

ANTROPOLOGICA
57, 1982: 79-96



COMENTARIOS

Languages of the Orinoco-Amazon watershed: some comments on Migliazza's classification

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Migliazza's recent contribution to *Antropológica* (1980: 95-162) represents a welcome attempt to impose some semblance of order on an unwieldy corpus of data. However, as the author himself remarks, any classification of the languages of this region requires one to work with sources of very variable quality and under these circumstances, it is almost inevitable that one will make some errors of judgement or fact. Nevertheless, if specialists on each of the various groups or languages of the area were to comment on Migliazza's scheme, it would be possible to reduce the inaccuracies to a minimum and produce a truly up-to-date linguistic assessment of the region. It is with this objective that we offer the following comments, hoping that other specialists will follow suit. After some preliminary comments on the empirical basis of Migliazza's classification, we continue with a discussion of his identification of the characteristic features of the languages of the region. This is followed by some remarks on his discussion of the effects that contact with national societies has had on the linguistic diversity of the region.

Although Migliazza refers to the Orinoco-Amazon 'basin' in the title of his article, he makes it clear in the introductory paragraphs that he intends to deal only with the languages in the region of the watershed of these rivers. It is obvious that all surveys of this kind must end somewhere and that there is bound to be some element of arbitrariness about whatever boundaries one chooses. However by confining himself to the Orinoco-

NOTA DEL EDITOR: Para el momento en que estos comentarios se enviaron a la imprenta el autor aún no había respondido.

Amazon watershed, Migliazza seems to have chosen particularly arbitrary limits. It is the eastern boundary of his survey —the headwaters of the Essequibo— that seems especially arbitrary since it rules out a number of languages of the Guiana highlands that are closely related to languages that he does deal with. Among these excluded languages there are at least four Carib languages (Trio, Akuriyo, Wayana and Apalaï) and one Tupi language (Oyampi). Given that one of Migliazza's general arguments is that all the languages of the region he has chosen share certain common features due to mutual acculturation over long periods (p. 97), there appears to be no good reason for excluding the languages of any of these groups since all are known to have been in prolonged contact with their neighbours further west. The same could be said (though perhaps to a more limited extent) of the groups of the coastal lowlands between the mouths of the Orinoco and Amazon, i.e. the Warao, Lokono (Arawak) and Kari'nya. The latter are a particularly curious omission, not only because all the scattered communities of Kari'nya taken together add up to at least 9,000 individuals and thus represent one of the largest groups of contemporary lowland South America, but also because they have been the subject of a classic linguistic study by Hoff (1968). Since Migliazza gives no reason for confining his analysis to the groups of the watershed region, and mentions only the existence of Trio (in a footnote undertaking to deal with this language and Guahibo in a subsequent paper) out of the several cognate languages that are spoken just to the east of this area, it would be quite reasonable for a reader without previous knowledge of the region to conclude that there were no other Amerindian languages spoken to the east of the Essequibo.

There are also some points of detail about the empirical basis of Migliazza's classification which we wish to raise. They all concern Carib-speaking groups in whom we have a particular interest:

a) *Panare*. Since Migliazza's article went to press a number of significant publications on the Panare have appeared. These include several articles (1977*a-c*, 1981) and a second book by Dumont (1978), a paper on the kinship system by Villalón (1978), an article and a book on Panare basketry by the authors of the present commentary (1978), an article on syllabic reduction in the Panare language by Mattei-Muller (1981), and an article on settlement patterns (1979) and a general monograph by Henley (1982). Generally speaking, these publications date the ethnographic information presented by Migliazza. Even so, the present Panare population is probably still no more than about 2,300, a figure quite close to the one suggested by Dumont in 1971, even if his estimate was probably a little high at the time. A more accurate figure should shortly become available once the recently completed Venezuelan government census of the indigenous

population is published (Villalón 1983).

