

# The culture-conscious Brazilian Indian:

## Representing and reworking Indianness in Kayabi political discourse

### ABSTRACT

In this article, I examine a Brazilian indigenous people's self-conscious use of the ideas of "culture" and "Indian ethnicity." Whereas analysts usually discuss indigenous use of these concepts in the context of high-profile national or transnational intercultural events, I look at how retrospective accounts of participation in such events are woven into local political discourse. I focus on how two Amazonian leaders represent their participation in past events of cultural display as a means of mounting very different arguments about their eligibility for positions of authority in their community. I argue that local frames of reference, for example, those relating to the culturally appropriate conduct of politics, must be considered in assessing the significance and meaning of cultural performances, even when the staging of indigenous culture is performed principally for a nonlocal audience. [*Indian identity, cultural performance, leadership, Xingu Indigenous Park, Brazilian Amazon*]

Recent ethnography in lowland South America has become increasingly focused on indigenous peoples' self-conscious use of the ideas of "culture" and "ethnicity," as such peoples have entered into the public spheres of several nation-states. For example, in Brazil, Kayapó and Xavante have become well-known for using aspects of Indian identity to influence national and international audiences to gain some, albeit precarious, leverage in high-profile battles over natural resources (Conklin 1997; Conklin and Graham 1995; Fisher 1994; Ramos 1998; Turner 1991, 1999). In Columbia, Tukanoans discuss the term *culture* with others in regional encounters such as shaman workshops and teacher seminars and within indigenous rights organizations (Gow and Rappaport 2002; Jackson 1989, 1991, 1995a, 1995b). In Venezuela, Warão dance troupes participating in national pageants self-consciously talk about and display what they consider emblems of indigenous culture (Briggs 1996). The awareness and manipulation of the idea of "culture" that is taking place throughout lowland South America mirrors a similar self-conscious display of culture currently going on among indigenous peoples elsewhere in the world, such as in Australia (Myers 1991, 1994), New Zealand (Hanson 1989; Linnekin 1991), Melanesia (Foster 1995; Thomas 1992), and Polynesia (Sahlins 2000), among other places.

For the most part, the staging of culture, particularly in Amazonia, has been examined within the context of the growing participation of indigenous peoples in interethnic or intercultural events such as national festivals, regional indigenous gatherings, transnational protests, global environmental summits, and museum exhibits in large metropolitan areas. In this article I, too, examine indigenous—specifically, Kayabi—participation in interethnic events. I focus, however, not on the events themselves, but on Kayabi internal discussions about them. I document and interpret two Kayabi leaders' retrospective accounts of their participation in such events as those accounts are formulated in the course of a local process of political mediation. This is my way of answering Fred Myers's (1994:681, 694) call for more ethnographic attention to the

meaning, for the participants themselves, of the presentation of culture in intercultural transactions, especially beyond the moment of performance. One of the Kayabi leaders recounts a visit to a gathering held in conjunction with the Earth Summit, a global forum on the environment that took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the other tells of the relocation of several Kayabi families to a celebrated Brazilian reservation, the Xingu Indigenous Park, in 1966. Although I was present during the telling of both narratives, they were largely directed to members of the men's own community. In both cases, the accounts were integral to the negotiation of contemporary village leadership. Over the past several decades, the leadership of Kayabi local groups in the Xingu Indigenous Park has been moving out of the hands of senior family leaders and into the hands of much younger men. In this article, I focus on one elder and one younger leader. Both men used their accounts of how they displayed Indianness and reified images of indigenous culture to Brazilians and to others to mount arguments about their eligibility for positions of authority in their community.

These accounts demonstrate how the experience of participating in cultural display becomes available to these men's self-presentation in other contexts and for ends other than those at stake in the original encounters. I suggest that more ethnography focused on local frames of reference, for example, on the culturally appropriate conduct of politics, is needed to assess fully the significance of cultural performance, even when the staging of indigenous culture is in the first instance performed for national or other nonlocal audiences (see Foster 1995; Turner 1999).

These narratives show that although Kayabi individuals are developing notions of "culture" and "Indian ethnicity" in dialogue with non-Kayabi at various supra-local events, at the same time they are also engaged with fellow Kayabi—in events like those I discuss here, where local concerns are at issue.<sup>1</sup> The construction of a reified idea of culture and Indian identity is therefore not merely a two-sided affair, between indigenous and non-indigenous representatives. Rather, indigenous people actively refashion national-level identities that they know to have been attributed to them, as they put these identities to use for their own locally specific purposes. Other anthropologists have focused on the extent to which aspects of the identities attributed to South American indigenous people by colonizers have been assumed by and become part of the self-image of the native populations (Taussig 1987), or on the way native peoples have skillfully deployed these images at specific moments, playing to others' notions of what Indians should be like (with respect to Brazil, see Conklin 1997; Conklin and Graham 1995; Graham 2002; Ramos 1998; Turner 1991). How these identities become meaningful to indigenous participants through local-level processes,

however, has been less investigated (see Albert 2000).<sup>2</sup> In the two Kayabi men's debates over leadership, Indian identity can be seen to take on a different significance than it had in the intercultural events the men staged for nonindigenous audiences.

Both leaders display an "appropriate level of social consciousness" (Turner 1991:293). On the one hand, they are aware of their ethnicity as marking them for subordination by the dominant society, and, on the other hand, they also recognize ethnicity as a vehicle for asserting Kayabi collective autonomy. The men I discuss here draw on opposite sides of ethnicity's "ambivalent import" as they put forth arguments about why authority should be entrusted to the young or to the old (Turner 1991:293). The young chief points to the subordination of an ethnically unreflexive Kayabi by the dominant society, linking this oppression to senior leadership. The elder headman, by contrast, focuses on how empowerment follows from conforming to others' notions of Indianness, emphasizing his own role in that process.

A focus on how facets of Indian identity are discussed within local-level, culturally specific processes offers a perspective on matters generally evaluated in terms of authenticity. (For a critique of this framework, see Jackson 1989, 1995a; Warren and Jackson 2002.) As several anthropologists have pointed out, non-Indians often challenge the performance of Indianness as an inauthentic practice and, hence, see it as illegitimate. For example, indigenous activists who self-consciously frame their causes in terms that appeal to Western ideas about Indians run the risk of being portrayed by Western observers as inauthentic on occasions when they fail to conform to these notions (Conklin 1997; Conklin and Graham 1995). Similarly, as Hanne Weber (1998:388) has observed, the concept of "invented tradition" (often brought up in conjunction with cultural staging) tends to ignore the possibility that native people are simultaneously living an authentic way of life and acting effectively as political subjects (see also Sahlins 2000:475).

The emerging concept that Greg Urban calls "metaculture," which he describes as "culture that is about culture" or the "judgements made by natives about similarities and differences with the past and change" (2001:3), offers more promise for illuminating the kind of material I focus on in this article. In the accounts included here, narrators are grappling with patently borrowed concepts. They are defining culture and Indian identity for others and commenting on what activities do and do not count as examples of them. As they discuss culture and Indianness, it becomes apparent that the men are not borrowing the concepts wholesale; in accord with Kayabi metaculture, they are tailoring the concepts to conform to local meanings, and the process, always subject to failure or revision, is organized in conformance

with local structures of authority. Seeing these men's discussions in terms of metaculture rather than of authenticity opens up the possibility that, although the concepts originate from outside, the Kayabi are using them in distinctly, if not quintessentially, Kayabi ways.

