

INSTITUTO SOCIOAMBIENTAL
Data 02/05/66
Cod. 0000003

Atas do Simpósio sobre a Biota Amazônica
Vol. 2 (Antropologia): 69-83 — 1967

THE CANELA MESSIANIC MOVEMENT: AN INTRODUCTION

WILLIAM H. CROCKER

Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

Introductory Summary

Amongst the Jê-speaking Ramkokamekra-Canela Indians of Maranhão, Brazil, in February 1963, there arose a prophetess called Kee-khwëi who predicted the downfall of the *civilizados* — that they would be banished to the woods to hunt animals with bows and arrows while the índios would take over the cities, driving the buses and flying the airplanes. Kee-khwëi received these revelations, through the "child" in her womb, from the great Jê culture hero, Aukhé, who was going to bring about this transformation because he was angry at the way the *civilizado* was treating the *índio*. Since it was Aukhé himself who, in the beginning, had given the *índio* the bow and arrow and the *civilizado* the shot gun, with the condition that the *civilizado* take care of the *índio*, it was naturally Aukhé who was expected to rectify any breach of this mythical contract. By 1963,

disillusioned with *civilizado* support and faith in their ancestral ways all but lost, the Canela fabricated a sequel to the Aukhé myth to express their wished-for remodeling of the world, with themselves using *civilizado* equipment, and their aboriginal way of life completely abandoned.

In February, the "child" manifested various signs, or proofs, of supernatural power to Kee-khwëi and her family, and the good news was passed to the village council and carried by runners to the two other Ramkokamekra-Canela villages. Ten days later, the prophetess entered the ancestral village of Ponto at the head of a triumphal procession, shielded from the sun with palm branches and refreshed with water from gourds held by attendants. The hope of her prophecies had drawn together the three tribal factions for the first time in several years and provided a morale-lifting outlook toward the future.

Kee-khwëi prophesied that the great transformation would take place on the day her child was born, and that until that time the *indio* should dance in the Canela style on weekdays and like the *civilizado* on weekends to make the child (Aukhé's sister) and Aukhé happy. The more possessions a person gave and the more he danced, the greater the riches he would receive in the new life. Those not cooperating in the dancing cult, or in giving Kee-khwëi possessions and money, were punished very severely by a favored corps of youthful followers who carried out her wishes as divine orders from Aukhé. Cattle stealing, to provide meat for the cult movement, provoked *civilizado* retaliations, but Kee-khwëi reported that Aukhé claimed all cattle to have been his from the beginning so that the Canelas could certainly take and eat what was rightfully theirs. She also prophesied that if the *civilizados* came to attack the village, lakes would rise in the savannas to hinder their advance, fires would consume them, and their bullets would be turned aside by the powers of Aukhé. But when the attack finally occurred in early July, a number of bullets actually hit their targets, and with the harsh evidence of dead relatives lying on the ground, the Cane-

la soon considered the movement to have been a deception and Kee-khwëi a liar.

* * *

The story starts in the heat of the midmorning sun late in February. Kee-khwëi was alone in her garden digging up bitter manioc roots to sustain her family, when she perceived that her six-month fetus was sending messages by kicking in her womb. The "child" communicated that the sun was too hot and that she was tired and wanted to go home immediately. She "said" that her father had just killed a small armadillo and an agouti and that her mother should return quickly to their farm plot hut in order to have water ready and boiling to properly receive the hunter and his game.

It was when her husband returned from the hunt with precisely one small armadillo and one agouti that Kee-khwëi began to think a great deal about the messages of the child. She did not tell her husband, Preu, about the remarkable occurrence immediately. Later he tried to make love to her, and when the child indicated that she did not want such attentions, Kee-khwëi pushed her husband away and told him about the amazing prediction and the nature of the fetus. Preu was doubtful until Kee-khwëi pressed his hands to her

abdomen. The movements were convincing to Preu, a simple sort of grown up boy in his early 30's. Kee-khwëi, a tall woman of strong will and striking "classical" beauty in her early 40's, was clearly the dominant person in that marriage.

Kee-khwëi and Preu returned to their community, the Aldeia Velha village, before dusk and went out into the savanna behind their house in the early evening to "see" the child. In the light of the full moon the child came out and appeared before them, as an eleven-year-old Canela girl, dressed in the usual wrap-around cloth from her waist to her knees with her hair neatly combed. The complexion of the apparition was fair, her hair straight, and she was beautiful to behold.

