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# Communicational Cosmopraxis of Brazil's Kaiowa Indigenous People: Intermedial Resistance and the Struggle for Visibility

Luciana de Oliveira

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Résumé de l'article

À de nombreux autres désavantages pour les luttes des peuples autochtones au Brésil, s'ajoute leur absence dans les sphères de visibilité hégémonique. Le cas des peuples Kaiowa et Guarani mérite une attention particulière, non seulement parce qu'il s'agit de la deuxième population autochtone en importance au Brésil, mais aussi parce qu'il se caractérise comme l'un des cas les plus frappants de gestion nécropolitique par l'État et les agents privés, dans lequel la paix prend le visage d'une guerre sans fin. Dans cet essai, je présente quelques-unes des formes intermédiales d'affirmation créative de l'existence développées par les peuples autochtones dans leur lutte pour récupérer leur territoire ancestral, ainsi que la lutte pour la visibilité qui en découle, avec des répercussions sur les moyens et les significations de ce qu'est la résistance.

# Communicational Cosmopraxis of Brazil's Kaiowa Indigenous People: Intermedial Resistance and the Struggle for Visibility

### Luciana de Oliveira

**T**he purpose of this essay is to link the production of imagery with the historical experiences and the Kaiowa cosmopraxis as well as the potential for interworld communication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds. The main interlocutors in the scientific and artistic production processes are people who identify themselves as Kaiowa (commonly called "Guarani-Kaiowa"). Kaiowa and Guarani are distinct peoples but are united politically through the serious land conflict they face and the struggle to exercise the right to their original territories, guaranteed by the 1988 Brazilian Constitution. Both peoples speak the Guarani language from the Tupi-Guarani linguistic family/Tupi branch, and nowadays live in close and sometimes shared territories in Mato Grosso do Sul State in Brazil, with a population of about 55,000 people. Anthropological literature identifies three groups of Guarani peoples: Ñandeva, Mbya, and Kaiowa;[1] Ñandeva also describe themselves as Guarani, using the two terms interchangeably. They are involved in a daily struggle to affirm Guarani-Kaiowa *teko* (the source of a traditional and true way of life) together with the defense of their territory from the economic interests of global agribusiness.

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1.   This classic division comes from Egon Schaden, *Fundamental Aspects of Guaraní Culture,* New Haven, Connecticut, Human Relations Area Files, 1962.

The starting point is my first-hand experience in Kaiowa land, where I have worked collaboratively with the Guaiviry Yvy Pyte Y Jere[2] community (*tekoha* in the Guarani language)[3] since 2012, producing films, visual arts, digital networks actions, and books. For research coding purposes, from a methodological point of view, this article is the result of a multi-sited ethnographic research gesture.[4] Multi-sited processes[5] permitted me to experience many spaces and temporalities of *tekoha* daily life, as well as the Kaiowa presence in the cities surrounding the *tekoha*, in Belo Horizonte (city where I live and work), at universities in the states of Minas Gerais and Mato Grosso do Sul, and in diverse public forums to monitor the Kaiowa struggle for land and self-definition.[6] This is not a conventional ethnographic gesture that presents an objectifying description of "the world of others." I work with two methodological prerogatives in this multi-sited ethnography. On the one hand, there is the ethical and practical convention that considers the meeting of worlds as

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2.    Guaiviry Yvy Pyte Y Jere is one of the Kaiowa *tekoha* in southern Mato Grosso do Sul State in Brazil. It is part of the autonomous reoccupation movement of traditional territories—or self-demarcation—which began on a larger scale in the 1980s and became known as "land retaking." The territory was reoccupied in 2011 and provoked the brutal murder of the family group leader, Chief Nísio Gomes. See "Brazil Indigenous Guarani Leader Nisio Gomes Killed," *BBC News*, 19 November 2011, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-15799712 (accessed 18 November 2021). Guaiviry currently houses about forty families and 300 people. The *tekoha*'s name can be translated as "the heart of the land, by the river where a very old female shaman lived, and its surroundings."

3.    *Tekoha* in the Guarani language designates the place (*-ha*) where Indigenous people can live independently and where there is everything needed to live (*teko*). It is the Kaiowa and Guarani groups' preferred name, especially in land retaking, instead of "tribe" and "village," which sound colonialist.

4.    To date, my fieldwork has consisted of annual visits, since 2012, that have included cinema workshop projects in 2014, 2016, 2020, and an extended period in 2018 based in the *tekoha*. No less important to this research was the involvement of the shaman couple Valdomiro Flores and Tereza Amarília Flores as visiting professors at my university and our activities in Belo Horizonte and the *tekoha* neighbouring cities. Audiovisual register and field diaries (with notes and drawings) were used as primary forms of record and intermedial productions, particularly in the transcription and translation tasks.

5.    George A. Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," Annual Review of Anthropology, vol. 24, 1995, p. 95–117; Luciana de Oliveira, "Etnografia, pesquisa multissituada e produção de conhecimento no campo da comunicação," *Questões Transversais: Revista de Epistemologias da Comunicação*, vol. 5, 2017, p. 72–81, http://revistas.unisinos.br/index.php/questoes/article/view/15735 (accessed 18 November 2021).

6.    Research project "Regimes of Knowledge and Forms of Life at University: Cosmopolitical Experiences and Experiments in Face of Traditional Knowledges and Other (In)Visible Epistemologies," funded by Prograd-UFMG, Fapemig 2018, INCTI-UNB; Rumos Itaú Cultural 2018–2019, Extension Program Image Song-Pray Word in Guarani and Kaiowa Territory, funded by Proext-MEC 2014–2015.

a coming together of knowledge[7] wherein neither side is superior to the other. In other words, the ethnographic work is a meeting of Western science and traditional Guarani-Kaiowa cosmopraxis. Both have their distinctive and non-equivalent forms of knowledge production, transmission, and dissemination. On the other hand, the "object" in my approach is not an Indigenous people but rather the relationship between worlds. Field experience and shared production are a matter of developing an interworld relationship, which is precisely the object of my research. It is considered to be a tentative communicational interaction[8] where long-term shared experiences are key to learning together.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

The theoretical question that informs this research, both in the analysis of images and the co-creation processes involved, is based upon three articulating concepts: re-existence, visibility regimes, and cosmopraxis. Adolfo Alban Achinte defines re-existence as:

> The everyday *dispositifs* created and developed by communities to reinvent their lives and confront the established reality of a hegemonic project. A project that from colonial times until the present day has silenced and held a negative view of Afro-descendent and Indigenous communities, seeing them as inferior. Re-existence looks to decentralize the established forms of logic to locate within the depth of cultures—in this case Indigenous and Afro-descendent cultures—the keys to the forms of organization, production, nutrition, rituals, and aesthetics that can dignify life and reinvent it so that it can continue to transform itself. Re-existence relates to a quote from the community, cooperative, and trade union leader Héctor Daniel Useche Berón "Pájaro," murdered in 1986 in the town of

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7.　José Jorge de Carvalho & Juliana Florez, "The Meeting of Knowledges: A Project for the Decolonization of Universities in Latin America," Postcolonial Studies, vol. 17, no. 2, 2014, p. 122–139. The Meeting of Knowledges Project is a political-epistemic decolonization activity in Brazilian universities that includes my university, where this project has been in place since 2014. Its main objective is to create spaces of interaction where there is epistemic parity between the traditional masters and scientific knowledge. With this inspiration, those carrying out ethnography are apprentices rather than an authority on scientific knowledge to validate Indigenous knowledge.

8.　José Luiz Braga, "Neither Rare nor Absent–Tentative," *MATRIZes*, São Paulo, vol. 4, no. 1, 2010, p. 65–81, https://www.revistas.usp.br/matrizes/article/view/38276/41087 (accessed 29 July 2020).

Bugalagrande in the centre of the Valle del Cauca in Colombia. He once said, "What are we going to invent today to continue living?"[9]

Indigenous forms of existence imply a cosmopraxis[10] where the continuity between nature and culture is not merely a thought process, but rather involves everyday activities that produce experience and thinking at the same time. Re-existence involves the adoption of a cosmopraxis that intervenes into the visibility regimes of the *media* and the State's Indigenous policies that have historically always promoted assimilation. A different perspective is evident through other images that increase the visibility of the struggle for rights and the reporting of the violence suffered by Indigenous peoples. The Indigenous cosmopraxis includes relationships, invisible to Western regimes of visibility, between peoples and non-human entities. As Michel Foucault observes,[11] a visibility regime is not so much about what is seen, but the reality that becomes visible through power relations. Re-existence, more than a mere reaction to all the violence suffered, is an insurgent practice, and enables other ways of being, thinking, knowing, feeling, existing, and living.

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9.    In the original: "los dispositivos que las comunidades crean y desarrollan para inventarse cotidianamente la vida y poder de esta manera confrontar la realidad establecida por el proyecto hegemónico que desde la colonia hasta nuestros días ha inferiorizado, silenciado y visibilizado negativamente la existencia de las comunidades afrodescendientes. La re-existencia apunta a descentrar las lógicas establecidas para buscar en las profundidades de las culturas—en este caso indígenas y afrodescendientes—las claves de formas organizativas, de producción, alimentarias, rituales y estéticas que permitan dignificar la vida y re-inventarla para permanecer transformándose. La re-existencia apunta a lo que el líder comunitario, cooperativo y sindical Héctor Daniel Useche Berón "Pájaro," asesinado en 1986 en el Municipio de Bugalagrande en el centro del Valle del Cauca, Colombia, alguna vez planteó: "¿Qué nos vamos a inventar hoy para seguir viviendo?" Adolfo Alban Achinte, "Pedagogías de la re-existencia. Artistas indígenas y afrocolombianos," Catherine Walsh (ed.), *Pedagogías decoloniales: Prácticas insurgentes de resistir, (re)existir y (re)vivir*, tome I, Quito, Ediciones Abya-Yala, 2013, p. 455 (our translation).
10.    The concept of Amerindian cosmopraxis or sociocosmologies can be found in Renato Stutzman's book *O Profeta e o Principal. A Ação Política Ameríndia e Seus Personagens*, São Paulo, EDUSP, 2012. I will not go into detail on the ethnological issues discussed in this text as it merits a dense literature review on the Indigenous mechanisms of refusal and the conjuration of coercive power as well as ontological unity.
11.    Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, 2nd ed., New York, Vintage Books, 1995, p. 218. When discussing the panopticon, Foucault understands it to be as much about a regime of visibility as an abstract machine that traverses all enunciated functions. His abstract formula is: "techniques for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities."

For this study, I have selected a series of images—several of which derive from creative processes in which I participated[12]—that offer insight into the creation of Kaiowa cosmopraxis that allows for Indigenized forms of mediation. All the images are of collaborative productions between the Guarani-Kaiowa communities and artists, intellectuals, and activists. The main contemporary aspects of Kaiowa resistance and the related struggle for visibility can, so to speak, be analyzed within the framework of intermediality. Within the context of this study, it means mediations have history and must be situated on solid ground.[13] The second section of the article discusses an image by Paulo Nazareth, an artist who has worked collaboratively with the Guarani-Kaiowa since 2012. His artistic investigation draws from his own Indigenous lineage, and this image provides a brief historical description that helps us understand the resistance of Indigenous peoples in Brazil. The third section describes four forms of Kaiowa re-existence through the following images: 1) the attempts to speak to the Pope; 2) self-representation in cinema; 3) rap and collaboration with contemporary artists; 4) forms of multidimensional mediation in the reaffirmation of a sacred form of existing that challenges the disenchanted modern colonial reality. The basis of this re-existence is the war for land. This involves elements of a legal-institutional nature as well as intermedial imagery, insofar as both enforce operations of stigmatization, stereotyping, subordination, invisibilization, and erasure. Such factors, as part of a *dispositif* of power-knowledge, desensitize westerners towards Indigenous perspectives on war, operating at the levels of everyday subjective and intersubjective experiences. My objective is to demonstrate that, through these types of images, re-existence has the potential to disrupt the historically established visibility regime of necropolitical power.

