TERRITORIALITY, ETHNOPOLITICS, AND DEVELOPMENT: THE INDIAN MOVEMENT IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

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The encompassment of Amerindian societies in Amazonia by the development frontier (highways, agrarian colonization, ranching, mining, logging, etc.) subjects the sociosymbolic coordinates of indigenous territories and the collective identities they sustain to disruptions that are as profound as those suffered by their systems of production. The ensuing territorial confinement and identity ambiguities impel these groups toward the dynamics of “adaptive resistance” (Stern 1987), which gradually become a crucial dimension of their social and cultural reproduction. They thus become engaged in processes of reconstruction that depend as much on repertoires of legitimation imposed by developing states and advocacy organizations as on their own political-symbolic resources.

In the reflections that follow, I analyze this dialectical reformulation of identity and territory through the example of the Indian movement that has emerged in the Brazilian Amazon in the wake of the multiple interventions of development and “counter-development” occurring there from the 1970s through the “90s.

Amazonian development and indigenous lands: the saga of the “Indian Statute”

After the military coup d’état of 1964, the Brazilian Amazon became a theater of vast governmental programs for geopolitical integration, demographic occupation, and economic development. Policies aimed at incorporating the region were implemented by creating a huge communication and transportation network, building military bases, elaborating colonization projects, constructing hydroelectric complexes, and attracting major investments in mining, logging, agricultural, and ranching sectors through fiscal concessions and credit subsidies. Through this large-scale restructuring, the region was opened to intense competition for control over space and resources, which soon escaped the control of those who initiated the process and threw together a myriad of economic actors: the State itself (notably through the army and public enterprises), large-scale ranchers, corporate enterprises, banks, speculators, logging and mining companies, gold panners, small farmers, and landless peasants.

The Brazilian Amazon is currently inhabited by approximately 170,000 Indians (not counting isolated or urbanized groups), divided among 160 peoples who represent 61% of the indigenous population of the country (and about 1% of the total population of the region). Here live the largest ethnic groups, such as the Tikuna of the state of Amazonas (23,000 people) and the Makushi of Roraima (15,000 people). This region includes more than 98% of the total extension of indigenous lands in Brazil, which form an archipelago of 371 “indigenous territories” covering 987,664 square kilometers (more than those in Venezuela, which cover 912,050 square kilometers). This represents 11% of the surface area of Brazil, or 19% of “Legal Amazonia.” Moreover, these territories are distributed in such a way that they sometimes constitute a significant part of the states within which they are located, particularly in northern Amazonia, where they make up 20% of the extension of Pará and 47% of that of Roraima (Oliveira 1994:325). Furthermore, they are often situated in regions considered “sensitive” in economic terms (such as areas of mineral deposits) and/or geopolitical terms (such as international border zones).

The situation of Yanomami lands, which have suffered pressures linked to the mining lobby, clandestine gold panners, and the military for two decades, represents an exemplary case. The Yanomami Indigenous Territory covers 96,649 square kilometers spread over two states and runs along some 900 kilometers of the border with Venezuela. Although this territory was ratified by a presidential decree in May 1992, it is blanketed by 780 requests and 39 concessions for exploration by mining companies, while its central area is invaded by 3,000 gold panners. The Brazilian army has always considered the legal recognition of the Yanomami territory as a “threat to national sovereignty.”

Despite the slight demographics of indigenous populations, the “Indian question” has become so prominent in Brazil primarily because of its role in the territorial stakes at issue in the politics and media coverage of Amazonian development. Since the 1960s, military governments have made an effort to institute new legal instruments for resolving the thorny problem of “indigenous lands” lying at the center of its policy for integrating Amazonia. In 1965, the government signed Convention 107 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) regarding indigenous peoples. In 1967, Brazil created a new administrative agency, the National Indian Foundation (Fundação Nacional do Índio, FUNAI), a step made all the more urgent due to international condemnation of the former Indian Protection Service (Serviço de Proteção aos Índios, SPI) when its employees were denounced for exploiting and coercing native peoples. Finally, in 1973, the military government promulgated new indigenist legislation, the “Indian Statute” (Law 6001), which sought to reduce the obstacles to implanting development projects within
for legalization: in 1981, FUNAI recognized the existence of 308 indigenous territories, covering some 400,000 square kilometers; by 1996, the Brazilian government counted 554 such lands, occupying 947,000 square kilometers – more than doubling their total surface area in fifteen years.