The accounts that follow are self-conscious commentaries on Indianness and reified images of indigenous culture formulated during a particular moment in Brazilian history. Beth Conklin (1997) has argued that the emergence of political consciousness for Brazilian indigenous people, including a sense of the facets of Indian identity, was catalyzed by the interethnic conflict following large-scale development projects initiated in the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Over the course of the following decade, greater access to technologies of representation and the development of a communications infrastructure broadened this consciousness and expanded the arena for activism, ultimately, by the late 1980s, linking indigenous causes with international environmentalism (Conklin 1997). Like other Kayabi individuals, the two leaders I discuss have been in the thick of the action with respect to development projects and the rise in indigenous activism. For example, Kayabi families were encouraged to move from their own areas to the Xingu Indigenous Park reservation, beginning in the late 1950s, specifically to make way for the development of Kayabi western territories. The elderly headman's story about his own relocation in 1966 documents the effects of this project in a very personal manner. Similarly, the young village chief's account of his visit to the 1992 Earth Summit documents the following generations' increased participation in pan-Indian events that are linked to the international environmental movement.

The events I focus on in this article were two among several I witnessed in which reified images of Indianness or indigenous culture were in play. I noticed that, although not always the case, these images frequently were invoked by leaders. In evening discussions, both young and senior leaders often discussed to what extent the Kayabi may or may not be as "Indian" as other indigenous people residing with them in the Xingu Park reservation. Usually, a discussion of this sort was related to visits by outsiders, such as filmmakers, anthropologists, or representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and involved the assessment of the kind and amount of goods an indigenous community received from such visitors. At other times, I heard leaders joke about how a particular individual was "no longer an Indian," that the individual in question could not stand to sleep without a blanket or walk without shoes. This kind of commentary took place when leaders were either managing requests from followers or distributing purchased goods to followers. On other occasions, leaders discussed self-conscious displays of Indianness and indigenous culture as part of the process

of directing others how to relate to me as an anthropologist. During one ritual, for example, an exceptionally well traveled and unusually worldly senior leader warned other Kayabi that if they were to have their pictures taken by me, they should take off their Western-style shirts so that they would look like "Indians" in my photos. Several decades earlier, the same leader had posed in paint and feathers as an example of a "Kayabi shaman" for a nationally distributed post card. On another occasion, the young leader whom I introduce in this article commented to me and to others that a particular ritual, held so that I could see it performed, was an example of Kayabi culture. Considering the extent to which Kayabi leaders, like other Amazonian leaders, either interface with the surrounding national society or advise followers on issues relating to their involvement with non-Kayabi people and institutions, it is not at all surprising that they make such frequent reference to reified ideas of Indianness and indigenous culture. The two examples I analyze here were notable because it was apparent that both speakers were using memories of past cultural displays as a significant means of presenting themselves to their fellows. In both cases, the leaders spoke in a commanding oratorical style, and their audiences listened intently. During those moments, the two men's claims to status and authority were being displayed and tested to a greater degree than during most other interactions.

In my analysis of the young and the senior leaders' narratives, I follow linguistic anthropologists who have highlighted the distinction between the narrated event (i.e., the events recounted) and the narrating event (i.e., the event in which the narrative is told) and who have explored the relationship between the two (Bauman 1986; Jakobson 1971; Silverstein 1996; among others). I pay close attention to how the characters and identities at issue in the narrated stories relate to the relational identities of people involved in the moment of the stories' performance, that is, how narratives call into play certain identities for the narrators and their audience members. Through this focus on narrative performance, I am able to link accounts of past cultural display to current struggles over claims to authority.

### **The Kayabi within the Xingu Indigenous Park**

People who call themselves Kayabi currently live in three locations in central Brazil. The vast majority currently reside in the Xingu Indigenous Park reservation, in the state of Mato Grosso.<sup>4</sup> Officially debated in 1952 and legally declared in 1961, the park was intended to buffer indigenous people from the effects of Euro-Brazilian colonization in the region (Davis 1980:50, 52). Families relocated to the park in several waves beginning in the early 1950s (Grünberg n.d.:52). They moved from territories

located along the Teles Pires and Peixes Rivers located to the west of the park (Grünberg n.d.:52).<sup>5</sup>

Within the park, Kayabi families live along the banks of the Xingu River side by side with a number of other indigenous peoples, and they participate to varying degrees in their neighbors' communities. Much further upriver from the majority of Kayabi park settlements is a locale known as the Upper Xingu—a long-standing interethnic community of indigenous peoples who share common values, norms of behavior, rituals, and myths, despite the fact that they speak several different languages (Agostinho 1974:15; Basso 1973:3). Within the park, the Upper Xinguans have the reputation of having maintained indigenous culture in its purest form. The Upper Xinguans, in fact, inspired the founders of the park, the Villas Boas brothers, to establish the Xingu as a refuge in the first place.<sup>6</sup> Although some Kayabi individuals visit the Upper Xingu, particularly to trade, Kayabi generally are not a part of the upriver community. As a rule, they do not, for example, participate in Upper Xinguan rituals. Kayabi within the park live in an area to the north of the Upper Xinguans called the "Lower Xingu." There they are part of an interethnic community that includes several other peoples whom the Villas Boas brothers also persuaded to relocate as well as communities that have historically resided in this area but that have always been outsiders to the Upper Xinguan system.<sup>7</sup>

The park is unusual in Brazil for several reasons. First, since 1984 indigenous residents have run the park administration, working both at the park posts and in the central offices in Brasília. Kayabi men have held some of the highest administrative positions, such as park chief and assistant to the chief. The park has also received an unusually large share of resources from the Brazilian Indian Service (FUNAI) and from NGOs active within Brazil. As a result, its boundaries are relatively well protected. The park is closed to any small-scale development such as ranching, farming, mining, and tourism. Missionization is also prohibited. It is not, however, completely exempt from territorial infringements. In 1971, for example, the Brazilian government constructed a road (BR-80) through the northern portion of the park (Davis 1980:58).

Located just south of the geographical center of Brazil, the park is an important national symbol. Its conception during the late 1940s was connected to a national project aimed at opening up the interior. Similarly, its foundation in 1961 corresponded with the transfer of the national capital from the coastal city of Rio de Janeiro to the new, completely planned city of Brasília in the interior. In keeping with its importance in the national arena, dignitaries, including presidents of Brazil, are often flown into the park for short but celebrated and very well publicized visits. In keeping with its symbolic significance, the Upper

Xingu has also been a privileged site for ethnographic research (Schwartzman 1988: 354, 348).

### Brazilian formulations of Indianness

Because Kayabi people have resided in two different types of national spaces, over the course of time Brazilian national society has projected two different sorts of identities on the Kayabi as Indians. In areas outside of the park, Indianness has had a pejorative connotation. Indians' distinctiveness outside the park stood, and still stands in many places, in opposition to the Euro-Brazilian ideal of having one homogenized national society. Outside the park Indians have been understood as primitives, as outside of time and outside of the progress of the rest of the nation. Within the park, by contrast, Indianness has positive connotations. The park and its residents continue to be conceptualized by non-Indians as existing outside the flow of time, but in contrast to frontier areas, this timelessness has positive connotations. The space of the park and its indigenous residents are associated with the origin of history and with an Edenlike purity when contrasted to the rest of the nation and to the developed world at large. In short, outside the park, the idea of the "ignoble savage" has taken precedence, whereas within the park, the idea of the "noble savage" or what Alcida Ramos (1998:276) has called the "hyperreal Indian" is dominant (see Ramos 1998 with respect to these notions, and Nagengast and Kearney 1990; Pagden 1982; Pearce 1953 on similar notions of primitivism in the Americas).

