

Land repossessions (*tekoharã*) in Mato Grosso do Sul and facing the logic of financialization of the territory

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Land repossessions (*tekoharã*) in Mato Grosso do Sul and facing the logic of financialization of the territory

Abstract

The study focuses its analysis on private property, on the agricultural and financial dynamics of the land in Mato Grosso do Sul, based on the premise that the State has been the main legitimizing agent of the process of appropriation of the lands of native Brazilian peoples, competing with the forms of struggle for the recovery of their traditional territories. The article begins with a brief ethno-historical-geographic contextualization of the Kaiowá and Guaraní with respect to the constitution of private land ownership, and the incorporation of this fraction of space in the national State and how territorial determinations of this social conflict are analyzed, understanding them as the state and movement of the socio-spatial practices of the subjects in the consolidation of hegemony and resistance projects. We concluded that in opposition to the form of value, the centrality of the territorial determinations of agribusiness, there is land repossession (*tekoharã*), which represents the confrontation, the resistance, of the native Brazilian peoples to the genocidal project of the capital-State.

Keywords: Financialization of the territory. Indigenous resistance. Repossession (*tekoharã*). Private land ownership. Kaiowá and Guaraní.

Retomadas (*tekoharã*) no Mato Grosso do Sul e enfrentamento da lógica de financeirização do território

Resumo

O trabalho concentra sua análise na propriedade privada, nas dinâmicas agrícolas e de financeirização da terra no Mato Grosso do Sul, partindo da premissa de que o Estado tem sido o principal agente legitimador do processo de apropriação das terras dos povos originários, competindo com as formas de luta na recuperação de seus territórios tradicionais. O trabalho inicia-se com uma breve contextualização etnohistórico-geográfica dos Kaiowá e Guaraní frente ao processo de constituição

da propriedade privada da terra, incorporando e consolidando essa fração do espaço ao Estado nacional, e como se estabelecem as determinações territoriais, compreendendo-as como estado e movimento das práticas socioespaciais dos sujeitos na consolidação da hegemonia e das formas de resistência. Conclui-se que, em oposição à forma valor, centro das determinações territoriais do agronegócio, engendram-se retomadas (*tekoharã*) como uma ação metabólica de unicidade de seres (inorgânicos, orgânicos e sociais), que representam o enfrentamento e a resistência dos povos originários ao projeto genocida do Estado/capital.

Palavras-chave: Financeirização do território. Resistência indígena. Retomada (*tekoharã*). Propriedade privada da terra. Kaiowá e Guarani.

La reanudación de tierras (*tekoharã*) en Mato Grosso do Sul y la confrontación con la lógica de financiarización del territorio

Resumen

El trabajo centra su análisis en la propiedad privada, en la dinámica agrícola y financiera de la tierra en Mato Grosso do Sul, desde la premisa de que el Estado ha sido el principal agente legitimador del proceso de apropiación de las tierras de los pueblos originales que compiten con las formas de lucha por la recuperación de sus territorios tradicionales. El trabajo comienza con una breve contextualización etno-histórica-geográfica de los Kaiowá y Guaraní con respecto a la constitución de la propiedad privada de la tierra, y la incorporación de esta fracción de espacio en el Estado nacional y se analizan las principales determinaciones territoriales de este conflicto social, entendiéndolas como el estado y movimiento de las prácticas socioespaciales de los sujetos en la consolidación de proyectos de hegemonía y resistencia. Se concluye que en oposición a la forma valor, centralidad de las determinaciones territoriales de la agroindustria, se engendran las reanudaciones de tierras (*tekoharã*), que representan la confrontación, la resistencia, de los pueblos originarios al proyecto genocida del Estado-capital.

Palabras clave: Financiarización del territorio. Resistencia indígena. Retomada (*tekoharã*). Propiedad privada de la tierra. Kaiowá y Guaraní.

Introduction

In the current stage of economic globalization, large corporations have managed to hegemonically realize value and its expanded reproduction. In Brazil, given the relation with the interests of traditional oligarchic sectors, this mechanism is historically established with State intermediation, in which the private ownership of land and its financialization — through agricultural production systems and appropriation of public funds — potentiate the logic of accumulation dominating the territories of the Guarani-Kaiowá.

This work focuses its analysis of this process on Mato Grosso do Sul, tracing the territorial determinations, understanding them as state and movement of the socio-spatial practices of the subjects towards the hegemony and consolidation of their class project and/or (counter-hegemonic) resistance project (Borges; Souza, 2019), which materialize in the logics of capitalists-landowners and confront native peoples in the struggle for the recovery of their traditional territories, through repossession as a new territorial determination. Thus, initially we presented a brief ethnohistorical and geographical contextualization of the Kaiowá and Guarani in relation to the constitution of private land ownership, highly concentrated, with the incorporation of this fraction of space into the national State and the determinations that were established for the various ethnic groups.

In this process, the main territorial determinations of capitalists-landowners correspond to the commoditization of agriculture; the appropriation of indigenous territories and the suppression of food production, in the logic of associating the production to the export of grains and the production of biofuels, to the commodification of land and its speculation, considering the ways of obtaining income and, effectively, its relation with the appropriation of public funds for the reproduction of value. Therefore, it is not a matter of association with economic determinism, but of understanding the historical forms of determination of social life, which remove the fundamental elements of the life of the native Brazilian peoples, their bond to *tekoharã*, as a synthesis of resistance and reproduction of the unity of (inorganic, organic and social) beings as opposed to the metabolic fracture with nature (Foster, 2005) that capitalist relations of production impose.

Given the diversity and complexity of historical resistances that involve the different indigenous groups/nations in Brazil, we limit ourselves to pointing out, in particular, the struggle of the Kaiowá and Guarani, against whom there is consolidated *grilagem* (illegal and/or violent land grabbing),¹ private appropriation of land, and their contradictory mechanisms of accumulation.

Mato Grosso do Sul and the indigenous peoples

There are currently 11 ethnic groups living in Mato Grosso do Sul: the Kaiowá and Guarani, the latter also known as Nhandeva (from the Tupi-Guarani language family, Tupi language branch), the Ofaié, Guató and Bororo (Ofaié, Guató and Bororo language families, respectively,

¹ Accordingly, we reaffirm the centrality of the concept of *grilagem* in the analysis of the Brazilian agrarian question, considering that it is the most violent and absolute form (as content and method) of land appropriation, given the naturalization and class fragmentation that implies the notion of land grabbing and land foreignization.

