

The Mëbêngôkre (Kayapó) dataset

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Ethnographic context

The Mëbêngôkre (better known as Kayapó), located in the states of Mato Grosso and Pará, Central Brazil, are part of the Northern Jê linguistic family (see the map of all the areas occupied by the Mëbêngôkre). The name Kayapó was originally given by an enemy Tupi speaking people and means “Monkey like”. The ethnonym Mëbêngôkre means “people from the water source”, a name that can no longer be explained. The Mëtyktire refer to the block east of the Xingu as the Krĩkati or Gorotire (not to be confused with a Jê people known as the Krĩkati or with the village called Gorotire). The block to the north of the Mëtyktire is known collectively as the Mëkrãgnõti (not to be confused with the homonymous village). The Mëkrãgnõti resulted from a schism around 1905, when this group moved to the west of the Xingu and then split in two groups, one maintaining the name Mëkrãgnõti and the other becoming known as the Mëtyktire. The Indigenous Land (Terra Indígena) called Kapoto-Jarina is where the Mëtyktire villages are presently located.

In the nineteenth century, villages resulting from schisms became enemies and attacked each other. After official state contact with the Mëtyktire, in 1953, the schisms continued. In 1971, when the BR-080 road construction began, the Directors of the Xingu Park, the Villas Boas brothers, convinced part of the Mëtyktire to move within the limits of the park, establishing the village of Kretire. At the beginning of my research, between 1978 and 1982, the entire Mëtyktire population inhabited two villages (Kretire and Jarina). These two Mëtyktire villages later merged temporarily into one village (visited in 1987, see map), and then divided up into two groups, one of which has subsequently split up into an ever-increasing number of villages. The same process characterizes those groups residing east of the Xingu and those residing to the north of the Mëtyktire. All these Mëbêngôkre consider themselves to be different from the Xikrin – whom they refer to as Djore (a designation that characterizes an extinct group). The Xikrin, however, consider themselves to be Mëbêngôkre, referring to the non-Xikrin Mëbêngôkre as the Kayapó.

The data collected between 1978 and 1982 were obtained from the Mëtyktire division of the Mëbêngôkre (also known in the literature as Txukarramãe), located in the village of Kretire, on the western banks of the river Xingu, near the border of Mato Grosso with Pará (see maps of Kretire village in 1978 and 1982, including the administrative post in 1982 which was much the same as it was in 1978). In 1982 the population of Kretire totalled around 200 inhabitants. The 1.444 people listed in the original genealogies include the latter’s relatives, both living and dead, in the then existent villages to

the west and east of the Xingu. Most of the population married within the village of Kretire, but there has always been migration of individuals and families between villages.

Some of the data refer to the Pau d'Arco or Irã'ãmrãjre, one of the first branches of the Mëbêngôkre to have entered into contact with non-Indians. They became extinct in the mid twentieth century. Attacks by slave traders are thought to have affected the Mëbêngôkre as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, and this is linked to their migration westwards in an attempt to avoid violent contact.

In the census that I made in 1995, the Mëtyktire totalled 552 people. Like other indigenous peoples in Brazil the population began to grow in the second half of the twentieth century, due to an improvement in health services, notably with vaccinations against diseases resulting from contact with non-Indians.

Official data¹ (<https://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/povo/mebengokre-kayapo/180>) calculated the Mëbêngôkre population as totalling 11.675 in 2014, of which 1.164 were Mëtyktire. The NGO ISA (2017: 493-494) registered 79 Mëbêngôkre villages in 2016 (excluding the Xikrin), with a population of 8.594. Ten of these villages were Mëtyktire with a population of 1.556. The Xikrin must have been included in the 2014 calculation, but were excluded in 2016, accounting for the discrepancy between the calculations.

The Mëbêngôkre are renowned for their complex rituals, especially those held for confirming the beautiful names of children. People have common names and joking names, besides beautiful names, and it is not uncommon for people to be known by more than one name, and to be referred to by different names by different people. It was due to this difficulty that I recorded the death cause of each individual, as a tool for facilitating the recognition of a person referred to by different names and also for distinguishing namesakes. Each person receives around ten names on average.

When the first village census was made, in 1978, I expected interconnections to involve mainly the Mëtyktire, but the genealogies revealed the network of consanguinity and affinity that characterizes all the Mëbêngôkre, excluding the Xikrin with the exception of the offspring of war captives. To the east of the Xingu there are also Xikrin migrants living in "Mëbêngôkre" villages.

In climatic terms the year is divided into two seasons, the rainy season extending from November to April, and the dry season, from May to October. Before contact the Mëbêngôkre were characterized by semi-nomadic trekking between a base village, inhabited in the rainy season, and temporary camp sites, used mainly during the dry season. They had learned to exploit the resources of

¹ Siasi/Sesai: Sistema de Informações da Atenção à Saúde Indígena/Secretaria Especial de Saúde Indígena. Data from 2010 (Funasa) calculates the Xikrin as 1.818 (see <https://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/povo/xikrin-mebengokre>).

both the savannahs and the forest. Fishing became increasingly important to the Mětyktire when they began to reside on the banks of the river Xingu, after contact. Formerly hunting was more important as the main source of protein. Since contact in 1953 game has become increasingly scarce, mainly due to deforestation by non-Indians for raising cattle and, more recently, for huge plantations of soya, corn and cotton.

