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## Food and nutritional security in Tekoa Pyau, a Guarani village in the municipality of São Paulo

*Segurança alimentar e nutricional na Tekoa Pyau, aldeia guarani do município de São Paulo*

### Abstract

**Introduction:** The Guarani people from the indigenous village of Tekoa Pyau, in the municipality of São Paulo, are confined to a small area imperiled by territorial disputes and surrounded by intense urbanization. These circumstances hinder their traditional practices and favor an increasing circulation of people and industrialized goods, diminishing their autonomy in relation to such goods, thus impacting political, environmental, economic, spiritual, social and health-related aspects of the community. The sociocosmological knowledge that informs their culture and practices around food could be powerful tools for fostering alliances between traditional food systems and government policies. **Objective:** Discuss Food and Nutritional Security in relation to existing public policies for the village and elaborate proposals for their effectiveness. **Method:** Ethnography was chosen to understand a world in which food practices can only be apprehended within their local meaning. **Results:** The Guarani categorize foods as “dead foods” (purchased in supermarkets and that weaken their bodies, including ultra-processed foods) and “living foods” (extracted from nature directly, which strengthens them). Among the “living foods” they yield *avaxi etei* (‘real corn’), a gift from Nhanderu (‘Our Father’ deity) and basic ingredient of their traditional foods. **Conclusion:** In the data analysis, public mismanagement of resources with inappropriate distribution of infant formulas, political invisibility and school meal programs with no relation to the traditional food are examined. In order to build appropriate public policies, it is important to consider the link between traditional foods and the cosmology, and to understand the healthcare practices of the Guarani.

**Keywords:** Food and Nutritional Security. Ethnography. Guarani people.

### Resumo

**Introdução:** Os Guarani da Tekoa Pyau, aldeia localizada no município de São Paulo, estão confinados em uma pequena área ameaçada por disputas territoriais e com intensa urbanização no entorno. Esses fatores dificultam as atividades tradicionais e permitem afluxo crescente de pessoas e mercadorias da cidade, fazendo com que a vida na aldeia não prescindia de produtos industrializados, afetando questões políticas, ambientais, econômicas, espirituais, sociais e de saúde. As compreensões sociocosmológicas que orientam saberes e práticas relacionadas à alimentação no contexto podem ser potentes ferramentas de promoção de alianças entre sistemas próprios de alimentação e a política nacional. **Objetivo:** Debater Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional com interface das políticas públicas na aldeia e realizar proposições para sua efetividade. **Método:** A etnografia foi escolhida para compreender um mundo em que as práticas alimentares só podem ser apreendidas em seus significados locais. **Resultados:** Os Guarani categorizam os alimentos em “mortos” (os que foram comprados nos mercados e enfraquecem os corpos) e “vivos”

(os extraídos da natureza que os fortalecem). Entre os “vivos” existe o *avaxi etei* (‘milho verdadeiro’), dádiva de Nhanderu (‘Nosso Pai’, divindade) e base da alimentação tradicional; entre os “mortos”, estão os ultraprocessados. **Conclusão:** Ao analisar os dados, pondera-se mau uso de gerência pública com distribuição inadequada de fórmulas infantis, invisibilidade política e alimentação escolar sem afinidade com a alimentação tradicional. Para construir políticas públicas, é importante considerar o vínculo entre a alimentação e a cosmologia e compreender as práticas de saúde dos Guarani.

**Palavras-chave:** Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional. Etnografia. Povo Guarani.

## INTRODUCTION

Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) presupposes “the right to regular and permanent access to food of sufficient quality and quantity, without compromising access to other essential needs [...] respecting cultural diversity”.<sup>1</sup> The broad definition allows for varied interpretations that depend on the respective worldview. Policies relating to FNS provide for the recognition and respect for the unique ways in which people conceive culture. However, people from non-hegemonic cultures end up having to adapt to a variety of bureaucratic and institutional procedures that go against their knowledge and customs, limiting the implementation of policies that dialogue with their context and singularities. The Guarani consequently reject bureaucratic authority and organize themselves in order to not submit to conditioning factors.<sup>2</sup>

These peoples have always had their own effective systems of healthcare, healings and food,<sup>3</sup> and comprehending this knowledge is essential for health professionals who work with such specific groups.

