'The Space to Be Ourselves': Ethanol-Fuel Production and Land Conflict on a Brazilian 'Frontier'

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Since the early 20th century, national and international movements in capital and ideas have contributed to the radical transformation of the Brazilian countryside.   In Mato Grosso do Sul, the Kaiowá-Guarani have been gradually crowded onto reservations (through often violent, extralegal means) due to deforestation for cattle ranches and soy plantations. Since the 1970s, land despoliation has intensified with the ongoing expansion of privately owned sugarcane plantations for ethanol fuel production. Kaiowá land activists argue that displacement has given rise to problems like starvation and high crime rates. Today, protests for land return and occupation of plantations by Kaiowá result in sometimes violent counter-mobilization by plantation owners[1].

This paper explores how the production and endurance of ethnic boundaries between self-identified "Indians" and "non-Indians" becomes articulated in territorial terms with important, real-life consequences. In examining ethnographic moments in which meanings of indigeneity and Brazilianess are articulated in often conflicting and contradictory terms, I examine how different political and economic scales contribute to such boundary formation. I query how land emerges as a site for both mapping those social boundaries and resolving the conflicts brought to bear in their production.

Since 2007, I have conducted fieldwork to investigate land conflict by focusing

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[1] As an example, a Federal Tribunal recently transferred to São Paulo the case of a murdered Kaiowá-Guaraní cacique, Marcos Veron, who was killed in 2003 in the municipality of Juti, Mato Grosso do Sul. More than 28 people have been denounced for involvement in the crime, in which four men were contracted to expel Kaiowá protesters from a plantation (Folha Online 2009).

on ethnicity-based social movements in the region, particularly, Kaiowá-Guarani[2] occupations of sugarcane plantations. As Pereira (2003:143-144) describes, Kaiowá activists do not have a central organization coordinating their protests. Instead, since the 1970s there have been distinct and somewhat autonomous uprisings in Mato Grosso do Sul, often consisting of roadside occupation of plantations.

The mobilizations take place amid two contrasting processes currently unfolding. First, Brazil's federal agency overseeing Indian affairs (Funai) recently commissioned studies to demarcate historical-cultural indigenous lands. Second, expanding agro-industrial production, particularly sugarcane plantations for ethanol fuel, has put upward pressure on land values and increased competition over land use. The number of sugarcane-ethanol plantations is set to multiply from eleven to more than fifty in the next few years.

In this paper, I focus on two sets of ethnographic moments to analyze how boundary formation-both in terms of ethnicity and those delineating land claims to territory- are worked out in conflicting and contradictory terms by ethnographic subjects. In the first, self-identified Kaiowá-Guarani express a yearning for the space to be "themselves," to be Kaiowá. They complain that existing reservations provide insufficient space to carry out so-called traditional Kaiowá activities, including prior modes of economic production. In the second set of ethnographic moments, I describe the general paranoia pervasive among self-identified non-Indians (*não-indios*) concerning

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[2] The Kaiowá are a self-identified Guaraní sub-group that numbers roughly 80,000 people, of whom approximately 15,000 live in Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. They are the dominant indigenous group in the southern region of the state. They are also the region's chief suppliers of cane cutting labor. The Kaiowá live in a variety of settlement types, including 24 reservations (Almeida 2001:19). Kaiowá-Guarani identified people also live on the Paraguay side of the border, where they are known as Pãi-Tavyterã.

how much land will be demarcated as *terra indigena* (indigenous land).[3]   While

conducting fieldwork, I heard rumors that as much as a third of the land of the state is

"vulnerable." *Não-indios* across different social classes lament that land return would be

a waste of resources and detrimental to the advancement of the state of Mato Grosso do

Sul, and indeed to the larger path of national economic development[4].

In examining these moments in which variously positioned groups articulate

different meanings of indigeneity and Brazilianess, I ask how and why land recurs as an

object of conflict. In Mato Grosso do Sul, an ethnic self, *indio* versus *não-indio*, is

constructed through a relation to land and understandings of its contemporary, past and

future forms. As an object of dispute, articulations of ethnic difference necessarily entail

contradictory terms of identity formation that remain open-ended and unresolved, as are

the claims to the land itself.

Over the course of the 20th century, Brazil's population shifted from roughly 80%

agrarian to 80% urban[5]. There existed a push-pull relationship between the city and

country in which people were attracted to industrializing urban areas by the prospects of

work and pushed off the land by a variety of factors. Though droughts in the northeast,

massive deforestation (Dean 1995), and public works like hydroelectric projects

(Bloemer 2001) were factors in the rural exodus, changes in the regulation of land and

labor also displaced millions of people in favor of large landholders (*fazendeiros*) and

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[3] *Terra indígena* belongs to the state, which secures for the indigenous community that lives on it the permanent usufruct of its resources, in conformity with prevailing law (Oliveira & Pereira 2009:50).
[4] Politicians, plantation owners, and laymen express these sentiments in private conversations as well as public statements.
[5] Though Mato Grosso do Sul features a mostly agricultural economy, most of the population is urban. An estimated 86% of the population of 2.3 million people live in urban areas (World Bank 2010:76).

agro-industry.

Both *indio* and *não-indio* rural Brazilians have faced similar circumstances of displacement by large-scale agro-industry and incorporation as manual labor. However, approaches have differed in the study of the two groups. Some Brazilian researchers have tended to analyze non-indigenous people in terms of the transformed consciousness in the transition from peasants to wage laborers, that is to say, they focus on proletarianization (cf Incao 1984, Moraes 1999 and 2006, Stolcke 1988). In contrast, many specialists on the Kaiowá-Guarani concentrate on the continuities of indigenous "culture" as a given basis of identity and political mobilization along lines of kinship and ethnicity (cf Brand 1997, Almeida 2001).[6] For example, some of the anthropologists that sought to influence the writing of Brazil's 1988 constitution argued that the basis of indigenous land rights is descent from the "first occupants" of the land (cf Carneiro da Cunha 1987). *Terras indígenas* (indigenous lands) belong to those whose genealogies extend back to the pre-Columbian era (24). Legislation codifying this basis endured a series of governments, from colonialism through the military dictatorship that lasted from 1964 to 1988.[7]

In an influential essay, Seeger and Viveiros de Castro (1978) advocated studies of the cultural impact caused by settler land encroachment and the forced relocation of indigenous people onto reservations. They wondered how the pre-existing characteristics of these tribes would produce new cultural forms in response to that confinement. Seeger and Viveiros de Castro argued that geography alters cultures in accordance with their pre-

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[6] A notable exception, here, is João Pacheco de Oliveira's (1998) concept of *territorialização* (territorialization), the process of social reorganization by which an ethnic boundary is mapped onto a demarcated land area due to the imposition of a colonial state structure. He argued that the historical reorganization of social relations for the exercise of a political mandate, spatial regulation of a colonial state, provided the genesis for the coherence of Brazil's indigenous ethnic groups.

