

Marriage Between “Close Relatives”

Considerations about Kinship Between the
Guarani Nhandéva on Western Paraná

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Resumo

Trata-se de um breve estudo que apresenta os sentidos do parentesco entre os índios Guarani Nhandéva no oeste do Estado do Paraná. “O que significa ser parente nessa sociedade?” é uma das questões centrais do trabalho e que obtém como resposta uma classificação dos parentes em três níveis, em que aqueles considerados “próximos” são também aqueles com quem se deve casar.

Palavras-chave: Guarani; Parentesco; Tekohá Añetete

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the meanings of “kinship” among the Nhandéva Guarani Indians in western Paraná State in Brazil. The main question that this work discusses and answers is “What is the meaning of being a “relative” in this society?” The empirical and theoretical research suggest that a classification can be done relatively on three levels, in which those who are considered “close” are also those with whom they should marry.

Keywords: Guarani; Relationship; Tekohá Añetete

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Introduction

This work presents the meanings of kinship among the *Nhandéva* Guarani residents of western Paraná, together with whom I have been conducting field work for my master’s dissertation in the graduate program in the social sciences at Unioeste. I first conduct a brief review of how the issue of kinship was treated in classic Anthropological studies and then construct a dialog between a minimal bibliography that addresses the issues of Guarani kinship and the data obtained in my study.

There are two logics that concern kinship among the *Nhandéva*¹ Guarani in western Paraná: it is possible to be a consanguine or an affine relative. The work of Silva (2007) emphasizes the dimension of affinity in kinship, where the relations individuals construct among each other in their daily activities determine who is or is not a relative. In this sense, it is affirmed that contact and living in proximity are producers of consubstantiality and therefore of consanguinity. The work of Albernaz (2009a) follows a different trajectory, presenting cases of marriage between relatives who were raised together, and affirms limitations in the AmerIndian concept adopted by Silva.

Without adopting either of these two positions, this study presents the way that the Guarani at the *Tekohá Añetete* settlement (located in the municipality of Diamante in Western Paraná) experience their concept of kinship,

1 According to Maria Inês Ladeira: “The term “ñandéva” means “us,” “all of us” or “our people” and is used by all the Guarani. Nevertheless, it is the only way used to represent those who speak the dialect that the ethnographer Kurt Nimuendaju surveyed and which is denominated Apapukuva or by the descendants of the Tanigua, Apapukuva and Oguaiuva groups. In Mato Grosso do Sul, the Ñandeva are known as Guarani, distinguishing them from Kaiowa; in Paraguay, they are known as Ava-Chiripa, in reference to their traditional clothing” (LADEIRA 2008).

based on the existence of a system of “kinship levels” – which demonstrate that the Amerindian Perspective Theory² is quite explanatory of these relations in Guarani society.

It is important to emphasize that the concepts of kinship with which the Guarani operate are quite broad. The term “parente,” [relative] for example, is used to designate all individuals who are found at the heart of any one of the three Guarani³ subgroups. They also use the term “close relative” (which can also refer to individuals from other subgroups) and “very close relative” (which here refers to family – extended or nuclear – and their aggregates).⁴ This article will restrict its focus to these categories to understand how they influence matrimonial calculations – that concern with whom one may marry or not – and will briefly present the terminologies used to designate the genealogical relatives.

The importance of kinship networks is re-emphasized in many situations. When commenting about a Guarani person who was encountered during field research in another village it is always possible to be speaking of one of their “close relatives” or “very close” relatives.

Even physical separations do not provoke the loss of ties with those who are far away, because they are remembered in daily conversations, are visited whenever possible, even if to do so it is necessary to take long walks (*-guatá*). These facts demonstrate how much kinship is a central element within this culture. For this reason it is important to understand how it is configured or how it is questioned⁵ by these indigenous people.

2 “Amerindian anthropology – perspectivism – appears to project an image of thinking that is radically different from ours concerning the concept of relationship. In first place, it presumes an epistemological continuity among beings (everyone knows in the same way) allied to an ontological discontinuity (the things that are known are not the same); everyone sees things in the same way (universal subjectivity), but the things they see are not the same (relative objectivity) – jaguars see blood as *cauimo* [a fermented drink], tapirs see a mud deposit as their ceremonial home, vultures see maggots in rotten meat as fish, etc. This conceptual imagination is evidently contrary to our Theory of Knowledge, which is based, to the contrary, on an objective universality of bodies and matter (Nature) in opposition to a subjective diversity in the plane of representations and meanings (Culture)” (GORDON).