The national policies the Kayabi have experienced outside the park, beginning for them in the 1920s, have been based on the goal of creating a homogeneous national society, specifically by turning Indians into national workers like other Brazilians (de Souza Lima 1992:254). According to this scenario, Indians (*índios*) were to become civilized people (*civilizados*), in the process passing through an intermediate stage of partial civilization. In many parts of the interior, indigenous people perceived to be occupying this stage are called *caboclos*. Alcida Ramos (1998:77) points out that in the eyes of government officials and of their Brazilian neighbors, *caboclos* lack both a white, or civilized, identity and a full Indian identity, particularly in the context of a loss of indigenous lands. The first step in the "civilizing" process was (and still is) to attract indigenous people to government-run posts through "pacification," or, as it has more recently been relabeled, "attraction" (Ramos 1998:150). This step involves offering consumer goods such as axes, knives, beads, pots, and the like, to "uncontacted" peoples (Ramos 1998:150). Ideally, once attracted to posts distributing such items, Indians' new needs for the consumer

goods would encourage them to seek out the appropriate training necessary to obtain wage labor, enabling them to buy the goods for themselves. As Carlos de Souza Lima (1992:253) has pointed out, according to the evolutionary logic that guided these policies, indigenous people were understood as having come to participate only very recently and minimally in the development and progress of the human race. Laboring for wages and goods was conceptualized as helping Indians enter into the process of development (de Souza Lima 1992:253).

Induction of indigenous peoples into the workforce accelerated in the 1950s and 1960s. During that period, posts began to implement the *renda indígena* (indigenous income), a policy stipulating that posts were to pay for their own maintenance by selling indigenous labor, crafts, or the resources from indigenous land (Davis 1980:57). One of the most significant types of labor that posts in Kayabi areas encouraged was rubber tapping (de Las Casas 1964:12).<sup>8</sup> At these commercial rubber collection sites Kayabi individuals became fully enmeshed in the system of debt peonage typical in rubber tapping areas. According to the system of *aviamento* (credit), rubber tappers could buy consumer goods (usually at inflated prices) at a company store and then work off their debts by collecting rubber. For indigenous people who had originally been attracted to posts through “presents,” this sort of arrangement was especially dangerous.

Living and working at posts as well as at commercial rubber extraction sites encouraged many Kayabi, like so many other indigenous people, to begin to dress and act like non-Indian Brazilians living in the interior. Most Kayabi, for example, stopped tattooing their faces, although many continue to tattoo other parts of their bodies.<sup>9</sup> Like the majority of indigenous people in Brazil, Kayabi people also wear some types of Western clothing. In short, because Indianness outside of the park implied backwardness, being outside of time and outside of the nation, Kayabi individuals living beyond the Xingu reservation boundaries, like other indigenous groups, tried to blend in as much as possible with the surrounding population.

In contrast to areas where indigenous peoples were encouraged to develop and to assimilate with the national society, the Xingu Park was set up explicitly as an anachronism, as a place that represents a contrast to the progress of the rest of the nation. The park was meant to be, to some extent, a measure of how far history had progressed in Brazil from some original time still located in the Xingu. In the words of the Villas Boas brothers, the park was set up to preserve “a natural reservation where fauna and flora would be safeguarded for the distant future of the country, as evidence of Brazil at the time of its discovery” (Villas Boas and Villas Boas 1973:3).

In the media, the Xingu is frequently presented as an untouched, primitive space deep in the heart of Brazil. In the Brazilian press, the Xingu has been described (in some of the more sensational coverage) as a “place where Indians still live an existence ... like their forefathers’ before the discovery of America” (translation of a notice for the film *Aspectos do Alto Xingu* published in *Journal de São Paulo*, September 6, 1949, quoted in Ferreira 1983:66). It has been touted as a place where tribes “live as in the times of Cabral” (from the magazine *Manchete* circa 1981; quoted in Schwartzman 1988:331). For a more international audience, the park has been similarly described: It is a precontact utopia that stands in contrast to the world’s industrialized countries. The Xingu has been presented as a place where one can encounter “the perfect image of pre-conquest America” (Hanbury-Tenison 1973:62). The rock star Sting, founder of an NGO that has been extremely active within the Xingu, wrote the following about his trip to the Xingu: “We are paying homage to our primeval history. We have stepped back to the Stone Age” and “in some ways Western man is in reverse evolution, we’ve forgotten our real potential. The Xingu can remind us of what we really are” (Sting and Dutilleux 1989:39).

In keeping with this timelessness and purity, much of the photo coverage of the Xingu emphasizes the residents’ nakedness and their lack of familiarity with Western dress. For example, in the coverage of the 1992 Earth Summit, the Xingu Park was represented as a sort of millennial paradise in which the best of all epochs is combined. A special English-language issue of the Brazilian magazine *Manchete* features the Yualapitis of the Upper Xingu in an article entitled “Heading toward the Third Millennium.” The piece begins with a two-page photo spread of two Yualapiti men working on a solar energy panel, barefoot but wearing colorful swimming shorts. Part of the text reads, “Modernists without losing their culture” (*Manchete* 1992: 85). The story elaborates on the utopian mixture of epochs to be found in the Xingu, explaining that the Yualapitis “have become high-tech Indians with out abandoning their bows and arrows” and that “our Indians of the third millennium, are conspicuous users also of CB radios, motorcycles, tractors, movie cameras and of course, battery-operated radios” (*Manchete* 1992: 85).

The millennial allusion in the article’s title and these excerpts reflect a theme that surrounded coverage of the Earth Summit in general. The marriage of high technology (images from satellites, genetic testing, etc.) with a concern for the natural environment is represented throughout this particular issue of *Manchete* as the combination necessary to recover “the paradise we lost” (*Manchete* 1993: 33). With the Earth Summit coverage, the earlier representations of the Xingu as a locale where history has not yet begun or is still in the “Stone Age” are replaced with

another sort of timelessness—that characteristic of millennial, utopian end times.

This image of the park as a paradise that contrasts to the developed world is not lost on residents like the Kayabi. They are aware of the benefits of conforming to this image just as they were aware of the benefits of adopting certain Brazilian traits when assimilation was the dominant policy outside the park. One Xinguan Kayabi leader, for example, told members of his community in 1992 that they should not mention that they kill animals or eat meat when representatives of an international NGO came to visit. He was concerned that animal-killing, meat-eating Indians would not fit the image of purity that has been mapped onto the park and that the Kayabi would be seen as too impure, too fully inserted into the process of history to merit the investment of foreign capital. His wariness very likely reflects the criticism leveled at Mario Juruna, a formerly prominent indigenous politician, after he supposedly spoke out at the 1992 Earth Summit against ecologists who defend animal rights before human rights. More generally, his reaction is an example of how Kayabi leaders are aware of the “hyperreal Indian” in Brazil, a simulacrum, or model, Indian created in the image of what Westerners would like Indians to be (Ramos 1998:277). This model Indian, which Ramos calls “the NGO’s ethical hologram,” involves, among other traits, an unawareness of “bourgeois evils,” and an honorability “in actions and intentions” (1998:277).

### **The changing structure of authority in Kayabi local groups**

Over the past three decades the structure and leadership of Kayabi local groups in the park have changed significantly. Directly after their move to the Xingu, the majority of Kayabi families lived in isolated family homesteads spread out along river banks, as they had outside of the park (Grünberg n.d.:59, 65; Ribeiro 1979:11). Each household had its own field and was led by a senior male family member, or headman, called a *wyriat*. A household consisted and still consists of the headman and his wife (or wives, as Kayabi men occasionally marry sisters), their unmarried children, their married daughters, and those daughters’ husbands and children. In addition, if the headman is particularly powerful or persuasive, he may attract his married sons and their families as well as more distant relatives back to his homestead. A headman and his wife give moral guidance to, organize the daily chores for, and distribute food among the household members. As is common among Tupian groups, the headman is supposed to watch over or take care of his followers (see also Kracke 1978:44).

