

# The Shifting Middle Ground: Amazonian Indians and Eco-Politics

IN THE PAST DECADE, native Amazonians emerged at the forefront of the trend to “think locally, act globally” (Varese 1991), pursuing political strategies that link local indigenous struggles to international issues and organizations. In Brazil, Indians and environmentalists discovered common cause in opposing ecologically destructive dams, roads, mines, and colonization schemes. A host of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—including the Environmental Defense Fund, National Wildlife Federation, Nature Conservancy, Rainforest Action Network, and World Wildlife Fund—joined forces with indigenous communities in defense of native rights to land and resources (Arnt and Schwartzman 1992). Media reporting on global warming, deforestation, declining biodiversity, and the extinction of species brought local Amazonian conflicts over natural resources to the attention of a broad international audience. People in places like Munich, Ann Arbor, and Rome came to feel like they had a personal stake in what was happening in places like Mato Grosso, Acre, and Roraima.

This internationalization of local Amazonian struggles had tremendous impact on the political situation of South American Indians, particularly in the Brazilian Amazon. New forms of transnational, transcultural encounters and alliances emerged as native leaders became prominent in the international public sphere of environmental and human rights activism. The Kayapó leader Payakan exemplifies the high media visibility that Brazilian Indians have attained. Between 1988 and 1992, Payakan made a speaking tour of seven European countries, testified at the World Bank, met with French president François Mitter-

and and former U.S. president Jimmy Carter, appeared on the Phil Donahue Show, was featured on the cover of *Parade* magazine (see Figure 1), and organized a huge political protest/media event that attracted hundreds of foreign journalists to the Amazonian town of Altamira.

At the same time that Amazonian Indians were forging new contacts abroad, a new breed of first-world citizens began to make the reverse journey to remote fourth-world (indigenous) communities. These were no longer just the usual suspects—anthropologists, missionaries, human rights workers, traders, government agents, and military personnel. The new visitors ranged from NGO representatives to eco-conscious celebrities like Sting, corporate executives like Anita and Gordon Roddick of the Body Shop cosmetics firm, and eco-tourists who sign up for guided visits to native villages (see, for example, Buchanan 1993).

In these diverse arenas where Amazonian Indians and environmentally concerned outsiders interact, we see the emergence of what historian Richard White calls a middle ground the construction of a mutually comprehensible world characterized by new systems of meaning and exchange” (1991:ix). White developed the middle ground concept to describe Indian-white relations in North America’s Great Lakes region in the 17th to 19th centuries. Through processes of confrontation, negotiation, and creative innovation, Indians and non-Indians (fur traders, soldiers, clerics, colonial officials) developed systems of communication and exchange through which both sides perceived their goals could be achieved. White argues that these middle grounds were pragmatic, mutually constructed accommodations that do not fit a simple rubric of domination, subordination, and acculturation.

Today a new kind of middle ground is developing between some fourth-world and first-world citizens. This contemporary middle ground is neither a geographic territory nor a social space where neighbors meet face-to-

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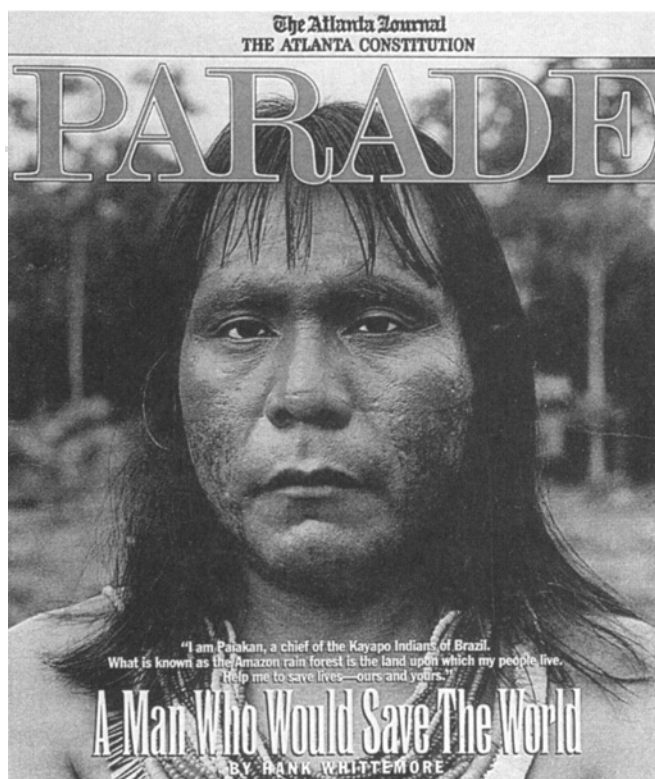


Figure 1

*Parade* magazine featured an interview with the Kayapó leader Payakan. Cover photo © Hank Whittemore, 1992. Courtesy of Parade Publications cover © 1992.

face. It is instead a political space, an arena of intercultural communication, exchange, and joint political action.

The new politics of the eco-Indian middle ground is primarily a symbolic politics; ideas and images, not common identity or economic interests, mobilize political actions across wide gulfs of distance, language, and culture. Since the 1980s, indigenous people have become key symbols, as well as key participants, in the development of an ideology and organizational networks that link local Amazonian conflicts to international issues and social movements. Indians possess, to use Bourdieu's (1977[1972], 1984[1979]) terminology, "symbolic capital," and positive ideas about Indians and their relations to nature have become a potent symbolic resource in transnational politics.

In this article, we examine the Indian-environmentalist alliance in Brazil, focusing on how Westerners' ideas about Indians have contributed to the strengths and weaknesses of eco-politics as a vehicle for pursuing indigenous goals of self-determination. This relationship has benefited both environmentalist and Indian interests. Recent events in Brazil, however, suggest that the international alliance may prove fragile and pose domestic political risks for indigenous peoples. We argue that the instability

of this new political-ideological middle ground is rooted in contradictions between the realities of Amazonian Indian societies and the ideas about Indians that have inspired support within a broad public far beyond the Amazon.

Middle grounds are forged on the basis of assumptions about the Other and what the Other can contribute to specific goals. These assumptions, observes White, always involve cross-cultural misperceptions and strategic misrepresentations:

Diverse peoples adjust their differences through what amounts to a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings. People try to persuade others who are different from themselves by appealing to what they perceive to be the values and practices of those others. They often misinterpret and distort both the values and practices of those they deal with, but from these misunderstandings arise new meanings and through them new practices—the shared meanings and practices of the middle ground. [1991:x]

The middle ground of Amazonian eco-politics was founded on the assertion that native peoples' views of nature and ways of using natural resources are consistent with Western conservationist principles. Many environmentalists, and certain Amazonian Indian activists, came to frame their political discourses in terms of this assumption in order to establish common ideological ground and mutual interests in opposing destruction of the rain forest and keeping land in native hands. The Kayapó leader Payakan entered millions of American homes on the cover of *Parade* magazine with the plea, "Help me to save lives—ours and yours" (Whittemore 1992). The idea of commonality between first- and fourth-world peoples appeals to a large, transnational audience, in part because it resonates with multiple Western cultural trends.

### Noble Savages and Global Ecological Imaginings

The contemporary equation of indigenous resource management practices with Western environmentalism has promoted an image of Amazonian Indians that Kent Redford (1990) dubbed "the Ecologically Noble Savage." This is the latest expression of a long tradition of Euro-American thought that identifies certain non-Western "primitives" as innocent and free of corruption, in contrast to the West's destructive materialism. The "noble savage" idea—prominent in the writings of European philosophers like Montaigne, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Moore, and others—idealized the virtues of New World native cultures as a foil to criticisms of European social institutions.<sup>1</sup> At the core of this primitivist ideal was the dream of "people dwelling in nature according to nature, existing free of history's burden and the social complexity felt by Europeans in the modern period" (Berkhofer 1978:72).

