

THE PREHISTORIC PEOPLING OF THE SÃO FRANCISCO VALLEY (BRAZIL)

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On October 04, 1501, Saint Francis day, the Italian Américo Vespúcio discovered the estuary of a river called Opara by the indigenous peoples and named it after Saint Francis Assisi. The tragic fate of the native population who had inhabited the margins of the great Northeastern river for ten thousand years was sealed on that date, although the European colonization of the São Francisco Valley was still some decades away.

The São Francisco river is the great river of the Northeast and is extraordinarily valuable for regional life. Its headwaters are located on the Minas Gerais plateau therefore the "Northeastern" portion of the river is mainly its medium and low course. From the Borborema plateau it receives temporary confluents from Pernambuco and Alagoas : the Pajeú and the Moxotó rivers. The great basin of the São Francisco river was an attraction and natural route for prehistoric peoples since the end of the Pleistocene. Based on reports of missionaries, adventurers and travelers penetrating the inlands of the São Francisco Region in the beginning of colonization, information on the indigenous inhabitants of the great valley, of their resistance and gradual extermination or flight to the almost unreachable places on the surrounding hills, can be held. Currently the Pankararú, Atikum, Kimbiwa on the Pernambuco margin , the Truká from the

Assunção island and the Kiriri, Tuxá and Pankararé in Bahia, are the reminiscent peoples of those ancient tribes who in succeeding migration waves occupied the medium and low portions of the São Francisco Valley from the eighth millennium B.C. on.

Knowledge on the prehistoric indigenous peoples of the São Francisco Valley , can be drawn from three groups of basic sources: the missionaries reports who for the first time contacted these populations, as in : *Relação de uma missão no Rio São Francisco, of the French friar Frei Martin de Nantes* , or the report of Friar Bernardo, his companion ; pioneer work of ethnologists such as Carlos Estevão de Oliveira and Estevão Pinto, the latest the author of *Os Índigenas do Nordeste*, written and published between 1935 and 1938, and field research results of archaeologists accomplished principally by CHESF supported rescuing missions during the construction of the Sobradinho, Itaparica

and Xingó dams. Other data are furnished by researches performed in the high valley directed by P.I. Schmitz in the Serra Geral Project and on Maria Beltrão's work as general coordinator for the Central Project, in the depression of the São Francisco valley and on the Diamantina plateau. But and notwithstanding the doubtless accumulation of historical, ethnographic and archaeological data related to indigenous occupations, the History of the São Francisco Valley still remain to be written, whilst the publication of the abundant documentation researched, remain unpublished in excavation and archaeological prospecting reports.

The Archaeological Rescuing of the Sobradinho Project

In the 70's, Calderón was in charge of the Sobradinho Project of Archaeological Rescuing, during the construction of the Sobradinho barrage flooding 400 square kilometers of the São Francisco Valley. In reality Calderón did not participate of the field researches, which were limited to prospecting, for archaeological excavations were not performed in the project, only some drilling. The research was carried under the direct responsibility of his disciples Iara de Atayde and Ivan Dórea Soares, who marked archaeological sites and collected lithic and ceramic materials from the future reservoir's area. Therefore, approximately 50 prehistoric sites were registered in the municipalities of Casa Nova, Remanso, Pilão Arcada and Barra, on the left margin of the river and in Juazeiro, Sento Sé and Xique Xique on the right side. In the published report, the research authors wrote small descriptions of the visited sites, but a more complete study of the collected materials.

During the Sobradinho Project Work shelters with rock paintings classified as belonging to the Agreste tradition were registered. This tradition had already been marked by various authors practically in all of the Brazilian Northeast States (A. Aguiar, 1982, 1986; N. Guidon, 1981, 1985, A.M. Pessis, 1992, G. Martin, 1993, 1996) and the different subtraditions with their regional variables were gradually amplified with the discovery of new shelters with rock art. Eight sites with rock paintings which I propose should be called *the Sobradinho subtradition* were located by the Calderón team during the Archaeological Rescuing of the Sobradinho Project.

The Itaparica Project of Archaeological Rescuing

In the medium valley of the São Francisco River the **Itaparica Project of Archaeological Rescuing** was implemented between 1982 and 1988 with the objective of identifying and rescuing the archaeological sites of the great area to be flooded by the artificial Lake of Itaparica currently feeding the hydroelectric power plant of the same name. The project was financed by the Companhia Hidroelétrica do Vale do São Francisco - CHESF, responsible for the construction of the barrage and electrical power plant. Archaeological in the beginning, lately the project was amplified with the accomplishment of anthropologic researches in the indigenous areas of the Pankararu and of the Atticum, in Tacaratu and Floresta (PE), in addition to a documentation survey of the valleys colonial occupation.

Archaeological researches on the Pernambuco side were accomplished by the Federal University of Pernambuco, under my coordination, in the municipalities of Petrolândia, Itacuruba, Floresta and Belém do São Francisco. On the Bahia side archaeologists of the Archaeology and Ethnology Museum of the Federal University of Bahia under the coordination of the anthropologist Pedro Agostinho and the archaeologist Carlos Echvarne (1993, 1995) in the municipalities of Chorroorro, Rodelas and Glória, were in charge.

The excavations simultaneously realized on the two margins permitted the obtainment of a scenario, although incomplete, of the prehistoric human occupation of this part of the valley. Extensive and intensive prospecting were carried on the fluvial terraces and on the surrounding hills. On the valley's portion inserted into the flooding quota numerous rock engravures were surveyed which for more than one kilometer existed on the margins of the river, close to Petrolândia. With less density they were repeated on the right margin where the Bahia team spotted rock engravures in the Pedra da Moeda, Bebedouro das Pedras and Itacoatiara sites in Rodelas.

Three shelters were excavated on the Pernambuco side of the river : the Abrigo do Sol Poente, Letreiro do Sobrado and Gruta do Padre shelters, in Petrolândia. On the Bahia side, the grouping named Itacoatiara was excavated, which is formed by open sites and small shelters (I to X) with rock engravures and ceramic establishment on the Zorobabel and Jacó dunes in Rodelas.

Researches carried on the Pernambuco side were intense during the Lake forming barrage construction. Following area flooding, these researches still continued on the bordering areas and away from the flooding quota. They were, nevertheless, interrupted by the inherent difficulties of an isolated and far from academic centers area, which obviously implied in enormous financial

costs. But, the basic knowledge of an archaeological enclave with an epicenter on the Itaparica waterfalls in Petrolândia after which the project was named, was achieved.

In the archeological researches of the Itaparica Project, with the deficiencies and possibilities of a rescuing project, it was the initial thrust to place the foundations of a systematic research enabling the knowledge of the human occupation in the São Francisco Valley during prehistory, in the portion in which special construction circumstances of an hydroelectric plant was offered. Thus, archaeological prospecting was accomplished throughout the valley, basically registering two types of collection and hunting settlements: open sites and rock shelters. The first, on the fluvial terraces of the archaic valley, marked by great concentrations of flaked lithic material but with scarce or non existent stratigraphic depth, indicated temporary camps: rock shelters, close to the river, presented more prolonged human occupation, determined by stratigraphic sequences. The farmer-ceramist settlements which we could name Neolithic villages in their more concentrated areas, were located in the São Francisco islands : Zorobabel, Itacuruba, Viúva , Pontal and Assunção . With accessible drinking water and fertile soil, these islands located along the middle course of the São Francisco river, were intensively occupied by farmers prehistoric groups and afterwards by missions.