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12.    I have worked collaboratively with Paulo Nazareth and have shared many creative processes and processes of production with him since 2012. The last one is the object book *Tee: amboe oguahema omburahei ha oñembosarai haguã/Descendentes: Outros que chegam para rezar e brincar* (Belo Horizonte, PPGCOM/UFMG, 2020). With Yuri Firmeza and Igor Vidor, I have participated in the World Indigenous Games (Palmas, Brazil, 2015) whose processes were part of the exhibition *Jogos do Sul* (*Games of the South*, 2016), and Paulo Nazareth and I helped the artists to contact Bro MC's in Mato Grosso do Sul. Other images came from my own projects and works in collaboration with the Kaiowa.

13.    Éric Méchoulan, "Intermédialités: le temps des illusions perdues," *Intermédialités/Intermediality*, no. 1, "Naître," spring 2003, p. 9–27, https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/im/2003-n1-im1814473/1005442ar/ (accessed 18 November 2021).

**The War over Land in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil: What Are the Guarani-Kaiowa Resisting?**



Fig. 1. Paulo Nazareth, *A morte anunciada dos Guarani-Kaiowá/The Announced Death of the Guarani-Kaiowa*, drawing on rice paper, 2012. From the project "Images That Already Exist in the World." Courtesy of the artist.

In 2012, a letter from a Kaiowa community called Pyellito Kue initially posted on the Aty Guasu (Guarani-Kaiowa political organization) Facebook page drew national and international attention. In the letter, the inhabitants of Pyellito, who were threatened with eviction from their traditional territory by a judicial decision favouring the ranchers with the official title to the land, asked the Brazilian state to rescind their eviction from the land and to order instead "our collective death and to bury us all here" or to declare "our total decimation and extinction, as well as sending several tractors to dig a big hole

to throw us in and bury our bodies."[14] If their request was not met, they raised the possibility of their community fighting to the death against state forces, as they would not abandon their *tekoha*. The Brazilian press interpreted this message as a threat of collective suicide, and this simultaneously provoked both conservative reactions in newspapers and social networks[15] as well as an unprecedented mobilization in favour of the Indigenous people and their struggle for traditional territories. The "Kaiowarization" of the Facebook network prompted mobilization in public spaces and on the streets of several cities in Brazil and around the world. It was further spread by social media users adopting the surname Guarani-Kaiowa on their social network accounts. Above (see Fig. 1) is Paulo Nazareth's drawing on rice paper as part of his project "Images That Already Exist in the World." Produced in the context of the show of support for Guarani-Kaiowa, mobilized through Facebook, the image represents a performance by Elizeu Lopes, a national leader of the Kaiowa people political struggle, who placed 5,000 crosses at the Ministerial Esplanade in the Brazilian capital. With these crosses, he sought to erect a temporary memorial to the numerous homicides, suicides, and violent deaths suffered in the daily conflicts for land in Mato Grosso do Sul.[16] The image drawn by Paulo Nazareth reiterates Elizeu Lopes' installation (which includes the performance itself as well as the images published by several media) and describes a circularity between discourses, materials, and means of transmission.

Valdomiro Flores,[17] an old Kaiowa shaman from Guaiviry Yvy Pyte Y Jere, always used to say, "The war of the triple alliance and Paraguay never ended." With this sentence, he introduced a detailed and compelling historical testimony about the slow genocide of his people throughout the twentieth century. Yet he did not see himself as a victim, but rather as a survivor acting in defense of a world, praying for it not to end. In Valdomiro's speech, the word becomes an image insofar as the endless war is

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14. Luciana de Oliveira, Tonico Benites & Rui Oliveira Neto, "Sacrifício e quase-acontecimento: apontamentos sobre a visibilidade da luta pela terra dos povos indígenas Guarani e Kaiowá," *Cadernos de História*, vol. 17, no. 26, 2016, p. 116, http://periodicos.pucminas.br/index.php/cadernoshistoria/article/view/P.2237-8871.2016v17n26p114 (accessed 18 November 2021).
15. Luciana de Oliveira, "Em Nome da Liberdade de Expressão: Visões Críticas da Visibilidade da Causa Guarani e Kaiowá," Venício Lima & Juarez Rocha Guimarães (eds.), *Mídia e Liberdade de Expressão*, São Paulo, Paulus, 2013.
16. The original picture, shot by Wilson Dias, is part of the Agência Brasil Collection. It was republished in the main newspapers in Brazil and abroad. Available at Memoria.ebc, https://memoria.ebc.com.br/agenciabrasil/galeria/2012-10-19/cruzes-marcam-protesto-indigena-em-frente-ao-congresso-nacional (accessed 18 November 2021).
17. Valdomiro Flores, Classes at Federal University of Minas Gerais (2014 and 2016). Notes in my field diary.

analogous to the historical experiences and violence that he, an almost centenarian, and his people endured and continue to endure daily.

In other interpretation, Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe has named the strategic death management processes, and the continuation of frames of war that define who lives and therefore matters and who does not, as necropolitics.[18] His reflections on necropolitics explain the various ways in which boundaries and destructive weapons are deployed in the interest of eliminating people and creating *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to such conditions of life as to reduce them to the status of "living dead." Mbembe further explains how necropolitics does not distinguish between sovereignty and a state of exception, normalizing peace as a "war without end."[19] The leader Aílton Krenak provides the best interpretive key for understanding how this applies to Indigenous worlds. In a discussion of the Anthropocene, he references "the contagion of the encounter" between Europeans visitors and the Indigenous peoples of the Americas: "For the peoples who received that visit and died, the end of the world was in the sixteenth century."[20] Indigenous peoples have seen their worlds end over many centuries and, as Krenak notes, they continue to exist because they have created forms of knowledge that allow for resistance: "We have resisted expanding our subjectivity, not accepting the idea that we are all the same."[21]

Indigenous peoples are in a war for land with the general faceless economic powers of transnational capital allied with states. In the historic war for land in Mato Grosso do Sul—where the traditional Kaiowa and Guarani territories are located—such a *dispositif* was built from a framework of laws and public policies[22] as well as from a set of efforts in the field of visibility to characterize Indigenous people as wild,