The Guarani Mbya are present in extensive portions of the Brazilian territory, in villages spread out in the states of São Paulo, Espírito Santo Rio de Janeiro, and throughout the southern region, with some families having migrated to yet other states. They are also found in Argentina and Paraguay.<sup>4</sup> Despite the discontinuous territory, lopped off by extensive farms and highways, the villages form networks that maintain connections between the families.<sup>5</sup>

Comprehending Guarani food is to tackle cosmological relationships. The Guarani inhabit the “*Yvy vai*” (mean land) and seek ideally for the “*Yvy marã é ÿ*” (the land without evil).<sup>a</sup> Feeding and being joyful can be their path to it through a bodily transformation. In *Yvy vai*, one faces great adversity. It is a place that breaks and gets one sick.<sup>6</sup> Territorial confinement is a major problem as it also impairs the relation to foods considered gifts from the deities, such as corn (*avaxi etei*, real corn, which has many varieties, cultivated according to their precepts) other crops, hunting, rituals and traditional habits. Thus the *nheẽ* (soul-word, condition for existing, and the divinity principle contained in the mbya<sup>2</sup> humanity) becomes sad and may want to leave the body, causing the Guarani’s death.

This predicament, coupled with the proximity to urban supermarkets, boosted eating habits such as high consumption of ultra-processed foods (food products often poor in fresh ingredients and with a high percentage of sugars, salt, oils, fats, stabilizers and additives used to conceal undesirable sensory attributes, or to simulate nonexistent ones<sup>7</sup>), discouraging traditional food habits.

In 2014, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported<sup>8</sup> on the urgent situation of food insecurity afflicting indigenous peoples in Brazil. One of the main challenges identified is in the creation and further strengthening of policies that foster ethnodevelopment, aimed at modifying indicators related to the rise in chronic noncommunicable diseases and anemia associated with poor diet.<sup>9</sup>

Pointing out contextual issues around the Guarani sociocosmological categories that guide their knowledge and practices as they relate to food is crucial for understanding the local perspectives of convergence and divergences with public policies. Studies such as the present one, specific to a village surrounded by intense urbanization, are worthy of concern due to the peculiarities of the sociopolitical tensions involved. The difficulty to effectively map out the impact of the Brazilian government policies on the indigenous populations’ way of life is widely recognized.

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<sup>a</sup> See Macedo, 2017; Ladeira, 2001.

This text aims to discuss FNS policies in indigenous territories, especially in Tekoa Pyau, a Guarani village located in the outskirts of the city of São Paulo, from an ethnographic perspective, seeking to contemplate the practices and concepts of the Guarani. To account for the entirety of the complex and sophisticated universe of relationships and meanings linked to their food practices is not the purpose here.

## METHOD

This article is the unfolding of an ethnographic research conducted between 2015 and 2017,<sup>10</sup> focusing on the food practices of the Guarani Mbya in the village of Tekoa Pyau surrounded by an urban area in the municipality of São Paulo, next to the Jaraguá State Park, alongside the Estrada Turística do Jaraguá and the Bandeirantes Highway.

### Field work

The village is part of the Jaraguá Indigenous Territory (Terra Indígena - TI), which comprehends five other villages with a declared land status. Currently, only 1.7 hectares of the entire TI are officially certified, which corresponds to Tekoa Ytu, separated from Tekoa Pyau village by a road. The smallest in the world in total area, up until this text was written.

In 2015, the then village chief estimated that about 500 people were living in 140 houses in Tekoa Pyau. However the intense circulation of people from different villages and locations,<sup>5</sup> makes it difficult to ascertain the total number of inhabitants.

The Guarani usually organize themselves into families that live in the same house or in a group of houses close to one another. These families can be formed of two individuals and up to several generations, constantly reconfigured through marriages, separations and dislocations.<sup>5</sup> The relatives within a Guarani family form a network of family members.<sup>11</sup>

According to the Relatório Circunstanciado de Identificação e Delimitação da TI<sup>12</sup> (Detailed Identification and Delimitation Report on the TI), between the 1960s and 1970s, only Tekoa Ytu existed in that area. Part of what is now Tekoa Pyau was a cultivation area where the members of the first village grew thatch, eucalyptus, bamboo and bananas. The Report indicates that in the first half of the 1990s, a shaman founded Tekoa Pyau with his partner and children after dreaming about Nhanderu ('Our Father' deity), who indicated the place where they should move to. The cultivation area that existed gave way to housing for still other families, and became insufficient to meet their needs. The village exists in a restricted geographic space with a high population density that far exceeds the standard of Mbya Guarani villages,<sup>13</sup> thus limiting the crops area.

