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## The Beautiful and the Common: Inequalities of Value and Revolving Hierarchy among the Kayapó

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# The Beautiful and the Common: Inequalities of Value and Revolving Hierarchy among the Kayapó<sup>1</sup>

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This paper addresses the nature of hierarchy in indigenous Amazonian societies, particularly but not exclusively those of Central Brazil. The longstanding controversy between partisans of “egalitarian” and “hierarchical” views of these societies has recently focused largely upon arguments about how or whether economic interpretations of production, surplus, and political economy might apply to their social systems (e.g., Rivière 1983-4; Lorrain 2000). I shall argue that closer ethnographic and theoretical scrutiny of these societies suggests that in them social production, in the absence of markets and production of commodities for exchange (i.e., of “economies”), is concerned above all with the production of social persons and relations, and the social values attaching to them. The production of subsistence goods and services, while important, appears as an ancillary aspect of the process of (re-)producing social persons and the families and extended family relations that serve as the organizing framework of this process, rather than as a distinct, separately institutionalized domain of production and exchange: that is, not as an “economy.” The main categories of social value (“power” and “beauty” among the Kayapó) are produced and objectified as aspects of the identities of social persons that are the main products of this process. These categories of value, I argue, are integral to Amazonian systems of production, and as such are fundamental aspects of the culturally specific forms of exploitation and hierarchy in these societies. The key to understanding the hierarchical structure of the social and political systems of Central Brazilian societies (a term usually taken to apply to the Gê-speaking peoples and similar if not always geographically contiguous groups such as the Karajá, Tapirapé, Mundurucú and Bororo), as well as the less obviously hierarchized systems of other Amazonian peoples of the Tupian, Carib, Arawakan, Tukanoan, Zaparoan and other linguistic stocks, in other words, consists in understanding how forms of social value are produced in the process of producing social persons. This in turn makes possible the recognition that

these values are unevenly distributed as a result of the relations of social production, in ways that enable the appropriation of a surplus product *in forms of value* from direct producers of social persons by indirect producers who control the essential means of this production: women and households. The Kayapó, a Northern Gê people who currently inhabit a large area of the valley of the middle Xingú, exemplify this exploitative system of value production and surplus value extraction, as I have argued in several places (Turner 1979a, 1979b, 2002).

## THE PRODUCTION OF SOCIAL VALUES

How, then, are values produced in the process of producing social persons? The activities that produce social persons and groups require periods of time, which are identified with social units (for example, the elementary family cycle or the socially recognized stages of the individual life cycle, which are denominated in terms of major transformations of family relations such as puberty, marriage, grandparenthood). Among central Brazilian societies like the Kayapó, these stages are formally defined and recognized by collective rites of passage and instituted as recruitment criteria for communal groups such as age sets. These standardized periods of social time constitute emically defined units of “socially necessary production time.” Different amounts of these periods are consumed in the production of successive stages of personhood and family relations. These stages comprise the series of personal identities that make up the life cycle, and the status relations that constitute the framework of extended family households. These identities and statuses may be said to embody the differing proportions of socially necessary production time that it took to construct them. They thus contrast with one another in terms of their relative degrees of completeness, as more or less finished products of the common process through which they are all produced.

These relative degrees of completeness correspond to the relative proportions of the society’s total stock of productive time that they embody. In the final stage of the life cycle, corresponding (for both genders) to the statuses of grandparent, parent-in-law, and extended family household head, the personal qualities associated with “completeness” are most fully developed, and manifested in specialized performances of a variety of discourse genres, ritual actions, political leadership, and other honorific behaviors.

The two most fundamental properties of personal identity—completeness and the power to perform properly or to put things in the

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proper order—are expressed by common Kayapó terms and phrases.<sup>2</sup> I shall employ the English terms “beauty” and “power,” respectively, for the ideas denoted by the Kayapó terms. Persons are considered in principle (that is, as a matter of potential capacity) to be imbued with differing relative amounts of each kind of value according to the amounts of socially necessary time that has gone into the production of their stage of the life and family cycles, and the corresponding degree of completeness their network of social relations and status attributes has attained.

