The Languages of Indigenous Peoples in the Park of Xingu, Brazil

by

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The Languages of Indigenous Peoples in the Park of Xingu, Brazil*

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Summary:
The Indigenous Park of Xingu is a large mosaic of different peoples, living languages and diverse cultures located in Central Brazil. There are seventeen minority communities residing in the region and they speak sixteen distinct languages. The social and linguistic history of the Park has had the effect of making the area unique and therefore of major scientific interest. This paper describes this history and briefly traces its development from its origins to the present.

Le Parc Indigène du Xingu, situé au Brésil Central, est une large mosaïque composée de différents peuples, langues vivantes et cultures diverses. Dans ce Parc habitent dix-sept communautés minoritaires qui parlent seize langues différentes. L’histoire sociale et linguistique du Parc l'a rendu une région unique et particulièrement intéressante du point de vue de la recherche scientifique. Ce travail décrit brèvement cette histoire dès ses origines à nos jours.

O Parque Indígena do Xingu é um grande mosaico de povos diferentes, línguas vivas e culturas diversas. Localizado no Brasil Central, o Parque abriga dezessete comunidades minoritárias que falam dezesseis línguas distintas. A história social e linguística do Parque tornou a área de singular padrão e enorme interesse científico. Este trabalho descreve esta história e traça brevemente seu desenvolvimento desde suas origens até os dias de hoje.

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1. Introduction

In this paper I briefly trace the development of the Park of Xingu (PqXin - Parque Indígena do Xingu) from its origins to the present. I also outline the sociolinguistic context and comment on the effects that the changes now in progress in the park have had on this context, particularly on the field of education.

As I have done in a previous paper on language policy for minority languages in Brazil published in this series (Cunha, 1996a), I avoid the use of the word Indian throughout the paper. This word presents a systemic ambiguity in the English language: it represents both the natives of India as well as the native American inhabitants. In Portuguese, such ambiguity is avoided by the use of two different terms: indiano, the generic term used to define natives of India, and índio, the word used to designate indigenous peoples in the Americas. It is this last word that I chose when translating Megaron Txukahamãê's text from Portuguese into English. (See Section 3 of this paper.) The strategy has previously been used in the translation of Karandide Juruna by Grupioni & Ferreira (1993).

I generally use the expression indigenous people/s. However, whenever I am translating the names of Brazilian organisations and institutions that have the word índio, I respect the agreed translations into English which retain the term Indian and in which the more appropriate term indigenous is not used, e. g. Serviço de Proteção ao Índio translated as Service for the Protection of the Indian (and not Service for the Protection of the Indigenous People). As for the name of the park itself, I chose to call it simply Park of Xingu (Parque do Xingu) or PqXin (its acronym) because that is how people living and working in the area know it.

The Yudja, one of the seventeen indigenous groups who live in the Park of Xingu, have so far been identified as Juruna or Yuruna. However, Juruna is the language spoken by this group of 170 people. They identify themselves as Yudja. In this paper, I follow their use, except when referring to names which are officialised in I.D. cards, birth certificates and other documents (e. g. Karandinde Juruna).

2. The Park of Xingu.

The Park of Xingu is located in the State of Mato Grosso, right in the heart of Brazil. (See Map 1). Seventeen minority communities speaking sixteen different languages reside in this 33,400 km² area. The Yudja, a group of 167 people with whom I have been conducting my research, is one of them. (Cunha, 1996b; 1992a; Cunha and Seki, 1990; Cunha and Forest, 1989).

The mythological narrative of the Xinguang creation begins where the Xingu starts: in the confluence of three other rivers, Culuene, Batovi and Runuro. This place called Morená by the natives is situated in an extraordinary natural environment with extremely beautiful beaches. They say that
Mavutsinín, the creator of the sun and the moon, lived in Morená and, from there, the whole world was started. Mavutsinín created all the indigenous peoples and the different weapons which distinguished one tribe from another.

However, the written history of the people who have been living around the Xingu river basin and its tributaries only starts to be reported from the XVII Century. I divide this written history in four different periods.

MAP 1

The State of Mato Grosso and the Park of Xingu

The first is a period in which missionaries, researchers, journalists, military or merely adventurous people occasionally break the indigenous isolation in Xingu. One of the best known expeditions of this time is led by Karl von der Steinen, a German explorer who travelled through the region twice, in 1884 and 1887. Silva (1972) considers Steinen to be the first to have recorded the history of Xingu but my research with the Yudja has shown that, 250 years before, Parente (1625) had already reported having seen that group; in fact, his is the first written mention of the “Yuruna”. (See Chart 1). Later, the area was also visited by Hermann Meyer (1896 and 1898) Max Schmidt (1910); Hintermann (1924); Fawcett (1925); Dyott, 1928; Petrullo, 1931; and Quain, 1938. The contact the natives had with members of non-indigenous society was sporadic until 1943, when the Villas Boas brothers arrived in the area (Ribeiro, 1979).

Orlando Villas Boas, in official command, and his two brothers Leonardo and Cláudio led the famous Roncador-Xingu expedition which was
set up by the Central Brazil Foundation (Fundação Brasil Central) with the original aim of opening up the unknown heart of the interior for colonisation. The Central Brazil Foundation had been founded in that same year, during World War II. Its policy was to open new frontiers for settlement in a vast country - three times the size of India and 35 times the size of Britain - with a huge demographic vacuum in the central-western region. At the time, the federal government seat, Rio de Janeiro, was located on the coast as was the majority of the population. The government feared that the empty lands could somehow be made use of by the military powers involved in the conflict, whether Adolph Hitler's Germany or Franklin Delano Roosevelt's United States.

