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The Kamaiurá Brazilian Indigenous People and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the importance of the recognition of legal pluralism in promotion of cultural and environmental sustainability. Through the Legal Anthropology discipline, we intend to present some of the standards of the Brazilian indigenous people Kamaiurá, concerning land use and the use of natural resources.

The Kamaiurá people live in the southern part of the Xingu Indigenous Park, in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso and have a population of approximately 523 people. They are part of the Tupi linguistic branch and speak the indigenous language Kamaiurá. Due to their contact with non-indigenous people, most of the population also speaks Portuguese. Despite the presence of some Western values, such as consumer goods - clothes, motorcycles, stereos etc., the Kamaiurá people preserve their social organization and their unique way of relating to the natural environment.

To understand a little of the Kamaiurá universe, it is necessary to understand the importance of myths to these indigenous people. They not only permeate through the collective imagination, but define rules and establish the way of life in the village. The respect they have for natural resources is connected to this mythological universe. The preservation of resources comes from a very close relationship they establish with nature, which is defined not only by dependency aspects, but mostly by the primary meaning of myths and Kamaiurá beliefs. Many plants and animals, for example, have spirits in the myths and they act directly on the social environment. In this sense, it is intrinsic in the indigenous nature to use natural resources sustainably, as they support them physically and culturally. It is common in some Kamaiurá myths to have marriages between Indians and animals, showing that they are treated as human equals.

The Kamaiurá territory is collective. Although the Brazilian Federal Constitution does not recognize the indigenous property rights over their land, but rather only the right of possession, internally, there is no such distinction. Each village location is historically linked to its inhabitants. The territory identifies the indigenous people because of the memory of ancestors and the natural resources necessary for the maintenance of their socio-cultural survival.

Among the Kamaiurá values is to care of individual goods, such as a fruit tree, as well as collective goods such as rivers, lakes and forests. Prioritizing the well-being of the community, the Kamaiurá indigenous people continue to adjust their rules and operate regardless of state authoritative presence. Considering the traditional way of life of indigenous peoples, recognition and respect of their own values are closely related to sustainable development, ensuring that both the environment and richness of cultural diversity is preserved.

Keywords: Indigenous People Kamaiurá; Sustainable Development; Legal Anthropology.

Introduction

Due to the complexity of human nature, we constantly redefine the meaning of our egalitarian essence. We carry with us our ancestral human memory that unites and identifies us as beings of the same species. On the other hand, each has a unique experience in recognizing reality and, although part of the collective, each is gifted with characteristics that identify us culturally and distinguish us from other groups.

The current Brazilian Federal Constitution, recognizing uniqueness as an essential element in constructing a free, just and solitary society, guarantees that all may exercise their individual and cultural rights. Similarly, international law recognizes individual rights founded on the principal of human dignity, and collective rights of social groups, like the rights of indigenous people.

Searching to accept differences and reduce inequalities, new concepts presented on the national and international stages, like judicial pluralism, gender equality, collective rights and sustainability, are becoming more and more a regulatory force, without, however, ending the contradictions in their application. Is it possible that we are in fact prepared to respect others and their full dignity?

From the western perspective, historically, we take the position of creating “others”. Founded on our civility, the indigenous people are primitive; the capitalist system is unjust; the state promotes inequalities and so on. The fact that we do not recognize the “other” as equal frees us of any responsibility.

The indigenous people, with their own social organization, are diverse within their group and with respect to the surrounding western society. Due to the degrading contact forced upon them by the non-Indians, in current day Brazil there is an estimated population of 818,000 habitants, considering those that live on their own lands as well as those that live in urban environments (IBGE, 2014).

Despite its true diversity, the Brazilian state, since its creation, dismissed the coexistence of culturally different societies within the national territory. In general, indigenous politics in Brazil supported state interests as opposed to the people they should protect. Although backed by a progressive and modern constitution, state politics in general have a different objective, that of the latest economic interests in the country.