Macro-Jê language branch), the Terena and Kinikinau (Aruak language family), the Chamacoco (Zamuco language family), the Kamba (Romanesque language family, Indo-European language branch), the Kadiwéu (Guaikuru language family), and the Atikun (Romanesque language family, Indo-European language branch) (Martins; Chamorro, 2018). The IBGE (2010) also mentions the self-declaration of people belonging to other ethnic groups, such as the Ayoreo, the Kari Xocó, the Warekena, the Xavante, the Gavião Parkatejê and the Paresi.

In this federation unit, the reality of these peoples is quite complex and diverse, in terms of both the different forms of social, political, religious and cosmological organization and the forms of resistance. However, the recent history of these social groups has a common marker: the transformations to which they are submitted, notably by a mode of production radically opposed to their forms of existence, with the resistance and the current hegemonic social form of relationship with nature (the capitalist form) have led to the extermination² of these ethnic groups and, at the same time, of their *habitats*.

In Mato Grosso do Sul, the Kaiowá subgroup constitutes the majority of the native population and is concentrated further south of the state (municipalities of Rio Brillhante, Dourados, Antônio João to Mundo Novo and Sete Quedas). The Kaiowá also live in the eastern region of Paraguay (departments of Amambaí, Canindeyú), but the constitution of the national States Brazil and Paraguay and the border that separates them fragmented the territory of the Kaiowá, who are called Pãi-Tavyterã in Paraguay (Brand, 1993). The Kaiowá term derives from *Ka'agua*, those who lived in the forest (Chamorro, 2015).

Based on archaeological evidence, Bartomeu Melià (1990) assesses that the Guarani would have occupied the best lands in the foothills of the Cordillera de los Andes and in the basin of the Paraná, Paraguay and Uruguay rivers. The author emphasizes that, although not homogeneous, this occupation followed a pattern of rainfall, proximity to large rivers, lakes, humid forest formations, in short, a series of characteristics of the ecological environment, showing the close association between the Guarani way of being and the land. He also highlights that the Guarani understand the land as a way of producing existence, a culture, as a place where they can realize their way of being, conceived as *tekoha*.

Analyzing the social organization of the Kaiowá, Pereira (1999, p. 169, emphasis added) reinforces the notion of group bonds and the centrality of kinship relations:

The ideal of every Kaiowá is to belong to a kin that is sufficiently wide, in order to compete for prestige and political power in good conditions. *Belonging to a kinship is a precondition of social existence*, as it establishes patterns of distinction between individuals and, consequently, constitutes a fundamental component of social identity. Without this inclusion, the individual is prevented from operating within the system, and their development process as a person is compromised.

2 The genocidal processes result from several mechanisms: murder, cultural and rights erasure, and expropriation.

The author mentions that each kin had political-religious autonomy,³ acting as a factor of cohesion, distinction and (re)existence of the Kaiowá and Guarani, highlighting elements of social experience: the family fire (in the Guarani language, *che ypyky kuera*), the extended family (or *Che ñenoñá*, *Che jehuvi* or *Che re'yi*, or, as it has been more used in the literature, the *te'yi*, (uninflected form of *re'yi*). According to Pereira (1999, p. 82), the “family fire” can be roughly translated as “my direct descendants” and “[...] it can gather people united by four types of relations: consanguinity, descent, alliance, and a pseudo-kinship relation, through the institution of the adoption or raising of a child.” Therefore, it has very dynamic characteristics in its form and composition. Chamorro (2018) reports that a nuclear family is one that, inside a house, shares the “common fire.” In turn, the extended family, or *te'yi*:

[...] are household units that gather a variable number of family fires. [...] Currently, the arrangement of family fires in separate houses is, apparently, random. However, closer observation reveals a series of bonds that establish a variable range of relations between a set of houses, forming a kind of cluster around a political center, occupying a certain portion of the territory of an indigenous area. The grouping of fires in a contiguous space is determined by bonds of consanguinity and affinity, and by relations of political and religious alliances, which maintain a certain regularity over time. The political center — not necessarily geographical center— of the core constituted by the fires that compose a *te'yi* is the household of the head of the kin, the *hi'u*, and the territory is identified with the figure of its controller (Pereira, 1999, p. 85-86).

As a fundamental element of this organizational structure, an important category highlighted by Brand (1993) is the *ñande reko* (our way of being). This way of being is governed by the principle of *teko katu*, “the authentic and true way of being Pãĩ,” and is connected to the ideal of behavior, attitudes, laws and norms, that is, the consolidation of a social ethics, and not of a morality, as prescribed by the *karai* (non-indigenous people). The *teko katu* is realized by the *teko marangatu*, related to virtues associated with religiosity, and by the *teko porã*, related to social virtues and individual behaviors that are important in the relation with the community, in which reciprocity is a valued virtue.

The *teko* is realized in the *tekoha*: “where land, territory, subsistence, social relations, and religious festivals merge,” producing an interrelation of existential dimensions. (Brand, 1993, p. 95). It is important to note that, according to this anthropologist, the reading of territory presents as a cultural information of “enclosure” of the living area, while for us, geographers, it (*tekoha* – territory) is a construct that materializes as a totality of the elements that the author exposes: land, subsistence, social relations, and religious festivals.

3 This situation changes significantly after the compulsory confinement in the reserves, as pointed out by studies of Brand (1993) and Pereira (2007).

It is as explained by Bartomeu Melià (1990, p. 36):

Teko is, according to the meaning given to it by Montoya in his *Tesoro de la lengua guarani* (1639, f. 363s), “way of being, way of existing, system, law, culture, norm, behavior, habit, condition, custom...” Well, *tekoha* is the place where there are the conditions for the possibility of the Guarani way of being. The land conceived as *tekoha* is, above all, a socio-political space. “*Tekoha* signifies and produces, at the same time, economic relations, social relations and political-religious organization essential for Guarani life... Although it seems like a paralogism, we have to admit, together with the Guarani leaders, that without *tekoha* there is no *teko*.” [...] It is “the place where we live according to our customs.”