In the past two decades, the noble savage theme was recast with a distinctly ecological emphasis. Native peoples in general, and Native Americans in particular, came to be widely viewed as “natural conservationists” who use environmental resources in ways that are nondestructive, sustainable, and mindful of effects on future generations. Anthropologists, historians, and some native leaders have called attention to problems with making a generic assumption that Native Americans’ relations to nature are equivalent to Western environmentalist principles.<sup>2</sup> The rhetorical power of this idea in contemporary Western culture is, however, undeniable.

Spokespersons for both environmental and indigenous causes have come to speak in a shared idiom of solidarity between forest and city peoples, united by their respect for nature and commitment to protecting lifeways in harmony with the earth. Activists see this solidarity as a matter of converging or at least overlapping political goals. Within the larger public, however, there are some for whom this new solidarity goes beyond the level of pragmatic alliance to deeper levels of intercultural identification and notions of comembership in a nascent global community. In this vision of a transnational, transcultural imagined community, we see the emergence of what one might call the “global ecological imaginary,” following Annette Hamilton’s (1990) notion of the “national imaginary.”<sup>3</sup> The concept of the imaginary calls attention to parallels with other imagined communities and the use of ideas about the Other to construct a sense of solidarity among people from diverse backgrounds.<sup>4</sup>

All communities are to some extent imagined, in that members carry images of other group members and ideas of what binds them together (Anderson 1983:15). Late 20th-century visions of eco-community, however, are especially heavily imagined. Whereas most communities are predicated on common personal interests (economic, linguistic, political, or residential) or salient dimensions of identity (ethnicity, religion, or occupation), the global ecological imaginary is based mostly on abstract notions about the convergence between native and environmentalist visions for the future.

The positive value ascribed to indigenous lifeways distinguishes the global eco-community from earlier global imagined communities. Christian missionaries have long promoted visions of native converts’ membership in a worldwide Christian fellowship, and the great religious communities of Islam and Buddhism link city dwellers and tribespeople across immense territories (Anderson 1983:20). Contemporary visions of transcultural eco-solidarity differ in that native people are treated not as peripheral members whose inclusion requires shedding their own traditions but as paradigmatic exemplars of the community’s core values. Indigenous people are natural partners in the global ecological imaginary because of—not in spite of—their cultural difference.

The global eco-village is primarily a first-world construct, created and re-created through media messages and images. Face-to-face contacts between Amazonian Indians and their urban supporters are rare and are generally limited to a handful of native leaders who travel to conferences and media events. The global ecological imaginary, like Hamilton’s Australian national imaginary, “emerges not from the realm of concrete everyday experience but in the circulation of collectively held images” (Hamilton 1990:16; see also Ginsburg 1993:561).

For native Amazonians, the imagining at the heart of the eco-Indian partnership may prove to be both its strength and its weakness. The power of ideas and images to cross national boundaries generated unprecedented international support for local Amazonian struggles that helped some Brazilian Indians gain important land rights and more favorable government policies. Indian activists and their allies in environmental NGOs were able to channel diffuse public sentiments concerning solidarity with indigenous peoples into concrete forms of political support. This has been one of the most significant developments in the history of indigenous rights struggles. Support for indigenous causes, however, needs to be founded on realistic understandings of Indians that will outlast the ebb and flow of popular enthusiasms and media fads. The Brazilian case suggests that the stereotype of native people as natural conservationists forms a precarious foundation for indigenous rights advocacy because it misrepresents the nature of native Amazonian communities and their priorities.

### **Environmentalists: The Benefits of the Indian Alliance**

The recent solidarity between environmentalists and native peoples represents a departure from the traditional orientations of both conservationist and native-rights movements. Historically, indigenous advocacy was based on human rights notions about the intrinsic value of distinct cultures and universal rights to physical and cultural survival (Wright 1988:368). Until recently, environmental advocacy focused on protecting flora and fauna; the presence of people (including native inhabitants) tended to be seen as an obstacle to environmental preservation (Hecht and Cockburn 1989:27–28). As environmental philosophy shifted to emphasize sustainable development rather than strict preservation, the search for models of sustainable uses of rain forest resources created an ecological rationale for defending indigenous land rights. Environmentalists discovered the value of indigenous knowledge, and environmental organizations discovered the strategic value of allying with indigenous causes.

In Brazil, government-sponsored economic development schemes sparked massive clear-cutting, erosion,

and deforestation in the Amazon basin. In the 1980s, mounting evidence of these policies' failure to meet even short-term economic goals and increasing recognition of the long-term negative economic effects of environmental degradation drew public attention to the limits of Western scientific knowledge of the rain forest. Simultaneously, research in ethnobiology and cultural ecology began to reveal the sophisticated nature of indigenous knowledge systems and the productivity of Amazonian Indians' sustainable resource management practices.<sup>5</sup> Studies of the Kayapó, for example, documented intimate understandings of plants, insects, and ecological interactions that were unknown to Western science, and indicated that Kayapó farming and forestry techniques actually increase biodiversity (see, for example, Posey 1985).<sup>6</sup>

Ethnobiological research had tremendous ideological impact among environmental advocates, who predicate their arguments on scientific facts. The scientifically legitimized goal of preserving biodiversity became attached to the idea of preserving indigenous knowledge and, by extension, preserving indigenous peoples. Indians suddenly were hailed as guardians of the forest: saving the forest's people was seen as a way to save the rain forest and to preserve its unknown resources that held promise for advances in medicine and pharmaceuticals (see Bennett 1992; Soejarto and Farnsworth 1989).

As information about indigenous resource management was disseminated, it supplied important data to support an ecological critique (Schwartzman 1991; Rich 1990:320–328). In the early 1980s, environmental NGOs began to articulate economic development models that diverged from the policies of multilateral lending agencies. Environmentalists argued that sound economic planning must include the maintenance of biological diversity, promotion of social equity, and preservation of local cultures (Aufderheide and Rich 1988:307). Indians—formerly seen as irrelevant to economic development—now were championed as the holders of important keys to rational development. Numerous international agencies promoted innovative models for sustainable land use (such as extractive reserves) that incorporated Indians and/or indigenous resource management practices.<sup>7</sup>

The alliance with Amazonian Indian causes conferred another important ideological and political benefit: it legitimized first-world environmentalists' involvement in distant nations' internal affairs.<sup>8</sup> Without the connection to local peoples' struggles, foreigners' protests against Amazonian deforestation can be construed as just another form of self-interested first-world imperialist meddling in third-world affairs. (This is, in fact, how the environmental movement has been widely portrayed in the Brazilian media [Neves 1994].) Identifying with indigenous causes also strengthened environmentalism's moral position; the alliance with native struggles allowed environmentalists to claim the humanitarian stance of defend-

ing human rights and oppressed, politically disempowered people, not just protecting flora and fauna (Brysk 1992:27).