The lack of running water is constant, and basic sanitation, precarious. The urbanization process and consequent expansion of *juruá* (non-indigenous) houses and commercial establishments all around the TI was greatly intensified in recent years. Furthermore, the area is subject to real-estate and tourism speculation, so the Guarani receive constant threats of expropriation from purported titleholders (some of whom hold political offices) and the São Paulo State government that administers the Jaraguá Park, the UC, Unidade de Conservação (Conservation Unit) whose area overlaps that of the TI - comprehending a native forest of vital importance for the cultural practices of the Guarani.

The native forest comprehended by the UC has a pedagogical function as it's where the elders teach the children to recognize and collect forest matter of interest to the Guarani.<sup>12</sup> During this research, it was

reported that any activities conducted by the indigenous people in the park require prior authorization from the UC manager (*a juruá*). The Guarani are pursuing shared management of the UC in order to carry out projects aimed at preserving the forest and cultivating plant species of great significance to them.

The village is served by a CECI, Centro Educacional da Cultura Indígena (Educational Center for Indigenous Culture), akin to a kindergarten within the municipal education policy, a public school and a UBS, Unidade Básica de Saúde (Basic Health Unit) in Tekoa Ytu. These institutions serve all the TI. Some Guarani report that the access to these services is a reason for not leaving the village, despite their desire to spend long periods of time in other villages farther from the city center.

### Production and data analysis

The ethnographic research method was used for the comprehension of a singular cultural universe, articulating its various aspects and avoiding any fragmentation. Furthermore, this approach promotes a “thick description” of the studied phenomena within their contexts, assimilating the respective meanings.<sup>14</sup> Some aspects witnessed in the research are highlighted in this article for bringing up important issues that couldn't however be more extensively examined.

One of the techniques used was the field diary<sup>15</sup> to record events, conversations, narratives and speeches of people of different ages, trajectories and social positions, while partaking in the daily life of the village in different contexts, such as in the preparation of food, at meal times, in family relationships and in friendships, in social and religious events, as well taking notice of objects, symbols and behaviors, including personal reflections and emotions experienced by the field researcher. The records were read and reread throughout the research for new assimilation and recognition of gaps.

Despite not living in the village for an uninterrupted period of time - as in classic works of ethnography -, there existed a prior bond with the residents, and some studies into the Guarani language through prior work on site as part of a program of the Centro de Trabalho Indigenista, for over a year. Altogether, the duration of the work project and the study spanned over three years of direct contact with the Guarani. At Tekoa Pyau, the field researcher participated in four rituals of consecration of sacred elements, two of mate, one of water and another of fruits.<sup>b</sup> We accompanied the *xeramõi* (translated as “my grandfather”, used for elders, the holders of wisdom and spiritual powers) of the village, in rituals performed at Tekoa Ytu; three rituals of water and three of mate (the field researcher was baptized in the first mate ritual). We also covered the TI demarcation area by foot with the Guarani, registering points of interest for the Plano de Gestão Territorial e Ambiental (Territorial and Environmental Management Plan); accompanied them while purchasing food and other necessities such as seedlings and tools; participated in political meetings within and outside the village, communal crop planting; meetings in villages situated in other TIs.

Another technique used was semi-structured interviews with prior reading, clarification and signing of Free and Prior Informed Consents. The interviews addressed the way of life and thinking of the Guarani Mbya, in addition to producing a description and reflection on traditional food in view of the current conjuncture, involving specific knowledge and concepts. The interviews were carried out with members of different families, varying in age and gender, respecting the ways of speaking, pauses, pace, moments of speaking and of silence of each interviewee. When the use of the Guarani language was necessary, the main interlocutor interpreted it into Brazilian Portuguese.

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<sup>b</sup> See Maymone, 2017.

