The Kalapalo Affinal Civility Register

Data from narratives, conversations, and didactic speech are employed to describe a multimodal, combinatorial civility register used by speakers of Kalapalo, a central Brazilian Southern Carib language. Practiced among family members, these intimate ritual communications involve complementary grammatical, lexical, discursive, and interactive features, including self-abnegation and avoidance practices. Examples of conventional usage, and the consequences of register misuse and the collapse of civility are included. Affinal civility enables both specific domestic unions, and more extensive social networks or chains of partnerships within the multilingual Alto Xingu macro-polity. The question of the relationship of affinal civility to multilingual macro-polities more generally is addressed with respect to evidence from Australia. [register, avoidance, kinship, Amazonia, multilingual region]

Alongside the better known collective public performances that constitute Amazonian ceremonial gatherings and shamanic practice are more intimate rituals, forms of artful talk used within the family. This article concerns an example of such a style, the elaborate and pervasive register of politeness and respect used by the Southern Carib-speaking Kalapalo who live in the Alto Xingu region of Mato Gross, central Brazil. My intention here is to describe this intimate ritual life as I observed it while living in Kalapalo communities, and especially as the Kalapalo themselves quote and comment upon it in their narratives about marriage. Such narratives are essentially composed of quoted conversations, often complemented by a storyteller’s more explicit metacommentary, and often featuring talk among family members that is extraordinarily bungled or overtly angry. Difficulties within marriages are rarely discussed openly in casual Kalapalo discourse but appear very often in narrative art. The ancient and ancestral narrative frame, marked as such by the special “mythic hearsay” evidential -tï that places responsibility for utterance content on unnamed ancestors, is particularly appropriate for describing family problems—bad feelings between parents and children, and essential incompatibilities between spouses. This is in keeping with what others with extensive field experience in Amazonia have found. Allen Johnson, for example, observes that he learned more about social conflict through Machiguenga storytelling than “ordinary discourse,” “(which) is often misleading in this regard, portraying a degree of interpersonal harmony that is no more than an exaggerated half-truth masking complex ambivalent emotional undercurrents that can be very distressing for people” (n.d.:8; see also 2003). In Kalapalo narratives about marriages, the affinal idiom is a central element, its use and misuse often the very substance of such stories.
Within and around the large communal family households, some with 20 or more people in residence, the practice and performance of a special kind of talk among Kalapalo affines involves an interpersonal tone of politeness or “civility” in which speech, collective and individual activity, bodily comportment and gesture have complementary significance. Through affinal civility, people acknowledge one another’s different social positions (often the reason for proposing a union in the first place), while pretending to ignore them, or perhaps better, making such differences irrelevant so as to enable shared, mutually beneficial domestic projects. Not surprisingly, a deeper exploration of Kalapalo affinal civility will take us well into its special relevance for social politics more generally.

Kalapalo affinal civility develops over time, a continual doing or making of the familial interpersonal. A closer look at this process suggests how we might come to understand how registers more generally constitute changes in a social world of personal differences. In the Kalapalo case, affinal civility enables specific domestic unions, and also more extensive social networks or chains of partnerships within a major geographical region, to the extent of contributing to a regional multilingual macro-polity which I have called Alto Xingu society. Although I am unable to pursue this matter here, much evidence suggests that affinal civility is a register that occurs in all the different language groups in the region, and perhaps a means for developing communication across language barriers. The question of how this register might contribute to developing trans-language communication requires a close look at how metacommunicative gesture and activity complement speech.

Both Kalapalo “affinal civility” and honorificiation have in common a developmental aspect through which interpersonal relationships are enabled through respect for, or deference to, social position or status. Some of my recent translations and review of Kalapalo narratives led me to think about the characteristically long marriages in this society, through the many conversations involving movement into a register and out of casual speech, as well as register misuse quoted by narrators. By “register misuse” I refer to the collapse of civility within a family. I am interested in what happens when people repeatedly experience differences between what they are taught to know and feel (the dominant rhetorics of self and society), and what actually happens to them as they engage others, particularly when they are expected to participate in these ritualized communications.

I call this Kalapalo affinal style a “civility” register because when people use it they perform expected acts of politeness, conveying and (usually) receiving ‘respect’ (ifutisu) from people who are distanced in extreme ways by their own avoidance practices. Yet it is speech that occurs as often between husband and wife, parents and their children, as between the in-laws themselves. These Kalapalo civilities occur within what appears to be an ordinary intimate domestic setting—of household, field or orchard, as well as along the network of paths and waterways leading to or away from any of these places. Affinal footings are set by very distinctive clusters of language that accompany the giving and receiving of specially prepared food and finely hewn firewood, the presentation and use of important tools for body techniques like hair cutting equipment and blood-letting tools, and the visual rearrangement of living spaces within the house itself in connection with puberty seclusion and new marriages. Affinal civility is thus a multimodal idiom that involves important affinal gestures, activities and actions that are themselves icons of the relationship(s) being addressed. As is always the case with registered speech, the particular interpersonal force of Kalapalo civility registration depends upon how individuals manage the resources of this style in connection with such practices. The resultant speakers’ identities as “family members,” and the particular affinal agency characterized by distinctive affective and epistemic stances, contribute together to the development of specific familial relationships. Consider an incident that took place in Aifa settlement during 1968. As I walked over to the rear of a certain house, I noticed a young man returning there from bathing in the nearby lake. A large family lived in this house, led by the young man’s deceased mother’s sister and her brother.
The young man had just joined another resident, a married woman (wife of one of his “brothers”), mother of two young boys. This woman was his ifau or ‘potential spouse’, and one of his friends, perhaps even an ajo (‘lover’). Not long after the couple had sat down together in the rear doorway, the woman—facing toward the house of the young man’s betrothed—suddenly stood up to move farther inside, saying with something of a smirk, ‘here come your people’ (ani anago etako). The smile quickly left the young man’s face, as he turned to see that his future mother-in-law and ten-year-old bride-to-be were about to approach the place where he had just been sitting so casually. The newly arrived pair presented a striking contrast. The beautiful, freshly washed and ornamented child wore several of her father’s shell belts as necklaces. She was led by her somewhat disheveled mother, who seemed not to have combed her hair that day, and who wore an old dress dirtied from the manioc she had been working over throughout the morning. Her daughter carried several large rounds of newly made kine (flat manioc bread), the delicious kind upon which extra crumbs of dried manioc starch is sprinkled. Most likely expertly made by the girl’s mother, the special food was wrapped in a fine tuafi mat, recently constructed from woven and dyed palm leaf ribs. The old woman gently pushed her daughter forward with her hands, and the girl shyly held out the food to the young man, who now stood facing her in order to receive it. Offering the food with both hands, and looking shyly at him, she said,

(1) an i ake=tsa e-hoku-gu
exist manner=EX-INT 2-dry food-POSS
Here, in this manner, some food for you.

He in turn smiled fondly at the child, answered her simply—“eh he” (‘yes it has’) —and gently took the bread from her, upon which the mother and daughter hurried away without another word. The man had carefully refrained from even looking at his mother-in-law, and there was no talk between them.

This brief encounter between new relatives is an example of communication constructed by an affinal triad, involving several verbal and nonverbal gestures. Offering and accepting food is of course the dominant event. This event is configured stylistically by the particular linguistic forms used, the manner of self-presentation (dress and posture), and the interactive elements: the careful way the manioc bread was presented and received, and avoidance of eye contact on the part of two of the participants. It was in marked stylistic contrast to the way the young man and his friend relaxed together in the doorway.

Consider another event, involving some of the same people. Inside the house that day, the young man’s mother and her daughter-in-law had been preparing hot manioc soup. Throughout the afternoon, the poisonous prussic acid in the liquid saved from processing the manioc rhizomes had been boiled off in a large ceramic cauldron. The result was a rather sweet, thick, yellowish-brown liquid that people would drink in the late afternoon and early the next morning during the months of harvest. The older women and their girl helpers made several trips to the lake to draw water for the processing, hurrying back with their large buckets balanced on their heads, the water sloshing over their bodies as they ran across the hot ground in their bare feet. Finally, as the sun was about to set, the female household head had her husband check to see if the soup was ready to drink (a man is less susceptible to the poison if it has not been completely boiled away). When he confirmed it was safe, his wife poured several large ladies-full into a large metal basin, cooled it with her gourd dipper, and called to the people gathered in the house to partake of the soup:

(2) Dyadya, ande kuigiku e-li-tse-ge, ipï aande kuigiku, idyï, ipï, elena kuigikuuu, ob
here/now manioc soup 2-drink-IV-I, son, here/now manioc soup, daughter, son, (name) manioc soup
Brother, heeere’s manioc soup, come drink, Son, here’s manioc soup, Daughter, Son, Elena, manioc sooup . . .