Parallel to this increase of indigenous territories, the interethnic political field has become considerably more developed and diversified ever since the first “indigenous assemblies” promoted by Cimi in 1974 and the national campaign against the emancipation decree of 1978. As of 1996, there were about 109 indigenous organizations (the majority in Amazonia), along with some 30 pro-Indian associations (Ricardo 1996b). Besides their abilities to construct alliances and organize campaigns at the national level, these entities have managed to obtain financial and political support through a complex international network of nongovernmental organizations (mainly in the United States and northern Europe) specializing in minority rights, environmental protection, and local development, as well as through connections with relevant sectors of multilateral organizations (in the United Nations and Europe) and agencies for international cooperation in various countries (Austria, Germany, Canada, Norway, United Kingdom, etc.).

Counter-ethnicity and ethnopolitics:
from official indigenism to nongovernmental indigenism

This historical overview indicates the complex relations that the genesis of the Brazilian Indian movement has maintained, on the one hand, with the State’s development projects in Amazonia and, on the other, with the increasingly influential activities of militant nongovernmental actors, both of which are associated with the economic and information globalization that has been expanding since the late ‘60s. Amerindian strategies regarding identity and territory are inscribed within international political conjunctures that set out their conditions of possibility, sustained their emergence, and delineated the range of their implementation. We cannot understand such ethnopolitical struggles outside this context. The “Indian question” could not have emerged as a legitimate cause at the heart of public space on the national and then international levels except through the indigenous appropriation of systems of norms (laws) and values (symbols) utilized by protagonists dominating this space. These codes of legitimation, emanating from State and nongovernmental constructions of “Indianness,” provide the framework for political and ideational negotiations through which indigenous societies must redefine their alterity and territoriality, using modes of “strategic syncretism.” Discursive hybridity has thus become a structural condition for expression in the Indian movement. Its ethnopolitical constructions draw as much from the sources of official indigenist rhetoric (juridical and administra-
The Land within - Indigenous Territory and the Perception of Environment

mi continued to be represented by essentially one solidarity NGO (the Pro-
Yanomami Commission, CCPY).

The emergence of ethnic movements in the Brazilian Amazon can thus be as-
dcribed, in the first place, to the expansion of State interventions and the reinforce-
ment of its functions in this region. Through its development policies and indigen-
ist reforms in the 1970s, the Brazilian State became a central actor in the con-
struction and mobilization of local identities. This was due to the dynamics of
territorial expropriation that it instigated as well as to the forms of legal recogni-
tion conferred on its victims (inhabiting a residual archipelago of indigenous
“communities” and “territories” within national space). This statist process of
ethnic and territorial recalibration, intended to facilitate new forms of economic
occupation was not actually new in Amazonia. The Indian Protection Service
(SPI) had been utilized for such purposes ever since its creation in 1910, notably
through the mediation of its “Regional Inspectorates” in Amazonas and Pará.
However, the public policies of the 1970s saw a redeployment of this strategy
with unprecedented breadth and power.

SPI’s presence in Amazonia had always been weak. The number of indige-
nous posts in its first Regional Inspectorate, which covered the northern region in
what are now three states (Roraima, Amazonas, and Acre), was only six in 1913
(out of a total of twenty-six throughout the country), reaching a maximum of
nineteen in 1930 (out of sixty-seven), cut back to eleven in 1945 (out of one hun-
dred and four), twelve in 1954 (out of ninety-seven), and falling to nine in 1962
(out of one hundred and eleven). By comparison, FUNAI maintained fifteen
posts in the Yanomami territory alone until the ’80s. During its existence, SPI
managed to complete the legalization of only nine indigenous territories in this
immense Regional Inspectorate – territories that, moreover, were considered
more as reserves of manual labor than as true territorial reservations (Oliveira
1983b:17-19). Their total area under the SPI toppled out at 5,113 hectares. By the
mid-’90s, the indigenous territories in the northern region of Amazonia were of-
ically estimated to cover 165,467 square kilometers (PR 1996:12).

Recognizing the part played by public policies of national development in the
emergence of the indigenous movement in the Brazilian Amazon does not mean
that its social and political dynamics can be assimilated to a mere strategic use of
the legal and administrative framework created by the official indigenist agency.
Here, as elsewhere, the assertion of ethnicity can never be reduced to the imposi-
tion of ethnicity. Even if the violent annexations they have undergone compel
aboriginal societies to reconstruct their identity and territorial references in line
with the State’s exo definitions and development apparatus, they do so in terms
of an autonomous social project and according to their own symbolic perspec-
tives. The provisions of official indigenism are thus simultaneously reproduced
and redirected by the very dynamics of their appropriation. Certainly this in-
volves a tactical inversion of the discourse of official “ethnification,” but above
all, it entails a political and cultural surpassing of the State’s hegemonic and assim-
ilationist aims.

