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celeration or deceleration. Whether archeologists can develop a scale comparable to glottochronology remains to be established. The possibility is worth investigating, however, because of the difficulties in applying other forms of dating to shallow sites in forested regions. Particularly where evidence is reduced to characteristics of the site and the ceramic refuse, as it is in so many parts of tropical America, more reliable methods of extracting a maximum of information from these remains need to be developed if archeology is to advance beyond description and chronology to reconstruction of general patterns of cultural adaptation that prevailed in the past.

The Tapirapé During the Era of Reconstruction

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THE BRAZILIAN INDIAN has, since Europeans first landed on the eastern coast of South America, occupied a special place in the European world view. More than any other so-called "primitive" or tribal people, the Indians of tropical Brazil have represented to Western civilization its antithesis because the Indians appeared to be living in harmony with nature, sharing the fruits of their labor, and free from the social inequalities of class and structured, centralized systems of political authority. Brazilian national society today, in the quickening pace of its push toward development of the interior, invades those territories where the last autonomous Indian groups had managed to survive and maintain their independence and integrity as a people. As reports by anthropologists, journalists, and other concerned observers chronicle their overnight destruction (or transformation into rural proletarians), international attention has come to focus with a particular urgency on the Indians of Brazil. Few in number compared with the impoverished masses of Brazil's rural backlands and urban slums, the significance of the Indians' plight goes beyond their sufferings as individuals. They stand as an indictment of a system that is not only lacking in social and economic justice for a large proportion of its own members, but inexorable in its appropriation of all that surrounds it, a system that represents the negation of what was for so long the central fact of our species' condition: cultural diversity. In

Maxine L. Margolis and William
E. Carter: Brazil: Anthropological
Perspectives. Essays in Honour of
Charles Wagley, Columbia Univ.
Press, NY, 1979.

terms of Western society's own mythology, which commonly provides a metaphor for accounts of the Brazilian experience, we are witnessing the culmination of man's fall from grace; having been expelled from Eden, he now takes upon himself the project of destroying it entirely.

It is understandable that concern with the fate of the Brazilian Indian currently centers on those groups who are either still relatively isolated (their contacts with non-Indians thus far limited to travelers, anthropologists, Indian agents, or missionaries), or are experiencing their first major shock of confrontation with the expanding Brazilian frontier. It is important, however, not to lose sight of those who, having endured a more prolonged period of contact, are engaged in the struggle to preserve at least some portion of their traditional way of life. The Tapirapé Indians of central Brazil are one such group. Their case is of particular interest because it is unique and at the same time contributes to a more general understanding of the possibilities for cultural survival.

The Tapirapé are one of the best documented Indian groups in Brazil. Their major ethnographers are Charles Wagley and Herbert Baldus. Wagley has been producing publications on the Tapirapé since his first and most extended period of field research in 1939-40. A recent monograph is both an ethnographic summation and a personal memoir (Wagley 1977). Baldus, who first visited the Tapirapé in 1935, continued to concern himself with Tapirapé studies over the succeeding decades, making his most important contributions in the areas of ethnohistory and material culture, and setting the Tapirapé in comparative ethnological perspective; his own monograph appeared in 1970. Other anthropologists who have visited and written about the Tapirapé include Eduardo Galvão, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, and myself.¹ Since this research spans a time period of over 40 years, we have material for the kind of longitudinal study that is not often encountered in the anthropological literature on tribal peoples.

The earliest sources on the Tapirapé indicate that they have been living in their present homeland just to the north of the river that bears their name since at least the eighteenth century.² They are, however, relative newcomers to an area of central Brazil whose Indian population is otherwise composed of Gê-speaking peoples (the Kayapó to the north and the Sherente and Shavante to the east and south) and Karajá, who inhabit the banks of the Araguaia River. A

true tropical forest people who, at some point in their history, moved into a region of savannah and gallery forest, the Tapirapé differ markedly from their Indian neighbors in the degree to which their subsistence revolves around horticulture. Their language is Tupian, of the same family as those spoken by the first encountered and long extinct populations of the Brazilian coast.

The history of the Tapirapé during the twentieth century, particularly since they first began to have sustained contact with outsiders in the 1930s, has been treated in detail in the published work of Wagley and Baldus. I will therefore limit myself to an outline of the facts that form a necessary background to the present discussion, adding in places to the information available elsewhere.

At the turn of the century, the Tapirapé were living in five villages, each with a population of approximately 200.³ By the 1930s, the *total* Tapirapé population had been reduced to fewer than 200 individuals. A single village, Tampiitawa ("Village of the Tapirs"), constituted the permanent settlement for most of the remaining Tapirapé population. Three villages had become extinct. The other, Chechutawa ("Village of the Fish"), located several days' journey to the north of Tampiitawa and which Baldus believed also to be extinct at the time of his visit to the Tapirapé in 1935, was in 1939 the home of some 40 Tapirapé who left it to move to Tampiitawa during Wagley's stay (Wagley 1977:38). Chechutawa was later re-established and inhabited intermittently by groups of Tapirapé during succeeding years.⁴ The Tapirapé population continued to decline during the 1940s. When Baldus returned to Tampiitawa in 1947, there were only 62 Tapirapé living there. He was told that a smaller group were living at Chechutawa and estimated that the total number of Tapirapé could not have been more than 100 (Baldus 1970:75,81).

The year 1947 proved to be a major turning point in Tapirapé history. Described as a "pacific" people as far back as the eighteenth century, the Tapirapé had for some time been suffering at the hands of their more aggressive Kayapó and Karajá neighbors. Shortly after Baldus's departure, Tampiitawa was attacked by the Kayapó, who looted and set fire to the village. Some Tapirapé were killed; others, women and young girls, were abducted. The attack occurred at a time when most of the men were away working in their gardens. As a result of this event, Tampiitawa was abandoned and the Tapirapé became dependent upon outsiders for their continued existence. Those

who survived the attack scattered, some taking refuge with a local rancher and others at an Indian Protection Service Post that had been established at the mouth of the Tapirapé River.⁵ Their fate from this point on might well have been either gradual extinction or incorporation into the bottom layer of the local Brazilian social order. Instead, after spending two years in this fragmented state, decimated further by disease and hunger, having neither village nor gardens of their own, they were able to re-establish themselves as a community and to rebuild their horticultural economy. Through the efforts of an exceptionally devoted Indian agent, Valentim Gomes, who had served as Wagley's companion during his field research among the Tapirapé and had subsequently joined the Indian Protection Service, the survivors of Tampiitawa were brought together at the Indian post and assisted while they chose a site for their new settlement and began clearing and planting their gardens. This settlement, Tawaiho ("New Village"), has continued to be the home of the Tapirapé up to the present.