From this perspective, in practice, there is no intention of guaranteeing cultural and territorial rights for these people, as their customs go against the neoliberal logic, that needs citizens/consumers and available land to promote economic growth. On the other hand, following this movement, many indigenous groups, living by the codes of the surrounding society, are going forward and reclaiming their cultural interests. This has brought more visibility to the indigenous people and the violations of their rights, on both the national and international stages.

The Kamaiurá indigenous people, the study subject of the work presented here, live in the southern part of the Xingu Indigenous Park, in the state of Mato Grosso and have, according to the National Health Foundation – FUNASA (2009) data, a population of approximately

523 people. Of this group, 266 live in the Ipavu village, while 105 live in the Morená village and the rest, around 150 individuals, live in the cities near the Xingu Indigenous Park. A study was performed in the Ipavu village, which is located near a lake with the same name – Ipavu Lake, which in the Kamaiurá language means “big water”.

The Kamaiurá Ipavu village is made up of 20 houses located around the large central circular courtyard. Each house is occupied by a domestic group composed of people united through kinship of their parents. The domestic group leader is the “man of the house”, who coordinates the production activities and other daily tasks.

The present study is part of the author’s Doctoral research that, in order to understand the Kamaiurá universe – its social organization, myths and internal rules – performed theoretical and empirical studies. A literature search was performed with respect to the material and field research completed at the Kamaiurá Indigenous Land, between 2006 and 2009.

1. Indigenous People Customary Law

The law that we are proposing to analyze here is that which represents not only the main normative existing in a given society, but that also acts as an integral part of the social processes. This perspective is related to Anthropology of Law or Judicial Anthropology that, according to Oliveira (1985), is characterized by approaching laws through means of a historical and cultural phenomenon, whose social efficiency and dynamism should be explained by the interrelation between values and interests of certain social groups, with changing social contexts and with diversified customs and traditions.

This characteristic of understanding the law respecting social dynamism and the historical and cultural phenomena is very important in determining customary law, because this, in contrast to what one might imagine, does not refer to a collection of unchangeable and unaltered laws from a dateless time, but its current conception is that it includes many aspects, ranging from precolonial cultural elements to contemporary references that were dynamically incorporated in its culture.

To characterize indigenous law as consuetudinary or customary law, we may, in general, consider two specific points: 1) it is immersed in the social body, firmly interlaced with all other cultural aspects, which forms a compact unit; 2) it extracts its power and content from the community’s traditions shown by their customs.

As presented by Cuevas Gayosso (2000), customary law for indigenous people serves a worldview founded on ancestral principals and that is related to the natural law of events. They are rules accepted and applied by the society because the collective consciousness says that they are good for men. The application does not require the inclusion of said rules in normative texts, because what makes them legitimate is the common consciousness of the group that, by means of the knowledge of general principles that govern their conduct, sustain the determined rules to resolve specific problems.

In this way, with some other peculiarities, customary law differs from the positive law used in modern societies by not separating the social and judicial facets. The law for indigenous communities is concealed in the social body, in the community’s customs and traditions, involving oral traditions, hierarchical systems and magical-religious fundamentals that

compose a certain worldview for the community. On the other hand, modern societies require the separation of these two aspects – the social and judicial, creating a dichotomy between form and content.

One definition considered relevant by Cuevas Gayosso (2000) is that customary law is a community organizational rule rooted in a cosmologic vision. According to the author, considering this definition one can point to two primary principals: flexibility and depth.

The term “rule” allows one to conceive customary law as something that does not have the same inflexibility as the term “rule of law”, used by positive law. The former allows for an adaptation in the society in which it acts, while the latter, used in a different context, is rigid and its application corresponds to the imposition of the referent conduct law in social phenomena.

The rules must become adequate for the society’s characteristics, thus becoming a common expression of a distinct group and having a tendency to preserve its primary values and principals. From this perspective, Cuevas Gayosso (2000) highlights the fundamental origin of customary rules, which he calls the “cosmologic view”.

