Schooling and the claim of a theory of knowledge Kaiowá and Guarani: interconnections between the indigenous livelihood - *ava reko* - and the non-indigenous way of life - *karai reko*

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the engagement of Kaiowá and Guarani intellectuals in the effort to systematize a theory of knowledge from their own cosmological principles. Such a theory is forged in the multifaceted connections between the indigenous knowledge system – the *ava reko* –, understood as different types of beings and inhabitants of the various planes of existence accessed by indigenous specialists, such as the shaman men and women, and the non-indigenous schooling system to which educated young people are intensely exposed – the *karai reko*. The aim here is to demonstrate how the process of literacy or schooling that at a first glance would alienate or imprison the Indigenous perspective has often the opposite effect: a deeper connection of these literate young people with their own tradition. We prioritize the dialogue with young scholars and their intellectual productions as a basis for the development of the hypothesis.

Escolarização e reivindicação de uma teoria do conhecimento guarani e kaiowá: interconexões entre o modo de ser indígena - *ava reko* - e o modo de ser não indígena - *karai reko*

RESUMO O artigo discute o engajamento de intelectuais Kaiowá e Guarani no esforço de sistematização de uma teoria do conhecimento oriunda de seus próprios princípios cosmológicos. Tal teoria seria forjada nas conexões multifacetadas entre o sistema de conhecimento indígena - *ava reko* -, referido como distintas modalidades de seres, habitantes dos vários planos de existência e acessados por especialistas indígenas, como os homens e mulheres xamãs, e o sistema não indígena de escolarização, no qual os jovens letrados estão intensamente inseridos - *karai reko*. O objetivo é demonstrar como o processo de letramento ou escolarização, que à primeira vista afastaria ou aprisionaria a perspectiva indígena, muitas vezes tem um efeito contrário, provocando a intensificação da (re)conexão desses/as jovens letrados/as com sua própria tradição. Priorizamos o diálogo com esses/as jovens pesquisadores/as e com suas produções escritas como base para o desenvolvimento da hipótese aqui sugerida.

INTRODUCTION

The indigenous school education might be defined as a cultural policy *for* Indigenous People until the Federal Constitution of 1988 – according to the definition of Manuela Carneiro da Cunha and Pedro de Niemeyer Cesarino (2016) – because this education used to be oriented by a paradigm of integration in which indigenous cultures and languages had no perspective of future. From the Federal Constitution of 1988 on, a new period guaranteeing the right of cultural and linguistic diversity started. Therefore, the old paradigm of integration coexists in a tense atmosphere with the State mandatory aspect of guaranteeing the linguistic and cultural diversity of Indigenous People, albeit that is still reflected in some programs and practices.

The Kaiowá and Guarani in the Mato Grosso do Sul (MS) state, Brazil, make efforts to build an education or cultural policies based on their own knowledge system: a cultural policy *of* Kaiowá and Guarani Indigenous People, also according to Carneiro da Cunha e Cesarino's (2016) definition. It's worth highlighting that this policy results from the Guarani Kaiowá Teachers' Movement[1], promoted by the end of the 1980s and 1990s - see Renata Lourenço's thesis (defended in 2001 and published in 2013) and Veronice Rossato's thesis (defended in 2002 and published in 2021) in this aspect.

This article aims to reflect on a relatively new move that tries to expand the recognition of creative actions of Indigenous People facing the authoritative issues of contact. Such actions involve the relationship between Indigenous People and schooling that ended up in specific "effects" or exchanged actions (Carneiro da Cunha; Cesarino, 2016: 9). Scholars try to express how the connections between indigenous populations and the State bring multiple changes in the daily lives of these people.

The school as an institution first appeared after de demarcation of eight lands by the Service of Protection for Indigenous People[2], between 1915 and 1928. The Indigenous Stations[3] came along with schools to teach the Portuguese reading and writing. In 1928, the Evangelical Mission Caiuá[4] – with a strong focus in the health, education, and evangelization areas – was inaugurated in the area. The education oriented by the assimilationist paradigm kept moving forward into the 1980s. By then, the Indigenous Teachers' Movement and some sectors of indigenism, mainly associated with the Missionaries Indigenist Council[5], started questioning this kind of education. Such contestation was incorporated in the text of the Federal Constitution of 1988: a slow and constant process of change in the indigenous school education. The effects of an integrationist education oriented by the evangelization are the object of deep reflections in the thesis of the Guarani researcher Valentim Pires' for the Master Program in Education and Territoriality of the Indigenous Intercultural Faculty[6] (Pires, 2022).

Currently, the school is a strong institution of the State that proposes, plans, and funds educational policies apparently required by Indigenous People. However,

1 | Original text: Movimento de Professores Guarani e Kaiowá.

2 | Original text: Serviço de Proteção ao Índio, or SPI.

3 | Original text: Postos Indígenas.

4 | Original text: Missão Evangélica Caiuá.

5 | Original text: Conselho Indigenista Missionário, or CIMI

6 | Original text: Programa de Mestrado em Educação e Territorialidade da Faculdade Intercultural Indígena, or PPGET–FAIND.

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as we aim to show in this article, into the indigenous communities, such policies are appropriate in different ways and go beyond the State proposal. Frequently, such appropriations might lead to changes as educational policies affect the way Indigenous People seek changes in relation to the State and the society through the school. Therefore, the school is also a place for the intensification of political relations. Better said, such an education enters the cosmopolitics world[7] and replaces the school into a set of references that go beyond educational programs and policies. Despite inconsistencies between traditional and school-based knowledges, the prominence of Kaiowá and Guarani people is revealing as they keep their own ways of doing politics *vis-à-vis* constraints from regulatory State agencies.