The Xingó Project of Archaeological Rescuing

The Xingó Project was developed for five years until the barrage flooding of Xingó between the States of Sergipe and Alagoas took place. The field work was coordinated by Cleonice Vergne under the responsibility of the Federal University of Sergipe, although it also had the help of specialized Consultants of the American Man Museum Foundation - FUNDHAM and of the Nucleus of Archaeological Studies of the Federal University of Pernambuco. The prospecting accomplished in both margins of the São Francisco, in the cited States, resulted in the discovery of over one hundred archaeological sites, between open sites and rock shelters. Many of these shelters had rock paintings of the Nordeste and Agreste and possibly of the São Francisco traditions. The rock *corpus* of this great archaeological area is still in a preliminary stage of study.

The archaeological finding of greatest value in the Xingó project, was, without any doubt, the discovery of two indigenous graveyards : the Justino Site, in the Sergipe margin and the São José Site, on the Alagoas side (C.

Vergne, 1995- 96). The Justino Site was discovered in 1990 in the Cabeça de Nego farm, in Canindé do São Francisco, a terrace located in the confluence of the Curitiba stream with the São Francisco river. It was occupied for the period comprised between 2000 and 8000 BP, and two hundred skeletons, both complete and incomplete, were discovered, enabling an evaluation of the funeral rites employed by the prehistoric inhabitants of the lower São Francisco Valley. Occupied by various ceramist groups in different epochs, pottery was part of the funeral utensils. In a burial where the body was laid on complete dorsal decubitus with arms extended alongside, two ceramic urns were placed on the head and abdomen of the deceased. A similar ritual was equally observed in two sites with burials excavated by V. Calderón in Curacá (BA), in the medium Valley of the São Francisco. One of the burials of Toca do Gongo, in São Raimundo Nonato, also presented a ceramic vase on the head and was dated from 2090+/- 100 BP.

In another burial of the Sítio do Justino, the upper part of the cranium was deposited on a circular cut slate and another similar slate was equally placed on the abdomen. The cranium of another individual was carefully serrated longitudinally and the two parts buried together with the rest of the body. We do not have the elements to deduct if the macabre ritual was immediately effected after death or in a secondary phase of the ritual. Ritual variety and burial forms of the Justino graveyard is truly impressive, but we cannot determine whether these rituals were exclusive for individuals of the male or female gender for the funeral grouping skeletal studies have not as yet been accomplished. Inarticulate bones indicate the practice of a secondary ritual and the destruction of burials in the act of deposition of other more recent ones is equally noted. The preparations of a skeleton within an urn, whose bones were carefully cut and polished in the epiphyses should be noted; the cranium was serrated in the longitudinal direction, the borders were equally polished and one of the halves of the cranium was fitted inside the other. In addition to the complete pottery placed with the skeleton on the upper layers of the sites, a great quantity of fragmented ceramics, appearing to be the product of a dwelling place could be observed. This could have meant that the site could have equally been used as a village and the dead were buried in the same location of the dwellings, which, incidentally, was a common practice among ceramist prehistoric groups. The presence of fires could point in the direction of the previous hypothesis. In addition, there were ritual fires marks over the burials. Besides the singularly ritualized tombs, the majority followed a simple ritual with only the body laid on lateral decubitus with the legs curved and no utensils.

The detailed study of the funeral rites of the Justino site with the indication

of gender and age of the buried individuals will surely furnish precious data for the knowledge of the social life and the symbolic universe of the ethnic groups who occupied the site.

The First Inhabitants of the São Francisco Valley

The first men to arrive in the Brazilian Northeast belonged to Mongoloid groups, probably as all inhabitants of the Americas before European colonization. Among the natural varieties, there is, therefore, an evident homogeneity among the different Brazilian groups identifying all South American Indians as being of the same origin. It is accepted that the Brazilian Indians who arrived in the Northeast are descendants of archaic migration waves crossing the Bering Strait, some thousands of years before. Even, if, periodically, the conjecture of the existence of other routes is argued, which could have resulted in the arrival of human groups in America during the Pleistocene, this is yet to be proved.

The human groups crossing the Pacific Ocean and reaching the American East Coast must have already possessed the Neolithic technology and were not earlier than 5000 BP judging by the known proof. As for the possibility of a transatlantic route of the prehistoric arrival in Brazil, even if it is a suggestive conjecture the theory lacks, for the time being, scientific support.

The first migration waves of Paleoindians arriving at the margins of the middle portion of the São Francisco River are dated from the eighth millennium BP, and must have arrived at the Valley from the Goiania Plateau, from the headwaters of the upper São Francisco and from the ample network of affluents flowing into the great Northeastern river in Southwest Bahia. Very old human occupations were found in the valleys of the rivers Pratudão, Formoso and Correntina forming the Correntina river, which is in itself an affluent of the São Francisco river in the Municipalities of Coribe and Santa Maria da Vitória (P.I. Schmitz 1994; 1996; 1997). Prospecting in the *cerrado* areas and arboreal *caatinga*, disclosed approximately 60 prehistoric sites with calcareous shelters and occupations in open pre-ceramic and ceramic sites. The researches results indicated stratigraphic sequences demonstrating the presence of diversified hunters-collectors in this area of the São Francisco Valley depression, starting 9000 years BP. Older occupations were also discovered in the Morro Furado, in the Coribe shelter where chronologies as early as one thousand years BP determined through stratigraphic sequences were obtained, with strata dated from 5000, 6000 and 9000 BP in round numbers, in addition Pleistocene dating obtained from mollusk lenses among ashes which could have been burned to be

eaten, indicated 16, 18, 21 and 26 thousand years BP.

There were no human bones in Brazil dated ten thousand years before the present and although traces of material culture are sufficient to identify one ethnic group, the existence of bone samples enables the adding of a large volume of data to complete the cultural profile of an specific prehistoric group. Among the few skeletal findings collected in the region of the São Francisco Valley, I will cite two dolicocephalous craniums in the Gruta das Onças in Jacobina, Bahia, described by the anthropologist Marília Carvalho Alvim, as similar to the Men from Lagoa Santa. They belong to a young woman and an approximately nine year old child. The craniums could not be dated because they were dragged by the waters penetrating the cave. Collected with remnants of extinct fauna, the giant sloth, principally - they, without any doubt show archaic characteristics. The skeletal remnants collected at the Gruta do Padre, in addition to being burned, chronologically do not go beyond two thousand years BP. Nevertheless, I believe that a detailed study of the skeletons found in Sítio Justino, in Sergipe, a location occupied before eight thousand years will furnish precious data concerning the first populations inhabiting the São Francisco region in prehistoric times.

The Hunters of the Itaparica Tradition

The São Francisco Valley has been the focus of attention of prehistoric ethnic groups since the beginning of the Holocene 10000 years BP when a long extremely dry period must have led populations to the area of the great river. Dates as far back as 7000-6000 BP have been securely established, but based on the dates obtained in the plateau of Goiana and the similarity of lithic implements it is possible that the first occupations took place already in the tenth millennium.

