

# Native American Cultures along the Atlantic Littoral of South America, 1499–1650

NEIL L. WHITEHEAD

*Department of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin-Madison,  
Madison, WI 53706-1393*

**Summary.** The main features of cultural and social change among the native peoples of the Atlantic coast of South America from 1499 to 1650 are described and analysed. Standard anthropological models are critically assessed and new directions in research are indicated. A detailed history of the development of European colonial activity and Amerindian reactions is given and the aftershock of European impacts evaluated on the basis of the ethnological material from the period of first contact. The concluding section considers the problems and limitations of analysing cultural change in anthropological contexts.

THIS ESSAY DESCRIBES the process of interaction and cultural change that took place along the Atlantic littoral of South America with the initial meeting of the “two worlds” of America and Europe. The discussion will not involve an extended narration of the episodes of contact between Native Americans and Europeans, since this may readily be found in such standard works as Southey (1810–19), Varnhagen (1858), Marchant (1966), Ojer (1966), Goslinga (1971), Hemming (1978), and most recently in the collected papers of the *The Cambridge History of Latin America* (Bethell 1984, 1987).

My purpose in this chapter is to offer an examination of archaic cultural forms, using present knowledge of colonial history and modern ethnography as a baseline for the discussion of change in the first century of contact.

This will be done by outlining the broad nature of Amerindian societies, so that the European impact on their political and economic trajectories may be appreciated in native terms. Within these general aims attention will focus particularly on the native side of this process and will try to discriminate the ways in which the various European enterprises entailed differing consequences for native peoples.

This emphasis on the native view also means that the dates 1499 and 1650 should be seen as defining an epoch of real historical significance to native societies, and not just as the beginning and end points in a phase of European occupation: an occupation which, in any case, was very uneven and disjointed when viewed from the American perspective, rather than seen as part of the triumphal progress of early modern Europe. For this reason, only the period up to the definitive establishment of the Europeans will be examined, largely ignoring cultural change after ca. 1580 in the southern captaincies of Brazil, after 1620 in the northern captaincies, and after 1650 in Guayana. Further distinctions will be drawn according to the avowed intentions of the European adventurers in these early phases of contact, as well as with regard to the eventual development of imperial or commercial ambitions.

With European contact there also came unforeseen consequences, most significantly the spread of Old World diseases, which in the longer term enhanced the dominance of the Europeans. Nonetheless, dramatic though such unforeseen consequences were, analyses of these trends forms only one element in a sophisticated understanding of the fate of Native American societies. Accordingly, it is the Native American as *actor* in that drama, and not just as its inevitable victim, with which we will be concerned.

## The American Idyll

### **Ideologies and anthropologies**

Fundamental to any attempt to understand the nature of social change for the Amerindians in the sixteenth century must be an appreciation of the extent to which they were actors in their own destiny. That modern commentators have been ambiguous on this point is evident enough from the assumptions that have been made as to the levels of cultural complexity encountered on the Atlantic seaboard, as compared, say, with those of Peru and Mexico. For example, in all the current standard narratives of contact along the Brazil shore, the Amerindians are presented as “primitive”, “stone age”, or “naked nomads” (Marchant 1966:32–33; Hemming 1978:24; Johnson 1987:6–7).

Certainly, such an interpretation of native cultures had its roots in the accounts of the first adventurers (Caminha 1937; Vespucci 1894) but is not one that can be sustained in the face of the evidence of the European secular sources (e.g. Knivet 1906; Léry 1880; Staden 1874; Thevet 1878) or of the extensive Portuguese and French missionary writings (e.g. Anchieta 1988; Cardim 1906; D'Evreux 1864; D'Abbeville 1614; Nóbrega 1931).

Moreover, modern anthropology has been complicit in this rather negative evaluation of the social and cultural potential of the peoples of tropical South America. Thus, for example, Levi-Strauss (1966b) asserted the existence of "hot" and "cold" societies, and categorized those of lowland South America as "cold", implying that purposeful social and cultural change was inhibited. In the same vein, Meggers (1971) asserted that environmental constraints on social development in the tropical context, as originally expounded by Steward (1949), meant that the complex cultures revealed by archaeologists working in the tropical forest must have derived from the Andean region.

Despite the pioneering work of Carneiro (1960, 1961, 1970) and Denevan (1966), this general view is only now beginning to be corrected as a better appreciation emerges of the cultural dynamics of native society in tropical South America (Hill 1988; Viveiros de Castro 1992; Whitehead 1990c; Williams 1985). There is now information on long term ecological patterns (Balée 1992; Balée and Gely 1989; Carneiro 1983; Denevan 1982, 1991, 1992a, 1992b; Denevan and Schwerin 1978; Posey and Balée 1989; Zucchi and Denevan 1979; Williams 1979), archaeological profiles (Roosevelt 1980, 1991a, 1991b; Williams 1981) and historical trajectories (Roosevelt 1987; Whitehead 1988, 1992a, 1993a, 1993b).

Equally, the persistence of native cultural forms, even where autonomous societies have disappeared, is now more clearly recognized, as is the impact such cultural forms had on early European thinking, continuing through the later writings of such luminaries as Locke, Montaigne, Rabelais, Rousseau and Voltaire, and eventually up to the modern literature of travel and anthropology (Boon 1982; Hulme 1986; Hulme and Whitehead 1992; Pagden 1982; Whitehead 1992b). The symbiotic connection between the degradation of Native American cultures and the elevation of European ones is not, therefore, the neutral consequence of chance encounter, but the contested outcome of historical decision—as much for Americans as Europeans.

### **The ethnological setting**

The Atlantic littoral of South America in the sixteenth century was occupied by four major linguistic groupings of peoples—the Tupi, Guarani,

Carib and Arawak—with the Amazon river forming a rough boundary between the Tupi-Guarani to the south and the Carib and Arawak to the north. However, despite the analytical utility of such distinctions, which might be elaborated with regard to any number of ethnological criteria, it is also the case that such cultural elements as mutual linguistic imprinting (Goeje 1928), the distribution of the Polychrome ceramic horizon in macro-Amazonia and of the Tupiguarani ceramic tradition along the Atlantic coast of Brazil (Meggers and Evans 1982), as well as the existence of a common mythic and symbolic repertoire (Levi-Strauss 1964, 1966a), all attest to important cultural unities right across this vast region. Moreover, the apparent similarity of subsistence practices, with their supposed orientation to the overriding goal of “protein capture” in the context of a nutritionally inadequate manioc-based swidden horticulture, led some theorists to propose the notion of a “Tropical Forest Society” which became the organizing idiom for the influential *Handbook of South American Indians* (Steward 1946–50). However, recent research (see above) has begun to demonstrate the inadequacy of such a conception of the native economy, most of all with regard to those societies of the major floodplains and Atlantic coast which were in the frontline of contact with the Europeans, and with whom we are principally concerned here.

The economy of some of these societies was of a highly developed scale, involving the intensive production of seed crops, especially maize, as well as the highly organized exploitation of fish stocks. The fruits of this intensive production were both stored and traded in a processed form, serviced by significant market centres, where specialized craft artifacts also circulated.

Such societies were often heterogeneous in their ethnic and linguistic composition, especially where a slave class developed or where whole ethnic units were incorporated in the aftermath of a military expansion. Some societies were thereby becoming regional in their economic organization, and ever more complex in their political operation. In typological parlance they hovered between being maximal chieftaincies and proto-states (Clastres 1977), the chiefly elites bolstering their position with the promotion of ancestral and warrior cults.

The demographic basis of these polities has been the subject of much debate, since neither the tropical forest nor the coastal environments were felt to offer sufficiently favourable contexts for endogenous cultural development. As a result, demonstrably complex archaeological cultures, such as Marajó at the mouth of the Amazon, were sometimes assigned origins outside the region. However, an indication of the economic capacity and population size of the coastal groups is also provided by various kinds of evidence from the contact period, such as the mass

migratory movements observed by the Europeans, the size of native armies with which they had to contend and, not least, the persistent reliance of the Europeans themselves on trading with the Amerindians for foodstuffs.

These macro-polities also participated in long-distance trade in elite or luxury items, such as goldwork, featherwork and semi-precious stones. Goldwork was produced north of the Amazon and traded south in exchange for "greenstones" (carved nephrite). South of the Amazon, metalwork was much rarer, and feather artifacts, especially feather cloaks, were the most highly esteemed items (Boomert 1987; Metraux 1948; Whitehead 1990c).

The interconnections implied by such systems of exchange also went along with the practice of warfare which, particularly in the case of Tupi anthropophagy, involved an exchange of persons rather than the conquest of territory or the capture of objects. It was therefore a "feudal" control of persons, rather than the possession or management of resources or technologies, that was often the context in which the political evolution of these societies took place. Accordingly, the first Europeans encountered a situation that was sociologically alien and which often led them to deny the existence of a structured political life, so evident to them in their encounters with the Aztecs or Incas.