Here the offering of food requires no special gestures or vocabulary, and indeed the woman’s insistent call to the children playing outside and her drawn out vowels urged people to participate without emphasizing any particular relationship they had with her other than that they were members of her household. The semantics of affinity had no place in this particular discourse, though affinity governs how the women, while collectively involved with preparing the soup, had neatly avoided each other within the larger space.

On the other hand, the first encounter is a nice instance of how a young girl whose marriage was recently arranged participates in practicing this affinal talk, embedded as it is in one of her earliest duties to her betrothed—presentation of food. He in turn, older and as it happened many years past his ear piercing and puberty seclusion, would have begun using these forms earlier when he presented firewood to his in-laws (and as this particular man was a young widower, he had gone through the rituals several years earlier with his first, deceased wife’s older relatives). The performance enacted by these three was not, however, the same kind of public event as we might see in a ceremonial gathering (Basso 1985, 1988[1973]). No one but the anthropologist and some of the women in the house were present to see what took place and to hear what was said. The man’s mother remained working in the house and did not attempt to participate in any way. Though the three met in the more private area to the rear of the house, they could still be seen by others, so it was not a deliberately concealed event. The continual repetition of such brief but eventful encounters contributed to the developing interpersonal relationships that were forming between them, relationships that emerged more clearly, building over time. The mother, daughter and future son-in-law (and the girl’s father) built their affinity through a kind of interpersonal self-cultivation, enabled by the work they did for one another and the gifts they continually exchanged, but also by their adherence to the civility register. (This couple has remained married for 40 years.)

Kalapalo consider the use of this speech style an important component of the dominant value of ifutisu, generally meaning peaceful, modest and controlled behavior. Affines are said to be ifutisuendako ekugu ‘they act with complete respect’. The continual efforts at maintaining mutual support of projects is very much a part of this, as we will see when examining the rhetoric of interpersonal discursive alignment involving reference to “customary” or “traditional” practice/knowledge as well as epistemic “validation” and “verification” (Basso 1986, 1995:ch. 5).

Certain aspects of the register are discussed using descriptions in which the verb stem –augu- (‘deception’, ‘concealment’, or ‘substitution’ for something appropriate or accurate) appears. However, we should be careful not to understand this central Kalapalo concept in an exclusively negative way; Kalapalo rhetorics of deception do not variably lead to distrust or skepticism, but can just as well glorify linguistic creativity, costuming, trickery of all kinds (the creator of humans is a trickster [Basso 1987]). In regard to both avoidance and to metaphoric humbling of things related to one’s self and one’s family, described below, affinal civility is expected to manifest this ideological association of language with artful transformation. The register is therefore at several levels both a strongly moral-evaluative and an aesthetic speech style. The success of the affinal relationship can be judged by the intensity of this civility; its temporally and spatially enduring quality is important because affinal civility persists in a wide range of contexts even long after important older members of the family have died.

Features of Affinal Civility

There are at least 13 frequently used features of Kalapalo affinal civility. The combination of these features (not their exclusive use with affines) is what makes the register stand out as a special kind of talk. Grammatical elements and name avoidance must
operate in tandem with special lexemes and self-presentation styles, because they are not restricted to affinal talk. Name avoidance, for example, is observed by close kin after people have died, until names of the dead can be passed on to children. The epistemic markers *wãke* and *muk*ë figure prominently in *anetu itagiñu* ‘leader’s speech’, heard on public ceremonial occasions. The traditional customary practice clitic –tsï is not restricted to affinal contexts, but plays an important validating role when someone comments upon a relative’s activities. Postpositions and kinterms for non-relatives soften direct requests, opinions, and even expository lessons about something new in the experience of the affinal listener, but they are used in other, non-affinal contexts when politeness is important (some examples are given later in the article). In other words, affinal civility is a combinatorial style, rather than a monolithic register with distinctive features unheard in other varieties of Kalapalo speech. While Kalapalo affinal civility involves use of teknonyms and metaphors normally not heard in other contexts, it is quite different from the Australian Guugu Yimidhirr style familiar to anthropologists, in which an elaborate special lexicon substitutes for “ordinary” words (Haviland 1979a, 1979b). Table 1 shows features associated with Kalapalo affinal civility, ordered as grammatical, lexical, discursive, and interactive (including self-presentational) features.

### Table 1

*Features of Affinal Civility*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatical</th>
<th>Semantic</th>
<th>Discursive</th>
<th>Interactive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deictic postpositions: aketsane/aketsigey ('decided in this manner'); fetsane/fetsigey ('what is wished for').</td>
<td>Teknonyms: e.g., ulimositsipigi ('mother of our children who are no more'); ulimovi ('our children’s father').</td>
<td>Avoidance: (a) names; (b) speech between parents in law and children-in-law in most circumstances; (c) eye-contact.</td>
<td>Domestic gestures: presenting food, firewood, valuable objects; cutting the new bride's hair; building her seclusion chamber, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epistemic particles: nïfa; muk<em>ë</em>; ekugu; kï (see text for explanations).</td>
<td>Devaluations or Inversions</td>
<td>Triadic communication</td>
<td>Self-presentation: younger person does not spit or fart in presence of elders; person is clean and well decorated when presenting gifts; gifts carefully prepared and presented, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customary/traditional clitic -tsï (customary or traditional knowledge/practice)</td>
<td>Metaphors</td>
<td>Validation/verification expressions</td>
<td>Avoidance of eye contact; no touching or use of personal items (hammocks, items of clothing, etc.); eating face-to-face; walking in front of one another.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Kinterms for spouses and other in-laws; usual avoidance of “category” reference terms for in-laws. |
Grammatical Features
At this point I will simply describe these elements and sketch some of their main functions. However, it is not sufficient to simply list them, for these grammatical functions can really only be fully understood by looking at their combinatorial effect. For that, it is necessary to place them in their discursive settings. Therefore, most examples are extended conversations in which clusters of these features occur. Relevant features are in boldface.

Deontic Postpositions
A speaker's use of any one of three deontic postpositions focuses the listener's attention on some event, concretely in the here-and-now or as planned to take place in the future, in which the listener and an affine (who can be the speaker) are involved. These forms are important in the civility register insofar as they assert the necessity for a relative's personal decisions and choices. The first pair (aketsa/aketsigey) is formed with the prefix ake- (manner/decision), existential copula itsa, and intentional mood suffix -ne or demonstrative pronoun igey. These forms appear with indicative moods and completive aspect, and assert the tangible manner or decisiveness of one's own decision to act (Examples 1, 3, 4, 7 [line 3], 15 [line 5]). The third (fetsa) follows the same pattern: desiderative prefix fe-, existential copula itsa, and intentional mood -ne. Fetsa is used when speaking of a potential activity that is “desired” by a third person, and such activities will also have concretely substantial consequences. This form appears with imperative, hortative, directive or subjunctive verbal moods, as well as incompletive aspect (as in Examples 3, 4, 9).

Epistemic Markers
The second grammatical feature of affinal civility is the recurrent presence of certain epistemic particles. There are probably 28 such particles in all, but only a few are heard in the civility register. Two that help to validate affinal projects are taka—confirming another person's knowledge/experience—and nifa—confirming another's inferential understanding of, for example, a plan that someone is proposing. An example is in the second line from bottom in (7). Two contrasting epistemic markers are important in the register. The “positive” particle mukʷe is important in affinal civility because it has a “humbling” effect in the context of a requested activity. It is often heard when someone is wishing in a positive but contra-factual way (‘if only’, ‘in vain’, as with a seemingly hopeless wish). In contrast is the “negative” kiŋi, (‘if only it were not so’), as in response to another’s bad news or, in affinal civility, the other speaker’s personal devaluation.

