

**„Da Lídia compramos televisão“. Social Programs and Indigenous Agency among the Sateré-Mawé of the Lower Amazon in Brazil**

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“Da Lídia compramos televisão ...” “From Lídia we bought a television set” was, what a Sateré-Mawé friend gleefully responded to a question of mine [WK], asking what his family has done with the money of the “*salário-maternidade*”, the maternity benefit they received for the birth of his youngest daughter Lídia. In the case of the Sateré-Mawé Indians of the Lower Amazon governmental transfer payments such as *salário-maternidade*, *aposentadoria* (old-age pension) and *Bolsa Família* (family stipend) can be observed to be mostly spent on consumer goods.

To counteract structural poverty, transfer payments have become best practice in a variety of Latin American Countries (Hall 2006, Handa/Davis 2006, Lindert et. al. 2007). These payments mostly come in form of so-called conditional cash transfers (CCT) which oblige recipient families to follow certain prerequisites as subjecting children to preventive medical check-up routines and enrolment in school. In Brazil already existing programs have been merged into the *Bolsa Família* program to become the world’s largest CCT program affecting 46 million individuals or 25% of the Brazilian population. Conditions are school attendance and observance of a health and nutrition agenda.<sup>2</sup> Although it is not possible to support a family exclusively with the monetary transfer of the *Bolsa Família* per se, several recent studies (de Bem Lignani et.al. 2010, Paes-Sousa et.al. 2011) have shown that the program can

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<sup>2</sup> Concretely the conditions to receive *Bolsa Família* are: family income cannot pass ¼ of the minimum wage (=170 R\$); all minors beneath 17 of age have to enroll in school and must hold a certificate of vaccination (pregnant members of the family have to do prenatal care); the maximum value received per family amounts to 200 R\$ (the majority receives less); the maximum number of children calculated per family is 3.

lead to a better nutritional status in children of the recipient families since by and large the purchase of food for children is often prioritized (Paes-Sousa et.al. 2011:500).

While the CCT program of Brazil is considered as a social protection strategy to promote social development, but also warranted on humanitarian grounds, the reception of *aposentadoria*, old-age pension, is guaranteed by Brazilian labor legislation. On the grounds of social justice also so-called rural workers, as which also indigenous people are classified, are included as recipients, although, having spent a lifetime mostly outside the formal labor market, they have never been able to pay in a social pension fund. The transfer payment of one minimum wage (R\$ 678 in 2013) to these rural workers takes account of the fact of the severe social injustice these persons have often suffered having been exploited by their patrons who never wasted a thought to branch off social contributions on the behalf of their clients.

Finally, as female rural worker, every indigenous woman has the right to receive one minimum wage as *salário-maternidade* (maternity salary) for four months on occasion of the birth of a child. If one considers the young age of women when having their first child and an extraordinarily high birth rate<sup>3</sup> there is a considerable influx of cash into the Sateré-Mawé communities. The latter transfer payments, *aposentadoria* and *salário maternidade* need certification as (indigenous) “rural workers” by the FUNAI, the governmental organ for indigenous affairs in Brazil, and are, contrary to the CCTs, non-conditional.

In recent years some scientific studies have been published particularly on the CCT policy in Brazil albeit without including indigenous territories into the survey. Evaluations have been by and large positive, as has been said, although a distinction has to be made between short-term effects of the program and intended long-run impacts. Positive short-term effects on health status and school enrolment could be shown, while it seems to be too early to be able to evaluate the desired long-term effects of CCT. Since CCT is primarily invested in the human-capital accumulation of the children of recipient families, one has to wait and see if the intergenerational cycle of structural poverty can really be broken (Handa/Davis 2006).

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<sup>3</sup> Although the average birth rate in Brazil is nowadays less than 2 children per woman, among the Sateré-Mawé it is a staggering average of 8 children per women (Teixeira 2004). Since the seventies the population approximately multiplied tenfold and numbers today about 12.000 persons. It is beyond the scope of the paper, but there is a serious gender issue to be noted here: to subsidize childbirth in a society which already exhibits one of the highest birth rates in the world has of course serious consequences for the psycho-physical condition of women in Sateré-Mawé society. The Sateré-Mawé are caught in the middle of a demographic transition like many other lowland indigenous groups in Latin America (McSweeney/Arps 2005).

Furthermore, results in non-indigenous Brazilian society hint at socio-cultural implications beyond mere economic effects (e. g. greater purchasing power), as necessary they are. The implications might be relevant for our more specific case of an indigenous society:

- The “conditionality” of cash transfers is introduced implicitly as a mechanism of social disciplining of the poor as cultural Other in order to bestow legitimacy to a social program before a skeptic middle class<sup>4</sup> (there is an unacknowledged cultural bias).
- Cash transfers possibly alter norms and values in relation to (external) consumption to the detriment of (internal) production<sup>5</sup> (this cultural bias manifests itself in the imposing of a normative consumer behavior).
- Cash transfers foster a certain “immediatism”<sup>6</sup> (this normative consumer behavior may distract from long-term objectives).

The Sateré-Mawé<sup>7</sup> are one of the last indigenous groups living in relative vicinity to the main Amazon River. Today the Tupí-speaking Sateré-Mawé live in the *Área Indígena Andirá-Marau* near the cities of Parintins and Maués. Typical horticulturalists, hunters and fishers of the Amazonian rain forest, the Sateré-Mawé nevertheless have a prolonged history of intercultural contact. For a long time they have been included into the predatory and exploitative cycles of regional extractivism, however, according to their own oral traditions, the Sateré-Mawé also managed to stand their own as producers and merchants of guaraná. Due to an enormous demographic explosion ecological and economic pressure on the forest environment increased considerably and shortage of decent alimentation has become a chronic problem. Although a Fair Trade Project, the “*projeto integrado de etno-desenvolvimento*” or “*Projeto Guaraná*”, now already running for an astonishing number of years, takes up the cosmological centrality of guaraná and fuses it with Western environmental ethics in order to produce and commercialize guaraná (and other, mostly collected, forest products), the ecologically, economically and socially critical situation in the *Área Indígena* lingers on. While the “*Projeto Guaraná*” struggles to maintain, or rather revitalize a productive indigenous culture, crisis exacerbated in recent years, not in the least

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Handa/Davis (2006:523)

<sup>5</sup> Cf. de Bem Lignani et.al. (2010) who note a significant shift towards processed foods and cereals bought with CCT money (see l. c. fig.1), which has to do with availability but also with a shift in symbolic and cultural aspects of food consumption (l. c. 708).

<sup>6</sup> The physical and psychological pressure of poverty per se requires short-term solutions, while long-term strategies take a back seat (cf. Handa/Davis 2006). Poor people are forced to develop a habitual “immediatism” (cf. Day/Papataxiarchis/Stewart 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Pereira 1954; Lorenz 1992; Figueroa 1997; Alvarez 2009; Kapfhammer 2004a, 2009, 2012a, 2012b; Wright/Kapfhammer/Wiik 2012.

because of the “culturally” overwhelming competition of governmental transfer payments, as Sateré-Mawé activists and professionals of the guaraná project maintain<sup>8</sup>. To give an idea of the proportions: on a yearly round, about 80% of the cash flow is made up by social benefits, while only 20% come from the international Fair-Trade project in spite of the nonpareil prices it is able to pay to the individual producers. In place of guaraná gardens transfer payments are tapped as principal sources of revenue. To give an example, persons entitled to pensions have become the main “asset” of a Sateré-Mawé household. If there are two or three persons entitled to pensions in a household the revenue easily amounts to 1500 to 2000 R\$ per month. Even if one counts only two retired persons the yearly revenue amounts to 15.600 R\$, which is the equivalent of 390 kilos of Guaraná which sells for 40 R\$ per kilo to the Fair-Trade market. Currently only the more productive Sateré-Mawé producers yield a crop this large.<sup>9</sup> It can be observed that the regime of transfer payments creates its own political ecology among the Sateré-Mawé: less by blocking access to territory to produce or to markets to sell the produce, but by recoining desires (cf. Rubenstein 2004) to create what we will call a “cargo-stance”. It will be shown, that, ironically, this process of habitual subjugation roots squarely in Sateré-Mawé cosmology.

