

# INTRODUCTION

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This volume is one of the end results of the collaborative project named *Exploring the Linguistic Past: Historical Linguistics in South America*, which involved three institutions: the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi in Belém (Pará, Brazil), the University of Oregon in Eugene (Oregon, U.S.), and Radboud University Nijmegen (Nijmegen, the Netherlands), and was supported principally by the Netherlands Foundation for Scientific Research (NWO).

Other published results, besides the present volume, include a special issue of the *International Journal of American Linguistics* edited by Spike Gildea and Ana Vilacy Galucio (to appear), and a collection of articles in book form edited by Denny Moore and Hein van der Voort<sup>1</sup>.

The collaborative project was inspired by the growing and renewed interest in the historical relations among the languages and language families of South America. Over the last two or three decades, the available knowledge on South American languages has increased dramatically. In Brazil, there are about 154 indigenous languages spoken in the country<sup>2</sup>. Based in part on an estimate by Franchetto<sup>3</sup>, Moore (2007) describes the following situation for the level of study of those languages in the year 2000: 9% of the languages had a complete description, 23% had a PhD thesis or many articles, 40% had a MA dissertation or a few articles, and 28% nothing of scientific relevance. Though this situation shows an improvement in a longer run, much is still lacking – for 68% of the languages there is still little or no study.

There is more information available now than ever before, however. In other countries, more and more work is also being done. One may mention the descriptions of Colombian languages published by the CCELA in Bogotá, ongoing projects for the documentation of a number of lesser known languages in Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador. The time is thus ripe for the beginning of more fruitful historical-comparative endeavors, leading to a better understanding of the linguistic prehistory of South America.

The main objective of our cooperation project was to provide a forum for the exchange of information, results, and ideas on the linguistic prehistory of South America. For this purpose, specialists in the various language families and/or isolates from the participant institutions (among whom there are already long-standing contacts) came to extended workshops (one every year for three years, hosted by each of the participant institutions) to attempt to integrate their current research results with those of their colleagues, thus arriving at a general picture. In addition to linguists, specialists of other areas (archaeologists, anthropologists) were also invited, so that non-linguistic approaches and knowledge can also be brought to bear on the issue. The basic idea is that the amount of extant knowledge on the various aspects of

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<sup>1</sup> MOORE, Denny; VOORT, Hein van der (Eds.). **Amazonian linguistic stocks and their prehistory**. (to appear).

<sup>2</sup> MOORE, Denny. Endangered languages of lowland tropical South America. In: BRENZINGER, Matthias (Ed.). **Language Diversity Endangered**. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007. p. 29-58.

<sup>3</sup> FRANCHETTO, Bruna. O conhecimento científico das línguas indígenas da Amazônia no Brasil. In: QUEIXALÓS, Francisco; RENAULT-LESCURE, Odile (Orgs.). **As línguas amazônicas hoje**. São Paulo: Instituto Socioambiental, 2000.

South American prehistory, although still limited and in need of expansion, is nevertheless sufficient for a first attempt at integration to be fruitful.

Two workshops and a conference were planned and executed for the period 2003-2005, one every year. The workshops and conference were hosted by the participant institutions, according to the following schedule:

2003	Radboud University Nijmegen and University of Leiden (the Netherlands)
2004	University of Oregon (USA)
2005	Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi and Universidade Federal do Pará (Brazil)

The very lively meeting in the Netherlands (consecutively in Leusden and Leiden) served to outline a number of the issues at hand, particularly links between some of the larger Amazonian language families (see below), as well as between the Andean and the Amazonian languages. It resulted in a number of collaborations and pilots.

The Oregon meeting, somewhat smaller, was dominated by questions concerning the Tu-Ka-Jê (Tupi, Carib, Jê) macro-family, in large part because seven of the nine presentations dealt with languages that putatively belong to Macro-Jê, Tupí, and Carib. The quality of work in progress led us to consider whether we might not gain a wider readership by selecting certain of these papers and proposing them for publication in a special issue of a journal, such as the *International Journal of American Linguistics*.

The closing Belém meeting – *International Symposium on Historical Linguistics in South America* – was more ambitious, and brought together an even larger group of researchers, particularly also from adjacent disciplines, including archeology, anthropology, ethnohistory, and biology. This event made possible a fruitful interaction between researchers and students from various national and international institutions, developing research in the area which relates linguistic relationships to prehistoric human occupation of South America. Even though no firm conclusions were reached, it is clear that rapid advances can be made once researchers start collaborating more intensively. It was also clear that through the collaborative investigation of related disciplines, we can reach a far more elaborate level of understanding of prehistoric human occupation in the Americas and its historical development. Therefore, the opportunity of having several researchers from different areas together in this event was essential for strengthening the interaction and the possibilities of cooperation in this area of study.

## The papers in the present volume

This volume contains a selection of the papers presented at the Belém meeting.

Spike Gildea and Doris Payne's paper *Is Greenberg's "Macro-Carib" viable?* re-evaluates Greenberg's<sup>4</sup> claim that there is a Macro-Carib family in the light of new data that has recently become available. They conclude that neither on the basis of morphological data nor on the basis of lexical comparisons can Greenberg's postulated family be accepted.

Roland Hemmauer's paper *On the Tupi-Guaranian prehistory of the Siriono verb* argues that, in spite of the fact that the Siriono verb system is morphosyntactically very different from that of other Tupi-Guaranian languages, it can still be reconstructed directly on the basis of the Proto-Tupi-Guarani system.

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<sup>4</sup> GREENBERG, Joseph. *Language in the Americas*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987.

Rafael Nonato and Filomena Sandalo's paper *Uma comparação gramatical, fonológica e lexical entre as famílias Guaikurú, Mataco e Bororo: um caso de difusão areal?* presents a comparison between the linguistic families Waikurúan, Bororoan and Matacoan, in order to evaluate whether some of the features they share can be credited to genetic relationships or to areal diffusion. They conclude that the lexical comparison points to a case of diffusion by borrowing, but that there are other morphosyntactic properties that justify the need for further research in this area before one can discard the hypothesis of a common origin for these language families.

Ana Paula Brandão and Sidi Facundes' paper *Estudos comparativos do léxico da fauna e flora Aruák* examines lexical items in the Arawak languages Apurinã, Piro and Iñapari, and establishes cognates pertinent to the semantic field of fauna and flora. On the basis of the analysis, various interesting conclusions about the history and classification of these languages can be drawn.

Hein van der Voort's article *Proto-Jabutí: um primeiro passo na reconstrução da língua ancestral dos Arikapú e Djeoromití* provides a preliminary reconstruction of Proto-Jabutí on the basis of new findings concerning the two languages Arikapú and Djeoromití, with the aim of later linking this reconstructed proto-family to the larger unit of Macro-Jê.

All papers show how with established methodology considerable advances can be made in unraveling the linguistic prehistory of South America.

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