This understanding is shared by Pereira (1999), who emphasizes that in *tekoha* the political-religious dimension is more relevant, being flexible and dynamic in terms of the number and form of coordination of the kins. The main conductor of the cohesion of this nature is the religious leader, of recognized wisdom and prestige. It is the ability of a head of kin (*hi'u*) to establish alliances and maintain group cohesion, which enables his influence on various kins, “[...] constituting one of the basic foundations for structuring the *tekoha*, as political units with an extended character” (Pereira, 1999, p. 97).

In confrontations with external agents, cohesion and solidarity among the *te'yi* are manifested. Networks of relationships, alliances built between kins. Once the conflict is over, they resume their routine, and the internal conflicts that resurface are resolved with the fragmentation and movement of a group (Pereira, 1999).

The contacts of non-indigenous people with the native population in current Mato Grosso do Sul began with colonial expeditions and their different strategies for spatial appropriation. Considering the limits of the work, we emphasize that the main historical facts, with the greatest impact on the social organization of the Kaiowá and Guarani, were the war with Paraguay (1864-1870) and the subsequent exploitation of the work of these peoples in the herb production by the Mate Larangeira Company, the imposition of eight reserves by the extinct Indian Protection Service (SPI) between 1915 and 1928 and their confinement in these spaces, the creation of the National Agricultural Colony of Dourados (Cand) in 1943 in Kaiowá territory, and the appropriation of traditional territories by private companies deprived of colonization in the 1950s (Brand, 1993).

In the late 1970s, another process affected the lives of the native peoples, with the territorialization of mechanized capitalist agriculture in the cultivation of soybeans intercropped with wheat. That was the expansion of the agricultural frontier that reaches the current Mato Grosso do Sul, driven by the migration of “southerners” (*gaúchos*)⁴ who imposed this productive model (Silva, 1992). Many Guarani and Kaiowá family groups continued to live in the “backwoods” of the farms, constituting refuges, but with the expansion of agricultural projects the Guarani and Kaiowá were gradually expropriated. The indigenous called this process of loss of their territories *sarambi*, which was translated into Portuguese as “esparramo” (sprawling), considering their socio-spatial disarticulation and dismantling (Brand; Ferreira; Azambuja, 2008; Pereira, 2010).

4 The term *sulista* (southerner) designates all migrants originating from São Paulo–Rio Grande do Sul, and *gaúcho* designates those coming from Paraná–Rio Grande do Sul.

From the 2000s onwards, a new territorial process takes place, with the expansion of the sugar-energy sector impacting the native peoples, in a national and international context of energy demands arising from the high price of oil and the appeal for products with lower CO₂ emissions.⁵ This “new movement” is established with the notorious participation of the State, as evidenced by the works of Silva (1992), Backes (2009), Domingues (2010), and Borges and Souza (2019).

The consolidation of this model enabled the expansion and development of industrial and financial capital in the fields of Mato Grosso do Sul, based on monoculture and on the intensive use of technologies and inputs of industrial origin, transforming and/or deterritorializing old relations and greatly aggravating the conditions of existence of native peoples.

Land and financialization: the logic of appropriation of value and the public fund

The logic of agribusiness production, although “translated” as food production and modernization, constitutes a mechanism of production and reproduction-consumption of commodities, with the main purpose of realizing value.

Water, air, biological nature, seeds, human genes, etc. were natural or social elements that were not subject to ownership and that have been taken from the totality of human beings and converted into property. What has been happening is not just “converting” into a commodity something that was not, but an effective social process of expropriation. It is not just about converting things into commodities, but ensuring the permanence and expansion of the social relations that nourish capitalism (Fontes, 2008, p. 28).

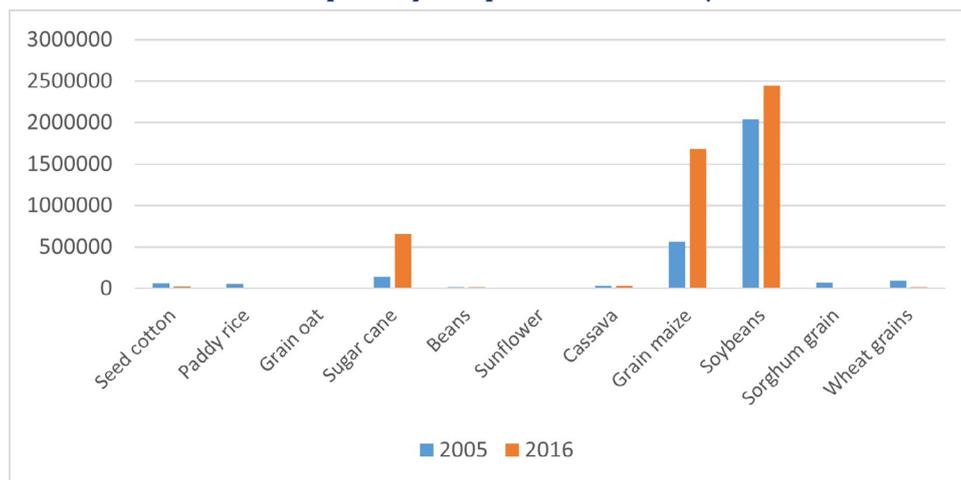
This sense of expropriation permeates the life of the native communities in the appropriation of their lands for the intensive production of commodities. The foundation is the land in its potential dimension for generating future value in the exploitation of labor and in the extraction of income from the land (Monerato, 2018). The materiality of this process results in the formation of production value supported by a historical process of expropriation and violence.

In order to analyze the dynamics of dispossession and violence produced by the territorial expansion and realization of value, we present data on production area and value, rural credit, and land price.

Graph 1 shows the planted area of the main temporary crops in Mato Grosso do Sul in 2005 and 2016, when the sugarcane crop expands. There is a radical difference between the dynamics of the three commodities compared to the other crops and an exponential growth in the planted area of sugarcane (381.2%) and corn (197.9%), followed by soybean (20.1%). On the other hand, with the exception of oats (14.8%) and cassava (5.2%), which had a negligible increase in the planted area, the others had greater reductions: rice (-72.7%), beans (-25.6%), sorghum (-87.2%), wheat (-78.4%), cotton (-53.6%), and sunflower (-75.8%).