With the annotation and coordination of all the material collected during the research period, the interpretation process began, accompanied by the bibliographical reading, as did the work of writing the dissertation from which this article originated. The selected readings on Guaraní ethnology to converse with the ethnographic material consist of classic and contemporary works having the theme of food as a criterion. Thus the thick description<sup>14</sup> followed the established objectives, considering the local meanings implied in the practice that expresses the ethnographic experience.

The villager's time, pace and space were respected, with conversations and constant requests for permission to carry out the field work within Guaraní ethics, respecting the limits determined by them for all field activities.

The field work within indigenous lands was duly authorized by FUNAI, Fundação Nacional do Índio (National indigenous Foundation) and by the then chief of the village. The study was approved by the Comissão Nacional de Ética em Pesquisa (parecer nº 2.083.986) (National Research Ethics Committee, Opinion no. 2.083.986).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Food practices and commensality among the Guaraní Mbya in Tekoa Pyau

The current scenario in the village is marked by the intense presence of *jurua* (non-indigenous) food, which means the Guaraní suffer from food related ailments of non-indigenous people. The *jurua* food that causes *jurua* diseases also causes Guaraní diseases ("spiritual disease", as they say), because the *nhe'ẽ* becomes sad<sup>16</sup> and may want to leave the body, causing the Guaraní's death.

There are two forms of imbalance involving food consumption. One is when the Guaraní Mbya have *tembiu etei* (real food) and no appetite, probably related to a spiritual cause; the *nhe'ẽ* is not adapting to the body. The lack of appetite is a sign of the *nhe'ẽ*'s sadness, as well as poor "health". The other imbalance is when you have the appetite but no food, which also makes the body more vulnerable to *jurua* and Guaraní illnesses.<sup>17</sup>

The Guaraní Mbya understand proper food as food that strengthens the body and the soul, categorize by them as "living" foods, obtained directly from nature with the permission of their *ija* (the protectors, creators, dominant spirits). Relationships of respect and sharing with the *ija* are maintained and managed in order to obtain, transform and cultivate living food. These relationships between living foods and the creators are disseminated throughout the village.

Most of the food they currently have access to is called "dead" foods, food that denies them relationship with the deities, that are part of mercantile relationships, and that weaken their bodies. They are packaged foods that do not sustain their health and weakens their bodies.

The situation of food insecurity is related to social vulnerability, and for the Guaraní it is reflected in the vulnerability of relationships between the *ija* and the *nhe'ẽ*. The Guaraní become vulnerable to the transformation of their bodies for being unable to develop *aguyje* (a state of perfect maturation suited to the Mbya way of life).<sup>18</sup> To eat, for the Guaraní Mbya, is to be in relationship with beings who operate through the

rituals of smoking *petỹgua* (a kind of pipe with rope tobacco), rituals of consecration, chanting and dances to the deities.<sup>c</sup>

One example is the traditional corn, gift corn, *avaxi etei* (real corn), central ingredient in the Guarani culture as it strengthens their bodies. At Tekoa Ytu, the Guarani still persist in planting this variety of corn on a small scale, despite the difficulties in acquiring the seedlings, restricted space and poor quality of the soil. On the other hand, there is the commercial corn, basic ingredient of ultra-processed products widely consumed in the village. While around the first variety what matters is the maintenance of the cited relationships, in the second, it is the accumulation and generation of wealth that matters.

The Guarani Mbya do not cultivate food to make money but to be physically and spiritually healthy.<sup>17</sup> One of the interlocutors explains that among the teachings of the elders of his family is that only a few grains should be planted at a time, and each harvest should not be overdone so as not to affect diseases throughout the village. If they eat too much of a food item, either from hunting or harvesting, that creates an imbalance and the respective *ija* may become enraged and restrict further access to it, which references extinction.<sup>19</sup>

The village does not have sufficient land or resources for hunting and fishing, they have to roam through the Jaraguá Park to find items of cultural interest for their practices. So in addition to the mediation with the *ija kuery*, currently the dialogue with the manager of the Park is also necessary.

Few families carry out planting other than in the collective area at the CECI, which is insufficient for their subsistence. The occurrence of *avaxi etei* was observed, in addition to pumpkin, peanuts and beans. However, more and more families have to rely on resources provided by individuals and NGOs, organized or not, to carry out planting. As well as a cultural manifestation and a way to prevent the disappearance of seeds, planting in such a restricted area is a movement of resistance against the advance of monoculture and the use of chemical inputs in food production.

