

## Article

# “Good Morning, Poet, How Are You?” Peasant Poetry and Its Vitality in Sertão do Pajeú (Brazil)

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**Abstract:** The present paper discusses the presence and vitality of peasant poetry as an expression of the peasant way of life in Sertão do Pajeú (Brazil), and it seeks to understand to what extent it can play an important role in the territory, such as agroecological organizations considering work from the concept of “coexistence with the semiarid” as a communication and popular education tool. We performed semi-structured interviews, participant observation and bibliographic and documentary research. In addition, we filled in a field journal and took photographic and audiovisual records. We understand peasant poetry as an expression of the popular culture of that territory, produced by peasant poets to interpret, communicate and reaffirm their way of life and their relationship with nature. Peasant poetry is part of the identity and is currently present in the collective memory of Sertão do Pajeú, and it has been guided by agroecological organizations and can become an instrument capable of enhancing the search for environmental sustainability in the territory.

**Keywords:** agroecology; “coexistence with the semiarid”; peasant poets; popular culture



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## 1. Introduction

The use of poetry as a cultural element is typical of peasant territories and has been a widely studied topic in anthropology. The existence of poets in peasant territories is a generalized social fact, and their orality is part of the constituent assets of peasant agrarian heritage [1]. Poets are part of peasant cultural expressions, composing poems, strophes, work songs, guitar singing and other artistic expressions. This is what we observe in every peasant time and peasant place around the world, such as in the use of peasant orality in the recovery of identity and cultural manifestations for sustainable development in the region of Cartagena, Cuba [2]; or in Chile’s popular lira, which blended peasant culture with modern urban tradition to spread the sentiments of the people through printed textual productions [3]. In Mexico, we know about the Mexican topada, with its community festivities led by peasant troubadours and guitar players [4]. In Spain, however, there are several traditions of poetry and peasant songs, such as the flamenco songs of work in the field (such as the songs of threshing, ploughing and harvesting), the Galician regueiferios, the poets of Genil or the glossers of the Balearic Islands [5], and also in the Basque Country, where the Bertsolaris express this poetry through its participative, popular and accessible character [6,7]. In Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia), agricultural work inspires work songs, with the corn threshing time, for example, being a popular time to celebrate these songs [8], and in Brazil, the popular poetry of the Northeast is present in peasant territories in the guitar songs and the cordel literature of sertão [9].

There are also studies on peasant poetry in other parts of the world, demonstrating the internationality of this debate. In the Soviet Union, for example, a distant connection of peasant poetry was described with songs that celebrate nature through the use of simple everyday language and widespread consumption by the masses [10]. Later, in Russia, studies have been conducted on neo-peasant poetry, linking it to aspects related to the

social and ideological foundations of the 20th century [11]. In England, we noticed how peasant poetry had a great diversity of genres and sought a didacticism that provides a celebratory action and appreciation of local customs [12]. In Finland, we found studies that focused on observing how peasant poetry was socially inserted in the 19th century to defend the peasant way of life—peasant poets were called *talonpoikaismoilija* or *rahvaan runoniekka*, which, in the local dialect, means peasants with the capacity to produce poems [13]. In Poland, studies that looked at peasant poetry in the 20th century pointed to how peasant poets, living in a situation of oppression, managed to establish themselves as spiritual leaders and lead rural crowds on their historical tour [14]. In Ethiopia, we cite a study that observed how Amharic peasant poetry in the 1990s was fundamental to politicize, denounce and socially influence the debate on the land issue [15].

In the present paper, we address the vitality of peasant poetry and its derivations as a popular education tool for the “dialogue of knowledge” [16] and the strengthening of sustainable agriculture, the peasant way of life and the work of agroecological organizations [17] in Brazil’s Northeast region. For this, we use the concepts of peasant poetry and popular poetry made by peasants. When we speak of peasant poetry, we are referring to an expression of popular poetry made by peasants and not to an erudite movement of a territory or a certain social class that is not theirs. We are referring to peasants who write poetry and have their art inserted and committed in the daily life of peasants, who sing what they live and live what they sing. Peasant poets are part of peasant societies that, through poetry, try to understand and give meaning to their lives [10–15]. In this sense, from our perspective, peasant poetry is a reflection of the existence of peasants in rural areas, serving to affirm their way of life and for the community to communicate and exchange symbols and the meaning of peasant everyday life. Poetry serves to mark and accompany their times of life and work; to reproduce socially and culturally for peasants and their communities; and to seek recognition and become aware of their place in the world. Therefore, it reflects the dynamics of its territory—its agriculture, its memory and its position in relation to society.

This popular poetry made by peasants almost disappeared or was left aside as something folkloric—decontextualized, museified or converted into an object of cultural consumption [18,19], mainly because agricultural modernization linked to the phenomenon of the cultural industry provided a conflicting movement between peasant traditions and mass cultures [20,21]. In this way, popular peasant poetry reflects, in a way, the same sense of resistance that the peasantry itself developed to remain active in industrial societies [22,23]. It is an expression of the vitality of these subjects and the resistance in their ways of living, producing and reproducing themselves. Therefore, for as long as there is peasant agriculture, we understand that its cultural forms, its art, its music and its narratives survive in the same way as that of the peasantry itself. We understand peasantry and peasant agriculture as those characterized by having an ecological capital based on self-managed resources, both social and natural, with land tenure being the central pillar of this base of resources that are generally scarce and strategically protected and conserved. This model of agriculture and society interacts with less dependence on the market, consuming what it produces and selling its productive surplus. Peasant agriculture depends directly on its workforce to produce and reproduce in its environment, and its autonomy and resistance to capitalist society are fundamental dimensions of its cultural identity’s strengthening [23–25].

In the search for the poetry present in these peasant societies, this paper presents the case of Sertão do Pajeú in the state of Pernambuco, Brazil, as a territory in which peasant poetry was constituted as a social fact of the first order. This poetic event, wrapped in memory, resistance and identity, can be observed in the peasants of this territory, who have always found in poetry a phenomenon of representation of their popular culture and rationality. Whether through orality, musicality or written poetry, the peasants of Pajeú do not center their lives only on agricultural work, but they also do so on the poetic value of life. Through the peasant poetry that is celebrated there, the pajezeiro people built their

traditions in such a way that, without poetry, we cannot understand the other dimensions of their life because, from it, social denouncement, political struggle, nature reading and work songs are practiced. In addition to its historical importance and current vitality, the peasant poetry of Pajeú has great potential for revaluation, updating and social prominence in the region as a popular education tool for the development of sustainable agriculture and in the search for “living with the semi-arid region or coexistence with the semi-arid”. This concept has been built through the work of numerous agroecological organizations in dialogue with peasant societies in the region to oppose the perspective of “combating drought” for many years, defended by the Brazilian State and local oligarchies [26].

