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Names, Nicknames, and Surnames in Amazon: Traditional Gavião-Jê Naming Traditions

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Abstract

This article aims to contribute to safeguarding the naming institution of the Gavião-Jê language and tradition by providing explanations regarding names, surnames, and nicknames. The act of naming children in Gavião-Jê tradition involves an endogamous system which defines significant aspects of a person's life, such as affinity relatives, formal friendships, potential relationships, ritual moities, and body painting patterns. The Gavião-Jê did not traditionally have surnames. In the 1980s, based on a community decision, this Indigenous people began to be registered by notaries using their parents' first names as surnames, establishing this as a new social norm.

Keywords:
Amazon, Gavião-Jê, Indigenous language, nomination, anthroponym, nickname, surname

General Introduction

Gavião-Jê is a Macro-Jê language spoken in the southeastern part of Pará state in the Amazon region of Brazil. This language is a member of the Timbira dialectal complex (Rodrigues 1986). Timbira societies are organized into pairs of moieties that divide the population into groups for rituals based on seasonal periods or other criteria, such as age groups. According to Jõpaipaire (2011), the population has had intense contact with non-Indigenous society since the 19th century. Krôhôkrenhum used to relate how the non-Indigenous people (kupên) from the nearby areas occasionally invaded their territory, which was rich in Brazil nut trees, to gather nuts to sell. The Gavião began to "get used to" their presence in their territory, as the relationships initially seemed friendly, since they obtained goods such as machetes and axes from the kupên. However, violent episodes occurred, with deaths on both sides, especially after the assassination of one of the Indigenous chiefs by nut gatherers in the lower Tauri River. The Gavião-Jê retaliated by killing three non-Indigenous men and burning their huts. The cycle of revenge marked by deaths intensified the tension between these Indigenous people and the locals.

Conflicts between the Gavião and the nut gatherers increased as that product grew in value for the regional economy. The Gavião were known for committing "great savagery," and in Marabá, during the 1930s and 1940s, local politicians, merchants, and nut field owners organized extermination expeditions against this Indigenous people. Armed clashes occurred over an area of almost 180 km, covering lands in the current municipalities of Tucuruí, Itupiranga, Marabá, and São João do Araguaia, on the right bank of the Tocantins River.

In 1937, the Indian Protection Service (SPI) established a post on the Ipixuna River, aimed at attracting the Gavião. The Indigenous people discovered the location and began to visit the Post to receive tools and other "gifts." On one occasion, during one of these visits, they "found the Post devoid of tools and especially of flour. After expressing their discontent, they killed one of the workers with several arrows. They ceased visiting the Post, having established peaceful contacts in other areas of the Tocantins, including a place called Ambauá, opposite Tucuruí" (Arnaud 1964).

In 1945, the SPI set up a post in Ambauá to resume attraction efforts. The Gavião were organized into different “groups” and villages near this location. They began visiting the area, sometimes becoming involved in violent incidents that made national news between 1948 and 1951 (Arnaud 1964). Internal conflicts among the groups also arose due to theft of agricultural products, accusations of witchcraft, or abductions of women. It was in this context that separations and rivalries occurred.

In the 1950s, the Gavião's social organization weakened due to the fragmentation of common territories, an epidemic outbreak among them, and depopulation. One group of 15 people whose community had been almost decimated arrived in Itupiranga, a neighboring municipality of Marabá, and sought contact with non-Indigenous people. They were cared for and baptized with non-Indigenous names. The few members of the Cocal community, a village of the Parkatêjê, who were under Krôhôkrenhum's leadership, were contacted in 1956 by an expedition organized by the Dominican Friar Gil Gomes Leitão and Lieutenant Hilmar, working for the SPI. The purpose of the meeting with the Gavião was to prevent punitive expeditions, supported by local politicians, from exterminating the Indigenous people in order to exploit the chestnut resources on their lands. During the time they were in Itupiranga, according to Friar José's manuscript, a deputy from

Belém had bought the Indigenous territories.