⁵ It is important to emphasize these characteristics of fuel alcohol, given that the sector seeks to characterize its production as renewable energy, clean energy, biofuel, which are actually representations that obscure its necro-results, or its negative externalities, as classic economists prefer.

Graph 1 – Mato Grosso do Sul – Planted area (ha) of the main temporary crops – 2005-2016)



Sources: IBGE (2019).
Organization: The authors, 2019.

Thus, the data reflect the relevant characteristics of the hegemonic form of use and appropriation of space, expanding the mercantile character of land as private property, and which more seriously expands especially in the municipalities of the southern portion of the state (Table 1), the same space of life of the native peoples, intensifying the situation of territorial conflict and violence.

Table 1 shows the behavior of the production of value in agricultural activities (permanent and temporary crops) and livestock breeding activities (animal production) in the municipalities where there are repossession actions by the Kaiowá and Guarani. We note the annual growth of the production of value between 2000 and 2017, when the struggles of the Guarani for the recognition of their territorial rights are observed, especially from 2004. In the period under analysis, the mean growth variation in the value of production in these municipalities is 413%.

When analyzing the absolute variation (2000-2017), the municipalities with the highest growth are Paranhos, with 989%, and Antônio João, with 592%. Bela Vista shows a negative trajectory (-24%), but it is an area more linked to extensive beef cattle farming.

It is important to highlight that land represents not only a reserve of value, an expectation of value production, but, above all, a mechanism for accessing public funds and, accordingly, the National Rural Credit System plays a fundamental role in the logic of production and amplification of expectation of future gains and reflecting on land price, its demand, and the escalation of conflicts.

Table 2 shows the release of agricultural credit. It should be noted that this concerns the appropriation of public funds in an unparalleled volume in the last 25 years, which confirms the criticism of Souza (2009) as to the subordination of workers' party governments to the interests of agribusiness.

**Table 1 – Total production value (R\$) of the selected municipalities
– Mato Grosso do Sul – 2000-2017**

Municipality	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017
Antônio João	21,042,129.38	32,527,789.26	48,330,994.12	135,348,813.48	145,652,891.30
Aral Moreira	131,622,981.86	200,696,305.59	318,507,364.49	567,835,286.62	550,115,114.13
Bela Vista	156,931,021.01	42,882,244.96	51,015,225.46	106,717,425.86	119,966,797.20
Caarapó	156,931,021.01	169,897,195.13	369,563,784.41	548,489,301.11	568,102,250.05
Coronel Sapucaia	16,537,964.02	49,101,084.36	33,308,196.62	72,041,541.02	68,283,767.50
Japorã	8,301,127.61	13,540,950.25	12,439,080.65	19,915,090.80	38,051,053.42
Naviraí	79,229,441.16	201,420,809.19	266,112,948.34	397,392,445.67	439,989,378.47
Paranhos	3,282,632.69	22,023,588.14	10,946,193.24	37,571,732.19	35,758,034.28
Sete Quedas	14,480,645.83	31,644,731.68	42,486,323.42	77,560,065.15	80,500,063.49

Sources: IBGE (2019a, 2019b).
Organization: The authors, 2019.

**Table 2 – Values released by rural credit (R\$) for selected municipalities
– Mato Grosso do Sul – 2000-2018**

Municipality	2000	2005	2010	2015	2018
Antônio João	2,421,128.40	8,476,072.65	29,356,523.66	78,508,447.59	93,026,055.23
Aral Moreira	39,403,102.11	78,036,722.08	96,153,627.82	196,953,771.33	211,632,748.96
Bela Vista	17,050,412.82	41,336,212.55	80,038,083.31	114,973,315.43	164,033,253.04
Caarapó	64,535,305.26	104,603,106.39	133,932,286.57	246,947,649.71	283,221,377.76
Coronel Sapucaia	1,711,720.42	7,897,932.72	13,002,017.91	28,788,956.56	39,403,710.98
Japorã	8,567,545.43	3,156,337.63	5,246,819.56	11,258,934.81	6,902,173.86
Naviraí	58,795,305.53	177,558,607.19	203,913,233.29	438,806,179.07	369,694,010.93
Paranhos	1,524,071.14	12,402,882.14	16,515,279.93	20,775,602.19	17,073,830.65
Sete Quedas	9,627,518.87	29,725,264.50	26,553,058.15	46,991,711.83	53,454,589.20

Source: BCB (2020).
Organization: The authors, 2019.

In the analyzed municipalities, the mean absolute variation of credit growth is greater than 1,000% between 2000 and 2018. The largest positive variations were in the municipalities of Antônio João (3,742%) and Coronel Sapucaia (2,202%). The only negative variation presented is in Japorã, which reached an absolute variation of -24%, a negative oscillation that cannot be considered, given the behavior of releases in the intermediate years.

Table 3 presents the proportions of financing in relation to the value of production, showing that both public funds — considering the concept of anti-value (Oliveira, 1988) — and social values (taxes), which are placed as a counterpart of the State in realizing capital in its various spheres of realization (from maintaining the workforce to leveraging the production and circulation of goods), are fundamental for the region's production, which calls into question the productive efficiency and the logic of "wealth" that agribusiness propagates, if we consider the negative effects of its production.

Table 3 – Percentage of rural credit compared to production value in the selected municipalities – Mato Grosso do Sul – 2000-2018

Municipality	2000	2005	2010	2015	2018
Antônio João	11.5	26.1	60.7	58.0	63.9
Aral Moreira	29.9	38.9	30.2	34.7	38.5
Bela Vista	10.9	96.4	156.9	107.7	136.7
Caarapó	41.1	61.6	36.2	45.0	49.9
Coronel Sapucaia	10.4	16.1	39.0	40.0	57.7
Japorã	103.2	23.3	42.2	56.5	18.1
Naviraí	74.2	88.2	76.6	110.4	84.0
Paranhos	46.4	56.3	150.9	55.3	47.7
Sete Quedas	66.5	93.9	62.5	60.6	66.4
Mean Proportion	43.8	55.6	72.8	63.1	62.5

Sources: IBGE (2019a, 2019b) and BCB (2020).
Organization: The authors, 2019.