Studies similar to this one have been developed in other parts of the world and Brazil, as well as in Spain, Central America and the Caribbean, giving a sense of the expansion of this agroecological practice in dialogue with the traditional knowledge of territories for the political strengthening of the peasant subject through popular education. In this sense, the expansion of peasant agroecology requires a collective political subject to be able to trigger major transformations, such as the work of Via Campesina, which combines political training with strengthening the socio-historical identities of peasants [17,27]. Education is another disputed territory [28–34], with the “dialogue of knowledge” and the democratic radicalization of knowledge and institutions being a fundamental step for the construction of political identity in agroecology and for the transformation of peasant and disputed territories. Thinking about an agroecological peasant education [29], there is an epistemological challenge in the theory of learning to account for including collective and local actors, with a fundamental need to connect the processes of the learning and empowerment of subjects with the reality of these territories. For this, a theoretical framework that deeply connects the territorial struggle, agroecology and popular education are needed. As a result of its vitality and its identity, and because it is inserted in the cultural life and in the peasant daily life of Pajeú, peasant poetry has aroused the interest of academia, institutional policy and, above all, organizations that work with agroecology in the territory, which has reflected on how to use this cultural expression as a tool for popular education and the transformation of agricultural practices and local policies. Agroecology can be understood as a science, a practice and a social movement that applies social, environmental and productive concepts and worldviews in search of improving the life of rural society and maintaining the socio-biodiversity of traditional territories, taking into account the accumulation of the knowledge of peasant society as a determinant to promote sustainability in the countryside [35].

Ultimately, the purpose of this paper is to analyze the vitality of peasant poetry in Sertão do Pajeú in terms of its dimensions of communication, collective celebration, identity, political articulation, the participation of peasant women poets and the understanding of nature. We also aim to analyze the potential for updating and reframing this peasant poetry as a popular education tool, whether for the promotion of sustainable management styles in line with the paradigm of “living with the semi-arid region” or even for strengthening the work of organizations that work in the field of Agroecology.

## 2. Materials and Methods

Since 2019, we have been collecting information about Pajeú’s peasant poetry, which is part of the doctoral research carried out by us. During the research path, we carried out semi-structured interviews, participant observation, bibliographical and documental surveys, filling out a field diary, making photographic and audiovisual recordings and actively searching for data on the Internet. We conducted seventeen interviews, eight with men and nine with women. The interviewed people interviewed comprise four distinct social groups: peasant poets, agroecological organizations, popular poetry institutions and educational public administrators. For each distinct group, we prepared an interview guide that would provide us with specific perspectives on Pajeú’s peasant poetry. Part of the interviews took place while respecting the social isolation in force in Brazil since 11 March 2020 as a result of the pandemic caused by the New Coronavirus (COVID-19). To

this end, the semi-structured scripts were designed to use tools available on the Internet, ensuring the social isolation required by the competent health authorities on the case. The used instruments were the WhatsApp messaging application for the peasants' interviews and the GoogleMeet video conferencing platform for the others. It was decided to use the two online communication channels to achieve a certain diversity at the time of data collection and to consequently achieve a greater guarantee with regard to the quality of the data to be systematized. The interviews lasted an average of two hours each. Peasant poets were interviewed in 2020, and the other participants were interviewed in 2021.

We interviewed six peasant poets from five municipalities in Pajeú: three men and three women from Sítio Serrinha (São José do Egito), from Sítio Maniçobas (Itapetim), from Sítio Baixa Grande (Iguaracy), from Sítio Minadouro (Ingazeira) and from the District of Brejinho (Tabira). The choice of these poets was due to the fact that they were people who lived in a rural area and at the same time performed collective celebrations of peasant poetry in Pajeú. The purpose of these interviews was to understand the place that poetry occupies in the lives of poets and its importance for the territory with regard to the reaffirmation of the peasant way of life and peasant identity manifested through poetry.

We also interviewed six people from five organizations that worked with agroecology in Pajeú: two from the Sabiá Agroecological Development Center (Centro de Desenvolvimento Agroecológico Sabiá), one from Diaconia, one from the House of the Northeast Women (Casa da Mulher do Nordeste)—CMN, one from the Brazilian Association of Agroecology (Associação Brasileira de Agroecologia)—ABA and one from the National Articulation of Agroecology (Articulação Nacional de Agroecologia)—ANA. The purpose of these interviews was to understand how organizations perceive poetry in the peasant life of Pajeú and its importance for strengthening the community and territorial agroecological processes.

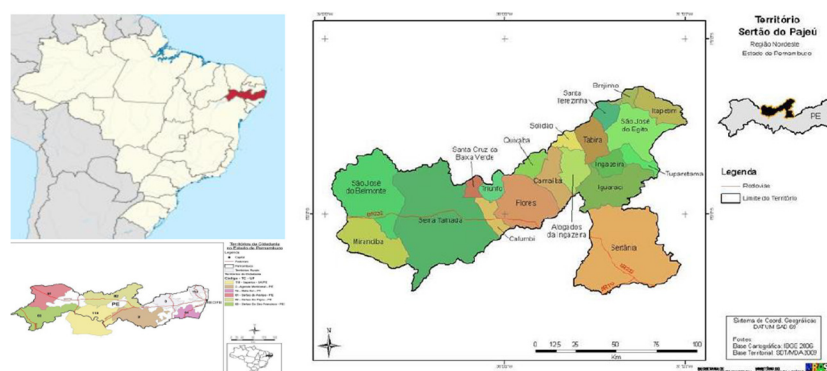
Regarding the institutions that work with popular poetry, we interviewed the manager of the Lourival Batista Institute (Instituto Lourival Batista, a collaborator of the Mambembe Institute (Instituto Mambembe)), the president and a founding member of the Tabira's Association of Poets and Prose Writers (Associação de Poetas e Prosadores de Tabira)—APPTA. We also interviewed the Director of Elementary Education of the Department of Education of the municipality of São José do Egito. We listened to these institutions in order to understand their involvement with peasant poetry and to learn about their ability to provoke processes of social inclusion, collective celebration and political and educational insertion in Pajeú.

Through participatory observation, we entered the daily life of the territory, and we participated in a field day with peasant poets in order to understand how they cross poetry with their peasant experience in agricultural work. We also participated in face-to-face and virtual events that celebrate Pajeú's peasant poetry, such as the Louro's Festival (Festa de Louro) in 2020 (in person), the Poet's Mass (Missa do Poeta) in 2021 (virtual) and guitar singing in 2022 (in person). Our goal in accompanying guitar singing, a poetry table, a poetry recital and musical performances was to understand how peasant poetry is present in these manifestations and its power of communication with the general public.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. "Sertão do Pajeú"

Sertão do Pajeú is a territory located in the state of Pernambuco, in the Northeast region of Brazil (Figure 1). According to official data from the Brazilian State [36], Pajeú covers an area of 13,350.30 km<sup>2</sup> and comprises 20 municipalities. The total population of the territory is 389,580 inhabitants, of which 164,559 live in rural areas, which corresponds to 42.24% of the total. Of this percentage, 33,804 are family farmers, 1810 are settled families, 16 are from quilombola communities and 1 is from indigenous land. The average Human Development Index (HDI) is 0.65.



**Figure 1.** These maps present Pajeú in Brazil and in the state of Pernambuco and its towns. Source: Base Cartográfica [36]; Base Territorial [37].