Examples (3) and (4) involve speakers using the deontic postpositions aketsa and fetsa as well as mukʷe and kiŋi. (3) is part of a conversation between a young unmarried man named Cuckoo and his mother. Cuckoo tells her he wants to try for his “dear uncle’s daughter” (awadyu indisï) “even though it probably won’t work out” (suggested by mukʷe):

(3) eŋu fe=sta-ŋe taloki muk=ake-sta-ŋe awa-dyu i-ndisï-na u-te-fo-ta. 
because wanted-EX-INT no reason EM-decision-EX-INT Uncle-END 3-daughter-EM-2 away-HYP-PI

Because I’ve decided to go try for Uncle’s daughter (though it probably won’t work out the way I want.)

The Conformity Clitic
Another grammatical feature of affinal civility alignment that helps to ratify projects of the interlocutor is the presence of the –apa taxis clitic, indicating “conformity” to the addressee’s wishes of an action the speaker proposes. This can be complimented by the “agreement” epistemic markers nifa and taka used elsewhere in a conversation. In (4),
after Cuckoo tells his mother that he wants to go try for his uncle’s daughter, she sup-
ports his intent, hoping that his wish will not be in vain as he has modestly stated ear-
lier on and (like Cuckoo) using te-, the verb for ‘go to’ to emphasize what exactly she 
is agreeing that her son do. In (3) Cuckoo uses mukce; his mother replies in (4) with ki:

(4) Eh he kiñi. Te-ke-apa=ke-tsa-ñe.
Agreement EM, go away-I-CONF=decision-EX-INT

May it not be so. I think you should go away to do that if that’s what you want to do.

In contrast to this polite talk between a parent and her adult son, (5) is an example 
of a mother reprimanding her daughter, who realizes a repulsive man she had 
refused to marry (as she has rejected many others) really has been disguised. When 
she sees him in all his masculine beauty, she wants to go back to him. Her mother 
speaks harshly to her using the pejorative-compulsive -su clitic, the epistemic parti-

cle wâke, and a very strong assertive with past tense semantics. She does not validate 
her at all with any of the alignment forms already described. Moreover, the mother 
angrily slaps her daughter on the shoulder. Note also that the daughter perversely 
wants to hang her hammock beneath the man’s, rather than taking his own hammock 
and hanging it above her own (part of the usual marriage rite).

(5) Daughter: Ama, Akwakañña ofiñati ti-dya-te-gani
Mother, (name) beneath hammock-hang up-IV-INT

“Mother, I’m going to tie my hammock beneath Akwakañña.”

Narrator: tok, api-fo-li isi-feke
(ideophone) strike-GV-PI mother-ER

Tok! her mother went to strike her.

Mother: Egea-su wâke atani e-fisu ti-fuñe-ta
2-this way-PEJ EM EQ 2-ybro O-reject-CI

“You always did stupid things like this before when you were rejecting your younger brother.”

Semantic Features

A number of semantic features appear at both the lexical and phrasal levels. These 
include kinship terms, teknonyms, and metaphors as a way of devaluing or hum-
bling one’s own gifts or wishes. Metaphors are also used to substitute for names that 
must be avoided.

Teknonyms and Kinship Terms

These forms are used for affines and highlight many of the meanings involving val-
idation and ratification of family projects that I have discussed in connection with 
features described above. The Kalapalo use a vocabulary that expands the bound-
aries of the speaker’s close family by referring to the wife as the husband’s ñandsu, 
‘sister’; or the daughter’s husband as her efisu, ‘younger brother’. Sisters-in-law 
become “sisters”; brothers-in-law become “brothers.” After marriage, spouses refer 
to a parent-in-law as “our parent.” In direct address, the father-in-law is ‘uncle’ 
(awa), the mother-in-law is ‘aunt’ (etsi) (Basso 1975, 1988[1973]). Such a practice is 
also common in polite reference to men and women of other communities, even if 
the context is not affinal. Teknonyms are more restricted in usage and are never used 
in direct address. These words are nominals, some derived from verbs that empha-
size the presence, absence, or deceased status of offspring of unions when speaking 
about an affine to another close relative (e.g., a grandfather to his grandson’s wife). 
We might contrast these civility expressions with the considerable number of alter-
nate means for characterizing varying qualities of affinal relationships between 
brother- and sister-in-law. As the fact of multiple options suggests, these relationships
can be quite varied and seem often to depend upon the personal character of the individuals involved, especially men. Otherwise, the choices are very few. The very word for parent or ‘child-in-law’ (ifotisofô) is used only in (non-affinal) didactic discourse, as in example (7). The use of invariant and unalterable terms in the civility register to denote these relatives is an indication of their uniquely rigid status relationship. However, the entire set of affinal forms allows a Kalapalo to characterize subtle differences in the relationships between relatives by marriage, even though these differences are not supposed to be the subject of overt commentary (see Table 2).

Metaphors
Indirection on the topic of spousal intimacies involves use of metaphoric expressions which are typically nominalizations of verbs (a common derivational process in Kalapalo as there are very few adjectives). These allude to the partners’ intimacy and sexuality entailed by lying down together in a hammock and sleeping close to one another. Other subjects for metaphorization are the activities of talking freely with one another and of sharing food. Descriptive nominals substitute for words for ‘husband’ (iño) and ‘wife’ (iifitsu) when uttered by a senior affine to a junior. Table 3 is a short list of expressions I have heard Kalapalo speakers use, with some of the meanings or allusions involved.

### Table 2
**Compounded Elements in Referential Affinal Teknonyms**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>Limo</td>
<td>si</td>
<td>tsiŋi =</td>
<td>simbiŋi =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘my’</td>
<td>‘child’</td>
<td>‘mother’</td>
<td>‘deceased’</td>
<td>‘divorced’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ku</td>
<td>mugu</td>
<td>wñ =</td>
<td>‘father’</td>
<td>‘alive’, no suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘our’ (inclusive)</td>
<td>(k)indiší</td>
<td>‘daughter’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fãti</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘younger female potential affine’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fãtuwi</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘younger male potential affine’</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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**Explanation of Classes of Elements:**
I: Required first person plural inclusive possessive marker
II: Required kinship relationship of the child linking speaker and listener to referent
III: Required parental relationship of referent to person denoted in II
IV: Life status of person denoted in II (optional)
V: Marital status of person denoted in III (optional)

**Examples of terms:**
Ku-limo-wñ-tsiŋi: ‘father of our children who are no more’
(e.g., used to refer to a granddaughter’s husband)
Ku-mugu-simbiŋi: ‘our son’s divorced mother’
(e.g., used to refer to a former daughter-in-law)
Ku-fãtuwi-si: ‘mother of the youth who will marry our daughter’
(e.g., used by a woman to denote her brother’s daughter’s mother)
Devaluation

A third set (used especially by men) includes expressions that devalue or humble the valued quality of someone or something that is the subject of the discourse. Men talk about their daughters this way, and sons-in-law do this when they present an unusual gift to the parents-in-law—a gift of special food, a new way of building a house, or in more ordinary settings, useful gifts from a Brazilian town they have visited. Self-abnegation is not restricted to affinal civility, as there are many other contexts in which people give one another gifts; the appropriate way to do so is to claim there is only a “little amount,” or a “worthless thing” is being given. It is strikingly apparent in the leaders’ ceremonial discourse (anetu itagiñu). In (6), after a young woman has agreed to marry her suitor, the father-in-law offers him some cold soup, using an odd but striking metaphor. This is his reference to a woman’s practice of gracefully mixing the ingredients together with her hand, using the personal customary clitic –tsïgï, perhaps to allude to his daughter’s skill in preparing food of this kind:

(6) ıntsï, ıh ıñandsu et-iña-ti-tsïgï ıamba-ke
My young relative EXP Z REFL-hand-wash-Vt-PERF-PC drink-I
“My young relative, drink this stuff your sister has just washed her hands in.”