3 According to Egon Schaden (1962), the Guarani population of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil can be, in principle, divided into 3 subgroups: the Nandéva, also known as the Xiripá, the Mbiá (Mbuá, Mbwá, Mbyá) and the Kaiowá.

4 This distinction based on degrees of proximity between individuals, therefore generates a gradation of kinship, a theme detailed by Viveiros de Castro in “Pensando o parentesco Amerindio” (1995).

5 For Viveiros de Castro, Anthropology’s task is to investigate the questions that the different cultures raise, because “The questions are not necessarily the same; to the contrary: what precisely distinguishes

Kinship

The issue of kinship is central to anthropology. Morgan's work entitled "Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family," from 1871, inaugurated research about the issue and countless other studies followed. These include those of Claude Lévi-Strauss, which would culminate in the classic work "Elementary Structures of Kinship."

Morgan believed that kinship was the expression of natural ties. Its terminologies, he affirmed, represented the places occupied by individuals based on consanguinity. These terms, in turn, contain the type of relationship that the different subjects assume due to the name or role that they carry. In other words, the nomenclature would be sufficient to explain the arrangements of parentela. It did not take long for this vision to be questioned.

Durkheim was one of the first to perceive the gaps and mistakes of this "naturalizing" vision. In his work, "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life" (1912), he criticized Morgan for believing that kinship was only an aspect of physiological relations that result from natural reproduction. According to Durkheim:

the individuals who compose it [the clan] consider themselves joined by a bond of kinship, but of a very special sort. This kinship does not come from specific blood relations with one another; members of the same clan are kin only if they bear the same name. (...) and if we say that they consider each other as part of the same family, this is because they recognize mutual obligations identical to those that have always been incumbent upon kin: obligations of assistance, vengeance, mourning, the obligations not to intermarry, and so on. (DURKHEIM 2001: 88).

For Durkheim, kinship is, therefore, a system of social classification, not a corresponding vocabulary of natural phenomenon. It concerns moral and legal relationships. This Durkheimian vision led the British structural-functionalists to overestimate this domain.

The structural-functional school tended to perceive kinship as an organizing element of society, and was elected as a privileged plane for understanding "primitive" people or those without a state. The authors varied in their concepts, some considering it to be the base of the legal (Radcliffe-Brown), or

cultures are the type of questions that they make, the type of question that they raise, and it is the questions that differ, much more than the answers." (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2009).

political (Evans-Pritchard) or economic (Firth) system. In sum, kinship was seen as the central organizing element of these groups.

Lévi-Strauss, considered the founder of structuralist anthropology, proposed in “The Elementary Structures of Kinship” another approach to the theme, conceiving it as a form of language, or the communication system based on the exchange of wives. This exchange is at the basis of kinship systems. This author’s theory is based on an interpretation of the prohibition of incest.

The central question expressed in the work can be expressed as follows: “Where does nature end? Where does culture begin?” If the analysis conducted by the natural sciences and even by physical anthropology does not present satisfactory responses to this question, the analysis of Lévi-Strauss provides positive data in this direction: the presence of the rule constitutes the criteria (the only criteria) to distinguish nature and culture. “Everywhere where a rule is manifest we can be sure that we are in a phase of culture” (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1982: 47). In this case, the only universal rule, and that which guarantees detecting culture in all societies, would be the prohibition against incest. According to the author, this prohibition is aimed at incest because it is the sole behavior, in the realm of nature, which demands socialization, contact with the other. According to Lévi-Strauss:

The origin (of the concept) of incest is not purely cultural or purely natural, and it is also not a dose of various elements borrowed partially from nature and partially from culture. It is an essential step thanks to which, by which and above all in which is realized the passage from nature to culture. (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1982: 62).

