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INDIGENOUS RIGHTS, INDIGENOUS CULTURES AND ENVIRONMENTAL
CONSERVATION: CONVERGENCE OR DIVERGENCE?
THE CASE OF THE BRAZILIAN KAYAPO¹

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The crusade to save the "rain forest" (as the Amazon forest is popularly, if for the most part inaccurately, designated) has been one of the main contexts in which the environmentalist movement has defined its principles and its politics. An important part of this process has been the convergence of the environmentalist struggle to save the forest with the struggle of the indigenous peoples of the forest for physical and cultural survival, in alliance with indigenous support groups, human rights organizations, and (sporadically) government agencies.

The threatened extermination of the last surviving communities of Amerindians in the Amazon had independently gained the attention of large sectors of world public opinion in the late 1960's, at about the same time that the ecological movement was attracting mass support. There were obvious reasons for linking the defense of the environment with that of its original human inhabitants. The forces menacing the physical and cultural survival of the indigenous peoples of the region (above all, massive "development" schemes financed by governments and international financial institutions, and Brazil's road-building and settlement programs designed to promote the political and economic integration of the national territory and at the same time solve the social problem of surplus rural population in the

Northeast and South) were the same as those threatening the destruction of the forest.

Native Amazonian peoples are themselves an integral part of the forest ecosystem. Their traditional forms of subsistence and environmental adaptation depend on the forest, having evolved over millenia as modes of sustainable coexistence with it. Objectively, the indigenous areas of the Amazon are those in which the forest still survives more or less unscathed, while in areas of Brazilian settlement it has tended to disappear. Indigenous peoples' struggles to defend and maintain their traditional subsistence base, comprising their traditional lands and resources, thus appear to converge with environmentalist efforts to defend the Amazonian ecosystem. Forging alliances between environmental groups and organizations involved in the struggle for indigenous land rights and cultural survival (including the indigenous groups themselves) therefore seemed a logical and mutually beneficial step.

Cooperation and mutual support between environmentalists and advocates of indigenous rights has born fruit. Over the past decade, a number of indigenous Amazonian peoples have succeeded, with significant support from environmentalist, human rights and indigenous support organizations, backed by foreign and domestic public opinion, in inducing the Brazilian government to grant them title to their traditional territories. Relatively large

groups like the Kayapo and Yanomami have been able to secure sizeable reserves, with an important, though not complete, measure of legal control over surface and subsurface resources within their areas.

The alliance of environmentalists and indigenous forest peoples, however, has been unstable and fraught with difficulty on both sides. Some environmentalists have oscillated between unrealistic extremes in their attitudes to indigenous peoples. Amazonian Indian peoples have sometimes been romanticized as "primitive ecologists", with a spiritual feeling of kinship for everything natural and a highly sophisticated ethnoscience of "forest management" through which they have virtually created the forest through a kind of ecological gardening. At the opposite extreme, some environmentalists have recoiled from the realization that Amazonian cultures do not share Western ecological values such as a commitment to the preservation of nature for its own sake, or a reverence for individual trees and animals. Based on recent examples of a few indigenous groups that permitted ecologically destructive practices like mining or logging on their land in exchange for fees, some environmental activists have suggested that native peoples must be seen as enemies by the environmentalist movement, their immemorial record of sustained coexistence with the forest ecosystem a mere incidental by-product of the weakness of their technologies and lack of capitalist incentives for surplus accumulation--

incentives that have unfortunately now arrived. (Redford 1992) Variants of these two extreme views have dominated much of the increasingly intense debate over the relationship between environmental and indigenous peoples' interests in the Amazon.

The Kayapo

The Kayapo, an indigenous people of the southern fringe of the Amazon forest, have been the objects, and even for many the prototypes, of both of these extreme views. Most existing Kayapo groups established peaceful relations with Brazilian society in the late 1950's. Now as then, the Kayapo live in relatively large, mutually autonomous village communities ranging from 100 to 1,000 in population. (Turner 1992a) There are presently 15 villages, located on both sides of the River Xingu, a major southern tributary of the Amazon. Kayapo country is a mixture of forest and savannah. There is a rainy season and a dry season: the forest in the Kayapo area, like that in much of the greater Amazon region, is thus, strictly speaking, not "rain forest".

The Kayapo emerged as the leaders of the indigenous struggle for land, rights, and environmental protection in the 1980's. Their bold and successful demonstrations and campaigns to secure governmental recognition of their lands and to block destructive development projects, like the proposed giant hydroelectric dam scheme on the Xingu river that runs through their territory, gained world recognition. Kayapo warriors captured large gold

mines illegally opened on their territory and held thousands of miners hostage until the Brazilian government granted them ownership and control of the mines, including the right to close them down. (Turner 1991a) Two Kayapo leaders, Rauni (Ropni) and Payakan, became international celebrities as they toured Europe and North America (the former in concerts with the rock star, Sting) in search of support for their cause. The international outpouring of support, both financial and political, was a major factor in the Brazilian government's official recognition of a series of Kayapo reserves in the late 1980's and early 1990's, with a combined area of roughly 100,000 square kilometers. Environmentalists hailed the proclamation of these reserves in the expectation that the formidable Kayapo would defend their areas against invasion by ranchers and settlers--the main agents of deforestation. They likewise assumed the Kayapo would resist penetration by environmentally destructive forms of extractive enterprise, above all mining and logging, both of which had earlier made major inroads in Kayapo territory.

The political mobilization of the Kayapo in defense of their lands and resources in the 1980's, however, was a far more complex political process than environmentalist activists and NGO's realized. Different Kayapo communities and their leaders took sharply opposing positions in this struggle. These indigenous political differences persisted after the demarcation of Kayapo reserves during the past decade gave the Kayapo legal

control over their land and resources. Some communities refused to admit Brazilian gold prospectors and loggers. Others granted mining and logging concessions, which resulted in the stripping of forests and the pollution of rivers with mining wastes. The chief beneficiaries of these concessions were a few Portuguese-speaking leaders, who bought town houses in regional Brazilian cities like Redencao and Tucuman, acquired cars, trucks and airplanes, and in some cases led publicly dissolute lives. For large segments of public opinion, the Kayapo, regularly caricatured in the Brazilian media as corrupted plutocrats of "Kayapo, Incorporated", turned from heroes of the environmentalist movement into eco-villains, willing accomplices in the destruction of the environment they had fought so hard to protect. (Turner 1995c)

As the economy of Southern Para state, based in large part on illegal mining and logging in Kayapo areas, boomed, ordinary Kayapo villagers suffered the effects of environmental degradation: the destruction of forest hunting and gathering resources by logging activities and the pollution of rivers by gold miners, whose Placer techniques cause the flooding of large areas which rapidly become incubators for malarial mosquitoes. (Cleary 1990; Schminck and Wood 1992; Fisher 1994) Even more seriously, Placer mining makes heavy use of mercury, which is discharged into the rivers and poisons both their water and fish. Several of the principal rivers and streams of Kayapo country

have become dangerously polluted and their fish inedible; many Kayapo now show dangerously high levels of mercury contamination. (Ferrari et al. 1993a, 1993b; Goncalves 1994, Goncalves et al. 1992, 1993)

Recently, however, Kayapo communities have begun turning against the leaders who permitted and benefitted from the mining and logging concessions, and have expelled miners and loggers from their territories. They have formed several new associations to develop projects for sustainable production of forest products. This political reversal has been accomplished by a coalition of common villagers and senior ritual chiefs, the ultimate repositories of political authority in Kayapo society, who had appeared to have lost power to the younger leaders who dealt with the miners and loggers. Those Kayapo communities that had continued to resist the penetration of Brazilian economic interests have supported the new political movement and joined the new associations. How this transformation of Kayapo environmental politics came about is one of the main subjects of this paper (see also Turner 1995c).

