

# Food practices of the *Kariri-xocó* indigenous group from Lauro de Freitas-BA: sustainability and challenges in times of change

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## Abstract

The *Kariri-xocó* group is composed by two family groups from the ethnicities *Kariri* from Ceará, *Xocó*, from Ilha de São Pedro-SE and *Fulni-ô*, from Águas Belas-PE. This article aims to describe their food practices problematizing their food sustainability, as well as their insertion in the local consumer market since the group foundation in Lauro de Freitas-BA. The methodology adopted was participative observation during the period of September to December 2012, covering aspects related to production, acquisition, food preparation and distribution of food within the family. Data suggest that their production is insufficient for their food needs, with manufactured products being combined with local fruit. The financial resources for buying food derive from the minimum salary earned by one of the inhabitants through the Bolsa Familia program, donations and sales of craft products. The change of location to the indigenous reserve *Thá-Fene*, in Lauro de Freitas, was in search for better living conditions; However, water resources seem to be insufficient for self-sustainability. The excessive consumption of manufactured products instead of local fruit is the biggest change for the group. Changes in food habits have been occurring to indigenous populations in general, with repercussion in several areas of communal living, such as the decrease of self-sustainability and the increasing dependence on local food markets.

**Key words:** Food Practices. Consumption. Sustainability. South American Indians.

## Initial considerations

The issue of food practices in indigenous groups continues to be a topic to be analyzed in the scope of the different environmental and sociocultural conditions that characterize the approximately 817,000 Brazilian Indians.<sup>1</sup> There are specificities regarding the way of living, because every population group has their own social organization, they are an open field to be contextualized by the public politics of the nutrition and health area.

When talking about indigenous populations located near urban areas, the changes and transformations in the eating habits acquire their own identity, once these peoples are exposed equally to the changes in food practices imposed by capitalism.<sup>2,3</sup>

In the case of the *Kariri-Xocó* indigenous group, from Lauro de Freitas-BA, because they are a relatively new group, whose food practices have still not been studied, some issues emerge as privileged observation objects, especially regarding the impact caused by the change of their place of living on the eating habits of the families and their strategy for obtaining resources for their material, social and symbolic reproduction as an ethnic group. The territory and its possibilities of use is a central point in the demands of the indigenous peoples in the whole country. For the indigenous groups, the idea of territoriality incorporates a spatial dimension, where people organize the access to the available resources, just like a politics and symbolic dimension, because that is also the place where collective meanings are produced.

Among the many problems experienced by the Brazilian indigenous groups nowadays, one of the most challenging is the issue of sustainability in indigenous land, continuously degraded by different processes of inappropriate use, by the pressure suffered from agribusiness and also by governmental projects with a high environmental cost. In that sense, Nunes<sup>4</sup> affirms that the indigenous universe is increasingly involving itself with processes resulting from the "white cities", including the ways of eating and dependence on industrialized products.

The concept of eating habits developed in this text must be understood as ways in which the individuals select, consume and use the available food, covering the production, storage, elaboration, distribution and consumption system.<sup>5</sup> To understand the food practices in the collective scope, it is necessary to understand the several aspects that contribute to the understanding of these practices, such as origin of the food, ways of preparation, place allocated for the meals, by whom the meal was prepared and what it represents in a certain context.

The objective of this paper is to describe the eating habits by analyzing the conditions of food self-sustainability, as well as the relationships with the local consumption market from the establishment of a group in an area of the city of Lauro de Freitas-BA.

## Method

The results and discussion of this paper came from a field qualitative research, combining different techniques of gathering data and information: the observation of the facts, data collection, record and analysis of the data collected. The basis technique for data collection was the participating observation of the experiences.<sup>6</sup>

The data was collected from the indigenous group *Kariri-Xocó*-BA, residents of the indigenous reserve located in the region of Quingoma in the city of Lauro de Freitas-BA. The approximation and insertion in the field were possible due to the contribution of a friend of the group's, who mediated the first day of visit. It is worth highlighting that the two leaders that live in the ranch have been consulted and informed of the nature and objective of the paper, and they were favorable to its execution. The research was composed of all the members of the group that were present in the ranch during the days of research, between September 15 and December 2, 2012, in alternate days and/or consecutive days (including overnight at the ranch). The collection was based on investigation categories related to the eating habits and on the observation of the relationship between the residents and the physical space and their food resources.