Example (2) showed how casual speakers simply urge people to partake when they offer food, even most familiarly simply naming the food itself. In (7), deprecation honors the youth as an important new household member, whose difficult “bride service” works on behalf of the well-being of the family, making him worthy of respect. More importantly, the locution contributes to the young man’s own affinal footing, helping him realize when he is actually being honored. Finally, (7) subsumes elements of all three lexical aspects of affinal civility in yet another fashion: a young man asks his new father-in-law for permission to visit his own family with his wives. The request is made somewhat indirectly. First, the young man avoids any direct reference to the marriage relationship as such. His wives are not called ‘my wives’ (ufitsaï), but rather “sisters of mine I’ve found,” a humbling remark. He speaks of “taking his sisters away,” not mentioning that the goal is to actually stay with his own family for a while. The father-in-law replies in a similar elliptical fashion, using the kinship designation “your sisters” but acknowledging the marital relationship through the figure of “those who fan your fire.” As in other examples, kinship terms are used to reinforce the sense of family commensality that will persist away from the older person’s domestic sphere. Yet nothing about leaving itself or where they will go is directly mentioned. Note that in the second line of (7), the narrator, speaking to

Table 3
Metaphors Used in Kalapalo Affinal Civility

| a. i-saha-tofo (=3-take care of-NTU): ‘the one who is cared for’. Expression used for a man engaged in bride service with his wife’s family; a betrothed man. |
| b. e-ito-gu ugi-ñi (=2-fire-POSS fan-VN): ‘the one who fans your fire’. (because the young wife sleeps beneath her husband and tends the hearth that warms them at night). (See example 7.) |
| c. u-imba-tofo (=1-drink-USU): ‘the one who makes what I drink’. (The wife is almost continuously engaged in providing hot and cold manioc drinks to her family.) |
| d. u-ikena-mo (=1-?-group): ‘my companions’. (i.e., co-wives). |
| e. ey-ta-fi-gi-ñi (=2-join up-ADV-VN): ‘your companion’. |
| f. ukw-î-toto (=dual-utter-USU): ‘we who speak to each other’. |

While in address spouses often use one another’s names; in reference these would be substituted when speaking with an affine.

Devaluation

A third set (used especially by men) includes expressions that devalue or humble the valued quality of someone or something that is the subject of the discourse. Men talk about their daughters this way, and sons-in-law do this when they present an unusual gift to the parents-in-law—a gift of special food, a new way of building a house, or in more ordinary settings, useful gifts from a Brazilian town they have visited. Self-abnegation is not restricted to affinal civility, as there are many other contexts in which people give one another gifts; the appropriate way to do so is to claim there is only a “little amount,” or a “worthless thing” is being given. It is strikingly apparent in the leaders’ ceremonial discourse (anetu itagiñu). In (6), after a young woman has agreed to marry her suitor, the father-in-law offers him some cold soup, using an odd but striking metaphor. This is his reference to a woman’s practice of gracefully mixing the ingredients together with her hand, using the personal customary clitic –tsïgï, perhaps to allude to his daughter’s skill in preparing food of this kind:

(6) ıntsï, ıh ıñandsu et-iña-ti-tsïgï ıamba-ke
My young relative EXP Z REFL-hand-wash-Vt-PERF-PC drink-I
“My young relative, drink this stuff your sister has just washed her hands in.”

Example (2) showed how casual speakers simply urge people to partake when they offer food, even most familiarly simply naming the food itself. In (7), deprecation honors the youth as an important new household member, whose difficult “bride service” works on behalf of the well-being of the family, making him worthy of respect. More importantly, the locution contributes to the young man’s own affinal footing, helping him realize when he is actually being honored. Finally, (7) subsumes elements of all three lexical aspects of affinal civility in yet another fashion: a young man asks his new father-in-law for permission to visit his own family with his wives. The request is made somewhat indirectly. First, the young man avoids any direct reference to the marriage relationship as such. His wives are not called ‘my wives’ (ufitsaï), but rather “sisters of mine I’ve found,” a humbling remark. He speaks of “taking his sisters away,” not mentioning that the goal is to actually stay with his own family for a while. The father-in-law replies in a similar elliptical fashion, using the kinship designation “your sisters” but acknowledging the marital relationship through the figure of “those who fan your fire.” As in other examples, kinship terms are used to reinforce the sense of family commensality that will persist away from the older person’s domestic sphere. Yet nothing about leaving itself or where they will go is directly mentioned. Note that in the second line of (7), the narrator, speaking to
me and to younger members of his family, does not hesitate to use the category term for ‘parent-in-law’, ifotisofo, which would never be used in affinal civility. This suggests the speaker’s own role as a distanced, didactic observer of the story’s action, as seen in his use in the final line of (7), his explanation to us listeners of the father’s response.

(7) Son-in-law: “Awa”, Ø-nïg=i-feke.
Uncle, say to -PERF-3-ERG
“Uncle,” he addressed him.
EXP, say-PERF-SR-XA, P-in-law utter-PR
“What,” the other answered when he said that to him, the father-in-law spoke.
Son-in-law: Ejï-ta=ke=ts-igey i-ñandsu fogi-dyu, iñandsu-fa
because-Cl= decision-EX-DEM 3-sister respond-PR 1-ERG 3-sister-B
“I speak because I’ve decided to do something with these sisters I’ve found, these sisters.”
Father-in-law: Eh he, Ø-nïg=i-feke.
Agreement, say to-PERF-3-ERG
“Yes you should,” he answered.
E-te-ke-fa e-te-ke-apa Ø-nïg=i-feke.
2-go away-I-E, 2-go away-I-CONF say to-PERF
“Go then, go if that’s what you want to do,” he said.
Ịnadyo-mo-tsi-nifa e-ito-gu ugi-ñi ige-ke, Ø-nïg=i-feke.
Sisters-PL-M-EM 2-fire-POSS fan-N 3-take away-I say to-PERF=3-ERG
“I agree, you should take those sisters who fan your fire” he answered.
REFL-children send away-PI 3-ERG-MT, REFL-children send away-PI
He sent his children away, sent his children away.

Discursive features
Under this heading I group important features of affinal civility that shape the interactive events, including avoidance postures, name avoidance, triadic communication, and ratification and validation, essential components of Kalapalo discursive alignment.

Avoidance Postures
Normally affines do not engage in activities within an intimate shared space. Not only do they avoid eye contact, they refrain from walking in front of one another, and certainly do not touch one another. A younger person will stand or sit or work behind an elder, in order to avoid the direct glance of that person. Looking at photographs of people at work, new sons-or daughters-in-law of the organizer are still busily engaged during “breaks,” their bodies oriented in a direction away from the main figures. Most houses are large enough to allow affines to work somewhat apart from each other. At night, the newly in-married residents return to sleep in their hammocks after everyone else. Even in the contexts of intimate work situations, strategies for preserving this avoidance are deftly managed by the participants so that eye contact and inadvertent touching in particular can be prevented. “Restraint in the face of mistakes” might also be added to Table 2 as a notable feature of civility.
Consider the poor youth living with the family of his future wife. Entering the dark interior of the house from the brilliant midday sun, he realized he had walked (whistling, no less!) directly past his father-in-law who was working inside the doorway. Deeply embarrassed, this young man sat down near my hammock, clapped his hand over his mouth, then whispered, “I just walked in front of Uncle!” Faced with his son-in-law’s blunder, the father-in-law simply pretended to ignore what had happened. (Haviland 1979a remarks on a similar appropriateness of affinal restraint in the face of such blunders in Australia.)

Name Avoidance

“Avoidance” also involves a person’s refusal to utter names of parents-in-law, child’s spouse, and spouse’s opposite-sex sibling, or words that evoke those names. Most child names are words for common objects and natural species, so one is always confronting situations where a relative’s name needs to be carefully remembered so as to be avoided. It is literally true that this prohibition results in a kind of “avoidance” of sound images, but having to remember such a large corpus of names cannot be easy. The point of this is to remember the names, some of which will eventually be passed down to the children. Forgetting names is not uncommon, as one of the most distinguished elders in the settlement reminded me when he embarrassed himself in front of his wife by forgetting to avoid one of his mother-in-law’s many names while he was enthusiastically telling us a story: “Oops, I forgot my mother-in-law’s name!” The couple had been married over 50 years, the mother-in-law dead many decades past. People often substitute metaphoric nominals or words from different languages for names. (8) is a simple example of a metaphor used by a man whose relative bore the name Tafitse (‘Macaw’):

(8) Ule-pe-tu  tu-üncü i-feke, tukumilu-iñe funda-gi, tu-üncü i-feke.
ATR-SAL-EV O-give 3-ERG, blue-N tail feather-POSS, 0-give 3-ERG
Regarding what he gave them, I’m told it was an object made from the one with blue tail feathers.

