



War and Peace Among the Canela

William H. Crocker

Introduction

The Canela (Crocker, 1990, 1994) Native Americans of Central Brazil speak Gê, and they are one of the Timbira nations like the Krahó (Melatti, 1967, 1978) and the Apinayé (Da Matta, 1982). They live in grassy, open woodlands (*cerrados*) lying between the wet Amazon basin and the dry Northeast. While Canela culture is oriented toward the Amazon, like that of their cultural cousins, the Kayapó (Turner, 1966) and Shavante (Flowers; 1994, Maybury-Lewis, 1967, 1979), they are situated so far east that the waters of their region flow directly into the Atlantic. Currently, some 1,300 Canela live in one large circular village in the center of Maranhão state about 60 kilometers south of Barra do Corda and about 600 kilometers southeast of the mouth of the Amazon. They survived during the 18th and 19th centuries because there is no large river to lead Western settlers into their area, and during the 20th century because there is nothing worthwhile to exploit in their lands -no oil, iron ore, gold, rubber, Brazil nuts, or timber. Their soil is marginal even for cattle and agriculture. They live now on their own reservation in relative security and growing numbers.

Background Material

Aboriginally, that is some 300 years ago, the Canela were not sedentary agriculturalists like most Amazonian Native Americans. They relied for less than one-quarter of their economic subsistence on slash-and-burn agriculture, using stone axes and digging sticks in stream-edge forests. They depended for at least three-quarters of their subsistence on hunting, fishing and gathering, according to the German-Brazilian ethnologist, Curt Nimuendajú, who studied them extensively during the 1930s (Nimuendajú, 1946) and who wrote *The Eastern Timbira* mostly about the Canela, who are also known as the Ramkokamekra.

Before pacification, the Canela controlled about 12,000 square kilometers of scrub forests and closed savannahs (Nimuendajú, 1946: 32).

They needed this great extent of land for economic support and survival, being principally food collectors. Unlike the usual food collecting bands, however, they lived in large numbers of more than 1,000 like the other Timbira nations. Several severe military defeats by another Timbira people forced the Canela to surrender to a Brazilian garrison in 1814 for their very survival (Nimuendajú, 1946: 32). Backlanders of the region allowed the Canela to settle in the northwestern corner of their former lands during the late 1830s.

By 1840, the Canela may have controlled only about 600 square kilometers of their former territories, having lost about 95 per cent of their lands since 1814 (Nimuendajú, 1946: 64). This disastrous loss forced them to turn for survival from relying principally on food collecting to depending largely on slash-and-burn agriculture with steel axes, which is still the basis of the economy of both the Canela and the backland Brazilian nationals who surround them today. Nevertheless, the Canela had not become psychologically adapted to this new way of life even by the late 1950s. Most Canela do not have the pertinent values and consequently the desire and patience to put in large enough farms to sustain their families throughout the year even today. Therefore, they experience moderate hunger from about September through December. This happens because most Canela give prestige to hunters, ceremonial leaders, political chiefs, and good shamans, but they do not reward the men who prepare larger fields for their families with appropriate prestige. Thus, up into the 1980s, many families had to depend on some sort of outside help to survive, such as extensive begging in towns, working on the fields of backland farmers for food, and handouts from the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) and from any visitors. By 2001, nine National Indian Foundation and Nation Foundation of Health (FUNASA) salaries were pouring ample funds into the tribe. About 100 agricultural retirement pensions were furnishing funds, as well as four municipality-level teachers' salaries. There were also a few medical disability pensions, some maternity support funds, and a number of school attendance allowances. Hunger during the lean months of the year as well as working for backland farmers had all but disappeared, thanks to Brazil's vast social support network which had begun arriving among the Canela during the early 1990s.

Their aboriginal crops were bitter and sweet manioc, corn, sweet potatoes, yams, squash, peanuts, cotton, and other field products. Now, they rely principally on bitter manioc, dry field rice, and beans.

It may be significant, when considering the Canela's poor adaption to agriculture, that Layrisse and Wilbert (1999: 43) report the Ramkokamekra-Canela to be low in the Diego factor, indicating that their ancestors probably arrived in the Western Hemisphere from Asia very early and that they may be "Paleo-Mongoloids." Phenotypically, the Canela contrast distinctly with the forest Indians living to their northwest, the Tenetehara-Guajajara (Wagley and Galvão, 1949), who are settled agriculturalists. Giving just one characteristic,

the Canela are more dolichocephalic while the Guajajara are more brachycephalic. To the Canela, a Japanese-American missionary woman looked like the Guajajara, not like them.

