THE KAYAPO VIDEO PROJECT: A PROGRESS REPORT

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Supported by a grant from the Spencer Foundation, I spent six weeks in Brazil this summer (from end-June to early-August, 1990) carrying out the first phase of a project to establish a video self-documentation programme among the Kayapo Indians of the southern Para and northeastern Mato Grosso states. The idea of this programme had come from the Kayapo themselves. Several Kayapo had already learned to use a video camera. A small group of Brazilian anthropologists and video documentarians, headed by Monica Feitosa and Renato Pereira, had brought a video camera to the Kayapo community of Gorotire in 1985 and taught two Kayapo - Nhakaykep, a young woman from Gorotire, and Kinhiabeti, a young man from the community of Mentuktire - how to use it. In the course of making documentary films on the Kayapo in 1987 and 1989, I met these individuals and Mokuka of the village of A'ukre, who had learned to use the camera at Gorotire. On these occasions, I not only saw examples of their work, which was of impressively high standard, but worked side by side with several of them (Kinhiabieti, Mokuka, and Kuben'i of Gorotire) filming the same events. They spoke to me of their interest in making videos of their own culture, and had already begun to record ceremonies, speeches by communal leaders, visits to other Kayapo communities and assorted confrontations with Brazilians. One of the most important and thoughtful Kayapo leaders, Payakan of A'ukre, spoke with me of his vision of compiling a comprehensive video archive of Kayapo culture, including ceremonies, oral history, ecological knowledge, and mythology, recounted by old people whose knowledge might soon be lost.

Payakan conceived of these videos as basic texts of a comprehensive course in Kayapo culture for young people. I found this idea was shared by other Kayapo leaders, above all at Gorotire. Gorotire has had the longest exposure to Brazilian culture of any Kayapo community (now over 50 years), and is beginning to have problems with some of its young people questioning the value and relevance of the traditional culture. As the generation that had reached maturity at the time of the first peaceful contact dies out, there is also concern that much historical and cultural knowledge may be lost forever. Payakan, other leaders, and numerous younger people have turned to video as a partial solution to these problems. On one hand, it offers the possibility of recording traditional knowledge and historical memories in a form much more directly amenable to Kayapo recorders and accessible to Kayapo viewers than print or audio. On the other, it offers an opportunity to demonstrate Kayapo mastery of one of the more glamorous technologies of Western culture; the sort which, to many young Kayapo, seems to set Western culture apart

from their own, in the service of recording and reproducing Kayapo culture. The point of this demonstration for the Kayapo is clearly not the reproduction of Kayapo culture as it was before the inception of contact with Brazilian society. Rather, the activity of recording and displaying tapes of Kayapo culture becomes, for the Kayapo, an icon of the sort of hybrid culture they are struggling to construct. This new synthesis may be understood as the ideological expression of the inter-ethnic friction between the Kayapo and Brazilians. In it, a body of knowledge, ritual practice and social institutions conceived under the distinctly un-Kayapo category of Kayapo culture becomes objectified and hypostatized as the center of a new socio-cultural cosmos framed in Kayapo versions of Brazilian cultural, technological and political-economic terms (for the concepts of "situation" and "inter-ethnic friction" see Cardoso de Oliveira 1964, Ramos 1990). The technical objectification of their own culture through use of Western video technology has become an important means by which the Kayapo are constructing this traditional culture and ethnic identity (Turner 1990, n.d.1).

In addition to the uses of video self-documentation for education and as a repository of cultural knowledge against losses from death or acculturation, many Kayapo see video as a means of reaching out to non-Kayapo, presenting their culture and way of life in a form that others can understand, respect and support. They see this as an essential part of their struggle to sustain and defend their society and environment. Responding to these expressed Kayapo desires, I had the Granada TV film-crew bring new video cameras to Mentuktire and A'ukre, respectively, on our 1987 and 1989 filming trips.