The Kayapo case raises, in compelling terms, the issue of the compatibility of environmentalist goals and those of the struggle for indigenous rights (above all, land rights, rights over resources, and rights of cultural autonomy). One aspect of this complex issue involves the nature of the cultural

relationship of indigenous forest peoples to their environment. Is the undoubted historical fact of successful, sustained coexistence of such groups (as represented, for instance, by the Kayapo) with the forest environment based on an explicit cultural valuation of environmental conservation? Or is it merely the incidental result of the small populations, feeble technologies, and subsistence production orientation of these societies?

The answers to these questions depend partly on the way one defines "culture". Is culture a fixed repertoire of "tradition", any change or departure from which must be regarded as "loss", or decadence? Many environmentalist statements about the ecological values and attitudes of indigenous cultures have implicitly or explicitly taken such a view. The indigenes are thereby defined as inflexible conservatives for whom cultural conformity substitutes for politics ("we" have politics, "they" have culture). A less demeaning, and more anthropologically and politically viable, conception of culture is as a flexible capacity for collective adaptation and self-creation. Where changes in circumstances call for new adaptive strategies or revised conceptions of the world, the exercise of the capacity for culture means the generation of new adaptive strategies, conceptions of the world, and social and political forms. Such cultural innovations normally involve political struggles between different views, interests and approaches within a society.

Politics, in this perspective, then, is an essential corollary of "culture", rather than substituting for it.

The Kayapo afford a dramatic example of an indigenous society engaged in political struggle between contrasting cultural visions of their relations to their natural and social environment. Only by understanding this process in Kayapo terms can we form an accurate idea of the cultural roots of Kayapo relations with the natural environment, including the current Kayapo rejection of collaboration with extractive industry and reorientation towards sustainable forms of production. Understanding these developments, in turn, should lead to a more accurate assessment of the possibilities for practical collaboration between environmentalists and indigenous societies like the Kayapo.

Kayapo relations with the environment: resource use, cultural values and political economy

The best way to understand Kayapo attitudes relations with the environment is by examining the activities make up their traditional subsistence base. For most Kayapo today these activities continue to be the main business of their lives, and they continue to provide most Kayapo subsistence needs. The Kayapo produce their means of subsistence by a combination of slash-and-burn horticulture, hunting, fishing, and gathering. According to the division of labor by gender and generation, men

engage in all productive pursuits incompatible with the care of young children, while women perform those which can be carried out while caring for children. This means that men hunt, fish, do the heavy and dangerous work of clearing gardens, and gather certain products which grow at great distances, that require overnight journeys. Women do most of the planting, weeding and harvesting of gardens, cut firewood, cook the food, build traditional shelters (now done almost exclusively in trekking camps), and care for children.

The nuclear family is the basic social unit of cooperation in the production and consumption of material subsistence, but as a social unit it owes its form primarily to its role in producing new social persons, not its functions in expediting subsistence activities. The production of material subsistence in Kayapo society, in other words, forms an integral part of the process of producing human beings (social persons), not a separate sphere of activity (i.e., "the economy") to which the term "production" exclusively applies. There is no "economy" in this limited sense in Kayapo society.

In the course of a year Kayapo communities spend part of the time in their base village near their gardens and part of the time on collective camping treks, moving through the country and hunting and foraging as they go. Trekking expeditions typically last from one to three months and take several forms: individual

age-sets (most frequently, the male batchelors' set) may be sent out to gather seasonally ripening nuts or fruits; adult men's societies, with women, children, and batchelors as dependents, may trek as separate groups, or the whole village may go on trek together, with the men's societies maintaining separate areas within the hunting camps; or most of the village may jointly go on trek to gather food for a ceremonial feast, in which case the men's society format is normally ignored, and the men instead divide themselves into hunting teams, each working for one of the fathers of the children being honored in the ceremony. A community may go on two or three such treks per year, so that as much as half the year is spent on trek.

Kayapo society, in sum, is constituted as an integral process of social production, which subsumes the production of material subsistence, the production of social persons, and the production of families in their capacities as social units of production relations. This global activity of production is the basis of the Kayapo conceptual relation to the natural environment. Since the production of food, shelter and utensils from natural materials, animals and plants forms a direct and continuous part of the production of human persons, families, and societies, rather than being made the object of a separate sphere of "economic" activities, the well-being and productivity of the ecosystem and that of human persons and society are seen as being directly interdependent. This view clearly does not preclude an

instrumental attitude toward nature, nor does it enjoin a "spiritual" reverence for natural things such as trees or animals as such. It does, however, promote a profound collective identification between human beings and the natural environment as parts of a single great life process, which makes the destruction of the one tantamount to the destruction of the other. (Turner 1995b) This Kayapo cultural vision of human-ecosystemic interdependence was mobilized to telling political effect in the famous Kayapo campaign against the Brazilian government's secret plan to build, with World Bank support, a series of hydroelectric dams on the Xingu River which runs through their territory. (Turner 1989; 1991b; 1993b)

The cultural roots of Kayapo environmental activism: the Altamira demonstration as ritual drama

For five days in February 1989, some 600 Kayapo Indians, together with representatives of 40 other Indigenous nations of Amazonia, gathered together at the small river town of Altamira in the state of Para, Brazil. Also present were over 400 representatives of the Brazilian and world news media, documentary film-makers, photographers, and non-governmental organizations of several types not often seen together: environmentalists, human rights advocates, and indigenous support groups. The announced purpose of the gathering was to force representatives of the Brazilian government, the World Bank, and Brazilian construction and electric power companies to give a

public account of their plans for a huge hydroelectric dam scheme in the Xingu River valley. The Kayapo, who had called the meeting and invited the media and NGO representatives as well as the other indigenous peoples, had made it clear that they intended to call upon the representatives of the government and construction companies to disclose their projections of the environmental and human impact of the scheme, and to explain why they had attempted to keep their plans secret from those who would ultimately be most affected by it: the native peoples and rural Brazilian population of the region. The government and World Bank had been understandably reluctant to accept the Kayapos' invitation; only when it became clear that hundreds of national and world media and opinion leaders would attend the gathering did President Sarney of Brazil agree to send a personal representative and the chief engineer of the state power company in charge of the dam scheme, Eletronorte, to present the case for the government project.

