

**“WE DO NOT LIVE FOR MATERIAL THINGS:”
INDIGENOUS CULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY IN BRAZIL,
THE CASE OF THE CINTA VERMELHA-JUNDIBA VILLAGE**

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ABSTRACT

This project is based on a qualitative analysis of the opinions of key actors involved in the construction of the indigenous village Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba (CVJ) in Brazil. The CVJ village represents a unique case in Brazil: for the first time in history, an indigenous group from different ethnic backgrounds got together and bought their own land. The research question that guided the analysis is in the context of the creation of the CVJ village: Does food play a role related to cultural reinvention and ethnic reconstruction? The purpose of this project is to explore how food has the communicative function of a bridging mechanism between the Pankararu and the Pataxó cultures in the CVJ village. The conclusions of the analysis show that the interaction between the CVJ's inhabitants is characterized by profound cultural reconstruction and ethnic reinvention, and food production and consumption are key factors in these processes.

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Dedicated to Raimundo and Socorro;
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for their love,
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Introduction

To'ê, Geo, Ytxay, Cleonice and Yamany grew up in a penal colony destined to indigenous people in Brazil. This special penal colony was created by the Brazilian military dictatorship that ruled the country between 1964 and 1984. By the mid-1980s, with whole families from diverse ethnic backgrounds living there, the facility was transformed into an indigenous reserve called Guarani. In 2005, a forest fire that started in a neighbor eucalyptus farm invaded the reserve's territory and destroyed much of it. The catastrophe proved to be unbearable for many. Devastated by the consequences of the fire for the community, the *cacique* (chief or leader) of the Guarani reserve killed himself.

It was then that, the young To'ê, Geo, Ytxay, Cleonice, and Yamany, along with the elders Valdi, Creuza, Graça and Domingos, took their children and left everything behind in the ruins of the Guarani reserve. Together they headed to the semi arid region of Minas Gerais in the Jequitinhonha Valley. Ethnically, the group was formed by members of the Pataxó and the Pankararu peoples. The group made two important decisions: to name as their *cacique* the young To'ê Pankararu, and to buy 70 hectares of land to be settled as their new home. The new village was named Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba (CVJ), after a Pankararu deity and a Pataxó sacred tree.

Since 2006, these five families have been working to build a new life for themselves in the new settlement. The CVJ village is located within a plot of land in the rural area of the municipality of Araçuaí, Minas Gerais. Besides the individual family houses, the village has also a small school, and a communal place for gatherings. Its members have been cultivating traditional crops for subsistence in an agricultural system

based on their traditional knowledge and the ideas of permaculture, i. e. the development of a sustainable, ecological, and independent agricultural system. The community complements its income with the production and sale of crafts made of native seeds and bird feathers.

The community is also changing the landscape by planting herbs and trees. For more than a century the region's original scenery was transformed by plantation owners, legal and illegal diamond diggers, and overall extensive livestock farmers that cleared up large plots of land to open up space for cattle pasture. Presently, during the raining season, the arid landscape slowly turns into green within the boundaries of the CVJ village, as blooming traditional crops, medicinal herbs, and sacred trees cover the land. This ecological boom is accompanied by a similar process on the cultural level. A new people is being created, made of an amalgam of two very different cultural traditions (Pankararu and Pataxó), and food plays an important role in their course of action. In this paper I argue that food has the communicative function of a bridging mechanism between the Pankararu and Pataxó cultures in the CVJ village in Brazil.

For that reason, it is divided into seven parts. The first part presents the struggle for land and the creation of the CVJ village. In the second the concept and the practice of the permaculture in the village are posed. The third explores food security, culture, and indigenous knowledge on food in the CVJ village. The concepts of food and culture are explored in the fourth part. The research findings are described in the fifth part in a topic named "the communicative function of food in the CVJ village". Research context and data source, as well as research methodology and ethics are explored in the sixth part. The seventh session explores the video production and technical decisions; training on

equipment use; narration; music; the video structure and its availability. In the conclusion I summarize what was learned in the process and its contribution to the researcher learning: theoretical knowledge and professional practice

1. The struggle for land and the history of the Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba village

The CVJ village represents a unique case in Brazil. For the first time in history, an indigenous group from different ethnic backgrounds got together and bought their own land. The singularity of the case is not that different indigenous peoples got together to create a new life, but that they bought land. The plot of land where the CVJ village is settled was purchased in 2005. It has 70 hectares and is located in the northeastern region of the State of Minas Gerais, Brazil, in the municipality of Araçuaí. The climate of the region is characterized as semi arid and it is known as the Jequitinhonha Valley. The community is formed by five families that comprise a total of thirty people, being the majority of the population constituted by children, sixteen in total. Cleonice Pankararu points out the settlement's nature: "This is a place for resistance where we have been searching for our rights as indigenous people" (C. Pankararu, recorded interview, March 2nd, 2009).

The group came from the Guarani reserve. In the 19th century, the reserve's area was occupied by a coffee farm. In the early 20th century, the land was appropriated by the Brazilian Federal Government and transformed into an indigenous penal colony. In his study regarding the Guarani reserve, Warren (2001) argued that "in the 1980s with no land to return, the former prisoners fought successfully to have the area converted into an indigenous reserve" (p .40). At that time there were almost 250 inhabitants with a diverse ethnic background. There, Krenak, Pataxó, Pankararu, Kaingang, Maxakali, and Guarani individuals lived side by side. When the reserve was finally established in the

mid-1980s, there were already many constituted families that cultivated the land with subsistence crops.

It was in this environment full of cultural diversity that To'ê Pankararu, Yamany Pataxó, Cleonice Pankararu, Ytxay Pataxó and Geo Pataxó grew up. Later on they became the main actors in the process of construction of the CVJ village. In the words of the *cacique* To'ê Pankararu, the group left the Guarani reserve because:

Fazendeiros [big landowners], who bordered the Guarani reserve, installed in their fields a 'development' project. They started planting forests and forests of eucalyptus to produce cellulose around our Guarani reserve. In 2005, they put fire in the land and this fire arrived at the Guarani, destroying our source of water and our farmlands. Facing this enormous disaster, two elders killed themselves. We were devastated. Thus, we were five families that decided to start a new life and to find a place where we would not have to leave it again because of the intrusion of development projects. Moving is tiresome. We had been changing from place to place since I was a child so that we were fatigued of this life. Hence, we decided to have our own land so that we bought 70 hectares of land in the municipality of Araçuaí, because we do not want to see our children suffering from hunger (as cited in Rocha and Liberato, 2008).

The new village was named in honor of a Pankararu deity (Cinta Vermelha) and a Pataxó sacred tree (Jundiba). According to Cleonice:

Cinta Vermelha [Red Belt] is one of the protectors of our Pankararu culture, a religious entity, a religious being for us, who protects the village. He is one of those that God gave to protect nature. *Cinta Vermelha* is the one who stayed to protect To'ê, the *cacique* [chief]. *Jundiba* is a sacred tree of the Pataxó people, one with huge roots. It is very leafy. So, when the Pataxó people were being persecuted, it was in this tree that they found protection; the tree hid them. They would make houses within the roots of the Jundiba. They would hide and their enemies would pass by and not see them inside the roots of the Jundiba. (C. Pankararu, recorded interview, March 2nd 2009).

The arrival of the group was greeted with distrust by many inhabitants of the Jequitinhonha Valley. When the group guided by the chief To'ê Pankararu arrived in the region, many people said that they were there to die of hunger because this is an arid place where an agriculture of subsistence was difficult to have. However, the group proved they were wrong and started to change the landscape. After three years of hard

work, the CVJ village has now cultivated fields, a common garden and a few fruit trees. From November 2008 to March 2009 they have planted up to 200 native tree species. In the small indigenous school at the village they teach the Pankararu and the Pataxó languages to their children.

Seeking to maintain their Pankararu and Pataxó cultures as well as their autonomy, dignity and food security in the CVJ village, the group has inverted the logic of many indigenous groups in Brazil that wait for years to have access to land through governmental intervention. The group bought its own land. In the words of the *cacique* To'ê Pankararu they chose this course of action because:

We couldn't wait for a federal agency or even travel to our own traditional territories because of the problem we faced. Before we arrived in this region we were living in the city, renting, often without enough money, with 12 children, who often asked for what was lacking. A better way appeared when we heard about this farm credit program that offered to small farmers, to rural people, the means to get their own plot of land. So we heard about this, looked to see if we could pay and believed we could. So we got into this program to buy land to build our village, to build the future of our families, our children. The strength of our will to build the village, to maintain our culture, traditions and customs, led us to build our village this way (T. Pankararu, recorded interview, March 3rd, 2009).

From this viewpoint, the CVJ village initiative may serve as an example of the idea of 'commons' as defined by the group of intellectuals gathered around the periodical *The Ecologist*:

'Commons' implies the right of local people to define their own grid, their own forms of community respect for watercourses, meadows or paths; resolve conflicts their own way; to translate what enters their ken into the personal terms of their own dialect; to be 'biased' against the 'rights' of outsiders to local 'resources' in ways usually unrecognized in modern laws; to treat their home not simply as a location housing transferable goods and chunks of population but as irreplaceable and even to be defended at all costs (1993, p.12).