It will be argued that the Sateré-Mawé do their very own reading of “conditionality”. From a governmental perspective the conditionality of cash transfers aims at the securing of long-term objectives as human-capital accumulation among the children of recipient families.<sup>10</sup> Instead, “conditionality” / “unconditionality” among the Sateré-Mawé have to be seen primarily within a cosmological framework of relations between human persons and non-human-domains. While “conditionality” has to be understood as complex and demanding relationships an adult Sateré-Mawé person is subjected to in his or her *productive* life as subsistence farmer in the tropical rain forest, “unconditionality” operates as the principal scheme of simple and undemanding relations activated primarily in the context of *procuring* resources from the environment. Both schemata of relations are affected either positively or negatively by differential historical events. It is argued that access to the package of

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<sup>8</sup> Revenues from production (e. g. manioc flour) for the regional market are usually negligible because prices are very low (the Fair Trade project pays up to three times more for a kilo of guaraná as the local market) or highly volatile (in the case of manioc flour). Furthermore the fees for transport to town by ship have risen considerably in recent years, so that any profit might easily be eaten up.

<sup>9</sup> It can also be observed that, contrary to what one might expect, this situation does not lead to enhanced power of the elderly who receive the money. On the contrary: the money is quickly distributed, or rather: torn from the hands of the powerless elder men and women by their younger *progeny* to go out on a spree.

<sup>10</sup> Transfer payments as *aposentadoria* and *salário maternidade*, which constitute by far the biggest revenues, are unconditional anyway. Also, it is unclear what heightening the chances of indigenous youths on the regional job market can really mean other than increasing an already problematic urban migration.

governmental transfer payments exacerbates the mythopraxis (Sahlins 1985; cf. Kapfhammer 2004a, Wright/Kapfhammer/Wiik 2012:386) of unconditional relations with the (broader) environment of indigenous modernity. The appropriation of external resources may follow traditional cosmological models, however proves to be dysfunctional in the long run, because of the concomitant gradual dislocation of the cosmological and ontological source of autonomy and agency towards the exterior.

Contrary to the goals announced by the governmental policy of reducing structural poverty the impact of transfer payments triggers unforeseen consequences: heightening consumption at the expense of production aggravates rather than alleviates the capacity of the Sateré-Mawé to reproduce their social life as a culturally differential social group in Brazil.

Philippe Descola (2005) has elaborated the plurality of relational schemas with non-human domains or nature accommodated within the same animistic mode of identification among Amazonian cultures. Obviously, specific styles of social philosophies (e. g. “generalized predation”, “symmetry of obligations” or “togetherness of sharing”) can be found among different collectives, although Descola concedes that no relational mode can be absolutely dominant (Descola 2012:493). In another work Kapfhammer (2012a, b) has argued that basically two modalities of human-nature-relations can be identified among the Sateré-Mawé: one based on “non-conditional” relations with the environment, and one based on “conditional” relations. Obviously the two modalities are oriented by a person’s life-cycle development insofar as the latter modality is constructed during the initiation ritual. This ritual substitutes a mode of relation couched in consanguine terms by a mode formulated by affinal terms<sup>11</sup>. While the grand scheme of this relational mode is established in the initiation rite it finds myriad expressions in everyday life in form of a multitude of complex rules of conduct. These rules and restrictions have to be adhered in order to be able to live peacefully and unmolested and at the same time to be able to benefit from the resources. Noncompliance to these rules of conduct entails sickness and interruption of access to the resources of the different environmental domains. It is therefore viable to call this latter conditional mode “*ambitious*”, a system, which creates a specific communicative environment characterized by its much greater complexity than the “*unambitious*” system based on the logic of unconditional care a mother fosters for her children. Within the life cycle of a Sateré-Mawé

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<sup>11</sup> The non-conditional mode is constructed in terms of relations to a game mother (*miat ty*), while the conditional mode revolves around an affinal relation to Snake Woman (*Uniamoire’i; moi*, snake) as staged in the initiation rite *waumat* (cf. Kapfhammer 2012a/b).

person this logic is internalized prior to the “ambitious” mode.<sup>12</sup> What is more, it can be said that both modalities continue to coexist in a kind of habitual potentiality or option. Above all, it is argued, certain historical events and external impacts are able to trigger or even exacerbate one or the other modality. Indigenous modernity, as it recently came to the Sateré-Mawé in the form of governmental transfer payments, most certainly brings to the fore the non-conditional mode of “demanding” from an expanded environment including the state.

The mode of unconditional extraction of resources from the (expanded) environment does have its precedence in a (more) traditional Sateré-Mawé cosmology. In certain hunting rituals the shamans demanded game from the animal mother *Urihe'i*. An older Sateré-Mawé man tells of his father-in-law, who was a shaman (*paini*):

“... He called the white-lipped peccaries two times. He had brought a beautiful stone from the Rio Marau. Inside that stone was the mother of the peccaries (*hamaut wato ehary*). At that time we all went to his house; there the people said: ‘It would be good to call white-lipped peccaries this week, because we need a lot of food!’ We all came together there. At that time my uncle Alípio was learning to become a shaman with him. He was his *mesário* at that time. Then my father-in-law lighted his cigar and smoked. And he danced. He danced with a calabash of *sap’o* (guaraná beverage) in his hand. While singing he also shook his *mariri* (rattle). At that time we really believed in him. Because it was the first time that he did this. After he had stopped dancing, he said: ‘A peccary herd will appear for sure! You better prepare your guns at home. But you should not kill the peccaries carelessly. If you miss them, they will only be wounded and will die someplace else! So be careful!’ The next day a peccary herd indeed appeared at his landing place. That day Mr. Clovis visited my father-in-law. He took my father-in-law’s gun and killed six peccaries! Even chief Adelino killed some. Because the peccary herd had appeared, the people believed very much in the shaman.”

In contrast to the well-known reciprocal exchange between the human shaman and the supernatural animal master in Tucanoan cosmology – as made famous by Reichel-Dolmatoff

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<sup>12</sup> In Descola’s inventory of possible modes of relations within the animistic mode of identification it is probably the example of the Arawakan Campa which comes closest to the Sateré-Mawé case (Descola 2005, 2012:486-92; Weiss 1975). Like the Sateré-Mawés’ relation to the animal mother *Urihe'i* the Campas’ relation to animal masters is based on a logic of “gift”. In contrast to “exchange” this “gift” is rendered unconditionally out of benevolence. The difference of the two Sateré-Mawé modalities of environmental relations is not so much characterized by differential modalities of reciprocity (as e.g. Descola’s mode of “exchange” based on “balanced reciprocity” or “predation” which may be associated with “negative reciprocity” in Sahlins’ [1972] terms). Rather it seems that the “ambitious” mode of human-nature relations among the Sateré-Mawé is triggered by an insight in the existence of a “darker side” of nature; an environment, which can be ambivalent, violent and vindictive. In Sateré-Mawé cosmology this insight is constructed on the basis of a notion of environmental “toxicity”. The ambitious mindfulness for environmental relations is requested during the comprehensive “detoxification” process of manioc cultivation, the necessary bodily subjugation which prepares the adult Sateré-Mawé person to cope with this noxious environment is accomplished during the initiation ritual *waumat*, where the adolescent boys have to endure the poisonous and extremely dolorous stings of *tucandeira* ants (Kapfhammer 2012a).

(1976) - no reciprocal exchange is executed here.<sup>13</sup> The relation to the animal mother<sup>14</sup> is rather characterized by a kind of “demand-sharing” (Peterson 1993; cf. Wright/Kapfhammer/Wiik 2012, Kapfhammer 2012a/b). It seems as if this kind of unconditional relationship between Sateré-Mawé hunters and the animal mother has been historically carried over to the relationship between chiefs and river traders, indigenous representatives of the Sateré-Mawé and governmental indigenist agents and international NGOs on the project market, up to the relationship of Sateré-Mawé as Brazilian citizens and the governmental organs like the INSS (*Instituto Nacional do Seguro Social*) responsible for distributing transfer payments.

It is argued that the perseverance of this mode of relations between humans and their environment lays open a dilemma of indigenous cosmology, or rather: cosmopraxis. Unconditional acceptance of transfer money is in stark contrast to a differential, but equally traditional notion of productivity and agency as it is elaborated in some of the myths on the origin of important cultivated plants.

