

Resistir no céu, viver na terra

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GARCIA, Uirá. *Awá-Guajá. Crônicas de Caça e Criação*. São Paulo: Hedra. 2018. 656pp.

The Awá-Guajá are a collective of Tupi-Guarani-speaking people who resisted encounters with Brazil, but who increasingly have nowhere to scape. Its territory today is invaded by land-grabbers, ranchers, small farmers, loggers and traffickers. Awá-Guajá, *crônicas de caça e criação*, by Uirá Garcia, is an ethnography about hunting and breeding, as expressed in the title, but also about kinship and cosmology, about territory and movement and, in the case of a people who live in such adverse political conditions, it is also an ethnography about struggle and resistance.

During the book, the author reports on the difficulties the Guajá went through throughout their history aiming to escape from the whites: they faced food shortages, since the places of escape were devoid of hunting; they dispersed from their families and, in order not to disappear as a group, they even had to devise alliance strategies. Today, with nowhere to scape, the Awá-Guajá are forced to live with the whites and to “work”, an activity that is constituted by its effects – wearing white clothes, drinking cold water from the Funai post, gossiping and consuming the whites' food – but which includes “a set of problems, dilemmas and differences guiding the relationship between the Guajá and the whites” (: 62).

The book starts from thematic fields of ethnology which, although theoretically

different, in this ethnography they need to be treated in articulation – just like the grammatical construction of the book title, with an additive coordinative conjunction, hunting and breeding. In addition to comply with the challenge of contributing ethnographically and theoretically to the ethnology of the South American lowlands, Uirá Garcia's work is successful in an even more arduous challenge, as he himself mentions: that of combining research efforts with the delicate situation in who were (and still are) their interlocutors (: 16). Effectively, the author's ethnographic description unfolds in the paths and stretches, that is, it takes place fundamentally in the movement and change currently experienced by the Guajá. This perspective is also consistent with the way in which these people conceive of hunting, namely, as a walk (wataha).

Hunting is presented by the author as a metaphor for Guajá life. If there is no hunting, there is nothing, because walking, walking (wata) and moving are the way par excellence to live. Therefore, the forest (ka'a) is the place where the Guajá find their "place of life" (: 66) and where they have always protected themselves from whites (karai) and hostile indigenous groups (kamara). However, with deforestation and the advance of whites over the forest, life (that is, hunting) has been increasingly difficult.

Garcia focuses more precisely in the theoretical discussion of ethnology in the Amazon from the third chapter, which deals with the notions of person, body, vitality and others. The author presents the vital Guajá (hajtekera), principles, which are conversation and relationship with each other; the signs of imminent death, which are deafness (japijakoá myty, "blocked ear") and old age; and it also deals with the meaning of death, ways of mourning and signs of forgetfulness (imahare). Among the Awá-Gujá, to die (mañu) is to forget that he was alive, and this natural forgetfulness of earthly life is experienced in heaven (iwa). The chapter also discusses the onomastic Guajá, which is conceived as a process in constant movement of production and creation of names, and about the direct association between pain and odor, whose relationship also occurs in other Amazonian peoples. Something that draws attention in the book is the way in which Garcia uses secondary ethnographic data to add to the Guajá data, and not the other way around.

By examining the Guajá methods of conceiving relatives and making alliances, in the fourth and fifth chapters, Garcia presents a terminology of social relations that permeates all native sociality. The author shows how the marital relationship between the Guajá is defined through elements outside the Western kinship system. Marriage, for example, is conceived as a process of creation in which the relationship between spouses is coextensive with relationships that escape (at least a priori) from the field of conjugality. The term used for the definition of a relationship between husband and wife is pyry, "to be together", exactly the same as that used for the creation of domestic animals by women. In the same regard, the verb mixa'a ("to grow"/"to create") which also characterizes the marital relationship is the same term used by parents who raise children.

As Garcia says, conjugality for the Awá-Guajá does not consist of something purely cosmological, but of the sociological relationship of marriage as a relationship of creation (: 382). The term riku – translated by the author precisely as “creation” – defines the continuous process of producing new relationships between people. In the sense of the potential Amazonian affinity (Viveiros de Castro, 2002), riku guides the proximity and distance between different beings in the world and applies to the relationships of “planting”, “guiding”, “walking together (to the wife and the husband)”, “providing food”, among others. The term riku applies to relationships between mothers and children, between husband and wife, between humans and domestic animals¹, as well as between objects (such as arrows) and the object itself (: 98).

Although the translation of the term proposed by the author has no correspondence- in most other Tupi-Guarani languages (: 384), what is interesting in Garcia’s analysis is his interpretation of riku as a “system of action”, that is, as a theory of the marital relationship not associated with a model of complex terminologies, but with a generalized form of relationality. As Viveiros de Castro says, the complexity of the Amazonian terminology and kinship relationships demanded that ethnologists in the region seek to understand “realities that are rebellious to traditional segmental models- ” (1995: 9). Therefore, simplistic correlations between terminologies, norms and practices had to be dissolved, allowing the symbolic dimension- and complexity of kinship in the Amazon to be studied without raising this domain to an order “capable of introducing us to the universal” (idem: 10). The analysis of the Awá de Garcia kinship is successful not only in escaping such simplistic correlations, but also in bringing the kinship back to the center of theoretical discussion in an Amazonian ethnography.