“Power” and “beauty” are the main Kayapó social values. They represent the qualities in terms of which the relative worth of persons, their ability to play roles in the community commensurate with their stage of life and family status, their relative prestige and influence, and their capacity for leadership and political effectiveness, are judged. These values of power and beauty, however, are not directly “realized” in the domestic household sphere in which they are produced as embodied aspects of persons, but rather in the public domain of ritual and political activity, characterized by formalized modes of speaking and collective action. These formalized modes of speaking (oratory for men, keening for women), and the leading roles in collective activities, are reserved for senior men and women who have attained the social age and family status of parents-in-law, at which stage they are considered to “know” and be able to perform them with the necessary level of mastery and panache. These specialized symbolic media of speech and performance are the principal means through which actors “realize” the values imbued in their personal identities. They are the means by which the forms of status hierarchy produced within the domestic sphere are projected, objectified, circulated, received and accepted in the public sphere. They are, in short, the means by which actors lay claim to the values, prestige and “status honor” imbued in their persons in production. These specialized genres of speech and action are, as such, integral parts of the Kayapó system of social values. The institutionalized role of political and ritual leader or “chief” (designated by a term that denotes his exclusive right to perform the most elaborate and prestigious mode of ritualized speech) is the quintessential example of this linking of hierarchical position with a specialized mode of public speech performance.

### PRODUCTION, SURPLUS VALUE, AND EXPLOITATION

Given the definition of social production as the production of persons and family relations, the domestic group (which in Central Brazil invariably means the matri-uxorilocal extended family household) becomes, in the

most literal sense of Fortes' expression, the "workshop" of social production (Fortes 1958). It is the point of production of social persons and it comprises the social relations and units in which this production commences and culminates. The temporal form and spatial relations of the process of social production thus defined comprise the developmental cycle of the family and domestic household.

The domestic household itself consists of consanguineally related women with their husbands, their unmarried sons, and their married daughters with their husbands and children. The key relation within this unit is that between the daughter's husband and the wife's parents, above all the wife's father. It is a relation of symbolic domination, in which the son-in-law is obliged to act in specified ways that represent his deference to the superior power (in the Kayapó sense of embodied force) of the parents-in-law. This symbolic deference is rooted in real material constraint, in the form of the father-in-law's control over his daughter, manifested in his ability to oblige her to remain a resident of his and his wife's (her mother's) household. This power of the wife's father is backed up by the chief's authority, as well as by the whole collective institutional apparatus of the community. I have observed several occasions when chiefs refused to permit young men to move their brides out of their mothers' houses, or take them to another village, or allow young women to set up housekeeping with their husbands in neolocal residences. Both the daughter and the household itself, as essential means of social production of the daughter's husband's conjugal family and offspring, thus remain under the control of the parents-in-law. This allows them to command a surplus product from the direct production of the new conjugal family, namely the incremental level of family structure that constitutes the extended family, and the status of household heads, with its increment of the social values of power and beauty, which now accrue to the persons of the parents-in-law.

Matri-uxorilocality thus functions as a device for converting male control over women (in the form of the father's control over his daughter) into control over men (in the form of the wife's father's control over the daughter's husband). The exercise of this control over a critical means of production—their daughter—based in turn on their control of the household as a localized residential group, allows the wife's father, and to a lesser degree the wife's mother, indirectly to produce a major increment of value associated with the personal status identity of heads of an extended family household, which their daughter's and son-in-law's marriage and procreation of children indirectly produces. In this role, they are socially defined as completed social products, integrating both affinal and consanguineal ties to the household in their relations with its members.

They thus become defined as fully “beautiful” people, while simultaneously embodying the full measure of effective force or social power reflected in their control over their son-in-law.