The apparition proclaimed that she was the sister of Aukhé, and that when she would be born, Aukhé would appear and change many things. By dawn, all the Canelas would have new tiled houses, be living in cities, and have uncountable riches, while the *civilizados* would be relegated to the forests to hunt animals.

Kee-khwëi asked the apparition when she would be born, begging her to come soon to alleviate her suffering and poverty. The apparition replied that she would be born at night on the coming 15th of

May, and that she would not suckle at the breast but would suck oranges and drink only sugar cane juice (*garapa*). By dawn, she would already be a large girl and the Canela would be rich.

The apparition returned to the womb and instructed her mother to go to the house of her "aunt" and "uncle" (Ketti) to tell them about the news so that everybody would know. The next morning the uncle, the old Kaukhré, told the story to the councilors in the plaza and Preu was summoned to testify. The good news was accepted with great joy and messengers were sent to the other three Ramkokamekra-Canela communities — the Campestre, Baixão Prêto, and the almost abandoned village of Ponto.

Kee-khwëi chose the name of Krää-khwëi (Dry-girl) for the child because she had not conceived for a long time. Krää-khwëi is said to have emerged in the Aldeia Velha in the form of a snake and to have chased her little Canela brother, Pääcēt, up into a puxá tree. Kee-khwëi told Pääcēt not to be afraid of the snake because it was really his sister and would not harm him.

During the next few days Krää-khwëi gave permission for *civilizado* cattle to be stolen and killed. After all, Aukhé was the owner of

all cattle, so why should his people not eat cattle when they were hungry?

According to some versions, little else happened in the Aldeia Velha except that Krää-khwëi announced she did not want the tribe to be split into factions and that she wanted to be born in the Ponto village, so within three days the Canela of the Aldeia Velha area were on the move with all their possessions to the Campestre village (founded in 1961). There they spent two or three nights and obtained and ate four head of cattle according to the orders of Kee-khwëi, who claimed to have received these directions from her daughter, Krää-khwëi. It was also here that Kee-khwëi first ordered the Canela to carry out certain acts of sexual behavior that were not consistent with Canela traditions. She seems to have consolidated her power very quickly.

On the trip from the Campestre area to the Baixão Prêto village, people gave their horses, mules, or donkeys for her to ride and made shade for her with large palm fronds. Others brought water and fruits of the savanna to please her.

In Baixão Prêto, youths again sought permission to steal *civilizado* cattle, and when the Chief of the village objected, Kee-khwëi is reported to have said, "You can go

and obtain more cattle without any kind of fear at all, because the "mother" has arrived among us so that nobody need be afraid of any dangers — not of any dangers at all — nothing."

On the way from Baixão Prêto to Ponto, Kee-khwëi was carried by Canelas of every age, men and women, young and old. In the middle of the journey they stopped to let her rest and her ceremonial friend gave her a bath. She sent back an order to the men who were about to race with logs between the two villages directing them to wait until she had been seated in the plaza before they should arrive. She was sitting on a chair, with a mat on the ground for her feet, and covered with decorations, when the two racing teams finally entered the plaza carrying their logs.

Once the whole tribe had arrived in the Ponto village and reconstructed their houses, the form that the cult movement was going to take soon became apparent. During the triumphal procession from village to village, Kee-khwëi had already enlisted certain young men and women into her corps of 40 to 50 faithful retainers. Kee-khwëi chose high status, conservative, generally well-behaved young people to join her prestigious group. It appears that these youths carried out most and possibly all of Kee-khwëi's orders even though they

found them personally distasteful or extremely embarrassing. All these retainers generally lived and slept together in a cluster of houses maintained by Kee-khwëi herself. She clothed and fed them on a scale far better than the rest of the community could afford.

During the first days in Ponto, Kee-khwëi's prophecies were repeated and elaborated. On May 15, Krää-khwëi would be born and Aukhé would reshape the world, correcting the current injustices. This great event, however, would be conditional to keeping Krää and Aukhé happy in the meanwhile, and Krää wanted to see all the Canela dance and dance and dance. He who danced the most would be the richest when the great day came, and he who sold his worldly goods to provide materials to enhance the dance cult would also become very rich. A gift to Kee-khwëi of 20 cruzeiros would become 20 contos (20,000 cruzeiros). And so, many horses, shotguns, and even crops were sold in order to buy all sorts of *civilizado* clothing from shoes to hats, from under pants to suit coats, and from dresses to jewelry, and facial make-up. Of course, the retainers received these items directly from Kee-khwëi for their services and loyalty, but all other Canelas were equally encouraged to obtain and wear these symbols of the future.