So strong was environmentalism's public appeal in the 1980s that a number of human rights groups recast their campaigns in terms of it. A representative of Cultural Survival, a prominent indigenous rights advocacy organization, told political scientist Alison Brysk, "We see ourselves as a human rights organization in the broadest sense, and that was certainly our first track of contact with indigenous rights. But we've moved into ecology . . . clearly, it works better" (Brysk 1994:36). A Rainforest Foundation spokesperson put it more bluntly: "The rainforest card is stronger than the indigenous card. They [indigenous people] know that, and we [advocates] know that—and without that, indigenous people wouldn't have a chance in hell" (Brysk 1994:36).<sup>9</sup>

The international environmental movement thus came to encompass a heterogeneous set of constituencies with diverse agendas concerning Amazonia, ranging from those whose primary goal was to save the rain forest to those who were in the movement primarily to defend indigenous rights. In strategic terms, both human rights groups that decided to "go green" and environmental NGOs that decided to "go native" benefited from the merging of scientific and moral arguments, as well as organizational resources. Similarly, Brazilian Indian activists who hitched their wagons to the environmental movement's rising star attained unprecedented visibility and effectiveness.

## Brazilian Indians: The Benefits of the Environmental Alliance

Brazil is home to more than 200,000 Indians (CEDI 1987:24), members of some 180 distinct groups that speak different languages and live in diverse conditions. Some of Brazil's native peoples have had little or no contact with the national society; others have interacted with non-Indians for centuries. Today, the majority of Brazilian Indians reside in the Amazon basin, where their lands and resources are increasingly coveted by outsiders.

Historically, Brazilian Indians depended heavily on non-Indian mediators to defend their rights within the nation-state. Barriers of language, distance, and lack of familiarity with the national political system—compounded by Indians' ambiguous legal status as "relatively incapable" wards of the state, according to the country's civil code—also hinder participation in government policy making.<sup>10</sup> At the local level, most Indians depend on employees of the state Indian agency (FUNAI, the National Indian Foundation) or other patrons, such as missionaries, ranchers, or local entrepreneurs.<sup>11</sup> Many of

these outsiders consider Indians socially inferior and see little value in indigenous cultural distinctiveness.

At the national level, until recently only two major institutional agents mediated Indians' relations to the larger Brazilian society: FUNAI and the Catholic Church. In both cases, the defense of indigenous rights was subordinate to other institutional goals. Until 1988, FUNAI was a branch of the Ministry of the Interior, whose principal mission—to develop Brazil's natural resources—was ironically at odds with protecting Indian rights. Many of FUNAI's top officials, moreover, came from the upper ranks of the Brazilian military and had close ties to corporations interested in exploiting the Amazon's natural resources. Dependency on these mediators strongly constrained possibilities for change in indigenous affairs. The situation has changed somewhat since 1988, when the office of the Attorney General assumed a major role in defending indigenous rights. Indians, however, remain politically vulnerable. While the constitution guarantees native land rights, the enforcement of these rights is tenuous and is often contingent on Indians' ability to mobilize external political support to leverage their claims.

In the early 1980s, other promoters of Indian interests began to have more voice in Brazil. Regional indigenous support groups proliferated, a process that intensified with the political "opening" in the last years of the military dictatorship. These pro-Indian NGOs consisted primarily of professionals and intellectuals (Urban 1985); in the general Brazilian population, support for Indian causes has been consistently weak.

At the international level, pro-Indian advocacy had a limited base of support until recently, and arguments for protecting Indians were framed almost solely in terms of human rights and cultural preservation. This changed in the mid-1980s when environmentalists discovered common cause with the rain forest's native peoples. The language of environmentalism offered Indian activists a way to communicate and legitimate native claims to land and resources in terms that outsiders could comprehend. With cultural survival reframed as an environmental issue, Amazonian Indians gained powerful new allies. This recalls Richard Adams's observation that, historically, the only way (apart from revolution) for nondominant ethnic minorities to obtain power in relation to Latin American states has been to rally support from a third party that makes the state "pause and pay attention" (1991:197).

Environmentalist pressure did, indeed, force Brazilian policy makers to pay attention. The nation's huge foreign debt increased reliance on multilateral lending institutions (notably, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank). This made officials sensitive to criticism channeled through international protests and letter-writing campaigns, foreign diplomats, and negative press coverage. International pressure was critical in forcing the Brazilian government to recognize Indian land

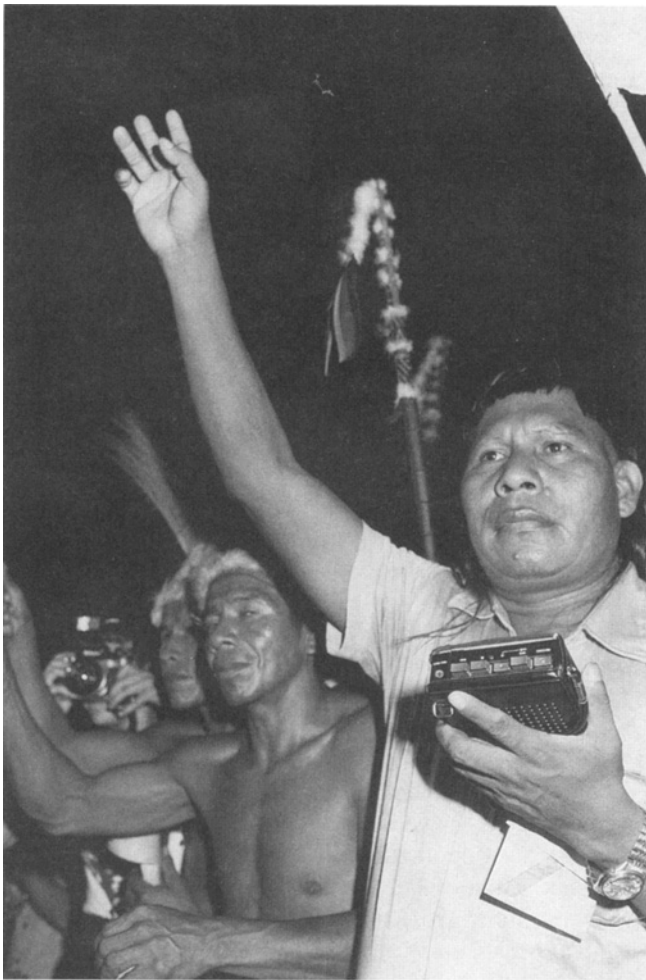
rights in several regions adversely affected by rapid, large-scale economic development: Rondônia and Mato Grosso (site of the Polonoroeste colonization project), Roraima (where gold miners invaded Yanomami territory), and Pará and Mato Grosso (site of the Grande Carajás project and Xingú River dams).<sup>12</sup>

International support gave native activists new independence from FUNAI. It enabled some Indians to circumvent local and national Brazilian political officials and take their causes directly to international supporters and the global media. The careers of two Indian leaders from central Brazil reveal the impact of this new, ecologically based geopolitics. One rose to prominence prior to the rise of eco-consciousness; the other rode the crest of the environmentalist wave.

### Politics: Old and New

The Xavante are a Gê group of some 6,000 people who live in the state of Mato Grosso. In the late 1970s, a Xavante leader named Mario Juruna gained notoriety for his denunciations of corruption in the military government (Ramos 1988:231). Juruna astutely perceived the power of media publicity and drew the press into Xavante efforts to gain legal title to land. Using a cassette tape recorder, he documented government officials making promises. Then, when the government failed to uphold these commitments, Juruna summoned the press. Armed with war clubs, bows, arrows, and the tape recordings of broken promises, Juruna and dozens of boldly painted Xavante men staged dramatic confrontations with high ranking government officials (see Figure 2). Television and press photographers seized upon the images of Xavante wielding Western technology (the tape recorder) in theatrical protests and disseminated these images throughout Brazil. The bluntly outspoken Juruna became a national symbol of opposition to Brazil's military dictatorship. His unprecedented rise to national prominence rested on his ability to demonstrate that Xavante frustrations with the dictatorship aligned with the political frustrations of the general Brazilian public.<sup>13</sup>

Having inserted himself into the national public sphere, Juruna became the protégé of Darcy Ribeiro, an anthropologist turned politician. Under Ribeiro's patronage, Juruna became the first Indian voted into national office. In 1982, he was elected to the Congress of Deputies from an utterly non-Indian, urban district in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Dressed in a business suit—but sporting the distinctive Xavante coiffure and ear plugs—Juruna positioned himself as both insider and outsider to the national political scene. He gave Indians a voice in Congress (Maybury-Lewis 1991:224), but his participation and effectiveness in party politics depended on the patronage system. Juruna became a pawn of domestic politicians,



**Figure 2**

Mario Juruna and Xavante men confronting government officials. Photo by Ricardo Chaves, Abril Imagens, 1980. Courtesy of Editora Abril.

and his reputation degenerated into a caricature of a corrupt buffoon. Ultimately, he accomplished little for Brazilian Indian causes.

