Ritual Music of the Kayapó-Xikrin, Brazil
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1. Tàkàk 15:36
2. Nhiok: Nhuti ngrere 6:54
   Min ngrere
   Nhuiti ngrere
3. Nhiok: ngrere 10:14
   Min ngrere
   Nhuiti ngrere
4. Nhiok: Ngoi ngrere 4:49
5. Nhiok: Okkaikriki 2:13
6. Morning Twilight: Forest and village sounds 1:31
7. Krua aben muru 7:38
8. Krua aben muru 3:30
9. Angró metóro 9:47
10. Ngo kadju metóro 7:16

Total time: 70:60

The Xikrin villages of the Kayapó, located in the Brazilian Amazon, perform long and elaborate ceremonies to initiate their youth and to renew their relations with the natural world, with one another, and with spirits. Powerful choral music, performed by groups of men and women, characterizes the music of these communities. Xikrin music provides a strong community support for their continuing resistance to invasions and abuse of their traditional lands.

These 1988 digital recordings include selections from several Xikrin ceremonies. Xikrin culture and mythology is presented by Brazilian specialists in a 76 page booklet. Royalties from this recording are directed to the Xikrin community Catate.
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Commentary and Text Transcriptions
by Lux Boelitz Vidal and Isabelle Vidal Giannini
Recordings by Max Peter Baumann

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Ritual Music of the Kayapó-Xikrin, Amazonia

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INTRODUCTION

The Kayapó are a people indigenous to South America who belong to the linguistic group of the Gê and who live in a large area of Central Brazil between the rivers Tocantins and Xingu in the southwestern part of the State of Pará (see map).

Despite repeated splits, the Kayapó have been gradually moving from the east towards the west for more than two hundred years. In spite of a significant weakening caused by their first contacts with the surrounding society, they still make up today a group of approximately 2,500 individuals. These individuals are divided into fifteen sub-groups living in scattered, semi-autonomous villages. However, the Kayapó way of life is, generally speaking, very homogeneous as far as their subsistence activities, socio-political structures and cultural aspects are concerned. The differences between groups are due to successive splits and to diversified means of adaptation to the geographical environment (forest and bush land). In addition, the internal evolution of each group can be linked to more specific factors such as their demographic configuration, their intertribal and interethnic contacts and their idiosyncrasies. The most important differences in this connection are between the Kayapó of the Xingu region and the
Kayapó of the Tocantins. The Xikrin of the Cateté, whose music is recorded on this compact disk, belong to this second group.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Kayapó were still considered “savages,” unfamiliar to and feared by local people and hidden in a jungle where very few whites had ever dared venture. Nowadays, they live in a region renamed the “Legal Amazon,” where the Indians are often referred to as the “People of the Forest.” This exemplifies a typical contradiction of our times. On the one hand, expansionist projects and fierce capitalism threaten the heart of the rain forest, on the other hand, a new social and ecological awareness has also emerged. This indeed represents a conflicting situation. It is not by chance that the Amazon has drawn the attention of international scrutiny as a result of the disorderly process of land occupation and constant destruction of natural resources that it has undergone in recent years. In that time, an increasing amount of land appropriation implemented by means of major investments in the infrastructure, added to official colonization projects, have stimulated intense migratory movements to the region. These movements, together with agricultural projects and a major project involving the extraction of minerals (Projeto Ferro Carajás), have led to severe intrusions on the forest and major changes for its inhabitants.

One region most affected by this constant shrinking of borders is the southwest of the State of Pará, i.e., the region inhabited by the Kayapó. In recent years this process has been documented by satellite pictures showing the dramatic appearance of countless new “blank spots.”

The Projeto Grande Carajás, launched in 1982, and many other enterprises have totally transformed the geographic and socio-economic map of the Eastern Amazon, an area where repeated conflicts arise as a result of struggles for land.

The Kayapó own territories demarcated or officially delimited by the State. However they are constantly being invaded by garimpeiros searching for gold or by lumbering companies looking for the world’s last mahogany trees and other woods of high commercial value.

The Indians' traditional life in this region used to be very different from that which the world now offers them as a model of progress and civilization. Their life was based on subsistence agriculture, the gathering of forest produce, fishing and non-predatory hunting. Over the years, they have developed specific cultural adaptations to and integrated themselves into their Amazonian environment. For generations, the Indians have been accumulating knowledge of the potentialities and limitations of the various ecosystems that form this region, passing this knowledge on from generation to generation. They occupy both the forest and savannah-bush land and have learned to extract from these the means for their physical survival. In addition the Kayapó have also learned from their surroundings how to establish the social and symbolic relationships which constitute the basis for their vision of the world, i.e., relationships which underly the rich and recurrent ritual activity that is still so much alive among the Kayapó. The music recorded in this album, for example, belongs to a male and female naming ceremony staged in a grand style. Their music — which is accompanied by dancing, body-painting, formal speeches and rich ornamentation — represents one of
the highest manifestations of Kayapó cultural identity.

Their attachment to custom and traditional values has strongly motivated the Kayapó to fight for their land and for acknowledgement of their rights. The Kayapó Indians have become famous for their ability to organize political forums and resistance movements. For example, the Kayapó maintained a continuous presence while the new Brazilian Constitution was worked out at the National Congress in Brasilia in 1988. They organized the Altamira Meeting in 1989, which made a major impact on the media. At this meeting, all the Kayapó groups gathered in an act of denunciation of the construction of the Xingú hydroelectric complex, whose reservoir was expected to flood part of their land together with that of other indigenous peoples in the region.

But the future of the Kayapó in particular, and the indigenous peoples of Brazil in general, does not depend alone on their own efforts. They all live within the frontiers of a nation-state which imposes rules of social intercourse, and they are limited by the multiple problems of a still developing country. Difficulties in the fields of education, health and environmental protection are characteristic of an ever uncertain framework. This uncertain framework diminishes the possibilities of mutual agreement between the indigenous people, the State and the surrounding society. Finally, in view of the unfavourable socio-economic climate in Brazil, Indians and their organizations are always in danger of losing control over their destinies, even though, since 1988, they have won a large number of legal and constitutional battles.

Name

The term Kayapó comes from the Tupi (katia = monkey and po = look like) but has never been used by the Gê groups to which it is applied. All the Kayapó call themselves Mebengôkre, i.e. "people of the water hole" or "people of the big water," thus linking themselves to the Tocantins and Araguaia Rivers. To cross one of these signified a split in the ancestral group. Added to this common self-designation, each group has its own name derived from that of a leader or from the location of their village, the latter being the most frequent reference used to identify each group.

Language

The language spoken by the Kayapó belongs to a branch of the linguistic group Gê. Other groups also belonging to this group include the Apinagé, the Eastern and Western Timbira, the Suyá of the Upper Xingú and more remotely the Xavante and Xerente of Central Brazil, as well as the Xokleng and Kaingang of the southern part of the country. As for the Bororo, the link is believed to be even more remote. Although some dialectic differences between the various Kayapó groups do exist, the language is the most pronounced characteristic of their ethnic identity and the leading factor in their acknowledgement of sharing a common culture.

The Kayapó, for whom speech is a highly revered social practice, define themselves as the people who "speak well or beautifully" (Kaben mé) in contrast to other peoples who do not speak their language. On some occasions, such as during the speeches of the Council or during
ceremonies, the men speak in falsetto (*ben*), thus differentiating this type of speech from common speech. The Kayapó’s command of Portuguese varies from group to group according to amount of contact, the degree of isolation and the presence or absence of a National Indian Foundation School. Generally speaking, the young Xikrin men of the Cateté, who have the most opportunities for contact with the surrounding society, speak better Portuguese than the elderly, the women or the children.

**Historic Splits and Occupation of Land**

The present configuration of the Kayapó groups results from a long process of social and spatial mobility, underlined by the continuous formation of new factions and by political splits. The stories of these exploits are full of tension, conflicts, accusations of witchcraft and epic accounts of their leaders. They fill the memories of the living Kayapó and are told by the elders over and over again with dramatic intensity and in great detail.

The Kayapó split from their ancestral Apinagé group at the beginning of the 18th century and crossed the Araguaia River. The Kayapó underwent a further split at the end of the same century. The original group remained in the area of the Pau d’Arco — a tributary of the Araguaia — while another group called the Pore-Kru, ancestors of the present-day Xikrin, moved northwards towards the region of the River Paraúpebas and the River Itacaiunas. The Kayapó who remained in the Pau d’Arco region then split into two groups again, the dissidents moving towards the River Xingu and the River Fresco. All the groups known as the Kayapó of the Xingú come from these dissident groups, after several further splits. The Kayapó who stayed on the left bank of the Araguaia River were the first to establish “friendly” contact with the local population and became known as the Kayapó of the Pau d’Arco. In 1897 a Dominican brother named Gil Vilanova arrived in the Araguaia region and founded the Vila de Conceição. From there he started his work amongst the Kayapó based on a method of learning through religious teachings. A school for indigenous children was opened and around it was created an important missionary station. By 1909 these Kayapó were suffering from drastic and progressive depopulation. Twelve years later the group was living in a single village, and in 1940 they amounted to only six individuals.

**THE XIKRIN**

As already mentioned, a split occurred at the end of the 18th century among the Kayapó who had crossed the Araguaia River, resulting in the departure of the Pore-Kru. Later on, the same group was again divided into two: the Kokorekre, who settled in the Paraúpebas River area, and the Put-Karot, who moved towards the region of the Cateté River in the Upper Itacaiunas.

The Kokorekre, who had started offering goods for barter to the local inhabitants travelling up the Paraúpebas River, became victims of disease; around 1910 surrounding local inhabitants attacked them, killing many.

Rubber tapping led to a deterioration in relations between the Put-Karot and the surrounding inhabitants. The Indians left the Cateté and settled at the source of the Itacaiunas River. It was in this village that a weakened group of Kokorekre joined the Put-Karot and began a long
period of hostilities with the Gorotire. Around 1926, due to their fear of the Gorotire (Kayapó of the Xingú), the Xikrin migrated to the north and settled in the region of the Bacajá River. A little later, between 1930 and 1940, a group that had become dissatisfied with the region left and went back to the Cateté River. These two groups are known today as the Xikrin of the Bacajá and the Xikrin of the Cateté.