## Theme development

### The *Kariri-Xocó* people

The “*Kariri-Xocó*” term, which means “quiet people”, is used to refer to the “Kariri” indigenous group. It was formed from the aggregation of several indigenous peoples, among them the *Kariri*, from Ceará, the *Xocó*, from Ilha de São Pedro, Sergipe and the *Fulni-ô*, a group from Pernambuco that watched the city of Águas Belas grow inside their indigenous land (TI).<sup>4,7</sup>

The aggregation of different ethnicities was possible due to the process of nomadism that they performed for a long time. The occupation of a fixed territory happened, initially, in the year of 1578, where the state of Alagoas is currently, in the city of Porto Real do Colégio.<sup>7</sup> They arrived in Bahia around 1996, and there they stayed in the city of Lauro de Freitas.

At first, two members influenced by the religious segment Bahá'í (Muslim religion) came, and they found here better material conditions than on their original land, transforming the new place of living to serve as a field for the spread of the *Kariri-Xocó* culture. Besides, the greater easiness of access to education and health favored their stay in the state.

Until 2002, they inhabited a residence in the district of Itinga (Lauro de Freitas), the year in which a ranch was given to them by the old owner of the land, connected to the Bahaí religion. The donation of the ranch enabled more members to move to Bahia. The place where they currently live is a 28,000m<sup>2</sup> ranch located in the region of Quingoma (Portão), far from downtown Lauro de Freitas, also known as *Thá-Fene* indigenous reserve, which means Live Seed.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding the geographic aspects, the land is characterized by its precariousness of plain surfaces and it has stony ground. However, the natural vegetation is still very preserved, with the presence of several native fruit trees. The access to the ranch is through a dirt road, a fact that makes transportation difficult, especially public transport. The distance from the capital of the state, Salvador, is 30km.<sup>8</sup> In this place, customarily, there are ten people, among them men, women and children. Regarding the group leadership, there is no chief or witch doctor in the ranch located in Lauro de Freitas, although these indigenous authorities are present in their mother land (Alagoas or Pernambuco), also called by their members of "sacred territory".

Regarding the cultural aspects, the *Kariri-Xocó* usually dance the *toré*, an indigenous practice that aims at celebrating the union, strength, love and also at asking nature for things. *Toré* can also be sung both in Portuguese and the native language, the *kariri-xocó*, which was recognized by the Social-environmental Institute (ISA) as belonging to the *Kariri* family, a language belonging to the *Macro-Jê* trunk, but it was not included in any specific family.<sup>9</sup> The group also produces articles of handicraft such as earrings and headwear with feathers, whistles, arrows, and others, to be sold in places of exhibition or to the visitors. In addition, they smoke a tobacco pipe, the *xanduca*, to provide physical and psychological wellbeing, as well as to pray individually.<sup>7</sup>

Another cultural aspect is that the *Kariri-Xocó* compose the indigenous groups that develop Jurema as an integrating part of rituals or celebrations. The term "jurema" is related to a plant (*Mimosa tenuiflora*) and to a beverage elaborated from this plant and, sometimes, the term is used to refer to a ritual associated to the ingestion of this beverage. In this group, the performance of the sacred ritual and the ingestion of the beverage, which is considered hallucinogenic, integrate Jurema as an indigenous cultural identity, and the chief and the witch doctor are the ones responsible for its preparation.<sup>10,11</sup>

Among the *Kariri-Xocó* from Lauro de Freitas, the custom is to return to the homeland (original villages) some times a year, to take part in rituals and celebrations that aim at preserving their customs. The period between January and March is one of the moments in which the members go to their original villages, located in Pernambuco (for those who have a greater *Fulni-ô* lineage) and Alagoas (for those who have a higher lineage *Kariri-Xocó*). In both villages, the "*Ouricuri*" is usually performed in this period; it is a sacred space where the ethnic identity is kept, as well as the union of the group, and it is kept even with low availability of lands and minimum conditions of subsistence.<sup>12</sup>

