

THE KAINGANG PERSPECTIVES ON LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS IN THE SOUTH OF BRAZIL

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What can we say about the society-nature relationship of the indigenous peoples of Southern Brazil? Perhaps we should begin with what people have to say about this relationship. In this case, common sense reveals a prejudiced and ethnocentric rationale which surrounds the Brazilian indigenous reality. Two extremes: on the one hand, the sensation, always present, that the indigenous peoples of the south are no longer indigenous; on the other hand, the conviction that these people are socially destitute parasites who exploit nature. In this region, the Noble Savage is a myth that has not kept up with times. According to the *hardcore* version of common sense, to be an Indian in the south is to be a vagrant; to rely on the generous protection of FUNAI [National Indian Foundation], to be free to use land and natural resources at will. In the *light* version of common sense, Indians are the generic excluded; creditors to a historical debt which, like so many others, will never be paid. And nature? Nature is also seen through the eyes of common sense. In this case, however, it is seen through eyes which, to a certain extent, are influenced by a global environmental perspective, on a planetary level. The Indian-nature equation is therefore a dilemma: whether because it is inconceivable to acknowledge that they were involved in logging; or because it is difficult to accept that, in today's world, Indians insist on hunting, fishing and gathering; or because of their uncomfortable presence in cities... If, in many cases, common sense is a safe haven for sociological reason, in this particular case, it is a trap. After all, we know very little about the Indians of the southern region. What many describe as an ethnic barrier between Indians and 'whites' is, from the point of view of whites more than anything, a cultural barrier. Indigenous wisdom does not contribute to the knowledge available in our schools, media and other cultural spheres. Common sense, in this situation, is a trap which imprisons us in the illusion of ecological correctness.

In order to reflect on Indian-nature relations in the southern region of Brazil, we will analyze aspects of Kaingang politics and cosmology. In particular, we will examine

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the processes of indigenous land recovery in Santa Catarina state and references to nature expressed in myth, rite and cosmology. Thus, we will seek to demonstrate that the interplay between cosmological conceptions and political trajectories form the basis of the indigenous perspective concerning their environmental and land rights.

Land, territory and politics

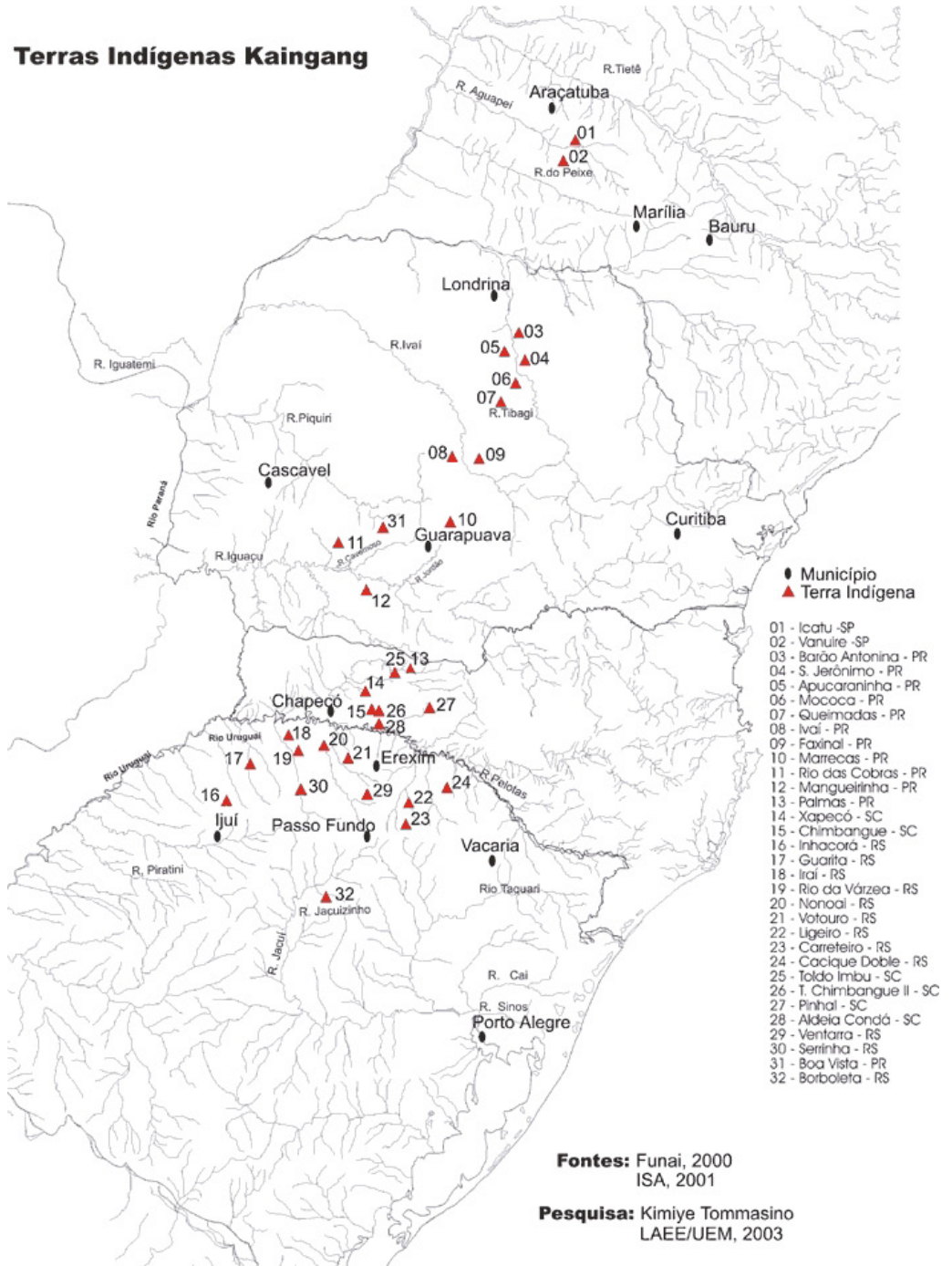
The presence of the Kaingang in the pastures and forests of the south of Brazil stretches back approximately three thousand years. Presently, they live in 32 indigenous lands spread across the states of São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. This is a relatively recent situation in the history of the Kaingang who have had regular contact with the conquerors and colonizer-settlers of southern Brazil since the mid-19th century. The policy of demarcation of indigenous lands has had the explicit aim, since its introduction in the 19th century, of concentrating these populations and consequently liberating ethnically-cleared lands for settlement. The “whitening of the race” was also part of the “civilizing” process of the Brazilian territory.

