

Education in the village and Muã Mimatxi Indigenous school: the *tehêys* of fishing knowledge*

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Abstract

Nowadays, Brazilian laws on Indigenous education highlight the need to build differentiated schools in the villages and the inclusion of Indigenous theme in urban schools. In this work, we aim to understand the culture of Pataxoop, whose village *Muã Mimatxi* is located in the city of *Itapecerica, Minas Gerais*, Brazil. We intend to seek elements that help build the cultural identity of this people, strengthening their sense of belonging. It is a qualitative research aiming to understand the past and its connection to the present, distinguishing the subjective times of the ensemble. To do so, we interviewed the cacique and the teacher of the subject 'Uses of the Territory' who has been creating narrative-drawing, called *tehêys* of knowledge fishing. In the *tehêys*, the formation of Pataxoop people, their cosmogonies, myths, generational interaction, and forms of resistance are represented. It is also a didactic material for the village school. We could see, in both interviews, a spontaneous narration, with no cuts, in which interviewees developed these stories with a strong affective commitment. We have increased our understanding of the interactions among education, culture, and identity of these Indigenous groups, thus better understanding the social formation of Brazilian people and the importance of myths to build the history of the village. Understanding the way of living and thinking, their rituals and social practices, helps to think about the selection of themes to be studied in Indigenous and urban schools.

Keywords

Pataxoop Culture – Traditional knowledge – *Tehêys* of knowledge – Indigenous education

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Introduction

Compared with former legislations, whose texts had a colonizing perspective on the Indigenous peoples, the 1988 Brazilian Constitution assumed the right to cultural difference, that is, the right to be Indigenous, to have their territories, and to preserve their traditional knowledge, ways of life, and native languages. This change was reached thanks to the resistance and fight of the Indigenous population throughout the years, culminating with the land demarcation, the guidelines for Indigenous school education, and the resurface and use of native tongues. All these aspects, discussed by society in the establishment of the Citizen Constitution, have also marked the educational guidelines for Indigenous schools. On article 2 of the decree 6.861, from 2009, we read the following on the objectives of Indigenous school education:

- I – To value the cultures of Indigenous peoples and to affirm and maintain their ethnic diversity;
- II – To strengthen sociocultural practices and the native language of each Indigenous community;
- III – To formulate and maintain training programs for specialized personnel to work on school education in Indigenous communities;
- IV – To develop specific curricula and programs, including on theme cultural contents corresponding to their respective communities;
- V – To systematically create and publish specific and differentiated didactic material; and
- VI – To affirm ethnic identities and consider societal projects autonomously defined by each Indigenous people. (BRASIL, 2009).

Since the approval of *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (BRASIL, 1996 - Law of Guidelines and Bases of the Education) school system was remodeled to create an Indigenous school education incorporated into public school systems. A demand of the Indigenous peoples was the training of Indigenous teachers to work in the village schools: Indigenous schools, Indigenous teachers. The hope was mainly on the creation of a differentiated school, especially regarding the contact with their native language and the culture of each people, since the first years of schooling. Each people, in each village, weaved the impasses that led to the distinction between Indigenous education and Indigenous school education. We ask: how can we think formative contexts in the villages having interculturality as an axis? How can Indigenous peoples select aspects of their culture to develop as school contents?

On its turn, against the practices that silenced Indigenous culture in our schools, in 2008, Law nº 11.645 was promulgated, mandating the study of African and Indigenous history and culture in all elementary, middle, and high schools. In paragraph 1, article 27, we can read:

The syllabus to which we refer in this article will include different aspects of history and culture that characterize the formation of Brazilian population, from these two ethnic groups, such as history of African and Africans, the fight of Black and Indigenous people in Brazil, Brazilian

Black and Indigenous culture, and Black and Indigenous peoples in the formation of national society, reclaiming their contributions to social, economic, and political spheres, pertinent to the history of Brazil. (BRASIL, 2008).

We must note that, in urban school, Indigenous culture was normally related to the Indigenous day, mostly presented through a romanticized, stereotyped, and prejudiced perspective. In this conception, there would be real Indigenous and Indigenous that are not Indigenous, as they would not protect nature, walk around naked, use cellphones, etc. By making mandatory the teaching of Indigenous culture in urban schools, we ask: what Indigenous culture should we present in these schools? How can interculturality be thought based on a different gaze on the culture of the other?