The Villas Boas brothers then entered inland travelling along the Das Mortes river until they reached the upper part of the Xingu river (Alto Xingu) in 1946. There they established a permanent centre of the Foundation by setting up the post Capitão Vasconcellos (later called Leonardo)\(^1\). Two years later, they founded another post, Diauarum, in the middle region of Xingu (Médio Xingu)\(^2\). Inevitably, the expedition introduced diseases which led to epidemic outbreaks but, at the same time, it brought the possibility of permanent medical assistance for the indigenous groups (Silva, 1971). Finding

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\(^1\) In 1962, the name of that post was changed in honour of Leonardo Villas Boas who died in 1961, the same year the park was officially created.

\(^2\) The Diauarum is the nearest post to the Yudja community who lives mostly in Tubatuba village, located on the left bank of the Xingu river, near the basin of the Manitsawá river.
themselves responsible for the survival of more than a dozen unknown or still uncontacted groups, the three brothers remained in the region after the expedition disbanded. They were overwhelmed by the beauty and cultural richness of the indigenous network they had encountered and they decided to stay and protect the Xinguans from the land speculators, diamond prospectors, skin hunters, and rubber gatherers who had followed in their wake (Bretcher apud Villas Boas, 1973).

The beginning of the second period of the written history of Xingu is when, after 1946, not only the Central Brazil Foundation but also the Service for Protection of the Indian (SPI, Serviço de Proteção ao Indio) and the National Airmail Service (Serviço Aéreo Nacional) began to work in the area.

The river Xingu from an aeroplane.

The contact between the Xinguan groups and different members of the dominant Brazilian Portuguese speaking society was intensified as several air strips and SPI permanent camps were established in the region. When research teams from the National Museum visited the area between 1947 and 1952, they became aware of the rapid changes Xingu was undergoing and joined the Villas Boas brothers in the idea of the establishment of a native park in the area. The park was to "serve both as a reserve and as a showpiece of a sector of Brazil in the throes of transformation and extinction". (Silva, 1972: 252).

This initial conception of the park as "a reservation of flora and fauna as well as of indios" (Ribeiro, 1979:19, my emphasis) was supported by two groups of people. First, social science researchers from bodies like the National Museum (Museu Nacional), the Osvaldo Cruz Institute (Instituto Oswaldo
Cruz), the National Research Council (CNPq, currently Conselho Nacional para o Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico), and the Institute of History and Geography of Mato Grosso State (Instituto de História e Geografia do Estado do Mato Grosso). These were, for the most part, people working within a traditional positivist paradigm, carrying out survey-type research and documenting quantitative trends in the region. The second group were government employees from SPI whose role was to defend the indigenous peoples against exploitation and oppression by conservative sectors of the mainstream society. Empowering research -- in the sense of working on, for and with the subjects involved in the project (Cameron et al., 1992) -- was not often undertaken at this time. It is only recently that researchers working in a more ethnographic, interpretative vein have become interested in observing and describing the situation in Xingu at the same time as being concerned with the defence of the indigenous people and empowering them to control their own lives.

From the beginning of the 1950's, the creation of a park in Xingu was discussed among representatives from different institutions culminating in a meeting set up by the Vice-President's office\(^3\). After the debate, the idea was officially suggested in a legal draft which was sent to the Vice-President's office on 27 April 1952, and later forwarded to the Congress\(^4\). The document proposed a vast territory (around 30,000 km\(^2\)) in which non-indigenous colonisation would be strictly forbidden. This delayed the creation of the park for nine years as land possession has always created tension in the relations between the native peoples and the dominant non-indigenous society since the Brazilian Republican period.\(^5\)

It was not until 1961 that the Park was marked out\(^6\) with an initial area of 22,000 km\(^2\); this was an area decidedly smaller than that which had been recommended nine years earlier. To the South, the Park was bounded by a parallel which began at the confluence of the Culuene and the Culiseu rivers and, to the West, it continued to the Ronnie river. From these two established points geodetic lines extended until meeting parallel 12° latitude South, at 40 km on both sides of the Culuene river. This 80 km wide strip followed the

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\(^3\) João Fernandes Campos Café Filho (1899-1970) was the vice-President of Getúlio Vargas (1982-1954) from 1951 until 1954 when the President committed suicide. After Vargas’ death, Café Filho assumed the government of Brazil until 1955.

\(^4\) The draft was originally signed by Brigadier Raimundo Vasconcelos Amorim, Orlando Villas Boas, and the anthropologists Heloisa Alberto Torres and Darcy Ribeiro (SPI (1953), Oliveira (1955), Silva (1972), Ribeiro (1979). Heloisa Alberto Torres was then the director of the National Museum and, at the same time, a member of the National Council for the Protection of the Indian (Conselho Nacional de Proteção ao Índio/CNPI).

\(^5\) Brazil was a Portuguese colony from 1500 to 1822, when it was declared an independent empire which lasted until the Republic was proclaimed in 1889. The Republican period which was marked by struggle between the indigenous peoples and the non-indigenous members of dominant society. (Cunha, 1996).