The following Indigenous Territories were demarcated between 1902 and 1921: Xaçecó (1902) in Santa Catarina, Mangueirinha and Palmas (1909) in the southeast of Paraná, Monte Caseros, Nonoai, Ligeiro, Ventarra, Carreteiro and Cacique Doble (1911), Serrinha (1912), Guarita and Votouro (1918), and Inhacorá (1921), in the northeast region of Rio Grande do Sul. The western region of Santa Catarina state was part of Paraná state until 1916, when, under the mediation of the President of the Republic at the time, the interstate borders were redefined. Therefore, the Xaçecó Indigenous Territory (TI) was instituted by the Paraná State Government in 1902, via Decree n.07, safeguarding an area of land:

for the tribe of Coroado indians under the command of the tribal leader, Vaicrê, where the rights of third parties are excluded, within the following limits: From the River Chapecó, via a road toward the south, until the crossing of the River Chapecozinho, and continuing via these two rivers to where the rivers form sandbanks (Decree n.07, 18 June, 1902).

Confined inside indigenous lands officially demarcated, the Kaingang, from the very first decades of the 20th century, have closely witnessed the intense civilizing process which has characterized the history of the Southern region. The demarcation of indigenous lands contributed to logging activities, definitively steering the settling process. Within this context, indigenous lands became potential sources of manual labour and natural resources. The Kaingang, an indigenous people who used to occupy the lands covering the region’s main river basins, in touch with each other via extensive sociability networks, thus became confined. In the west of Santa Catarina only one area was demarcated: the Xaçecó TI. Many did not adapt to this macro spatial planning, sometimes finding refuge in areas of difficult access and sometimes remaining “invisible” to the projects of the settlers, covertly and indirectly subsisting alongside the incipient settler centres.

Terras Indígenas Kaingang



Kaingang Indigenous Lands

TOMMASINO LAEE/UEM. 2003

Throughout the 20th century, as the settling program gathered pace, the west of Santa Catarina was transformed into a region of intense agricultural and cattle-rearing production. The woods which had once covered the region were now only seen as forestry resources. Environmental wealth and diversity were replaced by large-scale economic production. From the 1950s the indigenous territories of the Kaingang were the last remnant areas of unexplored forest. The anthropologist, Silvio Coelho dos Santos, when analyzing the role of indigenous outposts described the situation of the Xaçepó TI as follows:

The Indigenous Outpost concentrated on exploring the forestry resources within the indigenous area, in particular (araucaria) pine trees. It even set up its own sawmill (...) There was almost total devastation of the forest reserves within the indigenous area. The region's timber companies which had long resented the reduction in raw materials, started to work round the clock - Approximately 60,000 pine trees were felled within the indigenous reserve (SANTOS, 1970, p.666).

The development of sawmills in Kaingang indigenous lands coincided with the implementation of “*the big pot regime*” - where the Kaingang, prevented from working on their domestic cultivations, were forced to work on collective farms for which they received collective food served from a big pot. As a Kaingang from Cacique Doble TI (in Rio Grande do Sul) stated, “*on Saturdays we got a bit of meat and a small bar of soap*”. Only some Indians worked in the sawmills and these had been recommended by the indigenous organization. The Kaingang case exposed the cruellest aspect of the environmental degradation process: human degradation.