Thus, we perceive that understanding the way of being and living of the various Indigenous peoples should be part of the training processes of future Indigenous teachers, as well as of the pre- and in-service training of urban-school teachers, whose subjects in Basic education should include the Indigenous theme, according to Brazilian legislation. In both situations, knowing more the cultures of Indigenous peoples can help us have more depth on the theme and, consequently, to be more firm when positioning ourselves on the tensions and impasses previously mentioned. Rodrigo Crepalde (2017) suggests the importance of having a research program that promotes an investigation on the insertion of traditional knowledge and its practices in basic education schools. The author believes that such program should contribute to a proposal of intercultural education:

In this context, the training of Science teachers to rural education cannot be subsumed to the canonic knowledge of school science as this might silence and relegate to the background the rural culture and social practices. This statement might seem redundant, as we are dealing with new subjects arriving in the university and, therefore, demand, by right, new pedagogies. However, the articulation between research and pedagogical practices in the teaching of sciences and the area of rural education is still recent. (CREPALDE, 2017, p. 3).

We are part of a group of researchers that believes and values the knowledge of tradition. We aim to recover the cultural and social construction involving the knowledge of Indigenous and rural peoples and place them in the classroom contexts, as didactic contents, relating them with scientific knowledge (VALADARES; SILVEIRA JÚNIOR, 2016; VALADARES; PERNAMBUCO, 2018).

Therefore, we hope to better understand the interactions of school/village/society, as well as the impact that local culture might have when building a national curriculum, considering its political dimension and the market logic that goes hand in hand with hegemonic culture. Using Paulo Freire (1982), the questions posed to school by interculturality refer more to the interactions and subjective dimensions that act to humanize subjects, a process that allows breaking the *limit-situation* by developing a *viable unprecedented*. In the words of Fleuri (2003, p. 31), these creations allow the mutual (re)cognition of cultures under contact:

[...] intercultural education is concerned with the relations between human beings that are culturally different from one another. Not only aiming to apprehend the character of various cultures, but mostly seeking to understand the meaning that their actions assume in the context of their respective cultural standards and the possibility of letting oneself be questioned by the senses of such actions and the meanings established by such contexts.

In this work, we analyze the curricular changes that have been taking place in the Pataxoop Indigenous community living in the village Muã Mimatxi, located in the city of Itapecerica, Minas Gerais, Brazil. Originally from the South of Bahia, the Pataxoop people arrived in the village in March 2006, the year the Federal government granted them the land after great struggles from Indigenous leaderships. Today the territory is delimited by *Fundação Nacional do Índio* (Funai- National Indigenous Foundation). The Muã Mimatxi village is composed by 12 families and approximately 50 people, in a territory of 97 acres. Pataxoop people aims to strengthen the land culture, nature, and traditions in their everyday life. Pataxoop language belong to the Maxakali family, the Macro-jê branch.

As they strengthened themselves with the possession of the new territory, the Pataxoop also appropriated themselves on the importance of Indigenous school education, showing they could innovatively manage the organization of schoolwork in the village school. As a result of very creative processes, in our analysis we have seen teachers' innovative practices and diverse methodologies, as well as a vast production of didactic material used in classes. The curricular change is a political-pedagogical process, from people that live, write, and rewrite school routine.

We were faced by *tehêys* of knowledge fishing inserted in this set of practices and didactic resources in the Indigenous school in the village. A *tehêy* is, superficially, a narrative-drawing, made by D. Liça³, the teacher responsible for the subject "Culture and uses of territory" in the village school. A drawing that tells a story or a scene in the village, depicting their values, their personal relations, myths, and ancestors. Besides this, the narrative-drawing transmits the knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous culture, in school and in social practices. Thus, it connects what was previously separated – Indigenous education and Indigenous school education –, and to problematize the interaction of the village with the world.

The idea of a narrative-drawing recovers the role and the function of language, as conceived by Gersem José dos Santos Luciano (2017). According to the author, language has the purpose to establish connections with nature and the world, it has a vital importance in the reciprocity relation between human societies and non-human beings in nature. To Luciano (2017), the village is, externally, involved by globalized, universal, hegemonic, and technological types of knowledge. Internally, each Indigenous people tries to recover their traditions, myths, culture, and language. We are starting to understand the phrase by the *cacique* of Muã Mimatxi, Kanatyó Pataxoop: "With one foot on the village and another foot on the world" (verbal information)⁴.

3- Teacher D. Liça and the *cacique* Kanatyó authorized us to use their names, as well as the name of the village, Muã Mimatxi.

4- Phrase by the *cacique* Kanatyó Pataxoop in an oral report during the research.

The *tehêys* are exclusively from this village and thus we think it is important to know them and the role they play in the everyday life of Pataxoop people.

