6-15-2017

The Political Man as a Sick Animal: On the "Ideology of Kisêdjê Political Leadership"

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Introduction

Pierre Clastres' take on Amerindian politics drew upon an image as old as the first Iberian New World chronicles, namely, the "powerless chief," a non-authority supposedly lacking any coercive and, therefore, effective means to rule. Controversially, he argued that such an apparent deficiency of authority was not a consequence of "primitive society's" alleged rudimentary "techno-economic development," as evolutionists would have it, but of its unceasing and intentional effort to forestall and prevent the rise of a fundamental breech between "those who command" and "those who obey," i.e. the institution of the State. Refusing the specious notion that political power would necessarily manifest itself as dreary coercion, as in Western "civilizations," Clastres called upon us to conceive of other politics, or rather to take seriously the otherness of Amerindian politics. More than thirty years after his untimely death, lowland South America ethnology scholars have finally responded. Championed by, among others, Marcio Goldman and Tânia Stolze Lima (Goldman and Lima 2003), Gustavo Barbosa (2004), Beatriz Perrone-Moisés (2011), and Renato Sztutman (2012), a long overdue reconsideration of Clastres' contributions has recently led to a resurgence of the study of politics—or cosmopolitics—as a thriving field of research. The present paper constitutes an additional support to this effort.

At first, my own response to Clastres' formulations took the form of a somewhat naïve inquiry. Initially, what attracted me to the ethnological study of Gê-Bororo peoples was their irregularity (from a Clastrean perspective). As Clastres wrote in *Society Against the State* (2003:67),

> One omission will likely cause some surprise: The absence of the numerous tribes belonging to the important Gê linguistic stock. It is certainly not my intention to take up again in these pages the classification of the HSAI (Handbook of South American Indians), which assigns to these peoples the status of Marginals, when in fact their ecology, of which agriculture is a part, should assimilate them to the cultural region of the Tropical Forest. These tribes are not touched upon in this essay precisely because of the extraordinary complexity of their social organization into clans, multiple systems of moieties, associations, and so on. For this reason, the Gê require a special study.[1]

Having read some of Anthony Seeger's excellent work and knowing of the ample data on leadership there available, the Suya seemed to be the optimal place to commence this "special study."[2] Simply put, using Seeger's ethnography, I sought to test Clastres' 1960-era model and to ascertain the extent to which the latter's "philosophy of indigenous chieftainship" could shed some light on the former's "ideology of Suya leadership," and vice versa. More specifically, I was keenly aware that polygyny was not at all common among the Gê and thought this discrepancy from Clastres' model, could, indeed, contribute to its refinement.

In *Society Against the State* (2003:58–61) Clastres argues that the chief's supposedly hereditary (patrilineal) polygynous privilege, coupled with the unidirectionality of the flows of words (oratory) and goods (generosity) from himself to the group, would bring about a breach in the "reciprocal exchange networks" which constitute the "foundation and essence of society," hence allowing for the installation of the "political function," i.e. the chieftainship, "outside the universe of communication." The "purely negative" relationship between "this particular system and the general system" would, in its turn, manifest "a very early premonition that power's transcendence conceals a mortal risk for the group, that the principle of an authority which is external and the creator of its own legality is a challenge to culture itself" (Clastres, 2003:61). My earliest hypothesis regarding Seeger's Suya was that their leaders' license to violate the otherwise uxorilocal post-marital residence norm might correspond, in the absence of the accumulation of multiple wives, to an analogue of the polygynous mechanism described above for non-Gê chiefs. There would be no "rupture" in the circuits of reciprocal exchange of women—differently, it is the men who cease to circulate—but, in any event, a change in the customary configuration of loyalties and allegiances.

As I ruminated on Seeger's ethnography, I noticed that what Seeger's "ideology of Suya leadership" had to say about Amerindian chieftainship and politics went far beyond Clastres' intuitive observations. I became progressively concerned with unraveling how the inflections to which Suya leaders subject kinship-making processes (virilocality being one of many) alter their own bodies and agency to fit their "political function." The problem here, as I have found out, is not one of determining whether they are Clastrean "prisoners of the group"— seemingly selfless "public servants"—or, on the contrary, "ambitious individuals" who seek to "manipulate" social relations and norms to advance their own factional interests—nor, still, if they are a little bit of both. I am not concerned with the sociology or psychology— "philosophy" or "ideology"—of Suya leadership, but with its physiology. More explicitly, I aim to demonstrate that Suya leadership is not a "status," an "office" or a "prerogative," but an active substance, an affect which inscribes itself in the body as a specific bodily quality and transforms it if accrued in an adequate "culture medium" (the maternal household and an oddly ample body of unconventional kin), manifesting itself in "chiefly" knowledge, discourse, and actions, as well as in the leader's animal-like "strong smell." I believe this peculiar quality to be the sensible index of an enhanced capacity susceptibility to alterity and alteration that is paramount to the *mēropakande's* (chief's) function-position as, in Seeger's terms, a "mediator between the opposed domains of nature and culture."[3]

A final introductory remark about the scope of this article is warranted. Though along with Seeger I do think "the Gê provide an ideal area for comparative studies," and in spite of being conscious that "chiefly liminality" is a recurring yet relatively unexplored theme in lowland South American ethnology, my primary concern here is with the specificities of the mẽ ropakande's "ambivalence." Hence, by using data on the Apinayé, Bororo, and Kaingang, I mean principally to clarify the Suya case. Nevertheless, I do think my argument can be profitably tested in other Gê-Bororo contexts. I, myself, could not have carried out the analysis with equal competence on such a lofty level. Having said that, if not "comparative" in a strict sense, this work offers, I hope, some broader contributions to our understanding of Gê-Bororo, and, perhaps, Amerindian, leadership, chieftainship, and politics.

The Kisêdjê

Formerly known as Eastern Suya, in 2006 the Kisêdjê numbered about 450 people living in four communities located on the Wawi Indigenous Reservation, a recently recovered territory they had occupied before being transferred to the Xingu Indigenous Park in 1959. The Kisêdjê language belongs to the northern branch of the Gê family, which also includes the Northern Kayapo, Apinayé and Timbira, with whom the Kisêdjê "share a number of cultural and sociological traits" (Seeger 1980:18–9). Prior to 1970 "there were two widely separated groups of Indians speaking the same language, which I have called Suya since this was the name given to the first of the two groups contacted by Brazilians" (Seeger 1981:49). That group, the Eastern Suya or Kisêdjê, encountered by Karl von den Steinen on the Xingu in 1884, has lived on that river and an affluent known as the Suya-Missu for over 150 years. The other group, known as Tapayuna and presently self-denominated Kajkwakratxi, lived

some three hundred miles to west between the Arinos and Sangue rivers in Mato Grosso—thus the designation "Western Suya." Both groups "recall a similar legendary past. They believe they originated far in the east and then moved to the west, crossing the Xingu and continuing to the Tapajós River. From there they apparently moved south and separated. One group, the Eastern Suya, traveled east to the Ronuro River and down into the Xingu River system. The other, the Western Suya, continued south to the vicinity of the Arinos River" (Seeger 1981:49). Coelho de Souza (2012:212) asserts the division between the two groups took place about 200 years ago.

There is little information about Western Suya history. It is known that after decades fighting encroaching settlers and being decimated by conflicts and epidemics, they were taken by the Villas Bôas brothers to join the Eastern Suya in the Xingu Park in 1970.[4] Currently, fifty-seven Kajkwakratxi still reside alongside their Kisêdjê kin, while ninety-eight live within the Capoto-Jarina Kayapo Metyktire reservation (Coelho de Souza 2012:212).

The Kisêdjê past was also one of considerable violence. Under pressure of repeated attacks from other indigenous groups, they fled the region near the Tapajós and traveled east to the Xingu River basin. Almost immediately upon their arrival in the area, the Kisêdjê became "the scourge of the Xingu," repeatedly raiding its other indigenous peoples' established villages and incorporating captives into their own population. Retaliatory raids kept them almost constantly on the move.

The Kisêdjê first settled villages in the Upper Xingu but soon fled to the region of Diauarum, trying to escape Trumai harassment. Subsequent strife with the Juruna, Txukahamae and Northern Kayapo forced them up the Suya-Missu River. Next, having captured many Wauja women and children, they resettled at the junction of the Suya-Missu and Wawi rivers in order to avoid reprisals. Dislodged from this site by the Juruna, the Kisêdjê went back to live on the Suya-Missu, from where they once more engaged in mutual hostilities with the Wauja and with the Northern Kayapo. Anticipating a day of reckoning in retribution for the successful seizure of Wauja pot-making women, they retreated to a maze of small rivers and buriti palm swamps off the Suya-Missu, where they eluded detection until spotted by a reconnaissance plane in the late 1950s. A few years later, the Villas Bôas brothers convinced them to return to their old dwelling place near Diauarum, now within the boundaries of the recently established Xingu Indigenous Park. After several more moves within the park they were joined by the survivors of the Western Suya, with whom they erected a new village two hours up the Suya-Missu from Diauarum by canoe. Seeger encountered them there in 1971.