Aside from supporting what I saw as worthy political struggles and a positive process of cultural innovation, I had an anthropological motive for supporting the Kayapo in their desire to acquire video competence so as to record their culture and struggle to reach a *modus vivendi* with Brazilian society. The Kayapo goals of self-education and self-representation, to outsiders, required a degree of self-objectification and analysis of their own culture. Organizing a systematic programme of self-documentation, and constructing appropriate representations of themselves and their culture for different audiences (themselves, Brazilians, or foreign potential supporters) would entail forms of reflection and objectification of great potential anthropological interest. The nature of the visual medium, including the process of editing films from raw footage, would afford more concrete and accessible insights into these mental and conceptual processes than most other cultural modes of representation. With this interest in mind, I conceived of the Kayapo Video Project as a way of simultaneously supporting and studying the Kayapo struggle for social, political and cultural survival.

In 1989, when I applied to the Spencer Foundation for project support, the Kayapo already had several able and experienced

video camerapersons, as mentioned. They lacked, however, three essential conditions for the pursuit of a viable programme of cultural self-documentation through video. The first of these was viable video camera equipment. The video cameras which had been brought by Feitosa and Pereira to Gorotire, and by me to Mentuktire, had broken down. And the camera I had brought for A'ukre had been appropriated by a leader of that community who had been unwilling to share it with his fellow villagers or to use it for the purposes originally intended. Gorotire had acquired new video cameras with communal funds, but A'ukre and Mentuktire needed new machines. A second problem was that the video tapes shot by the Kayapo with their cameras remained in the villages under conditions that led to their rapid deterioration. They were stored in dirty, humid containers, constantly handled, and shown frequently on VCR decks with uneven electrical sources, so that the tapes became stretched and distorted. It was clearly necessary to establish a tape archive or depository somewhere outside the villages, where original tapes could be kept under viable conditions and copies made for use and abuse in local communities. Thirdly, although a number of Kayapo had become expert in video camera work, none had learned to edit. The Kayapo, as a result, were still unable to produce their own finished videotapes. This was partly a problem of training and partly one of access to video editing facilities with supportive technical personnel sympathetic and patient enough to work with the Kayapo as they learned to use the equipment.

The Kayapo Video Project seeks to address these basic needs. On my first trip to Brazil for the project, my objectives were, firstly, to deliver a new video camera to Mentuktire, which had two trained video-camerapersons but lacked a functioning video-camera; secondly, to do some videotaping in the field to acquire fresh material to use in the first editing sessions; thirdly, to arrange access for Kayapo video camera-persons from Mentuktire and other Kayapo communities to video editing facilities, with training assistance from experienced video editing technicians, so that they could learn to edit their own videos; fourthly, to observe Kayapo editors at work, analyz ing the criteria they employed in their editing decisions; fifthly, to establish a Kayapo video archive, where original Kayapo video tapes could be stored under optimal conditions, and copies made for showing in all Kayapo communities; sixthly, to involve two other Kayapo communities, Gorotire and A'ukre, each of which possessed able video camerapersons, in the project, planning for the training of personnel from these communities in video editing on my next trip, and getting them started videotaping to generate material for them to edit and add to the common Kayapo Video Archive. If these ends could be accomplished on the first trip, during June, July and August, I hoped to be able to return in January for a second round of editing and editing training, this time involving

videotapes and personnel from all three villages.