In 1952, Tawaiho also became the home of a group of nuns belonging to the Order of the Little Sisters of Jesus, who have maintained a mission there ever since.⁶ In 1954, a French priest, Father François Jentel, arrived in the region and spent the next twenty years living and working both with the Tapirapé and with the Brazilian population of the nearby town of Santa Teresinha until his expulsion by the Brazilian government in 1974. The Little Sisters of Jesus and Father Jentel have, as we shall see, influenced Tapirapé life in crucial and complementary ways.

When Tawaiho was founded, there were 54 Tapirapé living there. The population reached a low point of 48 following a measles epidemic in 1955 and has been climbing ever since. There were 55 at the time of Wagley's and Cardoso's visit in 1957, 79 when I arrived in 1966, 81 when I returned the following year, and over 120 by my 1974 visit. According to a Brazilian government report (Wagley 1977:45), there were a total of 136 Tapirapé as of 1976. This figure includes, in addition to the survivors of Tampiitawa and their descendants, remnants of the population that had been living in Chechutawa at the time of the Kayapó attack. The Tapirapé who founded Tawaiho had continued to speak of other Tapirapé whom they believed still to be living to the north and had made some unsuccessful attempts to locate them. In 1963 and again in 1970, small groups of survivors

from Chechutawa made their way to Tawaiho after years of living in isolation in the forest. The first, composed of three women and two children, appeared one day in a Brazilian settlement, were recognized as Tapirapé, and sent on to join the others. The group that arrived in 1970 included the last surviving Tapirapé shaman, a powerful man named Kamaira who had led a move to Chechutawa shortly before the Kayapó attack (see note 4). He was encountered in the forest, together with his elderly wife and adolescent son, by a local settler who recognized the language they were speaking. The family had been living alone for many years, fearful of approaching white settlements and believing that they were the only remaining Tapirapé. With Kamaira's return, the Tapirapé saw the possibility of recovering valuable knowledge that had been slipping away from them and reinstating ceremonies that they had not been able to perform for a number of years. His house became the social center of the village; people would come to ask him about matters of tradition and several Tapirapé showed an interest in becoming apprentice shamans. Kamaira was, however, seriously ill with a tubercular condition aggravated by a chronic gripe and was generally unable to adjust to life in the village. He died in November 1970, four months after his arrival; his wife and son survived, the last of the Tapirapé to become a part of the reconstructed society of Tawaiho.

When Wagley first wrote about the Tapirapé as they appeared to him in 1939–1940, he described them as a people heading toward extinction.⁷ He focused on the disruptive effects of drastic depopulation, noting the breakdown of traditional patterns of domestic organization and dislocations in the Tapirapé system of socio-ceremonial groupings. He also analyzed the way in which the Tapirapé, by adhering to their traditional policy of family planning, were conspiring in their own demise. The Tapirapé belief that no family should have more than three children, and no more than two of the same sex had, in former conditions, served to maintain a stable population; given the circumstances in which the Tapirapé found themselves in the 1930s, however, such a policy was demographic suicide.

Upon his return to the Tapirapé after a brief visit in 1953, Wagley found that their cultural repertoire had been reduced in certain respects, most notably by the virtual disappearance of shamanism, but he was nonetheless struck by the degree to which the Tapirapé had been able to reconstitute their traditional way of life (Wagley 1955).

The period since the founding of Tawaiho has, in fact, been one of both physical and cultural vitality for the Tapirapé. The steady increase in their population, noted above, is a result of the medical assistance they have been receiving and the abandonment of taboos on family size and composition. Subsistence needs are plentifully provided for, since the Tapirapé have up to now been able to retain access to sufficient land for extensive and productive horticultural plots. Hunting plays a smaller role in their economy than when they were living in Tampiitawa, but this has been balanced by an increased emphasis on fishing. Dry rice is an important new food source, and chickens, which the Tapirapé already had in Tampiitawa, have, along with eggs, come to play a larger role in their diet. The Tapirapé have become accustomed to various items that they acquire from Brazilians through trade or purchase, including material for the clothes they now wear, kerosene, soap, flashlights and batteries, fishhooks, combs, salt, and rapadura, a molasses-like sweetener. A number of Tapirapé men have spent time working as commercial fishermen. The Tapirapé have, however, largely retained their economic self-sufficiency and are certainly not dependent upon the regional economy for their basic sustenance.

The village of Tawaiho itself is laid out in the traditional manner, with family dwellings forming a circle around a central plaza and men's house. The family houses show the influence of Brazilian styles of building, but the men's house is constructed in the traditional style and continues to serve as the sleeping place for young unmarried men and a social and ritual center for all men in the community. The relationship between the structure of the village circle and the organization of ceremonial events still remains; the sponsors that co-ordinate certain major ceremonies must still come from opposite sides of the village and patterns of dancing between the men's house and family houses have been maintained. The domestic groups that live in these houses are no longer the large uxorilocal extended families of former times and they tend instead to be composed of single nuclear families,⁸ augmented in some cases by other unmarried relatives. The principle of uxorilocality persists, however, in the tendency for a couple to reside with the girl's parents in the early period of the marriage, moving out as their own family grows.

The social and ceremonial categories into which the Tapirapé, particularly the males, are divided, and (which Wagley had consid-

ered particularly vulnerable to the kind of disruption the Tapirapé had been experiencing in the course of the twentieth century), continue to function in the life of Tawaiho. The most important of these are the men's moieties, each divided into three age-graded groups. At the time of my stay in 1966, there were only three men in the senior age level; since they all belonged to the same moiety, this left the senior age grade of the other moiety, a temporarily depleted category. Membership in the adolescent and mature men's age grades was, however, evenly balanced and served as an ordering principle in various activities that took place during my stay. The formal differentiation of age levels remains an important principle in Tapirapé social life and is reflected in the system of naming, in patterns of body decoration, in the movement of boys into the men's house and their subsequent elaborate initiation into adulthood, and in the common use of age status terms in reference and address.

