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Extramarital Sexual Practices of the Ramkokamekra-Canela Indians

An Analysis of Socio-Cultural Factors¹⁾

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Extramarital sexual intercourse is practiced extensively among the nearly 400 Jê-speaking Ramkokamekra-Canela Indians of the northern edge of the Central Brazilian Plateau. Comparing this practice cross-culturally, the Canela variety in sexual partners and also their frequency of extramarital intercourse seem unusual.

Most students of Brazilian ethnography are familiar with the extensive works of Curt Nimuendajú, the German-born, self-trained Brazilian ethnographer. In fact, they usually study his largest monograph, *The Eastern Timbira*, in which there is a detailed account of how these same Ramkokamekra-Canela lived about 30 years ago. In his writings, most sectors of Canela life are described with relative accuracy, but the information presented on the extramarital sexual activities is incomplete and some aspects need to be restated.

Nimuendajú's time with the Canela totaled 14 months in his many visits. The writer of this paper has spent 24 months during 1957 through 1960 living in the two Ramkokamekra-Canela villages and was adopted into a family in both of their communities. The advantages of having the information of the first monograph to utilize as a basis for the second study were very significant, and it seems appropriate at this time to express a strong appreciation for Nimuendajú's difficult and extensive research work among the Canela.

The main objective of this article is to present an analysis of some of the factors contributing to the operation and maintenance of this extramarital sexual intercourse sub-system of the over-all Canela socio-cultural system. First, the day-to-day, informal extramarital practices will be described. Then we will examine some aspects of the questions: how are Canela individuals socialized into performing these practices, and how are these practices sanctioned and supported as customs? Next, in order to understand better how this sub-system operates we will examine a factor which contributes conspicuously to disrupting this sub-system and then we will analyze some of the ways in which this disruptive factor is controlled. Finally, some social ramifications and acculturative aspects of this sub-system will be discussed.

¹⁾ This article is an expanded form of a paper read before the 61st Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Chicago, 1962.

This ethnological reconstruction will be presented as it is believed to have been operating around 1910, before the current social disintegration had progressed to any great extent. Most of the behavioral patterns handled, however, were known to be occurring at the time of this investigator's visits.

The Informal Extramarital Practices

The matrilineal and matrilocal Canela are strongly monogamous, and divorce is rare after the birth of a child cements the marriage. Both the husband and the wife, however, are likely to be having extramarital relationships of a brief and sometimes of a lengthy nature during the entire course of their sexually active lives. If a man or a woman has a strong desire for an appropriate member of the opposite sex, these feelings are communicated directly to the desired person or a message is sent indirectly through known channels with the result that a rendezvous is usually arranged. Regardless of who takes the initiative, the man eventually finds himself obliged to provide the woman with gifts as part of the arrangement. These extramarital encounters go on all the time and it is only the spouse who is not supposed to know about them. There is good evidence that this always was the accepted pattern and that the trend is toward a reduction rather than an increase in these practices. The Canela have attempted to hide these facts from outsiders for fear of embarrassing them and of receiving disapproval. Adherence to the practice of marital fidelity is a Christian ideal which has been affecting Canela behavior since the beginning of their more extensive contacts with local Brazilians in the 19th century. Extramarital relations, nevertheless, were never grounds for divorce according to any of this researcher's informants including two men over seventy years of age. (Cf. Nimuendajú 1946, p. 128.)

In addition to these more informal ways for individuals to fulfill sexual desires, there are a number of patterns for extramarital contacts in which the partners come together for social reasons rather than as a result of personal choice and preference. For instance, several women or girls without children are invited by male groups, or designated in the morning council by the elders, to be present during the resting period before the almost daily afternoon sportive log races. Any of the numerous male racers who wish to can take turns in having brief sexual relationships with these women who receive any non-relatives in rapid succession. The group gives the girls some sort of token payment to please them, and though these activities are seen to some extent as a duty, they are also very much enjoyed. Another example is that any expeditions such as work parties recruited for road building, group farm work, or the gathering of needed natural materials, are likely to be accompanied by at least two girls who will gather firewood, carry water, and provide sexual outlets for the men. A third example is that a man who has performed some service for the head of another family will often be paid by being given access to an appropriate girl of that family.