As far as the linguistic information is concerned, Migliazza's account is not entirely correct either. Although there are significant differences between the northern and southern dialects of the Panare language, this is not sufficient to prevent comprehension between speakers from opposite ends of Panare territory. Also, although the Northern Panare (whom we would divide on both cultural and dialectical grounds into Western and Eastern regional groups) speak some trade Spanish, the number who speak Spanish really fluently is still less than twenty. Almost all of these individuals are under thirty-five and with one or two exceptions, learnt Spanish when they were taken away from their communities, on the initiative of the Archbishop of Ciudad Bolívar, to be placed in Roman Catholic schools. For the most part, however, these children return sooner or later to their communities. In general, despite the Panare's frequent contact with Spanish speakers, there is no evidence whatsoever that any form of language displacement is taking place, even in the most acculturated communities.

It is also quite incorrect to assert, as Migliazza does, that 'a diglossia situation prevails' in these communities simply on account of the fact that adult men use a limited trade Spanish in the course of economic exchanges with the local creole population. If one follows Fergusson (1959) and restricts the term 'diglossia' to situations in which two languages or language variants exist (one usually more specialised than the other) within a single language community, as Migliazza himself suggests one should (see Migliazza 1972: 459-461), what we are dealing with here is a case of limited bilingualism rather than 'diglossia'. Although there is a superficial similarity between the concepts of 'diglossia' and 'bilingualism'—witness the observation of Marcellesi (1981) that diglossia is a form of 'mass bilingualism'—there is also a fundamental difference: 'diglossia' refers to a situation in which *all* members of a language community can normally speak two languages, each having a distinctive social function, whilst 'bilingualism' refers simply to the capacity of an *individual* to speak two languages, irrespective of the functions these languages may have.

b) *Wanai (Mapoyo) & Yawarana*. A recent comparison by Mattéi-Muller of her Wanai vocabulary collected in 1976 (see Muller 1975) with a Yawarana vocabulary collected in 1958 by Méndez-Arocha (1959) revealed an incidence of about 80% of common words, once differences in techniques of transcription had been allowed for. In addition, many of the words that were not identical were quite clearly cognates of one another. Such is the similarity of the two vocabularies, that from a strictly linguistic perspective they could be considered dialectal variants of a single

language. However, from an ethnographic perspective, the two groups have been distinguished for at least 200 years (see Gilij 1965, I: 27), whilst at the present time, the two groups have no contact with one another, nor even any knowledge of one another's existence.

Although the Wanai language is unlikely to survive beyond the lifetime of those presently 35 years old, the population is not so threatened physically as Migliazza maintains. Citing one of our own articles (Henley 1975), Migliazza claims that only four members of the rural Wanai population of 75 individuals are under 15 years of age. In fact, the original text says that at that time (1976) there were over 40 children under 15 years of age, thus justifying the establishment of a school under the regulations of the Ministry of Education. In April 1982, the Wanai still did not have their own school.

c) *Waiwai*. The main modification that Migliazza proposes to Durbin's earlier (1977) classification of the Carib languages of the Guianas concerns the language of the Waiwai of the Guyanese-Brazilian border region. In Durbin's scheme, there is a major distinction between Northern and Southern Carib languages, the principal diagnostic feature of which is the presence or otherwise of the proto-Carib *p. In the Southern Carib languages, this phoneme is said to have given way to /h/ or /f/. Since Durbin classifies Waiwai in the Northern Carib group, it would appear that he believes that this language has retained the distinctive proto-Carib *p. Migliazza, on the other hand, claims that Waiwai should be classified as a Southern Carib language on the grounds that it is closely related to Hishkaryana and Warikyana (both recognized as Southern Carib languages) and, moreover, "it exhibits the change of the proto-Carib *p to h" (p. 123).