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18. Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture*, vol. 15, no. 1, winter 2003, p. 11–40.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
20. Aílton Krenak, Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo [Ideas to Postpone the End of the World], São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2019, p. 34.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
22. Based on Levi Pereira, *Os Kaiowá em Mato Grosso do Sul: módulos organizacionais e humanização do espaço habitado*, Dourados, Brazil, Editora da UFGD, 2016; Antônio Jacó Brand, *O impacto da perda da terra sobre a tradição Kaiowá/Guarani: os difíceis caminhos da palavra*, doctoral dissertation, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, 1997; Graciela Chamorro, *História Kaiowá: das Origens aos Desafios Contemporâneos*, São Bernardo do Campo, Brazil, Nhanduti Editora, 2015; Graciela Chamorro & Isabelle Combès (eds.), *Povos Indígenas em Mato Grosso do Sul: história, cultura, transformações sociais*, Dourados, Brazil, Editora da UFGD, 2018.

lazy, false, and, finally, nonexistent.[23] The destruction and persecution of traditional ways of life forged a significant turning point in the late 1970s, in dialogue with a whole movement and organization of the diverse Indigenous peoples in South America. Organized in the form of large assemblies known as Aty Guasu Guarani-Kaiowa,[24] Guarani and Kaiowa peoples deliberated as a community and initiated a series of actions called "retakings" to return to their traditional territories.[25] On the basis of the elders' memory and strengthened by the activation of chants-prayers in rituals that are both political and sacred, they burst into the territories mobilized by the dream of reviving the traditional *teko* and leaving the artificial reserves territories.

## Re-existence and Visibility

In the late 1970s, the Guarani-Kaiowa people reflected upon territorial conditions and strived to come up with strategic ways to stay alive. This was prompted by all forms of violence the Kaiowa people had historically suffered, which made following *teko* impossible. At that time, the ubiquitous presence of agribusiness in the territories destroyed even small, protected areas of forest behind the farms where some Guarani and Kaiowa family groups, despite having their labour exploited, precariously maintained their traditional way of life. Hence the land claims that the Guarani-Kaiowa have been presenting to the federal government in recent decades. The claims are an attempt to guarantee their lands by resisting removal from traditional places where they are present. Alongside the claims, another strategy used is the retaking of ancestral territories, which entails mobilization and direct action in the form of self-demarcation to recover lands they were previously forced to vacate.

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23.  On the prejudiced imaginary about Indigenous peoples in Brazil, see José Ribamar de Bessa Freire, "Cinco ideias equivocadas sobre o índio," *Revista do Centro de Estudos do Comportamento Humano (CENESCH)*, no. 1, September 2000, p. 17–33; Mércio Pereira Gomes, *Os índios e o Brasil: Passado, Presente e Futuro*, São Paulo, Contexto, 2012; Luís Donizete Benzi Grupioni (ed.), Índios no Brasil [1992], 4th edition, São Paulo, Global Editora, 2000; Júlio César Melatti, Índios do Brasil, São Paulo, EDUSP, 2007, p. 255–270.

24.  The Aty Guasu history is detailed in: Rubem Thomaz Almeida, *Do Desenvolvimento Comunitário à Mobilização Política: o Projeto Kaiowa-Ñandeva como experiência antropológica*, Rio de Janeiro, Contra Capa Livraria, 2001; Tonico Benites, *Rojeroky hina ha roike jevy tekohape (Rezando e lutando): o movimento histórico dos Aty Guasu dos Ava Kaiowa e dos Ava Guarani pela recuperação de seus tekoha*, doctoral dissertation, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2014.

25.  Crowded onto tiny reservations, with appalling social consequences, many Kaiowa and Guarani communities have attempted to recover small parcels of their ancestral land. These "*retomadas*" (literally "retakings") have been violently resisted by the powerful and ruthless farmers who now occupy the region.

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The political and spiritual work[26] intrinsic to the Aty Guasu, which guaranteed increased intensity in the retaking of lands, also generated a great drive in these assemblies towards new behaviours regarding communications with the surrounding society, the non-Indigenous world. Such communication seeks to turn political action or strategies aimed at visibility in non-Indigenous worlds—be it in means, materials, or discourse—into something unique. This is demonstrated in the numerous attempts to speak with the Pope. In 1980, leader Marçal Souza had the chance to address Pope John Paul II during his first visit to Brazil. A return to this action (see Fig. 2) has been pursued by several leaders in an effort to engage with the Pope and bring claims and reports on the war in an Indigenous voice to the great spiritual authority in the world of the "whites" (*karai kuera* or *mbairy Kuera* in the Guarani language). From a Kaiowa perspective, the Pope is the great *Nhanderu* (higher spiritual authority in the Guarani language) of the white world and, therefore, to achieve a dialogue between Kaiowa authorities and the Pope is to create a symmetrical horizon of hierarchical parity. The *Nhanderu* is an individual of great spiritual power who undergoes extensive and continuous processes of formation and shamanic travel rituals to achieve *aguye*, which means perfection, purification, completeness. These training processes usually occur within an extended family. Parents and grandparents are primarily responsible for passing on the magical knowledge and techniques. There is also, however, the case of those who are born with shamanic powers, and the technical domains are given to them by *Nhanderu Guasu* and *Nhandesy Guasu*—the great Father and the great Mother, demiurges who created the worlds—their *yvyraija* (messengers) and *járy* (ancient spirits—the guardians of all things in the worlds). In addition to the shaman seeking messages through ritual prayers, relatives of the spirit world also send messages to him in dreams, unusual encounters during journeys, or through people and animals.

Thus, the Kaiowa and Guarani peoples are engaged in three-pronged effort: the labour of activating culture and communal life, the labour of defending that right and the right to territory without which culture does not exist, and the labour to include their history and struggles into the visibility regimes of the non-Indigenous world in order to allow their expressive resources and philosophies to speak and act. Dialogue

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26. Benites, 2014.

with the Pope also relates to the third effort that seeks worldwide visibility whilst also establishing symmetry between higher authorities, not only on the earth on which we live but also on the spiritual plane.