For several years directly after marriage young men owe their in-laws a period of bride service. According to

the reasoning given me by several Kayabi individuals, a man has to pay his mother-in-law and father-in-law for the work each expended carrying, giving birth to, and raising their daughter. The first few years of marriage are therefore a time of subordination for a son-in-law. Not only should he provide game, produce, and handicrafts for his in-laws, but he should also more generally follow their orders and be deferential to them. Later in a marriage, as a couple has grown children and sons-in-law of their own, they often branch off and form a homestead of their own.

Over the course of the 1980s the majority of previously isolated households in the Xingu have joined together to form large, multihousehold villages. As of 1993, there were three of these new-style Kayabi villages within the park, and only five families continued to live on their own. The largest of these villages consisted of 17 households arranged in a circle around an open plaza.<sup>10</sup> This sort of unification is encouraged by the way park administrators structure assistance to local groups, with motor boats, shortwave radios, and supplies like medicine going to the most populous groups, but not to smaller ones.

Although Kayabi local groups have, at times in the past, had very high populations, similar in size to contemporary park villages, the structure of leadership in the Xinguan villages is unprecedented.<sup>11</sup> Much like other Amazonian peoples (see Brown 1993; Turner 1995), new Xinguan villages are choosing relatively young men rather than senior family headmen to lead them.<sup>12</sup> These new leaders are called both by the Kayabi term, *wyriat*, and by the Portuguese term for chief, *chefe*. (In the text that follows, I refer to these new-style leaders as chiefs and to the older, senior leaders of households as headmen.) Although each household is still led by a senior family headman, villages are now run by men who have relatively little authority based on the developmental cycle of their own families. Rather, with respect to household structure, these village chiefs are in a weak position: They have only very young children and no sons-in-law of their own. Effectively, they lack the traditional base from which to constitute a work force. In fact, some of these men are themselves still performing bride-service obligations.

Villages are coming under the leadership of younger men for several reasons. First of all, these are the individuals in Kayabi society who are currently most proficient in Portuguese, arithmetic, and the use of money. As a result, they are much more able to garner resources from the park administration and NGOs active within the park. In addition, they are able to effectively arrange for the transportation and the sale of Kayabi produce in towns outside the park. Second, I believe younger men are chosen by their seniors to be leaders precisely because of the juniors’ weak position within the household structure of authority. Because Kayabi family headmen of equal status tend to be extremely egalitarian and avoid situations that would place

them in a hierarchy with respect to one other, it seems that they could perhaps only agree to appoint someone of clearly lower status than they in an effort to unite them all as a village.

Although family headmen choose these young leaders, the new form of leadership has created subtle intergenerational tensions, which play themselves out in micropractices, such as political oratory. Day-to-day tensions exist, for example, over who controls the workforce. In the village where I did most of my research, each senior headman loans out a few of his own sons or sons-in-law to work on a communal field or project for a limited amount of time. Although they do not impose an extreme hardship on him, these communal projects, nevertheless, cut into the workforce a headman can muster for his own household and field. The distribution of goods from the sale of crops produced in the community field also now falls within the purview of the village chief and his wife. Even though some headmen function as intermediaries for their own households, this distribution process has the potential to exclude the family headmen. Young chiefs also have increasing control over boys' education, especially because they can often teach young men skills that the boys' fathers cannot. Senior headmen appear to feel some of the strains of this new system and frequently debate the problems of living in multifamily villages. Some bring up the possibility of moving their families out of the village and of reestablishing themselves in separate homesteads again.

These intergenerational tensions, however, are not entirely new. Myths suggest that the father-in-law-son-in-law relationship was problematic in earlier times, as well. One story recounts how a father-in-law tries but cannot measure up to his new son-in-law's hunting and fishing prowess. Even in single-family households the aging process naturally produces shifts and tensions in leadership. As his own family grows older, a son-in-law either moves away or takes charge of the household, eventually becoming more powerful than his father-in-law.

What is striking in the current debate over which generation is most suited to lead is how individuals are employing commentary on appropriate and inappropriate ways to reify Kayabi culture and how they present themselves as Indians to argue their positions. I now turn to two examples of this strategy, one involving a new-style chief, João, and the other a senior family headman, Amapá.<sup>13</sup> Both men talk about past events in which they themselves were involved during interethnic cultural displays. Both men engage in a style of oratory that is typical for Kayabi leaders and for Amazonian leaders more generally. Both also present capable leadership as pivoting on a full understanding of Indian identity and the related concept of culture. The two are at odds over which of them possesses this full understanding. The new-style chief

argues that young leaders understand these concepts the best, whereas the headman asserts that seniors like himself do. Each leader also presents and enacts a different orientation toward the power of the national society to define them as Indians. The young chief's comments imply that an unquestioning adoption of the national definitions leads to subordination, whereas the elder headman's statements suggest that compliance will lead to empowerment. At no point, however, does either man represent himself in quite the same way that members of the national society have represented Indians. Instead, facets of Brazilian Indian identity, such as cultural purity, are refashioned through their debate, showing how, although influenced by national-level discourse, these two men's understandings of reified images of ethnicity and culture are not entirely shaped by such discourse.

### Chief João's address

The first example is embedded in a joke that Chief João told in a village meeting called after he returned home from a trip to Rio de Janeiro in 1992. João had traveled to Rio along with several others from the Xingu Park to participate in an indigenous gathering held in conjunction with the Earth Summit.<sup>14</sup> Typically, after a long trip, a village chief or headman makes an address, in which he tells his local group about his travels. This style of speaking differs minimally from ordinary Kayabi speech, especially when compared with the well-documented oratorical styles of several of the Gê-speaking peoples in Brazil. Kayabi leaders do not use imploded lateral clicks or extensive repetition like the Xavante (Graham 1993: 733), nor do they thump a club or slap the trunk of the body to accompany their rhythmical addresses, like the Suyá (Seeger 1986:66). Similarly, leaders do not typically address their followers in the plaza, as occurs in many Gê communities, but, rather, within their own homes. A young child is usually sent out to tell people, "Wyriara porongyta [the chief is conversing]," and people gradually assemble in the chief's house. Chiefs' addresses are delivered at a slightly higher volume than ordinary speech and contain more parallelism. Leaders also speak uninterrupted for a length of time, and on finishing, close with "It's finished" or "My part is finished" (*tepap* or *tepap je'ma'e*). At this point, less formal conversation begins. Other than giving an account of time spent away from the village, the most frequent subject matter of a leader's talk consists of admonitions or instructions on how to live correctly.

João reclined in his hammock while giving his talk after he returned from Rio, and others sat on the dirt floor around him or propped themselves up against the stick walls of his large, oval house. I was present during the address, as I lived in a corner of João's house during my

research, and I have reconstructed his address from my field notes.

