

**MATRILOCALITY AND PATRINEALITY IN MUNDURUCU SOCIETY:
A CRITICAL RE-EXAMINATION FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE¹**

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Introduction

The emergence of contemporary feminist movements and, with it, the quest to reveal the roots of the oppression of women in society has drawn special attention to anthropological research and theory. Because of its pan-historical and cross-cultural approach, anthropology promises to offer us a better understanding of what it means to be women and men in a comparative perspective, and how gender relations are structured in different societies, both over time and space. This could open the way for the unraveling of the transformation of these relations over time - what has changed and what remains – and how they may be re-structured in the construction of a more equitable society.

Despite this promise, however - and in spite of the actual contribution of anthropological studies in revealing the diversity of women's experiences - feminist-inspired analyses of the anthropological enterprise have shown that male-bias has been an integral part of the production of knowledge in the field, often misinterpreting, if not totally distorting, the images and experiences of women. As Rayna Reiter (1975:12-13) well observes:

“Kinship studies are usually centered on males, marriage systems are analyzed in terms of the exchanges men make using women to weave their networks, evolutionary models explain the origin and development of human society by giving weight to the male role of hunting without much consideration of female gathering. These are all instances of a deeply rooted male orientation which makes the anthropological discourse suspect. All our information must be filtered through a critical lens to examine the biases inherent in it. (...) We need to be aware of the potential for a double male bias in anthropological accounts of other cultures: the bias we bring with us to our research, and the bias we receive if the society we study expresses male dominance.”

In the collection *Toward and Anthropology of Women*, Reiter (1975) brings together the works of women anthropologists who make use of this 'critical lens', providing us

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not only with a feminist perspective of women in different societies, but also a radically different outlook of these societies as a whole. Indeed, as Sally Slocum (1975) argues in “Woman the Gatherer: Male Bias in Anthropology”, since “Anthropology, as an academic science, has been developed primarily by white Western males, during a specific period in history” (1975:37), women’s perspective may be equally foreign as those of the peoples and minorities anthropologists have traditionally studied. In “Aboriginal Women: Male and Female Anthropological Perspectives”, for example, Ruby Rohrlich-Leavitt, Barbara Sykes, and Elizabeth Weatherford (1975) re-examine works on aboriginal peoples compiled by men anthropologists in contrast to those of women anthropologists, showing that the former distorted women’s everyday life and realities, not only because they worked mostly through male informants (both by “inclination or culture requirements”), but also because they found women’s activities non-important, reproducing male-bias present in our own society.

Following in the recommendations of these and other authors in the referred book, in this paper, I intend to also make use of a feminist perspective as “the critical lens” to examine previous anthropological works. More specifically, I will apply the lens to examine Robert Murphy’s (1956) proposed analysis of the so-called ‘disharmonic system’ found by him to exist among the Mundurucu Indians of Northern Brazil. My critique of his analysis was first inspired by my reading of the book written by him with his wife, Yolanda Murphy (Murphy and Murphy 1974), titled *Women of the Forest*, where they offered us one of the first accounts of the tribal lives of indigenous women in Brazil, and one of the first that gave voice to these, until recently, silenced women. I have dealt elsewhere (Sardenberg 1977) with the important contributions as well as with the shortcomings included in their work, which stands as one of the most relevant early contributions to both anthropology and women’s studies regarding gender divisions and relations among Brazilian indigenous populations. But I was not able then to direct attention to Murphy’s previous works, particularly to his monograph on the Mundurucu, *Headhunters’ Heritage* (1960), and the article where he formulated his hypothesis on the evolution of the Mundurucu kinship system (Murphy 1956; 1957a ; 1957b), and where Mundurucu women were, for the most part, disregarded, or worse, misrepresented. Although in *Women of the Forest*, the Murphys try to redress many of these previous misrepresentations, they still sustain Robert Murphy’s hypothesis regarding the Mundurucu kinship system. In this paper, therefore, I intend to closely assess Roberty Murphy’s arguments, showing that they not only rest on male-biased propositions, but on propositions at large about the nature of kinship systems in Latin America that crumble under closer analysis.

Murphy’s Hypothesis

In “Matrilocality and Patrilineality in Mundurucu Society”, a celebrated article published in the journal *American Anthropologist* back in the 1950s, Murphy (1956:414) characterized the Mundurucu as representing a sort of ethnographic rarity and oddity, for, whereas at the time they had a well developed system of patrilineal clans and moieties, chieftainship status and shamanistic powers inherited through the father’s line, and an overall male-oriented ideological framework, traits which Murphy (1956: 417) proposed would characterize them as being “...patrilineal in nearly all

respects”, their post-marital residence was ideally as well as statistically matrilocal (uxorilocal, in fact).² Mundurucu women remained in their native villages as active members of their matrilocal households for life, whereas agnatically related males were dispersed throughout the different villages, wherever their individual marriage histories may take them. As such, Mundurucu clans were non-localized and did not constitute corporate descent groups. Instead, it was the matrilocal extended households, composed primarily of nuclei of consanguineally related females, which constituted the core of Mundurucu villages, and which assumed a *de facto* role of corporate groups in the communities.

To account for the origins of this seemingly unusual regime in which ‘strong patrilineality’ was combined with permanent uxorilocality, as well as to explain the presence of other traits which were apparently “...incongruous, nonfunctional, or dysfunctional...” (Murphy 1956:414) in such a situation, Murphy formulated a residence shift hypothesis for the Mundurucu. Murphy postulated that in the not-too-distant-past, the Mundurucu observed a rule of patrilocal (actually, patri-virilocal) post-marital residence and had localized clans with corporate functions. He cited George Murdock and the latter’s assertions that “...unilinear descent can arise in no other way than through unilocal residence” (Murdock 1965:209) – in support of this thesis, thus regarding the presence of a patrilineal descent construct among the Mundurucu as implying a previous situation of patrilocality.³

Evidence for this supposed former patrilocality was found by Murphy in: a) the names of the clans which for him suggested that the clans had a localized origin (Murphy 1956:418-419); b) the existence of phratries and subclans, suggesting a process of clan-segmentation, possible only if the clans had a localized core of patrilocally resident males (Murphy 1960:77-79); c) discontinuities between rights over the sacred instruments, which for Murphy (1960:76) was an anomaly which could only be resolved through a former rule of patrilocality; and d) likewise, discontinuities between kinship terminology and actual practice of sister’s daughter (ZD) marriage, a problem which could only be similarly solved, i.e., through patrilocality (Murphy 1960:91).