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<sup>13</sup> Again we would like to quote Descola’s recapitulation of Campa cosmology: “The status of the mistress of peccaries makes it possible to contrast this dutiful generosity with the imperative of exchange that characterizes hunting in the Tukano groups; among the Campas, this is a feminine entity, described as a generic sister, who keeps the peccaries in an enclosure at the top of a mountain. From time to time a shaman comes to intercede with her, asking her to part with one member of her herd. She then tugs out a tuft of bristles from the back of one of the animals and blows it away so that it will eventually produce many more peccaries, which she will then send down to the humans, for them to hunt. This is an action of pure benevolence. It certainly creates certain moral obligations for the hunters. In particular, they must make sure that they kill the peccaries with a single arrow shot, so as not to cause them to suffer. However, unlike among the Tukanos, no compensation is demanded” (2012:488). Interestingly, there is a master person (*kaiwat*) in Sateré-Mawé cosmology who relates to the hunter only on conditional terms, namely *ase’i kuru* or *Curupira*. If a hunter uses one of the many magic preparations (*mohãg* or *caxila* in vernacular Portuguese) associated with *Curupira* in order to benefit from the hunting resources this person commands, he has to obey meticulously the many rules and restrictions which go along with any “pact” with *Curupira*. These rules and restrictions interpenetrate daily routines and create a complex and ambitious “culture of mindfulness” in dealing with human and non-human domains.

<sup>14</sup> It is not rare in Amazonia to construct owner figures as maternal imagos (Kohn 2007, Walker 2012b; see also Bird-David 1990) e.g. among the Munduruku, once the immediate neighbors of the Sateré-Mawé (Murphy 1958, cf. Kapfhammer 2012c). While the Munduruku seem to have played out this theme internally by way of the male society occupying diverse ‘maternal’ positions, quite a few groups ‘externalized’ it historically by including relationships to river traders of the *aviamento* system into this basic scheme (Paumari, Bonilla 2005; Avilá-Runa, Kohn 2007; Kanamari, Costa 2009; Urarina, Walker 2012a; see also Fausto 2008, 2012). However, to be able to trust in the ‘animal mother’ / river trader’s unconditional care these groups are compelled to *dissimulate* the severe exploitative character of these relationships (cf. Gow 1991:62-71). Accordingly, we contest Walker’s argument in the wake of Foucault and Butler that submission amounts to a form of agency (Walker 2012:142/3, 155). It is interesting that the ritual machine of Munduruku society, based on the agency of the male “warrior-mothers” engaged in head-hunting, flourished as long as their military prowess was advantageous to the colonial system, and collapsed, as hierarchies were inverted radically and the Munduruku fell prey to river traders during the rubber boom (Kapfhammer 2012c). As argued in Kapfhammer (2012a) and the present paper the Sateré-Mawé actually dispose of a cosmo-practical alternative to ‘submission’. Furthermore, quite a few of our Sateré-Mawé interlocutors fiercely criticize “‘pitiful’ and ‘helpless’ demeanour ... as a means of eliciting paternalistic benevolence” (Walker 2012:142).

In 2009 Terence Turner published an erudite critique of recent debates on “animism”, “perspectivism” or “multinaturalism” among Amerindian cultures of Amazonia. One of Turner’s strongest argument is that, what really counts within the regime of human-nature-relations, are less the differential perspectives between two positions, but the possibility of *transformation*, which potentially happens between the positions occupied by two beings. In the end it is this potentiality for transformation that characterizes the agency of Amerindian cultures of the Amazon. On the basis of the famous myths about the origin of the cooking fire among the Gê Tuner shows how these narratives not only explain the existence of certain cultural phenomena in present time, but also, how to “*produce*” or “*reproduce*” them:

“The essence of fully developed culture, as contrasted to the half-way house of the animals’ prototypes, is rather described as the ability to *produce* these things, and most importantly, what this ability further implies, *the reflexive ability to produce the process of producing them, as a generalized and infinitely replicable form of activity*” (2009:20, emphasis Turner).

The fundamental capacity of a truly human society according to Turner is the capacity to “*produce production*” (l.c.):

“Culture comes fully into existence when the ancestral humans not only come into possession of these objects but become able to objectify and replicate the processes of objectification (in pragmatic terms, production) by which they are produced: how to use fire to make fire, how to ferment manioc to make manioc beer, or how to transform the surface forms of their bodies with painting or ornaments to produce or regulate in culturally standardized ways the internal bodily processes of transformation that give rise to aspects of social personhood” (2009:21).

A good example of this origin of transformative and productive power is the Sateré-Mawé myth on the origin of manioc:

The narrative starts out with a classic conflict between the culture hero *Hate ywakup* and his (prospective) father-in-law jaguar, a cannibalistic ogre, who before has devoured all his wannabe sons-in-law<sup>15</sup>. After some unsuccessful attempts to marry a frog and an aguti woman, *Hate ywakup* sets out to court Jaguar’s daughter. Aware of the cannibalistic appetites

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<sup>15</sup> By calling Jaguar *hamu nokap*, “father-in-law / enemy”, *Hate ywakup* emphasizes the potential violence residing in affinal relationships of Amazonian Indians. In Sateré-Mawé mythology an escalating conflict between affines often sets the stage for the unleashing of those creative forces that give rise to the life-sustaining plants of today (Wright/Kapfhammer/Wiik 2012:421).

of Jaguar, he relies on his shamanistic powers<sup>16</sup> to get the better of the Jaguar monster. *Hate ywakup* succeeds to counter all the deadly ploys of the Jaguar and manages to flee. He hides beneath the hair of Frog woman. At the behest of *Hate ywakup* Frog woman finally kills Jaguar by stuffing a red-hot stone down his throat. *Hate ywakup* beats the carcass with the branch of the taperebá tree<sup>17</sup>, throws it into the water and the Jaguar transforms into the Black Caiman (*Melanosochus niger*). Jaguar-Caiman becomes the master (*kaiwat*) of the fish (*murikaria*). Meanwhile *Hate ywakup* refrains from marrying the Jaguar daughter, who instead becomes the wife of a Frog man (*cururu*).

Sometime later the fish (*murikaria*) organize a dance fest, where they invite the Jaguar daughter, only in order to kill her because she never had considered marrying them<sup>18</sup>. They intend to kill her with shamanistic magic and transform her into manioc. Despite the warnings of her husband Frog, Jaguar daughter participates in the dance, ensorcelled she gets sick and dies. The fish shamans dismember her body and bury the bodily parts<sup>19</sup>. From the grave springs the first manioc plant.

However the new plant proves to be inedible because it is too “strong”<sup>20</sup>. The people venture an experiment: they convoke a reunion in order to find out how to produce *beijús* (manioc cakes). Unfortunately, all those who take a taste of the manioc plant, die. They ask the shaman *Hate ywakup* for advice and succeed to revive the dead persons by blowing tobacco over them. Because of this, the narrators hasten to explain, people are able to consume manioc beer until dropping “dead”, only to get up again afterwards.

In a second “experiment” the production of *tarubá* (manioc beer) succeeds. It is the bees who teach the humans how to make *tarubá*:

“Their mother was preparing *tarubá*. But others worked real slowly. Another one (of the bees, *awia*) got angry so they expelled her from their midst. Because of this the honey of the black bee (*awia huni*) is inedible. But the other bees didn’t get angry. These are the true bees (*awia sese*). They worked together to make *tarubá*. During the work they conversed: “Your *tarubá*, is it good?” “Yes, it is!” But there was another bee who did not participate from the beginning. Her name is *wamuni*. She is not numbered

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<sup>16</sup> *Hate ywakup* epitomizes autonomous agency: to avoid the sinister invitations of Jaguar to enter his house, *Hate ywakup* has brought along his own bench to sit on outside. Once a political activist of the Sateré-Mawé told me [WK] that he is trying to model himself on that kind of behavior.

<sup>17</sup> *Spondias mombin*, a fruit tree with a characteristically rough bark – like the skin of the caiman.

<sup>18</sup> The *murikaria*, evil shamans, are considered as the *hamu’in*, „uncles“, of Jaguar daughter, obviously in function of Jaguar-Caiman being their „master“ (*kaiwat*).

<sup>19</sup> In one version of the narrative (Uggé n/d: 88) the *murikaria* explicitly cut up the belly of the dead woman to pull out the unborn child of Jaguar daughter. Out of the child’s stomach they make a big *beijú* (manioc cake) and tear it to pieces. Out of the child’s nipples they make a fruit called *mutu hã*. They inter all the pieces of the body. See Kapfhammer (2009:215 ff.) for a discussion of the recurring motif in Sateré-Mawé mythology of killing primordial persons out of whose bodies grow the first useful plants.