Therefore, prohibition appears to be that which makes the transition between nature and culture, in which nature would be represented by the absence of rules and culture by particularities. Nevertheless, this general character that it has over human groups is transformed in particularities through language. Lévi-Strauss discusses the variability of the rules concerning the prohibition of incest – which, in fact, differ from society to society (both in relation to whom would be prohibited spouses or partners, as well as concerning the punishment for the transgression). Beyond all of the differences among the various societies about this issue, no human group fails to establish rules about sexuality.

But this prohibition can also take place in its inverse or positive form, that is, the recommendation or requirement for exchange of people among different social groups. In this case, Lévi-Strauss affirms that marriage represents an initial moment in a cycle of exchanges, in which the relatives of the wife and of the husband, by means of marriage, establish various exchanges of goods, services and symbols, Kinship is thus that which organizes this circulation of bodies and things, forming ties that are not limited to biological connections.

The regulation of sexual life appears as a condition for social life; it requires the establishment of the alliance outside of the sphere of immediate consanguinity: “By opposing separatist trends of consanguinity, the prohibition of incest is able to establish networks of affinities that provide societies structure without which none of them would be maintained” (LÉVI-STRAUSS 1986b: 89).

This view of marriage as an exchange of wives (understood here as reciprocity) was sharply criticized by feminists who attacked Levi-Strauss’ supposed pretension to reduce women to objects of exchange – notably authors such as Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974), Rubin (1975), and various others who made this criticism. Nevertheless, for Lévi-Strauss, what was relevant was not that the other sex be an object of exchange, but that there is regulation of sexual life. No society could maintain itself without requiring its members to establish relationships beyond the family limits. These relationships occur as a function of sexual interdictions that cause some people to be prohibited for some and not for others.

This notion of kinship developed by Lévi-Strauss is essential to understanding how marriages are processed among the Guarani *Nhandéva* in western Paraná.

Families, marriages: the organization of the Guarani

The extended family is at the base of the Guarani social, economic and political organization – that is, macro-familiar groups that have forms of organization of spatial occupation among the settlements, determined by relations of affinity and consanguinity. It is composed of the couple, children, son and daughter in laws, grandchildren and siblings and constitutes a unity of production and consumption. In more remote times, the extended families

inhabited the so-called collective houses:

[...] as the basic community cell of the Guarani [...] each *te'yy-oga* (large house) of the Guarani can include up to 10 - 60 families [...], with their fires and beds. The large house shelters an extended family that represents the basic socioeconomic unit, with its areas for planting, hunting and fishing, delimited by rivers and other geographic elements. (SUSNIK 1979: 80).

Currently, among the Guarani of western Parana, these houses no longer exist. In general, after marriage, the sons and daughters continue to live close to their parents and grandparents, forming an extended family, but with separate residences. Each extended family corresponds, as a condition for its existence, to a leader, who is usually a man they call *tamõĩ* (grandfather), but who may also be a woman, who they call *jari* (grandmother). The family leader brings together relatives and provides political and religious guidance. It is also up to them to make decisions about the space which their group will occupy in the settlement and where the nuclear families (parents and children) belonging to their family group will distribute their residences, plant their crops and how they will use the available natural resources.

The nuclear families live in isolated residences scattered through the available land, with a reference, however, to the presence of the house of the *tamõĩ* or *jari*. His or her house is a central location, around which the entire family circulates. It is common for each one of these extended groups to form their own prayer house. In the *Tekoha Añetete* village, for example, there were three of these and therefore three extended families, who represent distinct economic, political and religious units that are quite solid and with relative autonomy among each other.

The economy of the extended families is based mainly on planting crops, although it is common to see small numbers of milk cows, goats, pigs and chickens. There is also an area used for pasture, which now has about 300 beef cattle, which are slaughtered for feasts or when there is a need for food. Nevertheless, the community is not directly occupied with this activity: through an agreement with the State, they pay two "production agents," who are responsible for raising and caring for the cattle. There are also a few people who are dedicated to producing crafts that are sold in fairs or in the city, door to door, but there are exceptions. Agriculture, is therefore, the only task linked to the economy that involves all of the families.