\(^6\) Decree No. 50.455, dated 19 April 1961.
bends of the river, bounded on the North by the corresponding segment of the parallel 10° latitude South.

More important than these geographical descriptions, the essential fact is that the Park was originally delineated according to its natural boundaries: in the Low Xingu (Baixo Xingu), the waterfalls impeded navigation towards the river’s source; to the South, the vast tablelands of Mato Grosso (Chapadão Mato Grossense) were an obstacle to the settlement of members of the dominant society. There were neither nuts nor rubber to attract outside gatherers.

The park - initially called the National Park of Xingu (PNX) -- now Parque Indígena do Xingu 7 -- embodied a different conception from the ‘Indian reservations’ in the United States. Often the North American indigenous peoples were compulsorily confined within the limits of a territory that was not always their original homeland and was not infrequently located in arid lands (Spence, 1914/94: 31-34). Due to the conditions under which the Amerindian territories were set up, the term ‘Indian reservation’ carries negative implications in English. On the other hand, the use of the Portuguese expression ‘reserva indígena’ implies a territory where advances on the part of members of the outer society should be controlled. The expression conveys the idea of restriction in the opposite direction.

In Xingu, from the beginning, the idea was to place the boundaries of the park on lands already inhabited by indigenous peoples who were located in the region. For this reason, an enlargement of the reservation was proposed in 1968 8 so as to incorporate three groups who lived outside the Southern confines of the Park: the Mehinaku, the Awetí and the Kuikuro.

Ultimately, any relocation of indigenous communities into and onto the park was a result of their own needs, specific cultural features and internal struggles. The Trumai, for example, certainly have had difficulties in adapting themselves to other Upper Xingu groups with whom they have fought several times. Consequently they have moved a great deal compared to other groups such as the Kamayurá and the Awetí who "hardly moved out of their territory of 1884-87" (Silva, 1972:256). The migratory movement of the Yudja was also intense around the areas of Lower and Middle Xingu until they located themselves around the confluence of Maritsawá and Xingu rivers. (See Chart 1, above) 9.

7 The change in the name of the park was made after the decree No. 82.455 (dated 13 April 1979 and signed by President Ernesto Geisel) as a symbolic recognition of the Xinguans’ rights over the land as expressed in the document.
8 Decree No. 63 082, 16 August 1968.
9 Chart 1 is the result of a search for literacy evidence on the migration of the Yudja as a means to trace the reasons for bilingualism among them. Previously another chart was attempted by Oliveira (1970) when she was searching the Yudja migratory movement.
CHART 1: The Yudja movements in the Xingu area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1625</td>
<td>Island between Pacajé and Xingu rivers</td>
<td>Parente (1625)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before 1655</td>
<td>“River of the Juruna”</td>
<td>Betendorf (1910)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1655</td>
<td>“River of the Juruna” (Iriri)</td>
<td>Betendorf (1910)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1662</td>
<td>Mouth of Xingu river</td>
<td>Heriarte (1874)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1662/7</td>
<td>“River of the Juruna”</td>
<td>Betendorf (1910)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1667</td>
<td>Mission of the Low Xingu</td>
<td>Betendorf (1910)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1685</td>
<td>Banks and islands of the Xingu</td>
<td>Nimuendajú (1948)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1686</td>
<td>Banks and islands of the Xingu</td>
<td>Southey (1817/9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1691 or 1692</td>
<td>Village of Xingu</td>
<td>Betendorf (1910)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1697</td>
<td>“Juruna from the bushes”</td>
<td>Betendorf (1910)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1698</td>
<td>Mission of the Low Xingu</td>
<td>Betendorf (1910)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1707</td>
<td>Low Xingu (probably in a tributary of Xingu river, the Pacajá river)</td>
<td>Fritz (1922)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1736</td>
<td>Village of San Ignácio de Aricari (later called Sousel)</td>
<td>Leite (1943)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Four little villages located 30 miles up river, 10 miles apart from the first waterfalls.</td>
<td>Moraes (1860)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid XVIII Century</td>
<td>Mission of Taváquara (a little above today’s Altamira, in the State of Pará)</td>
<td>Adalbert (1849)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>Forests around Xingu river</td>
<td>Daniel (1844)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1819</td>
<td>Between Tocantins and Tapajós rivers</td>
<td>Spix &amp; Martins (1936)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>Taváquara (Imperatriz Mission)</td>
<td>Adalbert (1849)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1842</td>
<td>Nine villages located between Taváquara and Piranhaquara.</td>
<td>Adalbert (1849)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>Above Volta Grande (Tucurui)</td>
<td>Brusque (1862; 1863); Steinem (1942); Nimuendajú (1948)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Twenty-three palhoças (thatched houses) located on the first islands above the Xingu waterfalls.</td>
<td>Brusque (1862).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Between Pedra Preta (above Piranhaquã, lat. 4°40‘S) and Pedra Preta (lat. 8°30‘S)</td>
<td>Steinem (1942)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>One group between Praia Grande and Pedra Seca ... and another, smaller, around the Jurucuá waterfalls.</td>
<td>Steinem (1942). ; Condreau (1897).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Between Praia Grande and Pedra Seca</td>
<td>Snethlage (1910)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Further down from Pedra Seca</td>
<td>Nimuendajú (1948)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Tributary river on the left bank of Xingu, above von Martius waterfalls.</td>
<td>Nimuendajú (1948)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Further down the mouth of Maritsawá river</td>
<td>Chateaubriand (1954) ; Siek (1958)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>One village located on the left bank of Xingu river near Maritsawá river’s mouth.</td>
<td>Galvão (1952)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Two villages: Bibina’s group in the place Galvão had met them; Daá’s group, on the right bank of Xingu river, towards the Diauarum.</td>
<td>Oliveira (1970a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Two villages in the neighbourhood of Maritsawá river</td>
<td>Simões (1963)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Two groups in the neighbourhood of Maritsawá river (10°55’S and 53°26’W)</td>
<td>Oliveira (1968)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Return to Bibina’s village except for a family which stayed in Daá’s village mixing with a group of Kayabi.</td>
<td>Oliveira (1970a; 1970b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984 and 1985</td>
<td>Two villages, Tubatuba and Saúva, located on the left bank of the Xingu river.</td>
<td>Lima (1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Medio Xingu, near the mouth of Maritsawá river</td>
<td>Novaes (1985)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Left bank of Xingu near the confluence of Xingu and Maritsawá rivers</td>
<td>Cunha and Seki (1988)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Island near the confluence of Maritsawá and Xingu rivers</td>
<td>Cunha (1989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>One single village, Tubatuba, located on the left bank of Xingu river, near the Maritsawá river</td>
<td>Cunha &amp; Forest (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>The main village (Tubatuba) and a small grouping (Capoeira) on the right bank of Xingu river towards the BR-080 road.</td>
<td>Cunha (1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Tubatuba, Capoeira and Pequizal, a mixed Juruna-Kayabi village located on the right bank of Xingu river down South to the Posto Diasuarum.</td>
<td>Cunha (1996)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The official creation of the park marks the beginning of the third period in the written history of Xingu. From 1961 onwards, there was a legally defined and protected indigenous territory that was supposed to be safe from the threats of new land sales and speculation attempts. However, land possession has always been a tug of war in the fight for indigenous minority rights and the ecological harmony of the park was soon broken by the
construction of a motorway during the military regime in 1971\(^{10}\). (See Map 2). Motorway BR-080, a section of the Brasilia-Manaus highway, crossed the Northern area of the Park, dividing in two the Txukahamãe\(^{11}\) territory, bringing disease and a series of conflicts between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