<sup>20</sup> Bitter manioc, of course, consumed raw is deadly poisonous.

among the other bees, because she does not know how to make *tarubá* like the others. But the *karawin* bee did join in to work together with the others. There are two types of bees who know how to make *tarubá* best: *awyt'apanag* and *awia sese*. But there are also other bees that make *tarubá* (*mahy*<sup>21</sup>), but there are various bees, of which nobody knows the names.

They talked among themselves: “How can we make our *tarubá*? “ Then they prepared a feast with music in order to try their *tarubá*. But their dancing was different. They drank their *tarubá*.<sup>22</sup>

[...]

When their work was finished, they celebrated a lively party. Today there are bees in the forest, the world over. They live in their own houses. They showed all their work [to the humans], because at that time, before they transformed, they were people here on earth.

There was also their younger brother *kamasawa* (bumblebee) who did not participate. But he is a good-natured guy. They (the bees) showed all their work. They said: “Let’s embellish *Uniamoire*’i and *Uniamākuru*’i!”<sup>23</sup> At that moment *kamasawa* arrived without joining them. When it is time for the guaraná plants to flower, he is the first to suck. But we have never found his honey.”<sup>24</sup>

After the primordial people have successfully found out how to process the poisonous manioc plant into staple food and drink an old man called *Neki* appears and asks for the manioc plant. The owners of the plant (the *murikaria* fish people) advise him to open up a garden of his own, so the plant (-woman) will relocate to his place. After some arduous work, because at that time only stone axes exist, *Neki* is ready with cutting and burning the forest and the (single) manioc plant changes over to his garden. Although the fish people have warned him to reveal his secret, *Neki* divulges his newly found plenitude, because he would like to invest his *farinha* and *beijú* in a feast. Some dove women arrive and tell him that, if he would marry one of them, he would have manioc planted all over his garden (and not just a single exemplar). The next day the manioc plant has disappeared. The Fish people tell him:

“Now she (manioc woman) does not want any more. You will only have manioc, if you invite your friends and relatives, in order to prepare a garden. You will have to clear, burn and plant. That’s the only way to do it!”

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<sup>21</sup> The narrator uses *mahy*, alcoholic beverages. Of course, the product of the bees is honey (*awia hy*). **Kann Honig nicht auch berauschend sein???** Schon, aber s. nächste Fußnote!

<sup>22</sup> The sight of bees buzzing around the entrance of their hive is interpreted by the Sateré-Mawé as bees which, after having drunk *tarubá* inside their house, now dance like crazy (*tuwemahy u*) at the entrance.

<sup>23</sup> These are the two sisters whose bodies have transformed into the terrestrial layer at the beginning of the world.

<sup>24</sup> This citation is an excerpt of a narration told by Erdene Michilis in 2012 during a meeting of the *Consórcio dos Produtores Sateré-Mawé*, the syndicate of Sateré-Mawé producers engaged in an international Fair-Trade project (see Kapfhammer 2009a, Wright/Kapfhammer/Wiik 2012). Honey is one of the products commercialized and the objective of the recitation of the myth (as well as the recitation of the important narrative on the origin of guaraná, the main article of Sateré-Mawé production) was exactly to “re-embed” the economic endeavor into Sateré-Mawé cosmology.

As has been said this long narrative cycle not only explains how the manioc plant came about as a “botanical” phenomenon, but most importantly how this entity by way of a complicated and entangled process has been transformed from a proto-human / - animal person into the food plant of today. The transformational capacity of the fish sorcerers gives a productive turn (cf. Kapfhammer 2009) to the death of the jaguar daughter: out of her dismembered body grows the first manioc plant.

As has been said, according to Turner the “ability to *produce* these things”, whose origin the myths recount, “implies *the reflexive ability to produce the process of producing them, as a generalized and infinitely replicable form of activity*” (2009:22, emphasis Turner). And, what strikes us as most important, from the perspective of the Sateré-Mawé the capacities and skills (“means of production”) to replicate manioc cultivation are by and large available from *within* Sateré-Mawé cosmography. At the end of the long narrative we find two episodes that convey the establishment of a “reflexive ability” to replicate a productive process:

In a series of “experimental” processes today’s humankind acquired the ability to transform manioc tubers into staple food (*beijús*) and festive drinks (*tarubá*). Thus Sateré-Mawé of today should be able to re-produce society by feeding one’s intimate relatives – the commensality of consanguines eating *beijú* - , as well as by celebrating rituals that manage exogamous relations – the festive carousal of potential affines drinking *tarubá*.<sup>25</sup> Finally, the artisan skills<sup>26</sup> of making *tarubá* are taught to the (proto-) humans by (proto-) animals, the bees. The final episode about the distribution of the novel plant further maps out some social implications of “manioc culture”: *Neki*’s conduct implicitly establishes the necessity to organize the large communal works (*puxirum*) for clearing, burning and planting the gardens as absolutely crucial social events of Sateré-Mawé communities. Moreover, it also alludes to the female networks of special knowledge concerning manioc cultivation<sup>27</sup> that is activated by marital alliances.

This myth teaches nothing less than the production of manioc as a prerequisite of the reproduction of the society as a whole. Up to this day certain manioc varieties are called *awyato wato* or *awyato hit*, Big Jaguar or Little Jaguar: the productive transformation of the raw and

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<sup>25</sup> During the *waumat* initiation ritual, where the young boys are initiated into the social organization of exogamous clans, invited visitors **where** obliged to drink *tarubá* until passing out, before being allowed to the fest house.

<sup>26</sup> The narratives also convey what might be duly called „Traditional Environmental Knowledge“: in one version of the myths collected the narrator somewhat enigmatically talks about a “stick” the (bee-) women manipulate to make *tarubá* out of *beijús*. According to the interlocutors it is about the *sawiti*, a long stemmed plant, whose leaves are roasted and added to the soaked *beijús* in order to make the mash ferment.

<sup>27</sup> This can be read into the dove women’s proposal (cf. Emperaire/Peroni 2007).

dangerous power of the cannibalistic jaguar was transformed into the staple food of the same name for human persons today.

In its requirement of complex knowledge, technology and social relations manioc cultivation continues to be a bulwark for the daily aesthetics of village life, and above all: it's a bulwark "manned" by women! The men primarily make an appearance when it comes to wrest the necessary space for manioc cultivation from wild nature. Masculine self-esteem as hunter and (in former times) warrior may have its effect in dealing with nature. Clearing of primary forest thought of as more "manly" than clearing a *capoeira* (secondary forest),<sup>[n1]</sup> On the other hand men had to discipline themselves from an early age into skilled artisans who provide the basket work the women need for processing manioc into edible foodstuff<sup>28</sup>. "Manioc culture" integrates ecological and economical knowledge and skills, gender, social and ritual relations. In short, it organizes life into an ambitious system that not only is rich of the actors' aesthetic involvement (Ingold 2000) with their social and natural environment, but a system that draws exclusively from internal, autonomous resources.

As a matter of fact in recent years "manioc culture", which should be deeply ingrained in Sateré-Mawé everyday life, has come under pressure for a variety of reasons. Due to the enormous demographic explosion and attendant environmental pressure shortage of food is nowadays chronic among the Sateré-Mawé. This shortage of food normally extends primarily to game and fish, but in recent years the occasional lack of *farinha*, manioc flour, keeps occurring. This shortage of even the basic alimentation is attributed by the Sateré-Mawé to an increasing number of villagers who abandon to open gardens and rather rely on monthly social benefits to buy food in the city. They rather put up with prolonged periods of dearth when the money is gone and commodities are consumed.

What concerns manioc production a variety of factors, both objectivist and constructivist, must be taken into account. First, due to population growth there is an increasing demand of space for opening a garden. Each village community considers a certain territory as its own; within this territory the possibility to allot plots of land for new gardens is reaching its limits. Socially there are increasing difficulties for organizing and maintaining a working group for the necessary communal works (*puxirum*). This must be attributed to a general crisis of traditional strategies of constructing consensus by way of chiefly authority<sup>29</sup>. Increasing

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<sup>28</sup> Young Sateré-Mawé men were obliged to do the wickerwork their future spouses need to harvest and process manioc: *tipití*, and a variety of baskets and sieves. Beyond the technological aspect wickerwork conveyed an aesthetically demanding design art and had a kind of morally disciplining effect on the young adolescents.

