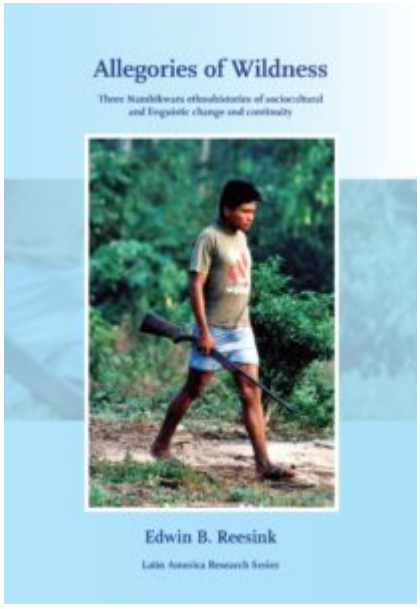
Allegories Of Wildness ~ The String Of Events



Before and after Rondon

The common impression of Rondon is of an intrepid man who explored the pristine wilderness and made contact with unknown wild Indians. An image, that is, of someone with a penchant and talent to subdue wildness in its diverse modes. The reality though may not be so simple, the Nambikwara congeries and other indigenous peoples inhabiting the southern fringe of the Amazon basin had a long history of previous contacts. The Latundê played a role in the fabric of the Northern Nambikwara cluster before retreating into *isolation*, living on the edge of a region of rapidly changing peoples and places. At some time they separated from the main body of the Northern Nambikwara peoples, and more specifically from the Lakondê, most likely a consequence of the construction of the Telegraph Line lead by Rondon. It is unclear whether they or Indians from another related component of the Northern cluster ever had peaceful contact with the Whites before Rondon. The occupation of areas in Rondônia and the documented rubber gatherers' penetration from rivers throughout the region north of the Nambikwara do Campo, preceding and coinciding with the Mission, certainly do indicate the possibility that the Northern Nambikwara and the Sabanê were affected by the movements of the rubber frontier. In contrast with previous possible historical relations, Rondon and his Mission accomplished two major feats. They crossed the heartland of the Northern Nambikwara peoples, established a fixed occupation and made contact with numerous Nambikwara villages. In this sense, Rondon's efforts represent the first real *contact*. He constructed base camps and extended the Telegraph Line right through the middle of the northern territory. This represented the materialization of the Brazilian state's claim to the land. It would not be for several more years that the Sabanê, Lakondê and other members of the cluster would learn about the State, the *nation* and its claims that Rondon and his *achievements* exemplified. The Indians reinterpreted their understanding of Rondon in light of the newly created social space of intersocietal interaction and

interethnic situations. In this manner Rondon assumes an importance from the external point of view of Nambikwara history and a salient significance in the Sabanê and Nambikwara interpretation of the *Whites* and their own conception of the same history. As a central figure in these chronicles, it is worthwhile to examine Rondon carefully.

Rondon's heroic image relates to his famous mission to construct the Telegraph Line from Cuiabá into the Amazon in order to *integrate* Amazonia into the national framework envisioned by the recently constituted Republic of Brazil. Rondon seems to have fully adhered to the military ideology and the justification of their intervention. The aim of the republic and the military was to extend the authority of the nation, in effect seen as the *benign and civilizing* power of the state, to all its borders and to include all major regions of the country within the reach of the central government. Several efforts were made. During the previous successful construction of a Telegraph Line within the state of Mato Grosso, Rondon participated and made friends with some of the employees, a group of Bororo Indians. Here Rondon learned his way around and later proved perfectly suited for the task of leading this major project of geopolitical state building. Rondon, then a major, was a native of Mato Grosso. He came from a rural background, and was a qualified engineer. Ideologically a firm positivist, Rondon was dedicated to the country's *progress*. His abilities and skills made him the most suitable candidate to lead what became known as *The Rondon Commission*. Although the characteristically lengthy and cumbersome official title did not feature his name, it was also commonly referred to as *The Rondon Mission*. The use of the word *mission* in this name may have given participants a religious analogy to their project and helped put this political mission on par with those of religious missionaries, who were usually in the front lines of the conquest and sociopolitical domination of Indian peoples. As if they too found themselves on a kind of sacred mission.

It is not coincidental that Rondon was a member of an offshoot of the Positivist Church founded by August Comte, a man who claimed that this church represented the highest form of the religion. When away on the mission in the wilderness of the Northern Nambikwara region Rondon did not forget the festivities on the anniversary of the death of Comte, a man who Rondon regarded as "*humanity's greatest philosopher*". He recommended that his wife and family be his representatives at the commemoration that took place at Brazil's previous

capital, Rio de Janeiro (n.d.: 247). Known widely as a frontiersman, Rondon adhered wholeheartedly to a prominent group in the army that embraced the western ideology concerning progress and what can only be described as a totalizing reductionist evolutionary scheme of the history and future of mankind. In this philosophy, the idea of *backward tribes* occupied a legitimate but inferior place. Rondon is remembered for his *humane treatment* and a certain respect for the Indians he encountered. By examining the available literature, this seems a fair judgement and one that is perpetuated in the Brazilian hero cult dedicated to the great explorer and protector of *our Indians*[i]. In one famed incident, Rondon was hit by an Indian's arrow and had to restrain his companions from taking immediate revenge. As he surely would have died had it not been for the bandoleer that he wore across his chest, it is clear that he lived by the belief that made him legendary, *die if necessary, but never kill*[ii]. In this respect, he belonged to a strand of the historical European intellectual tradition that recognized the *Indians* as human beings in a country where only a small minority agreed. For example, in the beginning of the nineteenth century the traveler Auguste Saint-Hilaire attempted in vain to convert local Brazilian hosts in the interior of Espírito Santo to accept this point of view. He did not meet with any success because the local population considered these *savage Indians* as *heathens*, and as worthless, ferocious beasts, unfit for any attempt to be *civilized*. They believed that to be a real human being, one must be baptized (a view prevalent even today among Catholics in Recife[iii]). Hypocritically, this understanding contradicts the Catholic idea that the Indians have human souls and should be treated accordingly (Hemming 1995: 136). Saint-Hilaire was a naturalist and Rondon himself was very much inspired by the ideal of being a naturalist. He patronized the scientific aspects of his expeditions, employed scientists and he himself lectured in public and wrote, among other topics, about geography. Both Saint-Hilaire and Rondon shared the *scientific* notion that the Indians are essentially *children* (Saint-Hilaire), that is, perfectible, and so must be capable of being educated in the *higher* forms of an *advanced* society.

Therefore Rondon seems to have held the Indians and their *tribes* – this word itself a by-product of the evolutionary conception of history – in a relatively high regard and certainly felt sincere affection for them. Despite this admiration and respect for the societies and cultures of these peoples and their special competence in various activities inherent in their lived world, the intrinsic superiority of Western *civilization* is not a topic open for discussion. Yet, in light

of Rondon's humble background in the interior and his restraint even when hit by Nambikwara arrows demonstrate that Rondon is indeed both a courageous and just figure firm in his resolve. It can be said that he recognized the humanity of the Indians more than the vast majority of his compatriots, no small feat for someone of his background. But he also believed strongly in the evolutionary scheme of mankind and felt that as human beings are perfectible, the Indians ought to educated by a disinterested tutelage to reach a *higher level of civilization*. Such education involves first and foremost the teaching of *work* as understood to be the disciplined activity of the body engaged in *producing* for others and being involved with the *market*. The idea was to change the basically short-term production and consumption strategies of the Indians into something more similar to the capitalist mode of production[iv]. Indeed, the foreign nature of Indian *economics* (or lack thereof) caused observers to regard what the perceived as idleness, laziness, improvidence or carelessness to be completely askance to a *real work* ethic. Within the Indian peoples, the socially set levels of needs normally were easily met by the existing production levels. Indian villages and peoples remained, consequently, in a state of *unproductive* autonomy with what many outsiders perceived as an "*infuriating indifference to material possessions*" (ib.: 137)[v].

The real issue is what the Indians considered normal productive activities was not the same as what the outsiders thought of as *work*. This underscored the necessity of *education* for a people considered less evolved and justified intervention. This usually forceful interference was sometimes done with the sincere intention of *being for their own good* and hence this was seen as an act of helping these *childlike* peoples who were still in the *infancy of mankind*. This concept of backwardness is still current in Western societies and is almost universally characterized as the *Stone Age*, an expression current in writings relating to the Telegraph Commission. The human beings left in the wake of history need the assistance of those *who know better*. This fundamental and obviously ethnocentric and tempo-centric assumption appears as the undisputed common sense in Rondon's time and, as already evident, remains a constant certitude in even the temporary conceptions of *Indians*. Especially so when seen as *savages* and *uncivilized*. The well-intentioned disposition of granting a human status to "*our Indians*" (Rondon), is evident the Republic's possessive tone. Brazil's positivist national slogan written on the flag, *order and progress*, also implies the *duty* of transforming these *citizens*. *Indians*, currently considered the

first Brazilians – note that such an understanding of history inherently involves the idea of eternal or pre-existing nation-state – must become genuinely useful citizens that participate in the *national life*. For this goal to be reached, the Indians must be *taught* this view. Despite the silence about the arbitrary nature of this symbolic dispossession of political autonomy, it should be obvious that no native people ever realized that the national state considers their territory as part of the *national territory* and its peoples as *national citizens*. This literal and symbolic violence derived from the conception of the nation-state is always passed over under silence and the *right* of political and territorial possession usually is conceived of as an undisputed *naturally* existing *right*. To all compatriots like Rondon the *order* must be imposed in the whole country and then the state must lead the way to *progress*. Although, of course, in this scheme, order is progress and, so as to bring about the new order, the opposite is also true.

In fact, the entire Telegraph Line project can be thought of as a manifestation of the domination and domestication of wild spaces and indigenous peoples. Here, under the auspices of science, the positivist inspiration of the Mission correlated not only with development interests but also with scientific advancement. This is clear in the language used during the expeditions, and the explorers' mention of *new lands* that qualified observers had not yet penetrated. The Mission discussed these issues, especially about the *discovery* of rivers and the delineation of the watersheds and river basins. They effectively turned the penetration of *virgin lands* into an exercise of naming *new rivers* and outlining the network of watercourses which permeate the country. Such geographical questions raised debates among the participant officers and were discussed in detail in Rondon's lectures in the then-capital Rio de Janeiro, where his talks aroused a very interested public. Rondon gave new names to nearly all rivers and streams in the region of Nambikwara occupancy. Rondon even renamed some stagnant small towns and villages to encourage *development*. For example, Rondon is responsible for naming what is currently a large town in the Sararé region, located at the upper Guaporé River – Pontes e Lacerda (Rondon 1922: 26). Rondon usually chose names in honor of significant dates, national republican events, and personal associates. Many of these new names are still in use. Other examples include Rio da Bandeira (Flag), Rio Comemoração (Commemoration), Rio Tenente Marques (formerly the Rio Ananaz – Pineapple River – renamed to honor the sudden death of a participant of the Mission) and Rio da Dúvida (River

of Doubt). The latter is a reference to the doubt concerning into which basin this river drains. This doubt created a sort of geographical controversy cumulating during discussions at the capital and ended up calling the attention of the former U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt with whom Rondon led a joint expedition to clear up the issue[vi]. They mounted the expedition, travelled to the region and descended the river, initially through Northern Nambikwara lands. When they arrived at the lower reaches they discovered that the river was inhabited by rubber tappers who used to come up from the Madeira River. Men there were sure that the river's name was *Castanha*. Characteristically, despite the fact that the regional people already had christened the river, it was renamed and now is known as the Rio Roosevelt.

The history of the incorporation of unknown lands

Under Rondon's guidance and within the premisses of his thought, the Telegraph Line first penetrated into a section of the Paresi territory that was inhabited by a people that spoke an Aruak language and who had long-standing relations with the Nambikwara that populated the eastern border. For a long time these Indians had suffered various national intrusions of diverse nature. Interestingly, this people was considered to be more *civilized* than many of their neighbours because their means of sustenance stressed their horticultural techniques and due to their peaceful reputation. In this sense, they constituted a forceful counterbalance to the Nambikwara, whom many thought to be *uncivilized*, warlike, nomadic and brutish cannibals. This benevolent image turned the Paresi into preferred junior partners in the planned civilizing process. They became major junior collaborators in the civilizing mission to bring *progress* to *less advanced tribes*, the *most primitive* being, of course, their neighbours. It should be noted that the Paresi nicknamed the Nambikwara "*those who sleep on the ground*" and here White and Paresi prejudice and stereotype coincided to condemn Nambikwara backwardness. An Indian people that did not even make or use hammocks, the only exception in the region, surely are the most primitive of all the Indians. Rondon cites this Paresi name with a certain approval[vii]. Lévi-Strauss also reminds his readers that the *Indians*, in general, disregard anyone who is so poor as to not even to possess a hammock. He stresses a kind of material austerity for the Nambikwara. In fact, although a common stereotype regards all Indians as poor and lacking in material culture, all peoples do possess their proper notions about the socially established normal level of material possessions and that what represents wealth. It is probably not arbitrary that, by

a coincidence, both of these men were familiar with the Bororo, an indigenous people of Mato Grosso who placed great importance on ownership of a enormous variety of material culture and for whom the wealth of the corporate matrilineal group consists in the ownership of a diverse array of objects, including myths and rituals[viii].

Rondon published a volume on "*Ethnography*" in the series of publications edited by the *Telegraph Commission* somewhere around 1910[ix]. The volume opens with a description of the Paresi according to the usual evolutionist scheme. Rondon noted the high degree of development of their agriculture and in an attempt to improve the limited cultivation capability of their land, he proposed that they move to richer soil. The Paresi leader Toilori refused the offer. He clearly stated his attachment to his land and indicated the limits of what his people considered their territory, "*where their grandfathers were born, died, hunted, and cultivated crops*" (Rondon 1947: 34). Interestingly, aside from a strong attachment to an ancestral territory, there was the necessity of periodically moving villages owing to poor soil. Nonetheless, Rondon did not take this to be a *nomadic* tendency. Not even when the Paresi relocate for cultural reasons like a number of deaths, and hence for what Rondon would call an irrational reason. Greatly suffering from the encroachment of rubber tappers from the Amazon basin and the forceful recruitment inherent in the rubber exploitation system, this same leader explicitly refused the offer, mentioning that he had no desire to be a rubber collector[x]. Living at the headwaters along the watershed of the Amazonian river basin and at the higher parts of its rivers, the Paresi only partially escaped from the pressure of the rubber system expanding upward from the lower parts of the river that are located in the forests where rubber trees are much more abundant. Many villages suffered from the pressure to give up their lands and join the system, than at its zenith. Another such group of people were the neighboring Nambikwara do Campo who, despite the same scarcity of rubber trees of the Parecis plateau, also suffered attacks by rubber tappers. Fortunately, their resistance to compromise and a greater mobility earned them a brutal reputation that may have protected them (at least in part) from further encroachment. Ferociousness was, in this constellation of images mediated by the notion of undomesticated wildness, equated with cannibalism; and so the Nambikwara were thought of as a particularly wild people close to untamed nature.

Rondon, naturally, did not abandon his plans to help the Paresi come closer to civilization. According to Machado, an expert on the Paresi's relation with Rondon, the Paresi are prominent in the Rondon's conception of the Indian and his decision to act in their favor (Machado 1998:253). Rondon represented the *Federal Government* to the Paresi and he called them to his aid in his *discoveries* in order to carry out the state's firm demand *to populate this immense hinterland* and regain the *primitive splendour* of the Paresi from before the enormous decline of this *populous and wealthy great nation*. Accordingly, he created great scenes demonstrating both the generosity of the government and of himself as its representative. Once during a sort of inter-village potlatch, Rondon made a great show of the distribution of the usual commodities to people from various localities and of different group affiliations. To stamp the most vivid impression upon their *naive spirits* with the *power and greatness* of the government, this military man dressed in his most regal uniform. This impression management (as called by Goffman) thus established him as the embodiment of the abstract and distant government from Rio de Janeiro, the very city that was his home base where his family lived. Personifying the state with an elaborate external signs entails a conscious construction that coincides with the image he projected towards national society. This personal trajectory successfully transformed his personage into a national hero. By promising easy access to outside commodities, either by the redistribution that he employed to gain the Indian's confidence and cooperation, or as rewards for labor engagements, the Commission unquestionably needed to succeed, Rondon achieved the same effect among the Paresi. Consequently, the Indians assigned him the role of a exalted and generous chief, as it was through him that goods were redistributed. This sentiment arose amongst a people who were already dependent on outside goods, and either subjected to the exploitative rubber regime or to the collecting of ipecac; accordingly relations with Rondon entailed a great relief from the direct and sometimes violent domination imposed on them (see Machado 1998: 253-60). Thus, Rondon managed to fabricate being a hero among the Indians as well.

Rondon despised the violence inflicted on the Indians and considered the total system of the rubber market, from the low price fetched by produce to the high cost of commodities, to be unjust and exploitative. In fact, he claimed that he paid his laborers the same as he did the *national laborers*. The employment of the *docile Paresi* demonstrates both the use of *education* and the transformation of the Indian into a manual laborer. This docility is obviously another stereotype,

although overall, it may contain a kernel of truth. Mainly, it may have arisen out of this paternalistic hero image and the concomitant generous favors granted, and the fairer treatment they received compared to the disparaging and unfair *contact* to which most of the Paresi were subjected[xi]. Docility apparently is equated with domestication and acceptance of domination. The Mission consequently gained a reliable labor force, Indians were responsible for various aspects of the construction of the Telegraph Line and they were indispensable guides through the *unexplored* Nambikwara lands. The Commission built a boarding school for regional Indian students. Initially this was based in the Paresi heartland, later it was moved to Utiarity, closer to the Nambikwara. Some students (including six orphans from Vilhena) learned the morse alphabet and worked on the telegraph, while others were soldiers and even trumpet players who knew how to play the military commands and the national anthem. Consequently, an Indian could sound the command to stand at attention and play the national hymn when Rondon arrived at his station during one of his later tours of excursion through the region. This purpose of education was to inspire a firm national sentiment jointly with new capabilities and social customs. Being a positivist, Rondon did not support the religious missions. He competed with them directly for control over the role of mediator and *fraternal protection*. The Paresi hence actualized this project of *protection without direction* (in the words of Roquette-Pinto [1919]), letting progress take its *natural* course. They became Rondon's *dedicated, submissive* [sic] *and very loyal friends,* ideal laborers for the conquest of the wilderness along with its *savage* inhabitants (apud Machado 1998: 247; 265). They were an ideal example for the 1910 political campaign to make the Indians wards of the state under the auspices of the new agency *Serviço de Proteção aos Índios e Localização de Trabalhadores Nacionais (*"Service for the Protection of the Indians and the Localization of National Laborers"). Interestingly, the task of this agency differs from pure *protection* to Indians as it also supported colonization in favor of the settlement of national agricultural workers. The latter idea was abandoned eight years later[xii].