The building of the road raised loud protests on the part of the indigenous political leaders and supporters of the indigenous cause. The international press\(^{12}\) criticised the violation of political and civil rights in Brazil and, in particular, disapproved of the damage caused to indigenous communities in the park. Much more concerned with its image abroad than with domestic human rights, the government partially retreated by enlarging the park's boundaries to the South. However, the new piece of land guaranteed\(^{13}\) as reparation was poorer in quality than the one taken for the building of the motorway. (Ribeiro, 1979).

The BR-080 brought irreversible intermittent contact with the mainstream society. This was the beginning of the fourth and current period in the history of Xingu. Today, there are five posts under the jurisdiction of the National Foundation for the Indian (FUNAI)\(^{14}\), a governmental department responsible for the welfare of indigenous peoples. (See Chart 2). Initially all the available assistance (e. g. medical aid, amateur radio communication,

\(^{10}\) The military coup d'etat happened in 1964; the regime lasted until 1985. During the years of nationalistic 'euphoria' created under the rule of the third military president, General Emílio Garrastazu Médici (1969-74), the National Integration Plan (Plano de Integração Nacional/PIN) started expanding the road network towards the North aiming to integrate the Amazon region with the rest of the country. (Cunha, 1996).

\(^{11}\) The Txukahamãe, a group of the larger Kaiapô language community, prefer now to be called Mentuktire. Txukahamãe, they say, is the name used by members of the non-indigenous society. Indeed, the name Txukahamãe is not a non-indigenous creation but it was originally pronounced by the Yudja. In their first contact with Cláudio Villas Boas, the Yudja referred to the Mentuktire as natives who "did not use bowls". In the Juruna language 'txukaha' means 'bowl', and 'mãe' is 'without'.

\(^{12}\) The Brazilian media was under strong censorship during the military rule. In 1980, when the pressure on the Brazilian press had been relieved, the indigenist Cláudio Villas Boas spoke to the weekly magazine Veja about how the motorway had been allowed to be constructed. According to him, FUNAI officers had certified that there were no natives on 102 pieces of land which were to be crossed by the road. When, in fact, the land was inhabited mainly by the Txukahamãe. The decree that authorised the motorway through the park was signed by General Jerônimo Bandeira de Melo, who had been the president of FUNAI ten years earlier. Cláudio Villas Boas' statement was an attempt to explain an existing conflict between the Txukahamãe and some members of the dominant society in which ten non-indigenous people were killed. (Veja, 20 August, 1980)

\(^{13}\) Decree 68 909 (13th July, 1971).