## The food issue among the *Kariri Xocó*

To start, it is important to sign that the indigenous food systems are proven to be as diverse as their cultures.<sup>13</sup> Because of that, it is not possible to trace a single eating habit of the indigenous in Brazil, since the factors that may generate diversity among different cultures can be combined in several ways. The territorial (geographic) isolation, the characteristics that are peculiar to the environment, the dynamics of the relationship with neighbor groups, as well as the daily food practices, favor the understanding of isolated aspects, but they are incapable of sustaining more general explanations.<sup>14</sup>

The development of studies that cover the presence of indigenous peoples in the cities is recent. Nunes<sup>4</sup> affirms that this process initiated with greater vigor only in the last ten years. It is interesting to notice that the increase coincides, in part, with the increasing indigenous migration to urban spaces. Migration, in turn, many times understood as indigenous rural exodus, should not be interpreted as an abrupt and definitive process of transfer of family residence, once before the transfer occurs it is common that only part of the group moves to peri-urban regions and, after knowing the place, the other members of the family go to the new place of living.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, the indigenous food tends to go through modifications in its composition when there are territorial migrations. According to Santos & Barbosa,<sup>16</sup> the vigor of a people is directly related to their territory, and, consequently, with their eating habits. With that, it is possible to say that the change of the original place also enables alterations in the food profile. Moura et al.<sup>17</sup> affirm that the contact of the indigenous with the urban population enables the introduction of "white people food" in their diets, that is, industrialized products. A similar finding is done by Pacheco,<sup>18</sup> in which the increasing consumption of the industrialized products is a consequence, among others, of a greater contact of the indigenous with surrounding cities.

The attempt to identify the causes of this intense food change reveals several aspects. The lack or precariousness of land appears as a ruling factor, once it is capable of elevating the need for consumption of industrialized products rather than traditional food original from the agriculture. Other, but not less important, aspects are: the lack of productive areas for cultivation in indigenous lands, population growth of these peoples, the low productivity of the occupied land, and the easy access to social programs that distribute non-traditional food, elevating the consumption of industrialized food.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, changes, whether in food or not, constitute the dynamics of any social group, once no ethnic group keeps the same characteristics their predecessors presented centuries ago.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, tradition is continuously resignified in the scope of the group, and there is no sense in searching for an "original" situation without taking into account the influence of the historical, temporal and spatial processes.

Among the *Kariri-Xocó*, the data collected in the field work point to an eating habit marked by the intense presence of industrialized food, being the production of local food insignificant in the supply of foodstuff. This is justified by the fact that the conditions of the soil are not favorable to the planting of beans, corn, okra, and other food consumed traditionally in their home village. The consumption of native fruits, resulting from the harvest of trees found in the ranch itself, was observed as well, but they are not the central food in the preparation of food. They are consumed as "snacks", occasionally, in the absence of other more valued food items.

The financial resources for the purchase of food results from the minimum wage of one of the members of the group, from donations made by natural and legal people, as well as the sale of handicrafts. This includes feather accessories, bow and arrow, wood whistles, and books that cover the *Kariri-Xocó* culture. Regarding donations, the leader of the house is the main responsible for the maintenance of the things received, which can be food, cleaning products, or even utensils or furniture for domestic use, and the food items represent a greater percentage. These donations result from campaigns carried out by the leaderships in schools from the region and among the supporters that visit the ranch.

Regarding the acquisition of food, a considerable part of the items is acquired from the direct purchase at the supermarket. When asked about this item, an Indian from the group made an interesting point: "The Indians learned [had to learn to] hunt in the supermarket." This speech brings a mixture of humor and criticism to the conversation, and summarizes part of the tonic that the group puts to its current habits related to food: the indigenous peoples have to adapt to the changes generated by the lack of land that would allow them to live from agriculture. In this sense, they buy in the supermarket what money allows them to buy, not what they want to buy. Usually, they learn to "hunt" for the cheapest.

Since the beginning of the research, the Indians were questioned about the food grown in the *Thá-Fene* ranch, in order to widen the understanding regarding the reasons for the absence of this practice in the place. Fishing and hunting are absent because of the lack of natural resources. Similarly, the existing forest is preserved by the group so that "nature does not end", so there is no field for the development of agriculture.