The Canela population lived before contact, as it does today, in a single circular village with several concentric rings of houses which was largely endogamous. Before pacification, they fought with other Timbira tribes seasonally -June through August- in potentially devastating raids. They concentrated their annual aggressions outward but, in contrast, focused inward on social bonding -on peaceful cooperation to resolve problems and on extensive sharing of all goods and services, as primary survival orientations.

The Canela are uxorilocal or matrilocal. A man marries into his mother-in-law's family and customarily lives and serves there until death, since very few divorces were allowed before 1975. Their terminological relationship system is a form of Crow, but without lineages. It is cognatic stressing the matrilineal side. House population size runs from two to twelve individuals these days, but there is evidence that it ran up to thirty individuals or more aboriginally (Greene and Crocker, 1994).

These households extend along the village circle, kin next to kin. This fringe-of-the-village area is the women's world. A woman's closest female kin live in the houses next to hers on either side and behind in the second and third rings of houses. The men's world lies in the central plaza where the elders meet twice a day in its center to resolve problems. Around the edges of the plaza, four age-sets of younger men met for discussions in former times and to depart together for athletic contests around the village circle before the houses. The customary solidarity and group opinion of these age-sets disciplined the men, as did orders from the elders and the tribal chiefs. The Canela, and presumably the other Timbira nations, were quasi-military societies in which youths were trained primarily to be warriors.

We find remnants of this military training in the festivals and rituals still put on today. One of these three-month-long festival-pageants is called "The Pepyê," meaning "The Warriors" -*pep* signifying "warrior" and *yê* the plural (Crocker, 1982: 152). These warriors-in-training are interned in cells in their families' houses for two months so that they can be fed proper and enriching foods by their female relatives and so that they can be kept alone for extended visits by their senior male relatives and members of the elders, who give them lectures on custom and morality. During these internments a ceremonial uncle¹ calls the leading trainee out of his cell to determine the growth and development of his body. The uncle shouts at him before the assembled crowd, asking him if he is ready yet to go out into the savannas to protect his

¹ An "uncle" among the Canela, and in most Crow-like terminological systems, is a MB, or a M"B." Reciprocally, a "nephew" is a man's ZS, or his "Z"S. Among the Canela, a very strong relationship, one of near identity, exists between a man and his ZS so that the latter, during pre-pacification times, had to avenge the death of the former.

people by killing the enemy. The youth retreats, but on the third summoning-out, he answers yes. Then all the youths-in-training are marched out of their cells for further training in the savannas as a troop.

This military training commenced when boys or youths were approximately seven to seventeen years old. The boys and youths in this ten-year bracket were trained together during four or five festival-pageants over a period of about ten years, after which they were graduated as the age-set of warriors at ages approximately seventeen to twenty-seven, forming a solidarity group which remained together for life.

In a certain ritual with military aspects, an old Canela acting as a warrior dashes into the plaza in the late afternoon before the assembled elders, shouting that he is capable of killing off the enemy should he appear. He then proceeds to summon insubordinate nephews to discipline them severely before the line of assembled women.

For each of the four or five training festivals, the elders and chiefs of the tribe designate trainers from the older age-sets and appoint leaders from the membership of the age-set being trained, six for each of the earlier festivals and two for the final one. Boys or youths are reappointed successively to these positions of festival leadership, depending on the success of their previous commands. The elders base their selections for festival leadership on the youths' abilities for directing their peers-in-training. The leaders who survive to command the graduating age-set are the commandants of their age-sets for life and are likely to become chiefs of the tribe later. Thus, the Canela, and presumably the other Timbira nations, had training for leadership -training for military command- built into their procedures for maturing young men. Nevertheless, chieftainships tended to run in the lines of certain families, but if these families did not produce able sons, other families could take over the tribal leadership, as happened to the chiefly succession in 1952. This procedure of accession to leadership may be uncharacteristic of the Amazon (cf. Kracke, 1978), since it is based more on ability than on kinship and affinity.

Purposes of this Paper

In this paper I want to throw some light on the Canela procedures and practices associated with warfare, with intertribal relations, and with peace making. The extent to which these customs can be generalized to apply to the other Timbira nations has to be questioned, though they probably can be applied to at least the more eastern of the Timbira peoples with whom the Ramkokamekra-Canela were in contact and sometimes fighting. These nations, which spoke the same language, were the Krahó, Apanyekra, Čakamekra, and Krëyê. These generalizations may also apply to the Pukobyé (Newton, 1981), Krīkati (Lave, 1979), and Gaviões (Arnaud, 1989), who lived further west and spoke a somewhat different, though mutually understandable,

language. I will assume that they do apply. For the Apinayé, however, who are really Western Timbira and more like the Kayapó, these practices may not apply at all, and for the Kayapó (Werswijver, 1992), they do not apply.