Pajeú is located in the Brazilian semi-arid region where the Caatinga biome predominates. According to data from the 2017 Agricultural Census, 79% of rural establishments in the semi-arid region belong to family farming, which corresponds to 51% of their total area. Of what is produced by this activity, 68.5% is destined for self-consumption, and 31.5% is sold [37]. Regarding the level of education, 42.8% of family farmers in the semi-arid region do not know how to read, and 26% of them have never attended school. In the middle of the 21st century, 17.5% of properties still do not have electricity, and 90% have not had access in recent years to any type of technical assistance that can strengthen their production. Regarding water resources, 23.8% do not have any structure that allows access to them, and of the families that have some technology for capturing and storing water, 73.7% have cisterns for capturing water from the rain in their homes, built through public policies of “coexistence with the Semi-arid” [37]. When we look specifically at Pajeú, we can see that this territory maintains a rural tradition focused on the diversified production of food since the period of its formation, when livestock, cotton and sugar planting were the main crops for the agricultural and economic development of the region [38]. Currently, the people of Pajeú produce for self-consumption and the commercialization of surpluses, with animal production of goats, sheep, cattle, poultry, pigs and bees, and with vegetable production of corn, beans, pumpkin, cassava, tomatoes, sugar cane and fruits in general.

In Pajeú, agriculture maintains aspects related to peasant rationality, a fact that we can see manifested in the structure of its community social organization, in its fragile relationship with the state and in its sustainable strategy of coexistence with nature [39]. For example, at the beginning of the 20th century, this territory witnessed the emergence of Cangaço as a peasant resistance movement, with the Central Sertão’s Movement of Rural Women Workers (Movimento de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais do Sertão Central)—MMTR/SC founded in 1984. This territory has collectively organized itself to strengthen its peasant way of life and is characterized by being a territory of struggles and resistance [40]. The following stand out in this process of resistance: the trade union movement led by the Rural Workers’ Union (Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais)—STR; Non-Governmental Organizations—NGOs that have been working for over 30 years with hundreds of rural communities mediated by the principles of agroecology; the historical work of Brazilian Semi-arid Articulation (Articulação do Semiárido Brasileiro)—ASA in the fight for “coexistence with the semi-arid”; agroecological fairs spread over almost all the municipalities of Pajeú; community associations led by farming families; and the action of the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (Universidade Rural de Pernambuco)—UFRPE, which has enhanced the process of reflection and action on peasant practices in the territory [41].

Pajeú is a typical peasant territory of the Brazilian semi-arid region, where houses are smoothly spaced from each other on properties that can be considered small farms of family farming. The gathering of these houses forms the existence of countless rural communities, locally called “sítios”. These “sítios” have similarities with regard to work, religiosity and leisure; the families are closely related, which strengthens their relationships of solidarity

and reciprocity, which are fundamental for their permanence and their way of occupying the territory. The size of the properties varies from one to fifty hectares in area [37], and they generally have a similar division regarding their use, with parts of the area destined for the production of annual and permanent vegetable crops, for animal husbandry and for the preservation of the Caatinga. It is common to find at least one instance of social technology for rainwater catchment in homes, which, in most cases, is a cistern with a storage capacity for 16,000 L of water (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Image of a typical peasant house with a cistern, at Sítio Riachão, in the town of São José do Egito, in Pajeú. Source: The first author (2022).

The communities have public facilities, such as municipal schools and health clinics, which are generally precarious due to a lack of investment; churches—catholic and neopentecostal—which are the only leisure spaces for young people and women in the communities; football fields, which are generally used by adult men to practice this sport involving people from the same community or the surrounding area; and bars, which are predominantly male spaces and denounce the lack of leisure facilities that are not linked to the consumption of alcoholic beverages. The presence of community associations is common, which are environments in which the political dimension of peasant life is discussed and deliberated collectively.

### 3.2. *The Vitality of Peasant Poetry in Sertão do Pajeú*

It is in this rich and expressive territory of the productive practices of the peasantry that we find the peasant poetry of Pajeú. In addition, here, we are referring to poetry that is strictly peasant, made by peasants, socialized among peasants and used to sing and describe the phenomena that surround peasant life, which give sense and meaning to being a peasant in Sertão do Pajeú. These peasant poets are subjects who follow the logic of the organization of peasant work [35] and cross their daily lives with the presence of peasant poetry. They are poets who work in the field and make poetry based on the stimuli of rural life. In other words, they are peasants who sing about rural life and their daily lives, describing it and synthesizing it into poetic words. Through the peasant poetry found in Pajeú, we are able to understand aspects related to culture, work, the biome, the climate, socio-biodiversity and even the formation of this territory. Several authors [42–44] have stated that poetry was already present in Pajeú at the time of its formation, as the groups that entered there brought the culture of the poetic word into their identity. Some of these studies [42,44] also support the idea that the original peoples celebrated this place of poetic orality even before the arrival of colonization. Regarding the origin of Pajeú's peasant poetry, we can make use of the understanding of Brazil's National

Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional)—IPHAN [45] (p. 55):

“In the formation of Brazilian culture, of which cordel literature is a part, Indigenous, Africans and Portuguese added practices of oral transmission of their cosmologies, their tales, their songs. In this sense, it is necessary to point out that cultural practices are crossed by the tensions and conflicts of a society that was constituted from European colonialism in the New World”.

The peasant poetry of Pajeú, in addition to the encounter of a great diversity of peoples, has different ways of materializing. It is conceived through improvisation (or “de repente”, as it is called in the region) or through writing (bench poetry). The literary structures that are used in the construction of the strophes vary a lot, highlighting by quatrains (quadras), sextiles (sextilhas), septillas (septilhas), tenths (décimas), decasyllables (decassílabos), gallops (galopes) and sonnets (sonetos) [44].

Poets use their favorite themes to develop their strophes, but it is generally those related to nature and agriculture that most intensely bring out this sense of reality. In this poetic wake, peasant poets use their words to describe in verse periods of drought or rain, planting or harvesting processes, times of abundance or scarcity, happiness or sadness, the misfortunes of life, the rural exodus, etc. According to Steil and Carvalho [46] (p. 163), from a continuous commitment with the environment, people acquire this ecological perspective of uniting culture and nature with knowledge and experience, as follows:

“The ecological imagination crosses life social as a creative power, redefining the landscape we live in and our relationships with other organisms and objects that form the same world in which we exist. At the same time, it transforms everyday environmental preservation practices, sometimes learned recently, into predispositions and attitudes that are imposed on individuals and social groups as a *habitus*. This imaginative horizon is not exhausted, however, in the creation and constant reproduction of ways of being and living, but also focuses on the ways in which we think and know the world”.

This perspective of thinking about life and knowing the world based on poetry is still alive and updated in Pajeú, because even though it emerged in the mid-1850s and reached its peak in the mid-20th century, it has been renewed with each generation, occupying an important place in the formation of the identity of the people of the territory. This manifestation of the poetic word inhabits and feeds the “pajeuzeiro’s” (people from Pajeú, in portuguese) life and imagination, forming a parallel between what is lived and what is seen. That is what we observed when interviewing peasant poets who understood that poetry is an inseparable part of Pajeú’s peasant life.