Through the “cosmologic view”, one finds various sources of law. One finds that not only the desire of the legislator is responsible in creating the law, but that the daily practices, related to the worldview of various social groups, also results in the creation of customary rules that, even informally, become legitimate in dictating social life.

Other features attributed to customary law that differ from positive law, is that it is neither not written nor encoded and that they hold even without state presence. In this branch of law there is a defined body of rules and customs, recognized and shared by a give collective.

The fact that it is not written and codified brings about various criticisms in an attempt to weaken customary law. In general, written law is seen as a more secure law, giving more guarantees to the law. However, despite this definition, there are without question contradictions. For example, consider the English judicial system, which does not have a written constitution. Contrary to indigenous people’s cases, all recognize and provide legitimacy to this legal order.

One thus finds that the most relevant aspect is not whether or not it is written, but that it has been tied to communities said to be “primitive”, whose rights were always an afterthought. Maybe the bigger worry is that once recognized, these rights should become compatible in practice with the current positive law. And as said by Venne (1989), considering that the legal systems have root in different needs and concerns, there is little chance that they may become compatible. This would be another big challenge – finding adequate mechanisms to make compatible consuetudinary indigenous law and the positive laws of the country.

For Cunha (1990), although positive law and customary law may have different social natures and utilizations, they can live together peacefully. However, this does not mean that they can be reduced to a single system, or rather, there is no way to replicate in positive law, explicitly and substantially, the customary law that only makes sense in the system in which it governs.

1.1 Judicial Pluralism

Considering the cultural diversity that exists in Brazil and the perspective that the concept of culture covers social, mythological, religious, symbolic, and legal aspects, among others, one recognizes that each society, including indigenous ones, has its own way of expressing and translating its surrounding reality. In this context, contrasting the proposal of monistic State law, the idea of judicial pluralism is introduced as a way to guarantee internal regulations.

With pluralism as a reference point, it is worth considering two aspects: the first is the fact that plural reality brings about a factual inequality that shines through in all aspects of daily life, even if the values contained in the conceptions of different existing groups may be conceived within the boundaries of the same country and related through historical origins. The second aspect is the coexistence of two or more regulatory systems in one space.

The word “pluralism” means non-unique quality or accepts more than one thing or category. It is also characterized as a political system that is based on the coexistence of different groups or different organisms that are independent with respect to their management or representation.

Through conceptualization, the referred to inequality can be identified as well as the coexistence of two or more systems in the same space, seeing that the plurality comes through in the existence and in the recognition of the differences. In this sense, speaking in pluralism legitimizes the diversity.

Rouland (2003, p. 158) advocates two theories of conceptualization of legal pluralism. The first, considered a weak concept, is that which recognizes the existence, within society, of different legal mechanisms to treat identical situations. For example, he cites the merchants’ use of different rules to sell their merchandise. Unlike the rest of the citizens, the merchants can benefit from more flexible regulations.

The second theory, treated as a strong concept, is based on the idea that the relations between the different social groups exist, beyond state law, as well as multiple judicial systems, that can coincide or diverge. An example of this theory is the immigrant worker who submits his or herself to the internal regulations of the company in which he or she works; utilizing the social benefits provided by state law, and within his or her family, redistributing the income based on personal norms, which are not the same as the state laws.

The legal pluralism proposal, although still reaching restricted areas in the academic world, is approached as a potential new solution to conflicts and to recognize the particular laws of groups and societies. Its central objective is to demonstrate that the modern state is not the only legitimate agent to create legality and to formulate the types of social relations that come about, or rather, that they do not have a monopoly in the creation of legal rulings.

In this sense, it presents itself as a way to counteract the monist legal doctrine and to recognize the multiplicity of legal sources and legal relations within one judicial system. As highlighted by Wolkmer (2001), the intention is not to deny state law, but rather to legitimize other existing legal systems in a society.