However, the difference between Durbin's and Migliazza's points of view appears to be simply a function of the sources on which they have respectively relied. Migliazza's argument appears to be based on an article by Derbyshire (1961*a*) who, in his turn, derived his information about Waiwai from Hawkins, a North American evangelical missionary. However these sources conflict with the classic ethnographic sources on the Waiwai, written by the two Danish anthropologists, Fock (1963) and Yde (1965). It would appear that Durbin relied on these latter two sources whilst Migliazza appears to be unaware of their existence since he neither refers to them in his text, nor lists them in his bibliography. In the extensive vocabularies published by the two Danes, /h/ and also /f/ are absent whilst /p/ is very frequent. On the other hand though, in the introduction to his vocabulary, Fock describes the /p/ of Waiwai as 'fricative'. Moreover, in the short Waiwai vocabulary collected by Farabee some forty years earlier, /p/ and /f/ appear to be in free variation (compare the words for 'currasow' and 'powis

jaw', for example) (Farabee 1924: 177-181). It may be that these variations in the transcription of Waiwai can be put down to differences in the 'ear' of the various sources, which in turn may partly depend on their respective native languages. But even if this is the case, it would appear that whichever of the two Carib language groups Waiwai is deemed to belong to, it must be considered a borderline case.

Finally in this connection, we might add a note of ethnographic interest which would tend to support Migliazza's rather than Durbin's classification. In a personal communication, P. René Bros informs us that the well-known Ye'kuana ritual specialist, Barné Yavarí, once visited the Waiwai in the company of a group of (Brazilian?) military personnel and found their culture and language so similar to his own that he classified them as Ye'kuana 'who have gone astray'. Since the Ye'kuana language is regarded by both authorities as belonging to the Southern Carib group, this would suggest that Waiwai does also.

As far as the general linguistic discussion of the article is concerned, we have serious reservations about Migliazza's treatment of the features which he claims are shared "in various degrees" by the languages of the region. These are said to derive "from diffusion and centuries of contact rather than genetic relationship" and to "constitute areal patterns suggesting that these languages are part of a linguistic area" (p. 97). However the only feature which he identifies in connection with these far-reaching conclusions is "the diffusion from west to east of nasalization, aspiration and glottalization" (note 5) which he refers to, in a footnote, on the authority of a personal communication from Krute-Georges. This is clearly quite insufficient to establish in any significant degree the validity of his claims about the linguistic uniformity of the region. Nor can we agree with Migliazza's treatment of what he calls "traits of typological interest" which he claims are also widely distributed within the area. These invite closer examination:

a) *Discourse redundancy* (p. 97). Although we believe that the model described with reference to the Hishkaryana by Derbyshire (1977), is probably characteristic of the majority of Guianese Carib languages, to argue that it is also characteristic of all the languages of the region is an assumption that is quite unwarranted by the presently available data. Furthermore, the most interesting feature of 'discourse redundancy' in Hishkaryana is what Derbyshire calls 'the verification particle'. But the description of this feature requires a level of both syntactical and semantic analysis that goes way beyond the levels reached for many of the languages that Migliazza deals with.

b) *Ergative case* (p. 97). Migliazza claims that "except for a few Arawak languages, all others are ergative languages and have a transitive

verb phrase pattern in which the nominal Object precedes the Verb (OV)'. It may be true that Yanomami, which Migliazza knows well, is an ergative language but this is not true of any of the Carib languages that have been studied in any depth. In the case of many other languages (Hoti for example), there is simply not enough information to draw any firm conclusions at this juncture.

c) *Word order*. As far as Carib languages are concerned, Migliazza is correct when he asserts that the Subject can either precede the Object or follow the Verb, either in the form SOV or the form OVS. However the OVS word order can be considered in Guianese Carib languages, notably in Panare and Hishkaryana (Derbyshire 1977), as the basic order. Given that OVS is extremely rare in the languages of the world, it would seem to be most appropriate in the case of any particular language to assume—until firm contrary evidence is forthcoming—that cases of OVS word ordering are mere variations on the more common SOV pattern. Nevertheless from a theoretical point of view it is not so much the position of the Object with respect to the Verb that is important but rather the position of the Subject with respect to the verb phrase OV (see Greenberg 1966: 76-77), so, it is clearly relevant to distinguish the languages of the region that follow OVS as the basic word order pattern from those in which this order occurs merely as a variation on a basic SOV pattern.

d) *Lack of the formal active-passive distinction*. This is also a generalization that cannot be legitimately applied to the Carib languages of the region. In these languages, the verb system includes 'intransitive' forms which can be assimilated to forms of the 'reflexive-passive' type (here we use the term 'intransitive' in the strictest sense, i.e. to denote verbal syntagms which cannot carry a direct object). This process of assimilation is made possible by an agent-operator which effects the inversion of the relationship between actor and subject that is characteristic of the move from active to passive forms.