Commenting on the relationship between food and land for indigenous peoples in Brazil,

Renato Maluf, president of the Brazilian National Council for Food and Nutrition

Security – Consea and a well-known scholar, argued that

land is crucial for indigenous peoples and the main factor making indigenous populations susceptible to hunger is the fragility of their land situation. Be it their access to land, or insufficient access, or the precariousness of access or ownership of the land where they live (R. Maluf, recorded interview, March 5th, 2009).

Therefore, buying this plot of land has the meaning of an opportunity to define their own priorities and to reconstruct what ‘development projects’ such as hydroelectric plants and eucalyptus farms had destroyed: to cultivate their own food and to reclaim their own culture.

2. Permaculture in the Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba village

In many ways food plays an important role (economic, cultural and political) in the process of the CVJ village construction. It is important to call attention to their decision to implement an innovative agricultural system based not only on their own traditional knowledge but also on the permaculture principles. Although there were discrepancies on how to define the guidelines of the permaculture, it seems that today most researchers on the subject agree on the centrality of three of them:

1) *Care of the Earth* – provision for all life systems to continue and multiply; 2) *Care of people* – provision for people to access those resources necessary to their existence; 3) *Setting limits to population and consumption* – by governing our own needs, we can set resources aside to further the above principles (Mollisson, 1990, p. 2).

These principles reflect the village's philosophy of cultural reinvention and ethnic reconstruction.

For Ytxay Pataxó, permaculture is a reinvention of their own traditional knowledge and agricultural system. He argues that:

We used to practice permaculture in the yard at home, known as the first zone for permaculture. The indigenous and my parents would already do this: raise a chicken, plant a banana tree, throw food scraps and other decaying material onto the roots of the banana tree, but permaculture is a more innovative system, with more planning and technology (Y. Pataxó, recorded interview, March 2nd, 2009).

Mollison (1990) argues that permaculture – from *permanent* and *agriculture* – is an integrated design philosophy that includes gardening, architecture, horticulture, and ecology:

Permaculture is a system of assembling conceptual, material, and strategic components in a pattern which functions to benefit life in all forms. It seeks to provide a sustainable and secure place for all living things on this Earth (p. 69).

Ytxay Pataxó is the coordinator of the CVJ village's permaculture project. He remembers that he first heard about this ecologically sustainable system in a course on the subject that Sayry Pataxó and himself attended in Araçuaí in 2006. All started when he was seeking for a better agricultural model that could help the CVJ village to succeed in their new land. Ytxay started to do his own research on sustainable agricultural systems that could help the group improve their territory. Thus, he heard about a permaculture course offered by an NGO in Araçuaí, and decided to take it.

Ytxay's previous experiences with agricultural education had been quite different. Some years before, he had attended a technical school in Araçuaí and obtained a certificate in Agricultural Techniques. There, however, he realized that most of the techniques that were taught in that school were not appropriate for indigenous peoples or any person working in subsistence agriculture. He states that the courses were:

...geared for monoculture, mass production, and cattle-raising. The techniques they taught us were not what I had in mind. I did not fit in there. The school was working with chemical fertilizers, with dangerous insecticides. So I think that this is not my path: destroying the soil, nature, introducing something that is not good for future generations (Y. Pataxó, recorded interview, March 2nd, 2009).

The Brazilian hegemonic idea about agriculture privileges the mass production of cash crops for export reflecting what is called the Green Revolution, which reproduces unequal social standards and is a totally unsustainable model (R. Maluf, recorded interview, March 5th, 2009). Some argued that the consequences of the Green Revolution have been brutal worldwide. Esteva (1996) commenting on the consequences of this process for Mexico, argued that peasants became totally dependent on the market and its institutions. Thus, hunger emerged in all the country. For him the Green Revolution:

Clearly reduced the technical and social options of the country, introduced rigidly and harmful simplifications in its productive structure and in its system of agricultural research and education, dangerously constrained the techno-cultural horizon of Mexico in this field, and perniciously reduced the biological, technical, and cultural diversity of the country, with grave damage and risk to its ecology and society (p.268).

A new kind of living disconnected from the devastation of the natural resources has been desired by many indigenous peoples around the world. For Mohawk (2006), subsistence living has no connection with materialism:

People who live a subsistence life see themselves living in the world and in a relationship to the world in which not only does the world nurture them, but they have a reciprocal obligation to nurture it (p. 27).

By the same token, while justifying the community's choice for the permaculture, the *cacique* To'ê Pankararu from the CVJ village explains that:

Our identity is the most important thing that we have. We love who we are. We enjoy painting our faces and bathing together in the river. For us, this is happiness. In our village everything is shared, our life is shared. We do not live for material things and do not strive to accumulate things. We miss the river we once had, and the forest and natural resources that are now gone (as cited in Liberato, 2007, p. 30).

For Ytxay, the two-week permaculture course he attended, substituted all disappointment from the whole program in agricultural techniques that he had taken before. He learned that the permaculture system principles touch many

aspects that are very important to indigenous peoples: to collaborate with the planet, to take care of living things and to manage waste. For me, permaculture can improve our indigenous culture, be it Pankararu, Pataxó, Guarani, or Krenak...or any ethnic group (Y. Pataxó, recorded interview, March 2nd, 2009).

This practice of integrating agriculture with traditional knowledge strengthens the network of living things, and among them are the Pankararu and the Pataxó from the CVJ village.

3. Food security, culture, and indigenous knowledge on food in the CVJ village

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations defines food security as “a condition in which all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 2009). As Rocha (2009) points out, in Brazil the concept of food and nutrition security consists in:

Realizing the right of all to regular and permanent access to food in sufficient quantity and quality, without compromising access to other essential needs, on the basis of food habits which promote health and respect cultural diversity, and which are environmentally, culturally, economically, and socially sustainable (p.63).

According to her, in early 2008 it was estimated that over 30 million Brazilians were still below the poverty line, suffering the daily threat of hunger and malnutrition (p. 61). In a more specific stratum, a report from the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE* (2006) showed that in Brazil hunger has color, gender and age (pp. 4 -6).

Therefore, black and indigenous people constitute significant part of the segments that faces hunger. Globally indigenous poverty is a consequence of a historical process. Since the European arrival in Brazil in the 16th century, many rights were denied to indigenous peoples because of hegemonic projects from the colonizer's enterprises.

The figures are alarming in today's Brazil. In March 1st 2005, Francisco Menezes, then president of the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (Consea), stated in an official letter sent to the President of the Republic of Brazil, Luís Inácio Lula da Silva that:

The problem of food and nutrition insecurity among the indigenous people is graver than it has been shown by the mass media and governmental agencies responsible for the formulation and execution of policies among this group. We reiterate that this Council is worried about the lack of answer and political option of the land demarcation and

homologations of the indigenous territory. We believe that the first condition to the human right to access adequate food is sufficient land to the physical and cultural reproduction of indigenous people, as stated the article 231 of the Brazilian Constitution. The negation of this right and its consequences caused the suicide of 234 indigenous people from the state of Mato Grosso do Sul in the last five years. In addition to these numbers, the infant mortality reached an average of 60 indigenous children per a thousand of infants who were born alive. Three times more than the national average (Consea E.M. nº 016-2005).

On a previous document called *Monção*, also sent to the President of Brazil, Menezes pointed out the general diagnostic of the indigenous food access problematic and indicated the necessity of immediate governmental actions. He wrote then to the president that “there was a confirmation that food and nutrition insecurity were persistent and affected the majority of the indigenous people (Consea E.M. nº 003-2005). Among other factors that maintain indigenous peoples in this situation, he emphasized the following:

- 1) Problems related to land access, such as the non-conclusion of demarcation and regularization processes, the insufficiency of reserves, the human pressure on and the degradation of the indigenous lands;
- 2) Precariousness of local health services and difficulty to access more complex procedures required in some cases to procure other health benefits, despite the assistance given by the National Foundation of Health – Funasa;
- 3) Difficulty to include indigenous communities in the *Bolsa Família* program [a government emergency benefit program for the poor];
- 4) Difficulty to access education, especially at university level, indispensable requirement to enlarge the participation of indigenous technicians in the management and the definition of priorities for government programs;
- 5) Insufficiency of spaces and mechanisms of control and participation of indigenous peoples in the management and definition of priorities for government programs; and,
- 6) Low commitment of local and regional governments with the indigenous peoples’ cause (Consea E.M. nº 003-2005).

The Brazilian government has increased the distribution of food supply in many indigenous villages through the *Fome Zero* [Hunger Zero] program. However, Fávaro et al. (2007) argued that even though the *Fome Zero* program has been seen as an efficient

initiative to fight hunger, the distribution of food is not compatible with the local alimentary habits and more: “the quantity of food is not compatible with families’ average size” (p. 7). In her descriptive study about the Terena, an indigenous group from the state of Mato Grosso do Sul - Brazil, she described the situation of food insecurity among the families in the villages of Água Azul, Olho D’Água, and Oliveiras. For her:

The Brazilian Food Insecurity Scale was adapted to 15 questions that reflect food insecurity at different levels of intensity. A survey was conducted in the villages with 49 families that had under-five children. Information was obtained on income, family size, maternal education, and children’s food intake. The 75.5% of families showed some level of food insecurity (22.4% low, 32.7% moderate and 20.4% high). Large percentages (67.3%) of the families live with fear of lack of food. One fourth of women had experienced hunger during the month prior to the survey, and 14.3% reported the same condition for the children in the household (p. 7; author’s translation).