Each nuclear family has, close to its house, about 1.5ha of land for planting where they usually have corn, cassava or potatoes. In addition to these small areas, there are places dedicated to collective activities: these are plots under the responsibility of each one of the extended families. The production from these spaces is sold to agricultural cooperatives owned by “white people,” and the income generated is divided among all those involved in the planning. Nevertheless, before promoting sales outside the village, the large family responsible for production cedes or exchanges a part with the others, so that the three extended families have access to what each one of them produces. Since the cooperatives have a strong demand for organic cassava, it is common for two or three families to simultaneously raise this product – which ends the exchange among them.

Concerning politics, each one of the extended families has as a reference its *tamõi* and his assistants (usually his sons or “very close” relatives), thus establishing independence from each other. Nevertheless, in situations of contact with whites, the families try to maintain unity, converging the center of decisions on the cacique.

The *tamõi* and the assistant must resolve daily issues such as: what to plant, who should be responsible for what activities in the collective plots, if a family that comes to visit a relative may or may not establish residence there, and others. To resolve the situations, they call a meeting, or during the rituals at the prayer house they speak with all the members of that extended family. The cacique, who also has assistance, must represent the interests of the community before the surrounding society, and interfere in questions of the extended families in case of serious conflicts or disputes that involve members of other families. This interference must be conducted with much care to not upset anyone and because the cacique, who is also a member of one of these families, can be seen to be favoring his own, and therefore, may be criticized or even a victim of witchcraft⁶.

The cacique is chosen by the group. Therefore, the larger the family, the greater will be its chance of having someone in leadership in the community. Nevertheless, the Guarani understand that the task of being a political leader demands that the person be extremely well balanced, know how to

6 Witchcraft, as already pointed by Schaden (1962), is a subject very much present in the daily life of the Guarani, its causes them fear and concern. It is an action produced from the magical powers of a shaman and which seeks some kind of evil to the victim - death in general.

speak about “the roots” of the culture and principally, know how to speak to the whites. Due to all of these demands, the position, contrary to how it may seem, is nearly never disputed and among the families of this village, there was never talk of the existence of any rivalry motivated by the desire to occupy the post. The Guarani are currently discussing the need to have an indigenous representative on the city council of Diamante do Oeste. In the three families, it seems there is consensus that, among them, the best representative would be João (a teacher, craftsman, former cacique and assistant to the current cacique). But he is still considering the issue, given that he understands it would require a lot of work, and that he would have to spend considerable time away from home and far from his family – which he said may not be worthwhile.

Concerning the religious practices, each one of the extended families has a prayer house and a spiritual leader (*pajé*), who they turn to for prayer, counseling, to cure disease and protection from witchcraft. At times, a highly regarded *pajé* linked to one of the extended families is sought by members of another, and by people from other settlements. Nevertheless, the reverse is also true: the *pajé* of one extended family is actually seen by members of another as someone who does not know the “true” teachings of the Guarani culture very well. They even say that the prayer house of that family (which has the front door facing south) was built in the wrong position, because it should have the front facing east. Accusations of witchcraft also occur among these families, given that at some moments the interference of a *pajé* and even of a cacique was needed to settle the differences.

It is noted, however, that in terms of economy, politics and religion (thought of separately) it is possible to note relative autonomy between one family and another – a fact also noted by Pereira (1999) among the *kaiowa*. The same is not true in terms of marriages, an issue that makes one family highly dependent on another and which confers to them a dynamic character in terms of their constitution.

Among these Guarani, the spouses should belong to different extended families,⁷ given that there are explicit rules to prohibit marriage within what

7 Although there is this precept, it is known that there are marriages within the same extended family – even because nearly all of them include people who recently came from another settlement (because they were expelled, because they were experiencing hunger, because there were disagreements where they lived, etc.) without any blood bond with those who were their hosts, according to Albernaz:

they consider the same family – which characterize exogamic rules. Marriage is prohibited with the father, mother, son or daughter, sister, brother, grandparent, uncle aunt, nephew, niece, cousins or sons of cousins, because all of these are seen as consanguine, or that is they have bodily ties from the sharing of the same blood. The cousins, crossed or parallel, are called *Che pe'i* (for males) and *Che membykary* (for females). The same terms are used to denominate nephews and nieces. The brothers of the father and mother are called, without distinction, *che ruy'i*; the mother's sister and the father's sister are called *chaine*. A marriage with any one of those mentioned above would characterize an illicit union (incest) – which, according to mythology, could cause interminable evil for the entire extended family.