However, the reality of centralized political power, if not its overt institutionalization, is evident enough from the juridical and social position of the native ruling elites. In some situations, such as Orinoco, evidence indicates that such elites were closely related by marriage and kinship. In other contexts, such as coastal Brazil, it is at least clear that ruling individuals incorporated villages from over a wide area, though the stability of these groupings was undermined by other cultural factors, such as prophetism. These contrasts suggest a basic distinction between chieftaincies that derived authority from a genealogical position in kin networks such as a system of clan marriages, and those that were more dynamic, deriving authority from success in warfare and the supply of appropriate captives for consumption.

Most important for an understanding of Tupi-Guarani political leadership was also the tradition of prophetic leadership, resulting in mass migrations in search of the "Land-without-Evil". It has been suggested that such prophets, termed *Karai* or *Caraibes*, provided a continual source of opposition to the institutionalization of chiefly power (i.e. state formation) through the way in which they broke up local kin-networks, the building blocks of political power. The ability of the *caraibes* to induce many thousands of persons to follow them in a physical migration by promising not only an "earthly paradise" but also by declaring an end to

social rules, such as incest and marriage prescription, clearly threatened all notions of social order and authority (Clastres 1975).

In sum, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the range of Amerindian societies that the Europeans first encountered was vastly more complex and sophisticated than has hitherto been allowed. This serves to underline the point that the Europeans had only partial knowledge of the social formations with which they interacted, and that many Amerindian groups were already substantially altered before they were even contacted by the Europeans. That this partial view was substantially confirmed by twentieth century ethnography is itself measure of the regressive nature of this change. As we shall see, European exploration was not driven by an abstract curiosity, but by the lure of commercial or political opportunity. Such opportunities did not present themselves systematically, and so the moment of direct contact between Amerindian and European varies considerably along the Atlantic littoral. It is that successive impact which is now considered.

## Impact

In the preceding section it has been suggested that a series of broad cultural unities underlay native society from one end of the South American seaboard to the other. This pre-contact situation strongly contrasts with the fate of the natives in the sixteenth century, when the purposes and trajectories of European invasion differed markedly across this same region. Nonetheless, differences amongst native groups gave shape to the pattern of European occupation as native culture itself responded to the challenge of contact, and as the Europeans in turn utilized existing cultural and political differences to neutralize and control native society.

Just as Cariban and Arawakan groups were culturally prevalent to the north of the Amazon, with the Tupi-Guarani prevalent in the south, so too, initially at least, the Spanish were the only active colonial power in Guayana, while the Portuguese eventually came to dominate the region from the Amazon almost as far south as the River Plate. Most obviously this situation arose from the Papal adjudication between Spain and Portugal by which all territories to the west of the "Line of Tordesillas" (approximately 48° W) were assigned to Spain, and those to the east to Portugal. So convenient was the Papal adjudication, in assigning those areas which these colonial competitors had in any case begun to make their own, that a foreknowledge of Brazil has been imputed to the Portuguese Crown. This seems unlikely but it does highlight the fact that the Amazon

river, for indigenous and colonial cultures alike, represented a physical hiatus in networks of social integration.

Accordingly, the processes of contact and eventual colonization of these two zones were distinct. To the north the Spanish never established any significant settlements, except on the Orinoco, and even these were marginal to the main imperial adventures of Mexico and Peru. Moreover, until at least the early eighteenth century the Spanish were embroiled in persistent conflict with the Dutch and their native allies for control of the Orinoco. In the rest of the region between Orinoco and the Amazon no European settlements were made at all until the end of the sixteenth century, at about the same time that the Spanish first settled Orinoco.

In contrast the Brazilian littoral was intensively visited by traders from the time of its discovery, and successive attempts were made to actively settle the region after it had been carved up into various "captaincies". Although the Dutch were to contest control of coastal Brazil with the Portuguese in the seventeenth century, as they did with the Spanish along the Orinoco, it was the French who initially competed with the Portuguese traders in the hope of establishing "Antarctic France".

There is thus a strong contrast between the fate of native populations to the north and south of the Amazon in that the former were not the objects of the intense colonial interest that characterized the Brazil shore. Although one cannot speak of pristine populations, the autonomy of native society in Guayana certainly persisted until the late seventeenth century, while in Brazil the European political economy was firmly in place, even if its leadership was still contested, by 1600.

### **The Brazil shore**

The basic reason for the intensity of trading activity south of the Amazon was the attraction of the timber resources of the Atlantic coastal forests, above all brasilwood. To the north of the Amazon the low-lying marshlands and mangrove swamps were an effective deterrent to landings by the early traders, and the resources of the region were little investigated. Moreover, the native goldwork that could be plundered in the Caribbean, as well as the attraction of the pearl fisheries off the north Venezuela coast, effectively drew off any resources that might have been used for the exploration of the coastal zone between the Orinoco and Amazon deltas. It was for this reason that Spain's colonial rivals, especially the Dutch, found this region open to exploitation at the end of the sixteenth century.

In Brazil, particularly to the south of what was to become the captaincy of Rio Grande, the period from 1500 to the 1530s saw the development of an extensive trade with the coastal Amerindians, principally centred on

brasilwood, but also including Amerindian slaves, animal skins and live parrots. The Europeans offered metal tools, clothing and other "trinkets" such as mirrors, combs and whistles, in return for Amerindian labour in locating, cutting and delivering the heavy brasilwood. In the earliest phase of this trade the Portuguese employed the "factory-system" that had been successfully developed in their trade to the West African coast. Essentially this meant that a group of traders would secure a Royal contract whereby the right to trade was leased for a fixed period. A group of vessels was then despatched, and a small fort-cum-warehouse (i.e. factory) would be erected. In 1506 the Portuguese Crown became more directly involved by establishing a series of "royal factories" along the African coast, which private traders were then licensed to fill through the trade they conducted with the native population.

Reconstruction of this trade is hampered by a lack of detailed records, but in most modern accounts (Marchant 1966:34-9; Hemming 1978:10; Johnson 1987:9) the records of the trading-ships *Bertoa* and *La Pélérine* are used to suggest some of the parameters, as well as highlighting the persistent encroachment of the French during the 1520s. These documents suggest that the resident Portuguese factors were solely responsible for trade with the Amerindians, who deposited their logs and other trade goods at the factory. Thus, the *Bertoa* loaded 5,008 logs between 12 June and 24 July 1511, each "log" weighing approximately 50 pounds. Records relating to the capture of the Pernambuco factory by the French ship *La Pélérine* in 1530, as well as to the subsequent capture of *La Pélérine* herself off Portugal, provide further details on the nature of trade with the Amerindians. Aside from the brasilwood which formed the most valuable part of the cargo, cotton, grains, gold-bearing ore and medicinal oils were also carried. Most striking of all, though, was the inclusion in the cargo of 3,000 jaguar skins and 600 parrots, a fact which well underlines the ecological, as well as social, impact of European trading (Crosby 1986).

The trading factories themselves did not simply rely on the willingness of the Amerindians to trade such items, but also actively required native support in the establishment and defence of these outposts. In the case of the Pernambuco factory it was defended against the French by a combined force of Portuguese and Amerindians. Thus, alongside the consequences of maintaining an intense trade with the Portuguese, the utility of military alliance in the face of French encroachment meant that the Amerindians were increasingly drawn into inter-colonial disputes.

From 1504 onwards French traders had begun to seek brasilwood in defiance of Portuguese claims to a trading monopoly east of the Tordesillas Line, since they did not recognize the legitimacy of the Papal grant. The initial Portuguese response was to create a coastguard fleet, as they had



done in India, which patrolled between 1516–19, and intermittently during the 1520s, but to little effect as the Brazilian coast was too long and resources too few. By 1530 the Portuguese Crown had therefore decided that some form of permanent occupation was necessary to interdict French attempts to trade with the native population, and so the fourteen captaincies were created, where only the Portuguese residents could trade with the natives. Of these captaincies only ten were actually settled before 1550 and of these only two were considered a success, since there were chronic problems in attracting settlers and capital for development. In this context the disposition of the native population was a key element and, as we shall see, dependence on the Amerindians for both subsistence and military support was absolute in the initial years of settlement.

However, from the native perspective, the presence of French traders was an equally important feature of the European intrusion of this period. The manner of French trading differed from that of the Portuguese in that the French did not establish factories ashore, but traded directly off their ships (Figure 1). Thus, once a ship had arrived, the cargo would be prepared after negotiation with the local Amerindians. In order to facilitate this process, factors were also established amongst a number of coastal groups. Known as “interpreters” in the literature, and often originating from Normandy, such individuals would live for many years amongst Amerindian groups, often fully adapting to the mode of life of their hosts (Staden 1874:67), even to the point of partaking of the flesh of enemy prisoners (Léry 1880: II, Chap. 15). On the part of the Portuguese the equivalents to these French factors were the so-called “squawmen”, some of whom, such as Caramurú (Diogo Alvares), Aleixo Garcia and Joao Ramalho, have become well known in the literature (Marchant 1966:50; Hemming 1978:35–6, 42–3, 239). Such individuals were not, however, planted among the natives purposely but came there by means of shipwreck, or by virtue of being of mixed blood. Nonetheless, they were an important avenue of communication for the Portuguese, especially as reliance on the native population grew as trade turned to settlement under the captaincies.