Triadic Communication

Much affinal communication follows what Ameka (n.d.) has called a “triadic” formula, with an intermediary acting to transmit a message between two relatives who are expected to avoid each other.7 In (9), a husband asks his wife to tell her father (whom he addresses as “our parent”) to collect firewood:

(9) Husband: Uk"-oto  fe=tsa-że i-ña i-fa-ke uk"-oto-iña. Uk"-oto
i-ka-ğu-nndomi.
Dual-parent wanted-EX-INT 3-ALL 3-tell-I dual-parent-ALL.
Dual-parent wood-go get-Vt-PURP
I want you to tell our parent, to let our parent know. Our parent needs to get firewood.

Wife: Eh he, Ø-nğı.
Agreement, say to-PERF
“He’ll do that,” she said to him.
Apa Ø-nğı=feke, e-ı-ka-ŋu-nge-tu fe=tsa-że,
e-ı-kaŋu-ngge.
Father say to-PERF=ERG, 2-wood-go get -I- DES wanted-EX-INT, 2-wood-go get-I
“Father,” she said to him, “we want you to go get firewood, go get firewood.”
Wife's father: **Eh he Ø-nïgi.**
Agreement say to-PERF
“I’ll do that,” he answered.

Wife: **E nu ake-ts-igey a-fatuwï i-feni-nïm-i nïm-i a-feni-nïm-i nïm-i.**
do decision-EX-DEM 2-nephew 3-plant-Vt-POT, 3-plant-Vt-POT
“You’re asked to do this because your nephew will be planting, he’ll be planting.”

Wife’s Father: **Eh he.**
Agreement
“All right.”

(10) is another example in which a mother asks her daughter for the husband’s help on a fishing trip:

(10) **Idyï Ø-nïg=i-feke.**
Daughter say to-PERF=3-ERG
“Daughter,” she addressed her.
Tomorrow EQ-M 2-ybro-ERG EQ-DES 1+2-take-PURP fish trap throw-PI-ALL,
say to-PERF-C=3-ERG
“It would be nice for your younger brother to do the customary thing tomorrow and take us to throw the fish traps,” she said to her.

Ratification and Validation: Discursive Alignment
A fourth discursive feature is the exceptionally common use of agreement responses such as appear in almost all the conversations used so far as examples. These are **eh-he** (‘all right’, ‘that’s so’, ‘I’ll do that’) and **eh he kiñi** (‘if only it were not so’, ‘I regret’, ‘unfortunately’), particularly in response to a devalued or negative comment about the speaker’s self; see (3) above. Such responses appear after a relative’s stated plans, requests, opinions and even expository lessons, which are themselves made “civil” by the epistemic particle **mukê’e**, one or more postpositions, and the -apa clitic. This form, together with ratification or validation of the interlocutor’s speech by such a listener-relative develops a shared positive stance concerning the topics of the discourse, helping to merge two speakers, sometimes very different, into people committed to a shared project.

Embodiment and “Domesticity”: Affinal Civility in Narrative Discourse
Events typical of affinal domestic activities involve what John Gumperz has called “contextualization cues” or “context-invoking meta-messages” (Gumperz 1996:365). This becomes especially clear in quoted affinal dialogues within narratives. My examples show that Kalapalo stories contain direct verbal evidence of the human dramas in which speakers feel themselves to be participating, not only conversations about and within marriages, but participants’ and narrators’ metacommentary about what was being said. In these examples, affinal civility is shaped by responses that suggest a shared set of goals and values about marriage practices. The unusual forms in many of these dialogues are important (though somewhat strange) examples for listeners, both the younger Kalapalo who are yet to marry, and older men and women who can readily appreciate the quality of the interpersonal tie by what is being said. Each of these perspectives makes the characters seem uniquely real to listeners, almost as if they were people living among them. Such stories could be told as counter-models for married people suspected of having trouble.
As my examples illustrate, through their affinal civility register Kalapalo speakers substitute for more casual locutions special words and discursive forms for food, their relatives, other important ordinary domestic activities, and particularly for the activities that are involved in events that occur early in a marriage (especially treatment of the young bride as she physically matures from first menstruation through puberty seclusion to her final hair cutting). By this means the physical, biological, as well as social features of marriage (particularly having to do with sexuality) take on a heightened, more sensory quality, as if truly felt and not only labeled and categorized. Yet the verbal enactment of making both intimate and unusual, even strange, bodily actions appear to be comfortably familiar through kinship labels and metonymic allusions to the spousal roles results in a special kind of shared deference. As speakers devalue affinal offerings (including the spouses themselves) they emphasize the intimacy of the new marital tie and its involvement (through a variety of requests, exchanges and collaborative work) of more people than just the spousal pair.

Why is talk about these domestic matters—a newly menstruating woman, making payment for a bride, the apparently simple acts of offering firewood and food, and a couple’s traveling—couched in such a particular dialogical rhetoric of humility and validation? It is as if such activities were fraught with potential difficulties that accompany the intensification of commensality. Traveling away from the new domestic sphere to the spouse’s first home exposes the new couple to the vagaries of prior relationships (especially, in many stories, to aggrieved former spouses and greedy relatives). Brothers- and sisters-in-law are particularly difficult as they are both members of the spouses’ family, subject to this civility register, yet persons usually close in age, who are expected to share in a good deal of domestic labor. Sharing food is potentially disruptive because of the unknown character of food offered by a stranger and the fear of consuming poisons. Yet these unknown foods may prove to be exceptionally important (thus stories about the introduction of piqui fruit and manioc are centrally about affinity). The introduction through marriage ties of a very new kind of collective ceremonial practice results in a powerful, shared community-wide (usually musical) practice (Basso 1985). Equivalent processes occur at another level: alignment of stances associated with the beginning of face-to-face relationships between parents-in-law and their children’s spouses. The heterogeneity of the speakers’ origins is submerged—if only for the moment (though hopefully longer)—by the emergence of a very markedly different and non-spontaneous kind of speech, in itself shaped by anticipation and anxiety. This “affinal subjectivity” is embodied in the very experience of contrasts between one’s own civil and casual voices, with the awareness that identical contrasts appear in the voices of the people with whom one is living.

Affines in the Alto Xingu shift from a non-embodied and usually rather detached connection to their relatives, often purely a classificatory one—they may be residents of different communities, less commonly speaking different languages, or even, as in some of the stories, they are members of very different experiential worlds. After having experienced a complex and long, drawn out period of body techniques, they move into a different but equally intense commensality that is characteristic of spousal and, eventually, parent–child intimacy. Thus, upon marriage the intimacy of parent and child becomes compromised insofar as new and different intimacies are developing. Psychologically, affinal civility is nestled in a cushion of mingled shyness, embarrassment, affection, and hope. Such locations involve a degree of tension, muscle rigidity or stiffening, the voice held back, breath inhaled rather than exhaled, what sounded to me like a whining nasality (connected to emphasis, not complaining), and an averted gaze that is focused on objects, not persons. “Affinal civility” then, involves using particular linguistic forms associated with a certain feeling of restraint and anxiety affecting the participants. Suddenly, people who may have known one another for years, who have treated each other casually and perhaps even disrespectfully, now are forced into an exceptional intimacy, fraught with civility.
Narratives about Marriage Difficulties and Register Misuse

Kalapalo stories also say a lot about underlying tensions within Kalapalo families. Through storytelling, one learns about the emotional difficulties caused by the particular circumstances of Kalapalo life in small communities where privacy is lacking and people feel “on show” much of the time. Outbursts in everyday life are exceptionally rare in Kalapalo communities; one hardly ever sees people openly fighting or causing serious disturbances in any other way. People will be reluctant to openly criticize a relative who has caused trouble, and they especially will not try to “explain” away the trouble, nor will they even admit to any wrongdoing on their relative’s part (nor is it polite to ask). Nevertheless, there is talk among others about what is going on between the disputants.