Marriage among all the “very close relatives,” is also considered incest, even if they are not biological relatives. This fact means that the young men and women must look for partners in other extended families, to which they will be incorporated after marriage. The marriages therefore represent an important mechanism of alteration of the constitution of an extended family. It is through them that during his or her existence, a person can be born in one “parentela” [extended family]⁸ and come to belong to others (PEREIRA, 1999).

In *Tekohá Añetete*, although marriage between members of different families is authorized, it is more common for youths to marry with young men or women who live in other settlements, especially those from Ocoy (located in the municipality of São Miguel do Iguacu) or Kiritó and Acaray-Mi (located in Paraguay). Various justifications are presented for the search for these outside marriages, from the lack of potential partners in the settlement where they live to the importance of marrying someone about whom there is certainty that they live in keeping with Guarani traditions.

The lack of partners should not be understood as a lack of people of either sex who are available for marriage. The Guarani explain that in *Tekohá Añetete* the children grow up together since they are very young; they play together, eat together, visit one another (events motivated even by school activities). For this reason, many of them, even if they belong to different extended

“Nevertheless, the marriages between extended families in Oco'y were frequent, as long as they were not between couples with the genealogical kinship relations mentioned above” (ALBERNAZ 2008).

8 The term is used by Pereira (1999) to designate a set of “family fires.” As this author observed, in various studies in the ethnological literature “parentela” is synonymous with “extended family.”

families, wind up identifying as “very close” relatives and therefore, they are prohibited from marrying among each other.

Meanwhile, the search for a husband or wife who lives within the Guarani tradition stimulates people to look for marriages on the outside, because, among the different families, it is common that there are cases of friction, disagreements, gossip and even accusations of witchcraft – which causes the older ones, at times, to counsel the young to avoid marriage there, under the risk of aggregating relatives who do not behave in a way that they understand to be correct and thus, wind up tarnishing their values and their way of life.

A re-encounter with a young man or woman in another settlement known for a long time and the search for an unknown person and resident of another community, but seen in a premonitory dream (*-endu*) as the ideal spouse, are also motives given to explain movements taken in search of marriage.

Once married, there is a trend in the tradition of these Guarani that the new spouses come to constitute residence uxorilocally. Nevertheless, there is no rule that determines that the post-marital residence is patri- ou matri-linear. What defines where the couple will reside, and therefore, to which extended family it will belong, are criteria such as the prestige of the in-laws. If the wife’s parents have more prestige than the husband’s parents it is probable that the residence of this family be matrilinear.

Thus, in Oco’y the new couples group around the house of the parents of one of the spouses, with no strict rule that guides recurrences of a specific type of matri- or patrilocal residence. Factors such as influence and prestige (for example, the desire to live close to the mother or father) and above all, availability of space, speak louder than any fixed rule of residence. (ALBERNAZ 2009: 65).

The only positive rule referring to marriages concerns endogamy of the ethnic group – or that is, it is determined that every Guarani man and woman have as a partner a man or woman who is also Guarani. This society affirms that marriages can only take place between those who are “close relatives,” because all “true Guarani” are one of theirs.

The relative with whom one marries

When adolescents approach the age at which marriage is common (after 14), the elders, usually the grandparents, present oral teachings about how

they should live, behave and organize their lives. They make many recommendations, including about the choice of a partner for marriage. The religious chief (*pajés*), even if not the adolescent's grandparent, also has an imminent role in this counseling process. The political chief (*cacique*) also participates in these teachings. What they all express in common is that the young person must marry one of their "close relatives."

Every Guarani, from whatever sub-group, is considered to be a relative. Silva (2007) calls attention to this "original kinship." It is because of the divine origin that is common to them and expressed in the term *-etarã* (relative). "The *-etarã* as an expression of the broadest gradient of consanguinity is "human kinship" itself, which identifies all of the Guarani wherever they are" (SILVA 2007: 96). Among the *Nhandéva* of the *Tekohá Añetete* settlement, relative (*-etarã*) is used to designate the Guarani *Kaiowa* who inhabit the state of Mato Grosso and some groups of *Mbyas* who live in Paraguay, to whom they also refer to as being the "false Guarani."