I do not intend to compare these Canela practices, that is, these Eastern Timbira ones, with those of other Amazonian regions, nor do I intend to place the Canela war and peace practices in theoretical frameworks provided by colleagues (Chagnon, 1992; Ferguson, 1995; Hemming, 1987; Otterbein, 2000), though I hope to present materials that will help colleagues make such comparisons. I believe that the materials I am presenting on the Eastern Timbira are important, partly because we know so little about their pre-pacification practices. This is because, although they were first contacted indirectly some 300 years ago, they have remained relatively isolated. The Canela were pacified in 1814, so materials have to come from that decade or earlier. These materials may also be important because these people were largely food collectors, though living in villages of more than 1,000. Thus, they were not characteristic of the Amazonian region. Consequently, when making contrasting generalizations, analysts may have to place them in a special category.

The sources are, first, historical accounts and, second, Eastern Timbira stories about war and peace.

Historical Accounts

There is only one really helpful historical source, the three reports of the Portuguese/Brazilian military garrison leader, Francisco de Paula Ribeiro (1841, 1870, 1874), who between about 1810 and 1820, traveled among the Timbira peoples of the states of Maranhão and the current Tocantins, writing accounts of his explorations and contacts for military authorities. Hemming (1987: 185-86) seems to have relied principally on Ribeiro. Nevertheless, there may be other sources of documents about contacts with Eastern Timbira nations of the 17th into the 19th century, which I do not have or which have not yet been discovered. It is probable that the Timbira nations did not live near the Atlantic coast, so significant contacts with Dutch colonials to the east and with French settlements to the north were not likely. Sources of such origins would have to be searched for and included in a thorough historical study of this subject matter.

For a military officer of the times, Ribeiro was surprisingly sympathetic to Indian populations, but his opportunities to observe them closely were quite limited. He did not live among them, and he did not see them fight each other in pre-contact contexts. Nevertheless, about the ancestors of the Canela, Ribeiro wrote the following during the late 1810s, as found translated in Nimuendajú (1946: 149): "Through some jealousies over territorial boundaries, over hunting or the fruits of some tree, they [the Eastern Timbira na-

tions] become inexorable enemies and execute such horrible massacres as completely to destroy one another.”

Nimuendajú (1946), writing from the early 1940s on his field work of 15 months carried out largely during the 1930s, obtained his information on warfare and peace either from Ribeiro or from what the Canela and other Timbira peoples told him about how their ancestors used to fight other nations of the same kind (*mēhīṽ*).²

I can confirm most of what Nimuendajú writes. Unfortunately, he provides little material. He writes (1946: 152) that “The Ramkokamekra [i.e., the Canela] took no prisoners, but indiscriminately knocked down opponents with their clubs. They neither mutilated corpses nor took home any part of the body as a trophy.” He points out exceptions to the above in that Ribeiro reports just one example of cut off ears being a trophy for the Čakamekra and one example of a girl captured alive being a prisoner for the Pukobyé. He writes that Ribeiro reports only one case of cannibalism, but here the Čakamekra defiled the flesh and bones of a Brazilian, not of another Timbira, and Ribeiro gives good reasons to doubt the occurrence anyway. Thus, the Eastern Timbira are assessed by Ribeiro and Nimuendajú as having not had cannibalism, a conclusion with which I agree.

With respect to tactics, Nimuendajú points out that the Eastern Timbira used the dawn surprise attack, incendiary arrows, and especially the flattened, hardwood war club with blades on each side and a point for thrusting. It could also be thrown. They used the surround-by-fire as well. Nimuendajú continues with, “The raids of the Ramkokamekra were executed either by all the warriors on the councilors’ decision or by single individuals on their own responsibility.” I found these alternatives between a whole group forming a raiding party and an individual executing his family’s revenge to be correct. However, in the war stories, there was only one example of an age-set (i.e., the “warriors”) going off to war as a unit. Instead, I found that proven warriors led raids followed by their personal adherents who were some of their kin, some of their in-laws, and certain of their friends. Moreover, I found that it was a group of old ex-war leaders, rather than “the councilors” of the tribe as meant by Nimuendajú, who made the decisions about when to launch a raid.

² Providing an orthography for the Canela language that is easy for colleagues to use is difficult because Canela has 17 vowel phonemes. The usual nasalization diacritics are difficult to relate to some letters, such as a tilde over an “i” and an “e.” The reverse cedilla under a vowel also furnishes some difficulties. In contrast, the dieresis, though it is not used as a nasalization diacritic generally, can be found and used easily on computers, and especially for the HTML “language.” Thus, my publications are now coming out with the use of the tilde and the dieresis to indicate nasalization for certain vowel phonemes in Canela, such as /ã/, /ê/, /i/, and /û/.

