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“Living with joy”: history, sociability, and alterity in Kaingang ritual life

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Abstract

This article analyses the role of Kaingang ritual life in understanding the social, political, and cosmological dimensions of their relations to alterity, which requires contextualizing sources and historical processes. I reflect on aspects of the funeral rites in historical sources, reported along with war “feasts”, both of which concern intervillage life. These rituals hence play a fundamental role in understanding the performances carried out in the *Kujá* Meeting (Morro do Osso Village) and in the *Kiki* Ritual (Xapecó Indigenous Land). The ethnography focuses on the rules of etiquette and the ritual prestations that guide relations between the exogamous moieties. Inspired by Americanist debates, one of its aims is to highlight the place of laughter as an alternative to relations of avoidance, arguing that humour in these societies has a range of mediatory roles, particularly in what concerns the incorporation of external powers and foreigners into the interior of the collectivity.

Key words: Kaingang; ritual; avoidance; joking; alterity.

“Viver com alegria”: história, sociabilidade e alteridade na vida ritual Kaingang

Resumo

Este artigo analisa a importância da vida ritual kaingang para a compreensão das dimensões social, política e cosmológica na relação com a alteridade, o que implica situar as fontes e os processos históricos. Para tanto, faço uma reflexão atentando para aspectos dos rituais funerários nas fontes históricas, registrados em paralelo ou comparáveis com as “festas” de guerra, ambos tematizando a vida aldeã e interaldeã e, por isso, fundamentais para a compreensão das performances realizadas no Encontro dos *kujá* (Aldeia Morro do Osso) e no Ritual do *kiki* (Terra Indígena Xapecó). A etnografia destaca as regras de etiqueta e as prestações rituais que orientam as relações entre as metades exogâmicas, inclusive, para retomar, inspirados no debate americanista, a dimensão do riso, como alternativa as relações de evitação, sustentando a argumentação de que o humor nestas sociedades realiza diversas mediações, notadamente, àquelas referentes à incorporação de poderes exteriores e de estrangeiros no interior do coletivo.

Palavras-chave: Kaingang; ritual; relações de evitação; jocosidade; alteridade.

“Living with joy”: history, sociability, and alterity in Kaingang ritual life

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Introduction

The Kaingang speak a language from the Gê family. With Xokleng, it constitutes the Southern Gê linguistic group.¹ Following received anthropological convention, I use ‘Kaingang’ to designate the people or ethnic group. The word is derived from the ethnonym *Kanhgág*, which means ‘people’, ‘person’ and ‘Kaingang Indigenous person’. The Kaingang currently inhabit villages in four Brazilian states: Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, Paraná, and São Paulo. They total approximately 34,000 people.

This article seeks to restore the Indigenous point of view on their historicity, identifying correspondences between the content of their oral traditions, their social practices, and historical sources. This conception conjoins mythical (*gufãg*) and historical (*vãsy*) times, as is evident in the myths related to *Kamë e Kanhrú*, the ancestral twins, with whom the Kaingang share characteristics by virtue of the fact that they each provide the name for one of the two exogamous moieties (“marks”), motivating discursive practices and ritual performances that convey village life in current times (*üri*).

The first part of the article establishes correlations between the historical sources and the ethnography, situating them in the context of debates concerning intra- and inter-village relations in what pertains to rules of etiquette guided by reciprocity between the exogamous moieties. I then turn to the ethnological literature on humour as an alternative to relations of avoidance and its central role in the rituals of numerous Indigenous peoples, particularly Gê-speaking peoples, showing how, in this ethnographic context, humour also destabilizes hierarchies and actualizes relations of difference between villages, women and men, humans and nonhumans, and the Kaingang and non-Indigenous people.

The second part of the article is a comparative investigation of ethnographies of the *Kujá* Meeting at the Morro do Osso village, and the *Kiki* Ritual in the Xapecó Indigenous Land, in which ceremonial specialists mediate the relation between the living and the world of the dead (*nugme*).²

1 The orthography used here follows that of Wiesemann’s (2002) bilingual Kaingang-Portuguese dictionary. I use the umlat on e, i, u and y instead of the tilde due to the limitations of my text editor.

2 Morro do Osso Village and the Xapecó Indigenous Land are located, respectively, in the coastal region of Rio Grande do Sul and in the highlands of Santa Catarina. Despite their different historical processes of colonization, which have had effects on the landholding titles to these villages, the Kaingang population of these two regions shares the same ethos (language, dances, among other practices that shed light on the rituals analysed below). The Xapecó Indigenous Land was demarcated in 1901, through the efforts of chief Vaikre, as payment for services rendered by the Kaingang in building a telegraph line. It currently has an extension of 15,623 hectares, and was legally ratified in 1991. Morro do Osso village was founded in April of 2004. However, the Kaingang had long used the area to gather raw material for craftwork, often coming into conflict with the administration of the natural park that covers approximately 300 hectares of the area they claim as theirs. The area is in the municipality of Porto Alegre, which prohibited Indigenous use of the natural species used in craftwork (such as seeds, vines, and bamboos). I wrote Anthropological Reports (2012; 2014) through a partnership between FUNAI and UNESCO which provided relevant historical data on Kaingang occupation of the coast of Rio Grande do Sul. These reports are not yet available to the public-at-large, since they remain under the analysis of the overseeing agency.

Cosmology, history, and Kaingang village life: aspects of humour in Americanist ethnology

Kaingang cosmology confers a central place to dualism as a way of classifying society, nature and supernature. This dualist cosmology is evident in the exogamous norm of the patrilineal moieties, which are taught to children from an early age. They are told “stories from the *gufãg*” (mythical time) that show how the dualistic division of the cosmos is intimately tied to social practices regarding marriage. According to myth, the Kaingang person should act toward a person of the other moiety as Sun and Moon act toward each other, that is “they cannot quarrel, but instead marry”. This is clear in the following passage, narrated by the bilingual teacher Dorvalino Reféi Cardoso:

Sun was stronger and punched Moon in the eye, the latter becoming weaker. This happened because they were from the same mark, which is why they fought. After moon became weaker he asked what he was going to do now that he could no longer work because he was not at his full capacity. They thus decided that Moon would light up the night while Sun would light up the day. From that day forward, Moon became of another mark, and they never fought again. Sun is the opposite of Moon but they complement each other, Sun comes to destroy Moon and bring life. Sun burns plants and Moon brings dew for the plants...

As Baptista da Silva (2002) observes, this passage refers to the Kaingang emphasis on “the symbolic fertility (and efficacy) of conjoining opposite principles”, which is observable in the mythological and ritual relations between Kamë and Kanhrú, which involve various domains of the cosmos and the intentionalities of its myriad beings:

Kaingang rhetoric ideally tends to frequently emphasize the complementarity of, on the one hand, the moieties, and, on the other, society and nature, underscoring, respectively, the apparently [diametrical and] symmetrical relation of opposites and marking the possibility of [concentric and asymmetrical] relations between differently conceived worlds. In truth, this dialectical principle continually marks Kaingang rhetoric, pointing to the “aversion and horror of the conjunction of like things, for they are sterile” (Veiga 2000: 79) [...]. In brief, male [and female] sibling-in-lawship, complementarity of opposites, or, better still, the possibility of establishing relations between opposites, seems to be a founding principle of the Kaingang (Baptista da Silva, 2002: 192-195; my additions).