Some even wore palm leaf wristlets which would become transformed into watches. In this way, the Ramkokamekra-Canela, who in the spring of 1963 were enjoying their best economic conditions since 1947 (their first year of potential crop surplus), became quite impoverished within four months. When the *civilizados* attacked, the Canela certainly had less than six shotguns with which to defend themselves.

On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays the Canela danced in their traditional style in the plaza. The principal difference was that now they had to dance, and keep dancing much of the time, or face disciplinary action. They also had to sing out loudly or face the consequences. One punishment was to tie up the culprit and have him sit for hours on an up-ended burity log filled with coarse rocks. Another punishment was to have a file of women pass by tied up male offenders, each yanking out a few strands of pubic hair. At least on one occasion, the worst male singers were laid on their backs on one side of the plaza for the exhaustive sexual use of the good female singers, while the sexes were reversed for the other side of the plaza. It was hard to determine whether these punishments were one-time, occasional, or continuous, but the assessed eviden-

ce favors an occasional utilization of these punishments. Evidently, most of the Canelas were pretty well convinced or scared into cooperation with the objectives and activities of the cult movement.

On Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays the Canela danced in the *civilizado* style, couples embraced, to the surprisingly good accordion music of the young (about 20) Caa-hĩ. Sometimes married couples could only dance with each other and the unmarried were segregated, while at other times the dancing was mixed. The discipline on the weekends, however, was more strict than during the four week days. Offenders were marched into a room adjoining the dance floor, and tied up with all their clothing removed. Sometimes they were ordered to make themselves sexually available to all comers. It was the male retainers who to a large extent carried out these "punishments" on the female "culprits."

The Canela attitude toward sex, which traditionally had been an expression of fun and mutual enjoyment, became associated in the cult with prohibitions and disrespect of Krää-khwëi. Private sexual relations were completely prohibited on weekends and permitted only outside the village on the four week days.

It is surprising that a number of men in their 50's and 60's entered

quite actively into this dancing cult. The pressure upon them to conform was considerably milder and they danced less often than men in their 40's and younger. There were apparently only three conspicuously vocal nonconformists. The principal one was the elder Kaapel-tik, leader of the novices in NIMUENDAJU's time (1) and Chief of the Baixão Prêto community. Mii-khlo, a respected traditionalist and good curer, even spoke in the plaza against the movement. Ko-?gannāl, a strong curer, was outspoken only in private. These three were left alone, however, because of their age and strength. All the political leaders, except for the above-mentioned elder Kaapel-tik, cooperated fully in the dancing, in the selling of their possessions, and in obeying Kee-khwëi.

And so the cult movement continued sustained by promises, punishments, and good living through March and April. But on the 13th of May a "tragedy" occurred which would have completely upset the designs of a less imaginative person than Kee-khwëi. On that day, two days before the forecasted date, her "little girls", Krää-khwëi, was stillborn — a male. Besides this, Kee-khwëi herself almost died because the afterbirth was slow to appear. The younger Kaapel-tik, one of her officers, prayed for hours beside the greatly

weakened Kee-khwëi and her struggling female aides, and finally the afterbirth was removed. The younger Kaapel-tik, Commandant of the young Western Age Class, gained an ascendancy at this time which he continued to exploit.

Much disappointment and bewilderment ensued. Krää-khwëi's ceremonial friend, the elder Lääläk, made a little wooden casket (*civilizado* tradition) and the corpse was buried behind Kee-khwëi's house (untraditional) outside the village, but according to Kee-khwëi, Aukhé, himself, intervened asking that the casket be placed just off the radial pathway to the plaza. And so, a little house of pole-reinforced mud-clay (untraditional) was erected in the "divinely" required spot, and the cult movement took a turn in the direction of Kaapel-tik's folk-Catholicism.