The labor force participated in a variety of activities undertaken by the Mission. The Indians' own participation in the Mission ranged from their determination to move villages or groups to telegraph stations, to individual or family movements along the route of the Telegraph Line. The Commission itself cared for orphans of epidemics and, in time, was involved with not only arranging but even determining marriages for Indians directly under its influence (Machado 1998:

287). The type of commitment from the dominated Indians themselves stemmed from more than an alleviation of oppression. These Indians developed a sense of being *Rondon's Indians* and being *civilized Indians*. On one occasion Rondon participated in an inter-village feast meant to promote harmony between close and distant kin. It was during this time that the image of Rondon was firmly established as a chief of the Whites who supported traditional leaders and genuinely appreciated the native culture and the Paresi language. The Paresi recognized the builder of the first house of a village as the *owner of the place*, the natural local leadership, but also acknowledged a few major leaders with authority over more than one village. Rondon reinforced this authority by means of the redistribution of goods through these headmen. Perhaps after using his power to resettle whole villages to the Posts he had founded, Rondon already came to be seen as a chief of chiefs[xiii]. In separating Indian territory from White lands and renaming all rivers and various places, he acted as the mythological hero of the Paresi that named the whole region and allocated the different segments to their respective territories. Hence, by renaming and in a way resettling the lands Rondon replicated the original process of occupation by the Indian peoples and he, probably unknowingly, played the role of master of renewal of the placement of the Paresi in the cosmos (cf. Machado 1998). One of the Indians who served Rondon (self-proclaimed *Indian of Rondon*) was reported to have said: "*That one is our chief* (…) *He is correcting the world!*" (Machado 1998: 272). Apparently, these Indians believed that one who imposes order on the land and the people reinstates the world. Perhaps one could say, master of a way of worldmaking (Goodman 1978).

When the Paresi chief, Toloiri, unexpectedly died, Rondon lamented the lost opportunity to propel *progress* through this collaborator. The death was a serious setback to Rondon's grand plans and to the *"speed and profoundness of the desired transformation*" of the Paresi people (Rondon 1922: 48). Toloiri belonged to the Paresi group sometimes referred to as *Cabixi*. This group was generally regarded by the other Paresi segments as uncivilized. They may have been confused with the *savage* Southern Nambikwara groups believed to be responsible for the persistent long term attacks on the former capital of Mato Grosso, Vila Bela (a city on the Guaporé River, near the Bolivian frontier). Hence the name *Kabixí* both in and out of the Paresi group refered to the least civilized and most savage group. The man whom Rondon called a *chief* was the only one of this southern Paresi group to be incorporated as a guide in Rondon's Mission[xiv].

Ironically, only after Toloiri's death did Rondon honor him by giving his name to one the smaller streams deep within the Nambikwara territories. The Tolori river currently marks the border of the Pyrineus de Souza Indian Territory, near the city of Vilhena (Rondon n.d.: 195; today the name is pronounced Tolori). As a result, one of the only Paresi geographical names is an homage to a dead chief engaged by the Mission and is nowhere near his home territory: Rondon usually knew the Paresi names of geographical occurrences but never adopted them for national usage, always choosing a Brazilian name. The Northern Nambikwara region even includes features with his daughter's names. In naming these lands, Rondon was essentially claiming them for his country. The nation-state required *undiscovered lands* to receive *proper names* as part of the nationalization process. On one occasion Rondon received explicit orders in naming locales. Owing to the sensitive international character of the expedition with Roosevelt, and in compliance with the government resolution, as communicated by the minister of Foreign Affairs, Rondon was told "(…) *to perpetuate on the map of Brazil the memory of the voyage of geographical discoveries*" (Rondon 1916: 75-6). The renaming of the River of Doubt as Roosevelt River could be said to represent the official government policy of imprinting the national mark on the land and transforming geographical landmarks into the distinguishing features of the Republic.

The less contacted Southern Paresi maintained relations with the Nambikwara of the Guaporé valley. Some Southern Paresi even learned the language of this Nambikwara cluster. A *brother* of Toloiri spoke the Nambikwara language (Rondon 1922: 43). At this time, the other Paresi also used the term *Cabixi* pejoratively for both these Paresi and Nambikwara, placing their kin on the same low level as their despicable neighbors. However, Rondon and Roquette-Pinto (see, for example, 1913: 382) preferred to restrict the name *Cabixi* to the Nambikwara. This name identified them as the assailants of the Vila Bela inhabitants (the locally called Cabixi). This is presumably because this leaves only notorious *savages* as the culprits and saves face for the Paresi[xv]. Both authors presented a possible redefinition of the reference implied by the name of an *Indian tribe* as the mere finding out of the truth, again playing down the political and social consequences of naming. Rondon knew very well that the names of Indian peoples represent labels assigned by the Brazilians who came into contact with them. Rondon wrote that the name *Nambikwara* has its source in backlanders and has been in circulation for a long time. As for the name Paresi,

he explains that it is what the explorers understood to be the proper name of the Paresi for themselves. Rondon also remarks that almost all peoples have their own auto-denomination. He relates, however, that the contacts with what he called *Nhambiquara* have not been successful in discovering what this name for themselves might be.

With the fundamental aid of Paresi guides and laborers, the Mission first penetrated the Paresi heartlands and later the territory of the Nambikwara do Campo. The glamour of penetrating *new lands* and ensuing encounters with indigenous peoples enlivened this monotonous advance. In stark contrast with the *peaceful* Paresi, the penetration of Nambikwara territories caused anxiety and tension. But there was also the thrill of *serving the Republic* and extending the State's authority over *untamed* populations, expanding the economic potential of the nation. During this historical time, national curiosity stimulated Rondon to publish ethnographic details about the Nambikwara. He started the chapter emphasizing the fame of this people in the beginning of the century: "*Among the savage populations of Brazil none have recently aroused more attention than the Nhambiquára or Nambiquara tribe that lives in the extreme north of the state of Mato Grosso*" (Rondon 1947: 45). This is the first time the Nambikwara gained a fame they did not procure. It is unclear why Rondon decided to adopt the spelling with an "h" instead of the simpler Nambiquara (Price 1989b: 195). Apparently, he wanted to maintain the previous century's spelling as cited in the work of the German Karl Von den Steinen. Von den Steinen based his information on the reports of the state agency then dealing with the Indians. In this publication, Rondon demonstrated a penchant for ethnography. He copied the model of both current scientists and predecessors like Von den Steinen. This project, however, was not to be done in the same way that foreign investigators proceeded but carried out in the service of the republic, like the hagiographic articles in a journal of the capital in 1915 clearly show. Instead of collecting *exotic objects* there was to be "(…) *an attempt to construct an image of the nhambiquara people detailed enough to permit one to know how, when, and in what sense one would have to act to be agreeable to them, to obtain a mode of expression more suitable to their mentality, to the state of their soul, and to the intentions that their discoverer and protector held towards them*" (Missão Rondon 1916: 134; the book is based on a series of articles in the journal that seems to copy parts of the Mission's reports; no author is cited but the writer is thought to be Buena Horta Barbosa, the brother of participants in the Mission, Lima 1990: 19). The

investigation of what the *discoverer* also describes as the unknown *ethnic conditions* of the Nambikwara clearly aims at the loftier purpose of ethnographic knowledge subordinated to the *discoverer's* exalted intentions of *pacification* (under his *protection*) and subsequent *improvement* of this people (his *intentions*). The quest was for useful knowledge that could further serve the nation, not just the sterile collection of material objects[xvi].

It is probably not arbitrary that the ethnographic style after the initial conclusion regarding the absence of any real historic information begins with giving the coordinates where the expedition first encountered Nambikwara, where Rondon was first attacked and then relates the making of contact by the worker in charge of the Campos Novos Station (the Nambikwara do Campo; Rondon 1947: 46-8). This contact proceeded quite slowly in 1910, and the information obtained is rather restricted to directly observable phenomena like ornaments, sleeping on the ground, and bodily features. The employee in charge and an army officer succeeded in annotating a very small vocabulary in two different places with two different dialects. This is exactly the information presented by Roquette-Pinto (1913) at the Congress of Americanists in London in 1912. Notably, the ethnography on the Paresi contains more information than the one regarding the Nambikwara. Rondon himself reminds the reader of the severe limitations of his notes. Contrary to what is asserted in *Missão Rondon*, a version of the same work that was specifically geared towards the general populace, his ethnography remains rather subordinated to his practical objectives of the efficient construction of the telegraphic line. What Rondon did accomplish, in contrast to this otherwise meager knowledge, relates to the Nambikwara's reputation. Previously, a people thought of as the wildest savages could only be feared as cannibals (Missão Rondon 1916: 136). In Brazilian imagery, the primitive savage fierceness is associated with this practice, iconic of the basest level of civilization or, more aptly, barbarity. Consequently, Rondon searched through the remainders of food refuse in *many villages* in order to examine the bones. This inquiry found no evidence of cannibalism (ib.: 145). The verdict of, one might say, *primitive but not anthropophagic*, raised the Nambikwara to a higher level of civilization and they gained a slightly higher regard for their lifestyle.

Rondon's account of the adventures during the Mission gives the impression that he felt both respect and admiration for the Nambikwara's valiant resistance to the invasion of their lands, although he never abandons the predicate of

primitiveness. In one incident on the savanna "*a cabocla*" – a polysemic Tupi word meaning a copper-colored person of at least some Indian ascendancy, but it can also refer to an Amazonian Indian, or even a *civilized* Indian – shot an arrow which hurt someone on the expedition. This astonished the members of the Mission. Embarrassingly for the wounded man Brazilian's masculine pride, he was struck by a woman (Missão Rondon 1916: 141). Incidentally, this shows that there have been other groups aside from the Latundê, where women used a bow and arrow prior to contact. Apparently then, this phenomenon is not necessarily an act of desperation on the part of a group. Another incident (mentioned earlier) had a strong initial affect on the Brazilian image of Rondon. Despite nearly being shot in the neck, Rondon refused to retaliate or permit any action against the Indians (see Rondon 1922: 26). This attitude denotes what is known as the *peaceful embrace* that was used in the conquest of Brazil's interior. An embrace that actually rather denotes the pressure of a relentless envelopment, containment and encapsulation that the encircled Indians must have felt (that is, not unlike the more general enclosure movement of lands in the interior). The event certainly aided in the fabrication of the image of a *hero*. It is no surprise that this event is always cited as the prime example of Rondon's compliance with his own dictum and a major noble feat responsible for his legendary status (see the short biography of Rondon by Bigio, 2000: 45)[xvii]. This story and similar variants appear even in international summaries of Rondon's life. It is well known that arrows actually hit him and some of the equipment that he wore bore the impact mark made by the most perilous one (Hemming 1995: 445)[xviii].

In the first years of the Mission, the Telegraph Line penetrated further into Nambikwara territories each dry season. Finally, they reached the Serra do Norte (the northern mountain range). Despite the name, the Serra do Norte is not actually a mountain range. It was optimistically labeled this way in the hope that it could be the legendary gold-rich mines (known as *the lost mines of Urucumacuan*) mentioned in historical texts. They were rumored to be located somewhere in eastern Rondônia, anywhere from Vilhena onwards into the current state, and other rumors about finding appeared once and while in reports and publications. Coincidentally, this area comprises the Northern Nambikwara's region and includes several of the rivers and streams of their homeland. In 1913, impressed by the rumors, Roosevelt suggested that gold mining could be a major incentive that might spur the occupation and development of the whole Nambikwara region. He went on to declare that the entire region awaited a great

future in agriculture and cattle raising (Roosevelt 1914: 203); see Rondon (1922: 66) for the Commission report). The change in landscape, vegetation and climate from the savanna highlands of the Parecis Plateau made a strong impression on the members of the Mission. Each journey had its difficulties. Rondon told Roosevelt that he named the Ananaz (pineapple) River after the deserted Indian pineapple field that fed the famished explorers when they reached the river (ib.: 175). In effect, as the exploration crossed the Nambikwara do Campo territory, there were frequent accounts of the size, quality and variety of their fields (raising food crops like the staples maize and manioc, and even various types of potatoes)[xix]. Apparently, these fields had a relatively abundant yield. In 1908, the Mission encountered a village sighted before and abandoned before the explorers entered: a *vast clean plaza*, around which were built one big house and three smaller ones; an area planted with two fruit trees was nearby; one field in fallow a little farther and beyond that quite a large field *testified to the tenacity of these people*. Rondon noted that the original vegetation was cleared better than that of the civilized neighbors. It was *very well done*, well cleared, effectively burnt and trimmed afterwards (Rondon 1922: 33)[xx].

Rondon follows the Paresi in distinguishing two different groups of Nambikwara, one of them being more *warlike* and intractable, the other less so. Thus, Rondon recognized some differences between the *groups* or *tribes* of the great *Nambikwara Nation*. When penetrating the north one of the officers met, by chance, a woman carrying foodstuffs and a child. He established the first contact, which was reported to be very friendly. Thus, Rondon postulates the second group has *lighter customs* and is more peaceful then the Plateau groups. Rondon attributes this difference to the state of war between rubber gatherers and Indians (to which he also attributes the presence of some metal tools, like axes and machetes among the latter). Past the savanna, around Vilhena (already outside of the Tapajos basin), the region is made of a denser forest with a number of small brooks that constitute the headwaters of several rivers that ultimately run into the Madeira River. It is probable that because of the smallish rivers and the presence of rapids the Northern Nambikwara had avoided serious invasions previous to the occupation occasioned by the Commission. To the north, there lives a number of warlike Tupi Mondé peoples. These peoples also helped deter access from adventurers traveling upriver. In this forested region, the Commission was glad to find several open grassy areas where the mules and oxen found something to eat. According to Rondon and other members, these open,

savanna-like areas are the result of the continual Indian practice of occasionally putting fire to the land in order to *clean* it of the vegetation, resulting in permanent *campos* (savanna). This corresponds with the general Nambikwara preference for villages built in open areas and their inclination to inhabit savannas. Owing to these open lands, Rondon decided to change the itinerary of the Telegraph Line to use these pastures as ideal places both line itself and for the telegraph stations and the government cattle farm of Três Buritis. The latter constructions could offer support for mule trains and personnel movements along the Telegraph Line. If so, the Telegraph Line competed with the ecological spaces created by the Northern Nambikwara themselves and hence appropriated a most appreciated part of their ecosystem.

Within this region the expedition found diverse remains that the people left behind in their hasty departure. These objects represent a cross section of the culture of these people. Items found include fire sticks, stone axes, a gourd with a fermented drink, a dead wild pig, head covers made of monkey pelts and tucum strings, a roasted wild potato, urucu seeds, pieces of manioc cakes, several types of arrows, two parakeets under a woven basket, a small pestle, and a ceramic cooking vessel. Overall an interesting and *very rich ethnographic collection* that was left untouched out of respect to the Indians. To assure that no one meddled with any of these objects, Rondon posted a guard while the expedition's main body (the civil labourers) passed the spot[xxi]. The objects catalogued clearly demonstrated the village's impressive ability as cultivators and hunters. Later, the expedition came across another uninhabited village. This one had several conic houses that formed a triangle around a plaza. The occupants had planted banana, pineapple, *araruta* (a type of potato), cotton and the remains of the maize already collected from the stalks. Note the indigenous presence of cotton and ceramics. Interestingly Rondon does not point out the fact that the banana trees imply either some kind of direct contact with the Brazilians or long distance trading between Indian groups that passed this imported crop to this remote area. So although this place was indeed very distant, *history* already had caught up with these *isolated* Indians. The unique conic form of the houses fascinated Rondon. He attributed this distinctive shape to the influence of runaway slaves who founded a maroon village to the south in Guaporé Valley (these slaves were fleeing from Vila Bela and mining villages; see Part III). This was a relatively popular theory and reappears in his later writings (Rondon 1922: 64). In this sense, he did propose to keep open the possibility of an incomplete isolation even

though this contrasted with the key propaganda about the expedition and its explicit goal, namely, the exploration of the *unknown* – unknown *wilderness* and unknown *wildness*.

It is noteworthy that, after this speculation about the origin of the distinctive houses, there follows a description regarding the refuse of the bones of many fish, wild pigs, and tapir. This was yet more proof of the sound ecological adaptation and a tribute to the quality of the hunters and to the variety of the game. Rondon, however, asserted this find to be perhaps the most original *from the viewpoint of indigenous archaeology* of the whole expedition, and possibly of the last few years in general (ib.: 64). Archaeology places these objects in the past when he actually discusses a village given as uninhabited but not abandoned (as the nearby fields prove). It may well have been evacuated soon before the invader's advance, out of fear. However, by using this classification Rondon demotes the inhabitants to the past and so conceives ethnography as the potential archaeology of the future. The fact remains that the region was populated enough to afford these chance encounters. A richer habitat and a relatively dense population challenged the Mission to elaborate a notion of the future for this region within the premises set by the ideology of progress. The report highlights the value of the *incalculable richness* of the land. The supposed economic advantages of the region range from the rich alluvial layers full of gold and diamonds to the *inexhaustible* forest products and the *very fertile soil*, ideal for agriculture. Simply put, the symbolic value of being a part of the Republic appeals to economic values and the sentiment of belonging. Both of these dimensions, of course, imply no change in the tendency to expropriate land and wealth from the indigenous inhabitants as a naturalized and unreasoned practice. The symbolic value motivated an elaborate Independence Day ceremony; the national anthem was played on the expedition's phonograph, the flag was raised, compliments were paid to the leader at his barrack and the order of day discussed the great services of José Bonifácio to the country and its independence. José Bonifácio entertained notions about the education of the apathetic savages and their perfectibility as human beings whom could be incorporated within *civilization* as wards of the state, a line of thinking strikingly similar to that of the positivists. Rondon named the future telegraph station in the region after this *patron*. Furthermore, this same statesman thought the lazy Indians needed little in life and could get along without strong desires for private property, the vanity of social distinction, or the desire for commodities of civilized man. Thus, he believed, that the Indians should be given presents that

both encourage these social motives and impress them with the technological might of civilization (see Erthal apud Machado 1998:266-8). It is no coincidence that Rondon published a picture of his phonograph playing in a Nambikwara hut[xxii].