Impolite speech essentially invalidates the collective marriage project. Marital breakpoints are preceded by people’s misuse of affinal civility: angry speech that is spoken of as “painful,” and ironic speech that is described as augene, ‘lying’ or ‘deception’. There are then “ordeals” that lie within the polite conversation between affinal relatives, people who have become extremely distanced by avoidance and other civility requirements but who are expected to share a common footing as indexed by the face they are required to perform. Such problems raise the question of the “resistances,” “defamiliarization,” or open challenges to this footing, responses to what may sometimes be an ultimately intolerable affinal stance. For example, what takes place when a person is required to make reference to affinal commitments in the face of a total lack of commitment? Is there evidence for a person’s use of the various codes and tropes that elsewhere index affinal civility but now conflict with feelings of indifference or even outright loathing? To learn something about these matters, I turn again to Kalapalo narratives to provide examples. Indeed, there are many stories that tell about the consequences of misusing the affinal register, when seemingly ironic use of civility combines with angry, painful stances that are distinctly uncivil, and where the entire affinal context seems to have been constructed from a deception on the part of one or another person. In (11) I return to the story of the man who takes his mother-in-law and wife on a fishing trip (example 10). As in this story, Kalapalo deception is often a way to inflict deep pain or emotion on oneself, with transforming effects. As Kudyu the storyteller told us, the mother-in-law walks up behind her son-in-law while her daughter has stepped off the path momentarily. Seemingly without knowing who is behind him (except Kudyu has already told us he is going to deceive them), he begins to speak in a patently lascivious manner as if he believes his wife is still following behind him, not his avoidance relative:

(11) Kudyu:

agestiño-i-kugu-lefa i-igea i-fitsu enĩ-mba-ta, bĩĩi et-etu-isí.
Only one-CL-intensive-MT this way 3-wife come toward-Vi-CI, (ideophone) REFL-rub-ADV
As they stood there together, while his wife was coming up from behind, bĩĩi he rubbed himself (his penis).
Etui-dyi fegey.
Rub-PI DEM

He rubbed it that way.

Kusimefu:

imía-tale=gey i-ka ku-te-gote u-figí a-tape-li, Ø-níg=i-feke, bũĩĩ itojisofo-iña-mbe
Yesterday-DE=DEM wood-get 1+2-go away-CONJ 1-penis 2-sharpen-PI, say to-PERF-3-ERG, (sound image) parent-in-law-ALLs.

“Yesterday when we went to get firewood you sharpened my penis (aroused me).”
Kudyu: bïïïï ifotisofo-iña
(sound image) 3-parent-in-law-ALL
While he rubbed it in the direction of his mother-in-law!

EXP, me-EM=EX=manner=EX-DEM me-EM
‘I’m telling you, you’re not supposed to do that to me! Not to me!

Kudyu: atâng-mbe-fa ifutisu fegey, ifutisu.
Stay there-SR-B shame DEM, shame
There he was, ashamed after he had done that, ashamed.

Bïtïï, itsa-ku-lï.
(ideophone), run away-Vi-PI
Bïtïï, he took off.

Igea-kugu iñï-mba-ta.
This way-intensive become-Vi-CI
She just stood there.

Tum! Tuwa-kua,
(ideophone) Water-into
Tum! Into the water,

Tugufi-mbele ete-lu-lefa.
Catfish-SRA go away-PI-MT
And he went away as a painted catfish.

Kalapalo narratives also describe people’s painful, angry misuse of affinal civility. Ugaki’s story of Afanda the Black Skimmer, which she told to me and to her husband at Aifa settlement in January of 1982, does this very well.⁸ Afanda, a being from the underwater world of the Fish People, marries the human woman Kefesugu who has “wished for him” when he first appeared to her as a bird flying over the sandbanks in the middle of the river. Unable to tolerate the poor tastes and low yields of the sweet manioc, melons, sweet potatoes, and other root crops grown by his wife’s family, Afanda asks the Fish People to bring bitter manioc to humans. Initially most of his human relatives are pleased because of bitter manioc’s high productivity and many uses. But this is a magical manioc that never runs out, exhausting the wife who must harvest her husband’s fields day after day, and then respond to his relentless sexual ardor. Afanda’s wife mutters to herself that he should “lie down” with her youngest sister Koti, a pubescent maiden hidden in a seclusion basket suspended from the rafters of the house. Hearing his wife speak this way, Afanda decides to find the girl. In order to get to Koti, he pretends he is sick. The next morning, after the others leave for the fields, he lowers her down. But having seduced her, he finds she can no longer crouch down as before. With her head poking out a bit, he is unable to completely close the lid of her basket. When the women return, one by one they notice she has been tampered with, and become angry with Afanda. The narrator’s outright mention of ‘anger’ (-e) clearly refers to the character of the women’s speech, not directly to their “feelings.”

In (12), Kefesugu notices that her sister is changed and accuses her husband. He in turn denies he has done anything. While Kefesugu might have been just incredulous and annoyed at first (this indexed by her use of the incredulity EM –mana), because he persists in lying to her she gets really angry. Both her accusation and his lying are events that initiate the collapse of the marriage. However, both Afanda and Kefesugu still use civility register forms, referring to the sexual act as ‘touching’ (-fi-) and to Koti as uk’ikene ‘our younger sister’.

Dual-younger sister touch-PI like-EM 2-ERG, say to-PERF=3-ERG
“I can’t believe you actually touched our younger sister,” she said to him.
Afanda: Ti-fi-dyu-male, Ø-nïg-i-feke.
RQ-touch-PI-EM, say to-PERF=3-ERG
“What makes you think I touched her,” he answered.

Kefesugu: i-fidyu-fïjï-me-maï  e-feke.
3-touch-like-FACS-EM 2-ERG
“I can’t believe it, it does look like you touched her or something.”

RQ, RQ, touch-PI-EM, RQ touch-PI-EM
“Why, why do you think I touched her? Why do you think I touched her?”

Ugaki: Augï-nda-f=igey.
lie-CI- C=DEM
He lied this way.

Afanda: Ti-fi-dyu-male.
RQ- touch-PI-EM
“Why do you think I touched her?”

Kefesugu: Telo-aka-je  uk*-ikene  e-ge-po-pde-pïgi-lefa, telo-i.
different –EM-INT dual-younger sister lid-POS-s-on-flat surface-Vt-PERF-MT, different-CL
“You can see for yourself, our younger sister isn’t the same, her covering has been put on differently.”

3-wife-ERG-IM 3-angry-PI, 3-wife-ERG-IM=angry-PI
That’s when his wife got angry with him, right away his wife got angry with him.

In (13), Kefesugu returns from bathing realizing her husband’s subterfuge, and once again speaks angrily to him. Now we really begin to see her register collapse, though some polite forms are still used. Kefesugu beings using the assertive epistemic expletive (“believe me,” “I’m right to say,” “I’m telling you . . .”). She also begins to use the rhetorical question tïtomi (‘for what reason’). In the last line, this rhetorical question is used together with negation. This kind of talk is clearly very different from the alignment talk we have been accustomed to hearing among affines:

(13) Ai-gehale tï-iño  e-li i-feke.
Read-again REFL-husband angry-PI 3-ERG
Once again she got angry with her husband.

ah, igey-tomi-ña=le=gey  e-tïgi-ŋ-ŋ=tsa, ah uk*-ikene  i-fi-tsom i-e-feke,
Ø-nïgï- ti=feke
EXP this-PURP-EM=UT=DEM 2-sick-Vi-ADV-CL, EM dual-younger sister 3-touch-PURP 2-ERG. Say to-PERF-EV-3-ERG
“I’m telling you, most likely you were sick in order to do this, to seduce our younger sister.” That’s what they say she said to him.

Ti-tomi-ni-ga  kwïg- a-nda-ti  uk*-ikene  fi-tsa e-feke
RQ-PURP-OPP-CYC manioc-V-CI-DES dual-younger sister touch-CL 2-ERG
“Why didn’t you want go to the manioc fields this time? So you could touch our younger sister?”