Taken to the same SPI site, they began to work under a forced intensive regime, collecting Brazil nuts in the region. A man known as "Mr. Benedito" who was living on Gavião territories "allowed" them to collect nuts there for themselves. According to Da Matta (1967, 115), the production was sold in Itupiranga. SPI was responsible for selling the nuts, but very little of the revenue reached the Indigenous people—until they managed to recover and strengthen themselves.

The Gavião-Jê were aware of another Indigenous people from Maranhão (the Kyikatêjê), who spoke a variation of the same language and lived near their land. The traditional chief, Tomprãmre Krôhôkrenhum Jõpaipaire (in memoriam), invited the Kyikatêjê to come live together in a large common village. They accepted and joined the community from Pará, taking the collective name of Parkatêjê, while remaining aware of their individual origins.

By the 1970s, the Indigenous people began fighting to manage the work with nuts themselves. Following troubled times, the Parkatêjê people entered a new historical phase in the mid-1970s. In the 1980s, having reestablished themselves and gained experience, they started to take control of the economy generated by their regional products and to lead their own decision-making. This moment was favorable for reviving their culture and traditions. Joining with another predominantly monolingual community brought vitality to their traditional practices, and the Indigenous population grew in number.

In the 1980s, the State imposed economic projects to develop the southeast of Pará: the construction of the Pará-Maranhão (PA-70 or BR-222) railway, which cuts through Indigenous territory to connect the city of Marabá with the Belém-Brasília Highway; the installation of electricity towers by Eletronorte; and the Carajás-Ponta de Madeira Railway by the Vale Company (Araújo 2008).

The impact of the construction of the Carajás-Ponta de Madeira Railway was so significant that the Indigenous people obtained a court order to receive monthly compensation from Vale, as life in the community had been irrevocably altered by the arrival of high-voltage equipment, the death of wildlife, and many other issues. On the one hand, the compensation was positive, as it provided them with a more comfortable life. On the other hand, the money brought about profound changes to their way of life, resulting in an increase in illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and obesity. Access to goods led to greater exposure to Portuguese language and tradition in areas that had previously used only the traditional language, causing a weakening of traditional language and culture.

In the 2000s, a split occurred between the Parkatêjê (from Pará) and the Kyikatêjê (from Maranhão), despite the strong consanguinity ties they had at that time. The Kyikatêjê left the Mãe Maria village, located at km 30, and established a new village at km 25. As of 2024, there are at least two dozen villages spread along the BR-222 Highway, which crosses Indigenous territory. Nonetheless, despite the number of communities, the total population does not exceed 1,000 individuals. Of this population, less than 5% speak the traditional language, as Portuguese has taken over social spaces once occupied by the traditional language. For more than five decades, children have not learned the traditional language as their native language.

Onomastic Studies

Onomastics is devoted to the study of names and constitutes a discipline that is in constant dialogue with other areas of Linguistics and human knowledge. Among

these areas, we can mention Historical Linguistics, Anthropological Linguistics, Semantics, Logic, and the Philosophy of Language.

Names and nicknames are fundamental to both individual and collective identity, reflecting the cultural and social aspects of a people. The study of Onomastics helps us understand how these elements reveal traditions, histories, and cultural values throughout the history of languages and societies. Names are often linked to rituals, beliefs, and social practices. Since nicknames can replace proper names in certain contexts, they too are the subject of research within the field of Onomastics, as demonstrated in the works of Matfunjwa, Muzi, et al. (2024), Urdang (1987), Hornsby (2007), Vanzolini (2019), and Hugh-Jones (2006).

Martins (1994) emphasizes that the proper name "can evoke a world of possible representations. It can elucidate, in fact, worlds that are studied by the most diverse disciplines, from linguistics, anthropology, and law to biology, psychology, and psychoanalysis." The two main areas of study in Onomastics, according to Seabra (2006) and other authors, are Anthroponymy and Toponymy, both of which examine linguistic elements that preserve ancient naming stages (Seabra 2006, 1953).