I was able to meet all of the objectives I had set for the first trip. It turned out that Kinhiabieti of Mentuktire had already videotaped two ceremonies before the community's video camera broke down, and was eager to edit his material. With the generous help of Vincent Carelli and others from the Centro de Trabalho Indigenista (CTI) of Sao Paulo, I was able to arrange access for the Kayapo to the video editing facilities of the Centro. Carelli taught Kinhiabieti to edit, and supervised use of the editing equipment in making finished versions of the two ceremonies. The results were the first two Kayapo-edited videos, a 17-minute tape of the women's naming ceremony, the <u>Menire MeBiok</u>, and a 42 minute tape of the corresponding men's naming ceremony, the <u>Memu Mebiok</u> I assisted with this process and made a comprehensive record of the editing of the two tapes, with interesting results. With Carelli's cooperation, I was also able to establish the embryonic Kayapo Video Archive at the CTI, starting with the original edited tapes and other rushes brought by Kinhiabieti from Mentuktire. The CTI is prepared to serve as the venue for all Kayapo video editing operations in the near future, and to store video rushes and original finished videos from all Kayapo communities there. Videomakers from all Kayapo communities will have access to all of these materials, and all Kayapo communities will be able to make copies of the finished videos for use in their own villages. It is also envisioned that the CTI Kayapo archive will serve as a distribution point for circulation to non-Kayapo interested in viewing these films.

After editing the videos of the two ceremonies with Kinhiabieti at CTI, I returned with him to his home village of Mentuktire. There I presented the new video camera and a supply of videotapes I had brought to the community. I explained my ideas for the video project to the people, and solicited their ideas about subjects to be filmed and about maintaining community input and control of the project (having in mind the example of what had happened at A'ukre with the video camera I had brought to that community in 1989). The project was enthusiastically received by almost everyone, but it immediately appeared that there was a problem of rivalry between the two video cameramen in the village. The one I knew less well, who was considerably less experienced than Kinhiabieti, and whom I had not invited to come to Sao Paulo for the first session of editing training at CTI, resented the preference given to Kinhiabieti. I later learned from Renato Pereira that the same problem had come up with the same individual when he and Feitosa worked with Kinhiabieti in the same community five years earlier. Since the aggrieved individual is considerably senior to Kinhiabieti and has risen to a position of leadership in the community, his dissatisfaction presented a political problem with serious implications for the success of the project in Mentuktire.

After several days of discussion with him and the men of the village, I was able to arrive at a satisfactory arrangement by promising to include him in later stages of the project. I assured him that, in the meantime, he was to have equal access to the new video camera, and we settled on a programme of subjects to be videotaped: several ceremonies due to be celebrated, a hunting expedition, and a series of political speeches by village chiefs and leaders.

From Mentuktire, I flew by air taxi to the Brazilian town of Redencao, located near the Kayapo village of Gorotire. There, I found all the chiefs and younger leaders of Gorotire gathered for a meeting at a hostel on the Gorotire maintain at the outskirts of town. I discussed the video project with them, and they concurred enthusiastically with its program and aims. Also in Redencao was Mokuka, the leader and video cameraman from A'ukre, with whom I had planned to coordinate that community's participation in the project. Mokuka was extremely enthusiastic about participating in the project, personally learning to edit, and videotaping in his own community. I arranged to bring him out to Sao Paulo to learn editing at CTI when I returned in January, at which time I also hoped to be able to bring a video camera for his community.

I urged one of the Gorotire leaders to come back to Sao Paulo with me so that I could introduce him to the CTI and its editing facilities and establish a direct connection between the Gorotire and the CTI. One of them, Tapiet, accepted my invitation, but took Vincent Carelli and me off guard when he coolly directed us, upon his arrival, to videotape his visit so that he could show the people back in the village everything he was seeing! We complied, reflecting on how well the Kayapo have mastered the civilizado maxim, "what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

In the course of our discussions, Tapiet formulated the plan of making a video documentary of the various Brazilians who threaten their environment (miners, loggers, ranchers, and small farmer squatters), and of the projects for alternative economic development the Gorotire have established on the border of their reserve. Five border guard posts have been constructed, each of which have begun agricultural or gathering projects to provide sources of income for the community. Tapiet is presently engaged in taping material for this video, together with another young Gorotire leader, Kuben'i. Tapiet and Kuben'i want to use their video to support appeals for aid to international funding agencies for the Gorotire projects. At the same time, they are videotaping Gorotire rituals, and have completed shooting two men's naming ceremonies, the Takak and Memu Mebiok. All of these videos will be edited in January, when Tapiet and Kuben'i come to the CTI in Sao Paulo.