After marriage, the couple should behave in accordance to the “law” of the village, whether in the context of the extended family and the domestic group or in that of the village and their agglomerations. This ‘village law’ can be summed up by Kaingang people as follows: the relation between moieties is said to be one between “those who have a profound respect for each other and only want each other’s well-being”. In the domestic sphere, the *jamré* (brothers-in-law) “all but give food directly into each other’s mouths” and “never speak hard [*vi tar*; where does the word *vi* mean speak; and *tar* is strong, hard] one to the other”. But if someone makes some “mistake”, he or she should be punished by someone of the “same mark”, who can “speak hard” and make it clear that a mistake has been made. If the matter becomes very serious, it must be settled in the public sphere, where the village “council” – the Kaingang legal forum – is also directed by a councillor (*jãvã fa*) of the “same mark”. In this context, a partner that “is very, very fond of his *jamré*” will say that he will take the punishment on his behalf (be arrested, for example). Hence the village “council” may choose not to punish, and instead to emphasise that the *jamré*, who “is very fond of him, is an innocent person who will pay for a crime he did not commit”. Otherwise, if rules are not followed, it is necessary to make use of “jails” and man or woman can be sent to the “jail” of the village in which they live, or of another village. The leaders of the other moiety support the decisions of their own *jamré*, but take great care to not disrespect the accused *jamré*, stating their opinion in a solemn tone: “I will not even say much because you are my *jamré*”.

Thus, the village council, in which the “authorities” are immersed, underscores the constitutive activities of the Kaingang collectivity, in the guise of the values of “living well” (*kanhgág há kar*) and of “thinking well” (*kanhgágjykre*). The chiefs, who lack the power of coercion, can only mediate conflicts and make people become engaged in political activities as part of a wider collective through a series of techniques and rituals that actualize the various dimensions of reciprocity. Indeed, the rules of etiquette cut across the domestic and public-ceremonial spheres, featuring even in contexts in which various villages gather, as I describe now through an ethnography of the *Kujá* Meeting and *Kiki* Ritual.

On these two occasions, emphasising relations with the world of the dead, the exogamous moieties render ceremonial services with the habitual solemnity of relations of avoidance; however, they also carry out “feasts of joy” (*mã sin ser*), which is how they refer to humorous performances, through which, by way of laughter and mockery, they carve a social space in which the *jamré* (brothers-in-law) joke with each other, and in which the *jamréfi* (sisters-in-law) are included in joking relations and removed from the laughable, thereby establishing the contours of society

Before moving forward with the ethnography, I would like to take note of the traditional *kanhir* game and some aspects of humour discernible in historical sources. My aim is to situate these aspects of humour as an alternative to the relations of avoidance or factionalism, emphasizing that their expression involves the management of differences, playing with the feelings of the target of the initial mockery of hostility, so that, in the end, everything turns out to be just a game. Furthermore, I pay attention to the funerary rites, mentioned in these registers alongside or as comparisons with the war “feasts”, thematizing their importance for village and inter-village life, which is fundamental to an understanding of the performances in the meeting of the Morro do Osso Village and the ritual in the Xapecó Indigenous Land.

By highlighting the importance of intra- and inter-village relations in the context of the 19th Century Capuchin missions in the state of Paraná, Amoroso (2014) analyses two situations in which the importance of funerary rites and war “feasts” in Kaingang sociocosmology become evident: the *kiki* ritual held for chief Arepquembe and the *kanjire* (*kanhir*, games). Amoroso allows us to compare the analysis developed here to the rituals and performances which will be described later. This is particularly clear by highlighting the emphasis Nimuendajú affords to three aspects of ritual (even if briefly described as ‘ceremonial classes’) which include participants from different planes of multi-communal social relations: the moieties, the Toldos guests, and the entities that inhabit the cosmos, the animals linked to the moieties, which is tantamount to opening up an analysis of Kaingang ceremonial life to its sociocosmic dimension.³

According to Amoroso, these many villages, involved in an exchange network of “significant geographical dimensions”, reveal a ritual facet that anchors villages to those who visit them sporadically during feasts. The “death of the chief is an occasion for celebrating the *kiki-koi*, the Kaingang funerary rite, a ceremony briefly registered by the mendicant friars (... [quoting Cavasso]: Thus Began the feasts of the Coroados, being present for the first time six tame Coroados from Guarapuava and one woman, those from the colony (from Jataí), those from Ivaí, and from the hinterlands. They ended on the 5th of April [1872]” (Amoroso, 2014: 191-193). In what concerns the game of *kandjire* – which, having been prohibited by the mission, serves as an example of the dynamic of alliances and conflicts in the network of inter-village relations – Amoroso reveals the importance

3 According to Amoroso, Nimuendajú notes the value of Borba’s study (1908), but observes limitations to his analysis of factionalism based on the relationship between politics and kinship, in that he failed to make headways in an analysis of the Kaingang clan system, composed of moieties. With the studies of Nimuendajú, who lived with the Indigenous people of Ivaí hinterlands years after Borba, we encounter modern standards of ethnography among the Kaingang and Guarani. In this work we find, along with a record of the *kiki* ritual – *kiki* being “the name of drink made of honey and water [which] was served in this, the most important of Kaingang rituals, the *kiki-koi* (“eating kiki”) – the ethnographer’s knowledge of the Kaingang language, which allowed him to see not only elements of Kaingang social segmentation in their rituals, but also aspects of their spirituality.

of “this commonplace male club-game, in which women took part as assistants, and which was a friendly conflict, to which “other lodges” could be invited (...) [and which thus] remained within a space wherein rivalry was exercised, conflicts between settled groups and visiting groups were encouraged, as between those close to the colony” (Amoroso, 2014: 185-188).

Mabilde’s report, dating from the 19th Century, at a time immediately prior to the establishment of villages in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, compares funerary rites to the war feasts, conveying certain common characteristics to intra- and inter-village relations in Paran . These characteristics are also a feature of the performances I observed, and which I analyse in this article, insofar as they clearly express corporality (as a set of affects, attributes of their humanity) through paintings, weapons, musical instruments, situating a warrior ethos before figures of alterity (the *jamr *, the dead, the enemy, the others, the whites):

An identical impression (when compared to burials) is caused in us by the feasts, when they celebrate their feats of war – the only feasts they deem worthy of consideration (...). In the date set aside for the feast, all of the subordinate tribes gathered at the place where the chief had his ranch. Men bring their bows and arrows and their clubs and guard them close at hand. The women, who brought the required food, light fires around the ranch of the main chief and between the other ranches (Mabilde, 1983: 118).

This, in tandem with the factional conflicts, “harmony reigns among them” as the author describes through the wider gathering in times of feasts and the traditional “visits” carried out by the “ambassadors” between the “ranches” of the “subordinate tribes” and the “ranch of the main chief”. Yet, in considering the “character” and “temperament” of the Coroados (Kaingang), Mabilde confers special attention to their stern “punishments”, through which we can discern certain features of Kaingang humour that were related to processes of social inclusion and exclusion, as indeed they are now. According to Mabilde:

This punishment is all the more humiliating every time the punished party executes it, and passes in the presence of others, carrying fruits or logs [cf. Mabilde: this service they consider proper to women] he is the object of a scorn that is very hard to resist, considering the proud character of these savages (...) When the Coroados mock their companion, who, because of his disobedience, is forced to carry fruits and water and logs to the ranch, the women are the worst, those who take most pleasure in the fact and insist that men mistreat their companion and punish him with clubbings whenever, unable to withstand any longer, he responds to the insults that his old companions throw at his face (Mabilde, 1983: 82).

Mabilde proceeds with the theme of humour (or, yet: “temperament”) by asking chief Braga a question that, as we can see, is marked by the relation between the genders in what concerns social rules:

We asked the same chief what he did when the women disobeyed his orders. He laughed, at first, and told as that, when they did not obey, the other women hit them many times, and that that was enough for the order to be obeyed (Mabilde, 1983: 83).