The number of studies dedicated to aspects of the Onomastics of Indigenous languages is still generally considered small. In Brazil, specifically, the vast majority of research on this subject focuses on Anthropology. Motta and Silva (2000) point out that Onomastics in Brazilian Anthropology primarily enters through Indigenous ethnology, although it also occurs in studies of urban Anthropology and rural populations.

In this context, studies on Indigenous Onomastics in South America have been heavily influenced by the debate proposed by Viveiros de Castro (1992), who defined societies with internal name transfer—such as the Jê peoples of central Brazil—as opposed to others where names come from "outside," as in the case of the ancient Tupi, who acquired names from enemies who had been killed. Thus, the different forms of personal naming reflect various social organizations among Indigenous peoples.

According to Vanzolini (2019, 107), for example, the Onomastic system of the Aweti, a Tupian-speaking people who live in the headwaters of the Xingu River, explores how personal qualities are evoked through names. In the Alto Xingu, every Indigenous person must have at least two names given by maternal and paternal grandparents during the first months of life. These names are called by the Aweti tekyt eput, roughly translating to "green names" referring to their childish nature. Girls change their names during puberty, while boys ideally do so during the ear-piercing ceremony, a ritual celebration marking the beginning of adulthood. In the Aweti tradition, using a name that has already been exchanged is considered dangerous, as it may attract bad things to the individual.

According to Vanzolini (2019, 107):

“The same family names go from village to village in the Upper Xingu through interethnic marriages: while neither prescriptive nor preferential, such marriages are allowed and common. Although some of them are recognizably associated with some linguistic groups, broadly they are shared by all those whom the Aweti refer to as mo’aza—humans or, in a narrower sense, Upper Xinguano people.”

Therefore, names circulate between villages through marriages and are widely shared among Xinguan peoples, regardless of linguistic meaning. It seems that they choose certain names based on their aesthetic preferences.

Aside from family names, considered their true names, the Aweti may also have

nicknames and "white" names that are not obligatory. In the absence of a family name, a "way of calling" is used instead. The so-called "white" names can be self-assigned, but nicknames are always given by others, often carry humorous connotations, as is common in many parts of the world (Vanzolini 2019).

Hugh-Jones (2006), when describing the Tukano onomastic system, also notes that while family names are generally associated with spiritual qualities and group belonging, nicknames are established through everyday interactions and refer to bodily signs or events from personal history, serving as a form of individualization.

In the field of Linguistics specifically, the number of studies related to Indigenous Onomastics remains quite limited, despite the linguistic and cultural importance of research on the subject, as discussed in Lopes (2017, 2022).

The first approach to Parkatêjê proper names was presented by Araújo and Ferreira at a seminar in Brazil in 2001. In their preliminary presentation, Araújo and Ferreira (2001) briefly addressed the naming system and the structure of names, and provided a list of names collected in a census conducted by the authors two years earlier. They stated that proper names in Parkatêjê can be either denotative or figurative. From this perspective, denotative names are those whose primary meaning is denotation, while figurative names consist of metaphors or metonyms. They did not publish a complete paper on this topic.

In Brazil, there are researchers working on Onomastics, such as Dick (2000) and Carvalhinhos (2007) at São Paulo University; Seide (2022) at Federal University of Minas Gerais; Andrade (2017) at Federal University of Tocantins; Sousa (2019) at Federal University of Acre; and Santos and Rodrigues (2024) at Federal University of Pará. However, studies specifically focused on Indigenous Onomastics remain scarce. Lopes' thesis (2017), titled “Parkatêjê Onomastics: A Morphosyntactic and Semantic Study of Proper Names”, represents the first systematic linguistic research on the subject about a Macro-Jê language. This study examined linguistic and cultural issues related to the onomastic system of the Parkatêjê people. The research demonstrates that Amazonian Indigenous people possess a sophisticated system of naming. Drawing on the perspectives of authors such as Dick (1996; 1997; 1999; 2000; 2001), Lyons (1977), Ullmann (1964), Seabra (2006), Carvalhinhos (2007), among others, Lopes provides a general overview of the nomination system of Timbira languages, primarily based on the works of Coelho de Souza (2002), Nimuendajú (1946), Melatti (1978), Arnaud (1964), and Carneiro de Cunha (1986), in addition to her own research.