\(^{14}\) The FUNAI (Fundação Nacional do Índio) was created by Law No. 5371/1967 during the military regime as a replacement for the former SPI (Serviço de Proteção ao Índio). A significant difference between the two is the fact that the FUNAI was an organisation centralised by the government and linked to the former Ministry of Internal Affairs. After 1985 the organisation has become part of the Ministry of Justice. (Cunha, 1996b)
A major change in the area has been the withdrawal of the base of the Brazilian Air Force (FAB, Força Aérea Brasileira) in 1991. The base was located on the left bank of the Xingu river with the official mission of strategically protecting all flights between Rio de Janeiro and Manaus. The base Posto Jacaré -- as the Xinguans used to call it (jacaré = alligator) -- was located on the right bank of the Southern Xingu river closer to the Posto Leonardo than to the Posto Diauarum (see Map 2). Though no significant conflict were recorded between local communities and the FAB personnel, the base had always been felt to be an alien presence consisting of elements living in a way which contrasted markedly with that of the indigenous groups: the base was manned solely by men managed within a tight military structure.

Now that the Air Force are no longer working in the area, flights to the park are under the full responsibility of the FUNAI. Since Xingu has never been open to the public and commercial airlines do not operate there, aeroplanes may only land there if they are licensed by FUNAI. The Foundation does not have regular flights to Xingu only those determined by specific needs (e.g. health emergencies, political demands from the indigenous communities, medical/education training). Transportation takes place mainly by the river in motor and rowing boats and the communication through the radio. Access to the park and residence in the posts or the villages is only possible with the formal authorisation of FUNAI. All the scientific research carried out in the area must also have the approval of the National Research Council and the acquiescence of the community involved. Religious missions are not allowed in.
A plane authorised by FUNAI lands in the Yudja village

The Xinguans who are on the electoral register have not always voted since their own access to the nearest polling stations is rather difficult. They normally justify their absence on grounds of the distance and the lack of transport\textsuperscript{15}. As for the demographic census the Medical School of São Paulo (Escola Paulista de Medicina) has traditionally collected statistics during its inoculation campaigns. In recent years this data has been kept by the Regional Administration of Xingu\textsuperscript{16}, a section of FUNAI which is responsible for the administration of the park.

The empowering policy in the park has increasingly developed from its first manager, Orlando Villas Boas, to its present director, Yanukulá Rodarte, a member of the Kamaiurá group.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, the park has had its territory enlarged from the initial 22,000 km\textsuperscript{2} to the present 33, 400 km\textsuperscript{2}, an area even larger than the one originally demanded in 1952. The present territory of the park -- officially marked out by a decree signed by President Fernando Collor de Mello on 25 January 1991 -- roughly corresponds to the size of Wales (20,761 km\textsuperscript{2}) and Northern Ireland (14,147 km\textsuperscript{2}) combined.

3. The Sociolinguistic Context

As I have indicated in the beginning of this paper, there are sixteen different speech communities living within the Park of Xingu. They consist of seventeen different groups but both the Matipú and Nafukwá, who live in the

\textsuperscript{15} According to the Brazilian Constitution (Chap. IV, Art. 14), electoral registration and voting are compulsory for every citizen between the age of 18 and 60. Registered indigenous people who do not vote have to justify themselves as any other citizen would. No Xinguan leader has ever been a candidate in elections.

\textsuperscript{16} Administração Regional do Xingu, known by the acronym PqXin.

\textsuperscript{17} The PqXin administrators under FUNAI have been: Orlando Villas Boas (1/6/68 - 30/4/75), Olympio Serra (1/7/75 - 20/11/78), Francisco A. da Silva (15/06/79 - 2/3/83), Cláudio Romero (2/3/83 - 14/5/84), Megaron Txukahamãe (14/5/84 -11/4/95) and Yanukulá Rodarte (11/4/95 - presently).
Upper Xingu area, are members of the same speech community: both speak the Nafukwá language and they are classified as one single population by the Regional Administration of Xingu.

Map 2

All the languages spoken by these communities belong to one of the four main indigenous language families: Tupi, Arawak, Carib and Ge. Villas Boas (1989) considers Txikāo and Juruna to be isolated languages, but Rodrigues (1985) classifies the first as part of the Carib family and the latter as one of the languages of the Tupi group. While Rodrigues places the Juruna language as a separate family within the Tupi group, Villas Boas argues that
the Juruna is not a Tupi language but it has suffered a *tupinização* after contact.18

The Mentuktire (Txukahamãe) who live in the Lower Xingu are members of a larger speech community, the Kayapó, which spreads from the inside to the outside of the park towards the State of Pará, in the North of the country.19 Their language has been described by linguists of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) using outside park members of the Kayapó community as informants. The Kayapó command considerable prestige which I consider to be due to their larger number and higher degree of political mobilisation.20

To better visualise such diversity, I produced Chart 3, below, in which I followed Rodrigues (1986)’s classification of Brazilian indigenous languages. The figures used for the native speakers of each language were given by the Regional Administration of Xingu in May, 1994.