I propose that this record of “punishments” (or, better yet, of the “law” of etiquette) and of the expressions related to humour and/or games (*kanhir*) can be interpreted through a sociocosmology that motivates and/or structures intra- and inter-village relations in present times. To this end, along with the various dimensions of reciprocity in which the “authorities” are immersed, it is worth reflecting on some aspects of the ethnological debate on the place of humour as an element of mediation and reflection on power in the Indigenous societies of lowland South America.

Clastres proposes that we understand humour in the key of (the fear of) power, drawing attention to the cathartic function of myth in apprehending the real world:

Here we see emerge a cathartic function of the myth, so to speak: in its narration it frees one of the Indians' passions, the secret obsession to laugh at what one fears. It devalues on the plane of language a thing that cannot be taken lightly in reality, and, manifesting in laughter an equivalent of death, it instructs us that, among the Indians, ridicule kills (Clastres, 2003: 162).

According to Clastres, this laughing at (the fear of) power is intimately associated with alterity, as indicated by the Chulupi myth of shamans and jaguars: in daily life they are effectively dangerous beings, but in myth they present themselves in a contrary version, in a way that it is possible to dump their real attributes and to symbolically transform them through laughter and myth into "village idiots", or, in a different manner, to actually kill them. In possession of a repertoire of humour, they have access to a content the main characteristic of which is to laugh at power and to take cognizance of the world in which they are embedded, that is, one in which jaguars and shamans are related in a mythological set, conveying that both predatory animal and shaman have powers that threaten social life.

Sharing this presupposition, Overing (2006) observes that laughter relieves tensions that can cause the accumulation of power by a particular faction and its chief, since humour expresses the egalitarianism typical of these sociocosmologies. Laughter enables us to question rationalistic conceptions of society, which are the basis from which their social and political organizations are described by what they lack: "without states, without any government or political authority, and with little by way of social structure". The author emphasizes two conditions of sociability among the Piaroa which are generative of a "community of social relations" that is contrary to the emergence of tyranny, and to which I will return below when establishing correlations with the description of Kaingang events and rituals: to wit, the verbal and culinary arts, which allow us to glimpse how the poetics and politics of grotesque humour constitute a "philosophy of folly" as the very condition of the social. In events of humour, the body is the central theme, and also, as in Kaingang "games", they express interactions with the "mythic landscape" that exists "within, so to speak, each person" (Overing, 2006: 21). She proceeds:

The nuances of interpersonal relationships, their affective conditions, are too complicated – intellectually and affectively – as are the intrusions of the treacherous and undomesticated cosmic landscape within the social domain. This landscape still exists in the here and now (...) Thus, instead of social rules and regulations, what we need is a nuanced social psychology, this exuberant philosophy of folly, a constant evaluation of cosmic folly. Folly is at the heart of the social. The human social condition can only be realized through the spirit of folly (Overing 2006: 19, 20).

In this same line of argument, Lagrou claims that laughter among the Kainxawá must be apprehended as a space that makes possible modalities of being in which the terms of the relations and possibilities of action and reaction are evoked without going into a denotative and accusatory register, in such a way that: "one laughs at fear itself and at the very concept of power" (Lagrou, 2006: 60, 61). It verifies "the expression of its attitudes before the efficacy of songs that takes seriously Austin's theory of speech acts: words do not only inform us about the world, they also act on the world in powerful ways" (Tambiah, 1979, p. 119; Austin, 1989 apud Lagrou, 2006). Lagrou also highlights two issues. The first, the "relation between similarity and difference" and "the power to act on or incorporate the other – the other gender or the foreigner"; the second, the relation "with non-human beings that inhabit the spaces of their environment", which bring us back to bodies:

During feasts, bodies participate in a larger bodies, and they are, themselves, dividuals rather than individuals, permeable, partible bodies – what is emphasized is the relation between bodies and between the body and the world. The formula of the game and of grotesque humour, set for by both Bakhtin and Bateson, is that they speak of the relation between people-bodies and between people-bodies and the world (...) (Lagrou, 2006: 63).

Here, where the analysis relates the notions of the person, the body, and feasts, we might establish a comparison with studies of Gê-speaking peoples. In particular, Seeger's analysis of laughter in Suyá (Kisêdjê) society illuminates the imbrication of the domestic and public-ceremonial spheres, particularly in what pertains to the matter of alterity, visible in the etiquette rules that guide the ceremonial moieties (which, for the Kaingang, are also exogamous). For instance, Seeger shows the relationship between status and age-classes for men and women. After analysing the various stages of the development cycle of the domestic group and the initiation ceremonies for "adult" age (*ihen krai*) and "already old or mature" (*hen tumu*), he associates the elderly in the *wikényi* ceremonial class to the practice of humour, in light of their situation of dependence and social marginality, by way of which they mediate between the human and nonhuman worlds. The *wikényi* position indicates not only marginality and dependence; it is also a ceremonial class, which includes a change of status from 'mature man' to 'old man' effected by an initiation ritual, through which the Kisêdjê reaffirm that: "instead of being an 'other' incorporated through marriage, the new grandfather becomes the one around which a residential group is united" (Seeger, 1980: 73).

While men actively participate in the public sphere during their adult lives, where they occupy a tense subordinate role to their father-in-law, in old age they become dependents and retribute with obscenity and humour, which are expected and obligatory. The ceremonial role of the clown (which is not collective; they sing humorously or emit characteristic shrills) enjoys a certain liberty and special benefits in exchange for humorous buffoonery. In other words, they are marginal people who are not censured for doing things which would otherwise be highly censured. Women play an important role in politics through their husbands, sons, and brothers, but are less likely to engage in humorous games than men are, since they continue to carry out domestic activities and do not change their residence.

Acting as mediators, the *wikényi* provide an alternative to relations of avoidance, expressed in the respect between formal friends and, in this case, the moieties. The humoristic content of their performances, pantomimes, and parodies, reveal these relations between men and the fearful powers that stem from alterity, from the "less social world of the dead and the animal kingdom". Old men are themselves ambiguous figures, due to their "behaviour as intermediaries between the Suyá ideal of an adult man". They can, because of this, even be accused of sorcery.

Marginality can be dangerous or socialized. Old men can act as funny *wikényi* or as sorcerers (...). The *wikényi* does not leave the system: he plays an important role within it (Seeger, 1980: 69-72).

Despite ethnographic differences, the mediating role of humour among the Kaingang, whether in articulating social positions and ceremonial categories or connecting differently conceived worlds, such as society and nature, intends to motivate processes of producing joy that delineate sociality and confront hierarchies and crystallizations of power. I observed, for example, that humour emphasizes the relational character of the power of chiefs in terms of the physical characteristics and personal attributes of moiety affiliation, with implications in the ways they act.

According to the origin myth, the fact, for instance, that *kamë* came from below the mythical hills, and, while climbing to its summit, had to pass over stony terrain, caused his soles to become thick, causing him to be slow in his acts and in making decisions. In present times we find respectful references to this mythical episode, but it can also take on a burlesque tone, as when Valdomiro Vergueiro, chief of Morro do Osso, explained to me his abilities as a chief from the *kamë* moiety: "I have to take wide steps to come out in front". Similarly, critiques with a strong "insulting humour" relate mythical times to the stock of names that belong to the moieties. A well-known case involves a chief of the *kanhru* moiety, whose members are perceived to be quick-thinking, but irresolute in their actions: "starts and stops". The name is of a type of wood "which only bends, never breaks" and that is "why it's bad like that", and is "not suitable to be a chief".

That is, as soon as this chief came to abandon his mild way of speaking, which is an ideal that is required for mediating conflicts, his name became the butt of jokes and, along with his attitudes, considered to be those of a *kanhgág jug jug* (wild Kaingang bravo), he came to be an object of scorn for his coresidents, which contributed to limiting his activities and, later, to his exclusion from the circle of power.