Several morphosyntactic and semantic aspects identified in the proper names of the Parkatêjê language share the characteristics identified in Ferreira’s work from 2003. Lopes' PhD dissertation, titled "Parkatêjê (Timbira) Toponymy: A Study on Place Proper Names," delves into the linguistic, historical, and cultural context of the onomastics of the Parkatêjê, Kỳikatêjê, and Akrãtikatêjê by documenting, describing, and analyzing toponyms known and used by native speakers of the Parkatêjê language. The primary goal of Lopes' dissertation was to contribute to the description of the morphosyntactic, semantic, and motivational aspects of Parkatêjê proper nouns that denote locations. As a practical outcome, the Parkatêjê Toponymic Glossary now compiles all known toponyms in a single reference source, serving as a starting point for future studies on the Parkatêjê language and for initiatives aimed at teaching the native language.

According to the standard methodology in toponymic studies, the corpus representative of the semantic field of proper nouns denoting locations is divided

into two large groups: natural geographical features—such as “rivers”, “creeks”, or “streams”—and human geographical features, subdivided into “abandoned villages,” “new villages,” “paths,” “camps,” and “cities.” Based on this classification, lexicographical toponymic tokens proposed by Dick (2002, adapted for the context of this study) were filled. The resulting data was subsequently organized in a digital database using Fieldworks Language Explorer (FLEx) v. 8.2.8, which was then processed using the Lexique Pro software (www.sil.org) so as to generate a toponymic glossary. Linguistic data was analyzed based on its morphosyntactic and semantic structure. The data collection and the division of the corpus into natural and human geographical features was followed by taxonomic classification of the toponyms, as proposed by Dick (1992). The classification takes into account the description given by Indigenous consultants to explain the motivation behind the nomination act. The semantic content of the toponyms is grounded in the worldview of Indigenous individuals, but also in the collective worldview of the community to which the individual belongs, revealing aspects of the people’s history, cultural and physical landscape and values, among others. Both projects were supervised by Prof. Marília Ferreira at Federal University of Pará, in Belém, Amazonia, Brazil.

The studies in Onomastics have shed light on a very interesting issue—the use of nicknames in the community. Our working hypothesis was that all Timbira Indigenous people in Pará had nicknames, due to the fact that their anthroponyms consist of two or more words, making them long, thus difficult to use in fast and natural everyday speech. In fact, nearly everyone has a nickname derived from their names, with a few exceptions in which the nickname has a distinct origin.

Methodology

The methodology used for the development of this study followed the usual standards in Descriptive and Anthropological Linguistics, which emphasize the importance of comprehensive data collection, ethical practices, and cultural context. Descriptive linguistics focuses on documenting the structure of the language, while anthropological linguistics investigates how language relates to social and cultural phenomena. The steps taken were:

a) **Critical analysis of bibliographical references**: Works such as Araújo (1977, 1989), Arnaud (1964), Coelho de Souza (2002), Dick (1992, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001), Ferreira (2003, 2005), among others, were considered;

b) **Fieldwork for data collection**: The data were obtained through interviews recorded in audio and video within the main target Indigenous community. The recordings were made using a digital camera and audio recorder, and the questions were posed directly to the speakers. Each interview was conducted by one of the two authors. Based on the list of anthroponyms presented in Lopes (2017) and Lopes and Ferreira (2018), one of the authors asked participants which nicknames could have originated from proper names.