João told about his trip first in Portuguese and then in Kayabi, alternating languages being something he often did in his addresses.<sup>15</sup> João recounted how, on his way to Rio, he had met the other Kayabi from the Xingu Park who were also attending the conference.<sup>16</sup> He described how, as they all rode the bus provided for the occasion, the others nervously asked him just what they were going to be expected to do once they got to Rio. He said that he told them the following: “When we get there you’re going to have to show your culture” (Port.: *cultura*; João used the Portuguese term in both the Portuguese and Kayabi portions of his address). Implying that some of the older people in his traveling party, as well as in his audience, might not know what *cultura* was, he continued, “That means you’ll have get up in front of thousands of people and sing Kayabi songs completely naked.” He continued to joke that an old man from a Kayabi village downriver was so scared by this possibility that he never left the mock Indian village, called the Kari-Ocá, set up in Rio to house the visiting Brazilian Indians. In fact, he supposedly never left his hammock during the entire visit. Literally stuck in the space for Indian identity set up by the national society, he missed the rest of the city completely. By contrast, the chief continued, *he* had visited many of the sights of Rio and had even discovered a way to make some money—by selling the condoms being passed out for free to conference visitors.

A good sense of humor and the ability to joke and play around with followers is one of the skills that Kayabi people value in a leader, whether an elder, senior family headman or a younger, new-style chief. By relating this particular joke, despite its reference to culture and condoms, João is fulfilling the Kayabi ideal, showing that he, too, knows how to joke with his followers.

In young Chief João’s story, the character of the old man provides a contrast to the character of the chief himself. João portrays himself as being able to maneuver through the neighborhoods of Rio, whereas his elderly traveling companion is literally confined to his hammock inside the mock Indian village called the Kari-Ocá. The image of the old man stuck in his hammock brings to mind initiation rites once practiced by Kayabi during which adolescent boys were secluded within their houses (and ideally within their hammocks) for a period of time after having had contact with the body of a dead enemy. This similarity could not have been totally lost on João’s audience. The older man in the story becomes like an adolescent. The seclusion is particularly degrading for his character because the house in which he is confined is the Kari-Ocá of the fairgrounds.

Kari-Ocá was very likely chosen by conference organizers as the name for the Indians’ shelter because in

Portuguese *carioca* refers to an inhabitant of Rio de Janeiro.<sup>17</sup> *Oka* means “house” in many Tupian languages, including Kayabi. And, in Kayabi, *kari* is a vocative used by men when speaking to their female relatives. For a Kayabi audience, then, the name Kari-Ocá might sound both familiar and strange. It might even carry the connotation of being a place for women. The sense that the old man’s fear and ignorance about the national culture puts him in an adolescent or even female position is heightened when the listener learns that the items the chief himself was selling on the street were condoms.

### The headman Amapá’s address

In the senior household leader’s address, it is his own past that provides the unflattering contrast to his current maturity. One afternoon a few weeks after Chief João had come back from Rio, the elder man, named Amapá, and a younger man who operated the shortwave radio in the village were visiting with me in the chief’s house. Several young boys were hanging around the periphery of the conversation, listening. The young chief and his family, however, were not at home. The two men were letting me tape-record their opinions on various subjects. A remark by the young radio operator prompted Amapá to describe his 1966 relocation to the Xingu Park from the Teles Pires River area; he did so in the style of a leader’s talk.<sup>18</sup> Although slightly unusual, it is not unheard of for a headman to porongyta in another family’s home. When he began to speak in that style, Amapá raised his voice and commanded the attention of the boys in the room. They quickly became silent.

The remark that prompted Amapá to begin his address concerned the leadership abilities of younger versus older Kayabi. Lounging in the chief’s hammock, the radio operator explained to me that older men simply do not understand very much and that younger generations had to take over because they could read, use money, and operate machinery like the shortwave radio. He seemed to be repeating sentiments that I had heard the young chief express while lying in the very same hammock on many other occasions, including his address after he returned from Rio. In response, the headman, sitting on a wooden bench, reached down on the dirt floor and picked up a crumpled magazine page that the adolescent boys had dropped. He said, “Boys today only know paper.” He continued in Portuguese. The following is a transcription of the recorded event. The boldfaced lines were delivered at a significantly higher volume (see Tedlock 1983:46).<sup>19</sup>

When I first arrived here it was really lousy. I complained to Claudio Villas Boas.

“Ah, you really are accustomed to whites aren’t you. Hell, here in the Xingu that doesn’t exist. You have to learn more with your own people. **De-educate a little**,” [Villas Boas said.]

Later, people here [said], “You came here and you ruined people. You know whites more. You know more how to speak with whites. You don’t have to be teaching other people how.”

“Let him be. He’ll learn things slowly.” That’s how Claudio [Villas Boas] spoke to me.

He didn’t like that I asked for so many things from him either. I used to say, “Oh, I want this and I want ammunition, I want soap to wash cloths, I want thread to sew, I want. . .” It was lots of things that I said. He did not like it.

“Ah, you spend a lot. It’s true. You really turned into a civilized person. I’m going to **call a plane** for you to go [back to the Teles Pires],” he said.

Amapá subsequently describes how he had moved away from his youthful infatuation with the civilized life in his more mature years. By recounting this change, he skillfully places the sorts of skills and knowledge about which the young radio operator was boasting into his own past—a past that Amapá had surpassed by devoting himself to Kayabi skills.

With this move, Amapá displays a common Kayabi style of leadership. The Amazon is famous as a place where leaders often lack direct authority and instead lead by example (Brown 1993:310; Kracke 1978; Price 1981: 697). When they porongyta, Kayabi leaders frequently counsel wayward followers by describing their own transgressions and reform rather than by focusing on the transgressions of their followers. In the preceding excerpt, Amapá never says to the radio operator, “You are wrong to act like this.” Rather, he says, “I was wrong” and goes on to describe how he was once just like the radio operator, completely entranced by non-Kayabi goods and behaviors. He describes how others, such as the park’s Brazilian director, Claudio Villas Boas, as well as other Kayabi, had told him his behavior was wrong. According to his account, he ultimately followed their advice and returned to Kayabi traditions. In this way, Amapá’s own return to tradition formed an exemplary model for the radio operator.

Amapá continues by pointing out his current role as steward and teacher of Kayabi traditions. Directing his comments to me, he says,

**In the first time**, you see, Suzanne, people didn’t have anything. Nothing. Nothing. They didn’t know how to eat mangos. They didn’t eat potatoes, those other kind from whites. They didn’t know how to wash clothes. **Nobody had sandals, just the foot right on the ground.**

Today no, today they have everything here. They all have sandals. The boys all have sandals, everything. You don’t have the Indian always just using our own things.

That’s why I talk to people, “Let’s not finish it early. When we are alive talk to sons, grandsons, nephews, to people in groups. Get them to understand not to finish that, ours, everything.” Understand?

In this here you can’t finish. In this, the most important. The most truly important is the business about **festivals, real Indian festivals**, all of it. Only once in a while if you want to learn with boys like those there [he gestures toward the village plaza], learn what you’re **going to learn** there in the middle of the city. How it is he [the white] dances. So what, he dances.

Now the older ones like me, the older ones **carry the Indian music** so it doesn’t stop. Go **turning it over** to sons, to grandsons because he dies and there is another guy, because the oldest one dies. Then he goes carrying the job forward to **teach** another, right? For it not to be finished, right?

Amapá concludes this account of his own maturation into a teacher and leader in the Xingu with a comment indicating that the Kayabi’s well-being currently rests on the extent to which they are perceived by members of the national society to follow a distinct way of life. He equates the maintenance of Kayabi language and festivals with *culture*. And, using Portuguese phrasing that fits with the rhetoric of assimilation, whereby Indians are to enter the nation through wage labor, he equates *culture* with a *job*, specifically his job as an elder. He continues,

Therefore you don’t need to finish it **all at once** like I said to that one over there, other people there, “**It’s over**. You don’t know anything, not even how to **speak**” . . . Order more learning, work. It is our job. It’s our culture. In order not to do away with this. Then you’re stronger, more strength for us. You do away with this, speak more white. The white says today, “**That one is not an Indian anymore**, he’s already a caboclo. He’s already civilized.” And then, “**He speaks more Portuguese. He learns more, speaks more Portuguese.**” Right?