Murphy suggested that the shift to matrilocality and the eventual dispersal of the clans, in turn, came as a result of economic factors, namely, the development and growth of the trade in *farinha* (manioc flour) between the Mundurucu and Luso-Brazilian colonizers, thus taking place during the latter half of the nineteenth century (Murphy 1956:428).⁴ Obtained from bitter manioc, the production of *farinha* is a time-consuming process, undertaken, among the Mundurucu, through the cooperative and organized effort of the women of a given household under the supervision and leadership of the female household head (Murphy and Murphy 1974:123-125). Murphy believed that the efficiency and productivity of these task units rested on the

² Although Murphy refers to the Mundurucu as ‘matrilocal’, ‘uxorilocal’ would be a more precise term, since a couple takes up post-marital residence with the wife’s family. ‘Matrilocal’ is imprecise because it can also refer to the case of a couple taking up post-marital residence with husband’s mother’s family, which is not the case among the Mundurucu.

³ Murdock’s assertions are also shared by Julian Steward (1936) and Misha Titiev (1943). For a critique of these views, see, for example, Sahlins (1976:91-102).

⁴ Here Murphy is also following Murdock’s (1965) suggestions that residence patterns are the most dynamic aspects of kinship systems, and that they are directly influenced by economic factors.

fact that they were formed by consanguineally-related, co-resident females. Thus, he argued, with the need to increase the production of *farinha* for trade, the Mundurucu, in time, found it more advantageous to keep their daughters together as an organized and cooperative task unit, at the cost of dispersing their sons and the once localized patri-clans through uxori-local marriages (Murphy 1956:430; Murphy 1960:80-81). This residence shift, in turn, had the added effect of promoting the emergence of what Murphy (1960:101) has called “the most complete development of the male-female dichotomy and accompanying men’s house complex in South America,” that is, the most complete spatial separation and segregation of the sexes.

Now, it is not my intention in this paper to deny the role that economic factors may play in the development of residence patterns, or that these, in turn, may influence the adoption of particular descent constructs and eventual development of new kinship structures. Nor do I wish to question the possible extent to which the development of trade between a formerly subsistence-oriented social formation and a dominant, market-oriented one may affect the former’s social structure and ideological framework, through an eventual transformation in the social relations of this native social formation. Murphy’s own analysis of the effects of the rubber trade on Mundurucu social organization is in fact an excellent example of this process in operation (Murphy 1960; Murphy and Steward 1956).

Nevertheless, it seems to me that Murphy’s postulations on a supposed *farinha* trade prompted patrilocality-to-uxorilocality residence shift among the Mundurucu, as well as his overall interpretation of the Mundurucu disharmonious regime, were often based on assumptions which are at best questionable and not necessarily empirically founded. Likewise, the evidence which he presented in support of his claim for the priority of patrilocality among the Mundurucu are equally doubtful, and I would add, it reeks of male-bias. Indeed, there is enough evidence to suggest that not only does uxorilocality have a much longer history among the Mundurucu than Murphy was willing to accept, but also – and more importantly – comparative analysis suggests that it may have preceded the development of patrilineal clans and moieties among these people.

One would have, in this case, a complete reversal of Murphy’s hypothesis. Instead of examining the problem of the development of uxorilocality among the ‘patrilineal’ Mundurucu, as Murphy proposed, one would then examine the problem of the development of ‘patrilineality’ among the ‘uxori-local’ Mundurucu – an empirical problem which entails far ranging theoretical implications, and the rethinking of developmental models of kinship systems, such as the one upheld by Murphy. In what follows, however, I will not be so ambitious. I will restrict my discussions to assessing Murphy’s postulations of the basis of the data he himself provided, specifically concerning his use (or misuse) of historical data and his omission of comparative culture area data, while pointing at the male-biased basis propositions upon which his argument is built. For this purpose, I will use mostly Murphy’s own data, which are quite substantial, including information not provided in his earlier works, but which were disclosed in his later works, particularly the monograph co-authored with Yolanda Murphy.

Historical and Ethnographic Background on the Mundurucu

The Mundurucu were once a fierce headhunting Tupian people dwelling in the savanna lands east of the upper Tapajós River, in what is today part of the territory of the State of Pará, in Northern Brazil.⁵ They have been in direct contact with Amazon settlers since the second half of the eighteenth century (circa 1795), when, after a series of successful raids on neighboring native groups and colonialist settlements, a military expedition was sent by the colonial authorities into their savanna territory to 'pacify' them (Almeida in Murphy 1960:29). Thereupon, the Mundurucu became allies of the new conquerors of the land, engaging in 'mercenary' warfare on their behalf. In exchange for manufactured goods, the Mundurucu raided other groups in the area who still remained openly hostile to colonial encroachments (Murphy 1960:8).

Trade relations between the Mundurucu and itinerant tradesmen soon developed as well, with the barter of Mundurucu garden products, first *farinha* and later rubber latex, for the sought after goods of Western civilization. In time, increasing dependency on these goods and the social context in which they were acquired were to bring drastic consequences to the native life. From a subsistence-oriented people, the Mundurucu were firstly transformed into petty-commodity producers, and later into debt-peons tied to a *barracão* system; and from constituting an autonomous social formation, the Mundurucu came to constitute merely an ethnic enclave, integrated into the lower strata of the dominant Brazilian state (Murphy and Steward 1956; Murphy 1960:15-22; Ribeiro 1977).⁶

During the nearly two hundred years which have followed initial contact with colonizers, the Mundurucu population in the savannas has also been sharply reduced. Estimations of the size of the Mundurucu population at the time of initial contact vary greatly. Murphy calculates that there were approximately 5,000 Mundurucu in the Upper Tapajós in the mid-nineteenth century (Murphy 1960:7). In the 1950's, when Murphy conducted his study, the Mundurucu population amounted to 1,250 people, including those living in the Madeira settlements as well as in the Lower Tapajós area. In the savannahs, Murphy encountered not more than 360 Mundurucu (Murphy 1960:10).

Intensive warfare boosted by the colonizers, which only ceased at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the introduction of alien diseases brought by the colonizers were responsible for a great part of the losses (Ribeiro 1977). Besides, the continuous stream of migration from the savannas to areas nearer colonialist settlements and, religious missions, a trend began at the onset of contact, has also considerably contributed to the sharp reduction of the population in the savannas and the subsequent disappearance of most Mundurucu traditional villages from the region (Murphy 1960:29-30). When Yolanda and Robert Murphy conducted their field research in the 1950s there were only six remaining savanna villages: Caiui (25 people),

⁵ The exact location of the territory they occupied is between 6 and 7 ½ degrees of S latitude (Murphy 1960:7).

⁶ For a detailed discussion of debt-peonage and the *barracão* system in Amazonia see Charles Wagley (1953).