Collection of War Story Materials

While in the field during 1970 and 1971, I taped myths and war stories from two very old Apanyekra- and Ramkokamekra-Canela men, Capitão Vicente Kupaakhà of the Apanyekra and Major João Ludugero Pù?tô of the Ramkokamekra. Six of these stories have been published (Wilbert and Simoneau, 1984), and I have already published a paper partly based on these materials (Crocker, 1978). Henceforth, I will use "Apanyekra" for the Apanyekra-Canela and "Canela" for the Ramkokamekra-Canela. These two raconteurs, Vicente and João, were most certainly in their early 80s when I taped their stories. While the institution of telling stories in the plaza during the late afternoon was no longer practiced in either tribe, both Vicente and João were familiar with the custom and its forms. Thus, it was easy to get them to start telling stories in the plaza at that time of day, and boys, youths, and some girls assembled to listen. Most of the stories from these two persons of these two closely related tribes were similar and just versions of each other.

In 1970, a Canela in his early 80s was born between 1885 and 1890. As an adolescent between 1895 and 1905, this person would have heard war stories told by his grandfather's associates who may have been born 40 to 80 years earlier -at the most around 1820. Thus, a person born in 1820, would have been old enough during the 1830s to hear war stories from his grandfather's associates born from 1770 to 1790. Thus, tales told in 1970 could have been about the narrator's grandparent's grandparents -only four generations earlier. Pre-pacification tales with the presence of Brazilians in them may have come from between 1770 and 1810, while the tales with no Brazilians in them may have come from a still earlier period. Actually, one war tale clearly came from post-pacification days, which was attributed to a village occupied during the 1840s.

While myths and accounts of the activities of the ancestors of a people are likely to be updated to conform with the current values of the same people, the Apanyekra and the Canela by 1970 were telling stories about their ancestors whom they believed to have been "wild Indians" (*índios bravos*), not tame ones (*índios mansos*). Thus, they spoke about their grandparents' grandparents as if they were an entirely different people with very different practices, so the tendency of the story tellers to update the values found in their stories can be considered significantly reduced.

The over 100 myths and war stories on tape which I collected from Capitão Vicente and Major João Ludugero were parallel translated by Raimundo Roberto Kaapêl-túk between 1975 and 1979. By "parallel translation" I mean that Raimundo listened to the tapes of Vicente and João in two to five minute sections and then translated what he had heard into Portuguese onto another tape onto which I was also re-recording the original words of Vicente and João. Thus, the tapes that I have been studying to provide materials for this paper have the accounts in Gê, which I partly

understand, interspersed with the translations of Raimundo in backland Portuguese, which I fully understand. To further enhance the value of these war stories, other Canela attended these sessions such as Manuel Diogo Lõõ-le-?hõ, 63; Sabino Mĩikhrõ, 58; Conceição Mulwa, 58, and others. During these sessions in 1975, 1976, 1978, and 1979, these helpers commented on the war tales, adding information and “correcting” the earlier two narrators. They also spoke their own versions of some of the war stories onto tape, which Raimundo parallel translated at later sessions. After discussing aspects of each tale with this group, I added my comments in English to the tape. Thus, much of the material on early war practices comes from the discussions which took place after the group had listened to and heard the translation of a story.

Story Materials on War

My Canela field assistants believed that before pacification, intertribal attacks and skirmishes took place partly because of the necessity to avenge the death of relatives. They also took place because of the custom that “superior” youths had to demonstrate their special abilities in order to become *hààprāl* persons, that is, valiant and fierce persons, who were therefore capable of becoming war leaders and village peacetime “organizers.” These were necessarily individuals who, during their adolescence, had attained the capacity of being *kay* to some degree -being psychic or shamanic- if only to a lesser degree than the powerful shamans (Crocker, 1993). The pattern was that some young man with these skills would ask an uncle to take him on a trip to a hostile tribe so that he could prove that he had *hààprāl* abilities by coming back with captured equipment and bloodstained hands to demonstrate his accomplishments before the assembled elders and tribal members.

The great warriors were always *kay*, and therefore could dodge (*hal-pey*) arrows at close range. Several warriors (Khrüt-re, Kää-re, Tut-re) did not attempt to kill their opponents with arrows, but rather waited until the enemy’s supply was exhausted. Then, having avoided the arrows, they moved in closer to pierce the enemy leader and some of his immediate companions with ceremonial lances (*khřúwatswa*) or to crush him with a hardwood club (*khõp-po*). These attacking leaders and their followers then pursued the rest of the enemy group, clubbing them down from behind. Rather than using a war club, the great warrior Pèp shot scores of enemy persons during a battle only in the eye. Pèp aimed each arrow in the general direction of the enemy, putting a spell of witchcraft (*feititço: hũũtsũũ*) on it, so that the missile flew through the air under its own power (*amyiá-?khõt*: self-following), successfully seeking out and piercing an enemy’s eye every time. Other *hààprāl* leaders also used weapons that particularly characterized them. Wayatom used a heavy club (*khõp-po: borduna*), Kupè-mää killed only by throwing rocks, and Pálpa-yũ?têê and Khrã-nkwèn shot only arrows. Thus, these battles were

seen as being quite personalized, with most warriors following a special *hààprāl* war leader and depending on his success rather than on their own individual efforts.