[7] Of course, the terms for demarcating and administering *terras indigenas* shifted over the course of this history, and even more significantly with the 1988 constitution (to which I will return later).

existing characteristics, particularly their economic activities. Unmanaged settler activity near indigenous people, as well as their displacement and confinement, ought to be expected to transform these groups accordingly. Proponents of designating protected areas for indigenous people, including the Yanomama (Ramos & Taylor 1979), cited such changes and the negative impacts of unregulated contact and encroachment. Here, continuity of economic activities were a feature of a way of life whose continuity depended on demarcated land for its viability.

Along the lines of this narrative of cultural loss and recuperation, the bulk of literature on the Kaiowá pleads for land return and protection to preserve Kaiowá culture (cf. Brand 2004; Almeida 2001). This approach amounts to a sort of impact study of land loss, where the goal is to advocate moral redress for victims of colonization and dispossession by demonstrating the cultural loss and accompanying social distress (e.g., malnutrition, crime).[8] In these analyses, recuperation of land would ameliorate such problems by allowing greater autonomy to live in accordance with prior ways of life, such as economic activities and social organization.

Such literature on the Kaiowá (cf Almeida 2001; Brand 1997; Pereira 2004), cite Barth's (1969) analysis of ethnicity as determined by the boundaries recognized between groups. The positive definitions or characteristics delimiting a group are not the basis of the discreteness of the group's ethnic category. Such positive definitions contain contradictions and inconsistencies. However, the groups still recognize themselves and are recognized in relational opposition to other groups. The boundaries that operate to

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[8] Brazil's indigenous land laws demand as much. For the state to determine if land is *terra indigena,* researchers must show that a particular group of people were expelled from the disputed land, say which people were responsible for the despoliation, as well as when and why it took place. Likewise, the researchers must show how the disputed area is vital for the physical and cultural reproduction of the indigenous community involved in the judicial dispute.

distinguish groups are the basis for the ethnic category. In the case of Brazil's indigenes, the ethnic boundary arises in contradistinction to the non-indigenous (não-*indio*) or in with other indigenous ethnic groups.

In this paper, I am interested in conducting and analysis of how political and economic contexts of different scales factor into the emergence or endurance of ethnic boundaries.[9] By different scales I mean the national and international processes that produce structures of authority and networks of exchange of ideas and commodities. For example, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank exerted considerable influence on Brazil's military dictatorship in the 1980s by linking financing for development projects in indigenous areas to assurance of studies for demarcation of indigenous territory and the impact on these populations (Carneiro da Cunha 1987:132-133; Guimarães 1989:40). Such conditions mandated an articulation of ethnicity as a basis for interlocution with the state and transnational institutions. Beyond the supposed subjects of the ethnic categories, such transactions-and the concomitant multi-directional flow of capital, information, technology, actors and processes- factor into the production of ethnic boundary distinctions.

Transformations in land occupancy regimes, as well as regimes of production and accumulation of surplus emergent with land use policies, are complicit with the production of ethnic boundaries. That production links identity and place to stakes of material survival and being. In this context, one can understand territory as not merely a

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[9] However, these anthropologists' direct engagement and advocacy for those who are among the weakest in Brazil are waged in the juridical and political terms given by the context of the Brazilian nation-state. The centrality of a political project does not discount the scientific merit of their research, as argued by anti-indigenous publications like *Veja* (Coutinho, Paulin & Madeiros 2010). The latter pretend that in pointing out the political objectives of anthropologists, they discredit them. To the contrary, the political stakes of the study of ethnic land claims are ever present and dissociable for those on all sides of the issue, including the self-proclaimed objective.

legally demarcated geographical terrain for the preservation or revival of the culture of its inhabitants. Instead, a concept of territory prevails that I call identity-through-property, in which a neoliberal form of subjectivity/consciousness gains recognition via "being" an ethnicity as facilitated through territorial claims (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). The conditions lent by the contemporary juridical-economic context of the current mode of production in the Brazilian countryside gives rise to a mode of survival through being a particular identity or ethnicity. For it is identification with a particular category that serves as a basis for access to land, through transnational financial institutions, international organizations, and different Brazilian state agencies, as the terms for and means of survival.

At the same time, land conflict also involves questions of belonging, in which the defining of place is interwoven into the land contest. In the social process that delineates territory, economic survival, subsistence and/or thriving, are not the only stakes. National identity and ethnic being register, at the symbolic level, one's temporal orientation: narratives of from where one comes and to where one is going. Ironically, neither necessarily aligns with the terms of contemporary economic production or its historical transformation. Similar to the emergence of cowboy narratives through country music in the mid-20th century, notions of rural selfhood linked to prior modes of production on the land, always shifting and contingent, become idealized at the moment in which those former relations of production have been utterly transformed. Indeed, such narratives emerge in urban contexts in folk remembrances of a romanticized past, achieved through reference to a sense of place to which one belongs. Social actors enact his sense of self, experience of identity and self-fashioning, through moments of nostalgia.