If in daily political life, hierarchies, and consequently their inclinations toward factionalism, can be claimed or confronted, appealing to the characteristics of the attributes of moiety-belonging (as these examples of naming show), an emphasis on ritual mediates between them. This is particularly evident in the cases I describe shortly, where these attributes are associated with the *pěj* category and to their function of caring for the dead (preparing graves, cleaning, etc) and protecting the living from the dangers of the *venh kupri* (souls of the dead).⁴

As we will see, in both ritual contexts the importance of humour as a mediator with the world of the dead is an important element, even if the rituals are marked by the usual solemn tone of the relations of avoidance between *jamré*. It should be recalled that this double function of the prestations of ceremonial services between moieties, sometimes expressed as respect, other times by joking, is also found in the Bororo mortuary rituals in the relation between close and distant affines, while grotesque humour separates the Indigenous people from a specific set of others: the “whites”, the “civilized”. The Bororo parody of the whites, an actualization of alterity that has come to strongly mark their way of being in the context of the advancement of the civilized world, is experienced in a ritual context “peopled by potbellied, heavy beings, who speak and gesticulate too much, establishing a clear contrast with the ritual in which the new souls, the *aroe maiawu*, light and splendid beings, appear” (Cayubi Novaes, 2006: 299). The *aroe maiawu*, who should be someone from the opposite moiety of the dead and who transform into representatives of the dead, are chosen by elderly men after someone dies. This is a process of reconstruction since, in this society, “if death disfigures the world, it must be reconfigured”.

Of all events which mark the life cycle among the Bororo, death is certainly the most celebrated. There is no life without death in this society. It is during funerary rites that the souls of the ancestors and culture heroes are evoked. During funeral rites (...) young men become familiar with the values that guide this dual society, they are reminded of the rules of reciprocity and initiated into adult life. In this sense, the funeral is a ripe moment for the production and diffusion of knowledge – which occurs, we will see, in a very specific mould (...). There are numerous transformations after the abrupt rupture of death (...) rituals, we will see, do not exclude laughter and humour and there are numerous rites and celebrations in which the grotesque reigns (Cayubi Novaes, 2006: 284, 285).

It is worth comparing this process of reconstructing society in Bororo ritual, since, among the Kaingang, the *kiki* ritual is also associated with recuperating the names of dead ancestors. Reaffirming the opposition and complementarity between the *kamë* and *kanhru* moieties, Crépeau (2005) notes that the names of the dead can be used and the widows who were, until that time, “stuck” in the dead man’s moiety can once again return to their mark. However, it is important to note that the relations of respect and joking during Kaingang mortuary rituals are expressed in relations with the other moiety, in such a way that the *jamré* and the *jamré fi* (siblings-in-law) are vested both with the process of constructing kinship and the distance that is characteristic of alterity, established in Bororo ritual between Indigenous peoples and the whites.

4 Caring for the dead is a function of particular people: “the *pein*, who, because of their name (*jiji korég* – bad or strong name) have a stronger spirit and can deal with the dead of any one of the moieties (...). People with *jiji hã* (good or weak name) could not attend wakes” (Veiga, 2004: 272). It should be noted that, according to Wiesemann (1960): the “semantic category” *hã* is opposed to *korég* and both are part of a wide field of Kaingang relations that involve names and social positions: “To sum it up, in evaluating a thing, it seems that *hã* [*hã*] ‘good’ has such connotations as something remote, something unattainable, something which has its advantages but also is somewhat to be feared, and certainly not practical for everyday use. *Korég* [*korég*] ‘bad’ seems to reflect something that has its disadvantages but is the best we can do, or the ordinary everyday thing. In evaluating a person, ‘good’ is that quality which is recognized as better and should be striven for” (Wiesemann 1960: 179).

Indeed, with the aim of attenuating the risks incurred by close kin and/or people from the same moiety that stem from the dangers that may be caused by the spirit of the dead – a constant during the burial process – this relation between moieties in mortuary rituals is carried out by the *pěj* ceremonial category. If someone of this category is not available, the Kaingang say that “if there is no *pěj*, the *jamré* carries the dead”; and also, as they are of the patrilineal moiety, those from the *votor* (*kanhru*) and *veineky* (*kamě*) subsections, as well as the whites (those who are married in the village, for example), are called on to care for the dead.⁵

***Mã sin ser* feasts: rituals and aspects of humour in Kaingang affinity**

The Kaingang, “when they are in the *venh kaga*”, that is, when they are in states associated with disease, “are not joyful” – being *venh kaga* and not being joyful are synonyms, and both can lead to death. Disease and sadness are incongruent with the ethos of sharing and reciprocity among the *jamré*. This is why ‘joy’ (*ag mã sér*), in contradistinction to ‘sadness’ or ‘disease’ (*inh mã kaga*), traverses various events and rituals, guiding the *mã sin ser* feast (“feast of joy”). In these performances, they reaffirm the importance of enlivening the people of the other moiety, according to a logic of negotiating with a world inhabited by beings and things with intentionalities and powers, who fertilize social life, and, for this reason, humans and nonhumans sometimes become burlesque, instruments of domesticated force.

The expression of laughter (*venh nig nig*) recurs during collective tasks: cooking, dancing, making and selling artifacts or applying body paint, in both the domestic and public spheres. The Kaingang thus laugh and make others laugh with kinspeople in events in which they share the same environment of commensality, as in marriage feasts, Indian Day feasts, forums, meetings, baptisms and naming rituals, “seventh day celebrations” (after a funeral), when “visiting” the *jamré* – all situations in which people from various villages are gathered. These events certainly originate from and develop in a wider political context, including the struggle for specific rights: bilingual education, healthcare, and land rights, but they also refer to cultural issues that, such as in the *Kujá* meeting and the demarcation of the Morro do Osso Village, and the Kiki Ritual and the expansion of the Xapecó Indigenous Land.

What the Kaingang call *mã sin ser* feast (“feast of joy”), with its verbal forms typical of humour, allows us to develop a central aspect of the ceremonies that focus on relations with the dead. We can understand how they share a common theme with the *kiki* ritual, since, on this occasion, Kaingang specialists in the art of humour hope to control relations with the dangerous world of the dead, with the help of the solemn tone of the *kujá* and the *pěj*, who observe their respective spells, blessings, and songs.

I return, first, to the analysis of the Meetings of the *kujá* in the Morro dos Ossos Village, which I described in detail elsewhere (Aquino, 2014), and present briefly here for limitations of space. Without focusing on the role of laughter in the performances, I argued that the organization of the ritual spaces was related to land claims, particularly in relation to an ancestral “cemetery”. A series of rituals were necessary to ward off the dangers of the souls of the dead, and these took place at specific spots which were designated Meetings I, II, III and IV. Beyond the village patio, there is a rocky outcrop popularly known as “the foot of God”, which has a cavity in the shape of foot, which the Kaingang understand to have resulted from the activities of the ancient *kujá* since it is similar to the sharpeners known in the region as *panela de bugre*. The “subterranean home” is a source of water (*goj ror*), which was blessed by the *kuja* at that time. In these places, the *pěj* and the *kujá* from the villages of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina carried out naming rites, prayers, and medicinal “herb

⁵ Veiga (1994) hypothesizes that these subsections are a consequence of the incorporation of possible slaves by the Kaingang or as a consequence of marriage of the *fóg* with the Kaingang.

burnings” (*věnh kagta pür*) for protection and curing. Thus, the *Kujá* Meetings, in large part conducted by the chiefs, signalled a context in which the *kujá* occupied the public-ceremonial scene as the “root” *jãre* of the *kanhgág* collectivity.