These special war leaders inevitably managed to capture certain artifacts -never body parts- of the slain enemy leaders as proof of the conquest. Then they returned home with their trophies to proudly tell the story of their own great successes. Even the healer-sorcerer, Yawè, though he was not a warrior, made a similar trip to demonstrate his *kay* powers, as did culture heroes in the course of obtaining certain rites. Similarly, a man, Kupaa-tep, who had seriously lost face within his own tribe, the Apanyekra, undertook such a trip with an informal friend (*i?khwè?nō*).³ However, in such a situation of lost honor, the purpose was for both to be killed by members of another tribe -tantamount to suicide. The Canela have a similar story which occurred during the post-pacification 1840s. Today this pattern of going out from the tribe is continued in the form of trips to cities in order to bring back shotguns or other implements, and shamed individuals still go out "into the world" or visit a neighboring Timbira tribe, sometimes staying indefinitely.

My Canela research assistants believed that the tribal boundaries following ridges or streams were changed sometimes to reflect relative growth in tribal size or to conform to a successful raid, but that territorial expansion was not a purpose of warfare. If contiguous territory was unoccupied due to a massacre, my Canela research assistants thought that the growing tribe probably moved into the vacuum to some extent to create a buffer zone and to augment their food supply.

They believed that the more general and principal reason for intertribal warfare, however, was *the fear of other tribes becoming too populous*. "We had to cut them down to size before they could grow to outnumber and overwhelm us later" is essentially what one research assistant said. Another research assistant group consensus on the purposes of warfare was that the desire for safe movement within and just beyond recognized boundaries for hunting and food gathering required a reduction of the enemy's strength. "If our enemy neighbors became too daring so that their foraging parties ranged through our lands, we would not be able to move freely even in our own territory without fear of being ambushed. Thus, it was better to keep the enemy nations afraid of us by raiding them every now and then."

In the story of Payatuy-re, the Canela tribe left an age-set of their young boys behind in their village, interned and training to be warriors, while they went foraging two days away. These *pepyè* initiates were secluded separately in cells in their maternal houses and thus were quite vulnerable in their

³ The Canela maintain the institution of informal friendship. A pair of adolescents becomes informal friends during a formal ritual, and they retain this relationship for life. As such, they were constant companions, exchanged wives, and joked constantly. If one went to war, the other had to go along to stand by him.

isolation. During their parents' absence, an enemy war party led by Payatuy-re accidentally discovered these boys and killed them all for no other reason than that they would grow up to be warriors.

In the story of Khrã?kurom, women and children were killed in the heat of battle because they would raise warriors or become them. According to this tale, the Canela left their village in hunger because a plague of caterpillars had decimated their sweet potato crop. They went south in peace to their neighbors, probably the Krahó, for help -food. While living and eating as guests' in the Krahó village, dispersed as "relatives" throughout the houses, a misunderstanding arose. This caused a general battle, during which on a signal the Krahó killed all the Canela guests in their houses regardless of sex or age, while the Pro-khãm age-set of warriors shot down with arrows any Krahó coming out of their houses. This tale must have taken place before the Krahó were driven, during the early 1810s, from their ancestral region just south of the Canela territory. Portuguese/Brazilian settlers are not mentioned in the tale, so the events might have taken place still earlier.

It was inconceivable to Canela research assistants that there could have been much intertribal mixing of persons in aboriginal times, because such contacts were thought to have been too dangerous, as shown in the story of Khrã?kurom. Quasi alliances, nevertheless, were formed between some tribes to enhance their strength vis-à-vis their enemies, but real security existed principally in a tribe's ability, based on its number of warriors and its leader's *kay* powers, they believed, to organize its forces for defense and surprise attack. Alliances between tribes were unreliable, either because of frequently troubled relations or because allies could not be summoned in time to be of much assistance in the event of the usual surprise attacks. Intertribal mixing on a significant scale occurred mostly when defeated parties of two or more tribes joined each other in order to increase their population size for defense.

In times of raids, each warrior qualifying as an *hàâprâl* led a file of warriors who were his personal friends and followers regardless of age-set affiliation. Several active *hàâprâl*-level leaders in a council meeting with the old, and therefore the retired, *hàâprâl* leaders thought out the general plan of attack, if there was a plan. In the story of Khrùt-re, *hàâprâl* warriors were counseled to take their files to certain positions to surround the enemy. Once the fighting had begun, however, each *hàâprâl* warrior was in command of his own file of adherents while the old and retired *hàâprâl* leaders remained behind.