For example, the Kaiowá-Guarani seeking land return in the Antonio João region of Mato Grosso do Sul, reference the base of a hill (*cerro*) that they consider sacred as central to their land claim (Oliveira & Pereira 2008). The hill provides an example of how religious and cosmological significations may erect boundaries and interdictions against trespassing along lines of kinship. Here, these lines of interdiction draw spatial boundaries around land to which the group belongs based on relations to ancestors related to parts of the terrain, links that establish the significance of a place and serve to demarcate an area as territory (cf. Munn 1996). Specifically, the base of the hill is a marker from the ancestral spirits of the limits of their territory, which they refuse to abandon in the face of Funai offers of a reservation area elsewhere. It is only markers of remembrance like the *cerro*, references to a past to which they want to return, that will actually bestow them with a future.[10]

The ethnicity-based land claim is not just a means to survival and reproduction of life, it is the material anchor to a claim on a "way of life" that calls on the past as a means of producing one's future. João Pacheco de Oliveira (1998:66) argued that the emergence of ethnic claims involves more than a stake in territory. In ethnicity's reference to a "way of life," it involves a communion of feelings and values that bestows a feeling of belonging. It is this "elaboration of utopias" (religious, moral, and political) that permits overcoming the contradictions between historical objectives and feelings of

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[10] Since encroachment by colonists in the early 20th century, some Kaiowá have frequently interpreted land loss or its threat as a harbinger of the destruction of the earth and the making of a new land free from evil (*terra sem mal*). *Terra* also means earth in Portuguese. Though the concept of the coming of a terra sem mal has existed since colonial writings on the Guarani (Clastres 1995) contemporary ethnic distinction for Kaiowá produce categorical divides between those who would be saved in such a catastrophic event (the Guarani) and those who would not (*não-indios*) (Oliveira & Pereira 2009:68-69). The former know the prayers that would save them, the latter do not (68-69). This operates as a difference of epistemology (or more precisely, know-how) more than a difference of 'being,' essence, or genealogy.

loyalty to "origins," transforming ethnicity into effective social practice. However, while

Oliveira insists on an historical basis of identity production, he does not ground the

production of an accompanying feeling of belonging to an ethnic place in the

particularities of the historical, political and economic context in which that feeling

emerges.

Land conflicts play out amidst a neoliberal economic order in which access to the

material means of everyday life have become increasingly precarious for Brazil's rural

people in general and the Kaiowá in particular. Factors like the increased concentration of

land ownership, [11] capital intensification of agro-industry and mechanization, as well as

rationalized management[12] of labor contribute to the increased precariousness. This

remains the case despite current government efforts to extend welfare programs like the

cesta básica (basic basket) to the desperately poor (Haddod 2008).

Kaiowá invoke a primordial essence and "tradition" that calls on the past, while at

the same time enables a way out or solution to present crises. This invocation emerges

from the precarious conditions described above as a means of envisioning possible

futures. Thus, I focus on what Comaroff and Comaroff (2004: 336) call the "crisis of

reproduction" under conditions of contemporary capitalism. This references a sense of

disorder accompanying political and economic transformations that have altered the

terms of access to the means of reproducing one's social order and way of being. Here,

Comaroff and Comaroff refer to the "shifting ratio of desire to possibility" in which

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[11] Farms of more than 1,000 hectares occupy 77% of Mato Grosso do Sul's agricultural area. Farms of 10 to 100 hectares and less than 10 hectares represent 2.9% and 0.2% of landholdings in the state respectively (World Bank 2010:77.

[12] In agro-industrial firm Agrodeco's outline for its two sugarcane ethanol plantations in Angelica (constructed in 2008) and Ivanhema (projected for 2012), Mato Grosso do Sul, the firm describes the strengths of its "centralized management: harvest efficiencies (non-stop harvest), viability of logistics projects, and Technological packages" (Agrodeco 2010).

access to the material means of producing life, and advancement through life cycles in their myriad cultural forms, have palpably diminished (340).

I foreground land as a point of analysis to be accounted for 1) in relation to its position as a means of survival through its anchoring of claims on the state, and 2) as an object to which ones' relation serves as a point of nostalgia and longing. In both, land serves as a point of struggle in one's material reproduction and of competing maps in narratives of belonging, subjectivity, and citizenship.

Historical Transformations

Once considered a drag on the nation's economic progress, Brazil's countryside is now a major force in the national economy. Today, agro-industry is booming, particularly in former hinterlands like Mato Grosso do Sul.[13] However, anxieties about how to develop the countryside have constituted a persistent feature of state policy since at least the abolition of slavery in the late 19th century (Andrews 1991). The assurance of a labor supply that was both sufficiently plentiful and motivated to fill the labor needs of large plantations invoked a racial image of the countryside as inhabited by lazy and backwards *indios* and *caboclos* (Brazilians of supposed mixed racial stock). Towards the end of the 19th century, after much debate and maneuverings, a program of colonization was put in place to both insure labor productivity with European immigrants (*colonos*) and disperse *caboclos* further into the hinterland of the country (Holloway 1980; Stolcke 1988). The clearing of these lands, in turn, made way for further inroads of colonization and rural economic development (i.e., the extension of deforestation, railroads, roads and

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[13] Economic growth in the state has surged since the 1970s. Mato Grosso do Sul has one of the strongest agro-industry sectors in Brazil. In agriculture, the state production volume increased 3-fold between 1980 and 2004 (World Bank 2010:27). Agriculture dominates the state's economy, generating 30% of the state GDP. The sector is mostly internationally focused, with over 55% destined for international exportation. Mato Grosso do Sul ranked 8th nationally in 2007 in ethanol production.

communications lines) into previously un-colonized areas.

The reorganization of land occupation and use in Mato Grosso do Sul took place over three phases during the course of the 20th century. In the first phase, from 1882 through 1942, the federal government bestowed a monopoly land concession (of more than 5 million hectares) to the Matte Larangeira Company for the extraction of native *herva matte*[14]. In the second phase, the company lost monopoly control over the exploitation of the region with the mid- 20th century influx of *fazendeiros* (plantation owners) for agriculture and animal husbandry (Lutti 2008). This made way for expansion of large-scale cattle and agricultural plantations, as well as the influx of colonists from the northeast and São Paulo for the federal government's Westward March colonization program. This second phase lasted until the 1970s, when a third form of land occupation and land use came to the fore: corporate colonization. This third phase, which continues through today, more heavily involves the influx of international capital, and more exclusively favors agro-industrial production for export[15].