“**If you don’t have anymore** Indian you don’t have anymore value.” Understand? That’s the way it is.

In his oratory, Amapá represents his current self as a person who actively spoke to grandsons, nephews, sons, and “people in groups” and as one who “carries Indian music” for the next generation. His younger self, the person who first came to the park, was someone who others spoke about as “ruining people” because he “knew more how to talk to whites.” Much like the old man stuck in the mock Indian village in the young chief’s

story, the younger Amapá came very close to being physically unable to move as a result of his civilized behavior. He was, he relates, almost sent back to the Teles Pires by Claudio Villas Boas and not allowed to relocate to the Xingu.

### Representing oneself as a leader for the present

In representing themselves as appropriate sorts of leaders for the present, the young chief and the senior headman present similar images of their own agency and power. In his narrative, each presents himself as the more capable and fully developed character because he possesses knowledge both about Kayabi life and about the national society, including what it currently means to be an Indian in the nation of Brazil. Other characters in the narratives—representatives of other generations—serve as the men's more ignorant and weaker foils. João, for example, not only presents himself as a self-conscious representative of Kayabi distinctiveness in Rio but also as knowing city life so well that he is able to trick city folk in their own territory by selling them items that they themselves are passing out free of charge. Furthermore, he displays his full understanding of the role that Indians living within the Xingu play within the nation, as the most primitive, innocent, and naked of all.

In João's story, however, even the character of the old man is aware of the stereotypic identity of Xinguans as naked primitives. After all, it is the prospect of his public nakedness that scares him into his hammock for a week. Like other lowland peoples (see Conklin 1997), Kayabi of all ages are familiar with professional photographers who come to the park and insist on taking pictures of people who are not wearing any Western clothing. The old man in the young chief's joke has a similar understanding that Indianness resides in a lack of familiarity with Western goods. What distinguishes the chief from the old man is the former's full understanding of the use of terms like *culture* in the current national-international context. João knows that at present representing one's culture in an urban context does not necessarily involve being unclothed. He portrays the old man's knowledge about Xinguan Indian identity as outdated or provincial at best.

The senior Amapá represents himself much like young Chief João. In his narrative, Amapá displays his control of both the knowledge and skills characteristic of whites as well as of the Kayabi. For him, different periods in the life cycle correspond to expertise in different sorts of knowledge. And, although he depicts his current mature self as having surpassed an earlier civilized self by taking the advice of Claudio Villas Boas and heeding the comments of other Kayabi, he does not completely deride learning

about whites. According to Amapá, it is acceptable to learn things in the city, like white-style dancing "with boys," provided that one does not forget about what is "ours." Being absorbed by only Brazilian culture is merely a phase of youth. For Amapá, adult knowledge is built on an understanding of whites merged with an understanding of Kayabi practices. Importantly, this combination includes an understanding of how Kayabi practices fit into a national context. Like the younger chief, whose joke turned on his own understanding and the old man's ignorance of the term *culture*, Amapá also understands that what is considered culture in the national context is crucial for having power or strength in the present. He equates culture, however, with the process whereby elders like himself do the work of teaching the younger generations the Kayabi language and festivals.

As Turner (1992:10, 2002) has described with respect to Kayapó video productions, João's and Amapá's depictions of their contemporary interethnic encounters draw both on foreign terms and concepts and on indigenous forms of self-representation. As these men make reference to their own superior understanding of facets of Indian ethnicity and definitions of culture, they also follow long-established Kayabi ways of representing mature male ability. Representations of male power are most dramatically found in a Kayabi style of singing called Jowosi. Jowosi songs are currently sung for a variety of reasons, but in the past they were sung at male initiations, and they are still emblematic of male adulthood. The solo portions of these songs are sung exclusively by mature men. Sung in the first person, they depict a Kayabi man's heroic encounter with a non-Kayabi enemy. Because these songs can be inherited from paternal relatives as well as created from the singer's own experiences, they feature enemies from both past epochs and the present day, such as non-Indigenous rubber tappers and miners. Most Jowosi songs present a dramatic image of a warrior moving through the territory of another people or ethnic group. For both João and Amapá, the image of successful movement through different sorts of national spaces is central to their depiction of their authority. Moreover, much like Indian identity and the term *culture*, Jowosi songs are understood to reflect a vantage point outside of Kayabi society. Jowosi texts describe the Kayabi warrior from the perspective of an enemy individual. Understanding and reproducing how others perceive oneself, or understanding "the enemy's point of view," to use Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's (1992) formulation of the ultimate goal in Tupi-Guarani personhood, is therefore an established marker of mature male power for Kayabi.

In addition to representing himself as the most knowledgeable and able character in his narrative, each leader also enacts the superiority of his knowledge with respect to particular members of his audience—that is,

those who are of a different generation. Manipulating the relationship between the narrated event and the event of narration is the mechanism by which both João and Amapá establish their authority.<sup>20</sup> The young chief uses the Portuguese term *cultura* to this end, whereas the senior headman uses quoted speech and the presence of the tape recorder.

João's joke is particularly effective in enacting his authority with respect to two groups in the audience: people who have no understanding of the term *cultura* and those who have heard the term but are unsure of its meaning. Many of the seniors in João's village, as well as women of all ages, are monolingual and have little experience traveling beyond Kayabi communities. Listening to his address in Kayabi, these people would have had no idea what the Portuguese term *cultura* meant. They might in fact have empathized with the old man in the story, a character who João implies does not understand the term either. But, monolingual Kayabi also would have missed much of the humor of the joke. João's story would have been more effective for those who recognized the term *cultura* but were not entirely sure of its meaning. Although I heard the term used by the chief and other well-traveled men, on other occasions I also heard slightly less cosmopolitan men ask for its clarification. The chief relied on all of the village men to some extent but especially on those who spent the majority of their time in the village rather than working at posts or traveling in the city. These men made up the workforce for the village field. They also seemed to be the individuals within the village who were most convinced of the benefits of interacting with the national society and, at the same time, most painfully aware of their own shortcomings in that context, especially with respect to their ability to speak Portuguese and handle monetary transactions effectively. Someone unsure of the meaning of *cultura* would have felt uncomfortably close to the old man of João's joke and also would have felt the urgency of relying on the chief for successful interactions (financial and otherwise) with the world outside of Kayabi communities.

The key aspect of Amapá's account, with respect to the interactional dynamics, is his characterization of himself as a young man. Not only does he describe himself in much the same terms as the radio operator describes *himself*, that is, as skilled in nonindigenous ways, but he also presents his characterization from the point of view of his past interlocutors. His use of the second person singular in direct quotations has the effect of making his comments seem as though they could be the responses of powerful whites and fellow Kayabi to his present interlocutor, the young radio operator. He quotes Claudio Villas Boas as having said, "Ah, you really are accustomed to whites ... you have to learn more with your own people." He also quotes the Kayabi in

the Xingu as saying to him, "You came here and you ruined people."