Although far from "ruined," as Amadeu Lanna had alleged after a brief visit in 1967, "for historical reasons the Suya were not living as they thought they should. Residence, male initiation, and ceremonial life were all deeply affected by depopulation" (Seeger 1981:16). Furthermore, "Suya ideology did not entirely agree with the practice that they had followed since their severe population loss" (ibid.). The Suya suffered or, more accurately, pursued a process of xinguanization antedating their participation in the fairly complex set of relationships that characterizes the Xingu Indigenous Park: "Captives introduced new ideas, new songs, and new technology. From the Indians of the Upper Xingu the Suya learned to sleep in hammocks, to prepare manioc in the style of the Upper Xingu, and to perform new ceremonies" (Seeger 1981:53). Today, thanks to Seeger and his contemporaries, this kind of deliberate, self-inflicted "acculturation" is viewed as an exemplification of the fundamental part played by the incorporation of alterity in the constitution of Amerindian "cultures" (for more on this, see pages 8 and 9 of this paper). In any event, we must not exaggerate the effects of this still ongoing process. If, on the one hand, the "unstable and peripheral" participation in the multiethnic and multilingual complex of relations usually termed "Upper Xingu Society" had—and continues to have—considerable effects on Kisêdjê technology and material culture, body ornamentation and bodily fabrication, on musical and ceremonial repertoires, on the other hand, "the Kisêdjê retained an important part of their own ceremonial and musical repertoires as well as its associated male onomastic groups, to which they attach meanings and values quite different from those attributed to Xinguan festive performances" (Coelho de Souza, 2012:214).

As it directly concerns the subject of this paper, I must briefly address the changes that affected traditional Suya leadership and the emergence of a new kind a leader. "First as a result of contact with the tribes of the Upper Xingu, and more recently from contact with

members of the Brazilian national society, especially Claudio Villas Bôas, certain aspects of leadership among the Suya have changed" (Seeger 1981:182). The *waropakande*,[5] the "traditional Eastern Suya leaders," were "extra brave," "extra belligerent" men whose obligation was mainly initiative in war. In addition, as their less ill-tempered contemporary substitutes, the mẽropakande, they were also supposed to coordinate collective enterprises and to orate in the plaza, exhorting people to behave properly and cajoling those who did not.

Moreover, "there is every reason to believe that leadership has always been hereditary, ideally in the patriline from a father to one of his sons, but that consent of the members of the village was essential" (Seeger 1981:182). What definitely changed after "pacification" is that Eastern Suya leaders undertook further ceremonial responsibilities and became more generous. "Among Upper Xingu tribes every ceremony has an owner. In Suya they are called the *kande*, or owner-controllers, of the ceremonies. Only Upper Xingu ceremonies have individual owner-controllers among the Suya. Strictly Suya ceremonies may be controlled by a moiety, but not by a single person. As a result of the performance of Upper Xingu ceremonies by the Suya, certain men became kande of particular ceremonies. These men tended to be *mẽ-sàgri* [belligerent]. The leaders who were also controllers of ceremonies were called mẽropakande" (Seeger 1981:183–4). So, whereas the mẽropakande did not have to be super bellicose warriors anymore, they had to "give food to the men in return for the performance of the ceremony of which they are kande. They must also supply the paraphernalia" (Seeger 1981:184). Regarding Eastern Suya leaders' new found munificence, "the Suya say this feature was not found among the earlier leaders . . . but was learned from the Upper Xingu and distinguishes mẽropakande from waropakande" (Seeger 1981:185). In Seeger's time, the Kisêdjê, as well as all other Xingu-dwelling groups, were also experimenting with yet another "type of leadership," the *capitão* (captain): an Indian who mediated between the Villas Bôas brothers and his group and through whom the Park's administration distributed gifts. "Among the Suya the present capitão is also a hereditary mẽropakande" (Seeger 1981:187).

Like most of Seeger's data and analyses, the present work, unless explicitly stated, concerns itself solely with the "Eastern Suya," Kisêdjê mẽropakande, as it was in 1970s. Since Seeger, only very recently has another ethnographer carried on field research among the Kisêdjê, and given that her single article on them (Coelho de Souza 2012) touches but little the subject of "leadership," I must confess my ignorance of the current state of things (even less is known of the Kajkwakratxi).

The ambivalence of Kisêdjê political leadership

Kisêdjê chieftainship seems to evoke an already familiar image from the onset. Anthony Seeger (1981:181) evokes it explicitly, if vaguely: "The ideal attributes of political leaders have often been listed (Clastres 1962), and the Suya leaders are within the pattern for American Indians." Befittingly, Kisêdjê political leaders are eloquent, wise, munificent, brave, and good hunters; in short, they are "exemplary" and provide the "model for an active, socially adequate man" (Seeger 1980:114). Leadership is shown in the following areas: coordinating collective endeavors such as garden clearings, hunting and fishing expeditions, raids, and village relocation, the equitable distribution of food, industrialized goods and other items, and the fostering of practices in compliance with the "norms of the tribe." The leader must also be a peacemaker and mediate internecine conflicts. A good performance of this "office" (needless to say) does not hinge on command and coercion, but solely on its incumbent's prestige. Generosity, rhetoric, pacification, impotence–a cliché indeed! However, in fact, the chief is not simply an ideal Clastrean chief nor (exclusively) a Kisêdjê paragon. While in charge of "representing" the village as well as the "ideal man," the mẽropakande are reputed to be frightening and unpredictable and are explicitly compared to the most powerful and dangerous beings and substances in the Kisêdjê cosmology, e.g. carnivores, sexual fluids, women, and witches. Said to possess "animal-like" attributes that render them "ambiguous" and "not fully social" figures, they appear to pose a threat to the very social order they ought to safeguard (Seeger 1980:107–8).

For Seeger (1980:120), such "ambivalence" constitutes the "ideological" expression of the leaders' function-position, "whose political and social power working at the center of the village ultimately derives from biological kinship affiliations associated with the periphery."

Beyond, or rather prior to, being the "representative of the whole village," a leader must augment and cohere his particular group of relatives, his "faction." Toward this end, he relies on a number of expedients. Firstly, he and his progeny are exempted from uxorilocality. Instead of leaving his natal home to live with his father-in-law and furthering bonds with his wife's relatives, which would be the ordinary course of events, he remains close to his own kin, thus keeping them under his auspices and escaping, to some extent, from the ascendancy of affines.[6] According to Seeger, this inversion of the postmarital residence pattern is due to a patrifocal tendency that also manifests itself in the regime of succession and in the mechanisms that preside over the "legitimation" of Kisêdjê leadership. Belligerent men and political leaders have, the Kisêdjê say, "strong flesh and bones," traits that are "transmitted from father to son through the semen" (Seeger 1980:118). Hence, although the "descent principle" is otherwise of little consequence to the Kisêdjê, here, in accordance with native ideas regarding conception and gestation, a patrilineal emphasis is invoked to mitigate the "diffuse character" of Northern Gê sociality—the lack of "named lineages or other important kinship-based corporate groups" (Seeger 1980:122)—and to "structure" political formations such as villages and factions. Still, ancestry ensures nothing: "Consent of the members of the village [is] essential" (Seeger 1981:182). Far from operating as a sufficient and automatic criterion, genealogy is only one of the "resources manipulated" by aspiring leaders. In addition, leaders also often ignore the distinction between "real" or "close kin" *(kwoi-kumeni)* and "distant kin" *(muhai kwoiyi).*

> The Suya say that there is a physical identity between parents and children, which begins with the formation of the fetus and continues throughout life. In times of transition—birth, serious injury, death—certain relatives observe dietary and activity restrictions *(sangri)* to protect their biologically linked relative. A person observes these restrictions only for his close kinsman *(kwoi-kumeni)* (Seeger 1981:125).

The mẽropakande, who are once more exceptional in this respect, not only observe the sangri with full decorum, but extend it to "distant kin," "as if the close genealogical relationship existed" (Seeger 1981:126). In this way they broaden their political support. Equally peculiar–and indeed related–is their penchant for tracing relations with other people through consanguineal rather than affinal ties whenever both possibilities present themselves (Seeger 1980:114).