The story of the hardships involved with crossing the Northern Nambikwara region and going on to the Madeira River are preceded by the heroic example of Columbus and the reference to "(…) *our beautiful pavilion* [with the flag] *fluctuating serenely in Brazilian lands, to remind us that our beloved fatherland would never abandon us, and from all sides she extended to us her loving motherly arms*" [fatherland is feminine in Portuguese] (Rondon 1922: 67). The patriotic rhetoric couched in a familial and paternalistic idiom may have influenced Rondon's fellow officers and some of the civilian recruited men. The Republic was seen as the superior and caring parent of dependent children. Those civilians, however, did not always share Rondon's enthusiasm. An enlisted Paresi Indian recounted that the workers of the civilian camp, separated at a considerable distance from the officer's tents, schemed to kill Rondon. Thankfully for Rondon, the rumor reached the military and a rebellion was prevented. Note that the set up and infrastructure of the camps and the tents thoroughly maintained class and social distinctions (Machado 1998: 283-5). At the end of a particularly difficult expedition, Rondon praised the men he journeyed with as admirable backwoodsmen with muscles stronger than steel without whom the expedition would have failed (Rondon 1922: 68). Other comments asserted that these men were in desperate need of a civilizing education. Clearly, the same kind of condescending attitude prevailed towards the common *sertanejos*, people very good at physical labor in service of the enlightened superior officers, but simultaneously in need of a cultural enrichment to escape their primitive customs. Admiration of physical body and strength was associated with the rejection of the same men's sociocultural background. This brings to mind the famous positivist intellectual and fellow military Euclides da Cunha whose book was a model to Rondon, as is evident in his description of the landscape and nature. Euclides da Cunha writes that the *race* which populates the country's interior in the Northeast was mixed and yet in some respects outstanding: "*before anything else, the sertanejo is a strong man*." [xxiii]

The bodies of both sertanejos and Indians needed the guiding hand of the superior civilized minds; the same Service (SPI) could thus take care of them. In

this way, resuming the major results of the three years of expedition in his public lectures, Rondon confirmed the notions of the superiority of the coastal cities on the Atlantic seaboard over the deep interior, though such a notion was already accepted in the capital. Rondon asserted that: "*We, the descendants of the conquerors of these lands, really can do very much to benefit the inhabitants of these interiors; however in that environment they are better prepared than all of us as they already adapted their organism, and are of inestimable service to us. It is a simple question of the combination of efforts without any evident preoccupation of transforming civilizations, habits, or customs* [like the services rendered by the Bororo and the Paresi at the service of the Telegraph Line s]. *The inhabitants of the Campos Novos of the Serra do Norte, a docile and intelligent people, probably closely related to the Uaicoarcorês or Nhambiquaras (of the large group of Gé) also already provide us with valuable assistance at the construction of huts, and the opening up of fields and camps*" (Rondon 1922: 80). At least in the heart of this city and its capital public Rondon identified himself completely with the listening elite, the conquest and the *conquerors*, and not at all with the conquered, contrary to what one might suspect given his renowned partial Indian ancestry so focal in his hagiography. A partial Indian ancestry is still a minor share of a predominantly *White* make up. The quality of a remote Indian ancestry by this time was an even fashionable higher-class feature[xxiv]. In his text, after exempting the savages from the charge of anthropophagy and reminding them of the long list of violent incidents during the penetration of their lands, Rondon commemorated on the success of the visits of the Indians to the camps. Describing the current fraternizing he finished his thoughts on the racial future: "*And as they belong to an intrepid and tenacious race, the men being robust, tall and handsome, their incorporation into the Brazilian population can only be advantageous to the physical improvement of the latter*" (Rondon 1922: 81). Quite in accordance with the intellectual agenda of the day and its worry about the future of the mixed Brazilian people, the future of the Nambikwara *race* is to dissolve and improve the general stock. Under superior guidance and with formal education they may contribute to the *evolution* of Brazil. Remarkably, this future resembles closely the ancestry and personal trajectory of Rondon himself.

Expeditions in Northern Nambikwara territory

A few years later, when the Indian Service was institutionalized and under his command, Rondon organized the famous expedition with Roosevelt (in accordance with the allure of the unknown and the fame of exotic *exploration*). A

year after the *scientific expedition*, he gave another series of lectures, again in the capital Rio de Janeiro. Both men held a lot of discussions and Rondon did not pass the opportunity to point out some of their convergent views. Thus both agreed on the necessity of the Indians to be allotted to the state as "(…) *pupils of the nation during the time they do not attain the level of civilization that permits them to amalgamate themselves with the rest of the population and be absorbed by it*". The ex-president also approved of the republican model of action put into practice in the intervening years "(…) *to resolve, amongst us, the great problem, sharply formulated by José Bonifacio, of the establishment of the ethnic unity of the Brazilian people*" (both citations Rondon 1916: 44). The ethnic unity, in this idiom, means the assimilation of the Indians and their racial and cultural disappearance as distinct peoples into a Brazilian melting pot. In another aspect though, the situation between the two countries differed. According to the very magnanimous picture painted by Roosevelt, his nation reserved lands as the right to property of the *Indian tribes* and indemnified them with compensations in case of loss or removal *in the public interest*. In Brazil, Rondon notes indignantly that the question of land allocation to Indians differs considerably. The land registers in the towns are already full of land deeds and property rights claiming lands where no civilized man ever even set foot. On paper the territories of Indian peoples are carved up by these *titles* long before any *owner* ever visited or could present a claim based on real presence on *his land*. If the so-called proprietors following their personal interests should claim these *rights* and take actual possession of the land, by a *monstrous inversion of the facts* the Indians would be treated as if they were *invaders* and *thieves* (Rondon 1916: 44-5). True enough, although the counterpoint with the Northern hemisphere is a distorted picture and in actuality both situations reveal strong analogies in conceptions and actions[xxv].

Land was a real, continuous and conscientious preoccupation of Rondon that found its way into the policy of the Service to create Indian reservations when the legal opportunity arose. Before such action, the Commission applied for land grants for its own benefit and use around its telegraph stations. That is, to benefit Posts like those at Utiarity and José Bonifácio to the north, right in the heart of the Northern Nambikwara territory. The Service's record for the formalization of Indian land possessions and the associated realization of a land-base for the various Indian peoples themselves is a relatively poor one (Lima 1995). In conformity with his ideas of respectful but, in effect, subordinated humane

integration within the *Brazilian territory*, Rondon succeeded in making contact with the Northern Nambikwara when visiting the ranch already established at Três Buritis. He stayed during one of these efforts by the Commission to support the Telegraph Line with locally produced food and work animals, a subsistence base to decrease the demand for goods and diminish the need for long supply lines. Between the first expedition in 1909 and the passage at the end of 1912, the Rondon Commission set up a ranch at this place, near José Bonifácio. The local people engaged in the establishment and production turned the enterprise into a relatively large business in the middle of Northern Nambikwara lands. If the Commission petitioned for land around the Posts and included this sort of own managerial productive activities, no apparent concern over land rights of the traditional inhabitants occured at this point. At least in the beginning of the establishment of the Telegraph Line and its concomitant supporting activities these took precedence over any other concern Rondon might have had about land rights. He conceived the inhabitants as *Brazilians* also to be beneficiaries of the *improvements* implemented and the very example of the success of the ranch as the future for the *Indians* (as employees or peasant-like occupants). Sovereignty could never lie with the uncivilized subalterns to be incorporated into the benevolent civilized state, and in the process the proletarianized or 'peasantified' *Indians* would supposedly require much less land.

When Rondon reported on the *Roosevelt-Rondon Scientific Expedition*, he did not elaborate on the previous expedition through the Southern Nambikwara lands. He does remark on the feature of the enormous success of several local groups of different peoples visiting his expedition, receiving presents and reciprocating likewise. If during this trip he gave a fair stock of presents, his resources may have exceeded the means later dedicated to the people employed in the service of the Line. The year before his trip, the Brazilian anthropologist Roquette-Pinto traveled along the Line to the northern area. He described how the Indians did not frequent the various Posts because the people in charge of the Posts had not been given provisions and so lacked metal instruments and other utensils to distribute to the Indians. Doubtlessly this was at least partially the result of the long transport lines necessary for replenishment. It was also a token of the financial difficulties often associated with long-term government projects[xxvi]. Two of the employees at Três Buritis, the telegraph operator and the cattle caretaker, are said to be very good friends of the Indians and pointed out to him that one of the "*large Nambikuára*" villages was nearby. Later while searching for

Indians for his investigation, the employees brought Roquette-Pinto to a group of "*over 200, with their women and children*" who had resolved to make camp nearby a hut for a few days. The author documents the symbolic and economic conquest of part of the Northern lands and the subsequent flourishing of the ranch in his account. He testifies that the establishment of peaceful relations through the exchange of commodities at a time when the Indian population was also present in considerable size. He forfeited a cow to keep the Indian group in close and to commence some research (Roquette-Pinto 1919).

Roquette-Pinto wrote *Rondônia* (1917; republished several times), a famous book in homage to Rondon. It was he who first suggested naming this Brazilian state after the man who had done much of the renaming in the region. Incidentally, this honorous name encompassing the grid of names he himself imposed could never be suggested by him in good taste. The virtue of modesty and the notion of serving the country impeded such vanity. Roquette-Pinto profited from the aid of the Commission chief on his trip, as in the example of the cow used to feed the Indians and retain them nearby. The retribution inherent in the book title later extended to the proposal that eventually created the state of Rondônia. In the book itself his data consist mainly of the measures he took of them for their *racial* characterization, in accordance with the scientific mores of the day. Although he projected a less anthropometrical and more cultural future for anthropology and spent considerable effort gathering sociocultural information, he confessed to learning little cultural information[xxvii]. Yet, what he learned from observing the Indians contains some interesting glimpses of contact and native life. The size of the group around the civilized base is in itself surprising and it might have been composed of the temporary joining of several local groups. Even if this was the case, the overall testimony points to a dense occupancy of the land. Around the *fazenda* of Campos Novos various groups of Indians gravitate in order to procure the metal tools they prize above anything else (they trade anything for a large ax head), and where they seek medical aid as well. One can safely assume that Três Buritis, where the Line ended at that time, initially transformed into a similar center of attraction and production. On the other hand, the author observes that he did not gain insight into the relations between the Northern groups which he assumed consisted of a few secondary nuclei within the major ensemble. He mentions the *Tagnani*, *Tauitês* (the only ones he made some notes on) the *Tarutês*, *Taschuitês* and *Salumá*. On some of the pictures in the book the visitors appear, sometimes lying around on the ground in typical Nambikwara fashion as a sign of

their being at ease. He situates the main group of the Northern area between the eastern *Doze de Outubro* River (towards the east of the Tenente Marques) and the western Roosevelt River, extending north towards the junction of the Tenente Marques with the Roosevelt. All in all the Northern territory encompasses quite a large region spilling over in the direction of Pimenta Bueno to the south (locating the *Tagnani* in the center on the map; see Roquette-Pinto 1919)[xxviii].

Roquette-Pinto, the first Brazilian anthropologist to visit the Nambikwara made some direct observations about the villages of these groups. He noted that the village plan centres around a large, clean, circular plaza approximately fifty meters in diameter. The villages are located at small hills of savanna vegetation in the forested region envisaging to *dominate* the surrounding landscape and, because of this reason, at some distance from the stream that serves as water supply. The village buildings are in a star-like form, a circle with outgoing paths where two houses oppose each other "*at the extremities of one of the diameters of the plaza*" (ib.: 229). At the Festa da Bandeira River (given as the Nambikwara name *Karumí* in the text), he described the plaza as measuring twenty meters and the circumference of the two houses add up to 28 and 30 meters, respectively. In the largest house he found three smoking racks and two *enormous black pots* that could not have fit through the small door openings. As mentioned earlier, the presence of this ceramics among a *tribe* mostly reputed to be either without this technique or only able to produce coarse rudimentary pots might astound some but he does not comment on his find nor does it seems to be noticed or accounted for by later anthropologists[xxix]. What really aroused his astonishment, however, concerns the state of agriculture verified by the fields and the crops grown: "*They feed themselves principally on agricultural products; it is one of the paradoxical features that this population shows such a development of their agriculture in their retarded stage*" (Roquette-Pinto 1919: 238). He then goes on to describe several kinds of foods, one of them being the manioc cakes toasted in the ashes of the fire, and adds that the manioc is a staple food always present in the house as an indispensable component for any meal (ib.: 240; 245). Meat, of course, as proven by Rondon's examinations of the house waste as well, furnishes a necessary and amply present complement to the food consumed, but Roquette-Pinto adduces that the special taste for hunted monkeys might have arisen from previous cannibalistic practices (ib.: 241). From his Western vantage point, monkeys call to mind children, or, more generally, human bodies. His scientific writing geared towards a more scientific audience (as opposed to the political

writings of Rondon) was not restrained in offering the hypothesis that the primitiveness of the Nambikwara warrants the notion of their being only one step away from cannibal stage.

It is for this reason that the sophisticated horticulture astounded the anthropologist. According to the customary evolutionary stages of mankind, their state of primitiveness (and the shocking lack of the hammock in particular), should combine with a hunting and gathering economy. He therefore returns to the same point to stress that the size of a large population like the one he met here in the north could not depend only on hunting. So *the seed of agriculture* permitted their ample numbers yet he emphasized "(…) *their preservation in the 'stone age' until now*" (Roquette-Pinto: 254). He attributes the cultivation of the *very fertile lands* also to their isolation from the White man and his domestic animals (even the dog). The obligation to survive under these circumstances caused them to "*perfect themselves in this industry*" and "*turn into distinguished agriculturalists even when remaining in a very elementary state of civilization*" (ib. 1919: 254). In other words, the observer recorded a remarkable horticultural activity that furnished a permanent supply of manioc and other crops (both food crops and non-food ones, like tobacco) as attested by the size of the fields, the quantity produced and the variety of cultivated plants. As a counterpoint to the deftness and skill of horticulture, he claims that according to his observations, the Indians collected the maize still green from the fields or the manioc prematurely before full growth. However, the green maize is edible when prepared correctly and may be appreciated as such. The early harvest of manioc may have been due to a specific harvest, tiding them over between two normal harvests. Therefore, these observations do not indicate hunger or malnutrition. The overall picture impressed Roquette-Pinto just as it did Rondon. Indeed, his previous remarks on the abundant produce and horticulture attest to this. Roquette-Pinto noticed these fields to be of a regular circular form and he thought that the abandoned fields may be transformed into open spaces of *campos* (savannas) within the forested region.

The string of telegraph posts and the trail blazed by Rondon not only opened the way for Roquette-Pinto as the first Brazilian anthropologist to visit and do research among the Nambikwara, but also paved the road for the mentioned joint North American–Brazilian venture to clear up the ambiguity of the Rio da Duvída. The description of the journey in a book published soon afterwards is written as a

report of events but it also serves as an important medium of promotion of ideas in the intellectual and political arena of the age. Here Rondon explains the circumstances of his first contact with the Northern Nambikwara that occurred after his initial penetration described in his lectures of 1910 when, at the end of 1911, he searched for the best route to construct the Line. Just like Roquette-Pinto, the Mission members attributed the presence of savannas, called *campos*, in the wooded region to the action of slash and burn horticulture practiced by the Nambikwara[xxx]. Rondon remarks that, from the Juruena onwards, the area is inhabited by groups such as the "(…) *Nenês, Iáias, Navaitês, Tagananis, Tauitê and others, each of which occupies his own proper territory in the valleys of the various rivers and streams*" (Rondon 1916: 137). This relatively dense population furnished the string of islands in the woods through which Rondon resolved to create the trail of posts for his precious wire. First he headed to the northeast of Vilhena between the headwaters of the Roosevelt and Ique Rivers to a place where a subordinate officer discovered "(…) *a large village and many fields of Nhambiquaras, of a group we later learned to be called Mamãindê; I, however, did not encounter anything: the Indians had abandoned the spot and incinerated the village*" (ib.: 138). It is worth noting how this shows both the extension of the Mamaindê territory and their proximity to the other Northern groups. This reinforces the likelihood that this group was at one time a semi-unified population. The only village today is located in the Guaporé valley to the south of Vilhena.

Rondon makes contact

The way Rondon noted the existence of basically demarcated territories for each different people did not distract him from his broader aim of incorporating these peoples as Brazilians and the lands as Brazil. After developing the new trail (occasionally with the help of the "*Tauitês*"), Rondon arrived at Três Buritis. The ranch served as a place to rest and feed the cattle necessary to the construction and maintenance of the line, Rondon met with his maternal uncle and the man's nephew, and he decided to explore the area to the north and northwest of the main fazenda with them (Roosevelt (1914: 227) took this uncle to be the farm manager). Unexpectedly meeting five unarmed Nambikwara men in the forest, Rondon correctly guessed that the small group did not harbor any violent intentions. He established a form of contact. One of the men spoke animatedly before Rondon dismounted from his horse and circulated amongst the group. He succeeded in communicating an interest in visiting their village and they gladly

invited him to follow. During most of this trip, Rondon had to restrain his deeply suspicious uncle who, as his nephew pointed out, represented the thoroughly prejudiced regional population that rated the Indians (in an obvious line of long-standing tradition) as hardly better than animals, treacherous, and totally untrustworthy. The description of the way the Indians walked by their weapons without picking them up, serves to underpin Rondon's own counterpoint "(…) *the trait of true nobility, of courage, and of tact by these men*" (Rondon 1916: 142). Rondon, of course, wanted to counter the negative stereotypes about Indians and especially the fame of the *primitive* and *savage* Nambikwara[xxxi]. Therefore he amply recounts their very good welcome and the bountiful food and drink offered to them as guests: *an interminable procession* of manioc, manioc cakes, toasted maize, potatoes and a kind of sweet potatoes, monkey meat, fish and toasted larva.

He found some thirty men from two different groups in the village, with no women and children. Later he discovered the women and children gathered in the only large house of the village. Initially this house protected them from prying eyes. The house contrasted to the *many others*, constructions which more closely resembled lean-tos and allowed no privacy[xxxii]. On arrival, two men, one of the incoming party and one from the village, each gave a loud speech. Afterwards the headman sent messengers to a neighboring village of *Tagananis* and about ten Indians came over from the north and the same man energetically asked them to lay down their weapons. Other people kept arriving because word was sent to other nearby villages of the *Tauitês, Minis and Tachiuvítês* (ib.: 147). Even at night, a large number of Indians, a *crowd*, collected at the village around the campfires and lively discussions ensued. As the night advanced, the women left the large house but fled when the stranger stood up to look at them, much to the amusement of the men. Rondon rested his head on the leg of one of the Indians. This seemed to please the choosen Indian. Rondon even dozed (his uncle, on the other hand, did not as much as blink). In the end, a multitude of no less than two hundred people assembled. The Indians did not sleep because, he conjectured, they were very excited about the stirring prospect of the metal axes they desired ardently. In the morning they invited him to visit the neighbouring villages on the same savanna and in an undefined but relatively short time he saw four other villages the total population of which the visitors calculated to be *over three hundred individuals*.