She stated that the most serious stage of food insecurity was observed in families

with lower per capita income and lower maternal education, more family members, and more children per family group in which the children’s diet was insufficient, especially in protein and iron (Fávaro et al., 2007, p.1).

Commenting on this matter of food insecurity and the *Fome Zero* program in the indigenous villages in Brazil, the chief To’ê Pankararu pointed out that when an indigenous person is hungry it is because he or she has no land. About the *Fome Zero* basic food supply basket he declared that “it is a food supply that does not fulfill what an indigenous group needs. It is food that indigenous people do not know about” (T. Pankararu, recorded interview, March 3rd, 2009)

Brazilian scholars argue that the key aspect that has to be considered by policy makers in Brazil is that food and nutrition security needs to be guided by two main principles: the human right to food as well as food sovereignty, which means the right of peoples to choose all that has to do with their food (R. Maluf, recorded interview, March 5th, 2009). The chief To’ê Pankararu (2009) gives a good example about what can

happen if the food sovereignty aspect is not taken seriously in the process of food security promotion:

When the government sends the basic food supply basket to the Maxacali people in Brazil, they send canned milk powder, often out of date and without instructions. Small children are seen eating a cup of milk powder and canned foods. I am against this kind of food in the villages, understand? Because indigenous people have a more native menu, food they know about (T. Pankararu, recorded interview, March 3rd, 2009)

The current president of the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security, Renato

Maluf, explains that:

When multilateral organizations, big corporations say that world's food security will be achieved when we increase production, they are speaking of four products: soybeans, corn, wheat, and rice. Thus, for us, food security policies should express a perspective of sovereignty. It is the right of peoples to decide all that has to do with their food. What they want to produce, how they produce, the consumption standard they want, and the protection of their biodiversity and habits. That is why, to complete the phrase, we always refer to food and nutrition security and sovereignty, and the human right to food (R. Maluf, recorded interview, March 5th, 2009).

In this perspective, the nutritional culture of each people must be taken into consideration as means to promote food security. In the specific case of indigenous peoples, the imposition of food by external agents, without respecting their different habits and cultures, can be a serious mistake. The Centre for Studies in Food Security-CSFS at Ryerson University states that:

In order to develop policies towards the implementation of programs in food security, there are five principles that must be followed to encompass all its complexity: *availability* – sufficient food for all people at all times; *accessibility* – physical and economic access to food for all at all times; *adequacy* – access to food that is nutritious, safe and produced in environmentally sustainable ways; *acceptability* – access to culturally acceptable food, which is produced and obtained in ways that do not compromise people's dignity, self-respect or human rights; and, *agency* – the policies and processes that enable the achievement of food security (CSFS, 2009).

Menotti (2006) claims that essential decisions about who controls land, water, and public services are now in fact being put under the authority of the World Trade Organization – WTO (p.59). For him there is an important reaction to the WTO rules:

Indigenous groups are now joining with nonindigenous farmer and fisher organizations, demanding WTO recognition of two key rights: 1) food security, the right of people to access enough food to feed themselves; and, 2) food sovereignty, the right of traditional local producers to continue to grow for local consumers, and to each community to continue to produce enough food to feed its own people (p.62).

In 2004, sixty-four indigenous peoples from Canada to Chile convened in Quito, Ecuador, during the Second Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples, and discussed many struggles they had been facing. The debate exposed many issues related to sovereignty, land, food sources and agriculture, violation of human and political rights, and exploitative free trade pacts, and that was only a partial list of the indigenous agenda. The Zapatistas from Mexico, the U'wa from Colombia, and the Awas from Nicaragua were represented in this encounter and their initiatives received substantial attention from other indigenous groups (Bell, 2006, pp. 182-183).

In Brazil and elsewhere in the Americas, the relation between land, culture, and food are essential to understand how indigenous communities may acquire access to land, sovereignty over food production, and reach food security.

Even though the CVJ village was not formed at that time, this research found out that they are in the same path as their *parentes* [relatives], constructing new forms of resistance and organizing. An evidence of it is the fact that the CVJ village designed its own permaculture system based on indigenous agricultural and land organizations, which was used previously by the elders, to increase food access and their identity. According

to Darrel Posey (2006), “this system is based on complex ecological knowledge and understanding, and highly efficient, productive, and inherently sustainable their traditional knowledge” (p.31).

4. Eating culture in the Pankararu and the Pataxó land

To investigate the meaning of food in the cultural process that permeates the relations between Pankararu and Pataxó individuals, I observed and interviewed ten adults in the CVJ village. They were chosen for their leadership and commitment to the creation and development of the new community. These two different indigenous groups, now living together, are comprised of hunters (Pankararu) and fishermen (Pataxó). It means that they have two very distinct cultural traditions and, therefore, had to find ways of communication to make living together possible. For the Pankararu a delicious dinner is a succulent snake barbecue or some fried caterpillars. A fabulous dinner for the Pataxó means fresh fish baked inside banana's leaves.

The attitude people take toward food production and consumption reflect their disposition and story of ethnic reinvention and reconstruction. The CVJ village's permaculture project provides not only an example of food production, but also a discursive arena model for debating food security promotion and cultural reconstruction.

Traditionally, Pankararu and Pataxó have different food habits. However, despite their original differences, in the CVJ village they have found ways to put together both cultural traditions through innovative practices. As an example of their bridging discourse, Ytxay Pataxó is clear when he states that:

We are planning to reconstruct the forest around our village with special trees to our cultures. Doing this we can teach our children about our rituals. We moved to this place two years ago and we do not have easy access to our traditional foods (Ytxay Pataxó as cited in Liberato, 2007, p. 27)

Accordingly to this thought, they planted the sacred tree for the Pankararu people named *umbuzeiro* (umbu cherry tree), and are now seeking for saplings of *jundiba* and *mangabeira* (mangaba cherry tree), both sacred for the Pataxó people. According to the teacher of the community's little schoolhouse, Yamany Pataxó,

it is important to bring all seeds possible from our ancestral village, because if we cultivate them here we can teach our children about our rituals and also make our jewellery, which is very important to our tradition as well as to our income (Yamany Pataxó, recorded interview, March 3rd, 2009).

The *cacique* To'ê Pankararu talking about their sharing of food, describes the food interaction that happened between himself and his brother in law, Ytxay, who is Pataxó:

Ytxay has been married to my sister for almost fifteen years. We have our customs. They belong to the Pataxó, we to the Pankararu. We tell our stories about food traditions. My people have the habit of eating some things they do not eat. They are from the coast. They know about many things there that I hesitate to speak about... I eat boa constrictor meat. He said he would never eat snake. I said: 'One day you will!' Not because it is bad but because it is delicious. Tastes like fried chicken. It tastes very good. One day he went to the city and I had a snake in the refrigerator. I prepared it. When he arrived, a little hungry, looking for something to eat, there was only the *furofa* of boa constrictor meat [to eat]. He tasted it, ate it all, and thought it was delicious. Afterwards I told him it was a snake he had just eaten. He did not believe me. But, according to him, it was so good he could have eaten more if there were more (T. Pankararu, recorded interview, March 3rd, 2009).

On the other hand, Ytxay Pataxó (2009) narrates the event that happened between him and his wife, who belongs to the Pankararu people:

Some time ago, my wife did not know what a crab was. So in my relatives' home there was boiled crab for dinner and she ate it, shell and all. She bit the shell thinking it was soft. She bit into that and into everything. But now, she likes it and knows how to eat it. (Y. Pataxó, recorded interview, March 3rd, 2009).

In the CVJ village, food is much more than a physical necessity. It is both a material and a spiritual issue for it is used not only as nourishment but also symbolically. Thus the post-structuralist methodology, where meaning is socially constructed through power relations, is fundamental to understand the relationship between food and culture.

According to Barthes (2008) food is “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour” (p.29). In this sense of food, “substances, techniques of preparation, habits, all become part of a system of differences in signification; and as soon as this happens, we have communication by way of food” (p.30).

In fact, the etymology of the term communication is related to food. It comes from the Latin word *communicatio*, meaning an activity carried out together. The term was first used in the Middle Ages, when Cenobite monks “started the *communicatio*, the act of having supper together, breaking the isolation” (Martino, 2001, p. 13). By doing this, the group formed by monks from very different backgrounds was sharing culture. Ashley, Hollows, Jones & Taylor (2004) analyzing the relationship between food and culture argue that “the ways in which what we eat and how we eat relate to class, cultures, and identities” (p. 59). In the same way, it is clear that “food is more than a basic source of nutrients; it is also a key component of our culture, central to our sense of identity” (Koc and Welsh, 2002, p. 46).

However, the debate on how culture and food are related is all but simple. To begin with, Raymond Williams (1983) says that culture is “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” (p. 87). In order to avoid misunderstandings and for the purposes of this paper, the term culture will be defined as a

historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life (Geertz, 1973, p.89).

The primary symbolic system used to transmit culture is that of language (Ogan, 2006, p.296), but food is also very important, because it has the power to bring people together and to create a system of communication. Food is also highly symbolic in most cultural traditions, especially in the spiritual realm. Many people worldwide communicate through food or food-related practices with their gods. In North America, for instance, wild rice is a source of food and also of wisdom for aboriginal peoples:

Wild rice is at the core of being, since we believe that the Creator gave us it as part of their original instructions. These instructions teach us how to live sustainable, in an intricate relationship with all living things (LaDuke, 2006, p. 25).