To the hundreds of Brazilian, European and North American journalists and activists who attended the event, and the millions who saw news clips of it on their televisions or read of it in their newspapers and magazines, the Altamira gathering appeared to be a combined earth-day demonstration and environmentalist panel discussion, put on by painted Indians wielding neolithic weapons and performing primitive dances. It was easy for a Western observer to miss the ritual and

cosmological framework that to the Kayapo participants constituted its essential organizational nexus and code of cultural meaning.

The Altamira gathering was planned by a gathering of Kayapo chiefs at Gorotire (the largest Kayapo village) in October 1988. Their common conceptual vocabulary (for some of them, their only vocabulary) for organizing a collective Kayapo social action was their shared cultural background of Kayapo ritual symbols, cosmological concepts and social forms. These social and ritual forms included, most importantly, the construction of the Altamira encampment as a complete Kayapo village, with family households and children as well as a men's house; the New Corn Ceremony with its associated myth, employed as the organizational and ideological matrix of the event; and the more general use of traditional ritual, oratory and song in the Kayapo language throughout the public sessions as well as in the encampment.

Non-Indian supporters of the Kayapo were puzzled and not a little disturbed when the Kayapo chiefs announced their decision to hold the Altamira meeting at the end of February, in the middle of the rainy season, when road travel throughout the area becomes difficult. From the standpoint of organizational efficiency, it seemed an irrational choice. From the standpoint of the Kayapo leaders struggling with the above questions, however, the decision was the outcome of compellingly rational considerations. Late February is the time when the final rites of

the New Corn Ceremony are performed, and the New Corn Ceremony is the only major Kayapo ritual which is celebrated at the same time of year by all the Kayapo communities, being tied to the actual time of ripening of the new maize crop, which is the same over the whole region. Like all major Kayapo ceremonies, it takes the form of a series of initial rites, followed by a collective hunting and foraging trek lasting several weeks, followed in turn by a final, climactic ceremony. The Kayapo leaders therefore couched their appeal for attendance at Altamira in terms of the New Corn Ceremony: all Kayapo were exhorted to come together for a collective celebration of the final rites of the New Corn Ceremony at Altamira; the initial rites were to be performed as usual in each village, but in place of the semi-nomadic hunting trek to collect food for the final ceremony, there would be a great trek to Altamira.

For the Kayapo participants, then, the basic organizational and calendrical framework for the Altamira event was not an abstract date on the Western calendar or a list of arbitrary assignments to chartered buses, but the New Corn Ceremony with its collective trek redirected towards the final ritual celebration site at Altamira. The New Corn Ceremony, however, not only served as an organizational structure but as a structure of meaning. It is, among other things, an agricultural first fruits ritual. The celebration of the growth and maturation of the garden crop, however, is coupled with parallel rites of passage for human children of both sexes. Before the ears of corn ripen,

when the new corn plants reach the height of about one meter, the young men of the village clip the hair of the unmarried girls (this short hair-style being the main public badge of their membership in the young girls' age set). Later, after the presentation of the first newly ripened ears of corn by the women of the village to their brothers, adult sons, or brothers' sons in the men's house, young boys of around eight years of age are ritually removed from their mothers' houses, where they have resided up to that time, and inducted into the men's house, which henceforth serves as their collective dormitory until they marry and move in with their wives. The final rite of the ceremony, that which was celebrated as the final act of the Altamira encounter, is the culmination of this collective initiation of youths.

Both the agricultural and human rites of passage which make up the New Corn Ceremony revolve around yet another, more fundamental rite of passage, which forms the dramatic centerpiece of the whole ceremony and occurs at its midpoint, just before the celebrants depart on their collective month-long hunting and foraging trek. This involves the cutting down of a great tree in the forest. After the trunk is trimmed of branches and a ten-foot section decorated at the ends with red paint representing fire, it is carried by the men into the center of the village plaza and thrown down in front of the men's house. There, in its transformed and domesticated form, it thenceforth serves as a bench.

The significance of this rite is clarified by the myth associated with the ceremony, which explains that the ancestors of the Indians first discovered maize growing like fruit on the branches of a single great tree in the forest. They cut down the tree and thus obtained the ears and kernels, which they planted. The result was the multiple reproduction, in miniature, of the original corn tree by the cornstalks that sprang up in their gardens. This was the origin of agriculture. The multiplication, however, did not stop with the corn. As they gathered and planted the kernels, the ancestral Indians, who up to then had been a single society speaking a common language, began to speak the different, mutually unintelligible languages of the Indian societies of the contemporary Amazon, and scattered into the mutually dissociated native groups found in the region today.

The great tree cut down for the ceremony represents the ancestral maize tree of the myth. Like its mythical precursor, it embodies the natural powers of reproduction and growth which society must tap and channel into the domesticated forms of garden horticulture and the socialization of human individuals. The cutting, symbolic decoration, and bringing in of the tree to the center of the village represent this process of domestication, and the renewal of society and the garden crops which it produces. It expresses, by the same act, the dependence of society and its reproduction upon the natural forest environment, and the powers of reproduction and growth of which the forest is the embodiment and source. The New Corn Ceremony,

in sum, expresses the Kayapo conception of the interdependence of society and nature, a relationship focused in the processes of reproduction and growth of both. The production of subsistence through the appropriation of natural forces and the growing of crops appears in this view as an integral part of the global process of producing human beings and social life. By making the New Corn Ceremony the organizing schema for the Altamira encounter, the Kayapo leaders implicitly communicated to the mass of Kayapo participants the essence of what they were asking them to defend, and was threatened by the environmental destruction that would be caused by the dams.

The construction of the Kayapo encampment at Altamira as a total Kayapo village community, complete with families, children, and households pursuing domestic activities like cooking, child-care, and the manufacture of artifacts, was another deliberate symbolic gesture, calculated to send many of the same messages to the outside world as the use of New Corn Ceremony would convey to the Kayapo participants. By building a total social community at Altamira directly in the path of the dam, the Kayapo presented themselves as a total human society, with a vital culture whose way of life was being threatened by the projects of distant governmental planners. Indeed, the original plans for the encampment called for continuing it as a permanent Kayapo village, which would constitute a sort of permanent "live-in" at the dam site.

The Altamira meeting and demonstration, in sum, was a dramatization of the environmental values of Kayapo culture in the service of a Kayapo version of environmental activism. Supported and attended by many Western environmental activists and organizations, the meeting nevertheless asserted a cultural and political vision of the relation of human society to its natural environment different in fundamental respects from that of the Western participants. The Kayapo at Altamira were not fighting for nature as such, but for their own collective relation to nature as one of productive interdependence. In this vision, the reproduction of the ecosystem is identified with that of human communities, and political control over the land and rivers that constitute the ecosystem is directly identified with the continued existence of Kayapo society as a politically autonomous collection of self-regulating communities.