Before the onset of the first phase, the Kaiowá eluded missionaries and slave raiders in the colonial era by hiding in the forests (Meliá, Grunberg & Grunberg 1976:175-177). Late 19th century legal precedents and settler expansion altered these

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[14] Herva matte, yerba mate in English, is an herb mixed with water to make a beverage stimulant.

[15] Examples of international finance capital include investments in heretofore Brazilian family-owned and operated plantations. This also encompasses purchasing land and installing international agro-industrial firms like Adecoagro. Based in Buenos Aires, the corporation owns over 270,000 hectares in Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil. In Mato Grosso do Sul, the firm specializes in the production of ethanol sugar and fuel (Agrodeco 2010). As an additional example of international capital investment, in 2007 AOL founder Steve Case, Sun Microsystems co-founder Vinod Khosla, supermarket giant Ron Burkle, film producer Steve Bing, and former World Bank President James Wolfensohn worked with Petrobras preseident Philippe Reichstul to create Brazilian Renewable Energy Co., or Brenco. The Americans invested $31 million in the company, while Brazilians contributed $20 million. In March 2007, the group raised an additional nearly $150 million from other Euro-American investors. Brenco planned to spend $2.2 billion to harvest 1.5 million acres of sugarcane, build 10 ethanol mills, and produce 1 billion gallons a year by 2014, primarily for export (Business Week 2007).

relations.[16] Over the course of the first and second phases, the Kaiowá were increasingly

restricted to 'protected' areas (reservations) under the direction of the *Serviço de Proteção*

aos Índios (SPI).[17] This occurred sometimes by force (due to settler violence) and

sometimes by choice due to the diminishment of resources (like forests) or the

encouragement of missionaries (Brand 1997:123-133).

As opposed to what happened in the Brazilian Amazon, in Mato Grosso do Sul

SPI demarcated discontinuous areas for reservations, denominating what amounted to

islands of land as *aldeias* (villages) for their administrative jurisdiction (Oliveira &

Pereira 2009:49). SPI did not prioritize demarcating land already occupied by indigenes.

The legislation of the period was concerned primarily with establishing areas for

indigenes whose previously occupied areas had become choice spaces for *fazendas*.

These lands tended to have the richest soil or location near transportation routes. The

principal criteria for reserving lands for the indigenes during the actions of SPI (1910-

1967) was that areas vacancy. More precisely, they were concerned that land designated

as reservations not be subject to any petitions from private interests.

The SPI imposed administrative organs known as a *Posto Indígenas* (PIs) on the

reservations. SPI installed a chief of post on each reservation. He had the prerogative to

replace the reservation's indigenous leadership whenever he deemed necessary. He also

interfered in all of the internal affairs of the community- including deciding on the

occurrence of festivals, sale of wood and labor contracts for rural land owners, as well as

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[16] A federal decree transferred the catechism and civilizing of Indians from the central to the state governments in 1889. The Constitution of 1891 transferred dominion over the devolution of land to the states without regard to the rights of indigenous people.

[17] The SPI mission of "protecting" the Indians implemented a policy of "accommodation" and acculturation for the supposed well-being of indigenous populations that rationalized confinement onto reservations. This state agency created to execute indigenous policy was transformed into the Fundação Nacional do Índio (Funai) in 1967.

planning and organizing communal labor (*mutirões*) in the quotidian functioning of the PI. The chief of post to named indigenous captains as sub-authorities on the reservation, of whom he was the top commander.

Jorge Eremites de Oliveria and Levi Marques Pereira (2009) have conducted ethnographic interviews with Kaiowá of Marangatu, an area on the border with Paraguay. There, land has been taken over by a series of violent incursions with non-Indians since the 1950s. The Kaiowá community currently seeking land return state that they refused to move to other reservations at the request of Funai for two reasons. They did not want to submit themselves to forms of political organization and authority, such as that imposed by SPI and later Funai. Secondly, they describe a feeling of belonging to the area associated with the *cerro* (hill) described above.

In recent decades, the Kaiowá face still different terms for displacement. The third party contracting of sugar cane production to *fazendeiro*s is exemplary of a larger socio-economic transformation of the countryside. This growth of sugarcane ethanol fuel production owes its long arc to federal government initiatives since the 1930s. Initially a sugar industry bailout, government subsidization of ethanol fuel evolved to be associated with energy security due to the global petroleum supply crises of the 1970s (Nunberg 1986). Pro-alcohol, as the program was called, was a boon to both local capitalists and the newly formed middle-class. The former sought to counter the flattening of world sugar prices and decline of the dominance of coffee with newly profitable ventures (Barzelay 1986). Though recent domestic petroleum discoveries have dampened the energy security line of logic, international concerns over global warming and carbon emissions have underlined ethanol's utility as an environmentally friendly alternative

fuel. This has spurred its ongoing growth as a site for public and private investment for both national and international financial institutions.

Investment in sugarcane plantations, *usinas* (the distilleries that produce ethanol fuel), as well as related investments in expansion of road networks, has surged. [18] This has put upward pressure on land values in the state, expansion of plantation holdings, and transformed the organization of production. *Usinas* prefer to contract cane production to third party producers in order to not have to deal with the messiness of such ordeals as labor management and environmental regulations. The *usinas* thus spread out the risks of those types of responsibilities across multiple suppliers, allowing more flexibility in cases of problems in labor relations or compliance with environmental regulations. This increases difficulties for those seeking to organize labor unions pushing for greater environmental safeguards. Of course, vulnerabilities remain for the *usina*s for insuring a supply of sugarcane, which thus cannot be entrusted completely to loosely related producers. Thus, both *fazendeiros* and *usina* owners have some interest in pushing political regulations of labor relations and territorial disputes over land rights with ethnic groups. The irony, however, is that former manual laborers on these plantations, once granted land by the state (such as MST, *quilombo* or indigenous groups), often become cane producers for the *usina*s or rent out their land to *fazendeiros*. So, the vulnerabilities presented by land rights disputes do not seem to pose the risk to *usinas* and *fazendeiro*s suggested by their staunch opposition and activities against land activists.

