

## Research Activity Report: South America

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We were invited by Dwight W. Read and Fadwa El Guindi, the senior co-Editors of the new international journal *Kinship*, to submit a report on kinship research activity in South America. This report focuses in particular on a specific project hosted by two distinguished academic centers in Brazil, namely University of São Paulo and the Federal University of Santa Catarina, to explore Amerindian kinship networks and 'gift' circulation, by a team of anthropologists and computer scientists from Brazil, Argentina and Peru.

This research project represents one kind of collaboration in kinship research activity. South America and especially Brazil is also actively involved in bilateral cooperation of research co-authorship with colleagues in Europe and especially in France, but the latter form of collaboration will be presented separately in another journal issue.

## Kinship News from South America

Anthropologists and computer scientists from Brazil, Argentina and Peru have teamed up to tackle theoretical, methodological and ethnographic challenges involved in the study of kinship and related issues. The project<sup>1</sup> relies on a set of computational means and methods specifically designed for or adapted to the study of kinship networks in connection with the circulation of many other things, alienable and inalienable, such as gifts and commodities, political and religious leadership, residence, migrations, ritual and onomastic practices.

Drawing from ethnographic and ethnohistoric materials produced by its members, in long duration research conducted among many South American indigenous populations, since the middle 1980's in some cases, the project currently entails the analysis and comparison of thirteen complex empirical networks of kinship and other related data on the dynamics of circulation among indigenous populations in the Amazon, Central and Meridional Brazil, the Chaco and Central Andes regions (see Map below). New contributions will always be welcome.

Two different academic centers in Brazil, the University of São Paulo (USP) and the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) are the main host institutions for the project, which brings together researchers from several-Brazilian institutions, colleagues from the Argentinean National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET) and from the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC) of Peru. The group is formed by Marcio Ferreira da Silva, Adriana Queiroz Testa, and Carlos Eduardo Ferreira (USP); Márnio Teixeira-Pinto and Álvaro Junio Pereira Franco (UFSC); Pablo Federico Sendón, Diego Villar and Lorena Córdoba (Instituto de Investigaciones de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales/Universidad Católica Argentina-UCA/CONICET); Edmundo Antônio Peggion (Universidade Estadual Paulista – UNESP); Antonio Roberto Guerreiro Jr. and Marina Pereira Novo (Universidade Estadual de Campinas – UNICAMP); Rodrigo Montani (IDACOR CONICET/UNC); Emanuele Fabiano (PUC) from Peru; Cecília Martínez (Becaria postdoctoral/IICS CONICET-UCA); Erik Pozo-Buleje (PhD Candidate, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales – EHESS-France and PUC-Perú); Carlos Melo de Oliveira Paulino (PhD Candidate, ABD, Universidade Federal de São Carlos - UFSCar).

Although the ethnographic cases contemplated are, and will always be, objects of individual investigations, the project aims at building a collective corpus for carrying out exploratory analytical exercises and comparative-tasks. The main ethnographic corpus, that will be made accessible to all team members and replicated in the research centers integrated by this project, are formed by a set of anonymous genealogical data, marriage and other networks of relations, which ensure the privacy

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<sup>1</sup> Titled "*Amerindian networks of circulation: computational approaches for the study of kinship and related themes.*"

of all individuals from the groups studied, as well as the protection of confidential data registered in the ethnographic research.

This interdisciplinary endeavor, congregating anthropologists with different backgrounds and computer scientists, aims to advance in the study of classic and recent anthropological challenges pertaining to kinship and develop new means and methods of anthropological inquiry, by incorporating technological innovations that can contribute to ethnographic research and to the construction of analytical models for treating large corpus of data. By charting new analytical methods designed to offer greater possibilities for exploring, modeling, manipulating, visualizing, understanding and comparing ethnographic data, the project seeks to apply computational resources to the study of kinship in connection with other pressing issues in the contemporary life of the indigenous peoples under the focus.

Initially, the project will produce a systematic analysis and comparison of the kinship terminologies, and fully process the marriage networks using computational tools. A comparison on the network structures of marriage practices, along with the dynamics of circulation of many other things, will then become feasible.

The computational study of these Amerindian kinship systems should allow for the exploration of important questions, such as:

1. What variables are implicated in the evolution of matrimonial alliance networks and what is the relative weight of such variables in each case?
2. How to harmoniously integrate mechanical models of kinship and marriage (e.g., in some prescriptive systems) and statistical models revealed by the network analysis?
3. How to develop an integrated approach of categories, rules and practices of kinship?
4. How to incorporate native classifications and rules into the computational modeling, without diminishing the perspective of comparability between cases?

In addition to these challenges, we must point out that the possibility of confronting the diverse configurations of the matrimonial circuits, revealed in the cases under study, should enable us to revisit, with new breadth, the macro-typology that traditionally distinguishes, in the structural theory of kinship, elementary, semi-complex and complex structures of marriage alliance. In this sense, the computational treatment of the specific cases of marriage circuits contemplated in this project, which represent examples of these three-macro-types, offers the possibility of comparing such structures not only in terms of rules and norms, but also taking into account the practices identified in their respective empirical networks. Another task set by this collective enterprise is to review classic dichotomies in kinship theory, such as mechanical models vs. statistical models, positive rules vs. negative rules, etc.

