

Exchange, Reciprocity and Social Dualism according to the Kaingang of Southern Brazil

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ABSTRACT. The nature of dual social organization and the role of reciprocity have been at the heart of anthropological research on the Gê and Bororo Indians of Brazil since the 1920s. This paper revisits the different approaches that have been proposed to explain the complex interrelationship existing between dualist ideology as expressed by the Gê themselves, the great variety of reciprocal practices associated with this ideology and the role of reciprocity as a unifying and explanatory principle. Using data collected among the Kaingang of Southern Brazil, it re-examines the role of social exchange and reciprocity in the ritual context of Kikikoia, a second funeral ritual. Kaingang's conceptions of reciprocal services and partnership are not adequately rendered by our anthropological concepts of gift, exchange, dialectical society, or process of social (re)production. The author argues that while it is true that these concepts are used as general implicit principles realized in practices by the social actors and the social system, and made explicit by the observer, partnership is explicit in Kaingang practices where the emphasis is put on the asymmetrical and complementary relationship of partners of opposite moieties defined as parts of a social whole. More precisely, according to the Kaingang, social life is not based on exchange as such (as an implicit principle) but on the explicit sociological institution of partnership between asymmetric and complementary classes emerging of a pre-existing totality. Accordingly, exchange and reciprocity are not an unconscious given nor a function of dual organization but something instituted in the mythic past by the action of some ancestral culture-heroes.

KEYWORDS: *Brazil, Kaingang, Gê, ritual, myths, reciprocity, exchange, social dualism*

INTRODUCTION

The nature of dual social organization and the role of reciprocity have been at the heart of anthropological research on the Gê and Bororo Indians of Brazil since the 1920s¹. A few competing approaches have been proposed to explain the complex interrelationship existing between dualist ideology as expressed by the Gê themselves, the great variety of reciprocal practices associated with this ideology and the role of reciprocity as a unifying and explanatory principle.

At the most general level, Gê dual social organization corresponds to Marcel Mauss's paradigmatic type of system of total services:

The purest type of such institutions seems to us to be characterized by the alliance of two phratries in Pacific or North American tribes in general, where rituals, marriages, inheritance of goods, legal ties and those of self-interest, the ranks of the military and priests – in short everything is complementary and presumes co-operation between the two halves of the tribes (Mauss 1990: 6).

Using data collected in collaboration with members of the Kaingang society of Southern Brazil², I revisit in this paper the role of social exchange and reciprocity. I argue for a contextual approach that takes into account dualist ideology as well as the fact that the Kaingang define also themselves in monadic and polyadic terms in various discursive and ritual contexts (Crépeau 1997, 2008).

I will also briefly address the relationships existing between holism and reciprocity and argue that Kaingang conceptions of reciprocal services and partnership are not adequately rendered by our anthropological concepts of gift (Mauss 1990), exchange (Lévi-Strauss 1950, 1958), dialectical society (Maybury-Lewis 1979, 1989; Da Matta 1982), or process of social (re)production (Turner 1996; Weiner 1992). While it is true that these concepts are used as general implicit principles realized in practices by the social actors and the social system and made explicit by the observer, partnership is explicit in Kaingang practices and in specific discursive and ritual contexts where the emphasis is put on the asymmetrical and complementary relationship of partners of opposite moieties and

sections. I will argue that from a Kaingang's point of view, partnership implies a holistic ideology which defines partners as essential parts of a social whole.

HAUNTED BY HAU

Godbout (2002: 151) writes that the gift should not be conceived and analyzed strictly in relation to the circulation of the object itself but by taking into account the point of view of the social actors. Godbout is reacting against what he calls "extreme conceptions" of the gift "defined only by what is circulating or ... by the fact that there is or not a counter-gift...". According to Godbout (2002: 152), this is precisely what Marcel Mauss intended to do in *The Gift*: "... instead of being satisfied to observe only what is circulating in one direction or the other, he asked himself the question of the signification of the relation".