One interlocutor points out that while the Guarani use sacred *xeramõi* tobacco ritualistically in order for the crops to improve the health of their body/soul, the *jurua* use chemical inputs to accelerate the growth of the crop plants with no respect for its life cycle. It is inconceivable to the Guarani that chemicals could be more beneficial than the smoke from *xeramõi* tobacco. Another comparison emerged: while the *tembiu etei* needs blessings, sacred smoke, fetching firewood and lighting a fire, all one needs is to open the package of the *jurua* food and put in the pot. For the Guarani Mbya, the time for growing the crops and that of consecration are essential to nourish body/soul.

With a reduced ability to produce their own food, the Guarani Mbya consume the ones that are easily accessible, from the *jurua* world. However, they reflect on these transformations, and understand that cosmological relationships are weakened by eating *jurua* food, and that that can be harmful, but eating it as the *jurua* do, without the sacred mediations, and relating to food as a product, is even more dangerous.

### School meals

The distribution of infant formulas by the CECI without prescriptions or professional guidance was very conspicuous. The UBS notice board includes information that can be understood as a stimulus for consumption: "We have Nestogeno2 milk from 6 months old/CECI Office". According to the Diretoria Regional de Ensino (Local Board of Education) nutritionist at the time of the research, the formula was requested in

<sup>c</sup> See Macedo, 2017; Pierri, 2013.



another TI in the municipality of São Paulo, therefore, according to the protocol, it has to be distributed proportionally to all CECIs. The Guarani member responsible for such distribution at Tekoa Pyau, reported that there was a list of all children in the village from zero to two years old, and at the beginning of every month, the mothers would get a can of the formula. In a meeting held with the women about breastfeeding, they reported knowing that breast milk is the ideal food, but they give it to their children because the CECI offers the formula. The can of infant formula lasts for less than a week and the next one only arrives a month later. Formula preparation was observed to be more diluted than recommended on the label and sometimes thickened with ultra-processed infant formula based on cereal containing sugar, which is not recommended for children in this age group.

During the research, no child was identified as having been prescribed Nestogeno2. However, two children were in need of Aptamil and another, of NAN1, formulas for ages and health situations different from those Nestogeno2 is suited for. This distribution of infant formula is a misuse of public money, a policy and management problem, in addition to being harmful to children who have since experienced a deterioration of their health.

The distribution seemed akin to a commercial strategy in which only one formula can a month was offered as a sample to any mother, without any real need for it.<sup>20</sup> This conduct can have harmful consequences, such as reducing breastfeeding, which for the Guarani can be even more worrying, since breastfeeding (*-mokambu*) and good breastfeeding (*-kambu porã*) is a crucial moment to “rejoice”, essential for the Guarani’s “health”,<sup>21</sup> especially during a period when the *nhe’ẽ* is getting used to its body.

Furthermore, families of children who needed different formulas had to reach out to social services or buy the product. There should be a closer supervision by the nutritionist in charge, or an agreement with health professionals from the UBS serving the TI, aiming at distributing the formula to children who actually need it, of the type and quantity prescribed.

In the two TI public schools, part of the local management is committed to buying fresh food, but there is still a lot of *jurua* food prepared according to *jurua* recipes and cooking practices.

As far as the Nutrition Science category,<sup>7</sup> there was a greater amount of fresh and minimally processed foods at the CECI; more ultra-processed and processed foods at the local Escola Estadual (State School), whose consumption should be avoided. Among the ultra-processed foods, ready-made seasonings were used on a daily basis, and frappé and nuggets were served at least once a week at the state school. In both institutions, biscuits and chocolate milk were available daily. An indigenous cook reported that the children disliked the frappé. Even so, the supervisor responsible for school meals instructed her to offer it until the stock ran out in order to place the next orders, and the product was always delivered to the village.