In Meetings III and IV, with some exceptions, the ritual spaces that had been consecrated during Meeting II [...] were revisited with the same ritual goal. The shamanic rituals were divided along the three days of Meeting II, interspersed by the other activities I have referred to. In the first day the Kaingang carried out the *nén kãmĩ mü jé há* (“let is walk within the forest”), so that a source of water (*gój ror*) could be blessed (*goj tu jé*) by the *kujá*. On the second day they went to the “Foot of God” (*tupë pën*). Since the very first trips seeking the occupation of the Morro do Osso, this outcrop was considered to be a place where magical activities had occurred in the ancestral past. There, the *kujá* initiated two children into shamanism and gathered the *pěj*, blessing them so that they would pray (*je*) for the dead [...]. Thus began the prayer ceremony of the *pěj*, in which they sang/prayed (*je*). Leaning against one another, the *pěj* formed a single file which included Rokã, the vice-chief of Morro do Osso. This song/prayer aimed to keep away the *věnh kupri*, who had been wandering through the Morro do Osso since the wars with the whites resulted in a “suffering death”. While the *pěj* prayed, *kujá* Jorge Garcia passed a tree-bark over the foreheads, occasionally squeezing it, making the sign of the cross, circular and semi-circular gesticulations, and, “speaking low”, descended from their chests right to their navels. He did the same with the chiefs. When the prayers were over, a line formed to receive this same treatment from Jorge Garcia. Then, vice-chief Rokã said to all present that the *kujá* initiated at that moment would be greater than the *pa i mág*, and that they would be respected by everyone, and by all “agencies” (government agencies of the whites). After the shamanic initiation ceremony had ended and the *pěj* had prayed, vice-chief Rokã spoke in Kaingang to his kinspeople: “tomorrow we will hold the *věnh kagta pür* and the baptism” (Aquino, 2014: 114-117).

The “feast of joy”, which I will now narrate, was performed in the space between the “fires” which were intended for the kitchens of the villages of the plateau and the coastal regions. It began by chance, in the midst of other ceremonies that had been scheduled for the event. In this it differed from the Kiki Ritual, which gathered the ceremonial specialists (divided between the moieties with fern ornaments displayed on the ground in two adjacent squares) in the dance plaza, tasking them with enlivening the audience and lighting the “first fire”, “second fire”, and the “third fire”, which were not for cooking, but for honouring the dead ancestors. But in both cases we find that humour, guided by improvisation and by the mythical repertoire, enables the delineation of sociality itself, in opposition to the world of the dead, the world of “contrary things”.

As I approached one of the village paths that lead to the houses, where men and women prepared traditional food for later consumption in the public-ceremonial sphere, some men met and began to test their rattles and gauge their instruments, speaking in the Kaingang language. They were getting ready to dance in the central patio of the village and also displayed their weapons, aesthetically recalling the descriptions of the 19th Century war feasts as described by Mabilde. During these tests and displays, the dialogue between *jamré* which would culminate in laughter and contaminate everyone with habitual joy. Then and there, more men, male adolescents and children gathered to take part in the “game” (*kanhir*).

The chief of Morro do Osso at the time, Valdomiro Vergueiro, explained that causing laughter articulates with “ancient time”, which is accessed by the protagonists that take part in the performance. In this case, causing laughter relies on a particular genre, ‘jokes’ (*venh kahir*), understood to be a “story that they did in the past, a game” that is meant to render an activity to be experienced with “joy”. This “joy” is possible because the *jamré*, who “tell stories” of the *vãsy* (ancient time) express the continuity of the mythical alliance between the moieties, which “the elders have been passing on to the youngsters, and which will never end”, according to Valdomiro. At the end of the dialogue they say: *Muna ã tá na ta ke mon*, which can be translated as “let’s go and tell up front”, and also means that when they meet they will hold the *mã sin ser* feast again.

The dialogue between *jamré* men continues in the Kaingang language (the chief and his wife translated it, after a film recording; however, I lack a literal translation of the game of question-and-answer so as to accompany the full sequence, which I have not been able to transcribe). The *jamré* gauge the *sig sig* (rattles), conjoining war weapons, animal characteristics, and human attributes to keep the audience laughing:

Jamré 1 [Gumerindo da Silva] *kamë*: - Yours sings well, it's stronger and louder for a rattle. Jamré, you have a good thing (*Jamrë ã tu nê há há*). His is better than the others'.

Jamré 2 [Francisco dos Santos] *kanhru*: - It seems like he's watching [my sexual organs].

Jamré 1: - Get naked and put your penis out... big dick (*gre mág*). [He here says that his *compadre*] has retched balls (*gré gerg*) like Pampa fox urine (*nén kome caxór*). [Here a *fóg sá* (half "Indigenous", half "white") interferes in the conversation and asks, in Portuguese: 'a fox or a coati?', ruining the game].

Jamré 2: [says to the *fóg sá*]: it's not for you to tell it. [After this interruption the *jamré* resume the game].

Jamré 1: - What did you put in the rattle?

Jamré 2: - You can't tell the whites.

Jamré 1: - Everything he's got between his legs... You could hit those two [the scrotum] together! [The *jamré* start to make an analogy between male sexual organs, referring to weapons of war, saying "who has the best weapon of them all", and they do this "mocking the lance's sheath" (*póg fo*), which reveals a metal tip when pushed back].

Kamë asks: - Do you shoot your wife well?

Kamë claims: - He still shoots.

Kamë claims: - So you shot your wife and hit her?

Kanhru answers: - This one I find nice. [The *jamré* proceed and now refer to me and the equipment I was using to film the game, which they also associate with sexual organs]:

Jamré 1: He has a big thing (*nén mág*) in his hand.

Jamré 2: His thing is pointy. [Valdomiro says at this moment: "the jokes are ending and the music is about to start"].

The dialogue continues: *Kanhru* asks *jamré*: *Kur a tu te* (Sing).

Kamë answers: *Kanh ne tój*. [Finally, the men chant a song to "prepare for war" with the Xokleng, about a brave spy, "the one who will face off", and that was accompanied by everyone who was watching, in dancing and singing.

It continues:].

Kro grôg han rá (stamp his feet strongly)

Kro grôg han rá

Tave ni vê (name of the spy)

Tave ni vê

The second comic situation occurred when women were speaking among each other and joyfully preparing food (*fág sin sér*) in one of the "fires" located on another path, also between houses, and, while carrying out these activities, "do not see how it was so quick: it's a joy", as Irundina, wife of chief Valdomiro, translated the words of the women and men (from the audio-visual register). She noted that, at the moment, the women were cutting fish and making the *ëmí ró* (ash-baked cake) "so that it gets really well-made", when the men arrived making jokes and everyone laughed. One of them said: "you need to wash your hands". One of the women replied: "He wants to lay down the law, but we're the ones doing it".

After this exchange, "he grabs the fish" to help her and says to the same woman: "see to it that you don't cut my finger". He then insists, once again, that there are excesses in the way the woman was preparing food, claiming that she "did not know how to cut fish slowly". She immediately retorted: "where it's caught, for me, I'm cutting, because I'm quick like that". He went on: "this fish needs to roast (*tata en tá néj keni*) on the ashes and not cook (*tata en ta grong gue ni*)" (because "on the ashes it's more difficult"); he ventured a few more jokes, such as "if the knife turns, it'll cut her". The "game" ended with a comparison of the caricatural form of the badly-executed (quick) cut of the cook in a situation in which there was no way that the Kaingang culinary

arts could be adequately accomplished (at least not to the standards the man intended). Thus, he concludes: “it’s as if you were on pavement”. Another woman intervenes: “this one only thinks of the pavement”! In this case, which involves a cross-sex relation, the joking relationship between *jamré* and *jamré fi* is only possible when “they [the women] allow it”.