Aspects of Socialization

In investigating the socialization procedures of the Canela in order to throw some light on how they develop into adults who maintain the extramarital practices described above, two aspects, among others, of the child training patterns seem to be outstanding.

These are (1) the social atmosphere in which sex is learned and (2) the permissiveness which is characteristic of most of the child training.

Concerning this social atmosphere, the Canela child is raised in an environment in which, in his presence, sex is talked and joked about with great delight between certain consanguinal relatives. This large category of fun and joke-oriented kin consists of all the consanguinal relatives not classed as parents, siblings, and children. As boys and girls grow older, they enter little by little into sex joking-relationships with any of these joking relatives, at first mimicking the words and tones of an older sibling and later making up provocative statements and sex-loaded jokes on their own. In this way, children are first hearing and then using sexual expressions before they can understand what is meant, and they are always learning about sex in a context of fun. On certain very festive occasions, children will see women standing, singing, and moving their hips in imitation of the movements of intercourse. They may also see men of the Clown Society repeatedly making thrusting motions with their penises while dancing around and shouting. In both these cases, these movements are performed to express great joy — *amyi-khin* — or in Portuguese, *alegria*. It is hypothesized herein that, brought up in such an atmosphere, the child learns to enjoy and to place a high value on sexual activities.

Turning to the development of personality traits that are important to the operation of this extramarital sub-system, it is clear that in several of the more conspicuous training procedures the baby learns to expect relatively often to obtain what will give it pleasure and to surrender relatively easily to others what will give them pleasure. The breast feeding practices, for instance, are among the many patterned experiences through which babies learn these emotional orientations. When they want the breast, they are given it; the mother, or a mother surrogate, is always around. They seldom let a baby cry for long, for this in itself is considered evil. Because of these practices, and for other reasons, babies experience relatively little frustration in this area of socialization.

The patterns are similar in weaning and in toilet training. The mother frustrates the child to a minimal extent, waiting months, and finally rewarding the child with affection for doing what she wants it to do. The child learns to expect to do what it wants to do relatively often and its tolerance of frustration remains relatively low, but it also learns to enjoy doing what the mother wants. The two outstanding exceptions to this permissive sort of socialization pertain to fighting and incest. Such offenses against society are considered intolerable and are punished quickly and severely.

These patterns are typical of the socialization process until puberty, so it is hypothesized that they are contributing factors in the development of much of the characteristic adult behavior. An example of the adult patterns is that when a legitimate sexual object is strongly desired, the man or woman expects, with great self-assurance, to attain the objective and cannot withstand frustration for long. Another example is that adults very conspicuously enjoy pleasing and gratifying other people. The act of giving themselves sexually to members of the opposite sex who express strong desires is consistent with this pattern. The person who refuses is felt to be stingy, and may become the objective of retaliatory witchcraft. One of the most common forms of black magic is a sickness «thrown into» a woman by her rejected lover. Deaths of this origin have caused tribal schisms and inter-tribal hostilities.

A boy, at the age of puberty, often has his first sexual experience with his naming uncle's wife, upon her initiative. When his other mother's brothers hear of this, they order him to have sexual relations just occasionally and only with middle-aged women so that he will grow strong and big. By the end of his adolescent initiation cycle, when he is about twenty, he can break these restrictions and marry. This course of behavior is held to be the ideal pattern, but occasional exceptions clandestinely practiced are understood by everybody to be the rule. By 1910, marriages were beginning to occur individually and at a much younger age as a result of the breakdown in the practice of a group rite in which all the members of an age class were ceremonially married on a day following the termination of their initiation cycle. Some of these youths were in their late teens, but most were in their twenties.