At the meeting of Gorotire leaders in Redencao, I found that the main topic of discussion was the crisis that had started with a dispute between two senior Kayapo chiefs, Pombo of Kikretum and Rop ni of Mentuktire, over the right to represent the Kayapo nation to the Brazilian and foreign public and media. This crisis was to have important repercussions on the video project. Stung by criticism from Rop ni - perhaps the best known and most influential Kayapo leader - FUNAI, the government Indian Service, had induced Pombo to stage a farcical media event in which he "deposed" Rop ni from the (fictitious) position of supreme Kayapo leader and proclaimed himself successor in that role. A communique to this effect was circulated, purportedly with the assent of a number of Kayapo chiefs, which began with a declaration of unqualified devotion and support for FUNAI. I found most Kayapo were, in fact, supporting Rop ni, and held Pombo's grandiose pretensions in contempt.

Aware that I was going on to Brasilia, where Rop ni had gone to confront the crisis, the Gorotire chiefs asked me to convey a message to Rop ni showing their support. I did so, at the same time taking the opportunity to present the video project to Rop ni, who had not been at Mentuktire when I had gone there with Kinhiabieti, and whose support would be crucial to the success of the project in that community. Rop ni gave the project his full support. He is a culturally conservative leader, concerned with the preservation of Kayapo traditional knowledge, social institutions and way of life. He saw the video project as an aid in this effort, and emphasized that videos showing the Kayapo following their traditional ways will be politically effective in shaming Brazilian and international financial agencies attempting to institute development schemes that could disrupt Kayapo communities and their environment.

After my return from Brazil in October, I received an urgent telephone call from Mokuka in Sao Paulo. He was under the mistaken impression that I was still there, working with CEDI (Centro Ecumenico de Documentacao e Informacao), an indigenous support organization. It developed that Mokuka and Rop ni had jointly called a plenary meeting of the leaders of all Kayapo communities at A'ukre for mid-November. This was to serve to reassert support for Rop ni's leadership and to ratify Mokuka's leadership of the A'ukre community, which he wanted to move to a new site as a result of a smoldering dispute with another A'ukre leader, Payakan. Mokuka was very eager to make a video record of this meeting, which (he hoped) would serve as a legitimizing charter of authority as leader of the new community he wanted to build. This, it turned out, was the reason he wanted so urgently to get in touch with me. Could I arrange to get him a video camera before I came in January so that the great council at A'ukre could be documented? As it turned out, I was able to obtain a video camera for him, and he was thus able to make a video record of this historic and politically important Kayapo gathering. He and I plan to review and edit the tapes of the A'ukre meeting at CTI in January. This episode makes clear the extent to which the use of video has already become integrated into Kayapo political thought, action and manoeuvre, not only in confrontations with

Brazilians, but in their own internal political processes and crises. It also shows how a project that hopes to document the formation of social and cultural consciousness, recognizing that it must at the same time become a catalytic factor in the process it hopes to record, must expect to become enmeshed in the political aspects of that process.

Kinhiabieti showed Vincent Carelli and I two hours of rushes of a long, detailed and beautifully shot video of the anteater mask ceremony at CTI in July. He intended to complete the videotaping of the ceremony in Mentuktire in late August, to be edited at CTI when I returned in January. Unfortunately, his house burned down. His tapes of the earlier part of the ceremony were destroyed. But the video camera and most of the blank tapes were saved. He is presently working on another ceremony and on a series of political statements by chiefs about the conflict between Rop ni and Pombo. He will edit this material at CTI with me in January.

Kinhiabieti told me that he or his colleague Waiwai plan to go to the site of the recent invasion, by a group of armed Brazilian ranchers, of the Waura tribal area of the Xingu National Park. The ranchers burnt a Waura village to the ground and are threatening to establish a ranch in its place. The Mentuktire have offered to send a group of armed men to defend the Waura and the Park. They plan to send a video cameraman to record the conflict and the deeds of the expeditionary force. Their plan for the expedition provides an example of the way the Kayapo have integrated video into their political confrontations with the national society.