Practices of humour are present when the focus is on mediation with the world of the dead, in such a way that the performances of people that belong to the moieties oscillate between moments of living with joy and the solemn tone of the prestation of funerary services. This is clear in the context of the Kujá Meeting, closely tied to the occupation of the Morro do Osso, which is considered to be an ancestral site, as well as in important moments of the Kiki Ritual in the Xaçecó Indigenous Land, which acquire more elaborate ceremonial characteristics – characteristics which are otherwise present, to a larger or lesser degree, in various rituals.

The Kiki Ritual gathers fundamental aspects of the ontology and eschatology of this society, allowing us to situate it in relation to a central theme of Gê ethnology, to wit: “If the dead are others, “we” are the living; if the former “incarnate maximum alterity” (Carneiro da Cunha, 1978: 3), it is because “life” consists of a fundamental parameter in the constitution of personal and collective identities. “Life is that which it is not – that is, death – is not”, according to Coelho de Souza’s analysis of the use of kinship terms and their cosmological connection, resonating with the morphological and institutional planes. In the Kaingang case, we see how these terms are emphasized in these performances, sometimes articulating the local context, at other times the cosmological context. In other words, as with Timbira formal friendship, there is a “mediation of the same type that would become ‘ambassadors’ in the intercommunal sphere, in the plane of relations between groups as groups” (Coelho de Souza, 2001: 78).

As has been extensively described in the literature, particularly by Crepéau (2002, 2005) and Veiga (1994, 2004), the efficacy of this ritual is associated with the release of the archive of names and the guidance of the souls of the dead (*vehn kuprig*) toward the world of the dead (*nugmë*). According to my interlocutors, the complementarity between the moieties is activated at various moments, so that “everything comes out right”. The occasion to attend a Kiki Ritual, which had not been carried out for two decades in this Indigenous Land, allowed me to observe that, along with the political situation motivated by the struggle of expanding the limits of the Indigenous Land, its sequence revealed, precisely, this perspective which ordered social and political organization, shamanism, the ceremonial classes, the production of persons and bodies, naming, kinship, and mythology.

The process for “reclaiming” the Ritual began in the 1990s, when Vicente Fokâe, a great master of Kaingang culture (whom I did not meet, but everyone referred to him as such), succeeded in garnering people’s support to perform the *kiki* once again, occupying the centre of social, political, and cosmological life among the Kaingang of the Xaçecó Indigenous Land. Its performance spurred on other performances in nearby villages, throughout a period of twenty years, culminating in this performance in 2018. One gets the feeling that Vicente Fokâe and his “companions” were superb masters, since the general form of the ceremony I watched follows the ritual sequence that these kinspeople, now deceased, had established.

I thus begin with this general aspect, emphasised by Veiga:

In this feast, guided by their prayer-masters, *pěj* and the *kujá*, the Kaingang conduct the spirit of the dead kinsperson to the world of the dead (*nugme*). The *kikikoi* feast, as the ritual was named, is the same ritual that Baldus (1937) called the cult of the dead (...) In these feasts the recently deceased appear, accompanied by those who live in the village of the dead. For this feast to be carried out, prayer-masters, specialized *kuia* (shamans) who are owners of powerful prayers, need to be present. They guide the preparation of the ritual; they designate *péin* to gather honey, the felling of pine trees to make the *konkéi* in which the drink will ferment (...). The *kikikoi* feast is hence a feast to eat *kiki* (Veiga, 1994: 273, 274).

The sequence of the ritual, as the author describes it, is “organized by the consanguines of the dead in his honour” (Veiga, 2004: 273), and “it takes a few months because it requires gathering honey and pine nuts, as well as gathering the pine knots needed to stoke the fires, and, finally, messengers need to be sent to all villages” (ibid: 274). The ritual also involves various stages: “gathering the necessary food, felling pine trees, putting the drink to ferment, calling guests, carrying out the feast”. She proceeds:

Before felling the pine trees, a fire is first lit (...). To bring down the pine tree, the prayer-masters and the *pēin* go to the chosen tree and pray, addressing the spirit of the tree, which they need for the ritual (...). When they bring the pine tree down, they pray over its trunk just as they pray over the dead person: the *kamē* prayer-masters begin praying with their sacred rattles (*xygxy*) next to the root of the tree moving up to its middle (metaphorically, from the head to its navel), while the *Kaiâru* prayer-masters pray from the middle to the tip of the tree (from the navel to its feet). After this, the trunk is measured and segmented, and the log is dragged into the plaza. The *pēin* will then take charge of whittling it until it is transformed into a large trough or canoe, which is the literal translation of the word *konkéi*. That night a second fire is lit, with prayer, dances and drink [in this case, blessed *cachaça*].

In these first stages of preparation, it is the people of the village who promote the feast. Only with the third fire, the most important part of the feast, are the guests from other villages presented, including those from *weinkuprig iamá* (the village of the spirits of the dead). In this last night, before they head to the cemetery, all must remain close to the fires, under the care of the prayer-masters. While people stay in the centre of the plaza, close to the fires, the spirits gather near the *konkéi*. The *tamper*, a class of dancers, almost inexistent at present, were formerly charged with guarding the drink until the end of the ceremony, so that the spirit of the dead did not touch it. People are painted with their clan marks as protection against the spirits. The following morning, after retouching the paintings and eating, they begin to prepare to go to the cemetery (...). [With] crosses [that] are in the house of the deceased or one of his consanguines (...) gathered by the *pěj*, who take them to the plaza where they are placed beside the *konkéi*. When all have been gathered, they follow in procession to the cemetery. The *kamē* moiety leads, and it is the first to enter and pray over the *Kaiâru* graves. These graves were previously marked with Cuphea branches strewn over them, while the graves of the dead of the *kamē* moiety are marked with pine branches. These branches are called *pōkri* and are a sort of lid for the grave. Next, the *pēin* of the *kamē* moiety gather the branches and throw them outside of the cemetery space, while prayer-masters sing and dance on or around the graves, guiding the dead back to the *weinkupriang iamá* and closing, through prayer, the grave or passage between the world of the dead and the world of the living. After the *Kaiâru* carry out the same procedure, everyone returns to the plaza where the *konkéi* is waiting (...). Once there, the dance around the fires, at first each moiety around its fire, before gathering the two groups around all of the fires and dancing together until the drink is finished and the painting and ornaments are removed (Veiga, 2004: 273, 277).

To follow this ritual in 2018, I arrived at the village one day before its start, to witness the first stage, on the 27th of February. I stayed until the 5th of March. The ritual was carried out in the Olaria sector, for reasons I will soon explain. In the run-up to the ritual, some 3 to 4 months before it was performed, the bilingual school teachers who were organizing it, Cesar Santos, Claudemir Pinheiro and Getúlio Narciso, were worried about its preparation, trying to ensure that “everything would turn out right”. They were concerned with its efficacy, since if anything was off someone could be carried away to the world of the dead (even someone who was “good”). The following day, the bus from Konda Village brought *kujá* João Vehn Grē (*kanhru*) and his wife Maria Pó Mág (*kamē*). As well as Irundina da Silva (*kanhru*), the two women considered to be *pěj*, and *kujá* João Do Re (*kanhru*), elders who would perform the ritual along with the ceremonial specialists from the Xapecó Indigenous Land.