A girl may be contracted for marriage before or around puberty. She often has her first sexual experience with the contracted youth, but just as often her virginity is «stolen» in an encounter with a lover. When the men of the community know that she has had sexual intercourse, they consider her available for casual sexual relationships. This is especially the case after she has received her ceremonial belt (*i?pre*). If she refuses these attentions for several months, a number of men, when they can catch her alone away from the village, will force her to give, each taking his turn. Her family is so ashamed that her stinginess provoked such a course of action among the men that even if she had been injured in resisting such an encounter, her maternal uncles would not make a claim to be given a compensatory payment from the assailants, as would be the custom under other circumstances. Eventually, when used to the experience, she learns to like to give herself in these group situations which take place in a spirit of gaiety, and in which the men are flattering and attentive.

From her introduction into sex until the birth of her first child, a girl experiences great freedom and has a lot of «fun», as they say. She is married during most of this time, but is receiving attentions frequently from most of the non-related men in the tribe. Especially after she has won her belt, she will be expected to answer the frequent summons to go off as an attendant on the daily log races and other semi-public events. Later, however, as a mother, she is obliged to stay with her babies most of the time, though she still can arrange private meetings.

Some Festival Activities

The Canela festivals consist of a number of dramatic acts comprising pageants which last for several days. Since the performances in these pageants are traditionally prescribed and considered «right» and «good», they carry the weight of tribal law for the informal interpersonal relationships in the non-festival periods. An account of a number of these performances, or rites, will now be presented.

Prepubertal girls are likely to have their first close personal contact with the festival extramarital practices during the carrying out of their roles as girl associates of a men's society. These girls are assigned in pairs, usually one virgin and one non-virgin, to the many societies for men which average about 25 in membership. At certain times, the non-virgin has to give herself to some or to most of the male members, one right after the other. The virgin is not touched, but since she remains in the vicinity, she is aware of what is going on and may wish she were part of the fun.

During a certain festival occasion, the Wild Boar Log Race Day, which occurs about every other year, the commandant of the troop of adolescent novices procures three or four middle-aged women and orders all the boys of the troop beyond puberty to have sex in turn with one of them (Nimuendajú 1946, pp. 169, 197). Being in the vicinity, the pre-pubescent boys also are fully aware of what is going on and may be anticipating the day when they can join their seniors. These formal events contribute toward the socialization of the boys and tend to sanction the pattern for the informal utilization of one woman by a number of men in succession.

On the same Wild Boar Log Race Day, the men of each moiety as a group go with the wives of the men of the other moiety into different areas. With their spouses far away, couples arrange to meet discreetly in the bushes for brief periods. This formal occasion sets the pattern for the informal rendezvous of men and women of any age and with any number of children. The conditions of this particular festival situation make it easy to leave children and babies with relatives.

On the annual *Ailen* Day (Nimuendajú 1946, pp. 168—9), young-married women, with few or no babies, secretly indicate as part of a rite their choice of a hunter to procure wild game for them. Publicly designated, the hunter awaits a secret message so that he will know where to take his kill in the late afternoon in exchange for sexual relations. This rite supports the informal patterns of the secret rendezvous. It also sets a precedent for the man giving the woman a gift even though she had taken the initiative in choosing *him* as a partner.

During the midday period of any festival, and this amounts to from seven to ten times a year, each moiety will conduct a conga line-like dance with the wives of the men of the other age class moiety interspersed in a long, sideways-facing file. After performing this very energetic *Me-aike* procession for an hour, each moiety dancing in opposite directions around the village circle, the performers of each group and their female partners disappear into different areas for sexual relations. One group may stay in the village using their communal *Wë?të* house, while the other group may use the forests by the stream. The younger age classes of both moieties, however, were excluded from such activities by the members of the older age classes, in their thirties, forties, and higher. This practice may be seen as a traditional sanctioning pattern for denying the youths access to the young girls and for the reservation of the latter for the older men, at least in the more public occasions.