   Recording only the nicknames originated from proper names restricted the data collection. An informal poll was also led by one of the authors to understand the community's history and decision to create surnames for formal registration in notary offices.

c) **Transcription and organization of data**: The material collected in the field was transcribed orthographically in both Portuguese and in Parkatêjê,

following the orthographic conventions proposed by Araújo's (1993).

d) **Morphological segmentation of the data**: The data were segmented in a way that facilitated subsequent analyses.

e) **Morphosyntactic and semantic analysis of the research corpus**: A detailed analysis of the morphosyntactic structure and the meanings of the collected data was carried out.

f) **Presentation and analysis of nicknames in Gavião-Jê**: The format of a nickname related to a proper name keeps the segmentation of words. In general, a lexical part of the expression is chosen as a nickname. So, the results obtained throughout the research were discussed.

These steps ensured a systematic and rigorous approach to the research, reflecting the recommended practices in the fields of Descriptive and Anthropological Linguistics.

Findings and Discussion

Nomination in the Parkatêjê Tradition

In general, Parkatêjê people receive their proper names when they are babies, shortly after birth, although nominators can choose names during the mother's pregnancy. The act of naming a child in Parkatêjê tradition involves an endogamous system to initiate a person into the world. According to Arnaud (1964), a man is responsible for naming the son or grandson of his sister (sororal nephew: (kêti [maternal uncle/maternal grandfather] – ituwa [nephew]) and a woman for naming her brother's daughter or granddaughter (katuy [paternal aunt] – ituwa [fraternal niece])

Araújo e Ferreira (2001) stated that name-givers, or nominators, choose a trait of their own behavior or character and use it as the basis for creating a name to assign to the name-receiver. Along with the given name, children also inherit affinity relations, formal friendship, potential relationships, ritual moieties, and body painting patterns. These elements are shared with the nominator, with whom the name-receiver forms a particular bond. From an anthropological perspective, the Parkatêjê tradition of creating a nomination based on a personal trait to identify a person involves the nominator giving part of themselves to create a kind of ego copy.

Linguistic Analysis of Anthroponyms and nicknames

Parkatêjê given names are, in most cases, long compounds containing two, three or more words. According to Lopes (2017), they can be divided into exclusively male, exclusively female, or unisex names. This depends on the full meaning of the name. One the one hand, activities or characteristics that, in the Parkatêjê cultural context, are restricted to one sex generate exclusively male or exclusively female anthroponyms. For example, activities that involve taking care of the land, gardening or denoting feelings and so on, are female-related. Thus, we find names such as Purprãmre "loves the field," Purkôre "plant in the rain," and Purhêre "field worker," which refer to exclusively feminine activities.

On the other hand, activities or characteristics typically assigned to males generate anthroponyms restricted to this gender. For example, male-related activities involving hunting give rise to names such as Hàkti "hunter" and Ropkatêre "jaguar hunter." According to our research, certain anthroponyms whose meanings denote activities without cultural restriction to men or women, such as Pamaprĩ "slow walk," Kôkupati "fear of river," and Kãmtaihoprãmre "writing lover," can be used by both sexes.

A large percentage of Parkatêjê anthroponyms are formed through the combination of sequences of simple roots. Such roots can belong to the same or different word classes. According to Araújo and Ferreira (2001), compounds resemble noun or verbal phrases—some simple and some complex. A simple anthroponym can be constituted of a nominal base plus a derivational suffix -re "diminutive" or -ti "augmentative," such as Kuwêre "bow," lit. "little bow;" Hõmjĩre "thorn;" Pàrhyti "chilli," lit. "nuisance taste;" and Hàkti "hunter," lit. "hawk." In the same way, there are anthroponyms constituted by verbs and suffixes -re and -ti (with verbs, these suffixes function as intensifiers or attenuatives of the verbal action), such as Nãkôti "sweat a lot," Kurẽkti "pierce a lot," Awỳre "beggar" and Aihure "fall down." Examples of other anthroponyms using transitive verbs and nouns include Akrôjarêre "field worker;" Tuxêre "tied belly;" Kiakakwĩnre "break the kia;" Piekawêre "walks with her husband," lit. "glued to her husband."