Among the purchase and donated food during the observation period, it was noticed that some products are repeated. The purchased ones: rice, beans, corn flour, sugar, coffee, meat, margarine, vegetables, bread and fruits (purchased at the door of the ranch), yogurt, ready-to-eat spices, milk and manioc flour, all acquired in small supermarkets in the neighborhood of Vida Nova, urban region of Lauro de Freitas.

It was also noticed that there is a preference by the members of this indigenous group for rice, beans and food with protein source (fish, chicken and meat, respectively), and after that came the vegetables and the fruits.

Regarding the food from donation, it was seen donation of toasts made of French bread (donated in great amount by the owner of a bakery of Vida Nova, a close neighborhood), dried meat, beans, rice, manioc flour, liquid milk in boxes, chocolate and bubble gums (aimed at the children as a way of pleasing them), among others, and the candies came from visitors or friends.

The harvest, in turn, is based on seasonal fruits such as jack fruit, mango and coconut. Next to the house, there is an abundance of these fruits, so the harvest happens at the moment it is requested or desired, as well as when the fruit naturally falls from the tree. It was rarely observed someone go up a tree to get a fruit.

The fruits are consumed in their natural forms, that is, raw. It was observed that the mango, in turn, can be consumed in the form of juice or as a whole. When it is consumed as a whole, they usually make a small hole at the bottom and knead the fruit so that there is juice that will be sucked until only the seed and the peel remains. Another usual way of consuming mango is with manioc flour. In this case, the fruit is peeled with their own hands and breaded with manioc flour in a shallow plate. As the flour runs out, the fruit is breaded again until there is no more flavor. This modality is very appreciated by the children.

The kitchen is a room not only for the preparation of food (done predominantly by women), but also for the consumption of fast meals, for family meetings, and for the passage to the house yard. The physical space is limited and occupied by some furniture and home appliances. Behind the door that gives access to the yard, there is a clay pot that stores and cools the water consumed by the members of the house. The pot is filled, every day, with water from the tap distributed by the Empresa Baiana de Águas e Saneamento (Bahia company for water and sanitation - EMBRASA) without receiving any previous treatment.

Also regarding mangoes, when it is consumed outside its regular time, it is connected to a physical discomfort, sickness or feeling of "bloating" if it is consumed during breakfast, because it is considered a strong fruit that is difficult to digest. About mango with flour, it is preferentially ingested in the afternoon, after a long interval from lunch. Other fruits are part of the routine diet of the *Kariri-Xocó*. Banana, orange, apple, papaya, guava and pineapple are the most consumed fruits. As they are not produced locally, they are bought from a car that passes in front of the ranch. Usually, the amount bought is the one that serves the consumption for one week. Generally, this group of foods is consumed in the interval of the main meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner). In special occasions (rituals) and on weekends, it was possible to observe the exposure of fruits together with the served meal, in a wooden container.

Coconut is another food harvested in the ranch that is used by the *Kariri-Xocó*, and it is usually employed in the elaboration of dishes such as fish. In this case, the coconut plays a main role in the cooking of this source of protein, because it is beaten with water in the blender, and it is added to the pan, replacing the water. It is interesting to observe that the industrialized coconut milk

is not usually aimed at this or other means, seeing that the "milk" obtained in a traditional way serves the culinary tastes of the ranch inhabitants. In addition, the coconut water is also used, and it is consumed *in natura*.

Regarding the vegetables consumed, they are, in general, food prepared by humid cooking, which are usually added to beans or meat, specially fish and chicken. In this aspect, it was possible to observe the preparation of the beans and the chicken with a great amount of vegetables, among which are the English potato, okra, chayote, carrots and pumpkins. This is the most common way of preparation on the weekends or in special dates. It was observed that only the English potato in large slices was added to the cooked fish. The consumption of cooked vegetables prepared in isolation was not observed in none of the visits.