The Waiãpi case, among others, can provide a relevant example of this pro-
cess. On the basis of the administrative and legal framework imposed on them,
these Indians took it upon themselves to define and delimit the territorial space
they wanted to have legally recognized, which, to them, meant expelling non-
indigenous gold prospectors (garimpeiros). They then consolidated this recon-
quest through a strategy of independent artisanal extraction of gold deposits in
their region. They legitimized their mode of extraction through a millenarian
discourse about the mythological creation of the universe and the risk of “rotting
the land” when garimpeiros use mechanized means of gold prospecting (Titkin
Galbois 1989, 1990, 1996). This type of ethnopolitical formula, with its weighty
components of cultural symbolism and identity, is by no means restricted to
groups with the most recent sustained contact, since it is also used by ethnic
groups with much longer historical experiences with non-Indians (even though
the emblematic leaders emerging from the former seem to specialize in this for-
mula, more so than the organizations that often represent the latter).

Nongovernmental Indigenism and Ethnopolitical Hybridity

The relations of power and meaning that underpin the mobilizations of the In-
dian movement in Amazonia are not only nurtured by the encounter of the State
with autochthonous societies transformed in the process into “indigenous com-
munities” through official legislation and interventions. If we fail to consider
a decisive third term, the dialectical interaction between public policies and politi-
cal ethnicities remains incomprehensible. Actually, the ethnic subversion of indi-
genist categories – that is, the concrete movement from their statist imposition to
their indigenous appropriation – is directly linked to the intervention of the
“third sector,” made up of nongovernmental indigenist actors. Because of the
alliances formed by Amazonian Indian leaders with NGO militants, first at the re-
gional level, then at the national and international levels, these leaders gradu-
ally acquired the discursive tools and social mediation they needed for the political
and symbolic inversion of official indigenism. Through their political-pedagogi-
cal associations with representatives of successive phases of the pro-Indian move-
ment, such leaders learned how to use the referents and strategies that were in-
dispensable for the construction of an “indigenous cause” in the public space,
both local and global, of Amazonian development.

The first phase in articulating links between Indians and social justice NGOs
was contemporaneous with the intensification of the State’s interventions in Am-
azonia, the expansion of the economic interests it promoted in the region, and the
revision of indigenist legislation. Such links took shape under the initiative of
progressive sectors of the Brazilian Catholic Church that were inspired by the
By a group of secret preparations during the recent years (ITP), the process of forming the new group (ITP) has been under way to prepare for the moment. The two groups (ITP) will be formed through a series of secret preparations. The process of forming the new group (ITP) has been under way to prepare for the moment. The two groups (ITP) will be formed through a series of secret preparations.
Grosso. It was then validated during the fourteenth assembly of indigenous chiefs sponsored by CIMI and, soon thereafter, was introduced at a public convention for the “Creation of the Brazilian Indigenous Federation” (attended by a representative of the Shuar Federation (CED 1981:38-39)).

Ever since its formation, UNAI had to overcome the determined opposition of FUNAI and the Ministry of the Interior at the instigation of the National Information Service (part of the military security apparatus). UNAI’s representatives were the target of a wide range of attempts to intimidate them. These maneuvers persisted or were replaced by job offers, but they were not enough to undermine the movement’s organizational capacity (holding local, regional, and national assemblies) or to hinder the development of its presence on the national political and media scene. Thus, despite its informal character and instability (it was never institutionalized nor even officially recognized), its internal dissensions (involving rivalries and defections over the offices of president and coordinators), and its logistic dependence on indigenous NGOs, UNAI and its directors (notably Marcos Terena, Álvaro Tukano, Lino Miranha, and, later on, Alilton Krenak) were successful in ensuring the politico-symbolic representation of a type of generic Indianness during the redemocratization process that led to the 1988 Constitution (Ricardo 1996b:91). But they did not do so by themselves: various other emblematic Indian leaders also made decisive contributions to the development of the indigenous cause during this period, such as Mário Juruna (Shavante), who participated in the Russell Tribunal (1980) and served as a Congressional representative (1982-85), or Raoni (Kayapo), who accompanied the Constitution process in Brasilia (1985-88).

As of 1988, the new Constitution modified the rules of the interethic political game through Article 232, which recognized “indigenous communities” and “indigenous organizations” as parties that could legally enter the justice system in defense of their rights and interests, under the supervision of the Public Ministry but outside the tutelage of FUNAI. After the Constitutional battle, UNAI underwent a gradual effacement, having become too generic and informal. In its place emerged a proliferation of local organizations with registered statutes, elected councils, and bank accounts. These dynamics had already begun timidly in Amazonia before the new Constitution, with the creation of the Tukuna Council and seven other indigenous associations in the Upper Amazon and Upper Rio Negro between 1984 and 1987. But the rhythm picked up in earnest after 1988: already by 1991, the number of Amazonian indigenous organizations was more than 29 (out of 48 throughout the country); by 1996, there were some 71 (out of a national total of 109).