For example, in Ye'kuana:

yëë wokoï = I cut that
wookoï = (intransitive form), I cut myself
wookohoi ʔewwë = I was cut by him

In this last case, the intransitive form of the verb, *okoo ði*, 'to cut', has been modified by the insertion of a marker of factitivity, *ho*. Derbyshire (1961b: 127-128) has reported a similar phenomenon in Hishkaryana. In Ye'kuana, there are also verbal adjectives which can fulfill this passive function. For example:

yëë ʔiweene = (lit. that seen), that is visible or that is seen
yëë neenea = (intransitive form), that is visible or that is seen

yëë neneea = (lit. that sees), he sees that (thing)

This verbal adjective form, which occurs in most other Carib languages as well, can also be accompanied by an agent-operator (see Hoff 1968: 97). In Panare, there is even a past participle form:

amakã yamasa' kënuya = (lit. manioc thrown out him by)
the manioc was thrown out by him

Finally, we would like to comment on Migliazza's discussion of the effects of contact with national societies on the linguistic diversity of the Orinoco-Amazon watershed region. Migliazza argues that this contact has resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of languages spoken in the region and on pp. 98-99, he produces two distribution maps to substantiate his point, one corresponding to 1800, the other to 1977. He claims that these maps show that whereas in 1800 "there were still about 50 tribes and languages... Today, only 23 indigenous languages are still spoken". In other words, the languages of the area have been reduced by over half in the last 180 years.

But whilst no-one could deny that both the number of speakers of indigenous languages, as well as the area of land that they control has been drastically reduced in the period under review, a close examination of Migliazza's comparison shows that it has the effect of exaggerating the degree of linguistic extinction that has taken place. For example, he lists Pemon, Arekuna, Kamarakoto and Taurepan as separate entries in the list of roughly fifty languages existing in 1800. Pemon is listed as number 17 and the other three as numbers 17a, b and c, respectively. It might be assumed that Migliazza meant to imply by this form of classification that Arekuna, Kamarakoto and Taurepan should be considered dialects of Pemon since he describes them as such later in the article (p. 121). However if one applies this interpretation to all the entries in the list on p. 99, one would need to conclude that the map corresponding to 1800 shows that there were 26 distinct languages at the time, only three more than those that Migliazza claims were spoken in the area in 1977.

Although this figure is probably closer to the truth than Migliazza's original calculation, it would appear, for its part, to be an underestimate of the number of indigenous languages existing in the Orinoco-Amazon watershed region in 1800 since there are a number of important omissions from Migliazza's list. Examples that spring immediately to mind are Tamanaco, spoken on the right bank of the middle Orinoco until the middle of the last century (Gilij 1965; Bueno 1965: 146; Codazzi 1940, II: 17); Pareca, spoken in the same area until the beginning of this century (see Henley 1975); and Wayumara and Sapara spoken on the Isla de Maraca, of the middle Uraricoera, until at least 1913 (see Koch-Grünberg 1979-1982, I:

23, 61-62, 164-167; 1928: 262 *et seq.*; Farabee 1924, who appears to have used the same informants as Koch-Grünberg).

Although Migliazza has obviously been somewhat careless in the organization of his data, what is really at issue here is the trustworthiness of the earliest sources on the area. Generally speaking, in the ethnohistory of Orinoquia and Amazonia, the earlier the source, the greater the number of indigenous groups that it identifies in a given area. It is often assumed that the lesser number of latter periods can be entirely put down to the extinction of large numbers of indigenous groups in the last few hundred years, primarily as a result of contact with peoples of European extraction. Migliazza appears to share this assumption since he claims that, "The last one hundred years of European colonization has brought about a 'leveling' of dialect differences within the languages of this area... While observing their tribal marriage rules, local people tend to marry among those who speak their own dialect. Only when the community comes into permanent contact with, or is intergrated into the national society, do dialect boundaries cease to be barriers to gene flow" (p. 97).