If we keep the preceding in mind, it is fairly easy to argue that "political leadership, political succession, factional alignments, and political power are all intimately connected to notions of physical relation and descent," and to what Seeger (1980:123) terms "biological identity," which is related to infancy and femininity, to domestic life in the peripheral houses, and to nature. Inversely, "the ceremonial identity of a mẽropakande does not affect his status. The mẽropakande can be members of any moiety, plaza group, and name" (Seeger 1980:118).[7] Therefore, "the stress on the physical and animal-like attributes of the mẽropakande are all consistent with the power base on which authority is centered," i.e. "on the control of a faction through the manipulation of his kinship ties" (Seeger 1981:202). As a kind of hyperkinsman—and for this very reason a strange kin—the leader weaves his political network at the antipodes of sociality. Nonetheless, this man is assumed to be exemplary. An "ambitious" man for whom "rules are always flexible and manipulable," the mẽropakande urges acquiescence to those same "rules" he neglects (Seeger 1981:187). Of all people, it is this singular man riven by conflicting loyalties who is expected to display a unitary image of communitarian wholeness. Extraordinarily committed to his "blood relations"—and to his own "individuality" as we shall see—he is the threshold between the factional *uti singuli* and the village's *summum bonum:* Duty commands not only that he "transcends" his own centrifugal ties with his kin, but also that he induces the same disposition in others.[8] Therein lies the heart of the paradox: "The mẽropakande is beset by conflicting responsibilities, those to his kinsmen . . . and those to the entire village" (Seeger 1981:204). He strives to be both "the selfish leader of a strong faction and the benevolent leader, the ideal of all Suya" (Seeger 1980:115). In short, in this view the "ambivalence" of Kisêdjê political leadership is understood to be related to its mediating—and medium—

position "between nature and society," "between kinship-based factions and the collectivity of the village."

As per Seeger's understanding, the peripheral nature of Kisêdjê leadership slides from the "animal-like" to the "all-too-human." In dealing with the political, the ethnologist reveals himself somewhat in sympathy with a generation of scholars that, in its antagonism to the systemic model of British structural functionalism, longed to replace the latter's jural approach by one that, although intending to revive the subject and to favor the pragmatics of social agency, frequently relapsed into the old and dull play of opposing the individual and society. An example of this may be illustrated by the following quote from Seeger:

> [I]n addition to relationships of Suya with various categories of kinsmen and affines and the characteristics of groups distinguished by sex and age, Suya society has certain social roles that are to varying degrees achieved rather than ascribed. These offer opportunities for individual manipulation. In the society described so far all actions occur at the right time and in the right place; all adults hear-understand-know and behave correctly; all members of a given sex and age are homogeneous. But in fact factionalism exists, and political leaders manipulate their resources to obtain support for proposed collective action (Seeger 1981:180).

Thus, "although it would be a serious error to see Suya society as individualistic in the Western sense (L. Dumont 1966, 1977), there are certain domains in which the individual Suya may express his own style" (Seeger 1981:180). As for the qualities this "Kisêdjê individual" may manifest in his "style" when it comes to the political leader, I urge the reader to consider how leadership qualities described by Seeger, such as "ambitious" and "selfish", are insistently counterposed to the leader's generosity and his devotion to the *res publica*. Despite all the intervening academic labor, alas, we find ourselves on ground that British structural-functionalists would find quite familiar. It may be that amongst us "Westerners" the State's iron fist does allows for or even implies a perspective from which it is possible to gaze upon the "norm" as something placed objectively before, outside, and against oneself, and therefore to be suffered or bent. However, when the issue of "legal validity" is not resolved by "an authority which is external and creates its own legality," the relation between "rule" and "conduct," yields something entirely different (Clastres 2004:185). Moreover, if what is at stake here are the "formal properties of the institution," as Clastres (ibid.) would put it, the manipulation of rules by Kisêdjê political leaders is no less normative than the rule to be manipulated. Finally, if "politics" is assumed to be the name given to individual intentions and interventions and, by contrast, "the sociological" is to denote a neutral and homogeneous space governed by machine-like principles, then politics (vaguely deemed to be an "aspect" or "dimension" of any relation) becomes confounded with the very dynamics of social life (Goldman and Lima 2003:13). In a certain sense, as Clastres (2003:34–35) writes, "everything is thus assigned to the field of the political," and if "the political is everywhere, then it is nowhere."

Physiology and morphology, motivated and arbitrary, faction and community, individual and society: Are these contradictions or hypostases? I do not attribute to the phenomena termed "factionalism" a merely illusory character, but both the grouping of such various phenomena under the label and the label itself seem to be inadequate. The term "faction," imbued with strong semantic ballast especially in the context of North American culture, means, according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "a small group of people within a larger one whose members have some different aims and beliefs to those of the larger group" and "opposition, disagreement, etc. that exists between small groups of people within an organization or political party." This definition immediately evokes the idea that "politics is primarily about competition and the confrontation of interests" (Balandier 1972:18) and therefore a sort of "struggle for power" (Mair 1970:9). Da Matta, Seeger's colleague at Harvard and also a Gê-specialist, is well aware of this:

> Politics is first and foremost the study of subjects such as "conflict control," "competition," "disputes," and other disjunctive processes of social life, and we know that what is central to these discontinuities between

groups and individuals is precisely related to the problems that arise from the application of norms, rules or cultural ideals to the processes and situations engendered by social practice (Da Matta 1976:199–200).

But what can such a definition tell us about a society in which "the controller of the village cannot command" and where "there is no power to command" (Seeger 1980:109)? Whatever the duality of the peripheral and the focal is here, I believe it is impossible to reduce it to mere "power play".

The fact remains: The mẽropakande "has a strong smell and is 'like a jaguar'" (Seeger 1980:108). A Clastrean interpretation might be attempted. In his model, "ruptures" in the cycle of reciprocal exchange of goods, women and words would institute the "political function"—chieftainship—as exterior to the group's structure and alongside nature, thereby reducing it to impotency. Society against nature, society against the State:

> "The relationship between power and exchange, although negative, does not cease to show us that it is at the deepest level of the social structure, the site of the unconscious constitution of its dimensions, where the problematic of power arises and takes shape. In other words, it is culture itself, as nature's absolute difference, that becomes totally invested in the rejection of this power. And is it not precisely in its relation to nature that culture manifests a repudiation of equal profundity? The identical character of the two instances of rejection brings us to discern in these [against-the-state] societies an identification of power with nature: Culture is the negation of both, not in the sense that power and nature would be two different dangers, the sameness of which would be that of an identical–negative–relationship to a third term, but indeed in the sense that culture apprehends power as the very resurgence of nature" (Clastres, 2003:60–61).

Somehow archaic, the images of nature, culture, and society this excerpt conveys are today of little appeal. At least since Lévi-Strauss (2004), the ethnology developed in the last forty years progressively and resolutely asserts the role of otherness–superhuman, animal, foreign–in the constitution of Amerindian collectivities and persons. As early as the beginning of the 1980s, Seeger himself pointed to the impossibility of reducing the relationship between culture/society and nature to sheer negativity: "I have defined nature and society largely through their opposition. But nature may also be defined through its transformative power over society" (Seeger 1981:27). In its myths, Kisêdjê society was established through the obtaining of elements from animals or "extra-human" sources: "fire by theft from the jaguar, maize from a mouse, names from the sole survivor of a cannibal tribe living beneath the earth" (Seeger 1981:210). Furthermore, daily life and "even Suya's 'real' or 'objective' recent history" (Seeger 1993:439) represent a continuation of the process of procuring desirable goods and potencies from the non-Kisêdjê—consequently, from more "natural" beings—"to effect their own transformation" (ibid.). "Suya songs are learned from animals," and "similarly, curing chants attempt to instill a particular animal attribute into a person in order to stimulate rapid growth, give strength, and cure certain illnesses" (Seeger 1981:25).

It is true that, also for Clastres (2004:116), an "[against-the-state] society's foundation is exterior to itself, society is not the founder of itself." It would find "its foundations outside itself in the ensemble of rules and instructions bequeathed by the great ancestors or cultural heroes, both often denoted by the name Father, Grandfather or Our True Father" (2004:102). Thus, the "order of the Law," the institution of the social or the cultural, would not derive from human decision, but from the action of "divinities." However, such recourse to otherness is confined to the conceptualization of society's genesis: is society not the "reproducer of itself" (Clastres 2004:116)? The divergence between Seeger and Clastres is almost total in this respect. While Clastres (2004:204) reduces the chief to the position of a "mere spokesman" of an "ancestral Law" which has been given—as transcendent—in a mythical time-space that precedes society, and thus expels "innovation" and "change" through the backdoor of his "primitive societies," Seeger in contrast, seeks to make transformation immanent and even inevitable and inscribes it into a becoming that is not, however, a becoming of a State.

No matter how conspicuous it might be, the animality of the Kisêdjê political leader is neither a metaphor of his "solitude" (Clastres 2003:63) nor of his "selfishness" (Seeger 1980:115). Indeed, I am convinced that the relation between "nature" and "culture" as made manifest in the mẽropakande's ambivalence is not at all metaphoric.