Peasant poet Lenelson Piancó (44 years old), born and raised on the Maniçobas “sítio”, in the town of Itapetim, recorded his interview under an umbu tree, a characteristic tree of the Caatinga biome. He, who calls himself a “fella from the farm” and says that he has been performing agricultural work since he was a child, said that his art serves him by demonstrating his activities in agriculture, such as in the sugar cane mill on his property, from which he sought inspiration for his verses even in the “engine hum”: “I was raised on the farm and my inspiration was always the side of the old house where we were raised. The yard, the hoe, the plow, the clearing, the bird, the sun going down, the moon coming up, these things that we only find in the Sertão. I even find it difficult to write poetry that leaves this context, that doesn’t talk about these things. That’s why my land is sacred to me” (Lenelson Piancó, in an interview in the year 2020). Peasant poetry remains alive to such an extent that we found it to be present throughout Pajeú’s social life, materializing in June festivities, baptisms, weddings, religious celebrations, school, prints on t-shirts, paintings on walls (Figure 3), pieces erected by the entrance portals of towns and, especially, crossing with the daily life of the rural environment.



**Figure 3.** Walls painted with poetry, in Beco de Laura in the town of São José do Egito, in Pajeú. Source: The first author (2022).

During the face-to-face research, we heard repeatedly, as part of the permanent and daily reality of the territory, peasant poets greeting each other in verses, calling each other poets and speaking in a metrical way. It is common for pajeuzeiros and pajeuzeiras (men and women from Pajeú) to greet each other with waves, as follows: “Good morning, poet! Say a verse there, poet! Did it rain there, poet? Tell the news, poet! How are you, poet?” When asking Marquinhos da Serrinha in an interview in the year 2020 (35 years old) about the relationship between poetry and agriculture in Pajeú, he instantly replied in a metrical way, making a poetic comparison between the years of regular and irregular rains in his region:

Aqui nessa região  
O sertanejo persiste  
Pois tem a variação  
Do inverno que existe  
Se tem lucro, é verso alegre  
Se tem perda, é verso triste.

(Marquinhos da Serrinha)

Here in this region  
The sertanejo persists  
Well, there is variation  
Of the winter that exists  
If it makes a profit, it's a happy verse  
If there is loss, it is a sad verse.

(Marquinhos da Serrinha)

As previously described and observed in the verse above, Pajeú's peasant poetry materializes through writing or orality. When focusing on oral poetry (“de repente” or improvised), we can find that it has been present since the emergence of those who were considered the first peasant poets of Pajeú in the 19th century. This poetry materialized through singing with the guitar [12], the table of poetry [47] and the “vaqueiro's aboio” [43]. These materializations of the oral word usually describe everyday life, especially with regard to peasant life. According to Sosa et al [2] (not paginated):

“La oralidad es una forma comunicativa que va desde el grito de un recién nacido, hasta una tonada campesina generada entre amigos, englobando todas las posibles manifestaciones literarias de este carácter. Mantiene en su esencia el auténtico origen del

fenómeno poético como comunicação directa entre padres e filhos, entre abuelos y nietos, al calor del hogar; como comunicação directa entre aquellos que cultivaban las tierras cercanas. La literatura oral transmite sensaciones, essências, actitudes que, muchas veces comportan posiciones éticas, sociais o políticas”.

Orality, according to Cascudo [47], has historically played a communicational role for the northeastern sertão, and it currently continues to occupy a special place that allows illiterate peasant poets, for example, to have their verses recognized and memorized in order to constitute themselves as part of this expression of peasant culture and this oral collection that reinforces the poetic identity of the territory. In a collection of strophes by illiterate poets [48], we can observe this orality coming to the fore in the sextilla of the peasant poet Zezé Lulu, who, assuming his illiterate place, demonstrated his ability to read the natural phenomena that surrounds him, revealing to us that, even without having attended school, he can read nature through his observation and peasant experience:

Essa palavra ciência  
Deus a mim não concedeu  
A minha mão não escreve  
Minha boca nunca leu  
Mas vivo estudando os livros  
Que a natureza me deu

(ZEZÉ LULU em [49] (p. 23))

That word science  
God has not given me  
My hand does not write  
My mouth never read  
But I live studying the books  
That nature gave me

(ZEZÉ LULU in [49] (p. 23))

Among the themes most sung by the orality of these peasant poets is drought. Due to the fact that Pajeú is located in the northeastern semi-arid region, these periods that cyclically impact the peasant population are routinely described in the poetics of the place. The northeastern semi-arid region is the most populous semi-arid region on the planet and has the highest average rainfall for this type of climate, ranging from 200 to 800 mm per year [50]. However, as a result of the socio-ecological perspective of political submission and “combating drought” that the Brazilian State imposed on the people, the phenomenon of the drought industry, for a long time, generated hunger, thirst, misery, environmental destruction and a rural exodus for the semi-arid population [33]. On the other hand, since the process of redemocratization in Brazil in the mid-1990s, civil society organizations in the agroecological field have guided the problem of droughts, offering a differentiated approach with regard to the reading that can be made of this reality. This process has provoked a set of actions around the concept of “coexistence with the semi-arid region”, with the understanding that the biggest problem in the region is not climatic, but political, with the sustainable management of the Caatinga being an approach to mitigate climate change and ensure a good quality of life for the rural population [33]. The sentiment expressed in peasant poetry resonates in the demands and actions of agroecological organizations. Experienced in different ways, the same territorial phenomena has been experienced and is still experienced by these subjects. Drought experienced by peasant poets was the impulse for the agroecological movement to develop the concept of “coexistence with the Semiarid”. We bring greater emphasis to this connection between agroecology and peasant poetry later on. Faced with this problem, peasant poets have described the pluviometric instability

of Pajeú, singing in dry years about the negative impact on their lives caused by the lack of rain—aggravated by the political abandonment of the Brazilian State—and giving poetry the characteristics of denunciation, which have materialized in countless poems produced by these subjects. This is what we can observe in the decasyllables produced in guitar singing by the poets João Paraibano and Sebastião Dias, in 1981, brought to public knowledge in an unprecedented way for this work (verbal information):

Quando tinha a floresta colorida  
Toda noite se via os pirilampos  
Borboletas dançavam pelos campos  
Num desfile de amor em prol da vida  
Hoje em dia a floresta está despida  
Acabou-se a beleza do sertão  
Mesmo assim com a falta de água e pão  
Natureza não tem culpa de nada  
A cigarra só canta sufocada  
Pela forte quentura do verão.

(Sebastião Dias)

When there was a colorful forest  
Every night you saw the fireflies  
Butterflies danced across the fields  
In a parade of love for life  
Nowadays the forest is bare  
The beauty of the hinterland is over  
Even so with the lack of water and bread  
Nature is not to blame  
The cicada only sings suffocated  
Because of the hot summer heat.

(Sebastião Dias)

Sem a água e o pão de cada dia  
Tem razão da pobreza estar tristonha  
O carão canta à noite quando sonha  
Recordando o sertão quando chovia  
Morre a tarde e a terra não esfria  
Que a quentura do Sol fica no chão  
Um boi magro se coça num mourão  
Se furando nas pontas da ossada  
A cigarra só canta sufocada  
Pela forte quentura do verão.