### THE SOURCES OF POWER AND BEAUTY: THE CONTROL OF WOMEN AND THE ENCOMPASSMENT OF THE FAMILY

In an essay on the structure of Central Brazilian societies, I argued that the subordination and control of women are the basis of social control and of politics in these societies (Turner 1979a). In a recent article, Claire Lorrain (2000) reaches the same conclusion about the Kulina and other Amazonian societies by a different route. Analyzing the Kulina division of labor by gender, she contributes the fundamentally important insight that male tasks are all autonomous (i.e., they can be performed without the aid of women), whereas women’s tasks are all dependent on prior input from male productive activities. Male tasks, in other words, are “primary,” and as such encompass women’s “secondary” tasks. This relatively secondary and encompassed character of women’s tasks, she concludes, enables men to control women as producers, and thus get control of their reproductive powers, which they need to consolidate their dominance of society as a whole.

Lorrain’s analysis is compelling, and I agree with her that it holds generally for Central Brazilian as well as Amazonian societies. I note, however, that she does not attempt to answer the fundamental question that her own analysis raises: how does it happen that women end up with the uniformly secondary, dependent, encompassed tasks that make them susceptible to male control to begin with? In the essay cited above, I suggested that this female susceptibility is the result of a symbolic objectification of the functional concomitants of women’s maternal role (Turner 1979a). Women’s tasks in the social division of labor of Central Brazilian societies tend to be limited to those that can be accomplished while caring for, or being accompanied by, young children. An important aspect of all of these tasks is that they are micro-divisible: they can be easily interrupted and do not require sustained total attention, prolonged strenuous effort, potential danger or distant journeys. This quality of microdivisibility makes women’s activities relatively easy to control and “encompass” within simple social units like elementary families, while “primary” (men’s) activities are not so amenable. Women’s tasks are thus predominantly associated with the domestic domain and its attached child rearing, gardening, food-gathering and water-carrying activities. These

activities become attributes of the socially defined and represented female gender role as a generalized symbolic construct, rather than directly as individual, concrete activities. Women's biological reproductive role is symbolically objectified, as is its extension in the primary socialization of young children and the domestic duties of conjugal partners and mothers, generalized and reified in the normative social division of labor. This symbolic objectification may thus be seen as the essential mechanism and precondition of the ascription to women of functionally dependent and encompassed tasks (as analyzed by Lorrain), rather than the ascription of such tasks being seen as the basis of the subordination of women and their biological reproductive role (Turner 1979a, 1979b).

Women's tasks do not constitute such a basis, however, merely as brute, unmediated realities but as symbolically objectified and ideologically reified schemas. In this argument I follow Aaby, who in his 1977 article, "Engels on Women" argued presciently that the symbolic reification or objectification of female functions, rather than the unmediated properties of those functions in themselves, becomes the basis of the control of women and the appropriation of women's productive powers by men (Aaby 1977: 36). This is a fundamental point: it implies that understanding gender inequality as a social fact depends upon analyzing the ideological processes of objectification and reification as well as the social relations of encompassment of gender roles and control of reproductive functions. The social relations and groups (e.g., elementary families) in which women's subsistence and reproductive roles are exercised, and the symbolic, ritual and cosmological forms in which these relations and groups are represented, constitute the schemas of the production and appropriation of the products of women's productive activities (including biological individuals as well as subsistence), and form integral parts of the social activities and relations through which this appropriation takes place. These schemas in turn, in a socially and symbolically generalized form, comprise the framework of the communal institutions and activities of Kayapó social order. The collective male control of female sexuality (most directly manifested in social and ritual practices to be described below) and thus reproduction, as the basis of the solidarity of the collective groups of the men's house and the communal ceremonial activities, constitutes a projection on a higher social level of the control of daughters, and through them of sons-in-law, by fathers within the family.