Seeger only hesitantly relates the Kisêdjê notions of mbru and mẽ to "nature" and "culture" respectively, offering much more interesting glosses: "Many aspects of Suya cosmology rest upon the fundamental distinction that the Suya make between animal *(mbru)* and human *(mẽ)*" (Seeger 1981:22). Having in mind the latter—quite different from the former—we must analyze the idiosyncrasies presented by the Kisêdjê chiefly mode of kinship-making (the "resources manipulated by political leaders") and its bearings on the seemingly overlapping categories of "human" and "kin." To do so, I shall first briefly address more general and typical aspects of the Kisêdjê "kinship process," focusing on the (re)production of affines and consanguines by means of marriage and conjugal etiquette, residence, behavioral restraints and observances, and naming practices. After this, I trust the reader will not find it necessary to attach any metaphorical meaning to the mẽropakande's "strong smell"—it is quite literally the result or effect of the transformations that the unconventional mode of kinship-making bring about in the leader's body, person, and agency.

Humanity and kinship

If, for the Gê, kinship and humanity are "ideally co-extensive" categories, the prohibition to marry relatives spawns a contradiction: "Affines must come from the field of 'nonrelatives' in a context in which all members of the community consider each other as relatives" (Coelho de Souza, 2002:513). Fortunately, it is possible to circumvent this by finding or, as Peter Gow (1997:51) puts it, by producing, "within the field of identity (Humans)," that "minor difference" which allows sexuality to take on a "social form." According to Coelho de Souza (2004:33), such production has as its prosaic means the decorum or "avoidance" that, characteristic of the relation between newlyweds, presents itself as a "disjunctive protocol" destined to introduce and maintain the distance required for procreation. "Of course a man has sexual relations with his wife, but during the early stages of marriage he does not often look straight at her, never uses her name, and employs a special relationship terminology of shame for her" (Seeger 1981:125). Depending on how close suitors are, supplementary expedients must be taken to mitigate the dangers of interaction between a couple prior to and after the birth of their child. Among the Krahó, for example, "when a man marries or has sexual relations with a consanguineal kinswoman [e.g., FZD, MBD], he has to give much more valuable presents to her kin than he would have had to do should the girl not have been his consanguine. As the Krahó say, 'A good payment ends the shame'" (Melatti, 1979:63). Certain kin are considered less "kin" than others, and may be successfully transformed into affines. "In this case, there would be less risk involved . . . while substantial proximity would turn it into an inconceivable or fatal transformation" (Coelho de Souza, 2004:37). As claimed by Da Matta (1976), "co-abstinence" circumscribes the boundaries of "true kinship" and, hence, the domain of incest: "Consubstantiality is manifested in the complex of obligations and interdictions of the couvade . . . expressed by the notion of *piangrí* [*sangri* among the Kisêdjê], which is also to be applied to the restrictions mutually observed by parents, children and siblings in case of illness" (Coelho de Souza, 2004:38). The distinction that appears to be important is between "close" and "distant kin." This calculus of distance "resolves the paradox of incest (the prohibition to marry relatives in a world in which everyone is ultimately a relative)" (Coelho de Souza, 2004:37). The Kisêdjê express a preference for matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, that is, with the daughter of a *ngedi* (MB=MMB=MBS)—categorically, a "mother" (*tire:* M, MZ, MBD, etc.). However, "biological mothers, and father's spouses, are not potential wives." Only "distant mothers and the distant daughters of a mother's father or a father's father are acceptable as spouses" (Seeger 1981:132). Thus, it is possible "to keep (close) kin and affines categorically separated–that is, to fulfill the ideal marriage with a non-kwoiyi—in spite of the injunction of marriage with the daughter of a 'kin' implied by matrilateral preference" (Coelho de Souza, 2002:521). In short, more or less "distant kin" are marriageable, though further distancing might still be

necessary; "close," "real" consubstantial and co-abstinent kin, e.g., siblings and parents, would be unsusceptible to "reclassification," and unavoidably incestuous spouses.

As affirmed by Coelho de Souza (2004:43),

> [O]ne should capitalize on Americanist ethnology's current efforts towards the reconceptualization of the relationship between cultural idioms of physical connection and shared substance, on the one hand, and of respect and 'mutual support' . . . on the other hand—a reconceptualization that does not reduce this relationship to a mere avatar of the dualism of given substance (identity) and constructed relation (difference).

Da Matta already allowed us a glimpse of the fact that "true" or "real kinship," i.e. consubstantiality, is not liable to be a priori and unequivocally determined by genealogical and co-procreative bonds; nor, as Seeger (1981:136) writes, is co-abstinence merely the "sign" of previous "bodily similarity." As is well known to Kisêdjê political leaders, sangri observances have a performative character:

> Frequently, more distant kin (co-genitors, grandparents, half-siblings) start to observe restrictions only when the ill person's health worsens; or else, in case there is a certain distance, incest may or may not produce the feared consequences–one cannot know for certain without risking it. In other words, consubstantiality is something one recognizes by its effects . . . it is a mutable quality that depends on how subjects deal with relationships; it is revealed through the visible effects it has on the people involved–on their bodies. That is, it is a product of this relationship (Coelho de Souza, 2004:44).

Such an understanding makes it possible to better appreciate the complementarity of "ceremonial" and "substance" relations, especially regarding marriage. Among the Gê, "the particularity of effective affinity in comparison with other bonds of 'ceremonial' type . . . lies in the fact that it ultimately converts into a kinship relation and, more than that, into a 'substance' relationship" (Coelho de Souza, 2004:29). The flows of food and bodily fluids made possible, organized, and channeled by marriage continuously contract the initial distance between the spouses. This production of consubstantiality

> is followed by the relaxation of the avoidance [or shame] that characterizes the etiquette of affinity, a relaxation that has been registered by all ethnographers, but which seems to have been mostly taken for a mere expression of the Indians' little attachment to their own rules. However, one might interpret it more positively and consider it, as does Da Matta, as the expression of a progressive conversion of effective affines into 'consanguineous' [and co-abstinent] kin (Coelho de Souza, 2004:30).

The Kisêdjê, for example, observe the sangri in the name of dead affines during funerals (Seeger 1981:175–6). In contrast, hand in hand with this amalgam and strained by life in separate houses, the substantial bond between siblings, especially between brothers and sisters, expires and is transformed. For Da Matta, "when a brother gives his name to his sister's son, he acknowledges that his sister's substance group (her nuclear family) is a sociological fact. So at the same time he severs the bonds of common substance that he has with her, he substitutes ceremonial ties, through his nephew" (1979:119). B/Z and H/W are, thus, "inversely oriented pairs . . . H/W grow closer, that is, more akin, while B/Z become more distant and distinct," concludes Coelho de Souza (2004:46). The author then signals that

> these two movements do not have the same status. The first one is that towards which the Canela are oriented: it corresponds to the focus of their action. The second emerges as a non-intentional effect of kinship construction . . . . This non-intentional effect is, however, the condition for the whole process as well as the guarantee of its dynamics, for some difference

is always necessary in order to 'start up' the identification of Humans among themselves as well as their distinction from other types of subjects through kinship. Forgetfulness and distance have the positive function of repotentializing relations that would otherwise, taken as products of previous relations or as the results of the fabrication of kinship, be sterile (2004:46–7).

The production of marriageable people, that is, of "distant kin," would thus start (anew) every generation, with the residential change and marriage fragmenting cross-sex sibling unity. From this perspective, incest, which is more than a mere abuse of identity, an unduly accumulation of sameness, is to be related not to an original consubstantiality that would be given, but to the trajectory, to the destination—and destiny—of the "consubstantiation process."

Kisêdjê political leadership short-circuits the so-called "kinship process." Not satisfied with drawing distant kin into closer proximity and thus subtracting them from his fund of potential affines, the mẽropakande halts the differentiation process of the B/Z and H/W pairs by shifting the postmarital residential pattern. Hence, if incest consists of the inversion of these vectors, we find the mẽropakande midway toward becoming-dog—which is, say the Canela and Apinayé, the risk posed by this act (Coelho de Souza 2004:25). In other words, the "resources manipulated by aspiring leaders" hinder the movements that would regenerate the potential consumed by the actualization of affinity (Viveiros de Castro 2002:401—55). Virilocal residence, but also observing dietary and behavioral restrictions (sangri) for "distant kin" (muhai kwoiyi), tracing relations with other people through consanguine rather than affinal ties, and perhaps even the leaders' generosity (see footnote 8), all contribute to the generalization, rather than the transcendence, of kinship. If this is not a refusal of alliance, it is certainly reckless flirtation with the representation of community as "a single body of kin," an endopraxis that, by hampering (mis)adjustments between humanity and kinship, inflects the production of the "subject-agent" (Coelho de Souza, 2002:579).

So chiefs have lots of relatives. And we must properly consider the implications of this seemingly banal—and yet usually overlooked—"attribute" of Amerindian chieftainship.

Residential incest and demonic filiation

The Kisêdjê leader is a very peculiar person. The "biological elements" that he adducts from the periphery to the center of the village do not merely exacerbate or emphasize his "biology" but abduct (projecting it—and him—outwards). His (in)corporating enterprise results in the ex-corporation of his own humanity. While adult and initiated men either have no smell at all or give off the fresh aroma of pequi oil *(Caryocar brasiliense)* if anointed, the mẽropakande's scent is as strong as that of blood, of the non-edible flesh of certain animals, of the vulva that is to be enjoyed with moderation or of prepubescent young men who, like him, have not yet left their maternal households. Strong-smelling *(kü-kumeni)* animals are "carnivores or very powerful. They are thought to stand in a particular relationship to human beings, and many of them appear in myths. As a whole, the Suya guard themselves against members of this group by complete dietary avoidance or extensive restrictions on eating them" (Seeger 1981:99).