In the literature on Central Brazil, the Měbêngôkre have been characterized since the nineteenth century as having larger than average circular villages, with a men's meeting house located at the centre of the village.

There is a rigid sexual division of labour. In the past, the men were expected to spend most of their time assembled in the men's house, while in the village, ready to defend it against enemy invaders and to plan attacks on their enemies, including other Měbêngôkre subgroups. Young boys used to leave their mother's house to take up residence in the men's house until after marriage, consolidated with the birth of their first child, a custom that no longer existed when I began fieldwork in 1978.

The difference between spouses and lovers is not always very clear. Both are referred to by the same terms, qualified by the term *djwoj*, meaning true, or *krô'aj/ kaàk*, synonyms meaning pseudo/distant. A spouse is a person whom one lives with, but that information was not always available, as in the case of the ex-partners of 141, and more generally concerning people cited in the genealogies, but not known personally by the researcher.

At marriage the men move into the wife's house along with her mother and husband (either the father or subsequent MH). Ideally the women never move from the house where they were born, though if it gets overcrowded, especially with lots of children, then one or more daughters build a separate dwelling, next to that of their mother. Nevertheless, they consider themselves to belong to the same House (or matrihouse). A House resembles a clan; it occupies a specific portion of the village circle, in relation to east and west. It is exogamous and traces its origins to mythological times, having a legacy of personal names, and prerogatives involving the use of distinctive adornments, ritual roles and songs, raising specific animals as pets and consuming specific cuts of meat.

Each married woman has her own gardens, with a new one opened each year; resources are simultaneously used from older gardens for as long as they are productive. The women not only cook all the food consumed at home, they supply most of it, with the exception of meat and fish. They also gather wild fruits and are responsible for transporting water and firewood to their homes. The supreme art of the women is their body painting, producing elaborate geometrical designs with which they dress their children on an everyday basis, and which is also used for adults during rituals. Ritual wailing, performed exclusively by the women, is the counterpart to male oratory.

Ideally a woman marries her daughter to one of her (the mother's) formal friends, inherited patrilocally. In practice this occurs in a minority of cases and mainly concerning first marriages. The residential rule is matri-uxorilocal, with men circulating at marriage, compounded with the ideal association of formal friendship and marriage. Formal friends play an important role in rituals and at

funerals. It is an institution that is said to have originated in a specific House. Formal friendship is inherited through the father, but it was not easy to document as people lacking an inherited formal friend may acquire a new one. Unlike the uterine lines, traceable through the houses, male lines proved difficult to trace. Nowadays people have given up betrothing young children, and adolescents increasingly demand the right to choose their own spouses, following the example of the non-indigenous population.

The kinship terminology has been classified as Omaha, a feature more commonly associated with patrilineal systems. Besides terms of address and reference there is a series of triadic terms, such as *abam nget* “your father who is my formal friend”. These resemble triadic or triangular terms that have been documented among various aboriginal peoples of Australia, but not, at the time of writing, elsewhere.

My research began twenty-four years after official contact. Since then the pace of social change has accelerated as Mato Grosso has been opened up as part of the last agricultural frontier in Brazil. In the early 1980s literacy classes began in the village of Kretire. The first attempts to write Mëbêngôkre had been undertaken by missionaries from Summer Institute of Linguistics in the 1960s. This culminated in the translation of the New Testament into Mëbêngôkre. The orthography used in my publications is based on the phonological system devised by the SIL (Stout and Thomson 1974). As yet there is no agreed orthography either on the part of the Indigenous population or on the part of non-Indians. At the present time the Mëtyktire, like most Indigenous peoples in Brazil, are undergoing attempts by evangelical Church groups to convert them to Christianity.

Besides the impact of deforestation, resulting in increasing temperatures and smoke-filled skies during the dry season, the Mëtyktire who continue to live along the banks of the river Xingu are affected by the increasing pollution of this river, due to the runoff of pesticides from the large rural properties (*fazendas*). This is due to the fact that the headwaters of the river Xingu were excluded from the boundaries of the Xingu park, contiguous to the Indigenous Land Kapoto-Jarina.

Data collection and coding

The dataset is based on an appendix in the author’s 1986 PhD thesis. Later revisions concerning mainly the orthography of names (as well as some minor details) have been integrated into the computerized version. The maps of the Kràjmÿpryjaka village (indicating the positions of the 20 coded matrihouses) are accessible as attachments in pdf format on the Kinsources site. The dates calculated for the existence of this village (1936-1938) were made by Verswijver (1983:318). Kràjmÿpryjaka was given as a historical point of reference, where the matrihouses were in the correct places, by both my interlocutors and those of Verswijver.