The majority of these organizations were local (representing one or more villages or the population of a single river basin) or regional (such as UNI-Acre; CIR, the Indigenous Council of Roraima; and FOIN, the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro). Similarly, they are often constituted on behalf of a particular indigenous group or a professional category (such as health agents, teachers, students, or rubber tappers) within an ethnic group. Several associations of indigenous women were also created. The Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB) was founded in 1989 to serve as a framework for confederation. In 1992, COIAB stimulated the formation of a new national indigenous representative body, the Joint Council of Indigenous Peoples and Organizations of Brazil (CAPOI). However, the latter did not become truly operational until 1995, during the campaign against the Cardoso administration’s decree affecting the demarcation of Indian territories (ISA 1996:95-99).

The first indigenous organizations of the 1980s had been established to push forward the territorial, health, educational, and economic demands of local groups in light of the chronically deficient or abusive tutelary State. The organizations emerging in the 1990s were apparently formed more as means for capturing and managing foreign funds in order to make up for the lack of the services performed by the official indigenous agency, which was reduced to its simplest expression. These funds, issued by NGOs in the global north and, increasingly, by bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies, were usually channeled through local solidarity NGOs. In this regard, the new indigenous associations have tended to become service and (ethno)development organizations rather than entities with political demands (Ricardo 1996b:92). Moreover, the recent increase in the pace of their creation is certainly linked to this structural change. Of the 47 Amazonian organizations (out of a national total of 71) for which we know the date of their foundation, nine were created in 1988-89, ten in 1990-91, nine in 1992-93, and seventeen in 1994-95.

The case of the Waiampi offers a prime illustration of this phenomenon. In August 1994, these Indians created the Council of Waiampi Villages (APINA). Domínque Talik Galois, the anthropologist who is their advisor, described the drive behind its creation in this way (1996:268): “Like many other indigenous associations, APINA emerged out of interests that were more pragmatic than directly political. The Waiampi were anxious, above all, to set up direct means for obtaining resources and equipment that would no longer belong to FUNAI or be controlled by other institutions working in the region.”

This shift from making political demands to seeking replacements for official indigenist services appears to be typical of new indigenous organizations, but it cannot be ascribed to their efforts alone. Indigenous NGOs had largely preceded them down this path, offering a model and a stepping stone for these initiatives. APINA was created in the framework of the effective politico-logistical support provided by the Center for Indigenist Action (CTI) for Waiampi demands and initiatives in the form of a complex set of “projects” financed by various international entities. This is nowadays the rule for all pro-Indian NGOs. In 1992, CTI assisted the Waiampi in setting up a program for environmentally sound gold
indigenous economic activities (in the form of “alternative,” “community,” or “sustainable” projects). All of them are largely beneficiaries of international funding, formerly provided mainly by nongovernmental organizations, but, since the 90s, coming more often from governmental, bilateral, and/or multilateral sources. Many also depend increasingly on public monies (local or federal). In general, funding agencies favor projects for sustainable local development and programs for health, education, or land protection that are imbued with strong environmental components.

The Indian movement, confronted with the new ideological and logistical parameters imposed on the activities of their nongovernmental allies, was not slow in incorporating them into its own dynamics. The grand themes of Amazonian environmental awareness quickly entered the political discourse of indigenous leaders, taking on various forms, depending on the speakers’ contact experience and education or the context of enunciation, such as the bricolage of New Age stereotypes about nature and Mother Earth or syntheses of “eco-shamanic” conceptions. Nowadays, this process of reinventing and “greening” cultural differences comes across in nearly all Amazonian Indian demands concerning land and identity, without, for all that, eliminating discursive layers inspired by earlier concerns (legalist, culturalist, leftist). Since the late 80s, this allowed the Brazilian Indian movement to reach audiences of unprecedented proportions. Regional in scope from 1974-77 (from the first “assembly of indigenous chiefs” to the campaign against supposed emancipation), national from 1978-88 (from the shelving of the emancipation bill to the New Constitution), the movement gained an international dimension when it turned toward ecological and Amazonian themes, consecrated during the 1992 “Earth Summit” in Rio de Janeiro. Given the moribund condition of government indigenism, Indian groups nowadays are increasingly seeking the means for their economic autonomy and political affirmation from the institutional field, both local and global, of sustainable development policies. From this arises the widespread tendency to create new indigenous NGOs, like so many monadic identities, that are directly articulated with political and financial networks in this novel space where the nongovernmental domain, the public sector, bilateral cooperation, and multilateral aid are inextricably intertwined.