THE XIKRIN OF THE CATETÉ

Location

These groups never used the name “Xikrin” to identify themselves. Although the word comes from the Kayapó language, it was imposed from the outside. Today the Xikrin have adopted this name themselves. The Xikrin of the Cateté possess territory amounting to approximately 400,000 hectares, i.e., an indigenous reservation. This territory is located in the municipality of Marabá (Pará) between the Serra Carajás (the Rio Aquiiri constituting the northern border of the reservation) and the Serra da Seringa (Highway BR-158 at present delineating the territory to the south). To the east the reservation is bordered by the Itacaiunas River and to the west by the Cateté River and its tributaries. This is what is now remains of their previously much larger area of movement. The whole region is delineated by the two rivers mentioned above and is located on firm ground in tropical forest called in this region “liana forest.” This forest contains mahogany and Brazilian chestnut trees. Babaçu is concentrated in the clearings and in the swamp areas to the south there are many buriti palms. The village and the FUNAI (National Indian Foundation) post are located on the left bank of the Cateté River (latitude 6°15′20″ South, longitude 50°47′25″ West) thirty kilometres from the confluence of the Cateté and the Itacaiunas Rivers. The Indians call this place Pukatingró (Dry Sand), where the river makes a broad curve and is marked by a beach and a shallow waterfall. In between the river and the circle formed by the houses, the Indians have built a 900-metre landing ground, which they keep in a maintained state.

This village is located 210 kilometres from Marabá as the crow flies and 300 kilometres by river (River Itacaiunas), a distance which can be covered in approximately three days by motor-boat. The large mineral complex (Projeto Ferro Carajás) and its residential centre can be reached in only fifteen minutes by helicopter. To the north of the reservation, about 90 kilometres from the village, in the direction of the Itacaiunas, there is an encampment of the Companhia Vale do Rio Doce, the “Caldeirão.” From here a road leads to the “Salobo” — a copper detection encampment — and to the urban centers of the Serra Carajás. On the asphalted road between Carajás to Marabá it takes approximately two hours for a bus to drive between the two cities. About 30 kilometres to the south of the village, on the Rio Seco, there is a temporary Xikrin encampment. The Indians call this Kamkrokro, a place rich in chestnuts, hunting and fishing in the summer.

A guardpost has been placed further to the south, on the land of the Fazenda Cateté, recently reclaimed from an invading farmer 80 kilometres from Highway BR-158. Young Indians travel along this road visiting such places as Tucumã, Agua Azul, Xinguara and Redenção, where they meet
and talk to representatives of other Kayapó groups as well as local farmers, lumbermen and miners. In this region, which forms a part of the State of Pará, there is a considerable amount of conflict.

**Population**

A state of peace was established with the Xikrin of the Cateté in 1952 at the Las Casas Post, near the Vila de Conceição do Araguaia, where they had come to make tentative contacts with local whites. The Xikrin returned to the Cateté in 1953 accompanied by a member of the Indian Protection Service (SPI). According to his personal account, he took about 300 Indians with him. There is no reliable population data concerning the first decade after peace had been made with the group but it is known that the mortality rate over the period was very high.

In 1962 they were visited by ethnographer Protádio Frikel who reported 164 Indians living in eleven houses set in a circle and forming a village of the traditional type. By 1963, when Frikel returned to the Cateté, the situation had changed. Within this one year the group had split into two because they disagreed about civilized people and the fruits of civilization in general. There were now two villages. “The Conservatives” led by the old chief Bep-Karoti had stayed in the old village while the “Progressives” under the leadership of Bemoti had settled on the bank of the Itacaiunas at the Boca do Cateté in order to facilitate contact with the local inhabitants. The Indians expected much from these contacts to ensure opportunities to trade. Instead, they were bitterly disappointed, exploited and many of them caught fatal diseases. Within one year, they lost ten percent of their population. Many young people also left the village to be confronted with inhuman working conditions when they took jobs picking Brazil nuts or in pursuing other activities.

In 1964 the Xikrin were persuaded to return to the Cateté under the care of the Dominican brother José Caron.

His first goal was to motivate the group, bring back those who had left the village and protect other Indians from exploitation through trade with non-Indians. In 1966 the entire group amounted to only 92 people. The second goal was to create the conditions that would permit the Indians to become one group again. This meant providing medical assistance, building a landing field and organizing activities that would bring profit and thus enable them to acquire manufactured goods. The year 1967 represents a milestone in the history of the Xikrin and is marked by the beginnings of three phenomena that have continued from this year on. First, almost all the young people who had previously left the village returned and were re-integrated into tribal life. Re-integrating seemed to offer advantages they had not found among the white community. Second, the Xikrin’s attitude towards the invaders of their land became more intransigent and, finally, there was a gradual revival of tribal institutions.

In December 1969, on my first visit, the group was composed of 119 people living in eleven households. With the return of young men, women had asked for the reconstruction of the atukhe (men’s house) which, together with the Council or ngobe, began once more to fulfill its political and social function.

The work of the missionary Caron improved the health of the group
considerably and diminished the mortality rate drastically. In 1971 the Xikrin numbered 130 and since then the demographic increase has continued proportionately. In 1976 the population was 183, in 1982 it was 263, and in 1989 the inhabitants numbered approximately 380 individuals. This increase in population can be attributed to higher birth rates and a increased-migration of Xikrin families from Gorotire and Bacajá to the village of Cateté since 1985 (coinciding with the Projeto Ferro Carajás).

Life Style

a) Subsistence Activities

In terms of space utilization, the Kayapó world is very well structured and successfully integrates both adaptation to the environment and social organization. When possible, the Kayapó build their villages near a river or stream but always on dry and well-drained land. The Indians normally choose an area of transition between different ecological zones since this gives them the advantage of easy access to a wide variety of vegetable and animal species. Each zone offers different natural produce, depending on the season of the year. The Kayapó go out and explore the tropical forest and the bush land of the transitional region of the Tocantins-Xingú in an organized way. These rich hunting, fishing and gathering areas also contain black earth, which is particularly favourable for agriculture.

Until now, all the Kayapó, even when faced with drastic and rapid changes, have never failed to maintain their traditional subsistence activities. Further reduction in territory and continuing deforestation will make hunting and fishing increasingly more difficult and lead to the rapid exhaustion of cultivable land. This will increase the number of hours devoted to subsistence activities and bring about higher dependence on a market economy.

The method of cultivation is “swidden” agriculture, by which the men are responsible for cutting and the women for planting and harvesting. The gardens are both collective and individual. They grow different qualities of sweet potatoes, yams, bananas, sweet manioc and corn. Contact with the local inhabitants resulted in the growing of more manioc to make flour, which has now become their basic staple food. In addition, they have diversified their products and now cultivate pumpkins, broad (or fava) beans, watermelons and fruit trees such as avocados, papayas, cashew nuts, mangos, passion fruit, lemons and pineapples. They also produce a certain amount of sugarcane, coffee and rice, and traditionally grow cotton and urucu.

The Kayapó still consider themselves to be hunters, despite their dependence on the produce of the land. The game animals they appreciate most include tapir, boar, peccary, deer, *paca* (a large rodent) and *cotton*. They also hunt land turtles and armadillos in large numbers. In contrast to their customs in the past, they now eat certain types of poultry such as guan (a turkey-like bird) and curassow (a large game bird).

Contact with non-Indians has also led to the Kayapó to hunt with rifles and therefore to depend upon ammunition. This means that the traditional activity of hunting relies on external commodities. Also, the deforestation that has taken place throughout the southwest of Pará has drastically reduced the fauna of the region.

The Kayapó hunt significant quantities of birds such as macaw, *japu,*
joão congo and parrots to provide the materials for fashioning feather adornments. In the winter they fish with hook and line (nylon), whereas in summer, communal fishing with timbo (a poisonous vine) prevails. The Xikrin have slowly abandoned most of their food taboos and now eat all kinds of fish, although they still avoid some kinds when sick.

From the forest they gather palm hearts, Brazil nuts, various kinds of coconuts, various qualities of honey, wild fruits (açaí, bacaba, frutão etc.) and coconut larva. The Xikrin also pick large quantities of genipapo for body-painting, vines to fish with (timbo) and a large variety of medicinal plants. Babaçu oil, which mainly used to be employed as a cosmetic, is also used today in the preparation of food. They also collect all the raw materials necessary for their material culture, especially wood, liana vines, straw, shells and various seeds.

b) Eating Habits

The traditional Kayapó diet is extremely well balanced. Food is always baked in stone ovens or over an open fire. In recent years, with the introduction of metal pots, they have started to boil some of their meals and have also started using salt.

Children are normally breast-fed and, as they get older, they start eating bananas, papayas, palm hearts, potatoes and other foods which if necessary are pre-masticated by their mothers.

There are various dietary taboos linked to specific conventional classifications and to beliefs related to the body, the soul and to illness. Some taboos have been partially abandoned, thus increasing the number of edible products. Other taboos are however still observed. For example, the Xikrin refuse to eat the hearts or livers of game animals because those organs are associated with the loss of blood.

Traditionally a sick person was relegated to a marginal standing in the society. Amongst Amerindians, the incidence of diseases such as influenza, malaria, infectious diseases and bronchopulmonary disorders, makes food assistance essential for recovery.

c) Nomadic Life

Subsistence activities are cyclical and seasonal so that there are times of abundance and times of scarcity.

Traditionally the Kayapó are semi-nomadic with a pre-established calendar of wandering, the village always being the point of return. Their trekks can vary from a few days or weeks to up to two or three months during the dry season (July, August, September). However, since they have come into contact with the national society, they have all but abandoned this last alternative. The trekking groups are composed of men and are organized according to age-sets, men's societies or kinship ties. Sometimes a trekking group may even be composed of all the villagers. The purpose of these trekking expeditions, apart from their being culturally rooted in tradition, is to explore the resources of the territory, particularly during the dry season when their gardens are less productive.

When travelling, they build simple shelters and change their encampment every day. They sleep beside the rivers, where they can fish, near areas rich in specific resources (such as taquara for arrows, buriti palms or fruit trees)
or close to fallow land where they can hunt and gather fruit.

Nomadism, apart from contributing to the diversification of their diet, also permits balanced use of the various ecosystems without exerting too much pressure on any one specific area. Many rituals depend on these treks, since the expeditions are essential for obtaining the extra food needed to stage the ceremonies. The alternation of sedentary and nomadic life among the Kayapó plays an important role in various aspects of their social organization.

**Material Culture**

Before making contact with the outside world, the Kayapó used various types of very elaborate hunting clubs as well as spears made of wood and jaguar bones. Their bows and arrows, on the other hand, have always been of simple design. The women use wooden sticks to dig tubers from the garden.

The palm tree provides the material with which the Kayapó make the baskets, sacks, boxes and bags in which they keep their belongings. They used to carry water in hollow bamboo containers, for they do not make pottery. They keep seeds, birds’ down and urucu seeds in calabashes. They sleep on raised platforms or on mats stretched out on the ground. They spin cotton and weave armbands and are very skilled at making supports for feather adornments. They do not weave large pieces of fabric or hammocks nor do they make canoes or fishing nets. Kayapó material culture is relatively sparse.