The neo-liberal alternative: the Kayapo and the "rainforest harvest"

One of those attending the Altamira rally was Anita Roddick the head of the British cosmetic firm, The Body Shop. Eager to identify her company, with its line of support for "green" causes, with the Kayapo and their charismatic leader, Payakan, now world-famous after the success of the great rally, she offered Payakan for his community, A'ukre, an airplane and a press for extracting Brazil nut oil, to be purchased by her company for use in its cosmetic products. Payakan accepted, and the press for extracting the oil was duly installed in 1990. In

1992, The Body Shop added a second Brazil nut oil press in another community, Pukanu. It also started a project for the manufacture of bead jewelry by Kayapo women in four villages, to be sold in Body Shop outlets. The Kayapo thus became the first Indians in Amazonia to participate in the new wave of "green capitalist" enterprises based on environmentally sustainable production. (Turner n.d. 1)

By local standards, The Body Shop pays the Kayapo a good wage for their work on the Brazil Nut oil project and fair prices for the women's beadwork. It pays them nothing, however, for the value of their image as advertising, which is by far the most important value the Kayapo contribute to the Body Shop. The Body Shop is the sole buyer of the Kayapo products, and thus is able to set both the price and the amount of product it will buy. The Kayapo have pressed The Body Shop to allow them to expand production and install oil presses in other villages, but the Body Shop has refused, saying that it cannot use any more of the product (even though Kayapo-extracted Brazil nut oil comprises less than one per cent. of the volume of its "Brazil Nut Hair Conditioner"). The women's beadwork project was cancelled in mid-1995 when The Body Shop found that they could not sell the products fast enough through their shops to absorb the women's production. The Body Shop's interest in the projects clearly lies, or in the case of the women's bead jewelry project, lay, in their value as advertising; they clearly have no interest in expanding either project beyond the token levels of production

required for this purpose. These projects are thus not normal market-oriented trading ventures as implied by the Body Shop slogan of "Trade Not Aid", of which they hold up their Kayapo projects as a prime example. Furthermore, the Body Shop's maintenance of tight administrative control, and its continuing role as sole supplier of capital equipment and sole customer, able to fix unilaterally the levels of production and demand, means that there has been little "empowerment" of the Kayapo as "equal trading partners" as Body Shop publicity has claimed.

The Body Shop's "Trade Not Aid" slogan is deceptive in another sense, because it suggests that "trade" projects like the Body Shop's represent a viable alternative to aid for the Indians from governmental and non-governmental sources. This is patently not so. The real implications of the "Trade not Aid" slogan in this respect have been made brutally clear by the Brazilian government, which has cut off its appropriations for aid to indigenous peoples. Faced with the suspension of medical, educational and other services, indigenous peoples like the Kayapo have been driven to rely on the only forms of "trade" that can provide anything close to the amounts they need to pay for the goods and services they have come to need: mining and logging, the most destructive forms of extractive production. The small Body Shop projects do not begin to meet the need for communal income in the absence of government and private aid, and therefore never became viable alternatives to the much larger sums easily available from the loggers and miners. Both the

Kayapo communities with Brazil nut oil projects granted concessions to loggers, and one to gold miners as well, while the Body Shop projects were in full spate (Pukanu did expel its miners, for reasons unrelated to the Body Shop projects, in 1993, but A'ukre opened negotiations with a group of miners in the same year, inviting them to explore in a corner of their territory: fortunately they did not find any gold). It is therefore deceptive of The Body Shop to tell its customers that buying Brazil Nut Hair Conditioner "give[s the Kayapo] an income to help protect the Amazon rainforest". It is also politically retrograde for it to imply that its sort of "trade" renders redundant non-commercial forms of "aid" such as government support for basic services and political and legal struggles for land and human rights.

The Kayapo themselves are enthusiastically supportive of the Body Shop projects and want them to continue. There is no shortage of willing workers for both Brazil nut oil and beadwork production. Other Kayapo communities have asked The Body Shop to install similar projects, and have been disappointed with its refusal to expand the number of its Brazil nut oil operations and cancellation of the beadwork project. Kayapo opinion, in short, seems fairly unanimous that the Body Shop projects are good for them.

The question must be asked, however, if Kayapo enthusiasm and willingness to work implies fully informed consent to, and

agreement with, the terms of the Body Shop's own definition and representation of its operations among them. The answer to this question is clearly "No". The Kayapo start from a recognition of their fundamental dependency on the Western economic system, Brazilian, British or transnational, for a whole series of commodities they have come to need but cannot make themselves. They know the only way to get these commodities is either to persuade the state or other parties to give them as "presents", in the style of the old Indian Protection Service or visiting film crews, or to somehow get money to buy them with, either from timber and mineral concessions or, as a last resort, by working for wages. All of these, they are aware, are varieties of political-economic dependency; they do not expect them to be "empowering" (they have done quite well empowering themselves through organized political action and diplomacy, notably in obtaining official demarcation of their reserves, but that is another story). They chafe at the unaccustomed degree of subservience and regimentation exacted by the firm and efficient management of the Body Shop Brazilian project manager, but they are willing to put up with it for the sake of the income the work brings in.

They do not look upon the projects as straightforward "trade" relations with themselves as "equal trading partners"; they see them rather as aid mixed with trade. That the Body Shop has gone to the apparent inconvenience of coming to them from half-way around the world, bringing them elaborate oil pressing

machines and great stocks of beads to be made into bracelets, all to allow them the opportunity to earn money through individual work, impresses them as the gesture of a benevolent patron. Meanwhile, they prize the degree of individual empowerment the income from the work makes possible. Women, especially, benefitted from the chance to make money of their own, independently of their men, through the manufacture of the bead bracelets (this makes the cancellation of this project by The Body Shop especially regrettable). Few of them would otherwise have had this chance. For ordinary men (not chiefs or leaders) the Brazil nut oil work brings in more than they could acquire without going off to work in a mine or for a logging crew. For Kayapo men and women alike, the Body Shop projects therefore are, or were, valued options they would like to keep open. This, however, does not imply any principled agreement with the policy of Trade Not Aid, or with the Body Shop's representations of the linkage between its trade projects and the preservation of the ecosystem, or with The Body Shop's advertisements of their empowerment or equality in the relations of production and trade. Nor does their acceptance imply that the Kayapo understand the Body Shop projects for what they really are, namely symbolic operations undertaken primarily for p.r. purposes, whose value as "trade" to the Body Shop is virtually incidental. This means that the Kayapo do not understand how they are exploited by these projects, through the unpaid extraction and use of their representations in Body Shop publicity. Although the Body Shop, in an attempt to forestall criticism on this fundamental point,

has obtained the consent of Kayapo leaders to the use of their words and images, the Kayapo have no conception of the value of this publicity to the Body Shop. They cannot be said to have agreed to what they do not understand.

Kayapo complicity in environmentally destructive extractive enterprise: gold-mining and mahogany logging

The Altamira meeting marked the high point of the alliance between the Kayapo and the loose confederacy of environmentalist, human rights, and indigenous advocacy organizations, supported by large sectors of first world public opinion, who had rallied to support their resistance to the Xingu dams. Some saw in this emergent alliance of hitherto divergent and uncoordinated single-issue groups a portent of a new political conjuncture with implications far beyond the Amazon. (Turner 1989; 1993b) But just as the Kayapo and their brilliant and charismatic leader, Payakan, had played a leading role in precipitating this hopeful coalescence, however, they soon found themselves playing a leading role in its breakup.