While Kefesugu berates Afanda, her mother stands in the doorway, listening. Hearing what her daughter had just said, she too becomes angry. In (14), several elements index her anger: repetition of the rhetorical tïtomi (‘why, for what reason’),
the oppositive clitic -ni, the assertive expletive ah, and especially mah, the “shock” (or strong mirative9) expletive. As the mother-in-law persists with the normally polite reference to her daughter’s “younger brother,” this now seems ironic. And in the last line of the quotation (before Ugaki whispers her quotative) the mother-in-law seems to be blaming both wife and husband, as she uses several plurals suffixes: agentive plural (-ni), and the absolutive plural (-ko) both on “lower down” and on “sister.” This pluralization does not appear to be a politeness strategy.

(14) Wife’s Mother: Mah, tï-tomi-n=igey e-fisï-feke e-ikene i-tïtsi-ne=t-ïfïgï tï-tomi, tï-tomi. INT, RQ-PURP OPP=DEM 2-yb-ERG 2-younger sister 3-lower down-N=EQ-.PERF why- PURP, why- PURP “Oh no! Why did your younger brother have to lower your younger sister down, why, why?”

Ugaki: Tsue=l=egey i-ndsï i-niso-i e-li i-feke. Very=MT=DEM 3-daughter 3-husband-CI angry-PR 3-ERG And so she spoke angrily with this person who was her daughter’s husband.

Wife’s Mother: Ah ige-tomi-APA=le=gey e-tïgï-Gi-n-dyi-ko, i-ñandsu-ko i-tïtsine-tomi e-feke-ni. EXP this-PURP-EM=MT=DEM 3-sick-ADV-Vi-PI-EM, 3-sister-P 3-lower down-PURP 2-ERG-PL “I’m telling you, did he have to get sick like that so you both could lower your sister down?”

Ugaki: Ø-ta-i-feke, Ø-ta-i-feke -tell to-CI 3-ERG, tell to-CI 3-ERG She told her, she told her.

In the last line in (14), Ugaki whispers the quotative taifeke. Whispering in this way distances her from the bad speech she is quoting. As elsewhere whispering appears to de-emphasize the identity of the speaker (a person in puberty or morning seclusion whispers, for example). Afanda’s mother-in-law’s talk is the last straw. Afanda, who has been listening all the while, now has his chance to speak of the pain of the angry speech directed against him (15). His wife is much calmer than she was before; a positive take on his desire for her younger sister, whom he could have readily seduced after her participation in ceremonial dancing, and who could have then become his second wife. But it is too late. Afanda packs up and takes down his hammock; he is leaving her and she won’t be able to follow him. Kefesugu realizes he’s not going to change his mind (the women’s speech is the first anger directed against him), and in a last gesture, she pushes Afanda away as he walks down to the water, where he disappears forever into the world of the Fish People:

(15) Kefesugu: Tï-ki-ne= te-fo-lï Ø-nïgï-t=ifeke, i-fitsu ki-lï. RQ-MIR-OPP=go away-COND-PI say to-PERF-EV, 3-ERG, 3-wife utter-PI “I’m surprised you need to go away,” they say she answered him, his wife spoke.

uege-tsï-nafa uk”-i-ke, i-fitsinena-li e-feke. You-M-EM dual-younger sister 3-lower down-PI 2-ERG “After all, it was you who figured out how to lower down our younger sister.”
2-wait-INT-SA-M another time-IM dual-younger sister (dance in public for first time)- N dual-parent-ERG. 2-wait-INT
“You should have waited just a while longer as our parent was going to put our younger sister out to dance for the first time (in the usual way). You should have waited.”
Ti-tomi-ma-fale=gey i-ti-tsi-ne-ta e-feke, Ø-nígi-t=i-feke.
RQ-PURP-EM differm time=DEM 3-lower down-Vt-CI 2-ERG, say-to –EV-PERF-EV=3-ERG
“Why couldn’t you have lowered her down some other time,” they say she answered him.
EXP 1-go away=PI=manner/decision-EX-DEM, 1-go away-PI
“Look, I’ve decided to leave for good, I’m going away.”
Eh-fale, uge-e u-we-folí e-feke kuk"-oto-feke=k"=aka igey u-e-li,
Yes-different time, you 1-angry-try 2-ERG 1+2-parent-ERG =intense=EM this 1-angry-PI, involve pain 1-listen-Vi-CI-PURP
“Yes, you spoke to me in anger and you yourself heard how our parent spoke to me with such anger that it hurt me to listen.”
Yes-DT, you-PC 1-angry-G-PI 2-ERG
“Yes, you’re the one who was accustomed to speak angrily to me.”

Kefesugu dives in after Afanda, but she just hits the muddy bottom. Failing to follow her husband to the world underwater, the weeping wife returns to the house, where she becomes really angry with her mother (16):

(16) Ti-tomi-sí-ne e-nísi i-fu-ní-ta e-feke, ti-tomi.
RQ-PURP-PEJ-OPP 2-daughter 3-protect-Vt-CI 2-ERG, RQ-PURP
“Why did you have to be so stingy with your daughter in that stubborn way of yours, for what reason?
Tíjúgú-tí fogi-dye-nale-fa a-fatúwí-feke e-ki-nu, ti-tomi.
calm/slow-ADV respond-XA-UW-B 2-son-in-law-ERG 2-speak-N, RQ-PURP
“Why couldn’t you have spoken calmly to your son-in-law?
Ø-ta-i-ekugu-mbe=feke.
tell to-3-intense- SR=ERG
She really gave it to her.
The stories of Kusimefu and of Afanda the Black Skimmer are but two of many Kalapalo stories that describe difficulties people have persisting in their marriages. As we see in these examples, such persistence takes work that is often destroyed when civilities are forgotten in moments of selfish lust or anger. Marriages are also destroyed by outright deception (Kusimefu’s story), or when there is miscommunication (e.g., when “dung” for the human husband turns out to be “food” for his Dung Beetle Wife!). These are occasions for exceptional feelings of shame, insulting outbursts of disgust, and the departure of the offended spouse. In everyday life, though, relatives feel they must suppress their own voices and preserve silence when conflict and anger inevitably arise. The affine’s wish to maintain calm in the face of such
feelings (which develop even further as situations remain unresolved or mistakes in judgments are made) is itself a constant source of anxiety within the marriage.

Discussion

In the Alto Xingu region of central Brazil, an alliance of discourse practices, ceremonial activities, and body techniques have created a shared understanding among speakers of four mutually unintelligible languages. The leaders’ ceremonial speech genre (Franchetto 1983; 2000; Basso n.d.) and the affinal civility register are two discourse practices that transcend linguistic differences. There and in other dynamic regional Amazonian systems (the Northwest Amazon and Amapa settings are two others) whole cultural institutions exist in multilingual contexts (though how the languages are used varies from place to place in important ways). Following the idea of “discursive areas” proposed by Beier et al. 2002 (see also Passes 2002, 2004; Sylvia M. Vidal 2002), more research emphasis is needed on areal routines that transcend language differences, using a developmental, multimodal activity-oriented approach to social practice and ritual communication. Kalapalo affinal civility demonstrates the need to carefully examine the multiple features of other such discursive practices that exist in regions of linguistic diversity, in order to understand how shared systems of values come into being (Gumperz 1996:361). In particular, where gestures and more complex activities index shared epistemic and affective stances during “interethnic” and multilingual interaction, affinal civility could be the discursive grounding that promotes similar alignment processes independent of the particular linguistic differences that exist at various other levels.

Affinal civility enables transposing the meanings of certain activities to new situations. Indeed, in Kalapalo narratives, giving women to enemies and other strangers, sharing food and otherwise helping refugees, teaching musical rituals, trading special ornaments, are all very obvious means of such a transposition. Kalapalo civility does not appear to involve monological coercion by means of power differentials; alignment through agreement and validation is motivated as a positive goal of shared responsibility between speakers who are formally distanced by avoidance procedures, and who are, moreover, distanced from one another by personal differences that are acknowledged as they are heard in the voices of the participants. When these differences are brought into a new marriage, the parties involved are expected to become united in common cause through myriad repeated acts of civility; despite the fact that they may still have different outlooks and the power or existential differences existing between them may be felt very strongly. Kalapalo marriages should be seen as icons of that continual making of domesticity and its relational consequences outside the household, leading even to the success of more elaborate arrangements among people who do not share a single language.