From the excavation of the Gruta do Padre, in Petrolândia, on the Pernambuco margin of the São Francis, Valentin Calderón a Spanish archaeologist living in Bahia, established in 1969 a lithic horizon known as the *Itaparica Tradition* to name different hunters-collector groups in caves and shelters with characteristic lithic materials. Afterwards through researches accomplished by P. I. Schmitz and A.S. Barbosa on the Goiana plateau shelters of this tradition in the Serranópolis region were identified. From there on, the Itaparica tradition was divided into two periods named by the authors above of the Paranaíba and the Serranópolis phases. The first is the oldest one beginning around 11000 years BP and the second more recent, around 7000 BP. The

lithic material of the Paranaíba phase is smaller in size and has a more refined retouching technique as compared to the previous Serranópolis phase.

The lithic tools of the sites considered to belong to the Itaparica tradition in the Northeast are principally sylex plain convex unifaced scrappers (*lesmas*), of silicified sandstone and chalcedony, circular, semi-circular scrappers, lateral and fan-shaped, some finely retouched through pressure and very characteristic "shoulder" picks. There are also some blades. This Itaparica industry was located in the São Francisco Valley in the areas of Serra Geral, Central, Sobradinho and Itaparica in the States of Pernambuco and Bahia and in Bom Jardim in Pernambuco as well, in addition to the archaeological area of São Raimundo Nonato in Piauí. In more recent periods of the tradition, around 4000 years BP, there were some attempts at pedunculus tips although still unifaced.

Kitchen refuse collected in the shelters of Goiana and of the São Francisco Valley establish that these sites were used as a refuge of generalized hunters-fishermen-collectors, micro-fauna, gastropods and fish consumers.

Based on the linguistic correlation by Betty Meggers, A.S. Barbosa (1992) suggests that the Itaparica tradition hunters formed the Jê linguistic group permeating the interior of Brazil, including the Northeast. Basically, the lithic horizon of the Itaparica tradition extends throughout the *cerrado* areas, rich in diversified fauna and the *caatinga* areas, of lesser fauna, and that is too the reason why the Northeastern groups sought the river valleys more intensely. This tradition would also extend to Minas Gerais as indicated by excavations of Ondemar Dias in the Gruta do Gentio II, and in the Lapa da Foice where the oldest levels reached 8000 BP with the presence of *lesmas*, also collected at the intermediate levels dated 4000 BP.

Unexpectedly the lithic industry collected at the Xingó area did not present the elements featuring the Itaparica tradition. A preliminary study of the lithic material of the Sítio Justino (O. Jerônimo and D. Cisneiros, 1997) did not register the presence of *lesmas* (end scrapper made from a blade or an elongated flake with the base ground for insertion in a bone handle), circular scrappers, double scrappers or picks which could be referred to this lithic horizon. Considering that the Justino graveyard lithic industry is dated from the ninth millennium, including dates between 6000 and 4000 BP findings from older periods of the tradition would be expected but that did not happen. On the contrary, the artifacts were not significant and not very elaborate, with predominance of bipolar flaking for the obtainment of little or non retouched flakes.

Actually, the geographical boundaries of the Itaparica tradition as representative of a horizon of archaic hunters of the Holocene are not known, but it is evident that numerous groups of hunters did people the Northeastern

inlands since the beginning of the Holocene in dates that go beyond ten thousand years, occupying shelters and open terraces and preparing flaked stone tools including the *lesma*. The oldest materials are more refined and smaller and around 3000 BP it is noted that the more careful techniques are abandoned with the presence of larger and coarser tools. Between 2500-1000 years BP, the loss of the refined lithic technology featuring the Itaparica horizon is noted. More recently, in the 90's, "*Itaparica*" industries were found in the dune areas of the Rio Grande do Norte shores (P.T. de S. Albuquerque, 1994). In their majority these are flakes and unifaced sylex, chalcedony, jasper and quartz artifacts. What is most impressive in these dunes sites, probably seasonal camping sites, is the great quantity of lithic material emerging, at the first site on the dunes surface, flakes refuse in the format of small chips and double and plain-convex (*lesmas*), *semi-cortical* and shelled and fragments resulting from the use and incomplete artifacts abandoned during the flaking process. There are fragmented cores and their respective flakes allowing for the reconstruction of the original core. These are evidence demonstrating that the artifacts were prepared *in situ* from sylex cores transported from long distances or originated from rolled stones. The presence of lithic artifacts of the Itaparica tradition in littoral sites, opens a new perspective to the study of this cultural horizon, traditionally considered exclusive of ethnic groups adapted to the semiarid interior.

In general, the men inhabiting the middle São Francisco Valley in prehistory occupied shelters and terraces close to the river without moving very much away from it for it was there where they found food. Organizing into small groups of hunters-collectors, with ample mobility, they wandered through great distances in the Valley, hunting, fishing and preparing their stone tools as the density and extension of the lithic material scattered in the different sites of the river's vicinity seem to indicate. They occupied small shelters not far from its margins, formed in the sedimentary rocks of the witness mountain ridges and also settled at the margins of old lagoons, residues of the archaic Valley. An example of prehistoric occupation in the oldest areas of lagoons was also found in Salgueiro, PE in the District of Conceição das Creoulas in the Valley of the Terra Nova river, a confluent of the São Francisco river. Excavations made at the Lagoa da Pedra reflect prehistoric occupations at the site called "Lagoon Complex of the Caraíbas". As a consequence of the 1992-93 drought small lagoons and "water wells" dried out, showing the presence of bones and Pleistocene mammals, apparently associated to flaked lithic material. The fauna was formed by giant sloths (*Eremotherium lundii*) armadillos (*Pampatherium humboldti*, Lund), *Glyptodon clavipes*, *Taxodon platensis*, *mastodon*

(*Haplomastodon warringi*), *Hippidon*, *Palacolama* saber teeth tiger (*Smilodon populator*).

Other open sites succeeded themselves without continuity along the São Francisco river, not only in as well as out of the lake flooding quota at the oldest terraces of the archaic Valley. These sites, in both margins, presented abundant lithic material at the surface, indicating, in many cases, the flaking shops sites in which the rolling stones were used to manufacture artifacts. These extend themselves for kilometers along the Valley and in the Pernambuco margin occupy an extensive area between the river and the mountain ridges bordering it.

Valentim Calderón who had already marked the value of open sites of the mid São Francisco Valley described them as alluvial locations, covered with medium sized rolling stones consisting of the raw materials for the utensils found over there. He reported they formed small piles at the proximity of the river, streams and the São Francisco islands. Calderón additionally noted that some of the open sites presented a quantity of flaking fragments and residues which were quite impressing and considered that such sites were mostly lithic artifacts flaking shops, for, in the majority of cases, their topography did not offer camping conditions.

The density and extension of the lithic material on the open sites along the river seem to indicated the concentration of numerous human groups in temporary camps, for the material, even if plentiful is always superficial, with no stratigraphic refuse and without forming humiferous stains indicating human settlements. The extremely dry climate which seemed to prevail for a long period between 8000 and 6000 years BP in large interior areas of the NE could have enabled the occupation of those open spaces with precarious camps and would explain the small or no occupation of the rock shelters away from the river, in their majority carrying no evidence of occupation or evidence of very short lived occupations.

The Gruta do Padre, Petrolândia (Pernambuco)

The Gruta do Padre, with an archaeological excavation establishing the Itaparica tradition, is nowadays under the waters of the artificial lake of Itaparica, in the São Francisco Valley. In its place there is a small emerging island, a peninsula in the dry periods, conical in shape, remnants of the hill where one of the most well known archaeological sites of the Northeast naming one of the older prehistoric traditions in Brazil took place. The site was a starting point of identification of the prehistoric lithic industries of the mid São Francisco Valley.