The admission of Indigenous People in a close dialogue with non-indigenous scholars supporting them in graduate and undergraduate programs has been easing the emergence of some indigenous scholars in a new theoretical and methodological approach in the indigenous school education. Such scholars propose a specific epistemology and have as a starting point their own thinking and knowledge: a theory of knowledge Kaiowá and Guarani.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE, INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT AND SCHOOL PRACTICES

Some scholars on school education for Kaiowá and Guarani Indigenous people – such as Tonico Benites (2009), Elda Vasques Aquino (2012), Eliel Benites (2014), Claudemiro Pereira Lescano (2016), and Lídio Cavanha Ramires (2016) – demonstrate the bond of a striking part of teachers with the land struggle and the proposition of a school open to indigenous knowledge. It's evident that those scholars are authors and important political actors: Tonico Benites articulates the Aty Guasu – the Great Assembly Guarani and Kaiowá[8] at the Mato Grosso do Sul state – and is coordinator of the Training Program of Kaiowá e Guarani Teachers in High School[9] – Ara Vera. Elda Vasques Aquino is a public administrator of education at the Amambai City Hall, also in the MS state. Eliel Benites used to be the coordinator of the Graduation Indigenous Course Teko Arandu and currently is director at the Indigenous Intercultural Faculty. Claudemiro Lescano is a councilman and was the first indigenous person to be a school director at the Coronel Sapucaia municipality. Those scholars and political actors in institutional spaces requires a great effort and commitment to overcome historical barriers for the indigenous existence in such spaces, which is a strategy to guarantee rights.

By engaging with political movements, indigenous scholars recognize that their strength come from the elders and mainly from the shamans that by guiding leaders and teachers build bonds of mutual support. A strong speech of the teacher

7 | The notion of cosmopolitics is discussed extensively by Isabelle Stengers (2014) and is a useful tool in several studies in the ethnology field, i.e. the dissertation of Spensy Pimentel (2012), *Elementos para uma teoria política kaiowá e guarani (Elements for a kaiowá and guarani political theory,* free translation).

8 | Original text: Grande Assembleia Guarani e Kaiowá in the original language

9 | Original text: Curso de Formação de Professores Kaiowá e Guarani em Ensino Médio.

Léia Aquino (*in memorian*) in 2016 from author's fieldwork notebook makes clear the bonds between the system of indigenous knowledge and the struggle for rights: Professor Aquino was deeply involved in the land struggle, and she calls attention for the importance of shamans in all the processes to recover ancestral lands. Without shamans, the young leaders would be "very weak", lost, and unprotected from the attacks of farmers. When the Kaiowá and Guarani People get strong with the shamans praying, they are the ones to "pacify the Whites", by limiting their anger over ancestral lands and their symbolic universe. Professor Léia's perception reminds Carneiro da Cunha's (2002) when referring to the way of thinking of Indigenous People in the north Amazon. Praying, in this context, is the strongest weapon Indigenous People have as a strategy to oppose the domain of the "Whites": a perspective of indigenous victory soon.

The cosmological principles expressed in the Kaiowá and Guarani's ways of thinking and livelihoods are part of a specific manner of appropriation in the contemporary world. The school is appropriate as a socially suitable place for demanding actions in a movement organized and featured by Indigenous People aiming for their continuity as people and the promotion and strength of their relatives on a daily perspective.

The historic condition of indigenous reserves has placed several communities in a tiny space: a situation referred to as confinement by Brand (1993; 1997). This context generates other conflictual situations permanently discussed in the schools. In order to address such issues, the education at school takes the task of preparing children and young people for actual challenges. In this sense, the school is usually a political space increasingly significant for internal negotiations (and disputes) between different sectors and "collectives" that are part of indigenous reserves. Recent studies by indigenous scholars themselves point out to opportunities schooling brings. On the one hand, schooling seems to disturb the dynamics of the traditional leaders – shamans and the elderly – that have always led ritual practices and their relatives' social, economic, and political organization. In the indigenous reserve, the school assume tasks that used to be from the leaders of relatives and the shamans (PEREIRA, 2004). On the other hand, the school opens to the emergency of new social structures in a context where "relatives rising" currently emerge (PEREIRA, 2016) as mediators of dialogue between traditional knowledge and school education. A tremendous challenge to communities is the expansion of churches, either Pentecostal or neo-Pentecostal. In this respect, it's worth mentioning the Guarani historian Elemir Soare Martins' research (2020).

Hitherto, indigenous rights from the Federal Constitution of 1988 and all the indigenous school legislation were not enough to significantly guarantee the admission of indigenous knowledge in schools. Rather than that, the maintenance of a historic process of subalternation of the indigenous knowledge prevails, now

absorbed by the Indigenous People themselves as employees in the schools. Over 20 years after the Federal Constitution of 1988, the argument of Veronice Rossato (2002: 57, free translation)[10] as a supporter of the Guarani Kaiowá Teachers' Movement since 1985 is still valid: the increasing popularization of schools "lead communities to incorporate concepts and to a kind of 'seduction' regarding the role and purpose of schools as an individual and competitive model from the dominant society". Such a model has been reproduced over the years, solidifying the "coloniality" of school knowledge and practices, but it eventually escapes from the strictly pedagogical practices at school for a more comprehensive political action – the issue in this article

The recognition of problems related to the school but also its potential as a space to guarantee rights has been motivating a new generation of indigenous scholars to propose new parameters to the school. In this sense, such a generation seeks to bring closer the school to the aims and needs of indigenous communities – an issue that shall be clearer by the end of this article. Therefore, rather than simply a result of policies for "Indians", the indigenous school education is a victory for the indigenous movement and space of agency in the sense that from the appropriation of non-indigenous knowledge they may develop new political practices. In sum, if the school is a space from the dominance of colonialist practices, then an unusual fact takes place: "policies for Indigenous People and based on Indigenous People are interconnected to produce effects" (Carneiro da Cunha, 2016: 9, free translation)[11]. By producing such effects, it's worth considering the tools Indigenous People appropriate at schools to make their own politics. However, our results indicate that such dynamics always have ambiguities, contradictions, and conflicts. Indigenous scholars themselves recognize that putting the school for the benefit of communities shall demand a great effort and will be a long journey.

All the legal structure of schools is a result of cultural policies oriented by the State, even though such places and policies have Indigenous People as protagonists. Throughout the process of consolidation of such policies, in each community, every indigenous group, in every moment of their own histories, have been answering external parameters in different ways. As a result, ways of producing "effects" are sometimes invisible, sometimes very subtle, and demand a higher effort in understanding such transformations in a more assertive way.