Another important set of groups are the feasting societies, which involve everyone in the village and meet from time to time throughout the year, either singly or simultaneously in the village plaza, for the purpose of having their members share communal meals. Of the nine named groups that were remembered in 1966, and were considered to constitute the entire set, three were extinct and another, with only two members, seemed on the verge of becoming so. The ideology associated with these groups was passing into the realm of esoteric knowledge, understood by only a small segment of the community; its value for the others, particularly the younger members of the village, was as an enjoyable culinary and social event.⁹

My visits to the Tapirapé in 1966 and 1967 coincided with the height of their ceremonial cycle, which occurs during the dry season. There was dancing and singing almost every night and again at dawn, several major ceremonies were performed, and the feast groups came together for a communal meal. The men's moiety and age grade groupings played a central role in village life during this time, since they determine the pattern of men's activities in a large proportion of ritual events. The female population of Tawaiho was also mobilized for the full range of ceremonial activities. Though women's role in this sphere of life is secondary to that of men, it is still considerable. They take part in much of the singing and dancing that goes on daily, married women participating in accordance with the moiety affiliations of their husbands; unmarried girls play important roles in some

rituals; and the entire community of women serves as an active chorus and audience to masked dances performed by the men. The intensity of Tapirapé involvement in ceremonial activities, and the importance of these in the life of their community, can scarcely be exaggerated. Aside from the ceremonies themselves, there are the various preparations that go into them, which include the manufacture of regalia, the execution of intricate body painting, and the preparation of food for feasts and distributions.

Given this focus on ritual, the disappearance of the central institution of shamanism from the Tapirapé cultural repertoire is worthy of some further comment, particularly since other cases of shamanism have been known to survive the breakdown of the kinds of communal ceremonial activities that still form a part of Tapirapé life.¹⁰ Part of the explanation lies, to be sure, in the drastic shocks and dislocations the Tapirapé have suffered, which made it more likely that shamans would die before being able to pass on their special skills and knowledge to others. There is, however, more to the matter than this; it seems necessary also to consider the ambivalence with which the Tapirapé themselves regarded their shamans. While shamans were felt to possess knowledge vital to the continuing survival and well-being of the group and played a central role in what was formerly the most important event in the Tapirapé ritual cycle,¹¹ they were also feared as sorcerers and commonly executed by the relatives of their alleged victims. During my visits to Tawaiho in the 1960s, I heard several Tapirapé express relief to be free of the fear and violence associated with shamanism. I also became aware that the interest the Tapirapé had in trying to locate Kamaira was tempered by a reluctance to have a man of his powers back in their midst. There were also new factors in their lives that made it easier for them to conceive of being able to manage without their shamans—the medical assistance provided by the Sisters and the possibility of consulting shamans among the nearby Karajá. Karajá shamans could also serve as targets of sorcery accusations, a convenient situation because it allowed these hostilities to be projected outside the village. When Kamaira did rejoin the other Tapirapé, most of them, as we have seen, greeted his arrival with enthusiasm; perhaps they felt that, in their new social setting, the institution of shamanism could be revived selectively, that they could enjoy its ceremonial benefits without being exposed to its dangers. In any event, in considering cases

like this one, it is important to keep in mind that people's attitudes toward their own cultural institutions cannot be taken for granted. We are accustomed to thinking of them as varied and complex in our own society, and this perspective must be extended to societies like the Tapirapé as well.

The increased contact that the Tapirapé have had with Karajá, given the proximity of Tawaiho to the Araguaia River, has been an important new feature of Tapirapé social life in recent decades. The Indian Post located at the mouth of the Tapirapé River serves both groups and is the site of a Karajá settlement. During the 1950s and 1960s, there were several cases of intermarriage between Tapirapé men and Karajá women, due primarily to demographic imbalances in the Tapirapé population. Since both groups tend toward an uxorilocal residence pattern, and since Karajá women are not accustomed to performing the kinds of horticultural tasks at which Tapirapé women are proficient, such marriages generally involved the Tapirapé husband's leaving Tawaiho to live with his wife's people. Cardoso de Oliveira commented upon this situation after his 1957 visit, predicting a future of intensified inter-tribal contact, greater dependence of the Tapirapé on the Karajá, and an accelerated rate of culture change (Oliveira 1959). I raised similar questions myself, following my visits in the 1960s, calling attention not only to intermarriage, but to the involvement of young, unmarried Tapirapé men in such Karajá activities as commercial fishing. I felt that these young men would become used to a style of life different from that of Tawaiho and might not want to settle down again in the village (Shapiro 1968a:25–26). I found, however, when I returned in 1974 that all of these young men had married within the village, had cleared large gardens, and had taken on the full social and ceremonial responsibilities of Tapirapé family men. Out-marriage has, in fact, declined in recent years as the Tapirapé population has grown and the sex ratio become more balanced. One Karajá woman who had been living in Tawaiho with her Tapirapé husband in the 1960s was still living there in 1974, with a different Tapirapé husband. As of September 1977, a Karajá couple, related to Tapirapé through marriage, was living in Tawaiho. The couple had gone back to their Karajá village after living for a while in Tawaiho, but were urged to return by the Tapirapé who said they had grown attached to them.¹² Karajá have been attending ceremonies at Tawaiho for some time now and are included

in the food distributions that form part of these events. The relationship between the two groups has, in general, been less a matter of the Karajá exercising an acculturative influence over the Tapirapé than of the Tapirapé being able to fit the Karajá into their own social world.