This observation needs to be examined carefully. It is certainly true that following contact with Europeans, individuals of different dialect or language communities may begin to intermarry as a result of the breakdown of traditional indigenous marriage rules due to massive depopulation or to acculturation to non-Indian marriage customs. However it is quite incorrect to assume that in pre-contact times marriages between individuals from different linguistic communities were unknown in the Orinoco-Amazon watershed region. A good deal of ethnographic evidence points in the opposite direction. Although all the societies of the region show a strong preference for local endogamy, this preference exists side by side with a range of social contacts outside the local group and, in some cases, with extensive trade networks stretching over large areas and involving a number of different indigenous language groups. Such is the case, for example, with the trade network of the Gran Sabana and adjacent regions (see Coppens 1971; Thomas 1972; Butt Colson 1973). Moreover, as Thomas has shown, these networks presuppose and/or create marriage ties over extensive areas. Admittedly, nowadays, indigenous trade networks involve, in part, the exchange of European goods. But the earliest historical sources, as well as the archeological record, indicate that an active trade network connected the Orinoco basin to both the Caribbean coast and the Andes in pre-Columbian times (see Civrieux 1980: 50-51) and there is good reason to suppose that a network of the same kind also operated further south on the Orinoco-Amazon watershed. Furthermore, impressive though the indigenous trade networks of today may be, they appear relatively modest when compared to the networks described by the earliest explorers and missionaries. In the

1840s, Schomburgk's expedition met a group of Ye'kuana from the upper Caura on the Takutu river close to what is today the Guyanese-Brazilian border. They were on their way, via the Uraricoera and Esequibo rivers, to trade in Georgetown (Menezes 1977: 23). Similarly, in 1863, the English missionary, W.H. Brett was surprised one day to witness the arrival at his mission at Waramuri, on the Moruica river, close to the Atlantic coast of modern Guyana, of a group of 'Arekuna' from the Mt. Roraima region (see Thomas 1982: 23). It seems entirely likely that, as Thomas says is the case amongst the Pemon today, these far-flung trading relationships were consolidated by marriage alliances. Interestingly, Koch-Grünberg's guide on his trip along the Uraricoera and up to the headwaters of the Ventuari was a Ye'kuana who was returning home with a Makushi wife whom he had met on an expedition to the Rio Branco (Koch-Grünberg 1979-1982, I: 48, 51, 61 *passim*).

Rather than posit the existence of a patchwork of isolated groups, having very little to do with one another in pre-Columbian times, it seems more in tune with what we now know to question the accuracy of the early sources. As frequently as not, the large number of indigenous groups identified in these sources turn out to be no more than the names of local groups whose language and culture are very similar to one another. As anyone who has done fieldwork in the area knows, this is an error that it is easy to fall into since many Indians are only too ready to emphasize the differences between themselves and neighbouring communities, even though they may have close social and economic ties with the latter. But such claims to distinctiveness must be treated with caution. Take the distinctions that are frequently made between the various Pemon sub-groups: Koch-Grünberg (1979-1982, I: 52-53) emphasizes that the Arekuna and Taurepan should not be confused, even though the latter may be called by the former term by Brazilians. Perhaps this was a distinction that Akuli, Koch Grünberg's 'Arekuna' companion, encouraged him to make. But Padre Cesáreo de Armellada, who knows the Pemon and their language as well as any non-Pemon, has denied that this distinction has any 'somatological, ethnic or glottological' validity (quoted in Thomas 1982: 17). And yet Armellada arrived amongst the Pemon in the 1930s, a mere twenty years after Koch-Grünberg. There is no evidence of any upheaval in the intervening period that might have had the 'leveling' effect envisaged by Migliazza. Rather it seems that Koch-Grünberg allowed himself to be taken in by the various Pemon sub-groups' claim to distinctiveness. Although he was only in Pemon territory for three months, Koch-Grünberg must be one of the most ruthlessly systematic data-gatherers ever to stride across the Orinoco-Amazon watershed. We would suggest that the other sources on whom we rely for information regarding early periods of contact

between Indians and the national societies of the region were at least as likely as Koch-Grünberg to exaggerate the differences amongst the groups whom they knew.