Currently, in the Kaiowá and Guarani at the MS state case, kinship is organized in different settlements – reserves, areas of recovery of ancestral lands, camps, or even towns. Each reality has specific relations with the school. Different categories of settlements require greater attention to avoid a general understanding of this issue that ignores particularities. This leads to a set of "effects" from educational actions through the school between different settlements and the collectives based on configurations of space/time. Here, time is associated with the concept of social time for a task that varies according to each different group and collective. For the Kaiowá

and Guarani people, the most efficient organizational mode is the "bilateral relatives" mode that unites a certain number of allies. However, public policies (including the school) ignores this mode of organization and consider other references such as "village", "reserve", "recovery of lands", "camping", "polo school and extension", etc. Each place, according to specific features, designs its own policies with the school, considering political networks with relatives – a movement that managers of public policies don't observe.

FOR A THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE KAIOWÁ AND GUARANI: "EFFECTS" AND APPROPRIATIONS OF THE PROCESS OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

The lenses at the "effects" and appropriations regarding the achievements of Kaiowá and Guarani over the three last decades we propose here is oriented by an effort in capturing the direction of vindication of a systematized theory of knowledge Kaiowá and Guarani into the school for some indigenous scholars. Interestingly, the opinion of some shamans on indigenous knowledge is aligned with the proposal of such scholars – most of them are young students at undergraduate or graduate schools. It's worth mentioning that such a vindication has barriers permanently administered by governmental policies implemented by school institutions, and most scholars seem to be aware of this scenario. Both groups – teachers and traditional leaders – have been managing the school through several creative strategies pervaded by concessions and can promote negotiations to achieve their goals. The functioning of such strategies goes beyond the schools and includes networks of political alliances to attend different interests and initiatives for resolving problems in people's daily lives. Most problems are related to specific interests of relatives, an issue connecting the "cultural" practice of reinforcement of a kinship perspective.

In this sense, the challenge here is thinking of a shift for the school and its programs of schooling and literacy to a space of comprehensive transformations of **cultural policies for Indigenous People** or that **benefit from it**. First, such cultural policies positively transform the relations between the State and the society: those are policies strated by the State and then promoted by the communities. In this context, **cultural policies of Indigenous People** are replicated at the school. It's worth reminding Carneiro da Cunha and Cesarino's (2016) propositions: such movement activates a set of resources and networks that makes the school a multifunctional space for other goals than education, literacy, or numbering. Capturing such movements of different tactics and strategies is challenging and might be too ambitious. For this reason, the aim of this article is to show some directions for future research. The indigenous scholars will have much to say about it.

By working and being in contact with teacher training courses, as well as with

both groups analyzed in this article – traditional leaders and indigenous teachers and scholars –, we could note and discuss with them this new scenario of competition but also possibilities of transforming the school to a place for the promotion of own cultural policies – even though not ignoring the potential contradictions of such a process. Dominique Gallois (2016, p. 509, free translation)[12], when discussing related issues in a more general scenario, observes that the school "is a tool of empowerment for an 'autonomy' and a trap for the domestication of knowledge at the same time" – reasoning we agree with. The position of indigenous scholars seems to gravitate between both perceptions around the role of the school, generating a fruitful debate.

However, problems from indigenous schooling pointed out by non-indigenous scholars are not necessarily the same problems the indigenous scholars themselves point out. Dominique Gallois (2016, p. 509, free translation)[13] reflects about epistemological challenges that stand out to the indigenous teacher training courses: such courses aim initially to merge "the effective participation of Indigenous People to value a 'traditional knowledge' and the recognition of demands of Indigenous People themselves". Gallois concludes that such objectives to not reach the expected results. However, during the Seminar *Cultural policies and Indigenous People – the school and other problems*[14] with indigenous and non-indigenous scholars, Gallois pointed out some "lessons" from Indigenous Peoples of the Americas that are worth of consideration to connect with the Kaiowá and Guarani experiences: "the school is not the sole nor necessarily a privileged place to build specific knowledge; knowledges are created everywhere and have to be searched, discovered by people" (Testa, 2011 apud Gallois, 2016, p. 511, free translation)[15]. This citation might help to understand the persistence of Kaiowá and Guarani scholars on the need to search a deeper understanding with the elderly and shamans into Kaiowá and Guarani indigenous communities at the MS state: these would be the source of actual knowledges.

Such spaces could be called "walk toward an *ogá pysy*" (Guarani term for the space Kaiowá and Guarani people pray): a method for most Kaiowá and Guarani indigenous scholars. Some scholars describe in their autobiographies that the school and/or (neo) Pentecostal schools have promoted the distance of access and practice of traditional knowledges (Benites, E. 2014; Pires, 2022, among others). However, in the schooling process, and especially when they became scholars, they are benefited by the need to amplify the domains over such knowledges. Therefore, they get back to traditional masters, in general with relatives or the network of allies, an issue that leads us again to the issue of kinship.

Regarding schools at reserves and settled indigenous land, it might be claimed that, generally, the school has different purposes. On the one hand, the school is a privileged space to access or to be accessed by public policies. As an indigenous coordinator from a school at a reserve in Dourados city, MS state, points out: "every

12 | Original text: "é percebida ao mesmo tempo como instrumento de empoderamento para 'autonomia' e também como armadilha para a domesticação de conhecimentos".

13 | Original text: "a participação efetiva dos índios para a valorização dos 'conhecimentos tradicionais' e o reconhecimento das 'demandas de seus detentores'".

14 | Original title: *Políticas culturais e povos indígenas - a escola e outros problemas*. The Seminar was promoted by the Ford Project and the Center for the Metropolis Studies (in Portuguese Centro de Estudos da Metrópole, or Cebrap) in a partnership with the Center of Indigenous Peoples of the America at the University of São Paulo (USP), in November 2013.

15 | Original text: "a escola não é nem o único nem necessariamente um espaço privilegiado para a construção de um saber próprio; os saberes são criados alhures, precisam ser buscados, descobertos por sujeitos que circulam em busca de conhecimento".

little demand comes to the school, such as the guardianship council, councils for the defense of the rights of children or social help, justice, firefighters, non-indigenous scholars... this situation even disturb our work" (free translation)[16]. The school also and serves mainly as the expression of internal political networks of relatives from different places, expropriated from their territories and forced to live squeezed in small lands and present themselves as collectives. This way, the school expresses or becomes a battlefield to networks of domination and political control, because of the heterogeneity of social and political contexts from the community, village, or reserve.