They gathered before a warehouse in the Olaria Sector. The pine knots were there already, piled up for the “first fire” and the “second fire” and there was also the raw material for preparing food and drink for participants. The ceremony began at dusk (at sunset) on the 4th of March, a full moon, as is traditional, when, in the dance plaza, the two fires that make up the “first fire” were lit by the two “heads” (organizers) of the ritual, each one belonging to one of the moieties: the *kamë* moiety lights the fire for the *kanhru* moiety and vice-versa. The two fires were laid out on a north-south axis: in the north, the *kanhru* fire (*pi*), and in the south the *kamë* fire, separated by contiguous rectangles delimited by fern leaves. At that moment they began to play the *turu* horns, and a few people (around 10 to 15 men, women and children) were already at the place. Some belonged to the ceremonial classes and were there to “oversee” the *kiki* and those who accompanied them. People of the *kamë* and *kanhru* moieties started to arrive, individually or in sets, in a random manner, and slowly started to take up their place next to their fires.

Drink (*cachaça*), which is important in animating the ritual, is prayed on by the “prayer-masters”, so that its spirit is removed. It is distributed by the “heads” of the *kiki* and/or the *pěj* who serve the “animators” who are dancing and fooling about, accompanied by the *turu* horns and dancing to the sound of music played on flutes and rattles (*sigsig*). As the night progresses, jokes and parodies between the moieties become more common (as in the earlier example), as they provoke one another regarding the quality or volume of their dances or songs, which should ideally be more joyful or louder. These manifestations of joy will be repeated in all three “fires” of the *kiki*.

The *kamë* moiety could rely on João Maria Pinheiro, a “prayer-master” (*jān ti*) of the *veinke* ritual section. Although, at first, he “did not want to get involved”, perhaps (some suggested) because he was a Christian, he nonetheless stood out from the very beginning, planning events and guiding participants. He is the son of an old and important ritual organizer and prayer-master, Irineu Pinheiro, and is heir to his knowledge and technique. The *kanhru* moiety had Ivo Gabriel, who, along with João Maria’s nephew, Claudemir Pinheiro (*kamë*), “headed” the ritual, organizing the fire and food for the participants. I heard that although Ivo Gabriel and his brother knew the prayers of their moiety, transmitted to them by their father, “they did not want to pray”. That – along with the large number of *kanhru* people in the Xapecó Indigenous Land –the invitation was extended to the Kondá Village, and more specifically to its elders, who would, as *kujá* and *pěj*, make up the specialists who would take part in preparing the ceremony. Furthermore, the ritual for Irineu Pinheiro and José Gabriel, two dead elders, each from one of the moieties, and also for Manoel Gaspar and Júlio Narciso, who were “prayer-masters of the *kiki*” and/or *pěj*, in the time of Vicente Fokâe. The ceremony was now conducted by their respective sons and sons-in-law, as school teachers and/or ritual “heads”.

Kisy (Moon) emerged between the clouds, lighting, with the fires, the patio in which people were now gathered, dancing and chanting. In the “first fire” only people of one or the other moiety remained, the *turu* horns continued to sound and were interspersed with prayers and songs, accompanied by jokes, shouts, and mayhem. The first night last until more-or-less midnight, when everyone, already very drunk, returned to their homes.

On the morning of the 5th of March, the araucaria pine tree was chopped down to make the trough (*kokej*) where the *kiki* drink is prepared. Before gathering it, the *pěj* pray on the *cachaça* bottles that they will take with them. On this occasion there is no cheerful mood between the moieties, and everyone drinks solemnly. A large trek follows, with some 70 people including men, women, children, and elders, the *pěj*, the *kujá*, the “heads” and some “animators” in the lead, singing and/or playing the *turu*, along the road that leads to one of the houses of the Sector, close to remaining woodland, between plantations (monocultures). Between this house and the woodland there were other pine trees, chosen previously, with the right girth and size to make

the trough (from what I could gauge). From there they brought back the felled pine tree, more or less 5 metres long (see Crepéau 2005), by tractor, tying it with chains and dragging it across the plateau and, later, through the road until they reached the front of the communal cemetery.

The “second fire” began at dusk on the 5th of March, when two more fires were lit in the centre of dance plaza, to the north or the south, totalling four fires, two for each moiety. Shouts, dances and bawdiness, and more jokes, as drinks are distributed by the *pěj*, the “heads”, or the prayer-masters. This once again lasts until midnight.

This stage was followed by a lull of approximately one month – from the end of March to the start of April 2018. I returned to the Xapecó Indigenous Land again on the 29th of March for the last stage of the ritual, which took place on the 1st and 2nd of April, again on a full moon. During this period they whittle the trough, where they prepare the infusion of water, honey and cachaça. In what follows:

The trunk is dug out and made into a trough by both moieties. The *kairu* are responsible for the eastern side or the high section (attributed to the *kamé* spirits [the head: the tree top]), while the *kamé* dig to the west or the low section [a base of the tree; the feet]. This high and low refers to the head and feet of the body of the pine tree, which, since it is felled, is a “dead person”, in such a way that the disposition of the *kokej* in an east-west axis recalls burial practice, with the head facing west and the feet east (Crepéau, 2005: 18).

With the sound of the *turü* and sunset, the “third fire” is lit, again on a north-south axis, thus incorporating a third fire for each of the moieties. The ceremonial specialists start to pray over the *kokej*, on an east-west axis, in a lower voice than those who are taking part as “animators”, since the *mã sin ser* feast continues to take place in each of the fires and between the fires of the two moieties (perpendicular to the fires). They circle the fires again, and continue to proffer spells, also in a lower voice than the animators. These spells are also “prayers”, among which are those that evoke and/or reaffirm the presence of the deceased kinsperson in the dance plaza. They are proffered, precisely, by the “heads of the *kiki*”, keepers of an archive of knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation – even if they are aided so that the prayers are executed correctly (in this case by an older uncle, who knew them better).

The ritual is characterized by the prestation of mortuary services on behalf of the other moiety. Among the ceremonial classes that actively participate in this ritual, such as the *pěj*, the animators (*tamperi*), *jamré* and *jamré fi* and *kujá*, and the prayer-masters (*jān ti*), the people of the *votor* and *veineky mág* “subsections” stand out, and in this ethnographic case they were the “heads of the ritual”. These subsections are associated with the exterior, and they are inserted in the wider logic of ceremonial participation, in the same terms as the exogamous moieties. They thus conduct the act of eating the *kiki*, “the name of the second funeral, *kikoia*, literally means ‘to eat the mead’” (Crepéau, 2005: 16), understanding that the pine trough, in which the *kiki* drink is prepared, is a dead person:

The central symbol of the second funeral is the fact that the pine tree, considered to belong to the *kamé* moiety, which is ritually sacrificed and transformed into an approximately five-metre-long trough, where mead is prepared. According to the Kaingang, during the *kikoia* the trunk of this tree is treated as a dead person and, in relation to the spatial axis, is placed at the centre of ritual space, to the west (...) I would like to emphasise that the fundamental aspect of this ritual is the complementarity between the moieties so that its performance is successful. This essential complementarity is reiterated during the performance of the ritual, which literally and explicitly realizes the ideal of reciprocal exchange of services between the moieties, moieties which were established by the primordial *kamé* ancestors [and the *kanhru*, who originated from them] after the flood (...) The honey drink is called *kutu*, which can be translated as “deaf”. The prayer-masters say that they cannot drink it before it has been ritually prayed on and hit with a rattle, symbolizing through this a mark of the ritual, or an invitation to the deceased person (Crepéau, 2005: 17).