Ethnicity, ecologism, and citizenship

In order to understand the political-symbolic mechanisms and socioeconomic stakes underlying the “ecologization” and globalization of the Indian movement in the Brazilian Amazon, let me conclude by examining some fundamental aspects in greater detail. To do so, I will turn to the example of the Kayapo Indians, who, for the past decade, have been the uncontested media and political stars of these dynamics. This choice has the advantage (and the limitations) of exemplifying certain processes that, although also observable among other Amazonian groups, are perhaps less complex or intense elsewhere.

Local cosmologies and global ecopolitics

The model for the economic integration of Amazonia in the 1960s and 70s involved large-scale links between public investments and multinational capital. This opened the way for the process of globalizing regional stakes over minorities and the environment to unfold during subsequent decades (Fisher 1994:226-228). Accordingly, the Amazonian “indigenous question” took shape in the heart of a political and media arena that was, at first, essentially national (involving the military’s indigenist policies and the democratic opposition), but soon becoming international (with the emergence of nongovernmental indigenism and sustainable development). To deal with this context, Indian leaders have had to learn how to translate their people’s demands through imported codes in order to be culturally audible and politically efficacious on two fronts: a local one, where the legalist discourse still prevails (citizenship and collective rights), and a global one, where the ethnecological imaginary reigns (natural wisdom and “eco-mysticism”).

No matter how dependent the contemporary ethnopolitics of compromise may be, or how heterogeneous its discourse, they constitute the sole political and symbolic instruments available to indigenous groups for legitimizing their social existence within a national space that has excluded them ever since its formation and in the face of which they formerly had no choice except war, millenarian revolt, or individual assimilation. In this sense, instead of revealing some kind of particularistic invocation, these hybrid identities lead to an “ethnicity of openness.” Indeed, if those who adopt such a stance invoke specific historical and cultural idioms, it is primarily because these serve as vehicles of the will toward political, social, and economic participation in modernity.

Finally, I would argue that the inextricable debate about the “authenticity” of such (re)elaborations is based on false premises. No matter how simple or sophisticated such constructions may be, they are as strategic as they are unconscious, and as constructed as they are subjective. How could their authors avoid being reliant on an imaginary in which so much of their quest for legitimacy is embedded (Bayart 1996:154-166)? Far from being reducible to alienated recreations of themselves in the image that others make of them, these ethnopolitical formulas constitute the means of reproduction of a differentiated cultural space in the midst of a globalization that has become an irreversible reality of their existence (Sahlins 1993:20-21).

Nevertheless, even though these new ethnic identities are politically necessary for Indians to be socially recognized— and thus for their collectivities to endure—they are not culturally sufficient to account for the societies that assert
qualities within the very collectivities in the name of which the contracts had been made. The plundering of resources unleashed on their territories provoked serious ecological degradation, contaminating the rivers with mercury and causing widespread deforestation (Turner loc. cit.).

Despite (and, in part, because of) their spectacular enrichment and financial excesses, these leaders played a decisive role as interethnic mediators in the dynamics of political autonomy and territorial reconquest that their group witnessed during this recent period of their history. In the same way, the profits earned from their predatory contracts sustained, in spite of (and due to) their ostentatious and clienstlistic dilapidation, initiatives that were essential to the Kayapo offensive on the local and national scene. These funds contributed to their strategy of cultural reaffirmation (intercommunity meetings, bilingual schools, video documentation), to their ability to wrest control of FUNAI’s infrastructures in their territory (posts, health dispensaries, radio systems, transportation by river, road, and air, and border surveillance), as well as to their flamboyant political and media lobbying in Brazilian government forums, particularly during the Constitutional process (Turner 1993a, 1993b).

This paradoxical strategy, constantly engaging a sort of “imitic resistance” (Augé 1984), between negotiated alterity and cultural continuity, between communitarian territoriality and market logic, has proven to be as successful in land issues as in political ones. The Kayapo obtained legalization of a territory containing 100,000 square kilometers (an area larger than Portugal). Furthermore, several of their leaders were elected to municipal councils of towns near their reservations, and their mobilization at the Brazilian Congress had a decisive impact on the progressive formulation of Indian rights in the 1988 Constitution. Today, they are the most autonomous and well-known indigenous group of Brazil.80

The Kayapo’s exemplary achievements should not, however, mask the gravity of the social and ecological problems that this has cost them at the local level. Economic inequalities and resource degradation reached such proportions in the Kayapo villages that, by 1994, they ended up provoking a veritable revolt against the leaders who had become corrupted since the 1980s. This uprising was led by a new generation of young Kayapo associated with the elderly traditional leaders (Turner 1995a, n.d.).82 The “Kayapo revolution,” supported by a court action filed by the Public Ministry, led to the annulment of the illegal mining and logging concessions in the group’s lands, despite attempts at blackmail by local politicians and business interests. In January 1995, the measure entered into effect for the full ensemble of Kayapo lands, with the exception of a few peripheral sites that were, for the most part, personal fiefdoms of deposed leaders, where mining and logging continue on a small scale (Turner n.d.).