The positions of indigenous professionals in the education and health sectors are usually fulfilled by relatives from the stronger political network in each community. This sense of belonging aggregates a greater legitimacy in the services for the community and gives a greater reputation for the network. Of course, such positions involve disputes and competitions among relatives and their networks, especially in large reserves. It's common situations of stressful debates with reciprocal accusations involving public managers and in such moments most of them have no idea of what is effectively happening.

To a greater or lesser extent, the school is a place to assemble and promote political activities of relatives from communities to decide different issues. The school is a relatively "neutral" public space and might be claimed by any member from the school community, always favoring the best positioned members from the dominant political network. The school is also a space for different collectives to assemble, from elections to sports competitions, meetings with institutional agents – such as the Federal Public Ministry[17], the National Indigenous Foundation[18], and the Special Department of Indigenous Health[19] –, religious representatives, churches, and staffs from the local/ regional or federal governments.

Besides imposed issues, transformations from such impositions point out to creative possibilities on behalf of communities, usually considering the internal correlation of power between networks of relatives. Because of the issues of confinement, the school seems to be a proper space for the flourishing of a collective or a "community" in a reserve – and this is a continuous effort.

The school education for Indigenous People has always been a privileged area of activity for the Brazilian State intervention through disciplinary power relations to convince such populations to submit to national projects. Such persuasive methods operate through tutelary governmental bodies – SPI and FUNAI – in close relation with religious missions. From 1988 on, an atmosphere of greater "civility" was framed and a more harmonious and respectful conviviality with indigenous populations has been the tone since then. It's worth emphasizing that the disciplinary power conducted by the State through its governments had the "primary aim of 'training' the new individual to appropriate more and better new potentialities: thus, the demand of

16 | Original text: "tudo chega através da escola, ela é procurada pelo conselho tutelar, os conselhos de defesa do direito da criança ou de assistência social, oficial de justiça, bombeiros, pesquisadores não indígenas, tudo... isso até atrapalha o trabalho da gente".

17 | Original text: Ministério Público Federal, or MPF.

18 | Original text: Fundação Nacional do Índio, or FUNAI.

19 | Original text: Secretaria Especial de Saúde Indígena, or SESAI.

efforts aim to reduce them; connect such efforts to multiply and use them" (Foucault, 1987, p. 143 apud Lourenço, 2008, p. 186, free translation)[20]. According to Foucault (1987), the disciplinary power does not destroy the individual, but is produced by him and is one of its most important effects. The disciplinary power at school as a policy of State might be one of its pitfalls for the livelihood of the Kaiowá and Guarani people.

One "effect" of the disciplinary power might be the engagement for the emergence of the individual reproducing knowledge and power in the indigenous school education. Also, such "effects" might awaken either an interest in school knowledges and a pleasure for relations of domination: the system of knowledge from our society based in the individual consumption. However, such an ambiguous relation of knowledge and power allow that such mechanisms oriented to submission and domination become spaces of movement for the Kaiowá and Guarani people to build a comprehensive network of relations – internally and externally – to circulate new information and knowledges and promote exchanged actions that escape the State control[21]. Cultural policies designed for Indigenous People might become cultural policies or ultimately Indigenous Peoples are producers of knowledge in a permanent dynamic of transformations. As Michel Certeau (1995, p. 19, free translation)[22] expresses it, it's worth paying attention to: "[...] the operation and virtue of current practices as an infinite dynamic of the everyday life". Our understanding of the "effects" in the school include: a combination of forces in competition or conflict that develops a large amount of tactics in organized spaces at the same time marked by coercions and contracts (Certeau, 1995).

It's worth observing how such a process is seen by the elderly and the shaman leaders: most of them do not have a formal schooling but is expert in their own tradition of knowledge. Inside this new structure of power into the school, the older ones usually lose attributions to literate leaders that do not necessarily have a profound shamanic knowledge but in a certain way are best adapted to solve contemporary problems of people and the community. Such a change altered the composition of organizational forms of Kaiowá and Guarani people based on the shamanism as the primary reference in the last decades. Currently, the shamans consider they are unoccupied, although they have a role in crucial moments of the social life, i.e., diseases, deaths, and supernatural threats.

Besides the school, the expansion of (neo)Pentecostal churches might be the main responsible for a distance from shamans. The priest is a major competitor of shamans, and both (priests and shamans) accuse each other of witchcraft. As shamans are more fragile, they are the ones who suffer the most from this kind of aggression. Although in this brief article we will not deepen this issue, it's worth mentioning that shamans usually consider the school and the church as agencies to expand the non-indigenous way of life – *karai reko* – against the indigenous system

20 | Original text: "o objetivo primordial de 'adestrar' o indivíduo para se apropriar mais e melhor de suas potencialidades: ele não amarra as forças para reduzi-las; procura ligá-las para multiplicá-las e utilizá-las num todo".

21 | For indigenous professors it seems challenging to escape the community control, especially the relatives' social circle, even though some of them try to do so. The professor with jobs and reputation become a reference to the relatives and become an articulator or leadership – a position with reputation but also a set of obligations, including the redistribution of goods. Avoiding such responsibilities implies in a set of reprisals and penalties.

22 | Original text: "[...] à operacionalidade e à virtualidade das práticas correntes, dinâmica infinita da cotidianidade".

of knowledge – *ava reko*. Some shamans have become (neo)Pentecostals or get closer to schools, maybe seeking for the strengthening or pacification of such institutions.

At certain times – i.e., moments of recovery of ancestral lands – events from the indigenous movement *vis-à-vis* State institutions appeal to shamans and their groups of minor followers to perform the culture and legitimate the group as Indigenous People, thus with differentiated rights. Shamans are regarded as people that are constantly "sustaining the culture on the inside of their communities". Although such moments are sporadic, according to Eliel Benites (2014) and Veronice Rossato (2002), the Kaiowá and Guarani refer to it as the "return" to the traditional livelihoods after a time distant from them. The autobiographical stories from scholars show that something similar happens through the school and the indigenous movement when such spaces are open that. In this context, the school is a privileged area of some traditional leader to "talk about culture" that apparently have been taking secondary roles but are fundamental for changing new strategies to maintain or strength own political networks *vis-à-vis* people "against traditional livelihoods", especially the (neo)Pentecostal ones.