Located at a privileged place, a few meters above the Itaparica waterfall, since its ample entry it was possible to contemplate the river. The Pankararu Indians, whose village is close and who helped us during the cave's excavation, descended very easily to the margins of the waterfall to bathe and to collect water. Measuring 8 by 5,20 meters, it possessed a livable area of approximately 41 square meters enabling its permanent occupation by groups of hunters for a long period. Because it is easily accessible and close to the city of Petrolândia, it has always been intensively frequented by visitors and treasure hunters a disturbing factor to the sites stratigraphy and structure.

The archaeological History of the small cave goes back into the 30's when the ethnologist Carlos Estevão began the first excavations. From then on two more phases mark the archaeological researches in the Gruta do Padre : the Valentim Calderón excavations, in the 60's and the ones made by the Federal University of Pernambuco Archaeological Studies Nucleus, during the Itaparica Project of Archaeological Rescuing when excavation was completed. The second part was accomplished a little before the flooding of the site and consisted in the removal of great blocks detached from the roof on the left side of the shelter. Archaeological materials and the strata which could by chance appear below the fallen blocks, were, maybe the ones of the sole non violated area of the whole site, a supposition which was later confirmed. The existence of this untouched area was of special value because of the already mentioned fact of numerous human incursions suffered by the site, either by archaeologists or sightseers. Calderón himself was the one who had the opportunity of excavating the largest area of the cave could not be absolutely sure that its stratigraphy had not been previously disturbed by Carlos Estevão's work.

Because of the reasons above, the space of the cave we excavated , even if small - offered the total security of not been previously disturbed . Within this small area, we noted a major concentration of archaeological materials distributed in three layers of human occupation. The Gruta do Padre, had two different and perfectly delimited occupations. One of the first occupation which served as the shelter for hunters and a later one utilized as a graveyard. These two basic occupations were equally subdivided in very well delimited periods in which the occupations were modified. In the long period in which it would serve as a hunters refuge, a first phase comprised between 7000-4500 years BP, 7000-is characterized by finely finished tools such as unifaced retouched plain-convex scrapers (*lesmas*) and sylex and chalcedony . In the second period, also utilized as a hunters shelter, part of the tools were made in the cave from medium sized stones. From this occupation, abundant lithic material was collected in the way of flakes and excavated cores. The chronology of this

period is of approximately 4000-2500 BP, as established by the dates obtained from Carbon-14.

The Gruta do Padre was occupied as a necropolis during a long period of time, possibly beyond a thousand years the chronological boundaries of which are difficult to be determined but can be estimated from 2000 BP by the obtained chronologies. There are various reasons for the uncertainty related to the caves occupation chronological boundary for funeral purposes. When Carlos Estevão excavated part of this cave in 19237, the quantity of collected archaeological materials, human bones or funeral articles, he moved a considerable part of archaeological sediments and possibly caused a disturbance in the older layers of occupation previous to the necropolis. The Calderón excavation was, without any doubt, much more careful and stratigraphically accomplished through squares, but a major part of the site had already been disturbed and is doubtful whether he was able to obtain precise data on the graveyard's stratigraphy.

In the scarce seven square meters which could be excavated following the removal of the fallen blocks from the sandstone conglomerate of the grave, 751 lithic artifacts were collected more concentrated in the lower layers corresponding to the occupation of the shelter as a hunters refuge. Many of these artifacts must have been made *in situ* judging by the remnants of collected flakes. The raw material utilized was silex, quartz, quartzite, sandstone, and silicified sandstone, chalcedony and rare pieces in rhyolite. The artifacts of the deeper layers of the cave corresponding to the oldest occupations (7000-5000 BP) finally appear retouched through pressure in silex and chalcedony principally in the format of plain-convex scrapers. In the lower layers (between 400-2000 years BP) the tools are less refined, larger with little or no retouching, many of them simply flaked from rocks of the cave's conglomerate itself.

In all of the layers of the Gruta do Padre excavation there appeared human bones remains in quantities contrary to the concentration of lithic material, or, abundance in the more recent layers of stratigraphic deposition and decreasing in the deeper ones. Among the bone material collection there were the remains of two new born children, three from seven and twelve year old children and four adults, all very fragmented and burned, mixed with small animals bones, such as birds, rodents and marsupials, in addition to fish bones and Malacologic fauna which were part of the food diet and the incineration ritual as well.

In the older period of the caves occupation, the climate was drier, and from the formation of two superior strata, a more humid phase determined continuous infiltration and detachments, which culminated with the fall of the great block that protected the archaeological segments.

Close to the Gruta do Padre there was also a small cave known as the Gruta do Anselmo which had been previously exploited by Carlos Estevão. In it, the ethnographer found, following his own words, “a layer of ashes with plaques and fish bones, bones and mammal teeth, parts of armadillo carapace, birds tarso, as well as well a sizable quantity of kitchen refuse”, in addition to “pieces of sylex and quartz”. A later excavation accomplished resulted in 33 lithic on core artifacts, stones and shelled flakes, besides small animals bones and seed, refuse related with the recent occupation of the neighboring Gruta do Padre.

The Sol Poente Shelter, Petrolândia - PE

The Barrinha district, Petrolândia in the Serrote Vermelho close to the São Francisco was located in the small shelter of Sol Poente, currently submerged by the waters of the Itaparica lake. Of the excavations accomplished in this site, 49 quartz lithic artifacts, flint, quartzite and sandstone, in the format of flakes and chips and, among the artifacts, “chopping tools”, lateral and semi-circular scrappers, lithic material coincident with the more recent occupation of the Gruta do Padre. From the coal of a fire radiocarbon dating of 2760 years BP was obtained.

The Letreiro do Sobrado Shelter, Petrolândia-PE.

At the experimental farm of Sobrado, in Petrolândia, approximately 700 hundred meters away from the São Francisco river, there is a series of aligned ruin like hills of conglomerate sandstone, in the NE-SW direction. There a small shelter of a 16 meter entrance and 10 meter height known as Letreiro do Sobrado, because of a panel of rock paintings occupying a surface of 12 meters long by 1,00 to 1,50 meters high was researched. Because it is turned towards the São Francisco river, the water is perfectly visible from its entrance and it is evident it was intensively used by hunters, surely from the sixth millennium on. The archaeological excavation, in a 15 square meter area approximately, revealed the structures of twenty fires, some reutilized, as demonstrated by the shelter's stratigraphy between 50 and 60 cm deep. In the collected lithic material there is a predominance of sylex followed of quartz and smaller quantities of fine and coarse quartzite, chalcedony, silicified quartzite and slate. In the occupation strata the evolution of lithic industries and its changes were observed, with

smaller artifacts in the deeper layers and the attempts to manufacture pedunculated projectile points. The big volume of flakes refuse leads to the conclusion that the Letreiro do Sobrado Shelter was utilized as the location for the preparation of lithic artifacts as well, among which circular and side scrapers and picks. The shelter's interest stems additionally from the presence of engraved rock panels which were dated, an extremely difficult task specially in relation to the engravures on the blocks along watercourses. In this case, the slow, but continuous decomposition, of the engravures base sandstone, enabled its relation with the stratigraphic layers, detached from the fragmented engraved walls. It is clearly noted that as the engraved sandstone slabs fell from the shelter's walls these were again engraved by the new occupants who also used the rocks to sharpen their tools. Two engraved blocks and fragments dropped on the sediment were dated, through the proximity of the fires from 1680 and 6390 BP respectively indicating the long term occupation of the shelter. It possibly was a ceremonial site.