Fig. 2. Speech by Marçal Souza to Pope John Paul II, Brazil, 1980; Eliseu Lopes tries to speak to Pope Francis, Asunción, 2015; Campaign for Pope Francis to receive Chief Ládio Verón at the Vatican, 2014.[27]

I see two main and articulated types of strategic action in the hegemonic visibility spaces to generate interworld communication. On the one hand are movements that reference what Brazilian ethnologist Manuela Carneiro da Cunha has called culture or "culture"[28] (which I discuss below) with actions such as the occupation of public spaces in collective demonstrations while wearing headdresses and body paint and carrying traditional weapons. Like the performance of rituals outside of their habitual spaces, these are strategies to achieve acknowledgement of "the Indian" in the mind of non-Indigenous people, allowing for an inter-ethnic dialogue that is, in a certain way, more favourable to Indigenous claims. On the other hand is the "Indigenization" movement, more aptly described as the "Kaiowarization" of expressive forms: the transformation of technologies, means, and discourses into something unique to Kaiowa culture.

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27. Montage published in Luciana de Oliveira, "Na aldeia, na mídia, na rua: reflexões sobre a resistência Kaiowa e Guarani em diálogo com o contexto de golpe político no Brasil e com o campo hegemônico da comunicação," Revista *Mídia e Cotidiano,* vol. 12, no. 1, April 2018, available at Periodicos.uff.br, https://doi.org/10.22409/ppgmc.v12i1.9865 (accessed 18 November 2021).
28. Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, *"Culture" and Culture: Traditional Knowledge and Intellectual Rights*, Chicago, Prickly Paradigm Press, 2009.

Both strategic actions are particularly evident in Kaiowa cinematic productions and/or in collaborative projects. These projects demonstrate a desire to capture on film stories that can only be told by those who have experienced this traumatic war. They convey experiences such as the assassinations of leaders, life in retaken territories, environmental destruction, daily violence in the hostile surroundings of cities and large farms. They also display a desire to talk about the lived culture through rituals, songs, medicines, and ancestral agroforestry systems that combine the management of *cerrado* forests and agriculture in a deep intermedial relationship constituted by immaterial images of the Kaiowa cosmovision, reports of historical experiences and material images that provide them with a second life in the *tekoha* as well as various forums outside it.

As a result, cinema has been used both to denounce violence and to present an experience of "culture."[29] The use of cinema intends to guarantee spaces for Kaiowa voices to deal with two issues their people are facing: multiplying non-Indigenous people's knowledge about the "culture" and incorporating the cinematic medium itself into their culture. According to da Cunha,[30] "culture," placed within quotation marks, refers to actions that make the Kaiowa culture objective enough to be understood by those who do not belong to it. It is used like a weapon of the weak, operating within a regime of ethnicity that is deeply violent to Indigenous peoples. Culture, without quotation marks, is the expression of the invisible threads of internalized schemes that organize perception, action, and communication in social groups.

Consider two films (see Fig. 3) made by the Kaiowa in cinema workshops:[31] the short film *Ava Marangatu* (*Sacred Being*, Genito Gomes *et al*., 2016)[32] and the documentary feature film *Ava Yvy Vera* (*Lightning Earth People*, Genito Gomes *et al.,* 2016).[33]

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29.   See, for example, the work of the Association of Indigenous Directors (Ascuri), https://www.ascuri.org/ (accessed 18 November 2021).

30.   da Cunha, 2009.

31.   Extension Program Image-Song-Pray-Word in the Guarani and Kaiowa Territory (2014–present) organized by the author.

32.   *Ava Marangatu*, Genito Gomes, Johnathan Gomes, John Nara Gomes, Joilson Flores, Sara Brites, Dulcídio Gomes & Edna Ximene, 2016, Añetete, https://guaivirykaiowa.org/projetos-e-parcerias/#Cinema (accessed 18 November 2021), 15'.

33.   *Ava Yvy Vera*, Genito Gomes, Johnathan Gomes, John Nara Gomes, Joilson Flores, Sara Brites, Dulcídio Gomes & Edna Ximene, 2016, Añetete, https://guaivirykaiowa.org/projetos-e-parcerias/#Cinema (accessed 18 November 2021), 52'.

Fig. 3. On the left: Still from the film *Ava Marangatu* (*Sacred Being*), Genito, Johnathan, Johnn Nara and Dulcídio Gomes, Joilson Flores, Sara Brites, and Edna Ximene, 2016. On the right: Still from the film *Ava Yvy Vera* (*Lightning Earth People*), Genito, Johnathan, Johnn Nara and Dulcídio Gomes, Joilson Flores, Sara Brites, and Edna Ximene, 2016. Author's Extension Program Image-Song-Pray-Word in the Guarani and Kaiowa Territory.

In *Ava Marangatu*, two Kaiowa boys try to hunt but struggle due to the lack of animals in a small reserve of riparian forest amid the giant monocultural soy fields of agribusiness. In the struggle for affirmation of the Kaiowa people's traditional way of existence, resistance operates creative reinventions through the boys' meeting with an older shaman, who teaches them the correct prayer-chant to be able to hunt. In turn, *Ava Marangatu* strategically uses the narrative and image of the Indian in the white mind to show the creation of life within intergenerational and mythical connections, despite the unavoidable soy field monoculture of agribusiness.

*Ava Yvy Vera* is a documentary about the retaking of lands in Guaiviry Yvy Pyte Y Jere, to show the Kaiowa's autonomous way of life. In recounting the murder of leader Nísio Gomes, it emphasizes his dream of reactivating his people's alliance with the original way of existence and the means of making this legacy a set of experiences that are lived daily by the lightning people's community.[34] *Ava Yvy Vera* weaves an anti-narrative, aligning approximately eleven plans that may appear independent, but are poetically interconnected. The directors offer us the experience of a type of weaving

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34. "Lightening people" refers to the title of the film, which is a reference to the relationship between the community and the lightning bolts as higher spiritual entities or spirit words from *Nhanderu Guasu*.

of the vestiges of the Kaiowa *teko* that does not require any logic of totality or rational demonstration. It is an aesthetic-spiritual experience.