When the school is reluctant to get close to the shamans – for instance, when conducted by (neo)Pentecostal indigenous teachers – it might get close to religious values and practices and, at some point, withdraw from strictly "educational" aims that might remain in the sidelines. Here, the so-called traditional knowledge or the dialogue between knowledges might not have space in the school environment: then, the submission of the indigenous knowledge is subordinate as an "ornament", "confetti" or folklore, i.e., the Indian Day[23]. Frequently, shamans are not invited to talk about it because they are regarded as a representative of the devil. In most cases, the indigenous knowledge is out of context because the school turns into a nearly exclusive place to the non-indigenous system of knowledge – *karai reko*.

As most shamans are isolated into their communities, the school invitation is an opportunity for them to "present" themselves and this is an act of great value, although not necessarily the value the school identifies or supposes. However, not everyone is invited to take part in the school activities: the political network of control in such institution through some shamans is qualified *vis-à-vis* external agents, the legislation, and the State, even though the argument of a dialogue of knowledges and differentiated education prevails. However, the shamans also might take advantage of the involvement with the school, i.e., the strengthening of their own political networks, and a better chance of relatives as school employees. Shamans at school are an opportunity for students to access specific knowledge and debates that lead to reflections about the production and reproduction of culture in their collectives.

Anyway, the power play between the indigenous knowledge – *ava reko* – and non-indigenous knowledge – *karai reko* – is permanent. There's a continuous reinvention of own livelihoods in the networks connecting relatives with State institutions

23 | Original text: Dia do Índio.

and the national society.

Such a condition highlights the need to master both systems and the possibilities of connection between them. Some indigenous scholars raise the importance of a systematized theory of Kaiowá and Guarani knowledge from the literacy system at school. According to them, this would be a necessary condition for not succumbing *vis-à-vis* the non-indigenous way of life – *karai reko*. In this sense, there are different common grounds between the narratives of traditional masters and indigenous scholars.

An example of this is Mr. Atanásio Teixeira's speech. He is also known as *Ava Nhu Moendaju* – a traditional master. He talks about such common grounds with indigenous scholars in the sense of required conditions to enter the school:

> In the school, teachers do not teach how they should do so, based on our livelihood [...]. Our traditions have different ways of teaching children to learn our livelihood: the teachers should look for knowledge from shamans or talk a lot with people that understand our traditions to teach according to them. Teachers must learn first and then teach children. That kind of teaching for children is important because in that way children avoid frequent misunderstandings, drinking [alcohol], smoke. As problems urge, for every person, there is a correct way to teach and overall, there is a specific manner for really teaching children. That's the only way children might learn how to live in a society and be a trustworthy person; for each thing there's a correct teaching. (Interview, Mr. Atanásio to Renata Lourenço, July 10th, 2016, free translation)[24].

In his speech, Atanásio transpose the Kaiowá moral codes that indigenous authora as Eliel Benites (2014; 2019), Izaque João (2011), Tonico Benites (2009, 2014), Claudemiro Pereira Lescano (2014) and Gileandro Barbosa Pedro (2020) have been trying to systematize. Such codes or foundations must be the agenda for the building of this theory of knowledge Kaiowá and Guarani.

Different other narratives of shamans during the Meeting *Indigenous Knowledges at School*[25] at the Indigenous Land "Panambizinho" show efforts by indigenous intellectuals – shamans – in recovering a history with own knowledges at school and the indigenous territory[26] is the most important place for most people to live and reproduce as a social group.

When by the first time the author was in the Indigenous Land "Panambizinho" (January 2020) to follow up debates in the project *Teko Joja*[27], she realized that almost all the land is leased for large-scale soy and corn plantation. Apparently, the context of an expected dialogue gets more complicated in the context Kaiowá and Guarani People face in promoting self-sustainability for different reasons. In such a context, the school is a space for creative debates on complex issues that generate internal disputes in the communities. Whether or not the school will succeed in this task is

24 | Original text: Na escola os professores não ensinam como deveriam ensinar, no nosso modo de ser [...]. Os nossos costumes têm várias formas para ensinar as crianças para aprender bem o nosso modo de ser: é preciso os professores buscarem conhecimento com os rezadores ou conversar bastante com aquele que entende os nossos costumes, para ensinar conforme eles. Os professores têm que aprender primeiro para depois repassar para as crianças. Este ensino para as crianças é para elas não praticar o desentendimento constante com outro, para não beber na fase de criança e jovem, para não fumar na estrada. Conforme os problemas acontecem, para todos existe o modo adequado para ensinar, sobretudo, para as crianças aprender de verdade. Só assim as crianças vão aprender conviver na sociedade, ser pessoa de confiança, para cada coisa tem ensino adequado. (Entrevista, Sr. Atanásio, 2016, concedida a Renata Lourenço em 10 de julho de 2016).

25 | Original text: *Saberes Indígenas na Escola*. This is a Program in the Education and Ethnical Territory, by the Secretary of Education (in Portuguese, Ministério da Educação, or MEC) that involved schools from the lands occupied by Kaiowá Guarani people in the south area of the Mato Grosso do Sul state, Brazil. This meeting was promoted at the Indigenous Land (Panambizinho) between June 23-25th, 2016.

26 | See BENITES, Eliel. 2020. "Tekoha Ñeropu'ã: aldeia que se levanta". *Rev. NERA* 23(52): 19-38. https://doi.org/10.47946/ rnera.v0i52.7187.

27 | Project coordinated by Eliel Benites and funded by the European Union in partnership with the Organization Image of Life (in Portuguese, Imagem da Vida) and the Center of Indigenous Support (in Portuguese Núcleo de Apoio Indígena, or NAIN) from the Federal University of Metropolitan Dourados with the support of the Federal Public Ministry. The aim is to raise over 500 cases of human rights violations and establish strategies to combat and overcome such violations. The school is again the prime location for such actions.

an open question.

By translating the shamans in that meeting, the indigenous scholar Izaque João explained that the debates about traditional knowledges present the "ideal' conditions for the reproduction of Kaiowá and Guarani livelihoods. However, the application of an ideal reproduction in the daily lives of Kaiowá and Guarani people at schools, aligned with a generational issue, is challenging and has a low level of adhesion in the school environment. According to the scholar, the new generations do not follow up the matter because the rituals, dances and prays cannot be literally transpose to papers and is necessary a specific training for a person to become shaman. In this aspect the school is an auxiliary to disrupt such tradition but is still a space for debates and attempts to revive the Kaiowá and Guarani foundations in the education of children and young students, even though they are in a constant tension with other values and norms, i.e., the (neo)xPentecostals'.