Building theories and methodologies

We have no doubts that the role of Indigenous school education is to affirm the social rights of Indigenous people, valuing their language, culture, and traditional knowledge that are transmitted through social practices in everyday life. All these aspects are part of a (re)construction of Indigenous identity. If, on one hand, this Indigenous culture was subjugated by an hegemonic and Eurocentric culture for 500 years, on the other, the recent conquests in education, land demarcation, and the arrival of electric energy in the villages are the result of a fight of the Indigenous people. The structuring axis of this investigation is grounded on the possibility of recovering and knowing the traditional knowledge of this people and the singular ways to understand reality and the worldview typical of this Indigenous group.

In the specific field of education, the conquest of guidelines that promote the construction of a differentiated Indigenous school has brought new practices and didactic resources that have worked as mediators between, for example, Indigenous school education and the practices and experiences of the routine in the village. We understand that the *tehêy* of knowledge fishing would be one of these mediators.

On one hand, Brazilian educational guidelines give a certain freedom to build a differentiated Indigenous school education, that respects the knowledge and local traditional culture and, on the other, the incorporation of Indigenous behaviors and practices in the regular education in the schools of the city, acknowledging these behaviors as part of Brazilian society formation. Faced by this legislation, some objectives are important to reflect on educational processes. First, to better understand the cultures of Indigenous peoples and how they manifest themselves in different moments of public life and their specific rituals. Second, how these cultural values are present at school, in the curriculum configurations and on the creation of a utopic map for everyday practices and the objectives proposed to be reached by education. Finally, how the processes that take place within school and the village interact, i.e., which elements are intermediators in these interactions.

The first author of this text is Indigenous, lives in the village, is a teacher in the local school and, since 2020, a master student in Educação e Docência (Education and Teaching) of *Mestrado Profissional* (Professional Master) at *Faculdade de Educação* (School of Education) at *Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais*. She is also an active defender of her culture, participating in several events related to the movement of Indigenous peoples. Thus, she carries with her the important information and the knowledge on the village, the school, and community life. We have no doubts that memory and individual narrative are expressed based on institutional times and spaces. We can say that this text carries the mark of identity and social practices experiences in the territory, the new actions as well as the historic resistance against hegemonic culture. The authors have implications on the narratives collected, as their own subjectivities were at stake (CORVALÁN DE MEZZANO, 1998).

This text is based on data collected for the *trabalho de conclusão de curso* (TCC- undergraduate thesis) in the undergraduate degree *Formação Intercultural para Educadores Indígenas* (Fiei- Intercultural training for Indigenous teaching), in the area of *Ciências da Vida e da Natureza* (CVN- Sciences of Life and Nature), of *Faculdade de Educação* at *Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais* (FaE/UFGM). To collect and analyze the data, we stayed a day in the village to choose 10 *tehêys* that, in our opinion, were related to our research proposal. After, we photographed the *tehêys* and observed two classes in which D.Liça created a *tehêy* together with the children in the class. Six months later, we observed a collective class, taught by all teachers and with all students, showing how the use and construction of *tehêys* by the children was close to other practices and school projects, as to learn how to read and write through songs and pedagogical games. The collective class was given by *Cacique Kanatyó*.

To know the importance and value associated to each *tehêy*, we first interviewed D.Liça, a schoolteacher and author of *tehêys*. We had as a goal to write an explanatory text to the chosen *tehêy*. Despite considering that the interviews conducted were enough for the TCC, we decided to also interview the *cacique* of the village, Kanatyó Pataxoop. We invited him because he had a wide knowledge accumulated through his many experiences. Based on the questions asked, the *cacique* spoke broadly about the processes of innovation on the education in the village. The interviewees showed no barriers to divulge their knowledge, as they recognize the importance of research to the Indigenous peoples. The easiness of communication between generations during the interview was not surprising. Both interviews were recorded and transcribed. We believe that,

History is shaped by singular life stories that take place within institutions. On them are intertwined work events, issues of power, individual and group libidinal connections, inserted in the culture of each particular organization, which is supported by myths through everyday rituals. Who if not those who live this story are its main testimonies? Who if not those who 'do it' can narrate, testify, through oral testimonies, what takes place in the institutions? (CORVALÁN DE MEZZANO, 1998, p. 37).

We understand that the *tehêys* as learning materials, used in and outside the school, i.e., they are transition elements (KAËS, 2005), of passage among school, external reality, and ancestry; the narrative built through the interviews is also marked by a mythical construction. Thus, the story told involves the Pataxoop people, but also the narratives of an origin myth called Yãmixoop, the creator of men, plants, and animals. The myth always tells a sacred story, which took place in the time of creation and transposes the representations of causality of the experiences of each one, as well as the representations of their bonds with a great number of other subjects (KAËS, 2005). According to this author, the myth secures mutual inclusions and the reciprocity of the subject and the group. Talking about a myth is building a narrative of what a transcendental being has done and, once spoken, proclaims itself as truth, an initial way, an origin: "It is like this way because it has been said that it is this way" (ELIADE, 1992, p. 50). In her words,

The myth proclaims the emergence of a new cosmic “situation” or a primordial event. Therefore, it is always the narration of a “creation”; it tells how everything was made, started to be. This is why the myth is solidary to ontology: it only talks about the realities, what has actually happened, what has fully shown itself. (ELIADE, 1992, p. 50).