By the middle of the 1970s the forestry resources of the Kaingang indigenous lands were exhausted. FUNAI initiatives aimed at promoting the “integration” of indigenous communities had lost their bargaining chip: timber. This period saw the start of the process for recovering the Kaingang indigenous lands. The trigger for this process - a real founding myth of the “indigenous struggle” in the south of Brazil - was the expulsion of hundreds of smallholders from the Nonoai TI in Rio Grande do Sul. In five days the Nonoai Kaingang, with the support of other Kaingang from different TIs (in particular Xaçepó/SC and Mangueirinha/PR), set fire to rural schools and armed with clubs, bows and arrows, spears and some fire arms drove the smallholders off their landⁱ. The expulsion of the settlers from Nonoai TI was the Kaingang's first significant step in recovering their lands. In 1978 this movement grew with the expulsion of smallholders from Xaçepó/SC TI and Mangueirinha/PR TI.

From that time onward processes to recover Kaingang indigenous lands have been ongoing. In the west of Santa Catarina, where until 1986 only Xaçepó TI had existed, four new Tis, Toldo Chimbangue (1986), Toldo Pinhal (1996), Toldo Imbu (1999) and Aldeia Condá (2001)ⁱⁱ, were created. Common to all these cases are not only the existing tensions and conflicts between indigenous populations and smallholders, but also the torpid pace of land regularization processes and the tenuous decisions made by official indigenous bodies in face of local political pressures. In fact, 35 years after the start of

the recovery processes, four of the five Kaingang TIs in Santa Catarina are still awaiting land regularization.

Although serious issues of land ownership remain unresolved, land recovery has already influenced spatial planning in the western region of Santa Catarina. We will focus our analysis on the specificities of the processes for recovering the indigenous lands of Toldo Chimbanguê, Toldo Pinhal and Aldeia Condá - all of which are near the city of Chapecó, on the banks of the River Irani.

The Toldo Chimbanguê TI, located in the rural area of Chapecó municipality (a place known as Sede Trentin approximately 20km from the city centre), was partially demarcated in 1986. At this time pressure brought by CIMI [Indigenist Missionary Council] and other entities linked to indigenous causes led to the recognition of the territorial rights of the Kaingang in Toldo Chimbanguê. Thus, 988 hectares of land were subsequently demarcated along the River Irani. It had already been established at that time that the final size of this indigenous territory would include a further 975 hectares to be demarcated in the near future. The tensions that arose between the Toldo Chimbanguê Kaingang and the rural producers of Sede Trentin, the latter backed by unions, associations and local political representatives, made the demarcation of this additional area impossible. However, in this demarcation process, the recognition of indigenous rights over the claimed territory left clear marks: of the 998 hectares demarcated, 1 (only one) was demarcated in isolation, in order to secure the Kaingang territorial rights over an identified cemetery.

The situation of the Toldo Chimbanguê TI is nevertheless surreal. Around 2000 hectares were identified as traditional indigenous lands, but only 988 were initially demarcated, with one hectare isolated from the rest, marking a border. If, on the one hand, this process of demarcation partially secured indigenous rights, on the other, it set the grounds for the land conflicts which followed. Conflicts were intense until 2004 when FUNAI concluded its territorial demarcation process, which included all the lands initially identified. Toldo Chimbanguê was eventually granted 1817 hectares, and was thus the only clearly regularized TI associated to the Kaingang in the western region of Santa Catarina. Currently, 115 indigenous families live in this TI whose means of livelihood involves cultivating crops on their lands, providing services to rural landowners in the locality and working in agribusinesses, both in the region and in the city of Chapecó.

The Toldo Pinhal TI Kaingang experience a similar situation. The process of recovering their traditional lands began in 1993. At the time, FUNAI established a technical group in order to secure their territorial rights of this community located in the Seara (SC) municipality on the banks of the River Irani, close to Chapecó. Similar to Toldo Chimbanguê, studies carried out led to the demarcation of an area smaller than the indigenous population had claimed. In this case, however, the difference between the land actually demarcated and the land claimed by the indigenous community was far greater. The community stated that their traditional territory amounted to approximately 9000 (nine thousand) hectares. However, only 893 hectares were actually demarcated. The Toldo Pinhal TI identification and delimitation report, ratified by FUNAI in 1993, states that the indigenous community conceived the initial demarcation as provisional.

Even the indigenous community itself was surprised by the outcomes of this situation. The rural smallholders settled within the 9000 hectares (nine thousand) claimed by the indigenous population suffered the negative effects of this action. Once these areas were identified as potential indigenous lands, there was a sharp drop in public and private investment in the region. Local government stopped investing in the maintenance and building of new roads and routes, local commerce plummeted and banks cut agricultural funds as the producers were not able to offer their lands as collateral against loans. The dramatic situation experienced by agricultural families led them to take their case to the Federal Court in an attempt to define their land ownership status. In 2001, 45 farmers requested that the courts force FUNAI to carry out conclusive studies on the actual boundaries of the Toldo Pinhal TI. Paradoxically, pressured by the rural smallholders, FUNAI set up a technical group in January 2002 to reassess the Toldo Pinhal boundaries. In September 2002 these studies (conducted by a technical group working under my coordination) were concluded and delivered to FUNAI, with a proposal to increase the territory from 893ha to approximately 4500ha. Strongly contested by local political leaders, the FUNAI demarcation process entered into legal proceedings and over ten years later is still under the analysis of the Federal Courts. The 15 families living in the TI continue with their agricultural cultivation and service provision routines.