In the current terms of economic production, rural workers face increased difficulty finding work. The larger shift in preference to clearing ever more land for more

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[18] For example, in May 2010, the World Bank approved a USD $300 million loan to expand and improve Mato Grosso do Sul's road transportation network (World Bank 2010:22).

efficient, maximized production by using machines and day laborers instead of peasants has displaced rural people, both *indio* and *não-indio* alike. In the aforementioned second phase of economic production, for example, *fazendeiro*s sometimes allowed families to live on a parcel of land in exchange for them clearing forests and providing primary labor to set up the plantation. Such families consisted of non-indigenous and indigenous people alike. The families raised their own food and sold any surplus for money. They would also buy some commodities from the *fazendeiro* with money gained from selling their surplus. Over a period of time, after they cleared the land and establishing a portion of plantation, the *fazendeiro* could displace them to another parcel of his land to repeat the process. This category of rural inhabitants engaged in such a relationship with the *fazendeiro* without expectation of gaining land ownership. Rights of possession (*posse*) did not exist. They understood as that the legally land belonged to the *fazendeiro*.

Alternatively, there existed other communities (e.g., based on *compadrio*) of small holders that occupied land by *posse* or legal title, subsisting on the same parcel of land for generations. They sometimes did so without recognition of posse by the state. When eventually *fazendeiro*s showed up to claim land, a fight could develop. The fight could be actual violence, or juridical within the organs of government, or both. Large landholders almost always won these fights.

In this way, the countryside of Brazil was developed over the course of the late 19th and 20th centuries. The law of 1850 was designed to ensure the privileged possession of elites by not recognizing *posse* as a basis for claims to the land. It based rights to land on access to the bureaucratic processes of the state. Thus large tracts of land held by large landholders by title became the purview of the protection of the state

when disputes by *posseiros* (those claiming land by *posse* or occupation) took place.

Sometimes, the title of land was held by multiple people or otherwise ambiguously held.

This could come down to faulty or loss paperwork in offices of municipal and state

offices, for example. However, the former narrative of a lack of recognition of *posse* and

the privilege of elites in terms of access to and protections by the state seems to be

predominant in this history.

Today, in Mato Grosso do Sul there exists a diving line on the understanding of

this history. Many non-indigenes defend the rights of large landholders vehemently in

the face of the history of dispossession in the countryside.   Here, the category of non-

Indian may mark a distinction between respecting the social and legal order in place

today, where the *fazendeiros* are deemed entitled to their holdings as descendents of the

pioneers of economic development in the state, and indeed of Brazil as a nation. The

category of non-Indian, exemplified by the *fazendeiro*, works in contradistinction to the

Indian. In their protest occupations of plantations, Indian attempt to take what is not

theirs, disrupting the aforementioned economic developmental narrative. However, some

non-Indians (for example, those politicized in the MST movement) may take pride in

MST protest occupations of *fazendas*. In a conversation with anthropologist Levi Pereira,

he recalled a story of a man who, like many *colonos*, worked as a *posseiro* but refused

dispossession by the *fazendeiro*s. He took pride in both his work on the land and his

subsequent protests against dispossession by *fazendeiro*s. However, he laments the

ridicule and discontent expressed by his peers and family to his protest occupation. His

protest ran counter to the opposing narrative described above of Brazilian-ness and the

advance of development through which they make sense of the economic and political

transformations of production in the region.

"The Space to Be Ourselves"

        I have conducted my ethnographic research primarily in the municipality of Dourados, Mato Grosso do Sul. The state's second largest city, its population numbers approximately 180 thousand people. The state's largest indigenous reservation lies on the northern outskirts of the city, resembling a mere extension of the city in its proximity. Though the city contains all of the typical features of any modern city, like a shopping mall and high-rise apartments, Dourados yet has an agrarian feel. A pervasive rural aesthetic percolates through the town, examples of which include popular vehicle stickers featuring silhouettes of cowboys on horseback. A memorable variation depicts a mounted cowboy roping a busty, big haired, high-heeled woman by her ankle. As an additional example, I commonly, though infrequently, see horse drawn carts on the city streets interspersed with the town's sizeable car fleet.

        These expressions of rurality takes place in a context of broad dependence on advanced, capital intensive agro-industrial production in the region, including the derivative industries like frozen food (*frigorifico*). Bernadelli (2006) argued that small cities in Brazil are really neither rural nor urban. Instead the transformation of space with course of rural development has created a sort of bedroom cities (*cidades dormitorios*) that house former land occupants to the benefit of the production of capital and the reproduction of laborers for capital. For example, in São Paulo the state facilitated the expulsion of peasants from the land and the accommodation of their move into small cities. The state uprooted them through manipulation of the law and policies favoring modernization. This has included the construction of infrastructure to increase access to lands deeper in to the interior, including highways, and communications technologies. In

the region of Cantanduva, São Paulo, the state constructed or subsidized housing in order to ensure a stable reserve of workers for agro-industry for the sugarcane ethanol industry. The housing ensures workers' presence in these cities in intervals between harvests, although there cane cutting cane itself is poorly remunerated. A network of dependency of municipal authorities on agro-industry for state tax revenue and campaigns funds ensures the reproduction of these relations.

Spatial organization in Dourados conforms to Bernadelli's argument. Agro-industrial rural-urban production contradicts the pervasive idealization of an agrarian style of life. The city itself is organized on a grid similar to other cities in the region that were founded in the early 20th century. The reservation, however, features more dispersed houses, with communal agriculture organized by families. However, most people on the reservation live on remunerated work. For example, in the indigenous reservation on the outer edges of the city of Dourados, buses depart before dawn during harvest season to carry cane cutters to the plantations. During dry seasons, the buses waft clouds of red dust from the unpaved roads through the air as they rumble through the reservations, collecting cane cutters for a day's work on nearby plantations. Kaiowá complain of respiratory problems from the dust. Yet, the dependence for subsistence on remunerated labor on plantations (for men) and as domestics in the city (for women), with its concomitant enmeshment in larger networks of production and exchange, creates this seeming paradox between contemporary means of social reproduction and visions of its predecessors and possible successors.