After the construction of this sepulcher, possibly three by four by five feet high according to varied reports, most of the tribe would visit it just before sunrise to pray, with Kaapel leading the folk-Catholic chanting. Then they would file through Kee-khwëi's house each kissing her abdomen (the continuing locus of Krää-khwëi and Aukhé) and each receiving a blessing in return. Kee-khwëi explained that the corpse was merely the image of Krää-khwëi and that her actual being had returned to the

womb after a quick visit to Aukhé's establishment in the sky. Kee-khwëi maintained that when Canelas danced in her house, Krää and Aukhé came out and wandered around the dance room, holding kerosene lamps, and enjoying what they saw. When they were sufficiently pleased, after some months, Aukhé would come, as predicted, to transform the world. The "death" of the fetus was attributed to the witchcraft of certain visiting. Apanyekra-Canela who had been sexually refused by Kee-khwëi sometime earlier. It took extensive explanations, and finally the cult movement was secured from the disaster of the male stillbirth, but in the process new elements had been introduced.

Fully in keeping with the shift to folk-Catholicism, Kee-khwëi dismissed Preu, claiming that Krää-khwëi did not like him. Subsequently, she summoned the 16-year-old Gappreprek from his studies in the convent in Barra do Corda. With this son of the strongest political chief, Kheecé, as her new husband, her return to power was well secured.

It is not always possible to distinguish the pre - from the post - stillborn versions of the cult activities. There is, nevertheless, very certain evidence that the movement became more severe and more dominated by the younger

Kaapel-tik, the chief "policeman", during May and June. More liquor was drunk at the all-night dances, visiting *civilizados* were more openly defied, and the stealing of cattle and punishments for disobedience increased. Besides the introduction of daily prayers and chanting, a new emphasis on the breaking of all secondary (-gahhäk) kinship relationships through "incest" appears to have surfaced. There were times when Kee-khwëi ordered all of her retainers who were not primary (-mpéi) relatives to have sexual relations with each other. As punishments, on at least one occasion, even primary siblings and a son- and mother-in-law were ordered to be physically intimate. It became clear through careful questioning, however, that full sexual intercourse between close relatives never did occur. Kee-khwëi claimed that Krää-khwëi wanted it this way, and there is some evidence that Kee-khwëi believed that by eliminating their secondary and more distant primary kin, the Canela would become more like the *civilizados* who had far fewer kinsmen than the Canela.

Indian Protection Service agents report that during this period the Canela were animated and self-confident. The political Chief of Ponto, Kheéçé, told one of the agents that soon the Canela would control the cities. Another agent

reports that Kee-khwëi was enthroned like a queen and that it was difficult to get past all of her guards into her presence because it was necessary to obtain permission at each point up the echelon. The cattle attendant of the Ponto Indian Service Post managed to disobey Kee-khwëi on one of these visits and soon found himself tied up and stripped of all but his under shorts which he only managed to retain through shouting loud protests. A son of the headman of the neighboring Leandro community was ordered to lift and run with a Canela racing log, and when he could not physically carry out this command, the retainers also started to strip him. He saved himself, however, by producing a considerable amount of money and leaving the scene of his embarrassment with great haste. *Civilizados*, following the tracks of their stolen cattle, were prevented on at least one occasion from finding the remains they were seeking by direct confrontations with armed Canela groups. The episode which most aggravated the Indian Protection Service was when three armed and verbally hostile Canela stood in the way and prevented the Ponto Post agent, himself, from arriving at the site of the remains of butchered stolen cattle.

Both the local hinterlanders (*sertanejos*) and the personnel of

the Indian Protection Service were well aware that something unusual and well out of control was occurring among the Canela. By July, some 40 to 50 head of cattle had been stolen, an amount which was far beyond the usually overlooked rate of about six per year. Since this was a considerable loss to these small cattle owners, and since these ranchers (*fazendeiros*) had long coveted the Canela gallery forests for farming, it is not surprising that organized retaliation was not slow in being formed. Many Canela individuals were warned of the impending attack by particular friends among the small farm holders (*moradores*), but these admonitions had little effect on the central persons of the movement. After all, had not Krää-khwëi, their "mother", proclaimed that Aukhé would impede any attack and protect the lives of every Canela? It is interesting that although some Canelas had told certain *civilizados* what was going to happen in the near future (the transformation), the roles of Kee-khwëi, Krää-khwëi, and Aukhé were kept a secret quite successfully.

On Sunday, the 7th of July, a small troop of hinterlanders (*sertanejos*) raided the Aldeia Velha settlement, burning several of the houses. On Monday and Tuesday several other hostile skirmishes

occurred, but even though one Canela had died and several were wounded, Kee-khwëi still forecasted protection, victory, and the transformation of the world. It was only on Thursday, when three more Canela had been killed in a large attack, that certain women began talking against Kee-khwëi and her "child". Kee-khwëi claimed that it was the curses of these women that caused Aukhé and Krää-khwëi to abandon the Canela.