Izaque João[28] explained that new literate leadership and teachers are challenged to develop a theory of knowledge to rethink how to produce and circulate cultural goods with new generations during the schooling age in an indigenous teachers' training course (field notes). This issue is related to the challenging of building a Kaiowá and Guarani philosophy for the school knowledge. Yet, Izaque João suggests that to maintain a reliable reproduction of knowledge based on the shamans it's worth electing their followers – a "legacy", according to João, based on the way to do so. It seems that the challenging issue here is a self-recognition of Kaiowá and Guarani's cultural goods, including in the school space: apparently this is the project of a group of scholars Kaiowá and Guarani, and professor Izaque João shares this same point of view.

There's a convergence in several narratives of leaderships at schools that reminds their duty in elaborating own theories, by questioning the non-indigenous way of thinking based on the estrangement of the environment that only human beings might have actual actions. On the opposite side, the Kaiowá and Guarani thinking departs from the premise that all living beings have actions, intentions, desires, and are oriented by guardians that generate life. In this sense, all living beings have their own collectives, languages, and livelihoods – *teko* – in a continuous circular movement connecting all livelihoods in different plans of the cosmos (see Benites, E.; Pereira, 2021).

Izaque João's research (2011) shows that few institutional spaces is open to the Kaiowá and Guarani livelihood, especially in indigenous schools and even at the university, so it's worth promoting the Kaiowá and Guarani knowledge in the educational epistemology by teachers for the wellbeing of such groups. Indigenous scholars realized that the University might negotiate the curriculum, but not the ways of teaching. Put in another way, the producing and passing knowledge has direct effects in the contexts of its effective production and passing. Therefore, even the

28 | Izaque João is a deeply careful and hard-working scholar devoted to the understanding of aspects of the ritual life and cosmological issues (João, 2011). Currently, professor João is conducting a PhD research at the University of São Paulo. However, he used to be a teacher and coordinator of the indigenous teachers training course *Ara Vera*, always combining the duties of researcher and political actor in such positions. Professor João also works in movies and text editing about Kaiowá Guarani rituals in a close collaboration with the anthropologist Spensy Pimentel, i.e., the organization and translation of the book *Cantos dos animais primordiais: Guyra guahu ha mymba ka'aguy ayvu*. Editora Hedra. 2022.

ways of knowing must be challenged. The challenging issue for Indigenous People is questioning different fields of knowledge, thinking about how to move forward the indigenous knowledge in the school space, and doing other anthropologies. That way, they can go further in the environments of academic qualification at the same time the dialogue with knowledge from the national society is preserved, also as a way of expanding such references.

Some foundations of indigenous knowledge are activated punctually in some schools — i.e., the *Teko Joja* project coordinated by Eliel Benites — as a point of contact between the school and the traditional knowledge, even though in an environment with several correlations of force and a low understanding about the way of proceeding such contacts. Here, the challenging issue is how to organize the knowledge from own philosophical foundations in a dialogue with non-indigenous knowledge.

Based on the listening and interviews with older people, we can note that life in different expressions cannot be entirely shifted to the school: what can and shall be at school are the Kaiowá and Guarani symbolic and philosophic references, as well as demands due to social issue from the school and the relations with the regional area (i.e., social relations such as work and consumption). According to the indigenous scholars' angle, the school and its mechanisms must be activated as a potential unifying space for the development of future projects, although up to now discussions are initial and with low coalition forces. Debates are still restricted to the indigenous scholars, some traditional leaders, and students from the schools. However, most people, especially the (neo)Pentecostals, have not been touched by such debates nor there is data on how they could react to that.

The indigenous scholars seem to suggest that the Kaiowá and Guarani cultural policies are mediating their own knowledge based on indigenous and traditional livelihoods — *ava reko* — and school knowledge. A concept that eventually might be part of the debate is the actual livelihood — *teko pyahu* or *teko ko'ãngagua* — from an approach of connection between livelihoods. The debate goes back and forth according to varied demands related to the struggle for land, nutrition, health, security, production, sales of food, jobs, transportation, living, schooling, communication, kinship, social relations of children, and so on.

Based on the experience of school education, in the *Teko Joja* project, Eliel Benites expresses several strategies enabling different dialogues within each indigenous reserve or ancestral land that develops educational actions via school. In the pilot experiment with the Panambizinho community, the Kaiowá and Guarani concept *teko joja* adds the Kaiowá livelihood *ava reko*. Departing from such reference, innovative practices to make possible an understanding of actual scenarios. Here, a proper Kaiowá and Guarani theory of knowledge is the challenging issue for solidifying the school content. Therefore, this is a future project that points to positive results of schooling in the last three decades. The "positive" result of schooling seems

to be the possibility or maybe the need of transforming it into another project.

The promotion of such a theory of knowledge in the school environment is the result of a general observation from Kaiowá and Guarani scholars that the schooling they have been submitted is far away from the indigenous knowledge, so they must focus on a rapprochement. Bringing their indigenous own ways of producing and passing on knowledge to the schools would be a condition for new literate generations.

In this sense, Eliel Benites' reasoning is that the school is a privileged space for debates and tacit agreements between different groups of a community. Such a project might be "utopian" – not a problem because utopia is good for life, according to Benites –, but the project points to significant advances to the probably most advanced space for debates involving all aspects of the Kaiowá and Guarani life, although it depends on a constant correlation of forces. The proposal is centered on new content and includes a particular view mode, as well as specific ways of listening and feeling according to the livelihoods of such groups.

Eliel Benites always emphasizes the peculiarities of the way of producing indigenous knowledge as a **method** that activates other fields of perception, besides the rational. According to professor Benites, the word *arandu* is usually translated as knowledge and has such implicit meaning. However, the etymology of this word includes two other smaller words: *ara* (a substantive that unites the sense of time and space) and *hendu* (from the verb "listening"). Therefore, the etymological meaning of *arandu* would be "listen to the time and space": from that, we conclude that the word means to know how to understand and analyze the space of living and the relations from it, including connections with other livelihoods on different levels of existence. The modern reasoning "I think, therefore I am" is far away from the indigenous philosophy.