(João Paraibano)

Without water and daily bread  
Poverty is right to be sad  
The big guy sings at night when he dreams  
Remembering the sertão when it rained  
The afternoon dies and the earth does not cool down  
That the heat of the sun remains on the ground  
A skinny ox scratches itself on a post

Drilling into the ends of the bone  
The cicada only sings suffocated  
Because of the hot summer heat.

(João Paraibano)

This knowledge about climate, nature and politics that makes poets sing in verses about what is experienced in everyday life becomes possible as a result of the memory of this peasant society. According to Toledo and Barrera-Bassols [51], memory is an intangible part of traditional societies, where local knowledge incorporates a worldview in which nature and culture are aspects that cannot be separated, as they are knowledge systems that are holistic, cumulative, dynamic and open, channeled through the languages and dialects of each region and built on the basis of local experiences that span generations and adapt to changes in the world. These authors have shown that places where greater biodiversity can be found in ecosystems are where peasant and indigenous cultural traditions still maintain a high degree of preservation, proposing that there is a link between nature and culture in the construction of these societies that maintains a cosmovision passing through generations through memory.

It is through this memory that poetry is experienced and intertwined with all life, as in São José do Egito, a municipality in Pajeú territory that is known regionally as “the capital of poetry”. Its residents say that “anyone who is not a poet is crazy and anyone who is crazy writes poetry”. The most common interpretation of this public domain expression is that, in Pajeú, all people have at least a little bit of poetry in the constitution of their identity.

In the territory, we observed this collective memory [52], reproduced and nourished in the life of the peasant poet Paulo Barba (41 years old) from the Serrinha sítio in the municipality of São José do Egito. In addition to being a peasant poet, he is a vaqueiro (or cowboy, but a specific one that belongs to the Sertão of Brazil) and a herdsman, and in periods of drought, he needs to find food to offer his animals. He must often go on pilgrimages to rural properties in search of pasture for his cattle, which have become increasingly scarce due to climate change and the process of desertification that plagues the region, and he reflects in verses on the lack of food for his animals and the consequences of this. Accompanying this poet on one of those field days (Figure 4), we observed how poetry springs naturally from his conversation and forms a link between his work as a cowboy and the environmental crisis in his region. As Paulo Barba entered the Caatinga, he recited “aboios” of his own to describe and interpret his own peasant life and its relationship with the socio-ecological phenomena that surround him, as in the strophe we describe below:

Ao visitar meu sertão  
Achei tudo diferente  
Sem plantação de lavoura  
Sem chuva na terra quente  
Sem ter pastagem na serra  
O gado é magro e doente

(Paulo Barba e Jairinho)

When visiting my “sertão”  
I found everything different  
No crop plantation  
No rain in the hot land  
Without having pasture in the mountains  
The cattle are thin and sick

(Paulo Barba and Jairinho)



**Figure 4.** Paulo Barba reciting poetry on a field day at the Humaitá sítio in São José do Egito in Pajeú. Source: The first author (2022).

We can observe how the concern of the peasant poet is connected with agroecology. By proposing the concept of “coexistence with the Semiarid” and building strategies for food production in the Caatinga, the agroecological movement dialogues directly with the needs of peasant poet Paulo Barba, who memorizes peasant work through his art. This ability to memorize verses and the relationship between peasant poetry and the Caatinga biome is experienced with the same intensity as the production of poetic texts. Producing the text, memorizing it and then reciting it is part of this sign, which is completed in the socialization of strophes. This place of the poetic word in Pajeú’s daily life was responsible for establishing processes of popular communication at a time when the territory did not have television or radio to mediate its access to information. Orality carried out by improvised poetry and cordel literature was the precursor of this process of communication among peasants and is still present in their daily life [53].

Even today, when a peasant poet recites his verses, those strophes that are of interest to someone who is listening to him at that moment are easily memorized, later becoming part of the poetic collection of the person who memorized them. It is common for people to memorize strophes for many years, being able to recite them much later with details about how they accessed that information. Furthermore, the most common thing is that people know several strophes of several different poets. In this way, peasant poets go through generations and become known to people according to their poetic work, becoming, then and their works, fundamental instruments for the reproduction of the peasant culture of Pajeú. The male and female poets recited or improvised in their homes, communities or municipalities, which was a moment in which this poetry surfaced and in which people fraternized in the midst of Pajeú’s poetic universe. The peasant poet Odília Nunes (40 years old), from Sítio Minadouro, a municipality of Ingazeira, is a typical example of where poetry occupies in the social life of the territory. She is the daughter of a cowboy and says that listening to her father and neighbors driving the cattle through the aboio is the most beautiful expression of peasant poetry in her community. She, who calls herself “uma caatingueira”, in addition to being a peasant, is a cordelist, works with theater in her community and intends to insert the principles of permaculture and agroecology to combat deforestation in the region. When reflecting on the daily life of poetry in her life, Odília Nunes told us the following: “I saw in myself that I am a living proof of this when I discover myself and see in the people of my daily life that they are farmers and that out of nowhere they declaim a poem. Or when you go visit a neighbor and out of nowhere she recites a verse. So even if you don’t write poetry, popular poetry is present in the lives

of people here in Pajeú, I have no doubt about that” (Odília Nunes, in an interview given in 2020).

This peasant poetry has a territorial spreading capacity that allows texts to circulate among the people of Pajeú not only through orality. We can see the potentialization of this premise when we refer to written poetry, inaugurated by cordel literature and currently materialized in different ways and with different resources in Pajeú. The poets organize their works, and they produce material of their own authorship or have their production published by apologists of popular poetry, who organize collections by gathering strophes from various poets in the region. These poets are peasants or people who inhabit the small urban areas of Pajeú, most of whom are young men and women. This practice of publishing poetry has already become a tradition, with these materials comprising an important part of the historiography of the territory of Pajeú. Tradition, according to Pennesi and Souza [54], serves to legitimize, preserve and value elements of culture, which, for the appreciation of the past, qualifies and updates the collective look at reality. We found printed materials containing this poetic tradition in local bookstores (Figure 5), public libraries in municipalities and schools, music record stores and environments specialized in sertão products. We also saw products related to Pajeú’s peasant poetry being sold on the Internet.



**Figure 5.** Cultural bookstore with examples of peasant poetry in São José do Egito in Pajeú. Source: The first author (2022).

Peasant poet Lenelson Piancó stated that the Internet is fundamental today for the socialization of his poetry in the region: “I participate in poetry in my region through social networks, which is very important for poets. I publish the poems on social networks, but I also participate in recitations, cultural events such as workshops in schools, poetry tables” (Lenelson Piancó, in an interview given in 2020).

After the statement from him, we searched the Internet for Pajeú’s peasant poetry and discovered a diversity of peasant poets who publish new strophes on their profiles every day, in a virtual dialogue and with intense exchange of poetry. We found these profiles of several poets on Facebook and Instagram, which are used for the dissemination and socialization of peasant poetry from Pajeú. Lenelson Piancó’s strophes are constantly published on social networks. In one of his publications, he revealed his knowledge of plant biology and his ability to read the transmutation that occurs in his territory in times

of rain, when the Caatinga biome, which, until then, had been without foliage, develops a striking greenish color:

Sei que a água da chuva é incolor  
 Mas às vezes do alto quando pinga  
 Faz implante na pele da Caatinga  
 E o semblante daqui muda de cor.  
 A batata de umbu não é tambor  
 Mas se enche de água sob o chão,  
 E é a chuva quem faz decoração  
 De veludo no caule da urtiga.  
 A adutora de Deus é quem irriga  
 O canteiro de sonhos do Sertão!