Contrastively, "strength, or hardness, is the attribute most often sought in *sangere* [curing chants]. This is strength to run fast without getting winded or strength to grow rapidly. By far the greatest number of animals involved in this category are land mammals, and the group is heavily weighted to strong-smelling animals" (Seeger 1981:217).[9] For Seeger (1981:107), when "the same adjectives used in animal classification are also used in human classifications," as is the case with the mẽropakande, "these reveal the extent to which certain human beings in certain states are in some respects animal-like and natural."

As is the case with witches *(wayanga),* the most agile and savage game animals, and hard-to-kill or capture enemies, a mẽropakande's stare is "hard" *(ndo tüt).* Kisêdjê speech and practices place no emphasis on vision as social or desirable. Yet the eyes and exceptional vision do have a place in Kisêdjê thought. "Hearing and speaking are important modalities of the social person; vision is the important modality of the antisocial person" (Seeger 1981:86-

87). Witches "have exceptional faculties of vision, which they use for their night travels, taking the spirits of people with whom they are angry or attacking and preparing to kill other Suya" (Seeger 1981:198–9). There is, nonetheless, a positive role for a witch's ndo tüt,

> that of a "good wayanga," or curer (*wayanga-mbechi;* mbechi good, beautiful, correct). These individuals could turn their extraordinary vision to social uses: For fighting enemies, curing illness, and helping the mẽropakande. This aid is usually given by the witch's spirit, which takes the form of an animal and uses its superior vision to look for things (Seeger 1981:200).

Seeger is elliptical regarding the political ndo tüt. This may be because for him the witch and the political leader oppose each other, as do the private and public spheres and the individual and the community. "In contrast to the mẽropakande, whose leadership is legitimated and has a number of broad, social supports, a witch has illegitimate, unsanctioned, and individual power" (Seeger 1981:198). One can only assume that this peculiarity has something to do with the former's hunting skills and with his bellicose braveness.

The mẽropakande is brave, belligerent, and quarrelsome *(sàgri-kumeni),* characteristics directly opposed to decorum and shame *(whiasàm),* which are, in turn, distinctive of the field of sociality and absent in foreigners, dead people, small children, and animals (Coelho de Souza 2002:497–9). He lacks whiasàm, for example, when he uses the terminology of consanguinity to refer to affines or dares to display the *ngoro*—the circular pattern inscribed on the lower part of his lip disk—while continuing to live in his mother's household (Seeger 1981:158–161).[10] Moreover, strong smell (kü-kumeni) and belligerence (sàgri-kumeni) are negatively co-related with "hearing" *(ku-mba).*

> The Suya word ku-mba has more referents. They include the Suya morality, moral sense, acceptable behavior, and judgment of other people. The crucial phrase in Suya morality is *añi mbai kïdi* and its opposition *añi mbai mbechi.* Añi mbai kïdi translates as 'to not hear-understand-know' . . . . Its opposite means that one 'hears-understands-knows well' (mbechi, good). . . . All the cases in which a person is añi mbai kïdi occur when the individual is not behaving according to the social norms of the tribe. The person is in some respect wanton (Seeger 1981:84).

Old sàgri-kumeni men, chiefs and former chiefs included, are particularly liable to accusations of witchcraft—and one can only become a witch (wayanga) by "behaving immorally" (Seeger 1981:87, 200). Of women, and especially of vaginas, it is said that its smell (kü-kumeni) and heat subverts masculine society: "Men should not have frequent or lingering sexual relations because it keeps them from learning songs well, it obstructs hearing, and it weakens their legs so that they cannot race well" (Seeger 1981:108). Given that Kisêdjê proper knowledge implies proper conduct, the mẽropakande's wisdom is clearly unconventional.

Each and all of the aforementioned "sensible qualities" convey discrepancies relative to "the epitome of the social." Proper to dangerous beings and substances, by becoming channeled through human agency, such qualities divert that agency into marginal loci and into the interstices of the mbru-mẽ opposition. In effect, less substantive than "society" or "culture," the morpheme *mẽ,* common to Northern Gê, is "a pluralizer or a collectivizer with a prominent place in the vocabulary of social classification and occurs in some ethnonymic expressions" (Coelho de Souza, 2002:192). Like many of the Amerindian words commonly translated as "human," the Kisêdjê term has a pronominal denotative capacity, functioning as an enunciative marker of the subject's position, and not as a noun.[11] In contrast, mbru designates "them," multiple Others apprehended contextually. According to Coelho de Souza (2002:353),

> Seeger, in response to a suggestion by Viveiros de Castro (1998:37), has recently clarified that in Suya language, mbru, especially in its possessive form simbru (nyimbru, nimbru, etc.), means more precisely "prey" ("my game," in the sense of "my killed prey"), and not animal; it would thus be em-

ployed to refer to "fishes" *(tep)* and "birds" *(saga)*—and to reptiles, amphibians, insects, crustaceans, and women (Seeger 1981:26).

Thus, the notion seems to point to desirable transformative potencies in an alter: the "dead prey" is on its way to become food and fatten, i.e. strengthen the person. Similarly, the "captured" wife is on her way to making the youth into a fully grown-up man, a husband and a father, and, analogously, by means of the sangere, the attributes of strong-smelling animals pass onto children, healing and/or fortifying them. "The transformation may be either from natural to social or in the reverse direction" (Seeger 1981:24). On the one hand, the "socialization" of infants results from instances of the relation between mbru and mẽ (chants, names, ceremonies, etc.) in which "certain attributes of the animal world are incorporated" (Seeger 1981:25) so as to ensure their humanity. On the other hand, "human beings may be transformed from fully social beings into natural or less than social human beings by natural attributes or by strong smelling aspects of their own society" (ibid.).

Becoming a witch, falling seriously ill, and getting old

> involve transformations in which the individual takes on animal-like characteristics. Witches transform themselves into animals. Sick persons lose their spirits and either die or continue to live while their spirit resides with some natural species outside the village. Old people *(wikenyi)* are without shame about eating and sexuality. They are often thought to be witches. Similarly, being a political leader . . . involves a transformation, a less than fully social attribute (Seeger 1981:225–6).

Though largely unattended to, chiefly liminality has been described beyond the Kisêdjê. Many features of Seeger's take on Kisêdjê leadership are found in other Gê ethnographies. Leaders are described as "ambivalent," tilting now toward exemplary "character" and "cultural performance," now toward non-exemplary manipulation of the rules of sociality and the manifestation of asocial bodily attributes and behaviors—and again tilting back toward sensitivities that must be carefully monitored via various kinds of special observances and constraints. Likewise, leadership is frequently said to be "ascribed" based on filiation and heredity, and also as resting on consent and, therefore, to be "achieved."

Among the Canela, village chiefs *(pahí)*—along with other figures of "public esteem and ceremonial eminence"[12]—join in a "honorific order" termed *hamrén*, a distinction this indigenous people associates with "something special, superior," and, at the same time, with a "bodily sensitiveness" due to which their members undergo uninterrupted prophylaxis.

> A hamrén who should taste of a green gourd would be afflicted with wounds on his body; in gathering honey he must not eat it directly from the bees' nest, but must first put it on a gourd bowl, otherwise he would be likely to get injured by stepping on the stump of a tree. He would incur the same risk if he were to carve implements, such as clubs or arrowheads, from *pau roxo* in the plaza, where men frequently work manually during the meetings held there. The "unripe people" [that is, non-hamrén] are immune to such perils (Nimuendajú, 1946:98).

It is no coincidence that hamrén means, as translated by Nimuendajú's gloss, "recovered from illness." According to Alfred Métraux, the ranking of "Kaingang onomastic classes" also relates "superiority" to frailty: "The members of the *Paí* class [from which come the chiefs, ceremonial leaders and shamans] are all considered to be delicate and sensitive to magical influences," while the "inferior" *Pénye* "are considered to be of a rougher fiber and indifferent to charms, pains and uncleanliness" (Métraux 1947:149). It is interesting to note how this reverse "hierarchy," conjoining being and doing, shapes a certain social division of labor, a system of reciprocal gifts. "The most important functions of the Pénye are those they perform when death occurs, since only a Pénye… may safely approach the corpse, the widow or the cemetery. The Paí, and all the children who have not yet taken part in the Great Feast, would die immediately if they were to do so" (Métraux ibid.). Baldus (1947:81) and Veiga (1994:63–77) describe the *paí* as a "village chief" (and not as an onomastic class).