Cabrua (70), Cabitutu (40), Decodyen (50), Aro (80), and Aipka (50) (Murphy and Murphy 1954:22).

Not all Mundurucu villages were equally nor simultaneously affected by the ills of 'civilization'. Those which were located deeper into Mundurucu territory and of difficult access through the river ways only came into closer contact with the agents of colonization during the mid to late nineteenth century, following the penetration of rubber tappers in the area (Murphy 1960:42). The largest bulk of the Mundurucu population, in fact, remained in their native territory throughout the nineteenth century, maintaining contact with the settlers primarily through mercenary warfare (Murphy 1960:35). Warfare activities ceased in the beginning of the twentieth century; however, by then, most Mundurucu villages were already engaged in some type of trade for the acquisition of industrial products, most of them involved in rubber tapping.

This relatively unequal penetration of the 'tentacles of civilization' into Mundurucu territory, as well as the different waves of migration from the savanna areas, have in time given rise to distinct Mundurucu groups, settled in different localities, and at different levels of integration into the dominant national politico-economic structure. They range from those which are nearly completely assimilated into the lower strata of the Brazilian class structure and almost indistinct from the local *caboclo* population, such as the Mundurucu settled in the Madeira River area, up to the few (six) remaining 'traditional' villages in the original savanna territory, visited and studied by Yolanda and Robert Murphy in the early 1950'. Even at that, as Murphy noted:

"It cannot be said that the Mundurucu of the savannah villages represent the aboriginal culture, for they too have been deeply affected and altered by Brazilian society. But change has been the least among this population. A greater degree of political and economic autonomy is preserved and the native social system persists, although it has been subjected to modification. Society and culture in the savannas is certainly not the same as one hundred and fifty or even fifty years ago, but it is still more distinctively Mundurucu than in the Cururu villages, and far more so than among the scattered Indians of the Tapajos River" (Murphy 1960:11).

Robert Murphy reported that although most adult males in these remaining villages were engaged in the tapping of latex-rubber for trade, this was still only a seasonal activity for them, involving simply a temporary relocation from the villages. Despite the ceasing of all warfare activities and the related ceremonies, and an observable marked trend towards permanent migration to the settlements (Murphy 1960:18), Murphy believed that a communal mode of living was still in operation in these villages and much of the Mundurucu cultural heritage seemed to be preserved as well. Villages were still set up according to the traditional circular pattern, with large multiple families dwellings arranged a circular plaza, adjoining gardens surrounding them, with the presence of a men's house standing on the east corner of the plaza, facing west (Murphy 1960:64). Furthermore, *farinha*, the staple item the Mundurucu diet, remained as well a major trade item in these villages.

The Murphys spent most of their time in the field in the village of Cabruá, one of the six still remaining traditional villages. They also collected data from the Mundurucu

settled in other areas for data control purposes, but Robert Murphy relied heavily on historical records to develop his interpretation of Mundurucu social organization and to postulate his patrilocality to uxorilocality residence shift. Note, nevertheless, that there are no records which explicitly attest to a former practice of patrilocal post-marital residence among these people.

Women's Work and the *Farinha* Trade

Let us assume, for the moment, that Murphy may have been correct in asserting the priority of patrilocality among the Mundurucu, and thus that a 'harmonic regime' of patrilineality and patrilocality was in operation prior to contact. The point here is to assess Robert Murphy's thesis that the increase in *farinha* production for trading purposes exerted great pressures on Mundurucu society, particularly among non-consanguineally related groups of women, to the point of fostering a post-marital residence rule shift in the time period delineated by Murphy, that is, "during the mid-nineteenth century" (Murphy 1960:79-80).

In this context, it is necessary to recall that the penetration of 'civilization' in its many facets into Mundurucu territory was not homogeneous, nor did it simultaneously affect all village communities alike. As mentioned earlier, there were also different waves of migration from the savanna areas, the earliest contingents leaving at the onset of contact, and coming from those villages which were nearer the boundaries of the Mundurucu territory, and thus more exposed to colonial encroachments. These earlier migrant Mundurucu settled on the Lower Tapajós area, as well as on the Madeira River region, supposedly lured by the lucrative aspects of warfare on behalf of the colonisers, and by the possibility of acquiring graded supplies of the "manufactured goods offered by white traders and missionaries in return for *farinha* (coarse manioc flour), sarsaparilla, and guarana" (Murphy 1960:49). Indeed, an intensive trade did develop between these Mundurucu and Brazilian traders. But if we take Murphy's time-period for the shift into consideration, he could not have referred to these Mundurucu early settled on the Lower Tapajós and Madeira River areas when postulating the shift to matrilocal residence. Accounts from earlier travelers to these areas suggest that these Mundurucu were quickly acculturated, relinquishing their cultural traditions (cf. Ayres do Casal in Murphy 1960:31-32). There are no indications that in these settlements there were men's houses or the accompanying accoutrements of the traditional men's organization (*ibid*). Nor were there settlements arranged in the traditional circular pattern, with the large multi-families dwellings. Post-marital residence was probably neo-local or bilocal, for houses were built similar to those of the regional *caboclo* population, housing usually only a nuclear family. Inter-marriage with *caboclos* was quite common, such that by 1850s – approximately around the time Murphy's proposed residence rule shift was supposed to have taken place – these Mundurucu had been nearly completely assimilated into the regional population. As Murphy indicated:

"The first half of the nineteenth century saw intensive contact between Brazilians and Mundurucu in the region adjacent to the Amazon, and in the second half of the century these Mundurucu merged progressively with

caboclo society. But the bulk of the tribe had remained in their homeland on the Upper Tapajós River and did not experience any large-scale direct contact with the whites until a comparatively late period" (Murphy 1960:38).

Thus it would seem that it is only to this population which remained on the Upper Tapajós that Murphy's residence shift hypothesis would apply.

Murphy stated that "trade and the exploitation of natural resources came late to the upper Tapajós because of the impediments to navigation imposed by its many rapids, and also because of the specific commodities available there" (Murphy 1960:38). All the main trade items were found in abundance on the Madeira river area, which also had the aided advantage of being located nearer Brazilian markets. "As late as 1852," in fact, "the upper Tapajós area "was still only occasionally penetrated by Brazilians and *trade was too small* to warrant permanent commercial posts" (Murphy 1960:39, my italics). To be certain, the main trade item was *farinha*, but trading was only sporadic, and most industrial commodities were still acquired through occasional warring on behalf of the whites (Murphy 1960:39; 1960:49).