The honeymoon between the Kayapo and the environmentalist and indigenous support organizations, journalists, and public opinion who had done so much to help (and hype) them broke up over two issues. The more serious was that of Kayapo complicity in mining and logging on their own recently won reserves, and the misuse by some Kayapo leaders of the communal funds derived from the extractive concessions.

Beginning in 1990, there was a steady trickle of reports in the Brazilian and international media that Kayapo leaders were entering into contracts with logging and mining companies to operate on Kayapo lands, in return for a percentage of the proceeds, in effect acting as collaborators and profiteers in the destruction of their own forests and rivers. Some of these stories revealed that some Kayapo leaders were using the income from these contracts to maintain lavish personal life styles in Brazilian cities far from their home villages, complete with town houses, cars, airplanes, drinking binges, Brazilian mistresses and prostitutes. These accounts were often exaggerated to suggest that the Kayapo as a nation had become "rich", and that they enjoyed, and abused, a disproportionate share of the region's wealth, thus belying their claims, and those of their international supporters, that they were a threatened and deprived minority in need of aid.

Some of the Brazilian media reports of the corrupt urban life style that some younger Kayapo leaders were supporting with money from gold mining and logging contracts, included Payakan among their number, in direct contradiction of his symbolic persona as an eco-warrior sans peur et sans reproche. Payakan, indeed, became the second major issue that shook the alliance of environmentalists, indigenous advocates, and the Kayapo, as a result of the media-promoted scandal of the charges of rape brought against Payakan and his wife by a Brazilian girl, in the same week as the Rio UNCED meeting in August '92, at which he had

been expected to speak. Instead, Payakan, who had become, for his North American and European supporters, the incarnation of the myth of indigenous peoples as defenders of the biosphere, found himself, together with his wife, facing charges of raping a Brazilian girl after a boozy party in the Brazilian town of Redencao, where they had been living in preference to their own village of A'ukre.

The Brazilian media blew the case up into a national scandal, producing wildly distorted accounts of the alleged crime couched in racist epithets like "savage instinct" and "cannibalistic rituals". Both the media and politicians exploited the case as a pretext to attack the Kayapo and indigenous rights in general, calling for the elimination of Indian reserves and the removal of timber and mineral resources from indigenous control. Payakan was acquitted in December 1994 of all charges by a Brazilian court, which also declined to sentence his wife on grounds that she was insufficiently acculturated to understand Brazilian law. The decision,, however, came too late to undo much of the damage caused by the inflammatory media attacks.

All of this aroused widespread dismay among supporters of the Kayapo and other rain forest peoples, many of whom had imagined the Kayapo only as guardians of the forest, living in pristine harmony with their environment and in principled conformity with their ancient culture. The revelation that the Kayapo were indeed aiding and abetting the logging of their own

forest and the pollution of their own rivers with mercury and mud by gold miners was for many the end of the heady conjuncture of indigenous resistance and green activism that inspired the coming together of so many environmentalist and political support NGOs at Altamira and after. The defense of the Indians' right to control, and dispose of, their own lands and resources and the defense of the tropical forest ecosystem, the reports suggested, should perhaps be seen as mutually contradictory rather than mutually supportive.

The Gorotire revolt and the expulsion of miners and loggers from Kayapo territory, September-December 1994

Even as the young Kayapo leaders in their town houses continued to perform vital functions as inter-ethnic and inter-cultural mediators, they, and their policy of continuing the mining and logging concessions, became the objects of steadily mounting resistance by a wholly unprecedented conjuncture of social and political forces in the villages. Resentment had steadily built up in villages like Gorotire, Kikretum, A'ukre and Catete against the way the young leaders appeared to be using their role as inter-cultural mediators to constitute themselves as a new class, able to control and divert to themselves most of the benefits and power accruing from the new economic dealings with the Brazilians, while leaving relatively little for their fellow villagers. This opposition finally exploded in the Autumn of 1994 in the key village of Gorotire, the largest of the Kayapo communities and the one, together with its offshoot, Kikretum-

Djudjetuktire, with the longest and most intensive experience of both logging and mining.

The discontented included mature adults, who for long had felt powerless to protest because of their lack of inter-cultural skills commensurate with those of the young leaders, on the one hand, and the senior chiefs' continued support of them, on the other. Growing numbers of younger men and women, however, many of whom had acquired the same basic skills and experience of Brazilian ways as the young leaders of the previous generation, and saw no reason to defer to them on this account, were becoming more vociferously dissatisfied with their conduct of affairs. Most of those in this group were ordinary villagers with no special kinship to the chiefs, who had managed to take part in the classes sporadically taught by FUNAI or missionary teachers at Gorotire or one of the other Kayapo villages. Perhaps a dozen of these younger Gorotire men had had direct experience of work in the gold mines, and had seen at first hand how the Brazilian miners were robbing the Indians by concealing a large proportion of the gold they extracted, thus paying the ten per cent. nominally owed to the Kayapo on only a fraction of their total production. These men formed the nucleus of the ensuing protest. (Turner 1992c; 1995a)

At Gorotire, these currents of unrest gathered force until they crystallized into a political movement with the strength to force a reversal of communal policy on mining and logging

concessions. In August 1994, the men of Gorotire embarked on a collective hunting trek, as a normal part of a communal naming ceremony. As is customary on such occasions, the batchelor youths and recently married fathers acted as collective units, functioning separately from the older men. While the senior men were off hunting, the younger men met together to discuss the logging and mining contracts. Most had become bitterly opposed to both forms of extractive activity because of their effects on the environment and health, but above all because they, and the community as a whole, were seeing too little of the benefits the contracts had been supposed to bring. Those who had actually worked in the gold mines alongside Brazilian miners and had seen with their own eyes how much wealth the Brazilians were taking out of their land, and how little they were giving back, were the most strongly opposed to the concessions.

Two of these young ex-miners, Mekango and Beti, took the lead in urging the immediate abrogation of all mining and logging concessions. They carried the day in the young men's meeting. The young men in a body then confronted the senior men when they returned to the camp. One of the senior chiefs was present, and he and the rest of the older men resolved to support the younger men. All the men left the hunting camp and marched directly to the main Gorotire gold mine of Santidio, where almost 3,000 Brazilian miners were then working. The Kayapo assaulted the mine, burned down the miners' shelters, broke their machines and threw them in the flooded pits they had dug into the landscape,

and drove off the unresisting miners, who were obliged to walk 75 kilometers to the nearest road. The two young Kayapo ex-miners who led the protest, dreading the miners' vengeance, hid in the forest, and are still there as of this writing.