Amapá, furthermore, presents his current self as able to overcome these negative evaluations. He is the one who can teach the Kayabi skills necessary for the young radio operator to have value in the eyes of whites and of fellow Kayabi. Because I tape-record Amapá's words, I am also a means for Amapá to enact how non-Indians, in fact, value his knowledge as an elder. Tape recorder in hand, I am the sort of white that the Villas Boas brothers are; although not a Brazilian, I am nevertheless a relatively wealthy individual interested in Kayabi distinctiveness. Amapá is clearly a fellow Kayabi. The quotations from the Villas Boas and the Kayabi of the past could be read as typical responses Amapá and I might make to the radio operator's boasts. Amapá literally commandeers the tape recorder for his own ends and draws attention to the fact that representing Kayabiness to non-Indians, not fluency in Brazilian culture, is crucial for survival in the present context.

The fact that João and Amapá make reference to very different facets of Brazilian Indian identity in presenting themselves as leaders is, no doubt, in part a result of their different life experiences (see also Ramos 1988). Amapá only moved to the park in 1966, having spent his childhood and young adulthood under assimilationist policies. On his arrival, the more isolationist policies of the Xingu must have appeared in stark contrast to those he had known previously. The much younger Chief João, who in 1992 was approximately in his early thirties, has spent the majority of his life within the Xingu Park. The extent to which Amapá has been influenced by assimilationist logic calling for native peoples to distance themselves from indigenous customs is evident throughout his reminiscence. From the perspective of a more cosmopolitan speaker, much of Amapá's speech seems laden with derogatory terms for indigenous practices. For example, in many places in the interior, *gíria* (slang) is used to refer to indigenous languages but not to European languages like Portuguese. Amapá describes himself as saying, to encourage the use of Kayabi, "You have to speak in slang itself, so as not to finish it off." For him, practicing a Kayabi lifestyle is also accomplished by "de-educating" (Port.: *desaprender*). This phrasing fits well with the evolutionary logic of state institutions and others in the Teles Pires dictating that indigenous people were to be brought up to the level of the national culture through education. Amapá's use of Portuguese terms like *serviço* (task or job) to talk about teaching typically Kayabi rituals and practices also resonates with the notion that indigenous people should enter the nation as laborers. Fully aware that in the Xingu the Kayabi are not expected to enter the nation (at least not explicitly) through dependency on goods and wage labor, as had been the case in the Teles Pires, Amapá interprets his place in the nation as coming

about through a sort of production of culture or cultural labor. By contrast, I do not recall the younger chief ever using vocabulary indexing policies of assimilation when speaking Portuguese.

### Different orientations toward the power of the national society

Throughout their accounts, the two men not only emphasize different facets of Brazilian Indian identity but also portray the definitional power of the dominant society very differently. Again, although no doubt rooted in their life experiences, these portrayals are useful to each man as he establishes his current claims to authority.<sup>21</sup> The village chief flaunts his ability to manipulate identities that have been dealt to him as a Xinguan Indian. Unlike the old man stuck in the Kari-Ocá, he can literally step out of the constraints of the mock Indian village. The headman, on the other hand, presents himself (and his interlocutors) as trapped within a system of values imposed from without. In his account, it is the former park directors and whites in general who dictate what is of value.

Over the course of his story, Amapá seems to use the dominance of the national society over peoples like the Kayabi to assert his own dominance over younger generations. This is most obvious in his concluding remarks, during which he quotes the opinions of non-Indians. Listening to these remarks, one does not know exactly where the quoted speech of whites ends and Amapá's own opinion begins. It is clear where the quoted speech begins, for Amapá says, "The white says today." The identity of the author of the line "If you don't have anymore Indian you don't have anymore value" is unclear. The line either could be a continuation of the quoted speech of "the white," or the speaker could be Amapá himself. Amapá delivered the beginning of this statement at a much higher volume, as he did the obviously quoted speech of the white character that precedes it (and as he did much of Claudio Villas Boas's earlier speech). This amplification suggests that the line is, in fact, a continuation of a non-Indian's quoted speech. The line, however, is also framed by Amapá's responses to his present interlocutors: "Right?" and "Understand?" This ambiguity produces the effect that Amapá and the whites are speaking from the same position. They are the ones jointly setting the terms for judging what sort of behavior is valuable to others. In this way, by the end of his commentary, Amapá has merged or fused his voice (Bakhtin 1993:199) with those of representatives of the national society. Through this technique, he channels the obvious power of the national society to support his own claims. Furthermore, he finishes with "That is the way it is," implying that his perspective and that of whites

are one and the same and that theirs is the only correct perspective.

In contrast, João uses his story about how he is unfettered by Brazilian ethnic identities to show how he, as an iconoclast, is the appropriate sort of leader for the present. In the 1990s, leadership by the elder family headman was in many respects considered traditional or the status quo. These are the men who are spoken of as always having led local groups. Because he is a young leader of a multi-family local group, the chief is, in a sense, going against the usual hierarchy of authority. In keeping with his challenge to the authority of the elderly household headmen, João hints at the limitations of having one's culture defined by the dominant society, of being "stuck" in an Indian space. His joke implies that this might in fact be one of the dangers of leadership by senior family headmen in the current environment. His image as unconstrained by the Kari-Ocá is therefore particularly fitting in the modern context. He invokes the image of the dominant national society to present himself as unconstrained by that dominance. The senior headman, on the other hand, uses the power of the national society to define the Kayabi to argue that he too should be entrusted with shaping others' behavior. For him, the force of the national society is something he can channel to his own ends.

Although they may portray the definitional power of the dominant society differently, neither man simply adopts the Indian identities attributed to him by members of the national society. Rather, each man slightly revalues these identities as he puts them to use in local political debate. João, for example, portrays the naked and culturally distinct "Xinguan primitive" as an impossible role—a role that neither he nor his elderly traveling companion is willing to play. And, even though Amapá recognizes and invokes the power of the national society to define Kayabi ethnicity, he still does not actually adopt any of the Indian identities circulating at a national level. He portrays himself neither as a Xinguan who is "untouched by civilization" nor as someone who is "progressing from Indian to civilized." Instead, he inverts the assimilationist trajectory. Throughout his narrative, he describes how he and other young Xinguan Kayabi mature, first going through a youthful stage of infatuation with aspects of a white lifestyle, but then ideally assuming Kayabi traditions, language, and music. The Indian identity that results is neither the "noble" or "hyperreal" (Ramos 1998) Indian identity of the park nor the backward identity mapped onto indigenous peoples in areas outside the Xingu.

### Conclusion

João's and Amapá's narratives are examples of the continual negotiation of leadership that goes on between generations and individuals within one Kayabi village in the

Xingu Park. They are similar in that both present an understanding of how the Kayabi currently fit into the national (and perhaps even global) context as essential for a position of local leadership. They are, however, inverse images of each other in their portrayal and enactment of the relationship between the generations. For the chief, it is youths like himself who possess the most understanding; for the headman, it is seniors. The narrators also differ from each other in how they situate themselves with respect to the dominance of the national society. The image of the national society's jurisdiction over indigenous ethnic identities becomes differentially useful from different positions within their general debate over leadership. Ultimately, as they are employed in these men's political maneuvers, facets of Indian identity and the related term *culture* take on new meanings. Throughout this discussion, the complexities and the pointlessness of trying to define authenticity in contemporary native life should have become apparent (see also Graham 2002; Jackson 1995a; Turner 2002). For example, it is, ironically, the more traditional, senior leader who employs the power of the national society to assert his own authority over fellow Kayabi. The younger, new-style leader, on the other hand, only invokes such power to display that he is not subject to its constraints. My initial reaction to both men's narratives was that I was witnessing something less than authentic. The fact that Amapá was focused on the tape recorder initially led me to discount his comments as having no local significance. Similarly, João's joke about selling condoms in Rio made me wonder if he was not simply repeating a joke he had heard at the Earth Summit, and indeed he may have been doing just that. I remember feeling a vague sense of discomfort and wishing that João would hurry and get on with the "Kayabi" part of his oratory. Only after I thought more about these events in terms of "metaculture," or "culture that is about culture," embedded in local institutions such as leadership, did they begin to take shape as equally authentic locations where Kayabi leaders are pursuing positions of local authority at the same time that they are commenting on, employing, and reshaping notions of Indianness (Urban 2001:3). If, as Bruce Mannheim and Dennis Tedlock suggest, cultures are not preexisting patterns but "continuously produced, reproduced and revised in dialogues among their members" (1995:2) as well as others, then local talk (and jokes) about being Indian and having culture within indigenous communities—as well as for wider audiences (Jackson 1995a)—may be central to this process in contemporary Amazonia.