The Kaiowá-Guarani plea for land return to acquire the space to return to living in accordance with the concept of *tekoha*. *Tekoha* is the Kaiowá-Guarani term for territory.

It literally means, "that which facilitates a way of life," composed of *teko* meaning "way of being" and *ha* meaning "place." The term refers to the *bom modo de ser* (good way to be) that is the "traditional" Kaiowá way of life. *Tekoha* is the land necessary for survival of the Guaraní way of being, where one's ancestors lived and where future generations will live. At the same time, *tekoha* also means extended family in conventional usage. Among the Kaiowá, transformations in the family and the ability to both sustain and reproduce the *tekoha* coalesce in discourses regarding social change.

In Kaiowá social movements, Kaiowá express a longing for the "space to be themselves" in at least two senses. First, in interviews Kaiowá informants, teachers (professors) and sugarcane cutters alike, complained of not having the space to enact traditional social organization. Second, some Kaiowá informants discuss land return as a means of returning to previous forms of economic production on and spiritual relationship with land and forests.

In the pre-colonial arrangement of territory, systematic intermarriage between affinal houses created loosely bounded, endogamous local groupings of longhouses constituted by close kin and affines. The Guarani lived in *ogajekutu* (large houses) located preferably on the border of forests or in their clearings. The villages were formed by one or several longhouses, constituting the *tekoha*. Each longhouse was occupied by an extended family, composed of various nuclear families, which developed as much collectively as individually the economic agricultural activities that held them in one place. The land belonged to the entire village, with each nuclear family having its own lot. They observed the limits of neighboring *tekohas*, which according to Gadelha (1980)

generated a stable equilibrium between them. Sometimes relatives would leave to form other longhouses, augmenting the *tekoha*.

Meliá, Grunberg and Grunberg (1976) described the land of the *tekoha* as a well-defined area whose size and quantity of nuclear families may vary, but whose structure and function is always the same. Both a religious (*tekoharuvixa*) and a political (*mboruvixa, yvyraija*) leader head the *tekoha*, which has strong social cohesion. The land of the *tekoha* is understood as collective property, belonging to all who inhabit it, who are linked by kinship in *tekoha*. To each nuclear family there corresponds a parcel of land for usufruct for their own garden and the construction of a house.

Gurani specialists offer different explanations of the changes to the Kaiowá way of life wrought by the aforementioned history of colonization and development in the region. Schaden (1962) wrote that the shift away from the *ogajekutu* under colonization promoted a fragmentation of the extended family, an undoing of social unity and organization. Schaden suggested a social disorder in Kaiowá kinship relations under conditions of reservation life, a certain randomness and weak bond. In contrast, Almeida (2001) argued that although the fragmentation of the *ogajekutu* transformed the organization of the extended family, it did not compromise the structures of the Gurani social system (125). According to Almeida, today kinship relations still determine and order the appropriation of space and its transformations. For example, the power to decide whom and under what terms people occupy land in the *tekoha* is neither with the political leader nor an external agent, but resides in the economic and political system regulated by kinship relations and by the extended family.

Pereira (2004a) grounded the concept of *tekoha* in the link between kinship, religion and cosmology. Land, family, and politics form mutually constitutive concepts in Kaiowá daily life and shape their concepts of territory.   The nuclear family is an expression of the larger social organization of the Kaiowá, whose structure consists of nested concentric circles in which the innermost circle envelops those with whom one is closest in living arrangements and the intimacy of those relations. The circles extend outwards with each encompassing those with whom relations are more distant, in both physical and interpersonal proximity. These circles correspond to Kaiowá spatial organization as well. The outer circles include ever more distant kin relations, eventually encompassing all Kaiowá. Relations with those at the outer reaches of the network are carried out via religious ceremonies and occasional organization for extraordinary labor needs among them, for example, for the construction of a house.

This arrangement also corresponds to Kaiowá cosmology in that subjects describe two forces, *ore and pavêm*, which act centrifugally and centripetally, respectfully, in the bringing near and distancing of bonds beyond the domestic family unit. These forces strike a balance that holds people together in coherent sociological units (i.e. *fogo domestico, parentela* (kindred) while at the same time inhibiting the anti-social desire to remain solely within the nuclear family unit. *Pavêm* widens the circle of sociality to others, bonding different *parentelas* and facilitating resolution of conflicts between groups. Such bonding takes place via shared religious prayers under the leadership of shamans, for example. On the other hand, the articulation of supra-locality captures the economy of symbolic alterity through which the larger political-ritual composition of the ethnic group takes place. The sociological and cosmological share a reciprocal continuity

that regulates the cosmos for the Kaiowá. Without the land of their ancestors, the
Kaiowá system cannot operate.

These expositions of Kaiowá "culture" offer context to the complaints of some
Kaiowá that having to live in close proximity with groups outside of their extended kin,
even with other Kaiowá-Gurani, causes unease. Living close together on reservations,
they complained, creates conflicts, jealousies, and rivalries. Having the proper amount of
space would relieve those tensions. The contemporary crowding on reservations
contributes to the urgency of needing to reclaim lost (dispossessed) space: expanding the
availability of land for and as Kaiowá-Gurani. In these claims, self-identified Kaiowá
invoke a past social harmony wrought by a former, enlarged Kaiowá territory in which
they achieved that harmony by being allowed to "be" Kaiowá.

Yet, I argue, "being" Kaiowa is dissociable from the contemporary economic and
political production of space in which it occurs. For example, the intensification of
factionalism and conflict on reservations has accompanied different regimes of
government (Funai) administration policies seeking to "accommodate" (Pereira 2004a)
self-identified Kaiowá, and fix them in a governable space. Violence on the Bororo
reservation outside of the city of Dourados has become so notorious that many consider it
unsafe to leave their homes at night. While I was interviewing two Kaiowá
schoolteachers, we were forced to cut the interview short in order for them to return home
to the reservation before nightfall. Stories of violence include tales of youth gangs that
rob and maim without reason, including beheading victims. Informants expressed a
general sense that Kaiowá youth were out of control. Kaiowá professors complained that
youth lack proper upbringing and orientation because their parents are always far away

cutting cane and working in the city. Thus, no one is around to teach them the proper way of being Kaiowá. Land, they said, was a key part of the solution, as it would allow them to be self-sufficient and close to home.