<sup>29</sup> In former times this social consensus in preparation of communal works was established by means of formal reunions in the chief's house. Important components of these gatherings were the enactment of the symbolic

individualism and even selfishness can be observed<sup>30</sup>. Furthermore, economic incentive to produce manioc by the regional market is highly fluctuant. In times of high prices it may even occur, that too much is sold to the nearby cities at the expense of one's own subsistence in the village, in times of slump attention from production might be diverted altogether. This "listlessness" is certainly a consequence of low prices on a regional market, but much more so the consequence of a deep *habitual* change over decades of historical exploitation and dependency. In the following account an elderly chief complains about the unwillingness of his fellow villagers to secure their own subsistence using the word *eko*, "custom", "habit", to characterize this kind of behaviour:

"You know, the Sateré have the following habit (*eko*). I know very well, what kind of habit (*eko*) this is! As I was born, there was a good price for guaraná. Despite of this the Sateré have never become rich with guaraná. They produce very little. They like to drink it, but we could as well sell it. Nobody grew it any more. Same thing with manioc flour: it is good to eat and good to sell. But it became a habit (*eko*) of the Sateré that their production is never sufficient. Our land is big, but we never do anything with it! We used to work a lot with rose-wood<sup>31</sup>, but we never got many provisions (*rancho*). We received our rancho only once, the next day we did not come back to get another one. If you wanted to buy a gun, that was it! That was the custom (*eko*) of the Sateré. But today the price for guaraná is very high, but not a single Sateré sells one ton! Not a single chief works in the garden anymore. Nobody sells 1000 kilos per year; all they sell is 10, 30, 15, 20, 40, 50 kilos. That's it! That's the habit (*eko*) of all of us Sateré [...] Those, who do not open gardens, will stay hungry. Today nobody works with rose-wood anymore, but people still go hungry. Even the captain (*capitão*) goes hungry, because he has no garden! [...] We have to use our brains in order to work right and not go hungry. But some have not enough brains to clear their garden right in time. Those, who do not use their brains, stay behind with their work. They lament: 'There's no *farinha* [manioc flour] today!' Today there is no *farinha* in Nova Horizonte, over there in Santa Catarina it's the same thing, also in Kuruatuba, no *farinha*! [...] They only think of their salary (*salário*). They come to the city and go to the bank to draw out money. Nobody brings his products to the chief anymore to support him. Nobody supports father and mother anymore [...] Today many earn<sup>32</sup> a salary as retirees, *bolsa familia* or teacher."

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power of the so-called *puratig* and the ritual consumption of guaraná (on this quite unique ritual object called *puratig* cf. Kapfhammer 2004a).

<sup>30</sup> In working groups everything depends on the willingness of all participants to hang on until the cycle of works is completed. Hagglng over divergent workloads often leads to dropouts.

<sup>31</sup> In the 50ies and 60ies the *Área Indígena* was afflicted by a particularly devastating boom-and bust-cycle of Amazonian extractivism exploiting rose-wood oil. It is interesting that, in retrospect, despite the severe social and ecological devastations, the era of rose-wood extraction is remembered as an epoch characterized by the access to merchandise instead by misery and exploitation. Mainly chiefly persons, who functioned more as brokers and middlemen to the white merchants in contrast to their fellowmen who actually carried out the arduous work of felling and hauling rose-wood, tend to idealize this time.

<sup>32</sup> The speaker uses the verb *tat*, "to receive for free". From the perspective of the Sateré-Mawé the notion of "unconditionality" may also extend to salaried positions as teachers or health agents.

The complex interplay of external forces, which impacted Sateré-Mawé culture, allowed for building up a “cargo-stance” (Kapfhammer 2012a) which paradoxically exacerbated at the moment when state programs intended to combat poverty nationwide made inroads.

The grand narrative undergirding this habitual change as a kind of “anti-myth” (DaMatta 1971, Kapfhammer 2004b) to the manioc myth is the story of the “Emperor” (*Imperador*).

This is before the *puratĩg* appeared. There is the origin of the world and there is the origin of the house. The origin of the house is *nusoken*<sup>33</sup>. That house in *nusoken* was made of stone (*nu*). The origin of everything was there. It had many separate rooms. All the wickerwork was made of stone, like the roof<sup>34</sup>. A roof, but made of stone, the beams were also made of stone. That’s why the Sateré call it *nusoken*. There also were a lot of (cultivated) plants. These plants are the origin of those today. There is also the origin of the animals: bat, spider, the man-eating mosquito<sup>35</sup>. But the night for sleeping did not yet exist. But our ancestors, the *Wasiris*, already lived. There was also the origin of the white people and of the leaders. Ours was *Wasiri*, but the name of the white people’s leader was *Imperador*. As they left *nusoken*, they took along all the original things. But only the house remained in the hands of the Indians. The white people took everything with them, material for buildings, and all the factories that have been there [in *nusoken*]. All this the Emperor took with him, when he left. [...] What remained in the hands of the Sateré was only the “*fabrica*” of the house. All the forest and timber remained in the hands of the Sateré. Also loam and *caraná* to build houses remained in the hands of the Sateré. One part remained with the Sateré, the rest with the white people. All the factories remained in the hands of the Emperor. But the forest, to make things with, remained in the hands of *Wasiri*.

One day the Emperor said: “Let’s go! Let’s take our baggage with us! We will leave from here!” He also spoke to *Wasiri*’s people. He sent them ahead of him: “I will follow you later!” So they went first. He sent all his servants ahead. First, all the Indians were servants of the Emperor, all the *Wasiris*. He sent only *Wasiri*’s people, the people of *Anumare hit*<sup>36</sup>. So they went, but stopped in the middle of their journey. They caught the sight of all these fruits. Because there were a lot of fruits: *assai*, *patawá*, *burití*, all the [palm-] fruits. Because of these fruits they had stopped. Where there were *inajá* fruits they built their lean-tos (*tapirí*). They stayed there many days, until the fruits were gone. So they continued their journey. They found a lot of other fruits, *patawá* fruits. There they also spent a lot of days, until these fruits were also gone<sup>37</sup>.

Then the Emperor came behind them. He took a lot of things with him, he carried his baggage. He said to them: “I told you: ‘Go ahead!’ But you didn’t, because of the *patawá* fruits.” They had eaten many of them these days. The Emperor came to the first lean-to, then to another one, where he met the people themselves. That’s how it began. So the Emperor encountered the group. He said: “Why are you here?”

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<sup>33</sup> “*Nusoken*”, the origin of all things and the means to fabricate them, is nowadays the registered trademark of Sateré-Mawé fair trade products.

<sup>34</sup> *mare*, a roof made of plaited *caraná* leaves.

<sup>35</sup> *win pot’u*, mosquito / cannibal; apart from the sun that never stopped to shine, it was the stinging and biting beasts that prevented primordial beings from sleeping.

<sup>36</sup> *Wasiri* or *Anumare*, used interchangeably, is a primordial demiurge.

<sup>37</sup> Palm fruits are an important staple collected during the rainy season. These palms are also a striking feature of the Sateré-Mawés’ fluvial landscape. They originated from the shamanistic paraphernalia of Thunder person.

Didn't I tell you to go ahead? But you stopped here! I thought you were already at the river where the ships depart? I thought you had made your *tapiri* there? I think, you do not want to go." Those encampments in the middle of the forest are in the hands of the Sateré until this day. That's the origin of all the communities. [...] That's why there are Sateré communities in various places.

Then, the Emperor said to them: "If you don't want to go, you can stay here, because you cannot leave this forest and your land alone. You cannot leave all these plants alone. From now on you stay with your plants!" So the Emperor left without them and went to the port. [...] He took along all his baggage. When he arrived at the port, he chose one for every profession: there was a cook and many other professions. There were also persons to make canoes. He took them to where the big ships are made. He waited a little while to see if somebody still came behind him. But nobody came. At that moment the ship was already finished. He stowed his baggage, all of it. And the Emperor went away.

He left the Sateré halfway. Those, who are we today. *Wasiri's* people, the people of god *Anumare hit*. But the Emperor's people went downriver. The Emperor became the leader outside, a great leader. His grandsons remained leaders up to this day. Their name is "*Inspetoria*", later the name was "*SPT*", and later the leader was "*FUNAI*"<sup>38</sup>. The people of *Wasiri* are we, the chiefs, here in the forest, the sons of *Wasiri*. Our work comes from *Wasiri*. All these things originate in *nusoken*. [...]