However, this period of settlement, beginning in the 1530s, and taking place against the background of a notable degradation of the brasilwood resources, brought with it a differing strategy towards the native population. The Amerindians themselves had also changed in their attitude to the Europeans since their critical role in the brasilwood trade had made them less enamoured of the trinkets they had earlier accepted for their labour in the cutting and carrying of logs. As a result they demanded better quality goods, and even swords and muskets, for the delivery of the brasilwood, which had become more difficult and dangerous to extract as



**Figure 1** Brazilian Natives logging for French traders, using metal tools. From A. Thevet's *Cosmographie Universelle.*, 1575, (1st ed., p. 950v.), Bodleian Library—L.6.8.ART.

the coastal strip of forest had been utterly depleted in the immediate vicinity of the Portuguese factories. In this context, and with a growing need for plantation land and the labour to work it, the Portuguese began to move towards the outright slavery of Amerindian populations. As a result of such pressures widespread attacks were made on the Portuguese settlements in the 1540s, only three of the captaincies escaping without major damage or destruction.

Portuguese responses to these attacks, and in subsequent dealings with the Amerindians, were, of necessity, balanced by a military dependence on their native allies in the face of continuing French incursions, culminating in the occupation of the bay of Guanabara (Rio de Janeiro) by Villegagnon in 1555. For both French and Portuguese alike the natives were an indispensable element in their overall military postures.

As a result of the uncertainties of this transition from the brasilwood to plantation economy, the Portuguese Crown took over the direct administration of Brazil in 1549, in the hope of bringing the native

population under firm control and forestalling further French settlement. Accordingly, over the next decades until 1580, military campaigns of pacification went along with evangelical campaigns of conversion. The two were often indistinguishable, since resistance to conversion rendered a population liable to a "just" enslavement.

In the spiritual sphere the Jesuits, though founded only in 1540, were chosen to fulfill this task. Despite their later reputation for empathy with and defence of the native cultures they encountered, initial Jesuit reactions in Brazil were often negative as to the Amerindians' capacity for a spiritual life. Nevertheless, the Jesuit missionaries rose to the challenge of effecting rapid conversion by evolving the *aldeia* (protected village) system. In contrast to the Franciscans, who favoured a laborious conversion in situ, the Jesuits soon found that transplanting entire populations to new locations greatly facilitated the spiritual conversion of the natives, as well as their conversion into economically useful subjects. However, doubt as to the necessity for the first type of conversion, when well armed slavers might achieve an equivalent result, meant that large elements of the settler population, and even the first Bishop of Brazil, Sardinha, were sceptical of Jesuit efforts. Sardinha was recalled from Brazil in 1556, but was cannibalized by the Caeté after being shipwrecked en route to Portugal. A belated war of punishment against the Caeté in 1562, during which many Caeté who had been settled by the Jesuits into protected villages were also destroyed, caused the Jesuits thereafter to refocus most of their efforts further south into Guarani territory: it was here that the great Jesuit experiment in promoting a native syndicalist state was conducted. Nevertheless, in the intervening years the Jesuits, with the support of a new Governor, Mem de Sá, expanded their *aldeias* until these encompassed some 34,000 natives, some 2,000 of whom aided in the attacks and final expulsion of the French colony at Rio. It was among these mission Amerindians of Bahia and Ihléos that the smallpox epidemics of 1562 and 1563 began.

The net effect of these epidemics was to eliminate up to half the Amerindian population in these regions, reflected in the reduction of the number of Jesuit *aldeias* from eleven to five, and to intensify competition for native labour amongst the colonists. Following on the epidemics came famine as the native gardens were left unworked and abandoned. This, together with the slave raiding unleashed by the Caeté war, caused the Amerindian population to suffer a steep decrease, the final blow coming in 1584 as the survivors were hit by another series of epidemics.

These dramatic events led to a fundamental re-evaluation of Portuguese policy towards the natives, resulting in a series of declarations in the 1570s as to the legal status of the Amerindian. However, although Amerindians

could still be enslaved either in the course of a “just” war, or for the practice of cannibalism, interest in them as a source of labour fell away as the importation of Africans began. In this context many retreated to the interior, compounding the appearance of population loss along the coast, but were there later pursued by the bandeirantes (slavers). In short, by the 1580s the Portuguese were definitively established in their coastal possessions south of Rio Grande and the Amerindians subjugated or dispersed from their original territories.

To the north of Rio Grande, in the captaincies of Ceará and Maranhão, which had never been occupied, the French had a briefly flourishing colony between 1612 and 1615. Despite the brevity of this occupation it left an enduring monument to the culture of the local Tupinambá, since the Franciscan missionaries who accompanied the French force produced long texts on their evangelization that recorded many details of native life (D’Abbeville 1614, D’Evreux 1864). The subsequent occupation of Maranhão by the Portuguese resulted in the total devastation of the Tupinambá and was to provide the Portuguese with their stepping stone into the Amazon basin proper from the fort at Belém, founded in 1616.

### **The island Guayana**

Just as Brazil was thought to be an “island” encompassed by the rivers Plate and Amazon, so too, that area north of the Amazon which has been termed the “island of Guayana”, is similarly encircled by the waters of the Orinoco, Amazon and Atlantic. In contrast to Brazil, however, it was as much the rivers as the coast that were sites of the first encounters between the Amerindians and Europeans. As was indicated earlier, the Spanish did not try to settle Orinoco until the 1580s, or the Amazon until the seventeenth century. Thus it is significant that both the expeditions that first travelled the length of these rivers, departed from the west; Francisco de Orellana leaving Quito for the “Land of Cinnamon” in the expedition of Gonzalo Pizarro in 1541 (Medina 1988), and Antonio de Berrio leaving Bogotá for the Orinoco in 1583 (Ojer 1966).

Certainly neither of these expeditions represents the first European intrusion into the Amazon and Orinoco but they do signal the start of a serious interest in the exploitation of these rivers. Up until this point these interior regions had been marginal to Spanish colonizing efforts which, in northern South America, had centred on Peru and the Caribbean littoral. In the event the Amazon river was to remain marginal to Spanish colonial interest, although parts of the upper Amazon were integrated with the Vice-Royalty of Quito, and it was the Portuguese, led by Pedro Teixeira,

who initiated the occupation of the lower Amazon valley in the 1630s in defiance of the Line of Tordesillas.

This occupation also swept away the trading posts and forts that the Dutch, Irish and English had established on the river as part of their effort to develop trade with the Amerindians of the Amazon and Guianas, following on the expeditions of Robert Dudley, Walter Raleigh and Lawrence Keymis in the 1590s and the establishment of the Dutch West India Company in 1616. Thereafter the Dutch and English concentrated their efforts on the rivers of the Guayana coast, particularly Surinam, Berbice, Essequibo and Pomeroon as well as on the Caribbean islands. It was left to the French, who belatedly occupied the Cayenne and Oyapock rivers in the second half of the seventeenth century, to contest control of the Amazon mouth with the Portuguese.

The main source of European intrusion into the Guayana region in the sixteenth century was the Spanish colony on Margarita island, which served as a base for various *entradas* (armed incursions) made into the Orinoco basin, and whose colonists developed significant trade links with some of the native groups of the Guayana coast, particularly the *Lokono* (Arawak). The pearl fisheries at Margarita required significant numbers of native slaves, and the population of the Caribbean shore of Venezuela suffered accordingly, but there is little evidence to suggest systematic slave raiding either along Orinoco or the Guayana shore. Undoubtedly the occupation of Trinidad in 1531–2 by Antonio de Sedeño, as well as the rival expeditions led by Diego de Ordás to the mid-Orinoco in the same period, were accompanied by much bloodshed, but they did not result in permanent settlement. Nevertheless, these kinds of expedition on the mainland and the activities of Spanish slavers in the Caribbean islands, were the cause of a number of relocations by the native population (Whitehead 1988:18), mirroring the migrations of Brazilian groups after the Portuguese wars of conquest in the 1560s and 1570s.

However, as already indicated, in Guayana there was no analogue for the intense brasilwood trade that developed along the Brazil shore. The early and tentative Spanish incursions into the Orinoco basin, as well as the first descent of the Amazon, were all carried out in pursuit of plunder, specifically goldwork. Only latterly was permanent occupation envisaged, and then largely to forestall settlement by Spain's Protestant rivals. One might therefore say that whereas trade led eventually to plunder and conquest in the case of Brazil, the converse was true to the north of the Amazon, where relatively peaceful trade burgeoned despite a series of prior military adventures in search of the land of *El Dorado*. Furthermore, there was no significant missionary activity, comparable to the Jesuit system of *aldeias*, in either Orinoco or Amazon until the late seventeenth century, and even later or not at all in the Guayana coastal zone.

Such circumstances combined to create a situation where native autonomy persisted far longer in these regions, for even when the plantation economy was initiated in the late seventeenth century, the need and desire for Amerindian labour was substantially curtailed since the African slave trade had already been established to service the Brazilian and Caribbean markets. Indeed, it was the failure of the Dutch to situate themselves in Brazil that freed capital and resources for the development of their Guayana colonies, just as the French eventually turned to the Caribbean and Guayana after their earlier ejection from Brazil.