It is worth resuming that within an easy walking distance lived three or four different groups, some of which were very likely distinct peoples with dialectical differences, in five villages and numbering at least over three hundred fifty people. This was a dense multi-ethnic network of villages and peoples in one small pocket of the much vaster Northern Nambikwara territories. Through long-distance trading a new metal ax already had found its way to the village, presumably from the Campos Novos fazenda. A large delegation accompanied Rondon back to the main base and he gave each presents like axes, machetes and beads. From this time on, contact was not only firmly established but also expanded throughout a much larger region, including the Sabanê. No doubt the already present multi-ethnic network of relations facilitated this effect, proving to be bigger than the small pocket within the larger region visited by Rondon. "*From this date on the visits of the Indians to our camps never ceased and there were occasions at which they arrived in groups of 200 or more. The word about such an extraordinary success spread very rapidly in the sertão* [hinterland] *and soon caused other tribes than to join in, situated to the North at a distance of over twenty leagues. Thus, we got to know the Sabanês, the Iaiás, the Xaodês and the Teiobês, who are the most beautiful men of the whole region*" (Rondon 1916: 150). Note that the name *Sabanê* was already in circulation. The other names designate now unknown groups or peoples because of either extinction or renaming (in ignorance of previous naming). Sabanê is one of the few names to endure.

This information places the Sabanê to the north of Três Buritis, rather then to the east. The mixture of group names does not assure much certainty that the Sabanê referenced are the current Sabanê. As will be discussed in a future section, oral tradition claims the group originally came from the forests to the east – northeast of this location, and a later entry into the Northern Nambikwara region. The reference to a northerly origin could indicate a direction to the northeast, suggesting a migration from the direction of Mato Grosso. This group's original Amazonian territory may have been what is now the Aripuanã Indian Park (most of it in the northwestern corner of Mato Grosso). This Sabanê may have left because of pressures from the Cinta Larga or other Tupi Mondé. In any case one may assume that the Sabanê already lived either in the Northern Nambikwara region or in an immediately adjacent area north or northeast, participating in its intricate pattern of relations in this congeries of villages and peoples. The region occupied to the north of Três Buritis and José Bonifacio extended for a large

distance that must have passed the confluence of the Tenente Marques River with the Roosevelt River if the mentioned measure is correct. It remains unclear how the Indians communicated across such a distance. It is certain that Rondon's presence created a stir in the whole region. As another indication of the curiosity aroused, the military man added that even the elders came over to his camps to look "(…) *at the men that suddenly appeared in their lands and had the power to produce such a profound and radical modification in their secular customs like the one that results from the substitution of stone instruments by steel tools*" (Rondon 1916: 150). In itself, the causality postulated that the mere presence of metal tools shapes a radical sociocultural transformation denotes the common belief in the efficacy of extraneous objects as agents of change that naturalizes and validates the exercise of domination to produce social change.

So, in the name of civilization and in consideration of the protection and advancement of the contacted Indians, Rondon decided to name the new telegraph station José Bonifacio. In his opinion no one could better express "(…) *the moral and civic exigencies of the emotions and hopes that had been born and that we wished to flourish than this great statesman of Independence*" (ib.: id.). The author of the benign proposal of bringing the independent Indians up to civilization under the aegis of the enlightened Brazilians could be the iconic patron of the telegraph station, the metaphoric reference of the whole project of the recently initiated grandiose enterprise of the protection and civilization. In this respect, Rondon pretended to infuse a patriotic and symbolic significance to the inauguration of the telegraph station named after the hero of independence. He not only timed the inauguration ceremony to be on the birthday of the illustrious patriot but, "*by another happy coincidence*", "(…) *not only with the presence, but also the contribution of a group of Nhambiquaras, the "Tauitês", who selected one of their daughters to raise the sacred symbol of Brazilian nationality upon the hallowed ground of the sertão*" (Rondon 1916: 150). Without being so direct, such words (given at a formal address) probably evoked the classical image of claiming possession of a *virgin* territory, and the primary act of affirming the state's right to these lands to Rondon's audience. Of course, for someone like Rondon who esteemed the heroism of Columbus, the same act must have reminded him and the audience of the original claiming of Brazil. Note the similarities to the so-called *first mass* during the *discovery of Brazil*. Naturally, the raising of the wooden cross would interfere with his positivist religion. Hence the republican symbols substituted the original religious elements of Cabral's

well-known founding act. Earlier sacred acts and objects are now replaced by another *sacred symbol*, imbuing the flag with similar extraordinary content. Evolution and the nation-state replace the conversion of the inhabitants of the *new lands* to the sacred religion implied in the first exemplary act. The intensity of the belief in evolution, and faith in the future development of society against all possible negative evidence, adds a religious character to such system of convictions (Brody 2001: 336).

Thus the replication imitates the so called *birth of Brazil* of nationalist imaginary, with the finishing touch being the active participation of the very people being expropriated by the act, as if they gave their consent and were already present as a kind of proto-Brazilian[xxxiii]. In fact, just like his predecessor, Rondon must have been aware that the Indians could not have the slightest idea of the symbolic significance in the ceremony[xxxiv]. In the interest of historical myth making, he ignores any aspect of the Indian's view. From another perspective of the same event, the assistance of the symbolically inferior in the subordinate role of raising the sacred symbol by a child represents the future as the still pliable Indian. The child is more easily *educated* to acquire the level of a new *superior stage* is more symbolic than Rondon intended. Put differently, this was a silent reproduction of an old ceremony of establishing subordination and legitimizing expropriation. The ritualized pattern only changes the major objective and justification from the salvation of the *soul* by participation in the *true religion* to the incorporation of the native's bodies in the *nation* and *civilization*. The Indian's subordinate prospective role remained unchanged, this was the path to assimilation. Perhaps Roosevelt's mention that Rondon descended paternally from the Paulistas, a people who stand out as the colonial raiders of Indians and searchers for riches in the interior and considered by popularized history as the conquerors of the hinterland, is not irrelevant (Roosevelt 1914: 204). It seems no coincidence that the hagiographic descriptions of Rondon always foreground his Indian descent. In a way, Rondon followed in the footsteps of these conquerors in a novel manner of conquest, as if uniting in his own person common representations of the past and future of Brazil.

Along the wire: "one of the most attractive indigenous cultures in Brazil"

The dense network of associations between related but different peoples within the Northern Nambikwara territory was officially incorporated into *Brazilian boundaries*, a fact that should be recognized by the constellation of other similar

entities, the other nation states. Formerly, these peoples and their villages were outside of the reach of the republic or the preceding empire. The journey of Roosevelt and Rondon thus traversed the *unknown wilds* already symbolically appropriated but actually outside of official *civilization*. Roosevelt proudly recounted his penetration and traveling through the area in the company of Rondon. The ex-president had his own reasons for participating in a similar expedition to the wild unknown uncharted lands, emulating great explorers of other continents in order to *put on the map* rivers and *undiscovered* territories (cited in Enders 1998: 15). This personal desire coincided with a vision about the occupation of these savage lands being the exclusive duty and right of the American countries. Such a notion appealed to Brazilian diplomacy and in effect engendered the invitation from the Brazilian ministry of foreign affairs to Roosevelt. Roosevelt's expression of the principle that the *savage expanses* in the Americas should be the civilizing task of the countries within which bounds such regions officially lay was directed against any European power tempted to consider some void as a legitimate area of colonization. Such beliefs were felt to be justified when looking at what was happening in Africa at the time. Brazilian diplomacy pursued a policy of guaranteeing the *right* to Amazonia by settling the border problems with all neighbours, including the European ones to the north. An alliance with the United States and its strengthening by means of the expedition would serve the country as well as the concomitant publicized demonstration of how Brazil was engaged in *charting* and *civilizing* its interior (thus justifying its *right* in the international arena; Enders 1998)[xxxv]. Today, a hundred years later, the same ally is ironically conceived by nationalists as the very threat to sovereignty in Amazonia. This supposed threat is manipulated by false rumors and maps (usually on internet) in order to reject all *outside* interference within the region; in effect it is ordinarily an argument against Indian rights and in favour of an unrestricted pillage of natural resources.

The positivists also perceived a chance to boost their own internal prestige and their influence in shaping the political agenda of *civilizing* the interior and the way to proceed with the *formation of the nation* (Enders 1998: 11). It is impressive to note a number of similarities of presuppositions about the nature of man in society, his past and future between the group of Rondon and Roosevelt. One such point issues from the general premise of the design of the natural evolution of mankind. It concerns the translation of the presumed technological distance into the supposed superiority of the entirety of Western culture, and that

this advantage inevitably generates the desire of the retarded *tribes* stranded in a primitive stage. Stressing the more negative aspects of such parameters of evaluation, Roosevelt saw *ephemeral villages* and a tilling of the soil *with the rude and destructive cultivation of savages* in the several abandoned fields of the Navaitê (Northern Nambikwara) down the Roosevelt River (Roosevelt 1914: 242). Just as the Pareci they should be *raised by degrees* in order to procure to a *permanent rise* induced by their valued *friend* and *leader* Rondon (to be *followed* and *obeyed*) and the *virgin land* opened up for progress to industrious settlers (ib.: 183; 203). The slight contradiction with the *rather extensive maize and manioc cultivation* encountered before on the Chapada does not deter him from emphasizing the implicit comparison with modern *white settlers* and predicting a future of a large pastoral and agricultural population in the very same region. Roosevelt adopts the point of view of the savage that must struggle for survival, "(…) *the immense labor entailed by many of their industries, and the really extraordinary amount of work they accomplish with the skillful use of their primitive and ineffective tools*" (ib.: 196). More than that, when visiting a village and observing the presence of some commodities like some knives "(…) *which they sorely needed, for they are not even in the stone age*" (ib.: 229). The Stone Age was as low as any people can sink in this paradigm, and being below this level was a condition very rarely invoked. The degree of attributed *primitiveness* confers his expedition a special distinction in the set of *expeditions into the unknown*. His vision of the future seems remarkably similar to what already happened in the U.S. *West*. There, the Indians were conquered and dealt with. There were no more expeditions into the unknown. The conquest and assimilation of primitive peoples was seen as the natural, desirable, irrevocable and unquestionable outcome of history. An analogous process was well underway in Mato Grosso.

On the other hand, Rondon, while sharing the same general premises also emphasized the positive qualities of the primitiveness. He worries about the manner in which this people can be transformed as they are by definition his *countrymen* within the same nation-state. Hence the kind of view of the popularizing account of the *Missão Rondon* exposed in the book published only a year later, when the same naturalness of superiority is thought to be the cause for the gradual absorption of White technology and culture all by itself. That is, no abrupt imposition of cultural change is necessary: All inducement needed concerns what may be called 'the push of poverty and the pull of commodity'.

"These modifications shall be produced as the result of an evolution, the march of which is accelerated by the new instruments of labor with which we provide them, as well as the firearms, salt, matches, sugar, clothing and other utilities that rapidly enter into their customs, turning them ever so much dependent upon the relations with us and increasingly determining more intimate approximations. It is these voluntary, spontaneous approximations that will integrally change them, without neither leaps nor perturbations. And it has been noted that these modifications occur much more quickly than one could imagine" (Missão Rondon 1916: 258-9). Reality proved otherwise and belied this optimism. The ranch at Três Buritis did flourish around this time. Roosevelt, for example, claimed he saw over a hundred head of cattle. The region was considered the most densely populated area of all of *Nambikwara land* (in the expression of the ex-president). The valleys of the Ananaz, Roosevelt and Bandeira Rivers contained the largest population the authors considered as one group, although they were subdivided into numerous sub-groups like the "(…) *Mamá-indês, Tamá-indês, Malondês, Sabanês, Iaiás and Nava-itês*" (ib.: 298). Rondon estimated the total population at *20,000 souls*, the density of villages varying according to ecological conditions. In other words, if Rondon conceived of the *Nhambiquara nation* to consist of five major sets of groups, the richer northern region should be settled by over a fifth share of this figure (over a 4000 persons; ib.: 302). He recognized these segments as sufficiently distinct to merit the notion of *tribe* within the encompassing *Nation*.

The destiny of the long line of telegraph poles, stations and ranches (*stations of civilization*; Rondon quoted in Enders 1998: 13) was not as anticipated. Contrary to expectations, decline set in when technological change transformed the Line into obsolete technology. Although the telegraph was used once during the 1930 uprising in São Paulo against the federal government, it already was considered obsolete. The telegraph gave way to radio communication. Slowly, technical progress doomed the string of stations and its personnel to an ever increasing governmental neglect and disregard. Largely becoming dependent on their own resources, the people manning the stations and farms fended for themselves as best as they could, just as when Lévi-Strauss undertook his famous expedition through the Mato Grosso and into current Rondônia. By the time of his expedition in the 1930s, the contact phase had transformed the scene into a demographic disaster, especially as the even more isolated Northern Nambikwara were the primary victims of the so-called Columbian exchange, the arrival of unknown

contagious diseases. The results of the White penetration from the setting up of the Line, the presence and passage of a mixture of officers, soldiers, and lower class workers touched off a series of epidemics worsened by the reactions of the Indians to flee the sources of infectious dissipation and the meager, if existent, medical assistance available. Simultaneously, the sporadic entry of the servicing personnel and the absence of a large wave of settlers occupying Indian territory, left the Indian peoples with a very large measure of autonomy. Consequently, the first years of the conquest operated under the auspices of Rondon actually brought in the occupational forces for the Line that wreaked havoc with the epidemics naturally carried by the incoming new people – the decimation and demographic devastation of contagious diseases – without, as yet, the effects of large scale land restrictions introduced by *settlers*. In the years between the initial time of Rondon's approach and conquest and the adventure of the Lévi-Strauss expedition the Indian population greatly decreased, ruining the viability of a number of villages and even peoples to sustain an independent life. Lévi-Strauss followed the Telegraph Line and ventured beyond the straight line itself where he met some surviving groups, among them a group of Sabanê. While at the Vilhena station he described the very severe effects suffered by the Indians after Rondon's passage:
"*I encountered two new bands, one of which consisted of eighteen people who spoke a dialect close to that of the people who I began to be acquainted with, while the other, thirty-four members strong, used an unknown language; later I have not been able to identify it. Each was led by a chief, with, it would seem, in the first case purely profane attributions; but the chief of the other more important one was soon to reveal himself as a kind of sorcerer. His group was designated by the name of Sabanê; the others were called Tarundê.*"(Lévi-Strauss 1984: 360; my translation from French).

The Sabanê language is incomprehensible to any Northern Nambikwara speaker and it is safe to assume that the group mentioned above is indeed the *Sabanê*, His earlier, more academic, monograph of 1949 confers with the comparison with current speakers scrutinized by current linguistic research (with Antunes (2004), fieldwork in 2001). The 34 Sabanê in Vilhena are the survivors of the previous epoch when Rondon estimated the total number of the whole Nambikwara nation at about twenty thousand. Lévi-Strauss, who cites this number, probably affected by the impressive decline in population, held this to be most likely an inflated number, and no more than an educated guess. Nevertheless, when considering

the descriptions of the population before the ravages caused by the contagious diseases, the total may not be very much off the mark. Well aware of this, Lévi-Strauss remarks that the bands previously comprised several hundreds of members and that all evidence pointed to a rapid decline: "(…) *thirty years ago the fragment known as Sabané consisted of over a thousand individuals; when the group visited the telegraph station of Campos Novos, a count amounted to a hundred and twenty seven men, plus their women and children. However, an epidemic of the flu broke out when the group camped at a place called* Espirro[xxxvi]*. The disease developed into a kind of pulmonary edema and three hundred natives died in forty eight hours. The entire group fled, leaving behind the ill and the dying. Of the thousand Sabané known in the past, only nineteen men and their women and children survived in 1938. Perhaps, in order to explain these numbers, one must add that, since a few years ago, the Sabané were engaged in a war against some of their eastern neighbours. But a large group located not far from Tres Buritis was annihilated by the flu in 1927, except for six or seven persons of whom only three were still alive in 1938. The Tarundé group, one of the most important ones in the past, had twelve men (plus their women and children) in 1936; of these twelve men, only four survived in 1938*" (ib.: 347).

Only recently the Brazilian anthropologist Luiz de Castro Faria, who accompanied the expedition as the officially appointed Brazilian representative and inspector, published some of his notes and pictures. His numbers and dates in his diary differ slightly with the above but confirm the sudden and significant population decline:
"(…) *there were over a thousand Sabanese in 1929. In November of the same year, an influenza epidemic hit a group of forty-eight men accompanied by their families – a total of three hundred people – who were waiting for the general's arrival at Espirro. Of these only seven escaped, but is suspected that they had carried the illness to the maloca, causing an even higher number of deaths. In 1931, a group visiting Campos Novos, along with the Manduco* [Manduka] *was once more struck by the disease, although only one woman perished. On returning to the maloca, they carried the influenza, and so there were more deaths. Finding out the situation in which the Sabanese were the Manduco attacked their maloca, killing many.*

In 1932, the Sabanese came under pressure from the Manduco and appeared at the Vilhena post: they numbered only ninety-seven. They resided at the post for

three years. In 1935 they went to José Bonifácio, after being summoned by the telegraphist to work in a swidden; there they once more contracted the flu, which claimed more victims. Today only twenty-one men and twenty women remain" (Faria 2001:133).

The terrible effects of the epidemics on the Sabanê serve as the major example to Lévi-Strauss on the enormous losses of the Nambikwara and if the whole group totaled thirty-four people at the time of 1938, then these accounts indicate between 959 and 966 people died. A population drop of 96% or 97%. Lévi-Strauss and Castro Faria relate some figures that probably were gathered by witnesses. Such data are derived either from the Commission reports (not easily consulted today), or else from the testimony of employees they met along the Telegraph Line . This confers considerable reliability to the numbers cited even if the original base line of a thousand seems to be more of a reasonably informed guess than the result of a census. Such a decline may seem to be exaggerated but comparative cases examined in the recent years confirm impacts similar to the one suffered by the Sabanê (see Dobyns 1993). The contrast with previous reports can hardly be more striking: the Taúitê that visited the Roosevelt expedition and the members of the same group in the village visited by the expedition's doctor did not show any kind of disease. "*Every one appeared to be in perfect health*" (Cajazeira 1916: 32-3). It will hardly be surprising that the people at trade centres in North America were submitted to higher mortality than people in non-trading areas and it stands to reason that the telegraph stations functioned as nodes on the web of contagion (cf. Dobyns 1993: 276). Espirro, a settlement along the Line constructed to gather diverse groups is a prime example. Roquette-Pinto, for example, commented that the fazenda of Campos Novos attracted all groups into which the *great tribe* is subdivided, even enemies fraternize at this exchange centre (1919: 171; the classification of *fazenda* is his, and indexical to the scale of the economic operation).