2. The Kamaiurá Society: myths, rites and rules

The Kamaiurá culture is maintained and renovated through oral tradition, which consists of a powerful promoting tool of the sharing of experiences, the foundation of values, the furthering of knowledge, the disclosure of important information, creative stimuli and the possibility of conserving the memory. Although in modern times many youth have written abilities, orality prevails, presenting itself as the main vehicle in the production and reproduction of social life in the village.

In old times, according to Kamaiurá accounts taken by Seki (2000), they called themselves *Jamyrá*, at a time when they lived with the Tapirapé indigenous people. After Morená's trip through the region, the Kamaiurá started to call themselves *Apyap*. For Bastos (1981), the Kamaiurá self-designation would be *Apyap Anekopy*, or rather, "the true *apyap*", being that the word *apyap* is related to the term *apyaba*, which means "man", "heathen" of the old Tupi.

Despite their particular characteristics, the Kamaiurá have cultural similarities with respect to other indigenous groups in the Alto Xingu area. Through means of a similar way of life, this is articulated by a network of specialized trading, as well as interethnic marriages and rituals between villages.

The main form of intertribal relations between the groups of the Alto Xingu area is established through rituals, like in the meetings to perform *Kwaryp* (the celebration of the dead), *Jawari* (the celebration of warriors) and *Moitará* (gatherings for formal trading). In addition to these, many other similar aspects can be cited, like for example, the predominance of the use of fish over meat from hunting; the same ideal of behavior, that values generosity (the gift) and the containment of moods; certain artifacts that are produced in all villages; short oval haircuts for men and long haircuts with bangs for women; the same body ornaments and paintings; the creation of circular villages, with big oval huts and a house of sacred flutes in the village's central courtyard (entrance prohibited for women).

With respect to the differences, one can cite their different languages, the production of characteristic objects for each group, which identify them and maintain specialized trading as well as the unique identity of each ethnic group, not allowing their cultural characteristics to be diminished in the Alto Xingu society.

What one finds with respect to language in the Alto Xingu is that although each group has its own, they are able to communicate easily. It is common, even if one does not know how to speak it, for one to understand the language of his or her neighbors, allowing people of different ethnicities to talk, each in his or her own language. Interethnic marriage is also possible, which brings about children who are raised speaking both the maternal and paternal languages. Portuguese is utilized as well as a common language between these groups, spoken more fluently between young men and adults. Beyond being taught in the indigenous schools in the Park, Portuguese is the language heard on television, which are present in nearly all the villages in the PIX, and is utilized to establish relationships with non-Indians inside and outside of the Park's borders.

As taught by Santos and Coimbra Jr. (2001), the intense interaction between this group of societies make the Xingu system one of the most elaborate and complex ethnological groups in the Amazon, in which persistence of ethnic distinction is counterbalanced by the emphasis of regional integration.

2.1 Kamaiurá Cosmology: the importance of myths

Mavutsinin¹, the transforming hero, created the Kamaiurá and the non-Indian with the intention of forming a giant village in Morená. When the two brothers became adults, Mavutsinin called them and put them in front of two objects he created: the black arc and the firearm. He determined that the Kamaiurá would get the firearm: “You can take that, my grandson”. But the Kamaiurá, enchanted by the black arc, did not obey the orders of his grandfather. “Do not take this, take the firearm,” said the angry Mavutsinin. The Kamaiurá did not change its mind. Then, the non-Indian took the firearm for himself. Frustrated with the outcome, Mavutsinin sent the non-Indian far away and made the Kamaiurá stay in place.

Since it was not possible to finalize his plans for the creation of a giant village, Mavutsinin decided the destiny of the two groups: he gave fish and manioc to the Indian and pigs, rice, fat, bricks, axes and an endless list of goods to the non-Indian. Even today, in Morená one can find the Kamaiurá completely painted, seated on a vulture-shaped bench and firmly holding his arc. The white man, saddened by Mavutsinin’s decision, also lives eternally seated and close-lipped. It is said that that is where they will stay forever, never dying. The Kamaiurá and the non-Indian, living separately, come to meet personally through our grandparents (JUNQUEIRA, 1975).