Nonetheless, the terms of survival for native populations were such that their political and ethnic character underwent a process of profound change. In one sense therefore the coastal population of Brazil did not have the opportunity to respond to European intrusion in the way that groups north of the Amazon did, for it was extinguished or dispersed as a direct result of that occupation. To the north of the Amazon, however, although many of the groups encountered at "first contact" (itself a highly variable point in time during the sixteenth century) disappear, this is as much due to the series of political realignments made by native leaders, as to the effects of population loss following European conquest or the spread of epidemics (Whitehead 1992a, 1993b).

Such sustained interaction between autonomous native polities and the small scale European enclaves of the region produced a whole series of secondary social phenomena only intermittently glimpsed in the case of coastal Brazil; for example, the formation of new military elites, the emergence of new tribal divisions and a fundamental reorganization of native trading networks (Whitehead 1992a). As we shall see later, such processes certainly occurred in Brazil, but their significance does not become as evident over the time period we are considering.

European settlement in Guayana commences with the establishment of the Spanish fort of Santo Tomé, some time in the late 1590s, under the auspices of the Berrio family, who were given the captaincy or governorship of "El Dorado". Berrio's occupation of the lower Orinoco resulted in the total destruction of the extant ruling elites, which the Spanish then attempted to replace with a series of puppet rulers. However, just as the Portuguese and French in Brazil had found themselves dependent on the Amerindians for food and military support, so too in Orinoco and along the Guayana coast, where Dutch factories began to spring up in the second decade of the seventeenth century, domination of, or alliance with, the indigenous population was critical.

For Berrio, and subsequent Spanish Governors, this was partly achieved through the Lokono, who had supplied the Margaritan colony with manioc-flour since the 1530s, and had extended their own settlements

along the Guayana coast and into Orinoco with Spanish support. The local Amerindian population was also organized to service the fort, and black slaves were given to the Lokono for the production of the only cash crop — tobacco (Ojer 1966:161–234). However, the Spanish presence along the river was really only nominal and any determined effort to dislodge them invariably succeeded, as the English and Dutch, in conjunction with their Amerindian allies, repeatedly found. The tenuous hold that the Spanish had on their fort in Orinoco may thus be seen as a direct consequence of their earlier treatment of the native population for, although their connections with the Lokono had earlier ensured a supply of basic foodstuffs and valuable intelligence on the more hostile groups of the region, other Amerindian groups disadvantaged by this arrangement were eager for an active alliance with the Dutch and English (Whitehead 1988:69–104, 151–171).

English interest in this area, initially at least, was purely in the possible mineral wealth of the region, and as such was heavily influenced by the Spanish reports of goldworking cultures in the upland regions. Nonetheless, in the course of reconnaissances for an access route to these areas, much information was collected on the general trading potential of the coastal region. Principally this consisted of gold and silver work, specklewood, annatto dye, and oils. The region was also assessed as favourable for the plantation of sugar, rice, tobacco and cotton (Scott 1924:135).

The Dutch, however, were the first to actually establish stable factories in the area, the English and French choosing either to trade directly from their ships or attempting a number of abortive colonizing projects, until a brief English success in settling Surinam in the 1650s (Goslinga 1971:409–432, Whitehead 1993b).

The Amazon itself was penetrated by the Dutch, Irish and English who established a series of fortified factories on the lower reaches of the river during this same period, again trading largely for the hardwoods and dyes but also laying out profitable tobacco plantations. However, as has been mentioned, these small settlements were rooted out by the Portuguese in the 1630s, although so profitable had they been to their owners that licenses were sought to resurrect them, from both the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns (Lorimer 1989:398–459).

It will be appreciated that the scale of both trade and plantation in this region was far smaller than along the Brazil shore and, in consequence, the Guayana coast, as well as the lower reaches of the Amazon and Orinoco, remained a less desirable alternative, as the French and Dutch experience south of the Amazon shows. Nonetheless, the impact of European activity on the indigenous societies was marked, provoking a fundamental reorientation of patterns of native trade from an upland to a

coastal focus. Moreover knowledge of the Spanish occupation in Orinoco and beyond, as well as the lessons of its local consequences, was thoroughly assimilated by native leaders who actively sought military alliance with Spain's colonial rivals, well understanding the need to impede Spanish attempts to control the region (Whitehead 1990b, 1992a).

## Aftershock

Having outlined the broad nature of the indigenous societies that occupied the Atlantic seaboard in the sixteenth century, and having sketched in the principal features of the initial European encounter and colonial process, it now remains to assess the nature of cultural change that such contact with the Europeans induced.

In one sense cultural change was total, in that the arrival of the Europeans was a unique historic event, but for all the emphasis that is given to this disjuncture it is apparent that the Europeans were quickly, if not immediately, brought within indigenous conceptions (Whitehead 1993a). In the Brazilian context they were sometimes termed *caraíba* or *mai* by the Tupi-Guarani, terms indicating a quasi-divine status. This should not necessarily be taken to indicate an Amerindian sense of inferiority in the face of European technologies, but rather, on the basis of a belief in the possibility of passage between the human and divine (as for the ancient Greeks), a recognition of the Europeans' unearthly, external origins (Viveiros de Castro 1992:305). At the same time, that the *paranaghiri* (spirits-from-the-sea), as the Europeans were more prosaically termed by the Cariban peoples in Guayana, might have feet of clay, is illustrated often enough by the contempt with which their trade baubles could sometimes be received (Carvajal 1988:219) or by their declining purchasing power, as at the end of the period of brasilwood trading (see above).

Much the same is true of native attitudes to the precious metals that the Europeans so eagerly sought. For the Amerindian the value of these materials was in their brilliance and smell, qualities that made brass an even more preferable substance, and partly account for the fondness for all kinds of metal objects (Whitehead 1990c). This kind of disjuncture between European trade ambitions of "more for less", and the ideological basis of Amerindian interest in metal technologies, proceeds very directly from competing cultural conceptions of value and the nature of economic process. For these kinds of reasons European judgments as to the simplicity and economic naivety of the Amerindian, as well as his alleged laziness, derived from an equally naïve reading of indigenous behaviour.



Nonetheless, it is clear that European activities required a response by the Amerindians and it is here that culture change may be most easily inferred. For example, the brasilwood trade would have involved many thousands of Amerindians, albeit on an intermittent basis, and it is tempting to see the modern "log races" of the interior tribes as a cultural legacy of that period (Maybury-Lewis 1974:240-5). More significantly perhaps, in the sphere of economic relations, the advent of metal tools had a fundamental impact.

The desirability of these items is attested to all along the Atlantic littoral, and new cultural possibilities certainly emerged as a result of their availability through the Europeans. The influx of metal tools would have greatly enhanced the ability to cut new gardens, as well as the brasilwood logs for which the tools were originally given. It is more debatable whether this sudden possession of metal tools was in itself responsible for an increasing agricultural productivity, or whether it simply permitted a reorganization of the labour time that had been previously spent on such tasks. Moreover, the further possibility remains that access to metal tools itself caused an increasing reliance on swidden patterns of agriculture and a manioc monoculture (Denevan 1992b), especially since such an agricultural system would be highly mobile and appropriate to a wide variety of ecological niches. These considerations became critical as the Europeans later actively displaced the Amerindians from the most productive areas of the coastal strip and floodplains in order to lay out their *roças* (farms) and *fazendas* (plantations).

Previous to this, along the whole Atlantic seaboard, instances may be cited of the absolute dependency of the Europeans on being supplied with the produce of Amerindian gardens, principally with manioc-flour and bread. For example, the Lokono of the Guayana coast supplied the Spanish at Margarita with substantial quantities of such flour over a fifty-year period, between the 1530s and 1580s. The cultural significance of this relationship is attested linguistically, since this flour was called *aru* in the Lokono language, from which the Amerindian term *Aru-wak* was derived (Brinton 1871); just as the European name of the river which served as an entrepôt for this trade, Pomeroon, derives from the Lokono term for bread, *bioroma* (Bennett 1989:7).

This economic dependency also led the Spanish into a series of military and political alliances with the Lokono against other local groups (Boomert 1984; Ojer 1966:161-234). For similar reasons, in the various captaincies of Brazil, access to Amerindian foodstuffs was critical to the survival of the colonists and even for the evangelization of the natives themselves (Marchant 1966:67-69, 100).

At the same time, such a trade in foodstuffs may not have affected the

extant Amerindian economy in the same way that the trade for brasilwood, and other forest products, did, since these economies appear to have had notable capacities for production beyond a subsistence level in the first place. For example, some of the Tupi mass migrations have been related to a demographic upswing which such productive capacities created, particularly when joined with access to the rich marine resources of the Atlantic littoral. Moreover, these messianic migrations were themselves undertaken with a vast store of dried maize and manioc, indicating that the production of significant agricultural surpluses was well within the capabilities of the native economy (Clastres 1975:79–80). Similarly the existence of extensive mound complexes and raised field systems along the Amazon and Orinoco and in the Guayana coastal zone (Boomert 1980; Devevan and Schwerin 1978; Devevan 1982, 1991, 1992a; Roosevelt 1991; Versteeg 1985; Whitehead n.d.) clearly indicates that pre-European agricultural capacities were very different from the small-scale, marginal activities described in modern ethnography, or observed in the aftershock of European conquest and occupation.