Fleeing the Line may create a safer distance but also would put one beyond the reach of any medical assistance, and may spread the disease to other villages. The temptation of the useful metal tools occasionally encourages the Indians to trade or receive *presents*. This proved a deadly transaction because it facilitated the transmission of the full range of unknown diseases along all posts of the Line and spread into the entire region. The metal utensils effectively created one dependency that the Missão Rondon presupposed to be a sufficient motive for

total acculturation. However, the lack of any further influx of immigration into the region and the relaxed state power left the Indians autonomous, completely following their old ways. In fact, no such obvious causal relation exists between the want for metal instruments and the adoption of culturally *superior* behavior. Without an actual system of domination that brings about this supposedly natural result and the various languages and cultural variants of the Nambikwara ensemble were reproduced by the different peoples despite the power bestowed upon the *civilized* of the Line by the control of access to these commodities. In effect, the gradual abandonment of the personnel by its employer allowed the Indians to counteract this power because of their numbers and physical force, and, in a way, actually more or less turned the tables[xxxvii]. The impact created by contact, conjoined with the war on eastern neighbors waged simultaneously, must have thoroughly disorganized the sociocultural and political organization of the Sabanê, similarly to the Tarundê. Very little is known about the Sabanê previous to contact, but the disastrous decline in numbers undoubtedly disorganized this people, almost obliterating their existence. When Lévi-Strauss stayed at Vilhena, as cited, the two local groups (villages) entertained friendly relations differently from the animosity verified between other local groups in Campos Novos. Both were fragments of very much larger peoples. The author remarks on the existence of several such groups or peoples who were so reduced that they could no longer pursue an independent way of life. By this time, most peoples had been forced to constitute one village out of the formerly autonomous villages of their own people or else had been compelled to cohabitate and negotiate with a similar fraction of another people to restore the conditions of a socially viable group. In Lévi-Strauss' judgment:

"*In Vilhena, on the other hand, I witnessed an attempt at reconstruction. For there was little doubt that the natives with whom I made my camp elaborated a plan. All of the adult men of one band called the women in the other one "sisters", and the latter called the men in a symmetrical position "brothers". As for the men of the two bands, they designated one another with the term that, in their respective languages, signifies cross cousin and corresponds to the relation that we would translate with "brother-in-law". Given the rules of Nambikwara marriage, this nomenclature results in granting all of the children of one band in the situation of "potential spouse" of the children in the other one and vice versa. In this way, by the play of intermarriages, the two bands would be fused in the next generation*" (Lévi-Strauss 1984: 326).

Lévi-Strauss, perforce constrained by a very limited vocabulary – a sort of Telegraph Line pidgin –, considered the two groups in question as culturally identical but diverse by the mutually unintelligible languages (a gulf mediated by one or two individuals of each group). This is a view rather common among the students of Nambikwara although later anthropologists do not fail to emphasize a diversity within the whole set. There is a tendency to use the ethnonym as an encompassing catch word for all the different peoples and segments in any way affiliated to the linguistic family. A trend to feel justified about such homogeneity in sociocultural organization even when dialects or languages are barely or completely incomprehensible leads a sensitive author like Lévi-Strauss to include the Sabanê within the ensemble called *Nambikwara*. From the time of Rondon this usage has been followed mostly because a few visible distinguishing features, in particular sleeping on sand, a practice that set all of them so much apart to outsiders that the invisible cultural differences were overlooked. In effect, as Lévi-Strauss observed, the Indians looked very much alike in their near or complete *nudity*. Considering the circumstances, Lévi-Strauss did a remarkable job in ethnography, but failed to confirm or deny the classification of the Sabanê language within the Nambikwara language family. He also perceived quite well the social chiasm between the two *bands* which camped close to each other yet clearly maintained a social distance marked by the separation of their campfires[xxxviii]. He recounts episodes about the Sabanê leader that left the Tarundê one with a certain misgiving about the honesty of his colleague's intentions and the outcome of the whole joint project to aggregate the different fractions and regain a larger and more viable sociopolitical unit. The Sabané were engaged in a war against the most northern group of the Nambikwara on the savanna, one that occupied the land extending from the Ique River in the north to the headwaters of the Doze de Outubro and adjacent Camararé, with the center more or less where current reserve of Aroeira is (Lévi-Strauss 1948: 3; 9; 11). Waging war must have enhanced the pressure on the Sabanê to realize a significant addition to their potential of diminished demographic resources and to augment their chances of permanence as a people. Lévi-Strauss, without explicitly saying so, justifies their inclusion in the encompassing *Nambikwara* (my ensemble) yet he documents the conceived ethnic differences reporting on the tensions between the groups. Social difference plays a significant role in the project to merge of these two distinct peoples, in particular the distinctiveness of the languages, and the author perceives the precariousness of the convergence and the uncertainty about the outcome of the fusion of the two *bands*.

Lévi-Strauss could not forecast the ultimate result and when he wrote his popular book of the middle of the fifties he did not know it either. Lévi-Strauss believed that he earned an unexpected fame with the publication of his book on journeys into the unknown lands and encounters with exotic peoples. Discounting the book by Roosevelt of lesser distribution and fame, the *Tristes Tropiques*, the sad tropics, marks the introduction of the *Nambikwara* to the international scene of Western literature and the general public. To each party its proper fame. The reception of the idea of the *Nambikwara* among this public probably involves an image of one of the most primitive and backward peoples that the author encountered in his philosophical voyage in search of the meaning of his own life and of the significance of human sociality in human society. Although it is not easy to assess the impact of this book on the circulation of stereotypes in Western countries, it is remarkable how some ideas and *facts* expressed about the Nambikwara entered into a wider circulation. Such appearances arise in surprising contexts. For example, a Columbian Catholic bishop quoted Lévi Strauss during a course on homosexuality and the Catholic attitude towards human sexual nature: "*Yet, there are some signs that certain criteria are not absent in primitive tribes in contrast to the emptiness of a "culture" that turns its back on nature and ethics. And here we have a truth that involves an underlying anthropology. If C. Levi-Strauss recorded homosexual practices in some tribes, he also pointed out that in others, like the Nambikwara, this sort of conduct was given the name, "Tamindige Kihandige", which means "False-love", for which, as one moralist commented, it shows that they are more mature than certain ethnologists (Margaret Mead)* [xxxix]. Sometimes, ironically, the *primitive tribe* appears to concur in the moral judgement pronounced by the authority for whom the condemning attitude attributed to the Nambikwara rhetorically underscores how even these *primitives* already reject a practice that the *immature* anthropologist only catalogued as an example of the malleability of human conduct. As if the exegesis of the native term by Lévi-Strauss somehow contradicts the position of Mead in favor of cultural relativism and against ethnocentrism. This is an unexpected usage of the savage (though just one instance in a long line of Western tradition) actually against Lévi-Strauss' intention in more than one way, because he also clearly states that the same Indians do not morally object to the behavior described.

Apart from entering into more ample circulation of certain attributes in the wider social context, within anthropology the name of the Nambikwara also is

associated with the intellectual activity of Lévi-Strauss. The name of the Nambikwara as a anthropological case also derives from some articles where his observations are framed more abstractly. These publications highlight the specific way this *people* come into existence within the specialized literature as a typical case for a specific example in a thematic field. Added to the case of homosexual behavior appearing in both circuits of dissemination of knowledge, there are a variety of themes: the gender-based division of labor; the question of powerless leadership; the polygamy of chiefs as a retribution for the service of leading the local group; the origin and function of power and its relation to literacy. Furthermore, there is the dualism between the wet season and sedentary horticulture versus the nomadism of hunting and gathering in the dry season; trade exchange and war; cross cousin marriage (the traces of the possible fusion of groups and the implicit duality in Dravidian kinship terminology can be noted in his own first major work, *The elementary structures of kinship* and also in lesser-known earlier publications: Lévi-Strauss 1943; 1944; 1946; 1948a and b); and the astonishing simplicity of the social organization (family life), material culture and dearth of clothing and ornaments. Sometimes for the writer, the Nambikwara represent the *simplest expression* of human society. For example, he discusses the implications of *the elementary social structure* of the Nambikwara band for the origin and function of political power (Lévi-Strauss 1984: 373). However, such simplicity is tempered with his keen eye to individual personalities and characteristics. In no way did he translate the supposed absence of social complexity into a reduction of the varied and typically human qualities of the natives, as if these human beings also are depreciated into a lower life form. A type of humanity in its most *elementary condition*, a typical *modéle réduit*, is a proposition used at other times to gain insight in the laws of social life, observed as the *sociological experience* of a human experiment in sociocultural living. Here it leads him to conclude that the Nambikwara are *the most simple expression* of a reduced society made him *find only human beings*[xl]. In closing the chapters on the Nambikwara in *Tristes Tropiques* with this statement, he may sometimes confuse readers. Even if he thought he found only the smallest amount of social complexity, the minimal sociocultural condition of man still is profoundly and uniquely human and leaves space for an ample specter of personalities and expressions of individuality.

One of the paradoxes of the writings of Lévi-Strauss is the large public reception of this work amongst diverse audiences beyond his fellow anthropologists. This

resulted in the propagation of a number of ideas generated by the Nambikwara experience into mainstream anthropology (reprinting articles on the family, trade and war and political leadership in general readers). Simultaneously, very few of these readers ever set an eye on the academic companion thesis to "The Elementary Structures of Kinship" that predated the popular version (at the time the main doctoral thesis always was accompanied by a smaller supplementary one). Of course, its publication in the periodical of the Society of Americanists (Lévi-Strauss 1948), with its limited editions, contributes to this fact. More importantly, for the same reason the posterior correction of any of these views on the Nambikwara hardly ever penetrates into the same non-specialist circles reached by the popular book. In effect, the views expounded by Lévi-Strauss, admirable as his fieldwork may be when the extreme constraints in which he operated are taken into account, have been proved by later researchers to be incomplete, limited, and to have lead to generalizations not supported by later data. The characteristics of Nambikwara society mentioned above all have been subjected to more or less substantial changes, critiques and amendments. One clear example is the homosexual relation between cross cousins, a relation never witnessed by Lévi-Strauss, as he carefully cautions the reader, yet he still felt justified in suggesting it as a reasonably fair assumption. In this instance, the same conduct was interpreted by his companion anthropologist on the expedition, the Brazilian government representative, Luiz Castro Faria, as indicative of playful behavior devoid of real erotic content[xli]. This kind of joking relationship was corroborated by the findings of Price in the behavior between brothers-in-law among the Nambikwara do Campo (in his 1971 thesis). As far my own few observations permit me to generalize, similar behavior obtains among the Sararé.

Lévi-Strauss read the reports on the Nambikwara of the Rondon Commission and studied the book of Roquette-Pinto. In his academic ethnography he affirms the total lack of attention given to the Nambikwara after Roquette-Pinto, clearly considering his work as its continuation. Hence his major aim was to fill in some gaps in the previous research and especially to study familial and social organization. It is also *superfluous* to state that he did not pretend to exhaust the subject, if only because he spent time with them *during the nomadic period* and did not hide the fact that visiting during the sedentary season would have rectified the perspective of the whole. Conscious of his limitations, he cited Roquette-Pinto in claiming that the scientific constructions in this terrain will always be slow. As a sharp observer and anthropologist, the author is quite

explicit about some injunctions on his work among "*one of the most attractive cultures of indigenous Brazil*" and he expresses the wish to renew his research to include sedentary life (Lévi-Strauss 1948: 3). Apparently, Lévi-Strauss never explained why he did not pursue his study. His propositions and generalizations have only been subjected to revision by later Nambikwara scholars. The most debated case concerns the dual organization of the yearly cycle of activities. The very assertion that he only witnessed the nomadic dry season is a relevant rejoinder, as are his warnings about the limitations of his fieldwork. Yet, the notion of a season of nomadic hunting and gathering and the shorter period of sedentary horticultural villages is recurrent and pre-eminent in his description. Years of intensive research on *economic subsistence* among the Mamaindê (by P. Aspelin) demonstrated both the profound mastery of horticulture, its integration in the general culture and the overall sedentary disposition of this people. The Northern Nambikwara are definitely not nomadic in the sense that the prior research averred[xlii]. In the response following the original article questioning his results, Lévi-Strauss simply complied to the dictum of the temporary nature of knowledge he himself cited about a predecessor. Thus he mostly adhered to the straightforward belief that better and more elaborate research must be accepted as the normal way of progress of anthropological knowledge. He did make a few relevant criticisms about the difference in the respective periods of research. For example, the tremendous encroachment and invasions suffered by the Nambikwara provides, in his view, a plausible compelling force to sedentarization. Also, the Nambikwara are *a far from homogeneous lot*, a pertinent observation but something in the Sabané case not readily noticeable in his own prior writings. Lévi-Strauss further claims to have reported mostly about the *more northern bands*. This is interesting because these peoples are underrepresented in recent ethnographic research. But, on the other hand, it is remarkable argument as the Mamaindê are in fact part of the Northern Nambikwara. Maybe their current geographic position in the Guaporé Valley induced the author to this statement.

Lévi-Strauss (1976) warned against a simplistic invalidation of his observations and that the available data really could support his conclusion. There is no reason to discuss and compare the distinct ethnographic results in all its complexity, although it is relevant to remember the differentiating contextual set of social conditions in distinct moments of history. With hindsight, however, it seems reasonable that the kind of possibilities of research and the constraints imposed on the time and space of his observation and communication allow for the

conclusion that the Nambikwara could have perfectly well been predominantly sedentary. In fact, the reading of the prior reports consistently and constantly highlights the unequivocal mastery and presence of horticulture and permanent houses in villages, especially the emphasis posited by Roquette-Pinto. Nevertheless, sometimes an early observer like Roosevelt classified the villages as *ephemeral*, even when he himself passed through a northern village with *two large huts* of *closely woven thatch, circular in outline, with a rounded dome, and two doors* at opposite ends; there were *fifteen or twenty people to each hut* with a large assortment of material objects described as *implements and utensils* (Roosevelt 1914: 229). Notice that this particular expedition was delayed. They entered the region after the beginning of the rainy season; Rondon's pioneering efforts, on the other hand, usually took place during the dry seasons. Thus, it was likely during the dry period that he first made the described contact and completed his tour of the northern villages. He mentioned the same conical houses (although only one in the initial village; Rondon 1916: 145)[xliii]. Yet, the popularized version from roughly the same time, in the book *Missão Rondon*, he proposes to guide the evolution of the Indians slowly and without abrupt changes, including their *sedentarization* and the construction of villages (1916: 258). According to this view, the notion of *sedentary life* opposes *nomadism*. In itself, nomadism is pejorative, a stigmatizing label denoting the idea of wandering around with no permanent residence. It connotes a suspicious restlessness and unworthiness. Rondon designated a large village in the northern region with a great number of constructions around a major house and ample plantations as representing "*a regular and semi-nomadic life*" (s.d.1: 231). It is noteworthy that even with these qualifications he still considered the epithet *semi-nomadic* justified.

The issue of nomadism is academic to the debate among anthropologists but was hardly innocent in the beginning of the twentieth century when evolutionary schemes based on general common sense stereotypes were prevalent in Western societies. At the time when evolutionism functioned as a descriptive tool shaping *scientific* social interpretation, it was the commonly shared belief of the scientist, the positivist and the general public that the Nambikwara were uncivilized and backward. Compared to other Indian peoples their savageness and wildness justified the application of more violent means for defense or domination. A German geologist who accompanied Rondon in 1908 described a partially *sedentary tribe* with nomadic inclinations. He recognized *a certain degree of*

civilization because of the presence of well-made houses in villages and the sizable horticulture while the Indians at the same time traversed *large tracts of land on hunting trips*. As Price comments, all this concerns their position on the evolutionary scale of value. This type of value assignment applies to Rondon's attempt vigorously seeking to disprove accusations of cannibalism. In sum, divested of the value judgments, Price regarded these reports as evidence that the Nambikwara mode of economic adaptation did not change significantly between Rondon's time, his own, and Aspelin's research some sixty years later A few years after the debate Aspelin (1979a) reexamined the historical evidence I drew on above to confirm the highly probable scenario that the Nambikwara were not originally nomadic. Instead, these judgments may stem from too limited a theoretical paradigm (as in Rondon's case), or a fieldwork too limited in time (as with Lévi-Strauss). Viewed in this light, the Nambikwara proved far less primitive than the allegations claimed and this was important to some narrators to raise their status. On the other hand, such partially raised prestige remained incomplete and a practice like moving a village after some years still counts as unstable, perhaps *semi-nomadic*, behaviour. Maybe not barbarians but still savages, the Nambikwara still qualified for the pedagogical tutelage of the state for *improvement*. Worse, the idea of nomadism continued in full force among the personnel of the Line, people whom, understandably, hardly ever ventured beyond their posts and rarely visited villages but were instead visited by the various peoples (Aspelin 1976: 8)[xliv]. In stark contrast to all of this debate, as far I know, all components of the Nambikwara ensemble consider themselves sedentary and distrust people who wander about too much (Fiorini 2000).

From 1907 to the 1940s, the notion of sedentarization the errant or semi-errant Indians like the *nomadic Nambikwara* served as a cliché in the Service (SPI, Serviço de Proteção aos Índios) to implant a policy of attracting Indians, settling them, and constructing *modern* permanent villages. In such villages, the *responsible* functionary would unite a maximum of separate groups and then these are *administered* by an employee of the Service. In effect, imposing a *benign protection* to teach *modern* methods of subsistence and *raising the cultural level* of the Indians while augmenting their production level. The byproduct of such an endeavor was the liberation of the now *superfluous* lands to worthy settlers while the *nomadic condition* justifies the exercise of a strong mode of domination. Nomadism carries a remarkable number of stereotypes like being marginal, autarchic, and being socially frozen from immemorial times.