With the rubber boom, however, and thus only around the 1860s, this state of affairs began to change. The best rubber-latex in the area was to be found in rubber avenues on the margins of the small tributaries of the upper Tapajós river. Rubber tappers began to penetrate deeper into this area, in pursuit of this prized rubber-latex. They were followed by missions and permanent trading posts, which were thus established in the heart of the Mundurucu traditional territory (Murphy 1960:40). Intensification of the trade with previously little disturbed savanna population was almost and immediate consequence. Bates (in Murphy 1960:39) actually reported that in 1862 the Mundurucu of the upper Tapajós would already "...make large plantations of mandioca and sell the surplus produce, which amounts on the Tapajós to from 3000 to 5000 baskets (60 lb. each) annually, to traders who ascend the river from Santarem between the months of Augusta and January."

These amounts are impressive; but we have no means of knowing precisely what percentage of the normal, annual production of *farinha* they did represent, nor to what percentage was the normal production increased in order to allow such a supposedly large surplus for trading purposes. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that an increase in production must have taken place. If Murphy is correct, then, the residence shift proposed could have taken place at approximately this period.

Murphy regards Tocantins' (in Murphy 1960:80) reports that, when he visited the Mundurucu in 1875, the resolution of quarrels between males was achieved through the departure of one of the men from the village as suggestion of "the absence of local lineages and the high male mobility characteristic of Mundurucu matrilocality" (Murphy 1960:80). This is to say, for Murphy, the patrilocal-to-matrilocal residence shift was well under way, if not totally accomplished, by 1875 – a feat which was achieved in approximately fifteen years, if we take 1860 as the time in which greater intensification of trade took place, and pressures towards the 'shift' could thus have started.

Now, fifteen years is enough time for such a change to take place: more drastic transformations brought about as a result of contact have been observed among other South American indigenous groups in much shorter periods of time (See, for example, Laraia 1965). But it must be remembered that the intensification of the *farinha* trade, or of trade of any kind, in the upper Tapajós, was only launched with the rubber boom, the savanna Mundurucu themselves becoming involved in rubber tapping (Murphy 1960:49). Tocantins (1877:154) reported that by 1875, in fact, rubber was the main item of trade among these Mundurucu, a good proportion of them having already drifted into permanent settlements near the upper Tapajós tributaries, near the rubber avenues (Murphy 1960:42-43). As Murphy observed:

“all these scattered Mundurucu were living in Brazilian-type houses with an average population of ten in each house. This process was obviously a continuation of a local scale of the earlier spread of the Mundurucu of the lower Tapajós and the Madeira tributaries” (Murphy 1960:42).

What I am trying to emphasize here is the fact that at the same time period that the trade in *farinha* increased in the upper Tapajós area – and when Murphy’s proposed residence shift would have taken place – the Mundurucu were also becoming increasingly involved in rubber tapping. In this respect, note that rather than exert pressures towards uxorilocality, rubber tapping led to temporary and eventually into permanent migration from the savanna villages, neolocal residence, and the breakdown of communal life, as Murphy himself has well demonstrated (Murphy 1960:154-193; see also Murphy and Steward 1956).

Given the high demand for rubber in the international market, rubber latex brought more returns in manufactured goods than *farinha*. Thus, it would seem that when pressed for a choice between a supposed change to matrilocality to increase the production of *farinha*, and the historically confirmed one to neolocality and greater involvement in the extraction of rubber, the Mundurucu did prefer that which resulted in greater returns on the long run.

Of course, it would be possible for both changes to take place simultaneously: neolocality would only apply to those Mundurucu who did migrate. Those who remained in the savannas could have effected a shift towards permanent uxorilocality, instead, as Murphy proposes. But we must still ask if, indeed, Murphy’s supposition that task units formed by co-resident, consanguineally related women were more efficient and more productive than those which, given a rule of patri-virilocality, would consist of wives of lineage members, with “diverse residential origins having no pre-established ties of mutual accommodation and cooperation” (Murphy 1960:81), is well founded.

In this respect, it pays to observe that *farinha* is the staple item of Mundurucu diet, most likely being so, long before it became an important trade item, or long before intensified trade relations reached the upper Tapajós area, or even long before contact with whites was established (cf. Williams 1972). The steps in the production of *farinha* seem to have been patterned and similarly carried out in the different villages. Mundurucu girls learn to help their mothers and the tasks involved in the preparation of *farinha* from a very young age (Murphy and Murphy 1974:123). And from a very

young age, all Mundurucu learn to cooperate and share: “The cardinal principle of Mundurucu life is that people must cooperate and share” (Murphy and Murphy 1974:66). This suggests that the women of a given household traditionally cooperated in the production of *farinha*, regardless of their supposed multiple origins, or whether in patri-virilocal or matrilineal residence.

Among Mundurucu visited by Yolanda and Robert Murphy, according to what they have stated (1974:129-131), all the women of a village – independently of their household affiliation or degree of consanguinity – cooperated closely in the production of *farinha* under the leadership of the older women, even if the *farinha* which was being processed was to be consumed or bartered by a particular household alone. As the cited authors observed:

“Except for minor household chores, women’s work is always done in cooperation, or in companionship, with other women. That women work together in manioc processing can be explained by productive efficiency and technology, but it has other dimensions as well. Mundurucu women enjoy each other’s company, and the congregation of women in the *farinha* shed turns the tedium of a grinding chore into a chatty sort of sewing circle. They switch tasks, allowing each other to rest or wander off, and keep the workers amused with constant conversation. They do engage in malicious gossip about one another, (...), but the general tenor of their interaction is amiable. Through the men cooperate with each other as much as do the women, the women appear to be more sociable and outgoing, more dependent upon others”(Murphy and Murphy 1974:30).

Even if we admit a former rule of patri-virilocality for women, there seems to be no apparent reason to believe that the degree of cooperation and the amiable tone of the interaction among women – among all women – did not exist in former times as well. Furthermore, given that the Mundurucu observed a rule of exogamy only in relation to the moiety system, but not insofar as villages were concerned, a patri-virilocal post-marital residence rule would not necessarily implicate in village relocation for the women. They would change households, but could continue to work side-by-side with their women relatives carrying out their assigned tasks. Taking all this into consideration, I must argue that the causes presented by Murphy for a supposed residence shift to permanent uxorilocality, in the time period delineated by him, do not have a sound empirical basis; they are, at best, negligible or insufficient. If an increase in production was the aim, then it seems to me that an increase in labor hands through polygynous unions (quite possible given patrilocality) would be a faster and more efficient means to achieve the supposed goals.

Thus far, I have argued solely on the basis of Murphy’s postulation that the Mundurucu were in fact patrilocal in pre-contact times. It is time now to closely assess the evidence which he brings forth in support of this postulation.