In 1980, prior to his election to Congress, Juruna had become known in international human rights circles when he was elected president of the Jury of the Fourth Russell Tribunal on the Rights of Indians in the Americas, an international forum convened in the Netherlands. The Brazilian government attempted to thwart Juruna's trip by denying him a passport and the right to travel unaccompanied by FUNAI personnel. This provoked an uproar among human rights activists, who pressured Brazil to change its stance. Juruna took his case to the Supreme Court and won; the delay caused him to miss most of the conference, but he did attend the final sessions (see Figure 3).

Although bathed in the spotlight of international human rights activism, Juruna never became well known outside Brazil. This is because he rose to prominence before the advent of the new environmentalism, at a time

when Amazonian Indians had little symbolic value outside Brazil.

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Contrast Mario Juruna's career to the case of the Kayapó, a neighboring Gê group. The Kayapó burst to prominence on the Brazilian national scene in the mid-1980s when they mobilized against illegal gold mining, a proposed radioactive waste dump, and a huge hydroelectric project. Media-savvy Kayapó leaders, such as Paulo Payakan, Raoni (also known as Rop ni), and Kube-i, became masters of the art of translating indigenous cultural values into terms that outsiders could comprehend, and they drew heavily on the language of environmentalism. Like the Xavante, the Kayapó capitalized on indigenous cultural elements such as elaborate body decorations and spectacular dances. Inspired by their rich sense of theater and mimesis, the Kayapó took their media politics further to adapt traditional rituals and oratory to new political purposes.<sup>14</sup> The Kayapó were assured of international media attention when the British rock star Sting visited Kayapó villages accompanied by photographers from *Vogue* and *People* magazines.

Acting in the heyday of environmentalism, the Kayapó, unlike Juruna and the Xavante, were able to mobilize broad-based transnational and pan-Indian support. In 1988, when a proposed hydroelectric project threatened to flood Kayapó villages, Payakan and Kube-i, accompanied by anthropologist Darrell Posey, took their case directly to transnational agencies. They traveled to Washington, DC, where they spoke to officials at the World Bank, the United States Treasury, and Congress. In April of 1989, Payakan and other Kayapó organized a huge protest demonstration and media spectacle in the Amazonian town of Altamira. In an unprecedented show of international concern, hundreds of environmentalists and Indians traveled to Altamira to rally in support of the Kayapó (Fisher 1994; Turner 1991, 1993b).

This synthesis of eco-activism and media politics served the Kayapó well. The Altamira demonstration contributed to the World Bank's decision to suspend Brazil's first power-sector loan and Brazil postponed the hydroelectric dam project.<sup>15</sup> In the past few years, the Kayapó, who number some 4,000 people, have gained legal rights to a territory the size of Scotland (Turner 1992:14). Beyond these concrete gains, Terence Turner (1991, 1992) has emphasized the culturally revitalizing effects of activism in strengthening Kayapó self-awareness and pride in native culture.

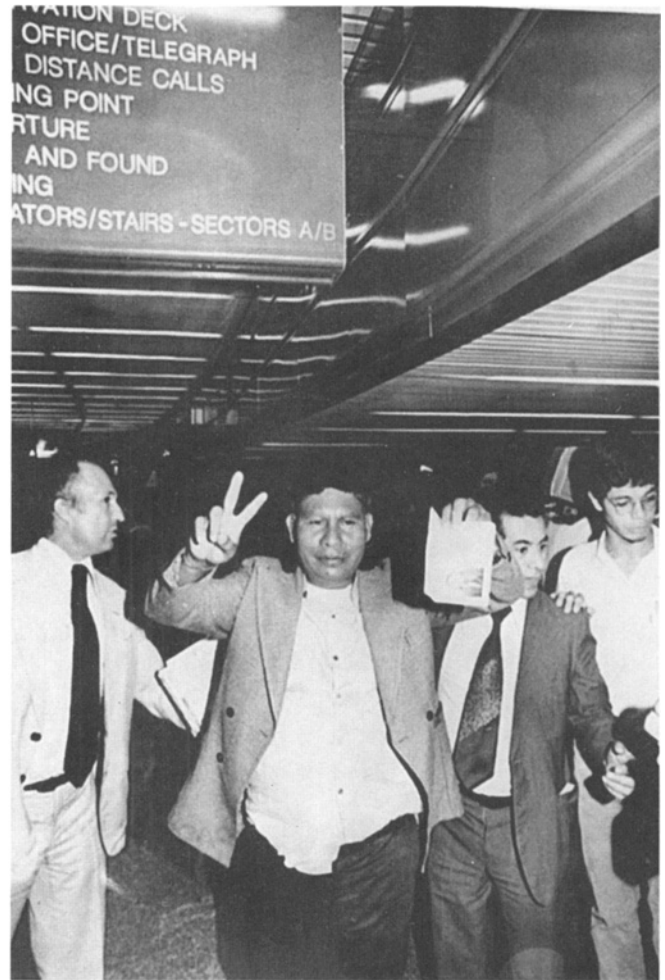
The contrast between the Kayapó's international celebrity and Juruna's limited foreign profile is striking and cannot be attributed solely to differences in style. Juruna and the Xavante pioneered the strategic deployment of indigenous symbols to claim media attention. The Kayapó

took this art to new heights, attracting even greater press coverage with larger numbers of Indian protesters, more elaborate spectacles, and the attention-getting image of their own Kayapó video technicians documenting the events (see Figure 4). The difference between the political trajectories of the Kayapó and the Xavante was not so much in their use of media as in the existence of an international audience responsive to the Amazonian Indian drama. Environmentalism created an audience that enabled the Kayapó to become international stars in much the same way that receptive audiences are essential to the making of Hollywood stars (Coombe 1992; Dyer 1986). By linking their local struggles to global ecological concerns, the Kayapó were able to mobilize broad foreign support in a way that Juruna could not.

At the same time that Brazilian Indians were forging new international alliances, they also were developing new relations among themselves. Land rights and conflicts over natural resources offered a rallying point for cooperation among native groups that formerly had little common ground. Regional Indian alliances proliferated and native activists began to meet each other at conferences and demonstrations, especially during the writing of Brazil's new constitution in 1987–88, where the Kayapó played a prominent role.<sup>16</sup> The pan-Indian identity politics that developed was framed by assertions of positive cultural difference and pride in being Indian. Michael Brown has observed that “the emergence of Amazonian ethnic politics took the leaders of Amazonian states by surprise, accustomed as they were to political discourse framed by issues of class and party” (1993:317). For Brazilian Indians, whose influence in party politics is minimal, the effectiveness of this new ethnic politics depends on identifying native Amazonian cultures with values that appeal to influential segments of the non-Indian public. In Amazonian identity politics, Indians' power—to the extent that they have any—derives not from traditional forms of economic power or patronage, but from Westerners' ideas about Indians.