Indeed, Mauss's use of the Maori concept *hau* has been widely discussed and often criticized since the publication of *The Gift* (Kilani 1990). For instance, according to various commentators (cf. Godelier 1996: 70, 144), Mauss's explanation of the obligation to reciprocate is wrongly founded on a specific system of beliefs or moral and magico-religious representations. I would like to argue briefly here that it is an exaggerated claim that "the Maori *hau* is raised [by Mauss] to the status of a general explanation ..." (Sahlins 1972: 150). Of course, it is true that Mauss used suggestive phrasing when describing the obligation to return gifts: "spiritual mechanism", "moral and religious reason" (Mauss 1990)³. However, I would like to suggest that most commentators did not fully realize that Mauss gives logical and consequently analytical priority not to spiritual mechanisms – of which Maori *hau* is a prototype in *The Gift* – but to what he calls "a type of law and economy" (Mauss 1983: 153)⁴. Spiritual mechanisms such as *hau* constitute a type of explicit rule and idea related to a general implicit normative context; in his words a "type of law and economy" (*ibid.*). In fact, these mechanisms are at work in specific contexts – Mauss is referring for instance to: "real contracts" (*ibid.*) – which constitute for him the general context

within which he wants to describe “the nature of the juridical bond created by the transmission of things” (*ibid.*).

It is well known that Lévi-Strauss suggested that Mauss used *hau* to reconstruct a totality from its parts. More importantly for my argument here, Lévi-Strauss criticized Mauss for introducing in his explanation of reciprocity an indigenous concept and point of view:

... Mauss strives to reconstruct a whole out of parts; and as that is manifestly not possible, he has to add to the mixture an additional quantity which gives him the illusion of squaring his account. This quantity is *hau*. Are we not dealing with a mystification, an effect quite often produced in the minds of ethnographers by indigenous people? Not, of course, by “indigenous people” in general, since no such beings exist, but by a given indigenous group, about whom specialists have already pondered problems, asked questions and attempted answers We do not need *hau* to make the synthesis, because the antithesis does not exist. The antithesis is a subjective illusion of ethnographers, and sometimes also of indigenous people who, when reasoning about themselves – as they quite often do – behave like ethnographers, or more precisely, like sociologists; that is, as colleagues with whom one may freely confer (Lévi-Strauss 1987 [1950]: 47 and 49).

But in contrast to Lévi-Strauss’s interpretation, it seems quite clear that Mauss was not trying to reconstruct exchange per se from its parts but was referring at the very beginning of *The Gift* to a totality which is not at all the sum of the three obligations to reciprocate to which he would later add *hau*. As Vincent Descombes wrote:

If the thing is animated instead of inert, it is not because people have an animist conception of inert things, but because things are integrated within the exchange system. What is “animated” is not the particular item in question ... , it is the thing as given by a person or a family. You might as well say that gift relations are triadic and that we must never separate the relation to the object of the relation to the person. And it is

precisely what Mauss never ceases to say: *hau* is the notion of a juridical bond between persons created by the transmission of things. (Descombes 1996a: 254, my translation)

The general hypothesis of Mauss in *The Gift* is correctly holistic and based on the pre-eminence of a social whole vis-à-vis its parts. Mauss initially locates this totality in a pattern of symmetrical and reciprocal rights and duties between groups and sub-groups, moieties or phratries, etc., which, he wrote, “ceases to appear contradictory if, above all, one grasps” that “all these institutions express one fact alone, one social system one precise mentality” (Mauss 1990 : 14).⁵ This specific mentality is realized as “a constant exchange of a spiritual matter, including things and men, between clans and individuals, distributed between social ranks, the sexes and the generations” (*ibid.*).

Mauss is adopting here a legitimate holistic approach by postulating an encompassing totality: a social regime, a specific mentality, a whole whose juridical (or, better, logical) pre-eminence is expressed by its parts or institutions in the form of rules, ideas and statuses binding men and objects in contextualized practices. It is a holistic approach which corresponds to the definition of social totality as a “logical system of rules” proposed by Descombes (1996b: 83)⁶. In other words, while it is true that “*hau* is not the ultimate explanation of exchange” (Lévi-Strauss 1950: 48), the reduction of the normative concept *hau*, to a non normative one, exchange as an unconscious necessity, does not constitute a sociological resolution of the problem.

As we know, Mauss (1990: 11) was puzzled by Ranaipiri’s allusion to the intervention of a third person, but as Godelier (1996: 61) wrote: “... even when exchanges (of gifts or commodities) imply only two individuals or groups, they always imply the presence of a third party – or rather of the others as third. In exchange, the third term is always included”. It is noteworthy that Charles S. Peirce defined exchange as a triadic relation which implies the law as the third term (or party):

If you take any ordinary triadic relation, you will always find a *mental* element in it. ... Analyze for instance the relation

involved in “A gives B to C”. Now what is giving? It does not consist [in] A’s putting B away from him and C’s subsequently taking B up. It is not necessary that any material transfer should take place. It consists in A’s making C the possessor of B according to *Law*. There must be some kind of law before there can be any kind of giving, – be it the law of the strongest (Peirce 1958: #331).