Adornment is fairly developed and body-painting constitutes a highly structured semiotic system with its own formal characteristics and aesthetics. The feather adornments, which are huge, consist of rich sets of headdresses made of macaw, hawk, *joão congo*, *japu* and heron feathers, armbands and pectoral and dorsal adornments. Another characteristic adornment of the Kayapó is the necklace, which is made of pieces of shell. Some adornments are still made of cotton, plant fibres, bast and straw.

The Kayapó possess only three musical instruments: the bamboo trumpet, the gourd rattle and the transverse flute. They also sometimes use sticks to beat time.

**Illness and Cures**

The Kayapó believe that illness is caused by the loss of the Mekaron (a kind of spirit akin to the double or the image) or by attack of the mrukaron by a wild animal.

For healing purposes, they use various plants in the form of bandages, baths and fumigations, and plants which are associated with certain game animals such as the jaguar or watersnake. They believe that failure to adhere to food taboos and to stipulated restrictions may incite these spirits to attack, causing illness or even death. To treat wounds, they use tobacco fumigations, for muscular pains, light scarifications and for headaches or neuralgia, applications with a naturally polished stone heated on a fire. The best remedy in all cases, however, is to rest in a hammock (bought in Marabá) or on a raised platform, surrounded by the family, until the sick person gets better.

The Kayapó have adapted well to medical treatment introduced by the
Brazilians. However they bitterly resent being afflicted by a number of serious illnesses that did not exist before their contact with the outside world and for which they have no cures. They practice simultaneously their own medicine, primarily to ensure recovery of the Mekaron, taking into account psychological aspects of therapy. The shaman acts as a healer who has considerable knowledge of medicinal plants and healing rituals, although his role can be played by other specialists, men or women. To become an authentic shaman, the aspirant must go through certain ordeals that evoke supernatural visions and give him the capacity to enter into contact with the supernatural.

Death

The Kayapó are afraid of death, although their eschatology is not particularly well developed. The individual dies because he has finally lost his Mekaron (soul). The Mekaron goes to the village of the dead, which lies within the tribal territory, very often at the top of a hill. The Mekaron go on living there as they did in the village of the living but in an incipient and non-dynamic life. The body of the dead person is painted and decorated with feathers and adornments and then put on a mat with his personal belongings. It is buried in the cemetery and after some time the bones are dug up, washed and painted with urucu. They are then submitted to a secondary funeral. The mourners observe certain restraints, cut their hair, refrain from painting their bodies and show their grief and mourning by ritual wailing, which gives expression to pain in a formally structured manner.

Work

According to specialists, the Kayapó work an average of 51 hours a week, this including all their activities. The nature of these activities depends on the season and can vary greatly during different periods of the year.

The Kayapó divide themselves into groups based on sex and age. Men's societies under the charge of a leader ensure control of economic activities and other community tasks. The women are always organized in groups according to kinship or age-sets.

From an ideological point of view, the Indians consider work to consist of activities linked with gardening and the harvesting of Brazil nuts, as well as hunting, fishing and gathering. Women's work includes gardening during the planting periods and the daily work of picking tubers for food and supplying the wood and water. They also do some of the gathering in the forest. In addition they are responsible for domestic tasks such as preparing and cooking food and looking after the children. The women, either individually or in groups, devote a great deal of their time to body-painting, which is a highly developed activity among the Kayapó. They also weave cotton and play an important role in rituals. Although they do not formally participate in the Council, they give their opinions on collective decisions and contribute to decisions on matters linked to naming and marriage. The objects they make, or those that are made for them, are their own property and if they want to sell them, they set the price and keep the payment themselves.

The men usually work under the leadership of a chief, divided into men's societies or age-sets. They sometimes work as a group for one individual
who renumerates the workers by giving them food. This occurs when areas are cleared to permit gardening or when houses are being built.

Hunting and fishing can be individual or collective activities and are sometimes highly ritualistic, similar to naming ceremonies or initiation rites. In such cases, the men in charge of the food supply for the whole village are kin groups generally consisting of real or classificatory brothers.

The Xikrin of the Cateté do not work for the surrounding local population. Their main commercial product is the Brazil nut. The chiefs and various adult men each have their own "sectors" of forest where they are in charge of the work during harvest time. They also devote themselves to fashioning handicraft goods which are sold in Belém or in neighbouring towns.

On several occasions in the recent past, the Indians have allowed lumbering and the selling of hardwoods in their territory. This activity leaves them open to exploitation. The lumbering is done carelessly and the price paid is far lower than the real value on the national and international markets. This activity, predominantly encouraged by younger members of the village, causes great controversy and many quarrels. For traditional tasks, however, a consensus is usually reached concerning collective work. The conclusions are then ratified by the chiefs at meetings of the Council.

**Traditional Education**

Children receive their traditional education through participatory learning methods and as a result of living communally. Adults sometimes

guide, correct and teach traditional chants, choreography and ritual sequences to groups of young boys and girls using more systematic methods. In the learning process, considerable importance is attached to repetition and participation in the various events. An individual who shows a special inclination for a specific activity will be taught in a more systematic way by an acknowledged specialist in this field. The girls are taught body-painting at home by adult relatives. Myths are passed on by the elderly in the form of tales, dramas or political speeches. Punishment or pressure can be exerted by kinsfolk or by the community to avoid misbehaviour. This punishment takes the form of ridicule or slight ostracism. Good work or behaviour considered appropriate is publicly praised and admired. Education follows steps corresponding, more or less, to the age-sets and to the sexual division of activities.

Depending on their personal skills, certain individuals become specialists in particular activities such as shamanism or handicrafts. Acceptance of a given function means implicit acknowledgement of one's ability. The future shaman must undergo a serious illness, devote a great deal of time to dreams and be taught by an older shaman. Singers inherit their functions from their name-donors. Those who are gifted in making handicrafts seek the company of senior craftsmen to learn the various techniques.

**Social Organization**

Among the Kayapó, space is subject to definite principles of organization. It is within this space (determined by the central plaza, the circle of houses and the surrounding savannah) that the family and the
community live their lives. It thus forms a basis for the development of the society and of individuals as social beings.

a) The Village

Kayapó villages consist of a circle of houses set around a central plaza. This spatial division is very important on a symbolic level since it represents a tangible reference to other divisions of the social structure such as periphery/center, men/women, private/public and domestic life/ritual life. Traditionally, the side of the house facing the plaza is open while the other three sides are closed in by straw walls, with one door at the back. Inside the house, the space has an “open plan” form but each nuclear family occupies an area delimited by a spatial distance of one or two metres. Here the members of the family have their own mats and fire. Each family possesses a catre or raised platform that provides a place for the couple and their young children to sleep. Each family has its own belongings. Baskets and gourds hang from the wooden pillars of the house or are put on top of platforms built at a certain height from the ground. Small objects are kept in the straw of the walls. Thirty or more individuals can live under the same roof. The present trend among the Kayapó is to build the households with mud-covered walls and to raise internal partitions between the families while at the same time maintaining a community area. The stone ovens where most of the food is baked are set at the back of the house.

b) The Domestic Group and the Extended Family

The basic institution is the domestic group living under the same roof.

It is the home of the extended family related through the women, the residence thus being uxorilocal. A Kayapó woman is born, lives her life and dies in the same house. The houses, like the gardens, belong to the women. After marriage, the man comes to live in his wife’s house, the birth of their first child bringing stability to their union. The women of a household participate in many activities together such as gardening, processing of manioc and gathering fruits in the forest. They also go to the river together to fetch wood and take care of the children of other women of the household, this last activity generally being the responsibility of girls. The women spend most of their time at home. In contrast, the men do most of their share of the work outside of the house and in the men’s house, where they also meet to talk. The women usually talk in front of the house of the village chief, whose wife is also considered to be the women’s chief.

c) Age-Sets

A fundamental institution of Kayapó society is its division into socially determined age-sets.

Children of both sexes are called meprire and live in their parent’s households. At the age of four or five they receive their ceremonial names in a public ceremony. When they reach the age of ten, the boys are taken to the men’s house under the responsibility of an adult male. They continue to live and in particular to sleep there until they get married. They then go to live in their wife’s households. From his introduction into the men’s house until puberty the young boy is called
me-ôkere. He lives with his companions of the same age and is submitted to various initiation ordeals. When he reaches puberty he receives a penis sheath and is called me-mudje-nu; later, after his initiation, he is called menôrônu. Traditionally, a man may remain in this category until the age of twenty to twenty-five.

After the birth of his first child, the man becomes a mekrare (kra = child). This moment is very important for him and is celebrated by a ritual symbolizing the change that has just occurred. Change occurs on the level of the domestic group (the constitution of a new nuclear family) and on the level of the political and collective institution, the Council of Men; by joining this group, the young father enters the category of adult man. The ritual marking these changes consists of continuous movement to and from the young man’s house and the House of Council in the center of the plaza and involves elaborate body-painting. Now placed in the category of adult man, he is initiated into the art of oratory and is made privy to ceremonial tales. He then starts to use the big tembeta, a lower lip plug often dyed with urucu and adorned with a feather and bead pendant. When he grows old he is called mebongêt. The elders are the members of the village who make the formal speeches and lead rituals. They are either excellent craftsmen, storytellers or healers. The women go through the same categories but in a simplified way since they are more securely and permanently bound to their domestic roles. Before they have their first child, they are called kurêrô and afterwards they are called mekrare, which emphasizes their social status as mothers.

At certain times, age-sets are more easily observed than at others. This is the case during trekking expeditions, when each set devotes itself to specific activities, or during certain rituals or sports competitions. The Xikrin of the Cateté, for instance, divide themselves into moiety groups (young men moiety versus married men moiety) which take part in various political, economic and ceremonial activities.

d) Men’s and Women’s Societies

Men’s and women’s societies are sometimes superimposed upon age-sets, thus forming more differentiated groups. This occurs particularly in the bigger villages where there are various chiefs, each with his own group of followers. The women are integrated into societies corresponding to those of their husbands. The men’s societies often turn into very powerful political factions which may lead to violent splits. Sometimes they disappear altogether and new alliances are defined.

e) The Men’s House

Among the Xikrin of the Cateté, until 1985 the nogbe, an open-sky arrangement of palm fronds, stood at the center of the village. This was the venue of the political council. Farther away from the circle of houses stood the attukbe, that is, the warriors’ house. The attukbe was used in the evening and early morning as a meeting place for the men. During the day it became a communal space where handicraft goods were made. At night young men used it as a dormitory. This space was basically reserved for men, though not strictly prohibited to women.
f) Kinship Relations

Kayapó kinship is bilateral, but its genealogical calculation lacks depth. Due to the continuous splits among the Kayapó, they have kinsmen in various villages, but there is no rule demanding exogamy in relation to the village. On the contrary, most marriages take place among people of the same village. Theoretically, a Kayapó Indian cannot marry a close relative or someone belonging to the same residential segment. In addition to biological kinship relations, the Kayapó also have a certain number of acquired kin, links being established by adoption, mutual agreement and friendship. Every individual knows his ties with the other members of the village as a result of kinship terminology. This terminology is of the Omaha type. The nuclear families within an extended family or a residential segment, including affinal relatives, constitute units of mutual support in daily life and in the event of illness.

