy tribes since captured women during wars are the most valuable reward for the winning party. Indeed, the capture of women is one of the major justifications for wars and raids. Likewise, demand for women is an important requirement in the formation of alliances and political ties.

It is also in the context of wars and raidings that we may see how rape manifests the inferior position of Yanomamö women and the masculine role. As Chagnon describes it, "When a woman is captured, she is raped by all the men in the raiding party and, later, by men in the village who did not go in the raid. She is then given to one of the men as wife" (111-113).

However, contrarily to the Mundurucu cases, bonds of kinship have precedence over gender relations. When a captured woman has ties of kinship with the aggressor parties she is not raped. In other words, masculine solidarity in Yanomamö societies is built upon the preservation of kinship roles, as basic parameter of maintaining the social order, and it stands beyond normative notions associated with wars and raids. Thus, the precedence of kinship roles can prevent captured women from being raped, in most cases.

In contrast, we saw that masculine solidarity among Mundurucu men rests upon a strong opposition to women. The ultimate scheme to preserve the social order is defined in terms of keeping the women in their place. To hold things under control males resort to gang rape, Murphy says, as a "mechanism of social control", and when gang rape is required kinship roles are neglected. The necessity to punish women via rape, regardless of bonds

of kinship, indicates that Mundurucu women constitute a potential threat to the male world.

Contrarily, Yanomamõ woman is totally disregarded and she poses no threat to the men. And perhaps precisely because of this, it is possible for her to enjoy a paternalistic protection from them. For instance, a woman, Chagon says, can escape from maltreatment in the marriage by fleeing to another village and finding another husband, or she can also count on her brothers for protection against a cruel husband.

To summarize, the source of power and control in Mundurucu societies derives from the men's house, whereas in the Yanomamõ case it derives from the role of the "father" – the headmen, the brother, or the husband – and as such, only the gang rape of the other is accepted.

III. Tukanoan and Tukuna Cases and Some Conclusions.

In this last section, two cases of rape-free societies are described as they provide valuable material to frame the final arguments of this study. Tukanoan and Tukuna societies share many cultural traits while revealing striking contrast, when compared with the previous cases, on the nature of the relationship between the sexes. Consider the following description of the Tukanoan in Northwest Amazon, a study originally made by Jean E. Jackson (1983).

In his studies of Tukanoan Identity and rituals, Jackson states that although this society is also male oriented, women participate fully in Tukanoan life especially with respect to food contribution and domestic issues. There is also no tendency, unlike the other indigenous groups, Jackson argues, toward polygyny or brittle marriages, and marriages are more stable. In terms of violence against women it is opportune to note that even when a woman is blamed of adultery, no coercion is used to force a undisciplined wife into submission. Likewise, there are no accounts of rape among Tukanoan societies in Jackson reports.

The only form of opposition and control toward women is by means of rituals. Jackson states that women are seen as empowered and potentially dangerous beings. Women is considered superior to men because of their creative power (fertility), and strong sexuality. Tukanoan women are not sexually passive and continually trie to attach new lovers; therefore, they are

potentially dangerous because of her sexual demands. Thus, men need to control women and female symbols by means of rituals in order to neutralize destructive female elements and limit their power.

The remarks made by Ian Craib, while utilizing Lévi-Strauss hypothesis, seem to make their case here[10]. In trying to explain the universal motivations behind men's control of women, he presents some arguments, such as the men being overwhelmed by the forces of nature over which they have no control. Women, "...because they give birth, are perceived as closer to the state of nature than men, and a consequent threat to a newly established society." Also, he continues, "... men are afraid of female sexuality: women are capable of more and faster orgasms than men" (Craib 1990: 51). These two facts combined explain why Tukanoan men are afraid of the creative power of women.

At this stage, we may feel compelled to make some inquiries by comparing the Tukanoan example with the others we have seen so far. There is a remarkable similitude, in terms of symbolism, between the Tukanoan rituals and Shavante initialization ceremony, or yet, between the hard work of both Yanomamö and Tukanoan women. Why then, the outcomes are so greatly distinct – from ceremonial rape or women's raids and rape, to the nonexistence of rape within the Tukanoans? Jackson's similar analysis refers to the fact that cessation of warfare within Tukanoans (while fightings and raidings are still present among Yanomamös and Shavantes) would be the main reason for these dissimilarities.

While these questions seems to require further investigations, it is important to enforce here that such inquiries demand an extensive analysis of cause and effect among co-related variables, which does not constitute the focus of this study. The latter is more, in a sense, an ethnological exercise rather than an ethnographic approach. In particular, I have focused on the study of the relationship of power (and its origins) and rape. Although I did not attempt to make large generalizations, linking specific variables with different kinds of rape, the study of individual cases confirmed the initial hypothesis that, in a broad sense, the existence of rape in a given society, is indicative of imbalance of power between the sexes. Conversely, the Tukanoan and Tukuna, whose description will follow, are useful to test the hypothesis

---

10 I have used the same arguments while explaining the component of generative power in the description of Shavante initiation ceremony (see page 5).

the other way around: the nonexistence of rape as indicative of strong female position and participation in social life.

Thus, the following and final case to be described—the Tukuna society—constitutes one example of such a situation. Linguistically classified as in the same family as the Tukanoan's, Tukuna society displays a unique pattern in inter-sexes relationships. There is no accounts of rape in Bruce Lincoln's *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation*[11]. Moreover, the most important ritual in Tukuna society is a women's ritual – the women's initialization ceremony – which is organized and performed by both the women and the men.