Mundurucu Patrilineal Clans

According to Murphy (1956:418; 1960:9; see also Kruse 1934:55), the Mundurucu were organized into two patrilineal exogamous moieties, the ‘Red’ and the ‘Black’

moiety, each constituted of an approximately equal number of clans, totaling at the time thirty-eight (38) clans. Some of these clans were joined into unnamed phratries, and four clans had sub-clans. Kinship terminology was bifurcate merging, of the Omaha type, with preferential cross-cousin marriage from either side (Murphy 1956:72). However, their type of terminology is suggestive of avuncular marriages with the sister's daughter, as well as of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage, even though, as noted, at the time Murphy lived with them there was not a unilateral preference in marriages with cross-cousins, and a taboo on avuncular marriages was observed (Murphy 1960:73).

All Mundurucu clans were named after animals, trees or birds, and thus had eponymous names, yet, they were not totemic. Each clan was associated with a *tubo*, a protector spirit, from whom they took their clan names (Murphy 1960:73). The *tubo* of the clans were believed to reside in the *karoko*, or sacred trumpets, alongside with another class of spirits, the spirits "companions of the trumpets" (Murphy 1956:419). Each clan has its own *tubo*, but two or more clans may share the same "companion spirits", these clans being regarded by the Mundurucu to have a close relationship and thus to form phratries (Murphy 1956 :419).

Each village has a set of three *karoko* housed in an enclosed chamber off the men's house. They are taboo to women, on the basis of a myth – the 'myth of matriarchy' (Bamberger 1974) – associating power with ownership of the *karoko*. According to this myth, women were the ones to first find the *karoko*; while they owned and played with them, they had power over men. Men had to do all 'women's work', including the processing of *farinha*, as well as hunt, as the *karoko* had to be fed regularly with meat offerings and a drink made of manioc. Men also had to be submissive to the sexual demands of women, who then took all initiative in those matters. But men tired of this situation, claiming that, since women could not hunt, they could not properly feed the sacred flutes. Thus, they stole the *karoko* from the women. With the loss of the *karoko*, women also lost their power and fell into a submissive position. The *karoko* became taboo to them in fear that, if they took possession of these instruments once again, they would regain their lost power (Murphy and Murphy 1974:88-89).⁷

Nevertheless, any man, regardless of moiety or clan affiliation, can play with and feed the *karoko*; these sacred instruments belong to the villages. All the ceremonial related to them aim at ensuring protection for the villages, despite the fact that any particular set of *karoko* is associated with the clan of the man who made it, and none of his sons or other fellow clan members reside in the village in which that specific set of *karoko* happens to be housed (Murphy 1960:76). As such, there is an apparent contradiction, or discontinuity between the *de facto* and the *de jure* rights over ownership of the *karoko*.

For Murphy (1960:76), this is one of the greatest anomalies resulting from the Mundurucu disharmonious regime, as well as one of the main evidences for a former practice of patrilocality among these people, as follows:

⁷ See also Kruse (1934:57), and Bamberger (1974).

“...the spirits in the trumpets, which have to be placated by playing the instruments and presenting them with ritual offerings of food, are considered to offer protection and aid to the village, and not to the clan. Despite the *de jure* rights of the clan over the karoko, *de facto* rights are vested in the village. This anomaly could only be resolved if the clan were either localized or had local nuclei. This would be possible only under a patrilocal rule of residence, which would allow the men, who are the perpetuators and transmitters of clan membership, to remain in the paternal home after marriage” (Murphy 1960:76).

Likewise, the fact that kinship terminology suggest sister’s daughter marriage while contemporary Mundurucu place a strong taboo on this type of unions is perceived by Murphy as still another ‘anomaly’ of the system, which could only be resolved in a similar fashion, that is, through a former rule of patrilocality. Murphy argues that, under a uxrilocal regime,

“...the mother’s brother and his sister’s daughter are co-residents, at least until the time of marriage. Thus, a union with her would be endogamous to the household and would not only be disruptive of the good order of residential unit, [...], but would tend to isolate the household from the larger society. [...]. That sister’s daughter marriage is congruent with a patrilocal residence rule would also, [...] lend confirmation to the thesis that the Mundurucu are patrilocal” (Murphy 1960:91).

Murphy also finds additional evidence in support of this thesis in the names of the clans. According to him, the Mundurucu word for clan is “diwat”, a term literally translatable as “dwellers of the river” (Murphy 1956:418-419). “Arudiwat”, the name of a particular Mundurucu, for instance, would thus translate as “dwellers of the river of the parrot”, “aru” standing for parrot. For Murphy, this is “suggestive of the origins of the clans as a local group.” An Aru clan member, in this case, would be “really descendent of the dwellers of the river of the parrot” (*ibid: ibidem.*).

The existence of phratries and subclans among the Mundurucu represents for Murphy a confirmation of the origin of the clans as localized groups, as hinted at by the term “diwat”. According to Murphy (1960 :77), the subclans are referred to as “kokuawat”, or “dwellers of the same place”, and they share the same *tubo* names, and the same spirits companions of the trumpets, with the exception that, whereas the clan itself recognized the larger species of the plant or animal family in question, the subclan recognizes the smaller species. For Murphy, this means that the subclan is an offshoot of the clan, which, in time, will acquire complete independence by taking a new *tubo* name, but will then enter into a phratric relationship with the other clan by sharing the same spirits companions of the trumpets. This, in turn, is indicative of a process of clan segmentation among the Mundurucu, a process which, according to Murphy (1960:78-79), “is only possible if the patrilineal society is also patrilocal, because it assumes a localized group of related males who are subjected to a common pressure to seek fresh sources of subsistence, and who can move as a unit.”

In a recent article, significantly entitled “Mundurucu: Social Change or False Problem?”, however, Alcida Ramos (1978) has pointed out that it is not necessary for a localized core of agnatically related males to live under the rule of patrilocal residence

for a process of clan segmentation to take place. In this regard, she demonstrates how among the Sanumá (a Yanomama group), segmentation of patrilineal clans takes place in a situation of uxorilocality, comparable to that of the Mundurucu (Ramos 1978:683-685). In addition, Ramos sustains, the use of the term “kokuawat”, that is, “dwellers of the same place” to refer to the subclans, rather than suggest necessarily a patrilocal rule of residence, may suggest, instead, a situation of dispersed clans, for,

“...if the men were localized under a patrilocal rule of residence, [...], this expression would be meaningless because it would apply to all agnatically related males in any given village; it is only in a context of dispersed kinsmen that this expression carries information” (Ramos 1978:678).

Therefore, Ramos suggests that what Murphy refers to as ‘subclans’ could simply be localized core of males of the same clan living in the same men’s house, and coming together through uxorilocal marriages in the same village. The fact that only four clans, from a total of thirty-eight, have these subsections, Ramos adds, would account for the very unlikelihood of this happening consistently over time (*ibid*).