When men come to live in the house of their wife's parents after marrying, they tend to feel like strangers for some time. As a consequence, the men always continue to visit the houses of their mothers and sisters, with whom they retain strong emotional and ceremonial links. Generally speaking, the relations between sisters-in-law are peaceful and friendly and they visit each other frequently. In contrast, the relations between brothers-in-law are almost always tense, since each newly wed young man has to leave his mother's house knowing that an outsider — his sister's husband — will come to occupy his place in his childhood home.

Naming Practices

Important kinship and ceremonial relationships are those established between the ngêt (paternal and maternal grandfathers, mother's brother) and the tabdjuo (grandson and sister's son), or between the kwattui (paternal and maternal grandmothers, father's sister) and the tabdjuo (granddaughter and brother's daughter). Ngêt and kwattui transmit their names and ceremonial privileges to their tabdjuo, privileges consisting of the right to make and use special adornments or to play certain roles in various ceremonies. This institution is one of the most important for ensuring continuity of the social traditions of the Kayapó. It is through this naming practice that the private and public spheres, as well as the biological and ceremonial relationships, are expressed. The name is also intimately linked to the person as if it were his soul, while also defining the social and public status of the individual.

Relations of Formal Friendship

Relationships of formal friendship are inherited patrilineally and exist between people of the same or opposite sexes, without kinship ties. Formal friends, or krobdjuo, maintain a relationship of respect which plays an important role during certain ceremonies in which they assist each other. This applies in particular to rites of passage.

Ceremonial Life

When the community has a sufficient number of people, i.e., the minimum necessary human resources for ceremonial life, the cycle of
rituals is continuous. For these ritual activities, the Kayapó arrange trekking expeditions to gather the necessary raw materials and additional ceremonial food that is ritually offered to the whole village.

The most important rituals are

1. the male naming ceremonies (beb, tokok) and the female naming ceremonies (bekwe, ire, nbiok, payn, koko) and

2. the male initiation ceremonies.

These two rituals are sometimes incorporated into other rituals such as:

3. the ceremony of the new corn or the mërëmëmi - "beautiful ceremony" - which takes place over the transition period between the dry and the rainy seasons;

4. feasts to celebrate new members joining a ceremonial society, such as that of the Armadillo Society apieti;

5. the wedding ritual or feast of the straw mats;

6. funeral rituals and

7. ritualized fishing with vines (timbo).

There are also more recently introduced rituals such as the kworo-kango feast, or the feast of manioc, which is of Juruna (a Tupi group of the Upper Xingu River) origin. All the rituals are always accompanied by chants and dances. These artistic performances have rarely been the subject of in-depth studies by specialists, making this compact disk an important venture.

Men and women prepare their feasts together or separately. The boys are constantly subjected to a wide variety of initiation ordeals. Some examples of these include fights against wasps' nests representing enemy villages, races, scarification of the legs to make the participant more agile, duels with heavy clubs (aben-tapk), competitive games, stays in the forest and compulsory eating of jaguar meat. During certain periods, ritual cycles reach their climax with great intensity and style in ceremonies that last several days in a row. The Kayapó take great pleasure in performing in such ceremonies.

All these rituals are divided into phases taking place either in the village, in the forest or even on the river bank. Ritual and subsistence activities are very closely linked.

War

Great importance is attached to strength, toughness, resistance and aggressiveness in the upbringing of Kayapó men. Throughout their initiation period, the young boys are submitted to trials of strength that prepare them to this effect.

In the past, war used to play an important part in the process of male initiation. Participation in war expeditions contributed to the upbringing of young men seeking the status of adult. Victorious warriors who had killed an enemy would receive a specific tattoo. During war expeditions, warriors would use a white club that would be covered with straw until the moment of combat. Whenever possible, the enemy was killed without bloodshed and the club was left by the side of the body. After killing an enemy, the warrior would observe a long period of restraint. The male enemy was always killed, while the women and children were abducted and taken back to live in the victorious village. Occasionally, some would manage to escape and find their way back to their villages. On other
occasions they were kidnapped again by a third group.  
The incorporation of Kayapó villages within the Indian Protection Service (SPI) or the National Indian Foundation School (FUNAI) posts after peace had been imposed meant the end of warring, although the conflict with the Brazilians for territory has often, in its most critical moments, taken the form of an authentic war for the Kayapó.

Cosmology

The Kayapó consider themselves as part of a circular world and universe and see the process of life and the universe as cyclical. The cycles of ecological and structural time define and accompany life and human activities. The center of the world is represented by the center of the patio of the village, where ritual, public life and life in general take place. The symbol of the center of the world is the gourd rattle, a musical instrument which is round in shape, similar to a head. The Indians dance to its music, following a circular path corresponding to the solar trajectory. The Indians maintain that, when dancing, they go back to the time of their mythic origins. Thus they recreate the energy necessary for their existence, for the continuous reproduction of life and for their various social institutions. In this way, the balance essential to community life is assured. Paradoxically, the rituals are considered powerful and sometimes even dangerous if there is an excessive amount of factionalism in the village. Certain games such as tug-of-war or blunt-headed arrow fights can lead to violent conflicts and consequently to the split of a village.
Considered allegorically, the pattern of the dance represents the water of the river and its origins and source. This is understandable if we bear in mind that, as already mentioned, the Kayapó call themselves “the people of the water hole.” Water is also very important for the psychological and physical well-being of the individual. For the Kayapó, who clean themselves in the river two to four times a day, bathing is an important activity.

Myth

Myths tell the story of the origins of Kayapó society, the beginnings of its institutions and its ongoing history, including legendary accounts of feats accomplished by the group. Feats performed by cultural heroes, the complex interplay between the human and animal worlds and their radical inversion, as well as tales of dogma and deviant behaviour have all contributed to the Kayapó vision of the world. Myths allow the Kayapó to enrich their experience, create a totally original way of life and assert their own identity. This is evident in certain parts of Kayapó-Xikrin myths, as related by Chief Bemoti and collected by Lux Vidal (1984; cf. also Appendix).

Body-Painting and Graphic Art

For the Kayapó, the body constitutes an ideal means for non-verbal, graphic expressions concerning their society and the natural world. The body can be conceived of as the canvas or the white paper which receives writing called body-painting. Body-painting among the Kayapó constitutes a graphic whole, rich but delimited and entirely codified and formally structured. It is essentially produced by the women, individually or in groups under the care of a female chief.
In this respect, Kayapó women and their highly stylized art confirm what has already been established by many theoreticians, namely that the body "is the initial technical object and the most natural to man" (Mauss 1950). Further confirmed are the notions that body adornment can reveal important aspects related to the notion of person and also represent the concrete expression of fundamental cultural values. Lévi-Strauss, in analyzing facial and body paintings reproduced on paper by Kadiweu women, tried in a brilliant essay (1955) to reconstitute the context in which such paintings would be used, thus discovering the social structure of the specific society and especially its style. In the light of this analysis, instead of considering body-painting as a cultural trait abstracted from its context, we shall examine it as symbols with a variety of referentials, that is, as a system. Mary Douglas showed that a strong link exists between the way people lead with their bodies and the social structure to which they belong (1966). According to Terence Turner (1980), on this general level of significance, body-painting constitutes a "social skin" superimposed on the naked, biological skin of the individuals. This author also shows how this second skin, constituted of standard references, expresses symbolically the "socialization" of the human body, or the subordination of the physical aspects of individual existence to behaviour and common social values.

In a more recent publication, A. Seeger (1987) transposes these functions to music. Among the Suyá Indians of the Upper Xingú, the body can be seen as a musical instrument and society as an orchestra where vocal recreation reproduces the social relationships. Furthermore, music, with its origins in the animal world, transcends merely human attributes. Its mission is also spiritual and cosmological, reaffirming the reciprocal accord existing between the animal world of nature and the world of men in society. Among the Kayapó (who, in addition to their names, integrate nature as well into their paintings, chants and rituals), body adornments and especially body-paintings express significant knowledge. They express the Indians' comprehension of cosmology, social structure and of biological manifestations, or better expressed, of the underlying principles of these various fields. But above all, it reveals to each individual the manifold facets of his own self as related to other selves in time and space.

The Kayapó consider body-painting as an attribute of human nature itself. In the myth of the star woman, the cultural heroine responsible for the origin of cultivated plants, the metamorphosis of the star into a human being is accomplished by painting and body adornment. In addition, after the fall of the umbilical cord, the newborn child is immediately painted with genipapo as an acknowledgement of his status as a human being.

The designs, however, show a great variety of references, taking the form of abstract patterns of fishes, birds, tapirs, deer, jaguars, plants, snakes, turtles and butterflies. Such designs refer to another level of cosmological accord to which the Kayapó consider themselves members. The function of painting when it is applied to the body is essentially social and magico-religious. But it is also the acknowledged aesthetic — met — and proper — kumren — way of presenting oneself and thus demonstrating the link between the ethic and the aesthetic. In addition,
mention should be made of the importance of body-painting as an activity as such, a process of the production and reproduction of social relationships. Also, body-painting is a means of integration, control and socialization of the individual.

At least among the Kayapó Xikrin, body-painting is an almost exclusively feminine task and constitutes a regular activity, similar to gardening, cooking or caring for the children. All women paint, so that the quality of a painter is considered an inherent attribute of feminine nature. In order to receive body-painting with designs and decorative patterns, the individual has to be healthy and clean-skinned. The body is divided into various areas which are painted in their own specific modes.

Facial painting, which is carried out with a palm-rib stylet, comes before body-painting and requires special care. The head, generally speaking, is the most decorated part of the body and the part at which the largest number of symbols and meanings converge. On the rest of the body, stripes of genipap paint are in most cases applied with the hand and then scratched with a special comb. From a formal point of view, the pattern as a whole is composed of a base design (several parallel stripes) which may or may not be accompanied by a highly stylized decorative motif linked to some aspect of the environment — flora, fauna or some object of everyday life.

Young children of both sexes receive the same body-painting. Painting the baby is a way for the mother to show her interest and tenderness. However, it is also a part of the child’s socialization process. Kayapó mothers spend hours painting their children, the child’s body acting as a laboratory or an experimental canvas on which the young mother can practice. It is by using her child’s body again and again that the woman rehearses, learns and becomes a qualified painter. The painting of her children is an individual activity for the mother, who has total freedom in her choice of patterns.