Disruptive Factors and their Control

The kind of behavior which most frequently disrupts this system of extramarital practices is jealousy on the part of the left out spouse. Though the importance of being generous with a spouse is portrayed in myths, traditions, and festivals, still jealousy and hostility are expressed when a person is confronted with the evidence of extramarital relations, though this could *never* justify divorce. The joking relatives lecture the angry person energetically, and at great length, saying that jealousy and fighting are hideous and bad, and that generosity is the great Canela virtue. In more extreme cases, a person's ceremonial and informal friends, as well as the ceremonial and political chiefs of the tribe, will call upon him to forget his grievances and wounded pride.

In such a society where sex is so evident and available, it is not surprising that incest lines are strongly maintained from childhood on by severe punishments. Intercourse with distant relatives occurs, but it is believed that such behavior will shorten a person's life considerably. Intercourse with a biological sibling, they say, results in madness and death, a point which they believe they can prove by referring to examples of such occurrences. They can show the interested observer a pigpen-like structure in an old village site which was used to confine a Canela who became violent in 1938—1939 after he had purportedly broken this tabu.

A person will feel the need to display anger especially when he or she catches the spouse in the sexual act with another person, and he will feel this need even more strongly when the act is taking place on the marital platform bed. Then the infraction is taken as a deliberate insult and lack of respect for the offended spouse, because if the offender cared more, he or she would not have taken such a chance at being discovered. Even when the spouse is caught in the act, however, neither fighting nor divorce is considered a justified course of action though there may be a fight and there is most likely to be a temporary separation and a demand for payments to erase the shame «passed onto the face» of the injured spouse.

There are many cultural devices which serve to prevent a person from being confronted with the information and evidence about extramarital activity on the part of a spouse. In the festival situations, for instance, spouses are invariably separated by their having to go with opposite moieties so that there can be no actual confrontations. In such cases, a person knows his or her spouse may have had relations with others but can neither be sure about it nor can the partners be identified. This tends to alleviate any feelings of jealousy.

Another striking cultural device for preventing disruptions can be found in the use of the ceremonial linguistic form of the second person singular, *ye*, instead of the informal morpheme, *ka*. In relationships concerning a person addressed as *ye*, the speaker should always express respect and honor and never discourtesy. Causing a *ye*-addressed person embarrassment is ugly behavior. For instance, a good Canela woman should not even tell her son about his wife's extramarital affairs because she should feel honor-bound to protect this daughter-in-law whom she addresses as *ye*. Most of the affinal relationships fall into this pattern so that such news is prevented from reaching a spouse through most of his or her close consanguinal relatives. In contrast to this kind of behavior of a mother with respect to her daughter-in-law, a wife's sister does not address the husband as *ye*. In fact, she can have sexual intercourse with him though the wife does not want to know about the relationship. Therefore, the wife's sister is also jealous of the husband's exploits with other women and may run to tell the wife about them.

Joking relatives do not tell a person about his or her spouse's affairs. They want to avoid the possibility that the person might get jealous and take some form of action. Their interest is centered around enjoying the person's own extramarital affairs which they discuss among themselves in his or her presence deriving a great deal of amusement from this source. Joking-related people take a special pride and pleasure in each other's sexual adventures often arranging them for each other. From the point of view of the social control of extramarital practices, it seems important that there exists such

a group of relatives with whom a person must share the superficial aspects of extramarital sexual life. This sharing of information allows certain social pressures, such as support and disapproval, to be applied in these situations. Being kept within certain limits in this manner, the informal love affairs and the one-time encounters are less likely to endanger a marriage, to break incest lines, or to disrupt other social aspects.