There are anthroponyms formed by two, three or more nominal bases. The noun on the left functions as a modifier, as in Awarkwỳi "girl/woman who likes to eat inajá fruit," lit. "inajá girl/woman" or Prĩtikwỳi "girl/woman who likes to eat pequi fruit," lit. "pequi girl/woman." Thus, the nominal bases Awar "inajá fruit" and Prĩti "pequi fruit" function as modifiers of the noun Kwỳi.

During traditional festivities in the village, people gather around the singer, who is always accompanied by a girl who dances in front of him with her head down. That girl is the Kwỳi of the party. This social role, by all indications, is only performed by a girl aged between 13 and 18 years. Thanks to its prominence, the noun Kwỳi is a constituent part of several feminine anthroponyms that Parkatêjê people translate approximately as "girl" or "woman." Examples include Takwỳi "raining girl/woman," Kukênkwỳire "agouti girl/woman," Atỳrkwỳi "wet girl/woman," and Amkràkwỳire "sunny girl/woman." It is important to note that the name Kwỳi has verifiably not been attested in other contexts.

There are many anthroponyms that use Jõ as a prefix, such as Jõtwỳm "fat food," Jõkumti "hot food," Jõtàmre "raw food," Jõjapỳre "take food and run away," Jõpiti "all the food," Jõkàntàtàre "join the food shell," Jõjapêre "stingy of food," Jõtũmre "old food," Jõkwỳrkutom "manioc cake," Jõhire "gnaw bones from food," Jõkakure "rotten food," Jõmpeiti "eat a lot," Jõpêptyti "hides food," Jõrẽre "throw food," and Jõpaipaire "throw up food." From the preceding names, one might infer that Jõ means "food," but there are other cases where this meaning is not so transparent, such as Jõkuhyre "fan the fire," Jõkopti "scratch," and Jõxàrti "play arrow."

The meaning of anthroponyms cannot be reduced to the simple sum of the constituent lexical items; rather, they present a meaning that goes beyond what is present in their internal parts, according to Ferreira (2003). To understand the meaning of anthroponyms in Parkatêjê, it is necessary to have contextual information and knowledge of the cultural world of the traditional language. The Parkatêjê tradition's familiar conviviality leads some people to receive a nickname which in general is a short part of their whole given name. This is the topic to be explored in the next section.

Nicknames

In the Parkatêjê tradition, nicknames are frequently used within a community among relatives, friends, and neighbors to express affection, familiarity, and sometimes amusement, to allude a character trait or attitude, or even to refer to a person's physical characteristics, such as "whale" for a fat person or "hairy" for a bald man. The same occurs in Brazilian Portuguese. Sometimes—depending on the situational

context—a nickname is a substitute for a person's proper name.

There does not appear to be a formula for giving someone a nickname, and it is not given in the same manner as an anthroponym. In the present text, the focus is on nicknames related to anthroponyms or proper names. After analyzing field and personal notes plus data collected to describe anthroponyms, we are in a position to assert that the shortening of proper names is the most common way to give someone a nickname. However, it is not simple to explain how reduction principles are applied to proper names to create nicknames, as the choice of which part will be used for the nickname seems to be arbitrary. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the selected portion always corresponds to a lexical item in the Indigenous language.

The anthroponym Krôhôkrenhum, whose meaning is "Krôhôkre's father," undergoes two types of simplification in its pronunciation in the current speech: a) reduction in size by losing the syllable hô: Krôhôkrenhum > Krôkrenhum; b) dropping of the first /r/ in the first syllable: Krôkrenhum > Kôkrenhum; and dropping of the /h/ in hum (father/man): Krôkrenhum > Kôkrenum. Thus, the nickname related to Krôhôkrenhum is Kôkrenum. We can see that this simplification made the pronunciation easier.