Both films use cinema's language and technical apparatus, whilst also drawing upon the fictional and the documentary to reinvent cinema itself. Like Indigenous film production in Brazil more widely, the films create three types of engagement: the bodies being filmed and the bodies who film are a central focus of the mise-en-scène; the duration of the plans are intense; and the connection with the *tekoha*—the land which is the source and way of life—is at times evident in the filmic material and at others, part of the invisible. Both celebrate *teko*, life in the *tekoha*. The experience of cinema and film production offers us the chance to think about visibility from another place of speech, magnetized by another way of seeing, tearing the gaze away from the spectacle formulas.[35] Certain points stand out: 1) the statement of the elders, especially shamans, that they would like to "keep" their prayers and words "forever"; 2) the possibilities of intergenerational bridges opened by the audiovisual media that connect young people's curiosity about technology with the knowledge of the old men and women of prayer, the living encyclopaedias of knowledge and their body memories full of lived experience, stories, chants-prayers, and myths; 3) the elective affinity between audiovisual production and orality, both modes of transmission that do not require writing; 4) the affirmation of know-how and a doing-knowing that, if shared, becomes a collective gain for both parties; 5) the possibility to assert the original language, despite the efforts that translation requires, to create and strengthen interethnic crossings and broaden the audience's horizons.

Artistic productions, such as the rap music composed and performed by the Bro MC's Rap Indígena group[36] in the Guarani language, can also help to disrupt the Western visibility regime. The Bro's rap aims to be a resource for denouncing

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35. Film theory offers diverse ways of describing what I refer to here as formulas of the spectacle. There are other concepts such as industrial cinema, Hollywood cinema, hegemonic cinema that prioritize the production and distribution of films. I prefer to borrow from the approach established by Jean-Louis Comolli where the fragmentation upon which the spectacle is created represents a contrast to contemporary cinema. Comolli analyzes films that slow down and destabilize the fragmentation with an emphasis upon the engagement of the film with the human body, temporality, and location. Jean Louis Comolli, *Cinema against Spectacle: Technique and Ideology Revisited* [2009], Daniel Fairfax (trans. and ed.), Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, coll. "Film Theory in Media History," 2015, available at Oapen.org, http://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/32378 (accessed 18 November 2021).

36. Luciana de Oliveira, "Bro MC's Rap Indígena: o rap e a constituição de fóruns cosmopolíticos na luta pela terra Kaiowa e Guarani," *Revista Eco-Pós*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2016, https://revistaecopos.eco.ufrj.br/eco_pos/article/view/3790, (accessed 18 November 2021).

situations of violence and exalting the Guarani-Kaiowa cultural experience. Its most interesting aspect, however, is the noticeable elective affinities between rap and chants-prayers that, in the performative circles of traditional repertoires called *Guahu* and *Kotyhu*, incite a battle (*ojeropapa* in the Guarani language) between rappers.

I am arguing here that the affinities between rap music and Kaiowa people represent more than a tool to denounce injustice, suffering, and harm. The Guarani word ñe'ẽ can be translated as "soul" or "spirit," meaning the foundation of life experience and of the constitution of person in the Kaiowa cosmological system; and it can be translated as "word," meaning a political duty in societies against the state.[37] Taking all of this into account, León Cadogan[38] has translated ñe'ẽ as "soul-word," which, according to ethnologist Valéria Macedo, "corresponds to language and constitutes the agentive principle that singularizes the different kinds of subjects populating the world with their diverse capacity for understanding and action."[39] People's names, their ñe'ẽ, come from different places on the higher plane and signify a way of being in the world, of relating to others and the cosmos, to different ways of affecting and being affected. Also, according to Macedo, knowledge is inseparable from ñe'ẽ, responsible for the ways of expression and understanding of subjects.[40] For finding a person's name there is a ritual performed by the Kaiowa people through the long prayer-song (Ñemongarai), in which the shaman travels through the higher planes in search of the person's ñe'ẽ. As such, the soul-word is precious and never used randomly, as Bro MC's rap song says: "See if you don't speak at random / Never speak at random" (*Re*ñe'ẽ *ko mbarei/Ani*reñe'ẽ *rei*).

In the video and song of Bro's most famous rap, "Eju Orendive" ("Come with Us";[41] see Fig. 4), young people express a feeling of invisibility or decry visibility that does not match the Kaiowa people's experiences in their multiplicity. The video shows their bodies in the most diverse situations in the village, in close-ups, in detailed and

37. Pierre Clastres, *Society against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology* [1974], trans. Robert Hurley & Abe Stein, New York, Zone Books, 1989.
38. Leon Cadogan, "Ayvu Rapyta: textos míticos de los Mbyá-Guarani," *Boletim 227*, FFLCH, Universidade de São Paulo, 1959.
39. Valéria Macedo, "Tracking Guarani Songs, between Villages, Cities, and Worlds," *Vibrant, Virtual Brazilian Anthropology*, vol. 8 no. 1, January–June 2011, p. 377, available at Scielo.br, https://www.scielo.br/pdf/vb/v8n1/a14v8n1.pdf, (accessed 18 November 2021).
40. *Ibid*., p. 402.
41. Bro MC's, "Eju Orendive," 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLbhGYfDmQg, (accessed 18 November 2021).

open shots with their faces, houses, and daily life. The mismatch between the images that circulate about them and the images that they are producing is expressed in verses such as: "You can't look at me / And if you do, you can't see me."[42] On the right of the illustration, as a reiteration of this fight, is a still frame from the videoclip produced by artists Yuri Firmeza and Igor Vidor[43] for the song "Humildade" ("Humility"). It shows "the truth," through a succession of alternating close-ups of the faces of the four boys that make up the group (Bruno Veron, Clemerson Veron, Charlie Peixoto, Kelvin Peixoto), against the background of the large monocultural field and the whitish cloudy sky.



Fig. 4. On the left, still frame from the videoclip *Eju Orendive* (Higor Lobo, 2015); on the right, still frame from the videoclip *Humildade* (Yuri Firmeza and Igor Vidor, 2016). Courtesy of the artists.

In addition to incisive occupations of spaces of hegemonic visibility, such as the Bro MC's use of pop culture, there is a further aesthetic-political work carried out by the Kaiowa involving what I describe as another political management of perspective.[44] Such work is as important, if not more so, for the resistance as the work done in public arenas. For clarification purposes, I will refer to a note in my field diary:

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42. Original, in the Guarani language: "Nde ndokatui remanha remanharon che rehe mba'eve nde rehechai" (our translation).
43. Bro MC's, "Humildade," 5'53, 2016, https://vimeo.com/199698276 (accessed 18 November 2021).
44. "Perspectivism" is the anthropological term for complex forms of thought in Indigenous worlds from the Americas. Here my dialogue is with the very local experience of perspectivism in my fieldwork.