Food and plants also perform an essential function in the spiritual traditions of the CVJ village. Cleonice Pankararu illustrates it with the tale of *The Rain and the Krampiô*, in which an umbu cherry tree plays an important symbolic role:

Once, a group of Pankararu had to flee from a drought. It was a time when drought was everywhere. There was not a single drop of water in the region. The sun splintered the skin of people and land. The indigenous wandered across the land, almost dying of thirstiness and hunger. There was nothing green at sight. Having enough of it, the Oldest Man asked everybody to stop under the branches of an umbu cherry tree that was completely defoliated. There, everybody stayed: women, children, and young people. Then, the Oldest Man called some men and they walked away from the rest of the group. Next, they took their Kampriôs (pipes) and smoked, blowing the smoke to the sky. The smoke of their Krampiô went higher, higher, and higher, until it formed large clouds. The rain fell in great amounts and, afterwards, everybody was able to drink and eat at ease. Never again rain became scarce, and all Pankararu returned to their village to cultivate the land and to live in abundance (Cartilha da Aldeia CVJ, p.12).

In this tale, one can see important elements of the Pankararu culture and history. This indigenous group of Brazil used to live in one of the driest places of the country and, for centuries, they have suffered from wars and droughts. In many occasions, migration was the only escape. However, either at home or going from one place to another, the Pankararu people trusted their elders and religious leaders.

The umbu cherry tree is one of the most sacred plants for the Pankararu people and its symbolism reflects the physical structure of the tree. The roots of the umbu go deep into the soil and many of its branches can stock several liters of water for many years. Indigenous peoples in Brazil always knew that they could count on this last resource of water to endure a long drought.

This paper aims to look at the role that food plays in the lives of the people from the CVJ village in Brazil; its symbolic as well as its practical significance. In particular, the focus rests upon the cultural dynamics around food cultivation and consumption, as well as Pankararu and Pataxó customs related to the traditional crops, medicinal herbs, and sacred trees that they are growing in common in the new land. In a broader perspective, this project paper attempts to investigate how food has the communicative function of a bridging mechanism between the Pankararu and Pataxó cultures in the CVJ village in Brazil.

5. The communicative function of food in the CVJ village

It is known that food can be used as a weapon and lead to reduce people to starvation during conflicts. However, “food can also be used as a bridge between people, a tool that promotes the emancipation of people” (Maluf, Recorded interview, March 5th, 2009). For indigenous peoples, getting together and developing a sustainable system of food production may increase their chances of surviving as sovereign peoples in the present era. Thus new alliances and strategic partnerships are essential to defend, maintain and reconstruct indigenous rights and culture. Benjamin Inuca, member of the Federation of Quechua Peoples of the Northern Sierra of Ecuador, said that “if we are not together, we are no more than a big meal” (as cited in Bell, 2006, p.184).

In the case of the CVJ village, food can be seen not only as a way for survival, sovereignty, and strategy, but also as a form of resistance, cultural reinvention and ethnic reconstruction. Geralda Soares, a Brazilian researcher and educator, argues that the CVJ village represents a group of survival peoples in today’s world, in a region with a semi-arid climate (G. Soares, recorded interview, March 3rd, 2009). On the resistance of the group, Cleonice Pankararu says that when they decided to move to the Jequitinhonha Valley many people said:

Gee! But you are crazy, are you going to the Jequitinhonha Valley? They say it is the misery valley, or this, or that. We say, no! It is not thought to be misery valley. Once I said to someone: how can misery valley produce so many precious stones, gold, diamonds in the Jequitinhonha River? There is constant exploitation such as Eucalypt farms, but it is not a place for misery. What is missing is for people to discover this... We came here. It has been three years. So we had another view of the valley, one that many don’t have, right? They still think it is a dry region that doesn’t produce. But people need to know that this here was devastated. They only destroyed! I think one of our obligations as indigenous peoples, as human beings, is to defend life. I think this space here will be for this (C. Pankararu, recorded interview, March 2nd, 2009).

There were numerous indigenous traditions centered on rituals of fishing, hunting, collecting fruits, and cultivating small pieces of land that have been lost in Brazil. At the turn of this century, the total indigenous population does not exceed 735,000 individuals (IBGE 2000), while the total Brazilian population today is just over 190 million people. Many indigenous groups disappeared from the face of Earth during the last centuries caused by alien diseases and conflicts with the newcomers. The indigenous people from the CVJ village showed resistance to this history of oppression by migrating, creating a new village, and constructing a new cultural life. The cultivation and sharing of traditional food, recipes and tales from both the Pataxó and the Pankararu peoples, play an important role in this process.

The way of cooking is also a language (Strauss, 2008). In the Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba village people share recipes of Pataxó boiled food (*mocuçui*) as well as roasted boa constrictor meat and *farofa* (manioc flour fried in butter) creating a perfect communicative function of bridge between these two cultures. An evidence of it came out when the chief To'ê Pankararu was in his sister's kitchen preparing the famous *moqueca moquiada* (roasted fish in banana leaves), when he and his brother in law, Ytxay Pataxó told the following story about the recipe:

To'ê Pankararu: We're going to roast fish in banana leaves. The recipe is simple. Season it overnight, slash it and on the next day wrap it in banana leaves. There's no secret. Dig a hole in the ground and build a fire. After rolling and tying it all up in the leaf, you put it there and throw live charcoal over it, and leave it alone at fire temperature. I learned this recipe from my brother-in-law, who is a Pataxó, married to my sister. It is their tradition. I learned from them.

Ytxay Pataxó: He has learned, for he has lived with us for a long time, understand? Besides this, he married a Pataxó. Didn't he have to learn too? I think of course he had to. This is one of our traditional foods. Not only ours, but of other peoples that make *moqueca* (T. Pankararu and Y. Pataxó, recorded interview, March 3rd, 2009).

From this exchange and by sharing recipes between the Pankararu and the Pataxó individuals from the CVJ village, it is clear that food is much more than a source of nutrients. It is a complex system of meaning and communication. It may indicate cultural reinvention and ethnic reconstruction and works as a communicative function of bridging mechanism between the two cultures.

Domingos Cachimbo, the *pajé* (shaman) of the CVJ village, explains some Pataxó traditional ways of eating that were practiced until recently by his people:

Occasionally the elders would kill a wild pig and we didn't have salt or a refrigerator. The last thing we had to do was dig a hole in the ground, put wood in there and light a fire. We would make charcoal and put the game meat there to roast; that we call *moqué*. That becomes *moquiada*, roasted – that meat inside. After the meat was roasted there was room to put a basket and cover it. They would not hunt again until that large amount of food was eaten. The people would keep on working and eating, doing those jobs and eating that game they had killed. They would divide the food with everyone working. That's the way they would eat (D. Cachimbo, recorded interview, March 2nd, 2009).

Hence, eating together and sharing food in a field work reveals the *modus operandi* of the indigenous group around their food *moqueca*. It combines a whole system of meanings, where the relationships are not vertical, or based on hierarchical power, but in trust and communality. At home, the way to serve food at the dinner time is also based in the same principle. There is no squared table. People sit in circles with food in the center, and eat together.

Cleonice Pankararu, commenting on her food culture argues that the way her mother served them dinner is the same as the Pataxó people: “my mother would cover a mat on the ground and put the food there. We would all sit in circle and my mother

would distribute the food on little plates” (C. Pankararu, recorded interview, March 2nd, 2009).

The elder Graça Pataxó describes her favorite meals and affirms that food for her is *mocuçui* (fish) and *pirão* (manioc flour cooked in seasoned water). Araponga Pataxó shares the same food culture of Graça, but adds that an important part of dinner is the gravy: “put meat here and there in the gravy, and it makes us happy because joy for us is a belly full of fish” (G. Pataxó and A. Pataxó, recorded interview, March 3rd, 2009).

The *beiju* (a kind of pancake made of manioc starch) is probably the most characteristic food of the Brazilian indigenous peoples. Graça Pataxó points out that:

When someone makes *beiju*, we eat that. To eat together with the communities, everyone happily smiling, eating the *mocuçui* (fish), drinking the *kauim* (fermented alcoholic beverage made of manioc), drinking the gravy... This is happiness for us, having our culture, and I think this is good. So this makes me feel satisfied! It can be rice, beans, spaghetti, but I don’t like them very much (Recorded interview, March 3rd, 2009).

In the CVJ village, the preparation of *beiju* reflects the ethnic group origins. In a meeting on the *cabana*, after a succulent *mocuçui* lunch, a group was talking about *beiju*:

Cleonice Pankararu: I think *beiju* is common in almost all the villages. It is made from manioc meal.

Geo Pataxó: But I think godmother [Cleonice] makes it with the manioc starch. We [Pataxó] make it mixing with the meal.

Cleonice Pankararu: Yes, my *beiju* is made from the manioc starch, water and a little salt and pure manioc starch.

Graça Pataxó: We also make *beiju* like Cleonice does. But I prefer it with coconut milk. I think it tastes better that way (C. Pankararu, G. Pataxó, and G. Pataxó, recorded interview, March 3rd, 2009).

This dialogue shows the way that Pankararu people have in making *beiju*. It may be a result of their cultural history: hunters from arid regions of Brazil. On the other hand, the Pataxó people in the preparation of their *beiju*, mix the manioc starch with the meal and

with coconut milk. Pataxó people belong to the coast and originally had access to ingredients that Pankararu peoples did not have.