For various reasons, adult painting is very different from child painting. For adults, the designs are less numerous and obey more rigid standards. Occasions for painting follow rules which are linked to other spheres of social organization and public life. Women paint the men, this meaning primarily young initiates (their sons) and their husbands. They may also paint a widowed brother or their father.

When painting the face, they apply a relatively thick layer of urucu with their fingers, some patterns being used according to sex and age. The feet and the lower part of the legs are also painted red. Most of the time the hair on the forehead is shaved off, in typical Kayapó fashion. The rest is combed and anointed with babaçu palm oil.

The children, after each application of genipap paint, are richly adorned with red urucu seed earplugs, necklaces of beads and pieces of shells, cotton shoulder slings also dyed red, and white harpy eagle down applied to the hair. On the forehead and towards the top of the head, where the hair has been shaved off, black striped designs of charcoal dust mixed with strong-smelling resin are applied to keep evil spirits away. Individuals participating in rites of passage seem transformed into birds through their large feathered diadems. On still other occasions, they wear large masks of palm tree leaves and bast fiber, transforming themselves into monkeys, ants, anteaters and aruana fishes.
Kayapó Featherwork

The two most expressive forms of Kayapó artistic creativity are body-painting, which is an exclusively female activity, and the fashioning of feather adornments, which is an entirely masculine task. Body-painting is a daily activity which is pursued in the household, that is, in women’s territory, while feather adornments are linked to ritual life and are made in the men’s house, or in an exclusively masculine space. Kayapó featherwork is highly diversified. The feathers are used in the making of bracelets, wristlets, shoulder slings, dorsal adornments and arrows, not to mention the various headdresses and diadems. Down is also used on blowing horns, gourd rattles and on the body. Down of the white king vulture, which is glued to the hair, is a typical adornment of these groups.

It is interesting to observe that the same adornments vary in size and shape from one Kayapó group to another, enabling the various subgroups to be identified by their featherwork artefacts. This also shows that, in spite of a common artistic background, each group has evolved its own aesthetic orientation. It also shows how the creativity of anonymous craftsmen has led to new artistic expressions.

During both hunting trips and daily expeditions through the forest, the men look out for birds whose feathers they wish to use. After they have properly selected and separated the feathers, the men tie fibre threads onto them and store in a potik-pu, a bamboo case that they carry with them all the time. When fashioning any adornment, the craftsman always has at his disposal a great variety of raw material, each type of feather being appropriate to the specific artefact to be fashioned.

The feathers are essentially worn during the major male naming and initiation rituals, during wedding ceremonies and for the adornment of the dead during funeral rites. In general, feather adornments are linked to ceremonial life, as opposed to body-painting, which is the body’s only adornment during everyday life.

Some adornments, such as the great krokrokiti feathered headdress, have profound symbolic significance. Among the Kayapó-Xikrin of the Cateté for instance, this headdress may in one context represent an eye (the feathers being the eyelashes) or else, in a different context, it may represent the sun (the feathers then symbolizing the rays).

More than anything else, however, the diadem symbolizes the circular shape of the village where the blue feathers in the middle represent the plaza — i.e., the masculine place — and above all the ritual, while the row of red feathers on the periphery symbolizes the domestic world of the women and the house. The white down tied to the tips of the feathers represents the surrounding forest, thus closing off the world of this little Xikrin group which for millennia has lived, adapted and reproduced itself in the heart of the Amazonian forest, creating its own means of artistic expression, ever similar but ever new.

Rescuing of the Rituals by the Community of the Xikrin of the Cateté

Before embarking on a description of the takah-nbiok male and female naming rituals, it is necessary to contextualize them. Important reasons led the Xikrin of the Cateté to renew the initiation and naming cycles that they had not carried out for over twenty years. Among these reasons was
the increased value attached by the Kayapó to their own culture when faced with the threat posed by the surrounding Brazilian society. In 1987-1988 the Kayapó became politically very active while the new Brazilian Constitution was being drawn up. At the end of 1988 the Kayapó met together in Belém and in the Gorotire village and decided to organize a massive meeting at Altamira at the end of February 1989. During this meeting they discussed the problems raised by the construction of the Xingu hydroelectric complex. The Kayapó took advantage of the occasion to perform the corn ritual (bau kadju metoro), thus demonstrating the relationship between rituals and historical events.

A second reason for this revival can be seen in the demographic sphere. A group of approximately 400 individuals (in 1964 there were only 100) is needed to perform these rituals:

1. for formation of the various ceremonial societies, which is a necessary precondition for performing the ritual,
2. for public transmission of inherited prerogatives and the names, and
3. for ensuring that the community is supplied with food by a group consisting of the kin of both the initiates and the name-recipients.

For example, twenty boys were initiated in August 1988 during the mewkọtọp ritual (and passed from the mewbengodju age-set to the menrónmure age-set) and fifteen girls received their names during the nbiok ritual of September 1988.

During the rituals, the individuals acknowledge the relationships of kinship and of formal friendship which are the heirlooms of every individual and are thus vital aspects of social organization and reproduction. In connection with naming rituals, Vidal says:

it is this moment which allows the children to learn the significance of the Baim (father) and Nā (mother) categories and also the [categories of] Ngét and Kwattui (or grandparents, uncles and aunts) who transmit the names and prerogatives, i.e., the significance of those individuals who are there to help them pass from the me-kākiri category (common people) to the category of the ceremonial name-holders, me mei. It is mainly during these rituals that the individuals get acquainted with their own culture in a systematic and collective way through myths, chants, choreography and adornments.

When talking about the mereremei ritual of the Xikrin of the Cateté, Vidal (1977:193) notes that what is most striking during the ritual’s progression is the logical order of its sequences, its symbolic coordination and also its integrated aspect...The main aspects are passed on in a clear, explicit and orderly way with almost didactic neatness, showing that the Xikrin are consciously in command of their world.

The male and female naming rituals takak-nbiok as well as the bep, bekvet, koko, ire and payn naming rituals are parts of an initiation cycle that ideally takes place over a five-year period and is divided into five stages. The first stage called the me-kutọp-ā-kangore, the me-kutọp being a wax helmet into which is inserted a feather adornment, kangore referring to one of the numerous men’s societies that participate in this phase. This first stage is linked with feather handicrafts. The second stage takes place
The spoils of the hunt, which were to be used later as an offering during the ritual, were cut into chunks, prepared in a stone-oven (ki) and stored until taken to the village together with captured land turtles (kaprö). The hunters consisted of the name recipients' fathers (bam), while the fathers' brothers (bam kaak) were charged with taking the spoils of the hunt back to the village.

The fish caught with timbo (vines) in the Rio Seco were used to feed both the men in the forest and the women who had stayed in the village. A "messenger" would head to the village every day to bring the fish or fishballs (tep kupu) prepared by the men to the women in the village and would return early the following day bringing flour, bananas and papayas.

Very early on September 9, 1988, the whole group returned to the village. On the way back, one member of the Mebegnet (elderly) category by the name of Piudjo, a master of Xikrin music, started singing chants called mri karon iaren (mri = hunt, kar = spirit, iaren = speech).

As is their normal custom when returning from the collective hunt, the men stopped before they reached the village to prepare themselves. They made a clearing in the forest and covered the ground with buriti leaves.

They then made krà-dje's (straw headdress), kà-uri-djo's (bracelets), me-akoko's (a 30-centimeter-long stick put slantwise in the lip-hole) and iko's (fibre slings). They then coated their bodies with urucu and painted themselves with the no kai kere design (charcoal painting put at eye level and on the shoulders). Once ready they resumed their way back to the village. As they got closer, they started to shout, thus announcing their arrival.
The Male Naming Ritual takak (Music 1)

The men begin the male naming ritual as soon as they reach the village, outside of the circle of houses. They form a small closed circle and dance and sing the whole takak chant.

They then enter the village and resume their dancing and singing in front of the house of one of the name-recipients. They repeat this ritual as they move towards the village center, then continue to move back and forth between between the different name recipients' houses and the village center.

The diagram below will enable us to visualize more clearly the above mentioned movements.

In the second phase of the diagram (in front of the first name-recipient's house), four women enter the center of the circle and dance, moving their arms to the front and to the back. Their participation in the ritual is conferred according to their kwatiti kinship or ritual category (FZ, FM, MM, ...), and they accompany the men until the end.

It is necessary here to introduce some elements of the indigenous exegesis of this ritual. From this point on the naming ceremony takak takes place concomitantly with the female naming ceremony nbiok.

According to Chief Bemoti, the takak ritual used to be exclusively feminine, taking place in the gardens and unknown to the men. One day, a man who happened to be passing by saw the women singing and dancing. He then ran to the village to inform his companions and they all came to watch. The women then taught them the ritual and they started to perform it in the village. Nowadays this ritual is considered exclusively masculine but, as has already been mentioned, it takes place in the presence of its “female owners.”

The women were taught the chants and music by the mythological heroes Kukrut-Kako and Kukrut-Uire. The name takak comes from the tapirs (kukrut). Legend has it that a shaman had heard the tapir call its son Takak and, when he returned to the village, he gave this name to his grandson.

The mythological hero who created, transformed and integrated social institutions and cultural elements is also said to have been a shaman. In the opinion of this author, this claim could be true, since in the myths, Kukrut-Kako in fact incorporates various characters, this being the real
essence of a shaman. The mythological hero of the Okti myth is depicted as a boy who saw a harpy eagle (okkaikeriki) seize his grandmother in the garden and carry her off. The boy then ran to the village to tell the men what had happened. The men transformed him together with his brother Kukrut-Uire into a giant, so that they were able to kill the eagle. After killing this bird of pray, the hero created big birds out of its large feathers and small birds out of its down. Kukrut-Kako stuck a feather in his hair, thus inventing the nekerei (Xikrin feather artefacts).

The Kukrut-Kako and Kukrut-Uire myths are important because they represent relevant aspects of the creation, transformation and integration of social institutions and above all describe the Xikrin ideal of a human being (see Myth).

To return to the ritual, the lyrics of the takak music are, in reality, the proper Okti myth, as we shall see below.

In fact, although the takak ritual is very short (compared with the Nhiok naming ritual) and is interspersed within the Nhiok ritual, it remains extremely important because of its close relation to the mythological heroes. The ritual uses an ancestral hero and puts him in contact with modern society. Here is a transcription and an interpretative translation of the lyrics of the takak ritual; work on these texts was carried out with the help of Baranhopari.