Nevertheless, Baldus (ibid.) confirms that they are "considered to be more susceptible to dangers of any kind, which, of course, are always magical in nature." Like the Canela hamrén and the Kaingang paí, the Kayapo who bear prestigious, "beautiful names" are also said to have "greater bodily sensitiveness" (Coelho de Souza 2002:288). It remains to be asked why one would follow men who, frail as children or sick people, are overly susceptible to "natural and supernatural" potencies. Perhaps it is so exactly on account of such susceptibility?

Curt Nimuendajú's monographs on the Apinayé and the Eastern Timbira (1939:60; 1946:170–201) demonstrate rather exhaustively how liminal states enable the acquisition and practice of certain sorts of knowledge. It is under seclusion and dietary-behavioral restrictions that Northern Gê initiates apprehend—partly from the dead—the sciences of adult life which they secrete in the frenetic production of adornments and ceremonies that characterizes this phase of the initiation cycle.

In his *Mythologiques*, Lévi-Strauss (2004) discerns an analogous positive assessment of cripples, the sick, and other oddities, for they embody modes of mediation and frequently present themselves as creators and demiurges.[13] Birimoddo, the mythical chief responsible for the invention-discovery of the arrows and ornaments that distinguish Bororo clans is an apropos example. As with many Bororo "heroes," he is someone who "refuses the due distance from the feminine world; in contrast, he seeks refuge in it or tries to dominate it longer than is allowed" (Lévi-Strauss, 2004:80). His nickname is actually Baitogogo, which means literally "always enclosed home" (Lévi-Strauss 2004:79). In M2, Birimoddo kills his wife and the incestuous member of her moiety who raped her; in M1, Geriguiguiatugo, also some kind of baitogogo, rapes his own mother; in M5, the protagonist is an adolescent who shuns the men's house. In all cases, the myths' "heroes" are baitogogos: "Reclusive" young or adult men who, as Lévi-Strauss (2004:80–1) says, "hang on to their mothers' dresses," who somehow fail to part from the feminine society in which they were born and raised (since residence among the Bororo, as with the Kisêdjê, is uxorilocal) to join male society. Regarding the apparent irregularity in M2, "Baitogogo's [Birimoddo's] fault is inverse and symmetrical to that perpetrated by Geriguiguiatugo; the latter is a boy who 'abuses' a mother he is no longer entitled to, while the former is a husband that, by 'abusing' his wife, deprives his son of a mother he is still entitled to" (Lévi-Strauss, 2004:80). In Lévi-Strauss's (2004:88) analysis of M5, one should note that it is the author himself who, with respect to the uxorilocal Bororo, equates "virilocality" and incest. One should also note that Bororo heroes' strangeness—or "exteriority" (Carneiro da Cunha 1978:96)—presents itself as the effect of an internment (in one's maternal household or in feminine society, for example); this enclosure, in turn, opens up "heroes" to otherness, thus endowing them with the transformative agency enjoyed by Others.

One can reduce the "ideology of Kisêdjê political leadership" to a framework discerned by Lévi-Strauss. "M1, M2 and M5 exhibit certain traces of a common framework which we may sketchily outline: In the beginning, there is incest, that is, an extreme conjunction; in the end, a disjunction owing to the appearance of a term which then mediates relations between the two poles" (Lévi-Strauss, 2004:88). In addition, "heroism" implies rottenness in the three myths: "M1: a hero disguised as a carrion; M2: a hero tainted by the feces of his son transformed into a bird; M5: a hero 'polluted' by his grandmother's flatulency" (Lévi-Strauss, 2004:172).[14]

In the Kisêdjê case, first there is the "extreme conjunction" brought about by the inversion of the uxorilocal residence pattern and of the B/Z vector. Extreme conjunction is also brought about by the consubstantialization of the leader's non-affinal "distant kin" (muhai kwoiyi) and ultimately of the whole village. In the wake of these actions, a disjunction between kinship and humanity follows.[15] Like an incestuous breed, the mẽropakande is a subhuman or suprahuman kin. He becomes "the lesser being" (see note 13) able to mediate mẽmbru relations, that is, relations between the centripetal and centrifugal forces that constitute community and also between humans who are more or less kin to each other and their various Others—the Brazilian government, international NGOs, foreign indigenous groups, and animals. Seeger's vestigial structural-functionalism drives him to highlight the leader's "internal" responsibilities, especially "pacification" and "conflict resolution." However, according to the ethnologist himself, the leader is also required to be the kande of Upper Xingu ceremonies, that is, he must acquire them from neighboring Upper Xingu Indians and then see to their performance among his own people (Seeger 1981:7). Far from being of secondary

importance, this "external" (and "internal") responsibility is actually paramount. "A man is a mẽropakande only if the village performs his ceremony, if it does not, then he is not a leader" (Seeger 1981:184).[16]

Let me expand on the thesis already advanced in the introduction of this article. As a mode of mediation, Kisêdjê political leadership consists of a "status" which, under the thrust of the becoming-Other that is its being-doing (function-position), inscribes itself in the body (as a bodily quality, a specific bodiliness) and transforms it. Sickness, frailty, rottenness and animality are sensible indexes of an enhanced susceptibility to alterity and alteration. Strictly speaking, leadership it is not a status—an office or a prerogative—but an active substance, an affect.[17] Neither hereditary right (ascribed) nor a mere entailment of merit (achieved), it flows from father to son through the semen and forms the son's bones and flesh; from there, embedded and latent, it requires an adequate "culture medium"—the maternal household (virilocality) and an hypertrophic body of kin—in order to be transformed into knowledge, discourse, and action. And it is not only the sons of a mẽropakande who become potential leaders.[18] His wife, a longstanding recipient of his semen, absorbs some of its qualities: "The wives of chiefs play important political roles in the village, calming disputants, taking food to nonrelatives in the village, and often prodding their husbands to act" (Seeger 1981:177). Moreover, "chiefs (mẽropakande), their wives, theirs sons, *and their daughters* may be buried in the plaza *(ngà-ihogo)*. This distinguishes them from the rest, who are buried in their houses" (Seeger 1981:68 my emphasis). Supposedly patrilineal and masculine, leadership not merely flows through women, but also manifests itself in them. Indeed, leadership qualities may be transmitted matrilineally: "If there are no sons or brothers [or BS] available, the Kisêdjê say that a sister's son *(taumtwa)* shall be the successor" (Seeger 1980:110). Therefore, the ZS and DS of a mẽropakande are, if to a lesser extent, also "potential leaders." The existence of this possibility reveals that semen and filiation are not the only vehicles for the affect of leadership. Consequently, any appeals to the "descent principle" regarding the legitimation or the regime of succession of Kisêdjê political leadership prove to be insufficient.

Bearing in mind the preceding and considering that "it is common for a village to have at least two mẽropakande, and [that] some have had even more" (Seeger 1981:110), one figures that among the Kisêdjê most people are more or less "chief." However, given that only a small number of people effectively become mẽropakande, one can safely assume it is a potency and a potential few care or manage to accrue and actualize. Is it not true that the becoming-Other, which is the end and the means of leadership, may get out of hand and impel its subject to full-blown and, therefore, noxious metamorphoses? Is not the state of a person abounding in kin and excessively consubstantial with them very precarious since he is doomed to live in almost perpetual (co-)abstinence? It is not that the Kisêdjê political leader lacks "initiative" or "ingenuity" (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1967). But it is surprising that Seeger considers him to be an individual. In contrast, is his dividual being (see Strathern 1988) not submitted to an thorough dispersion as a result of his many bonds of "close" kinship (kwoi-kumeni)? Consubstantiality and co-abstinence are modalities of co-participation and co-division of agencies. One can only hope that the day will come when the "individual" and his "interests," "manipulations," "resources," etc. will stop holding back ethnological reflection on the political. As far as the "problem of the application of rules" is concerned, where action—more than simply expressive—is constitutive of the subject, the possibility of a merely objective relation to the "norm" (in case the term deserves to be used at all) is excluded from the start.

Virilocality, one could say residential incest, more than a privilege granted to exceptional individuals, is a somewhat "demonic" way of fabricating persons, a visceral (re)configuration.

> If all production is filiative, not all filiation is (re)productive; if there are (representational, state-like) reproductive and administrative filiations, there are also contagious and monstrous filiations which result of counter-natural alliances and becomings. That is why incest has an intrinsic "affinity" with trans-specific unions: hyper-exogamy and hyper-endogamy flow into each other in the intensive world of myth, the conditioning world of fluent difference that accompanies the actual world as its virtual counterpart (Viveiros de Castro, 2007:124).

Leadership is indeed a sort of "daydreaming" (Clastres 2003:63). Untimely, in it and of it that otherly, but contemporary, space-time, which Viveiros de Castro (2007:112–3) terms "world of myth," spills into the "actual world" and impregnates it. Its "(pre)incestuous," "demonic" constitution experiments with an ever perilous return to "the mythical fund of metamorphic sociality," that is, to a state of undifferentiation between humans and non-humans, or rather (in the case at hand) with the reduction of this difference to mere kinship. If for his kin the mẽropakande is a baitogogo, the odd man out in the process of kinship-making, from the perspective of his mbru foreign and animal nonkin, his "strong smell" (kü-kumeni) might exhale cosmopolitism, the familiar fragrance which prompts him to the exercise of trans-specific diplomacy. One can invert Seeger's paradox. The mẽropakande is "like a jaguar" in that he is strangely human—both to the Kisêdjê and to jaguars.