Concepts such as *hau* reveal that a logical system of rules, a social totality (a type of law, a social regime, as Mauss puts it) is a necessary precondition to exchange and defines and orders the mutual status of the partners, for if one gives something one cannot at the same time be the recipient of that same item: “to make a gift of something to someone is to make a present of some part of oneself” (Mauss 1990: 12). In other words, the donor is giving away something of himself, not ontologically or mystically, but in juridical terms of status, rights and obligations in relationship to a specific partner and a specific object (term or services) of exchange.

ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND ON THE KAINGANG

The Kaingang are actually the most numerous members of Gê linguistic and cultural family of Brazil with approximately 30 000 persons living mainly on reservations located in the southern Brazilian states of São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. In contrast to other Gê and Bororo societies (Crocker 1969, 1985; Maybury-Lewis 1967; Nimuendajú 1939, 1946; Turner 1979), the Kaingang are not, historically at least, known to have built circular or semi-circular villages that directly express and represent their social organization and cosmology⁷, though it is noteworthy that the house of the political leader, called *pã-i* (*cacique* in Portuguese), is conceived to be located at the centre of the reservation. The space surrounding the houses is called *plur*, which means literally “clean space”, in contrast with the virgin forest, *nietkuxã*, literally “cold forest” or very dense forest where the sun never reaches the ground. These contrasts constitute the spatial triad “*in, plur, nietkuxã*” (house,

clean space, virgin forest) associated with the dyadic structure of moieties (Crépeau 1997; Rosa 2005).

Kaingang dual organization consists of moieties called *kamé* and *kairu*, which are conceived as asymmetric and complementary. *Kamé* moiety is conceived as first, masculine, associated with the sun, the east, political power and shamanism, while in contrast *kairu* is conceived as second, feminine, associated with the moon, the west, and the organization of second funeral rite. Each moiety has a section or sub-moiety: *votôro* is associated with *kairu* while *veineky* is associated with *kamé*. Moiety and section membership is patrilineal but can also be exceptionally acquired by nomination. The Kaingang describe the rule of exogamy by saying that one should ideally marry a person of a different facial painting, meaning a person of a different moiety or section. In formalized contexts such as myth and ritual, social relations are described or actualized as being mainly dyadic, using the *kamé-veineky/kairu-votôro* moiety contrast, while spatial relations are described according to two triadic schemes: horizontally, by using the “house, clean space, forest” domains discussed earlier, or vertically, by using, “high, middle, low” contrasts. For example, Xaçecó reservation cemeteries are best described using these contrasts. Located east of a settlement, the cemetery is divided into a *kamé* and a *kairu* section by an east-west path going from the entrance of a rectangular fenced-space to the main cross at the rear of the cemetery. In the administrative centre of the reservation, called Xaçecózinho, *kamé* and *veineky* are buried in the southern section and the *kairu* and *votorô* in the northern section, even if this ideal is not entirely realized in practice today for several reasons (Crépeau 2000). In a nearby settlement named Pinhalzinho, I noted an inversion of this pattern: *kamé* are buried in the northern section and *kairu* in the southern section delimited by an identical east-west axis. Since *kamé* moiety is clearly associated with the sun and the east while *kairu* is associated with the moon and west, at first I did not understand this inversion involving these two cemeteries until informants interpreted it for me by using a high/low contrast: the *kamé* belong to the higher part and the *kairu* to the lower part of the cemetery. This interpretation is also related to the fact that the cemetery is conceived as a temporary middle or intermediary domain for the deceased souls (*vein kupri*) who will be later liberated by the

enactment of the *Kikikioia* ritual (see below) after which they will be able to reach their final resting place(s). According to some informants, *kamé* and *veineky* souls rest in a place called *Fogkawé*, located toward the east in a high place, while *kairu* and *votôro* souls go to an underground location called *Nûmbé*, perhaps a cavern, to the west⁸.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL INSTITUTION OF RECIPROCITY AND EXCHANGE ACCORDING TO THE KAINGANG

In the early 1960s, David Maybury-Lewis (1960) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958, 1960) argued about the nature of dual social organization of the *Gê* and *Bororo* of Central Brazil. According to Lévi-Strauss, dual social organization is adventitious and illusory for the natives as well as for the naive ethnographer because there is always a third party involved in the apparent relationship of moieties, for example a third section or a third partner: “Behind the dualism and the apparent symmetry of the social structure, we perceive a more fundamental organization which is asymmetrical and triadic (...)” (Lévi-Strauss 1958: 145).