There are also those who are "close relatives" (*etarã ae'i*) and refer to those who live "the same way as us." It is among these that one must find a spouse. Here, kinship is not determined by consanguinity, but by living the same "type" of life. Anyone who lives in the same way is a "close relative." The relative, in this case, is one who is similar, who is a peer, who lives in the same way, who follows the same habits, who shares the same way of being.

The *Nhandéva* have a way of being that is considered ideal and good (that they call *nhanderekó*). For them, this is the way that everyone should live, because it is only in this way that the body and soul get strong and can be free of the evil that lives in the world. To live the *nhanderekó* involves a special diet (avoiding the food of white people), eating well-cooked meat, not exaggerating in the hunt, not drinking alcoholic beverages, dancing, smoking the pipe, hearing the "good words" of the elders, living with joy, visiting their "very close relatives," etc. If one does not live like this, one is not a "close relative."

Finally,⁹ there are those who are called "very close relatives" (*etarã ae'ive va'e*). These are those with whom one lives daily, with whom they share a

9 Silva (2007) also observes this system of "classification" of relatives. Nevertheless, the meanings that each one of these terms has differs a bit from what I now observe.

house, bed, clothes, fire,¹⁰ with whom they exist comensally, according to Amerindian Theory:

The sharing of meat and comensality not only marks relations between relatives, but produces them. To eat *like* someone and *with* someone is a strong vector of identity, as is to abstain for or with someone. The sharing of food and of the culinary code thus creates people of the same species. (FAUSTO 2002)

All of the consanguine relatives should make an effort to maintain this proximity. It is a fact that at times, for various reasons, they wind up residing in other settlements. Therefore, to share certain things becomes impossible. But this is not an element that is capable of weakening the degree of kinship if the subjects make an effort, even if sporadically, to visit each other, exchange presents, invitations to parties, messages, premonitory dreams – in a word, if there is reciprocity among them. Among other reasons, as Silva (2007) observes, it is for this reason that they take their long walks (*-guatá*), to update their kinship, eat together, to remember that their consanguines are “very close relatives.”

Marriage is only recommended when the spouse is a “close relative,” or that is, a Guarani who lives the *nhanderekó*. To marry with one who is “only” a “relative” is to tarnish the person’s reputation, given that he or she would be abandoning the specific customs of their group to cede to customs of another group who, even if they are Guarani, have many differences. It is possible that a *Mbya* comes to reside together with the *Nhandéva* and, therefore, comes to live with them. In this case, the marriage would be recommended, because he changed from being a distant relative to a “close relative.”

At *Tekohá Añetete* they tell the story of a youth who, in 2002, fell in love with a *Kaiowá* Guarani when she was in the municipality of Guaíra. They say that afterwards, she came to want to live like the *Kaiowá*, she no longer

10 Fire is an essential element in the production of Guarani culture. This was made clear in 2005 when the Companhia de Habitação Paranaense (COHAPAR) [the State Housing Agency] issued brick houses with cement floors to the Guarani of *Tekohá Añetete*. The architecture of the houses did not please these indigenous people. The existence of the floor and of the ceiling made it impossible to have a fire on the ground. The families who received the new residences immediately built traditional living spaces alongside the new homes. Until today they use the traditional style spaces where it is possible to make a fire and keep it burning, and around which converge all the members of that nuclear family. A house without fire is a house without a family. Pereira (1999), perceiving the centrality of this element in the production of kinship and in the *Kaiowa* social organization, uses the expression “fire family” to designate the small groups – nuclear families – that integrate a *parentela*.

followed the *Nhanderekó*; until one day, she escaped to go live with the boy. Since then, she is no longer a “very close relative” and became only a relative. Her attitude is seen as an example of what should not be done. Her parents no longer visit her, and for the group, she is seen as a “false Guarani.”