After the myth of creation of the Kamaiurá indigenous people, one can perceive the transcendental dimension that permeates the day to day activities of the Kamaiurá. To justify the separation and the existing differences between Indians and non-Indians, the latter are incorporated in the foundational myth after contact was established. In this sense, there is no way to disentangle the myth from the rite, since Kamaiurá customs are interlaced in the mythological, creative and original universe of all existing things. At the edge of Ipavu, Indians and *mama`e* (spirits) form the giant Kamaiurá village.

As taught by Jungueira (2002), through the Kamaiurá accounts it is possible to distinguish three landmarks in its history: the mythic age, the time in which man was created; the age of the grandparents, in which the Indian still had not established contact with the non-Indian, and the present age, which starts with the first encounters with the non-Indian and continues until the current day. Despite the differentiations in the ages, one finds that there is not a linear separation between the landmarks in history, since they are continuously interlaced, such that the present moment brings in itself the essence of the worldview conceived in the mythic age.

With respect to the creation of the other Alto Xingu groups, the Kamaiurá tell the following myth: at the beginning of time, in present day Morená², Mavutsinin one day saw a shell at the edge of the water and married it. From this union a child was born, that from the fact of being human was taken far away from the shell and from Mavutsinin. The shell, saddened, closed itself and went back to the water. The new being created by the two divinities was given the same name as its father. However, since Kamaiurá tradition has that the name of the

¹ For the Kamaiurá, he is considered the creator of humanity. His original power and guiding way that directs the happening of events are referenced in many myths. Even when the myth’s main characters do not focus on the figure of Mavutsinin, he appears as a good advisor, who wisely guides his “grandchildren”.

² Morená is considered the home of primordial beings, like Mavutsinin. It is located at the junction of the Ronuro, Batovi and Kuluene rivers.

grandfather should be given to the grandson, the narrators warn: “He was the son of Mavutsinin, but we say that he was the grandson” (JUNQUEIRA and PAGLIARO, 2009).

Mavutsinin the grandson then took some tree trunks, decorated them, and with the help of two agoutis that sang and played maracas, prayed and transformed the trunks into people. From then on, the groups of the Alto Xingu region created their villages in the Morená surroundings (JUNQUEIRA and PAGLIARO, 2009).

The word myth, from the Greek word *mythos*, means fable or legend. In this way, Malinowski defines it as an account of the events that occurred in the past that, since then, affect the destiny of the world and people (MALINOWSKI, 1954 and JUNQUEIRA, 1998).

For Villas Bôas (2000, p.39), the word myth can be defined “as the synthesis of a fantastic plot that responds to the inquiries about the origins of real beings, and above all, about the elementary values, rules and knowledge of the creature”.

From the psychological perspective, Campbell (1992, p. 41) states that the myths are hints that helps us look for our own life experiences. According to the author, considering that everything is within us – “all of the Gods, all of the Heavens, all of the worlds”, in the myth of all groups the images are the same and tell of the same problems. In this way, mythology can be related to life wisdom, integrating the individual in society, society in nature and acting, in a certain way, as a compass for our consciousness.

The myths are not merely symbolic in the structure of the Kamaiurá people, as mentioned earlier, since, transcending the visible, this universe presents itself as a defining source of many rules and cultural traits. The interface between the mythological universe and the real world demonstrates the transcendent aspect that permeates the reality lived in the village. The *mama'e* (spirits), for example, mentioned in many myths, do not only exist in the invisible and symbolic world, but operate in the visible world, provoking events and coexisting with the indigenous people in the village space.

For Junqueira and Pagliaro (2009), the notion of spirits for the Kamaiurá is not easy to grasp. It comes close to the idea of forces, which acts in the context of domain, and can be an animal species, plant or ceremonial object. As told by the authors, if one asks the Kamaiurá to make a graphical representation of the spirit, the representation will be according to the physical aspect of the animal, plant or object to which it is related.