It should be noted that the proportion of credits for the agribusiness sector in relation to the value of production shows a significant growth trajectory compared to the beginning of the analyzed period, since the mean annual proportion is around 60% in the nine municipalities that constitute the area of study. Although some data need to be pointed out regarding the significant parity between credit and production value, considering the credit modes (investment, funding and commercialization), it is essential to consider the high proportion they reach in relation to the total production value. There is a substantial supply of credit, which denotes the need to analyze the efficiency and the opportunity cost of agribusiness capital in comparison to the effects and equity that would be observed in investments in peasant production and agrarian reform.

It is imperative to consider that the volumes are not solely associated with defrayal, which corresponds to their investment in a single cycle/crop/productive year. The fact is that, if the values presented such proportionality percentages (close to 100%), the inefficiency of the sector would be very evident, especially the inefficiency of the opportunity cost of capital. However, this eliminates the need for a more detailed analysis of the cost/benefit ratio, especially in proportions above 30%, considering the levels of competitiveness, as well as the behavior of the price of agricultural commodities in the international market, which benefits the sector through significant currency devaluation. All these factors raise questions about the efficiency of Brazilian agribusiness, which is clearly backed by public credit.

Other evidence that attests to this process is land price (Table 4), which, on average, exceeds 150%.

Land represents more than the expectation of future gains with its inclusion in the production process and its speculation over time as a reserve of value, land defines access to public funds, which for the agribusiness sector features a very different particularity in its relationship with the State: the default profile and it is not by chance that conservative sectors seek agreements for debt remission (Souza; Mizusaki, 2018; Ruralistas podem..., 2019).

Table 4 – Land price and variation (R\$) between 2000 and 2015 in the selected municipalities – Mato Grosso do Sul

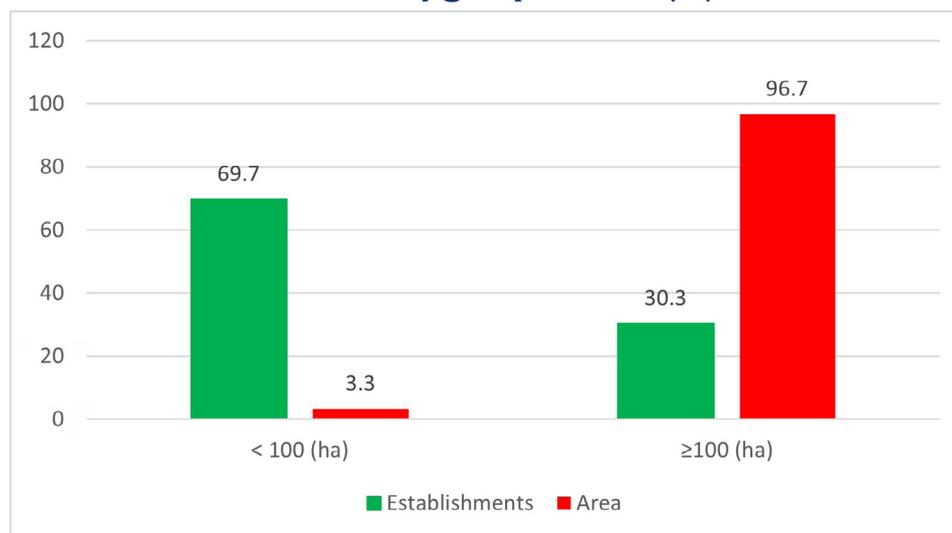
Municipality	2000	2005	2010	2015	Var (5) 2000-2015
Antônio João	8,922.35	12,450.00	12,720.98	24,230.07	171.57
Aral Moreira	8,922.35	12,450.00	12,720.98	24,230.07	171.57
Bela Vista	9,814.58	11,796.02	11,996.22	23,666.58	141.14
Caarapó	9,814.58	11,796.02	11,996.22	23,666.58	141.14
Coronel Sapucaia	8,922.35	12,450.00	12,720.98	24,230.07	171.57
Japorã	9,814.58	11,796.02	11,996.22	23,666.58	141.14
Naviraí	10,123.43	12,372.67	12,218.84	25,357.05	150.48
Paranhos	9,814.58	11,796.02	11,996.22	23,666.58	141.14
Sete Quedas	10,123.43	12,372.67	12,218.84	25,357.05	150.48

Source: IEG-FNP AGRIBUSINESS (2019).
Organization: The authors, 2019.

Graph 2 presents data on the state's agrarian structure, showing extreme concentration of land: 69.7% of establishments occupy only 3.3% of the area and 30.3% of establishments occupy 96.7% of the area. The data also clearly show that, behind these numbers, there are unequal social relations expressed in different forms of appropriation of space in the course of the historical process, which deprived most peasants, indigenous peoples, and quilombolas from access to land. They also indicate that small and large properties have different historical contents and, therefore, should not be analyzed from the same categorical perspective, as if they were all simply rural producers.

Therefore, given this set of hegemonic determinations, native peoples oppose this form of land appropriation and nature destruction through the repossession of their territories.

Graph 2 – Number of establishments by group of areas (%) – Mato Grosso do Sul – 2017



Source: IBGE (2017c).
Organization: The authors, 2019.

Repossessions (*tekoharã*) as resistance to genocide

From the 1980s onwards, with the advance of capitalist agriculture in the south of the state and the expelling of many native families who lived in the so-called pasture back areas, the Guarani and Kaiowá began the movement to recover their territories. Pereira (2010) highlights the effort and challenge of leaders to regroup their communities and part of their traditional lands, since the loss of territory meant fragmentation at various levels of their social organization, such as kinship, religious life, material production of living conditions, festivals and everything that shapes their community relationships. The author emphasizes that *sarambi* does not only mean dispersion, sprawling, but also lack of meaning and orientation, which denotes the territorial bond that agribusiness actions seek to split.

The movement to recover the territory of the Guarani and Kaiowá has been the occupations/repossessions, understood as a determination of resistance, which combine the struggle for life and land and, in this sense, a process of constituting identity territories.