On Friday, courageous personnel of the Indian Protection Service and the Mayor of Barra do Corda reached the Canela in a jeep after talking at great length with the attackers who were blocking the only access road. The Service personnel had to order the Canela out of their lands for their own safety, and they were relocated on the Guajajara federal reservation at the Sardinha Post by Tuesday, the 16th. This researcher and his wife arrived at Sardinha the following Monday to find the Canela living in a forest with just the underbrush cleared out for each family living site. These clearings formed a circle and an open area had already been prepared in the center for a plaza.

The cult movement had died; Kee-khwëi was considered a liar and the movement a deception. She was partly ostracized but experi-

enced no physical harm. The elder Kaapel-tik took charge of the tribe, and the councilors spoke strongly against the movement in the evening meetings. Kee-khwëi, nevertheless, continued with her predictions but few persons paid any attention to them.

* * *

Accounts of the Canela messianic movement varied a great deal depending on the informant. These differing versions, and a substantial number of fascinating episodes, have been omitted because of the lack of space. The analysis will have to be brief and superficial for similar reasons.

A remarkable feature of Ramkokamekra - Canela existence has been their characteristic conservatism. Pacified in 1815, it seems that they developed a viable and flexible mode of coexistence with the settlers of the neighboring hinterland during the 19th century (2). By 1910, this balance had been upset partly because of economic instability, but by 1945 the seeds for really significant change had already been planted in the form of Indian Protection Service schooling, surveillance, and control (3). In 1957, the Canela still believed themselves to be "a better" people than the outsiders and adhered strongly, or at least gave lip service, to most of the practices

of their ancestors, but the exercising of almost any form of authority had become very weak. As a result there were a number of significant shifts in progress but few of these shifts had gone far enough to constitute total structural changes of a qualitative nature (4). By 1960, the Ramkokamekra-Canela could speak in their council meetings of the realization that their descendants would retain very few of the traditions of their ancestors. There were even times when it was evident that certain people thought the *civilizado* way of life was better than their own. This was clearly the case in 1964 when Tél-khwëi, the informal female leader, with complete seriousness, wanted to send her son to the State Capital, São Luiz, to be raised entirely by *civilizados*. In 1958, this would have been unthinkable, though temporary stays were very much approved.

Most certainly, one of the really significant antecedent contributing factors, possibly a necessary factor, to the Canela messianic movement must have been this change in the Canela image of the nature and worthwhileness of the *civilizado* way of life. After all, Aukhé was going to transform the Canelas into *civilizados*; the ancestors had been discredited.

The Canela view of the role of the Indian Service constitutes one

aspect of this image shift. Although many and most *civilizados* were considered quite evil, at least the Indian Service in the 40's and early 50's were carrying out the responsibilities delegated to the *civilizado* by Aukhé when he gave them the shotgun and the Indian the bow and arrow. By 1957, however, the Service handouts had all but ceased, and in 1958 the great father, founder and head of the Service, Marshal Rondon, died. In 1958 and 1959, the Canela had many good reasons to feel that their privileged position as protégés of the Service had been lost. Certainly, the *civilizado* no longer deserved the shotgun.

An analysis of antecedent contributing factors of any revitalistic movement must almost necessarily focus on aspects of economic deficiency as a source of discontent and a lack of confidence. Quite clearly, the Canela economy was deficient and had been deficient for a number of years. It is interesting, however, that the movement occurred just when the economy was quite appreciably improving. The younger Kaapel-tik had established a viable credit relationship with a neighboring *fazendeiro* so that the Canela were receiving merchandise and meat in exchange for labor. It may be that a little economic improvement can raise hopes for wanting a great

deal more which can only be obtained through what might be called "cultural fantasy."

It seems likely that the people of some societies develop a reliance in future-promise belief systems more readily than the people of other sociocultural systems. If this is the case, it is important to hypothesize what cultural personality traits might be factors in contributing to such "future-promise" developments. Without having the space to bring in cross-cultural materials or Canela supporting evidence, several hypotheses pertaining specifically to the Canela are being offered herein: the existence of (a) traditional beliefs in magical transformations, as precedents; (b) a belief-orientation that life should be "good" and that if it is not, the present existence is wrong and unacceptable; (c) a belief-feeling that life should be grand and magnificent, and that if it is not, the present existence is wrong and unacceptable; (d) a behavioral pattern that when a person is refused something, that if the person persists in demanding the object again and again, his wish for the valued item will be granted. Quite obviously, a number of other hypotheses could be presented.