In the attempt to elucidate the idea that the mythological universe communicates with the daily practices of the Kamaiurá, and that first it can be considered a guiding source of many rules and practices experienced in the village, one can analyze some examples.

The fact that the Kamaiurá people are considered specialists in the production of the black arc, their habit of bathing at sunrise, have special diets at determined times, their practice of traditional rituals and celebrations, recognition of the figure of the shaman and fear of the sorcerer, among others, stems from the mythological explanations and from the transcendent spiritual universe.

Their dietary regimes are determined by the *mama'e* and their transgressions can instigate sicknesses and even death. As taught by Junqueira and Pagliaro (2009), for the Kamaiurá the

evils that affect health are always brought about by external factors, and in the majority of cases, caused by the spirits.

When death does not occur with old age, or rather, through natural processes, the explanations generally come from the transgressions imposed by the *mama'e* and the actions of the sorcerers. In his or her infancy, for example, a child can die if his or her parents violate some rule of the spirits, such as dietary restrictions, protection, etc. In the rest of the phases of life, death can occur through intentional acts by the spirits or through sorcery (*moã*), which is used to eliminate an opponent.

For Junqueira (2004), the myths carry at least two constant concerns: one is with respect to the description of what is considered ideal behavior for a peaceful social life; and the other is related to the Kamaiurá's concern of trying to explain the phenomenon of life, its essence and origin.

As an example of a rule of conduct to be followed, a myth generally tells of something that is considered wrong or condemnable for the Kamaiurá. Through a series of events, the story explains that, depending on the chosen path, there will either be compensation or punishment. The most recurring themes include extreme jealousy, greed, incest, malicious plans and lack of loyalty.

In relation to the myths that are supposed to bring a justification to the origin of humanity, searching for an explanation for the inquiries about the unknown universe of creation, we can also identify some references that characterize the daily life of the Kamaiurá.

In the universe of the origin, as told in some myths, there is equality between animals and Indians. Despite their diverse appearances, all play a part in the same phenomenon of life, or rather, all are mortal and have a soul (JUNQUEIRA, 2004). In this context, animals and humans communicate using the same language and live together normally as equals. For this reason it is natural that the myths may tell of marriages between men and women with animals.

In daily life, coming from this partnership established in the myths, the animal spirits have varied temperaments and personalities. Some of them, granted superior knowledge, teach the village shamans curing powers. Without this guidance, it would not be possible for a shaman to cure a disease, help with difficult births, find lost people in the jungle, etc. On the other hand, the spirits of these animals require rules of conduct of those initiated to perform shamanism, such as certain dietary restrictions and sexual abstinence.

This common mythological origin for the Kamariurá and animals helps define the strong tie between human beings and nature. The indigenous, by considering animals as their equals, do not feel separated from the natural environment, but rather consider themselves as a part of a whole.

2.2 – Kamaiurá Law

Daily life in the village, in general, unfolds in a quiet way. However, the Kamaiurá society, just like any other society, is not immune from conflicts, power disputes and antisocial conduct, in varying degrees of severity and disapproval.

The definition of rules, with its supposed end goal of social stability, is part of the jurisdiction of the group, which responds against distress to favor the collective well-being and not just the individual.

In the Kamaiurá, one can say that the respect shown for the laws is associated with the desire of public approval, as well as the fear of supernatural sanctions and retaliation. Different from the fear provoked by the punitive process in a state society, the fear that brings about obedience in the Kamaiurá gets differentiated profiles, since the rules were created and adapted with the participation of the supposed wrongdoer, due to the relation of its system of beliefs and traditional customs.

In general terms, social control is handled in two ways: through means of inhibiting action and punitive action. The latter, utilized in specific occasions, is considered a secondary resource, or rather, when the former is not sufficient in reconciling the relations.

Ramos (1982, p. 56) reports that the inhibiting actions are informal procedures that take shape in the form of ridicule, like gossip or accusations of witchcraft. In the Kamaiurá, the most familiar term would be shame, that beyond being associated with ridicule, is also related to control in social situations. In this way, shame stemming from ridicule makes sure that excesses are controlled, avoiding breaks in etiquette and imposed rules.