In contrast to the Toldo Chimbangue and Toldo Pinhal Kaingang whose lands were occupied due to rural expansion in the western region of the state, the Aldeia Condá Indigenous Reserve Kaingang were directly affected by the expansion of the city of Chapecó. Even as the city grew, they remained there, 'invisible', witnessing the transformation of their traditional lands. As paradoxical as it may seem, these indigenous people continued seeing the urban centre of Chapecó as their traditional territory. Despite their daily social interaction with the city, they maintained beliefs and practices closely tied to the 'indigenous tradition' - they all speak their indigenous language, for example. This peculiar condition of an indigenous population who simultaneously attach value to tradition while intensely living alongside 'white' society led to the centre of Chapecó being identified in the 1998 FUNAI report as a traditional indigenous land. In face of the impossibility of recovering this "traditional territory", FUNAI decided to designate an area for the establishment of the Aldeia Condá Indigenous Reserve. The chosen area of 2300 hectares is located at the confluence of the Uruguai and Irani rivers. Its northern border is less than one kilometre from the southern border of the Toldo Chimbangue TI. Among the criteria used for choosing this area were its proximity to the city centre, the presence of natural divisions such as rivers and water courses, and the rugged landscape with hills and peaks mentioned in myths. 64 families involved in both agriculture and urban activities live in Aldeia Condá.

Each of these cases provide ample possibilities for analysis. Of particular importance are reflections on the conflicts between Indians and smallholders and their local political ramifications. Apart from inter-ethnic tensions which characterize the regional indigenous context, the territorial situation of these communities provides an important socio-environmental dimension. In effect, the demarcation of these three "new" indigenous lands in the west of the state opens up the potential for establishing a Kaingang

territory of approximately 11,000ha covering the Irani and Uruguai river basins. The definitive demarcation of these TIs will not only facilitate the reorganization of these communities but will also contribute to the recovery of an important area which has undergone environmental degradation through years of settlement. Important processes of environmental recovery have already taken place in the Toldo Chimbanguê, Toldo Pinhal and Aldeia Condá lands. A reduction in the amount of land used for cultivation has contributed to this recovery, and this tendency has been particularly motivated by the restrictions set in place by indigenous leaders who prioritize securing environmental quality for future generations. To a certain extent, environmental recovery provides a path toward the recovery of past settings, traditional settings. Contrary to common sense, the Kaingang in the indigenous lands west of Santa Catarina are potential partners for environmental policies.

In order to understand the meaning behind the Kaingang perspective on environmental conservation and recovery, it is necessary to recognize that for these indigenous peoples tradition is based on ecological foundations. The settlement process involving the destruction of forests and logging did much more than transform the environment: it damaged the Kaingang way of life, culture and identity. Recovering the forest means recovering a part of their identity and the settings of their traditions. In this sense, the Kaingang understand that the right to their traditional lands is linked to the right to their traditional environment.

Indigenous “Tradition”: reflections on the nature-society relation among the Kaingang

“I do not want to re-invent the Kiki, I want it to be like the system of our elders, when the Kiki was made in the forest”. These were the first words of the ex-tribal leader when, at the start of the 2000s, he spoke about valuing the indigenous tradition among the Kaingang of Aldeia Condá. To understand this affirmation is a challenge; accepting this challenge would certainly help us to understand how these Indians view their present condition in relation to the ‘indigenous tradition’ and nature. It will also provide us with some understanding of their complex relationship with the ‘white society’.

The Kiki: abandonment and recovery

The *Kiki*, or the *Kikikoi ritual* (eat the *kiki*), or even, the Kaingang death cult, also known as the *fandango of the Indians*, has been described as the centre of Kaingang religious lifeⁱⁱⁱ. Historical records confirm that in the past this ritual was carried out across many regions. Its disappearance (and it could not be otherwise) is linked to the civilizing project (in other words, the national indigenous policy) which has marked the recent history of these indigenous groups. Since the 1940s, with the establishment of indigenous outposts within Kaingang indigenous lands, the *Kiki* has been constantly repressed. This meant not only that the drinking sessions marking the final stage of the ritual were discouraged but, above all, that the organizational capacity of the indigenous tradition was undermined.

It could be argued that the 'Day of the Indian' celebrations replaced the festive parts of the ritual^{iv}. The *Kiki* was re-initiated in the Xapecó TI in the mid-1970s as a result of the efforts of indigenous NGO entities, in particular CIMI, who considered this cultural expression to be a core element of indigenous organization in terms of achieving self-determination^v. Over the last 35 years the *Kiki* has been performed, though not without changes. To a certain extent, the former Aldeia Condá tribal leader is right: the *Kiki* was re-invented to play a strategic-political role in the history of the Kaingang in the region, becoming an emblem of their ethnicity.