The way anthroponyms are created gives the name-giver the freedom to form new names by combining different words in the language, but often the nicknames may end up sounding similar due to the combinations made. Feminine proper names using the noun Kwỳi "girl/woman" as a constituent part can undergo reduction by taking out the modifier, that is, the constituent on the left. Examples include Takwỳi "raining girl/woman," Kukênkwỳire "agouti girl/woman," Atỳrkwỳi "wet girl/woman," and Amkrokwỳire "sunny girl/woman." Nicknames originating from those names would have the same form of Kwỳi. Then to make distinctions in the current speech, it is important to specify some unique characteristic, such as "Kwỳi, the wife of Kuya," for instance. The same kind of reduction occurs when men have a proper name containing the noun Katê "hunter." For example, Ropkatê "jaguar hunter," or Kukrytkatê "tapir hunter" as the modifier in the left position is suppressed, the nickname is Katê.

Gavião individuals with proper names containing the Jõ prefix, whose meaning is not very clear, may have a nickname that suppresses the rest of the name while only keeping Jõ. This is the case for both men and women. However it is possible, in some cases, to suppress the Jõ prefix, as in Jõjapêre, where the nickname becomes Japêre. Normally people would choose part of the name equivalent to a single word and use it as the person's nickname; for instance, when they meet someone with a name like Kamtaihopramre "(the nominator) is a writing lover," the nickname would probably be Taiho. A person named Têkikupati "fear of arrows" can be called Têk. Sometimes, however, it is not easy to predict what the community would do.

Once more, the list of observed patterns of nickname formation from anthroponyms suppressing the modifier, in cases like Ropkatê "jaguar hunter" > Katê "hunter," and Atỳrkwỳi "wet girl/woman" > Kwỳi, indicates a similar way to create these names in which the more specific part of the compound is omitted, leaving the more generic name. In the cases of anthroponyms beginning with the Jõ prefix, one might conclude that certain individuals will possess nicknames created on the principle of suppressing the most specific noun in the compound, as in Jõxàrti "play arrow" > Jõ, but the nickname related to that name could be also Xàr. These names, Ropkatê "jaguar hunter," Atỳrkwỳi "wet girl/woman," and Jõxàrti "play arrow," differ in the position of the most generic and most specific part of the compound. In the first two examples, it appears that the name on the right is the

modifier, while in the last one the modifier is on the left. In order to complement the present research, a follow-up study is planned to clarify this finding by applying experiments to generate nicknames and by evaluating the naturalness of using them.

Surnames, Family Names, or Last Names

Indigenous peoples around the world have increasingly begun to use their Indigenous nation names as surnames for a variety of reasons, including to reinforce a sense of cultural identity and pride. This practice allows individuals to honor their heritage and maintain a connection to their ancestral tradition, raise awareness of Indigenous communities and their histories, and contribute to a greater understanding of their struggles and rights within wider society. It also serves as a means to actively resist pressures of colonization and assimilation. By adopting their nation names as surnames, Indigenous peoples can assert their rights and autonomy as a political statement.

Following years of colonization and forced assimilation, during which Indigenous names were often replaced or erased, the adoption of nation names as surnames can be a powerful act of reclaiming identity and lineage. It also serves to reinforce a connection to the territory, as Indigenous names may reflect ties to specific territories or natural environments. This connection to the land is fundamental to many Indigenous cultures.

In general, by using nation names as surnames, these communities can pass down cultural values and history to future generations, ensuring that cultural practices and identities are preserved, as we saw in the case of the Parkatêjê. Furthermore, a reality in Brazil is that more Indigenous people are seeking to formally recognize their identities through nation naming, particularly in legal documents, which can have an impact on their rights, entitlements, and representation in various institutions. Overall, the practice of using nation names as surnames serves multiple significant purposes in promoting dignity, identity, and resilience among Indigenous populations.