(Lenelson Piancó)

I know that rainwater is colorless  
 But sometimes from above when it drips  
 Implants in the skin of the Caatinga  
 And the face here changes color.  
 The umbu potato is not a drum  
 But it fills with water under the ground,  
 And it's the rain that decorates  
 Velvet on nettle stem.  
 God's pipeline is the one irrigating  
 The Sertão's dream bed!

(Lenelson Piancó)

It is important to emphasize that this peasant poetry is not only consumed and produced in the rural environment. On the one hand, it was invented and, until the present day, is mostly present in the peasant way of life in Pajeú. On the other hand, it has modernized and become a cultural phenomenon that permeates this territory, reaching other rural regions in urban environments of the northeastern semi-arid region and throughout Brazil. In other words, it is possible to find Pajeú's peasant poetry outside of its rural communities, with the Internet and the publication of books currently being the main media for this movement. When we refer to peasant life as a poetic theme, it is essential to state that it is also praised by popular poets from Pajeú who are not peasants. Therefore, in our understanding, a popular poet of Pajeú may or may not be a peasant, as the theme of peasant life is something that is not closed and exclusively approached by peasant poets. On the other hand, every peasant poet is popular, i.e., peasant poetry is a phenomenon of popular poetry that is intrinsic to peasant poets. In short, peasant poets are subjects who express their way of life through popular poetry.

We believe that these peasant poets expand and update the daily communication spaces of their poetry, maintaining their character as a collective phenomenon that allows for a critical reading of the reality in which they are inserted. Through their art, they promote a cultural movement based on values that are intrinsic to the context of their communities. In this sense, by being peasants and poets at the same time and by singing about their daily lives, they become emitters of their own culture, moving values that concern the politicization of the people to which they belong. These poets have acquired the ability to reverberate the problems of their daily lives, because their texts are focused on understanding their reality, giving notoriety from their poetics to social injustices, environmental destruction and the perspective of "fighting drought" that are present in the territory. To illustrate the criticality and reverberation capacity found in Pajeú's peasant

poetry, we highlight this decasyllable by the poet José Filó (1896–1982), written in 1953 and published by his son, Menezes [55]. This poem was sent in the form of a letter to the president of Brazil at that time, Getúlio Vargas, in order to claim rights for the farmers of Sertão do Pajeú:

Eu não sou professor de poesia  
 Agricultura é a minha profissão  
 Na qual vivo passando privação  
 No trabalho pesado todo dia  
 Nesta tal profissão sem garantia  
 Não se dá o valor ao brasileiro  
 Deve ter proteção o cavalheiro  
 Que é manso, trabalha e faz fartura  
 Pois se ele abandona a agricultura  
 Se acaba de fome o mundo inteiro.

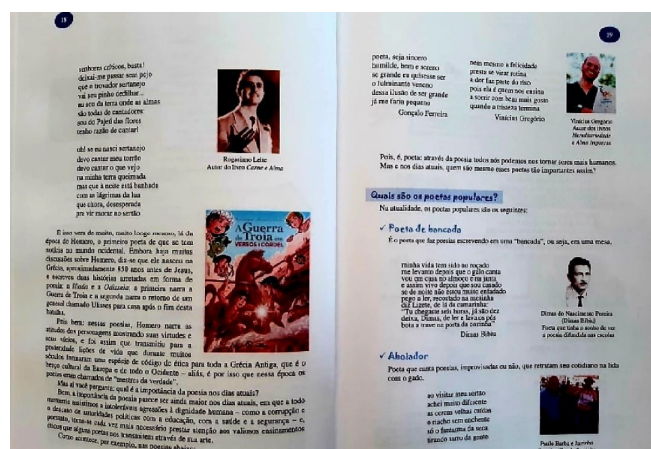
(JOSÉ FILÓ em [55] (p. 164)).

I'm not a poetry teacher  
 Agriculture is my profession  
 In which I live experiencing deprivation  
 In hard work every day  
 In this profession without guarantee  
 Brazilians are not appreciated  
 The gentleman must have protection  
 Who is meek, works and makes plenty  
 For if he abandons agriculture  
 The whole world ends up starving.

(JOSÉ FILÓ in [55] (p. 164)).

Another important dimension of Pajeú's peasant poetry concerns its transmission through generations. Whether formally or informally, "pajeuzeira" children (children from Pajeú) have been exposed to poetry from an early age. Through orality or initiation into reading, they have their first contact with poetry and are unlikely to stop living with this poetic side of their lives, linking poetry to peasant life even in childhood. This fact provokes, once again, an approximation of the debate between peasant poetry and agroecology, because the involvement of youth in the agroecological movement has stood out as one of the great current challenges facing the rural exodus. In this sense, if agroecology manages to involve youth in its actions as well as the expression of poetic identity, or rather, if the connection between peasant poetry and agroecology can reflect on the strengthening of this peasant youth, this dialogue can prove to be once more promising, because poetry has already branched out in Pajeú's daily life to such an extent that it has even become institutionalized in the official educational environment of the municipalities in the territory. In fact, since 2015, the teaching of popular poetry in municipal schools is mandatory by law. In an interview with the Elementary Education Director of the Education Department of São José do Egito and creator of the Popular Poetry subject in the municipality, Anderson Rocha (29 years old), we were able to analyze the didactic material (Figure 6) used in the course [56]. According to Anderson Rocha, it was produced with the aim of working on knowledge about the history of popular poetry in Pajeú and so that young people can visualize and learn about styles of poetry, rhyme, meter and singing, generating formal educational contact early on in Pajeú poetry. He believes that this practice contributes to the peasant poets of previous generations remaining alive in the memory of the current generation, and to provoke the emergence of new male and female poets from Pajeú,

because the creation of the subject took place “for the appreciation of the culture of poetry and not to lose cultural identity”.



**Figure 6.** Image of the didactic material of the subject of Popular Poetry in the municipal schools of São José do Egito representing stanzas and poets from the Pajeú region. Source: The first author (2022).