It has already been indicated that metal tools would have permitted the widescale adoption of swidden techniques, as well as an extension of the area that might be treated in such a way. Conventionally, this economic feature of European contact has been held to have had the political effect of permitting chiefs to produce greater food surpluses for the feasts that are the foundations of inter-village relations throughout the tropical forest (Basso 1973:30–33; Chagnon 1983:146–70; Maybury-Lewis 1974:48–51). However, of itself this may not have been sufficient to achieve greater political status, as women are still required to process such an increased crop (Jackson 1983:56–8; Rivière 1984:107; Whitehead 1988:42–43). In this way the advantages of metal tools in the sphere of political, as well as economic, relations seem to be incremental rather than absolute. Accordingly, the notion that the Amerindians gratefully provided the Europeans with the bounty of an increasingly productive “traditional economy” that was created by the gift of European technological artifacts (Johnson 1987: 17), simply cannot be sustained.

Nonetheless, the introduction of the new technological items the Europeans offered, into the extant political and economic systems of the Amerindians, was undoubtedly a source of great change in other aspects of culture. At the very least the lithic technologies and their productive bases were marginalized by access to metal tools; and so a range of specialists and their skills in this sphere died out, and the associated regional networks of trade collapsed or were reorientated to capture the European market (Roosevelt 1987; Whitehead 1993a). This is very evident from the intense brasilwood trade that the Europeans initiated along the

Brazil shore, the axis of raiding and trading having previously been with the interior. It is suggested that this ancient pattern of conflict might have also reflected underlying differences in the ecological favourability of coast over interior (Balée 1984).

A similar pattern of reversal in the flow of trade is also suggested by the decline of the upland chieftaincies in Guayana (which controlled the Amazon-Orinoco trade routes as well as the dispersion of gold and lapidary items from the mineral-rich upper reaches of the major rivers) and the concomitant rise of coastal ones, that used their privileged access to European goods as the means to political dominance (Boomert 1987; Whitehead 1988:151–171, 1990c, 1992a).

These kinds of economic change were accompanied by political and ethnic change as well, a point well understood by the Europeans who actively reformed native leadership using the lure of such items to reinforce the position of those native leaders most receptive to their needs. For example, the Spanish carefully worked on the chieftain of the Orinoco Nepoyo, Carapana, splitting him off from his traditional overlord Topiawari, in order that he could act as their agent within the ruling elite of the lower Orinoco (Ralegh 1848:103–4). Similarly, the French in Brazil favoured, among others, the Tamoio-Tupi *morubixabáçú* (“king”), known as *Quiniamboc* in the early French sources, or as *Cunhabébé* in the modern literature (Figure 2). The delicate manner in which such alliances were built up and preserved is brought home by the way in which a German mercenary in Portuguese service, Hans Staden, captured by one of Cunhabébé’s chieftains, *Iperuguassú* (Great Shark), was unable to persuade the local French factor to aid his escape, since this would have upset the carefully constructed trade relations. Indeed, the French factor even recommended that the Indians should eat Staden forthwith (Staden 1874: 68).

At times this process also led to overt military alliances, as can be seen vividly from the history of the French and Portuguese rivalry along the Brazil shore, or that of the Spanish and Dutch in Guayana. Broadly speaking, in the former case, the Caeté, Tupinambá, Tamoio and Potiguar supported French interests, while the Tupiniquin and Tobajara supported the Portuguese (Hemming 1978:40, 87–9, 129–30, 161–5, 538). However, since the groups that were designated by these ethnonyms were not invariably, or even usually, political units, local responses were often pragmatic and initially failed to follow these general lines of hostility, as the Portuguese found among the Bahian and Pernambucan Tupinambá (Marchant 1966:74–5). So too, alliance with one of the European groups did not preclude the pursuit of traditional enmities, as in the case of the Tupinambá and Caeté, who were both allies to the French, although this



**Figure 2** The Tamoio chieftain Quiniamboc using captured European weapons. From A. Thevet's *Cosmographie Universelle*, 1575, (1st ed., p. 952), Bodleian Library—L.6.8.ART.

enmity could be superseded by their hatred of the Portuguese, as the siege of Iguracú in 1548 shows (Hemming 1978:72–3; Staden 1874:21–4).

In the Guayana region local loyalties seem to have dominated over putative ethnic ones. Partly this may have been because, by the time of European settlement at the beginning of the seventeenth century, native polities had already undergone a series of fundamental changes in which the ancient elites had been marginalized or overthrown. This came about either as a direct result of intermittent Spanish intervention, or because the polities were disadvantaged in the struggle to capture the coastal trade with the Europeans. In either case the result was the formation of new political and military networks which themselves became the basis for new ethnic identities. Precisely because the material basis of these identities was so closely tied to the European trade, their range of incorporation closely followed the pattern of European occupation in the region, which as we have seen was fragmented and localized in nature (Whitehead 1990b).

These types of alliances with the Europeans could also lead to changes in native military behaviours and to their associated ideologies. In the Guayana area, because of the relative persistence of native autonomy, a general militarization of native groups took place as part of this same process by which the upland chieftaincies were marginalized. These factors were very evident in the rise to dominance of the Guayana Caribs (Whitehead 1990a).

In the case of the Tupi a vigorous tradition of war and cyclical cannibalism seems already to have been in place at the moment of European intrusion. This was utilized by the Europeans as they mobilized native armies, often numbering many hundreds, to assault the fortifications of their rivals, as in the Portuguese attack on the French fort at Rio in 1560 or the French aid given to the Potiguar in their attacks against the Portuguese settlement at Itamará in the 1540s (Soares 1938:25, 51-2, 67-8, 77-8, 81-2).

At this time the sheer weight of native numbers more than offset the primitive musketry and cannonry of the Europeans. However, this kind of warfare, or more exactly its frequency, could not have been part of pre-European patterns. Even in cases where a martial tradition was highly developed, the pretexts for its deployment were increased by direct involvement in European rivalries.

Such "ethnic soldiering" (Whitehead 1990b) became virtually institutionalized in the Guayana context, principally because of the longevity of interaction between autonomous native polities and a succession of European enclaves, all of which depended on native alliances to offset the lack of military resource from the metropolis. In the short run such conflicts certainly sharpened extant enmities and on occasion allowed a resolution of them in favour of one or other party, since native groups would receive European military support for the express purpose of totally annihilating their opponents. This outcome was unlikely to have been achievable within the technological and social balance that pertained in earlier times.

In parallel with these changes in the political and ideological context of warfare, native military technology was also altered (Whitehead 1990a). Fortifications and combat tactics were either adopted or elaborated under direct European influence (Knivet 1906:223; Léry 1880:II, chap. 14; Staden 1874:21-2). Metal replaced bone or wood in pointed weapons (Léry 1880:II, chap. 14) and firearms were utilized if available, although their supply was very restricted in the early period of contact. Thus, Figure 2 shows king Cunhabébé (*Quiniamboc*) with two heavy falconets over his shoulders that he had captured from a Portuguese ship. Thevet (1953:232) tells us: ". . . when they were discharged, he straight away took another

two to start firing again. When he saw his enemies [the Maracaja] running away and fleeing in terror, God knows how he mocked them! They fear the noise of cannonry or any other guns above all else."

Eventually these technological changes were to induce alterations in the pattern of military organization as well, for the opportunity for specialized military activity was greatly facilitated by the long succession of wars, raids and slavehunts that the Europeans carried out, always with native support—this assistance being given if not in terms of numbers (as in early Brazil) then by means of the knowledge of geographical and political landscapes. Thus Raleigh (1848:8) tells us that Berrio planted his Amerindian allies on Trinidad specifically to "eat out and waste" the local population—a reference not to cannibalism *per se*, but one which highlights the many symbolic overtones to native anthropophagy and European ambivalence as to its practice.

The revenge cannibalism of the Tupi is amply attested to both by European accounts (Forsyth 1983, 1985) and by the place that humanity is assigned in relation to the divine hunger of the gods of Tupi cosmology (Fernandes 1952; Viveiros de Castro 1992). Indeed the early European accounts are the better interpreted on the basis of modern ethnographic evidence (Viveiros de Castro 1992). However, given the integral connection within Tupi cannibal ideology between the reproduction of society and the individual and the killing and consumption of "enemies" who were classified as affines, then such a treatment of enemy Europeans represented a disruption of the system of human exchanges (such as occurred between the Tamoio and Maracaja, or the Tupinambá and Caeté) that validated the wider war-complex and ultimately the form of society itself. It was not that a European, mestizo, or African provided flesh whose ingestion was inappropriate for a participation in divinity, but rather that there was no possibility that the Tupi would be cannibalized in turn by this category of enemy (Viveiros de Castro 1992:239–247). It is for this reason that the sentiment was so often expressed that the Tupi would rather be buried in the bellies of their enemies, ". . . for they say that it is a wretched thing to die, and lie stinking, and eaten with worms" (Cardim 1906:432). Accordingly, when the French general Villegagnon forbade his Tupinambá to eat their captives, encouraging them to sell them off as slaves instead, there were protests from the captives as well as captors. Léry records [1880:II, chap. 14] that he had offered one mother to take her son to France and safety: ". . . But she responded—so deeply engraved in the heart is the desire for revenge in that nation—[ . . . ] that she would rather he was eaten by the Tupinambá than be taken so far from her."