An antisocial act like uncontrolled rage, for example, is received with jokes, laughs and teasing, putting the person in a situation of collective discomfort. In the majority of cases, the possibility of being shamed discourages behaviors that are collectively disapproved.

Gossip is also an efficient social control device. In the right proportions, it can operate as a sort of anticipated harassment in the possibility of an infraction. Evidently, in more serious conflicts, the sharing of information is not enough to avoid a direct confrontation between the opposing sides. In more daily cases, like the gossip that a woman is having extramarital affairs, can serve as a warning to the protagonist, who will have time to end the relationship and avoid greater personal embarrassment.

In accusations of witchcraft, although they may act as inhibiting actions, are not on the same level of severity as the others described above. It is much more serious and is characterized as a last resort before applying the prescribed penalty. Gossip about witchcraft in the village could make the suspected culprit move to a different community, even before the proof may be presented and before the respective punitive action may be applied.

Considering the content of the work, the following will contain just some of the Kamaiurá laws, especially those related to how the indigenous conceive territory and relate to the environment.

Kamaiurá Territory

As taught by Junqueira (1975), the immediate Kamaiurá territory constitutes the village, the neighboring jungle, Ipavu Lake and the streams which flow into it. However, these limits are passed by the Kamaiurá area of influence, which are the jungle areas and water bodies traditionally used, over which they have use and enjoyment privileges recognized by the rest of the region's groups. They also have free access to the Morená region, at the meeting of the Kuliseu and Kuluene rivers.

Considering the limits defined by the Kamaiurá, one perceives that there is a property limit definition for the group and a definition of limits that should be respected by both non-Indians and the rest of the region's indigenous people. Although the Federal Brazilian Constitution states that indigenous territories are properties of the Union, guaranteeing only possession of these lands for the Indians, internally this distinction does not exist. The Kamaiurá indigenous people identify with their territory since Mavutsinin created humanity with intention of forming a great village in Morená.

It is worth highlighting the implicit recognition of the geographic confines of the territory by the Kamaiurá community, as well as by the surrounding indigenous societies. It is not structured by rigid definitions of limits, to the point of making it impossible for other communities to access the available natural resources. In whatever way, there is a shared consensus in the neighboring communities that they should inform and consult the community about the possibility of utilizing a resource that may be in the area of influence of the other. Another characteristic that is worth highlighting is the fact that territory limits are not always permanent, or rather, can be modified. Spatial rearrangements are common as are location changes, if necessary.

The notion of property for the indigenous transcends the idea of identification of a physical space that they can dispose of. It is related to the proposal of domain, which is sanctioned by ancestral narratives and by the system of beliefs and knowledge associated with the territory. In this sense, the Kamaiurá connection with the land characterizes their identification as a people. By means of the identity bond, they recognize all of the visible and invisible elements in the territory that are essential for the development of their society.

With regards to this relationship, Ramos (1982, p. 12) affirms that “each site in the village is historically tied to its inhabitants, in a way that the passing of time does not erase the knowledge of the movement of the group, since this keeps alive the ancestral memory.”

The referred to identity bond of the Kamaiurá with their territory is what maintains the sustainable relationship between the indigenous and the environment. Through a righteous circle of natural resource utilization and preservation of the environment, the indigenous revere Earth as the house of their ancestors, developing their communities and reproducing myths and traditions.

Property

Kamaiurá property is classified as individual or collective. Except for the courtyard of the village, the waters and surrounding land are collective property, and the rest of the existing things are individual property, or rather, they have owners, which could be either people or supernatural beings. Despite this classification, the notion of property, as was already mentioned, and the enjoyment of these goods have their own characteristics, which differentiate themselves from western values.

As an example, consider access to food goods produced by nuclear families in each house. The gardens, with crops like manioc, the base of the Kamaiurá diet, have owners, and access is not open to anyone in the community. Although there are gardens with just one owner, these are commonly considered as property of a nuclear family, which acquired it by having cleaned the land, planted and worked the soil to produce the food.