The ritual marks the moment when a girl becomes a woman; in her transformation she becomes fertile and experienced. It is also a moment when the girl experiences the separation from the world of nature and immerses herself in the world of culture – one of maturity.

In contrast to the Shavante men's initiation ceremony, previously described, at Tukuna women's initiation, both men and women take active part in every step of the ritual. They perform the acts together, singing and dancing, and all the preparative for the event are collectively organized.

But this is not to say, though, that there is no opposition between the sexes. During the ritual it is the men who suppress the earthly elements of the initiant while the women communally help one another in the ordeal. Whereas the women as a group are identified with the initiant: they act together maintaining a unit, the man is still the preceptor and instigator of the ordeal.

But despite the fact that gender roles are clearly manifested during the ceremony of women's initiation, participants, rather than pursuing the specific interests of either gender, act as members of the broader society. Lincoln argues that the overall meaning, symbolism and purpose of the ritual are to preserve the social order and permit society to maintain its sense of solidarity.

---

11 The nonexistence of rape cannot be literally assumed, though. The author did reports about sacred instruments which are forbidden for women to see, but no mention is given in respect of rape. Since the author focuses on the women's initialization ritual as major theme, much need to be investigate. For example we may argue whether Tukuna society have men's house and who does most of the work, etc. Nevertheless, although such information was not available I have assumed the fact that Tukuna groups display high degree of equality between the sexes, when compared with the previous cases. The facts presented by the author while describing the women's ceremony seem to indicate that such is the case.

To finalize, it is important to note that any attempt of cross-cultural comparisons between different Amazonian societies involve some uncertainties. First, ethnographic work among the many different case studies was done within considerable time discrepancies from one case to another. Since Amazonian societies were affected (and have still been affected) by external Brazilian influence in different degrees according to time and location, it seems difficult to compare data with some accuracy. Likewise, conceptual variables as women's participation in social life, degree of hostility, and women's status, for instance, were defined with unequal emphases among different authors' analysis. To give an example, while Jackson emphasizes women's work status in the description of Tukanoan society, Lewis is more concern with the relative ceremonial restrictions for women as indicative of gender status, in his analysis of the Shavante culture. I would feel compelled, for instance, to associate different levels of women's status with the degree of their participation in daily life, and then to link it with different levels of violence against women and patterns of rape. But considering these difficulties the scope of this essay was mostly limited in describing, explaining, and classifying different broad categories of rape among different communities[12].

Nonetheless, within a particular category of rape I have made some suggestions to compare and contrast different patterns in gender relationships. In addition, by analyzing each culture as a complex whole, I have made some attempts to assess conflict, opposition, and contradictions in women/men interrelationships, drafting upon the theoretical considerations outlined in part I. In general, the results showed that despite what seems to be a universal tendency for male dominance (or a universal male necessity to dominate women) the patterns of dominance vary from culture to culture in virtually all aspects of female/male relationships. While an extensive analysis of these aspects was not made here, some could be logically associated, in each particular case, with variations in the dynamics of rape.

Overall, this article suggests that rape (on its diverse forms or even the nonexistence of rape) can serve as an index to assess the different degrees on the nature of conflictual relationships between the sexes. Further investigations of this nature, would provide, I believe, valuable insights to the dialectics of gender in our modern society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARMSTRONG, A. *Women and Rape in Zimbabwe,* Maseru, Lesotho: Epic Printers, 1990.

BROWNMILLER, Susan. *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape,* New York: Ballantine Books, 1993.

CHAGON, Napoleon. *Yanomamö: The Last Day of Eden,* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1992.

CRAIB, Ian *Psychoanalysis and Social Theory: The Limits of Sociology,* Amherst: The university of Massachusetts Press, 1990.

GREGOR, Thomas. *Anxious Pleasures: The sexual Lifes of an Amazonian People,* The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1985.

JACKSON, Jean E. *The Fish People: Linguistic Exogamy and Tukanoan Identity in Northwest Amazonia,* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983p. 100-120.

LEWIS, Maybury. *Akwe-Shavante Society,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1967.

LINCOLN, Bruce. *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1981

MEREDITH, Thomas C. "Environmental Impact Assessment, Cultural Diversity, and Sustainable Rural Development" in *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 1992, New York: Elsevier Science Publishing Co., Inc.: 1992. vol. 12, No. 1/2, March/June.

MURPHY, Yolanda and Murphy, Robert F. *Women of the Forest*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

RANDOLPH, Richard R., Schneider, David M., and Diaz, May N. (editors), *Dialectics and Gender: Anthropological Approaches*, London: Westview Press, 1988.

SANDAY, P. Reeves " Rape and the Silencing of the Feminine", in *Rape: An Historical and Social Enquiry*, Sylvania Tommasselli and Roy Porter (editors), NY: Basil Blackevell, 1986.

STACY, M., and Price, M. *Women Power and Politics*, London: Travistock, 1981:3

WAGLEY, Charles "The Tragedy of the Brazilian Indians." Chapter 8 in *Welcome of Tears: The Tapirapé Indians of Central Brazil*, Waveland Press, 1983p. 272-304.

WHYTE, Martin King *The Status of Women in Preindustrial Societies*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and New Jersey, 1978.