The ritual process

Performing the *Kiki*, even in the current context, allows trained observers to identify the interconnections between ritual experience with beliefs and practices related to the Kaingang dualist cosmology^{vi}. The ritual involves a performance by two groups consisting of individuals belonging to each of the half-clans or moieties, *Kamé* and *Kairu*, which make up Kaingang society. Membership to each moiety is defined patrilineally. For Kaingang sociability, patrilineal descent is a rule complemented by exogamous moieties. As Telêmaco Borba recorded in the origin myth collected in 1882 "first Cayuru married the daughters of the Camés and then the Camés married Cayuru daughters". As a counterweight to the rule of paternal descent, the Kaingang attach a very high value to the father/son-in-law relationship. The son-in-law owes his father-in-law absolute respect, very often making his home in his house. Thus, Kaingang social life operates through a constant fusion of moiety clans. During the *Kiki*, however, the moieties act separately, forming 'mythological or classificatory consanguine' groups, or actual embodied groups. The relationship between the groups which perform the ritual is based on complementarity and asymmetry. The relationship of the *Kamé* and *Kairu* moieties is, to an extent, acted out by the ritual groups.

The *Kiki* ritual depends on the request of the relatives of a person who died in the previous year or years. It must involve the dead from both moieties. The ritual process is characterized by a meeting of shamans around three fires lit on different days on the land of the organizer which serves as a 'dance space' or a 'fire space'. The first fire usually occurs two months before the date of the third and final fire. The Kaingang state that the ritual should take place between January and June. The first fire precedes the cutting (felling) of the Araucaria pine tree (*Fág - Araucária angustifolia*), which will serve as a *konkéi* (trough), the vessel used to hold the drink which gives the ritual its name - *Kiki* (around 70 litres of honey and 300 litres of water). The second fire takes place the following night and precedes the *konkéi* preparations.

The third fire, and most important stage of the ritual, brings together a greater number of people and events. Around two months after the drink is placed in the *konkéi*, six fires are lit - three by the *Kamé* and three by the *Kairu* - parallel to the *konkéi*. The shamans remain all night around the fires, accompanied by other members of their respective moieties, chanting songs and prayers. During this stage certain women, the *péin*, paint the participants' faces (with dyes made by mixing coal and water). Its purpose is to protect participants from the spirits of the opposite moiety. These are the women who are

ready to make contact with the objects of those deceased, without exposing themselves to the risks this entails. The shamans belonging to one moiety pray, sing and play wind instruments (carved out of bamboo [*taquara bambusa*] - *turus*) and maracas (made from gourds and grains of corn - *xic-xir*). At daybreak, the groups move from the dancing space to the cemetery, where once again prayers are said for the dead. When they return to the dancing space the groups devote themselves to dancing around the fires. The ritual is concluded when the drink, the *Kiki*, is consumed.

The *Kiki* can be defined as society's effort to affirm the power the world of the living has over the dangers associated with a proximity to the dead. In these rituals the Kaingang mix together themes such as the complementarity of the moieties, nomination, integration among different communities, territory control and a myth-historical interaction with nature. It is not enough to merely be aware of these themes, they must be capable of effectively inter-connecting social life so that the *Kiki* can be considered as an expression of tradition. Otherwise, the *Kiki* will merely be, as the former chief of Aldeia Condá remarked, an invention, a sort of theatre^{vii}.

Complementarity between the Kamé and Kairu moieties

Similarly to what happens in other Jê groups, the Kaingang moieties, *Kamé* and *Kairu*, are associated, respectively, to a number of characteristics: day and night, sun and moon, high and low, east and west, long and round, strong and weak... This relationship is clearly expressed in their mythology which provides a formula for classifying man and other natural beings. In effect, this is a dualist cosmology in which people, animals, plants and supernatural beings are conceived as belonging to one of the two halves.

This classification system comes into full operation during the performance of the *Kiki*. However, there are ramifications of this dualist conception at all levels of social organization. As previously mentioned, marriages should bring together individuals from the two moieties. Thus, within each family unit, there are *Kamés* and *Kairus* who maintain a complementary and asymmetrical relationship. It could be said that complementarity is a rule and asymmetry, a form. The clearest example of this asymmetry is the father/son-in-law relationship. The son-in-law must work for his father-in-law, and often he must live in his father-in-law's home. The father-in-law is not only an older man, the father of his wife, he is a member of the other moiety. This relationship, the relationship between the *Iambré* is a condition for living in society and it is the most valued expression of the traditional way of life for the Kaingang.

The complementarity between individuals of opposite moieties is not limited to the ritual and family context. This dualist conception encompasses other domains of social life, as is the case with the Indigenous Leadership, which must necessarily consist of individuals from both moieties. This formula is also applied to production: *it is better to work in cultivations with your iambré, as the work of each man complements the other and there are no arguments*. Complementarity is also important in hunting. The *iambré*, in this case also known as companions, go together to the forest to hunt and to collect honey. When one of them discovers honey high up in the trees, the other must climb up to ga-

ther it (the best honey should be saved for the father-in-law of the person who gathered it). *Even playing football is better with your iambré*. Complementarity between moieties is simultaneously an ideology, a theory on mankind and a formula for sociability.