Most of the angry and bewildered miners made their way back to Redencao, where 2,000 of them camped on the central boulevard of the town and commenced intimidating the citizens, threatening to burn down the offices of FUNAI and calling on the mayor to help them get back into the reserve if he valued the peace of his city. Meanwhile, the Gorotire returned to their village, where they immediately obtained the support of the other senior chief for their collective demand that the mining of gold should cease forthwith, and all miners be expelled from Gorotire territory. The senior chiefs ordered the younger leaders, their own sons and nephews, to repudiate the contracts they had negotiated and to confirm the order to expel the miners. The young leaders, who might have resisted either the authority of the senior chiefs if unsupported by an aroused populace, or the demands of a mob of villagers unsanctioned by chiefly authority, bowed to the combination of authority and power they jointly constituted, and reluctantly carried out the senior chiefs' orders. (Turner 1995b)

With the example of the Gorotire revolt against the miners before them, those Kayapo communities and leaders who had previously opposed the initiative now proved more receptive (others had been for it all along). With air transportation provided by the Indian Agency (FUNAI), leaders from all the

Kayapo villages met on December 10 in Redencao with representatives of the Federal Prosecutor, the Federal Police, and the Federal government's Insitute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA). Ironically, the meeting was held at the town house of one of the young Gorotire leaders, whose telephone had been cut off to forestall his running up any more bills. The result of the meeting was a unanimous decision by the Kayapo chiefs to expel all miners and loggers and terminate all mining and logging concessions on Kayapo land. The Federal Prosecutor announced that he would enforce the expulsion of both miners and loggers from all of Kayapo territory, beginning immediately following the meeting; the expulsion was substantially complete by the end of the following month.

New relations of production: associations and guard-posts

This decision was rapidly implemented by Federal Police in cooperation with Kayapo from local communities in January-February 1995. As some of the big saw mills of Redencao declared bankruptcy, gold-buying companies closed their doors, and Redencao plunged into economic depression, the judge of a Federal Court ruled that all of the illegally cut mahogany seized during the expulsion of the loggers would be sold at auction, and the proceeds (which should amount to several million dollars) turned over to the Kayapo. The judge specified that only duly constituted Kayapo development associations and their projects would qualify to receive this money; it would not simply be handed out directly to community leaders, thus risking the

creation of a new generation of corrupted young leaders, but would be administered by FUNAI, the National Indian Foundation, under the inspection of qualified non-governmental organizations such as the Instituto Socio-Ambiental, to bona fide Kayapo development projects organized by duly constituted Kayapo associations (i.e., voluntary associations with properly drawn-up "statutes" or by-laws that have been legally registered with the municipality or county in which their offices are located).

As it happened, the Kayapo had already begun organizing such associations, both at the single-community and inter-communal levels. (Turner 1995b) The first of the new associations to be formed at an inter-communal level was the Associacao Iprenre, founded in 1993 under the leadership of Megaron Txukarramae, a Mentuktire Kayapo who was then the director of the National Park of the Xingu. The immediate occasion for the foundation of the new association was a substantial donation of video filming and editing equipment by the Panasonic Corp. of Japan. Three years previously, I had started a Kayapo Video Project which supplied video cameras and access to editing facilities for Kayapo to produce video documentation of their own culture and their relations with Brazilian society (Turner 1992b) The new association was formed to carry on the work this project had begun, in a legal form that could receive and manage the donated equipment and funds from Panasonic and other sources. The founding members, in addition to Megaron, were mainly men who had worked as cameramen and editors in the Kayapo Video Project. They

came from several different communities. The new association, named for a mythical Kayapo culture hero, established a Center for Indigenous Video and Image to house the new Japanese equipment, but also committed itself to undertake various projects for generating income through ecologically sustainable production of wild and domesticated agricultural products.

The Associacao Iprene failed to attract further funding for its first two years, so these projects remained in the planning stage, but in March 1995 it reorganized itself and launched a major project for the construction of a center for ecotourism at a site on the east bank of the Xingu. The reorganization meeting took place at the village of Mentuktire, and was attended by members of the five Kayapo villages from the west bank of the Xingu: Mentuktire, Kapot, Pukanu, Menkranoti, and Bau. Officers were duly elected, one from each village. (Turner 1995a) A revised statute of by-laws was adopted and subsequently registered, and construction on the ecotourism site was begun immediately afterward, funded by income from fares at the Xingu ferry crossing which the Mentuktire run, and the rents from ranches established on their land before it became a reserve, which they have taken over and now rent out. When I visited this site in September 1995, construction (of five good-sized buildings, including two guest houses, a central recreation hall, a cook-house, and a house for the family of a caretaker and cook) was virtually complete; it appeared that it would soon be ready to receive paying guests.

The cutoff of income from mining and logging greatly intensified interest in alternative sources of income among the Kayapo, especially sustainable production of forest products. (Espirito Santo 1995a) They soon learned that legally constituted associations are necessary to receive many kinds of grants of financial and other types of support. The example of the Iprene Association with its Japanese support was one source of this knowledge, but there were others. The G7 (primarily Germany) have allocated a large sum for indigenous land demarcation and development in the Amazon, but G7 representatives in Brasilia informed Kayapo leaders that they can only have access to this money through associations, rather than simply as community leaders. There was also the previously reported decision of the Brazilian court supervising the auction of illegally cut mahogany seized by the Federal Police that the proceeds can be paid only to duly constituted Kayapo development associations, rather than individual communities or leaders as such.

These developments gave a powerful incentive to other Kayapo communities to emulate the example of the Iprene Association. In August 1995, the five eastern communities of the Area Indidgena Kayapo in Para met and established the "Pukatoti Associacao Kamokore", a near clone of the western Iprene Association. Like the latter, the new association has announced that it will undertake sustainable production of wild forest products, the marketing of processed garden crops such as tapioca starch and dried bananas, and ecotourism. Although committed in principle

to implementing such projects at the inter-communal level, the Association is beginning by initiating projects at the individual village level: at Gorotire, production of cumaru and copaiba, both wild forest products, is scheduled to begin in the coming rainy season.

It is significant that all five of the newly elected officers of the Pukatoti-Kamokore association, and all but one of the officers of the Iprene association, are under thirty. (Espirito Santo 1995b) Equally significantly, none of the previous generation of "young leaders" at Gorotire or the other villages from which the membership of the Pukatoti-Kamokore Association is drawn have had anything to do with the new association. They did not attend its organization meetings, took no part in the selection of its board of directors, and have shown ostentatious disinterest in its projects. (Destro Junior, personal communication) Taking account of this inter-generational rivalry, the two senior chiefs of Gorotire have appointed two new chiefs (one son of each senior chief), of the same age as the young activists of the Association, to lead the work parties that will execute its projects, thus bringing them within the traditional structure of authority of the community and sheltering them from obstruction or interference from the older "young leaders". Such overt institutional arrangements have not been necessary among the Xingu Kayapo of the Associacao Iprene, no doubt in large part because the key communities of Cachoeira-Mentuktire and Kapot-Roykore, who provided the principal impetus

for the formation of the new association, never permitted logging or mining and thus avoided the economically intensified inter-generational conflict that took place in the eastern villages like Gorotire.