Some processed foods delivered to the state school, mainly canned and pasteurized beans and meat, despite not containing preservatives, were not welcome by the Guarani. In a meeting organized by the Comissão Pró-Índio (Pro-Indigenous Commission) on school meals, with managers and indigenous leaders from the state of São Paulo, a Guarani representative reported that she did not recognize the contents of the cans as food, but as poison. The nutritionist in charge of the sector detailed how the pasteurization process worked, but the response from the leadership was that this food was dead, thus, it was poison.

The Guarani demand greater quantities of fresh food in schools and make an effort to carry out traditional planting and preparation of food as part of the pedagogical activities that dialogue with their world.



Another important point is that many people in the village rely on food from the school, and not letting anyone go hungry is part of the Guarani ethic that reverberates with “joy”/“health”. Therefore, among them no one is banned from eating in school even if they are not enrolled.

The indigenous portion of the local management is able to establish flexible procedures, maintaining the Guarani Mbya's relationship with food according to their own economy, including living food, without producing surpluses and without leaving anyone in the village go without food.

### **San na tekoa pyau Policies**

The fact that PNAN<sup>1</sup> has incorporated respect for cultures is of great relevance. However, the implementation of public policies on Food and Nutrition need to further consider the concept of “culture” for traditional and indigenous peoples, as well as their singularities. Establishing alliances and joint actions is feasible as long as it is understood, in each case, what the term “culture” entails as a valid perspective, and its relations with the health of each people.

For the Guarani, “food” and “nutrition” are inseparable from *nhandereko* ('our way of life', 'our culture'), thus food converses with a universe of relationships that comprehends the deities and those living in the village.

One of the obstacles to the implementation of FNS in indigenous lands is an assumption around the regular access to food, as “having food for tomorrow”. Despite making sense in the Western culture, the concern about having food the next day is associated with the idea of hoarding that makes no sense to the Guarani. For them, when the relationships with the deities are positive, when land is available and food is grown according to *nhandereko*, there will be sufficient living food. In this matter, the state school meals, in addition to including a great portion of dead food, also engage with the notion of accumulation of a large stock for several days.

Indigenous populations are directly affected by Food and Nutrition Insecurity as a result of historical and new obstacles that prevent the demarcation of their lands,<sup>8</sup> which guarantees the territory they will inhabit to develop their own activities in relation to food, following the way of life of each people, and to fulfill their meaning of existence. In the context of such restricted territories, the *tembiu etei* cannot be cultivated according to the *nhandereko*, causing a rupture in the relationship with the deities, which results in a major predicament for the Guarani. Feeding on what is sent by the gods enables the body to be closer to them and to protect itself from diseases, and also to avoid waste.

In this direction, the National FNS Policy,<sup>22</sup> which aims to ensure the human right to adequate food and to promote FNS throughout the national territory with intersectoral actions is a powerful tool, as it provides for the land tenure regularization of indigenous lands.

Ensuring access to traditional seeds is also essential for FNS. The support network can be leveraged with intersectoral public policies and the participation of local Guarani agents. Currently, the Guarani of Tekoa Pyau cultivate in small spaces in order to reproduce their seeds. Whenever they manage to obtain traditional seeds, these are preserved and sowed according to *nhandereko*, and even if it is not enough to feed themselves, there is an intention that the plant, and consequently the *ija* will always exist among them at Tekoa Pyau, and that the horizon does not disappear.

The Conselho de Alimentação Escolar (School Feeding Council), a FNS promotion entity based on social participation, has a representative chosen by the TI. At the municipal level, the relevance given to the

effectiveness of indigenous leadership participation and the management from the municipality was noticeable. This is a positive experience in the construction of a participatory policy. There were no reports of state council related activities.

Another sector that operates with social participation is the Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional - CONSEA (National Council for Food and Nutrition Security). On the Council's website, there are numerous documents and conference reports stating their position in favor of the rights of indigenous peoples, their incorporation in FNS public policies, and proposals for the implementation of ethnodevelopment.

In 2014, the Conselho Municipal de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional de São Paulo - COMUSAN (Municipal Food and Nutritional Security Council of São Paulo, accepted civil society applications for the next tenure of the council. There was not much interest on the part of the Guarani, mainly due to logistic issues (the meetings were held in the city center), and also for lack of fixed dates indicated to call and confirm that the meeting would indeed be taking place.