The shelving of mining and logging contracts has led the Kayapo toward new economic options that are both “politically correct” and socioecologically sus-

TERRITORIALITY, ETHNOPOLITICS AND DEVELOPMENT: THE INDIAN MOVEMENT IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

tainable. Their involvement in ethnodevelopment projects and their ability to attract funding linked to this type of project have recently led them, like many other groups, to form legally recognized associations. There are currently three such Kayapo organizations. The first, the Iprenre Association, was formed in 1993 by the Kayapo of the Xingu who, lacking the mining and logging revenues that others earned in the 1980s, led other Kayapo groups in the move toward setting up indigenous NGOs.83 This association administers an audiovisual center with equipment donated by the Japanese (Panasonic). In 1995, the Iprenre Association began building an ecotourism center (financed by revenue from running a ferry and renting pasture lands) and elaborating projects for sustainable development (involving agricultural and forest products) on the basis of traditional experience.

The second Kayapo organization, the Bep-Noi Association, was founded by the Kayapo-Xikrin of Cateté in 1995. Its main aim is to manage a project for extracting alternative forest resources as a means of bringing to a close a long period of illegal, predatory contracts with local logging interests. For this project, the Bep-Noi Association receives technical and legal assistance from the Socioenvironmental Institute (ISA), an NGO in São Paulo (Vidal-Giannini 1996).84 The statutes of the Bep-Noi Association indicate that it seeks to promote other “agreements and projects with national and international institutions, both governmental and nongovernmental” (ISA 1996:396).

The third of the Kayapo organizations is the Pukututi Kamikoro Association. It was also established in 1995, this time by the Kayapo of Pará (those who “revolted” in 1994). Its projects are similarly oriented toward sustainable development (agriculture, forest products, nonpolluting gold mining) and ecotourism. In addition, its members benefited from income from bidders who purchased the mahogany logs seized by the Kayapo when they expelled loggers from the reservation.

Shortly before the emergence of these associations, some other Kayapo groups had already created small eco-development enterprises (the A'ukre Trading Company, headed for a while by Payakan, and the Pukanru Trading Company), involving the extraction of Brazil nut oil, in conjunction with the British cosmetics company, The Body Shop.85

This panorama, although abbreviated, gives us an idea of the capacities of various Kayapo groups and factions to devise means for economic adaptation in order to ensure their social reproduction and political autonomy in a new market context. Their strategies have covered the entire range of available options, from committing ecological pilage to tapping public funds to pursuing sustainable development projects — projects that, in turn, have taken on both associative and managerial forms, involving both national and/or international links. We can appreciate even more the dynamism of Kayapo methods for seizing opportunities in all directions when we compare the group’s current situation to its subor-
1 "Legal Amazonia" is composed of six states in the northern part of the country (Amapá, Pará, Roraima, Amazonas, Acre, and Rondônia), as well as the new state of Tocantins, western Maranhão, and northern Mato Grosso. This administrative region covers approximately 500,631,660 hectares (almost 50% of the national territory), of which 83% is made up of tropical forest, and the remainder, of various kinds of savannas. The non-indigenous population of the Brazilian Amazon has risen to about 17,900,000 (data from IBGE 1996).

2 The operational heterogeneity of the process of occupying the Brazilian Amazon and the loss of control by public development policies, see Cleary 1993; Léna et al. 1994; Becker 1990; Léna and Oliveira 1995; Schirini and Wood 1992.

3 Indians in Brazil as a whole are estimated to be 281,000 (excluding isolated or uncontacted Indians), representing 0.2% of the national population. They are distributed among 210 societies (speaking 170 different languages), most of which are "micro-societies"; 73% of them have a population of less than 1,000, and 34% do not even have 100 people (Okalan 1993:31-32). A recent government document (PR 1996) gave higher figures: 356,000 Indians in 216 societies, without detailing the grounds for such calculations.

4 According to F. Pantaleoni Ricardo (1997:31-32), there are 563 indigenous territories in Brazil, covering a total area of 1,000,942 square kilometers (11.7% of the national territory). The legal status of the indigenous lands varies considerably, ranging from the initial step of simple "identification", through many intermediate stages, to the final step of "articulation". The government document mentioned above (PR 1996) presents slightly lower figures: 554 indigenous territories with a total area of 947,011 square kilometers.

5 The Indian population represents a majority in many municipalities in the states of Amazonas (São Gabriel da Cachoeira, Tabatinga, São Paulo de Olivença, and Amaturá) and Roraima (Normandia and Eldorado n.d.).


