Socio-cultural aspects of a Satere-Mawé circle game – Amazonase (praxiological analysis)

Aspectos sócio-culturais de um jogo de Satere-Mawé circle - Amazonase (análise praxiológica)

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ABSTRACT
This work aimed to analyze the socio-motor and cultural representations present in the circle game, called CACURI, typical of the Sateré-Mawé/AM People. Under the focus of motor Praxiology we can define Cacuri as a socio-motor activity characterized as CAI in the classification of P. Parlebas, that is, it is performed with Companion, in the presence of Adversary and without Instability in the physical surroundings. In view of the theories of corporeity we can perceive the forms of socio-cultural representations and from this look it is undeniable that children learn by playing, recreating their day life, without any conscious intention of a productive survival activity, only by simply copying adult life. Therefore we are faced with another point to be analyzed in the face of corporeity, because fishing with Cacuri is carried out by the men of the community and the game is typical of the girl’s imaginary world.

Keywords: cacuri, socio-motor practices, sateré-mawé, indigenous play.

RESUMO
Este trabalho teve como objetivo analisar as representações sociomotoras e culturais presentes no jogo do círculo, chamado CACURI, típico do Povo Sateré-Mawé/AM. Sob o foco da Praxiologia Motora podemos definir Cacuri como uma atividade sócio-motora caracterizada como CAI na classificação de P. Parlebas, ou seja, é realizada com Companheiro, na presença de Adversário e sem Instabilidade no meio físico. Diante das teorias da corporeidade podemos perceber as formas de representações socioculturais e deste olhar é inequívoco que as crianças aprendem brincando, recriando sua vida cotidiana, sem qualquer intenção consciente de uma atividade de sobrevivência produtiva, apenas copiando a vida adulta. Portanto, estamos diante de outro ponto a ser analisado diante da corporeidade, pois a pesca com Cacuri é realizada pelos homens da comunidade e o jogo é típico do mundo imaginário da menina.
1 INTRODUCTION

The sociocultural view on the body brings the understanding that the similarities or physical differences are fruits of a set of meaning that each society inscribes in its body, over time, “because it is the primary way of contact between the individual and the environment that surrounds him” (DAOLIO, 1995 *apud* ALMEIDA AND SUASSUNA, 2010, p. 57). Thus Ferreira, Vinha and Souza, (2008, p. 48) conceptualizes us that:

“Culture establishes patterns of behavior, in the case of the body, and develops specific cultural patterns. The meanings of the human game are located in the person’s interaction, in its environment, and within the collective production of each society. All, from birth, are inserted in a vulture, which means the sharing of a symbolic construction that influences our personal decisions, even recognizing its dynamism. This symbolic construction underlies the set of meanings, defining the internal unity of all sociocultural manifestations of the different groups. Among indigenous people, the foundation comes from myth, transmitted orally from one generation to another, fertilizing the way of living, being renewed and constantly renewing the culture, strengthening the feeling of involvement in the defense of the identity, consequently preservation of the cultural heritage of each society”.

Since the most remote societies of antiquity, the ludic had an important role in creating and maintaining the cultural identities of each society, therefore, it is essential to emphasize that in indigenous societies children learn by playing and recreating their daily lives in a pleasurable way, as well as in the games played in these same societies cooperative games are prevalent, because cooperativity is of great importance in adult life. Motor Praxiology focuses its attention on the study of motor actions, which represent the emergent properties of praxeological systems and arise as a consequence of the fact that these systems are endowed with a certain structure, that is, they have an established order. Lagardera Otero and Lavega Burgué (2003). The actions that emerge as a product of a given praxeological system are bearers of determinant praxeal information, since they bear the peculiarity of referring themselves to the praxeological system of pertinence, clearly identifiable by it. Thus P. Parlebas (2001, p.41) defines motor action as: “the process of adaptation of the motor conducts of one or several active subjects in a given motor situation determined.” *apud.* (LAGARDERA OTERO and LAVEGA BURGUÉS, 2003, p.48).
2 THE CACURI GAME

Cacuri\(^1\) is a kind of fishing trap, made from the stalk of an inajá, a type of palm tree found in the Amazon region, measuring 30cm to 1m, depending on the depth of the igarapé where it will be placed, used by Sateré-Mawé/AM (Tuxaua Fausto Andrade\(^2\)).