Cannibal cults also occurred to the north of the Amazon within both

the Cariban and Arawakan cultural complexes, but were arguably derived from the Tupi in the first place (Whitehead 1993c). Certainly such cults do not seem to have had an analogous role in social reproduction, being wholly the affair of the warriors to the exclusion of women and children, and being practiced proximate to the site of combat rather than in the home village; although the Arawakan Lokono of Guayana may not have been the exception to this generalization that was previously proposed (Whitehead 1990a:156).

As in the Tupi case, Europeans and Africans seem also to have been cannibalized initially, but were later excluded from this aspect of the Amerindian symbolic order. This was possibly because the corpses of Europeans and Africans were a source of disease (Forsyth 1983:171), but more probably because of the inappropriateness of the act, coupled with the ferocious response it provoked among the Europeans (see also Abler 1992). For both the Spanish and Portuguese the supposition of cannibalism was sufficient legal justification for the enslavement of a native population and so the distribution of "cannibals" far outstripped the actual incidence of the practice (Whitehead 1984).

The living presence of the French factors and their Portuguese counterparts more directly affected their Amerindian hosts, since they were a direct vector for the European trade, and were also a source of rivalry between groups over the benefits of such trading. For example, Anthony Knivet, an English captive of the Portuguese, found that trading with a supposedly friendly group for his master could provoke serious conflict. He tells us:

. . . I came to the town of [the] Pories, where I was saluted . . . After I had been there two or three hours, news went through all the town of my being there, and from this town to others hard by. Whilst I continued in this town a savage called *Waynembuth*, who bore a great grudge to the Portugals, came where I was [and] . . . went to separate my things [trade goods] that lay by me. [The chief] turned to the Canibal that had offered me abuse, and asked him what reason he had . . . to meddle with any friend of his in his town, and angrily commanded him to avoid his town; . . . the next morning news came to the town that that *Wanambuth* was coming with three hundred Canibals, and that perforce he would have me to his town, and that there I should be killed according to the order of the country. (Knivet 1906:197-8)

Nonetheless, constructive relationships also developed, especially in the zone from Rio Grande north towards the Amazon, which had been virtually abandoned by the Portuguese. Here French traders and colonists moved in and, by 1587, Soares de Sousa (1938:342) had noted the presence of "white tupis" with blond colouring.

It is also well known that some of the Portuguese "squawmen", such

as Joao Ramalho, who were survivors of early, unidentified expeditions, became powerful chiefs in their own right (Hemming 1978:42-3), or were involved in some of the messianic migrations of the sixteenth century (Simon 1861:2, 34). Others, like Carimurú (Diogo Alvares), played a critical role in the later phase of relationships between Amerindians and Portuguese, as the latter attempted permanent settlement (Hemming 1978:37; Marchant 1966:50).

Similarly, in Guayana, the trade and active alliance of the Spanish and Lokono in the sixteenth century was facilitated by the enigmatic interventions of a "Moor", who had been shipwrecked twelve years prior to his first appearance in Margarita in 1545 (Ojer 1966:165-173).

There is a facetious sense in which the mere fact of the European presence was itself a form of culture change, and on this definition the presence of such individuals indicates the definitive passing of the pre-Columbian idyll. A similar argument is sometimes deployed by historical demographers (Dobyns 1983) to suggest that contact must immediately involve negative demographic consequences for a given native population, resulting from the spread of disease, rather than social or economic disruption. But it should also be clear that cultural factors can play a dramatic rôle in altering demographic profiles, as the mass-migrations of Tupi messianic movements show. Moreover, contact between cultures is not something that just "happens" but is an uncertain, though conscious, process manifested in the behaviour of the protagonists; albeit that the consequences of that process can only become apparent with the passage of time.

Given such considerations, it is important not to counterpose a pristine pre-contact culture against a contaminated contacted one, for this emphasizes a particular cultural moment (in our case that of encounter with Europeans or Africans) which may not have been regarded as especially significant within that culture's own terms. Moreover, even where the moment of first encounter is of such cultural significance, there are still a multiplicity of cultural meanings that may be assigned to that moment. Which of these possible cultural meanings gains acceptance is itself the outcome of a contested political process.

This contested process becomes very evident as groups belonging to the same cultural tradition vary in their political and social responses to the encounter with Europe, and so begin also to diverge culturally. For the individual this variation is particularly provoked by the advent of missionary work, historically a very special feature of the American encounter, but its consequences for corporate or collective relationships are equally profound, usually resulting in the clearest of all forms of cultural change, the conversion to Christianity of significant sections of society (Figure 3). It should be stressed that such a collective "conversion",





**Figure 3** Brazilian Natives ceremonially greet European missionaries. From A. Thevet's *Cosmographie Universelle.*, 1575, (1st ed., p. 929), Bodleian Library—L.6.8.ART.

more aptly termed a *reducción* by the Spanish and Portuguese, says little about the presence or absence of individual faith, but does signal a clear political and social reorientation in the face of European intrusion. This reorientation was often contested by more “traditional” sections of native society, leading either to the formation of overtly hostile and physically separate factions, or to the persistent “rebellion” of groups nominally collected within the mission system (Ferguson and Whitehead 1992).

Along the Brazil shore the Tupinambá around Bahia split into factions, as the then Royal Governor, Mem de Sá, appreciating the Portuguese reliance on the natives, conciliated the Tupinambá chieftains and aided the Jesuits in their conversion. As a result he was able to use such “loyal” Tupinambá to fight against those, such as *Cururupeba* (Bloated Toad), who remained stubbornly heathen, as well as to support his expulsion of the French from Rio in 1560 (Hemming 1978:83–5; Marchant 1966:113–4).

The only other practical response to the wave of European evangelism

was to migrate away from the shore, as did a section of the Bahia Tupinambá. Such migrations were facilitated by the Tupi messianic tradition, even if now they were prompted by Portuguese encroachment, but similar migrations in the absence of such a tradition also took place in the region north of the Amazon. In particular the Yao migrated the length of the Guayana coast to avoid Spanish raiding from Trinidad and Margarita, while the Guyana region generally was the recipient of successive migrations from the islands of the Caribbean. This suggests that not all population loss in the region can be automatically attributed to the action of epidemic disease.

Less overt conflicts within native society can only be inferred, but one such instance seems to have centred on the question of the cannibalism of enemies. It has already been suggested that this cultural practice was fundamental to Tupi cosmology, so that its absence or presence might be said to function as a barometer of cultural change. The letters of the principal Jesuit evangelists, Joseph de Anchieta, Fernao Cardim and Manoel da Nóbrega, are replete with details, not only as to the nature of the practice, but also how its renunciation was seen as the critical token of *reduccion*. Accordingly, its recrudescence amongst a population was equally indicative of a move towards reasserting autonomy, such as occurred among the Bahian Tuipnambá in 1557 (Nóbrega 1931:161).

A similar point might be made about the messianic tradition of the Tupi-Guarani cultures, in that the long distance mass migrations, originally inspired by the *caraiã* prophets in their search for the "Land Without Evil", did not cease with the advent of European occupation, but neither were they simply occasioned by it. As in the case of cannibalism, the practice persisted and therefore was adapted to the changes brought about by the arrival of the Europeans. It also represented a continuity with Tupi traditions of the past, not, as in the case of other revitalization movements, a culturally idiosyncratic response to the changing conditions of the present.

Accordingly, Europeans and mestizos were incorporated within the extant Tupi-Guarani messianic tradition. In one of the earlier, and most striking, examples of this phenomenon, hundreds of Guarani followed the Portuguese, Aleixo Garcia, in an assault on the frontiers of the Inca empire in 1524, returning with plunder of copper and silver (Nordenskjöld 1917). There are also at least two other documented examples, in the period 1539–1549, and again around 1605, of Tupi messianic migrations taking place under the partial leadership of non-Tupi (Metraux 1927; Clastres 1975:73–78). The former migration was also one of the most prodigious, since its participants, although much reduced in numbers, finally reached Peru, sparking a number of analogous Spanish "migrations" in search of

El Dorado and the land of the Omagua. Indeed, the Omagua were themselves an enigmatic remnant of an earlier phase of Tupi migration, and were explicitly sought by the Tupi guides who accompanied one of these expeditions, that of Pedro de Ursua, which itself became a quasi-messianic quest to found a new Spanish empire after Ursua was assassinated by Lope de Aguirre, *El Peregrino Vendado*—the “Blindfolded Pilgrim” (Simón 1861).

The later mestizo-led Tupi migration, part of series that followed a similar route in the latter half of the sixteenth century, originated in Pernambuco and reached Maranhao. There, however, it faltered after fruitless attacks on the French forts recently founded in the region (Clastres 1975:78–80; D’Abbeville 1614).

Apocalyptic visions also occurred in response to Spanish occupation in the Guayana region, but arose from a cultural base in which prophecy and revelation was only one aspect of political and military leadership (Whitehead 1990a). Thus, the spirit *Wattopa*, who spoke to an Amerindian chieftain on the point of his execution by the Spanish, delivered the political, rather than spiritual, prophecy that the Amerindians would be liberated by the Dutch and English—a hope that the Dutch author also heartily endorsed (Cabeliau in Jonge 1862:I, 153–160).