Significantly they are viewed as societies without real occupancy, as very loosely related to the land they inhabit. Sedentary villagers tend to regard nomads as menaces, brigands, and overall archaic reprehensible autonomous people. The state apparatus usually adheres to the opinion that such people should be compelled to settle as soon as feasible, without regard to any specificities (see Digard (2000) for a general discussion). Therefore, when the Service policy makers and statements stress nomadism and the need for action such appeal is, politically and administratively speaking, far from an innocent statement of a supposedly ontological state. In fact, when one of the major goals concerns the fixation of nomadic or errant peoples and groups the intervention proposed consists of the total subordination and transformation of economic and sociocultural ways of life in accordance with absolutely distinct notions of economic activity and social organization (cf. the analysis of Lima 1995; for example, chapter 8)[xlv]

Another view of history

The Service made an effort to establish a foothold in the Nambikwara region in the twenties, without much success (Price 1978:150). Getulio Vargas' ascent as dictator in the thirties and the personal vicissitudes of Rondon's political life in this context always made itself felt in the rise and fall of the funds and power of the Service. The Service was crucially linked to its founder and major protector, Rondon, whether as its direct patron or under his indirect direction (Lima 1995). In the forties some of the prestige and influence of Rondon was recovered when the so-called *New State* (an authoritarian state) also proposed *a march to the west* and such undertaking brought Rondon closer to the president. The Service patronized a renewed search for the mines of Urucumacuan, a mystical place who many believed in, Rondon included. The search mainly went along the upper Pimenta Bueno River (also known by its prior name as Apidiá). The mines were never found, but contact was made with the diverse Indian nations that peopled the riverbanks. By this time, the rubber patrons had subjugated most or all the peoples of the region and forced them to work in the rubber gathering enterprise. Here the representative of the Service encountered Indians like the Massacá (future Aikaná) and Kwazá and promised to found a Indian Post to come to their assistance. This proposal failed and the Post never materialized to replace the rubber trading posts. As noted in the previous Part regarding the Latundê, this episode practically disappeared from the memory of the agency and the resurgence of the Aikaná took considerable time[xlvi]. It is not coincidental that

the journey and the planning of this effort happened in the Second World War when the rubber collecting in Amazonia regained some of its drive because of the necessity of the product in war machinery. With North American demand and finance, the rubber gathering revitalized interest in the region and a wave of *rubber soldiers* migrating from the poor Northeast Brazil were employed to furnish the cheap labor essential in the rubber extraction economy. The wide distribution of the individual trees in the forest required manpower and resulted in a pattern of extensive occupation of very large areas.

The renewed interest also brought the state to renovate its own interests in the region. The Indian peoples suffered because of the renewed pressure to cede their territories to the invaders. Usually by violent means or at the very least backed up by the potential of force, the invaders expelled or killed them. In addition, in some cases, they suffered because of the attempts at subjugation and to press the men and their families into the tapper mold as regimented cheap labor. The state as the formal holder of the monopoly of power and violence at this time did not really possess the necessary independence of local power structures to impose itself as the sole legitimate executive branch of the official regime of law and order. Thus, the Service expanded its network in the usually very difficult attempt to set itself up as the legitimate agency to deal with the Indians, as the sole lawful institution of state intervention and unsubordinated to the local interest groups. The region of the Nambikwara, of course, as Lévi-Strauss's travels make clear, featured a tense relation between the decadent pretentiously dominant Line and the effectually autonomous Indians. As Lévi-Strauss was mainly interested in the sociocultural dynamics of the Indian society, his remarks about the *political unrest* (Lévi-Strauss 1976) appear mostly in Tristes Tropiques and he does not really analyze the interethnic relations and the fact that the tenseness emanates from the clash between the Indian autonomy versus the false superiority of the *civilized*. This was not as much a clash of civilizations as a conflict of distinct visions of the same fact and the opposing naturalness of the right to power. Consequently, in order to achieve a greater grip of the situation, in 1942 the Service installed itself in Espirro and initiated an important part of its operations in the area of the Nambikwara. It founded a new Indian Post between Campos Novos (on the Plateau) and Vilhena (the Post lies within the current *Indian Area Pyrineus de Souza* and was already designated by this name in the time of Lévi-Strauss; Aspelin 1976: 21). The founding of the Post along the Line corresponds to the temporarily increased interest raised and the

attempt of the state to implant a semblance of its *right* of disposal of people, the introduction of its goals and discipline, and *right* of the management of its *own territory*. To Rondon, it may have represented a belated sign of the worth of his Line. Noteworthy in this respect is that he may have been a strong proponent of modernity but he stubbornly insisted in communicating with the engineer in Porto Velho by means of the Telegraph Line even when the much more modern and rapid means of radio was already available (Dequech 1988).

The employee responsible for the Post set it up in a strategic area. Located in the territory of the northernmost group that belongs to the Southern language cluster it is simultaneously relatively near the limits of major groups of the Northern language set. Near, for example, the Mamaindê, some of whose villages were first located by Rondon's lieutenant north of Vilhena and which were abandoned a little later. Still later, more or less at the time of the establishment of a port on the Cabixi River in 1921, most of their villages apparently were settled near or on this river to the south of Vilhena. Here they suffered immense losses from epidemics. Subsequently they lived in a village, or villages, away from the river at some twenty kilometers south of the new Post. Essentially, they withdrew into the interior, away from the Line and other lines of penetration, but not so far away as to be unable to visit the nodes of civilized presence. As for the Sabanê, Rondon's prior reports put them far to the north but later they too apparently moved southwards. By the time of Lévi-Strauss they visited as far south as Vilhena, where he found a group in the company of the Tarundê. The Rondon Commission furnished a map of the whole area north of Vilhena, revised before its publication in 1915. The map shows an impressive number of *malocas* (the large houses) along both sides of the Tenente Marques River, a string of longhouses adding up to over ten units; they extended from the source going down river far beyond the settlement of Três Buritis. Unfortunately the map does not indicate which peoples lived in these houses. In the same region, however, the *Taganani* do merit a specific mention, and the symbols on the map that signal *houses* are specifically designated as *village*. Near José Bonifácio some three other *villages* appear on the map, one labeled as *village of the fishing Indians*. The large area not located near the Line or the paths that already crossed the region is left blank. In this way, the middle of the map shows a large White central area demonstrating the complete ignorance of the Indian settlement of the major part of the Northern region. Clearly the map proves the presence of a dense Indian population of those parts visited by the explorers, while a very large part of the region remained relatively

unknown. Although the map is not explicit on the issue, it still stands to reason that the Sabanê inhabited some or most of the indicated malocas in the area north-northeast of Três Buritis.

Lévi-Strauss drew a map where the Sabanê occupy an area above the strip of the Mamaindê territory (he still indicates a part as north of Vilhena) and extending to the north in the direction of the upper and middle Tenente Marques (spreading in the direction of the Roosevelt) and to the northeast to areas adjacent to the upper Aripuanã and along the upper Juruena Mirim (affluent of the Juruena). Probably about one year after the founding of the Post, a Sabanê was born on the Tenente Marques River. The man, known by his Portuguese name Manézinho Sabanê is one of the few elder Indians still alive today who was born and raised in an independent village. He narrates a slightly different but not necessarily contradictory history. From the point of view of the stories told by his own elders, the history of the Sabanê begins in the northeast part of the Northern cluster, in the direction of the town of Diamantino, Mato Grosso. Of course, historically the oldest towns elevated to the status of municipality included immense areas within their boundaries, in this case roughly the whole upper northwestern corner of the state[xlvii]. Although it is hard to ascertain exactly, it is likely that the site of origin must have been to the north of the Nambikwara do Campo of the Parecis Plateau and in the direction of the Aripuanã headwaters. It is uncertain how far to the north the territory of the early *Sabanê* extended as, possibly, the most northern component of the Nambikwara ensemble. It is certain that these lands shared one or more frontiers with enemy peoples, possibly the Cinta Larga or other segments of the Tupi Mondé configuration that may have occupied territories along the middle Aripuanã River at the time[xlviii]. The diverse peoples of the Tupi Mondé thus from this time on probably were the major enemy of the Sabanê (although, as seen above, others like the Manduka also made serious inroads). At the time of the Lévi-Strauss' expedition it was known that Indians from the Aripuanã attacked and killed the Sabanê (Faria 2001: 119). The local rubber-tappers called the Indians who killed the wife and a chief's son *Suruí* (Faria 2001: 131). Today the Suruí are located the northwest of Três Buritis but Tupi Mondé names at this point are unlikely to be clearly fixed.

One can be reasonably certain that the Sabanê used to live in an area in some way to the northeast of the major cluster of Northern Nambikwara which comprised a number of smaller peoples centering in the area from the Tenente

Marques to the Comemoração. This places the former territory on the edge of the total region of the Nambikwara Nation (to use Rondon's term) and the people in a habitat that is much more forest than savanna. The language and the information of the few available elements of Sabanê culture bear out this relative distance and approximation to peoples of other languages and cultures. As noted, the Sabanê language differs considerably from the two major clusters of the Nambikwara language family and it constitutes a separate branch. The degree of distinctiveness caused by language drift from the moment of linguistic separation from the major blocs of the linguistic family reveals the considerable duration of the division. Although definitely affiliated with the other languages, Sabanê is unique in that it is incomprehensible to speakers of the other languages and it features a number of distinctive characteristics. In much the same way, contrary to what Lévi-Strauss thought, the Sabanê so-called original culture also includes a series of traits or institutions that demonstrate a differentiation from the main body of the Nambikwara ensemble. For example, the Sabanê had a bachelors house that lodged the unmarried youths and adult men and which they left when they married into the house of their father-in-law. The source of this information, Manézinho, himself slept in this men's house. When his father remarried, the new wife went to live in his father's house, and, therefore, he felt that he could not stay at the house. Such a men's lodge does not exist among the other peoples of the Nambikwara family but is a familiar phenomenon among other peoples. In fact, the Rikbaktsa (Macro-Jê) who used to live north of the Nambikwara cluster, at the Juruena more or less at the same latitude as the Aripuanã Park do have a similar house for single male adults in their villages (Arruda 1998; in the fifties the Cinta Larga also expelled the Rikbaktsa from the western bank of the Juruena, see Dornstauder (1975); so its is possible the Sabanê at one time were neighbors of the latter, a connection suggested by the men's house; this accords with the map in Price and Cook (1969) where the Sabanê are *kolimisi*). In this case, perhaps, the hut may have been mostly a sleeping place for bachelors rather then a true men's house although it is said that Sabanê fathers did not allow their daughters to enter this hut. Furthermore, although my knowledge is unfortunately fragmentary, there are strong affinities with the Nambikwara ensemble in the architecture of the cosmos and its inhabitants. The cosmology shows relevant variations in the distribution of the layers in the sky and the localization of the habitation of the important supernatural figure of Thunder (the same powerful supernatural being invoked in the adventure of the headman recounted by Lévi-Strauss)[xlix].

In other words, in social organisation and cosmology the Sabanê vary significantly from the Northern Nambikwara, but on some essential features, like the seclusion ritual for girls experiencing their menarche and the basic components of shamanism, the similarities and analogies permit fruitful interaction and a basic mutual understanding. The narrator lived in some of the villages that were founded after the Sabanê arrived in the area around and between the Roosevelt (named *Yatalánma*, a kind of bee) and Tenente Marques (named *Kókia*, hawk) Rivers. He was born on the latter river and subsequently his kin moved to banks of the Roosevelt. The distance between the two locations implied in a two or three day trip that crossed the Três Buritis River (named *Waykía*, wood). In fact, Manézinho is one of the few people alive that grew up in the autonomous villages and can recount some of the flavor of the indigenous lived worlds in free villages in the forties and fifties. He recalls that the villages generally had a relatively large number of houses. According to his recollection, at least six, but on the avarage ten people inhabited each house. The Tenente Marques village was abandoned under pressure from the Cinta Larga, who descended upon the Sabanê and attacked all of the Northern Nambikwara branch from the north-northeast. He claims that this village had about twenty relatively small houses. The other village at the Roosevelt was called *Yatali* (dry wood) where he estimates that roughly the same number of houses each hosted around ten people, thus this village was larger than the previous. The numbers of houses and inhabitants are uncertain as the narrator must refer to the distant past and only learned to express exact quantities in Portuguese numbers in his adulthood. Still, they represent a secure indication of a number of houses and a total population that is not unusual compared with other forest peoples. It does not, however, agree with Roquette-Pinto's description of the smaller villages of the Northern Nambikwara[l].

Other villages existed and sometimes resulted from the fusion of smaller ones for defensive purposes. One village to the northeast at the Tenente Marques named *Titotá* (the larger species of peccary) was under permanent risk of attack by the Tupi, who were thought to live some twelve days away. A small village called *Ulúmatití* (tapir), localized to the southeast of the former suffered at least one battle with the raiders. Manézinho's village always attempted to exact retribution of its enemies and sometimes united with one and up to four other villages to make a counter-raid. The Sabanê accuse the enemy, usually called Cinta Larga, of taking parts of their victim's body as trophy and consuming it later. Manézinho

adds that they were selective enough to prefer *Whites* or Indians and rejected those of black people[li]. The Sabanê made arrows with eagle feathers for their raids. In their own engagements they intended to pursue and to kill the men and capture the girls to take them back to be incorporated into the village. Clearly the pressure from the north was heavily felt and caused dislocations and fusions but at several times a number of villages seem to have existed simultaneously. The population probably was greater than the small group encountered by Lévi-Strauss. This discrepancy may have arisen from either miscommunication about the existence of other groups in the more remote areas or perhaps because of a population surge. In general, the elder remarks that all of the Sabanê spoke the same language and were one people: *dërëbitimuli* (my people, my kin). The different villages, on the other hand, did not always enjoy friendly relations and often *fought* each other. Therefore, it is quite possible that the people on the Line and Lévi-Strauss did not know about Sabanê higher up north. However, most groups entertained personal relations with the stations because of the goods to be obtained, especially steel instruments. Such an inducement to contact should motivate visits of possible other villages. Note that Rondon's and the commission's reports mention a group called *Iaiá.* This word is probably is derived from a Sabanê kin term (elder brother and parallel cousin) and hence this may have been another Sabanê village. The name of the Sabanê themselves might very well stem from *sapáne* (younger sister); Lévi-Strauss (1948b: 31) gives *sabáni* as younger sibling and *iáia* as elder sibling. The name Tawaindê resembles the Sabanê word for hunter, *tawánte* (for both terms G.Antunes 2001: personal communication; also Antunes 2004). This shows that the Sabanê language apparently influenced the group naming. The profusion of names and the temporal changes, of course, depend on who conferred what name, to whom and at what time, but by this derivation the label could be a referral of one Sabanê group to another. In that case different Sabanê villages may have been named as if different groups. It is also possible that some Sabanê village was unknown or differently named in Lévi-Strauss's time.

Thus, Manézinho claims that the Sabanê left the region to the northeast under pressure from other peoples. Fighting with these neighbors – at one time he named the *Cinta Larga*, *Nambikwara*[lii] (in regional parlance restricted to the Campo group, for example the Halotesu), *Salumã* (now officially renamed Enawenê Nawê; an Aruak speaking people close to Paresi), as the peoples *whom were killing us* – they fled until they thought to be out of reach and settled down

again. In fact, recently the same elder saw the photos of a poor Brazilian family that invaded the Enawenê Nawê area in the eighties and paid for their audacity with their lives. The mutilated corpses pierced with arrows reminded the Sabanê very strongly of the victims of his own war and he identifies this people as one of their old enemies[liii]. In the region existed a large village called *Kulimansi*, a place name, which is thought to have lodged all of the Sabanê at one time[liv]. Although this may be a more mythical reference to emphasize the common ancestry, it certainly coincides with the notion of the existence of large villages before and after arriving in the Roosevelt region. It is thought that the fragmentation into smaller villages only happened later. One striking point in this history of gradual migration is the constant reference to a withdrawal from villages and adjacent fields that was accompanied by the return to pick up plants, roots, stems and seeds from their old cultivated lands. They appear to have always gone back to collect the produce of their fields and gather the means to recreate the gardens in the new territory.

According to this account, the Sabanê were a thoroughly sedentary people that under normal circumstances changed their village sites every few years (Manézinho once mentioned ten years). They lived in settled villages and highly valued their horticultural activities. After felling the new fields sometime in the beginning of the dry season, the village dispersed for some time into the forest for hunting and gathering but they returned for the burning and planting in August, to live in the village afterwards[lv]. They buried the dead in a particular tree bark with all of their possessions *for the spirit* within the house without abandoning the construction. The house was fortified with a wooden infrastructure of about a meter high from the ground, circling around the perimeter. Burial in the house and the wooden construction are not usual Nambikwara practices, although Roquette-Pinto suggests some wooden underpinning for a house of the Northern Nambikwara and the latter (Lakondê) use the same technique for the enveloping the dead within a tree bark to serve as the coffin. The most remarkable distinctive feature of the Sabanê concerns Mané's assertion that the married men used to sleep on the ground, the young men sometimes did the same, but the bachelors also used to sleep in hammocks. Moreover, and particularly revealing, his own father knew how to weave and actually fabricated hammocks. Whether or not was taken over from allies or enemies in the high north-east is unknown. This practice distinguishes them from other members of the linguistic family which categorically refused the use of the hammock and the adoption of the

corresponding weaving technique. Also, contrary to the entire major bloc of the Nambikwara ensemble, the Sabanê preferred to live in the forest, near a savanna and running water, but not in the open savanna[lvi]. In these aspects the Sabanê differ from the normal attributes that most saliently characterize the so-called *Nambikwara* (as if a nominal group that implies a basic similarity and identifiable as one *Nation*).

The mention of the *Nambikwara* as an original enemy may have been an involuntary admission but the two groups certainly did not maintain any previous friendly relations. During a later interview, Manézinho described how contact was made. When the Sabanê encountered unknown or previously unfriendly peoples, they followed a mode of establishing alliances that seems to have been generalized among all the neighboring peoples and of which the Nambikwara case was one particular instantiation. Unfamiliar groups were approached with the utmost care, in order to test their willingness to forge a friendly relation and avoid enmities. This friendship had to be created as the other Indians rarely *liked us* initially. Some peoples immediately waged a war after the discovery of the presence of the intruding Sabanê was discovered and peace was not reached. All of the other peoples always feared or distrusted the Sabanê. Each of the newly encountered groups always had to be gradually convinced of their good intentions. Therefore, entering the area of the unknown Northern Nambikwara and, apparently, part of the Southern Nambikwara signified a potentially dangerous enterprise. In fact, the premise of the world outside of the own local group as a very menacing place appears prevalent among other elders of all peoples living in Aroeira. Probably the same conceptualization of the outside still holds for the younger generation as they still believe that illness and death result from sorcery of angry or envious Indians (even from their own people; this could be a reason for the internal disagreements and fragmentation within the Sabanê)[lvii]. A means of conveying good intentions was to "*talk to them*", even if no common language could be found. First from a distance they called out that they were friends and did not harbor any violent designs. One day a courageous Sabanê tuxauá of around forty or fifty, an *urikapari* (a strong leader, translated as *boss* in Antunes 2004: 251), mustered the courage to approach the Nambikwara and came face to face with them. After this contact that *familiarized* the unknown Indians to their presence, they initiated the trading of all sorts of objects – things like feathers, arrows, bows, necklaces, threads and cotton. This may be similar to the silent trade witnessed by Lévi-Strauss (1976a; orig 1942) where the

participants exchange objects without bargaining or conversation. This may be a delicate phase because the same author notes that the silentness potentially generates grudges about the varying appraisals of the values inherent in the objects exchanged. Manézinho said, they did not know that we are good, that we do not harbor bad intentions and *are not like animals*. This sort of exchange should therefore not be understood as simply trade of objects not produced by oneself. Although not absent, in its multifarious aspects it is rather more a representation of something closer to diplomacy, the social enactment of a new friendly tie and strongly of a political character.