![Picture 01 Inajá Plant](http://pesquisaemteatro.wordpress.com/2010/10/15/a-dimensao-do-cacuri-numa-concecao-cenografica)

![Picture 02 Fishing Trap](http://pesquisaemteatro.wordpress.com/2010/10/15/a-dimensao-do-cacuri-numa-concecao-cenografica)

*Cacuri* is also a round of singing typically female among Sateré-Mawé/AM that represents the fishing trap, realized as follows: the girls hold hands in a circle, and a girl (symbolizing the fish) stands in the center of the circle. The girls begin to spin around singing – *Jacau, Jacau, Pirawawa* – and the girls in the circle keep repeating the song until the girl in the center of the circle escapes from the trap. Then the girl, who allowed the fish-girl to escape from inside the circle, will switch places with her going to the middle of the wheel, and everything starts all over again. *Jacau* represents the trap *Pirawawa* – represents the fish, the piracema (spawning season), meaning that there will always be fish in the trap.

3 PRAXEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

“Parlebas (1981) proposes a classification of motor practices elaborated from the conception of any motor situation as a system in which the participant relates globally to the physical surroundings and to other possible protagonists.” (LAGARDERA OTERO and LAEVEGA BURGUES, 2008, p. 83).

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\(^1\) In this case – cacuri refers to trap, when the word is in italics, it refers to play.

\(^2\) Interview granted by the General Tuxaua of the Beija-Flor Indigenous Community Fausto Andrade 37 years old, ethnicity Sateré-Mawé/AM on May 21, 2011.
These same authors explain that:

“Two important components of any motor situation appear: the protagonists, which the author considers according to the criterion of presence or absence of companions (C) and/or adversary (A), and the space of action, distinguished according to the criterion of presence or absence of uncertainty (I) referring to the physical surroundings. The combination of these three CAI criteria allows us to characterize any motor situation”. (LAGARDERA OTERO and LAVEGA BURGUÉS. 2008 p. 83). 

The Cacuri, singing round play involves a relative number of participants, and is therefore characterized as a cooperative-oppositional socio-motor practice, classified as CAI in Pierre Parlebas’s theory. The activities take place in stable physical surroundings, involving several people – the presence of companions and adversaries and the opposing motor situation is classified as One vs. All, where the game is characterized by being played in a group and a protagonist has to face the other participants. Since it is a traditional game, the actions are predominantly playful. (Lagardera Otero and Lavega Burgués, 2003).

4 THE RULES

All the games and sports we know were created from an agreement or a human convention. Here we refer to the game in a clearly intentional way, since it is not in vain that this community represents one of the manifestations of indigenous culture, fishing, and there are even those who claim, like Huizinga, (1972, p. 63) that “culture comes about in the form of a game, that culture, ate first, is played” (LAGARDERA OTERO and LAVEGA BURGUÉS, 2003, p. 59). The ludic convention is at the base of any regulatory elaboration, which is configured from a verbal and transitory agreement. […] The convention is made explicit through a rule, which is the expression of how to do, how one should do, or how it is convenient to do a certain thing. Lagardera Otero and Lavega Burgués, (2003). In our case, the Cacuri is sustained by an oral tradition, but has rules that are followed and respected, also called by (Robles, 1984, p.149 apud Lagardera Otero and Lavega Burgués, 2003) prescriptive or technical-conventional rules that “are those that establish the necessary requirements for the realization of the action”. And according to Parlebas (2001, p. 209), “these prescriptive rules define the socio-motor statute of the intervening players since they set the conditions of a ludic contract and define the player’s motor performance field” (LAGARDERA OTERO and LAVEGA BURGUÉS, 2003, p.61).

5 IN RELATION TO EACH OTHER

In this game there are two clear types of relationships between the players.
- Cooperative type relationship: because a motor communication is established among the participants who form the circle representing the trap. In this game, synchronism and union among the
participants is important, and there is direct contact in the act of holding hands, creating a strong and stable circle, so that the fish-girl in the middle of the circle cannot escape.