The Emperor said to *Wasiri*: "I am leaving. But one day I will return again, when all the things are ready. I will bring you new hoes, new axes, new machetes, all the material once it is finished. At that time all your work<sup>39</sup> will also be finished and I will bring you the things." And he sent all the things as he had promised. The Emperor sent clothes to *Wasiri's* people, because the Sateré had no clothes. Also there was no [matches to make] fire, a lot of things they did not own. But when everything was ready the leader sent it to us. Because of this the Sateré today are like them [white people]. They already use a lot of material to work: machetes, axes, hoes. They plant, they know how to open gardens, know how to build houses. They also use clothes and soap. They have light and they eat salt, like he had promised. Because of this there are no enemies anymore! Nowadays all are our friends.

At first glance this narrative<sup>40</sup> seems to relate of an equal distribution of resources and goods between Indians and Whites. It was told after the fact of territorial demarcation and seems to "assign" the Sateré-Mawé their specific place of living. If one looks closer, its message is how indigenous desires have been redirected towards the exterior (cf. Fisher 2000, Rubenstein 2004): due to their "immediatism", the Indians miss the Emperor's boat and, consequently, lose all the "means of production" originally owned by the primordial forest-dwelling humanity. Henceforth commodities can only be obtained by bartering forest products. However, the barter of forest products for the Emperor's goods never functioned on equal economic terms and, what is more, a profound re-valorisation of forest products in

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<sup>38</sup> The successive public authorities of the Brazilian state responsible for Indian affairs.

<sup>39</sup> The forest products to barter for Western merchandise.

<sup>40</sup> It was told in 1999 by *tuxaua* Sewu Mikilis, then a powerful and charismatic protagonist of the evangelical conversion movement. While most origin myths should be recited quite „canonically“, the myth of the Emperor is wide open to interpretations. In recent times the activists of the guaraná fair trade project interpret the narrative as the Sateré-Mawé's mandate for the "stewardship" of their forest environment (see Kapfhammer 2012b).

comparison to Western products occurred. In a kind of “culinary theory of the Civilizing Process” it is the consumption of Western foodstuffs, which actually humanizes the Sateré-Mawé left behind in the woods. The consumption of forest fruits, on the other hand, connotes a kind of pre-human state:

At that time *Wasiri* didn't have fire. At that time there was no food, no game. There were only fruits: “*Wasiri's* tongue”, soft *arumã*, *aimã turi*, and “Jaguar above”<sup>41</sup>. Only this was the first food, because at that time there was still no fire. But at the moment when there was fire, they already picked *patawá*. There was no fire to roast raw meat. When there was already fire they tried to roast game. First they found fire beneath the earth, called “black stone” (*nu ryp*). With this they had fire. I don't remember when they had machete, ax and hoe. For many years they only used fire to open a garden. But one day there was fire and they tried it out. As they found game, they killed it. Then they tried to find out if it tasted good or not. They roasted it and it smelled good. Then they ate meat, because they already knew that it tasted good. But there was still no salt. But when they met the Whites, there was salt. Before they only had fire and they ate without salt. They lived like animals<sup>42</sup>, they stayed wild (*i'atupy'ahak*, “*bravos*”). When they got salt, they became tame (*i'atuperup'i*, “*mansos*”). At that time when some of them were angry (*bravo*) with their father, they soon killed him. That's what they did before they became tame. [...] When somebody quarreled (*to'omosatek mosatek*) with somebody, they brawled like dogs. They fought among themselves. At that time they already formed the clans (*ywania*, “*nações*”): Guaraná, but the Sateré<sup>43</sup> had the most power (*hesaika*). There are also the Assai (*wasai'i*), the Cutias (*akuriria*), the Flies (*meiruria*), and the Mundurukú (*muturuku tapyiaria*), of which there were many here. They fought a lot with them, because in the old times there was no love (*wo'oky'e*) (Sewu Mikilis).

This indigenous theory of the Civilizing Process was told by the same devout evangelical as the version of the Emperor myth above, and of course one could argue that this comment is shaped by the missionary process, a typical conversion narrative that distances itself sharply from the past. But a closer look reveals that this is actually a narrative on the origin of culture: accomplished not so much by a heroic act, but – progressively – step by step. And furthermore: this Sateré theory of the Civilising Process is unfurled in culinary terms. Sateré mankind is progressively civilised – or rather humanized – by the kind of food it ingests:

- first it is *fruit*
- then it is *roasted meat*

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<sup>41</sup> To designate common palm fruits the narrator is using poetic expressions in form of metonymic mythological allusions.

<sup>42</sup> *miat koi*; the ending *koi* „animalizes“ non-human beings, while the ending *-ria* “humanizes”; e.g. dogs who steal food from the table are scolded “*aware koi*”; while *awareria* connotes dogs as social beings. The ending of clan names, named after plants and animals, are often *-ria*; e. g. *murikaria*, “the fish people”.

<sup>43</sup> „*sateré*“ (a venomous caterpillar) designates a clan. At least since the 1970ies “*sateré*” has been added to the ethnonym “*mawé*”. The *sateré*-clan traditionally provides the majority of political leaders like the *tuxaua geral*.

- finally it is *salt*

According to Lévi-Strauss (1971) the origin of culture is inseparably linked to the acquisition of cooking fire. Cooking fire, the foundation of all culture, in the grand scheme of South American mythology corresponds to matrimonial alliance, the foundation of all society. But this nouvelle cuisine, in the eyes of the Sateré-Mawé convert, still corresponds to a deficient society. As the narrator continues to spread out in his story this sociality, based on exogamous but inimical clans, is entangled in violent brawls. Only the acquisition of salt<sup>44</sup>, obtained by external relations, lets this society advance to a more “civilized” or “humanized” sociability (cf. Kapfhammer 2009b).

This creeping devaluation of Sateré-Mawé forest economy is paralleled by the looming loss of the “infinitely replicable form of activity” (Turner 2009:20) as realized by manioc cultivation. As culinary tastes change and technological knowledge gets lost in the process, future generations of Sateré-Mawé will increasingly be confronted with the problem of “shifting baselines”<sup>45</sup>. Every generation of Sateré-Mawé mentally and practically veers away ever more from its forest environment, so that its environmental “baseline” consequentially will be cleared more and more of any meaningful cosmological references to the forest. With the introduction of the mercantile system of *aviamento* the source of goods (and the capacity to produce them) in Sateré-Mawé cosmology gradually shifted towards the exterior, while the modes of exchange moved from the (exploitative) conditionality of extractivist barter towards the unconditionality of (irregular and often erratic) donations by governmental agencies and finally (regular) transfer payments by the state. The unwillingness to produce has become habitually, or “custom” (*eko*), among the Sateré-Mawé, as the old chief from the Rio Andirá cited above bemoaned. But it is not only the prevalent lament of elderly men over the younger generation (Wilk 2006), transfer payments seriously hamper a fair trade project struggling to secure an alternative modernity for the Sateré-Mawé.

“Every time I go to my community Guaranatuba I converse a lot with my mother ... and when we talk about the issue of production, she says: ‘Listen, when there were no teachers in the communities [...] there was no old-age pension, there were no health agents, but every time you came to a house the people would offer you yam grits, maize, potato, fish, a basket full of oranges to suck’, and so on, production

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<sup>44</sup> The account on the Emperor cited above closes with these words on the “consanguinizing” effect of external goods: “They have light and they eat salt, like he had promised. Because of this there are no enemies anymore! Nowadays all are our friends.”

<sup>45</sup> The “shifting baselines syndrome” refers to the increasing difficulty to perceive environmental change and hence the inability to arrive at viable conclusions to alter the situation. This cognitive fallacy is the consequence of the fact that every generation tends to consider an experienced situation (e. g. the lack of fish in the rivers) as “normal”. The concept of “shifting baselines” was introduced by marine biologists (cf. Sáenz Arroyo et.al. 2005), German social psychologist Harald Welzer (2008) applied the concept to debates of climate change.

was big! ‘Nobody opened only a small garden’, she said to me. My father always opened big gardens and always in the forest, where it was good to plant manioc and also cassava, maize, pumpkin, and so on [...] Nowadays it is common to have teachers in every community, to receive pension, in every community there are 10, 15, 20 persons who receive pensions. Of course, nobody is against that people have access to governmental credits, but, actually, the intention was that this credit for the producers or the families should stimulate to increase production. However I see that our people has come accustomed to receive *bolsa familia*, that there is someone in the family, who receives pension, that there is someone, who receives a benefit either from health care or maternity salary or other governmental benefits, some *bolsa*, so that you simply wait for the end of the month to travel to the city to buy your provisions. They have become accustomed to it: ‘See, I already got a little something to survive.’ With that I see that production becomes scarce. Different.