After a process of becoming accustomed to each other and gradually being convinced of genuine intentions, the two groups began to learn each other's languages, and participate in each other's feasts and rituals. They showed their respective singing and dancing skills. Lévi-Strauss's description (1984: 357-9) of singing and trading confers with Manézinho's short observations which do not, however, mention altercations between the men of the two groups that clear the air by venting their griefs. But then again, such interaction normally would require the understanding between incomprehensible languages and thus only can come about in time. In this way the Sabanê founded their new relation to the *Nambikwara* (in the restricted regional sense) in a template of interaction that, judging from the case of Rondon and the Latundê, was and is shared by all groups, irrespective of language and cultural distinctions[lviii]. In the first phase, after some measure of friendship, the parties listen to each other's musical and festive performances and invite the other group to attend their rituals. In time some people starts to learn the other's language and after a while they can communicate and provide the link to a better communication and comprehension between villages. The Sabanê engaged in a regional web of relations in this manner that also included the Kithaulu (northwestern neighbours of the *Nambikwara*). The whole set of allies were on bad terms with the Manduka (the most northwestern of the Savanna Nambikwara) and with the Mamaindê. In this way, before reaching the Northern Nambikwara region and familiarize with the (as yet unknown) Tawaindê, the Sabanê are said to have inhabited the area north of the *Nambikwara*. That is, in all likelihood, in a region to the north of, or even part of, the northern tip of the Nambikwara reserve, or to the north of the lands immediately adjacent Enawanê Nawê (and, as seen, close to the Rikbaksta). Being friends (*dërërëbiti*), means being invited to feasts and bringing food for the occasion, observing and participating in dancing and singing rituals, and

exchanging objects to foster a mutual understanding.

This mode of alliance assures part of the necessary peace with important peoples in the vicinity. However, this amity does not include the exchange of women until *we are very well acquainted*, the Sabanê failed to achieve this level of social integration with the *Nambikwara* and the Kithaulu. In a reconstruction pieced together from what Manézinho told Antunes and I, the pressure of other peoples again drove them on and they ventured in the direction of the Tenente Marques. Looking for another place to live in peace, the Sabanê moved on. Initially, they saw few indications of other people but eventually they spotted human tracks during hunting, fishing and scouting expeditions. Alerted by the traces of human occupancy, careful observation from a certain distance revealed that the other's language was incomprehensible. After discovering the village and ascertaining the language difference, the Sabanê discussed the strange peoples' dispositions. They guessed that the others were peaceful (here Manézinho used the Brazilian vernacular, *manso*, *tame*, as opposed to *brabo*, *wild*). Some Indians of the group reconnoitered the terrain with an intent to initiate hostile activities, but the public opinion of a peaceful attitude prevailed. Three or four men then bravely attempted a direct face-to-face contact. The group contacted spoke a dialect the elder considers to be close to Tawaindê, a language and people that the Sabanê called *Sowaintê*. Lévi-Strauss (1948b: 12) mentioned the *sováinte* as the Sabanê name of part of Northern Nambikwara that live on the right bank of the Roosevelt River. They ended up living close by and further strengthened their ties learning the respective languages, taking the relationship further then the previous alliances. It is fairly certain that Lévi-Strauss witnessed such a process in a precarious stage, and it will be remembered that he stressed the enormous demographic decline suffered before. Lévi-Strauss did not know the outcome of this social engineering. In the case of the Sabanê and Sowaintê they drew so close as to exchange women. The Sabanê elder, however, recalls that the peoples were still populous. This opinion is furthered by his belief that living in the forest away from cities and civilization is much healthier than living near Whites[lix]. In this view, due to the mutual appreciation of each other's women as *beautiful*, a part the men of one people married women of the allies and vice versa. In the forest people died much less and generally enjoyed good health and, according to these recollections, from the exchange between both groups ensued a significant population increase. In this respect, the co-operation proved fruitful and new villages settled at the Tenente Marques and in the remainder of the region.

This still leaves with the question whether the Sowaintê are the Tarundê of Vilhena. The Sowaintê are Northern Nambikwara but Lévi-Strauss (1948: 53) already noted that their language is closely affiliated to Lakondê: a dialect group he called *b2*. Tarundê, on the contrary, pertains to the group *b1*, joining *tarúnde, maimãde* (ib.: 50). They would be survivors from two distinct local groups that used to live on the eastern bank of the upper Roosevelt. At the time the Tarundê wandered around Vilhena and received a visit from the *Kabixi*, coming from the south. This probably means this group was Mamaindê. During this visit the author treats the two local groups as if one group from dialect *b1*. The linguistic ability shown by Lévi-Strauss makes this close identification very likely. Hence the strong possibility that the Tarundê are a distinct local group of the Roosevelt River but, in regional terms, affiliated with the Mamaindê. On his map the *b2* area extends from the Guaporé Valley – the current Mamaindê territory – to the north of Vilhena towards the Roosevelt. As Price concluded that usually there existed a very close linkage between rivers, river basin and peoples or regional sets of local groups, this is either an exception of one regional set straddling the water sheds or the Mamaindê and the Tarundê actually considered one another very close, but different, regional sets. No one ever heard again of the Tarundê (no one Price knew, nor did he find a mention in the literature; Price 1978: 150). Of course, they may have renamed but it would be quite unclear as to under what name they would be known at other times. What is known is that the current Mamaindê are composed of remnants of local groups from the Valley (of the eastern side of the Cabixi River). And the only male survivor of the Northern Mamaindê from around Vilhena lives at Aroeira, and, it is commented, accuses the southern branch of having killed his relatives[lx]. Hence the strong possibility that the Tarundê were Northern Mamaindê or very close to them; and now they would be either extinct, or consisting of only one single person (possibly two, there are some unsubstantiated references about another woman). It is notable, incidentally, that of 68 quotations of words and phrases in *La vie familiale* only two are not from a Tarundê source. Really, Lévi-Strauss was right in pointing out the influence of the northern cluster in his ethnography even if his ecological description of Nambikwara land is definitely more appropriate to the Plateau.

Thus, in contradiction to the assertion of totally disastrous decline by Lévi-Strauss, the recollection also affirms that the populational strength of both groups did not really falter until after a period of some growth. Manézinho suggested that there was a population decline around the time of Lévi-Strauss but he does

not report a precipitous decline that engendered a reciprocal design to join forces with different peoples or villages. In reality, both local groups exchanged women but did not fuse. That is, not until the final dispersal of the Sowaintê the latter cease to exist as an independent people (a point I will return to below). Calling each other by terms of affinity and exchanging partners is actually not a project of fusion but the pattern of a normal more elaborated alliance. Here the primary contradiction revolves around the period before the personal memories of Manézinho and, partially, his experience of the later situation. On the one hand, as observed, the anthropologist did not really call attention to the total population of either people. On the other hand, a possible partial explanation concerns the fact that among most Amazonian indigenous peoples personal experience is much richer in detail than the reports on historical events before the narrator's life. The latter tend to be more stereotyped and less informative, reducing the content to a higher level of abstraction (Gow 2001). In discussing the years encompassing his childhood until adulthood, Manézinho envisions a number of roughly ten villages all with the same language and culture before the fusion. There was much inter-village participation in rituals and activities in a mesh of intense social relations. Each village in the web of villages constituted their own lived worlds of a free and viable specific mode of sociocultural life. For Manézinho, the major assault on the viability of the independent and autonomous Sabanê occurs gradually over his lifetime, culminating at the time when he was a young adult and the autonomous village life had to be abandoned.

Part of the Sabanê was drawn to or was coerced to go and live at the Post at Espirro (another point I will return to below). Another part of this group remained in the forest and maintained exchange relations with the José Bonifácio station. This station had been transformed into the centre and hub of access to external commodities of all Northern groups. In the forties and fifties, the Lakondê (probably originating in an area near the Melgaço River to the west), the Tawaindê (apparently living to the northwest of the station), and the Sabanê (in between the Roosevelt and Tenente Marques with at least once a village as far west as an affluent of the Comemoração River), still enjoyed independence and practiced intensive exchange relations amongst one another. As noted, the Sabanê entered this mesh of alliances even before Rondon's arrival. The project of allying with one of these Northern groups seems to have succeeded in replenishing group numbers. Simultaneously, the Sabanê reached a level of alliance relationships with the other Northern Nambikwara groups that

perpetuated the feelings of distinctiveness and a certain distance[lxi]. In the fifties, however, the Cinta Larga raised the intensity of their inroads in the region of the autonomous villages and all Northern groups began to suffer more severely. At the end of this decade and in the beginning of the sixties, despite the withdrawal in the independent villages away from White populations, the epidemics broke out again. The existence of José Bonifácio and the Indian Service Post with the Indian people forcefully contained in Espirro – although both cases represent only a precarious link and channel of external commodities and personnel from outside the region – must have functioned as a conduit for a continual flux of dangerous potential contamination. It is known that in similar situations epidemics struck early and lingered for a long time before erupting again in the same region (Dobyns 1993: 275).

The telegraph station allowed young male Indians to work periodically and to earn some wages to obtain steel tools. Sometimes entire villages camped near the small interethnic station although no people, village, or group seems ever to have moved to the immediate vicinity and give up its independence. The station, by the way, created it own complex interethnic micro-cosmos – with a few *Whites*, some Paresi Indians and local Indians married to the personnel comprising a small permanently resident village[lxii]. Different groups did not make camp jointly in the vicinity but, as clear sign of distinctiveness, raised temporary shelters on their own near the compound. It did create an environment of meeting all other groups of the large region and several or, maybe, many people learned other languages in this linguistically diverse environment. Manézinho was at this time a young adult and acquired some knowledge of Lakondê, Tawaindê, and Portuguese while working. In addition to her mother tongue, Lakondê, Teresa learned Sabanê very well as she was exposed to it at a young age when playing with the visiting children. From her Paresi foster father she also learned Portuguese. Her rapid acquisition of these languages stems, at least in part, from the fact that she was exposed to them when she was only three, an opportune time for language learning. Her case confirms that small children with the innate potential to acquiring native competence can do so in more than one language (here aged about three). Manézinho, a native speaker of Sabanê and a stern critic of the abilities of second-language learners, affirms that Teresa is a very good speaker (although she has had little opportunity to speak this language for most her life). From the previous transcript of the template of action from contact to alliance, a strongly positive attitude towards multilingualism transpires. The mould of

practice thus probably partakes of a favorable pan-Nambikwara disposition towards competence in various languages. In the multi-ethnic meeting-ground of José Bonifácio, this disposition favored the acquisition of various foreign languages. Observe that these peoples were not only interested in the so-called *national language* as the primary *lingua franca*. In this historic period, all Indian languages and dialects prospered as long as the native speakers did, and even spread to members of other language groups.

One segment of the Northern Nambikwara, the Sowaintê, in a way merged with the Sabanê although not, it seems, as conscious project. No traces are known of some of the other groups and peoples due to the fact they either died out completely or the few surviving individuals integrated into other more fortunate groups or peoples. This is a complicated process of which little is known. For example, the *Navaitê* known to Rondon and whose territory was encountered by Rondon on his descent of the River of Doubt, after whom he named a tract of river rapids, later on disappear from the literature. This seems to have been the most northern group but Teresa believes that the Lakondê originally used to occupy a region situated much lower on the Roosevelt River. In that case this people would have been neighbors to the *Navaitê* or they could simply be the same people, having been renamed after the Line became decadent. As for the Sowaintê, I did not come across their name in the limited number of published reports from Rondon's epoch that I have been able to consult. This people experienced a process of gradual decline and diminishing numbers affecting their capacity to live as an independent group. According to Manézinho, whose wife is a Sowaintê, roughly three women and one or two men are the only remnants of this group now that they have submerged in the Sabanê and the scattered descendants do not appear to assume any collective identity. There are a few other parallel instances of this process. As seen, one elder Mamaindê now living in Aroeira belongs to a group of Northern Mamaindê originally inhabiting the Vilhena area and the Southern Mamaindê are accused of murdering their northern brethren (in the south originating from the Guaporé and Cabixi valleys). Only one other woman is said to be from the same people. This man does not live among the Mamaindê in the Guaporé the Southern Mamaindê Valley Indigenous Territory because he hates the *killers* of his close kin. This man's Mamaindê identity persists even when, in similar cases of disintegrated peoples, they usually are subsumed within a larger people.

Another example is the *Yakoloré*[lxiii], formerly neighbors of the Lakondê after they had moved to the south closer to José Bonifácio, a few descendants also may be living in Aroeira. Most of these fragments of former local groups and peoples nowadays are classified by outsiders as belonging to the predominant enduring groups, the Sabanê among them. Manézinho's wife, Ivone is normally known and registered as Sabanê. She herself affirms that she does not understand how the disappearance of her people came about. She recalls that her people died more because of internecine warfare with other Northern Nambikwara than of diseases, although she recognizes that both contributed to the mortality rate out when they lived in a patch of savanna in the Roosevelt region (the *Campo do Susto*). Her father left the region and lived among the regional Brazilians where she grew up. Despite this, as a young girl she maintained her original language, the *same as Lakondê and Tawaindê* (all close dialects of the Northern Nambikwara cluster). Curiosity even stimulated her to learn Sabanê from a Sabanê foster mother. She was taught this quite different language when she was an adolescent and now speaks fluently. Observe that people born in an autonomous setting show a strong favorable disposition to learn various languages. Of course, the necessity of isolated individuals to attach themselves to a viable local group and the customary interethnic marriages lead to very unfavorable circumstances for language maintenance. The language can normally only be spoken with the few other surviving kin (or those who learned the language when it was socially relevant). Consequently, their offspring tend to be assimilated into the larger ethnic group and their origin forgotten. This is the case for the children of Dona Ivone, all identified as Sabanê, and the same appears to hold for the other Sowaintê women. The Sowaintê amalgamated with the Sabanê and the result is assimilation and concomitant disappearance of ethnic and linguistic uniqueness.

Notes

[i] See, for example, the words of Darcy Ribeiro (1959) at the third Brazilian Anthropology Meeting (1958), shortly after Rodon's death. Ribeiro suggests that the Indians' humanity and right to existence and land did signify a considerable advance (an advance that sadly usually existed mainly only in theory). The principal right, however, was the freedom to *evolve* without constraint, the privilege to *naturally* adopt the superior Brazilian culture (see Abreu (1996: 108-135) for the development of hero-cults in Brazil with reference to Rondon).

[ii] Marcos Galindo claims that the phrase originates from a ghostwriter who

helped prepare Rondon's speeches and books (2002, personal communication). Rondon, in fact, cared very much about his public image. Marc Piault notes that Rondon always appears impeccably dressed even when filmed or photographed during expeditions, deep in the wilderness (2001, personal communication). He has examined the context of Rondon and images in detail (Piault 2001).

[iii] Mísia Lins Reesink 2002, personal communication.

[iv] Today several studies demonstrate that the management of the environment, for example the planting of palm trees, do imply in long-term strategies.

[v] Sometimes the literature employs the idea of a *subsistence economy* to this kind of situation. This notion carries some unfortunate connotations. The Indians did not live in a state of poverty nor were they at the limit of their production capacity without any *surplus*. The most important point here refers to a negative evaluation of this sociocultural mode of production, which is never considered sufficient as a method of integrating economic production and consumption, or as the conversion of means into socially acceptable sustenance. These issues are present in various debates concerning the anthropological economics of non-western or non-capitalist societies that demonstrate the difficulty of discarding the ethnocentric centrality of what, mostly uncritically, are *western* and *capitalist* characteristics (this includes the debate on equality and hierarchy in so-called *simple* societies; Flanagan 1989).

[vi] The Brazilian part of the expedition was known as the "*Roosevelt-Rondon scientific expedition*" to stress national participation. Such an expedition could have potentially hurt national feelings if not for Roosevelt's diplomatic behavior, sometimes described as *respect* by Brazilian contemporaries. The upper reaches of the Roosevelt river received a number of names. A small upper river was named after the son of the former US president and participant in the expedition, Kermit Roosevelt. It's noteworthy that this stretch of river has many rapids and waterfalls that probably had protected the Northern Nambikwara from the full impact of earlier intrusions.

[vii] Rondon remarks that the Paresi did not even sit on the ground. This contrasts to the Nambikwara who sit on the ground in a peculiar and culturally specific way. The Paresi stereotype probably implies a more general perspective than merely ways of sleeping (Machado 1998 : 234).

[viii] When Rondon compares the Northern Nambikwara with their Tupian neighbours (of the Pimenta Bueno), the trait of sleeping on the ground is explicitly mentioned as, among other things, a trait that classifies the latter as being *more advanced* than the former (Rondon 1916: 154).

[ix] This is the year Machado and others place the reference in their bibliography but the original has no publication date (it was republished in 1947).
[x] Already accustomed to *contact*, they even hunted with firearms. The leader Toilori expressed the wish to act as a collector of a certain medicinal root gathered only with expeditions during one season of the year (translated by Hemming (1995: 202) as the "*ipecac root*", this is *poaia*, in Tupi *ipecacuanha* according to Machado [1995: 259]). This collecting could be mounted in much more independent manner and participants would be free from the harsh exploitative regime of the *seringal*.
[xi] Note that Rondon's own observations may contradict the peaceful image of the Paresi. Rondon relates how twice the Nambikwara attacked the Paresi, who defended themselves with firearms, inflicting heavy losses. The Paresi even pursued them to a large village on another river far into Nambikwara territory (Rondon 1947:38-9). The assassination of over 40 Nambikwara contradicts the prevalent view. The nature of the relations between these two groups is a matter under discussion (the Paresi are subdivided into a few endogamous named groups). Fiorini (2001, personal communication) is elaborating the idea that their neighboring groups had developed some symbiotic relation between warriors and horticulturalists before outside encroachment (this is examined in more detail in Part III). Max Schmidt, who travelled through the area at the same time, believed the Paresi presented this pacific image purposefully while simultaneously using bows and arrows to assault Whites and blame the *savages* (apud Machado 1998: 301).
[xii] That is, the agency was also charged with colonizing any newly opened regions with agricultural laborers (see the extensive social analysis of its inception and origin that includes discussion regarding the construction of Rondon's hero image in Lima 1995).
[xiii] One such major chief went to Rio de Janeiro with Rondon after the expedition of 1910 and came back with many commodities, like cattle and a gramophone which, according to Schmidt, he used to consolidate a firm domination over his subjects (apud Machado 1998: 301). This reinforcement of inequality most likely derives from the economic development assistance sent by Rondon (see the similar disastrous effects of unequal access among the Yanomami, Tierney 2000). In other words, unintended or unforeseen consequences of *development aid* goes back at least as far as Rondon. It seems likely that this aid was intended for the community as a whole, not as private property.

[xiv] Price (1983b) discussed the changes of this name and the question of to whom it was applied. By the time of Rondon it was usually referring to Nambikwara of the Guaporé Valley (see Part III). For more information about Toloiri's role as the only collaborator, see Machado (1995: 254-5).