Some Social Ramifications

Considering the social ramifications of the extramarital sub-system from the point of view of their relationship to the whole socio-cultural system, a number of observations can be made. For instance, with respect to social solidarity, loyalty between *ye*-related affinals is enhanced by the necessity to keep amorous trysts a secret, as already described, and the mutual arranging and sharing of information about sexual activities is a factor in building up the social cohesion among the consanguinal joking-related groups. Besides these ties, a man has a connection with any family to whom he is not related affinally or consanguinally because all non-related women of his generation are sexually accessible to him. Because of this, the man will call these women «my wife» (*iiprō*) whether or not he has had sexual relationships with them. Moreover, he will speak to the consanguinal relatives of these classificatory wives utilizing the appropriate affinal terms of address. He will even refer to their children as «my children», and he must behave towards them with the seriousness required in carrying out the paternal role. A result of this sexual accessibility to all non-related women of the same generation is that a secondary affinal system of relationships is maintained so that almost every non-consanguinally related person in the entire society becomes a relative in either the primary (*-mpsi*) or the secondary (*-gabək*) affinal systems. The secondary affinal relationships are clearly less serious and can be broken with relative ease. They form a social network, nevertheless, that is an important factor in the maintenance of the Canela high degree of social solidarity.

A great deal of gaiety and fun accompanies any potential or realized extramarital relationship so that at least certain members of almost every non-related family can be approached and associated with in this spirit, an aspect which may partially account for the pervasion of this attitude as a morale-building factor throughout the entire society. Both the high morale and group solidarity can be shown to be important factors in the Canela survival as a tribal unit into present times and in the maintenance of their conservatism with respect to their traditions.

High social cohesion often has a price which has to be paid psychologically by the individuals of a society. In a social unit in which almost any forms of intra-group aggression, hostility, and fighting must be suppressed in order to enhance group solidarity, alternative outlets often exist so that such frustrations can be reduced indirectly. The Canela have a number of such culturally approved emotional outlets. If a person is angry or unhappy, his associates usually try to get him to redirect his concerns into singing in the street or into making overtures to some sexually accessible women. It is expected that after being involved in such activities, he will soon be feeling happy again. Pleasures are quickly substituted for pains. It is hypothesized herein that the easy availability of frequent and varied sexual outlets is one of the factors contri-

buting to the reduction of individual hostility and frustration, and consequently, to the maintenance of group morale and solidarity. The Canela suppression of almost any manifestations of intra-group hostilities is so striking that there must be extensive traditional outlets for the individual frustrations that are necessarily built up in the maintenance of such a high degree of apparent group cooperation and the perpetual display of amiable attitudes on the part of the individual.

It might be thought that the position of women would be very low in a society where it is the custom for women to give themselves, even willingly, to groups of men. This is not the case with the Canela. Although women are not directly involved in the political administration and governing of the tribe, nevertheless, they exert a strong influence on the men of their families, a pressure which is translated into policies maintained in the council meetings. Women are not seen as being inferior but rather as being very different creatures though equally deserving and valued. Their relative lack of dependence upon their husbands is ensured by the matrilineal arrangements for living. Moreover, a woman receives a considerable amount of support socially and economically from her classificatory husbands from whom she can expect and demand gifts and services at any time. Ceremonial sanctioning for this sort of obligatory behavior can be observed in the *Pεbye* Festival, for instance, wherein a novice's sister requires a lover to carry the novice on his shoulders (Nimuendajú, p. 189). The unmarried non-virginal women of the so-called «wanton» category (Nimuendajú, pp. 130—1) can even support themselves and their children largely through their influence over their often numerous lovers so that they can be relatively independent of their matrilineal relatives economically.