Consequently, sharing *beiju* together as well as the different ways to prepare it, denotes how food has the communicative function of a bridging mechanism between the Pankararu and Pataxó cultures for both recipes are equally appreciated. They eat each other's *beiju* and make comparisons between the different recipes. All of it full of traditional knowledge and cultural values surrounding the exchange.

6. Research context and data source

The idea for this research project has evolved as a result of my participation in courses and activities at the Ryerson University's Centre for Studies in Food Security - CSFS. The centre was established in 1994, and has been working since then to promote food security through research, dissemination, education, community action, and professional practice. The CSFS has hosted several national and international conferences and is engaged with food security initiatives at local, regional and global levels in Canada, Brazil, and Angola.

I first met To'ê Pankararu, Ytxay Pataxó, Yamany Pataxó, and Geralda Soares in Toronto in June 2007. They had come to Canada to participate in a seminar promoted by the CSFS / CIDA project *Building Capacity in Food Security in Brazil and Angola*. At that time, I was working at the CSFS as a research assistant. During the seminar *Indigenous Youth Exploring Identities through Food Security*, I accompanied them as a translator and together we visited a few Aboriginal agencies and reserves in Ontario.

In May 2008, I met the group once again in Brazil. Professor Cecília Rocha, the director of the CSFS, took a group of researchers from Canada, Brazil, and Angola to visit the municipality of Araçuaí, in the Brazilian State of Minas Gerais, in order to know local initiatives in food security. I was invited to go as a research assistant with the goal to produce a video report about the journey. The CVJ village was among the visited projects in Araçuaí for they are experimenting with a sustainable agricultural system called permaculture.

By spending some days in the CVJ village, I had the opportunity to talk with the individuals I had met in Toronto, as well as many people from the CVJ village. The themes of conversation were rich and stimulating, especially on subjects related to food and culture.

For the last two years I have been a MA student in the Communication and Culture Program, and also a student of the two year online Certificate in Food Security promoted by Ryerson University and *Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro*, Brazil. This double perspective gave me access to various concepts of culture, communication, and food security. I have realized that there are unexplored connections between food, culture, and communication. For instance, I found out that there is a need for videos and communication materials to discuss food, culture and food security.

6.1. Research methodology and ethics

This project paper adopted the “research from the margins” approach. This methodology allows the data to speak for itself, and enables to describe daily practices from the point of view of those researched. This standpoint seemed to be the most appropriated for this project paper for it allows the recognition of the marginalization suffered by the indigenous people from the CVJ village. According to Kirby and Mckenna (1989), by using this approach the researcher accepts the commitment to advancing knowledge, in this case food and indigenous culture, grounded in the experience of living on the margins (p. 64). For them, methods from the margins are based in the fact that:

- 1) Knowledge is socially constructed;
- 2) Social interactions form the basis of social knowledge;

- 3) Different people experience the world differently;
- 4) Because they have different experience, people have different knowledge;
- 5) Knowledge changes over time;
- 6) Differences in power have resulted in the commodification of knowledge and a monopoly on knowledge production (p. 65).

Lofland and Lofland (1984) argued that an interview is a guided conversation, which main goal “is to elicit from the interviewee rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis” (p.12). As Kirby and Mckenna (1989) suggest, two principles are essential here: “formation and clarity of questions and egalitarian setting and relationship between the interviewer and the participant” (pp. 66-67). The interviews for this paper project occurred during the winter of 2009 in the Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba village.

Respondents were recruited because of their leadership and commitment to the creation and development of the village. I interviewed ten people using the Portuguese language, the respondents’ (and mine) mother-tongue. The data was collected based on a questionnaire (see appendix I) with open questions on food, culture, and life histories. Each interview was recorded and filmed for approximately 90 to 120 minutes.

Therefore, all interviews were filmed with the aim to be a raw material for the editing of a video documentary of about 30 minutes named *We do not live for material things*. Through this product I look at the role that food plays in the lives of people in the CVJ village. In particular, I focused on the dynamics around food cultivation and traditions related to the different cultures brought together by the decision of this group to settle together in a new land. In a broader perspective, the documentary shows how food has the communicative function of a bridging mechanism between the Pataxó and the Pankararu cultures in the CVJ village in Brazil.

Based on the research from the margins perspective, I always underlined with the interviewees that I am a learner and that I was seeking their teachings as means to answer not only research questions, but especially as a way to understand their lifestyle and culture. I was inspired by Levi (2007) and her research on food among the Elsipogtog, a Migmag First Nation in Canada, when she stated that “respect is the ethical principle that guides this process” (p.36).

Following my first visit to the CVJ village in May 2008, I contacted by telephone the *cacique* To’ê Pankararu, and presented the main ideas of my research and the project for the video. During this conversation we elaborated a working schedule for the next months. After that, I sent by mail the standard questionnaire for the interviews and the consent forms for the use of sounds and images, both translated into Portuguese to be distributed among the participants. This procedure made possible not only a better preparation for the interview by themselves, but it also allowed them to modify or add new questions to the questionnaire (see Appendix I). In the same way, they were able to bring additional material (documents, pictures, newspapers, projects, videos, etc.) to the interview.

The interviews started in March 2009. The *cacique* To’ê Pankararu prepared a succulent welcome lunch, followed by a meeting with his wife Geo Pataxó and the educator Geralda Soares. In this opportunity, I explained to them in detail the scope and objectives of the research. I told them about my plan around the agenda, interview setting, proposed recording method and needed length of time.

Kirby and Mckenna (1989) pointed out that the basics for management and analysis of the data produced by the method of researching from the margins is an adaptation from the constant comparative method: “this calculated management requires two essential components of research from the margins – intersubjectivity and critical reflection on the social context” (p.129). The intersubjectivity is based on trust and dialogue between all participants, including the interviewer. The critical reflection, says Freire (1985), “is the real, concrete context of facts” (p.51).

In addition to digital voice recorder, I used a recording protocol (Appendix II) with a chart with two columns and the titles: observations and personal notes that I worked after the interviews. Above all, the most important attitude during the interview that I have adopted was to express respect at all times to whatever the interviewee was saying and to the way he/she was expressing it. To me remained the obligation to show this respect by listening to them without prejudice and to allow them to tell their own history in their own words.

7. Video production and technical decisions

The production of this documentary has conveyed a massive learning process, and a powerful and valuable personal experience. The Pataxó and Pankararu from the CVJ village are rich in content and insights about different subjects: communication, culture, arts, political economy, food, food security, and environmental issues. In fact, they taught me a lot about many things, and more specifically about their relationship with Earth, the respect to living things, nature, education, and how to be a better human being.

The following are findings and reflections pertaining to my experience in doing this documentary.

7.1. Training on equipment use

I have come to realize the extensive amount of technical organization and preparation involved in a video production. Included are the routine maintenance procedures: batteries need to be charged, lenses kept clean, tapes cued, and interview questions printed. The communication groundwork I was required to perform included tasks such as: phoning interviewees, e-mailing ethic committees, printing plane tickets, and photocopying consent forms. Through the production of this video documentary, I have learned an enormous amount about the diverse technologies and tasks involved in video production.

Working with the video camera, I learned that the best thing to do is to keep it simple, therefore I avoided movements and special effects. My still-photography camera helped me with some images that were important in the editing process. Particularly pictures of food were valuable to illustrate the audio.

I found that is not so easy to make decisions about a film overseas, especially with a tight budget. To get to the Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba village from Toronto is a long journey. It takes ten hours in an airplane from Toronto to São Paulo. Two hours in another flight from São Paulo to Belo Horizonte. Ten hours in a bus from Belo Horizonte to Araçuaí and another 30 minutes from this city to the CVJ village.

Carrying all equipment, taking notes and thinking about gathering data and not forgetting if the microphone is on and if the angle/light is proper can be a challenge and strenuous work. Hence, the best way to do it is having the literature review done, a consistent questionnaire for the interviews, a good plan for the trip, and to be very organized.

Proper equipment is also crucial. For the making of this documentary, I used a simple Sony digital voice recorder, a still-photograph camera and a high-definition video camcorder and many, many tapes. An extra hard drive is very useful to download your images and sound and to have a suitable backup to carry all the equipment. To shoot the documentary *We do not live for material things*, I used a small Canon HDV – HV 20, with an optical image stabilizer, an ECZ-990 zoom microphone for camcorder, two batteries, a Gitzo Monotrek monopod, and an Aipu headphone.

Because in the CVJ village the sun light was usually very bright, external filming was made as much as possible in early hours in the morning or after four o'clock in the afternoon. The *cabana* (a circular cabin), used as gathering room, is a sacred place in the CVJ village and very important things happen there. However, in regards to technical and ethical principles, to film in this space was not always possible. First, the design of

the *cabana* makes shooting inside it very difficult during the day. The *cabana* comprises a circular earthen floor, surrounded by thirteen wooden columns, and covered by a roof made of batten and straw, but there are no walls. Most of the time, sunlight covers the room like a shiny white blanket of light and everything inside the *cabana* seems to be only shades. Second, during their rituals and gatherings, the *cacique* usually stays in the center of the room, while the remnant members of the group sit around him. Thus, capturing images depended on authorization from and convenience for the group respect being the ethical principle that guided this research. When allowed, shooting inside the *cabana* proved to be a very hard task.