David Maybury-Lewis called *Gê* societies “dialectical” because the theme of balance and complementarity is, according to him, a fundamental preoccupation for them. The *Gê* seek harmony and “it is the system which creates the reciprocity”, not the other way around: “This is demonstrated by the central Brazilian data that show how the terms of the reciprocity can change drastically without destroying the system. Reciprocity, in short, is a function of dual organization, not a cause of it” (Maybury-Lewis 1989: 112).

According to data gathered at *Xapécó* reservation in Santa Catarina State in Southern Brazil, Maybury-Lewis is right when he relates dual organization to a quest for harmony, though for my informants, dual organization is also related to power, which implies conflict, competition and hierarchy, a point well made by Terence Turner (1979, 1984, 1996) for the *Kayapó* and other *Gê* societies of Central Brazil. Indeed, informants of both moieties conceived contextually *kamé* moiety as first and stronger and as encompassing the *kairu* moiety which is consequently second and weaker, for

example in ritual contexts such as second funeral ritual as will be discussed in next section (Crépeau 1994, 1997; Rosa 2005).

According to the same informants of both moities, dual organization is not illusory, as wrote Lévi-Strauss (1958: 145), but elusive. They know too well that their day-to-day interaction is lived in a plural society with factions, social, economic and political divisions, and a sad absence of unity, *união* as they say in Portuguese. But according to their narratives about the great flood or the origin of the moon, they once in the past constituted a unified society issued of *kamé* ancestors who at the beginning of time instituted social order based on moieties and sections (Crépeau 1994, 1997, 2000; Pereira-Gonçalves 2000).

If we follow my Kaingang informants, exchange and reciprocity appear not as an unconscious given (Lévi-Strauss) nor a function of dual organization (Maybury-Lewis) but as something instituted in the past by the action of powerful ancestral culture-heroes: a) who stole the basic elements of Kaingang life such as fire, water or honey from their egoistic primordial owners; b) who generously gave them to humanity, for instance maize and other cultigens gave by *Nhar* (or Maize) after his death; c) who created moiety and section partnership after the destruction of the first humans by the great flood (Crépeau 1994, 2008).

KIKIKOIA SECOND FUNERAL

I will now briefly examine the context of “total services” between moities enacted in funerary ritual contexts in Xapecó and Palmas reservations of Southern Brazil. In the recent past, funerary treatment of a dead person involved two steps: 1) the burial and first funeral rite followed approximately a year later by, 2) the second funeral rite, called *Kikikoia*. Today, the latter was performed only for adult Catholic traditionalists.

The First Funeral

After death, the person is laid out on a table with his feet oriented to the east: “He is looking in direction of the cemetery, located to the east or in direction of sunrise”, according to the Kaingang. The body

is carefully washed, combed and dressed with clean clothes before being placed flat on its back in a wooden coffin. The person will then be exposed in the church or in the school in settlements where there is no church. There, the east-west orientation of the body is maintained. Family members and friends spend the night lighting candles, singing, praying and socializing. Since most of the time no Catholic priest is available, the reservation's ritual singers, two partners belonging respectively to *kamé* and *kairu* moieties, are invited to sing and pray for the deceased.

In the past, members of the opposite moiety of the deceased performed funerary services. I witnessed such a ritual only once in June 1995 when an influential man died at a very old age while the *Kikikoia* was being performed. Belonging to *kairu* moiety, this man was considered the oldest person of the reservation and was very respected as the penultimate organizer of the *Kikikoia*.⁹ When the news of his death broke, people commented that the old man had waited until the beginning of the *Kikikoia* to pass away, so he was able to participate in the ritual he loved and cared so much about.

The body is buried at daybreak the following morning (a practice which follows usual Brazilian funerary treatment). In the cemetery, the body is buried with his head oriented to the east and his feet to the west because he is now considered "looking" in the direction of sunset. A simple, plain wooden cross is driven into the ground at the head of the grave and a *tipankri*, a small branch of *Araucaria* pine tree (*Araucaria angustifolia*) for a *kamé* or of *sete sangria* tree (*Simplocus parviflora*) for a *kairu*, is placed on the grave to indicate that the second funeral has not yet taken place. After seven days, family members will light candles on the grave to guide the soul toward the cemetery where it is believe to remain until second funeral.