### Symbolic Value and the Marketing of Symbols

Environmental NGOs recognized the symbolic value of partnership with indigenous peoples as a way to communicate with and mobilize supporters. Indians provided environmentalists with “local knowledge,” a human face for the scientific abstractions of biodiversity (Brysk 1994:36). In an interview with political scientist Alison Brysk, one North American policy maker–activist explained the NGOs' enthusiasm for the Kayapó leader Payakan as a spokesperson who seemed to embody the complex issues of sustainable development and indigenous self-determination in the Amazon: “We needed someone to represent the human side . . . Paiakan had a genuine

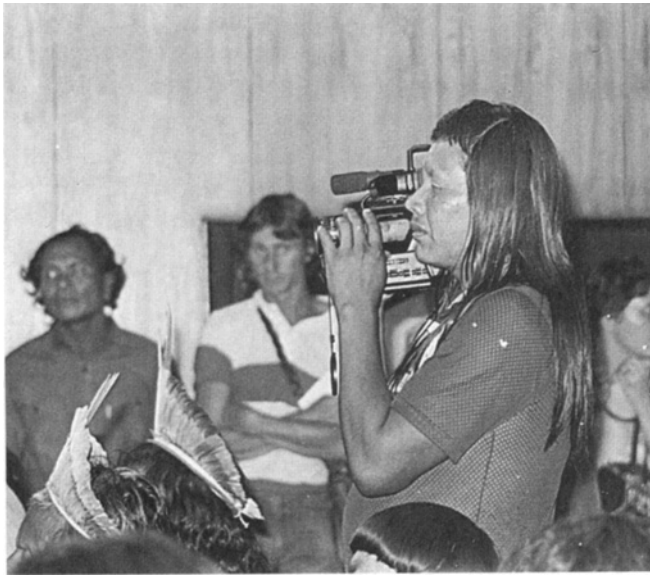


**Figure 3**

Mario Juruna with his passport, ready to travel to the Netherlands where he served as president of the Jury of the Fourth Russell Tribunal on Indigenous Rights in the Americas. Photo by Fernando Pimentel, *Abril Imagens*, 1980. Courtesy of Editora Abril.

appearance, and of course the regalia made good media. He really seemed to represent the forest” (1994:36).

Since the late 1980s, environmental publications and mainstream media have been flooded with images of Amazonian Indians in headdresses, body paint, and feathered ornaments—the visual embodiment of qualities associated with the noble savage—exoticism, naturalness, and harmony with nature (Conklin n.d.). The symbolic value of Indian images is especially important to NGOs since their fund-raising depends heavily on voluntary contributions from sympathetic donors (see Ramos 1994b). Those who wield symbols of indigenous identity achieve a “profit of distinction” (Bourdieu 1984[1979]) that sets them apart from other interest groups competing for attention and space in the crowded realms of nonprofit fund-raising and media coverage. For NGOs seeking to establish a long-term commitment to promoting sustainable development



**Figure 4**

Kayapó video technician taping a session during the Constitutional Assembly in Brasília. Photo by Laura R. Graham, 1987.

projects in Amazonia, the surge of public receptivity to rain forest images was a public relations godsend. In a crisis situation, it offered a set of ideas and symbols through which an organization could garner support and funding in order to “buy time” while laying the foundations for developing long-term programs in local native communities.

The public appeal of eco-Indian images was evident in the alacrity with which corporations began using rain forest Indians as positive marketing symbols. Socially conscious firms such as the Body Shop, Ben and Jerry’s ice cream, and Shaman Pharmaceuticals were among the first to recognize this potential, but other corporations were not far behind. Advertisers for products ranging from breakfast cereal to car wax capitalized on rain forest Indian imagery. The owner of the Body Shop cosmetics firm, Anita Roddick, explained her company’s contract to purchase cosmetic ingredients from the Kayapó, saying that “they [the Kayapó] are a symbol of purity” (Gomes and Silber 1992:71).

Beyond communicating qualities of purity, simplicity, and harmony with nature, the use of native Amazonian images in “green” publicity and advertising may evoke the ideals of planetary community and transcultural identification that we call the global ecological imaginary. Visions of partnership between environmentalists and native peoples share much in common with other contemporary trends in which third- and fourth-world cultural elements are being incorporated into transnational cultural products (such as music marketed as World Beat) and changing constructions of national identity. Identification with native cultures can be a political statement: it encapsu-

lates a critique of Western cultural dominance and colonial regimes and locates those who identify with the native in an oppositional position, morally distanced from their own societies’ racism or colonial histories.

Images of solidarity between native people and their distant supporters address a central contradiction—that many of the world’s citizens who are most consciously concerned with protecting natural environments are urbanites whose own lives are increasingly devoid of ties to local ecosystems. In projecting eco-community visions, the late-20th-century trend toward deterritorialization (Appadurai 1990:13–15) merges, paradoxically, with a profound expression of place-belonging. Metaphors of kinship and home—shared belonging on the planet—permeate environmentalist and New Age rhetoric. Claiming the whole planet as home creates the broadest possible moral claim for belonging. Identification with native cultures carries the additional appeal of a kind of superlegitimacy—associations with ancient roots, time-tested lifeways, and primordial mystical powers.

The symbolic value ascribed to the idea of Indians as outsiders to (a presumably corrupt and corrupting) Western civilization is illustrated by the difference in how Indians and non-Indian rain forest peoples have been treated in the media. The Amazonian forest is home to many more non-Indians than Indians. These include rubber tappers, small farmers, and fishers. They typically live in small riverine settlements or semi-isolated homesteads and have extensive knowledge of forest ecology. Like Indians, their survival is threatened by cattle ranching, road building, colonization projects, and large-scale development schemes (Redford and Padoch 1992). Rubber-tapper organizations joined forces with environmentalists in the late 1980s, and leaders like Chico Mendes became active and highly visible participants in ecology conferences. However, except for publicity surrounding Mendes’s assassination in 1988, rubber-tappers and their constituents have seldom received the global media attention devoted to Indians (see Nugent 1993; Pollock 1994).

“Green” advertising for Indian-produced products tends to feature large, color photo spreads of brilliantly decorated, scantily clad natives (see Figure 5). Advertising for rubber-tapper products (such as the Brazil nuts in Ben and Jerry’s Rainforest Crunch ice cream) tends to describe the producers as “rain forest people,” downplaying their less exotic origins. Nonindigenous forest dwellers simply do not have Indians’ symbolic cachet; they are not as colorful, nor can they claim the same (presumed) status as outsiders to Western corruption.

Western consumers (of products and ideas) respond positively to images of native Amazonians in ways that have aided indigenous South American causes. The problem is that Indianness and signs of Indianness have a symbolic value that is not intrinsic but bestowed from the outside. Amazonian Indians are appealing to Western





**Figure 5**

Body Shop display featuring a Kayapó man in an advertisement for Brazil Nut Conditioner. Photo by Laura R. Graham, 1994.

audiences and are useful to environmental groups and “green” corporations only to the extent that they conform to Westerners’ images of them. In Brazil, the essentialism at the core of this symbolic politics and marketing of symbols has tended to collide with native peoples’ own goals of self-determination. Indians and environmentalists entered the middle ground of eco-politics to negotiate different political interests, and the stakes for indigenous peoples are higher than they are for environmentalists.