With this in mind, what can be learned by comparing other examples of affinal styles with this Kalapalo register? Using John B. Haviland’s (1979a, 1979b) description of Guugu Yimidhirr respect talk and R. M. W. Dixon’s (2002:92–95) summary of more recent research on Australian language styles, I offer a few suggestions for work that would further understanding of affinal civility registers beyond their local micro-political contexts.

In both areas, avoidance between affinal relatives is the most striking component of these styles. But it would be wrong to restrict our observations only to affinal relations of respect. Special instances of politeness in the Alto Xingu involve substituting kinship terms for personal names both among affines and also among hereditary leaders (anetitii) who are residents of different communities congregating during ceremonial gatherings, and in ritual contexts such as ear piercing and shamanic activities in which people from outside the community have been asked to participate. This is not quite the same thing as avoidance but it is a practice that evokes, at the very least, the familial relationships and their alignments I have discussed in this article. Regarding Guugu Yimidhirr, Haviland (1979a:213) describes how kinship motifs
unify the entire social world, regardless of language or geographical distance, or “tribal” boundaries. While indexing the presence of certain affines, Guugu Yimidhirr “speaker’s repertoires represented as well a creative resource for shaping social relations” (Haviland 1979b:389). Dixon (2002:95) observes that in places where there is no initiation style, the avoidance style may be used in the context of initiation (between the initiant and his siblings, and his circumciser and the latter’s siblings). It would be very interesting to know what the pre-and post-ritual relationships are, or were, between these men. For example, how did moiety affiliations, which extended far beyond tribal or linguistic relations, serve as a means of recruiting such ritual specialists? In the Kalapalo case, boundaries between the civility register, the hereditary leader’s genre, and even casual but polite speech are not always firmly regulated by canonical models. The question arises concerning the historical relations among local ritualized forms of communication and their influences on language change, including situations of language contact such as we see in both the Alto Xingu area and Australia.

In Australia, avoidance of both persons and names is coupled with a highly marked and regulated structure of special grammatical and vocabulary forms, undoubtedly much more elaborated than what occurs in the Kalapalo register. Kalapalo civility does not make use of unique grammatical features, but there are special vocabularies. As with Australian languages described by Dixon, some of these Kalapalo vocabularies include made up words, some include words from other languages. Haviland notes the “relatively large amount of shared vocabulary between Australian languages,” that at the time of his research many residents were “accomplished polyglots who can get along reasonably well in several nearby languages” (1979a:210). Haviland observes that in the past, “individual Guugu Yimidhirr speakers controlled distinct language varieties from a range of neighboring areas” (1979b:367). Avoidance styles both in the Alto Xingu and in Australia should be a good source of information about the knowledge speakers have of “different” languages and their speakers, even if they supposedly “don’t speak” those other languages. Once again, the question arises concerning the relations between macro-political and micro-political activities, their development and transformations over time, and how local discursive forms assist in the formation of large-scale regional polities involving marriage, trade, and ritual practice. One good way to understand these polities is to focus upon the continual enabling and concrete making of extensive networks of interpersonal relationships, chains of partnerships in effect, within a major geographic region. Affinal registers, while seemingly focused upon intimate family life, in fact have consequences for social formations far beyond the domestic household.

Notes

Acknowledgments. As of this writing (2006) Kalapalo live in four settlements in the Alto Xingu region of northern Mato Grosso, in Canarana, a small town southeast of their reserve, and in cities in the interior, especially São Carlos (São Paulo State). My research was supported by the National Science Foundation, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc., the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, and the University of Arizona. Dr. Bruna Franchetto of the Department of Anthropology, Museu Nacional, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, generously offered to sponsor my more recent work in Brazil, and I thank her and Dr. Carlos Fausto for their gracious hospitality. I am grateful to the many members of Aifa and Tanguro communities for their warm welcome and interest in my work. As always I acknowledge their continuing to allow me to learn from them in so many different and lasting ways. This article was originally presented as the keynote address given at the 2005 meeting of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America. I thank the SALSA Board for their invitation. Suzanne Oakdale, Carlos David Londoño Sulkin, and Gunter Senft are to be thanked for their careful readings of an earlier draft. I am also grateful to the three anonymous reviewers and Editor of this journal whose detailed comments helped me to clarify and refine my discussion and presentation.
Avoidance or distancing of “commoners” from such elite persons is an important factor here.ations where chiefs and religious leaders do not speak openly or display emotion in public.

In these societies, “honorific” is associated with avoidance and seems to be involved not only with “affinal civility” but also with “formal friendship.” Alec J. Harrison (2001:1) provides the most detailed mate-

1. Practical Orthography: Vowels: a as in opera (low front open); e as in best (middle open); ê as in “œ” in French cœur (middle closed); i as in seem (high front open); ı as in should (middle open; ğ); o as in old (middle rounded); u as in moon (high back rounded). When following the k voiceless velar stop, 工夫 is pharyngealized and written as k̂. Vowel nasalization usually occurs in a stressed syllable. Consonants: d as in English (voiced alveolar stop); dy somewhat as in the name Nadia, but with more breath (voiced alveo-palatal fricative); f pronounced while blowing air through loosely opened, untouched lips (voiceless bilabial fricative); g as in English, but slightly farther back in the mouth (voiced glottal fricative; strongly glottализed when preceded by u); h as in English (voiceless glottal fricative); k as in coffee (voiceless velar stop); l as in English but tongue is held slightly longer and farther back in the mouth (voiced alveolar lateral); m as in English (voiced bilabial nasal); n as in English (voiced alveolar nasal); ñ as in Spanish leña; ñ similar to sing, but pronounced father back in the mouth (voiced palatal nasal); p as in English (voiced bilabial stop); s as in English (voiceless alveopalatal fricative); ts as in cats (voiceless dental affricate), t somewhat softer than tooth (voiceless alveolar stop). Abbreviations in interlinear word-by-word glosses: ALL: allative; ATR: anaphoric topic referent; B: complement boundary; C: connector; CCL: contextual aspect indicative mood; CL: proper inclusion copula; CONF: conformatif; CONJ: conjunctive; CTR: contradictory; CYC: cyclical; DE: different event; DEM: demonstrative; DES: desiderative; EM: epistemic marker; ERG: ergative; EQ: equative copula; EV: evidential; EX: existential copula; EXP: epistemic expletive; I: imperative; HYP: hypothetical; IM: immediate; INT: interjection; M: modifier; MIR: mirative; MT: metonymic taxis; N: nominalizer; O: object; PC: personal cus-

2. Earlier discussion of affinity in the Alto Xingu communities focused upon name avoid-

3. See Agha 1994, 2000. Agha’s Native American references to honorification include only Nahuatl and Zuni. More recent evidence from Amazonian languages is available. “Honoric” pronouns and address terms seem to be widespread in Ge languages (Crocker and Crocker 2004; Graham 1995; Harrison 2001; Seeger 1981; Lux Vidal 1977). In these societies, “honorifica-

4. I follow Du Bois’ technical use of “alignment” to refer to ongoing activity “in which two participants in dialogic interaction . . . converge to varying degrees” in taking a stance (2004:22-23). However, while there are certainly other kinds of Kalapalo alignment outside affinity, here I use the word in a more restricted way to refer to the consequences of using a particular Kalapalo dialogic formula to index a specifically affinal stance convergence.

5. Following De Haan (1999) and Aikhenvald (2004), I contrast epistemology and eviden-

6. I use this term to describe a closed set of about 21 clitics which index relations between events.

7. Ameka (n.d.) explains that triadic communication in West African societies involves dif-

8. In honorification, one feature of affinal registration that clearly transcends language affiliation (Galvão 1953). See also Agostinho 1974 on Tupi Kamaiura; Gregor 1976 on Arawak Mehinaku; Murphy and Quain 1955 on Trumai, a language “isolate.”
Rivière (1969, 1984) and Gow (1991:135) briefly describe similar respectful avoidance-related triadic communication involving husband, wife, and mother-in-law among the Carib Trio and Arawak Piro, respectively. I suspect it is much more common in lowland South America as elsewhere. It was also a practice of the Guugu Yimidhirr in Australia, vividly described by Haviland (1979a, 1979b).

8. The full text with translation may be accessed in the Archive of Indigenous Languages of Latin America (http://www.AILLA.texas.org).


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Department of Anthropology
University of Arizona
Tucson, AZ 85721-0300
20pinkminks@theriver.com