Second Funeral Rite

The second funeral name, *Kikikoia*, literally means "to eat the honey beer". It is celebrated approximately a year after the first funeral. The ritual must be formally solicited by family members of the deceased to a ritual singer of the opposite moiety or the *pã-i*, the chief organizer of the ritual. Second funeral is organized and performed only if demands originate from at least two families of opposite

moieties or sections; it could not be performed for deceased of only one moiety.

The second funeral usually takes place after harvest somewhere between April and May. It is consequently a period during which maize, black beans and other agricultural products are more abundant than average. It is also the period during which *Araucaria* pine trees (*Araucaria angustifolia*) produce their fruit, called *pinhão*, which before massive deforestation were a very important source of food for the Kaingang as well as for rodents and monkeys who were then easily and abundantly captured by hunters. Santos (1987: 28) also mentions that the Kaingang historically competed with the Xokleng, their immediate Gê neighbours, for the control of these rich pine-forests.

The central symbol – in Victor Turner's sense – of the second funeral is in fact an *Araucaria* pine tree, considered to be *kamé*, which is sacrificed ritually and transformed into a five metres trough in which honey beer is prepared. According to my informants, this pine trunk is treated like a deceased person and occupies the centre of the western pole of the ritual space-axis, the other pole being the cemetery.

Although I will not describe in detail the ritual, I would like to stress its fundamental aspect, which is the obligatory complementarity of moieties for its successful enactment. This essential complementarity is reiterated by the ritual performance, which literally and explicitly enacts the ideal of reciprocal exchange of services between moieties established after the great flood by Kaingang's primordial ancestors of *kamé* moiety (I will return to this point).

In contrast to the first funeral, all seven phases of the second funeral ritual imply the coordinated action of *kamé-veineky/kairu-votôro* moieties in relation to a third term: recently deceased persons and ancestors who are said to gather around the ritual fires and trough because they very much enjoy *Kikikoia* ritual and especially honey beer.

The second funeral officially begins with the first fire. After sunset, two fires of pine knots are lit along an east-west axis in a clean flat open space in the settlement. The ritual singers, first *kamé-veineky* followed by the *kairu-votôro*, come to their respective fires to

sing and to drink the honey beer (or sugarcane alcohol nowadays) offered by the deceased's families. The kamé-veineky singers occupy the western fire as they perform services for kairu souls, while the kairu-votôrô singers occupy the eastern fire where the kamé souls are said to gather.

The honey beer is called *kutu*, which could be translated as “deaf”. Ritual singers say that it should never be drunk before being ritually sung and beaten with a gourd rattle since it is a ritual signal or invitation transmitted to the deceased.

The following day, also after sunset, the second fire phase takes place along the same lines. Again, two fires are lit and the ritual singers finish singing over *kutu* alcohol for every deceased for whom the ritual is performed. The first and the second fire phases last approximately 3 hours each.

The following morning, the ritual singers and other participants proceed to the sacrifice of the pine tree. They select a mature pine of good diameter and walk around it from east to west while singing and beating rattle gourds before cutting the tree down. The kamé always perform first, followed by the kairu. Ritual officiants also sing and circulate around the felled trunk and while it is being transported to the ritual ground of the first and second fire phases. There, the trunk is placed along an east-west axis parallel to the fire axis, the head or crown of the tree toward east and its base or foot to the west. The trunk is divided into two sections: the lower section or the base of the tree is kairu and is attended by the kamé officiants while the crown, or high section, is kamé and consequently attended by the kairu.

Over the following days, the trunk is hollowed out and transformed into a trough by men of both moieties. The kairu take care of the eastern or high section (attributed to the kamé souls), while the kamé carve the western or low section. When the trough is ready, the fourth phase takes place. It consists in the preparation of honey beer, which again implies the coordinated action of the ritual singers of both moieties. All ingredients used in the mixture – water, honey, and sometimes white sugar and sugarcane alcohol – are said to be *kutu* and must be sung by each moiety before being mixed in the trough. Ritual singers gather around their respective extremities of the trunk with which they are associated: the eastern section by the kamé

and the western section by the kairu. The average fermentation period is about 2 to 4 weeks.

After the beer is ready, the last or third fire can take place. It is the most elaborate and consists in a large gathering of people from Xapecó and Palmas reservations and often from reservations of other regions. Six fires, three kamé and three kairu, are lit after sunset in the same ritual ground and along the same east-west axis where the singers and other participants must spend the whole night until sunrise. During this phase, participants must wear the respective facial painting that indicates their moiety, section and ritual affiliation. The facial paintings are applied by two elderly women, one from each moiety: a kairu woman paints the kamé and veineky participants with *Araucaria* pine-tree charcoal mixed with water, while a kamé woman paints the kairu and votôro with charcoal of sete sangria tree.