Transcription:

1 - Takak-kôre Takak muru ré ya (2x)
Ken ne ré kuka kahé yo ari bê
Taka - kôre ya murunbodja

2 - Onbitum mudjwya mâna tôtôre ya (2x)
Omruuru kanierei toi yo ari bê
Takakôre ya murunbodja

3 - Onbitum mudjwya mâna tôtôre ya (2x)
Omuru kaniere toi kvari kudjwa
me ba nhîpokori kudjá

4 - Aringô toi dja kamâ na
me kubê ibei ti takakôre
kumu imânikówodja

5 - Takak - kôre Takak tukutire ya
nbûum dja angrore nbidji bê
me ba te rûn khôdja

6 - Takak Takak prikêtire ya
ngônirî ndjî bê
Takak prikêtire me ba nbirâ ne guêtêmôdja

7 - Taka - kôre Takak djoãadjurûtire ya
tûrûti a nbidji bê
Takak djôajoadjurûtire me ne
kumâ nbûum nbûnikê

Interpretative translation:

1 - Takak is crying
A stone hit his head when turning
Takak is crying

2 - Takak is seated with an armadillo in the field
When the harpy eagle seized his grandmother with force
Takak is crying

3 - Takak is seated with an armadillo in the field
When the harpy eagle seized his grandmother with force
Don't move in the center, we'll stay

4 - The sun is already hot
Takak speaks and remains still
Scratch with force because we like it

5 - Takak tukutire stay here
And be the name of the peccary
Takak tukutire put and stay

6 - Takak priketi is the name of shrimp
Takak priketi remains standing

7 - Takak djioadjuruti is the name of banana
Takak djioadjuruti with everyone remains sitting and quiet

Another relevant observation is that Kukrut-Kako in fact tells his own
life story because in the Okti myth he is the boy whose grandmother is
taken away by the harpy eagle, although he is then turned into a giant.

Female Naming Ritual nhlok (Music 2, 3, 4, and 5)

This ritual, like the takak ritual, has never before been described in the
literature on the Kayapó. We shall try not to omit any of its major aspects,
since neither the preparations nor the chants are random. To a certain
extent, in fact, the preparations and the chants operate jointly. On the
other hand, the moment we come into contact with situations marked by
a revival of ceremonial life and the public transmission of prerogatives

and names, it is extremely important that the process be gradual.

The preparations for the nhlok female naming ritual begin on the day
preceding the return of the men from their collective hunt.

The berarubu (manioc cakes baked in a stone oven) are prepared by
the mothers (nã) and the mothers' sisters (nã koak) of the female name-
recipients. The fathers make the artefacts that will be used during the
ceremony, that is the krokroktire (large feathered headdress with one row
of red macaw feathers and another of harpy eagle feathers) and the pre
(large belt made of cotton beads).

The female name-recipients are painted in their houses by their
mothers with the kuo ku â ôk design, this painting being carried out
entirely with a palm-rib stiletto both on the body and the face.

In the afternoon, the men gather in the men's house in the middle
of the plaza (ngob) and start singing the three first verses of the nhlok chant.
After repeating this for a long time, they start to move outwards towards
the female name-recipient's house, dancing and singing.

The female name-recipients are not present but remain in their houses.
After this dance, which is the first performed by the men, they come out
of their respective houses and stay in front of them. They stretch out their
arms, put their hands behind their necks (a posture called nhlok amin
krã nhóî) and remain in this position. At this point they are only adorned
with their body-painting. At the side of each girl stands her name-donor
(kwatutu) and her formal friend (kroptio). Some of the men wear a rigid
diadem (kruapu), armbands (padjê) and a shell necklace (ngob-onkre-
dje) and hold a long stick with a red macaw feather at the end (putê).
The dance performed by the men is called *nbui-toro* (the hummingbird's dance). It is performed by two rows of men arranged according to the *ikie* (friends of the same age-set), who dance together grouped according to their age-sets. In front, to the side of the rows, stand the men of the *Mebegnet* age-set (mature or elderly men) and at the beginning of the row can be found the *Mekramti* (mature men with more than four children). Then come the *Mekramu* (mature men with one, two or three children) and finally the *Menorou* (initiated boys and boys who sleep in the men's house).

These men then move out of the center of the plaza towards each female name-receiver's house. When they arrive in front of the *nbiok*, they step back and forward twice, a movement called *kate-omu* (step back to see). Afterwards they go around the *nbiok* in a movement called *nbiok-kutu* (envelopment of the nbiok).

For clarification of the procedure, refer to the following diagram:

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**MEN’S MOVEMENTS**

- female name receivers
- female name givers
- formal female friends
- men singers

_Dancing scheme to the singing of selections 2, 3 and 4._

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According to Xikrin of the Cateté tradition, this is the dance of the hummingbirds, and the reasons behind this association can be clearly recognized. The _kate-omu_ movement (*kate* = backwards, *omu* = see) is reminiscent of the hummingbird when it stops in flight, moves backwards and then forwards again, it being the only bird capable of such movement. The _nbiok_ girls also resemble hummingbirds that sit in the sun with their opened wings after having bathed. This posture is also mentioned in the lyrics of the song.

Chief Bemot, the ceremonial chief, divides the chant of the _nbiok_ ritual into seven parts.

1. *Nhuiti ngreere*, large hummingbird's chant
2. *Min ngreere*, crocodile's chant
3. *Nhuiqire ngreere*, small hummingbird's chant
4. *Ngoi ngreere*, vulture's chant
5. *Irarradja ngreere*, mat's chant
6. *Rob ngreere*, jaguar's chant
7. *Okkaikrikti ngreere*, harpy eagle's chant

In this first stage of the ritual only the first three verses of the chant were sung. These are as follows:

**Transcription (Music no. 2):**

1. *A nbiuinbuietre a na kruoi*

   Nbiok nбоikёри pяri bё
   nго tò djua eae eae eae gu ga
2 - Góra me mrâm boi ne
    nin kôkôtire ngo atô
    måna nhiök kôrè kuman ibô ne
    eae eae eae gu ga

3 - Àmin angrô tutchi kamâ
    ne ba kamâ kôtô a bin
    Nhítut - mu nhiökôrè ëmu keterê
    kamâ ibônbodja eae eae eae gu ga

Interpretative Translation:
1 - Hummingbird and parrot
    Nhiök is standing
    Hummingbird is bathing
2 - Let us all walk and arrive
    Where the kokotire crocodile lies on the water
    With side warming up
    Nhiök goes bathing with her head bent
3 - The feathers are drying in the sun
    I am going to wait and then kill (crocodile)
    Male hummingbird cannot see
    Nhiök bathing bent

We asked the Indians about the significance of the hummingbirds in this ritual and their answer was that “hummingbirds are the jaguar's remedy.” And indeed, in Xikrin healing methods, its feathers are burnt and mixed with a plant (unidentified) and called rob-kane (rob = jaguar, kane = illness). This preparation, used as an ointment over the whole of the body, serves as protection and remedy against jaguars. This is very important since, in the next stage of the ritual, jaguar men appear.

After the dance just described, the men go back to the ngob, there is a break and, in the afternoon, the chants and dances start anew. Some new elements appear now, such as the jaguar men’s society (Robkore). We have already mentioned the necessity and possibilities for the formation of these ceremonial societies. During the mëkuto that took place in August 1988, the fish society (Tep) also joined at this point, composed of fifteen men representing four different types of fish: amod (white piranha), amod kuka kamrikë (red piranha), tep-tuk-ti (piranha) and tep-krumbu tu (bicuda). During the nhiök ritual, the jaguar’s society, composed of six individuals of the kinship category ngët, appears (MB, MF, FF, ...). These individuals represent three types of jaguar, the robkore (jaguar), the robmo (cougar) and the robtuk (panther).

In the Xikrin village, only one living Indian, Chief Boatie, enjoys this ceremonial prerogative that is confirmed in ritual. The other Indians who used to belong to the jaguar's society have died, but the prerogatives were passed on to their tabjuo and confirmed during this ritual. The men in this society are called Rob-mu.

Chief Boatie passed on the robkore (jaguar) ceremonial prerogative to his grandson (tabjuo). The boy was painted with the me kuka tuk design on his forehead and was carried by his grandfather during the ritual. However, he is not yet considered a robkore since he is very young and still a robkera (little jaguar).
While the jaguar men get ready in the *ngob*, a number of women adorned with *mekukatuk* painting appear (i.e., charcoal painting on the forehead). They are the *robna* or *robi* (mother jaguar or women jaguar) who stand in front of the *robmu* during the *nbui-toro*. These are the formal friends of the jaguar men.

The village’s oldest woman, who bears the “beautiful name” Nhiok, also wears the *mekuka-tuk* painting.

The body-painting of the jaguar men (*katiek-ök*) is applied by them in the *ngob*. This painting is carried out with charcoal and both for the *robkore* and *robo* represents the spots of the jaguar on the body and face. As for the *robtuk*, the spots are represented on the body but the face is all black.

While these preparations take place, the men are seated and sing the next three verses of the *nbio* chant, which is transcribed here.

**Transcription (Musics no. 3 and 4):**

4 - *Dja ga me rob mà ökö pumu*
    *Nbiot ronru kurëkrë ya pumu rob pó puma*
    *tirë ökö pru màn te boi ne boi*
    *eae eae eae gu ga.*

5 - *Irärädja ne krë tamuru rob pó puma*
    *tirë ökö pru màn te boi ne boi*
    *eae eae eae gu ga.*

6 - *Dja ga me amin amimaprin ba*
    *röró kamà kruoirère nhoini ya tô*
    *gue katoba ikatierere eae eae eae gu ga*

---

**Interpretative Translation:**

4 - All of you stay here for the jaguar to see the feathered headdress in the nest of vulture
    All with feathered headdresses along the path will arrive and stay

5 - Open a space on the straw mat for we are afraid of the jaguar
    All with feathered headdresses along the path will arrive and stay

6 - All stay here and I will slowly adorn myself with parrot down
    and then will burn the parrot down go out and be painted as a jaguar

Everything takes place slowly at the pace of the music.

The men leave the *ngob* again and move towards the female name-recipients’ houses. The *nbui-toro* dancing continues but now the *robi* dancers in front of the *robmu* and the *nbio* are no longer alone in front of their houses but are accompanied by their name-donors (*kwatu*) and their formal friends (*krobdjou*). The Nhiok use their specific artefacts, *pré*s (belts) and *kadjot-ia-budjia*’s (cotton slings with three red macaw feathers worn on the shoulder). The *pré*s are different for each *nbio*. The *pré*, the *kadjot-ia-budjia* and the diadem of white heron feathers (*kamri*) and black macaw feathers (*madkatuk*) are bestowed together with the name.
During the rituals, the participants not only wear the artefacts that are the property or heirloom of each individual but also the artefacts specific to each name-set, to the initiates, to the men's societies, to the age-sets and to sexual categories. The jaguar men are now wearing their body-paintings and, just like the other men, each has his own specific artefacts. They appear slowly, one after the other, gradually enriching the ritual.