- Opposition relationship: where a counter-communication is established, in which the relationship between the fish-girl and the group is not one of direct confrontation, but rather a form of dispute that requires little strength and a lot of skill to escape from the circle, requiring her to read the players, process called by (Lavega Burgués, 2008, p. 94) “decoding the actions of others”, that form the circle, to create the opportune moment of escape. Being the One x All type – a subcategory of Opposition Motor Situations, (Lagardera Otero and Lavega Burgués, 2003) – it means that one player opposes the other participants, and when the protagonist, in this case the fish-girl, reaches her goal – which is to escape – there is an exchange of places with the girl who allowed her to escape.

As many people participate in the game as there are people to form the circle, and a single person represents the fish in the center of the circle. The success of the game is not the escape, but the greatest possible number of unsuccessful escape attempts, which represents the continuity of the game and the strength of the group.

6 IN RELATION TO THE SPACE

This game requires the existence of a characterized physical space with a stable physical surroundings and the relation of the space can be characterized from two points of view: that of the girls who form the circle and that of the fish-girl.

- the girls who form the circle: the space can be a dirt field or even at home, with the space being free, since there is no limitation or specification for the girls to form the circle and perform successive spins while singing. The displacement is carried out freely, and the circle can move when spinning, which can be either clockwise or counterclockwise. The direction in which the circle spins is based on strategies to fool the fish-girl: the circle spins clockwise and the next moment the fish-girl tries to escape, the circle changes its direction to counterclockwise, thus preventing her from escaping.

- fish-girl: has limited space defined by the space of the circle, and its diameter varies according to the number of girls that make up the round. The escape from this trap-space will depend on the possible inattention of one person on the round and the perspicacity of the fish-girl, proving her “decoding the other” skills in the act of escaping.

7 IN RELATION TO THE MATERIAL

There is no direct use of material, there is only a relationship in imaginary form, as a way of interpreting a fishing trap and a fish in the circle game, charactering the Cacuri.
8 IN RELATION TO THE TIME

For the Cacuri game, we did not observe a determination of when to end or stop the game, and there is no time limit, because there is no loser or winner, and even though one of the characteristics of the game is the dispute, what we can highlight is the motivating process in continuing to represent the trap and the fish escape, with no time limit. The game can be repeated as many times as desired or as long as there is pleasure in continuing the game, however, the fish-girl, after numerous attempts to escape when she feels tired, may ask to stop or even to change places with one of the girls in the circle. The group can also decide to change the fish-girl after numerous unsuccessful attempts or even decide to end the game. In this way “the issue of time becomes very important, because we often have to decide when to end the game without prior authorization”. (Soares, 2010, p. 54). We can notice the existence of a rhythmic time, where the rhythm of the song determines the speed with which they spin and vice versa.

9 SOCIO-CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Our initial proposal is not based on analyzing the living space as a village and natural environment, or the social and economic organization, nor the religious systems and traditions, but only the game itself and its elements as part of the imaginary world of a certain children’s group that uses it as a representation of the adult world.

“The analysis is, therefore, to choose among the structures of signification […] and determine their social basis and their importance” (Geertz, 2008, p. 07).

The Cacuri as a round game is a symbolic game, since it has two physical elements represented in an imaginary way, which constitute the game itself: the fishing trap and the fish to be caught. In the game, only one girl symbolizes the fish while the others, united in a circle, represent the trap, the cacuri, leading to the following interpretation – the fishing is done cooperatively and only enough is caught to feed the group, because we notice that only one fish at a time enters the trap.

Analyzing the singing game we have the following interpretation, which can be summed up in three words: jacaú, jacaú, pirawawa and is repeated continuously until they decide to end the game. Jacaú is the trap e pirawawa is the piracema3 (spawning season). We also noticed three forms of socio-cultural representations in the game as a whole: the cacuri as a primitive form of fishing; the piracema as a sign of abundance for the community; and the fish symbolizing the main source of food. Being the cacuri – trap – made only from the inajá stalk, in the game it is represented only by the girls, in the act

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3 Piracema (spawning season): fishy season.
of holding hands, and just like in the trap only one fish can enter at a time, in the game only one girl
represents the fish. The singing is always repeated, symbolizing the piracema, abundance for the
community and the guarantee of survival. Thus we can verify in Ednelson Andrade Monteiro’s⁴ speech
that: “children play preparing for the future” and according to Barros (2010, p.140):

“Playing is a fundamental way for the cultural development of the child, because its practice
presupposes an understanding of the meaning of the other’s action, so much so that children in
the villages imitate through play, the adult in their routine actions, such as: hunting, fishing,
rituals, among others.”