Families usually occupy areas where their traditional *tekoha* live or close to them, along roadsides. Pereira (2012), Chamorro (2015) and Crespe (2015) clarify that the repossession encampments have been understood by indigenous leaders as *tekoharã*, which is the future *tekoha*, and have the objective of “[...] deconstructing the term ‘encampment,’ associated to leisure among urban non-indigenous people and to ‘disputed land,’ where the State’s basic food basket cannot be distributed, nor can health clinics or schools be built” (Chamorro, 2015, p. 219-220).⁶

The first time that the repossessions were designated as *tekoharã* — as explained by Crespe (2015) — was at the 1st Meeting of Indigenous Encampments, in November 2011, established considering the need to find forms of resistance to the conflicts experienced.

The *tekoharã* for us is a life. That is where we were born, our ancestors are there. We were expelled from there and we are returning there to be *tekoha* again. The *tekoharã* only exists now because it was once *tekoha*. The *tekoharã* is to show society that that “island” is now *tekoharã*, because there are two times, *tekoha* and *tekoharã*. For example, for us indigenous people, in our cosmology it is *tekoha*, but for most non-indigenous people and for politicians it is not *tekoha*. In order not to create more confusion about that, we started talking about *tekoharã*, because it is future. However, in our cosmology, when we return there we will remain there, then it will not be the future as it is now. We are asking “we are going to enter, we are going to enter” then saying “we are going to enter the *tekoharã*,” where our *tekoha* is, to which we belong. The *tekoharã* can also be just a piece of land, but where we still have a larger piece that was *tekoha* and that we want to enter as well, as is the case of *Passo Piraju*. There they are in a small piece of land, but *tekoha* is also very much *tekoharã* (Otoniel Ricardo, 2014⁷ apud Crespe, 2015, p. 164).

6 In this work, we adopted the term *encampment*, which is very common and known in academia and non-governmental institutions, but with the native language term, *tekoharã*, as proposed by the indigenous leaders, in parentheses.

7 Interview given at *Aty Kunhã* (meeting organized by women), held in the Sucuruy Indigenous Land, on June 27, 2014.

Crespe (2015, p. 163-164) explains the *tekoharã*:

In the word *tekoharã*, the suffix *rã* is an indication for the future. *Tekoharã* is the *tekoha* that needs to be again; according to the Kaiowá and Guarani, it is the *tekoha* from which they were expelled and which must *be reborn* by the demarcation of indigenous lands. *Tekoharã* is the *tekoha* that must be in the future, but it can only be in the future because it already existed in the past, just as it exists in the present through the memory of older people.

The statement of Otoniel and the analysis of Crespe (2015) demonstrate the enormous capacity for resignification, resistance and reconstruction of the indigenous struggles in movement and the movement of construction of significances and meanings of struggle. At the same time that it seeks to deconstruct the non-indigenous perspective of the notion of encampment, conflict areas, or even of the use of a Portuguese word such as “*retomada*” (repossession), the creation of the *tekoharã* category by the leaders marks the clarity of the place from which they speak and how they speak, since:

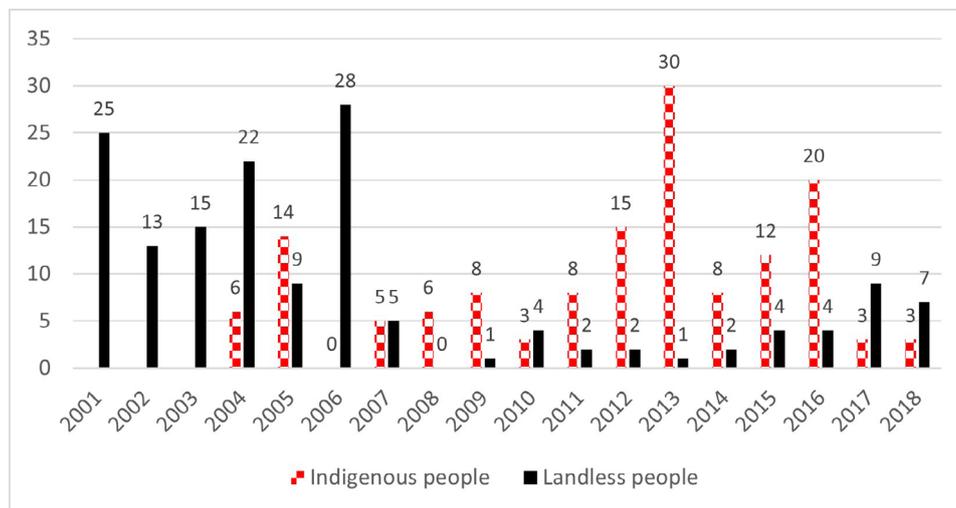
Previously to the notion of *tekoharã*, other terms were used to refer to the areas reoccupied by indigenous peoples from the 1980s onwards, most of which are in litigation. *Encampment*, *repossession area* and *conflict area* were terms used by indigenous people and by institutions in dialogue with indigenous people. [...] The problem, as Otoniel pointed out, is that these terms do not make it clear that these are indigenous lands and they want white people to know that, that is, that these are indigenous lands. The use of the term *tekoharã* indicates, in turn, that the lands they claim are indigenous lands and that they must become *tekoha* again (Crespe, 2015, p. 164).

The spatial and territorial dimension of the resistances has been expressed in several ways, which we can distinguish based on their different configurations. Pereira (2007) makes several distinctions when analyzing some modes of settlement of the Kaiowá in Mato Grosso do Sul: the reserves, called “accommodation areas,” the “farm indians,” the “corridor indians,” the “indigenous of the encampments,” and those who “live on the poor urban areas of cities.”

The native peoples of the reserves are those who live on lands recognized by the State for their usufruct. In them, indigenous persons undergo processes of social reorganization resulting from the compulsory confinement and the introduction of other political characters, such as the head of the Indigenous Post and the figure of the captain. The “farm indians” remain from the farm back areas that formed around their former *tekoha*. “Corridor indians” are those who live on the side of highways, close to their former *tekoha* or to current “settlements” (Pereira, 2007, p. 23). Indigenous persons who live on the poor areas of cities are those who “[...] did not adapt to the living conditions in the demarcated reserves and insisted on staying close to the lands they historically occupied, working as mobile workforce in agricultural properties that were installed in the region” (Pereira, 2007, p. 15-16). The agrarian situation of these repossessions is quite diverse; there are lands that have been homologated, regularized, interdicted, declared, delimited and under study, according to our survey of lawsuits on Funai.