Indigenous peoples in Brazil have traditionally not used surnames, family names, or last names in the way that Western traditions do. However, as in other parts of the world, some Brazilian Indigenous individuals who have gained national prominence have begun to use, or even be referred to, by their nations designations along with their first names, such as Mário Juruna, Célia Xakriabá, Alessandra Munduruku, and Aílton Krenák.

With close contact with non-Indigenous people and the understanding of what a surname would be, the Parkatêjê community made the decision to use paternal and maternal anthroponyms as the family's surnames. This became a rule, and all Indigenous people began to be formally registered by the notaries of Marabá in this way since the 1980s. For example, if a couple—a male Jõkumti and a female Prĩtikwỳi—had a baby girl who received an anthroponym like Jõjapêre, her full name would be Jõjapêre Prĩtikwỳi Jõkumti. From our knowledge, no other Macro-Jê communities have made such a move.

It appears that, when the Gavião-Jê were contacted, personnel from the SPI, in order to identify them and register how many individuals were part of this nation, used the strategy of recording their given names followed by their affiliations. Older Indigenous people who witnessed this considered it a good strategy for formal identification and civil registration in notary offices, adopting the first names of the mother and father as surnames. This illustrates that community decisions are more powerful than individual actions, and also demonstrates the arbitrary nature of surnames as linguistic signs. In addition, this is a way to keep the memory of their ancestors alive for the entire community.

Conclusion

The objective of this work was to contribute to the safeguarding of the institution of naming in the Parkatêjê language and tradition—documenting parts of this system, such as names, surnames, and nicknames originating from anthroponyms. This type of research can reveal historical, cultural, and linguistic facts about a people, yet names are a linguistic aspect that often receives little attention when linguists are involved in grammatical descriptions of endangered languages. For example, to clarify some anthroponyms, the Indigenous people need to recall everyday events that have marked their history in some way, and for this reason are used to name their named individuals. This also applies to nicknames.

Using unpublished sources, such as field notes and personal writing, it was possible to go further in capturing excerpts of a kind never recorded before. Future investigations could go even further by examining other types of nicknames and ways of calling someone “father of so-and-so,” considering the linguistic and cultural importance of names, nicknames and identity.

The institution of Indigenous names within the Gavião-Jê community is significant and socially relevant, as everyone, without exception, adopts and uses their traditional names. Since these names are generally composed of two or more words, they tend to be long. Thus, everyone has a nickname formed from their Gavião-Jê given names, which results from a selection process in which a lexical part of the name is used, through shortening, as a nickname. Only a few people have a nickname that is not related to their anthroponyms. Another point that should be highlighted in this regard is that the traditional language of the Gavião-Jê is considered a heritage language for younger generations. Despite this, all people segment the anthroponyms according to the conventions of the Indigenous language.

In general, Brazilian Indigenous peoples do not use surnames or family names. However, in all places where Indigenous peoples are present, they have begun to use their nation names as surnames for various reasons. The Gavião-Jê, perhaps due to contact with non-Indigenous society, decided to use their maternal and paternal anthroponyms as surnames, in the same order that Brazilians use their family names—after the anthroponym comes the mother’s name and finally the father's name. This community decision, made in the 1980s, was discussed and accepted by all and was based on the way in which personnel from the SPI identified them by recording their given names followed by their affiliations. The elder Indigenous people who witnessed this thought it would be a good strategy to have surnames so they could be identified by their families and formally registered in notary offices. This decision is unique in Brazil and demonstrates how a community retains supreme power over individual actions. These findings are important to the Gavião-Jê community, enabling them not only to document their history more fully but also to describe their language and culture. This, in turn, informs our understanding of the cultural forms of other Macro-Jê peoples.

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