The same idea is also confirmed by Almeida and Suassuna, (2010) when they say that:

“Games, dances, and games are ludic forms of apprehension of reality that form an identity
based on the specific senses and meanings of each culture, contributing to the construction of
the identity of the indigenous person.”

In this sense we mean that children play intentionally, but without any conscious intention of a
productive activity for survival, just for the simple fact of copying adult life, by transporting their daily
lives to the games, while recreating and reinforcing the history of their people in a perspective of
identity and survival of culture and traditions. Thus Almeida and Sussuna (2010) report us that:

“In indigenous societies, identity construction occurs through body practices, which are
cultural assets of immaterial nature and express reference value for each people. Such practices
are constantly recreated, […] providing a sense of continuity, based on their traditions.”

These same authors explain the meaning of body practices:

“seen from the sociocultural aspect, body techniques can be understood as part of human
movement, which engender, through a created gesture, meaning and significance as they are
transmitted and, in this way, refer to material and symbolic needs”. (p. 58).

The Cacuri as a symbolic game fulfills its function in the Sateré-mawé indigenous community,
for it has a playful and motivating aspect, while it recreates reality, leading its participants to experience
acts that will be part of their daily lives as adults. And we are faced with another point to be analyzed
from the point of view of corporeality, because fishing with the cacuri is a corporal technique
performed by the men of the community and the game is typical of the imaginary world of the girls,
also performed corporally. In this sense we recall Daisy Barros (1972), when she says that corporeality
is nothing more than the “capacity of the human being to feel and use the body as a tool for
manifestation and interaction with the world”. Taking into consideration that the cacuri is practiced as
a productive activity for the survival of the community and performed only by men, where they are

⁴ Sateré-Mawé indigenous teacher, from baixo Amazonas – Barros, (2010, p.139)
taught from a very early age – more or less around five years old – to hunt and fish, with all its instruments and artifices, the boys see the cacuri as a serious and productive activity, as work that they will exercise in adult life, thus making it impossible for them to have Cacuri as child’s play, while girls, as a free from of representation of the imaginary world, have the possibility to experience the practice, using their bodies as a relational instrument with the world they experience.

10 REFLECTIVE CONSIDERATIONS

“Culture is public because meaning is.” (Geertz, 2008, p. 09).

The Sateré-Mawé people, as well as many other ethnic groups, have their games, rites, and forms of representation and apprehension of the world around them, as integral elements of their culture.

The Cacuri, as a circle game or sung toy, so simple in conception, has great value within the socio-cultural analysis for this people, because it reveals elements that go through the traditional forms of fishing, the fish that is still the main food basis and the respect and dependence on nature – in this case the piracema – for the time of plenty food, and also shows us how the Cacuri can be seen as simple play for girls and productive activity in adult life for boys. And from the point of view of Pierre Parlebas Motor Praxiology, we have a deeper analysis of the existing relations within the Cacuri game as a socio-motor activity: 1. Relationship with the other in a cooperative situation – opposition established between the participants, in a cooperative relationship as companions, when they form the circle (representation of the trap); and an opposing relationship as adversaries that is established when the fish-girl has to escape from the circle and opposes the other members of the group; 2. Relation to the space, which can be performed in any stable physical surroundings, with no limitation of space, with displacements during the girls’ turns when singing and in the change of direction, which can be either clockwise or counterclockwise, depending on the strategy to prevent the escape of the fish-girl, and the space delimited from the fish-girl by the diameter of the round that varies according to the number of girls present at the game; 3. Relation to the material, that exists only in imaginary form, in the symbolic recreation of the trap and the fish and 4. Relation to the time, which is indeterminate in the chronological form and the children, can repeat the game continuously as long as there is motivation among the participants, and the rhythmic time that can determine the rhythm in which they spin by singing by the speed of the spins. Therefore, based on the analyses described above, we classify the Cacuri as a game as an activity characterized as CAI by Pierre Parlebas.
REFERENCES