The geographic location of the *Kariri* reserve in Alagoas made the Freshwater fish (coming from the São Francisco river) become the most consumed source of protein among them. Influenced by this memory, the indigenous group from Lauro de Freitas has the fish as their first option of protein, especially the Freshwater fish. The spice and the way of preparation are also a result from the food practices originated in Porto Real do Colégio - AL. This preference for the Freshwater fish is a valued "memory" in the purchase of food. According to the women in the group, the fish cannot be absent in their purchase because it is their culture, and it cannot be forgotten or replaced by another food.

Regarding the way of preparation, the fish is cooked with great amount of water, and the spice is based on onions, tomato, coriander, dye, salt and oil; the two first ingredients are cut in slices, the same way as the English potato, that is added almost in the end of the cooking. The coconut is a special ingredient in the preparation of this food, because it is usually added in special days. Normally, it is prepared in uniform pieces that are ready to be served and only the eatable parts are taken to the fire (head, tail, fins are discarded). On the other hand, in *Fulni-ô*, Pernambuco, the fish is usually entirely cooked, preserving the head and the fins. Regarding the way of spicing the food, the garlic and the salt are main players, according to what was said by an Indian with greater *Fulni-ô* influence: "we *Fulni-ô* Indians eat the fish more raw". On party days or weekends, especially on Sundays, the fish receives a special ingredient, the coconut (in the form of "milk"). That, as already presented, is used in order to replace the cooking water. It is worth highlighting that the cooking must be done with the pan uncovered, as referred by an Indian of this people. After cooking, the fish, which preserves the spices used in the regular days, stays with a considerable amount of broth. In this context, the broth is highly appreciated by everyone in the house and it is added to the rest of the preparations for the day, and it is even served separately, in individual containers.

The beef or jerk beef are protein alternatives usually prepared in shallow aluminum pans and fried in soy oil. The amount of oil employed is small, so that the meat does not stay immerse in fat. The frying of the fish was also observed once, observing that in this circumstance the spice used



is different: only garlic and salt, besides the fish being breaded in manioc flour. It is interesting to notice that the frying is understood by the *Kariri-Xocó* as a less healthy form and, therefore, employed in a lower scale. Allies of the protein consumption, the beans, the rice, and the couscous are more frequent types of food in the *Kariri-Xocó* feeding.

The corn couscous represents one of the most traditional food appreciated by the *Kariri-Xocó*. The preparation consists of a mixture of corn flour with low amount of salt and water, so that its aspect is closer to a bran than couscous dough. It is baked in a couscous maker and consumed in different ways by the members of the group.

The children show high regards for couscous with liquid milk. In this form of consumption, the hot couscous is converted into bran disposed in a container similar to a bowl and added with cold liquid whole milk. The ingredients are ware and consumed with a spoon. When milk is added, the couscous does not need margarine, a widely used product.

Ingesting "black" coffee in the morning is not an observed practice among the total members of this indigenous group. Its consumption is associated to the taste related to the male gender, since only men can drink it. This way, its preparation is in charge of those who consume it.

The consumption of coffee by the leader of the group comes before any other meal, being ingested without any food and no addition of milk, Sugar is the only ingredient added to the drink. The first meal of the day is only eaten in the presence of the other members of the house. Regarding that, Murrieta<sup>19</sup> affirms that the consumption of coffee with sugar when waking up reinforces and reproduces the idea of routine work associated to social relations, besides integrating a considerably caloric source to initiate the daily activities.

Among the *Kariri-Xocó*, the consumption of milk is more frequent among children. Regarding the forms of use, the addition of corn to the couscous is considerably approved, especially if the milk is cold or at room temperature. The amount employed in this mixture may vary according to the taste of those who consume it. Normally, children opt for a great amount of the product. The reason why this food is not accessible to everyone in the house is, among others, due to the difficulty in buying it.

Another product valued by the children is yogurt. When available, it usually integrates the breakfast or intermediate meals. In a situation where there was donation of yogurt by a commercial establishment, the joy of the residents was evident, especially the children's. The donation was highly appreciated in this context, because the children had asked their parents to buy it, but, because they were unable, this product had been lacking for several days. This situation seems to be frequently repeated, since the yogurt is a monthly acquisition product, purchased with the monthly purchase, so when it ends it will only be bought again in the following month, except when the financial conditions allow and when displacement to the city is possible.