The relationships Tapirapé have had with outsiders have been generally characterized by a receptiveness on the part of the Tapirapé to the cultural practices of others. They have, while maintaining their social and cultural distinctiveness, incorporated a variety of institutions borrowed from their Indian neighbors. Their moiety and age grade system, feasting groups, and various details of ceremonial life are clearly derived from similar patterns found among the Gê-speaking peoples of the region. They have adopted a major Karajá ritual, a masked dance known locally by the term *aruanã*,¹³ and integrated it into their own ceremonial cycle and cosmological system. This ritual, like other borrowed institutions, has undergone certain transformations in the Tapirapé context. The elements of sexual opposition and symbolic male dominance, which are central to the Karajá ritual, play a subordinate role in the Tapirapé version; the pairs who perform the dance together are said by the Karajá to represent two male spirits, while the Tapirapé see the spirit couple as husband and wife.

The distinctiveness of the Tapirapé vis à vis other Indian groups is expressed not only in such changes in borrowed practices, but also asserted symbolically by the Tapirapé in ritual enactments of the history of inter-tribal contact. One of the most important annual ceremonies performed by the Tapirapé represents the attacks they have suffered from their more warlike neighbors. The masks that are prepared for this ceremony are the most striking artifacts produced by the Tapirapé.¹⁴ These masks are worn by two male dancers, one of whom represents the Kayapó and the other the Karajá. The Kayapó are also portrayed by a number of young men and boys who dress in what are meant to be outlandish costumes and engage in wild and aggressive behavior. The men who represent the Tapirapé wear the clothing of "civilized" non-Indians and contrast with the others by virtue of their calm and stately demeanor. The various performers, after making a circuit of the village, gather in the plaza to stage a tableau in which the "Tapirapé" impassively sustain the ritual assaults of the "Kayapó" and "Karajá," and then overcome them by leading or carrying them, one by one, into the men's house. This fi-

nale not only serves as a reversal in which the victims become the victors, but posits a victory in terms of incorporation: erstwhile enemies are absorbed into the center of Tapirapé social and religious life. The ceremony concludes with a communal meal in the men's house, which male guests are invited to share with the men of Tawaiho. Since Karajá have come to figure prominently among the guests, the ceremony has become a ritual of incorporation on two levels. At the same time, given the presence of Karajá spectators and guests, politeness dictates that overt references to the identity of the "Karajá" masked figure be avoided. I discovered this when I made the mistake of trying to elicit the symbolic significance of the masks during the ceremony. It is possible that changes in the relationship between Tapirapé and Karajá will come to be reflected in a changing interpretation of the ritual.

One of the more intriguing features of this ritual, as it has come to be performed in Tawaiho, is the use of Western clothing as a means of symbolically distinguishing the Tapirapé from their traditional Indian enemies. This may seem, on the face of it, to be merely a reflection of the values and prejudices of the surrounding Brazilian society, an acquiescence to the notion that "civilizados" are superior to Indians. The matter is, however, more complex and requires a consideration of the unusual history of contacts between the Tapirapé and non-Indians. The Tapirapé have generally fared better with non-Indians than with their indigenous neighbors. This is not to say that the Tapirapé have escaped the kinds of threats that have brought about the extinction of other Indian groups. However, the fact that they have been able to survive as a people and to withstand these pressures up to the present is largely due to the help they have had from non-Indian outsiders.

Some of this help has already been described above, including, for example, the role played by a local Brazilian rancher, who supported a large part of the Tapirapé population in the period following the Kayapó attack of 1947. This episode of Tapirapé history stands in sharp contrast to the general pattern of relations between ranchers and Indian groups. The Tapirapé are also one of the few peoples for whom the Indian Protection Service fulfilled its intended function, at least during the time that Valentim Gomes was in charge of the Indian post.

Another unusual feature of Tapirapé history is the extent and va-

riety of their relationships with anthropologists, many of whom have remained in contact with the Tapirapé over long periods of time. The diversity in national backgrounds of these anthropologists has been one factor contributing to the development of a certain cosmopolitanism that characterizes Tapirapé attitudes toward outsiders. In their relationships with anthropologists, the Tapirapé have been introduced to non-Indians who find their way of life interesting, valuable, and enjoyable.

While anthropologists, like other outsiders, have served as agents of social change, they have, at the same time, acted to encourage the preservation of cultural traditions. One example of this traditionalizing effect comes from my own field experience. While I was living in Tawaiho in 1966, the time came for the men to clear plots of land for new gardens. This can be done in one of two ways: either each man works alone to clear his own horticultural plot or the men work communally to clear the plots in succession. In the latter case, the men's moiety system serves to organize labor and each day's work is followed by a communal meal. Of the two methods, the former had come to be the usual one during the decades preceding my own visit. When I heard the men begin to talk about clearing new gardens, I asked the village headman, who was my neighbor, if they were by any chance planning to do so communally. He told me that the Tapirapé were now too "lazy" for that and that each man would just go out to work alone. I must have made my disappointment evident, since that evening there was a general meeting in the men's house and the headman could be heard addressing his fellow Tapirapé at length. Though I could not follow the conversation in detail, I did catch the frequent mention of "Doto Kalo" (Doctor Carlos), the name by which Wagley is known to the Tapirapé. I subsequently learned that the headman's exhortations had taken the form of pointing out that Doctor Carlos had sent his niece from a great distance to come and live with the Tapirapé and that they would be disappointing both of us were they not to do things the "right" way. The next day, and on succeeding days, the men left the village together in the morning, spent the day clearing land, and returned in the early evening. At the conclusion of each day's work, the men would be met outside the village by their wives who brought food for the communal meal. The meal was shared by the men according to moiety and age-grade

affiliation. A few hours later, after everyone had had a chance to rest, the night's singing and dancing began.

This departure from what would otherwise have been the normal routine should not be seen as an artificial performance put on for my benefit. I may have served as a stimulus or pretext for the undertaking, but it was clearly something that the Tapirapé carried out to heighten the excitement of village life for themselves. It is commonly the case among the Tapirapé that practices that have been allowed to fall into disuse for a time will be revived when there is some special cause for animation in the community. In 1977, the communal garden clearing and its attendant rituals were performed again just before the arrival of delegates to an inter-tribal meeting that the Tapirapé were hosting.¹⁵ Thus, the best way to understand the decision in 1966 is not that the Tapirapé did something especially for their anthropologist friends, but that relationships with anthropologists had become a factor in their plans.