Since I travel a lot I am able to compare the two regions of Andirá and Marau. Let’s see, who have been the big producers on the Andirá? *Tuxaua* Servo. I still saw his guaraná plantation after he had died. (His son) G. still sold to us two or three times. Then he stopped. Another big producer was *tuxaua* Zuzú. We still came by to buy from him, about two sacks. Today there is nothing anymore. Another big producer was *tuxaua* Donato, today he is already old and sells half a sack at most, 20 or 30 kilos. *Tuxaua* Timaco from Santa Cruz, we always bought up to 300 kilos, recently we bought 200 kilos perhaps, sold by his wife; but he also has died. So, the big producers disappear, their sons normally do not take charge anymore like their parents did. In my community my uncle sold six, seven sacks of guaraná, a big producer of guaraná, and today, his son sells two, three sacks at most. That is, the dedication the old and experienced men still had, the young ones do not have anymore<sup>46</sup>. (Eudes Batista<sup>47</sup> 2012)”

The *cosmological* dislocation of productive capacity from the interior to the exterior can also be observed at an *ontological* level. Recently, a NGO published a folder in Sateré-Mawé language to serve as a guideline for indigenous persons to procure the necessary documents to apply for social benefits. It is insightful to take a closer look on how a highly bureaucratic language is translated into an indigenous language:

The title of the folder “*mo’yha nug torania piat haria*” means “walking stick”, that is: “guideline”, “for all”. The phrase “*popera registro haywi Certidão de Nascimento hap ti waku iramia’in popera wo’on’uesaiika hap puiuk hamo*” means: “With these documents one has the right (*uesaiika*) to do something” or “to apply for something”. The decisive word is *uesaiika* or *hesaiika*. It appears throughout the text, always meaning “to have the right to do something”, designating a kind of juridical power inherent to the documents. In other contemporary contexts it can also mean “to be registered” or “to be documented”.

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<sup>46</sup> There is a vivid oral tradition of Sateré-Mawé men who have been big producers of guaraná. Sociologically these “big men” and their families often formed the backbone of dynamically growing village communities.

<sup>47</sup> Responsible for the financial management of the *Consórcio dos Produtores Sateré-Mawé*.

However, “*hesaika*” actually denotes the physical strength of a healthy body (*aipit esaika*). E.g. “*hesaika*” is a man strong enough to cut down large trees to open a garden<sup>48</sup>. In earlier times a man would have been ridiculed by others, if he opened his garden “only” in the *capoeira* (second growth forest). Principally bodily strength is literally “introjected”<sup>49</sup> and “incarnated” during the initiatory *waumat* ritual by way of the poisonous stings of ants the young men have to endure (Kapfhammer 2012a/b, Wright/Kapfhammer/Wiik 2012). In shamanistic language “-*saika*” refers to the predatory power of the jaguar (Figuroa 1997). According to the ethno-medicinal theory of the Sateré-Mawé “*hesaika*” is the quality of “strong” (*reimoso*) meat not everybody is able to eat without running the risk to fall ill. In short the traditional meaning of “*hesaika*” is the “vital force”, which every living being possesses. To maintain a strong body a man has to eat sufficiently and also has to stay clear of the weakening influence of menstruating women (*haryporia myhu’at hat*). Finally he should not sleep too much. Somebody, who does not follow the habit of getting up in the early morning hours to take a bath in the river, will be “eaten up” by his hammock and grow old<sup>50</sup>.

Furthermore, *hesaika* refers to the political power of traditional chiefs. Sewu Mikilis, the estimated traditional chief and charismatic advocate of evangelical conversion, explained:

“All the power (*hesaika*) of the leaders came from the *puratĩg*, likewise the power of the Sateré. Their power came from the *puratĩg*. This is the counsel (*we’eg hap*) that God gave to us; it is the only [counsel].”

The *puratĩg* is a rather unique specimen among ritual objects of Amazonians Indians: museologically speaking it is a ceremonial club of the “spatulated” type with abstract designs incised on both sides of the blade<sup>51</sup>. However, the *puratĩg* is by no means considered a weapon, but rather a “*patente*”, “document”, in vernacular Portuguese. The incised designs are considered as “writing”, the words having been revealed supernaturally in primordial times:

<sup>48</sup> *ga’apy hesaika kahato koi ehamo*: forest / strength / much / to plant / for.

<sup>49</sup> Zent (2013) speaks of an „interpenetration of essences” that builds and rebuilds in a range of daily settings” among the Joti of Venezuela.

<sup>50</sup> The hammock (*yni*) connotes cannibalism and death (*mu’uro hap*). In the myth about the origin of manioc culture the hero *Hate ywakup*, the epitome of smarts and agency among the Sateré-Mawé, calls out to Old Jaguar, who invites him to lie down in his hammock: “I’ve never done it like the dead! (*uito rat yt gu’uro tuiã’ag hat i rat e*)” He rather sits down on his bench he shrewdly has brought with him outside the house of the cannibalistic jaguar.

<sup>51</sup> The name *puratĩg* most probably means “*pura*”, spatula used to roast manioc flour, and “*tĩg*”, painted.

*Wasiri* always went to the forest to hunt. But as the devils<sup>52</sup> met him, they went after him. He ran back to his house. When he entered his house, the devils turned back. The next day the devils persecuted him again, because *Wasiri* went to the forest to fetch fruits for him to eat. The devils went after him and he returned into his house. Another day he went again and the devils persecuted him again. *Wasiri* ran again. But the devils' dog went after him. One of the devils killed their own dog with a club. They believed it was *Wasiri* who was dead. But as they looked closer they found out, that it was their own dog! The next day they came again to go after *Wasiri*. *Wasiri* ran and climbed a tree. He ordered the rain to come. Because of this the devils cried: "Look, rain, rain!" And they left the club at the bottom of the tree. *Wasiri* climbed down and took the club with him. Now the devils no more persecuted him, because they were afraid. They said to themselves, that it would be him to kill them. Now that club belonged to *Wasiri*. It is called *puratĩg*. [...] One day the devil took *Wasiri* to the edge of the world to throw him down. On their way the devil spoke to *Wasiri*: "Say to me: 'The devil threw *Wasiri* into the hole!'" But *Wasiri* answered: "*Wasiri* threw the devil into the hole!" The devil said: "Don't say that! Say: 'The devil threw *Wasiri* into the hole!'" But *Wasiri* said: "*Wasiri* threw the devil into the hole!" "When we are close to the hole, we will see a palm tree." Then the devil said: "Say: 'Turn to the left, turn to the left!'" But *Wasiri* said: "Turn to the right, turn to the right!" He did not want to pass the devil at the left side. "Don't say so, *Wasiri*!" At that moment they arrived at the edge of the hole. And *Wasiri* threw the devil down. From there *Wasiri* went home. But he could not arrive there in one day. He was still out there when night fell. He slept at the bottom of a tree called *musuepo*, tree of words (*sehay*). And he recorded all those words on the *puratĩg*. All the good and the bad words<sup>53</sup> came out of that tree. On one side [of the *puratĩg*] he recorded the bad words; on the other side he recorded the good words. Because out of one branch of this plant came the good word, out of the other came the bad word. Because of that the *puratĩg* is like a recorder (*gravador*). In the morning he looked, where these words have come from, but all he could see was this tree.

On his way back *Wasiri* "documented" the words he had heard on his walking stick, which became the *puratĩg*. In former times the chiefs derived their power from their capacity to "read" the "writing" (*sehay wakuat*, the good words) on the *puratĩg*<sup>54</sup>. These ritual readings, accompanied by the ingestion of guaraná (Kapfhammer 2009), served to resolve conflicts; the "good words" constructed the unanimity necessary for doing communal work in the gardens. This power of the *puratĩg* to produce words and work was called "*hesaika*", as has been explained already to Nunes Pereira during his pioneering fieldwork among the Sateré-Mawé in the 1930ies:

<sup>52</sup> *Ahiãg*, "evil spirits"; the evangelical translator used the word "diabos".

<sup>53</sup> *sehay wakuat*, *sehay nakuat'i*. The incised design on both sides of the "club's" blade is considered the scripture documenting these words.