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1. NINAM. In the Paragua river the remaining speakers of the language classified by Migliazza as 'yanam' (Migliazza 1980), identify themselves as "ninam" and "shiriana" (cf. Migliazza 1964). In certain contexts the word "ninam" is rendered "ñanam". They refer to the inhabitants of the Mucujai as "kasarapai" and those further south (presumably those on the Ajarani) as "yawari pik"— ('opossum people', "yawari" means 'opossum' in Carib). The Sanema call the Ninam "walima" and refer to the Ninam of the Paragua as "palawa tipi".

Location and population. There are 191 Ninam on the Paragua, including 8 Uruak and 4 Sape who live with them and have adopted Ninam as their first language. A further 226 inhabit the Uaricaa (CCPY 1982), 355 the Mucujai and Apiu (Ibid.) and 81 the Ajarani area (Ibid.), making a total of 853 Ninam/Yanam. Further details on the Venezuelan Ninam are to be published in Colchester (1983c).

2. SANEMA. The autodenomination is "sanema". Village designations are also often by Yekuana names. Internal designations include "šamatali", "kopali", "opotatali", "pukumatali": only rarely are these terms ever accepted as self-designations. The Sanema are also commonly known as 'Chori' by criollo peoples— from the Sanema term "šoli", meaning 'brother-in-law'.

Location and population. Sanema speakers numbered about 3,300 in 1982— 2,630 in Venezuela and 670 in Brazil (CCPY 1982).

Ethnolinguistic situation. The current situation of the Sanema in Venezuela has been documented at length (Colchester 1982; 1983d). Brief

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The field work on which these comments are based consists of 11 months in the Ventuari (1975-1976), funded by numerous British institutions and industries, notably ICI, 18 months among the Sanema of the Ventuari and Erebató (1979-1980), funded by the Social Science Research Council, the Emslie-Hornimann Foundation and Ruggles-Gate Trust, 4 months among the Sanema of the Merevari, Erebató, Ventuari and Matakuni (1982), funded by the Oficina Central de Estadística e Informática and the Dirección de Asuntos Indígenas, and a mere five weeks in the Paragua river (1983), funded by the Fundación La Salle de Ciencias Naturales.

papers on their medical situation are to appear shortly (Colchester 1983*a*; 1983*b*). Recent language related studies include Colchester (1981), Colchester and Cerda (1983) and Colchester and Medina (1982).

3. URUAK. The few remaining Uruak on the Paragua call themselves "olotani", but say that they are 'really "awakí"'. The local Ninam refer to them as "uliak pik". The Pemon refer to them as "arutani".

Location and population. According to the Uruak they originally used to live much further south and east of their present location, in Brazil, but that they were chased up into the Uraricaa-Paragua area by raiding. Such an account corresponds well with the location given in the earliest source (Almada 1861). Decimated by introduced diseases, further reduced by inter-marriage with Pemon and Ninam, in which cases these other languages predominated, they no longer exist as an independent ethnic group. About 8 adult individuals, living among the Ninam of the Paragua, consider themselves to be 'olotani'. I was able to verify with the help of Migliazza's (1978) word-list that some of these still speak some words of their language. None of their issue speak Uruak, Ninam being the dominant tongue.

Prognosis and suggestions. The health situation of all the Indians of the Paragua is precarious (Viale 1982; Colchester 1983*c*), but even without further epidemics the survival of the Uruak language seems very improbable.

4. SAPE. They call themselves "sape". The Sanema refer to them as "sahe-walima".¹ A few of the Sape say that they used to be called "kaliana" in Brazil. This term is not known to the local Pemon who call them "sape".