The Archaeological Area of Central, in the Northwest of Bahia

In the depression of the São Francisco Valley, in the Northwest of Bahia, on the right margin of the medium-lower São Francisco river, the archaeologist Maria da Conceição Beltrão developed the *Central Project* which comprises in its first research phase, the municipalities of Central, Irecê and Xique-Xique. The Project, initiated in 1982, preceded the mapping of prehistoric and historic archaeological sites of the selected area and archaeological excavations were performed considering the municipality of Central, after which the Project was named, as its epicenter. Archaeological prospecting was guided along intermittent rivers and streams part of the great basin of the São Francisco river. Therefore, in the last decade, it was possible to submit the first results on the human occupations of the region under study during the Pleistocene and Holocene, and to gather important lithic, ceramic, bone and Malacologic materials collections, in addition to numerous rock art records in an area archaeologically unknown until the 80's.

In Maria Beltrão's and collaborators reports and publications hundreds of caves and shelters in limestone and quartzite sandstone outcrops, covered with rock art belonging to different traditions were mentioned. The value of these archaeological findings as a whole had an impact represented by the Toca da Esperança and its unpredictable chronologies of the medium Pleistocene. Sited 11 kilometers from the city of Central, in the pre-Cambrian limestone known as

the Pedra Calcária Hill, 610 meters over sea level, the Toca da Esperança comprises a 325 square meters room which, based on the statements of the team responsible for the excavation, contained Pleistocenic deposits 150 cm thick. The Archaeological excavation of this cave revealed the existence of Quaternary deposits containing, under a carbonated crust, extinct fauna's extremely fossilized bones, among which horses bones prevailed. The datings obtained through the uranium/thorium method on the collected bones indicated an age around 300.000 years. The authors of the paper, published in *L'anthropologie* stated that the quartz and quartzite lithic artifacts, collected among the extinct mega-fauna bones, could only have been transported by the human hand therefore, they considered the Toca da Esperança the oldest site for lithic Industry in the American Continent ever known, which would mean the presence of man in America during the mid Pleistocene, in addition to the possibility that the *Homo erectus* could have reached the American Continent through Asia, using the Bering isthmus during one of the great regressions of the oceans in the quaternary era.

As expected, the statements contained in the article signed by H. de Lumley, M.C. Beltrão, Y. Yokoyama, J. Laberite, J. Danon, G. Delibrias, C. Falguères and J.L. Bischoff were received by the scientific community with skepticism and restrictions, to an extent understandable, because of the impact of such finding on the more traditional theories and data collected on the peopling of America.

The excavations of the Toca da Esperança began in 1985 and were developed for the two following years, indicating four stratigraphic levels, from the top down, by a superficial occupation layer furnishing radiocarbon datings between 2000 and 6500 BP. These were on a very hard limestone crust, 50 centimeters thick dated 2200 years that materially "sealed" the three lower layers rich in extinct fauna fossilized bones, among which, on layer IV, a quartz rock fractured through violent percussion and a chopper plus quartz and quartzite flakes were collected. The paleo-fauna bones removed from layer IV dated 300.000 years were mainly of giant sloths (*Eremotherium*), camelidae (*Paleolamas*-sp) and a type of horse (*Hippidion*).

Independently of the obtainment of new evidence which may confirm, in the future, the existence of the Pleistocenic man in unexpected dates for America, the Toca da Esperança and the Toca dos Búzios, a neighboring shelter forming a part of the same karstic formation represent important prehistoric sites equally indicating human occupation in the old São Francisco Valley during the Holocene starting in the seventh millennium, datings that repeat themselves in the Gruta do Padre and in the Letreiro do Sobrado.

Alan Brien and Ruth Grün excavated as well, as part of the Central Project team, the Lesma Shelter, a small 21 square meter site, on the limestone plain of the Chapada da Diamantina, where lithic artifacts represented by flakes, cores and quartz, quartzite, limestone, silex and chalcedonies flaked stones, ceramic, mollusks, human and current local fauna mammal bones were collected (*mocós*, monkeys, skunks, armadillos, deer and wild pigs). Four radiocarbon datings were obtained between 1137 and 2712 years BP. As a great part of animal bones were collected within structured fires, the deduction was that they consisted of food refuse.

The archaeological area of the Central Project in Bahia, in addition to SE Piauí and Seridó, is one of the three great Nordeste tradition rock art "provinces", with a clear local subtradition, the name of which remains to be defined, but for the time being I will name *Central subtradition* identified by the recognizable zoomorphic species and of human figures in a dynamic scenarios composition. In at least five shelters, Maria da Conceição Beltrão identified rock graphisms with astronomic signs (sun, stars, comets, moons, etc.) which she considered to belong to a rock art tradition she named Astronomic Tradition. The most expressive shelter of this possible tradition is the Toca do Cosmos in the municipality of Xique-Xique a limestone outcrop close to the Verde river, an affluent of the São Francisco river. This cave forms a shelter with the roof covered with graphisms representing the sky, as interpreted by Beltrão.

Neolithic Cultures of the São Francisco Valley

We consider *Neolithic* cultures the prehistoric sedentary or semi-sedentary settlements of human groups familiarized with farming and ceramics who settled in the São Francisco Islands, of a more fertile soil than the semiarid surroundings and on the higher terraces and sites protected from floods and possible enemies. The term *Neolithic* of broad understanding and cultural constraints technologically corresponds to human groups familiar with farming and ceramics, but in parallel with the technology criteria, the *Neolithic era* equally means the long process of economic evolution which led men to master production means through farming and pasturing and the use of ceramics which enabled food and water storage and permitted sedentary living in the villages. From there men evolved to more complex societies with the formation of surpluses and ceremonial centers installation.

Therefore, the whole process of plants cultivation and animals domestication in the prehistory can be considered as belonging to the Neolithic stage. It

should be noted, however, that the lack of economically useful domestic animals does not indicate, in the Brazilian prehistory, in fact, in whole South America, the existence of a Neolithic era following the parameters of the Old World; it is a *sui generis* Neolithic with subsistence farming, without any surpluses stimulating trade and with semi-sedentary settlements. In these terms, "Neolithization" processes can be found in prehistoric Brazil.

Farming in the Americas is very old and developed from local crops and methods that are unique and not imported from the Old World, as some archaeologists mistakenly stated. It must have emerged from a slow observation process and from millennial independent practices, for this is indicated by the variety of cultivated American plants, completely different from the ones of the Old World including naturally cropping methods. Its possible that some form of incipient crops had been already known in America in the seventh millennium BP. Corn crop varieties appear in the fourth millennium. In Northeast Brazil, Agriculture may have started in the third millennium with incipient farmers in small subsistence plantations.