After all shooting, it is important to organize notes and tapes before starting the transcription of the material into Portuguese and, after that, its translation into English. In the case of the documentary *We do not live for material things* there were in total 31 Mini DV tapes of an hour each. It took me two weeks of concentrated work to edit all of it in 33 minutes. The Project video was edited on my own computer. I used the video-editing software Adobe Premiere and it was processed on an Acer computer with core 2 quad. An external hard drive of 750 GB helped to organize all clips.

The Windows Vista caused me many troubles while editing the material. During the process, many problems appeared and the computer crashed several times. Sometimes I lost hours of editing work, a very frustrating experience. A hard task also was to put the subtitles. Due to financial restrictions for this research, I could not buy specific software for subtitles. In fact they are titles made one by one over the images, which means a total of 330 opened and edited windows in Adobe Premiere.

I learned many lessons from the editing process: make backups of tapes/disks and files and keep a good record of them. By editing different versions, it was possible to arrange the footage in a sequence that accomplished concision and essential topic information.

7.2. Narration

In my documentary there is no external narrator. All voices belong to the interviewees. Once more, my ethical choice for the principle of respect informed my decision of letting the Pankararu and the Pataxó people from the CVJ village tell their history with their own words. The sporadic appearances of Renato Maluf and Geralda Soares serve strictly as a useful counterpoint in the narrative to make some concepts explicit and to offer to the viewer glimpses of a broader context. However, the real narrators of the documentary are the Pankararu and the Pataxó people. What we hear are their voices of wisdom and respect for Earth.

7.3. Music

Music plays a vital role in *We do not live for material things*. From start to finish music is almost always heard, either prominently in the mix or quietly in the background. I included three songs performed live by the CVJ village choir, the little singer Nerreuane, and Ytxay and his family, respectively. The morning birds' songs from the CVJ village were used as background sound for many scenes.

7.4. Notes on video structure

The duration of my documentary is 33.5 minutes. The first section, lasting approximately 12 minutes, introduces the issues of land, culture, and food. The interrelation of land and food security is explained in this opening section. Vocal layover

by Renato Maluf (interviewed at Universidade Federal Fluminense, Rio de Janeiro) and the *cacique* To'ê Pankararu (interviewed in the Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba village) provide the dialogue. With a brief historical background, To'ê tells us the history of the Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba village. The narration is illustrated by images of the Jequitinhonha Valley. Cleonice Pankararu narrates the decision of living in the CVJ village and Ytxay Pataxó introduces his permaculture plan, as a food production and distribution system.

The second section, lasting approximately 12 minutes in length, explores the concept of food security, indigenous culture and education, green revolution and food sovereignty. Voice-overs are provided by Geralda Soares (interviewed in the CVJ village) and Renato Maluf. Issues of prejudice against indigenous peoples are addressed by Cleonice Pankararu and To'ê Pankararu. The third section lasts approximately five minutes and shows how food has the communicative function of a bridging mechanism between Pankararu and Pataxó cultures. Featured speakers include Geralda Soares, Ytxay Pataxó and To'ê Pankararu, Cleonice Pankararu, Domingos Cachimbo, Graça Pataxó, Yamany Pataxó, Geo Pataxó and Araponga Pataxó. Related topics of recipes, sharing food, living and cooking together are discussed in the last six minutes, being a natural conclusion for the documentary for it shows how the cultural exchange occurs on the practical level.

7.5. Now available

With the video documentary now complete, my plan is to make this production available to a broader public. The dissemination of this documentary may help interested audiences with the discussion about relationships between food and culture for indigenous peoples in Brazil.

The documentary will be firstly screened in the CVJ village during the emblematic Festival of the Umbu Tree in October, 2009. Secondly, I will post an internet-compatible copy of the video on the CSFS's web site and send the link to the listserv of the CSFS, which includes scholars, researchers, and activists from Canada, Brazil, and Angola, as means to feed the debate on food security, permaculture, and sustainable agricultural systems.

Conclusion

The production of this documentary was a massive learning process for me. The Pankararu and the Pataxó people from the CVJ village are rich in content and insights about different subjects: communication, culture, arts, political economy, food, food security, and environmental issues. In fact, they taught me a lot about many things such as their model relationship with Earth, their respect for living things, nature, education, and how to be a better human being. It was a great experience to put on the table all the theoretical knowledge acquired in my Certificate in Food Security and MA program in Communication and Culture at Ryerson University. Not always this knowledge agreed with the data I gathered on the research field, and I had many times to review my previous ideas. As a result, I did not only got a better training as a researcher, but it also allowed me to better understand that there are alternative ways for life on this Earth.

Sometimes was hard to keep a silence on my mind after talking to the people from the CVJ village because of the volume of information and teaching that I got every day. I tried to keep myself alert, taking notes, shooting what was possible, and planning the better way to do my job without interfering in the normal life of the group. After the interviews, the sign 'food' became plural and I realized that what I have found was a script for many documentaries, not just one. I understand now that food has a meaning socially constructed through power relations, and that indigenous resistance to imposing exterior models is part of this process. The fact that in the CVJ village food has the communicative function of a bridging mechanism between Pankararu and Pataxó cultures increases their sovereignty as indigenous peoples.

Their permaculture project and its principles are key components in the process of their identity reconstruction, reflecting on the strengthening of their food security. In their specific struggle to achieve food security, the Pankararu and the Pataxó people from the CVJ village sew together ancient and new ideas on a sustainable way of life on this Earth. There, both tradition and modern thought are mutually enhancing. They are changing a destroyed and arid landscape, by growing subsistence crops, planting sacred trees, and cultivating medicinal plants. Through their daily practice, they are inspiring local non-indigenous people to do the same. They hope that someday, the so-called “misery valley” of the Jequitinhonha River will be called the “valley of life.” For that, many more people will have to adopt the maxim expressed by the cacique To’ê Pankararu: “We do not live for material things.”

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Appendices

1. Questionnaire

- a) Could you introduce yourself and tell your life history (ethnic origin, childhood, youth) ?
- b) What does it mean to you to be an Indigenous person in Brazil?
- c) What is your traditional food and what does it mean to you?
- d) How it has changed with the creation of the CVJ village?
- e) By exchanging food rituals or recipes, have you learned anything new about people from other cultural backgrounds in CVJ?
- f) Do you think this improved life in the village? How?
- g) Do you think these exchanges have changed your culture? How?
- h) What was your participation or involvement in the creation of the CVJ?
- i) What does the CVJ village mean to you?
- j) What does traditional agriculture and permaculture mean to you?
- k) Do you have a traditional tale or recipe related to food in your original culture?
- l) How do you share your traditional recipes with your community?
- m) What do elders and children participate in preserving food culture in the village?
- o) Would you like to add some more information?

2. Recording Protocol

Name: _____

Place/setting: _____

Date (dd/mm/yyyy): _____

Observations	Personal Notes



To: Rita Liberato
Communication and Culture
Re: REB 2008-299: Food and culture in Brazil: A case study of the Indigenous village Cinta
Vermelha-Jundiba
Date: March 1, 2009

Dear Rita Liberato,

The review of your protocol REB File REB 2008-299 is now complete. The project has been approved for a one year period. Please note that before proceeding with your project, compliance with other required University approvals/certifications, institutional requirements, or governmental authorizations may be required.

This approval may be extended after one year upon request. Please be advised that if the project is not renewed, approval will expire and no more research involving humans may take place. If this is a funded project, access to research funds may also be affected.

Please note that REB approval policies require that you adhere strictly to the protocol as last reviewed by the REB and that any modifications must be approved by the Board before they can be implemented. Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication from the Principal Investigator as to how, in the view of the Principal Investigator, these events affect the continuation of the protocol.

Finally, if research subjects are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research.

Please quote your REB file number (REB 2008-299) on future correspondence.

Congratulations and best of luck in conducting your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy Walton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Nancy Walton, Ph.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Board

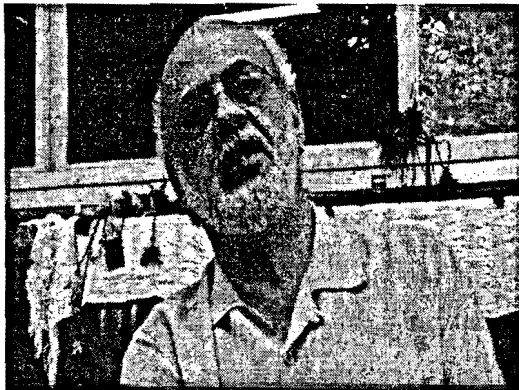


Journal – We do not live for material things

by Rita Liberato

The cultural reinvention and ethnic reconstruction of the VJ village



Interview with Professor Renato Maluf at Fluminense Federal University, Rio de Janeiro.



Land is crucial for indigenous peoples.

What's the principle factor making indigenous populations susceptible to hunger? The fragility of their land situation. Be it their access to land, or insufficient access, or the precariousness of access or ownership of the land where they live.

You can't separate food security from culture. Because food and eating, or nutritional goods and how people acquire them are main factors of cultural identity. Food is an expression of cultural identity. As bad nourishment can be an expression of loss of identity. So one cannot disassociate food from culture.