Knowledge and feelings of belonging are part of the *tehêys* drawn: knowledge of the myths that follow the Pataxoop people, the use of traditional and scientific knowledge, the importance of land and demarcation processes, the resistance against hegemonic culture, ultimately is life expressed in narrative-drawings. In this work, we present the *tehêys*, entitled *A construção do povo Pataxoop* (The construction of Pataxoop people). We mainly searched for the values and ideas that this *tehêy* carries and that define, in our perspective, singular identities.

We have no doubt that each people uses these constructions to model their actions in the everyday world (CAPIBERIBE, 2014). One of the reasons to do this work is to know more about peoples’ cosmogonies and cosmologies. They are types of knowledge lived as an essential part of everyday life, emphasizing religiousness, explanation of the world and understanding of part of the rationality of Indigenous people. This implies the possibility of integrated works that can bring a new understanding of the natural phenomena and the conversation of nature, as well as speaking based on another culture and, by doing so, decoding our own culture, making it visible to the non-Indigenous.

***Tehêys* of fishing knowledge**

According to the interviews, Pataxoop people came from a hearty land, where all happened in a shared and balanced way among all living beings. They lived this way, in an ancient time and, with the knowledge accumulated during this period, they learnt how to live within a territory as a great fraternity; in old times, they were the parrot people, from an ancestral time, during the creation of the world. People and myth are parts of (his)story, according to the interviewees. It is a people that came from the waters, the forest, and lived in a great territory that started in the South of Bahia, continued to the state of Espírito Santo and reached Minas Gerais; it was an immense territory, where there were no limits to live and walk. At this time, they hunted, fished, and gathered fruits and plants. It was a people that walked in the banks of rivers and mountains, searching for the knowledge of the woods, the river, and the earth, in a deep connection with the Yãmixoop. We understand that these are the beings that personify the powers that originated the phenomena and nature, spiritual and religious images that protect the material world. Here we present one of the *tehêys* done by D. Liça and its meanings according to her. This *tehêy* was called *A construção do povo Pataxoop* (The construction of Pataxoop people).

Figure 1 – Value of *tehêy*: the construction of Pataxoop people



Source: Photo from the authors, 2018.

The history of Pataxoop people blends, as we will see, with its founding myth, the Yãmixoop. As a myth, Yãmixoop tells us how a reality was created, how life came to be, and established itself in that place. In this sense, D. Liça states in the interview that the *tehêy* tells the narrative of the origins, the relations between two different people, Yãtihi [white people] and Txihy, mediated by Yãmixoop:

This is a *tehêy* that tells the story of the Pataxoop people and the Yãtihi. It is a *tehêy* that holds our knowledge on the construction of life. When Yãmixoop created the world, he created it to all, to the Yãtihi, who is the white man, and the Txihy, who is the Pataxoop; it is a *tehêy* of life building, of each one in their place because we came from another place, we came from a land beyond the sky, and the arrival of the white man and the Pataxoop on Earth, the pathway was formed so that we could all come to Earth. (D. Liça).

In this case, Yãmixoop created a communication between these two levels of nature – land and sky – through a figure represented in the *tehêy*. In the words of D.Liça, all that exists in nature was also previously prepared by Yãmixoop, who came first and made all nature:

And when was time to come to Earth, Yãmixoop came first. He did the land, he did nature. Yãmixoop formed the ground of life, but first Yãmixoop came to Earth and notice that the Pataxoop and the Yãtihi could come, so, he made the land, he made the river, the ocean, the

mountain. Yãmixoop made everything we can see in Earth, and these were the first relatives that arrived in Earth. After, Yãmixoop dreamt he could send someone to live in this land, but Yãmixoop imagined how we walked, how we came to earth, and Yãmixoop saw that the Pataxoop and the Yãtihi were different, each had their own way. (D. Liça).