In the story of Hũ?khraynō, two Čakamekra youths visited the Krëyê people to their north and created jealousy by having too much sex with their young women, so they were slaughtered. In revenge, the Čakamekra made a surprise attack, killing many Krëyê before most of the latter escaped. One Čakamekra used a shotgun, which indicated to us that this episode occurred during the post-contact, but pre-pacification, period between 1770 and 1814. The now Canela, João Ludugero, told this tale about his ancestors, the

Čakamekra, whose descendants had joined the Canela in 1900. In the tales of Khrã?kurom, Khrùt-re, and Hũ?khraynō, four different Eastern Timbira peoples were involved.

Canela research assistants could not think of any stories of pre-pacification tribal schisms, but they agreed that especially in post-pacification times when hostilities had been curtailed, strong *hààprāl* leaders with irreconcilable differences, parted company, taking along with them a mixture of consanguineals, affinals, and non-related adherents. The Kenkatēye-Canela tribe was formed in this way, having left the Apanyekra in about 1860.

In contrast to the general orientation of the Kayapó (T. Turner, 1966; J. Bamberger Turner, 1967; Verswijver, 1992) toward more inter-community-oriented relationships, Canela research assistants presented a picture of early Canela life as being relatively less inter-village-oriented. Inter-community movements of extended kin groups, though difficult and somewhat dangerous for Kayapó, were nevertheless institutionalized and part of the solution to leadership and problem-solving for the individual. The Canela had no intra-community institutionalized way of fighting like the Kayapó's *aben tak* (Bamberger 1979: 139) where individuals or factions fought in the plaza, the losers leaving the tribe. Thus, Kayapó minority factions moved to other villages or formed a new one, and dissenters departed to find better conditions or to survive a crisis.

Unlike the Kayapó to the west and the Akwe-Xavante to the southwest (Da Silva, 2000), the Canela stress the great difficulty and lethal consequences of pre-pacification inter-Eastern Timbira nation contacts. The Canela concept of a tribe/nation (*khrii*) is equated to that of village (*khrii*). In contrast, the Kayapó, with their over a dozen villages, nevertheless, see themselves as *one* people, at least in some sort of cultural sense. Thus, Vanessa Lea refers to all of them as the Mēbengokre, an expression which, apparently, the different tribes of Kayapó all accept (Lea, 1992: 132). The Canela have the expression *mēhū*, which merely means to be their own kind of Indian. They apply this expression to any of the Eastern Timbira peoples, though not to the Western Timbira, the Apinayê, or to the Tupi-speaking Guajajara. Nevertheless, the Eastern Timbira tribes do not recognize *mēhū* as an over-arching term characterizing them as one people. Thus, each Eastern Timbira nation was a socially separate entity.

This use of terms, as well as other comparative ethnological materials, leads me to believe that the Canela and the other Eastern Timbira tribes, while warlike on a seasonally inter-village/nation basis, placed a greater emphasis on internal cohesion and repression of activities leading to factionalism and schisms than the more bellicose Kayapó and Xavante. The Canela video, *Mending Ways* (Schechter and Crocker, 1999), its Study Guide (Crocker, 1999), and its Scene-by-scene Commentary (Crocker, MS) address this conflict resolution as a principal topic. When comparing Bamberger's and Verswijver's (1992: 248–266) statements on causes of Kayapó schisms with

my knowledge of Canela factionalism and village splits, such a belief seems tenable.

Materials on Peace

The Apanyekra and Canela war stories provide little material on peace, or on how certain Eastern Timbira tribes took steps to maintain peaceful relations with certain other ones. In some of these stories, however, the existence of visiting chiefs is mentioned. Thus, we know that the current institution of the visiting chief (*tâmhâk*) existed before pacification. Characteristic of this institution, tribe A chooses a member of tribe B to be their visiting chief in tribe B -to host them when they come to visit tribe B. To reciprocate, members of tribe B install a member of tribe A to be their visiting chief in tribe A. I have seen the Canela go through the ceremony of installing a visiting chief among the Apanyekra. They chose a person of relative affluence, of course, so individual Canela families can go to the Apanyekra village and be supported by his family for some time.

This institution of the visiting chief helped bridge the gap between tribes and was sometimes combined with marriage; that is, tribe A's visiting chief in tribe B sometimes had taken a woman from tribe A to live with in tribe B, and so tribe A chose to rely on him as their visiting chief. Nevertheless, while such relations facilitated peaceful entry, they did not guarantee a continued peaceful visit, as in the story of Khrâ?kurom which started with peaceful acceptance of the Canela visitors through their visiting chief among the Krahó, but which eventually ended in a massacre on both sides through a misunderstanding.