More important than the presence of ceramics to detect the Neolithization process in prehistory is the evidence of the appearance of cultivated plants and the adaptation of new subsistence forms. The separation between ceramists and non ceramist in prehistory, most of all in the Northeast Brazil prehistory is merely technical and does not mean, in principle, major economic changes. Even in prehistoric times there were indigenous groups who did not use ceramics but practiced some type of agriculture, the same way that prehistory seasonal planters of tomatoes and bottle gourds in the Andean valleys in the seventh millennium did. The value of ceramics as an Agriculture indicator is drawn from the ease it is detected and its conservation even under the most unfavorable conditions, when extremely fragmented or rolled. In addition to ceramics, it is possible to detect the existence of Agriculture through the presence of pestles, crushers and seeds conserved in shelters and caves. Certain types of polished axes are equally associated to farming groups who would use them principally to dig the land. But in open sites and villages it is practically impossible to infer agricultural practices when there is no presence of ceramics, specially in regions where, as in Brazil there was no animal domestication the remnants of which are a sure indication of sedentariness. On the other hand, the existence of hunters-collectors using some simples forms of ceramics cannot be discarded.

The relationship between farmers-ceramists is complemented only when before the presence of prehistoric ceramics the presence of farmers can be inferred. This does not mean that one could not exist without the other and, naturally, simple ceramic pottery could precede the existence of Agriculture.

Through the forms and sizes of the pottery basic crops and the more or less intensive sedentariness can be deducted. The presence of large decorated recipients would express more stability in the occupation of a certain area and the open or closed forms of these recipients, the massive use of manioc or grains.

To state with security the existence of cultivated plants in archaeological sites pollinic sample analysis of the samples removed from stratigraphic columns is needed, but this type of research is still not very much practiced in the Brazilian prehistory.

Of the three basic crops of primitive American agriculture, corn, beans and manioc, this last was the principal crop in tropical America. Probably originated from the Colombian Amazon, manioc with its varieties, the "bitter" or "wild" (*Manihot esculenta*, , *Manihot utilissima*) and the "sweet" one (*Manihot aipi*) was the basic food of the great part of prehistoric populations in Brazil, from the Amazon to the subtropical region where corn was more relevant.

The findings of Gruta do Boquete in the Peruaçu Valley deserve special notice. In this site underground deposits of food conserved by the extremely dry climate of this part of Minas Gerais in the high mid São Francisco interior were found. The deposits were lined with grass and corn straw layers, intercalated with ashes and covered with wooden planks forming superposed levels. In them corn cobs still with the grains were found, in addition to manioc, pindo palm fruits, jatoba, pitomba and umbu. There were also intertwined vegetal fibers and cotton lines (P.A. Junqueira and I.M Malta, 1984). A fire located on one of the silos furnished the Carbon-14 dating of 1.100 BP.

Different archaeologists teams researched the São Francisco Valley and discovered farmers-ceramists settlements grouped in villages, related to Neolithic cultural horizons of the ceramists tradition of *Una*, *Aratu*, *Tupiguarani*, *Cabrobó* and others still to be determined in chronological sequences going back to the third millennium BP.

In the archaeological area of the Serra Geral Project in the interior of Bahia and East of Goiás, region of the Corrente river affluents, a confluent river therefore of the São Francisco river, P.I. Schmitz and colleagues (1996) prospected and excavated a series of shelters and caves occupied by the *Una* tradition ceramists. The *Una* ceramics has small and utilitarian pottery, globular in shape and in some cases in a pear shaped format. The ceramic came with vegetal remains like seeds and the *caatinga* vegetation fruits (*umbú*, *pequi*, *pitomba*, *jatobá*) some cultivated varieties such as corn, bottle gourds and cotton and remnants of fabrics and fiber ropes, (Schmitz, 1996). The oldest chronologies of the *Una* reach the third millennium in the State of Tocantins

(Pindorama phase, 2370 \pm 70 BP). There are various datings of this ceramic around the thousand years in Minas Gerais and Goiás, in the regions forming the São Francisco river. Fragments of small globular urns and a whole pear shaped one, collected in the Gruta do Padre (Petrolândia, PE) could be related to the Una tradition. This ceramic was located in strata dated from around 200 years BP, and was part of the funeral utensils of the cave.

The Aratu Ceramists

Valentin Calderón established the Aratu tradition from the findings of ceramics in the 24 sites prospected in the littoral of Bahia, in Sergipe and in Pernambuco. The name *Aratu* to designate a culture of ceramist farmers stemmed from the Guipe site, in the industrial center of Aratu, 16 kilometers away from Salvador. Seeking the possible penetration to the interior, that the Aratu ceramics might have, Calderón prospected the headwaters of the Grande river in the municipalities of Barreiras, Catolândia and São Desidério where he located eight Aratu graveyards. He additionally considered that the ceramist tradition of Aratu extended throughout Pernambuco and reached the interior of Piauí.

Simultaneously to the findings in Bahia, ceramic sites in Minas Gerais and São Paulo were found and considered to belong to the same Aratu tradition. The largest study of the Aratu tradition sites was accomplished by Ondemar Dias, who named them as the Jaraguá, Itaci and Sapucaí phases, the last considered an independent and close to the Aratu tradition.

More recently, during the years of 1995-1996, Carlos Etchevarne excavated a possible village or Aratu cemetery in the Piragiba village, in the municipality of Muquém of São Francisco in Bahia in the depression of the São Francisco Valley (C. Etchevarne and C. Macedo, 1997). The principal square of the Piragiba village, formed by approximately 50 houses is located on the archaeological site so that from the collected funeral urns 103 are located in the squares and homes of the residents, a fact which hinders the determination of whether it is a village or a graveyard.

The value of the Aratu tradition lies in the circumstance that it is not only in the location of a specific type of ceramic but in the fact that it's perfectly characterized as a culture of ceramist farmers, forming villages with dense populations and lasting occupations as indicated by the depth of archaeological sediments (40, 60 and 90 cm) in comparison with the Tupiguarani occupations rarely going beyond 30 cm in which refuse of 15 to 20 cm are common. In the

villages in which the contact with the Tupiguarani groups are identified by the presence of ceramics, this always appears as intrusive in the latest layers of the Aratu villages acquired through trade or violent occupation, when the substitution of Aratu ceramics by the Tupiguaranis is noted.

The basic features of the Aratu culture are :

- a) rolled ceramics, without decoration with smooth surfaces or graphite decoration;
- b) pear shaped funerary urns with and without lids, of 70-75 cm high, small pottery employed as covers for the funeral urns;
- c) semi-spherical pots with undulated rims;
- d) primary burials in urns, outside the villages;
- e) circular villages with the huts circling a central square, located in high, smooth places;
- f) subsistence not based on the exclusive use of manioc. The absence of roasters and flat pottery seems to indicate that. Anyway, they did use manioc differently from the Tupinambás and their subsistence was corn, bean and peanut based; plantation routing enabled settlements during longer periods;
- g) elongated, chiseled and polished blades and heavy polished granite axes; simple small axes (8 to 10 cm long);
- h) large stone and ceramic fuse wheels indicating the spinning of hammocks and coarse fabrics; a 8 cm of diameter wheel is the largest one collected;
- i) tubular pipes or funnel shaped;
- j) polished rock fragments with artificial depressions used for crushing grains.

As for the Northeast Aratu tradition chronology, the dates obtained are between 1.000 and 1.500 A.D. in Bahia in villages previous to the Tupiguarani settlements who must have expelled them from the littoral before.