Another function that anthropologists have filled in the course of their work with the Tapirapé has been to serve as intermediaries between the Tapirapé and members of the local Brazilian population. The most important such case is Wagley's bringing Valentim Gomes with him on his 1939 trip, thereby initiating a relationship that was to be so crucial for the Tapirapé in the ensuing years. When I lived with the Tapirapé in 1966, I was accompanied by a young woman from the nearby settlement of Furo de Pedra. She was at first both shy and fearful of living in Tawaiho, but soon developed easy and companionable relationships in the village. She continued to receive visits from Tapirapé after returning to Furo de Pedra, and her relationship with them seems to have affected the attitudes of others in the town.

The closest and most important relationships the Tapirapé have had with outsiders have been with the Little Sisters of Jesus and Father François Jentel. Contacts with missionaries prior to the arrival of the Sisters and Father Jentel had, for the most part, been limited to brief and intermittent visits from representatives of a variety of different persuasions. The only fairly sustained contact during this time was with the Scottish evangelical missionary F. C. Kegel, who made several visits to the Tapirapé between 1932 and 1935, each of two to five months' duration, and introduced Baldus to the Tapirapé in 1935. Kegel's main activity among the Tapirapé was to teach them

songs (Baldus 1970:51). The Tapirapé, who have a strong interest in music that extends to learning any foreign songs they can master, proved receptive to his efforts and still speak of him often.

The role that the Little Sisters of Jesus have played in Tapirapé life from 1952 up to the present has few if any parallels in the history of contact between missionaries and Indians in Brazil. Their efforts were singled out by Brazil's foremost authority on Indian policy, Darcy Ribeiro, who, in an otherwise critical review of missionary activity, held the Tapirapé mission up as a 'model' for others to emulate.¹⁶

The unique quality of the relationship between the Little Sisters of Jesus and the Tapirapé stems mainly from the fact that their order, founded by followers of the French priest Charles Foucault, does not define its purpose in terms of proselytism and the acquisition of converts. The life of each chapter revolves around the dual activities of work and contemplation. The Sisters must, on the one hand, maintain a routine that includes several hours a day spent in silent prayer, and, on the other, seek to adapt themselves to the mode of life characteristic of the community in which they are living. The Sisters at Tawaiho perform many of the same subsistence activities as the Tapirapé, including the cultivation of swidden plots. I have had occasion to visit households of Sisters in one of the hillside slums of Rio, where they had jobs in the factory that employed many of their neighbors, and in a ghetto area of southwest Chicago, where they hold jobs similar to those of the Little Sisters in Rio. The house they live in at Tawaiho, while having certain structural features related to the life of the Order, like a chapel and a private sleeping area, was designed and built to blend in as much as possible with the architectural style of the Tapirapé village.

The Sisters participate to a considerable extent in the social and ceremonial round of village life. They have, like the anthropologists who have lived with the Tapirapé, been incorporated into such institutions as the system of feasting groups. The Sisters have also collaborated in the revival of certain Tapirapé customs. To give an example, the traditional practice of piercing the lower lip of male infants was abandoned at one point when increased contact with Brazilians made the Tapirapé self-conscious about this aspect of their appearance. Three years before my last visit in 1974, the Tapirapé, in a burst of good feeling that followed upon the rebuilding of their men's

house and the initiation of a group of young men, decided to revive the practice. There was, however, a problem because the young boys who had not had their lips pierced at birth were fearful of undergoing the operation because of the pain involved. A solution was found when the Sisters offered to provide a local anaesthetic.

An incident that is similarly revealing of the relationship between the Sisters and the Tapirapé in matters of custom and personal adornment occurred during my 1974 visit. I wanted to look at the quartz lip plug worn by a young man during the initiation ceremony. There is only one such plug left and the Tapirapé are no longer able to obtain material to replace it. The Tapirapé have asked the Sisters to keep it in a secluded part of their house, since they consider it the safest place in the village. When the Sisters brought it out to me, I noticed that it was wrapped in a pair of black knit briefs. Since I would not have expected the Sisters to possess an undergarment of this sort, I inquired about it. The explanation had to do with the fact that initiates had become unwilling to appear publicly wearing the penis sheath that constituted the sole item of male clothing in former years, and that the aesthetically unsatisfactory alternative was for them to complete a beautiful and intricate ensemble of regalia and body painting with a pair of baggy khaki shorts. One of the Sisters had, in the course of a trip to Rio, found the briefs in the Brazilian equivalent of a five and ten cent store and it occurred to her that they would be virtually invisible against the black body paint worn by the initiate. The effect, as she had foreseen, was most pleasing to the Tapirapé, particularly to the initiate who could improve his appearance without sacrificing his modesty.

The Sisters have played a central role in the physical survival and well-being of the Tapirapé not only through medical assistance, but also by their efforts in bringing about a change in the Tapirapé system of family planning. They did this in a manner that was both tactful and effective. Rather than attempting to convince the Tapirapé that infanticide was evil, the usual approach taken by missionaries, they instead offered to adopt the unwanted child of any woman who already had 3 children or 2 of the same sex. As it turned out, once the infants were not killed immediately at birth, their mothers were unwilling to renounce them. The first step was for the mother to decide to go on nursing the child until it could be given over entirely to the Sisters' care; the second was for the parents simply to accept the

child into their household. The change was effected quite rapidly, requiring only a few precedents to break the taboo. By 1966, large families were common and one couple had six sons.

The Sisters have mediated many of the relationships between Tapirapé and outsiders, including both local Brazilians and representatives of large development companies that have been seeking to establish themselves in the area in recent years. They have served as a buffer against tourists who have been traveling through the region in ever increasing numbers. In 1966, a traveling houseboat had begun making "safari" tours along the Araguaia, docking at the Tapirapé village whence tourists would be flown to Gê villages for sight-seeing. Among those who were brought to Tawaiho on this floating hotel during my stay in 1966 was the American novelist John Dos Passos, who subsequently published an account of his visit to the Tapirapé in *Holiday Magazine*. Such tourist traffic, besides being disruptive of village life, posed a pollution hazard to the Tapirapé bathing place and drinking supply, and the Sisters intervened to prevent the boat from coming as far as the village. Since that time the Sisters have continually sought to limit and control contacts between Tapirapé and tourists.