Land control and the interaction with nature

During the various stages of the ritual the Kaingang demonstrate their knowledge of the land. They also express specific conceptions of interaction with nature. The season in which the ritual occurs - the ritual time - is the first evidence that the *Kiki* brings together culturally specific conceptions of land and the environment. Though the ritual process begins in January or February, its most important stage take place in April or May, namely, the third fire. This time of the year is marked by the harvests of bean and corn and *pinhão* [the fruit of the araucaria pine tree] gathering; foods which are consumed during the ritual^{viii}.

The ritual is based around preparing and consuming the drink from which it takes its name (*Kiki*), felling an araucaria tree (*Fág*) and making the trough (*konkéi*). The felling of the araucaria is accompanied by prayers used to *calm* the spirit of the araucaria pine tree. It could be considered the ritual object par excellence. Like other natural beings, the pine tree belongs to one of the moieties: It is a *Kamé*. However, as a ritual object, it also contains the two moieties. The bottom half is *Kairu* and the top half is *Kamé*. The Kaingang also use the araucaria's wooden knots to keep the bonfires alight during song and prayer nights; these ritual fires can only be made using this part of the tree. Araucaria pine knot ashes are used to produce the dye used for painting the faces of the *Kamé* moiety who gather around the fire (the *Kairu* individuals are painted with the ashes of the 'sete sangrias' [*cuphea cathargensis*], a shrub classified as *Kairu*)^{ix}.

Honey is a fundamental ingredient in the production of the ritual drink. In the past, many different types of honey were mixed to prepare *Kiki*. Beehives, like the araucaria forests, were extremely important to define Kaingang lands. When describing the Kaingang's large collective houses (in 1882), Telêmaco Borba stated that the site for building a house was chosen when a "place with plentiful game and honey" was found (BORBA, 1908, 1882).

The wind instruments which accompany prayers, the *turus*, are made from *taquara* bamboo. Although not used for delimiting territories, they are used to mark time. Today it is still common to hear older Kaingang describing their age in reference to the 'bamboo drying period', an event which occurs approximately every 30 years.

The association of ritual elements with territorial and natural features is not restricted to araucaria pines, honey, water and to the material used to make musical instruments. The origin and the content of ritual prayers and dances demonstrate the original role attributed to nature in Kaingang culture. The Twag shaman (68 years) speaks about the content of and the way in which the Kaingang learn their prayers:

"My great grandfathers actually learned them from these small forest animals. These wild animals were once people, you know? They spoke,

you know, and they told the things, the learnt, so they were listening and learning the prayers of the small animals... All of these forest animals were people. That is, the people are from the forest, right. And it came, as the century came, with water... From there came the cry of these animals. ...The Kiki themselves come from these forest animals, who were the first people, right. So others started to learn, they learnt and passed on to their children". (first-hand account, as told to the author).

This shaman's account takes us directly into Kaingang myths, where the idea of an animal figure who speaks and acts like man and has supernatural powers is recurrent. Kaingang cosmology, in keeping with other Amerindian cosmologies, reveals that the boundaries between nature and culture do not coincide with the boundaries between the human and non-human^x. In fact, from a mythological perspective, the Kaingang survived the great flood with the help of the *saracura* [*Aramides saracura*]. According to the origin myth collected by Telêmaco Borba (1882), after the great flood only the top of one mountain range remained. The *Kamé* and *Kairu* brothers sheltered inside this mountain. The earth's surface was revived by the *saracura* who gathered tree branches and left them around the mountain. Thus, the mythological brothers *Kamé* and *Kairu* were able to return to the surface where they created the animals and the plants and populated the earth. The prayers and songs tell the story of the animals in the context of this creation myth. The dances which take place at the end of the ritual, before opening the trough and consuming the *Kiki*, express the same conception. The choreographies are imitations of the movements of animals, accompanied by the cries of 'forest animals'. The prayers and dances of the *Kiki* are, in effect, a direct reference to the mythological time of the Creation, when natural beings and the fundamental social rules were established: after creating the animals and plants, *Kamé* and *Kairu* decided that their children should marry each other.

As we have seen, animals sit at the centre of the Kaingang universe of ritual and mythology. The same thing is true of the shamans (*kuiã*), who gain their power of cure through 'companions' or animal guides. To initiate the relationship with the 'animal companion' the person aspiring to become a *kuiã* must go to the virgin forest, cut some palm leaves and fashion them into vessels to hold water in order to attract the 'companion'. A few days later they must go back to the forest to find out which animal has drunk the water. If he himself then drinks and bathes in this water he will take on the animal as a 'companion' and guide. The power of the *kuiã* depends on the type of 'animal companion' he has. The strongest, guided by the *mig* (ocelot), will be able to revive people whose spirits were seduced by the dead, by travelling to the *Numbé* (an intermediate place between the worlds of the living and the dead).