In assessing the evidence brought forth by Murphy in support of this thesis of a former patrilocality for the Mundurucu, Ramos has also offered an alternative explanation for the names of Mundurucu clans. She has argued that ‘diwat’ need not necessarily refer to a specific river or location, “[...] but to the condition of the Mundurucu as river Indianas” (Ramos 1978:678). Or, as she further suggests, even if the names of the clans did refer to places, these might have been simply mythological rather than actual historical plans – which seems to be a more plausible explanation given that, at one time. The Mundurucu are reported to have had over forty clans, thus requiring that approximately that number of rivers crossed their territory, were the names of the clans to refer to actual places. In the river-rich Amazon region, this would certainly not have been totally impossible – but it is rather unlikely that this was in fact the case.

In regards to Murphy’s assertions as to the ‘anomaly’ of the non-coincidence of the *de facto* and *de jure* rights over the *karoko*, and to his resolution of the dilemma through the priority of patrilocality hypothesis, Ramos has stated:

“[...] the situation does not, in fact, require that the actual members have exclusive access at the instruments because any Mundurucu male is entitled to play and feed them. The important thing is that the trumpets should be played and cared for by men (rather than women), in accordance with the myth that tells of the taking of power from the women by the men. Contrary to Murphy’s interpretation, we could say that, as a perfectly logical and practical possibility, although the trumpets can indeed house the clan ancestral spirits, they can be cared for by both clan members and nonclan members. There is no need to consider this fact an ‘anomaly’, nor is there any need to hypothesize a former rule of patrilocality in order to make sense of the present-day situation of rights over these instruments” (Ramos 1978:678-679, her emphasis).

I am thus led to conclude, in agreement with Ramos, that the arguments presented by Murphy in favor of this hypothesis are not sufficiently convincing, especially as the Mundurucu themselves adamantly deny that this was ever the case. As per Murphy

(1960:80) himself: “Matrilocality was the only mode of residence that even the oldest Mundurucu could remember, and they had no traditional memory of previous patrilocality.”

Furthermore, as Ramos (1978:679) has also indicated, contrary to Murphy’s belief that the disharmonic regime of patrilineality and uxorilocality of the Mundurucu is a unique instance, a similar regime is also found to operate among other South American groups, such as the Kaingang (Steward 1949), the Shavante (Mayberry-Lewis 1967), and the Sanumá (Raos 1972). In addition, two Tupi-speaking groups, like the Mundurucu, also exhibit a similar regime: the Tapirapé (Wagley 1977), and the Parintintin (Waude Kracke 1975), the latter being neighbors and long-time enemies of the Mundurucu. Must we then postulate a similar patrilocality to uxorilocality residence shift for these other groups as well?

Ramos (1978:680) has argued that at least one of aspect of Mundurucu social organization – i.e., the men’s house – suggests that “uxorilocality is not a result of a relatively recent externally induced social change but it is inherent to their traditional social structure.” Murphy (1960:105) himself states that the men’s house is “the singlemost important institution in the structuring of male activity” among the Mundurucu. In this regard, Ramos (1978:680) stresses that, in South America, “the role of the men’s house as an actual living quarters for at least part of the male population and not simply a gathering place for men of a given village is in most cases associated with a rule of uxorilocality, regardless of descent rule.”

Mundurucu Social Organization in a Comparative Perspective

One point which is extremely relevant to the understanding of the origins of Mundurucu social organization – and which is completely neglected by Ramos and only paid lip service to my Murphy – is that of the linguistic and overall cultural affiliation of the Mundurucu with the Tupi-speaking peoples of Brazil. It is true that there have been some past disagreements as to the proper classification of the Mundurucu language, but there is now a consensus that it rightly belongs with the Tupi-speaking family (cf. Laraia 1972, Crofts 1973). Yet, little dispute, if any, has existed as to the cultural similarities between the Mundurucu and their Tupi-family cousins.

Indeed, the Mundurucu ‘headhunter’s heritage’ - theme and title of Murphy’s major work on the Mudnurucu – cannot be other but a Tupi heritage, especially that of headhunting itself. One need only barely glance at Fernão Cardim’s (1980:95-101) first-hand accounts of the ceremonial involved in the elevation of a male to the status of warrior among the coastal Tupinambá (one of the most celebrated Tupi-family people) to understand where the true roots of the Mundurucu custom of headhunting do lie (cf. Murphy 1957a :124-1025 in comparison to Cardim’s accounts).

Murphy himself has recognized that there are striking similarities between Mundurucu culture overall and the cultural make-up of other Tupi-speaking peoples. But he has taken Curt Nimuendajú’s (1930Ç975) affirmation that their linguistic affiliation may be remote, as well as the few dissimilarities between Tupi and Mundurucu kinship system and social organization as suggestive of a “...considerable period of independent

development for the Mundurucu” (Murphy 1960:9). One could accept that, however, it is difficult to understand what Murphy means by this. The Tupi-speaking people were never a homogeneous group – in fact, they were not a single group from which others could have branched out. Instead, they consisted of several different peoples who actually fought against each other, but who spoke a somewhat mutually understandable language, later classified as Tupi – thus the Tupi language family. Cardim (1980:101-106) cites at least twenty different such groups on the Atlantic coast, whom he personally visited in the late sixteenth century. Obviously, there were many more spread into the hinterlands of whom he many hot have had any knowledge!

At the time the Portuguese first arrived in Brazil in the 1500s, the Tupi-speaking peoples were spread out throughout the Atlantic coast, from north to south, as well as into the interior. At present, however, only a few Tupi-speaking peoples survive (and they too may be doomed to disappear!), occupying isolated pockets in the Araguaia, Xingu, Tapajos, and Ucayali river areas, as well as in Paraguay (the Tupi-Guarani) and in French Guyana. Although at the time of conquest, the Tupi peoples seemed to be in an expansionist drive, their occupation of the hinterlands, including into the Amazon River area, was probably more a response to colonial encroachments, which pushed them away from the seacoast, and into the territory of other indigenous peoples. Murphy recognizes this and has indicated that although the Mundurucu claim the savanna lands as their original homeland, there is enough to suggest that their occupation of this territory has a relatively recent history, possibly preceding the time of earliest contact by no more than one century, that is, probably taking place during the seventeenth century, a time when the Portuguese and other European invaders (such as the French and the Dutch) had already driven many Tupi peoples from the coast. There are indications that they moved north into the Tapajós from a still unknown region in the neighboring state of Mato Grosso do Norte (Murphy 1960:22).