Data was collected during visits to each house in Kretire between 1978 and 1982. None of the women and few of the men spoke any Portuguese at the time the initial research was undertaken, so Mëbêngôkre was the main language used. There was no research assistant or translator available. It was

the Mētyktire, and mainly my classificatory father Raoni, who directed me to interlocutors in each House. The elders were taken to have most knowledge because of what they had seen; therefore, when enquiring into names and genealogies I was automatically directed to the eldest person responsible for knowledge in some specific sphere. Some such individuals were referenced as Ego of a specific genealogy, others gave information about a father's relatives, for instance, or filled in for missing information, for example, concerning the last living member of House X who was too young to know about his own relatives. The Mēbêngôkre look on genealogies as being upside down, something that makes sense in that the dead are buried in the ground, and the new generations sprout upwards and outwards like sweet potato plants.

The Mēbêngôkre, like the Indigenous peoples of the Upper Xingu area, consider that a foetus is built up gradually from semen; thus the men boast that it is a lot of work making a child. This explains why ceremonial sex is not considered relevant for calculating paternity, because it is a once off event. Cases were also encountered of men denying allegations of paternity made by women. The worst insult is for men to say that a child is “everybody's”, tantamount to an accusation of promiscuity. In the latter cases that I met with (about two) the baby died soon afterwards. I consider the practice of *couvade* to be a symbolic means of consolidating paternity.

Some children are considered to have been fathered by lovers, rather than husbands. It is thus possible that some MHs aren't the actual genitors, e.g. the woman 648, given 86 as her F in G 23, but 641 as her F in G 9. Another example is 369, initially given as D of M's present husband. This is coherent with the importance of the matrihouses; current husbands take over as the fathers of the present wife's children by previous marriages. Certain rituals involve ceremonial sexual relations, seemingly a type of fertility rite. This is another factor that must be kept in mind concerning the notion of paternity.

More data is available for processing, from later periods of research, but due to lack of funding in Brazil, and involvement in other activities, a decision was made by Klaus and myself to publish this version of the data base in 2020, hoping to continue the research at a later date.

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Attribute overview

INDIVIDUALS

Field	Type	Explication and source	Access
ID	Number	Identity numbers of individuals. Numbers above 10000 have been added to individuals unnumbered in the original genealogies.	Public
GENDER	Char	The gender of individuals. Symbolized by triangles (male) and circles (female)	Public
NAME	Text	The name of the individual. The orthography of all names in the original dataset has been revised by the author.	Anonymized
HOUSE	Number	The number of the matrihouse, corresponding to the (attached) map of the Kràjmypryjaka village. Not in the original dataset, added by the author.	Public
RES_PLACE	Text	The village of residence at the time of data collection, according to the coded indications on the genealogies: Baú KKK Kubêkrâkêjn KKM Kôkrajmõrõ PG Gorotire PIV (Posto de Vigilância, now village) Piraçu PJ Jarina	Public

		PK Kretire PN Pykany PM Mëkrãgnõti	
ALIVE	Boolean	Indicates whether the individual was alive (yes) or dead (no) in 1982. Dead individuals are crossed in the original genealogies. In addition, information on stillborn individuals is given (noted as NM (nasceu morto) in the original genealogies).	Public
DEATH_CAUSE	Text	Death cause	Hidden
ETHN	Text	The ethnic group of individuals other than Kayapó	Public
NOTE	Text	Notes by the author, in the original dataset or added later. This field indicates also cases in which no further information on offspring and house membership was available despite the author's efforts ("Further data lacking", coded SD (sem dados) in the original genealogies).	Hidden
NOTE_IDENTITY	Text	Notes by the author concerning cases of confirmed, doubtful or possible reduplication of individuals on different genealogies.	Public
CODER	Text	Remarks of the coder (concerns mainly divergences from the original dataset, checked with the author)	Public
DOUBLE	Number	Identity number of doubles (in the original genealogy) that have been eliminated from the dataset	Public

FAMILIES

Field	Type	Explication and source	Access
NOTE	Text	Notes by the author, in the original dataset or added later.	Hidden
CODER	Text	Remarks of the coder (concerns mainly divergences from the original dataset, checked with the author)	Public
SEE_SHEET	Number	Number of the genealogy on which the children of the family can be found	Public
TYPE	Text	Type of the marriage, as noted on the original genealogies	Public

GENEALOGY

Field	Type	Explication and source	Access
ID	Number	Number of the genealogy	Public

MAIN	Text	Individuals found on the genealogy, with their main genealogical environment	Public
MEMBER	Text	Individuals found on the genealogy but whose main genealogy is another one	Public
EGO	Number	The ego for the genealogy (indicated by a filled triangle or circle in the original genealogies)	Public
INFORMANT	Number	Informants for this genealogy (other than ego)	Hidden

ADOPTION

Field	Type	Explication and source	Access
FATHER	Number	Id of the adoptive father	Public
MOTHER	Number	Id of the adoptive mother	Public
CHILD	Number	Id of the adoptive child(ren)	Public

HOMONYMY

Field	Type	Explication and source	Access
HOMONYM	Number	Id of the homonym	Hidden