The symbolic cultural objectification of women's roles as wives and mothers in the elementary family becomes the operative link in the construction of the hierarchical relationship between fathers-in-law (and mothers-in-law) and sons-in-law. This in turn, as we have seen, becomes



the basis of the semiotically mediated construction of the more elaborate forms of social hierarchy in Amazonian and Central Brazilian societies, such as the pervasive form of matri-uxorilocal residence, and analogous weaker forms such as bride service. In the more strongly developed exploitative systems such as those of Central Brazil, the cultural reification of women's tasks and roles is accompanied by an objectification of the character of the elementary family itself as a sphere of "natural" relations of sexuality and biological reproduction, incapable of conferring the basic constituents of social identity on its offspring.

#### CENTRAL BRAZILIAN SOCIETIES AS SCALAR HIERARCHIES

Central Brazilian societies are complexly stratified. In all of them, matri-uxorilocal extended family households (themselves composed of elementary family units) comprise a basic level of segmentary units, upon which rests a second level of communal organization consisting of collective institutions and elaborate ceremonial performances. The systems of communal institutions tend to comprise age-sets or other kinds of associations based on formalized intergenerational relationships and involving women's as well as men's groups (or at least prescribed, gender-specific forms of female participation in collective ceremonies). Recruitment to these collective groups and roles is through a system of rites of passage that regulate the key steps in the reproduction of the structure of the extended-family household. As a function of this role, the ceremonies and the communal groups that celebrate them tend to embody in their social and symbolic structures the kinship and intergenerational relations that constitute the internal hierarchical structure of the segmentary unit. For example, the younger Kayapó men's and women's age associations, which are connected to the men's house, are recruited by symbolic "fathers" and "mothers" respectively, who serve to attenuate the ties of the recruited individuals to their natal families. In contrast, the criteria for recruitment into the fully adult groupings are marriage, parenthood and even, in the case of women, multiple parenthood, all of which serve to promote the emphasis on affinal and parental, over consanguineal, natal, and filial ties that are the characteristic traits of Kayapó extended family structure. The system of communal groupings and ceremonies thus constitutes a symbolic framework for the generalization and projection onto the communal level of the structure of the family and extended family household. By this means, collective male control of female sexuality at the household level



(grounded in the control of daughters and through them, sons-in-law, by fathers) is transformed into the basis of collective solidarity of the age sets and men's societies, as manifested in the men's house, and the organization of the communal ceremonies.

All central Brazilian societies also possess elaborate systems for representing and regulating the acquisition of socially prescribed forms and qualities of personal identity, such as codes of bodily decoration, systems of naming and the inheritance of ritual rights and ornaments, and other forms and qualities, all of which are directly correlated with important transitions in family relations in the domestic domain and status in the public domain (Turner 1980, 1995). The result is that the production of the social person, like that of the system of collective groups and ceremonies through which it is effected, replicates the hierarchical order of the segmentary domestic unit and its process of (re-) production.

The process of reproducing the segmentary unit of family relations, as well as the construction of the social person that forms an integral part of it, has two complementary aspects or dimensions. One aspect consists of the incorporation into the household of new, previously unrelated male affines, balanced against the centrifugal loss of male consanguines who must move out to marry into other households. This aspect of the process has an irreversible linear form. The other aspect in the process consists of the embedding and encompassing of elementary family units, the sites of biological reproduction, in networks of inter-family relations through which grandparents, uncles, and aunts confer their names and other valued aspects of social identity on their grandchildren, nieces and nephews. As elementary families are dispersed and the grown-up children marry and form new families, the ex-members of their common natal families go over their heads, as it were, to bestow their names and a great variety of privileges and ornaments, collectively known as "valuables" (*nêkrêtch*) on their children, thus symbolically reversing the dispersion of their original common family. This second, complementary process thus has a reversible, cyclical form, which complements the linear process of formation and dispersion of the biological family.