### Disjuncture and Dissonance

International support enabled some Brazilian Indians to achieve very real political gains, but recent events suggest that this relationship is fraught with complexities and risks. There are three major tensions in the foundation on which the middle ground of the Amazonian eco-Indian alliance has been constructed. First, it is based on symbolic representations that define authentic Indianness in ways that contradict the realities of many native peoples’ lives. Second, it is created and maintained primarily through the circulation of media images and contacts with a small number of indigenous cultural mediators. Third, the internationalization of indigenous

struggles collides with nationalist sentiment and Brazilian definitions of national sovereignty.

### Symbols and Realities

In Brazil, the Indian-environmentalist alliance is predicated on the assumption that both parties’ goals converge around desires to preserve the rain forest. In actuality, there are two partially contradictory agendas. Environmentalists’ primary goal is to promote sustainable systems of natural resource management. Indigenous peoples ultimately seek self-determination and control over their own resources. The degree to which these two sets of priorities coincide is debatable.

The Western stereotype of the “ecologically noble savage” is, like the earlier noble savage of Locke and Rousseau, a myth at variance with the substance of indigenous lives. The need to participate in the market economy is a given reality for the vast majority of Brazilian Indians (Colchester 1989). Native Amazonians are subject to the same economic pressures and limited options for earning cash as other poor, rural Amazonians. The assumption that Indians will always opt for long-term environmental conservation rather than short-term profits is untenable. Redford observes that “there is no cultural barrier to the Indians’ adoption of means to ‘improve’ their lives (i.e., make them more like Western lives), even if the long-term sustainability of the resource base is threatened” (1990:27). “Why shouldn’t Indians,” he asks rhetorically, “have the same right to dispose of the timber on their land as the international timber companies have to sell theirs?”

Brazilian Indian leaders have consistently defined self-determination to include control over their lands’ natural resources and the right to use them as they see fit.<sup>17</sup> In several instances in which native communities have asserted control over commercially valuable natural resources, they have chosen environmentally destructive options. In 1989, for example, Guajajara Indians took hostages to force FUNAI to allow them to sell lumber from their land (Redford 1990:28). The politically astute Kayapó—who probably have had more exposure to ecological arguments than any other Brazilian group—have rushed into the arms of the market economy. Several Kayapó leaders have granted timber companies concessions to log large tracts of virgin mahogany and other tropical hardwoods.<sup>18</sup> The Brazilian news magazine *Veja* reported that in February of 1993, Kayapó leaders met with Brazil’s president, Itamar Franco, and “demanded the right to deforest sixteen areas that they occupy. If not permitted to cut down the trees, to sell the lumber, they [the Kayapó] would demand an indemnification of \$800,000 per month” (April 28, 1993).

The disjuncture between Kayapó images and actions may reflect outsiders’ misreadings of what it means when Amazonian Indians invoke ecological arguments to sup-

port native political agendas. William Fisher notes that both social scientists and the media have attributed Kayapó eco-activism to “the resiliency of their cultural traditions which flourish only in harmony with the tropical forest” (1994:221). He asserts that a strictly cultural interpretation fails to recognize that environmentalism is, above all, a strategic tool for communication. Non-Indian politicians suffer little damage from being perceived as strategic users of politically fashionable ideas. The public, however, has different expectations of Indians. In the “ecologically noble savage” ideal, environmental consciousness is seen as utterly “natural” to Indians, the product of cultural traditions that constitute the essential fabric of native life. Indian actions that contradict this image tend to be interpreted as evidence of corruption or inauthenticity.<sup>19</sup> Native activists thus confront a quandary: they can forge alliances with outsiders only by framing their cause in terms that appeal to Western values, but this foreign framework does not necessarily encompass indigenous communities’ own worldviews and priorities. When Indians’ actions collide with outsiders’ assumptions about them, they run the risk that their images will become tainted, diluting the symbolic meanings on which their international support is based.

### The Liabilities of Leadership

A second weakness in the Amazonian eco-Indian alliance is that it depends on a few individuals to mediate communications between local native communities and the outside world. Go-betweens are needed to surmount constraints of linguistic and cultural differences, not to mention the logistical difficulties of communicating with remote rain forest villages.

During the past decade, a remarkable group of indigenous cultural mediators has arisen. In addition to the Xavante leader Mario Juruna and the Kayapó leaders Payakan, Raoni, and Kube-i, these include Davi Yanomami, Ailton Krenak, Marcos Terena, Alvaro Tucano, Siã Kashinahua, and others. In outsiders’ eyes, these individuals often serve as metonyms—symbols that stand for entire indigenous groups. Leaders come to be seen not as individual personalities but as representatives of an amorphous, homogeneous, authentic community.

This ignores diversity among and within native Amazonian groups. In some groups, leaders may speak for whole communities. In others, however, dissent, factionalism, and egalitarian orientations militate against facile suppositions about the extent to which individuals represent broader communities. The Kayapó illustrate the complexity of this issue. Turner (1993b:536) observes that some Kayapó leaders have been corrupted—selling out community resources to benefit themselves and their factions—to the point that they are no longer welcome in their own villages. Other Kayapó chiefs, however—most

notably the elderly Chief Raoni—have used transnational activism to pursue communal, not just personal, goals.

Indigenous mediators are frequently “uncomfortable bridges” (Karttunen 1994) who occupy a precarious position. While outsiders often regard them as authentic “chiefs,” they may hold uncertain support from their local communities. In acquiring the linguistic skills, cultural savvy, and political connections required to deal with outsiders, bicultural mediators may become alienated from their local communities (Jackson 1991:144, 1995). Brown (1993:317–318) has pointed out that in lowland South America, where native Amazonians have a deeply ingrained suspicion of hierarchy and too-powerful leaders, culturally alienated or self-aggrandizing individuals often have little local legitimacy.

If internal support for bicultural leaders is unstable, outsiders’ support for such individuals is even more so. Brown observes that “if an international funding agency should deem a native leader corrupted or unauthentic, his or her fall from grace is swift. Resources are redirected to new and more ‘representative’ organizations” (1993:318; see also Ramos 1994b).<sup>20</sup>

In 1992, the Kayapó leader Payakan experienced such a fall from grace when the Brazilian media launched a character defamation campaign against him at the outset of the United Nations Earth Summit conference (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. Payakan was to be the star attraction, focusing media attention on indigenous peoples’ alternative summit and separate agenda. In a story that splashed across headlines around the globe, a Brazilian woman accused Payakan of a violent rape. The timing raised questions about the allegations (Cockburn 1992a, 1992b), and the legal charges were dropped in November 1994. The impact of the negative reporting, however, is unmistakable. Overnight, Payakan came to be perceived as a liability to international groups with whom he was associated, and he was dropped from the boards of NGOs worldwide. Regardless of the truth behind the allegations, his career as a celebrated advocate of indigenous rights was severely damaged.

Payakan’s case demonstrates the harsh fact that when a culture broker’s image is tarnished, his position as an indigenous metonym may tarnish an entire group, or Indians in general. The Payakan scandal unleashed the floodgates of media criticism against the Kayapó as a whole (see, for example, Viana 1992). In the past several years, Brazilian media have reveled in reports of Kayapó corruption and hypocrisy, and have assailed the connection between Indians and their foreign supporters.<sup>21</sup> The Kayapó saga is not an isolated case but a manifestation of structural tensions in transnational-local alliances that view indigenous aims through Western lenses and rely on a few bicultural individuals as mediators. Although all political actors are vulnerable to damage to their public images, Indians are arguably more vulnerable than most.

This is because in media-oriented politics, their power is based on a politics of symbols and ideas. Symbols and ideas are intrinsically vulnerable to contamination, and the power of their meanings shifts over time.