Some individual Kayapo communities had already organized development companies or associations before, or contemporary with and independently of, the two inter-communal associations just described. (Turner n.d.1) The village of Catete formed its own association for sustainable development project, the Associacao Bep-Noi, in late 1994. (Giannini 1994) The case of Catete is especially significant because it shows close parallels with what happened at Gorotire. Like Gorotire, Catete had been heavily involved in logging contracts. Heavy logging began in 1989, and rapidly devastated large areas of the Catete forest. In 1990, a team from the Brazilian non-governmental organization CEDI arrived to propose to the villagers an alternative scheme of forest management, with technical advice from forestry engineers of the University of Sao Paulo School of Forestry. The alternative project was supported by the senior chiefs, who resented the logging, negotiated as at Gorotire by younger leaders. (Giannini 1994) The half-dozen villagers who identified themselves most enthusiastically with the project and worked most closely with the CEDI team were younger men in their twenties. The anthropologist and forestry experts who comprised the project team continually engaged the villagers in collective discussions of the need for a rational forest management plan, and the

financial losses and environmental damage being done by the commercial logging then under way.

In 1990, the community decided to expel the loggers, but a few months later, younger leaders succeeded in renewing the contract with the logging company. renewed Finally, in 1992, the villagers, with the support of the older chiefs, called for an abrogation of the logging contracts, which had been negotiated by one of the younger chiefs and were due for renewal. (Gianninni 1994) When this individual attempted to leave the village to return to the Brazilian town of Tucuman, where he was to meet with the logging company to renew the contract, the villagers physically restrained him, holding his plane on the landing strip. They not only obliged him to remain in the village, thus preventing the renewal of the logging contracts, but they later made him the president of the new community development association (Associacao Bep-Noi) they organized to implement alternative projects for generating income through sustainable production of forest products. (Gianninni, personal communication)

That the villagers of Catete obliged the leader previously most strongly identified with the predatory logging concessions to assume the direction of the new sustainable production association is a typical Kayapo solution to the political problem constituted by the clash of contradictory economic approaches: avoid overt polarization by obliging the "leader" of the opposing

faction to identify with the ascendant consensual position. Similar tactics have been employed by other Kayapo groups to deal with the same problem. Pukatire, the leading chief of the village of Pukanu, which until this year regularly did business with mahogany loggers and until two years ago also had a team of gold miners working on its land, was elected president of the new western Kayapo inter-communal sustainable development association, the Associacao Iprepre, although he was removed from office only seven months later for failure to perform as expected. At Gorotire, the senior chiefs who now strongly back the communal consensus against the renewal of logging and mining contracts presided over and profited from these same contracts up until the September, when they were persuaded to join the movement for their repudiation.

The younger Gorotire leaders continue to be recognized as leaders by the community, and to fulfill various intermediary roles between the community, the FUNAI bureaucracy, and the regional economy. The focus of their role in all these respects, however, has shifted to that of chiefs of the more important of the recently constructed guard posts along the frontier of the reserve. Sizeable communities that have grown up around some of these, notably Kube'i's post of Purure and Tapiet's post of Nhakin (with populations of 90 and 70, respectively), as a result of the still potent ability of these leaders to extract financial support from official and private Brazilian sources. (Destro Junior 1995b) With financial support, construction

materials and tools provided by FUNAI, twenty-seven such settlements in all have been established by the five eastern communities of the Area Indigena Kayapo, most of them within the past two years (Destro Junior 1995a; Espirito Santo 1995b). Thirteen of these posts have been founded by the Gorotire alone (eight within the past year), and perhaps half of the total population of the village now lives, and supports itself, primarily at these relatively distant settlements.

The new guard posts have been created for the ostensible purpose of protecting the boundaries of the reserve against invasion by squatters, ranchers, miners and loggers. This motive, however, cannot account for the great amount of energy and resources that have been put into constructing these posts in the past two years. It is significant that most of the posts either already have, or soon will possess extensive fields for the production of cash crops destined for markets in nearby Brazilian towns. The new guard posts, in short, represent yet another way the Kayapo have attempted to meet the need for alternative sources of revenue. The involvement of the young leaders of Gorotire in building up their respective post settlements can only be understood in this light. Because of their location on the frontier of the reserve, with immediate access to the non-Kayapo areas outside it, and because they constitute enclaves under their exclusive control, they have become personal fiefdoms in which some of these leaders have attempted to revive in microcosm the now prohibited logging and

mining concessions. (Turner 1995a, 1995b) Indeed, Tapiet is openly running a small gold mining operation at his frontier post of Nhakin, while Kube'i, according to Gorotire informants, has invited loggers to operate in his frontier area of Purure.

Gold mining has also recommenced at the large Gorotire mine of Santidio, albeit on a vastly reduced scale (35 miners in contrast to the previous number of 3,000), on the initiative of the son of one of the senior chiefs, who invited the small group of miners back to instruct him and a few Kayapo colleagues how to mine. When I returned to Gorotire in September 1995, I found these and other Gorotire leaders and at least one counterpart from Kikretum engaged in intense negotiations with a leading gold-mining organizer and entrepreneur, in an attempt to assist him to recommence operations at the main Gorotire gold mine of Santidio. Their quid pro quo was to be an undertaking by the mining executive to pay all the expenses of their frontier post communities and the main village of Gorotire (including construction, transportation, medical care, food, etc.). These negotiations were being openly conducted in the local offices of FUNAI, with the benign encouragement of the regional FUNAI director, in blatant contradiction of the announced policy of FUNAI and other branches of the Federal government against any renewal of extractive activity by non-Indians within indigenous areas.

These negotiations, furthermore, were in direct contradiction to the mission on which I had just come to Redencao, in company with a geologist and mining expert, at the behest of FUNAI/Brasilia and ISA to investigate the possibility of the Kayapo conducting their own gold mining operation at Santidio using ecologically non-destructive methods. The geologist and I were received grudgingly and with suspicion by the Kayapo leaders and FUNAI personnel involved in these negotiations, who had of course been advised of our mission but attempted to persuade us to "suspend" it to allow their negotiations with the miners to proceed undisturbed (not to our surprise, we found that they had not notified FUNAI/Brasilia of these negotiations). In contrast, we were welcomed enthusiastically in the village by the senior Gorotire chiefs and a group of young Kayapo who had already attempted to begin work on their own at the mine. Most of the other villagers were receptive toward our project, provided it could be made environmentally safe, but some, mostly young men who had taken part in the movement to terminate the mining contracts the previous September, pronounced themselves opposed to a resumption of mining in any form. After I explained at length the nature of the operation we were proposing (a completely Kayapo-operated and managed process that would restore the land as it progressed and avoid releasing mercury into the environment) most of the dissidents appeared to give their qualified assent. Significantly, this group included some of the principal supporters of the newly formed Kamokore-Pukatoti Association for

sustainable development. If the alternative Kayapo mining project (which has already gotten under way as I write this) can succeed with their support, I am confident that the return of the old-style mining concessions for which the older generation of "young leaders" have been conspiring with the support of the local FUNAI officials can be forestalled.