7 SPI was founded in 1910. See Souza Lima 1993 on its formation and history; and Davis and Mengel 1981 on its extinction and replacement by FUNAI.


10 The groups comprising each of these three poles ("autóctone", "pro-", and "indian") are, of course, more complex than what is sketched here. They are, moreover, cut across by multiple conflicts of interest and/or strategic differences (inherent and/or situational).

11 In 1994, following a long process of consultation and negotiation (notably with indigenous NGOs and the Catholic Church), a special consultation of the Brazilian House of Representatives charged with this revision approved a proposal for the "Statuto das Comunidades Indígenas", composed of 173 articles (see Santilli 1996). However, the circulation of the Statute through Congress was paralyzed by the Cardoso administration (ISA 1996:5). On Indigenous rights and the new Brazilian Constitution of 1988, see Carneiro da Cunha 1990 and Fabris (ed.) 1993.

12 On the mobilization of Indians and their supporters in the 1970s around the question of indigenous lands, see Piresdant 1979; CIP/SP 1981; Albert 1982.

13 Concerning the national movement against the "emancipation" of Indian lands, see the papers collected in CIP/SP 1978 and Minuendias Boletin de CIP/SP no 1 (1979), as well as the Boletim do CIMO no 54 (Mar. 1979) (Cadeiro 17-Emancipacion).

14 For a summary of the decrees on procedures for legalizing indigenous lands in Brazil, see ISA 1986:66.

15 See Albert 1992 on the exemplary case of the Ynomami lands in 1988-89.

16 For more on these points, see ISA 1996:64-81; Barbarosa Ramos 1996.

17 For a chronology of the administration of the fifth decree (#1775) and the impact of the first year it went into effect, see, respectively, ISA 1996:76-80, and F. Pantaleoni Ricardo and M. Santilli (eds.) 1997.

18 This calculation is based on data in F. Pantaleoni Ricardo and M. Santilli (eds.) 1993:21-32. The official figures are not too different: 554 indigenous territories, of which 50% have only precarious protection (25%) or almost none (24%) (PR 1996). Of the 371 Amazonian indigenous territories, 33.6% are "identified" or "to be identified," and 16.2% are "delimitated," meaning, altogether, 49.8% are in a vulnerable situation.

19 This is according to FUNAI's Director of Land Affairs, in an interview with the Jornal de Brasilia (Nov. 15, 1993).

20 For the sake of consistency: the figures used here are drawn from official sources for 1984 (see Oliveira 1995:271) and 1996 (PR 1996), which differ from ISA's figures, cited earlier in the text.

21 Only seven of these indigenous NGOs date from the late 70s. The organizations set up by the Catholic Church date from 1969 (Operation Amigas/OPEN) and 1972 (Indigenous Missionary Council/CIMI).

22 Some information about the funding sources and official political support of Brazilian indigenous NGOs can be found in Amrit and Schwartzman 1992.

23 Recall that this phrase covers a complex galaxy of mobilizations and actors, ranging widely in study: organizations, some legalized, others not (local, regional, ethnic, professional, cultural, gender-based, etc.); campaigns over local situations; emblematic and/or political leaders; Indian employees of FUNAI or other government agencies; Indians holding local political offices; and so on. On the relations among causes, public spaces, and moral engagement, see Boland 1993:50-66.

24 This phrase is borrowed from C. Jaffelet (regarding Hindu nationalism), as cited in Bayart 1996:50.

25 On the notions of discursive hybridity and the political imaginary, see Bayart 1996:113-117 and chap. 3.

26 See Seeger and Viveiros de Castro 1979 on these categories.

27 In 1977, there were 175 FUNAI posts administered by 11 "regional delegacies"; by 1994, there were 531 posts and 46 "regional administrations."

28 Conversely, in the zones escaping FUNAI control, the militant indigenism of the Catholic missionaries and their efforts toward "consciousness-raising," especially of indigenous leaders, were decisive in inculcating the norms and concepts of the Indian Statute. The indigenist and/or missionary background of most of the spokespersons for indigenous rights have been a determinant factor in the Indian movement in Brazil.

29 These products include latex (natural rubber), palm fibers (piassava), and Brazil nuts.


31 See, for example, Dreyfus (ed.) 1974; Clastes n.d.

32 Interventions by SPI when they took place, did little to alter this system, whether due to powerlessness or complicity. Missionaries were more successful in countering the river traders' paramilitary exploitation, but they did so by instituting theocratic federations (using public funds) that were just as decisive (see Boletim do CIMO no 68 [Dec. 1980]:24-25; also see Cardoso de Oliveira 1988:25 on the Upper Rio Negro).

33 See Iglesias and Aquino 1996 on the Jurua-Purus region; Oliveira 1990b on the Upper Amazon; and Buchillet 1990 on the Upper Rio Negro.