So for effective participation, the indigenous need to incorporate the languages and organization structure of the Western world. It is necessary that food and nutrition programs continue to incorporate different understandings of culture and forms of organization, in addition to valuing the place of speech of these peoples.

Staple baskets,<sup>d</sup> even when including items chosen with the participation of the Guarani, and meals offered at institutions could solve the nutritional problem, but they do not solve the cosmological relationships involved in food. <sup>1</sup>The encouragement for cultivating food through public policies is essential. In addition to strengthening *nhandereko*, traditional populations contribute to agricultural diversity by valuing and preserving their various cultivars: "Essa diversidade é elemento central da segurança alimentar do mundo"<sup>23</sup> (Diversity is central to food security in the world).

Thus, based on the discussions on FNS policies and the experience obtained in the specific field of Tekoa Pyau, some propositions are herewith presented for the effectiveness of FNS:

- Land demarcation should be a political priority as it is of vital importance for indigenous peoples to reproduce physically and culturally.<sup>24</sup>
- Taking into account basic sanitation. The land must provide conditions for walking in the woods, planting, having clean water with fish. In that way, it will provide food and health to body and soul in accordance with *nhandereko*, strengthening relationships with visible and invisible beings.
- Adequate food must be in accordance with the culture of each people,<sup>1</sup> thus the specific contexts must be addressed by policies and teams trained in the localities without homogenizing the diversity of indigenous peoples and/or all their situations. Investment in participatory and intersectoral actions, guaranteeing decision over the direction of policies for each people would make it possible to apprehend the different visions that they give to FNS.
- Access to traditional seeds, as well as cultivation practices, must be strengthened through adequate policies.

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<sup>d</sup> The delivery of emergency staple baskets was reported. See Maymone, 2017.

- Differentiated meals in schools must operate with a greater participation of local indigenous management, aiming at meals that are closer to the Mbya tradition.
- Public Calls for institutional food purchase can be carried out in a dialogue with the indigenous people, similarly to what happens at the TI Rio Branco, located in Itanhaém, in the municipality of São Paulo, which sells its Guarani corn, planted according to its precepts, for the TI school meals.<sup>25</sup>
- The effort by the Guarani to plant in schools can be aligned with the marco de referência da Educação Alimentar e Nutricional<sup>26</sup> (framework of Food and Nutrition Education), and thus be supported and strengthened by the government.
- The sociocultural heritage of these peoples must be valued and self-managed. Meaning the construction of projects defended by a people according to their values and aspirations, considering their experiences and cultural resources.<sup>27</sup> Most of the Guarani Mbya that we know in São Paulo demand political, productive and territorial autonomy and the recognition of their cultural identity.

The situation of food insecurity demands a complex set of actions that dialogue with the local (individual) and global (collective) context, without overlapping priorities, placing the indigenous as an actor in the process. The symbolic dimensions intrinsic to food consumption must be known in FNS actions and strategies, which must be built in a participatory manner. And despite these efforts, even if it is possible for the indigenous people to advance closer to a situation of food security, the desired sovereignty,<sup>e e</sup> based on the militancy of the rural movements, will not be achieved, as it would require a transformation of society's economic and political macrostructure.

## CONCLUSION

This article dealt with an indigenous village and its internal complexities and with the surrounding society. Therefore, reflecting on it is also a complex task.

The cosmological relationships that make one think of "nutrition" in relation to the Guarani Mbya can turn into a problematic concept when one comes from the so-called Western culture to the Guarani culture. Within the framework of the Nutrition Area, it is very important to consider the link between food and cosmology, because it helps to understand the health practices of the Guarani in general and contributes to the promotion of public policies that meet differentiated health practices.

It is noteworthy that this study is reiterating policies aimed at indigenous populations, increasingly vulnerable as their rights are crushed by laws favoring the interests of agribusiness and large rural producers.

When relations with the deities are broken and the Guarani have to consume foods that do not dialogue with the *nhandereko*, a big problem ensues of maintaining life and the relationships that sustain it. The continuity of Guarani food and their life are maintained by these relationships, which can only exist when there is land to begin with.

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<sup>e</sup> Although the differences between food security and sovereignty have not been addressed in this work, sovereignty dialogues with the struggle for self-determination of indigenous peoples. See Final Declaration of the World Forum on Food Sovereignty, Via Campesina, 2001.

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