### The Nationalist Backlash

A third major lesson from Brazilian Indians' experiences with "thinking locally, acting globally" is that good global politics do not always make good domestic politics. In Brazil, the internationalization of indigenous struggles has fed a nationalist backlash (Maybury-Lewis 1991:225). Mainstream Brazilian media and many government officials portray Indians as pawns of foreign economic imperialists seeking to interfere in Brazilian national affairs and control the country's natural resources (Neves 1994). The Amazon has long been a focus of military national security concerns, but these anxieties have intensified since the mid-1980s. Democratization and the end of the cold war left a huge military with little rationale for its existence and generous funding. Political scientist Wendy Hunter observes that "so far, the only new threat the ESG [National War College] has come up with is the 'internationalization of the Amazon.' The domestic subversives of the 1990s are ecologists linked to this international movement" (1992:296). The idea that the Amazon might be invaded by foreign armies aiming to stop deforestation may appear ludicrous to foreigners, but it is taken seriously in South America and has been used to justify the Brazilian military's tight control of Amazonian policy.<sup>22</sup>

Suspicious about foreign environmentalists extend to their Indian allies as well. This resonates with long-standing stereotypes of Indians as both childlike (easily duped) and not fully Brazilian—people with uncertain allegiances and suspect loyalties. In 1988, when Payakan and Kube-i traveled to the United States and testified against the Xingú River dams, they returned to Brazil and were charged with sedition under a law applied to *foreigners* (Cummings 1990; Hecht and Cockburn 1989:175). The Brazilian military so distrusts Indians that it attempts to impede full legalization of Indian land rights near its international borders (CIMI 1987). In Yanomami Indians' struggle to expel thousands of gold miners who illegally invaded their territory, "the military's overt hostility has helped weaken the Government's resolve to defend the Yanomami reserve" (Turner 1993a).

In the Brazilian press, Indians' connections to foreign environmentalists have been portrayed as antinationalist and unpatriotic. Brazil's indigenous peoples—because of their unique position as statutory minors ("wards of the state")—may be more vulnerable to government repression than other local groups that form transnational alliances. International support continues to be one of Indians' most effective weapons for pressuring the state to enforce the land rights to which they are entitled under

the national constitution. International alliances, however, have proven to be a double-edged sword, turned against Indians to undermine native people's credibility in domestic politics. The images and information about Amazonia that percolate through the international media are often quite different from what the Brazilian public receives. The enthusiasm first-world activists have for forging alliances with Indians might become a stronger, more effective force if it is tempered by an understanding of how green global activism can look like yet another brand of imperialism when viewed from a South American perspective.

### Conclusion

The emergent middle ground of Amazonian ecopolitics is but the latest manifestation of the historical capacity of Brazilian Indians to creatively adapt native traditions to changing political situations. Mutual accommodation and new forms of communication and cooperation have benefited both Indians and environmentalists. Indigenous activists found that environmentalism provided concepts and language to translate native concerns to a transnational audience. Environmentalists found that Amazonian Indians provided local knowledge, evocative images, and moral and political legitimacy. Together, first-world and fourth-world activists have forged a new geopolitics that has transformed the Amazonian political landscape.

In Brazil, powerful corporate, military, and elite interests remain entrenched against indigenous rights to land and cultural autonomy. International NGOs—which have provided critical support to Brazil's domestic pro-Indian organizations—are one of the only effective counterweights to state domination. Transnational activism has brought some Indian groups unprecedented successes; Kayapó land rights and the hard-won demarcation of the Yanomami reserve are important examples.<sup>23</sup> The gains of the past decade, however, remain fragile and vulnerable to domestic political opposition.

The middle ground of Amazonian ecopolitics was forged in a specific historical context and framed by particular symbolic and ideological constructions. The fault lines emerging in this middle ground are related to the heavy semiotic load that Amazonian Indians carry as actors on the global political stage, representing core values of the imagined eco-community. Representations of Amazonian Indians circulating in the international public sphere tend to be generic stereotypes that misrepresent the diversity of native Amazonian cultures and the complexity of native priorities and leadership issues. More importantly, generic representations, no matter how sympathetic, inevitably turn into liabilities when the dis-

junctures between external images and indigenous realities become manifest.

Different native groups fall in and out of fashion. In Brazil in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Xavante were *the* Indians par excellence, giving bellicose voice to citizens' silenced discontent with the dictatorship. As they fell out of favor, the Kayapó came into vogue. Their vividly theatrical politics embodied the heady rush of democratic energies and the emergence of the Amazon as a central trope in the renegotiating of Brazilian national identity (Viveiros de Castro 1992). Each native group profited from its moment in the sun. When native leaders' actions failed to meet outsiders' expectations, however, each group was left shadowed by public perceptions of hypocrisy and corruption. The Hollywood-like stardom bestowed upon indigenous peoples and their leaders does little to build broad-based constituencies and sustained support for native causes.

In transnational symbolic politics, Indian activists negotiate among multiple cultural forces: global media dynamics, the organizational structure of NGO bureaucracies, and Western intellectual traditions that favor idealized native images. These intersecting forces propel native activists to frame their identity politics in terms of ideas, images, and symbols that communicate to outsiders.

All politics is conducted by adjusting one's discourse to others' language and goals, strategically deploying ideas and symbolic resources to create bases for cooperation. Identity politics always involves projecting representations that reduce intragroup diversity to idealized, homogenized images. In this respect, the essentializing of native images may be an inevitable component of any effective transnational symbolic political action. What distinguishes Amazonian eco-politics from other brands of identity politics is the degree to which cultural identity constitutes indigenous peoples' most effective source of political power. This power exists only so long as Indians' political identities resonate with Western ideas and symbols; transnational symbolic politics accommodates indigenous definitions of identity and goals only to the extent that they coincide with global concerns and trends of the moment.

There is an inherent asymmetry at the core of the eco-Indian alliance. Indians' eco-political value is bestowed from the outside—the product of a historical moment that has seized on Indians in general, and certain Indians in particular, as natural symbols of ecologically harmonious lifeways. The corollary is that the external market that bestows symbolic value may also take it away, particularly if the conditions of its legitimacy fail to be met. In capitalizing on symbolic values bestowed from the outside, native Amazonian activists may, ironically, have substituted one form of political dependency for another.

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Brazilian Indian activists initially approached international environmentalism in much the same spirit that their ancestors approached early missionaries, traders, and other outsiders—as sources of money, trade goods, and political advantage that are useful only until they begin to threaten native autonomy.<sup>24</sup> Historically, as Indians experienced the constraints of specific dependency relationships, they actively sought, and often found, ways to preserve a degree of autonomy by taking the skills and resources acquired from outsiders and turning them to indigenous purposes. Today, Native Amazonians have already begun to reshape Western environmentalism into forms suited to their own objectives and realities.

For first-world supporters of fourth-world causes, there is a risk of unintentionally reproducing colonial relations in the absence of critical reflection on the position of indigenous peoples in transnational movements. In South America, successive waves of explorers, colonizers, and settlers have learned valuable lessons about the rain forest from its indigenous inhabitants. Today, as the contradictions and limitations of reductionist symbolic politics become apparent, the world's environmentally concerned citizens may learn to listen to the diverse Indian voices that describe the complex terrain of Amazonia's contemporary political economy. If they can move beyond the pitfalls of relying on unrealistic assumptions about who Indians are, what Indians want, and what Indians need for political survival, the rain forest's native peoples and their allies may clear the way to find common paths over this shifting middle ground.

## Notes

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1. See Hemming 1978:1–23; Kehoe 1990; Ramos 1994a; and Simard 1990:355–357.