## Conclusion

By way of concluding this essay it seems appropriate to reflect on what is meant by culture change, for it should have become clear that the Europeans produced very diverse reactions on the part of the Native Americans: although these reactions, as in the case of ethnic soldiering, still showed some uniformity despite the vast range of “cultures” we have been considering. For example, in the disruption of “traditional” patterns of leadership we might infer the extinction of a particular cultural pattern, but the ensuing birth of a new form of leadership, perhaps based on the re-distribution of Western trade goods, implies a continuing participation in a wider cultural matrix.

In turn, such considerations imply that our object of study should ideally be the joint culture of Native American and European that was initiated after 1499. This naturally leads, in the description of Amerindian cultural change, to the theoretical problem of distinguishing “modernized tradition” from a “traditionalized modernity” (Strathern 1992:242). The intractability of this problem seems due to its philosophical nature being really a question as to how we wish to decide when is something the same and when is it different.

Certainly, a static, timeless, definition of culture, is unsatisfactory, not least because it represents an abstraction from historical processes. But the description of process is itself another thorny theoretical problem. Therefore, by focusing just on a particular "way of doing things", as a minimal definition of culture, we can actually then see that cultures never stay precisely the same. As a result it is the cultural actors' own attitudes to their "way of doing things" which need to be the foundation for our understanding of change. This kind of understanding is crucial when dealing with such topics as evangelization, since, whatever the missionary effort destroyed in terms of "traditional" culture, it was also the cause of the emergence of new cultural forms, no less culturally authentic than those practices encountered in early contacts (Brown and Fernandez 1992; Butt-Colson 1960).

We may expect that cultures expressing beliefs which seek to deny change, or suggest that it can be politically managed, might be more familiar and explicable for us than those that see change as a permanent condition. This kind of analytical distinction has proved fruitful in providing general explanations of social change as a result of European contact (Whitehead 1993c, 1992a), as well as in explaining change in particular cultural and symbolic patterns (Viveiros de Castro 1992:252–305). Indeed, following Clastres's (1975) exposition of Tupi-Guarani prophetism, the "permanent revolution" of the Tupi provides just such an historical contrast with the more rigid socio-political formations found among the ancient élites north of the Amazon.

In sum then it may be said that European contact elaborated Amerindian cultures, as well as destroying them or inhibiting their development: just as the American encounter profoundly altered European conceptions of themselves and others. Culture change is thus a multifaceted progression that creates a number of possible paths for future development, and is not just a linear transition from a "traditional" state to a "new" one. So it is that the Native American cultures of today, half a millennium later, display their historicity in the measure of the cultural and social distance they have traversed from that original American idyll.

## References Cited

Abler, T.

1992 Scalping, Torture, Cannibalism and Rape: An Ethnohistorical Analysis of Conflicting Culture Values in War. *Anthropologica* 34:3–20.

Anchieta, J. de

1988 *Cartas, informações, fragmentos históricos e sermoes*. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.

Balée, W.

1984 The Ecology of Ancient Tupi Warfare. In *Warfare, Culture and Environment*, edited by R. B. Ferguson, pp. 241–265. Academic Press, New York.

1992 People of the Fallow: A Historical Ecology of Foraging in Lowland South America. In *Conservation of Neotropical Forests*, edited by K. Radford and C. Padoch, pp. 35–57. Columbia University Press, New York.

Balée, W., and A. Gely,

1989 Managed Forest Succession in Amazonia: The Ka'apor Case. In *Resource Management in Amazonia: Indigenous and Folk Strategies*, edited by D. Posey and W. Balée, pp. 129–157. New York Botanical Garden, New York.

Basso, E. B.

1973 *The Kalapalo Indians of Central Brazil*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York.

Bennett, J. P.

1989 An Arawak-English Dictionary. *Archaeology and Anthropology* 6:1–71.

Bethell, L.

1984 *The Cambridge History of Latin America*. 5 vols. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

1987 *Colonial Brazil*. (Extracts from vols. I, II of *The Cambridge History of Latin America*) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Boomert, A.

1980 Hertenrits: An Arauquinoid Complex in North West Suriname. *Archaeology and Anthropology* 3(2):68–104.

1984 The Arawak Indians of Trinidad and coastal Guiana, ca1500–1650. *The Journal of Caribbean History* 19(2):123–188.

1987 Gifts of the Amazons: “green stone” pendants and beads as items of ceremonial exchange in Amazonia and the Caribbean. *Antropologica* 67: 33–54.

Boon, J. A.

1982 *Other tribes, other scribes. Symbolic anthropology in the comparative study of cultures, histories, religions and texts*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Brinton, D. G.

1871 The Arawack Language of Guiana. *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 14:427–44.

Brown, M., and E. Fernandez

1992 Tribe and State in a Frontier Mosaic: The Asháninka of Eastern Peru. In *War in the Tribal Zone. Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare*, edited by R. B. Ferguson and N. L. Whitehead, pp. 175–198. School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series. SAR Press, Santa Fe.

Butt-Colson, A.

1960 The Birth of a Religion. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society* 90(1):66–106.

Caminha, P. V. de

1937 Letter to King Manoel, 1500. In *The Voyages of Pedro Alvares Cabral to Brazil and India*, edited by W. B. Greenlee, pp. 3–33. Hakluyt Society, London.

- Carvajal, G. de  
1988 [1542] Discovery of the Orellana River. In *The Discovery of the Amazon*, edited by J. T. Medina, pp. 167–235. Dover Publications, New York.
- Cardim, F.  
1906 [1625] A Treatise of Brasil. In *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, pp. 417–517. Hakluyt Society, Glasgow.
- Carneiro, R. L.  
1960 Slash-and-Burn Agriculture: A Closer Look at Its Implications for Settlement Patterns. In *Men and Cultures*, edited by A. F. C. Wallace, pp. 229–234. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.  
1961 Slash-and-Burn Cultivation among the Kuikuru and Its Implications for Cultural Development in the Amazon Basin. In *The Evolution of Horticultural Systems in Native South America: Causes and Consequences, Antropológica (special issue) 2:47–67*.  
1970 The Transition from Hunting to Horticulture in the Amazon Basin. *Ethnology and Archaeology* 3:144–148.  
1983 The Cultivation of Manioc among the Kuikuru Indians of the Upper Xingú. In *Adaptive Responses of Native Amazonians*, edited by R. B. Hames and W. T. Vickers, pp. 65–111. Academic Press, New York.
- Chagnon, N. A.  
1983 *Yanomamö. The Fierce People*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York.
- Clastres, H.  
1975 *La Terre Sans Mal. Le Prophétisme Tupi-Guarani*. Editions du Seuil, Paris.
- Clastres, P.  
1977 *Society Against the State. The Leader as Servant and the Human Uses of Power among the Indians of the Americas*. (translated by R. Hurley). Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Crosby, A. W.  
1986 *Ecological Imperialism. The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- D'Abbeville  
1614 *Histoire de la mission des Pères Capucins en l'Isle de Maragnan et terres circonfinés* [ . . . ]. François Huby, Paris.
- Denevan, W. M.  
1966 *The Aboriginal Cultural Geography of the Llanos de Mojos of Bolivia*. Ibero-Americana 48. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.  
1982 Hydraulic Agriculture in the American Tropics: Forms, Measures and Recent Research. In *Maya Subsistence*, edited by K. Flannery, pp. 181–203. Academic Press, New York.  
1991 Prehistoric roads and causeways of lowland tropical America. In: *Ancient road networks and settlement hierarchies in the New World*, edited by C. D. Trombold, pp. 230–242. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.  
1992(a) The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82(3):369–385.  
1992(b) Stone vs. metal axes: The ambiguity of shifting cultivation in

prehistoric Amazonia. *Journal of the Steward Anthropological Society*, Forthcoming.

Denevan, W., and K. Schwerin

1978 Adaptive Strategies in Karinya subsistence, Venezuelan Llanos. *Antropologica* 50:3–91.

D'Evreux, Y.

1864 *Voyage dans le nord du Brésil, fait durant les années 1613 et 1614*, edited by F. Denis. A. L. Herold, Paris/Leipzig.

Dobyns, H. F.

1983 *Their Number Become Thinned, Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America*. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

Fernandes, F.

1952 La Guerre et Le Sacrifice Chez Les Tupinamba. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 41:139–220.

Ferguson, R. B., and N. L. Whitehead

1992 The Violent Edge of Empire. In *War in the Tribal Zone. Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare*, edited by R. B. Ferguson and N. L. Whitehead, pp. 1–30. School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series. SAR Press, Santa Fe.

Forsyth, D. W.

1983 The Beginnings of Brazilian Anthropology: Jesuits and Tupinamba Cannibalism. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 39(2):147–178.

1985 Three Cheers for Hans Staden: The Case For Brazilian Cannibalism. *Ethnohistory* 32(1):17–36.

Goeje, C. H. de,

1928 Old Relations between Arowak, Carib and Tupi. *Acts of the International Congress of Americanists* 22:63–67.

Goslinga, C. CH.

1971 *The Dutch in the Caribbean and on the Wild Coast, 1580–1680*. Van Gorcum, Assen.

Hemming, J.