The spreading process of Pajeú’s peasant poetry is also part of the production and socialization of audiovisual documentaries, a practice that has become constant for the recording, organization and publication of its contents. Peasant poets are interviewed for these documentaries, which have become very important historiographical material to help us understand the dynamics of peasant poetry in the social life of Pajeú, because each material has a distinct look, covering themes such as environmental education, the poetic identity of Pajeú and the renewal of this tradition. Peasant poets have also participated in processes of collective organization and social mobilization through the formation of groups and institutions aimed at their valorization. In São José do Egito, we can mention the Mambembe Institute (Instituto Mambembe) and the Lourival Batista Institute (Instituto Lourival Batista), which work for the citizen poetic initiation of young people in socially vulnerable situations and in the maintenance of the memory of old Pajeú’s poets, respectively. In an interview with Antônio Marinho (34 years old), the manager of the Lourival Batista Institute, we understood the importance of the Louro’s Festival for the involvement of the surrounding rural communities. This festival has been held since 2014 and celebrates the memory of the poet Lourival Batista and other poets from Pajeú, becoming a place where different generations of poets meet and strengthen the identity of the Pajeú people: “At the Louro’s Festival, there are eight-year-olds reciting, the elderly watching the guitar singing. The mass that is in poetry. We have a combination of all of that. The rural public is present, we know the people, the town is small, so we know the families that go to the Louro’s Festival. The family from Riachão (region’s farm/“sítio”) that promotes singing goes there, the Moura family that comes from Humaitá (another region’s farm/“sítio”), summing up, the people who have this rural experience and who are promoters and lovers of guitar singing, these people goes very spontaneously to the Louro’s Festival” (Antonio Marinho, in an interview given in 2020).

In the town of Tabira, the Tabira’s Association of Prose Makers Poets (Associação de Poetas Prosadores de Tabira, in portuguese)—APPTA stands out. In an interview with Neide Nascimento (42 years old), the current president of APPTA, she revealed to us that the association makes a direct relationship between poetry and the peasant way of life, dealing with themes such as feminism, social inequality, the destruction of nature and environmental education. According to her, “Poetry helps raise people’s awareness of what is happening to nature, of what is ending. The Pajeú has been using over the years the poetry to scream, to say that the nature is seeking for help” (Neide Nascimento, in an interview given in 2020). When poets cry out for nature, their cry is heard in the rural communities of Pajeú, which, through conversation circles, radio programs, guitar singing,

cowboy “aboio”, poetry tables or poetry books, access those contents that relate to their reality. We can see this cry for nature clearly expressed in the poem “A braúna”, by the peasant poet Leonardo Bastião, when, in his tenth (strophe with ten verses) poem, he draws attention to the environmental destruction of his territory:

O sertão não presta mais  
 E ele *vêi* ficar ruim  
 Depois que o *home* deu fim  
 À mata e aos animais  
 O chão foi ficando inchuto  
 E a terra negando fruto  
 E o povo passando fome  
 Quem destruiu a beleza  
 Não deu fé que a natureza  
 Tá se vingando do *home*.

(BASTIÃO [57] (p. 20))

The wilderness no longer serves  
 And he saw it get bad  
 After the man ended  
 To the forest and the animals  
 The floor was swollen  
 And the earth withholding fruit  
 And the people starving  
 Who destroyed the beauty  
 Didn't give faith that nature  
 It's taking revenge on the human.

(BASTIÃO [57] (p. 20))

To conclude the discussion of the vitality of Pajeú's peasant poetry, we highlight the participation of women in this universe, because the male presence has always stood out to the detriment of the female, which has been gradually transformed. Following a patriarchal tradition, sertão culture for a long time has isolated women poets from the environment of popular poetry, making historical records highlight the presence of men, by a majority. However, women produce and recite their poems, perform in guitar singing and fight to have their presence respected in the universe of popular poetry in the sertão [48]. Currently, female peasant poets have built spaces of greater prominence in this universe of Pajeú's popular poetry in the poetry tables, which are spaces in which they are constantly managing to insert subjects such as feminism and violence against women. These young women have touched upon fundamental themes for the politicization of peasant poetry in Pajeú, and they cast a very powerful air of renewal in this scenario. Dayane Rocha (27 years old), a peasant poet from Brejinho's District, a town that belongs to Tabira, accompanied her father's agricultural life since she was a child, planting corn and beans, and she is currently a horse breeder. She revealed to us that both agriculture and poetry tables are still environments in which male participation is the majority and where there is still a lot of prejudice regarding women's participation. According to her, “Although we are in a poetry barn like Pajeú, there are always more men at poetry events than women and today we have women who make poetry. We are part of the Women of Poetry Project (Projeto Mulheres de Repente). This hurts me, because we are from Pajeú and yet there is this exclusion of women from the poetry table. I know what we go through. For me, it's very disappointing a women's tribute with only men at the table. This I do not accept. That's why sometimes I'm excluded from events because I really speak, I have the right to speak

and I use it for that, to question this kind of position of Pajeú poets” (Dayane Rocha, in an interview given in 2020).

According to the 2017 Agricultural Census (Censo Agropecuário, in portuguese) [58], women are the main managers of only 24% of rural establishments in the Brazilian semi-arid region, which denotes their marginalized place in rural sertão areas. However, by statistically comparing it with the same 2006 Census [58], we can see that this number increased by 48.5%, which, in a way, demonstrates that this reality has been changing. Peasant women in semi-arid regions, according to Rody and Telles [59], are the people that are most impacted by the events resulting from climate change, due to their relationship of permanence in their territories; their place of marginality, rural poverty and violence in the countryside; and their responsibility to domestic and care work on their property. On the other hand, they are the guardians and protagonists of the sustainable use of biodiversity, managing the Caatinga, implementing productive backyards and often ensuring the insertion of the principles of Agroecology in the context of their communities. Because they are carriers of ancestral knowledge, they conserve and develop practices that guarantee sustainable ways of producing and preserving food, rescuing and improving native seeds, cultivating medicinal plants and raising small animals and being responsible for ensuring the food and nutritional security of their territories [59]. We cannot say that poetry plays a role in this process, but it is positive to highlight that female peasant poets are conquering their space in a context of advancing women’s protagonism in this scenario of struggle against patriarchy in the countryside, and they are safeguarding the richness of the Caatinga. Understanding how peasant women’s poetry can contribute to enhancing the sustainable use of socio-biodiversity in social processes is fundamental for us, so we are able to think about the possibilities of its use as a tool for social transformation and peasant resistance.

#### 4. Discussion

##### *Peasant Poetry, Popular Education and Agroecology*

Pajeú’s peasant poetry has been establishing itself in broad senses, serving this territory as an instrument for reaffirming the peasant way of life and its identity. Through poetry, peasant poets have managed, for generations, to describe and reflect on their practice and better understand their broad reality in their process of co-evolution with nature, with poetry being, in addition to an artistic language, a popular education and communication tool. Furthermore, this diversity of the contents and capacities for connection with peasant everyday life makes us imagine its approximation with the agroecological movement. On one hand, poetry brings together dimensions such as popular communication and formal education, descriptions of peasant work and the Caatinga biome, the involvement of rural youth and the appreciation of local identity, and on the other hand, the agroecological movement proposes to advance in “coexistence with the semiarid region” with its consequences for guaranteeing food and nutritional security, for the struggle for women’s rights and for sustainable rural development. Much of what is intended to be achieved with agroecology is decanted in poetry, and the agroecological movement has sought to guarantee much of what is denounced in Pajeú’s poetics, in an evident connection between these two realities of the territory. However, the limitations of this type of connection should be better analyzed in order to determine its real contribution to territorial strengthening processes [28]. Moreover, in times of conservative offensives, especially in Latin America, instruments for strengthening collective subjects are essential to maintaining and reinventing processes of peasant resistance [60–63], also facing ecological trends and sociopolitical processes linked to climate change [64].