Although we can identify forms of resistance in these different modes, our focus is on the struggles and resistance of the Guarani and Kaiowá in the repossessions and in the corridor, or the *tekoharã*, future *tekoha*, according to Pereira (2012), Chamorro (2015), and Crespe (2015). Graph 3 presents data on occupations/repossessions and encampments (*tekoharã*) of native peoples and landless workers in Mato Grosso do Sul.

Graph 3 – Occupations/repossessions and encampments (*tekoharã*) – Mato Grosso do Sul – 2001-2018



Sources: CPT (2020) and CIMI ([2019]).
Organization: The authors, 2019.

In the period under analysis, it is observed that, from 2004 onwards, the process of repossessing traditional lands is practically continuous (except in 2006), most of which occurred between 2012 and 2016. The “native peoples movement” apparently indicates an opposite direction in relation to the landless workers movement, since, in the period in which the occupations of the landless workers are reduced, the repossessions increase. We can consider that the favorable economic conditions for the country in the period of neo-developmentalism of the Workers’ Party governments (2003-2016), with social policies favorable to peasant production, contributed to reducing the landless workers movements. However, this same developmentalist policy intensified the process of appropriation of traditional lands that are in the flat and fertile strips in the south of the state. Additionally, there was a process of land demarcation, which in the Workers’ party governments was characterized by slowness and omission (Cordeiro, 2021).

As highlighted in the *Violence against indigenous peoples* report (Cimi, [2019?]), from 2017 onwards, there was an increase in lawsuits against land demarcations and the use of the thesis of the Temporal Framework of the 1988 Constitution, which originated in a petition in the trial of the Raposa Serra do Sol case. Also according to this report, in 2017 in Mato Grosso do Sul there were 102 indigenous lands with some administrative pending issue, 10 of which to be identified, six identified, nine declared, three homologated and 74 without action, showing the State’s omission as to the claims of indigenous peoples. It is noted that these are areas of occupation and claims, some of which have already been submitted to anthropological studies that confirm occupation by ancestry, such as the case of the Guyraroka Indigenous Land, declared

Indigenous Land by the Minister of Justice by means of Ordinance no. 3,219, of October 7, 2009; however, at least as of 2019, the legal process is stopped.

The occupations and repossessions (*tekoharã*) have resulted in conflicts and violence, transforming — especially the south of the state — into a battlefield with the genocide of the native peoples. Tables 5 and 6 show the land conflicts registered in Mato Grosso do Sul in 2013, when the highest numbers are recorded, and, by way of comparison, in 2018, the most recent data available.

Table 5 – Land conflicts – Mato Grosso do Sul – 2013

Municipality	Number of conflicts	Native peoples	Landless workers movement
Amambaí/Coronel Sapucaia	1	1	–
Amambaí/Ponta Porã	2	2	–
Antônio João	1	1	–
Aquidauana	1	1	–
Caarapó	5	5	–
Corumbá	1	1	–
Corumbá/Porto Murtinho	2	2	–
Dois Irmãos do Buriti/Sidrolândia	1	1	–
Douradina/Itaporã	6	6	–
Dourados	9	9	–
Iguatemi	4	4	–
Iguatemi/Japorã	4	4	–
Japorã	4	4	–
Juti	4	4	–
Miranda	7	7	–
Paranhos	1	1	–
Rio Brilhante	2	2	–
Sete Quedas	1	1	–
Sidrolândia	5	5	–
Total	61	61	–

Source: CPT (2020).
Organization: The authors, 2019.

Table 6 – Land conflicts – Mato Grosso do Sul – 2018

Municipality	Number of conflicts	Native peoples	Landless workers movement
Aquidauana	1	1	–
Aquidauana/Caarapó	1	1	–
Aral Moreira	1	1	–
Caarapó	7	7	–
Dois Irmãos do Buriti	1	–	1
Douradina/Itaporã	1	1	–

Table 6 – Cont.

Municipality	Number of conflicts	Native peoples	Landless workers movement
Dourados	6	6	–
Iguatemi	1	1	–
Japorã	2	1	1
Miranda	3	3	–
Mundo Novo	1	–	1
Rio Brilhante	1	1	–
Total	26	23	3

Source: CPT (2020).
Organization: The authors, 2019.

The data reveal that, in 2013, land conflicts exclusively involved indigenous peoples, totaling 61 conflicts, out of a total of 30 occupations involving indigenous peoples and one involving the landless workers movement (Graph 2).

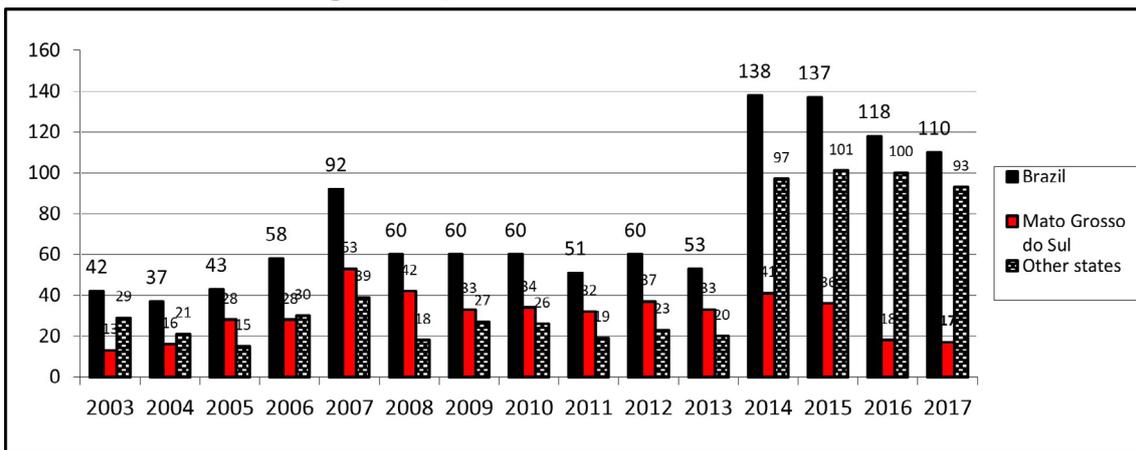
The conflicts are all over the south and southwest of the state, the most frequent being in Caarapó, Douradina/Itaporã, Dourados, Iguatemi, Japorã, Juti, Miranda and Sidrolândia, which does not exclude the severity or violence of conflicts in other areas. In 2018, 23 conflicts involved indigenous peoples and three involved the landless workers movement. That same year, there were seven landless workers occupations and two indigenous occupations. The municipalities of Dourados, Caarapó, Japorã and Miranda continue to be among those with the highest rates of conflict. The data also show that the violence against the movements fighting for land/territory has been much greater against native peoples. It should be noted that these data refer only to 2013 and 2018, but there have been conflicts in other municipalities as well.