The night is spent singing and drinking sugarcane alcohol donated by the families of the deceased¹⁰. Here again, the coordinated efforts of members of both moieties are essential to the enactment of the ritual. Both moieties compete in the intensity, enthusiasm and sadness of their songs – the kamé always initiating the singing followed by the kairu.

At sunrise, a meal is offered to all participants by the ritual organizers in the name of the families of the deceased. Then, a procession moves toward the cemetery. But, first, participants from both moieties, the ritual singers ahead and their ritual assistants, named *penk*, proceed to the houses of the families who are sponsoring the ritual to recover the wooden crosses of their deceased moiety member. The crosses are painted according to the deceased's facial painting design. The kamé open this procession and proceed to kairu houses, followed at good distance by the kairu who go to kamé houses. Each family receives the celebrants by offering them sugarcane alcohol.

Participants then walk slowly to the cemetery. The kamé enter the cemetery first and proceed systematically to each individual kairu grave. There, the ritual singers sing and beat rattle gourds on each grave while their assistants enact specific ritual operations to free the spirits of the dead and send them to their resting place. The Kaingang said that they must remove the *tipankri* – that small branch of pine or

sete sangria tree placed on the grave during the first funeral – and throw it over the cemetery fence in the direction toward which the spirit must travel to reach its resting place, more precisely to the east for a kamé or veineky spirit and to the west for a kairu or votôro spirit. After completing this task, the kamé participants slowly walk back to the fire ritual ground. Only then, do kairu singers and their *penk* assistants enter the cemetery and attend ritually the kamé graves. This order is said to be rigid and must be respected for the ritual to be successful.

Then both moieties go back to the ritual fire ground for the closing dance, the kairu well behind the kamé. Members of both moieties decorate their heads and waists with foliage picked up along the road and carry boughs of bamboo. At the entrance of the settlement, each moiety is welcomed by an officiant of the opposite moiety who gives generous portions of honey beer to every celebrant. The moieties then proceed to the fires, now almost out, singing and shouting joyously. They start dancing around the fires in an east-west circular movement. Drinking honey beer and dancing separately for a while, the moiety dancers progressively approach each other and eventually start dancing together as one body, ignoring for the first time the duality and the distance that was maintained between them during the whole ritual up to that point. Both groups dance together in a spiral-like movement forming a human wave in which moieties are fused and become one entity. This final phase is crucial since, according to my Kaingang informants, it consists in the fusion of moieties into a choreographically unified social group. Kaingang society is at the end represented as a single unified entity, rather than as dual or plural. The honey beer is served abundantly by several officiants to all celebrants until the trough is almost empty. The participants then gather around the trough and finish the last drops before reversing the trough and hitting it with boughs or with stones to signal that the *Kikikoia* is finally over.

DISCUSSION

According to contemporary Kaingang Catholic traditionalists of Xaçepó reservation, the *Kikikoia* explicitly enacts their Amerindian

identity in the reservation, as well as in the regional and national contexts, to which the international context must nowadays be added. Almost abandoned during the 1950s and 1960s because of external religious and political pressures, the *Kikikoia* has been actualized in 1976 on Xaçecó reservation with the help of CIMI (Centro Indígena Misionero – Native Missionary Centre), which is a progressive branch of the Brazilian Catholic Church (Veiga 2000).

In 1976 and still at the time of my fieldwork in 1998, one of the greatest challenges facing the Kaingang in their desire to hold the *Kikikoia* ritual was poverty. Because of the massive deforestation of their reservation and the pollution caused by agricultural chemicals used by their neighbours, the Xaçecó reservation is ecologically devastated. Nowadays, there is not enough honey from wild bees to make honey beer, and no more game to hunt or fish to catch to feed ritual participants. Consequently, CIMI financial support has been crucial for honey and food purchases as well as for meeting the transportation costs of participants from other reservations.

When my Kaingang informants described the *Kikikoia* as “beautiful”, particularly its final dance, they were referring to the fact that the ritual implies the coordinated reciprocal participation of people from every sub-group, moiety or section. At the present time, however, these aesthetic considerations are darkened by religious factionalism between Protestants and Catholics and consequently the last performance of *Kikikoia* was held in year 2000. Indeed, as already mentioned above, the *Kikikoia* was a powerful and provocative response of the traditionalists to this situation. Robert Hertz wrote of second funeral rite that it: “always has a pronounced collective character and entails a concentration of the society. ... This action thus takes a political significance” (Hertz 1960: 71). It is not surprising that according to my Kaingang informants, the *Kikikoia* ritual constituted a privileged means for the expression of their Amerindian identity, which they express in myths and enact ritually in a holistic mode. In these specific contexts, the kamé moiety is always first and constitutes a logical encompassing totality, which is used as standard, starting point or zero order¹¹ of sociological and cosmological institution.