As Christians, the Sisters believe that their faith offers to humankind the greatest opportunity for spiritual fulfillment. However, they tend not to emphasize the exclusivity of their religion and will at times express the belief that God is present in different ways to different peoples. Nor do they consider themselves superior to the Tapirapé with regard to the practice of those virtues defined as "Christian." I have often heard the Sisters remark upon how much they can learn from the Tapirapé about such things as patience, humility, and charity. While their chapel is open to anyone who wishes to enter it, they do not exert any pressure on the Tapirapé to join them. They seem to be aware of what conversion amounts to in situations of social and economic inequality, when the bringers of a new religion are also the providers of desired goods; aware also that the process is usually one in which an intellectually and emotionally rich set of beliefs is replaced by an ill-understood approximation of a religious system.

It is interesting to note that the tolerance and degree of cultural relativism that informs the Sisters' view of their work antedates the liberalization of attitudes found among certain missionaries who have

more recently been influenced by the social sciences, cultural anthropology in particular, or by the general climate of opinion in their own societies. It seems that the Sisters have found within their own belief system, the same one that has historically provided the rationale for extreme forms of cultural imperialism, a very different and less traveled path.

There are, as of the present, no Tapirapé converts. The Tapirapé do show a certain amount of interest in the Sisters' religious observances, particularly those connected with Christmas and Easter, but the meaning of this interest is open to interpretation. It may be a part of the general curiosity the Tapirapé have for exotic customs, and also a reciprocal return for the Sisters' interest in Tapirapé traditions.

Though the Sisters have sought to impose themselves as little as possible on the Tapirapé, they have, inevitably, affected Tapirapé society in a number of ways. The Tapirapé have come to depend upon the Sisters, not only for medical assistance, but in terms of their social life as well. The Sisters' house has become a focal point of the village, a gathering place that has, to some extent, supplanted the men's house. The change is one that has significant social structural implications, since visits to the Sisters are made by women as well as men, and commonly involve married couples and family groups.

Given the fact that the Little Sisters of Jesus are representatives of a technologically and politically dominant society, their relationship to the Tapirapé is bound to be a hierarchical one. It is important, however, to see this relationship in comparative context, that is, to measure it against other relationships between tribal peoples and Westerners. In this light, the relationship between the Tapirapé and the Sisters is remarkable for its degree of symmetry and mutuality. The Sisters' approach is so different from that of most other missionaries that one wonders if the common label is even appropriate. In matters of religious belief and standards of dress, where missionary interference has been notorious, the Sisters have shown a respect for cultural differences. Where they have intervened to bring about social change, as in the case of the birth policy, they have done so in a nonaggressive manner and, as it turns out, to the advantage of the Tapirapé themselves. They have not, as is commonly the case, suppressed institutions that played a vital role in traditional life, leaving social chaos and demoralization in their wake. Their economic

dealings with the Tapirapé set them apart from most other missionaries, since they have largely entered into traditional Tapirapé patterns of reciprocal exchange rather than involving Indians in wage labor and thereby introducing new and exploitative relations of production foreign to the native system.

The fact that the Sisters are an order of women is worth considering in an attempt to understand their role in Tapirapé life. For one thing, their general attitude of support and self-effacement, while not an invariant feature or automatic consequence of European sex role structuring, is nonetheless more in line with the behavior expected of females than of males. Looking at it from the Tapirapé perspective, and given the relative positions of men and women in Tapirapé society, one might hypothesize that they themselves would have seen a group of male missionaries as being in a more dominant position; the sex of the Sisters thus, in some measure, acts as a counterbalance to the social asymmetry between themselves and the Tapirapé. Finally, the sex of the Sisters has had an influence on the attitudes of local Brazilians to their mission and to Tawaiho more generally. The respect with which the Sisters are viewed by members of the Brazilian population is mingled with feelings of protectiveness that extend to the Tapirapé as well, reinforcing the perception of the Tapirapé as an essentially pacific and gentle people. There is, in effect, a certain similarity in the behavioral styles of the Sisters and the Tapirapé. While it is possible that this reflects an influence of the Sisters on the Tapirapé, it seems more reasonable, considering the way in which the Tapirapé have been characteristically described by outsiders, to see this as a matter of compatibility rather than acculturation.

Another major missionary presence in Tapirapé life, in addition to the Little Sisters of Jesus, has been Father François Jentel, who arrived in the region two years after the Sisters and worked there until his imprisonment by the Brazilian government and expulsion from the country in 1974. During his stay, Father Jentel's parish included not only Tawaiho, but a couple of nearby Brazilian settlements as well; his relationship to the Tapirapé thus did not have the same continuity and intimacy as the Sisters'. At the same time, his impact on Tapirapé life was greater in terms of the changes he initiated and fostered.

The new items of technology that Father Jentel introduced into

the village include a tractor that serves to transport produce from the gardens, making it easier for the Tapirapé to cultivate plots located some distance from their village, and a generator that is used in pumping water and in a new technique of manioc processing that is used in addition to the traditional method.¹⁷ Father Jentel was also responsible for adding three modern buildings to the village circle: his own house, a schoolhouse, and a church. The buildings are of whitewashed concrete with tiled roofs; the priest's house and schoolhouse have flush toilets. Given Father Jentel's intermittent pattern of residence at Tawaiho, his house serves for much of the time as a storehouse or a place where guests to the village can spend a few days. The building officially designated as the schoolhouse has, in fact, more often been used as a residence, mostly for those who have served as teachers in the Tapirapé school program.¹⁸ When classes are being taught, they generally meet in the church, which in turn is only infrequently used for religious services.

The school program, which was established for the purpose of teaching the Tapirapé to read and write both in their own language and in Portuguese, has operated off and on, depending upon the availability of qualified teachers. It has been in regular session for the last several years, with separate classes for men, women, and children.¹⁹ While the buildings in which school activities take place were constructed under the supervision of Father Jentel, the Sisters have played an important role in organizing the program and finding teachers.

Though building a church at Tawaiho was one of Father Jentel's projects, he did not engage in active proselytism among the Tapirapé. When he said mass in the village, it was usually in the small chapel of the Sisters' house and was performed for the Sisters themselves. When mass was said in church, a number of Tapirapé turned out for the occasion and many sought to join in the singing. Here, as in the case of the aforementioned interest of the Tapirapé in the Sisters' ritual activities, there is some ambiguity as to what Tapirapé participation meant.