The tasks are divided between the relatives, differentiating themselves by questions of gender. The Kamaiurá look to produce in order to guarantee the subsistence and also to guarantee sufficient food in the rainy months when the harvest is small. The quantity is also determined by times of celebration or ceremonial situations.

That which is destined for storage is put in appropriate containers and separated from the rest to be used for daily consumption. The same occurs with food that will be utilized for celebrations and ceremonies. The food for daily consumption remains available to all those who live at the house, who may enjoy it freely. There is not, thus, a special moment of differentiated consumption by or for who produced the food. Clearly the existence of this freedom of access to the food between the residents is related to the quantity of production, thus requiring continuous agricultural work.

In the Kamaiurá organization one notices that the enjoyment of the goods occurs more freely inside residences, because, in the majority of the cases, the user does not need to ask for authorization to use an object that does not belong to him or her. Residents of other houses can also access these goods, however, they are subject to some restrictions. What one finds is that, although the ownership is always individual in making a good available, the users are not always individuals, as they may be members of a nuclear family or even a resident group.

It is worth highlighting that the possibility of theft inside the village is directly connected to the relations established with the non-indigenous. Industrialized goods, with their relatively difficult access for all of the members of the community, find themselves in the hands of only a few, going against the community logic.

The concept of theft brings the notion of accumulation, or rather, the non-socialization of the good, which also contradicts the fundamental principles of the Kamaiurá society, since greed is treated as antisocial conduct.

Due to contact with the surrounding society that becomes more intense every day, it is possible to notice the presence of industrialized goods in the village. However, in general, they are inserted with the objects that circulate through trade. During the study in the village, there were no reports of theft.

The owner of a good has the right of enjoyment, but also has the duty of taking care of his or her good. The owner of a fruit tree, for example, should take care so that it will not be damaged and so that its fruits are not collected before they have ripened. Whoever may be interested in obtaining some of the fruit should ask for permission from the owner who, generally, responds affirmatively to the request. After the donation, a commitment is made from the recipient to reciprocate to the donator (JUNQUEIRA, 2005)

The Kamaiurá live together, since primordial times, with supernatural beings, with the *mama'e*. In this universe, with exception of the souls of the dead, which live in their own village, the *mama'e* move about the Kamaiurá lands and participate in daily life in the village. Like the living, these supernatural beings have goods, like species of fauna, flora, ceremonial objects, lakes and places in the jungle, which are available to the Kamaiurá, but guarded with impositions of trade for the use and consumption.

The *mama'e* require that in order to use their goods the Kamaiurá must follow the governing dietary restrictions, follow the ritual obligations and obey tradition. Not fulfilling these duties is punished severely, because the *mama'e* do not tolerate transgressions, punishing the disobedient with diseases or even causing their death.

The use and consumption of the Kamaiurá goods are directly related to the trade system in the village. The fact that one possesses a good permits that it may be donated and establishes a relationship of commitment between the parts.

Conclusion

In just a few days of field research it was possible to notice an important characteristic of the Kamaiurá social structure, reported, as a matter of fact, in many published works. This is the fact that in this society, although there is a defined structure of social roles and their own codes, there is no imposition of rules. It seems that the community seeks to maintain its own internal and external balance by means of cordiality, in which necessary associations naturally govern the affairs, without coercive rules and fulfillment of activities by fear or repression.

The fact that no one tells others what to do and the system still functions opens space for new ways to understand reality. Through analyses, when it is said that the indigenous are in balance with the surrounding environment, I also include this perspective. The internal actions of the Kamaiurá preserve the natural resources and maintain a fluid social organization because the Kamaiurá structure is in tune with the order of nature, with the cosmology of its people, which includes mythical beings, *mama'e*, animals, human beings, natural resources and traditional celebrations in the same act of creation and daily action. Acting in favor of the universal order, life becomes relaxed, essentially courteous and sustainable.

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