Very early the next morning, the men gather in the ngob, where they make two beeswax helmets (mekutop) onto which the rigid diadems penikoiti are later placed. This artefact will be used by the robkroke. They are the only participants who use themekutop, since they represent the jaguars, which enjoy the highest prestige, and are, in fact, the shaman's assistants.

The ak patko (eagle's tarsus) is made by the father of one of the name-recipients and represents the tarsus of the harpy eagle. This artefact is made of buriti straw and bast. The eagle's claws will be used at the end of the ritual to symbolically claw the nbiok.

Simultaneously we note that the boys about to receive their names are being prepared by their fathers. They are taken to the ngob, where they will stay. These children wear five bracelets (i-h), have parrot's down (kuruto nboiti) on their bodies and king vulture down (kreamin) on their heads, in addition to wearing their own specific artefacts (kukrodo). Their faces are painted with urucu and the shaven part of the head is covered with a mixture of charcoal and tree resin (arob) to ward off evil spirits (Mekaron). They also wear the shell necklace (ngob onkere dje) and the cotton sling.

Around one o'clock in the afternoon, the takak-okiere or food offerings begin (bananas, sweet potatoes and land turtles), brought by the mothers and mothers' sisters of the takak name-recipients. The brothers of the name-recipients' fathers are the ones who leave the ngob to fetch the food offerings. The food is then offered to all the men and is the final event of the takak ritual.

Immediately afterwards, one member of the Mebegnê group, Piúdio, talks about the female naming ritual nbiok and also about the rituals that would follow, called krui djo aben muru (arrows' ritual) and angrô metôro (sun ritual). This speech lasts about one hour. The climax of the nbiok ritual takes place just after this "native exegesis", at three in the afternoon.

While all the men and female name-recipients are being adorned, the men start singing the nbiok, irâradja and rob chants. All the men are adorned with their respective kukrodo (property, heirlooms) and nekrei (riches). In this ritual, the kruiapu (headbands of bamboo and japi's tail feathers) are only used by their owners. The robkrome (jaguar men) show their mekutop, called by an Indian named Bebdjare mekutop krê nó pudji (beeswax helmet with one eye), and by another man called Rôiri, mekutop krê nó ame (beeswax helmet with two eyes).

The two representatives of the robkrome wear the same painting on their faces, which is composed of ngrê ko (a mask of egg-shell dust of the tinamous bird) and nó kre ipok (charcoal painting). Their bodies are covered with parakeet and macaw down (kuruto nboi).

The transformation or, to a certain extent, the socialization of the jaguar, is an interesting point to observe. During the earlier stages, as described above, the jaguars only wear body-painting imitating the animal (spots on the body). Now they display feather artefacts. Their bodies and
heads are covered with down, which gives them the appearance of birds and consequently of being Kayapó.

At a certain point in the ritual there is, in reality, a metamorphosis of the jaguar into a harpy eagle, as we shall see later. This metamorphosis is linked to the cycle of initiation of the shaman, who first goes into the forest sporting the mekutop (wax helmet into which a feathered headdress is embedded) representing the jaguar and is next seen as a bird.

The nbiok name-recipients display the artefacts already described, to which their fathers add the krokroktire (large feathered headdresses made of parrots’ wing feathers) and the peyotí amu (small feathered headdresses made of japus’ tail feathers). Their bodies are also covered with down, this including vulture’s down on their heads.

When everyone is ready, the hummingbird’s dance begins in the eastern part of the village. When the dance is over, two groups are formed at the village center, one called Me kramtí (men representing the community) and the other formed by the jaguar men’s society and by the name-donors and formal friends of the female name-recipients, i.e., people with distinct ceremonial status.

A robkore (jaguar), whose muffled tread imitates that of the animal, departs to one of the female name-recipients’ houses to fetch the nbiokdjokéiere (food offering). In this case the food is composed of land turtles, manioc and meat cakes (mirí kápu).

When the female name-recipient’s father offers this food, he says “kumren kubei” (my nbiok daughter, you claw well). The jaguar goes back with the offering and shows it to the community. He then gives it to the panther, who in turn puts it on the ground in front of the group formed by the society of jaguar men and the female name-recipients, together with their formal friends. This is repeated with every female name-recipient.

At sunset, the men and the female name-recipients form a circle in the western part of the village, the nbiok with their backs to the sun. This stage of the ritual is called nbiok kubet (nbiok = to claw). The men start singing the harpy eagle’s chant (okkaikrikiti), alternating with the robkore scream (kóro ba) and the symbolic clawing of the female name-recipients. This phase lasts until dawn.

Transcription of the okkaikrikiti Chant (Music no. 5):

Okkaikrikiti patkó pó tam be nbiokó kubet
iatché apru te aeeee...
iatché kumu nbiú tóróry tóróry

Translation of the Harpy Eagle’s Chant:
The claws of the harpy eagle will claw the Nbiok
Breathe and come through the path
Breathe and keep seeing hummingbird’s feathers being born

The kóro ba (harpy eagle’s scream) is a shrill and prolonged whistle “wi-uu,” an onomatopoeic representation of the call emitted by the harpy eagle during the mating period and lasting until the young are ready to fly.

The dance of the jaguar men (already transformed into eagles at this stage) recalls the return of this bird to its nest. It flies in a circle, only approaching the nest when it reaches the right tree.

At dawn, when they are all tired, the Indians say “Arup kei” (It is
The end of the ritual is marked by the mëkukatuk body-painting ritual for the fathers of both male and female name-recipients. This body-painting procedure represents the end of the kra rere mei ritual (kra = offspring, rere = transpose, mei = beautiful).

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APPENDIX:

The Descent from the Sky

Up in the sky an Indian dug an armadillo hole in the ground. An armadillo fell through the hole. Looking through it the Indian saw the earth with many buriti palms. It was our land, the savanna. All the Indians tied themselves together with a red and black cotton belt. They tied it to a tree and descended. Having reached the earth they cut the belt and the wind carried it away. There was no one left there.2

Informant: Bemoti

The Jaguar’s Fire

An Indian boy went out with his brother-in-law to catch macaws. They went and they placed a staff against the rocks to reach the macaw’s nest at the top. Then the boy climbed up. He did not grab the macaw for he was afraid. Instead he took stones and threw them down. His brother-in-law was hurt and he removed the staff and went away leaving the boy there.

He had to eat his own excrement and drink his own urine for up on the rocks there was nothing.

A jaguar went out to hunt peccaries. On his way back, he saw the shadow of the boy on the ground and he looked up and saw him. He replaced the staff for the boy to climb down. On his way down the Indian took a young macaw and threw it down for the jaguar to eat. Then the jaguar carried him to his house on his back.

When they arrived, the jaguar’s wife was spinning cotton. The jaguar said: “I have brought a boy.” He gave the boy a lot to eat for he was thin after spending such a long time on the rocks. The Indian called the female jaguar “mother” and the male “father”.

The jaguar said to his wife: “Whenever he is hungry take some meat and give it to him.”

The boy grew hungry but she did not give him anything. Then he grabbed some meat and ran out. He was afraid of her. When the jaguar came home, the boy told him and the jaguar made some arrows for him saying: “If she does it again, kill her.” Once more she began to tease him, refusing him meat. The boy killed her.

He made a basket to carry berarubi and his father, the jaguar, showed him the way to this village. He carried the meat here.

It took him one day to reach here. He told them what had happened to him and said there was fire there. Everybody went there.

They took a big burning jatoba and carried it home on their shoulders, all together. And to this day the jaguar remains without fire. He eats raw food and we eat cooked.

Informant: Bemoti

The Origin of Corn

The men had gone hunting and the women had gone to the forest to gather food.3 An old woman was alone in the village with her grandson.

She went to the river to wash the boy who was very dirty. Up above a macaw
was cutting off ears of corn. The corn fell to the ground and the opossum ate it.
The opossum went up to the old woman but she pushed it away with an abrupt gesture. The opossum came back, saying: “Look, old woman, look, grandmother, I have got some food.”

“Where?”

“Here in the corn tree. The macaw dropped it. It is good.”

The old woman left her grandson sitting there. She gathered the corn kernels and put them in a gourd which she carried back to the village and covered. Then she made flat cakes. When her daughter came she said: “My daughter, this is good food, the opossum said so. Tomorrow we will paint ourselves with genipapo and put white vulture feathers and resin on our heads and then we shall grind the corn.” In the afternoon the men were in the men’s house in the center of the plaza. The old woman gave a piece of flat cake to the children saying: “If the old men ask you for some, give it to them.” Thus the little ones went to instruct the group of old men in the men’s house.
The latter said: “Hatabdjiwo, come here and give me some, I would like to try it.”

One old man said: “It is good. It is sweet. What is this cake made of? It is good.”

When it was finished the children ran to the old woman’s house to get more.

An old man talked to the new chief, ngi-kon-bori-nu, asking him to summon the old woman to speak in the men’s house. The chief called her. “Look, old woman, come here and tell us what this good food is.”

The old woman came to the men’s house where she spoke loudly. Everybody was listening, the men in the man’s house and the women in the village. Everybody was listening when she said: “It was the opossum who taught me.” Everybody asked: “Where? Where?”

“It is what we used to throw away when we were bathing.”

Seizing their baskets, the women ran to the river. They carried everything to the village and then they ran back to the river. The little girls picked up all the kernels, leaving the ground completely clean. In the village everybody ground the corn and made flat cakes.

My grandmother said: “For a long time there was no food. We ate nothing but meat dried in the sun and rotten wood.” But then an Indian brought the jaguar’s fire.

The men went to cut down the corn tree. It was as big as the village and its kernels were falling into the water and on the edge of the river. It was a large corn tree (bōrirai). An old man said to two boys (mebokti): “Go and fetch an axe, boys, a stone axe.” On the way they saw the opossum running to hide in a hole in a coconut palm. They killed it, roasted it, and ate it. Immediately they turned into old men. Their ear ornaments became old and completely black, and their leg bands became old and loose-fitting. They were walking along slowly.

One old man said: “Let’s go quickly with the axe.”
They replied: “We cannot. We are old.”

They reached the corn tree. The boys were old men and the corn was falling. All the Indians carried the corn into the forest and today they all have corn: Gorotire, Caraía, Arara, Surui, Shavante, Gaviao and Assurini.

“Did not the Gorotire tell you this?”
The Christians only brought hard corn.
The Indians eat corn paste.
The Star from the Sky.