The first manifestation of reality is shown in birth that takes place through a divine being that builds everything to be a harmonious continuing social life. To reach such harmony, the Yãmixoop created a pathway through which each people would pass. He spent much energy because it was not an easy task to place so close people with different objects, even if there was an ocean between them:

So Yãmixoop thought and created a pathway in the sky: a great sphere, like a tunnel, with the most powerful force in the universe that could bring us. So Yãmixoop created this pathway, when the Pataxoop and the Yãtihi were going to enter this pathway, the Yãmixoop talked with them. First the Yãmixoop told the way to the Pataxoop: he would enter and follow, but there is a shortcut and the Yãtihi would walk a bit more, so the Pataxoop would arrive in a land and the Yãtihi would arrive in another, so the Yãmixoop made a division and placed each one on their own space, their own land. The Yãmixoop made the land we now live and another land on the other side of the ocean, so the division of lands was sea and there in the land of Yãtihi he placed all that he placed here in our land, but then there was the invasion of our life territory. (D. Liça).

Thus, looking at the *tehêy*, we can clearly see the pathways: two long arms or legs are, on one hand, stuck in the ground, establishing the place each group will live. On the other hand, on the top part there are the skies, where tunnels connect the different parts. As a myth, we infer that the figure drawn in the *tehêy* can represent a cosmic axis, because around it there is the territory that became inhabitable, that transformed itself into the world (ELIADE, 1992). Thinking about the village, we are faced by a spatial distribution based on the main street. We see the *cacique* house, in a high area near the entrance of the village, in a lower part, the house of his children. Further, there is the place for ritual practices, where there is a never-ending fire. The main street finishes in a forest of exuberant trees where the Yãmixoop, protectors of the forest, and the Pataxoop live. At this point, we have the way of the woods, where he can find native plants and some herbs. All these places are sacred and, possibly, establish connection with the cosmic axis, mentioned by Mircea Eliade (1992).

The construction of Yãmixoop existence and the establishment of the origin of Pataxoop people have a very strong existential value, a generator of identity. We could read, in the excerpts, the story of the work done by Yãmixoop to place each people in their own land. In this perspective, Yãmixoop guided and organized the world. After having built all nature, he brought the Pataxoop and *Yãtihi* to start their lives here. In the excerpt, this is the moment in which Yãmixoop talked with the new inhabitants, indicating the right way to reach their pieces of land.

When defining an origin myth, they affirm the construction of an identity and the belonging to the territory they live, as is the place to fix the roots of culture. Through the rituals they resume an ancestral time, living this life with the forest, rivers, animals,

fruits, and seeds. All this brotherhood is established through music, art, poetry, words, with feeling life in all corners of the world. Each time is lived differently from another; there is the time of the waters, the time of cold, the time of drought, and all these times are connected to the cycle of the universe (BRAZ, 2019).

As we have seen, Yãmixoop origin promoted the union of men, a moment in which Indigenous and white people lived harmonically, each on their own piece of land. Such narrative shows Yãmixoop with a great power and a law as a transcendental instance, that all could equally follow. These ways of seeing the world are coherent with the narratives and the forms of explanation that refer to the lack of separation between nature and culture: "and these were the first relatives that arrived in Earth." Jack Goody (2012) highlights the importance of considering that the separation between the divine (transcendental) and the natural world has meaning in our thought system. The conflict between the transcendental and the empirical knowledge is probably excluded from the culture of these Indigenous groups, or in part of them. Thus, the *tehêy* is valued as a possibility of utopia, of hope for the future based on the myth, on the viable unprecedented (FREIRE, 1982). As we will see, the resentment against the *Yãtihi* Ketxee (Pedro Álvares Cabral) has not stopped the people from their daily actions, did not make the Pataxoop people weak. History and memory strengthened each other, as told by D. Liça:

[...] but we were strong throughout this invasion, but then came Yãtihi ketxee [Pedro Álvares Cabral], that was walking on the sea, but he, very curious, saw our land, but Yãmixoop indicated to everyone where was the place of the white and the place of the Indigenous, and that we were going to live well in our land, and the white people too, we only had to care and protect it, and this is the true story of the creation of the peoples who came live in the land. The white man has no imagination, They think God placed the white people together with us, but he didn't. God, when he sent us here, it was different, each one in its own pathway. But the white man was curious and greedy, even when God placed them in their land, he was searching for new ways to discover things for their greed, and that is how he found our people here. He arrived knocking down everything, but this story within our people is very strong and very sacred to us, because each one has his land to live. And this tunnel that took place in the sky, it was at that time, the time of waters, the we have arrived and we were happy in the land, and here we had our production, and the Yãtihi had his production, and the Yãmixoop didn't choose the way each one arrived, everyone arrived in its own way and we continued our life that way Yãmixoop put us, but after Yãtihi ruined everything, ruined life, nature, brought other habits, but this isn't what weakened us. (D. Liça).