The diffusion of the Aratu Culture in the Northeast can be considered with certainty in all of the littoral of Bahia with penetration to the interior reaching the Grande river region and the São Francisco depression.

The Tupiguarani ceramists

The settlers named as "General Language" to the indigenous Language more intensively spoken along the Brazilian coast corresponding to the different varieties of ancient Tupi. This Language, nowadays lost as a Language spoken by live groups, has been collected into dictionaries and repertoires designed by

missionaries with a special interest in knowing Indigenous languages to catechize the Indians for their own good. The extensive territory reached by the Tupis is impressive and its expansion is, in part, coincident with the diffusion of the ceramic known as the Tupiguarani tradition, easily identifiable, specially in the painted polychromatic subtradition which is practically found from the North to the South of Brazil.

In general terms the Tupiguarani ceramics feature is the use of a stringed technique, or the manufacture with intertwined strings or clay shaped strings, forming thick walls in relation to the size of the vessel. Baking with a reduction or incomplete fire produces a dark or grayish band between the lighter inner and outer portion sides and is easily noted in the fragmented pieces. The additives and anti-plastic consist in crushed fragments, fine or coarse sand and argyle granules. They may be absent too, when unnecessary because natural impurities incorporated to the argyle was enough to give it the same sufficient plasticity. In the Tupiguarani ceramics the use of sponge matter (*cauxi*) nor of *cariapé* as an anti-plastic, additives amply used in the Amazon ceramics are not present. The most common shapes are variable in size, and only small 10 cm vases to large vessels of 70-80 cm with some over 1 meter of diameter are found. There are closed shapes, but the open ones have low, straight or keeled with straight or softly curved bottoms; the openings are circular, elliptical, rectangular or quadrangular.

Based on the decoration techniques features three subtraditions were defined designated as painted, corrugated and brushed. Therefore these are classified based on the surface treatment of the vessels without further shape determinants, nor sizes and usage. With this division, a starting point for settlements of farmers-ceramists located along the Brazilian littoral was determined. With research progress numerous ceramic sites in the interior of Brazil were identified, demonstrating that the Tupiguarani tradition had ample diffusion in the plateaus and interior, with two major North to South trends : one on the littoral and the other by the great basins forming the Amazonas and Prata rivers. Its origins should be explored in the Amazon basin and based on a great Amazon polychromatic tradition emerging around 1.500 BP. If this origin is accepted, the Tupiguarani tradition found in the Northeast is so deeply modified by the extensive route traveled that locating its origin is almost impossible.

The ceramic identified as of the Tupiguarani tradition in the Northeast littoral corresponds, principally to the painted sub-tradition, equally known as polychromatic, because depicting colors such as white, red, black and gray. The drawings are complex "geometric" or abstract ones, forming Greek and other fine finishes, applied to the inner or outer surfaces, or in both surfaces of

the vessels. The undecorated ceramics is manufactured and shaped like the painted ones, only decoration was not applied. In some sites, a coarser manufactured ceramic was found together with the painted ones. The brushed surface equally appears and the corrugated is more common in the interior regions. As for chronology, all tradition is comprised between 500 to 1800 A.D.

Hypotheses have been construed to explicate the origin of the Tupiguarani ceramists tradition, based above all on the shapes along the respective vessels surface decoration. One of them, formulated by J. Ferrari and P. I. Schmiz is based on the assumption that adaptations to the colder regions with varied foodstuffs would determine the deeper and closed shapes of the corrugated ceramics, to store and cook grains. In the warmer areas of the North-Northeast, diet would be based on the bitter manioc, represented by the painted ceramics with more straight and open shapes. This hypothesis is coincident with Calderón's observation when he identified the corrugated subtradition frequency in the headwaters of the São Francisco river affluents.

Valentin Calderón marked eleven sites of the Tupiguarani tradition in the interior of Bahia which he named the *Coribe* phase where urns and concave vessels were predominant with brushed and corrugated surfaces. They would be, therefore, following the traditional terminology, villages of the *brushed* and *corrugated* ceramist tradition sited in the interior of Bahia in the depression of the São Francisco Valley. The "Coribe" villages were located on hills and tableaus in defensive locations. It equally established the *Itapicuru* phase based on six villages located on the Chapada Diamantina in the headwaters of the Itapicuru, Salitre rives and in the Valley of the Contas river, with ceramics consisting of big rectangular vessels and oval platters (30 to 35 cm of diameter) used for secondary burials, with ungulated and linear painting motifs in black on white and red and black on white.

In the years of 1966-1967, Calderón had already researched the region of the Corrente river in the municipalities of Coribe and Santa Maria da Vitória (BA), locating settlements of the Tupiguarani tradition sited in high places considered as purposely selected as defensible locations. Researches following the Schmiz research in the Southwest of Bahia, equally marked the presence of Tupiguarani villages in high places, located in some cases, in the same quarters of the Aratu villages which could have been conquered by them.

On the east side of the Itaparica waterfall, concentrations of the Aratu and Tupiguarani villages disappeared, identified in the upper-mid São Francisco. Farmers-ceramists villages were principally concentrated on quaternary formation islands of fertile soil which are true oasis in the semiarid environment

of the São Francisco region. Archaeological prospecting on those islands found numerous traces of prehistoric farmer-ceramists groups, although they cannot be as yet related to a specific ceramist tradition.

Other ceramists cultures in the São Francisco Valley

Numerous prehistoric ceramists sites in the Northeast are in need of methodological studies to identify the ethnic groups who were the authors of the ceramic sets generically named as phases. When relating traditions as the Aratu and Tupiguarani becomes impossible, a number of considerable ceramic collections, product of prospecting and surface collections, ended up in not representing ethnic groups related to other elements of the archaeological records and within an ecological context.

To analyze these collections or phases its necessary that the starting point be exactly the opposite which directed a major part of the researches on Brazilian farmers and ceramists, characterized by diffusion trends in which all ceramic phases should be inserted within an ample geographical dispersion area fixed or to be determined. Based on the principle that the simple things are reinvented in various locations change rapidly, we can begin to study the prehistoric ceramic expressions of each enclave and each archaeological area without the concern of an immediate connection to major traditions. Taking into account that ceramics is the product of the human hand and in consequence subject to subjective modifications, besides fast adaptations of abundant and varied raw materials such as argyles and degreasing materials.

Certain surface plastic treatments, the smooth, brushed and corrugated finishes cannot be considered determinants of a tradition because experience has demonstrated that they appear throughout Brazil on different origin and tradition ceramics. Therefore, like in the previous hypothesis I base myself on the principle of the existence of the craft and cultural type through exchanging among the prehistoric ceramist populations considering the similarities only as the result of slow and continued contacts.

The presence of different tradition ceramics on the same village can both mean conquest and dislocation of one group by another, such as contacts, exchange and trade, as well as weddings and the capture of women who are traditionally the ceramists. The density and spatial distribution of ceramic records will be the key indicating the most viable response.

In the mid-low São Francisco, settlements of prehistoric ceramists were discovered indicating different ethnic groups, not related to the traditional horizons

of Aratu and Tupiguarani. The study of these occupations which only recently were initiated by Suely Luna and Ana Nascimento, of the Nucleus of Archaeological Studies of the Federal University of Pernambuco, could furnish information of the farmers-ceramist inhabitants of the region since the third millennium BP, much before the arrival of the Aratu and Tupiguarani groups to the Valley of São Francisco.