Before the strong authority of the older generations over the younger ones broke down in the 1940's and especially in the 19th century before marriages began to take place at an earlier age, young men in their teens were not supposed to have sexual relations with the girls of the same age, even though this was the great flowering period of beauty and attractiveness for Canela women. These young men, undergoing post-puberty restrictions and disciplines of a variety of types were supposed to have sex only with vigorous and firm-charactered women in their forties and fifties so that they too would grow strong. Similarly, the lovely young girls were reserved for the men in their late thirties, forties, and fifties. Young people would grow up weak and soft-natured if they indulged themselves in sex with their luxuriant contemporaries, it was thought. Such practices are patterned after certain festival acts and especially after the *Mε-aikhε* dance which is performed frequently during the summer ceremonial season. Besides serving to maintain the authority of the older generations, such practices must have furnished gratifications to people at a period in their lives when sexual powers were waning and when such psycho-cultural supports were welcomed. In any case, this practice can certainly be considered a factor which contributes toward building up group morale and social solidarity.

A Canela man's loyalties and interests were widely spread among a number of institutions. Correspondingly, his emotional attachment to his spouse was relatively weak since it was diluted by his responsibilities to his consanguinal relatives, his age class associates, his informal and formal friends, the ceremonial and political chiefs, the council of elders, and his lovers and their children and families. His control over his

wife, as over his few material possessions, was very much conditioned by the influences from these various categories of social agents. A Canela lived to a relatively large extent for these agents and their activities and to a relatively lesser extent for himself and his wife. In such a society, people cannot be very individualistic; exclusiveness is seen as stinginess so that even spouses have to be shared. This practice, however, is clearly consistent with the general notions about ownership and sharing, and it is in this light that the extensive sharing of sexual attributes must be viewed in order to be understood.

Acculturative Aspects

The extensive Canela extramarital practices are important contributing factors in enhancing high morale and group solidarity but are, on the other hand, deterrents to the development of individualism and notions of private ownership and industry. The little that is known about these sexual practices by the neighboring hinterland Brazilians and the Indian Protection Service representatives runs more strongly counter to their feelings and moral senses than any other Canela set of behaviors except, most certainly, for cattle stealing. It is not surprising, therefore, that significant pressures have been brought to bear upon these Indians to change or at least to conceal these practices (Crocker 1958, p. 2).

With the arrival of the Indian Protection Service personnel in the early 1940's, unmarried women found they could no longer spend nights in the plaza without running the risk of being embarrassed by outsiders. From that period on, all group-sponsored extramarital practices had to be confined to the stream gallery forests, the savannas, and the farm plot shacks, though the *Wë?të* houses could be utilized if certain precautions were taken. The Canela became well aware during this period of their existence that they would be made to feel very ashamed of these activities by almost any hinterlander who became aware of them.

Especially since the mid-fifties, therefore, with their giving up of their negative attitudes toward the local Brazilian way of life, feelings that extramarital practices may actually be uncivilized and wicked have been changing many aspects of the Canela traditions. It has become increasingly difficult to oblige girls to take part in the group activities involving sexual relations and even to obtain their families' permission for them to be installed in the formerly honored roles as girl associates of the festival societies. The private rendezvous affairs are considerably less affected by these new ideas than the traditional behaviors with greater social visibility. It is these more conspicuous practices, both of the daily and the festival varieties, which are being viewed by many younger women, and some men in their roles as fathers and young husbands, as being increasingly undesirable. Sexual jealousy is not suppressed as effectively as it used to be so that angry young husbands with new ideas about marital rights, unfaithful wives, and prostitutes can cause a considerable amount of inter-family trouble and serious intra-tribal bad feeling by demanding large compensatory payments and through involving the entire tribal judiciary system in the resolving of their untraditional problems (Crocker 1961, p. 81).

Observing these trends, the ethnologist wonders how a reduction in the availability of girl associates and extramarital sexual outlets will affect the festival system. Will just the rites involving these practices be omitted or will the festivals themselves be

abandoned or drastically transformed? And, with the decrease in the daily availability of extramarital opportunities and the consequent loss of these outlets for the reduction of personal frustrations and generalized hostility, how will group morale and social solidarity be affected? Moreover, what will be the effects on ownership of private property and the nature of the marital bond?