We can see here that the greed established by the production system knocked the Indigenous people down. Since then, the treason of Yãtihi, led by Ketxee, attacked Indigenous culture and their ways of living. Thus, bringing other habits implies, in our interpretation, the gradual silencing of Indigenous culture, in a clear process of acculturation. The denial of the other abolishes the differences and goes against the homogenization that Indigenous combat and resist for years.

Pataxoop people seek, in ancestry, the ways of breaking away with the limit situations that appear as historical determinations and, thus, perceived as frontiers between being and being more (FREIRE, 1982). In this world conception, peace maintenance does not imply the abolition of conflicts to live together, but a fair conflict between them. When invading the lands, the *Yãtíhi* disrespected this conception, this way of living with nature and the other. But this is not what weakened the Pataxoop people. That is what D. Liça tells us through the *tehêy*:

More and more we have to remember our stories and get stronger, and this is kept in the memory, this is a strengthened *tehêy* in my life, it is a story that marks the Pataxoop people: it tells the arrival in the land, because sometimes the white man is the first to ignore the owner of the land, because what is theirs they also had it, and today here is full of white people. They think they were the first owners of the land, the first inhabitants of land, but they are not. We are, because we have a history and this is not what makes us weak, we are a different people, of resistance, of culture. We are the owners of this land. (D. Liça).

The two previous excerpts show us how tense was the social formation of Brazilian people and the fight to know who is the owner of the land, who has more rights over it. In this *tehêy*, we see ancestry, the origin of the universe and all existing things: an origin myth. A myth that explains how political power was distributed with the arrival of Pedro Álvares Cabral and how the current situation of the social and power relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous (white) people were established. This understanding of an inequality, a distortion and not a given destiny, is what makes Pataxoop perceive themselves as history subjects, with the possibility of being more (FREIRE, 1982): we are the owners of this territory, we have our knowledge and our culture. Thus, the Pataxoop appropriate themselves of the many things done by *Yãmixoop*, the God protector of the relatives- people, relatives- plant, and relatives-animals, with which they share life (BRAZ, 2019). It is as if Indigenous people had a divine predestination: the past has the greatness of the dream that established this people. Work is always a communion of men with all forces of nature, and the Muã Mimatxi people are deeply connected with land and nature.

According to the interviews, when Muã Mimatxi, Pataxoop people had few animals and plants in their territory. Currently, there are animals that came from afar on this piece of land and plants that did not exist there. Pataxoop people carry fellowship close to them, through religion and culture. In the excerpts, we can see that animals and plants determine the force of the place. Therefore, they are also *Yãmixoop*, as can be children, depending on the situation experienced.

After all, what is *tehêy*?

What is a *tehêy*? According to D. Liça, *tehêy* is an instrument, a Pataxoop trap used in fishing, weaved with a *tucum* and vine, used to *tehêyá*, river fishing. Mostly women use the *tehêy*, who like *tehêyá*. The *tehêy* also selects the fish, as there are different types and

sizes. It allows fishing the right amount to eat, returning the rest to the river. Here we can see that *tehêy* fishes knowledge, identity, culture, socialization, and force.

We ask: who is D. Liça and what does she think about life? “As I have no knowledge on reading, my material has writings, but it is different from what you know and call writing”. Kanatyó, in his interview, helps us better understand this passage, as well as the power of *tehêy*:

This knowledge of images also passes through writing because it is a material that allows many types of production, many types of writing in the *tehêy*; we find music, games, stories, science of our people, we find many works to develop. The *tehêy* carries a multitude of knowledge, a living library of knowledge. (Kanatyo).

D. Liça tells about the origin of *tehêys* stating that they had lived in calm dreams after the arrival of her family in Muã Mimatxi. To her, “her writing” is able to spread the content and the values of her people and “the idea of *tehêy* as fishing came from what was dreamt”, she repeats. What does D. Liça understand as writing? We see:

We see that the writing I do from my teaching is a *tehêy*, a fishing instrument, because on it I draw everything I want to say, to present, to show. I draw everything on a paper, but it is called *tehêy*: for my people, Pataxóop, *tehêy* is a fishing instrument, but here it is a *tehêy* to fish knowledge. These are the knowledge I have learned, of what I know how to do, and the *tehêy* have many types of knowledge that I want to teach and present, so all goes in that material. (D. Liça).

D. Liça also compares the fishing *tehêys* and the *tehêys* to fish knowledge; they are “images that each knowledge has and each image is different from one another, so the *tehêy*, to the Muã Mimatxi is this and also so as not to finish with the culture and the value of images of each *tehêy*” (verbal information)⁵.