The second process reasserts the unity of the dispersed elementary families of the spouse-parents, the members of which (the grandparents, maternal uncles, and paternal aunts) have the more prestigious role of reproducing the social identity of the child, in contrast to the biological reproductive functions of the elementary family. This production of personal identity is accomplished, amongst the Kayapó and other Northern Gê societies, through the transference of names and other valued aspects of social identity to the child by its grandparents, uncles, and aunts (under no

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circumstances can the actual parents of the child perform these functions). This complementarity of reproductive functions thus has the effect of encompassing, subordinating, and devaluing the biological functions of birth and primary socialization performed by the elementary family, above all the roles of motherhood and male genitorship, within a penumbra of extra-family relations that alone can become the source of a child's social identity.

These two functions, pertaining as they do to different structural levels or ranges of relations, are treated not only as complementary but as actively incompatible and contradictory if juxtaposed within the same social context. This is why the names conferred in the communal ceremonies are said to be imbued with great power (they are called "wild" or "savage" [*âkrê*], and "great" or "huge" [*rûyn*]), and are therefore considered to be too "powerful" to confer on very young children (i.e., infants still too completely dependent on their mothers to sustain the separation from the minimal family unit implied by the identification with extrafamilial relatives, and the concomitant attenuation of the maternal relationship that is the symbolic meaning and social effect of the naming ceremonies).

The names are also considered to be "beautiful" (*/mê/*), and those who receive such "beautiful names" are therefore said to become "beautiful" people. The names and the social qualities they confer on personal identity thus embody the two master categories of Kayapó social value. Those who do not receive names in a ceremony (and there are many, since the sponsorship of such ceremonies is an onerous responsibility for the parents of the child, not to be undertaken lightly without the support of a numerous kindred) are referred to as "common" (*/kakrit/*), which in Kayapó is the antonym of "beautiful." Here, then, is a symbolic form of social hierarchy created through an asymmetrical distribution of social value, directly extrapolated from the subordination and encompassment of women's reproductive powers through the manipulation of relations of social (re-) production.

### AMAZONIAN HIERARCHY AS PROTOCLASS SYSTEM

Beyond this point, however, the analogy with fully developed class systems breaks down, since in Kayapó society individuals regularly pass from the "class" position of exploited workers to that of exploiting indirect producers. Those who are at any given moment subordinate juniors become in their turn dominant seniors, and all dominant seniors begin as subordinate juniors. The membership of the categories of producers and non-producers

in the exploitative relation of Kayapó social production, in other words, is not constant, but revolving. The hierarchical order it generates is not a fixed, but rather a *revolving* hierarchy. Such “revolving hierarchies” based on the appropriation of nonmaterial forms of surplus generated in the social production of persons rather than the production of surplus means of subsistence in a distinct “economic” sphere may nevertheless serve as prototypes and precursors of full class systems based on exploitation in the production of economic surpluses. There is reason to suspect that systems of the Central Brazilian type may have served in this capacity as the direct precursors to the development of the more complex, class-stratified societies of the Andes (Turner 1997).

### COSMOLOGY AND RITUAL

The two complementary processes of social (re-)production are represented and embodied in the layout of Kayapó villages, which in turn constitute cosmograms, embodying the structure of cosmic space-time. Kayapó cosmology is not constructed of explicitly sexualized or gendered categories. The cosmos as a whole, and in particular its basic dimensions of space-time, is articulated as a representation, or rather embodiment, of the fundamental process of social reproduction that operates to determine the relative places and roles of both genders in the social hierarchy (Turner 2002). Kayapó villages are ideally circular in form, and are bisected by an axis running from east (the “root” or base of the sky, or the “beginning” of the sun’s journey) to west (the “tip” or upper part of the sky or the “end” of the sun’s journey).<sup>3</sup> The east-west axis, corresponding to “the path of the sun,” is thus represented as a vertical process of linear growth (albeit one repeated anew every day) with a beginning (root) and end (tip). The diurnal journey of the sun is thus metaphorically represented as the process of growth of a plant. As a process occurring both in time and space, it is in the most precise sense a dimension of space-time. The other dimension of space-time is represented as a concentric series of mutually embedding circular zones, focused on the center of the village plaza (situated directly beneath the midpoint of the sun’s path across the sky). The central plaza, as the setting of the communal ceremonies that serve to reproduce the basic relationships, identities and values of the social order, as well as the men’s house and the meeting places of the women’s age associations, is associated with the ambiguous sacred powers of social creation, represented as acts of para-social (half natural and half social) beings. The socially productive powers of these beings are symbolically assumed by the