> Hunted for its claws, teeth and hide, used for necklaces, dancing belts, and most recently for trade, the jaguar is never eaten by any group of persons. It is said to be like man in that it is very smart, and its claws are likened to steel knives. Like man too, it is said to . . . disembowel its game, leaving entrails to one side. The Suya further say that underneath their skins the jaguars are like Indians (Seeger 1981:94–8).

Internal and external, excessive and exemplary

The jaguar-like mẽropakande is also an "ideal man," the "representative of the entire village," and the exemplary keeper of its "norms" (Seeger 1980:108). In a reversal, it is now the "representational, reproductive and administrative" (Viveiros de Castro 2007:124) aspects of Kisêdjê political leadership that seem out of place. Let us meditate for a moment on the idea of "representation" advanced by Carneiro da Cunha (1978). While we generally associate representation with identification and unity (e.g., the identification of the interests of representatives with the interests of those represented or the multiplicity of voters versus the unity of their representation) the ethnologist relates it to differentiation and duality. "According to a seemingly recurrent process—as this is apparent from the study of formal friendship—the representation of a group often rests upon someone who is, in fact, alien to it" (Carneiro da Cunha, 1978:96). Thus the formal friend *(hõpin)*[19] is always a conceptually distant nonrelative Other towards whom an etiquette of avoidance is prescribed, and, as such, the "opposite," the "antithesis" of the "I." Analogously, Krahó "representatives" would be exterior to the "we" they "symbolically represent." The male's *wïtï* are ceremonially honored females and the honorary chief (as with the Canela visiting chiefs—see Crocker 1990) is always "foreign to the tribe he represents." Regarding "village chiefs" *(pahi),* they are likewise said to "condensedly represent the whole of Krahó society," though Carneiro da Cunha (1978:96–7) fails to demonstrate whether—and how—they are "exterior" to it.

Such an unconventional use of the notion of "representation" is puzzling. How can the exception stand for the exemplar (as per Seeger's leader)? How can that which by definition does not belong to a given set, group, category or class, be so included (precisely on account of not belonging) as to denote the very relationship of belonging and "represent as a whole" this set, group, category or class (as per Carneiro da Cunha's account)? Why would any Krahó grouping—any group really—"represent" itself as something else entirely? Perhaps for the same reason some people chose to be led by frail, sickened, animal-like persons? Indeed, wïtï girls, the "honorary chiefs," the village chiefs (pahi), as well as other prestigious Krahó figures, are hamrén, a category not unlike the Canela hamrén and composed of people equally susceptible to "natural and supernatural" potencies. Be as it may, the mẽropakande's "foreignness" is beyond doubt–as attested by its "incestuous", "demonic" constitution, by his strong smell (kü-kumeni), hard stare (ndo tüt), and braveness (sàgri-kumeni). What is more, as the Kisêdjê themselves pointed out to Seeger, the form itself, this relatively pacified, generous and more ceremonially active political leadership, is in its origin Xinguan. "My informants said that as a result of the addition of ceremonial responsibilities, more emphasis was placed on the hereditary nature of the office, just as they say there is in the Upper Xingu" (Seeger 1981:184). Regarding his role as a "distributor known for his fairness," the Kisêdje say "this feature was not found among the earlier leaders . . . but was

learned from the Upper Xingu" (Seeger 1981:185). One could say that, besides "capturing" Xinguan ceremonies, the mẽropakande had and continues to have (for this is an ongoing process) to capture and transform Xinguan chieftainship itself. In any case, I ask the reader to notice that the capture of foreign potencies to effect their own and their groups' transformation, far from distinguishing the novel mẽropakande from the waropakande, fundamentally equates them. Long before they came to live among their former enemies inside the Xingu Park, thus taking part on the so-called Upper Xingu system, the Kisêdjê, through raids and its leading waropakande, were already capturing Xinguan becomings, and, in turn, being captured by them. More precisely, instead of Xinguan ceremonies, Xinguan women and Xinguan technologies (such as Wauja pottery) were captured (and strange affinal relationships coming along with them). Moreover, as the mẽropakande, the old waropakande was himself also "ambivalent," affected by a becoming-Xinguan, or rather a becoming-enemy. The prototypical warrior, the champion of his people, his stare was "hard" (ndo tüt), he was strong-smelling (kü-kumeni), he was extremely sàgri-kumeni (brave, belligerent, quarrelsome)–and on that account, shameless, lacking whiasàm, just like "foreigners," just like "enemies hard to kill or capture" (Seeger 1981:86–7).

Despite any shortcomings of Carneiro da Cunha's equivocal conceptualization of "representation," a parallel between Krahó formal friendship and Kisêdjê political leadership can be drawn. Both are instances of alterity, and both diachronically cleave the subject. A formal friend and a leader are ways of making past the one who presents himself to the relation and thus of moving him onward, of transforming him. If I am wounded, my formal friend has only to wound himself in a similar fashion so that I become healed. The mode of relationship Carneiro da Cunha seems to term "representation" excludes beforehand any coincidence between the "represented" and the "representative." A sudden light is thrown upon the "ambivalence" of Kisêdjê political leadership. The group, as the locus of an actual point of view, places itself in the interstices of the leader's double-sided, Janus-like face, between the "no longer" and the "not yet," the example and the exception, which he presents (but does not represent) to the group itself. Simply put, formal friendship and leadership introduce a distance and mediate between a "previous state" and a "new condition" to which an Ego accedes by virtue of a disjunctive relation to his Alter: I am bound to become that which I am not (Carneiro da Cunha 1978:82). My Other, in turn, undergoes, even if temporally or partially, a transformation inverse to that which his actions trigger: that which I am not becomes what I was.

Dealing broadly with the intricacies of some of the notions and modes of relationship that seem, at this point, to impair the progress of our analysis (belonging and not-belonging, inclusion and exclusion, interior and exterior, example and exception), the refined political philosophy of Giorgio Agamben (2010)—famed for this thoughts on the sovereign exception—may help us shed a light on the peculiar matters at hand. Agamben (2010:28) explains that "while the exception is . . . an inclusive exclusion (that is, one that includes what has been expelled), the example works rather as an exclusive inclusion." The example demonstrates its belonging, its "membership" in a set or class, but precisely because of that, at the very moment it exhibits and delimits it, the example escapes the set or class in question. "The mechanism of exception is different. While the example is excluded from the set to the extent that it belongs to it, exception is included . . . exactly because it does not belong to it. And because the belonging to a class can only be demonstrated by means of an example, that is, from the outside, non-belonging can also only be demonstrated from within, that is, by means of an exception" (Agamben, 2010:29). According to Agamben, exception thus stands in a symmetrical position to example and, together they constitute a system.

Appling this insight to the Kisêdjê, we can better understand how, produced by and as an exception, the mẽropakande's otherness enables him to capture–and/or be capture by– mbru becomings. Precisely as in the case of Agamben's "inclusive exclusion," the mẽropakande is not simply excluded, but due to his frequent association with other people—such as Upper Xingu Indians—he is also "recaptured outside." When this happens his otherness becomes a potential to be harnessed by his group in order to effect its own transformation. His prior exclusion results in the "inclusion" of Upper Xingu ceremonies (for example), or better yet, a becoming-Upper Xingu. But that is not all. As his potential is consumed and actualized, the mẽropakande's otherness becomes a being of and for his group and ceases to be otherly. From the perspective of his group, he is "no longer" a becoming. Thus "included,"

he stands excluded. He is then placed "outside" the group he helps to (trans)form. However, it is precisely by being "out" of it that he may restart the whole process and strive to be once again a "not yet" to his group. The group and its mẽropakande oscillate between being and becoming (to) each other, and thus mutually transform themselves.

Characterizations of chieftainship that overemphasize "internal" and "conservative" responsibilities such as "the preservation of order . . . and the maintenance of ancient ceremonial and social usages" (Lowie 1946:388) should be rejected. Ecce homo: Less human because too much of a kin to his relatives, the mẽropakande's externality is immanent while his internality is excrescent. One must acknowledge the essentiality of movement and the "in-between" double character of the Kisêdjê leader. If for Pierre Clastres (2004:203), "society's use of power [over the chief] to assure the conservation of its undivided being creates a relationship that relates the social being to itself," the Kisêdjê take a different tack and shape the "institution" to fit the purposes of establishing their "society's" transience and relating it to Others. From this perspective, they refuse much more than the historical possibility of the State. They refuse an unequivocal being, the totality and completeness with which they would encompass or be encompassed by any "representatives" (even if they sometimes seem to "represent" themselves by allowing a leader to present himself to them as an impermanent exemplary state of sociality and collectivity). In other words, positive forms neither define nor compel the group that, as prospective differentiation, is always moving onwards, beyond itself. The exemplar is the episodic, a pause which anticipates and allows for motion.