Thus, D. Liça explains that her *tehêys* represent the culture and the ways of life of Pataxóop people and are images and narratives that appear in each one, joined by Yãmixóop, which distinguish them from other people. Kanatyó continues with a more pedagogical perspective:

The *tehêy* of knowledge fishing is a pedagogical practice in the school of my village. It is a book, in which the teacher registers all the fishing for knowledge during his cultural life; he is a living book that keeps the stories alive [...] that become knowledge. (Kanatyo).

By saying that the *tehêys* are experiences of singular lives, Kanatyó does not lose sight of the collective, the group of belonging. In this conception, the *cacique* announces the role of *tehêys*:

The *tehêys* keep all this life experience and it is important that the *tehêy* doesn't die, doesn't end, the *tehêy* connects all life stories, it connects a knowledge to another, connects a value to

5- Phrase by D. Liça in an oral report during the interview.

another, connects a time with another time, connects a generation to another generation, the *tehêy* is important because it doesn't let the culture and our ancestral knowledge die (Kanatyo).

We have noticed the intermediating role of *tehêy*. It connects orality with writing, the school with the community, the experiences of each one with the territory; and it also establishes passages between past and future. In these passages between past and future, we find a timeless element: *Yãmixoop*. Timeless because the rituals revive it repeatedly year after year. Kanatyo tells us in the interview:

With the *tehêy* we work the values of searching for wisdom to reach improvements and life wellbeing, allowing a broad perspective of life and the world, where we search for these values in the ancestry with our religiousness, with images drawn. *Tehêys* are sacred, where values keep knowledge with the life force of nature and the search of knowledge that we use for life and to bring everything to our life center, seeking the joy of brightness and the light of the knowledge of everything that is part of our ancestry life and our current life, thus we can read the stories of the images and this is very important, we learn to read nature and life without them been written with letters and words. (Kanatyo).

We are here faced by the power of orality and the narrative that makes and transmits history, as well as the way myth unfolds itself in each member of this collective group, proving the elements of Indigenous culture, which are meaningful to life. This is the contract brought by religious and social rituals when they take place, showing that each Indigenous, when succeeding the generations, is in charge of continuing this perspective of the social, ethnic, and cultural world. Thus, the Indigenous people attribute a place to this new member that arrives, a place that was, until then, maintained by the multiple voices that manifest a discourse resonant with the ancestry and the founding myth of the group (KAËS, 2005). We believe that this represents the value of this *tehêy*.

Final remarks

We certainly provoke a certain strangeness when discussing and writing about Indigenous culture. In this work, we have told stories of the Indigenous people from the Pataxoop ethnicity, whose village, Muã Mimatxi, is located in the Center-West region of Minas Gerais, in the city of Itapeçerica. On one hand, for Pataxoop people, teaching takes place in the everyday life and through the socialization of children and adults, aiming to transmit life values and ways of living. On the other hand, school has its own way of teaching, its own pedagogies that strengthen the identity of the community and the territory: learning how to read and write through singing, Pataxoop games, use of the territory, Pataxoop culture, and didactic material produced by teachers, etc. The subjects (mathematics, Portuguese, sciences, geography, and history) are developed through all these methods. A school committed to the preservation of Pataxoop identity, strongly erased by the imposition of other races (BRAZ, 2019), and close to the community and the social practices that take place in the village, becomes a sociability center. Thus,

community leisure spaces became learning spaces, that is, despite frontiers, school and village are deeply related. It is within this logic that we perceive the *tehêys* of fishing knowledge, connected to heterogeneous spaces.

The shape and organization of schoolwork in the Muã Mimatxi School has strengthened the practices that seek in history the myths and the transformations the village and its inhabitants' way of living go through in time. It uses practices and material resources that seek in tradition, in memory, in traditional knowledge, new ways of relating with the world, be it on the discussion on sustainability or the resistance and fight against an hegemonic culture.

The *tehêys* are used in children's literacy processes. They learn how to read with the images and know the values of life and nature that are part of Indigenous culture, territory, traditions, health, and the life of Muã Mimatxi people. The reading of the world precedes the reading of the word, said Paulo Freire (1982). The *tehêy* to fish knowledge is simultaneously a resource and a didactic strategy, used in different moments of village life. The *tehêys* have shown themselves a peculiar and extremely creative way to tell their arts, customs, traditions, knowledge, and current ways Pataxoop people live among themselves and with other people. The children in the village are extremely involved in the construction of their stories and in creating the narrative-drawings.

The chosen *tehêy* – The construction of Pataxoop people– explained current experiences, as well as the foundational stories of this people: origins, myths, and rites. Our objective is clear: we aim to identify the mythical and historical conditions that promoted the preservation of traditional aspects and knowledge, which guarantee the identity and belonging, and the possible reinventions that allow the creation of innovations when building a differentiated and living school, highly cohesive with external reality.