After assembling for the assessment and resolution of these questions data, which cannot be discussed here, from several other sub-systems of the Canela socio-cultural system, I think it is most likely that as a result of the changes in the attitude toward extramarital sexual practices, the nuclear husband-wife family unit will be increasingly emphasized at the expense of the activities of the joking relative group and the secondary affinal family relationships; that the many hours spent in singing, dancing, log racing and in festival performances will be reduced, along with the loss of their sexual components, so that more time will be spent in the farm plots and in a broader number of economic pursuits learned in relation to the needs of the hinterland Brazilians; and that the tribal authority over the individual, which operates through his many diffused social responsibilities, will be weakened so that greater independence in living arrangements and in property ownership will become feasible. Living away from the tribe and marriage outside the group to hinterlanders and Guajajara Indians will then become possible though not frequent.

All of these predicted trends are in the direction of hinterland culture and Brazilian national life. It is not to be expected that the Canela will develop culturally in a direction that is to the side of and parallel to Brazilian society, as has been largely true of the Canela acculturative situation in the past. The Canela at this time are too completely dominated from the outside, too few in number, and too much in awe of the major culture surrounding them to develop independently in the future. Besides, they are already pretty well convinced, especially the youths, that the Brazilian way of life is «superior» to their own. Nevertheless, the outcome may be very different from anything that can be anticipated herein. Already, largely because of the provocations of a Ramkokamekra-Canela religious revitalistic movement of considerable proportions, they have been driven out of their ancestral savanna lands. This occurred in July of 1963 when 190 hinterland gunmen were summoned and hired by the local ranch owners to do the job by force of arms. It is surprising that only five Canela men were killed and twelve wounded. Following this culturally and psychologically traumatic experience, adaptation to forest life and to the immediate presence of Guajajara Indians have become the major challenges which the Ramkokamekra-Canela are currently facing. To survive the inroads of their new acculturative situation as an on-going and independent social unit, they will be required to utilize their characteristic flexibility, imagination, and sense of group cooperation to the fullest extent.

It is obvious that drastic changes are taking place in the Canela extramarital socio-cultural sub-system as well as in their whole ecological setting. It is also clear that because of the extensiveness of the ramifications of these extramarital practices throughout the social system, and because of their basic importance as factors in the maintenance of group morale and social solidarity, their reduction will be an important factor in bringing about very serious acculturative and personality adjustment problems in the next five to ten years.

Summary and Final Comments

In order to present this material on extramarital practices in the form of an analysis of a sub-system of the over-all Canela socio-cultural system, first the informal day-to-day extramarital practices were described and considered as the patterns being maintained by the operation of the sub-system. The most important of these patterns consist of frequent sexual contacts of a brief or lengthy duration begun on the initiative of either the man or the woman and carried out when desired during most of the sexual life span. These patterns include the frequent utilization of one woman by a group of men.

Following this account of the practices, the next part of the article was devoted to examining some of the factors operating to maintain the sub-system. Starting with socialization, it was hypothesized that two of the more significant factors (and most certainly there are many others) which may be related to enculturating individuals into the performing of these extramarital practices are the constant association of sex with joking and gaiety, and the general permissiveness and timing of rewards in the child training procedures. Then, a number of traditional rites were described which sanction the informal day-to-day extramarital activities. Sexual jealousy was next taken up as the strongest factor contributing to the disruption of the sub-system, and some of the factors contributing to the control of this disruptive element were portrayed — such as prohibitions against fighting, the use of an honorific form as an affinal term of address to aid in inhibiting the passage of provocative information, and the existence of a group of consanguinal relatives who cooperate to keep the extramarital activities within safe limits.

In the final portion, a number of ramifications of this sub-system were discussed including the relationship to tribal morale and group solidarity, the position of women and the diffused nature of the marital bond, and some acculturative aspects and predictions.

Such a sub-system of the over-all Canela socio-cultural system as extramarital practices is too extensive and intricate to be completely analyzed and described at this time. The more important factors, however, in the operation of this system have been presented and some related aspects have been discussed.

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