34 See the "chart of indigenous organizations (officially registered)" in Ricardo 1996a:92-93.

35 Socialized within their group before the period of intense contact, these emblematic leaders subsequently learned the language and political universe of the dominant society. This optimal association between symbolic capital (due to their cultural expressivity) and material competence (due to their ethnopolitical strategies) conferred extensive media visibility upon them (as symbols of Amazonian indianness), which eclipsed the more austere style and often more local audience of indigenous organizations and their militant leaders.

36 Note also 2000: The Two Yanomami organizations were created later: the Yanomami Association of the Caubari River and Tributaries (AVYSCA) in 1986 (Amazonas) and the Hukarata Yanomami Association in 2001 (Roraima).
and indigenous NGOs by multilateral organizations, see Van de Vliet (ed.) 1994; Shulle-Tenchoff and Horner 1995.

72 See Arnt and Schwartzman 1992 on the expansion of global ecological awareness in Amazonia. The term in Portuguese for “environment” is meio-ambiente.

73 They did not, however, fall into the mythology of the “ecologically noble savage” (Redford 1990), a figure that so warmed the hearts of their international allies in ecological and indigenist organizations, especially in the U.S. and Canada (Conklin and Graham 1995; Dewar 1995).

74 This includes, for instance, projects for planting fruit trees along the border strips of indigenous territories, environmental education, recuperating the use of medicinal plants, and the like.

75 See Le Bot 1994 and Vieira 1993 on this positive side of ethnicity.

76 Sedibes (1993-8), when discussing the Renaissance and its invention of antiquity, states: “When Europeans invent their traditions— with the Turks at the gates— it is [considered] a genuine cultural rebirth, the beginnings of a progressive future. When other peoples do it, it is a sign of cultural decadence; a factious recuperation, which can only bring forth the simulacra of a dead past.”


78 These were FUNAI, the Brazilian Environmental Institute, the Ministry of Foreign Relations, the Ministry of Mines and Energy, and Eletronorte.

79 For an ethnographic account of the Altamira meeting, see Turner 1991b, n.d.

80 In Turner’s (n.d.) words, “A dramatisation of the environmental values of Kayapo culture in the service of a Kayapo version of environmental activism.”

81 On the Kayapo system of production, see Flecht and Posey 1989; Werner 1983. However, the Kayapo anthropological literature has been greatly multiplied to satisfy ecological passions in the late ’80s (see the criticisms by Parker 1992, 1993).

82 According to the Brazilian Forestry Code, indigenous territories are also zones of ecological conservation.


84 New generations of Kayapo are becoming more radical in the basis of traditional social mechanisms: the opposition between successive generations in the age grade system, and the identification between alternate generations in the ceremonial system (Turner 1995a:100).

85 This includes G-7 funds earmarked for demarcating indigenous territories in Brazil, support from NGOs, cooperatives, agencies, multilateral organizations, environmental agencies, and “green” companies, which constitute the world complex of local/sustainable development.

86 The Ipiranga Association was founded at the initiative of the Kayapo director of the Xingu Indigenous Park, administered by FUNAI. Unless otherwise indicated, the data on Kayapo associations mentioned here come from Turner 1995a, n.d.

87 ISA obtained funds from the Special Office of the Environment (SMA) for preliminary studies for this project. The Xikrin of Cataré received a permanent source of income, via FUNAI, from a state mining company (Companhia Vale do Rio Doce, or CVRD) (see Vidal-Gianatti 1996:291).


89 These public funds take the form of FUNAI salaries and subsidies, income from CVRD, etc.


91 In a certain sense, the “corporate indigenism” (of mining and hydroelectric companies) of the 1980s among the Kayapo-Xikrin (through the FUNAI/CGRD contract) as well as the Waimiri-Atroari (FUNAI/Paranapanema and FUNAI/Eletronorte) prefigured this new orientation of government indigenism toward subcontracting.

92 A reform of FUNAI is underway, which, it seems, may gradually reduce the agency to a structure for supervising projects in partnership with NGOs and international development agencies (see the CMI publication, “FUNAI and the neoliberal reform of the State” [Apr. 3, 1997]). This retreat of the State from indigenous territories that it will no longer directly administer, and its distancing from an assimilatist, developmentalist indigenism that it can no longer afford, echoes the Mexican situation (Favre 1996:119-121). Conversely, in countries where government indigenism is weak, this tendency toward subcontracting opens up the possibility of low-intensity intervention in regions where the State has had little social influence.

93 On this point, see Conklin and Graham 1995; McCallum 1995. This may explain why indigenous territories in northeastern and southern Brazil, where the situation of Indian peoples is extremely critical, has attracted hardly any international funds (EIAP 1997).

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