As well as the power of cure, *kuiãs* develop the ability to see what will happen to those who live in the group. In the event of a fight between rival groups - as the old Kaingang responsible for the organization of the *Kiki* ritual in the Xapecó TI explained to me - the *kuiã* knows when their opponents are preparing an attack. If the group under attack also has a *kuiã*, he will be aware of the imminent attack, "they have a private conversation, like a telephone call".

Therefore, the *kuiã* and their guides or ‘companions’ occupy a strategic position in the organization of the political and social life of Kaingang communities. The respect of the *kuiã* for their animals is something very distinctive. Though the Kaingang are traditional hunters, the *kuiã* cannot hunt their animals. However, other members of the group are allowed to hunt these and other animals. Though animals are part of the moieties system, they can be hunted by anyone: *Kamé* men can hunt both *Kamé* and *Kairu* animals; it does not matter. However, there is a mark of respect concerning people and hunting. Whenever someone gathers fruits from the forest the first fruits must be thrown back into the forest and the name of the animal which was or will be hunted must be called out. It is thought that, in this way, there will never be a shortage of animals and fruits in the forest.

The animal ‘companions’ teach and have taught the *kuiã* about using ‘forest medicines’. This knowledge is not only the concern of the *kuiã*, many others have knowledge of the ‘forest medicines’. There are countless categories of people with knowledge of forest medicine, including: curers, medicine people and midwives. As an old *kuiã* from the Palmas indigenous land claimed, *everything that exists in nature is a medicine*. In order for plants to be considered a ‘forest medicine’ they have to be found in the forest and gathered from the forest, they cannot be cultivated. Even plants growing on the roadside are deemed to be inappropriate for producing medicine. Plants must be in the forest in order to retain their power, and the resultant medicine, its effectiveness.

Final considerations

We can now try to explain the words of the former Aldeia Condá tribal leader and move forward in our understanding of the relationship between the Kaingang and environmental recovery, that is, the perspective the Kaingang have on their territorial and environmental rights. To recall these words: “I do not want to re-invent the *Kiki*, I want it to be like the system of our elders, when the *Kiki* was made in the forest”. Indeed, the virgin forest occupies a strategic place in Kaingang mythology, ideology and sociology. To a certain extent, they see themselves as people of the forest, in fact, this is the etymology of the word ‘Kaingang’: ‘Forest people’. ‘Forest people’ who, living by a set of sociability rules, reproduce in historical time the mythical creation - man no longer creates the animals as the mythological heroes *Kamé* and *Kairu* did, but they have a relationship with them; man no longer creates the rules of marriage, but they respect them. In other words, nature and society, though fused together in mythical time, interact in historical time. Social life is incomplete without a continuous interaction with the virgin forest. The ideal spatial layout of Kaingang homes expresses this concept: the house is at the centre, surrounded by cultivation areas which in turn are surrounded by the virgin forest^{xi}. Their ritual chronology also expresses this concept: the araucaria pine is placated in the forest and transported to the dance space; and here the spirit of death is separated from the living, and through prayers, is sent to the cemetery.

These are concepts which interact in a complementary way in Kaingang social reproduction. The *Kiki* ritual, more than mere Kaingang mythological theatre, is the moment of reaffirming this equation and can only fully take place when there is certainty in

terms of the status of their territorial organization. Until now, the indigenous population of Aldeia Condá have been living one side of this equation, the home side, that of the living - after all, the ancestors of this group carried out the *Kiki* where Chapecó central square is today, a place which was *exclusively forest*. However, this reality does not mean that these traditional conceptions have become simply objects of the past. On the contrary, the memory of their ancestors' system is an authentic link to the sociability of the present. It is necessary, therefore, from the point of view of the indigenous population of Aldeia Condá, to restore the elements and to balance this equation, in order to reactivate the *Kiki* ritual. The Kaingang are not interested in using the *Kiki* as an instrument of ethnic identity - there is no doubt about their ethnicity. Their struggle is concerned with securing the conditions by which they are able to live in their traditional way in terms of land, socio-economic organization and the environment. The performance of the *Kiki* will perhaps be the outcome of this struggle.

And this has been the focus of the Kaingang struggles in the west of Santa Catarina since the process of recovering their lands begun, over thirty years ago. The recovery of their traditional lands is therefore seen not only as the recovery of their territorial heritage but, above all, as the re-establishment of the ecological roots which underpin and secure their social reproduction. For the Aldeia Condá Kaingang and their neighbours in the Irani River basin, conquering their territorial rights will only be fully realized if and when their environmental and ethno-environmental rights are effectively secured.

An understanding, albeit incipient, of the concepts and experiences which connect the Kaingang to nature allow us to claim that a recovery of a Kaingang territory which integrates the Toldo Pinhal, Toldo Chimbangue and Aldeia Condá indigenous lands, will be a significant socio-environmental gain. Not only will there be an area of approximately 11,000 ha saved from intensive agribusiness exploration, but we will also see a setting in which indigenous knowledge is revitalized which, in turn, can greatly contribute to building a model of environmental management which integrates ecology and society.