Calderón named *Cerâmica Cabrobó* a ceramic of simple format, globular and ovoid with brushed or smooth surfaces and also grooved, spatulate, and corrugated with straight rims. Additive or anti-plastic is fine and coarse sand. It is represented by funeral urns used in secondary burials and plants and pots which are equally globular. Decoration is always plastic with total absence of painting. This is the ceramic collected in the Valley of São Francisco in indigenous graveyards located in the municipality of Cabrobó (PE) and in the Assunção island belonging to this municipality. This type of ceramics appears following Calderón's research since Casa Nova (BA) up to Belém do São Francisco (PE). They are principally isolated funeral urns or in groups of two incineration secondary burials.

I found the same type of funeral urns at the river on the Zorobabel, Itacuruba and Viúva islands forming part of the incineration rituals. Open plates of a curved bottom banded in red were associated to this ceramic and must have served as the lid of urns or funeral offerings. This "Cabrobó" ceramic corresponds to farmers villages established on the fertile islands of the mid São Francisco river.

There are no conditions of exactly determining the structure of these villages on the islands because they were intensively cultivated with corn, rice and vegetables crops, and its principal proofs were destroyed, but it was still possible to detect, before the Itaparica lake flooding a great volume of ceramics scattered by the cultivated fields. The Zorobabel village was located on an elevated plateau in the center of the island, and the funeral urns were located on the village borders some buried in ash graves. Downstream from the Itaparica waterfall the Cabrobó culture disappear, at least based on our current knowledge:

Another expressive collection of ceramists settlements in the São Francisco Valley is located in the Xingó area, between Sergipe and Alagoas. In the municipality of Canindé of São Francisco (Southeast) various establishments with ceramics were identified corresponding to the Justino graveyard. The occupation of this important site corresponded to ceramist groups who through the chronology obtained from the dated level relates the settlement of the mid-low São Francisco populations to the half of the second millennium BC. From these very old dates for ceramists groups it is noted that the plastic treatment

techniques applied to the surfaces such as smooth, brushed, incise, corrugated and ungluted could be techniques used before the Tupiguaranis and Aratu expansion throughout the Northeast. Concretely, in the Sítio do Justino, the surface ceramics depicted a smooth finish, but as deeper levels were reached techniques became more refined and the plastic decoration more elaborate, incise, ungluted, brushed and corrugated. Painted decoration is more recent and appears in small quantities with remains of red and white paintings, the manufacture technique is stringed or rolled and the anti-plastic used are fine and coarse sand, sand containing mica and crushed ceramic remains in reduced quantities, in addition to pieces without additives. Small vessels are predominant with diameters between 5 and 20 centimeters and height between 5 to 10 cm, with globular formats, curved or straight bases and straight rims. Vessels collected whole as part of the funeral furnishings depict diameters between 30 and 40 cm and heights between 20 and 30 cm. Because the Justino graveyard was occupied, at least for 4000 by ceramists groups, the minute study of the collected ceramics could, in the future, offer a more complete vision of the prehistoric ceramics in the São Francisco Valley. In the current state of our knowledge we can only state the existence, in the part of the São Francisco Valley, of ceramist populations already established since the second millennium A.C. with inhumation funeral rites and absence of large funeral urns to enclose the bodies, either in primary or secondary burials.

Therefore, it can be deduced that in the mid São Francisco Valley ceramists groups settled starting on the second millennium A.C. and they practiced inhumation funeral rites (Justino graveyard) followed by incineration (occupation phase of the Gruta do Padre as a graveyard), using small and medium sized vessels as part of the funeral furnishings. New occupants, arriving much later, in undetermined dates of the Christian era introduced burials in large funeral urns, a practice which would be generalized until Colonial times.

The religious missions of the São Francisco Valley

On the islands and marshlands or more fertile nature, the first Catholic missions established themselves in the beginning of the XVII century, first by the Jesuits and later on by the French and Italian friars, who organized the indigenous people in the first Christian communities of the Valley. The History of these missions and their struggle with the powerful houses of Torre and Ponte are possibly the most dramatic chapters of the History of the Valley of the São Francisco river.

The establishment of Catholic mission in the São Francisco Valley is intimately related to the History of the Casa da Torre since the arrival in Bahia, in 1549 of the first Garcia d'Avila. Before the beginning of colonization, in the interior of São Francis, the first confrontation between Jesuits and cattle raisers who penetrated the Valley began. The Garcia d'Avila, power masters of the Casa da Torre had jurisdiction of the São Francisco region up to Piauí.

The missionary work and their eviction to facilitate the installation of cattle farms in the interior, meant the destruction of indigenous cultures, when not their physical annihilation. Even taking into account that the missionaries, full of good intentions attempted to protect the Indians from the greed and cruelty of the Garcia d'Avila, their compulsory lives in the missions, without respect to the diversity of Indigenous nations, meant the beginning of the end of the autochthonous human groups, the keepers of millennial cultural traditions. The gradual pushing of the Indigenous nations to the farthest areas of the Valley is related to the progress of cattle raising in the interior, for through successive royal privileges the farming areas belonging to the Indians were considered pasture land.

Of the number and name of the missions and their respective patrons and patronesses, as well as the Indigenous tribes they kept we gathered information through the documentation of the Missions Joints and in the list of villages in the *Informação Geral da Capitania de Pernambuco* from 1749, but we have few indications in the documentation of the architectural structure because not always the existing data correspond to reality. They Royal Permit of November 23, 1700 established for each mission the demarcation of a "legoa em quadra" (square league) and land for "cem casaes" (one hundred couples). There are various documents indicating that, as far as possible the standards established for the installation of a religious village, which comprised a square, church, Cross monument, graveyard, school, hospital and the priests home.

The religious missions of the São Francisco Valley were part of the Província de Santo Antonio do Brasil, and between 1679 and 1863 the following missions are listed in the documentation of Franciscan archives:

Mission

Patron/Patroness

Itapicurú de Cima

Santo Antonio and N.S. da Saúde

Massacra

Ssma. Trindade

Bom Jesus da Jacobina

Bom Jesus da Glória

Saí

Nossa Senhora das Neves

Juazeiro *	N.Sra. das Grotas
Rodelas*	São João Batista
Pambu*	N. Sra. Da Conceição
Massarandupio	Santo Antonio
Jeremoabo	N. Sra. Das Grotas
Curra dos Bois	S. Francisco and Sto. Antonio
Aracapá*	S. Francisco
Camumu	N. Sra. Do Desterro
Salitre	S. Gonzalo
Piagui	Santa Cruz
Catu	Santo Antonio
Aricobé	N. Sra. Da Conceição
Alagoas	N. Sra. Da Vitória
Plamar	Santo Amaro
Una ou Iguna	São Miguel
Coripos*	N. Sra. Do Pilar
Zorobabel *	N. Sra. Do Ó
Unhunu* ou Inhamuns	N. Sra. Da Piedade
Pontal*	N. Sra. Dos Remédios
Pajeú*	Santo Antônio
Cariris	N. Sra. Do Pilar

These missions correspond to the old indigenous villages listed in the *Anais Pernambucanos* by Pereira da Costa. It can be deducted that the farming indigenous villages, preceded that implementation of the missions on the same sites, or, the construction of urban planned mission “with homes for one hundred couples”.

Notes:

*All missions archaeologically located, all on the São Francisco islands.

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