Turning to the movement itself, it can most easily be understood as an attempt to leave traditional Ca-

nela life and become *civilizados*, though there were some millennial elements to the extent that conditions predicted for after the transformation varied between carrying out actual *civilizado* roles and existing in an idealized, "promised-land" style. There are many examples of this orientation toward becoming *civilizados*, in Ponto, they danced on the weekends as *civilizados*. The hinterland pattern of the *homem grande* and his corps of retainers was imitated. All of this pomp and utilization of symbols for rank distinctions are quite un-Canela. Folk-Catholic prayers and chanting were given important roles. Converting sex from a pleasure into a punishment, may have been partly a female acculturative expression of growing resentment against earlier enjoyed forms of sex (5), but it seems like a remarkably ingenious way of discrediting the particular behaviors of their aboriginal way of life which were most specifically condemned by the *civilizados*. The reduction in number of kin through incest was apparently a step in the *civilizado* direction, and the deliberate, ordered sex-shaming between total avoidance in-laws and full siblings was so embarrassing and unthinkable by aboriginal standards, that it seems best interpreted as an unconscious attempt to smash the aboriginal kinship structure itself.

This aspect of the required full commitment to the cult movement amounted to an act of burning their cultural bridges behind them (6).

The personal histories of Kee-khwëi and the younger Kaapel-tik are obviously pertinent. Kee-khwëi was tall, handsome, commanding, and prestigious - never marginal. She had had a number of affairs with *civilizados*, beginning in her adolescence, and spoke better Portuguese than most women. Kaapel-tik, besides being a natural leader and born into a chiefly line, had profited by the schooling of the Indian Protection Service in the 40's more than any other Canela. He spent nine months working in São Luís during his adolescence and has learned to read and write quite well. On his many trips to Rio de Janeiro and Brasília, he has learned a great deal about hinterland religious practices, and he believes that the *santo* he carries (a picture) has saved his life many times.

Considering some of the literature on revitalization movements, Wallace's outline of stages was followed closely in the Canela movement, but, of course, the stages of *Routinization* and *The New Steady State* (7) were not reached because Kee-khwëi's predictions about the outcome of the necessary conflict situation with the *sertanejos* were not accurate. In Goodenough's

terms, the Canela movement was "importing" in orientation because "...traditional means to self-goals [were] still largely available but [had] lost their value..." (8), René Ribeiro will be able to include the Canela movement in his "operational classification" by only slightly modifying his category "1. b)," *The Santidades*. (9)

It is not surprising that the Canela cult movement was centered around dancing, the main aboriginal group form for ceremonies and recreation. Nor is it surprising that the movement was split between three *civilizado* style weekend days and four traditional style weekdays, because this dichotomization parallels the characteristic Canela asymmetrical dualism seen in the contrast between the Sun and the Moon, the Pép-gahhāk and the Clowns, and the hämrén and the non-hämrén. But the most remarkable feature of the cult movement was the shift from placing the responsibility for the use of magical powers almost entirely in the hands of living Canelas (10), to projecting this responsibility onto a supernatural being. Possibly, for the movement to develop, Canela individuals needed to be convinced in a more unassailable manner than was inherent in the traditional belief system, or possibly, a shift of this nature is related to a profound change in world outlook,

from beneficent to hostile, from nurturing to demanding, from plentiful to insufficient, and from manipulatable to controlling.

RESUMO

Entre os índios Ramkokamekra-Canela, que falam Jê, no Estado de Maranhão, no mês de fevereiro, 1963, surgiu uma profeta chamada Kee-khwëi. Ela predisse a queda dos *civilizados* — que eles iam ser banidos para os matos para caçar animais com arco e flecha e que os índios iam tomar conta das cidades, dirigindo os caminhões e pilotando os aviões. Kee-khwëi recebeu essas revelações do Aukhé — grande herói cultural — através da "criança" que ela trazia no ventre. Aukhé havia resolvido efetuar essa transformação porque estava zangado com a maneira pela qual o *civilizado* estava tratando o índio. Uma vez que tinha sido Aukhé que a princípio havia dado ao índio o arco e flecha e ao *civilizado* a espingarda, com a condição de que o *civilizado* cuidasse do índio, era natural que os índios esperassem que o seu herói interviesse para retificar essa quebra de promessa mítica. Em 1963 desiludido pela falta de apoio do *civilizado* e com fé na vida dos antepassados, a qual estava quase desaparecendo, os Canelas criaram uma seqüência ao mito do Aukhé para poder expres-

sar o desejo de uma reformulação do conceito do mundo. Subseqüente a esta reformulação os Canelas utilizariam de tôdas as facilidades da cidade abandonando inteiramente a vida aborígene.