The following morning, around 8 AM, they march to the cemetery (I did not accompany this moment, because I was in the Sede Sector). When they arrive, the *kamë* are at the entrance waiting for the *kanhru* to leave. I was able to watch the film recorded by the anthropologist Ari Ghiggi, and can affirm that the register is similar to Crepéau's description (2005: 19), which, in turn, is similar to Veiga's (2004) description, as presented above:

The *kamë* are the first to enter the cemetery and proceed systematically to the graves of the dead *kairu*. The prayer-masters play their rattles at each grave and their assistants execute specific operations to free the spirits of death and to send them to their place of rest, *numbé*. The Kaingang say that they should remove the *tipankri* [*ponkri* according to Veiga 1994] – a small pine branch or of the *Cuphea* tree placed at the gravesite during the first funeral [first fire] – and throw it out of the fence that limits the cemetery, in the direction in which the soul should travel to reach its resting place, which is east for the *kamë* or *veinkeky* and west for the *kairu* or *votorô*. Once this task is completed, the *kamë* participants return, slowly, to the ritual space (they stay at the entrance, outside of the cemetery, as the *kahnru* did before them). Only then do the *kanhru* go into the cemetery and ritually attend to the graves of the dead *kamë* (...). Both moieties then return to the space of the fires for the final dance, the *kairu* always behind the *kamë* (Crepéau, 2005: 19)

When everyone returns to the patio, they perform a great dance around the six fires and *kamë* and *kanhru* join each other. They open up the *kokej* and drink *kiki*, or, in order to remain faithful to the literal meaning of *kikikoj*, they eat the *kiki*, until it is all finished, after which they turn over the trough so that the cavity faces the ground. The pine tree, which had been considered a dead person up until that point, is not so any longer.

Two observations I registered in film and obtained from conversations with ritual specialists as we left the cemetery should be added to these descriptions. First: the *kamë* dance on the graves of the *kanhru* and vice-versa in a clockwise movement, with songs and rattles, at the same time as the prayer-masters at the head of the line of dancers utter their prayers, sometimes low and at other times standing out in higher tones. Second: the *tipankri* (or *ponkri*, cf. Veiga) branch is thrown out of the cemetery by a *pěj* woman, the same one who offered funerary services to *kamë*, and the one who offered funerary services to *kanhru* then took it with her to the dance plaza, where the fires of the *kamë* moiety were situated, burning the branch (in the last fire of the three fires).

This final register reveals that there are certainly historical transformations in the *kiki* ritual, which requires, for its preparation and execution, the reunion of different villages and their ceremonial specialists. I offer a brief consideration as to why the Olaria Sector hosted the ritual, since it involves a series of wider discussions on the form of the ritual, which reflect a concern in relation to the correct sequence – lest the ritual result in deaths. Among other reasons, the Olaria Sector had a warehouse where the festivities could take place, and this fact prevailed over another place that they had also considered: the football field, situated in the middle of the forest, between the Sede and Olaria Sectors. Another factor tended toward the Olaria Sector: the fact that the current prayer-masters of the two moieties reside there. These two ritual “heads” are, necessarily, people that belong to each of the two moieties, who organize and oversee the *kiki*. It is important to observe that the decision of where to hold the ritual recalls the historical moment in which the ritual was reclaimed in the 1990s (1993, to be precise), when the *kiki* specialist Vicente Fokê always headed the ritual from his patio (“flat and clean in the settlement”, according to Crepéau (2005)). That is, from the patio of the house of the prayer-master to the warehouse of the community centre, the ritual was still performed in a place close to the houses of the prayer-masters rather than in the forest, thus contrasting, for example, with the *kiki* held in Kondá Village in 2004, as the Kujá João Venh Grê affirms (see Aquino, 2018).

This latter case also refers back to this *kujá*'s experiences of the traditions of Nonoai Village, in which contemporary *kujá* stress the importance of performing the ritual in the forest. In 2018, for example, when the ritual was carried out in Lajeado Village, it was performed in the *capãozinho do mato* (“little woodland covering”): “because the spirits of the tree take part together”. Indeed, we find in this way of performing *kiki*

in the middle of the forest characteristics shared with the description of Father Balduino Rambo during his “visit” to Nonoai in the 1940s, confirming that it is at least as old as the author’s description of a “mass” carried out in the middle of the forest, in which candles and a mead – that is, *kiki* – were involved:

The Indians visit the church, when they go to the village, and speak of a mysterious chapel that was said to exist somewhere in the woodlands (...) The central figure of the “mass” that they imitate from Catholicism is the “cuiem [kujá]”, a blend of doctor, guardian of tradition, clairvoyant, sacrificiant, and spiritual chief, in brief, the “sorcerer” of Jesuit accounts. This [“mass”] is the modern denomination, by analogy, of the religious gathering of the people. The “ancients” gave it another name, that of the herb that during the proceedings fulfilled a ritual function. To this end, all the people, or a large part of them, gathers at the ranch of a chief. Candles made of wild wax are used and a honey drink is mixed with this herb (unfortunately we could not see it). This drink is prepared in a large trough of cabriúva (*Myrocarpus frondosus* Fr. All.), of varying dimensions, reaching up to ten feet in length. This recipient is filled with honey, and herbs are added and it is all covered until the mass starts. In the midst of wax candles and various ceremonies, the “cuiem” instructs his people what to do and what to not do in order to live right, to avoid droughts and other calamities; it is, in brief, “like a mass” (Rambo, 1947: 84).

The differences in ritual sequence extrapolate a purely contextual dimension, situating possible translations of the diverse historical contexts, revealing two conditions which are requisite for holding the ritual: on the hand, the relations between villages and the importance of the configuration of a political-ceremonial agglomeration between villages in the west of Santa Catarina, particularly in Kondá Village⁶; on the other, a concern with its efficacy stemming from the dialogue the ritual establishes with the supernatural world, to ward off the dangers of the deceased person, who longs for the living and wants to take his kinspeople with him to the *nugmë*. This is why, during the ritual, the following expression is often heard: “everything is inverted” and, also, alternating with moments of solemnity, they enliven each other so that they may “live with joy”.

With this philosophy and ritual practice, the Kaingang emphasise prestations between those who belong to one “mark” and those of “the other mark”, so that everything “comes out right” – that is, so that no one who is “good” dies, so that the *venh kuprig*, the spirit of the dead, can go to another world, the *nugmé*, which is also inverted in relation to the world of the living. To this effect, formal friendship gathers, within the same complex, relations of avoidance and pleasantries, acting to ensure the continuity of Kaingang society.

Final Thoughts

The Kaingang rituals and events described here reveal a set of performances in which we see the centrality of etiquette rules and joking relations in ceremonial prestations. These are linked to modulations of the relationship to alterity: between the exogamous moieties, Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, the living and the dead, the genders, and humans and nonhumans. The many ways of laughing at (the fear of) power were addressed, for these are intimately tied to the mediation of powers that come from the exterior, which is a common theme among various Indigenous societies.

During ritual, characteristics which are common to Kaingang humanity are shared. They recall how the ancients, now inhabiting the world of the dead, lived when they were alive, with their instruments (weapons, rattles, etc.), paintings, ornaments, their ways of making joy (*mã ser*) – in effect, of making *kiki* – at the same time as they thematize the struggle for differentiated rights involving bilingual education, health, and territory.

⁶ In this ritual that I observed, Kondá Village took part in its two key stages (in the three fires) due to the fact that some of its elders, including *kujá* and *pěj*, were of the *kanhru* moiety. The Xapécó Indigenous Land had few people of this mark, and there were no participants from the Village of Palmas. As Crepéau (2005: 18) notes: “the last or third fire takes place. It is the most elaborate phase and consists of a large gathering of the Xapécó and Palmas Reservations, as well as the frequent presence of people from other regions”.

This perspective emphasise the importance of rituals in understanding Kaingang historicity, and, thus, the ethnography has sought to show that if in certain aspects the sequences of the *Kiki* Ritual and the *Kujá* Meeting are similar, focusing on a controlled relation with the world of the dead, they translate different historical processes, implying an understanding of the diverse transformations witnessed in socio-spatial organization, as well as in social dynamics, politics, and cosmology.

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