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participants in communal ceremonies, as they deck themselves with feathers and animal parts like hooves, claws, and teeth (Turner 1991).

Moving outward from the center, the next zone of social space-time comprises the ring of extended family houses, each a structurally identical segmentary unit that replicates the pattern embodied by the collective men's and women's groupings and ceremonies associated with the central plaza. Past the houses lies a third, transitional zone called the "black" or "dead" ground (*a-tük*), which is the locus of activities and processes that mediate between society and nature: the cemetery (death being considered a reversion to an animal or natural state) and seclusion camps for those undergoing rites of passage or engaged in the construction of ceremonial masks. Finally, beyond that is the fully natural zone of the forest and savannah. Ritual transitions in social status are spatially enacted as movements in both directions between the center of the village and the peripheral forest. Daily life follows the same pattern, as hunters, foragers and gardeners bring in natural foods and materials for transformation into social forms, while sickness, dying, and the disposal of waste constitute movements conceived as beginning in the central zones of plaza and households, and moving outward to the natural periphery, or being affected by the penetration of natural forces or substances from the periphery in ways that weaken or disrupt the social integration of the person, as when animal or plant substances cause disease.

The pattern of cosmic space-time embodied in the village cosmogram can be understood as a projection of the form of the process of encompassment and relative devaluation of biological motherhood and the primary socialization functions of the elementary family. The elementary family, as the ambiguously natural/social point of origin of social relations and persons, forms the center of the personal kindred, in a way analogous to the role of the central plaza in cosmic space-time. The extended-family relations that surround the family as the outer zone of kindred relations serve to convey and replicate the forms and values of social identity, just as the extended family households that surround the central village plaza replicate the structural forms created and reproduced by the central institutions and ceremonial actions of the central plaza. The great communal ceremonies consist of collectively choreographed enactments of this cosmic pattern of spatio-temporal categories that have as their focus the reproduction of the social identities of children through the conferring of names and social identity by extrafamilial relatives. The effect is to further reinforce the encompassment of the child's natal family and her or his biological parents by embedding it within the collective ceremonial organization of the community as a whole, as it cooperates to produce the "beautiful" (i.e., suprafamilial) social identity conferred upon the child with

its ceremonial names. Needless to say, the ceremonial organization of the community is primarily under the control of men. The Kayapó ceremonial system, and its infrastructure of naming and social identity-conferring relations by extended family members, may thus be understood as a variation on the common Amazonian pattern (see Turner 1979a; 1979b) of preempting and subordinating women's biological reproductive powers within more prestigious processes and relations of social reproduction controlled by men.

The cosmological system of space-time categories, as the framework of ceremonial performance, thus serves quite directly to reinforce the encompassment and expropriation of the productive powers and products of women and elementary families, in the name of higher-level processes of reproduction of social identity controlled by men. In these processes, the symbolic mediation of social relations through naming practices and communal ceremony, and the social organization of elementary and extended family relations, serve as the pragmatic means of encompassment, expropriation and exploitation of women as wives and mothers and the conjugal families in which they play those roles. Women as mothers, in other words, are not directly encompassed simply as "women" by "men," but as parental members of an elementary family unit which is itself encompassed by the network of relations between extended-family members, considered to be purely social relations untainted by "natural" (i.e., biological) relations. This structural envelopment is reinforced by the sacralized social order of communal ceremonial performances, which in turn embody, in their bi-dimensional spatio-temporal organization, the structure of the whole process of social production of families, extended families, and persons, in which the elementary family is but the lowest-level atomic unit.