In recent years, Funai reorganized the political leadership structure on the Bororo reservation. At the suggestion of a group of anthropologists, they removed the captaincy arrangements that had previously determined the circulation of government resources and services, stating that such an arrangement was foreign to the structure of traditional Kaiowá political organization. Certainly, captains were exogenous to pre-colonial Guarani social organization. However, in the wake of the removal of captains, a vacuum in authority emerged on the reservation; alongside increased factionalism and manifestations of violence. It is important to note that informants have never characterized the youth violence described above as instrumental. Indeed it is the nonsensical quality of its enactment and brutality that most disturbs reservation residents.

Brazilian law and state agencies charge anthropologists with documenting and outlining the terms of indigene's previous spatial organizations and territorial occupation, with its stated concomitant social harmony. However, in the anthropologists' work of documenting contemporary narratives of the past, they simultaneously make the past intelligible and render that past commensurate with the stakes of state recognition (Povinelli 2004). Understanding the ongoing examination of indigeneity and land claims in Mato Grosso do Sul thus requires analyzing invocations of a harmonious, mythical past as a counterpoint to a disorderly present and less than certain future. Rather than arising merely from a primordial Kaiowá-Guarani way of life, the current context of conflict and discord ground such invocations in more recent macro-transformations of

economy and society.

Regarding, the second sense of the call for space to "be" Kaiowá, some Kaiowá imagine that land return would allow them to return to a past mode of life by, for example, re-growing forests. Here, as described above, they mobilize the very socio-environmental characterizations of their indigeneity outlined in law. Traditional ways of life rely on the sustainability of forests that house spirits and florae species of religious and cosmological significance. They carry on these practices, to the extent possible, through the few remaining forested areas on public environmental reserves and private plantations[19] (Oliveira & Pereira 2009:75, 85-86). Socio-environmental arguments favoring land return take seriously the very different relations to nature involved in Kaiowá cosmology and practical activities, as opposed to agro-industrial logic of exploitation of nature, for example. It is a challenge, however, for informants to simultaneously factor how previous modes of production would allow access to contemporary material goods like cell phones and mopeds under contemporary economic conditions. For example, thirty two year old Kaiowá cane cutter informant, who had cut cane full-time since aged thirteen, complained of the increasing scarcity of work cutting cane due to mechanization.   When I pressed him to offer his sense of an ideal solution, he stated that he wanted more work (remunerated labor). More land, on the other hand, would offer him greater security. However, the land would not provide what he needed to buy materials for building a house, or furnishing that house. The conundrum of needing more remunerated work and more land for a traditional way of being presented him with irresolvable, yet not necessarily troubling nor irksome, contradictions. Instead,

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[19] Land owners are required to preserve a part of their land area for forests. There is lax enforcement of this requirement by authorities. Indigenous use of these areas involve trespassing that incurs conflicts with the land owners.

the contradictions arose in the course of conversation, unremarked upon by him. The contradiction does not present a problem to the reasoning. Nor do I suggest that it should. Rather, the contradiction constitutes an element of the logics through which ethnic categories are produced untroubled.

Contradictions and conflicts also emerge along lines religion, class and generation. Pereira (2004b), for example, demonstrates lines of difference over land and "being" Kaiowá between evangelicals and so-called traditional believers, as well as generational differences. While most Kaiowá describe the current problems facing the Kaiowá in terms of "crisis," there are cleavages in accounts of the cause and solutions. Older shamans and representatives of indigenous organizations claim a need for a return to "traditional" forms of religious worship and social organizations. These people push for the return of lands taken in colonization as a way of recovering previous forms of social organization and a return of social order and stability. In their rhetoric they explicitly reject "white" influences and consider such influences at the root of the contemporary crisis (275).

Young leaders and Pentecostals also consider these influences as prejudicial and invoke an idealized past. However, these groups consider such a past unrecoverable and irredeemably lost. Thus, they see themselves as mediators to new forms of integration with the national society that offer solutions that both move the community forward (i.e., attributing failure to the traditional leaders) while at the same time holding over translated forms of previous cultural norms and values towards progress (298). Land recovery is but one piece to a larger solution of integration of Kaiowá into the national society.

<u>Identity and National Development</u>

In 2008, I attended a public forum in Naviraí, Mato Grosso do Sul hosted by the state's plantation owners' syndicate. Dozens of local municipal functionaries, members of non-governmental organizations, and diverse locals filled the auditorium chairs. The land demarcation issue was and continues to be an in issue of great concern and interest in the town. Local media, including television, radio and newspapers, attended to cover the event. To my surprise, two radio stations interviewed me, a lowly foreign graduate student, after learning that I was conducting research on the issue in the region.

A tone of moderate outrage and mild panic permeated the forum, in both the formal presentations of the organizers and in audience testimonies and interventions. For example, I uncomfortably looked on as one *fazendeiro* joked about the shooting of an indigenous protester on his land. Another complained that the *indios* are not really that desperate for land since some of the protestors that showed up at this plantation were using cell phones. The cognitive dissonance engendered by seeing an *indio* with a piece of modern technology seemingly constituted an offense to either his sense of what it meant to be a "real" indigene (without modern technology) or really indigent, or both.

Syndicate representatives gave power point presentations and speeches faulting the role of law-transgressing Indians, politicized anthropologists, leftwing clergy and foreign-funded NGOs in the land struggle. These culprits menaced the wellbeing of Mato Grosso do Sul with the threat of land seizure. One syndicate representative complained that his ancestors had come to Mato Grosso do Sul to clear the forests for the country and make the region productive. "We whites" (*brancos*), he proclaimed, were Brazilians who fought to establish the area as a frontier to advance the country.