To marry someone who is a “very close relative” is incest. It does not matter if there is consanguinity or not between the couple. If there is this degree of approximation among them, it would be an incestuous relationship, and there is no knowledge of this occurring in the settlement. It is possible that, for example two people considered to be relatives because they were raised together come to marry each other, as in the case that involves “Frederico”¹¹ and “Delosanto and Agostinho”¹² presented by Albernaz (2009). What the Guarani of the *Tekohá Añetete* affirm about this case is that this only happens when the person who was incorporated to the family did not have very close relations with those who would become their spouse – they did not share the same home, the same food, the same substances; they did not exchange presents, did not work or play together – and therefore, they did not become “very close relatives,” but only “close relatives,” because they lived the same customs, although never together.

It is possible that the spouse would use a vocative to designate the person who would be his partner, which would indicate incest if they came to marry (uncle in the case of Frederico). This demonstrates that what, in fact, determines the prohibitions for marriage – kinship – is the proximity that the people maintain between each other. An uncle who did not have consubstantiality with someone who was a niece “through raising” would not be impeded to marry with her, because they would be “close relatives” of each other. The same does not apply if it involves, a consanguine relationship.

A consanguine relative, as the *nhandéva* affirms, would never be a “close relative” (which would make it impossible that they come to be in the group of those with whom marriage is recommended), because one who is

11 “Dolores, who married Frederico, had four children from a previous marriage, who came to be considered children raised by Frederico. Among Dolores’ children by blood, only one daughter, who came to be Frederico’s stepdaughter when she was 13, married when she was 28 with someone who was Frederico’s “brother through being raised together” and a blood brother of Irma.” (ALBERNAZ 2009: 104).

12 “This same scheme is found in the marriages of two consanguine brothers (Delosanto and Agostinho), in which one is married with the mother and the other with the daughter (who is the stepdaughter of his brother, which makes her a niece by creation) making one of the brothers the other’s father-in-law” (Idem: 104-105).

consanguine, if they live the *nhanderekó*, makes an effort to visit their own, and therefore, to remember that they are “very close relatives.” And if they do not live the *nhanderekó*, they become only a “relative” (with whom they are also prohibited from marrying), or, more frequently, they would lose kinship – which would also impede matrimony.

Loss of kinship

The Guarani of the *Nhandéva* subgroup believe that all the other subgroups are also their relatives. They do not recognize kinship with whites, with other indigenous groups, with animals and with plants. Thus, when someone loses kinship, it is because they became one of these.

Although the Guarani are divided into various subgroups, there are elements¹³ that make them feel they are members of the same ethnicity.¹⁴ Mythological histories told in the settlement *Tekoha Añetete* affirm that the material with which the God “our Father” (*Nhanderu*) made the bodies of all the Guarani is the same – therefore, they are all relatives.

Meanwhile white people, other indigenous groups, animals and plants had their bodies made from other materials and belong to another owner.¹⁵ On the earth, they come to live in a very different way among each other, taking on practices and behaviors that are not in keeping with the Guarani teachings and with their *nhanderekó*. Nevertheless, all of these beings inhabit and walk on the same earth, and there are times in which their trajectories cross. That is when someone who is *Nhandéva* may become enchanted with another being, and thus lose kinship in relation to his or her group.

13 Religion is certainly one of them, according to Brandão: “That is the same as saying that among the subgroups, a peculiar way of being, assuming and proclaiming such as an identity realized as an ancestral system of beliefs designed to guide both the history of a people as well as the daily conduct of each one of its people, is defined as a *religion*. This would be one of the reasons for which a single religious system, in principle one that is univocal among various subgroups and tribes, is quite resistant to the point of also being nearly integrally the *Guarani religion*, after a time between 450 and 300 years of Christian Evangelization.” (BRANDÃO 1990: 59)

14 Bartolomeu Meliá, in a magnum class given at the Graduate Program in the Social Sciences - Unioeste/ Campus Toledo, affirmed that, although we find various Guarani subgroups, it is possible to speak of the existence of a culture that unites them. The subgroups (*Nhandéva*, *Kaiowa* and *Mbyá*) represent differentiated identities within a single cultural unit.

15 This concept that living beings have an owner is also present among the *Mbyá*, according to the study of Maria Inês Ladeira (2008).

If there is enchantment, the Guarani individual will come to live with the other, forgetting the “right way to live life,” abandoning the habits, the religion, the sacred practices, the social coexistence, the impetus to speak, etc. This enchantment can be provoked by a man, by an animal or by a plant.