Regarding the initial land distribution by Yãmixoop, each people has its own place. Due to the transformations and attacks to the Ketxee territory, there is no variation in the spaces: you are either in or out, with the segregation of Indigenous. It was not possible to share this space with the Andihy, due to the greediness carried by whites. Nature was looted by white people, who consider themselves superior. Disappointed by this reference model, there was a “decentering” of part of the Pataxoop people regarding the conceptions of the Western world. The land, the culture, the tradition became elements of resistance, part of the sacred. *Tehêys* are, therefore, a way to select contents for a differentiated education, in which valuing, debating, and understanding interculturality helps strengthen Indigenous culture, music, dance, rites, and paintings.

In the interviews about this *tehêy*, we can see the social, economic, and political dimension, that is, they tell us about not only the experiences, but what grounds and organizes what is the past and how it was built, including discriminatory practices. These aspects show the different experiences lived by the Pataxoop in their everyday life, impregnated by ancestry and founding myths. Through the recovery of this intermediation of beliefs and myths (FERNANDES, 2005), a harmonious life is expected, with the presence of relative-men, relative-plant, and relative-animals.

The construction of identity emerges from the appropriation of stories and myths, in a process of knowing and accede culture. It derives from the beginning of times, when

Yãmixoop created all and formed nature, in a strong cohesion with the Indigenous. This, in terms of experience, each individual relives the relation with the other, with the group, with ancestry. The connections with the past, the ancestry, with the origins and with the present moment resurface through narrative-drawings. We are often faced by things that portray the vitalities, the beauty, the culture, as well as the animals, the cultivation, the duality, and the parts that testify the veracity of knowledge. According to the Pataxoop, they live with this great spirituality of land and the universe to strengthen their existence here. The greatest centrality of the village is education and it is in the center of experiences.

Yãmixoop mainly carries the illusion, a seducing discourse, as it play a regulatory role: what is now was different in another moment. What was can be again, in the future. He connects the subjective and singular reality to the external, collective, political, sociocultural reality. Yãmixoop does not belong to the order of external reality, though it is materialized, in different situations, to the elements of nature. This implies that he is and is not real (KAËS, 2005). It is real because each subject in the village grants him existence, what is undeniable, as we have seen in the *tehêy* explanations. It is not real because it is not part of the prerogatives that characterize the objects of scientific knowledge. At the same time, it is wisdom because it formalizes and structures the world.

In a registry done by the Indigenous author Kaká Werá Jecupé (1988 *apud* BERGAMASCHI; MEDEIROS, 2010, p. 63), we can read the lines of an Indigenous on the history of Brazil:

When telling its story, an Indigenous, a clan, a tribe, starts from the moment its essence-spirit has permeated the land and narrates the passage of this essence-spirit to the vegetal, mineral, and animal kingdoms. There are tribes that start their stories when the clan were spirits of the waters. Others bring their animal memory as the beginning of the story, and there are those that start their story from the trees they once were.

What we have learned with this work when focusing on the foundational history and origin myths? The Indigenous people always coexisted, since Katxee, with a violence of the State and certain private groups. We believe that, after this research, the search for knowledge and truth has been transforming itself into instruments against discriminatory practices, as they have become more open and more available to other concepts and cultures. If in urban schools, the subject is reduced to a role that excludes the intersubjective dimension, leading to a neutrality in his actions, a denial of himself and the other, as the bearer of its own logic. Here we are faced by heterogeneity, subjectivity, and a place with its own rules and life manifestations.

These approaches, different from scientific ones, can allow a great learning, mainly by understanding the importance of myths in the construction of Indigenous culture. School, together with the village, changes its pedagogy, turning itself more towards the student, a full subject, and Indigenous. This change demands slower times, so that each one can find a space to accommodate their learning. As seen in the *tehêy*, the times closer to those of consumption ignore another, an intergenerational one (FERNANDES, 2005).

To reach long-term changes, Gersem José dos Santos Luciano (2017) also believes in an intercultural education that values ethnic belonging, supported by educational and cultural guidelines present in the State reforms. In its turn, the current hegemony of scientific reality contributes to turn ethnic, subjective, and political problems into technical problems (FERNANDES, 2005; KAËS, 2005). The *tehêys* show an opposite way, mainly when supported by the concept of sustainability as proposed and experienced by the Pataxoo people. The myth of Yãmixoo acts in opposition to the Brazilian myth, a country of the future, or even the Brazil as a country that goes forward, ideas vaunted since the 1930s.

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