Location, population and number of speakers. The first historical record of the Sape is in a map published by Surville in 1778 (in Caulin 1966), which shows them as inhabiting the headwaters of the Ocamo river, tributary of the Upper Orinoco. As far as I am aware, they next appear in the historical record living in the Paragua, in the work of Koch-Grünberg (1979). Later Rice (1928) locates them in the Upper Paragua. Sanema currently inhabiting the Erebató recount that during the era of their presence on the Parima they had contacts with the "sahe-walima", but when these trading relations broke down the "sahe-walima" moved off eastwards. The fact that the Sanema's oral traditions coincide with the (very) meagre historical records suggests that Surville's original location may be accurate. Such a location might help explain the presence of Winao words in the Sape language (Migliazza 1980). The Sape now number about 28, of whom 4 live intermarried with the Ninam, 2 live among the Pemon of the

¹ In an earlier work, prior to my visit to the Paragua, I mistakenly identified the "sahe-walima" with the "walima" (Colchester 1982: 88).

Karun, and a further 22 live among the Pemon of the lower Paragua. Probably 5 Sape "speakers" still remain, but none of these admit to being active speakers: Ninam and Pemon are the languages that they use in the course of daily life.

5. MACO. The Salivan Maco of the lower Ventuari refer to themselves as "hohontu", which they translate as meaning 'people of flesh and blood' (Colchester and Lister 1978). The Piaroa refer to the Maco as "wirun", which has a pejorative significance, possibly best glossed as 'savage'. However the Maco themselves say that the "wilun" are a wild group of Indians with long hair who live in the woods to the north of the caño Guapuchi (lower Ventuari, right bank tributary). The terms Mako, Maku, Maco, etc., seem to have been widely used, indiscriminately with terms like Poitou, Witoto, Itoto, etc., to refer to slaves during the period of the slave wars (cf. Acosta-Saignes 1954). All groups referred to as Macu, etc., appear to have been interfluvial groups of simple material culture and dispersed residence patterns, who adopted (or still adopt) relatively sub-dominant roles when dealing with their numerically superior, more settled riverine neighbours, who had more complex technologies and/or more ready access to industrial products. Maku and Poitou are both terms meaning 'son-in-law', in Arawak and Carib languages respectively, evidently used by extension to refer to 'their' semi-dependent 'savages'. Thus:

Tukano: Maku
Piaroa: Maco
Winao: Mako
Tukano: Witoto

Somewhat similar relations obtain between the Panare and the Hoti and between the Yekuana and the Yanoama (Sanema and the Yanomami of the Padamo).

It is not hard to imagine the process by which such "mako" 'sons-in-law' became saleable slaves when the market was opened up by the arrival of the Europeans (cf. Gilij 1965: 287).

Location, population and number of speakers. The majority of the Salivan Maco inhabit the lower Ventuari tributaries in very small dispersed villages between Cerro Moriche and the small savannahs of the caño Guapuchi, where the Maco locate their cultural origin. Colchester and Lister (1978) estimated the number of Maco in the Ventuari at 200-300 in 1976. There are said to be pockets of Maco among the Piaroa of the middle Orinoco.

Ethnolinguistic situation. It is not clear to me on what grounds

Migliazza avers that the language spoken by the Maco is a variety of Piaroa rather than a separate tongue. So far as I know no word lists, let alone linguistic studies, have been made among the Maco, nor does Migliazza cite any. The ethnobotanical studies of Colchester and Lister (1978) demonstrated the close cultural similarities between them and the Piaroa, but also important differences that suggest significant periods of autonomous social evolution. Similarly the Maco names for plants reveal definite phonological differences to those used by the Piaroa. Whether these latter differences are dialect —rather than language— differences can only be determined by detailed study. Since the Piaroa periodically make use of Maco labour, as for example in felling their gardens, the fact of 'mutual intelligibility' that Migliazza notes, could be a result of bilingualism rather than the lack of real differences in their modes of speaking.

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