Accompanied by the vocal approbation of many in attendance he lamented that today the state wants to seize their land to give it to "indios quem não produzem nada" (Indians that do not produce anything). Invoking a shared identity for descendants of the region's *não-indio* pioneers, the syndicate representative set up an opposition between these descendents as Brazilians, a category distinguished by their productivity, and unproductive *indios*. I should note that, in a different context in Brazil, the syndicate representative might not have identified himself, nor have been perceived as, *branco* (white). Rather, he might have been identified as *negro* or *mulato* (mixed race black and white). Such is the complication of race in Brazil and the particularity of the context of Mato Grosso do Sul in the production of ethnic boundaries in its ethnographic context.[20]

Even self-identified *não-indios* that defend indigenous land claims sometimes do so in accordance with the very developmentalist logic producing ethnic *indio* versus *não-indio* distinctions. Referring to the Funai study to demarcate indigenous lands currently underway in the state, a Labor Party (Partido Trabalhista, PT) member of Mato Grosso do Sul's state congress explained, "The Indians will not derail the development of the state. Mato Grosso do Sul is not in financial difficulty."[21] Indeed, he said, the lack of demarcation generates legal uncertainty for current and potential financial investors in the state. They fear acquiring new lands to augment production since they do not know if that land will one day be designated indigenous territory. "If we do not demarcate the

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[20] Mato Grosso do Sul has the second largest indigenous population in Brazil (behind only the state of Amazonas). The indigenous population numbers 32,500 to 71,200 people belonging to several indigenous groups, including: the Kadiwéu, the Kamba, the Kinikinawa, and the Terena (World Bank 2010:76).

[21] My translation. Original reads, "Os índios não atrapalham o desenvolvimento do Estado. O Mato Grosso não está em dificuldade financeira."

land now, the insecurity will remain for the rest of our lives," he stated (Chileno 2010). [22] Presumably, such hindrance to the inflow of investment capital would constitute an unnecessary brake on the state's development. These public discourses distinguish between *indio*s that will inhibit productivity and advancement versus *não-indios* identified with productivity, progress, and finance capital.

However, territorial demarcation does not merely involve the association of a form of economic activity with an ethnic category. Land occupation within or outside of demarcated lines, further serves to interpellate people as being that ethnic subject. For example, the Kaiowá near the town of Antonio João that lived outside of SPI areas, having been encroached upon by *fazendeiros,* assumed the condition of peasantry (*peão de fazenda*). *Não-indios* recognized them as peasants, not as *indios.* Oliveira and Pereira (2009:97) recount that in ethnographic accounts of non-Indians of the region this presented itself as a process of "ethnic transfiguration" (*transfiguração étnica*), the transformation of Indians in the region into non-Indians. From this perception comes the phrase "the place for the Indian is on the reservation" (O lugar do indio está na reserva).

One cannot dissociate the current context of disputes over land demarcation and ethnicity-based land claims from the juridical context lent by the post-military dictatorship1988 constitution that brought a democratic form of government to Brazil. Prior to this constitution, Brazil's self-identified Indians were entitled to land protected by the government. However, that land did not necessarily have to be that of their "traditional" occupation. Thusly, as described above, in pre-1988 constitution Mato

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[22] My translation. The original full quote reads as follows. "'A falta de demarcação é que gera insegurança jurídica sobre o direito das propriedades e inibe os investimentos. Neste caso, empresários de outros locais não vão adquirir novas terras porque temem a sua transformação em território indígena. Se não demarcar, a insegurança vai ficar para o resto da vida,' comentou, frisando que os índios não vão passar fome sem protestar pela ampliação das reservas."

Grosso do Sul, indigenous people were routinely displaced to reservations, under the administrative "protection" of the federal government. Today, indigenous people have a right to the grounds occupied before their displacement, a sort of ethnic tie to the soil, deemed necessary for their cultural reproduction.

The 1988 constitution championed rights for indigenous groups within Brazil under new terms that were part of a multi-culturalist shift in politics. For example, note the difference between an earlier turn of the 20th century, positivist national slogan for Brazil "Order and Progress" (burnished on the national flag) and Lula's recent slogan of "Brazil: A Country for Everybody." The former describes an "imaginary of future transcendence of current reality and the other an imaginary of co-existence and identity" (Mitchell 2008:2). Previous ideological regimes sought national unity through the sublimation of racial difference via miscegenation or depicted "Indians" as the quintessential and original Brazilians (Garfield 2001:36-37). Though, as an extension of this logic, the state put forth acculturation programs to "civilize" the Indians due to their so-called primitive state of development. Today, at least in law, such policies have given way to multiculturalist redress of past wrongs through affirmative action programs and land return to indigenous and *quilombo* people. Mitchell rightly notes, however, that the current multiculturalism (like its homogenizing predecessor) presents the nation as a panoply of identities while offering scant detail on both the arrangement of relations between them in the application of newly defined rights. This, of course, is the problem that the identity-based movements are at pains to resolve.

Brazilian laws also connect ethnicity to land rights through socio-environmental claims, on the relation of traditional modes/types of production to environmental factors.

Here, indigeneity is tied to a forager and/or horticultural activities. The socio-environmental linking of ethnicity to land use recognizes an indigenous land claim as a legitimate alternative to a capitalist way of production. Embedded in that recognition are the assumptions of fundamental differences in the relation to nature of Indian versus non-Indian. In this imaginary, the viability of the expansion of indigenous lands becomes associated to the question of whether indigenes should be put in the way of, allowed to obstruct, development. In short, in much of the contemporary discourses of *não-indios* of Mato Grosso do Sul, the Indian has no "place," at least in development narratives.

In Mato Grosso do Sul, land conflicts are centered on the outcomes for economic productivity and distribution of resources associated with Brazilian citizenship and identity. In this paper, I focused on contests over visions of the future both across and within ethnic categories (Indian and non-Indian) as an analytical focal point. I have done so because of its centrality to the production of a sense of space and belonging. Land in Mato Grosso do Sul is a central contradiction in the struggle between how ethnicity and territory factor into an understanding of the past, future and contemporary terms for survival.

The expansion of global capital and neoliberal pressures are part of a historical shift in land appropriation and responses to it. Contested land claims take place in a context in which the influx of international capital and concomitant transformations of the organization of production and exchange has rendered people increasingly marginal, regardless of ethnic identification. Claiming an *indio* or *não-indio* right to land, an ethnic subjectivity mapped onto a demarcated territory, enacts a struggle for recognition in the

contemporary terms of these categories' production and upending.

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