In defining his own mission among the Tapirapé, Father Jentel saw his most pressing and immediate obligation not in terms of conversion, but in terms of helping the Tapirapé to secure rights over the land they occupied and depended on for their livelihood. A representative of the growing radical movement within the Catholic Church,

Father Jentel had come to re-examine the role of the clerical establishment in nations like Brazil and to question whether the Church could minister to the spiritual needs of its members without concerning itself also with their material well-being.

Father Jentel's activist engagement in the social and economic problems of his Indian and Brazilian parishioners was particularly important in view of the political situation that had been developing in the region since the 1950s. At that time, the government of the state of Mato Grosso began selling large tracts of land to development companies; as is commonly the case in such sales, the land was disposed of without concern for the constitutional rights of the Indian populations and Brazilian squatters who happened to be living on it. Land in the area changed hands several times and, by the time of my visit in 1966, 320,000 hectares, including large stretches of Tapirapé territory and the land on which the town of Santa Teresinha is located, had been acquired by the Companhia do Desenvolvimento do Araguaia (Araguaia Development Company). CODEARA, as the company was known, had been attempting to consolidate its position in the region, engaging in land surveys, using strong-arm tactics to displace squatters, and setting up in the vicinity of Santa Teresinha what can only be described as a slave labor camp composed of migrant workers brought in from the northeast.

The company came into direct confrontation with Father Jentel, primarily because of the priest's activities in Santa Teresinha, where he had aided in the establishment of a farmers' cooperative (see Shapiro 1967), but also because he opposed the company's efforts to take over Tapirapé lands and have the Tapirapé population relocated. Father Jentel urged the Tapirapé to survey and demarcate the boundaries of their land, and worked with them at this task. He engaged in negotiations with the Indian Protection Service (and, after 1968, with its successor, the National Indian Foundation), with a view toward helping the Tapirapé acquire clear legal title to their land and having the company relinquish its own claims. He suggested ways that the Tapirapé might discourage company land surveyors from intruding into their territory. One such tactic was for an armed Tapirapé man to appear close to where a surveyor was engaged in his activities, and merely to remain there immobile. The Tapirapé discovered, to their amusement, that this masquerade proved an effective means of intimidation.

The position of the Tapirapé has been a precarious one ever since CODEARA moved into the area. For several years, at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 70s, the Tapirapé delayed rebuilding their men's house because they were afraid the company would take away their land. For a while, it was rumored that the Tapirapé were to be relocated to the Island of Bananal, which had recently been made into a national park for indigenous groups. Such a move would have been disastrous to Tapirapé, given the unavailability on the island of sufficient land suitable for horticulture. The Tapirapé would have been deprived of what is not only the basis of their economy, but also the focus of their lives more generally, and would be forced to become, like the Karajá, increasingly dependent upon commercial relationships with local Brazilians and welfare aid from the National Indian Foundation.²⁰ The company presently has ceded only a small portion of the land the Tapirapé currently occupy and cultivate. The Tapirapé are still in de facto possession of the rest, but do not have legal title to it. With the departure of Father Jentel, they have lost an important source of support in their fight to hold on to their territory.

In aiding the Tapirapé in their battle against CODEARA, Father Jentel provided the Tapirapé with vital information about the economic and political factors that were impinging upon their lives from the outside. The political consciousness of the Tapirapé also developed in the context of various company-related events. For example, the arrival in their village of refugees fleeing from the company work camp to hide out with the Tapirapé until they could escape from the region, and the appearance in Tawaiho of military police who arrested Father Jentel and placed the Sisters under armed surveillance (Shapiro 1967) were two such instances.

Because Father Jentel worked both with the Tapirapé and the local Brazilian population, he was able to serve as a bridge between them and, in particular, to create an awareness that they faced a common plight and a common enemy. There has thus come to be a sentiment of solidarity in the attitudes of the Brazilian settlers toward the Tapirapé, an unusual state of affairs for a frontier area. While it cannot be said that the inhabitants of Santa Teresinha and Furo de Pedra are without prejudice against Indians, they nonetheless do not perceive the Tapirapé as a threat, nor do they question their right to exist as a people. It is interesting to note that local Brazilians generally use

the term "Tapirapé," the group's own auto-designation, rather than the broader and pejorative term "indio."

The roles that Father Jentel and the Little Sisters of Jesus have played in Tapirapé life have complemented one another: the Sisters, in accommodating themselves to the Tapirapé as a part of their own religious vocation, have supported the preservation of Tapirapé customs and the traditional bases of Tapirapé identity and self-esteem; the priest, for his part, has provided the Tapirapé with certain information and skills that have made them better prepared to deal with the larger society that will ultimately determine their fate. While the relationship with either the Sisters or the priest would alone have provided an unusual case of Indian/missionary contact, the combination of the two has made the Tapirapé experience unique.

The Tapirapé have managed, up to the present, to strike a balance between maintaining their cultural integrity and adapting to a changing set of social circumstances. They continue to dispose of resources sufficient to meet their needs and to enjoy a full and rewarding communal life; their village presents a striking and positive contrast to the Brazilian and Karajá settlements in the region. The crucial question is whether they can hold on to their land, and thus be able to confront Brazilian national society from a position of political strength. Given the general experience of indigenous peoples in lowland South America, it is difficult to be optimistic about the prospects of the Tapirapé. Even if their territory were to be declared a national park, or reservation, their troubles could hardly be considered over; the most famous of Brazil's Indian reservations, the Xingu National Park, created in 1961 and up until recently a symbol of the possibility for an enlightened and humane Indian policy, has been invaded and divided by national highways that form part of the larger Trans-Amazonian project.

In response to the problems they face, the Tapirapé have begun to come together with several other Indian groups in what looks like an incipient pan-Indian movement. This new level of political action has involved meetings among representatives of different tribes and visits to Brasília, with a view to making the national government take action with respect to the rights of tribal groups. In September of 1977, the Tapirapé were themselves hosts to a gathering involving Shavante, Bororo, Paresí, Nambikwara, and Kaingang delegates, who declared themselves prepared to participate in the efforts of the

Tapirapé to maintain their territory. The Tapirapé, for their part, can, given the history of their relationships both with other Indian groups and with Westerners, be expected to play an important role in such an emerging unified Indian movement in Brazil.