As noted above, the central symbol of *Kikikoia* is a pine-tree transformed into a trough and ritually treated like a deceased person.

The pine-tree is associated with the kamé moiety while the honey beer is associated both with kamé and kairu. Indeed, according to my informants, bees are classified as kamé while water is associated with kairu, kamé being associated with the sun and consequently with the dry. Fermentation could be described as the transformation (or fusion) of both ingredients into a superior unity, which furnishes an interesting metaphorical parallel with the final dance of the *Kikikoia*, which consists in a choreographic fusion of the moieties.

Lévi-Strauss (1966: 125) mentions that in South America, and more specifically among Gê, wild honey was usually collected and immediately eaten on the spot. In contrast, honey beer implies a deferred consumption of honey, which is collected, preserved and then only transformed by fermentation. In short, honey beer is associated with reciprocity while honey *per se* is not. This, of course, explains why honey beer and not honey is the main object of exchange between the ritual singers, the families patronizing the *Kikikoia*, the recently deceased and the ancestors. It is honey beer exchange and circulation that causes (or motivates) everyone to gather around the trough into a single social and logical entity.

Sullivan (1988: 197, 200) writes that in South America:

Fermentation marks a calendrical node where various time-cycles can be gathered symbolically. Furthermore, fermentation is a deliberate process by which human beings, imitating the actions of sacred beings, subject cosmic times to cultural artifice. ... Ritual drinking has the function of restaging the transformative acts that originally marked off time. ... Periodic drinking feasts reenact the effective return of destructive events ...

Indeed, my Kaingang informants explicitly associated the *Kikikoia* and a destructive event, the great flood. In the following narrative, the origin of Kaingang moieties partnership is explicitly described in association with this event:

God announced the flood:

“The day that this woman will wash a stove at the river, there will be a great flood”.

Then Joseph, the father of Jesus Christ,
built a boat in which he assembled a kamé-kairu couple as well
as a couple of each nation.

The Blacks did not board the boat except for a woman.

The water came during a full day and retired in three days.

After that there was no more humans or animals on earth;

The Blacks escaped by climbing on top of the trees located on
the highest mountains.

The woodpecker, who is kamé, stole the fire
and gave it to the kamé and the kairu.

Then they made a feast called Kikikoia
for those who perished during the flood.

The first who came to his fire was yamuyé yãgrè, the Cayman,
because the kamé always comes first to their fire.

Then the kãyer monkey who is kairu went to his fire. ...

The Kaingang learned the songs of the *Kikikoia* from those
animals.

(Narrated in 1994 by Vicente Fokâe Fernandes, a kairu
informant and chief organizer, until his death in 2005, of the
Kikikoia ritual of Xapécó reservation, see also Crépeau 1995,
1997, 2008).

This narrative – as well as others – describes the institution of post-diluvium social order. The initial logical unit of this new social order is constituted by a primordial couple who survived the great flood. They are the zero order of alliance, since their children are kamé following the rule of patrilineal affiliation to moiety or section. The following narrative describes how this primordial couple instituted Kaingang dual organization:

Numerous Indians died following a flood which took place in this area. The only survivors were a couple, a brother and his sister, both still very young. They were members of the Kamé group. The couple swam toward a very high mountain named *Krim-Takré*. They went to the summit and climbed into the branches of the trees. When the water withdrew they went back to earth. They married, the brother and the sister, and the Indians reproduced themselves. They made fire because they

had knowledge of the rope used to make fire. They had numerous children.

Before they died, the couple reestablished the division in two groups: the kamé are stronger and the kairu are weaker. They divided us to organize the marriages between them. After they multiplied themselves, the Indians also reestablished the division between votôro and veineky. The votôro have the strength of the kairu and the veineky the strength of the kamé.

(Narrated by João Xê Coelho of Paraná in 1947 to Schaden 1953: 140-1, my translation).

The normative frame of these Kaingang narratives is not an implicit principle such as exchange, reciprocity or the gift. Discussions with my Kaingang informants point toward a depiction in which the normative frame is rather a triangular configuration of social relations constituted by at least two individuals of opposed moieties and a third party. The latter is constituted by the victims of the flood, who are conceived explicitly in the first narrative as the recipients of the reciprocal ritual action enacted by the moieties during the celebration of the first *Kikikioia*.