**CHART 3: Indigenous groups of Xingu and their languages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETHNIC GROUP</th>
<th>LANGUAGE</th>
<th>LINGUISTIC FAMILY</th>
<th>LINGUISTIC TREE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF SPEAKERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awetí</td>
<td>Awetí</td>
<td>Tupi</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yudja</td>
<td>Juruna</td>
<td>Juruna</td>
<td>Tupi</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalapalo</td>
<td>Kalapalo</td>
<td>Carib</td>
<td>303</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamayurá</td>
<td>Kamayurá</td>
<td>Tupi-Guarani</td>
<td>325</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayabí</td>
<td>Kayabí</td>
<td>Tupi-Guarani</td>
<td>666</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuikuro</td>
<td>Kuikuro</td>
<td>Carib</td>
<td>328</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentuktire (Txukahamãe)</td>
<td>Kayapó</td>
<td>Ge</td>
<td>542</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matipú</td>
<td>Nafukwá</td>
<td>Carib</td>
<td>134</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meheinaku</td>
<td>Meheinaku</td>
<td>Arawak</td>
<td>145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panará</td>
<td>Kreen-Akarore</td>
<td>Macro-Ge</td>
<td>158</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suyá</td>
<td>Suyá</td>
<td>Ge</td>
<td>198</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapayuna (Beijo de Pau)</td>
<td>Tapayuna</td>
<td>Ge</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumai</td>
<td>Trumai</td>
<td>Maco-Ge</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Txikão</td>
<td>Txikão</td>
<td>Carib</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yawalapiti</td>
<td>Yawalapiti</td>
<td>Arawak</td>
<td>176</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waurá</td>
<td>Waurá</td>
<td>Arawak</td>
<td>222</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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18 Orlando Villas Boas in an interview given to me in São Paulo, on 22 July 1994.
19 Other members of the Kayapó community are: the Gorotire, the Kararaô, the Kokraimôro, the Kubenkrangnoti, the Kubenkrankêgn, the Menkranboti, and the Xiékin.
20 When the Kayapó lost the bureaucratic control of the park to a Kajabi (see note 18, above), they politically divided the park by extra-officially instituting the Administration of Northern Xingu.
Today all indigenous groups who live in the Park of Xingu are known as Xinguans. Formerly, this name was used to only describe the communities who were living in the region between Upper and Middle. Today the term is applied to all people living in the park. In the Upper Xingu (from the headwaters which form the source of the Xingu river as far as the Pavuru) live the Aweti, Kalapalo, Kamayurá, Kuikuro, Matipú, Mehinaku, Nafukwá, Txicão, Trumai, Yawalapiti, and Wará. In the Middle Xingu (area around the Diuarum) live, besides the Juruna, the Kayabi, the Panará and the Suyá. The Tapaiúna and the Kayapó live in the Lower Xingu, which is the region up North from the BR-080.

The Kamayurá, who are descendants of the historical Tupinambá from Bahia (Northeast of Brazil), arrived in Xingu coming from the South, along the Araguaia river. The Carib families (Kuikuru, Kalapalo, Matipú, Nafukwá) came from Central America. The tribes of the Arawak family (Yawalapiti, Mehinaku, Wará) arrived later from the West. The Yudja were already there when the Carib families reached Xingu. Observing several of the Yudja cultural features which resemble those of Inca groups (e.g.: the pointed hats, the back slings for carrying loads, collective bonfires), Orlando Villas Boas believes they might have had their origin in the Andes.

The Trumai was one of the last groups to arrive in Xingu. When the Villas Boas met them, the Trumai numbered only 27 individuals. In order to protect the group the Villas Boas suggested that the Trumai should marry within their own group and that they ought to speak exclusively in their mother tongue, at least with their children. Today the Trumai who number 91, still speak their language which is prized by linguists as very distinctive from other Brazilian languages with singular features not found in any other documented language in the world (Villas Boas & Villas Boas, 1994; Villas Boas, 1986).

An original feature of the indigenous language communities of the Macro-Ge group has always been their mobility since they are hunters and fruit gatherers. Only recently they have settled and begun to dedicate themselves to agriculture. In contrast, the Tupi language communities are sedentary people, having traditionally been dedicated to agriculture and fishing.

Many of the Xinguans speak one or more languages besides their mother tongue due to their continuous internal mobility and their frequent intertribal marriages. The Brazilian variety of Portuguese - the official language and the language spoken by the vast majority of the outer society -- will certainly be one. The mainstream language has increasingly encroached on the lives of the Xinguans who speak it not only as their *lingua franca* but also as a means of interacting with members of the dominant society. Until the 90’s Portuguese was the single medium of instruction in the schools of the area. The primer which was used to teach children and adults how to read and write was written in Portuguese. The practice was supported by the indigenous

21 Interview with Orlando Villas Boas, 22 July 1994.
leaders’ discourses such as the forward Megaron Txukahamâe presented in the primer:

Formerly we did not know the other ñndios, we did not have any contact with the other tribes, we did not speak with the others. Today it is different. Today we have contact one with another. From now on we have to stick together, fight together, because ours is a common struggle: we have to defend our land, our cultures, our languages, our traditions. Our children cannot forget our life. It is important to remember the heritage left by our grandparents. This is the reason why the elders have to teach the younger generation, so that, afterwards, they can teach their grandchildren. Some time ago not many people knew how to speak Portuguese. Now we are learning. It is good that our children learn how to read and write better than we did, so that they can keep on defending our land and our culture. My request and my advice is that those who are learning how to read and write should study well because they are going to go on with our work, our fight for defending what is ours.23

In opposition to the past, when the mainstream language was used in educational programmes which were designed to force the indigenous minorities to integrate into the dominant society, Portuguese was now to be used as a political tool to claim their right to maintain a distinct cultural identity and as a way to exercise their rights to full citizenship. The words of Chief Karandinde Juruna explain this well:

We, the Juruna [Yudja] people need schooling, to comprehend the life of the white man, the way he lives, his laws. If we do not acquaint ourselves with the life of the white man, he will deceive us. But the ñndio is intelligent: He can think as well as the white man. For that reason we need school taught by Juruna [Yudja] teachers. But we need help (...) to assist us in creating a school for the ñndio, in making books for the ñndio, in training teachers. Then we will be able to improve ourselves.24

In 1988 the Brazilian Constitution guaranteed indigenous minorities the right to use their mother tongues and their own learning procedures25. However, the number of speakers in each one of the different indigenous languages26 is small in the light of a total of 150,243,000 population who

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22 I use the term *lingua franca* to indicate a language used within an area as a commercial or contact language among speakers of different tongues. A *lingua franca* is not necessarily a *lingua mista*, that is a hybrid language formed by the system of two or more mixed languages as was the *lingua geral*, a language based on the Tupi and used by indigenous, African slaves and white settlers in early colonial times in Brazil. (See Cunha, 1996b).

23 In Troncatelli, Leite and Yamonaka (1990: III-V)


25 1988 Constitution of Brazil, Chap III, Article 210, Paragraph 2: "Basic education is to be provided in the Portuguese language, safeguarding the indigenous communities’ right to use their mother tongues and their own learning procedures". (My translation)

26 1995 figures published by CIMI (Conselho Indigenista Missionário) show that the number of Brazilian indigenous population has been calculated in “between 250 and 300 thousand individuals from 200 different groups speaking 170 native languages and living in 497
overwhelmingly speak Portuguese. The numerical importance of minority language speakers is one of the factors to be considered in language planning (Grosjean, 1982:25) especially in a country where education is a deep rooted social problem. Producing a primer in each one of the different Xinguan languages demands a great deal of effort and money applied to specific language research, material design and teacher education but it is a matter of recognition of fundamental civil rights.

Difficult as it is, an official linguistic project on the languages of the Park of Xingu has been carried out since 1988. New directions in language planning have also been followed in the Xinguan schools. The emphasis on a bilingual curriculum has raised the need for de-centralising schools which are now numbered eight as Chart 4 shows.

CHART 4: Schools located in the Park of Xingu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>STUDENTS' ETHNIC GROUP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kapôt</td>
<td>Metyktire village</td>
<td>Metyktire (Txukhamãe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piaraçu</td>
<td>BR-080</td>
<td>Metyktire, Kayabi, Juruna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapivara</td>
<td>Kayabi village</td>
<td>Kayabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuyrararé</td>
<td>Kayabi village</td>
<td>Kayabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuba Tuba</td>
<td>Juruna village</td>
<td>Juruna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rikô</td>
<td>Suyá village</td>
<td>Suyá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavuru</td>
<td>Txikão village</td>
<td>Txikão</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terra Preta</td>
<td>Trumai village</td>
<td>Trumai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, not all schools have the same prestige. The Yudja, for example, who can now learn how to read and write in their own village school taught by native teachers are still sending people to schools which are recognised as official by the State but are taught by non-native teachers, e. g. the school at the Piaraçu (BR-080) or in São José do Xingu (the nearest town out the park from Tubatuba.)

Indeed, the historical processes of contact have led to a situation of diglossia in Xingu. While literacy is bound to the mainstream language and the culture of the dominant society, the mother tongues are still transmitted in their spoken form (the only one in some cases) to the younger generations.

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29 São José do Xingu, Mato Grosso State, is also called Bang-Bang (or simply Bang) in allusion to the gun incidents that have happened there.

30 I am not using the concept of diglossia as two or more varieties of the same language used with different functions in the same speech community (cf. Ferguson, 1959), but as a linguistic phenomenon which may occur in multilingual societies (cf. Fishman, 1967).
This takes place through their own cultural processes for the reproduction of knowledge and their own procedures for socialisation: living and participating in different community events and sharing equally among all members of the community whatever is essential for survival. Acquiring their languages and culture has always been a continuous and multiple process in their everyday lives. In this sense the impact of the new models of learning proposed in the recently established schools has been considerable in raising a whole set of values linked to the dominant society among which is literacy.

4. Changes now in progress in Xingu

Before the creation of the park, when Galvão (1953:2) described the Xinguans as "uniform in essential aspects, above all in those related to the techniques that guarantee subsistence, their handicraft, and some of the religious and social institutions", he was mainly referring to the indigenous groups of Upper Xingu. Today the Xinguans, in general, still retain considerable cultural autonomy and provide for their basic needs through their own traditional processes. However, the intermittent contact with the dominant society has introduced new economic relationships. Instead of aiming to only meet their basic needs, they now dedicate a greater amount of time to producing extra handicraft articles to exchange with members of the dominant society. This commercial production allows them to pay for their secondary needs which have increased.

In the 80’s, Novaes (1985) described the Xinguans as living in "a world in which money was worthless and time was elastic"31 overlooking the changes that were already taking place. His economic view of Xingu was very simplistic and he focused on the moitará, the intertribal bartering still practised among the indigenous groups in the exchange of different items (e.g. pottery, domestic utensils, trinkets, or even non-indigenous articles circulating in the area) without the use of money32. However, the Xinguans say that in order to do a successful moitará it is important to have "cabeça grande" (literally 'big head', but meaning a 'brainy', intelligent person). They say it is necessary to act out coldly, recognising the best opportunities. So they did: they negotiated with Novaes two tractors in exchange for rights to make a film in Xingu. Indeed, this was an example of the modernisation of the culturally rooted moitará that had so much impressed the journalist.