There are no stories of Eastern Timbira tribes coming together to partake in the surplus of a particular foraging product or of animals killed, or to look for potential spouses. Each tribe was endogamous, though there were occasional intertribal marriages in the stories. It was almost always a woman who accepted to live in another tribe in marriage, because it was too dangerous for men to do so, since they would soon be suspected of witchcraft and killed, research assistants explained. Although women were occasionally curers/shamans and had *kay* abilities, they never threw spells of illnesses, so they could not be suspected of witchcraft.

Whether Eastern Timbira tribes joined each other before pacification is not told in the stories, but after pacification, remnants of decimated tribes joined each other to be able to live together in greater numbers and therefore safely. The Canela are composed of the remnants of four tribes which were decimated by other tribes, or by Brazilian posses called *bandeirantes* (Morse, 1965), some time after 1816. In a Canela festival, the Pepkahâk, descendants of these tribes (father to son or father's brother to son) sit together around the edge of the plaza in the direction from which they are supposed to have come to join the principal tribe, the Ramkokamekra (the Mól-tüm-re), who sit in the

middle of the plaza. The latest tribe to have joined the Ramkokamekra is the Čakamekra, who, very reduced in numbers, established visiting chiefs with the Canela. Then, after several joint meetings of the elders, the Čakamekra joined the Canela in 1900 in a customary manner called the Mě Hã?khawrè (Crocker and Crocker, 1994: 28).

The Čakamekra arrived before dawn, as if they were going to attack the Canela, and set up a camp only about a mile away. Then, instead of attacking, the Čakamekra “warriors” marched in file into the Canela village and proceeded into the plaza, doing the Tired Deer act (*poo-tùkrĩ*: deer-tired). They shuffled their feet along, one behind the other, panting like a tired deer. The symbolism is pertinent: such a deer is not expressing hostility and is turning itself over to the masters of the situation, the hosting tribe. It is the act of a tired deer which has finished its external struggle in the hostile world and is coming into his home pasture to rest and stay -to surrender. My research group thought that in earlier times, a lesser group may have entered a larger one this way, hoping for the best.

Once the Čakamekra warriors had been received in the plaza, they filed to the house of a great female Canela singer (*mě hōōkhre-pōy*: for-them throat it-comes-out), the wearer of the singing sash of honor, the *hahĩ*. There they each had sex in turn with the woman of high honor and left her a token present. In exchange, the Canela “warriors” filed over to the Čakamekra camp and each had sex with their designated great singer. Thus, through this act of sexual bonding, the two tribes were joined instead of fighting.

The researcher expects to find that some sort of trading existed between such peoples as the various Eastern Timbira nations, but there is little evidence for any sort of regular commerce other than very limited exchanges for such decorative items as macaw tail feathers, genipap body paint, and white chalk. These tribes were remarkably self-sufficient, inward-looking, and hostile to each other. During the late 1950s, Canela still bought and sold items with the intention of trying to please the other person instead of trying to make the best deal possible. Selling something was referred to as “having given” the object (*Wa ite hōl*: I past it-gave). If the Canela had had much commerce with other peoples in earlier times, it is likely that such a ceremonial attitude toward buying and selling would not have existed as late as the 1950s.

Summary

The Canela (i.e., the Ramkokamekra), an Eastern Timbira tribe which inhabited a part of the area between the Tocantins and Parnaíba rivers of eastern Central Brazil, were contacted indirectly as early as about 1700, but were “pacified” in 1814. The only significant observer of the times was Francisco de Paula Ribeiro, a Brazilian military officer who did not live among

the Timbira nations but who, nevertheless, wrote extensive reports on his observations of them for the national authorities.

War between these nations, living in groups of over one thousand individuals, took place for the most spontaneous and immediate reasons. Considering longer range motivation, youths made swift, clandestine raids on other tribes to avenge the death of an uncle or grandfather who had been killed years earlier. Sometimes such raids involved most of the mature men of a tribe who attacked at dawn, hoping to surprise the enemy to kill as many individuals as possible, including women and children. No captives were taken, no bodies were mutilated, and there was no cannibalism, but surviving enemy individuals were spared once the fighting had ceased and passions had become subdued.

Young men of special abilities went with an uncle or brother to kill members of another tribe and come back with material trophies as proof to establish themselves as "war leaders." Such proven warrior leaders led files of adherents into battle. Retired old warrior leaders instructed young war leaders, each with their file of warriors, how to place their files to best attack and decimate the enemy, so we know that there was some planning. However, once the raid had started, the special leaders proceeded independently and did most of the killing themselves through their psychic abilities, as was believed. Such attacks took place mostly during the dry season from June through August with almost annual regularity.