<p><i>Cacique [Chief]</i></p> <p>To'ê Pankararu</p> 	<p>The Earth is our mother!</p>
<p>Music</p>	<p>Heruê by the CVJ village group</p>
<p>History of the CVJ village</p> <p><i>Cacique To'ê Pankararu</i></p> 	<p>In the 1950's, we had an enormous conflict in the Pataxó's territory, where many Indigenous became fugitives, and dispersed throughout the country.</p> <p>There was a place called Guarani, a jail where the Brazilian government used to take the Indigenous, when the Indigenous used to do something that the government disapproved of, they were taken to this jail. As a result, this place became an Indigenous village. Many Indigenous peoples started their life there and built a family. This village was formed by many Indigenous peoples, such as: Guarani, Kaingang, Pataxó, Pankararu and Krenak. There were too many people groups in one village, so some of those people regressed back to their lands. The Krenak people went back to their land. The Maxakali people to theirs and Kaingang left too. But the Pataxós did not leave, they stayed there. They fought until they got the government recognition, which legally transformed that place into a village. This Pataxó people that are here</p>

today, used to live there.

In 2006, there was an immense forest fire because the village is always surrounded by rich farmers. The farmers started a fire in their field, but the fire quickly spread into the neighboring Indigenous village, and burned it down. The water spring, native forest, everything was burned down. Many lost their will to live, especially the elders. As a result, there were two suicides: the Chief and my father in law. This family group said that they could live there anymore, because there was too much pain. I lost my parents and there was no land for agriculture and the community was growing. During that time we knew a woman named Geralda. We shared our worries of leaving that place and find another piece of land to live with Geralda. To build a new village and to start a new life. We said that we could not live there anymore. So we choose the Jequitinhonha Valley.

Music



The CVJ village sings Heruê

Cacique To'ê Pankararu



We are the first Indigenous people to go against the principles of indigenous culture, to buy land. Because this doesn't exist in Indigenous culture: buying land. But when we claim indigenous land, it has to be land traditionally our, of our people, and we are not from this region. We entered into this system of buying land 'cause it was a pressing need. We couldn't wait for a federal agency or even travel to our own traditional lands because of the problem we faced. We were living in the city, renting, often without enough money, with 12 children, who often asked for what was lacking. A better way appeared when we heard about this farm credit program that offered to small farmers, to rural people, the means to get their own plot of land.

The Jequitinhona Valley is a region with many migrants, eh? People migrate a lot from here searching for survival. Many young people from here leave to cut sugar cane in São Paulo, go south to harvest coffee, and we were worried about that. So we heard about this, looked to see if we could pay and believed we could. So we got into this program to buy land to build our village, to build the future of our families, our children.

The strength of our will to build the village, to maintain our culture, traditions and customs, led us to build our village this way.

Cleonice Pankararu



For me it is God's gift to us to be able to live today in our village of *Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba*. Because we formed it with two different peoples. *Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba*, because *Cinta Vermelha* [Red Belt] is one of the protectors of our Pankararu culture, a religious entity, a religious being for us, who protects the village. He is one of those that God gave to nature. *Cinta Vermelha* is the one who stayed to protect To'ê, the chief. *Jundiba* is a sacred tree of the Pataxó people, one with huge roots. It is very leafy. So, when the Pataxós were being persecuted, it was in this tree that they found protection; the tree hid them. They would make houses within the roots of the Jundiba. They would hide and their enemies would pass by and not see them inside the roots of the Jundiba. I think one of our obligations as Indigenous peoples, as human beings, is to defend life. I think this space here will be for this.



Music

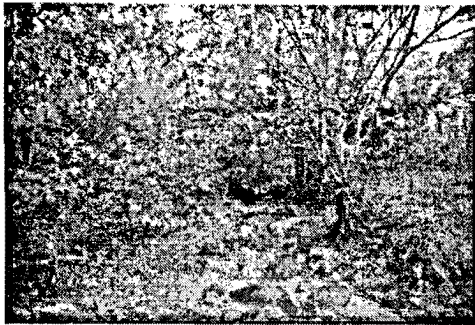
Heruê

Cleonice Pankararu



People say: Gee! But you're crazy, are you going to the Jequitinhonha Valley? They say its misery valley, or this, or that. We say, no! It is not thought to be misery valley. Once I said to someone: how can misery valley produce so many precious stones, gold, diamonds in the Jequitinhonha River? There's constant exploitation. Eucalypt farms. Such is not a place for misery. What's missing is for people to discover this. There's a market, people plant and go to see at the market...We came here. It's been three years. So we had another view of the valley, one that many don't have, right, one that many don't have, right? They still think it's a dry region that doesn't produce. But people need to know that

	<p>this here was devastated. They only destroyed...</p>
<p>Ytxay Pataxó</p> 	<p>Where you see clearing, you see field, cattle, fence, grass...We say: gosh! Why don't people change their ideas? I mean, why not change their private thoughts, but also show it a little so people can see they are at least aware and can see nature in a different way. Why can't we change this too? We used to practice permaculture in the yard at home, the first zone for permaculture. The Indigenous and my parents would already do this: raise a chicken, plant a banana tree, throw food scraps and other decaying material onto the roots of the banana tree. The rest of the food scraps would be given to the chickens or pig. So we already did all this, but as a form of our people's traditional knowledge. Permaculture is a more innovative system, with more planning and technology.</p>
<p>Geralda Soares</p> <p>(Interview -The CVJ village)</p> 	<p>There are regions like ours that suffer the impact of large monoculture projects. They are reserved for the planting of eucalyptus, like in <i>Mato Grosso do Sul</i> they are destined for producing soybeans for exportation.</p> <p>It's not so much for marketing here. It's the so-called green desert agenda, and on the other side the blue desert agenda, the construction of hydroelectric. Just along the Jequitinhonha River, it seems there are more than 20 projected hydroelectric.</p>
<p><i>Cacique To'ê Pankararu</i></p>	<p>Sometimes I say: Cleonice, do you suppose it's our luck, our destiny?</p> <p>Because when he was alive my father used to say that wherever he was there was this persecution by hydroelectric</p>



plants. Now that we've come here this Irapé hydroelectric comes for the Jequitinhonha River. When they closed the floodgates there, the river here became only a little stream. Everything dried up. From here to there all you could see was sand. Over there the fish went without oxygen.

Without water the fish flapped around and you could feel the heat of the water in the sun. Now it's like this because they are opening the floodgates and the water is back. But only water, no fish.

This is hard!

Food security, Indigenous culture and sovereignty

Geralda Soares

(Educator)



Interview in the CVJ village

This thing of food security, thinking about the future and wanting to create a life project that maintains life for these children here, is tied into other aspects as well.

Renato Maluf (PhD) (Interview at Fluminense Federal University, Rio de Janeiro.)

Our idea of food and nutrition security, as it is being utilized in Brazil, is guided by two main principles. The first principle is the human right to food.

That is, food is a basic right that belongs to every human being, to be well feed and protected against hunger. So, food and nutrition security policies should contemplate this legal perspective. The way these are conceived and implemented and the fact of you permanently having instruments that guarantee access to food is a conception of right. The second guiding principle of our conceptualization is that of food sovereignty. So, for us, food security policies should express a perspective of sovereignty. It is the right of peoples to

	<p>decide all that has to do with their food. What they want to produce, how they produce, the consumption standard they want, the protection of their biodiversity and habits. That's why, to complete the phrase, we always refer to food and nutrition security and sovereignty, and the human right to food. There are three references that are worked on together.</p>
<p>Geralda Soares</p> 	<p>I mean, life is not just eating, nourishing oneself or having plants.</p> <p>It's also identity, language, customs, painting, architecture, health and medicine. So, for me, the village <i>Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba</i> represents a grouping of survival elements in today's world, in a region with a semi-arid climate.</p>
<p>Cleonice Pankararu</p> 	<p>To be an indigenous people is a challenge. There's always one culture wanting to eliminate another.</p>
<p><i>Cacique</i> To'ê Pankararu</p>	<p>When my first boy was born, I mean my second, Watory, I went to register him. At the Registry Office the woman questioned that and said it was a complicated name. Even more ridiculous, she wanted to give him an American name that was just as complicated. I was lost for words. The name she was suggesting wasn't Brazilian either.</p>



It was very ugly.

To be indigenous person is...



I think that to be Indigenous person is to be respected and respect the other, the difference. (Yamany Pataxó)

I'm proud to be an Indigenous individual, understand? (Graça Pataxó)

This comes from my ancestral roots, great-grandparents, parents, all from our struggles. (Araponga Pataxó)

Dignity, having respect, your history. (Cleonice Pankararu)

To go about maintaining your culture, dances, foods. (Geo Pataxó)

Cleonice Pankararu
(Nurse)

The way my mother served us dinner is the same as the Pataxós people. She would cover a mat on the ground and put the food there.

We would all sit in circles. It was the same for the Pataxós. The mother would



distribute the food on little plates.

Someone would come up and say that it is out of date. How can you raise your children like that?

That's bad. You cannot teach your language to your child, it's ugly!

Ytxay Pataxó

(Teacher)



This here is our community's little schoolhouse. In our Pataxó language, school is *Kyjetyauê*. The name of our school here is *Cinta Vermelha-Jundiba*.

Music

Nerreuane sings Gavião da Pena Preta

Yamany Pataxó

(Teacher)

I have learned many things working with other ethnic groups.

But not after studying in a non indigenous school, where I learned nothing about my culture. But not because I first studied in a non Indigenous school. So when I finished my program at that time, I was not able to work with Indigenous culture Today I can affirm that I know a lot.

The children here in the village really like to read books.

My area is research and history with the elders. I'm going to research our history and then I want to write a children's primer for reading and writing.

I want to improve this, to teach children



the gift of reading well and understanding what they read.