The emphasis given by Garcia aotermo riku goes against the current Americanist tendency to think kinship as a native concept, to be explored in articulation, first, between the ontological premises of Amerindian thought and, second, between the terminological, behavioral and matrimonial aspects of distinct systems of kinship (Coelho de Souza, 2004: 25)². The riku Guajá, according to Garcia (: 313), can be thought of as an action system that emphasizes agency, intention, causation, result and transformation, as in the definition of Gell (1998: 6). Applied to all domains in which kinship is involved, the concept of riku would be among the Awá-Guajá something like an “ethnographic rewriting”³ of the concept of kinship (: 392).

From the sixth chapter, the analysis of the concept of riku is extended to relationships that are outside the field of kinship. Garcia’s theoretical approach – which until then favored relationships of affinity – extends to account for asymmetric relationships, where figures such as those of “owners” and “creatures” prevail. However, despite expanding his theoretical scope, the author moves away from the mastery model, saying that it would be more appropriate to think of the Guajá based on the idea of an “anti-mastery”, since the masters themselves (masters

1 | Felipe Vander Velden, in his ethnography about the Karitiana, an Arikém language group located in Rondônia, takes the concept of “creation” to explain the link between kinship between humans and domestic animals, which is expressed in terms of affiliation (2012: 214).

2 | After the innovations brought by Viveiros de Castro regarding kinship in the region, some Americanist researchers have sought to reflect on the theme - or particularly on the kinship of a specific group – from the focus on certain specific social relationships, such as those of creation (in the case hereby reviewed, and also of the Karitiana, refer to Vander Velden, 2002) and food (refer to Costa, 2017). The tendency among these studies is that, through specific concepts articulate different orders among themselves and not necessarily directly linked to kinship as a particular domain. Sexual, marital and food relations, as well as the relationship between humans and animals, or animate and inanimate beings, are conceived as social relations that culminate in the transformation of people among themselves, and in the transformation of these social relationships into others (Strathern, 2006: 262).

3 | The idea of “ethnographic rewriting” as a way to approach kinship under different native versions was proposed by Corsín Jimenes and Willerslev (2007).

of creatures, owners of water, etc.) have a slight participation in the Guajá universe. Another reason why the self-defeated model proposed by Carlos Fausto (2008) is a fact, according to Garcia, among the Guajá, mastery cannot be thought of separately from the alliance and affinity relations. Then, there would be no “totalization” (: 340) of mastery and dominance relations or an “absolutism” (: 381) of the master-owner forms.

As proclaimed by Fausto, however, and as Garcia himself mentions twice (: 381-2 e 388), affinity and mastery are complementary relationships, and in this sense “the relationship of mastery is as central to the understanding of indigenous sociocosmologies as that of affinity” (Fausto, 2008: 330). Furthermore, the theoretical model of mastery does not establish a “totalization” of the domain relations, on the contrary, there is always ambiguity between the one who exercises and the one who is in control. The concept of riku being an expression of ways of acting and forms of action, such as “incorporation, adoption, marriage relationship, among others” (: 386), Garcia’s departure from mastery was not convincing, whose model focuses precisely on the “magnified person capable of effective action” on the world (Fausto, 2008: 330).

In the seventh and eighth chapters, Garcia describes hunting activity among the Awá-Guajá and associates it with ecology, kinship, war and cosmology. The author also discusses the relationship between humans and animals and between hunters and hunting objects, and in both the concept of riku appears again as imperative. Relations between humans and animals are disallowed by the categories jara and nima, as , which designate, respectively, the owners (but also “breeders”, “those who are together” and “caregivers”) and farm animals. However, the nima category (offspring) is not limited to the relationship between humans and farm animals, as it applies to any being under the control of a jara (breeder). In turn, in the case of the relationship between hunters and hunting objects, the prototypical example is that of arrows and tabocas, for example, whose creation/domestication by the hunter is as important as the manufacture itself. Because they are dangerous, arrows and tabocas can only be useful (without causing accidents and tragedies) if they are created, since they act intentionally. If they don’t want to work, they don’t work: they break, miss the target and get lost.

In the last chapter of the book, Garcia deals with the karawara, a complex class of beings that inhabits the celestial levels while acting on earthly life. Defying the logic of Western metaphysics, which distinguishes beings (substances) from doing (procedures), the karawara are defined by the Awá-Guajá as infallible hunters, auxiliary spirits of shamans at the same time as the destiny of every human being after death (: 538-39). When they meet at night to perform rituals at the takaja (ritual shelter), the Guajá assume the perspective of the karawara: they address them (at the heavenly level, iwa), dress as they sing in their language. Chants can express joy and sexual pleasure, but it is also sung in times of sadness, mainly of diseases, since

singing is the main concrete material of Guajá shamanism (: 584). Although singing is a dangerous activity, to the extent that ascending to heaven involves the risk of not being able to descend from it (therefore, it involves the risk of dying), currently what most awakens fear to the Awá-Guajá are not the ascents to the celestial level, but yes, earthly life itself.

This is because the cutting down of forests and illegal logging interfere negatively in the ecology of the karawara. As infallible hunters, they also need the forest. Resisting deforestation and its violent effects on Earth means that the Awá-Guajá therefore value the essential good communication with the karawara in the sky (iwã). It means preventing the noise of chainsaws from overcoming the silence of the interior of the (iwã). (when singers go up to iwã) or the sound of feet jumping on the ground (when the celestial visitor arrives on Earth) (: 606); it also means avoiding the heat of the forest burning overshadowing the “warmth of the sky” (iwa rakuha) that the karawara breathe therapeutically into the singers' wives and children. If, on Earth, the Awá-Guajá increasingly have nowhere to flee, what remains for them is to resist on the celestial level. There they can communicate with the karawara and walk (wata) with them to carry out hunting (wataha), a metaphor for life.

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