Considerations about these processes of repossession (*tekoharã*) gain significant importance, not only because they denote the centrality of the conflict in the study area, but also the number of people and especially children who are subject to the violent action of agribusiness. In 2018, the conflicts involved 2,075 families (Cimi, [2019?]).

The drama is compounded with other forms of violence that are committed against native peoples, making evident the situation of genocide. In 2017, there were 17 murders, seven assassination attempts, five death threats, three manslaughter, and 31 suicides (Cimi, [2018?]). Although not all of these crimes are directly associated with land conflicts, as they also involve family conflicts and fights caused by the consumption of alcoholic beverages, it cannot be disregarded that the breakdown of the family environment and the difficulty and/or impossibility of practicing their way of life contribute to the lack of prospects and too the consumption of alcohol itself. Graph 4 presents data on murders of indigenous persons between 2003 and 2017.

It can be observed that, throughout the period considered, the number of murders of indigenous persons is continuous and significant, and the cases that occurred in the state in 2005 and from 2007 to 2013 exceeded the sum of the other Brazilian states, making Mato Grosso do Sul the state with the highest rate of violence against native peoples; such violence continued in the following years, and with a frightening increase in other states, particularly in the north of the country.

Graph 4 – Murders of indigenous persons – Brazil and Mato Grosso do Sul – 2003-2017



Source: Cimi ([2019?]).
Organization: The authors, 2019.

In field research, we surveyed some of these cases of violence against indigenous peoples. This is a case involving conflict between indigenous persons and the sugar and alcohol sector, the *tekoha Apyka'i*, led by chief Damiana Cavanha. Damiana and her family are today near the BR-463 highway, in the municipality of Dourados, since her last eviction, on July 6, 2016. They occupied an area they called *tekoha*, close to a forest inside a property that is leased for sugarcane plantations by the São Fernando mill, owned by José Carlos Bumlai. Damiana and her family lived there for years under tension (threats, violence, deaths, evictions, being run over), resulting in the death of six family members.

Photo 1 shows one of such moments of tension, when the fire that was burning the sugarcane spread, approaching the canvas shacks where they lived. At the time, Damiana and her family were in despair, at which point we managed to get the fire department to contain the fire.

Photo 2 shows family members who have already died. The latest eviction occurred under rain, with the Federal Police evicting nine persons, including four children aged 2 to 11 years. Their shacks were destroyed and their belongings were left on the side of the road, on the other side of the BR-463 highway, where they currently live (Batarce; Mizusaki, 2017). Since then, some family members have migrated to another place, with three persons still resisting there, including Damiana.

In this process of appropriation of their traditional territories, the sub-human conditions of the native peoples have been deteriorating with the population growth inside the reserves and the increase in relations and agents that are external to their way of life, compromising their physical and cultural reproduction, interfering in their political organization, in kinship relations, in festive events and religious rituals, in hunting, fishing, agriculture, in short, in the relations that constitute and give meaning to their way of life. Forming a reserve army within these spaces, which Brand (1993) called confinement, the overexploitation of indigenous labor has been frequent, such as cases of work analogous to slavery in sugar and alcohol mills.

In addition to the compromise of their way of life inside the reserves, several families that had remained in the forests inside the farms were gradually expelled with the expansion of agriculture, and the only way of existence is the struggle for a new *tekoha*.

Photo 1 – Municipality of Dourados-MS – Tekoha Apyka'i



Photo: The authors, 2016. Personal collection

Photo 2 – Apyka'i encampment, on the side of the BR-463 highway



Photo: The authors, 2017. Personal collection

Final considerations

The subordination of productive activities to industrial and financial capital, which was progressively controlled by large transnational corporations, established a new correlation of forces that has managed, in Brazil, to advance in alliance with the oligarchic sectors. The class of landowners, whose income was drained by capital, has created new offsetting mechanisms. Thus, the process of production and reproduction-consumption of commodities and which is mediated by the process of production of value totally disregards human life, being implemented through violence in the process of use and appropriation of natural and social elements, literally seized from other human beings; in the case, from native peoples.

For the production of commodities, private land ownership is a fundamental element, not only for the potential to produce future value, exploit labor and extract income from the land, but also for the anti-value generated in the appropriation of public funds, whose credit allocated to the analyzed municipalities was much higher than the value of production. In addition to these constraints, there are the processes of default and debt remission, as a political and economic expression of the strength of this class.

The analyzed data also reflect the escalation of territorial conflicts between indigenous persons and landowners, revealing the perversity of this unequal correlation of forces. Regardless of the party or politician that was elected, the historical omission of the State has revealed the continuity of the power of the landowners class, which is worsening in the current administration, declaredly contrary to the rights of indigenous peoples and quilombolas and in favor of easing restriction on firearms for the rural sectors. In the process of financialization of the territory, there is no place in Mato Grosso do Sul for other ways of existing, or rather, no place has been reserved for the Guarani way of being. For over 500 years, native peoples have continued to resist. In the historical omission of the State, the current government's stance, of incentive to the purchase of firearms in rural areas, has further aggravated the conflicts, revealing the most perverse face of the logic of financialization of the territory. The present and the future are bleak in Brazil.

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