Music

Nerreuane sings Gavião da Pena Preta

Yamany Pataxó (Teacher)



We arrived here at a time when there was no water at all. We collected rain water.

We needed land and water to live.

(Cacique To'ê Pankararu)

When I say that an Indigenous person is hungry it is because he has no land.



Renato Maluf (PhD)


(Interview at Fluminense Federal University, Rio de Janeiro.)

When multilateral organisms, big corporations say that food security in the world will be achieved when we increase production, it's not important what of, using all possible technology – what are they talking about? They are talking about four products. Today there are studies showing that almost all food ingested by the population comes from four products: soybeans, corn, wheat and rice.

Cacique To'ê Pankararu



The question of the government basic food supply: It is a food supply that doesn't fulfill what an Indigenous group needs. It is food that the Indian doesn't know about. For example, when they send a basic food supply basket to the Maxakali people, they send packaged milk, often out of date and without instruction, Small children are seen eating a cup of milk powder. Canned foods, principally. I'm against this kind of food in the villages, understand? Because Indigenous people have a more native menu, food they know about. That's why I say it all goes back to land.

<p>Professor Renato Maluf (PhD)</p> <p>(Interview at Fluminense Federal University, Rio de Janeiro.)</p>	<p>We are able to match this situation of large producers and exporters of food with the plague of inequality, because our model producer/exporter is built into the mass production of products that express what is called the great green revolution. But it so happens that this farming model, typical in Brazil, reproduces unequal standards and is totally unsustainable.</p>
<p>Ytxay Pataxó (Teacher)</p> 	<p>I really wanted to study agronomy and Agricultural Techniques and to eventually get a college degree in it, understand?</p> <p>Who knows, some day...? Though here in Araçuaí there's the Hagogemito School, run by the Church. I was selected and got a scholarship for a year's study of Agricultural Techniques. I started out. But we saw that the school, especially here in Araçuaí, taught mostly techniques that are inconvenient for us indigenous people.</p> <p>Or at least the person that works in the field.</p> <p>It's geared for monoculture, mass production, and cattle-raising.</p> <p>The techniques they taught us were not what I had in mind. Traditional schools don't teach according to the needs of each community, of each family group, do they?</p> <p>I did not fit in there. It was working with chemical fertilizers, with dangerous insecticides, understand?</p> <p>So I think that this is not my path. Destroying the soil, nature, introducing something that is not good for future generations. These days we want to communicate to the school children, communities, families...Not only here in</p>




the community, the village, but to our neighbors. So when they arrive they see that we have the intention to do permaculture. And for them to also practice it, that's very important, not only for us, but to collaborate with our planet, and to take care of living things and manage waste. One very serious thing for our planet today is the trash, isn't it? So Permaculture can improve our indigenous culture, be it Pankararu, Pataxó, Guarani, or Krenak...or any ethnic group. I think this is what's important.

Renato Maluf
(Interview at Fluminense Federal
University, Rio de Janeiro.)

This is why we insist so much on support for family farming.

Doing so, you are inverting the logic of at production. Go look at the kind of agricultural producer of food that, if well guided, produces food in a more sustainable way, giving value to diversity and within closer circuits of production and consumption. Food can be used as a weapon, a tool for conquest and power. But it can also be used as a bridge of cooperation between peoples, a respectful cooperation, shall we say, that promotes the emancipation of people.

	<p>How food has the communicative function of a bridging mechanism between the Pataxó and Pankararu peoples in the CVJ in Brazil</p>
<p>Geralda Soares (Educator)</p>	<p>It's easy to get people together somewhere. But that's not having a life project that people carry out together. I think that they are forming a new people, a result of this existence, this living with the Pankararu and Pataxó people. For me, they are founding a people that will inherit a lot from the Pankararus and a lot from the Pataxós.</p>
<p>Cacique To'ê Pankararu</p> 	<p>Ytxay has been married to my sister for almost fifteen years.</p> <p>We have our customs. They belong to the Pataxós, we to the Pankararus.</p> <p>We tell our stories about food customs. My people have the habit of eating some things they don't eat. They are from the coast. They know about many things there that I hesitate to speak about: I will not eat those things.</p> <p>I eat boa constrictor meat. He says he would never eat snake. I say: One day you will! Not because it's bad but because it's delicious. Tastes like fried chicken. Tastes very good. One day he went to the city and I had a snake in the refrigerator. I prepared it. When he arrived, a little hungry, looking for something to eat, there was only the boa constrictor. He tasted, ate it all, and thought it was delicious. Afterwards I told him it was a snake he had just eaten. He didn't believe me. But, according to him, it was so good he could have eaten more if there were more.</p>



all up in the leaf put it there and throws live charcoal over it and leaves it alone at fire temperature. I learned this recipe from my brother-in-law, who is a Pataxó, married to my sister.

It is their tradition. And I learned from them.

Ytxay Pataxó and To'ê Pankararu



He has learned, for he has lived with us for a long time, understand?

Besides this, he married a Pataxó. Didn't he have to learn too?

I think of course he had to. This is one of our traditional foods. Not only ours, but of other peoples that make *moqueca*.

After he married and moved to Espírito Santo, where he lived with the Tupiniquim and Guarani peoples, he enriched his knowledge of other customs.

And I to scattered out too, to live with other Indigenous peoples.

We had our childhood and adolescence together. That was a long stretch.

Cleonice Pankararu and Ytxay Pataxó cooking together

Ytxay, come here. Is this the way to add it?

This way, on top?

Put it inside. Is this how you season it?



Is this right? Is it?

You think that's enough seasoning?

You put salt under the gills.

Not under the gills.

Pajé Domingos Cachimbo

(Shaman)



Occasionally the elders would kill a wild pig and we didn't have salt or a refrigerator. We had nothing.

The last thing we had to do was dig a hole in the ground, put wood in there and light a fire. We would make charcoal and put the game meat there to roast; that we call *moqué*. It becomes *moquiada*, roasted – that meat inside. After the meat was roasted there was room to put a basket and cover it. They would not hunt again until that large amount of food was eaten. The people would keep on working and eating, doing those jobs and eating that game they had killed. They would kill tapirs; divide the food with everyone, working. That's the way they would eat.

Recipe



Moqueca moquiada

Cleonice
Pankararu.....

Yamany Pataxó.....

Araponga Pataxó

Graça Pataxó.....

Our food is wild game, fish, tapioca root pancakes and the fruit we find in the forest.

Each season yields ripe fruit. There's a time for mangaba, pequi, macaúba, the fruits from the forest. I think that is the best food.

Without meat or fish to eat, we are sad.

Eat only beans and rice without gravy?

The important part of dinner is the gravy.

Put meal here and there in the gravy and
we it makes us happy.

Joy for us is a belly full of fish.

To drink our kawim, eat our charcoal
roasted fish.

Take a gourd bowl of meal, sit there and eat.

This is our Indigenous custom.

Sometimes we cook mocuçui (fish) and



leave the gravy and the baby aside. It is a custom.

To drink the gravy of the mocuçu.

When someone makes beiju [a kind of tapioca pancake], we eat that. The same for meal.

To eat together with the communities, like we prepared the fish moqueca today, everyone happily smiling, eating the mocuçu (fish), drinking the kauim, drinking the gravy.

This is happiness for us, having our culture, and I think this is good.

I myself like to eat fish, meat, meal and pirão, and to drink gravy. So this makes me feel satisfied! It can be rice, beans, spaghetti, but I don't like them very much. I prefer to eat pirão and mocuçu (fish).

Cleonice Pankararu.....

I think *beiju* is common in almost all the villages. It is made from manioc meal. But

Géo Pataxó

I think Godmother makes it with the mandioc starch. We make it with the meal.

Cleonice Pankararu.....

My beiju is made from the mandioc starch, water and a little salt. Pure mandioc starch to make beiju.

Graça Pataxó.....

We also make beiju like Cleonice does. But I prefer it with coconut milk. I think it tastes better that way.

Araponga Pataxó



As they pass in front of my house they say: where's the coffee, relative?

Graça Pataxó

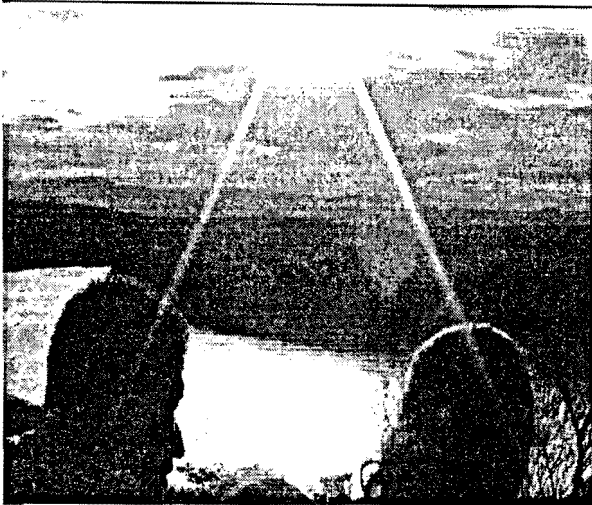


I like the other village. But my blood felt better here. I liked it better here than there where I was born and raised. After living here, I don't want to go back there. I prefer to live in a calm place, where I don't hear loud noise.

I want to stay here and only hear the voice of the birds and the crickets.

So, I think it's good to stay here.

Music



Ytxay Pataxó's family