[xv] This hierarchy may have extended to a social hierarchy within each village where leadership may have had some hereditary aspect. Thus, the society would have been less egalitarian than usually presumed. According to Schmidt, the inter-village chief who returned from Rio with many presents changed the social conditions of his community. I take this to mean that the chief exploited the commodities to establish himself in a way analogous to the rubber debt peonage and position himself as an owner with real power instead of the superior, but relatively powerless, person he previously was. This was meant to reinforce older ideas about inequality and to transform into power differences.

[xvi] Actually, the expedition and Rondon collected many indigenous objects which he greatly valued according to the standards of the day, as the wealth and the pride of an ethnographic collection of the *unknown*. Many if not all of these objects were in the first collection of the National Museum in Rio de Janeiro, helping the institution establish itself as an important museum. The museum corresponded with its firm *scientific* support in the political struggle of Rondon and the positivists to justify the intervention of the state in interethnic relations, and aided in creating the Indian Protection Service, headed by Rondon himself. This mutually productive alliance encouraged Roquette-Pinto to propose the name of Rondônia for the northwestern part of Mato Grosso (see Lima 1995). Thus, the region that was once barely acknowledged, began to be effectively incorporated into the nation.

[xvii] This author takes a slightly more critical stance than some other biographers but he hardly contributes to the understanding of the making of the hero. In all likelihood the author felt somewhat restrained because the national oil company financed this edition with the explicit purpose to furnish the public a series of portraits of "*personalities that contributed to the formation of the national identity*" (opening page, Bigio 2000: 3). Image building continues and occasionally resurges in the Rondônia papers in respect to the great civilizing hero who gave his name to the state. The Indian Protection Service (SPI) had less qualms about using euphemisms and appealed to the argument that the protection and salvation of the Indians by the government assured the indispensable means to the "*conquest*" of the closed interior of the country (ib.: 35).

[xviii] Rondon mentions the saddle and carbine preserved in Brazilian museums but nothing about the chest protection that is supposed to have saved his life in other versions of this accident. There may be several versions of this famous encounter.
[xix] Supposing that the exploration arrived on the Ananaz River exactly from the Parecis Plateau, these other reports reveal the savanna to be different from the somewhat extreme poverty attributed to this ecosystem.
[xx] In the interest of pacification and science, no reservations about this kind of invasion and expulsion appear in the text, as if this complete invasion of the village is a normal act. The expedition's participants did plant maize in the field among the manioc to demonstrate their good intentions and, explicitly, to show the utility of their metal instruments (Rondon 1922: 34).
[xxi] Observations like these tend to show Rondon a natural leader who dispenses with stern discipline and force in favour of earning allegiance and devotion through example and natural authority. The guard shows the limits of this picture, substantiated by other examples (Zarur 2003: 269).
[xxii] The picture was taken on a 1908 expedition. It featured a large hut *ornamented* with various presents and the phonograph playing prominently. Note that despite the fact that this picture appeared in a work on *ethnography,* it features a clothed expeditionary beside the phonograph. The house itself seems to be more the scene of self exhibition than a picture of ethnographic value (Rondon 1947: n.p.). The presence of the phonograph demonstrates that Western music was seen as civilizing. The school at Utiarity used music to inculcate new civilized body discipline and set of dispositions, a very effective way to alienate the children from their own sociocultural background (Lima 1995: 308-9).
[xxiii] This is a rough translation of what may be the most quoted phrase of *Os Sertões*. The gulf between the elite conception of the Republic and that of the common soldier is also evident in the Canudos war described by the same author. This famous work is considered as a *classic* and has a special status in some circles. This work, assimilating the European scientific theories of the times, stressed the geographical and racial determinations of the people and their culture in the interior.
[xxiv] On *race*, its relation to ethnicity, and the notion of blood as a vector of physical and moral qualities and rapid historical overview of its history and persisting current relevance, see Reesink (2001).
[xxv] In the beginning of conquest the aim was to convert the Indians and strove for assimilation but small areas were sometimes declared reserved for Indian

occupancy. Much later this came to resemble North America: "*The expropriation of North American Indian lands eventually secured by the reserve system: Indians were given title to enclaves of land which were for the most part of only marginal use, along with token compensation for the loss of millions of acres of other land*" (Brody 1975: 225). As for Rondon, his were prophetic words; even in the nineties the former showcase of official indigenist action, the Xingu National Park, has been subjected to a long and difficult lawsuit brought on by land owners with falsified titles. For a history of the genesis of this particular and in many senses exceptional Indian Park, see Menezes (1999).

[xxvi] It is interesting to note here that the problem of the overextended supply lines also occurred at the time when the prestige and allotted funds of the Commission were at its peak, before the later decline set in. Rondon himself, apparently, did not lack the means when he himself travelled through the region.

[xxvii] What he did do was to follow the usage of Rondon and the Commission to apply the name of the Serra do Norte for the entire region from Campos Novos up to the limits of the Northern Nambikwara constellation of peoples, effectively mixing up the northernmost of the Southern Nambikwara ensemble with the former. In this way it is sometimes difficult to know which of the clusters certain information applies to.

[xxviii] He also speculated about the significance of the names of these groups. Sometimes he surmised a connection with a name in older documentation, sometimes he attributes the name to a kin term like *Uncles* and hypothesizes that might be because they are the *most primitive* group of the *tribe*. In this reasoning the Nambikwara themselves are seen as evolutionists, but sometimes the naming proceeds clearly through the alter-classification customary among the entire ensemble of peoples although not an expression like uncles or children, which in all likelihood derived from a misunderstanding or mistranslation. The respondent may have answered a question about the name of a group with who in the other group he knows (see Price 1972 and later publications for an exhaustive treatment of such names, this is examined in the next Part).

[xxix] He remarked on a large stone outside the house that was being used for cracking palm nuts. He casually noted that were it not for the enormous weight of the object he would take it to the museum ignoring the necessity of discussion with the owners. As mentioned, Rondon restrained himself when visiting an abandoned village in spite of the enormous ethnographic worth. His honesty was motivated by the obligation to foster goodwill. Visiting in the name of science apparently allowed for some special liberty. As seen, Rondon posted a guard and

the practice of just taking Indian things in this sort of situation was normal for those of the interior. Regardless, although ordinary thievery was socially intolerable and a very despicable action in the interior, taking Indian objects was not judged so harshly.

[xxx] The geologist of the Roosevelt-Rondon expedition concurred. He described the savanna around Vilhena as the last natural one and comprised of a red clay and sand mixture. This could have been an additional reason for its growth into a town. From here on the savannas are the result of the action of man while the forest and vegetation attains increasing heights and Três Buritis is surrounded by high forest full of valuable timber (*madeira de lei*). Both Três Buritis and José Bonifácio are built on what were known as *Indian savannas* (Oliveira 1915: 33;47).

[xxxi] On this issue, he differs with Roosevelt. Although Roosevelt did agree with Rondon on a number of issues, for example he too considered the *nakedness* of the Indians to be *entirely modest*, yet they still were, to him, the wildest and most primitive savages he ever came across in his travels, even when compared to what he called the African tribes at the same stage of culture (Roosevelt 1914: 208; 210).

[xxxii] Rondon does not say so but it would make sense if these were destined to one of the groups as visitors and the main house is that of the hosts.

[xxxiii] The popular book, *Missão Rondon* (1916: 242) also reports the same solemn occasion in very similar words. It is mentioned how many Indians of the *Taú-i-tês* participated and how one girl was assigned to raise the flag, in commemoration of the newly achieved *peace* with Rondon.

[xxxiv] From the recent experience of the festivities around the so-called *500 years of Brazil* event, I conclude that the audience and public generally accepts unquestioningly the never explicit notion that the Indians at the *first mass* actually acted out of some kind of natural respect for the religious event, not simply out of mimetic politeness for the Portuguese.

[xxxv] It has even been argued that Rondon was well suited for the task to enhance this alliance on the personal level with Roosevelt because of his experience with the *attraction* and *pacification* of *savages*. That is, to pacify Roosevelt, as it were, and gain his respect for Rondon and his country (Zarur 2003: 262-3). In this he apparently succeeded, it seems Roosevelt came to admire Rondon and, by extension, his work and country.

[xxxvi] Forebodingly, the name “Espirro” means “sneeze”.

[xxxvii] As Lévi-Strauss commented, he knew them already decimated by

epidemics but still, after Rondon's humanitarian efforts, *no one had attempted to subjugate them*. Put differently, enjoying the autonomy of following their own way of life unencumbered by outside interference and domination (ib.: 345-6).

[xxxviii] He drew the conclusion about homogeneity on the basis of the material available most of which he collected in the course of this extremely arduous research. He did, at a certain point warn that the because of the lack of clear communication with the Sabanê: "*Il ne m'appertient donc pas de présenter son point de vue*" (1984: 362).

[xxxix] This quote comes from *For Authentic Sexual Education* by Cardinal Lopez Trujillo, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family. This talk was given at the seminar on Parental responsibility for sex education, London, September 1999 (Text available on Internet, accessed 2000). This example of cultural relativism is only one example among many but has the advantage of showing how cultural relativism is always contested by those high-ranking professionals in the religious hierarchy in pursuit of maintenance and increase of their religious capital. Needless to say the instance cited is not purported to be any condemnation by Lévi-Strauss.

[xl] [Une societé réduite] "*Celle des Nambikwara l'était au point que j'y trouvai seulement des hommes*" (ib.:377). What I interpret to mean they are still normal and complete human beings in the fullness of a specific mode of social life.

[xli] At least as far as concerns a picture in *Tristes Tropiques* which shows the play between two Indian girls; he already claimed to understand the situation differently (*O Globo* Nov. 28, 1998). Modern linguistic research cannot yet confirm or deny the meaning of the phrase in the bishop's quote (Telles 2002, personal communication; she does not recognize the phrase).

[xlii] Debate in the *Bijdragen tot de Taal, Land en Volkenkunde*, 1976, nr. 132 with the article by Aspelin and comments by Lévi-Strauss and Price. The latter wrote a *Final Note* citing early evidence of another observer participating in Rondon's expedition in support of the predominantly sedentary life style (a German ethnographer; Price 1991). However a recent general investigation into the living conditions of the Amazonian rainforest peoples (among other rainforest areas), still found it necessary to explain that *their previous reputation as nomads has been disproved* (website: lucy.ukc.ac.uk/Sonja/RF/Ukpr/Report49.htm; accessed 2000).

[xliii] He calculated over three hundred people for five villages and that would amount to over sixty people per village. He speaks about a number of make-shift shelters put up around the inner circle but also mentions the presence of visitors

from another village, so that might very well be the reason for this precarious arrangement. The *Missão Rondon* ventures the assertion that the shelters are family dwellings and the house serves as storage of the crops but this may be due to the same circumstance. Additionally, people such as the Sararé prefer to sleep outside, but otherwise live in houses.

[xliv] In his comment, Lévi-Strauss does not acknowledge this probable influence but cites the missionaries as witnesses to *the common knowledge* that the northern bands were far less sedentary than the southern. However, the mission can only be the one at Utiarity, which was established shortly before his arrival. Thus, the common knowledge could still very well derive from the people on the Line. It is notable that Lévi-Strauss paints a clear picture of the fears of the employees and the generally tense and always problematical relations entertained with the Nambikwara. Abandoned, hardly trained and of regional origin, their common sense must have been close to the normal stereotypes about Indians and hardly representative of Rondon's earlier attempts to elevate these views. Rondon actually had a harder time to impose his humanist conceptions and discipline than is generally assumed. Roosevelt (1914: 216) even mentions that twice soldiers had deserted their little lonely stations and fled to the Nambikwara. He suggests that the soldiers went to live permanently with the Indians, an unsubstantiated and unlikely conclusion.

[xlv] The discussion on Nambikwara nomadism also has an important place in the contributions of all three protagonists after a polemic article by Price, in the same journal reviewing the former discussion. This debate took a somewhat more problematic turn and need not be reviewed again for the present purpose. Suffice to say that Price adduces further support and that the two recent ethnographers agree on the rejection of nomadism; Lévi-Strauss contends to have already abided by the empirical evidence mustered in the first place, only raising some questions as to possible sources of discrepancy (see Price 1978;Lévi-Strauss 1978; Aspelin 1978). As said, Aspelin (1979) re-affirms the picture as does Aytai (1981) in a very little known contribution. Aytai only suggests that a particularly heavy drought may have fostered an abnormal situation witnessed by Lévi-Strauss.

[xlvi] Even though the travels of Duquech were mentioned in a book by the Service in 1944 and various pictures of these peoples were published (Magelhães 1944).

[xlvii] In 1728 gold was discovered in Diamantino by Gabriel Antunes Maciel and the region began to be regularly visited and conquered (Dornstauder 1975: 2).

[xlviii] In 1941 the mining engineer Victor Dequech (1943) visited the upper

Apidiá, now usually called the Pimenta Bueno River prospecting for gold and minerals. He did meet the Indians on the river, who had regained much of their autonomy with the decline of rubber tapping. He situates a mysterious Nambikwara group between the Apediá and Vilhena, adjacent to the current Latundê Area but locates the Sabanê, Xolandê and Mamaindê west of the upper Comemoração river, west of the Roosevelt river. Although he was a very astute observer of his own travels, he did not visit this region and based this possibility on hearsay. Regardless, it is interesting to note as an index of the extension of the occupation of the Northern Nambikwara cluster at the time.

[xlix] The comparison made here refers to narratives about the levels in the sky and their characteristics for the Lakondê and Sabanê as told by Tereza Lakondê and Manézinho Sabanê.

[l] This ideally consisted of two opposing houses, even if this plan did not confer with the single-house village visited by Rondon. One wonders why this dualistic picture is not mentioned by Lévi-Strauss when he definitely proposed dualism for the village plan in other cases; however, he did not visit any real village and his tendency to note and point to all forms of social dualism finds an outlet in the seasonal differentiation and his notion of the merging of the Sabanê – Tarundê.

[li] Keep in mind that in studying the Cinta Larga, João del Poz claims in these earlier days the distinctions between the different Tupi Mondé groups are blurred and the name in question seems to be used indistinctively for all of them. It seems likely that these attackers were indeed Cinta Larga. The mother of the narrator was a victim and the enemy took body parts but not the head, as was Cinta Larga custom (Del Poz 2001, personal communication).

[lii] The Nambikwara in question refer to the regionally designated *Nambikwara* do Campo cluster living on the Parecis Plateau. These peoples are given as extending up to latitudes as high as Três Buritis which would make this possibility plausible and the Sabanê might have been in the middle of these enemies (the Nambikwara and Enawenê to the east or south and the Tupian groups to the north).

[liii] This information was gathered with Antunes (2002, personal communication) at the Funai administration in Vilhena. Antunes also generously supplied the data on the history of the Sabanê villages.

[liv] It is noteworthy that the Enawenê live in one large village of some 250 persons (Valadão 1998). In the diary of Castro Faria cited above it remains unclear but at times he seems to imply that the Sabanê lived in one maloca or at least with many people within the same village.

[lv] The same sort of temporary period of foraging is known among other forest peoples, like the Arawetê (Viveiros de Castro 1992). Here this conduct regards a social event, a trek, and is not so much any kind of nomadism or caused by any insufficiency of sustenance (actually Southern Nambikwara do the same, see Part III). I suspect the same may have been true in this case as the aim also consists of stocking up meat to eat in the village. As said, the Sabanê are probably more like a forest people and, due to fear of another flood that killed many people in the mythical past, do not live near the larger rivers.
[lvi] In this description of similarities and differences, one important distinctive feature coincides: piercing the upper lip and the nose (see Price 1972). This practice was abandoned a long time ago.
[lvii] Shamanism continues to be very important even after the language shift of this generation and appears to be a very relevant practice even in the face of other sociocultural changes. It seems to adapt to knowledge of the new world created by the White man. The shaman consults the spirits to establish if some illness is *Indian* or *White*, and is to be treated accordingly.
[lviii] Lévi-Straus mentioned that the exchanges can be based on a real need of objects not locally produced, probably either raw resources or handicraft. However, except perhaps an item like suitable stone for tools, the exchange of women and people certainly enables learning other methods of fabrication. So, just like the hypothesis about the exchange of items at the Alto Xingu by Pedro Agostinho (1999, personal communication) this may in fact entail a renunciation to a skill exercised by another in order to maintain a kind of social group division of labor, each group had their ability. Lévi-Strauss noted that some Nambikwara peoples did not produce ceramics and so participated in exchange. The Sabanê, in fact, did know to fabricate cooking pots and exchanged them with some of their Northern Nambikwara neighbors for things like feathers and necklaces. Trade is for social relations rather than scarce goods. As Price (1989b: 36) said: "*People who trade are people who intermarry; and people who trade do not make war on each other*".
[lix] In a way this possibility reinforces the possibility of other Sabanê living in the area at the time. Although this does not become clear in Tristes Tropiques, in the academic thesis there is a clear reference that the group at Vilhena was only a fraction of the Sabanê. They were at odds with the old allies of their own people. Relations of *antagonism* (ib.: 50; 103) would explain the search for other allies, even of another people.
[lx] Vilhena is far away from the source of the Cabixi River, although it small

creeks run to the north. In Vilhena the denser vegetation along the same streams used to be cultivated by Mamaindê. That is, my collaborators asserted that 'Vilhena belongs to the Mamaindê'. Note that is about the only place where the high lands separating river basins permit very easy passage from set of rivers running south to the other running north. Hence the possibility that the Mamaindê regional set extended into another basin. Near Vilhena lies the high ground from which several rivers start running in various directions. Among them the Pimenta Bueno River and this shows how the Mamaindê used to be close to the current position of the Latundê. Finally, Stella Telles (2006, personal communication) points out that the Mamaindê dialect group differs in certain syntactic features from the Lakondê dialect group Hence, if the Tarundê and Cabixi easily mixed and conversed freely, then they very likely did belong to the same dialect group. This is why other regional sets may be calling them by the same name.

[lxi] Lévi-Strauss claims that *a proper distance* permits friendly relations and all sorts of exchange – Mané even mentioned that his Sabanê village readily gave food to needy allies. Such a distance does not threaten to erase ethnic differences and attendant sentiments of some permanent distrust.

[lxii] This is the place where Teresa Lakondé was raised when her *mother* (maternal aunt) became remarried to a Paresi Indian employee. Other Indians sometimes hold not being a *village Indian* against her today. However, her knowledge of Lakondê culture is large and, with the death of her brother, the last strong leader, unique.

[lxiii] Perhaps the name comes from the "*village Ialaquiauru of the Tauitê*" mentioned by Rondon (1947: 34). But the Lakondê people called themselves Yalakolori, also close to this name Yalakiaoro, so any identification is conjecture.