1978 *Red Gold. The Conquest of the Brazilian Indians, 1500–1760*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Hill, J.

1988 *Rethinking History and Myth. Indigenous South American Perspectives on the Past*. University of Illinois Press, Urbana.

Hulme, P.

1986 *Colonial Encounters. Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797*. Methuen, London/New York.

Hulme, P., and N. L. Whitehead

1992 *Wild Majesty. Encounters with Caribs from Columbus to the Present Day. An Anthology*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Jackson, J.

1983 *The Fish People. Linguistic Exogamy and Tukanoan Identity in the Northwest Amazon*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Jonge, J. K. J. de (editor)

1862–88 *De Opkomst van het Nederlandsch gezag in Oost-Indië*. 13 vols. Den Haag.

Johnson, H. B.

1987 Portuguese Settlement, 1500–1580. In *Colonial Brazil*, edited by L. Bethell, pp. 1–38. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Knivet, A.

1906 The Admirable Adventures and Strange Fortunes of Master Antonie Knivet [ . . . ] (in) *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes.*, pp. 177–289. Glasgow.

Léry, J. de

1880 *Historie d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil, autrement dite Amérique*. 2 vols, edited by P. Gaffarel. Maisonneuve, Paris.

Levi-Strauss, C.

1964 *Le Cru et le Cuit*. Plon, Paris.

1966(a) *Du Miel aux Cendres*. Plon, Paris.

1966(b) *The Savage Mind*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Lorimer, J. (editor)

1989 *English and Irish Settlement on the Amazon 1550–1646*. Hakluyt Society, London.

Marchant, A.

1966 *From Barter to Slavery. The Economic Relations of Portuguese and Indians in the Settlement of Brazil, 1500–1580*. Peter Smith, Gloucester, Mass.

Maybury-Lewis, D.

1974 *Akwe-Shavante Society*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Medina, J. T.

1988 *The Discovery of the Amazon*. Dover Publications, New York

Meggers, B.

1971 *Azonia, Man and Culture in a Counterfeit Paradise*. Aldine, Chicago.

Meggers, B., and C. Evans,

1983 Lowland South America and the Antilles. In *Ancient South Americans*, edited by J. Jennings, pp. 287–335. W. H. Freeman, New York.

Metraux, A.

1927 Migrations Historiques Des Tupi-Guarani. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 19:1–45.

1948 The Tupinambá. In *Handbook of South American Indians*, edited by J. H. Steward, Volume 3, pp. 687–712. Smithsonian Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 143. Washington

Nóbrega, M. da

1931 *Cartas do Brasil, 1549–1560*, edited by S. S. Leite et al. Rio de Janeiro.

Nordenskjöld, E.

1917 The Guarani Invasions of the Inca Empire in the Sixteenth Century: an historical Indian Migration. *The Geographical Review* 4:103–121.

Ojer, P.

1966 *La Formación del Oriente Venezolano*. Universidad Católica Andres Bello, Caracas.

Pagden, A.

1982 *The fall of natural man. The American Indian and the origins of comparative ethnology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.



Posey, D., and W. Balée (editors)

- 1989 *Resource Management in Amazonia: Indigenous and Folk Strategies. Advances in Economic Botany 7.* New York Botanical Garden, New York.

Raleigh, W.

- 1848 *The Discoveries of the Large, Rich and Bewtiful Empire of Guiana*, edited by R. H. Schomburgk. Hakluyt Society, London.

Rivière, P. G.

- 1984 *Individual and Society in Guiana.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Roosevelt, A. C.

- 1980 *Parmana. Prehistoric Maize and Manioc Subsistence along the Amazon and Orinoco.* Academic Press, New York.

- 1987 *Chiefdoms in the Amazon and Orinoco.* In *Chiefdoms in the Americas*, edited by R. D. Drennan and C. A. Uribe, pp. 153–184. University Press of America, New York.

- 1989 *Resource management in the Amazon Basin before the European conquest.* In *Resource Management in Amazonia: Indigenous and Folk Strategies*, edited by D. Posey and W. Balée, pp. 30–62, New York Botanical Garden, New York.

- 1991a *Moundbuilders of the Amazon. Geophysical Archaeology on Marajó Island, Brazil.* Academic Press, New York.

- 1991b *Eighth Millenium Pottery from a Prehistoric Shell Midden in the Brazilian Amazon.* *Science* 254:1621–4.

Scott, J.

- 1924 *The Discription of Guiana – Sloane MSS. 3662.* In *Colonising Expeditions to the West Indies and Guiana, 1623–1667*, edited by V. T. Harlow, pp. 132–148. Hakluyt Society, London.

Simón, Fr. P.

- 1861 [1627] *Sixth Historical Notice of the First Part of the Conquest of Tierra Firme*, translated by W. Bollaert, edited by C. Markham. Hakluyt Society, London.

Soares de Sousa, G.

- 1938 *Tratado descritivo do Brasil em 1587*, edited by F. A. Varnhagen. São Paulo.

Southey, R.

- 1810–19 *History of Brazil.* 3 vols. Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, London.

Staden, H.

- 1874 [1557] *Warhaftige Historie un Beschreibung eyner Landtschafft der Wilden [ . . . ]* edited and translated by R. F. Burton and A. Tootal. Hakluyt Society, London

Steward, J. H. (editor)

- 1946–50 *Handbook of South American Indians.* Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 143, 6 vols. U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington.

Strathern, A.

- 1992 *Let the Bow Go Down.* In *War in the Tribal Zone. Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare*, edited by R. B. Ferguson and N. L. Whitehead, pp. 229–250. School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series. SAR Press, Santa Fe.

Thevet, A.

1953 *La Cosmographie Universelle*. In *Les Français en Amérique pendant la deuxième moitié du XVI.e siècle: Le Brésil et les brésiliens*, edited by S. Lussagnet, pp. 1–316. Presses Universitaires. Paris.

Varnhagen, F. A. de

1858 *História Geral do Brasil*. São Paulo.

Versteeg, A. H.

1985 *The Prehistory of the Young Coastal Plain of West Suriname*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Leiden.

Vespucci, A.

1894 *The Letters of Amerigo Vespucci*, edited by C. Markham. Hakluyt Society, London.

Viveiros de Castro, E.

1992 *From the Enemy's Point of View. Humanity and Divinity in an Amazonian Society*, translated by C. Howard. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Whitehead, N. L.

1984 Carib Cannibalism. The Historical Evidence. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 70:69–88.

1988 *Lords of the Tiger Spirit. A History of the Caribs in Colonial Venezuela and Guyana, 1498–1820*. KITLV Caribbean Studies Series, no. 10. Foris Publications, Dordrecht.

1990a The Snake warriors, Sons of the Tiger's Teeth. A Descriptive Analysis of Carib Warfare, ca. 1500–1820. In *The Anthropology of War*, edited by J. Haas, pp. 146–170. School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

1990b Carib Ethnic Soldiering in Venezuela, the Guianas and the Antilles, 1492–1820. *Ethnohistory* 37(4):358–385.

1990c The Mazaruni Pectoral. A Golden Artefact Discovered in Guyana and the Historical Sources Concerning Native Metallurgy in the Caribbean, Orinoco and Northern Amazonia. *Archaeology and Anthropology* 7:19–28.

1992a Tribes Make States and States Make Tribes. Warfare and the Creation of Colonial Tribe and State in Northeastern South America. In *War in the Tribal Zone. Expanding States and indigenous Warfare*, edited by R. B. Ferguson and N. L. Whitehead, pp. 127–150. School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series. SAR Press, Santa Fe.

1992b El Dorado, Cannibalism and the Amazons. European Myth and Amerindian Praxis in the Conquest of South America. In *Beeld en Verbeelding van Amerika*, 1:53–70, edited by W. Pansters and J. Weerdenburg. Studium Generale Series 9206. University of Utrecht Press, Utrecht.

1993a Ethnic Transformation and Historical Discontinuity in Native Guayana and Amazonia, 1500–1900. *L'Homme* 33:289–309.

1993b De Transformatie van Indiaans Suriname, 1499–1681. In *Indianen van Suriname*, vol. 1., edited by P. Kloos. Free University Press, Amsterdam.

1993c Ethnic Plurality and Cultural Continuity in the Native Caribbean. Remarks and Uncertainties as to Data and Theory. In *Wolves from the Sea. Readings in the Anthropology of the Island Carib*, edited by N. L. Whitehead. KITLV Press, Leiden.

n.d. *Memorandum on the mound-complexes at Fort Nassau, Berbice River,*

*Guyana*. Document on file at the Walter Roth Museum, Georgetown, Guyana.

Williams, D.

1979 Preceramic Fishtraps on the Upper Essequibo. *Archaeology and Anthropology* 2(2): 125-40.

1981 Excavation of the Barabina Shell Mound North West District. *Archaeology and Anthropology* 4:13-34.

1985 Petroglyphs in the Prehistory of Northern Amazonia and the Antilles. (In) *Advances in World Archaeology.*, vol. 4, pp. 335-87. Academic Press, New York.

Zucchi, A., and Denevan, W.

1979 *Campos Elevados e Historia Cultural Prehispánica en los Llanos Occidentales de Venezuela*. Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Caracas.