31 Washington Novaes, an experienced journalist who has long embraced the indigenous cause, spent two months filming the Xingu and its people. He and his team spent 70 hours travelling by boat, walked 300 km, and filmed for 50 hours. The whole work - designed, written and presented by Novaes - was condensed into eleven hours which were showed by the Machete television network in eleven one-hour episodes from 15 April 1985.

32 The moitará is practised mainly among the groups from Alto Xingu. The Kamayurá normally trade their pequi oil, pepper and indigenous ornaments for the Wará's pottery and the belts and collars of the Kalapalo and Kuikuru. Theoretically any group can exchange with another provided that a message is sent ahead to warn the visited group and I myself have witnessed the moitará between Yudja and Kayabi.
Recent needs on the part of the Xinguans have introduced new commercial relations with the members of the dominant society. Previously, they used to sell their products at a minimum price in the neighbouring towns of São José do Xingu, São Félix do Araguaia, Peixoto de Azevedo and Canarana, all in Mato Grosso State. In exchange, they would buy industrialised items (such as soap, fabric, ammunition, kerosene and candles) at very high prices. Since 1992, Xinguan products (such as manioc flour and dried bananas) have been commercialised in bigger centres like Brasília and its satellite towns. The marketing is based on the fact that these products are naturally made without any chemical additives and, also, on the idea that their purchase will help the indigenous cause. The technical support to this joint project has been given by the Ecological Agriculture Association of the Federal District, the Rain Forest Foundation and the Regional Administration of Xingu.

Indeed, the rhythm of life is definitely different in that exuberant and natural environment but the Brazilian real is already necessary to buy the manufactured articles coming from the dominant society - even the wrist watch which seems to be the first individual property Xinguans buy. Battery radios -- definitely incorporated into the Xinguan life -- bring the sound of the music from the peripheral dominant society and the news broadcasts. When the Yudja were in Brasília (where the FUNAI seat is located), they used to communicate through messages sent from the studio of the Rádio Nacional da Amazônia which could be heard in Xingu. After the installation of wireless radio equipment in Tubatuba communication has become more direct.

Heavy machinery such as motor boats and agriculture tractors (generally supplied by FUNAI) is collective but items of individual property vary from watches to rare gas stoves and refrigerators. A new concept of privacy has been introduced by these items which convey prestige to their owners who are normally FUNAI waged officials.

Besides the five FUNAI posts shown on Chart 2, there are now six postos de vigilância strategically located on the borders where the park can be easily broken into by settlers from the areas in expansion. However, these postos de vigilância have not been able to prevent the Xinguans from trying to fulfil their new social and economic needs. Commercial relations between Xinguans and members of the dominant society exert an intense economic pressure on the natural resources of the park.

33 There is no electricity in Xinguan communities.
34 Associação de Agricultura Regional do Distrito Federal (AGE/DF); Fundação Mata Virgem.
35 One Brazilian real= US $ 0.96 (Dec. 1995).
36 The six vigilance posts are: Batovi (on the border of Batovi river), Kunizevu (on the border of Kunizevu river), Steinen (on the border of Steinen river), Arreia (on the border of the Arreia river), Pachiku (on the BR-080 limiting with São José do Xingu town), and the Jairinã (on the limits of Jaquedes on the right bank of Xingu river).
In this changing social context, Portuguese has been an important communicative tool for the new trade relations and the current process of economic reproduction. The functions of Portuguese have changed from that of a mere contact language. Portuguese has now become a necessary tool for communication with the Establishment. Due to all this change, deeper insights into the use, functions and values of the minority languages need to be gained in order to describe and explain eventual diglossic conflicts in the area. So far, most of the language research carried out in Xingu has been limited to formal descriptions of the indigenous languages; little has been done to set such descriptions within the social and cultural context of the users of the languages. My own research with the Yudja is an attempt to redress this imbalance (Cunha, 1996a).

5. Final remarks

As I have shown in this paper, from the first written accounts about the Xingu and its tributaries to the present, there have been important changes in the lives of the peoples who live there. The creation of the Indigenous Park of Xingu in 1961 was a significant achievement for the native groups living in the area and represented a new direction in State policy towards indigenous minorities in Brazil.

The whole territory is protected by federal law and there is also a carefully devised local policy there but the Xinguans are much more than a necessary element in the ecosystem balance; a human component of the fauna and flora. They are agents integrated into the structure and the development of human communities that are ultimately embedded in the environment in which they find themselves, the Park of Xingu.

The inevitable impact of modern social organisation and new technological processes on the park has led to the formation of new economic, political and social relations between Xinguans and members of the dominant society. Indeed, this has brought new needs to the indigenous communities living in the area; one of these needs is the study of Portuguese. The Xinguans themselves have demanded to be taught in the mainstream language. In the meantime, the minority languages remain largely spoken but restricted to the community contexts. In order to study these processes of change and the impact they are having in the community, further language research with a clear empowerment agenda is an urgent necessity.

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