18 July 2018. Vagner and I set up our work "office" under the fully flowery golden trumpet tree in Genito's backyard. We were going through our transcription routine of Valdomiro's and Tereza's classes when I looked in awe at that tree that gave us shade and beauty and said, "Wow, what a beautiful trumpet tree." Vagner asked me if I knew the prayer of that tree. I said no and asked why. He told me, "Those who know its prayers can pray and reach a person, and they will look like this, just like you looked at this tree, and then they see you as beautiful as you saw the tree. You are empowered to be the tree, and the person looks at you that way, in love."
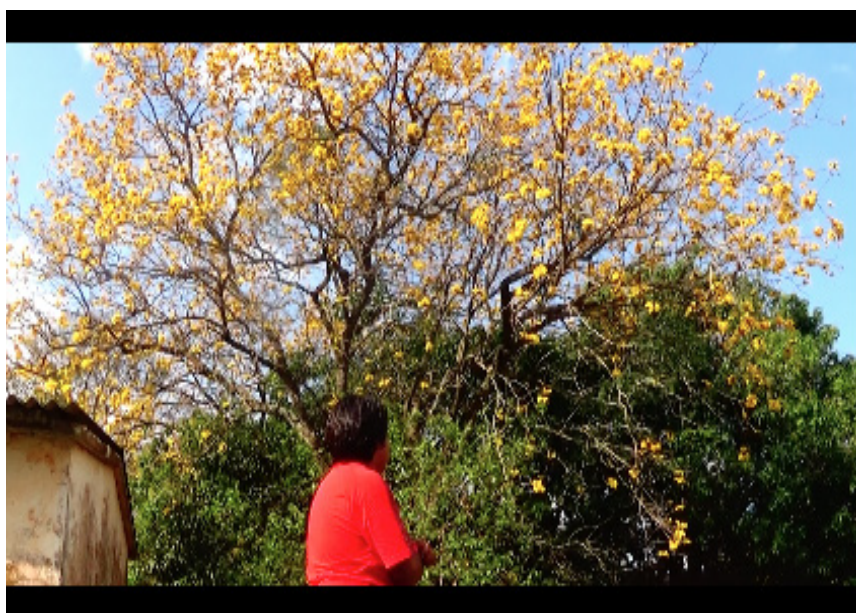


Fig. 5. Vagner and the golden trumpet tree (*tajy*) in Tekoha Guaiviry, 2018, digital photography. Author's collection.

Kaiowa people are deeply spiritual. They live a sacred life out of principle, a life governed by disciplinary, magical precepts and multiple relationships with agencies that inhabit the three lands—the one above, the one below, and the one we live in. The spirits of ancestors, and a myriad of sacred authorities that are guardians of plants, animals, objects, and elements with which life itself is made, are part of community

life. These authorities are in permanent ethical interconnection through prayers, songs, and daily conduct "which should never be seen as disconnected from practice, that is, they must be conceived as cosmopraxis."[45] As highlighted earlier, shamans are the great intellectual leaders as they master the technologies of access to the three lands, enabling transmutations of points of view and transition through the territories of the here and the beyond.[46]



Fig. 6. Cledson Ricarte, *Scene from Ñembo'e Puku (ritual of Long Prayer), inhabitants of this land visit the relatives of the land above, guided by the chant-prayer of the Shaman Valdomiro Flores*, 2018, drawing on print paper. Author's collection.

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45.  "Estas sociocosmologias—que não devem jamais ser concebidas como desvinculadas da prática, ou seja, que devem ser antes concebidas como cosmopráxis." Renato Sztutman, "Natureza e cultura, versão americanista: um sobrevoo," *Ponto Urbe,* vol. 3, 2009, p. 2 (our translation).
46.  Valdomiro Flores, Tereza Amarília Flores & Luciana de Oliveira (eds.), *Ñe'ẽ Tee Rekove/ Palavra Verdadeira Viva*, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, Selo PPGCOM/UFMG, 2020.

The political struggle for land is largely guided by these conversations between humans and non-humans,[47] as suggested by the drawing above (see Fig. 6). The non-human agencies (such as storms, winds, lightning, thunder, plants, animals, and several apparitions of the sun and moon) provide guidance on the strategies and tactics for struggle and offer warnings of various kinds of danger. These non-human agencies, which are visible to only a few people, have the power to communicate with them through subtle signs. But their messages are central to the struggle for land because they strengthen people subjectively. These conversations lead to journeys through beautiful and brilliant landscapes, with a predominance of yellow and red hues that emanate from powerful entities with whom messages, advice, and, above all, the power to see and be seen, can be exchanged. The solidarity established with such different (human, non-human) agencies involves different temporalities (myth, history, daily life, political moment, technology, and science) and territories (geographic and cosmological) that nurture other ways of making social ties with greater elasticity and impermanence. Likewise, returning to the excerpt from my field diary mentioned above, the different human and non-human perspectives that populate times and spaces are interchangeable. There is a power that can be achieved by any of them over the perspective that is not fixed, but can change at any time. It is a logic quite contrary to modern experiences and their obstinacy for fixing and stabilizing the perspective.

## INTERMEDIALITY AND INTERWORLD COMMUNICATION

I have provided a brief overview of artistic and communicational actions in which Indigenous people use image mediation as a citation of their culture to dialogue with non-Indigenous people. The actions seek to publicize as broadly as possible who they are—in subjective and collective senses, and what their histories are from their own perspective, engaging in diverse means—and infiltrating their cosmopraxis into the language of the

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47. Analysis solely based upon the relationship between humans, an important element of work since the beginning of the humanities and social sciences, is insufficient to provide an understanding of the reality of human collectives or individuals. This is because humans partially define themselves through multiple relationships with "non-humans" that make up their diverse environment—animals, molecules, technical objects, divinities, procedures, materials, buildings. All these diverse non-humans are important to humans, not in a cosmetic sense: the relationships we have with them are a small part of who we are. See more details about this argument in Sophie Houdart & Olivier Thiery (eds.), *Humains, Non-Humains : comment repeupler les sciences sociales*, Paris, La Découverte, 2011. The book is informed by diverse research projects and specific relationships, in dialogue with Bruno Latour and Phillipe Descola in particular.

non-Indigenous world's visibility regime. It is often the case that such attempts create the need to combine expressive forms and reformulate language in order to achieve the cohabitation with the visibility regime typical of the non-Indigenous world. Resistance therefore occurs as the creation of life (as opposed to the oppressive *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* that create "death-worlds"). We can see this activity in the numerous attempts by Kaiowa and Guarani leaders to meet with the Pope (see Fig. 2), where resistance means levelling power practices between one world and another.