The justification for such raids, given by my Canela research assistants after listening to the taped accounts of old story tellers, was to so reduce the number of the enemy that it could not retaliate successfully. Then their ancestors could move freely about their lands, foraging in safety. They might even cross well-known tribal boundaries to take advantage of the existence of certain fruits that happened to be in season, but raids were not undertaken principally to obtain more lands or change the boundaries, they said.

Tacit alliances were formed between certain tribes. They exchanged visiting chiefs to reduce the risk of individuals being killed on sight as they approached the other tribe, as was the practice if certain understandings were not established and signals given. Individuals who had been thoroughly shamed within their tribe, and who thus had lost their honor, approached another tribe without giving the appropriate warnings, expecting to be killed -a form of suicide. If one tribe was accepted to enter another tribe, it entered performing a rite called the "Tired Deer." Behaving like one, they surrendered, taking a chance on survival. After pacification, tribes which had decided to merge, did so after the warriors on each side had had sex sequentially with one ceremonial woman of the other side.

Contacts between Eastern Timbira tribes were so limited that there was little commerce in the region. These peoples were largely self-sufficient, living in extensive territories over which they foraged, following the locations of the edible foods as they came into season and only somewhat depending on

community gardens. Attitudes that I found during the late 1950s, that may have been related to this earlier limited trading, indicated to me that buying and selling had been more a matter of giving and taking in order to please the other person than to make exchanges for economic advantage.

In contrast to the Northern Gê people living further west, largely the Kayapó, there is evidence that the Eastern Timbira nations focused more inwardly and had less developed institutions for inter-group communication or exchanges of people.

Abstract

The Canela (i.e., the Ramkokamekra), an Eastern Timbira tribe, which inhabited part of the area between the Tocantins and Parnaíba rivers of northeastern Central Brazil, were "pacified" in 1814. Annual warfare between these largely food collecting Timbira tribes, living in groups of over one thousand, occurred for the most spontaneous reasons. Considering longer-range motivation, a youth brought up on revenge made a swift, clandestine raid on another tribe to avenge the death of his naming uncle killed there earlier. He returned with material trophies to establish himself as a "war leader." Such a proven warrior, through his psychic abilities, led files of adherents into battle. Often such raids involved most mature men who attacked at dawn, hoping to surprise the enemy to kill as many as possible, including women and children. They took no captives, mutilated no bodies, and practiced no cannibalism, but they spared most survivors once the fighting ceased.

The principal justification for such raids was to reduce the number of the enemy so that it could not retaliate successfully. Then they could move freely about their own lands, foraging in safety. They might even cross boundaries to obtain needed fruits or materials, but they did not undertake raids primarily to conquer more lands.

They formed tacit alliances with certain Timbira tribes, exchanging visiting chiefs to reduce the risk of killing visiting individuals. Timbira tribes who had decided to merge did so after the warriors on each side had had sex sequentially with one ceremonial woman of the other tribe.

Resumen

Los Canela (i.e. los Ramkokamekra), una tribu Timbira oriental que ocupaba parte del área entre los ríos Tocantins y Parnaíba del centro nororiental de Brasil, fueron "pacificados" en 1814. Cada año había guerra por los motivos más inesperados entre estas tribus Timbira recolectoras, que vivían en grupos de más de mil personas. Considerando motivaciones a largo plazo, un joven entrenado para vengarse realizaba una incursión rápida y clandestina en otra tribu, con el fin de vengar la muerte de su tío clasificatorio al que esta tribu había dado muerte con anterioridad.

Regresaba con trofeos materiales para establecerse como "jefe guerrero". Semejante individuo, en base a sus habilidades síquicas, conducía a sus seguidores a la pelea. Con frecuencia, en estas peleas se veían implicados la mayoría de los hombres maduros, los cuales atacaban al amanecer con la esperanza de sorprender al enemigo y matar a cuanta gente pudieran, incluyendo mujeres y niños. No tomaban prisioneros, no mutilaban los cuerpos, no practicaban el canibalismo; salvaban la vida de la mayoría de los sobrevivientes después de terminar la pelea.

La justificación principal de estas incursiones era la de reducir el número de enemigos, de modo tal que no pudieran desquitarse con éxito. Y, como consecuencia, ellos podrían moverse libremente en sus propias tierras, recolectando sin correr peligro.

Ellos formaban alianzas tácitas con ciertas tribus Tímbira, canjeando a jefes que venían de visita para así reducir el riesgo de matar a individuos que los estaban visitando. Tribus Tímbira que habían decidido fusionar, procedían de esta manera después que los guerreros de cada tribu habían tenido relaciones sexuales consecutivas con una mujer ceremonial de la otra tribu.

Smithsonian Institution
Department of Anthropology
Washington, DC 20560-0112, USA
E-mail: bilcroc@aol.com