Notes

- i As Serrano (1994) points out "these settlers initiated the Sem Terra (Landless) struggle in Rio Grande do Sul. Camped next to Nonoai, in a place known as Encruzilhada Natalino, they underwent a process of political education and recognized themselves as the victims of a perverse land ownership system, a paradigmatic action of the Landless Peasants' Movement."
- ii These indigenous lands are identified on the map by the following numbers: 15, 26, 27 and 28.
- iii References to the *Kiki* ritual can be found in 19th and early 20th century records, for example in Telêmaco Borba in 1882 and Nimuendaju in 1913. Researchers in the first half of the 20th century also reported on the central importance of this ritual. In 1937, Herbert Baldus defined the cult of the dead as being at the heart of Kaingang religious life.
- iv The Day of the Indian was introduced by the Getúlio Vargas government in 1943, when Marechal Rondon took part in the First Inter-American Indigenous Congress in Mexico. 19th April marks the ritual's festive period and is associated with the harvest of the pinhão, the fruit of the araucaria pine, taking place before winter.
- v The intense movement for self-determination and demarcation of indigenous lands led by CIMI instigated renewed efforts for political networking. For the Kaingang of the Xaçupé Indigenous Outpost, the *Kiki* represented one of the most legitimate rituals, strongly distinguishing Indians from settlers.
- vi This dualism is a central theme in the ethnology of groups belonging to the Macro-Jê linguistic branch, as demonstrated by comparative studies conducted by the Harvard Central Brazil Project in the 1970s and 1980s, coordinated by the anthropologist, David Maybury Lewis.

- vii On the ritual process see Veiga (1992a and b), Crépeaux (1997), Kurtz de Almeida (1998 and 2004), Fernandes (2003) and Fernandes, Kurtz de Almeida e Sacchi (1999).
- viii On the relationship between production, consumption and ritual see Crépeau 1995 "Économie et Rituel".
- ix On the demarcation of traditional Kaingang territories associated to araucaria forests, see Itala Becker 1977.
- x Kaingang conceptions are an example of what Descola (1996) defined as modes of definition and relation between humans and non-humans. He argues that the nature-culture dichotomy is an inadequate western concept with which to understand Amerindian forms of distributing human attributes.
- xi On Kaingang spatiality see Kurtz de Almeida 1998.

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THE KAINGANG PERSPECTIVES ON LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS IN THE SOUTH OF BRAZIL

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Abstract: This article discusses aspects of culture-nature relations among indigenous groups in Southern Brazil. Based on the ethnography of Kaingang groups in the state of Santa Catarina, conceptions of culture and nature are considered taking into account the relationship between politics and cosmology. More specifically, this article focuses on the analysis of two different kinds of ethnographic sources, namely: the historical processes of recovery of indigenous lands; and, the references to nature expressed in mythological narratives and ritual processes. Indeed, in the recent history of the Kaingang, the struggle for “indigenous tradition” has triggered scenes and scenarios from the past. These scenarios not only involve inter-ethnic resistance, but also specific notions of nature, culture and environmental recovery. In summary, this article argues that the link between political and cosmological conceptions forms the very basis of the indigenous perspective concerning their territorial and environmental rights.

Keywords: Kaingang, Culture, Nature, Politics, Cosmology

Resumo: Este artigo discute aspectos das relações cultura-natureza entre grupos indígenas no sul do Brasil. Com base na etnografia sobre os grupos kaingang do Oeste do estado de Santa Catarina, as concepções de cultura e natureza são consideradas a partir da aproximação entre a política e a cosmologia. Especificamente, são analisados os processos de retomada de terras indígenas e as referências à natureza expressas nas narrativas mitológicas e na experiência ritual. De fato, na história recente dos Kaingang a luta pela “tradição indígena” tem acionado cenas e cenários do passado. Cenários estes que envolvem não apenas a trajetória de resistência dos grupos, mas também noções específicas de natureza, cultura e recuperação ambiental. Em síntese, o artigo pretende demonstrar que a articulação entre política e concepções cosmológicas está na base da perspectiva indígena sobre seus direitos territoriais e ambientais.

Palavras-chave: Kaingang, Cultura, Natureza, Política, Cosmologia

Resumen: Este artículo discute varios aspectos de las relaciones cultura-naturaleza entre grupos indígenas en el sur de Brasil. Teniendo como base la etnografía de grupos kaingang que habitan en el Oeste del estado de Santa Catarina, las concepciones de cultura y naturaleza son consideradas a partir de la aproximación entre política y cosmología. Concretamente, serán analizados los procesos de retomada de las tierras indígenas y las referencias a la naturaleza presentes en las narrativas mitológicas y en la experiencia ritual. De hecho, en la historia reciente de los Kaingang la lucha por la “tradición indígena” ha movilizó escenas y escenarios del pasado. Escenarios estos que envuelven no solo la trayectoria de resistencia de los grupos, sino también nociones específicas de naturaleza, cultura y recuperación ambiental. En síntesis, este artículo pretende demostrar que la articulación entre política y concepciones cosmológicas está en la base de la perspectiva indígena sobre sus derechos territoriales y ambientales.

Palavras-Chave: Kaingang, Cultura, Naturaleza, Política, Cosmología