Despite the fact that the Tupi consisted of heterogeneous groups, they did – and the remaining Tupi groups still do – share some common characteristics besides their linguistic affiliation. One of these characteristics – and one which is still a constant among existing Tupi peoples – is the existence of matrilineal extended family groups, formed on the basis of uxori-local marriages, as basic to their social organization (cf. Wagley and Galvão 1949, Wagley 1977, Metraux 1928, Abbèville 1945, Murdock 1951, among others). Among the Tupinambá, for instance, these matrilineal family groups might consist of nearly two hundred individuals, all of whom lived in large, undivided rectangular dwelling, with thatched roofs, similar to those found in the Mundurucu savanna villages. In these large dwelling lived a core of consanguineally related females, their offspring and husbands, the oldest male usually being the head of the household (Abbèville 1945).

Heads of households who were successful in attracting a good number of young warriors and good hunters to their household through uxori-local marriages rose to the status of village leaders, village chiefs, and some of the most successful leaders even became paramount chiefs over several villages. The required long period of bride-service in uxori-local residence facilitated this process. Although, theoretically, a young husband could leave his in-laws’ household after this period of bride service was over

to set residence elsewhere (usually with his own relatives), a successful household leader would not need to do much to persuade him to remain uxori locally based. He would be also able to attract his own sons back home after their period of bride-service was over. There was no strict patrilineal right of succession in household leadership: any male could rise to this status. Quite commonly, however, sons succeeded fathers. A possible means of ensuring one's place in the line of succession was through sister's daughter marriage – a common practice among the Tupinambá – although cross-cousin marriage was the preferable type of union and, as such, more commonly practiced. But either through matrilineal cross-cousin marriage or sister's daughter marriage a young man could remain in his own matrilocal household (cf. Kirchoff 1932). This was of interest to both the head of the household – who thus ensured with his own sons a group of abiding and supporting males – as well as for the sons, who could guarantee in this manner their continuous presence at home and a place in the line of succession (cf. Abbéville 1945, Wagley and Galvão 1949). There was, in this case, a perfect harmony between uxori locality and avuncular marriage with the sister's daughter as well as matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. Through these types of marriage of a core of closely related males could stay together in co-residence, rallying around the figure of the household leader, even though uxori locality and not patrilocality was the rule (Wagley and Galvão 1949).

Let us recall that Murphy (1960:91) has regarded sister's daughter and matrilineal cross-cousin marriages – both implied in the Mundurucu kinship terminology – as being incompatible with uxori locality (because prospective marriage partners would be co-residents), and thus as suggestive of a former practice of patrilocality among them. Murphy (1960:72-74) has also asserted that since it appears that Mundurucu clans were once localized, or had a localized core of males in co-residence, which he assumes can only come about in a situation of patrilocality, this form of post-marital residence must have figured in the Mundurucu past. But as I have emphasized here, among the Tupinambá this was certainly not the case. Sister's daughter and matrilineal cross-cousin marriages were not only quite compatible with uxori locality, but also instrumental in enhancing the position of the leaders and ensuring the place of his sons in the line of succession, contributing, as such, to the emergence of localized cores of closely related males. Why wouldn't this also be possible to occur among the Mundurucu? In other words, one need not postulate a former rule of patrilocality to explain the suggestion of sister's daughter and matrilineal cross-cousin marriages in Mundurucu kinship nomenclature, nor to explain how localized cores of closely related males emerged (Williams 1972).

In postulating a former rule of patrilocality and a patrilocality to uxori locality residence shift for the Mundurucu, Murphy, in turn, has stated that a problem arose in reconciling the patrilineal rights of succession to chieftanship status, and the fact that under a rule of uxori locality the chief's sons would not be a member of the chief's household, or even live in the village where they would, by right, become the leaders. Murphy (1956:426) has thus suggested that the Mundurucu solved this problem by allowing that the sons of a village chief remained patrilocally based as among the contemporary Mundurucu.

If instead we view uxori-locality as the traditional post-marital residence rule practiced by the Mundurucu, as it is among all other Tupi-speaking peoples on the record, what we need to explain is how patrilo-cal residence – which was not even a *de jure* prerogative of Tupinambá paramount chiefs – became a legitimate right of chiefs and their sons in Mundurucu society.

Indeed, what we observe among the Mundurucu is an inversion of the Tupinambá situation. Among the latter, chieftanship status was patrilineally inherited, the sons of a village chief often remaining in patrilo-cal residence. But this was not a *de jure*, or legitimately recognized right. It was, instead, a result of common practice, accomplished through sister's daughter and matrilo-cal cross-cousin marriages, that is, through marriages which were endogamous to the household. It is possible that in certain cases, such as among the Mundurucu, continuous praxis led into the formal recognition of these rights: chieftanship status became a *de jure* and *de facto* patrilineally inherited status, chiefs and their sons acquiring the right to remain in their matrilo-cal households. Sister's daughter marriage, in turn, may have fallen into disuse, because it lost its important function of ensuring actual rights of succession and patrilo-cal residence. The present taboo on this type of union among the Mundurucu, however, may have been simply a result of the influence of Catholic missionaries, for whom such unions were incestuous.

The point that I would like to stress here is that we need not resort to the thesis of former patrilo-cality to explain these features of Mundurucu society, nor view them as incongruous with uxori-locality. At least, this is what the data on the Tupinambá seem to indicate.

I have extended the discussion on the Tupinambá, but it is important to emphasize again that uxori-locality and matrilo-cal extended family groups are common to most Tupi-speaking peoples – and that would include the Mundurucu. Thus, if we regard the Mundurucu in comparison to their Tupi-speaking 'cousins', it is not uxori-locality that seems at odds, or in need of explanation. On the other hand, patrilineal clans and moieties and, in particular, patrilineality are not traits associated with the Tupi: the Tupi-speaking peoples are almost always bilateral, even the Tapirapé, who exhibit patrilineal ceremonial moieties (Wagley 1977). Thus, when viewed in relation to the Tupi peoples, it is the presence of patri-clans and patrilineal exogamous moieties among the Mundurucu which actually demand an explanation – not uxori-locality!

In extending his hypothetical reconstructions of Mundurucu pre-contact history, i.e., their unrecorded history, to their last possible consequences, Murphy (1956:432) imagined the Mundurucu as a patrilineal-patrilo-cal hunting band, much as in the model of the patrilineal hunting band concocted by Julian Steward (1936). Patrilo-cality and eventually patrilineality, in this case, were viewed as resulting from a hunting adaptaion. Now, if we look at this developmental model for the Mundurucu in relation to Murphy's statements regarding the considerable period of independent development between the Mundurucu and the Tupi-speaking peoples (Murphy 1960:9; 1960:21), we are led to conclude that Murphy means that this 'break' between these peoples took place before the introduction of horticulture among them. And Murphy (1958b) does indeed like to stress that horticulture may be of recent development among the Mundurucu, given that most of Mundurucu mythology

relates to their hunting activities, only a few myths being directed to horticulture (Murphy 1958a).