Similarly, cheese is a type of food that is evidently approved. It is also acquired during the monthly shopping at the supermarket. When available, it is consumed with French bread at breakfast or at dinner, sometimes followed by bologna. When this food is prepared, couscous and other traditional food such as cassava and sweet potato are dismissed.

The ways of eating among the *Kariri-Xocó* keep several peculiarities. Considerable part of the eating ways is associated to urban habits. On the other hand, traditional customs are observed as well, despite the changes seen in the last ten years.

The utensils aimed at consumption of meals may vary according to the preparation and time of the meal. Usually, the spoon is the domestic instrument used at the meals. During lunch, it is observed that practically all the members of the group use this utensil. Sometimes, the fork comes as an alternative to the use of the spoon. This attitude comes from those who are more concerned about not using forks when in the presence of non-Indians.

The children usually eat only with the spoon. It was observed that the knife was rarely used together with the fork by the other members of the ranch. The eldest Indian also uses the spoon to eat. According to Canesqui,<sup>2</sup> it is frequent for the men of the old generation to use spoons rather than fork and knife and even deep plates at their meal time.

Regarding the plates, most of them are deep and made of glass. The children are served in plates or plastic bowls. Both the men and the women eat in glass plates. In the house there are two plates made of clay, and they are fought for by the members of the ranch at the time of the meals, especially at lunch. On the other hand, the elder in the group has privilege regarding the use of this utensil, because it is the only one used by him. He eats his meals without any flatware, he eats with his bare hands.

Still regarding the ways of eating, during weekends when there are visits, in festive dates or in ritual days, it is common for the food to be disposed outside the house in a wooden bench. This way, all food is organized side by side and stay available so that everyone can serve themselves. The three main meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) usually have this treatment in the occasions already mentioned. As the individuals serve themselves or are served (in case of the children), they start searching for a more comfortable place to eat, because there are no tables and chairs at the place. Among the places allocated for accommodation are the hammock, the floor, fixed wooden benches, and wooden trunks located at the yard.

During the week or in the days where there is no movement in the ranch, the form the main meals are distributed happens differently. In this case, the food remains in the kitchen, on the oven, in the pans in which it was prepared. The time of distribution is not so strict. The person who needs or prefers to eat earlier, goes to the kitchen and does so. The presence of the chief and the witch doctor of the group was registered in one of the days of the research. At the occasion,

both had come from Alagoas for the Jurema ritual. As already mentioned, this ritual is considered sacred among the Indians because it evokes the gods and enchanted beings. Usually, it is restricted to the "pure" Indians (children of Indians with Indians). However, on the day observed, the same happened during the presence of non-Indians, but with the express authorization of the indigenous leaders.

After the ritual, the participants were sent to eat. Before that, the chief and the witch doctor had already eaten their meals. The menu of the day was composed of beans soup with dough, French bread, fruits and juice. All this food was disposed in a wooden bench so that each visitor would serve themselves as they wished. The soup is considered by the Indigenous people as a weak preparation, highly eaten by children or sick people. In this case, it may have been prepared because it is a type of food that can be consumed after ingesting Jurema, since the vegetables and other ingredients that are part of its composition are hardly related to any physical malaise. In addition to the differentiated distribution, on this day, the time of the meals was strictly followed.

Another interesting and relatively new aspect in the group is the habit of eating while watching TV. This is a common practice in the *Thá-Fene* ranch. All meals are subject to being eaten in the living room. The main meals, probably because they require more time, are the ones that develop most in this environment. The intermediate meals, in turn, happen on the outside of the house, sitting on the hammock, in the kitchen, among others. It is important to observe that the habit of eating in front of the television come specially from the children, since the adults prefer to eat their meals in benches on the outside of the house. Questioned about the customs in sacred territories in Alagoas and Pernambuco, one of the female Indians affirmed that in those places this practice is tolerated by the elder.

This tension among recent habits and recommendations originated from the indigenous tradition, lived in the rural areas, permeates great part of the inhabitants' speeches. In this sense, being attentive to tradition, seeking to follow the predecessors and their customs, has the meaning of walking safely in the hostile space of the city. However, new challenges appear, new forms of life impose themselves, and elements that are absent in the communal life are now incorporated.