In terms of prospects for the analysis of other social phenomena manifested in

politics, ritual, cosmology, economy, migration, residence and so forth, the joining of anthropological and computer science studies also seeks to contribute to facing the following theoretical and empirical challenges:

1. Identifying connections between kinship and leadership that could shed light on how genealogical ties influence the transmission of political and religious roles among South American Indigenous societies;
2. Mapping out migrations and other forms of spatial mobility over a long period of time, in many cases over a century;
3. Analyzing how kinship and politics influence the formation and dissolution of villages, which connects to a problem still unsolved concerning Amerindian traditional tendencies to massive dispersion and migration;
4. Identifying and exploring other networks of relations through which kinship ties, knowledge and various forms of ritual, political and economic cooperation circulate among villages.

Returning to a general reflection on Amerindian kinship, in order to reassess the conceptual apparatus traditionally used, and reinvent some methodological resources that can be useful to reignite interest in kinship and other forms of connection and circulation are objectives the project seeks to achieve.

Our expectation is that an interdisciplinary approach will broaden our understanding of the Amerindian social networks contemplated in this research and, given the extensive geographical and cultural range covered by this ethnographic ensemble, render new perspectives in terms of controlled comparison and generalization. We assume that to face the main goals set by this project there is no other way than to deal with all the complexities posed by a large volume of data on kinship, marriage and the various other forms of connecting and circulating that interweave the social fabric of Amerindian peoples.

### **List of Amerindian populations included in the project (with some previous works from the project members)**

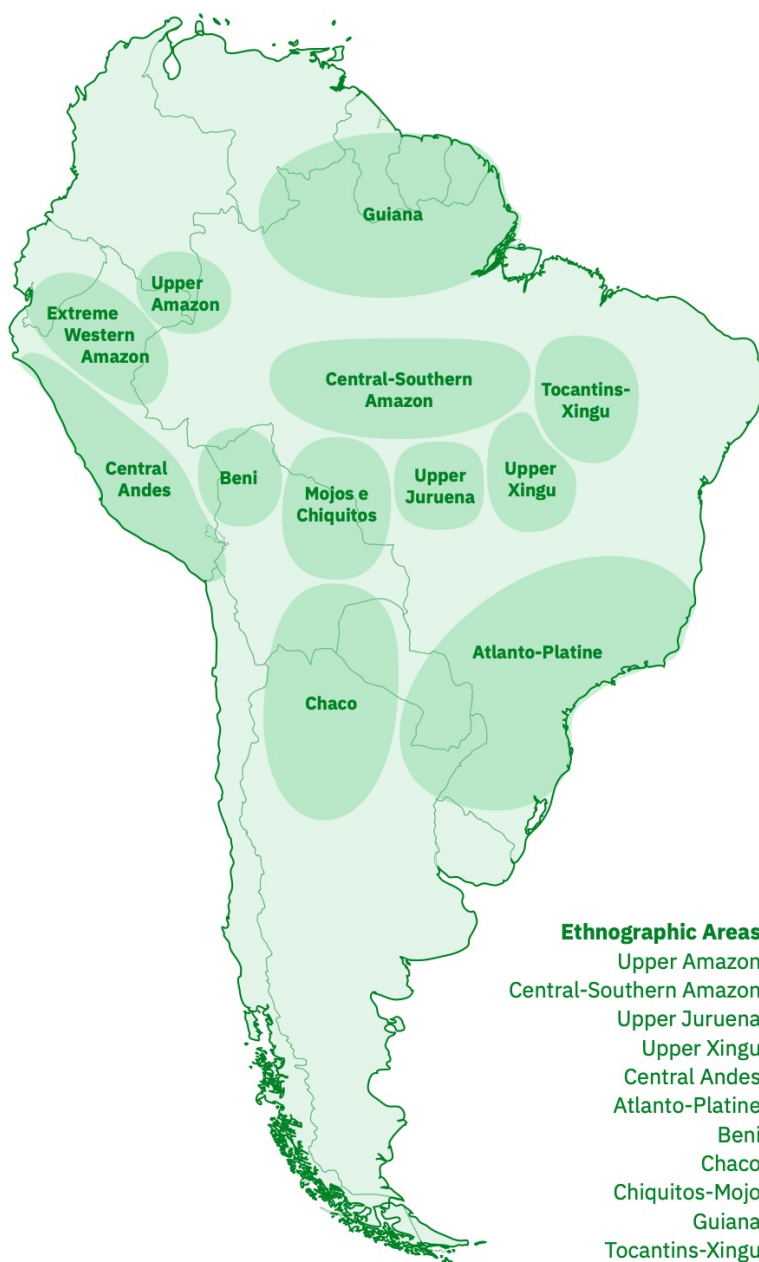
- Guarani Mbya* – Argentina, Brazil, Paraguai and Uruguai (Testa, 2018, 2019);
- Tenharim* - Brazil (Peggion, 1996, 2011);
- Kraho* - Brazil (Paulino, 2016);
- Quechua* – Peru (Sendón , 2016; Sendón & Villar, 2007; Bossert, Sendón & Villar, 2012);
- Chacobo* - Bolívia (Córdoba & Villar, 2013; Walker et. al., 2013);
- Wichí* – Argentina and Bolívia (Montani, 2017);
- Waimiri-Atroari* - Brazil (Silva, 1995, 2009);
- Chiquitos* - Bolívia (Martínez, 2018);
- Arara, Karib* – Brazil (Teixeira-Pinto, 1995, 1997, 2017);
- Kalapalo* - Brazil (Guerreiro Jr., 2008, 2015; Novo, 2017);

*Urarina* - Peru (Fabiano, 2015)

*Awajún* (Jivaro-Aguaruna) – Peru (Pozo-Buleje, 2017);

*Enawene-Nawe* - Brazil (Silva, 2008, 2012, 2017).

### Ethnographic Areas



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