In *Tekohá Añetete*, I met a youth named Aurélio who, at 19, fell in love with a white girl, who lived in a rural community 7 km from the settlement. It is told that the youth came to want to live as her parents lived. He no longer spoke with his own parents, he no longer went to their prayer house. After some time, he came to sleep and stay for a few days at a time at the girl’s house, until it came time to live with her. Since then, Aurélio no longer visits the settlement, and his family also does not visit because they say that the youth is no longer their relative – although, biologically, he has the same blood. Aurélio has a son with this girl and the child is also not recognized as a relative by the Guarani.

Other times, one who tries to seduce or capture the soul of the Guarani is an animal or plant. Carlos Fausto (2002), upon studying predation in indigenous Amazon societies, discusses the process of capture and, from there, the war among humans and animals as a form of production of the person and of the construction of “sociality.” According to Fausto (2002), humans and non-humans try to capture people to transform them into relatives, in that which they call “familiarizing predation.” “My argument supposes that humans and animals are immersed in a socio-cosmic system in which the object in dispute is the direction of the predation and the production of kinship.” (FAUSTO, 2002).

Among the *Nhandéva*, when a plant, or more frequently an animal, seduces the soul of a Guarani, the Guarani comes to see it in the form of a person. It is said that the individual is affected by a force called *-jepotá*, identified as the moment when a person is no longer a person and is transformed into an animal, and comes to represent a kind of devil (*Anhã*). According to Pissolato:

The *jepotá* refers to the passage from the human condition to that of belonging to some animal species, when based on an event there is communication between the person and the animal that seduces him, leading him to another social universe (PISSOLATO 2007: 245).

In this case, it is necessary that rituals be used, counseling and prayer

executed by the pajés to try to re-approximate the person to the social life with his or her relatives. If not, she or he will forever abandon contact with them and thus lose kinship with the Guarani to be transformed, psychically and physically, into an animal. The Perspectivist theory,¹⁶ developed by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, helps us to understand this process, proposing a focus on the body:

We should not be surprised with thinking that identifies bodies as great differentiators and also affirms their transformability. Our cosmology supposes the unique distinctiveness of the spirits, but not for this reason declares that communication is impossible (although solipsism is a constant problem) or does not believe in the spiritual transformation induced by processes such as education and religious conversion; in reality, it is precisely because the spirits are different that the conversion is necessary (Europeans want to know if the Indians had a soul to be able to modify it). The corporal metamorphosis is the Amerindian counterpart of the European theme of spiritual conversion. (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO 1996).

According to this author, humanity is the general name of the form of the individual person, because all beings, in common, are humans; they are distinguished by bodies, which are “bundles of affection” gifted with distinct capacities and through which beings express themselves. The transformation, in this case, should be understood as something that derives from an individual’s separation from its group, causing his or her body to cultivate other habits, and thus lose kinship.

In fact, corporality is an essential element for understanding kinship among the *Nhandéva*. If we observe that, to be a “relative” for the Guarani, it is necessary that the body be made of the same material as theirs, to be a “close relative” it is necessary that the body assume the same habits (*nhanderekó*), and to be a “very close relative” it is essential that the body be together, sharing the same things, the same substances. If not, there is no kinship.

16 “Perspectivism” was a label that I borrowed from the modern philosophical vocabulary to qualify a very characteristic aspect of various, if not all the Amerindian cosmologies. It involves a notion that, in the first place, the world is populated by many types of beings (in addition to humans themselves) gifted with consciousness and culture and in second place, that each one of these species sees itself and other species in a quite unique way: each one sees itself as human, seeing all the others as non-human, that is, as species of animals or spirits” (VIVEIROS DE CASTRO 2009).

Final considerations

Among the *Nhandéva* Guarani, more than consanguinity, it is the proximity between subjects that defines kinship, and therefore, with whom one may or may not marry. What makes this even more evident is the opportunity for loss of kinship if a person is separated from the others and they no longer live together.

Although any Guarani who is inserted in one of their subgroups is a relative, the *Nhandéva* have specific categories to designate them, and it is in accord with the proximity that they have among each other that the individuals recognize each other. This reiterates that kinship is not given, but produced in daily life.

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