### SEXUAL VIOLENCE, REAL AND SYMBOLIC

The objectification and encompassment of women in Kayapó society are not only effected through general processes of social reproduction, reinforced by cosmological categories and ritual performances, but by the direct appropriation of female sexuality by men in acts of ritually and socially sanctioned rape. In numerous contexts, Kayapó men collectively have sexual intercourse with designated women, either singly or in small groups. I have observed the preliminary or postcoital phases of several ceremonies with such sexual interludes in the field, and interviewed both male and female informants about others. One type of collective intercourse occurs

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in ceremonies, in which a few women, perhaps a half-dozen, may be selected for sexual duty in a given rite. When a girl reaches puberty, she is taken outside the village to a secluded spot in the transitional zone that separates the village as a social unit from the fully natural zone of forest and savannah. There she has her first sexual intercourse with members of the adult men's age set, the "fathers." In the climactic rite of the boys' initiation, the paternal aunts and grandmothers of the boys being initiated may be taken from the line of dancers in the night-time portion of the rite by the young men of the bachelors' age set, as many of whom have sex with her as they please. This is supposed to transmit "happiness" (*/kinh/*), or well-being, to their nephews and grandsons among the initiands. On other occasions, when men are undergoing ritual seclusion or making ritual masks in secluded camps in the transitional zone, women are supposed to avoid them and not come close enough to see the camps. Infractions of this prohibition are said to be punished by collective rape by the men at the spot. I have been present in seclusion camps for initiands or the makers of ritual masks (both male) when women thought to be approaching were warned away with threats of rape, though I never heard of this actually being carried out.

In yet another form of sexual appropriation, the girl's first menstruation ceremony, which takes the form of a symbolic marriage ceremony, a ritual "husband" (not necessarily the actual groom-to-be of the girl), issues from the men's house accompanied by his armed ritual companion (*kràbdjuò*) and lies with the girl under a mat, avoiding loud speech and strong foods like meat and manioc bread, for three days. At the birth of a woman's first child, the male ritual companions of the woman come to her house bearing long shafts made of the central ribs of inajá palm fronds. These shafts are painted red and about ten feet long. The men carry them vertically and move them up and down as they walk. They are then placed along the inside wall of the woman's house, next to her and her family's sleeping area. Before they are carried to the house, the painted staves are held by boys of initiation age seated in the middle of the village plaza, after they are decorated with initiation regalia in the men's house. These two key rites of passage, while they do not involve forcible sexual intercourse, are nonetheless revealing of the theme that runs through the overtly sexual rites as well. This is the assertion of control over women's sexuality and its productive consequences (the formation of a conjugal family through marriage, and the consummation of the marriage and confirmation of the family through the birth of a child) by men in their collective capacity as organized communal groups.

Not all the instances and forms of collective sexual relations that I have described here involve violent constraint, and in many cases women

seem not unwilling to play their part. There is nevertheless a presumption that female unwillingness will be countered by male force, and there are the examples that I have cited of collective rape being explicitly called for as a punitive sanction. The result of these normative prescriptions and actions is a pervasive climate of symbolic sexual violence which, however infrequently carried out in practice, nevertheless serves to ground male power over women and (re-)enforce the symbolic objectification and reification of women in the ways and contexts that have been specified.

What is the social motive for this pattern? Sexual and emotional ties to fiancées, wives, and elementary conjugal families comprising the lower level of social structure threaten the collective solidarity of male age sets and associations at the higher level of the men's house and the communal activities of the public domain. In Kayapó myth and ethnohistorical narrative, internecine village conflicts, especially those resulting in village fission, are typically represented as the result of conflicts over sexual relations with women. The solidarity of male groups, and therefore the communal peace, is thus seen (at least by men) as dependent upon controlling and containing the disruptive and individualizing effects of individual men's sexual relations with women and resulting family ties.