Another example was provided by the tour made by the Gorotire Kayapo leaders Kuben'i and Tapiet to the US and Canada in late September and early October. The motive of this trip was to support the Cree and Inuit of Northern Quebec in their struggle to prevent the construction of the James Bay II hydroelectric complex. Kuben'i and Tapiet made numerous public appearances, including lectures at the Universities of Cornell, McGill and Montreal. They insisted on videotaping all their appearances, and on speaking Kayapo rather than Portuguese, so that they could show the chiefs and people of their own and other Kayapo communities what they had done and said. I acted as their translator. Their motive was twofold: to provide the largely monolingual Kayapo audience with an accessible record of the tour; and to protect themselves against charges of using the trip for self-aggrandizement rather than to communicate collective Kayapo views and positions. There were suspicions among many Kayapo that another Kayapo leader, who had recently toured Europe and North America, may have used his tours to build his own political connections and raise money for himself. Kuben'i and Tapiet wanted to avoid this situation. The tapes of the tour will become part of the Kayapo Video Archive established by the project.

One of my main reasons for launching the video project was to study the Kayapo approach to editing their own video material. Kinhiabieti's editing of his two lots of video rushes on the men's and women's naming ceremonies from Mentuktire gave me my first opportunity to observe a Kayapo editor in action. I had surmised that the Kayapo might be guided in editing videos of their own culture by the same cultural schemas that guided the performance of the cultural activities in question. Kinhiabieti's ceremonial material provided an opportunity to test this hypothesis.

Kinhiabieti's editing of the two ceremonial videos fully bore out my expectations. The ceremonies in question were long and complex, involving two months of continual ritual activity. This activity is organized in repetitive sequences of singing and dancing, in which the same dances, accompanied by the same songs, are performed in the same order but in a series of different places. They begin at a secluded site in the forest far from the village, then moved through several intervening sites, ending with the climactic celebrations in the central village plaza. In the earlier performances, only a few decorations made from palm leaves are worn, but in the final dances in the village plaza, the full panoply of feather capes, headdresses and other special ornaments are worn. In editing his tapes of these sequences, Kinhiabieti meticulously included bits of every dance performed at every site he had on tape, in the same order in which they occurred. Repetition was emphasized. The aim was to make a full and faithful representation of the entire ritual performance, and to show that the ceremony had been fully and properly performed. The schema of the ceremonial performance was applied reflexively as the schema guiding the editing of its video representation. Non-repetitive elements, special rites, activities performed or ornaments worn at the ritual by persons who receive the right to do so from a relative, were also scrupulously shown. No significant particularity, in Kayapo terms, was omitted. There was no editorial selection of, or emphasis on, any segment or aspect of the ceremony at the expense of another. Following the editing cut by cut against my shot-record of the rushes, I learned a great deal about the naming ceremonies that I had not known before, although I had seen both ceremonies performed. To judge by these videos, the Kayapo are excellent and assiduous ethnographers of themselves, which is exactly what they set out to be in their approach to video self-documentation.

These first Kayapo-edited videos were made for Kayapo viewers. There is no attempt at voice-over, narration, commentary, translation, sub-titles, credits or written title or logo. Some of the videos to be edited in January however, such as the Gorotire video on environmental problems and community development projects, will be made primarily for the purpose of presenting Kayapo reality to non-Kayapo audiences, and will require most of these standard accessories of conventional documentary film and video. It is envisioned that at least some of the videos made by the Kayapo for use in their own cultural self-documentation program will be dubbed with explanatory narrative, and sub-titled for non-Kayapo audiences. The arrangements for distribution remain to be worked out with the Kayapo. Presumably, it will be coord inated through the Kayapo Video Archive. Meanwhile, interest in the Kayapo videos seems to be building in the international documentary video and film community. Videos of the two naming ceremonies were shown at the Festival of New Cinema in Montreal in October, which devoted part of its 1990 programme to film and video of and by indigenous peoples. Copies have also been acquired by the visual media department of the Museum of the American Indian of New York.