## Notes

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1. This study, then, complements other research that has looked at the deployment of Indian identity as it relates to the goals and values of the international environmental movement (Conklin 1997; Conklin and Graham 1995).

2. Bruce Albert (2000) discusses how, in a series of tape recordings, Yanomami leader Davi Kopenawa merges discourses on cosmology with contemporary discourses on ethnicity and environmentalism.

3. Alcida Ramos (1998:168) emphasizes the role of CIMI, the Indigenist Missionary Council, in launching a supralocal indigenous political movement during the 1970s. In the case of the Kayabi and others who were relocated to the Xingu Park, consciousness of Brazilian Indian identity likely may have emerged much earlier as a result of these groups having moved into a reservation where, since its inception, there has been explicit talk about Indianness.

4. In a 1992 census taken by the Escola Paulista medical team, the population of the Xinguan Kayabi was reported to be 536 persons. In August of 1993, I estimated the Xinguan population to be 560. It is certainly much greater currently.

5. Despite heavy colonization of those riverine areas, several Kayabi families have, nevertheless, decided to remain outside the park (Grünberg n.d.; Travassos 1984).

6. In 1946 as members of the Roncador-Xingu expedition, the Villas Boas brothers traveled into this area to build military airstrips (Davis 1980:48). As they tell the story, they were struck by the isolation of the Upper Xinguans and by the need to protect them from the social disorganization and epidemics that were likely to ensue if the area were opened up to colonization (Villas Boas and Villas Boas 1973:3).

7. Relocation was necessary for several peoples such as the Kayabi because the original 1952 park boundaries were redrawn by the government of the state of Mato Grosso, reducing the area encompassed by 75 percent to 30,000 square kilometers, so as to open up more land to development (Schwartzman 1988:338, 326). Although several of these groups have recently moved back outside of the park to reclaim their territories, during the early

1990s when I was doing ethnographic fieldwork in the Xingu, an interethnic community of refugees had taken shape around the park post of Diauraum in the Lower Xingu (see also Ferreira 1997). Currently, in addition to the Kayabi, this community includes the Western Suyá, who also relocated to the park from outside, as well as the Eastern Suyá and the Juruna, both of whom have resided in the Xingu area since before the establishment of the park. In the early 1990s this community also included the relocated Panará (Kren-Akrore) and a portion of the northern Kayapó. Members of these groups regularly meet or met at the northern post for a variety of ritual events as well as to discuss issues relating to the government of the park.

8. By 1959, Kayabi posts were described either as extensions or as rivals of the commercial rubber tapping companies in the area, in effect, fulfilling the ideal of the *renda indígena*, surviving on the labor of the Indians they were helping to enter the nation (de Las Casas 1964:12). In some cases Kayabi families even switched to a commercial patron to get away from the oppression at the posts (de Las Casas 1964:12).

9. Kayabi also did not publicly perform shamanic ceremonies and initiations while living with non-Indians. Dietary taboos were also constrained while working for crews of non-indigenous Brazilians. As Darcy Ribeiro writes about stereotypes in intensely colonized frontier areas, the indigenous individuals who received the most respect from Brazilians were “those obedient ones” who “didn’t even seem like an Indian” (1970:362).

10. The population of the largest village was 221 in August 1993. In 1992, the second largest village had a population of 150 and the smallest a population of 80.

11. High-density local groups are not an entirely new pattern for the Kayabi. In 1915, for example, the Kayabi in the Teles Pires River area were reported to be living in residential groups numbering over 100 persons each (Sousa 1916:76). Elderly Kayabi described these earlier villages as each consisting of one enormous longhouse-type structure and as being run by a senior extended family member.

12. The initial two families who started the largest Xinguan village came together in the early 1980s. Sometime between 1985 and 1989 the senior headmen of these two families appointed the elder son of one family chief of the village. By analogy to the FUNAI administration, they also chose an assistant called, in Portuguese, *assessor*. Both of these men at the time had only young, unmarried children. Eventually, when the chief received a salaried position working in the park administration, the assistant took over the position of chief. The young son of a third family that recently had been persuaded to move to the village then became the assistant. In 1993, when the chief was appointed Minister of Environmental Affairs for a local mayor in a town outside the park, the assistant once again became chief, and this time a village-wide election was held for the newly vacated position of assistant. The two men who competed for the position also had only very young children. In 2001 the same village also had a young man as chief. The second largest village appointed a young man chief in 1981 (Travassos 1984:31). This same man was still chief in 1993. The smallest village in the Xingu formed around a single extended family homestead and gradually increased in size as other families joined. In July of 1993, men of all ages and from all of the villages in the Xingu gathered to decide who should take over the leadership of the small village. Again a very young man was chosen.

13. João and Amapá are pseudonyms.

14. This event was called the Carioca Conference. Although Indians were technically excluded from the Earth Summit, the Kayabi who traveled to Rio and participated in the Carioca Conference spoke about it as part of the Earth Summit rather than as a separate conference.

15. According to João, he gave his addresses in both Kayabi and Portuguese because two men living in the village could not speak Kayabi. One was a Panara man and the other a Kayabi who had grown up with non-Indian Brazilians. It is likely that the Portuguese segments also signaled a facility with the non-Kayabi world, sending a message akin to that which Laura Graham has identified in a Xavante leader’s use of Portuguese, that is, “I am an effective mediator with the outside world” (2002:214; see also Jackson 1995a:14).

16. NGOs provided residents of the park with bus transportation.

17. An anonymous reviewer for *American Ethnologist* pointed out this connection to me (see also Conklin 1997:727).

18. Amapá was persuaded to move to the park by the Villas Boas brothers when a large influx of diamond prospectors invaded his land on the Teles Pires River.

19. I have chosen to transcribe this text in prose paragraphs to facilitate reader comprehension. Attention to pauses (Tedlock 1983) or the construction of a verse format (Hymes 1981), although useful for many arguments, does not advance the points I make here. At the outset, paragraph breaks correspond to the turns in the characters’ quoted speech. Later they correspond to changes in topic as well. Frequently, the end of a topic is signaled by a request for a back-channel response from an interlocutor.

20. See Bauman 1986, Genette 1980, and Silverstein 1996, 1999, among others.

21. The insecurity Amapá registers with respect to Brazilian ethnic labels such as *Indian* or *caboclo* is no doubt the result of pressures he has felt over the course of his own life. As an adult, for example, Amapá may have experienced the 1981 “criteria for Indianness” created by Colonel Zanoni Hausen, a FUNAI advisor. The criteria consisted of 60 traits, and FUNAI protection was revoked for those who showed fewer than 30 of the traits. The list was highly criticized and it dropped out of use (Ramos 1984:96). The young chief has spent the majority of his life within the Xingu and was only a very young man in 1981. He has perhaps never been threatened in the same way as Amapá with respect to his own claims to Indian identity.

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