<sup>54</sup> For an extended discussion of the *puratĩg* see Kapfhammer 2004a, 2009a. Today the (original) *puratĩg* still exists, but is stowed away in a family home on the Rio Andirá and not shown any more. However, depictions of the *puratĩg* have become iconic within the evangelical movement, where the *puratĩg* has replaced the Christian Cross. In recent times the *puratĩg* of the Rio Marau (considered a "copy" of the original) reappears within political contexts. It also makes part of the design of the Sateré-Mawé fair trade producers' brand label "*Nusoken*" (see Augustat / Batista Garcia / Kapfhammer / de Oliveira 2012).

“It is called *Aiuêçaiká*- [*hesaika*, W.K.] *Porantin*, meaning, *grosso modo*, according to our interpreter and guide ‘the rudder’ that is our ‘patent’, which gives us strength” (Nunes Pereira 1954:80).

The perception of the incised design on the *puratĩg* as “writing” and of the object *per se* as “document” (*patente*) is already an indigenous answer to the power of Western epistemic culture. In this modern context the meaning of *hesaika* shifts from “bodily strength” towards “power by being registered, documented”. Erdene Michilis, who was asked by the management of the fair trade producers’ syndicate to initiate a reunion by reciting some of the important Sateré-Mawé myths (see above), repeatedly used the phrase *hesaika* during his speech:

“Now we are going to document (*hesaika*) the story of the Bees. This work has been done a long time ago, but it has never been registered (*hesaika*). But today our friend ordered us to document (*hesaika*) the story of the Bees.”

The opposite term to *hesaika*, “vital force”, *ehog*, came to designate a Western bureaucratic concept in a similar way. In a traditional context *ehog* signifies “the spirit of the dead”, “shade” or “shadow soul”. Within the modern context of regional consumerism, however, *ehog* designates the “*nota fiscal*”, a “bill” or “check”, a “quittance”. To give an example: all that is left from a few chickens, once they have been consumed, is their “*ehog*”, their bill from the supermarket. Thus, *ehog* is a document, whose “vital force” (*hesaika*) has been spent and consumed.<sup>55</sup>

To summarize, the trajectory of the term *hesaika* from shamanistic to bureaucratic language can be sketched as follows:

- **physical health / strength**
- **political power**
- **right** (in the sense of bureaucratic power)

The generative capacity, the capacity “to make things come into being” (Hull 2012 citing Frohmann 2008), once residing in the body of each Sateré-Mawé person and brought about

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<sup>55</sup> The state exists not simply as a bureaucracy of regulation, but also “as a spectral presence materialized in documents” (Hull 2012 citing Das 2004).

through interaction / interpenetration with the forest domain, has moved over to bureaucratic documents of the state.

### *Conclusion*

Instead of ringing the death toll of indigenous cultures clashing with modernity Sahlins once maintained a quite optimistic view:

“Various indigenizations of modernity undertaken by people who have escaped the death sentence imposed by world capitalism now offer a whole new manifold of cultural variation for a renewed comparative anthropology” (Sahlins 2000:271).

Likewise, building on Sahlins’ insights, Whitten highlights the new visibility of indigenous peoples of the Ecuadorian Amazon at governmental level as “indigenization of Amazonian modernity”:

“If we are to understand the indigenization of modernity we must move into the deep metaphors of indigenusness itself – the *longue durée* undergirding the conjuncture – not transform these systems of signs and symbols into a Western mode. [...] We must explore indigenous hermeneutics within multiple dynamic modernities, eschewing Western hermetics of unified developmentalism and systematic binaries of savage and semicivilized” (Whitten 2008:25).

With similar enthusiasm Uzendowski (2005) declares Amazonia as “a place at the fore of ‘alternative modernities’ (Gaonkar 2001)”. To Little (2002) “the preservationist movement is a wedding of environmental science and Amazonian social movements: indigenous people, NGOs, rubber-tappers etc. struggle for preservationist forms of development as alternatives to the unsustainable policies of extraction” (cit. in Uzendowski). Uzendowski argues:

“There are very few Amazonians getting rich or content with the extractive purposes of capital. One way of conceptualizing this inherent tension with modernity’s most powerful material category is through the concept of alternative modernities. Contrary to the productive logics of capitalism, Amazonians continue to insist that nature is a complex, sentient being with whom one must relate socially. *While nature can be “giving”, she can also be vindictive and predatory just as people can be – a quintessentially Amazonian way of conceptualizing the world.* Modernity, if it is to work at all, has no choice but to adapt to the complexities of this persistent Amazonian reality” (2005:235; our emphasis).

Unfortunately, we think, we have to be careful not to overstate narratives of resistance and resilience of Amazonian people in the wake of Western modernity. In the case of the Sateré-Mawé we find a complex overlay of logics of agency that acquit themselves differentially towards modernity. On the one hand we find what we have called the “ambitious system”, which indeed might be resilient towards modernity, mainly because it maintains the addressability of points of reference with the immediate forest environment<sup>56</sup>. This system seems pertinent to represent an “AlterModernity” in partnership with alternative Western actors<sup>57</sup>.

In another paper Kapfhammer (2012a) argues for the sequence of a scheme of unconditional human-nature-relations based on a “giving” nature to a more “ambitious” scheme of conditional relations towards a “vindictive and predatory” (Uzendowski loc. cit.) nature among the Sateré-Mawé. This latter scheme of relation provides the context for building up the capacity to “produce production” (Turner 2009)<sup>58</sup>. On the other hand, the Sateré-Mawé person is always prone to sideline this logic and “regress” to the more unconditional, “unambitious” logic, which indeed is more contingent with modernity - at least with modernity *as it is written out on the peripheries of Western society*. The conjunctive element is the structure of unconditional relationship:

shaman – animal mother

*tuxaua* – *regatão*

*capitão* – FUNAI

modern indigenous leader – national & international NGOs

indigenous citizen – state<sup>[n3]</sup>

One notes the steady trajectory of the power source from the interior towards the exterior producing the classic modern condition of decontextualization (Hornborg 1998, 2001). It might not be fortuitous that this indigenous modernity has “millennial proclivities” (cf. Whitten 2008), but in the sense of “illusions of autonomous productivity” (attributed to the *Imperador* and its avatars FUNAI and the welfare state) which are “contingent on specific and unequal terms of exchange” (Hornborg 2001:241).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Halbmayer’s (2012) layout of Carib cosmologies informed by communication theory.

<sup>57</sup> See Wright/Kapfhammer/Wiik (2012) for a more detailed analysis of the Sateré-Mawé Fair Trade project as a culturally sustainable, yet “ambitious” or “demanding” concept of alternative modernity within an indigenous society.

<sup>58</sup> The ritual context is the ant ordeal *waumat*. To build up a strong body (*hesaika*; see above), young Sateré-Mawé boys were obliged to pass this ordeal up to 20 times.

If there is a cultural bias to be found in conditional cash transfer programs it is the universalisation of consumerism. As has been shown CCT programs among an indigenous group of the Amazon rainforest can be dysfunctional in the sense as they undermine resilience to a modernity threatening to disintegrate indigenous personhood. In a process of colonizing indigenous desires (Rubenstein 2004), which debased Sateré-Mawé “manioc culture” to a “cookie culture”, access to social benefits goes along with the steady erosion of ontological autonomy. Literary scholar Aleida Assmann once designated one of the basic postulates of modernity – the division of body and scripture – as “excarnation” (Assmann 1993). This translation of living bodies into abstract signs as it began on the *puratĩg* marked probably the first step towards the modern detachment of the Sateré-Mawé person from the *sehay wakuat*, the “good words” necessary to construct a harmonious society, in itself prerequisite of a productive society.

As the example of the Sateré-Mawé shows, a well-intentioned, yet culturally unpredictable policy can deprive indigenous cultures of the powerful autonomy to reproduce its differential way of life in a most practical way. It is not only the bitter irony that this policy alienates Amazonian people ever more from their forest environment at the very moment as they are elected as stewards of this endangered environment by Western ecologists, but it is the serious political, social and psychological consequences of this policy managing modern indigenous life in the *Áreas Indígenas*. If we are serious about our anthropological theories on “personhood” in Amazonia, which constitutes itself by cumulative interaction and interpenetration with the non-human domains specific of the Amazonian forest, thus contributing to *its* “biocultural diversity” (Zent 2013), it should be our very concern, what consequences the *interruption* of this interaction and interpenetration brings about for these “personhoods”.

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