The diversity of subjects represented by the videos to be edited in January should bring out an interesting variety of conceptual strategies and cultural assumptions on the part of their Kayapo editors. Internal Kayapo political factionalism, community economic projects, and political and environmental conflicts with the national society will not be dealt with by the same cultural schemas as Kayapo ceremonies. The extent to which Kayapo editors will resort to similar reflexive representational strategies remains to be seen. The construction of video representations of cultural and political subjects has become, for the Kayapo, an important channel for formulating new or altered ideological schemas for interpreting and acting upon them. An explicit aim of the Kayapo Video Project is to study this process as it takes shape in the editing room.

The success of the initial phase of the Kayapo Video Project has encouraged ideas for its expansion and continuation on a more permanent basis, in cooperation with Vincent Carelli and the CTI. This cooperation, as I have described, was essential to the successful editing of the first Kayapo videos, the training of the first Kayapo video editor, and the foundation of the Kayapo Video Archive. It has already given rise to close and ongoing relationships between various Kayapo video camerapersons and editors involved in the project. Such a relationship with a Brazilian institution, and with supportive video technicians, is essential to the continuing viability of the Kayapo's own video programme. The CTI seems the obvious choice for this role for several reasons. There is a substantial overlap in general orientation and objectives between the Kayapo Video Project and Corelli's Video in the Villages project at CTI. In Corelli's project, CTI video camerapersons videotape subjects at the request of indigenous communities for their own use. Further collaboration between the two projects, including proposals for joint funding, is presently being considered.

The possibility of a different educational application of Kayapo videomaking being developed by the Video Project has appeared, and presents a different opportunity for an extension of the project into new areas. While I was in Brazil working with Kinhiabieti at the CTI, I learned from Brazilian personnel of the Rainforest Foundation that they were in the process of developing a programme of self-education

among the indigenous communities of the Xingu (including the Kayapo). The programme focuses primarily on literacy in both the indigenous languages and Portuguese. As originally conceived it would rely on written materials prepared by non-natives. I suggested that, for the Kayapo, written texts and primers might be keyed to videotaped discourses, selected and taped by the Kayapo themselves. A visually motivated programme using self-made videos, dealing with culturally relevant material, I suggested, might more effectively engage the attention of Kayapo children than a program relying exclusively on the culturally alien medium of print and written primers. Personnel of the Foundation, responsible for the development of the education programme, were interested and encouraged me to submit a proposal for the making of a series of educational videos with transcribed texts for use in the literacy project. I did so, and the proposal is presently under consideration as part of the Foundation's Xingu Community Education Program. If approved, it would constitute an extension of the Kayapo Video Project in a different, more educational direction.

After the forthcoming editing sessions at CTI in January, I hope there will be six to eight edited Kayapo videos, plus a sizeable mass of raw videotape, all stored at the Kayapo Video Archive and available for editing or copying for Kayapo community viewing. These would be on subjects as diverse as ceremonies, political discourses, environmental problems and community development projects, conferences of chiefs such as that to be held at A'ukre, and foreign tours by Kayapo leaders. A further editing session is planned for the coming summer, when it is hoped that the number of edited videos double again. By then, there should be a half-dozen trained Kayapo video editors and perhaps a dozen capable video camerapersons working in at least three of the larger Kayapo communities. Of equal importance, the relationship between the Kayapo and CTI, with respect to access to editing facilities and videos stored at the Archive, should be firmly established. In the years ahead, this should provide an ample basis for the fulfilment of the Kayapo programme for cultural self-documentation through video.

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AUDIOVISUEL SCIENTIFIQUE,