These practices establish a new kind of mediation. In the face of non-Indigenous creations, Indigenous forms of media and artistic creation produce another type of relationship with the visibility of their causes, histories, and bodies. Indigenous peoples seem to invite us to create *with* them and not *about* them. The intermediality of the Kaiowa cosmopraxis forges greater control over visibility itself—not as a single voice with the authority to do so, but through the creation of presence that comes from the gesture of reiteration and exchange rather than the mediation of artistic talent. The invitation comes from an alliance and extends across the arts, obtaining answers in productions such as that of Paulo Nazareth (see Fig. 1) and Yuri Firmeza and Igor Vidor (see Fig. 4, on the right). In this case, resistance means producing words and images, and exerting greater control over images created by others. But, with the images that extend to wider audiences, for instance through the films directed by Kaiowa, *Ava Marangatu* and *Ava Yvy Vera* (see Fig. 3), and Bro MC's rap production (see Fig. 4, on the left), resistance means denying necropolitics through the creation and production of images that reinvent language as a self-affirmation of "culture" and as an autonomous lived experience of culture.

The reiteration then opens up a creative path for non-Kaiowa artists whilst, at the same time, generating a space for Indigenous self-representation and self-definition. Indigenized forms become autonomous and critically reflect on artistic creation and ways of thinking about it. In conclusion, this article seeks to present open and diverse communication with the Kaiowa ways of life, characterizing it as political management of perspective that seeks greater subjective freedom through the widening of spatial and temporal agencies together with the inclusion of their contingent forms under permanent construction. The story of Vagner and the trumpet tree (see Fig. 5) or the powerful scene of the shamanic ritual Ñembo'e Puku in Cledson Ricarte's drawing (see Fig. 6) demonstrate the sacred life that gives contours to this resistance that incorporates science, myth, philosophy, history, memory, magic, art, and everyday

experience. The interconnection between the history of linear time and the stories of mythical time, the view of different worlds, the communication directed to/by non-human agents, and the struggle for visibility led by the Indigenous people is what characterizes this resistance. They are elements that strengthen the groups, indicate the paths to be followed, and are the basis of what is described as the Kaiowa way of life. This strengthening also reaches people, nurturing them with the capacity to live life with joy, which suggests that it should be approached with what critical onto-epistemology has called "political subjectivation." Resistance also is to cohabit with different agencies in becoming and to experience life with constant possibilities of exchanging perspectives.

Interworld communication means the effort to create spaces to bring the Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds into cohabitation. More than just "raising" Indigenous into dialogue and the rationally organized exchange of ideas in the political arena, it means building, through the visibility regime of the non-Indigenous world, ways of epistemic enlargement in which different forms of lives create possibilities for mutual listening and affectedness. So its effect in relation to a cosmopraxis can be seen both in the denial of necropolitics forged into the historical logic of diverse capitalist cycles including the current one of neoliberal globalization, of false and idealized "harmonic" cultural miscegenation in Brazil that obscures differences and violence, as well as in the affirmation of a nurturing way of life based on multidimensional communication with multiple agencies, temporalities, forms of bonds, and territories. This process is obviously permeated by reflexivity between culture and "culture," present in the interethnic articulation that comprises a reciprocal game of objectification and in some way allows dialogue, as well as gestures of "Kaiowarization" of *dispositifs* and relations of foreign worlds. It is therefore worth pointing out that the Kaiowa knowledge regimes comprise a picture diametrically opposed to the Western regime, where many things occur on an invisible plane and, perhaps, this is where the most important and most difficult things can be learnt, hence their great value both aesthetically and politically.

# Communicational Cosmopraxis of Brazil's Kaiowa Indigenous People: Intermedial Resistance and the Struggle for Visibility

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**Abstract**

The struggles of Indigenous peoples in Brazil accumulate, among many other deficits, the absence in the fields of hegemonic visibility. The case of the Kaiowa and Guarani peoples deserves special attention, not only because it is the second largest Indigenous population in Brazil, but also because it is characterized as one of the most striking cases of necropolitical management by the State and private agents, in which peace takes on the face of an endless war. In the article, I present some of the creative ways of intermedial affirmation of existence developed by the Indigenous people in their struggle to retake their ancestral territory, as well as the attending fight for visibility, with repercussions on the means and meanings of what it is to resist.

**Résumé**

À de nombreux autres désavantages pour les luttes des peuples autochtones au Brésil, s'ajoute leur absence dans les sphères de visibilité hégémonique. Le cas des peuples Kaiowa et Guarani mérite une attention particulière, non seulement parce qu'il s'agit de la deuxième population autochtone en importance au Brésil, mais aussi parce qu'il se caractérise comme l'un des cas les plus frappants de gestion nécropolitique par l'État et les agents privés, dans lequel la paix prend le visage d'une guerre sans fin. Dans cet essai, je présente quelques-unes des formes intermédiales d'affirmation créative de l'existence développées

par les peuples autochtones dans leur lutte pour récupérer leur territoire ancestral, ainsi que la lutte pour la visibilité qui en découle, avec des répercussions sur les moyens et les significations de ce qu'est la résistance.

## Biographical note

Luciana De Oliveira is Associate Professor at the Department of Social Communication and the Graduate Program in Social Communication at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. She is leader of the Corisco Research Group: Collective of Studies, Ethnographic Research, and Communication Action in Risk Contexts. Since 2012, she has been working with the Kaiowa community of Guaiviry Yvy Pyte Y jere and with the Aty Guasu Guarani-Kaiowa in Brazil with productions in cinema, visual arts, digital and editorial networks. She is co-editor, along with shamans Valdomiro Flores and Tereza Amarília Flores, of the book Ñe'e Tee Rekove/*Palavra Verdadeira Viva* (2020) and co-author of the object book *Tee/Descendentes* (2020) with Paulo Nazareth.