#### CONCLUSION: SEX AND GENDER IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL HIERARCHY

I have argued that the systems of hierarchical relations erected upon the foundation of the reification and exploitation of women in the Amazon and Central Brazil cannot be fully understood without taking account of the way they make possible the production and realization of social values, as integral aspects of social persons, who constitute the real products of these societies in their capacity as systems of social production. In some respects my analysis thus converges with Rivière's interpretation of these systems as "political economies of persons," but not with his main point that the purpose of producing persons is to acquire their labor power to produce subsistence goods and services (1983-4:357). The reproduction of the complex hierarchy of relations of social production and value that constitutes Kayapó society (and, more broadly, Central Brazilian society) cannot be understood as undertaken primarily for the sake of the appropriation of marginal increments of subsistence goods from the labor of daughters and sons-in-law, as in Rivière's "political economy of persons" (1983-4; 1987:191). Central Brazilian societies produce no surplus in the ordinary sense of an excess of material production over subsistence needs.



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My basic point has been, rather, that the surplus product of the Kayapó system of social production of persons is directly appropriated in symbolically objectified forms of value. The production of social persons, for the Kayapó and other Amazonian peoples, is culturally defined as a process of imbuing them with symbolically mediated qualities of beauty and power. The social relations through which this process is organized enable the appropriation of surplus increments of these qualities by those in control of the key means of production (the segmentary matri-uxorilocal household and its junior female members). The values thus acquired are “realized” not at the point of production in the internal relations of the extended family household itself, but in contexts of public circulation through symbolic media of performances that function as claims to status and personal value, where they are “consumed” by the witnesses (spectators) of the performances. Those who are able to claim these valued qualities as aspects of their identities through their performances are thereby able to accumulate, in their persons, an extra measure of power and beauty. As persons progress from stage to stage of the life cycle, occupying the statuses appropriate to higher levels in the extended family structure, they thereby acquire the right to growing deference from the young, public recognition of their increasing beauty, and become able to exercise a greater measure of leadership and control in the social and political life of their communities. These, rather than a few extra scraps of material subsistence production, are goals worthy of a life project, which can manage to make even growing old seem worthwhile.

## NOTES

1. This paper was originally delivered in the panel, “Equality and Hierarchy in Question” at the Joint Meetings of the Canadian Anthropological Society, the American Ethnological Society, and the Society for Cultural Anthropology, in Montreal, May 2001

2. The Kayapó root /*mê-*/, in the combining form, or /*mêtbh*/, in radical form, carries the meanings of complete, well made, perfect or beautiful. The verb /*adjuòl*/, in the temporal mode, or /*adjuòròl*/, in the atemporal, infinitive, negative or customary mode, carries the meaning “to put in place” or “perform in the proper way,” as in the term for “chief,” /*beniadjuòròl*/, literally “he who performs the special ritual chants in the proper contexts.” This word thus connotes the capacity for acting with effective force, in contexts where the performance of the chants in question has the effect of enabling collective actions like ceremonies to happen. There are other terms and expressions that mean more or less the same thing, such as /*katàt anol*/ where /*katàt*/, means “right” or “correct” and /*anol*/ (infinitive form /*anorol*/) means “to command,” “to order,” “to put in order,” or “to send.”

3. The Kayapó terms /*kratch*/ and /*enbòt*/ have both spatial and temporal meaning: the former as “base,” “root” or “beginning,” and the latter as “upper part,” “tip” or “end.”

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These terms form the basis of the Kayapó expressions for the two cardinal points, east (/kàykwa kratch/) and west (/kàykwa 'enbôt/), where /kàykwa/ means "sky."

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