The vitality of poetry and peasant poets in Pajeú has shown the capacity to integrate with processes that seek to strengthen the paradigm shift that exists between the perspective of “combating drought” and “co-existence with the semi-arid region”, because, notoriously, as demonstrated in the stanzas presented here, the indignation of peasant poets with the content of the state’s participation in their lives and the power of denunciation have arisen

from their verses. In this way, we believe that peasant poetry can and may contribute to expanding agroecological management practices that are being developed in several rural communities in the region. In Pajeú, organized civil society has been guiding this change for more than thirty years, highlighting the work of Sabiá Center (Centro Sabiá), Diaconia, Northeast Women's House (Casa da Mulher do Nordeste), CECOR and ADESSU Baixa Verde. These NGOs participate in proposing public policies for "coexistence with the semi-arid region", in the fight for food and nutritional sovereignty, in the fight against social inequalities and in the reduction in climate change in the region. By reaffirming the socio-environmental characteristics of Pajeú in their work with rural communities, these organizations are reflecting and starting to consider that peasant poetry can be a tool to dialogue with peasants using their own terms and cultural forms, thus putting poetry in a dialogue with peasantry and agroecological knowledge.

The agroecological movement has constructed a dialogical pedagogy based on popular education among rural people and agroecological organizations, aiming at a deep reflection on social relations in the countryside and taking into account cultural manifestations and the forms and knowledge of peasant work [65]. In Pajeú, these organizations consider peasant poetry as a tool to facilitate this "dialogue of knowledge" and social mobilization in the face of agroecology [16]. In other words, peasant poetry is thought of as a pedagogical instrument of communication and massification of the implementation of agroecological management techniques in food production and conservation of natural resources, which can become a revitalization tool for the social and political articulation of peasants as a peasant resistance strategy [66]. In an interview with Paulo Petersen, the coordinator of Brazil's National Articulation of Agroecology (Articulação Nacional de Agroecologia)—ANA, we noticed how the discussion of poetry and agroecology can be connected from the perspective of the autonomy of peasant families and the subjectivity of their way of life. In this sense, it is understood that peasant art and poetry are not just a proposal but a way of transferring and generating action and knowledge in the territory, strengthening the collective memory around the processes of social cooperation in communities, the forms of land management and strategies of articulation and political resistance:

"Art is not a simple prop. So this amalgamation, this knowledge, walks through the various dimensions and people organize their way of expressing themselves that identifies the community, the common as an identity element, and understanding that knowledge is a collective construction, a process of reciprocity. These effervescent, dynamic cultural environments are where these dimensions are not treated separately. This crossing of peasant poets, understanding this in the life history of families and communities is a key to understanding how to build peasant hope and the struggle for autonomy. If this subjectivity is lost, it becomes anomie. The way of being and seeing in the world that is expressed in these words that are artistically combined to translate things of enormous ontological depth. This philosophy is one that is passed down through the generations. The question of philosophical thought is very important, which is another split that was pernicious in human evolution, which is the separation between philosophy and science" (Paulo Petersen, in an interview given in 2021).

This interest has been built especially because organizations have understood peasant poetry as a root of their people's memory; because of his ability to sing the characteristics of his work and denounce the social and environmental problems that his region faces; and because of having great communication potential in the territory. A similar process has taken place in Central America and the Caribbean since the 1970s, and in the formative political processes of La Via Campesina since the 1990s, in which the identity of this peasant subject has been at the center of the debate on territorial strengthening [29]. In an interview with Rivaneide Almeida (56 years old), the Territorial Coordinator of Sabiá Center in Pajeú, we noticed how the organization understands these connections between poetry and the peasant way of life: "From poetry, people connect with nature. One cannot talk about Agroecology in this territory without mentioning the importance of the river, the Caatinga... it cannot! It is impossible for you to do Agroecology without thinking about these spaces.

These environments, the place of this river, the springs, the water, the forest. And if you observe, all this is in poetry, it is in this popular expression, in this art. So, Agroecology, it has to dialogue with this poetry, it has to approach this language, because poetry, it is symbolic, it brings the symbology and identity of the peoples that are in this territory” (Rivaneide Almeida, in an interview given in 2020).

This understanding of poetry as part of peasant identity was corroborated by Itanacy Porto (47 years old), the Territorial Coordinator of Diaconia in Pajeú. According to her, the organization has perceived a powerful connection between agroecological processes and poetry and brought this component into its actions, understanding that this is part of the life of peasant families. She highlighted the perspective of working on poetry and agroecology with the women of Pajeú: “When you encourage poetry, from the women, naturally, methodologically, they already identify with their peers, and when this also becomes poetry, women also connect with the delight of poetry. So, they transform their moment of transformation of property, of their agroecological actions, into poetry, they dare, they allow themselves to dare to do this” (Itanacy Porto, in an interview given in 2020). The feminist, with a decolonizing and anti-capitalist consciousness that is based on observations and work with nature for production and food distribution, is a fundamental instrument for building a peasant agroecological consciousness [27,67,68].

In this sense, from an agroecological perspective, it is essential to discover and validate the knowledge carried by the families with whom agroecologists work to advance in the transition to sustainable agriculture [69,70]. It is no longer a “dialogue between different forms of knowledge”, but a “dialogue between worldviews” that questions whether agroecology seeks technological innovation, environmental and scientific concreteness or all of the above items inserted in a broader objective born of spirituality and the cosmovision of traditional peoples [16]. In this sense, it seems fundamental to us to state that, for the agroecological movement to approach the peasant poets of Pajeú, it is necessary to take into account the entire cosmovision of these people, who have poetry inserted in the logic of the organization of their peasant life.

## 5. Conclusions

Peasant poetry is intertwined in the lives of the peasants of Pajeú, manifested through orality or writing. This poetry inhabits everyday life, flows in memory, reproduces itself in identity and mainly reaffirms the peasant way of life, which, despite difficulties, continues to involve poetry in itself and in its community.

Through this poetry, peasant poets have reflected in verses the environmental, productive and political phenomena that surround them. In this way, they have been intrinsically related to peasant life and peasant poetry, allowing us to state that peasant poetry only exists because there are peasants in Pajeú.

This poetry is inserted in an essential way in the daily life of the territory and can be appreciated in the greetings and expressions among peasants, in the explanations and interpretations of poets about their lives and their agricultural work or in their metrified forms of expressiveness. In addition, we can find peasant poetry in the school environment, in the transmission of this tradition from one generation to another, in the creation of collective processes and poetic associations, in the organization of events that celebrate it collectively, in the production of written and audiovisual materials, in its dissemination through social media, in the cry of peasant poets and, above all, in the peasant pajezeiro's (peasants from Pajeú) day-to-day experience.

Furthermore, not only do we believe in the vitality of peasant poetry in the social life of Pajeú but also in its potential for insertion in the peasant dynamics of the territory, which has provoked agroecological organizations to reflect on its use as a pedagogical instrument for processes of popular education and agroecology. This launches the peasant poetry of Pajeú to be thought of using biases related to “living with the semi-arid region”, and it demonstrates its social importance for sustainable agriculture and local sustainability.

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