As at Gorotire, Kayapo elsewhere are divided over the desirability of returning to the easy and bountiful, if short-lived and ecologically destructive, source of income represented by the mining and logging concessions. It is likely that if the new alternative projects and associations now being tried fail to bring in a satisfactory level of income, pressure to return to the old ways will mount and in some places become irresistible. At the time of writing, however, ten months after the expulsion of miners and loggers from Kayapo territory by Federal Police, mining activity has been resumed to my knowledge at only three places: the Gorotire mine of Santidio; the Gorotire frontier post of Nhakin (personally controlled by Tapiet, the young Gorotire leader most deeply involved with the previous mining concessions); and at the small Tchikrin community of Bakaja. Some mining also continues in Bau, the one Kayapo area not yet demarcated at the time of writing because of the violent opposition of miners and ranchers operating in the area. I expect that this will be suppressed now that the Federal government has renewed its promise to the Kayapo to complete the demarcation (personal communication from Kayapo leaders cited above). Logging

has also effectively ceased everywhere except at the one Gorotire frontier post of Purure, under the personal control of the most powerful of the Gorotire "young leaders", Kuben'i. A politically, economically, and ecologically significant general cessation in socially and environmentally destructive extractive activities has thus been brought about in Kayapo country. Giving due credit to the Federal Police, the Federal Prosecutor's Office, assorted non-governmental organizations, and FUNAI, it must be recognized that this pause is primarily the result of political developments among the Kayapo themselves.

Conclusions: the indigenous political struggle for popular empowerment and environmental conservation

The termination, with a few minor exceptions, of environmentally destructive extractivist activities in the large area constituted by the Kayapo reserves is a landmark event in the struggle to preserve the Amazonian ecosystem together with its native peoples. The complex historical and political process leading to this joint decision by the leaders and people of the fifteen Kayapo villages and the Brazilian government holds several lessons of general relevance to students, activists and policy makers concerned with environmental conservation in areas inhabited by indigenous populations.

First, the Kayapo have been able to evolve through a series of different policies and positions over the past two decades, in response to changing political, economic, and ecological circumstances. They have developed these successive policies

through their own political processes, in dynamic interaction with changes in their relations with the regional Brazilian society and economy. Their most recent political victory, the successful assertion of communal control over the younger leaders who had parlayed their skills as inter-cultural mediators into political and economic dominance, was the prerequisite of beginning to reverse the ecological and social damage caused by the mining and logging contracts which these leaders had negotiated. It is significant that the Kayapo of Gorotire only succeeded in curbing the power and reversing the policies of these leaders through an alliance between traditional ritual chiefs and a new movement of "class" protest by a mass of ordinary villagers, an alliance rooted in traditional age-set alignments of alternate against adjacent generations. It is also important that the crucial act of revolt was launched by age sets acting together in the traditional context of a ritual hunt. These examples suggest that traditional institutional structures of political and ritual authority may continue to have constructive parts to play as indigenous communities struggle to come to terms with the problems and consequences of extractive industry and other forms of capitalist enterprise.

The Kayapo experience underlines the importance for NGOs, government agencies, and other entities engaged in supporting indigenous groups and/or protecting their ambient ecosystems to avoid as far as possible giving individual members of indigenous communities unique functions and powers as mediators. It is vital

to diffuse mediatory functions as much as possible, and to encourage communal participation in decisions affecting collective interests in which such individuals may be involved in their mediatory capacity. As private capital and governmental development projects increasingly penetrate the Amazon and similar areas, it becomes increasingly urgent to find ways to protect the interests of native communities and their environments alike from the effects of deals done on their behalf by individuals acting as mediators but with no effective constraints or even, sometimes, concern for collective interests. Indigenous political systems may not contain effective mechanisms for exercising such control, and every effort should be made to encourage their development.

A new generation of Kayapo educated in the skills of interethnic relations was instrumental in challenging the monopoly of the young Gorotire leaders in this respect, and helping their fellow villagers to understand the connection between the deteriorating health and environmental situation and the mining and logging contracts. Broadly based communal education in the skills of inter-cultural communication is clearly central to the successful accommodation of indigenous Amazonian communities to the changing demands of protecting their environment while dealing with the economic demands and pressures of capitalism.

Just as at Altamira, so in December 1944, Kayapo cultural attitudes towards the environment were important in the movement to expel the miners and loggers. Again, it was not a concern for nature in the abstract or the value of natural beings as such, but the sense that the continuity of the ecosystem as a whole is essential to the reproduction of Kayapo society. When a point is reached where the ecosystem is seriously threatened, as by the destruction and pollution of rivers and their fish by mining, or when so much of the forest is damaged by logging that hunting and gathering become increasingly unproductive, the indigenous people will resist if they can, even if the policies responsible for the destruction have been sanctioned by their own leaders and produce a modicum of wealth in Brazilian goods and devices such as cars, motorboats and airplanes.

The Kayapo example makes clear that the notion of indigenous peoples as "primitive ecologists" with environmentalist values analogous to, if more "spiritual" than our own, like the opposite conception of them as destructive exploiters, culturally indifferent to environmental values and ready to seize any opportunity for short-term profit, are false alternatives, and do not exhaust the real spectrum of indigenous environmental relations. The context of human-environmental relations in the Amazon, as in many parts of the world, is one of rapid change between a regime of subsistence and a capitalist economy dominated by extractive forms of production for profit. In this historic context of fundamental change, "culture" does not stand

still, an inert body of "traditional" concepts and attitudes, like a cook book of some bygone era no longer able to deal with today's ingredients. Nor are "culture" and "politics" mutually exclusive ways of relating to environmental problems, such that indigenous peoples operate only with "culture" and we with "politics". As the example of the Kayapo shows, indigenous communities, like ourselves, are fully capable, given the opportunity, of transforming their relationship to their environments through processes of internal political struggle, combined with active relations of resistance and accommodation to the ambient society and economic system.

That indigenous communities like the Kayapo may arrive, as a result of these processes, at environmentally sound policies and practices for reasons other than environmentalist principles in our sense may well point a moral for us. If environmentalist causes are to succeed politically in our own society, it will be because they become progressively more integrated into our consciousness of how environmental exploitation and despoliation is inseparable from the exploitation and degradation of people in society, and how the way we live with nature is an integral part of the way we produce ourselves and our social world.

NOTES

1. This paper is based on field work carried out on numerous visits to the Kayapo between 1989 and 1995. these trips included

extensive cooperation with Brazilian indigenous support organizations, chiefly the Centro de Trabalho Indigenista (CTI), the Centro Ecumenico de Documentacao e Informacao (CEDI), the Nucleo de Direitos Indigenas (NDI), and the Instituto Socio-Ambiental (ISA), which was formed through a union of the latter two in 1994; also, The Fundacao Mata Virgem (FMV) and its successor, the Associacao pela Vida e Ambiente (AVA), which also merged with ISA in 1995. On my most recent trip, in August and September 1995, I also worked closely with the Departamento do Patrimonio Indigena of the National Foundation for the Indian (FUNAI). My field trips have been funded by the Center for Latin American Studies of the University of Chicago, the Lichtstern Fund of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Chicago, The Spencer Foundation, Granada Television International, the Instituto Socio-Ambiental, and Conservation International.

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