In issues related to the food practices, the challenges regarding the continuous process of change that the social groups are subject to routinely are observed, with repercussions felt in all aspects of common life. The challenges are not the changes themselves, which are movements inherent to the dynamics of all social groups, but the meaning begotten in the center of these changes: replacement of food *in natura* for industrialized products, of low nutritional value, abandonment of ways and/or lifestyles culturally referenced, high dependence of commercial establishments for the provision of basic food, low investment in group solutions for the guarantee of food self-sustainability resources, etc.

## Final considerations

The National Survey of Health and Nutrition of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil, done in 2009, pointed out a very concerning situation regarding the nutritional and health situation of the indigenous people in Brazil: although there is great diversity in the observed situations, malnutrition assumes moderate and/or high proportions among children and, on the other hand, overweight and obesity are registered in high prevalence in adults of some ethnicities.<sup>20</sup> This nutritional profile shows the food insecurity that is present in those territories. One of the main changes refers to the increase in the consumption of industrialized food, refined food, and food with low nutritional quality, in a process of food exchange traditionally present in the rural area for others coming from more urbanized areas.

It is not by chance that the topic of rescuing the food traditions begins to be spread as a flag representing the fight for indigenous leaderships that act in the context of the movement of the Food and Nutritional Safety, from the understanding that this is also an instrument in the process of political negotiation.<sup>21</sup> The changes in the profile of the food consumption also talk about the sustainability conditions and maintenance of the lifestyles that are typical of the indigenous peoples.

In the case of the *Kariri-Xocó* group, it was observed that their food practices are strongly influenced by involving factors, whether due to the geographic location and quality of soil of the indigenous land, the weather conditions of the region, the donations from the surrounding population or social-economic factors directly connected to the members of the group.

Although its practices are permeated with customs acquired from life in the urban environment, some peculiarities are revealed with the observation, showing that the traditional is hardly abandoned. There is something that is brought to the present by the practices of the past. In this sense, the belief in the force of nature, the maintenance of original culinary preparation, the way of eating, with whom one eats, reinforce the ideas that the act of feeding is built according to cultural and symbolic concepts, the material and social conditions of the researched group.

In the situations described in this paper, the processes of food choice represent, in parts, the meaning of change. It is evident that the choices go through material issues (income, above all), but it is observed that the preparations and the forms of consumption keep a strict relation with the living of the original groups, that live in other states. The new space is open by the proximity of the supermarkets, by the impossibility of the traditional agriculture, by the advent of the television as a central element of the domestic sociability.

In a certain way, it is observed that, as it occurs in several indigenous groups studied, the ways of handling the natural resources and diversified ways of traditional technical knowledge, has been lost in the western technology, becoming fragments of knowledge that are not in use anymore

due to the insertion of the indigenous people in the market economies and in the networks of globalized relations.<sup>22</sup>

This interface between the change and the tradition deserves a more careful look in public policies, since the indigenous groups that live in peri-urban spaces, with a territorial limitation that makes it impossible for physical and cultural reproduction, profile a different segment, subject to the insecurities of several orders, especially in food. The access to the land is directly related to the maintenance of the indigenous tradition because the land is the *locus* of its physical, material, social, cultural and symbolic reproduction.

The growing number of industrialized products that compose the eating habits in the cities nowadays, and also the field, reflects the decrease in the small rural property, the difficulty of the small production in imposing itself onto the massive production of food with suspicious nutritional properties. Besides the cultural issues, there is also an imposition for the creation for a health schedule that takes care of the problems resulting from these changes in the lifestyle.

The food situation of the *Kariri-Xocó* from Lauro de Freitas can be easily compared with the other indigenous groups distributed along the national territory, such as the *Wari* from the Amazon region, the *Akwẽ-Xerente* from Tocantins, the *Kiriri* from the hinterland of Bahia, the *Baré* from Alto Rio Negro, and the *Xakriabá* from Minas Gerais. All these groups, among others, suffer with the transformation of the food practices engendered by big business, where the profit from the industry overlays and consolidates as a more economically viable food alternative.

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