CONCLUSION

While anthropology linked the problem of exchange and reciprocity with, for example, “a certain situation of the spirit in the presence of things” (Lévi-Strauss 1950: XLIII); or the problems implied by social relationships (Godelier 1996; Sahlins 1972) and cultural reproduction (Weiner 1992); or the problem of the status of collective representations, magico-religious and others (Godelier 1996: 144; Racine 1991), the Kaingang narratives and practices discussed above formulate a resolution to the problem which appears sociological through and through. This solution is based on the institution of complementarity between asymmetric partners from a zero order of sociality that is already (or never ceases to be) the social whole: kamé moiety. In the absence of initial or adequate triangular configuration of relations, there must be a primordial event which engenders this triangular configuration and creates the context for further

interactions. In Kaingang's flood narratives, Peirce's "law of the strongest" is simply the anteriority or encompassing pre-eminence of the kamé survivors. Accordingly, social life is not based on exchange as such (as an implicit principle or unconscious given) but on the primordial and explicit sociological institution¹² of partnership between asymmetric and complementary classes emerging of a pre-existing totality.

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Notes

- 1 The historical starting point of Gê studies is Nimuendaju's publication of ethnographies translated into English by Robert Lowie (Nimuendaju 1939, 1946). Lévi-Strauss, who was himself a "Gê-ologist" through his study of the Bororo, discussed social dualism in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* and elsewhere. The Harvard Central Brazil Project directed by David Maybury-Lewis (1979) in the 1960s and 70s focused on kinship and moieties systems of several Gê societies but excluded the Kaingang and the Xokleng of Southern Brazil.
- 2 Our data were collected between 1993 and 2009 on Xapécó and Palmas reservations located respectively in Santa Catarina and Paraná States in Southern Brazil. The fieldwork has been realized in collaboration with Silvio Coelho dos Santos, of Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina in Florianópolis. Funding has been provided by FQRSC (Quebec) and CRSHC (Canada). I want to thank my colleague Guy Lanoue for his very wise and helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper and an peer reviewer for his constructive and useful comments.
- 3 Following Brandom (1994, 2000), we would say today that in those expressions Mauss is emphasizing the explicit formulation of an implicit order.
- 4 It is rather important to note here that this conception is almost completely obliterated in the English translation of *The Gift* by Cunnison (Mauss 1967) who translated the French concept "droit" by "custom"; "nature du lien juridique" (p. 160) by "nature of the bond" (p. 10); "lien de droit" (p. 160) by "bond" (p. 10) and so on. The most recent English translation by W. D. Halls (Mauss 1990) corrects this.

- 5 Once again, Cunnisson's translation does not render the essence of Mauss' position: "All these institutions reveal the same kind of social and psychological pattern" (Mauss 1967: 11).
- 6 Such a logical system of rules is different from a general a priori principle such as exchange as proposed by Lévi-Strauss or Society as proposed by Durkheim – which Mauss divides into sub-groups linked by the gift-giving. What is primordial, in fact, is the logic of the whole and its parts which is different from the unconscious symbolic logic described by Lévi-Strauss (1950).
- 7 For example: "The Bororo themselves discuss their social organization in terms of a plan of the ideal village. Nearly all adult men and many women can reproduce an approximate version of the [circular] village model [...]". (Crocker 1969: 45)
- 8 Nowadays however, the dominant conception is that all souls are going to the *Númbé* (or *paraiso*, paradise) located to the west.
- 9 His nephew, Vicente Fokâe Fernandes, a kairu, was my main informant to whom the old man passed on the duty of organizing the Kikikioia. Many informants told me that the old man's age was "four taquaras". Taquara is a species of bamboo with a cycle of about 30 years and as such is an important time-marker for the Kaingang.
- 10 I witnessed and videotaped the *Kikikioia* ritual in 1994, 1995 and 1998. On some occasions, the fermented beverage, sugarcane or honey beer, was offered by the ritual organizers in the name of the families of the deceased. This fact is related to the difficult economic situation on the reservation that I will briefly address below. See Rosa (2005: 16-21) excellent depiction of anthropological research conducted in the 1990's on the *Kikikioia*.
- 11 I borrow this concept from the logic of zero order or propositional logic from Gauthier (2002: 189).
- 12 Interestingly, Lévi-Strauss (1968: 115) mentions that social dualism is often conceived as a deliberate social reform.

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