It was night, and the young men were sleeping in the men’s house. One of
them did not have a wife. He lay there, looking up at the sky.

He looked at the beautiful star and thought: "I want a pretty wife; I wonder if she'll marry me?" He fell asleep. The star came down to the earth and took the young man by the hand.

"Who's that?"

"It's I. I came from up there. Did you not call me?"

She lay down on the ground with him. She was very beautiful.

When the day dawned she went back up.

The next day she descended again.

Early in the morning he gave her something to eat, and then he hid her in a large gourd so that no one would see her.

The Indians went out on a collective expedition and were walking through the forest. The young man gave the gourd to one of his sisters to carry. She wanted to open it to see what was inside, for she found it very heavy. He said:

"Don't open it."

"I want to see what it is."

"Don't open it."

"Yes, open it, for it's very heavy. That's no good."

The sister opened it. Immediately Nhoikbõkti, who was looking up, bent her head in shame. The sister tapped her on the head but she would not look.

The mother said: "Don't carry the gourd, let her stay as a sister-in-law and a daughter-in-law (djuoy). I'll paint your wife so she'll look pretty."

In the camp they put palm fronds on the ground and built a hut, also of palm leaves. Inside they cut Nhoikbõkti's hair and painted her with genipapo. They decorated her with vulture feathers, resin, cotton string, a belt, a black shoulder belt, armlets, a polished stone necklace, and urucu.

The next day they went out once more on an expedition. Before leaving, the men who were going to hunt were sitting together in the men's meeting place outside the camp, waiting for the women to pass. When Nhoikbõkti appeared, followed by her mother-in-law, the men all began to stare, saying: "Who is that attractive woman? Who is that beautiful woman?" They all wanted to marry her and kept saying: "I'll marry her." "I" "I" "I" "I" "I" "I" "I" Her husband heard, and he was looking. Inside, speaking to himself, he was saying: "No, I"

Then Nhoikbõkti said to her husband: "I am going up there where your parents-in-law are. I shall fetch something there, and then return. Stay right here and don't move."

With the help of a flexible stick her husband catapulted her up into the sky.

In the afternoon he went to bathe, and when he returned to the place she was already on her way back. She arrived with three baskets, one on each side and one on her back. She brought everything to be planted: shoots of bananas, squash, yams, potatoes, manioc. She gave them everything, many things to plant, and she taught her husband how to prepare a field, saying: "My father and my relatives do like this." Then the Indians planted, and now they have a lot of potatoes. "What we really like is potatoes."

Informant: Bemoti

The Origin of the Names Bekwe and Bep

The sororal nephew of the shaman burned himself in the fire. He burned his foot.
The nephew cried a lot.
The shaman went there and asked: “Why is my nephew crying?”
In his sister’s house there was a large stone hearth.
The shaman said to his sister: “Open the hearth. I want to lie down on it.”
The sister opened the hearth.
The shaman said: “I will lie down on one side and then on the other side.”
Burning, he ran to the river and jumped into the water.
Another brother said: “He did not lie. The water is deep. He remained with the fish.”
The shaman was gone for a long time, three winters and three summers.
Then he returned.
The shaman who had burned himself was coming.
He arrived.
His sister was weeping because the shaman was coming.
His hair was long with many fish in it.
The shaman went to dance in the plaza all by himself.
The others did not know this dance.
He had learned it among the fish.
The shaman went to his sister’s house and said: “My sister’s child shall be called Bekwe-bô, and if it’s a boy, Be-tuk-ti.”

Informant: Bemoti

Kukrut-kako, Kukrut-uiire and the Deer
A deer was eating souari nuts.

The ngêtuwa\textsuperscript{20} of Kukrut-kako and Kukrut-uiire wanted to kill the deer but when he was running after the animal he tripped over a stone and fell.
Kukrut-kako and Kukrut-uiire came to the village and asked their huyuwa:\textsuperscript{21} “Why is our ngêtuwa lying down?”
The woman said: “Your ngêtuwa has been in the forest. He saw a deer eating souari nuts and wanted to kill it. The deer began to run and when your ngêtuwa ran after it, he hit his knee against a rock.”
Kukrut-kako asked: “Where was this? Let us go and look.” The two brothers went off with their ngêtuwa who took them to the souari tree.
After showing them the tracks he returned to the village.
Kukrut-kako and Kukrut-uiire ran after the deer.
They found a deer which was lying down but this was not their ngêtuwa’s deer.
This was still running away.
The two brothers came upon another deer but it was still not the one they wanted.
They went on running.
Kukrut-kako grabbed Kukrut-uiire’s hand and said: “Wait, the deer is very far away.”
The deer ran on. It climbed a mountain and ran down into a valley and then it ascended another mountain. When it reached the bottom of the valley, it climbed up yet another mountain with Kukrut-kako and Kukrut-uiire in pursuit.
The brothers were now gigantic so they soon caught up with it.
They succeeded in seizing the deer and tried to stun it by hitting it on the head, Kukrut-kako on one side and Kukrut-uiire on the other. The deer was exhausted and stunned.
Kukrut-kako carried the deer on his back and on the way home to the village, they sang the song of the deer: "More, more, more ...!"
This is the name given to a white deer out in the bush.
When they arrived at the village they went to the house of their ngëwu
They placed the deer in front of him, head first and he killed the animal with a pestle.
Cutting open the deer they removed the stomach and the entrails in order to make meat pies with the rest.

Informant: Bemori

The Origin of the Christians: The Story of Wag-me-kaprä

Long ago there were no Christians, only Indians. Everybody was Indian. Wag-me-kaprä quarreled with his wife. She told the other Indians to kill him. They did and then he came back to life. He arrived at the new camp in the afternoon. Again the wife ordered him killed. They killed him once more and went away. Again he returned to life. The Indians kept moving their camp and Wag-me-kaprä kept following. When he arrived once again his wife screamed. Then he said: "I’m not coming for you but for my yellow macaw and my dog. I want my things so I can leave for good." His wife gave him his belongings.
When his son had grown up and become a man he went into the forest with his compadre (krobdjüo). The latter shot a macaw that was sitting in a tree and the arrow remained stuck high in the tree. Climbing up to fetch it, he saw a plantation from above. He descended and went to look. He saw Wag-me-kaprä’s field. It had rice, squash, beans, and corn. In his house there were salt, pots, kerosene and cans of gasoline for outboard motors: everything. The compadre only looked through the window but he saw everything. He went back to the forest. "My compadre, the man who is in the plantation cutting away the brush is not an Indian, he is a Christian. He wears clothes. Your father is a white man now."
The son went over to the field and approached his father saying: "Father, father." The other did not listen but went on hoeing. Again the son said: "Father," taking the man’s arm. He looked at his son: "I am not your father." The son wept: "I am grown up, I am no longer little." His father asked: "There is another Indian. Did you come alone?" "No, my compadre came, too." "You may call him."
The father took them to his house, a large house like this one (the mission). When they arrived he sat down a while for he was tired. He gave them something to eat and afterwards he went to get some angó beads. The son did not get many and he wanted more: "More, more!" he said. And his father gave him more. The compadre did not get many beads: "More, more, more!" he said. And he was given more. There were knives as well. He was given several and wanted more: "More!"
Again he was given some more. Then he said: "That is fine. I now have a lot."
The father said: "Take a rifle, my son." The son replied: "I want only a bow and arrows." He did not want the rifle for he did not know what it was. Then he went away. When he was far away he heard a rifle shot. They were listening: Boom, Boom! They ran, both of them, and afterwards they thought that they would have liked to go back and take the rifle but they did not. They reached the village.
In the evening they told the women: "Wag-me-kaprä has many beads and axes and knives." The next morning all the women went there, including the man’s wife. In the house everybody took many things, beads, axes and knives. And then they went home. Others were waiting for him to give them objects.
Wag-me-kapra was busy clearing his field. His wife called him so that he would
give her things. He came, cleaning his knife and asking: “Who is my wife?”
Cleaning his knife and talking he came up to the woman, and he said: “Where is
your husband?” He seized her by the hair and killed her with his knife. All the
women were frightened and ran into the forest. Wag-me-kapra said: “Do not run
away. I only wanted to kill my wife. I am not going to kill everybody.” He
caught the women, closed and locked the door: “Stay here.”
During the night they all went away in a boat. In the morning the Indians
wanted to go and kill Wag-me-kapra but there was no one in the house. The
men ran along the edge of the river but they grew tired and did not see
anything. The boat was fast and travelled on the river whereas the Indians were
travelling on land. They returned to the village without having found their wives.
Wag-me-kapra took many women with him. Now there are many whites, in
Conceição do Araguaia, in Belém, in Rio, in Brasília (as you know, I have not
seen them). The women had many children and today there are many whites.

1 Me-prê: the informant explained that this is a belt similar to the ones used
during the niêok naming festival.
2 Another informant said that a certain number of Indians were afraid of
descending so they remained up in the sky.
3 Among the Xikrin this myth is separate from the myth about the origin of
cultivated plants, which it follows.
4 Ngia: opossum. It has two black streaks on both sides of the nose and lives at
the edge of water.

Kreamin: white vulture feathers; rob: resin.
Like a man who speaks formally in the Council.
Ikrekako: cigar-shaped wooden ear ornaments.
Cotton string tied around the legs below the knee.
Menôrômu: age-class of young men who have been initiated.
Identified as Venus. The navigators of the Araguaia and those who travel
across the country guide themselves by this star.
Nhiokbôki: the name of the star and of the heroine who brought cultivated
plants to the tribe.
Kreamin: vulture feathers.
Rob: resin.
Kain: cotton string, tied below the knee.
Pre: belt.
Arape-tuck: black shoulder belt made of cotton thread.
Pâde: armlets.
Ngob: necklace of small disks of polished stone. All are ornaments used by a
young woman after the wedding ceremony on the mat (me-kamro).
Another version of the myth specifies that when the shaman arrived at the
bottom of the river, the fish were singing a Bekwe naming ceremony
(merêmê), and the piabanha, the caru, and the bicuda were being named.
There are many Bekwe names among the fish.
The shaman made himself a decoration for his head with a *buriti* bud (*oronti*, the ornaments of the Bekwe girls during the naming ceremony), and many fish were caught in it. When he returned, he went to the village plaza, singing, and leaving the name Bekwe in several houses successively as is still done today. Then he went to paint himself and the naming ceremony began. These are the only two names that he brought back from the bottom of the river.

20 *Ngêtwá:* mother’s brother, mother’s father, father’s father.

21 *Tuyuwa:* here, the wife of the *ngêtwá*.

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Front cover photo: Men singing and dancing in front of men's house during tâkâk ritual (August 1988)

Back cover photo: Girl receiving ceremonial name in front of her parents' house during nhiok naming ritual (August 1988)