It's worth noting the indigenous scholars' willingness to arrogate the prominence of processes involving their lives; they "bring home" the knowledge from the broader society and aim to convert it for their own purposes. It's inspiring to see efforts for "pacifying" such knowledge in a way that indigenous scholars assume the position of actors and protagonists conducting a scene, even though at a clear disadvantage and in a challenging context of exclusion and prejudice. Hence, indigenous scholars denounce impositions and historic violence, and recently vindicate the direction of a process involving their lives. Some of them refer to that as a situation they must stand up for themselves in the face of domination and to respond to adversities, reinventing themselves and departing from the Kaiowá and Guarani references that inform their own livelihoods – *ava reko*.

In this sense, Eliel reinforces and introduces other dimensions of a theory of knowledge Kaiowá and Guarani – on which the project *Teko Joja* is based upon. At the indigenous land Panambizinho, such a project is based on the training for teachers and leaders in dialogue with partners whose reflections and actions try to transform

institutional and community actions for new practices on the school floor. Here's a long part of the professor's Eliel speech, a brilliant lesson:

> The idea of this project has a history a bit different from *Teko Joja*'s and started here at FAIND[29], Teko Arandu[30]. The *Teko Joja* as an idea is part of the Kaiowá and Guarani culture as a philosophy, as *teko*. The word *teko* that means the way of being - something like the word *tekoha*, because there are some philosophical elements, let's say, that orient the Kaiowá and Guarani existence. [...] So we had the idea of starting with three fundamental words that also guide the idea of the Ara Verá[31] course, the Teko Arandu and the indigenous movement: *Teko*, *Tekoha* and *Ñe'ẽ*[32]. These are three axes orienting all the movement's curriculum and the course itself. From that, we imagined what would be the *teko*. Actually, *teko* is a road, but this road has a specific feature, the *Teko Joja*. Therefore, the *Teko Joja*, the *teko porã* – a beautiful way of living – has different ways of behaving in the journey in the searching of the sacred, namely the indigenous existence itself. Therefore, it was interesting to pick some ideas to orient the project and observe that how was moving forward non-indigenous modus wherein two indigenous rights observatories took part and a training for leader was proposed to a better understanding of most common Kaiowá and Guarani problems in all aspects. We started by referring to the idea of *Teko Joja*, then strengthening and characterizing it as a project. At Panambizinho land, *Teko Joja* started acting recently as a challenging journey in the actual political context. What exactly is *Teko Joja*? A philosophy, a movement, a movement that harmonizes, a movement that reproduces a community. Therefore, the collective is rather than tight, the result of a movement. *Teko Joja* reflects it as a circular movement with a central power, a central axis surrounded by other issues. Thus, *Teko Joja* departs from this idea and from a cosmological discussion, for instance, the stars. There's a central [idea] on that and other ideas surrounding it that aim to keep connected to centrality of powers, the axis, the **jekoha**, the central issue. However, the idea of movement produces a harmonic collective. The *Teko Joja*, is being ripped by another way of being, the individual. So, the base that has been discussed and reflected with other leaders reflecting with the movement and with the professors, the *Teko Joja* we want. Currently, this is a resistance, a fight for rights. Besides the idea of the project itself, this is a reference of practice and activism as a professor in the indigenous teachers' movement, and as a leader. In line with this reasoning, we can also apply interdisciplinarity in indigenous schools, curriculums in schools and teachers' training, and politically... In sum, this is the philosophical Guarani idea as a guiding element in this moment... (Interview, Eliel Benites, 2020, to Renata Lourenço, free translation)[33].

It's worth noting at professor Benite's interview some central issues that are also frequent in the narratives of other Kaiowá and Guarani scholars and writers. During a lecture at the Union of Dourados City Education Workers[34] in 2017, professor Izaque João emphasized the need of establishing a Kaiowá being departing from these Peoples' own references. For children, this must be promoted since an early

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29 | Indigenous Intercultural Faculty at UFGD (FAIND).

30 | Indigenous graduation degree at FAIND/ UFGD, Teko Arandu.

31 | Indigenous High School for the Kaiowá Guarani people.

32 | Such words-concepts accommodate different meanings. Here is a summary of central meanings to situate the reader unfamiliar with the Kaiowá Guarani ethnography: Teko is the way of living/ exist é and might express the idea of life, i.e., *che reko*, my life. *Tekoha* is the place a person lives according to the Kaiowá Guarani livelihood: the time-space na effective practice of *teko* is applied. Ñe'e is the word, the language but also the soul that becomes part of a person's body.

33 | Original text: "A ideia do projeto tem uma história um pouco diferente da própria ideia do *Teko Joja*, de quando a gente começou aqui na FAIND, no Teko Arandu. O *Teko Joja* enquanto ideia, já tinha, já existia na cultura guarani e kaiowá como uma filosofia, como *teko*, como uma palavra teko, que é o modo de ser, e com a palavra *tekoha* também, porque existem outros elementos filosóficos, vamos dizer assim, que orienta toda a existência dos Guarani e Kaiowá. [...] Daí a ideia de nós começarmos por três palavras fundamentais que orientam também a ideia do curso Ara Verá, do Teko Arandu e do movimento indígena que é *Teko*, *Tekoha* e *Ñe'ẽ*. São três eixos que orientam todo o currículo do próprio movimento e do próprio curso. A partir dali a gente começou a pensar melhor o que seria o *teko*. O *teko*, na verdade, é um caminho, mas um caminho que tem que ter uma característica, que é o *Teko Joja*. Então, o *Teko Joja*, o *teko porã*, que é o belo modo de ser, são vários modos comportamentais no trajeto da busca do sagrado, que é a própria existência indígena. Então, foi interessante a gente pegar

age, because of the origin of ñe'ẽ (the spirit when a child is born): much dialogue with shamans must be promoted so parents can understand how this process will take place. According to Izaque João, when people die, their spirits come back to their places of origin, as birds. Such spirits inhabit children's bodies once they are born and become part of learning, according to the stages of development of a child. Therefore, each person has a proper moment to learn how to behave socially. The knowledge transmission to this bird in this new habitat must start in a "good way": a peaceful environment at home and in the community. When this process takes place in a bad way, this bird gets sick. Therefore, a set of "norms and rules" must be applied so the bird/child does not get "scared" and have peace in the new living environment. The family must make efforts to welcome this "bird" and conduct him properly inside the making up human being/child.