Having recast our understanding, we see that "exterior" and "foreign" (Carneiro da Cunha 1978:96) fall short of being proper adjectives to describe Kisêdjê political leadership. On the contrary, would not the group be interior to its leader? If in Amerindian worlds the construction of the person is coextensive with the construction of sociality, from the perspective of the mẽropakande, the constitution of collectivity—of what we call "a village"— emerges as a process that is internal to the amplification-dispersion of his person. It encompasses the circuit in which substances soaked in his agency move. However, this does not mean that leadership stands for a totality here. "It is common for a village to have at least two mẽropakande, while some have up to four" (Seeger 1980:110). Thus, the multiplication of same-village leadership-relations ensures that the totalizing impetus manifested by each leader is counterbalanced by others. A Kisêdjê community, far from being one, is many; it consists of the superposition and imbrication of various "political bodies," which are so to speak potential communities that are centripetal in themselves and centrifugal among themselves, and thus mutually de-totalize each other. There is no "whole community" or "entire village" to "represent." Moreover, as Carneiro da Cunha's uncanny "nonrepresentational" definition of representation implies, when the leader is–or coincides–with the group, the group is "no longer" itself.

As is the case with all mediators (Lévi-Strauss 2004), leadership is not limited to distinguishing the poles it mediates—what is inside from what is outside. It is neither entirely here nor there, but on the threshold from which internal and external—exception and example, mbru and mẽ—are interrelated, confounded, and ceaselessly (re)circumscribed. "Neither metaphor nor metamorphosis," the mẽropakande's otherness is, in the precise sense Viveiros de Castro (2007:116) attributes to this notion, a becoming: a movement that "deterritorializes" both terms of the relation it establishes. It extracts them from the relations that previously defined them to associate one and the other by means of a novel "partial connection." Both a gash and a suture, or, in other words, an intersection between the conjunction and disjunction of the group with itself—with the group's own multiplicity—and of the group with other groups, as well as of humans with their assorted Others, the mẽropakande's savoir-être is a perpetual imbalance of dualities (perpetually imbalanced by dualities).

Acknowledgements

the encouragement and thoughtful readings, suggestions, and critiques. This research is affiliated with a collective enterprise, the Redes Ameríndias: Geração e Transformação de Relações nas Terras Baixas Sul-Americanas project (2007–2012), funded by the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP). I am also in great debt to the project's team and to FAPESP.

Notes

[1] This and all other translations from Portuguese to English are my own.

[2] It is perhaps unnecessary to stress Seeger's prominence in lowland South American ethnology. It will suffice to say that, while members of the Harvard-Central Project were occupied chiefly with countering descent theory and more genealogically inclined conceptions of kinship, thus rendering evident the importance of naming practices in Gê groups' social organizations (Maybury-Lewis 1979), Seeger, along with Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Roberto Da Matta (Viveiros de Castro, Seeger, and Da Matta 1979) and J. Overing (1977), was one of the first Americanists to ostensibly experiment with notions of personhood and bodily fabrication—hallmarks of the discipline to this day.

[3] "A mẽropakande is an owner-controller of the village (mẽro, Suya; pa, village, or group of people together in a certain location; kande, owner, controller)" (Seeger 1981:181).

[4] Created by a presidential decree in 1961 largely due to the efforts of Villas Bôas brothers, Cláudio, Leonardo, and Orlando, the Xingu National Park, renamed Xingu Indigenous Park in 1967, is located on the northeastern region of the state of Mato Grosso, Brazil. Its 2,642,003 hectares are mostly inhabited by Arawak, Carib, and Tupi speaking indigenous groups. There are frequent marriages and other kinds of exchange among these peoples, specially between the Aweti, Kalapalo, Kamayurá, Kuikuru, Mehinaku, Wauja and others, whom share a similar way of life and constitute the core of the so-called Upper Xingu system.

[5] "Wa, first person possessive singular or plural; ro (?); pa, village; kande, owner, controller" (Seeger 1981:264).

[6] "The corporal ties are attenuated by naming groups and severed by residence. The political leaders, however, continue to rely on their corporal ties. Their factions are their brothers and sisters' husbands" (Seeger 1981:202)—and, of course, their sons.

[7] Here we encounter the classic nature-culture opposition, the prototype of an analogic series (center-periphery, adult men-women and children, ceremonial life-domestic life, affinity-consanguinity, name-substance or body, etc.) based on which the referred groups have been usually studied (see Seeger 1980:107).

[8]"A mẽropakande is supposed to be primarily a distributor known for his fairness which transcends his kinship ties" (Seeger 1981:185). Also among the Apinayé, the prestige of a leader "depends greatly on how he reactivates all his social relations, or rather on how he tries to maximize these social relations and make them effective in terms of political support. There are two fundamental ways of carrying out this transformation of bonds that are (considered) 'distant' into 'close' or effective social relations. One of them is to coordinate the village's labor force so as to satisfy all the domestic groups interested in and in need of it" (Da Matta, 1976:220). "The other mechanism is instantiated by the constant exchanges of food, especially of game. Thus, the chief demonstrates his attitude towards certain people and transforms them into legitimate relatives, for the exchange of food is one of the basic modes for establishing effective bonds with someone" (Da Matta 1976:221). One might argue that the leaders' generosity generalizes kinship rather than "transcend" it.

[9] "The important element in the sangere is the metaphoric naming of a certain animal that possesses a desired attribute. For example, the sangere for a child with high fever and convulsions names the cayman (*Caiman Crocodilus*), which lies very still in the water without a tremor and does not get hot" (Seeger 1981:212–3).

[10] The Kisêdjê say that after a young man's lip disk has been painted with the ngoro design he becomes "ashamed (whiasàm) to stay in his mother's house" (Seeger 1981:159).

[11] "The indigenous words that are usually translated as 'human being' and are part of ethnocentric self-designations do not denote humanity as a natural species, but the social condition of a person [personhood] . . . they work pragmatically, if not syntactically, less as nouns than as pronouns" (Viveiros de Castro 2002:371). Thus, "indigenous categories of collective

identity," as generally characteristic of pronouns, may contrastively mark "everything from the immediate kin of an Ego to all human beings, or all beings endowed with awareness" (Viveiros de Castro 2002:371–2).

[12] According to Nimuendajú (1946:97) these include, "the leaders *(mankyéti)* of the age classes," "those girls who are associated with the boys during their initiation ceremony and are called *pepkwéi* after the close of the initiation," "the women's precentresses *(mehokrepúi),"* and "the King Vultures *(tamhák)."*

[13] "The 'lesser being' is entitled to wholeness . . . for it is the only conceivable way of passing from one full-fledged state of being to another" (Lévi-Strauss, 2004:76).

[14] The "ideology of Kisêdjê political leadership" noticeably departs from Lévi-Strauss framework in one particular. While Bororo heroes are rotten, the eccentricity of the mẽropakande manifests itself under the sing of strong smell (kü-kumeni), "hard" stare (ndo tüt), and braveness (sàgri-kumeni). But this slight departure is not a hindrance to our intended use of the framework. In both the Bororo and Kisêdjê cases, after all, the various qualities of leaders indicate varying intensities and directions of a becoming-Other.

[15] One could say that such a disjunction presides over even the most ordinary marriages. Nevertheless, what lads and lasses have their hearts set on is a human being who is not a full-fledged kin, rather than a kin who is not entirely human!

16 As those brief remarks contain almost everything that Seeger has to say on the matter, it is impossible to elaborate further. It is worth mentioning that the data available on all other "ceremonial" aspects of Kisêdjê political leadership is thin. For example, Seeger informs us that only leaders can sing the *gaiyi ngere,* a piece related to an important naming ceremony intended specifically for themselves, but nothing is effectively reported on this (Seeger 1981:182–3).

[17] "AFFECT/AFFECTATION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling (sentiment in Deleuze and Guattari). L'affect (Spinoza's affectus) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. L'affection (Spinoza's affection) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body . . . "(Massumi 1987:16).

[18] "Those [sons of a mẽropakande] who are not active are called 'mẽropakande who do not make speeches'" (Seeger 1981:110).

[19] Among the Krahó, certain names imply a special relationship between its bearers. This relationship and the terminology it entails (hõpin, if the alter is a male, and hopintxwoi or pintxwoi if the alter is a female) takes precedence over all distant kinship and affinal relations. Ideally, one displays great respect and shame towards a hõpin or pintxwoi: Formal friends must avoid talking and even staring at each other–sexual relations and marriage are proscribed. Also, one should anticipate and attend to the needs of such friend. Finally, during ceremonies in which an Ego "changes its social condition" (e.g. during initiation), formal friends and their kin are supposed intervene and act on one's behalf, so as to ensure the transition.

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