2. See *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 1991; Harries-Jones 1993:48–49; Redford 1990; Simard 1990:359; and White and Cronon 1988.

3. The notion of the imaginary draws on Lacan's mirror phase in human development when the child sees its own reflection as Other. This confused identification permits the appropriation of certain critical and valuable aspects of the Other as an essential part of the self. Hamilton (1990) developed the notion of the national imaginary to describe the emergence, in Australia, of a national self-image incorporating Aboriginal cultural elements. We find it useful to extend this concept of the imaginary beyond the national level, to the visions of planetary-level community expressed in late-20th-century environmentalism, popular culture, and New Age romanticism (on the latter, see Kehoe 1990 and Luhmann 1993).

4. Anderson observes that "communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (1983:15). The global eco-community is imagined not as a territorial entity, but as a *network* of dispersed groups and individuals. The community is *limited*, in that there are insiders and outsiders, defined by their ecological commitment or lack thereof; only the most ecotopian dreamers envision a day when all humanity will live in planetary communion. Finally, it is imagined as a *community* in that, like the nations that Anderson (1983:16) describes, the global eco-community is conceived as a "deep, horizontal comradeship," a morally based fraternity. There is a pervasive emphasis on mutual respect and partnership between native and nonnative people, despite (or perhaps in response to) the obvious asymmetries in the relationship.

5. For discussions of research in Amazonian ethnobiology and cultural ecology, see Berlin 1992; Clay 1988; Hames and Vickers 1983; Posey and Balée 1989; and Redford and Padoch 1992.

6. On controversies surrounding Posey's work, see Parker 1992, 1993 and Posey 1992.

7. Extractive reserves are legally protected tracts of land managed by local communities who pursue sustainable land use practices. The model originated with Brazilian rubber tappers who proposed it as an alternative to deforestation at the first meeting of the National Council of Rubber Tappers in Brasília, 1985. Legislation permitting extractive reserves was signed into law in July 1987 (see Allegretti 1990; Hecht and Cockburn 1989:208–209; and Schwartzman 1991).

8. The role that Indians played in legitimizing environmentalist involvement in Amazonia resembles Hamilton's description of how Australian popular culture appropriates elements of Aboriginal culture to shape a sense of identity in the imagined community of contemporary Australia (see Ginsburg 1993:561; Myers 1991). Hamilton argues that incorporating Aboriginality into this "national imaginary" serves to justify the settler presence in the country (1990:18). On the role of local identities in the formation of transnational identities, see Mato 1994.

9. In Brazil, environmentalism has had considerable impact on domestic pro-Indian advocacy. For example, when CEDI (Ecumenical Documentation and Information Center)—one of the premier centers for research and publications on contemporary indigenous affairs—underwent a recent restructuring and joined with the NDI (Nucleus for Indigenous Rights), the new

organization was renamed the Socio-Environmental Institute (Instituto Socioambiental).

10. Brazilian Indians' relative political dependency contrasts with the situation in the Andean nations, where Indians are more numerous and have much more direct involvement in national political processes. For a discussion of Indian rights in Brazil prior to 1988, see Carneiro da Cunha 1987. On changes in Indians' legal status under the new Brazilian constitution, see Allen 1989. Ramos (1990) discusses Indians' status in relation to issues of ethnicity, citizenship, and universal human rights.

11. FUNAI replaced the former Indian agency, the SPI (Indian Protection Service) in 1969. On the history of Indian relations with the Brazilian state, see Allen 1989; Davis 1977; Maybury-Lewis 1991; and Souza Lima 1991.

12. On Brazilian development projects and their impact on native peoples, see Cummings 1990; Hecht and Cockburn 1989; Price 1989; Rich 1994:25–48; and Santos and Andrade 1988.

13. Ramos notes that under the dictatorship, "a common procedure . . . was to use the Indian issue as a channel to air criticisms against the military regime. . . . The 'Indian' theme was then one of the very few political issues one dared raise without being caught by censorship" (1994b:157).

14. The Kayapó also differed from the Xavante in that Kayapó mastery of video technology allowed them to achieve some control over the images and information about themselves that were disseminated to national and international audiences (Turner 1991, 1992). As in the case of the Xavante, however, much of the Kayapó's theatrical media politics was designed to be documented by non-Indian journalists and photographers, so that outsiders still mediated most representations of the Kayapó in the outside world.

15. See Rich 1994:136–138 for discussion of the World Bank's suspension of Brazil's power-sector loan in 1989.

16. During the constitutional assembly in which legislators rewrote Brazil's constitution, Indians and pro-Indian advocates were among the most visible interest groups pressuring legislators in Brasília (see Graham 1987; CEDI 1991).

17. According to Brazilian law, Indians have usufructory rights to their lands but ownership of resources such as minerals and timber rests with the Brazilian state, which can prohibit indigenous exploitation that is perceived to collide with state interests.

18. See Turner 1993b:533; *Economist* 1993; and Moffett 1994.

19. Ramos observes that

for all the apparently sympathetic and benign inclinations the environmentalists' rhetoric—associated with the less sophisticated side of ecological activism—displays toward the Indians, it conceals an element of paternalism and intolerance that can easily come to the fore whenever the Indians betray its expectations. If a good Indian is a pure Indian—and here, as usual, the definition of purity is given by the whites—an Indian who falls prey to western seduction (selling lumber, making pacts with the military, striking deals with corporations) is denigrated and doomed to fall lower than the white wheeler and dealer. [1994a:79–80]

20. Brysk comments that the "crisis of representation in Indian rights movements has also alienated potential allies and ironically strengthened the role of advocacy groups as gatekeepers for messy local political factions. . . . As governments, fund-

ing agencies and international organizations increasingly turn to pro-Indian organizations and other international allies instead of Indians themselves, the internationalization of Indian rights becomes fraught with the potential for a new, post-modern form of dependency" (In press: 24–25). For an illuminating discussion of how representations of native cultures are changing in response to NGO involvement in Colombian Indian affairs, see Jackson 1995.

21. The Brazilian press has been quick to pick up on any hint of tension or miscommunication between Indians and eco-advocates and portray this as evidence of hypocrisy on both sides. A classic instance of unprincipled journalistic distortion appeared in a 1993 *Veja* article titled "The End of Romanticism." The article reported that Sting, the rock star who founded the Rainforest Foundation, had decided to stop participating in Amazonian ecology conferences. It quoted him as saying, "They [the Indians] try to trick you all the time and tend to see the white man more as a source of money than as a friend. I was very naïve. I'm leaving my days in the rainforest behind" (*Veja*, April 28, 1993). When the article appeared, Sting denied having spoken these words, specifically that he was "leaving . . . the rainforest behind." According to Terence Turner (personal communication, 1995), Sting admitted having expressed some exasperation with Kayapó demands, but this was magnified and distorted by the reporter, who immediately communicated his version of Sting's comment to Raoni. Unaware of the journalist's manipulation, Raoni responded with an angry blast at Sting, stating "Sting is the one who got a lot of money from our cause. Brazilian Indians don't need him. It's best to just forget him" (*Veja*, April 28, 1993; our translation). Sting has in fact continued to work for the Kayapó and to raise money for the Rainforest Foundation.

22. See Hunter 1992 and Viveiros de Castro 1992. On South American resentment against foreign interference in Amazonian affairs, see Hill 1994 and *Nature* 1989a, 1989b.

23. Many Brazilian Indian groups remain largely unaffected by the rise of eco-politics and NGO involvement in Amazonia. For example, see Araújo Leitão 1994 on the continuing struggles of the Guaraní.

24. We thank Michael Brown for suggesting this parallel.

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