According to Izaque João, this is intimately connected to word formation that gives meaning to all things in all dimensions: the *Nhanderu Vusu ñe'ẽ oguerojera* (the word formation and the meaning of words) sets rules and regulations from one generation to the other, from one person to the other. A word has life, and its meaning comes with experience. A process of word formation was created by *Nhanderu Vusu* and must be applied by the shamans when they teach parents to educate their siblings. The ñe'ẽ mboypy (word formation, building, and definition of the meaning of a word) will define the range of each word in a broader system of meanings: what does a word mean, where and how a word is applied, and what is a word for (for instance, *tekoha* means life and space, *teko marane'ỹ* means decent life or full life, *teko marangatu* means fullness in life). The circular movement of Kaiowá and Guarani human formation has a focus on the *Teko Marangatu* (life in perfection) and activates the *Teko Joja* (reciprocal life, solidarity) and is related to the *Teko Marane'ỹ* (a life without malice, perfectly). Such issues might be marked by disruptions (spells, divorces, family disputes, discordance with leaders, etc.). Such disruptions activate a set of other systems of knowledge/ practices to overcome them, in a way that a human being keeps living a balanced life. According to Izaque João, all those issues imply a set of "rules and regulations" and attitudes for a good life.

The references associated with the Kaiowá and Guarani cosmology connect inhabitants from different celestial patamars and are tied to a concrete dimension of life on Earth – *yvy rupa* –, in a constant process of transformation that requires new arrangements. In the actual context, the reserves raise new kinship promoters (PEREIRA, 2016): besides couples and relatives around couples, also other collectives such as women, young people, religious, teachers, priests, etc. that mediate new ways of organizing. In this context, indigenous scholars pursue to reflect about the contemporary social experience and new ways of commitment in social struggles to produce and strength their collectives. Such researchers aim to activate a set of knowledges from the elderly or from the institutions they are in transit. It's worth

algumas ideias pra orientar o projeto, como o projeto estava enxergando, mas com *modus* não indígena, onde [...] dois polos de observatório de direitos indígenas e aí havia uma formação de lideranças, uma forma para entender melhor os seus problemas, de onde vêm os problemas mais comuns dos Guarani e Kaiowá, em todos os aspectos. A gente começou a referenciar nestas ideias que é o *Teko Joja*, aí foi se materializando e foi se caracterizando como um projeto. *Teko Joja* a gente foi atuar, agora recentemente, no Panambizinho, é uma formação como caminhar neste tempo, hoje, desafiador na conjuntura política. Então o que é exatamente *Teko Joja*. O Teko Joja, na verdade, é uma filosofia, é como um movimento, o movimento que harmoniza, um movimento que faz com que a coletividade seja reproduzida. Então, o coletivo não é estável, o coletivo é resultado do movimento. O *Teko Joja*, ele reflete isto, é como um movimento circular, quando tem uma força central, um eixo central no qual rodeiam os outros materiais. Então, ele parte um pouco desta ideia, parte da discussão cosmológica, como, por exemplo, das estrelas. Tem uma [ideia] central e tem as outras que rodeiam a margem, na busca de ficar conectados na centralidade das forças, que é o eixo, que é o *jekoha*, que é o central. Então, esta ideia de movimento que produz o coletivo harmônico, que é o *Teko Joja*, tá sendo esfacelado pelo outro modo de ser, que é o modelo mais individual. Então, esta é uma base que a gente tá discutindo e refletindo com outras lideranças, refletindo com o Movimento, com os professores, o tipo de *Teko Joja* que nós queremos. Hoje, na atualidade, é uma resistência, resistência de luta pelos seus direitos. Então, um pouco nesta linha que é o projeto e não só do projeto, mas que referencia toda uma atuação de militância como professor, como Movimento de professores indígenas, como formador também. E nesta linha, também, a gente pode usar na interdisciplinaridade nas escolas indígenas, nos currículos das escolas de formação de professores, e politicamente também... Então, a ideia filosófica guarani, como elemento norteador de toda atuação política teórica, neste momento que nós estamos vivendo, é isto aí...".

highlighting that each collective or way of organizing has a specific field of relations because of *sui generis* structures, although they share the same set of references available to other collectives. Such a shared context frames all of them in a same social formation: Kaiowá and Guarani, although their collectives have specific features and a particular style, from the shaman to the priest[35] (Pereira, 2016; Valiente, 2019).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The theory of knowledge has a significant number of Kaiowá and Guarani people committed to qualify as scholars and includes varied subjects, such as: land struggle, sustainability, environment, strengthening of collectives, strategies to interact with the national society and its institutions, disruption with colonial relations, and the system of teachers training.

This agenda results from reflections and systematizations of such scholars, is oriented by the need to find answers and develop practices oriented to face problems in the communities and has as reference the knowledge of the elderly whose legacy is at stake. In this sense, this is an engaged theory with the life of collectives that form this new context and are preparing themselves for confrontations and expansion of areas of activity projecting new logics for daily problem resolution. School and research are both spaces for the development of a Kaiowá and Guarani cultural policy that accommodates new forms of political intervention to protect their own livelihoods.

By and large, the indigenous themselves vindicate a prominence for the making of policies of school education, debate and overcome ambiguities, to tame such spaces in parallel to a particular livelihood. After all, these are the people to teach us what must be a liberating education for the society.

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34 | Sindicato de Trabalhadores em Educação de Dourados, or SINTED in the original language (Portuguese).

35 | Such positions are interchangeable, which means that a person might present her/himself as a (neo) Pentecostal priest in a moment and as a shaman in another moment, and vice-versa. However, many shamans do not accept such alternance of position and this does not exclude an opposition between (neo)Pentecostal priests and shamans, frequently a tense situation in the villages with mutual accusations. Yet, it's worth mentioning that such opposition might lead to situations such as fires in the *ogá pysys*, and the accused of such supposed criminal actions are the opponents of shaman practices.

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