Notes

1. Bibliographies of Wagley's and Baldus' writings on the Tapirapé can be found in their respective monographs. Galvão's work was done in collaboration with Wagley and resulted in an article on the Tapirapé for the *Handbook of South American Indians* (Wagley and Galvão 1948), as well as a comparative study of Tupian kinship terminology, which incorporated the results of their field research among the Tenetehara (Wagley and Galvão 1946a, 1946b). Cardoso de Oliveira accompanied Wagley to the Tapirapé in 1957 and published a report on their situation at that time (Oliveira 1959). My own visits to the Tapirapé took place in 1966, when I did field research from June to September under the sponsorship of the Ford Foundation's Frontier Research Project, administered through Columbia University's Institute of Latin American Studies, of which Wagley was then director; in August of 1967, when I returned for a month before going on to do doctoral research elsewhere in Brazil; and for two weeks in March 1974. The first two trips resulted in publications on kinship (Shapiro 1968a) and ceremonial activities (1968b), as well as an unpublished report on local political developments that were endangering the welfare of the Tapirapé (Shapiro 1967).
2. See Baldus 1970, ch. 2, for a review and analysis of the earliest documentary evidence concerning the Tapirapé.
3. Wagley (1977:32) reports that two informants mentioned a sixth village, but that others failed to confirm its existence. See Wagley 1977:33 for a map showing the location of the five Tapirapé villages and indicating the date when each was abandoned.
4. One major move to Chechutawa occurred during the early 1940s and was prompted by fear of the whites who were coming to settle in the region in increasing numbers. Most of the Tapirapé returned to Tapiitawa shortly thereafter because of homesickness and in the wake of a dispute that involved the killing of a shaman.
5. The Indian Protection Service was founded in 1910 with the dual purpose of creating safe conditions for the colonization of the interior and protecting the Indian groups that stood in the colonizers' path. Though these were contradictory aims, the service, under the aegis of its founder, General Rondon, took what was for its time an unusually enlightened and altruistic approach to native peoples. The subsequent record of the service was at best erratic and, at worst, a national scandal. In 1968, publicity concerning the nefarious activities of various of its functionaries brought the service to an end. It was replaced by the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), which now serves as the government agency in charge of Indian affairs. See Ribeiro 1962 for an account of the founding of the Indian Protection Service and of its activities up until 1960.

6. Of the three French nuns who formed the original group, one, Sister Geneviève-Hélène, has continued to live with the Tapirapé for the greater part of the succeeding years. Sister Mayi-Baptiste, who arrived in 1956, has been in the Tapirapé village almost continuously since that time. The group, in line with the philosophy of their order, has become more international in its composition and has sought to include at least one Brazilian Sister among those resident at any time. During the period of my research in 1966, there were four Sisters in the village whose respective countries of origin were France (Basque region), Brazil, Portugal, and Luxembourg.

7. See Wagley 1940 and also a later study, Wagley 1951, in which a contrast is drawn between the Tapirapé and the Tenetehara in regard to the groups' respective success in adjusting to their post-contact situations.

8. It should be remembered that the nuclear family unit is presently larger than in earlier times, given changes in the birth policy.

9. For further information on these institutions, see Wagley 1977: chs. 4 and 5; Shapiro 1968a and 1968b; and Baldus 1970: chs. 11 and 12. Recruitment to the men's moities is generally by patrilineation, though exceptions and changes of moiety affiliation also occur. Membership in the feasting societies seems to have been regulated traditionally by parallel filiation, boys joining their fathers' groups and girls their mothers'; patterns of membership were, however, quite fluid at the time I was in Tawaiho. These two sets of groupings bear a clear resemblance to institutions found among the Gê-speaking peoples of the region. Another Gê-related socio-ceremonial institution that existed formerly among the Tapirapé, but now exists only in memory, is a relationship of formalized friendship that involved exchange and an extreme form of respect marked by avoidance (Shapiro 1968b:12-13).

10. See the analysis presented in Murphy's (1958) study of Mundurucú religion.

11. This was a ritual in which shamans battled the spirit of Thunder at the onset of the rainy season. Wagley witnessed it in 1939 and described it in a photographic essay (Wagley 1943).

12. Personal communication from the Little Sisters of Jesus, September 5, 1977.

13. The Karajá term for this dance is *ijaso*. See Tavener 1973 for a discussion of the ritual and how it was being performed among the Karajá in the 1960s. According to William Lipkind, an anthropologist who did earlier research among the Karajá, the Tapirapé learned the dance from the Javaé, a Karajá sub-group, at a time when some Tapirapé were living on the island of Bananal (personal communication from Lipkind to Baldus, cited in Baldus 1970:36).

14. The Tapirapé term for both the mask and the ceremony is *tāwa*, commonly rendered in Portuguese as "cara grande," or "big face."

15. Personal communication from the Little Sisters of Jesus, September 5, 1977. See note 17.

16. "Um modelo de atuação missionária, altamente meritória é a realizada, hoje, entre os índios Tapirapé, por freiras católicas da irmandade Michel Foucault" (sic; the order was founded by followers of Charles Foucault). Ribeiro 1962:164.

17. The traditional method of processing bitter manioc, which is still the most common at present, is to soak the roots in a submerged canoe for several days, allowing the prussic acid to be leached away, set the roots in the sun to dry, pound them in a mortar, strain them in a sieve, and then roast the flour over a fire, sprinkling water on

it as it is cooking. The end product, called "farinha d'agua," can only be kept for a few days. The generator-powered processor is used in the preparation of a dry flour that can be stored for long periods of time.

18. During my visits in the 1960s, the house was occupied by a couple working as teachers and later by a linguist from the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, Yonne de Freitas Leite, who has been carrying out linguistic research among the Tapirapé.

19. Personal communication from the Little Sisters of Jesus, December 30, 1975, and September 10, 1977.

20. See Tavener 1973 for a discussion of the Karajá situation.