Yet, even if we accept Murphy's suggestion that the period development of Mundurucu society independent of their Tupi cousins is in fact that long so as to precede the introduction of horticulture among them, it would still seem very unlikely that the Mundurucu (or the other Tupi-speaking peoples) were in fact previously organized into patrilineal-patrilocal hunting bands. As Martin (1969) has well pointed out, Steward's patrilineal hunting band model is ill-applied to South America. Most South American band societies are not patrilineal, nor patrilocal, but overwhelmingly matrilineal (actually, uxorilocal as the Mundurucu), although they are almost equally divided between matrilineality and bilaterality, as far as descent constructs are involved. But uxorilocality – at least, temporary uxorilocality marked by long periods of bride-service – is in fact widespread among South American indigenous peoples, regardless of whether we consider hunting and gathering groups or horticulturalists, and regardless of the particular descent constructs in question (cf. Steward 1949, Murdock 1951). It would thus seem quite unlikely for the Tupi-speaking peoples, the Mundurucu among them, to have a patrilineal hunting band past, especially because the majority of these peoples exhibit bilateral descent and uxorilocal post-marital residence rules, thus having a regime which corresponds to that of the majority of South American hunting and gathering societies.

On the other hand, if we assume that the Mundurucu, like most Tupi-speaking peoples, had a regime of bilateral descent and uxorilocal post-marital residence, and tried to explain the origins of the disharmonious regime of patrilineality and uxorilocality which they exhibit today through the developmental model employed by Murphy – i.e., assuming that unilineal descent can only emerge in a situation of corresponding unilocal residence – then the developmental stages of the Mundurucu kinship system must have been the following: from bilateral-uxorilocal to bilateral-patrilocal; from bilateral-patrilocal to patrilineal-patrilocal; from patrilineal-patrilocal to patrilineal-uxorilocal – and possibly, from patrilineal-uxorilocal to matrilineal-uxorilocal. Complex, yes, but I take it that it would not be totally impossible. Nevertheless, let it just be remembered that at least two other Tupi-speaking peoples – the Tapirapé and the Parintintin – exhibit somewhat similar regimes to that of the Mundurucu. Must we then formulate a similar, complex developmental scheme for them as well? Or is there any other way to explain the origins of their present regimes? In other words, is there a possible way for patrilineal clans and moieties to emerge in a situation of uxorilocality without a society having to go through a state of patrilocality? I, for one, believe that this is possible and feasible, and that the Mundurucu is precisely one such case.

Final Considerations

In his discussion of the origins of the disharmonious regime of patrilineality and uxorilocality among the Mundurucu, Murphy focused primarily on the origins of Mundurucu patri-clans, paying little or no attention to the origins of the moieties. And he argued in favor of a former rule of patrilocality on the assumption that patrilineal clans could only emerge if there were localized cores of patrilineally related males,

which, for him, in turn, could only come about through the practice of a patrilocal rule of post-marital residence.

However, among the Sanumá, who also display a disharmonious regime such as that of the Mundurucu, uxori-locality does not preclude the emergence of localized cores of agnatically related males, nor the process of lineage formation and lineage segmentation (Ramos 1978:683-685, Ramos 1972). These lineages are sub-divisions of Sanumá clans; they "...are made up of groups of people related agnatically, reckoning their membership through cumulative links of paternal filiation to a well-known common ancestor, and, although a given lineage may, as a whole, be dispersed, each one has a localized nucleus"(Ramos 1978:684). This is possible among the Sanumá because they have a marked preference for village endogamy, which allows closely related males to remain together in the same village, while at the same time observing a rule of uxori-local marriages (*ibid: ibidem*).

As I have argued earlier, a similar result could have been obtained among the Tupinambá through a manipulation of the marriage system. Village endogamy, although not necessarily the rule, was commonly observed, and closely related males could remain together, patrilocally based, often as members of the same household and matrilocally extended family, while simultaneously abiding by the rule of uxori-locality.

As Ramos (1978:684) has observed, however, Murphy does not offer us sufficient data concerning the practice of village endogamy versus village exogamy among the Mundurucu, but, apparently, among contemporary Mundurucu no such preference, in either case, seems to exist. Depopulation of the savanna villages may have in fact altered former practices; it is possible that a greater incidence of village endogamy could have taken place in former times, which would have allowed for clusters of agnatically related males to remain together and for clans to emerge, even if unlike the Tupinambá, sister's daughter marriages may not have been a very common practice among the Mundurucu.

For the time being, these questions must remain unanswered. There are other problems worthy of investigation in relation to the Mundurucu which will remain at bay as well, particularly with respect to the emergence of Mundurucu moieties, a problem which Murphy never considers. But here I have challenged only Murphy's hypothesis concerning the origins of the disharmonious regime which he perceived among the Mundurucu. The challenge is put forth both on historical and theoretical grounds.

Because of his formalist, stagist – and, we could add, androcentric - approach, Murphy assigned priority to patrilocality which in turn rendered matrilocality an anomaly rather than a norm. However, as I have demonstrated here with extensive citation of data from surrounding Tupi groups, matrilocality enjoys a numerical if not a historical priority. It is, instead, the patrilineality of the Mundurucu which seem anomalous and demanding explanation.

Murphy's erroneous assumption, encouraged in part by a too hearty acceptance of Steward's and Murdock's culture change theories, is then supported by a less than

careful presentation of historical data. In essence, Murphy asserts the emergence of social changes in response to external economic forces; that is, he assigns the origins of the disharmonious regime to the increase of *farinha* production, at a time when other more pressuring economic forces (development of the rubber-trade) were simultaneously occurring. Furthermore, he bases his argument on somewhat doubtful (androcentric?) assumptions regarding the lack of female cooperativeness in a situation of patrilocality, when his own data suggest that Mundurucu women exhibit a high degree of comradeship – even sisterhood – regardless of circumstances. Murphy's assumptions in this regard – as well as to the very basis of his hypothesis on the priority of patrilocality among the Mundurucu (Murdock's and Steward's model of the 'patrilineal band') echo of 'male bias'. It is also a mechanical treatment of the relationship between economic forces and social organization from which anthropologists have for long tried to escape.

In all fairness, much of the ethnographic data collected and presented by Murphy advances our knowledge of the Mundurucu specifically and of Brazilian indigenous groups in general. However, his – and numerous other ethnographies based on similar models and male-biased assumptions – demand reformulation in light of recent advances in anthropology. The preceding is one such attempt.

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