Em fevereiro, a "criança deu vários sinais, ou provas, do poder sobrenatural para a Kee-khwëi e à família dela, e as notícias boas foram anunciadas ao conselho dos velhos da aldeia e transmitidas por corredores para as três outras aldeias dos Ramkokamekra-Canelas. Dez dias mais tarde, a profeta entrou na antiga aldeia do Ponto à frente de uma procissão triunfal, protegida do sol por grandes ramos de anajá e refrescada por água trazida em cabaças pelos seus "empregados".

A esperança das profecias fez com que três facções tribais se aproximassem pela primeira vez, em 8 anos. As profecias serviram como uma causa e motivação otimista para que enfrentassem o futuro.

Kee-khwëi predisse que a transformação grande ia acontecer no dia do nascimento do filho, e que até aquela hora os índios deviam dançar na maneira Canela nos dias de semana e como o civilizado nos fins de semana para dar alegria à "criança" (a irmã do Aukhé) e ao Aukhé. As pessoas que contribuíram com mais presentes e que mais dançassem, receberiam mais

riquezas na vida nova. Aquelas que não cooperassem no culto das danças, ou que não contribuíssem com regalos e dinheiro a Kee-khwëi, seriam muito castigadas pelo grupo predileto de jovens "empregados" que cumpriram os desejos da profeta como se essas ordens divinas fôsse do Aukhé. O roubo de gado, para fornecer carne para o culto, provocou represálias dos civilizados, mas Kee-khwëi falou que Aukhé havia dito que ele era dono de todo o gado desde o começo, e daí, os Canelas podiam com certeza se apropriar e comer o que era de seu direito. Ela também predisse que se os civilizados chegassem para atacar a aldeia, lagoas apareceriam na chapada para empatar o seu progresso; incêndios os queimariam; e seus tiros seriam desviados pelos poderes do Aukhé. Quando o ataque aconteceu na primeira parte de julho, umas balas atiradas pelos civilizados atingiram alguns Canelas, e a realidade dos parentes mortos no chão fez com que os Canelas compreendessem que o culto era uma decepção e Kee-khwëi uma impostora.

REFERENCES

1. NIMUENDAJU, C., 1946, The Eastern Timbira, ed. R. Lowie. *Univ. California Publ. Amer. Archaeol. and Ethnol.*, 41: 182.
2. CROCKER, W., 1964, Conservatism among the Canela: an analysis of contributing factors. *Actas y Me-*

3. CROCKER, W., 1958, Os índios canelas de hoje; nota prévia. *Bol. Mus. Paraense Emílio Goeldi, N.S., Antropologia*, 2: 4.
4. CROCKER, W., 1961, The Canela since Nimuendaju: a preliminary report on cultural change. *Anthropol. Quart.*, 34: 83.
5. CROCKER, W., 1964, Extramarital sexual practices of the Ramkokamekra-Canela Indians: an analysis of socio-cultural factors, in *Beiträge zur Völkerkunde Südamerikas. Festgabe für Herbert Baldus zum 65 Geburtstag*, ed. H. Becher, *Völkerkundliche Abhandlungen, Band 1*: 33. (Des Niedersächsischen Landesmuseums Abteilung für Völkerkunde, Hannover, Germany.)
6. TOBIASSEN, A. H., MS, *The messianic movement of the Canela Indians*, p. 19.
7. WALLACE, A. F. C., 1956, Revitalization movements. *Amer. Anthropol.*, 58: 275.
8. GOODENOUGH, W. H., 1963, *Cooperation in change: an anthropological approach to community development* (New York: Russel Sage Foundation), p. 300.
9. RIBEIRO, R., 1962, *Brazilian messianic movements. In Millennial dreams in action: essays in comparative study*, ed. S. L. Thrupp (The Hague, The Netherlands: Mouton & Co.), p. 62.
10. CROCKER, W., 1963, A preliminary analysis of some Canela religious aspects. *Rev. Mus. Paulista, N.S.*, 14: 172.