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## The territorialization of the Katxuyana indigenous people in the Trombetas region, western Pará

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# The territorialization of the Katxuyana indigenous people in the Trombetas region, western Pará


A territorialização dos indígenas Katxuyana na região do Trombetas, oeste do Pará

La territorialización de los indígenas Katxuyana en la región de Trombetas, oeste de Pará

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**Abstract:** The article analyzed the territorialization process of the Katxuyana indigenous people, in the municipality of Oriximiná, western Pará, Brazil. In the early 2000s, the Katxuyana returned to their territory of origin, after living for over 30 years in other territories. The process of territorialization for the Katxuyana has a dual meaning: affirmation of an identity and the struggle for the demarcation of their traditionally occupied territory. These collectives have differentiated relations with the form of appropriation of the territory, often generating conflicts, struggles, and territoriality, on which a cultural system is established that constitutes the pillars of the indigenous people and the sense of belonging to that territory, which goes far beyond a means of subsistence, having symbolic dimensions that underlie social life. Thus, the actions that involve the indigenous collective are the revindication for the right to use and political autonomy over the territory. To develop this text, a bibliographic review was carried out regarding the concepts of territorialization, territoriality, and identity, with an emphasis on authors of Geography and related areas, as well as the reflections resulting from dialogues held with the Katxuyana, obtained through interviews, meetings and field work.

**Keywords:** Katxuyana indigenous people, Identity, Territory, Territoriality, Territorialization.

**Resumo:** O artigo analisou o processo de territorialização dos indígenas Katxuyana, no município de Oriximiná, oeste paraense. No início dos anos 2000, os Katxuyana retornam para seu território de origem, após viverem por mais de 30 anos em outros territórios. O processo de territorialização para os Katxuyana tem um duplo significado: afirmação de uma identidade e a luta pela demarcação de seu território tradicionalmente ocupado. Esses coletivos têm relações diferenciadas com a forma de apropriação do território, gerando muitas vezes conflitos, lutas e territorialidade, sobre o qual se estabelece um sistema cultural que constituem os pilares do povo indígena e o sentido de pertencimento daquele território, que vai muito além de um meio de subsistência, possuindo dimensões simbólicas que fundamentam a vida social. Desta forma, as ações que envolvem o coletivo indígena são as reivindicações pelo direito de uso e autonomia política no território. Para a elaboração deste texto, foi realizada revisão bibliográfica referentes aos conceitos de territorialização, territorialidade e identidade, com ênfase em autores da Geografia e áreas afins, bem como, incorporou-se as reflexões frutos dos diálogos realizados com os Katxuyana, obtidas por meio de entrevistas, reuniões e trabalhos de campo.

**Palavras-chave:** Indígena Katxuyana, Identidade, Território, Territorialidade, territorialização,

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**Resumen:** El artículo analizó el proceso de territorialización de los pueblos indígenas katxuyana, en el municipio de Oriximiná, al oeste de Pará. A principios de la década de 2000, los Katxuyana regresan a su territorio de origen después de vivir durante más de 30 años en otros territorios. El proceso de territorialización para los Katxuyana tiene un doble sentido: la afirmación de una identidad y la lucha por la demarcación de su territorio tradicionalmente ocupado. Estos colectivos tienen diferentes relaciones con la forma de apropiación del territorio, generando muchas veces conflictos, luchas y territorialidad, sobre los cuales se establece un sistema cultural que constituye los pilares de los pueblos indígenas y el sentido de pertenencia a ese territorio, que va mucho más allá de un medio de subsistencia, teniendo dimensiones simbólicas que subyacen a la vida social. Así, las acciones que involucran al colectivo indígena son las demandas por el derecho de uso y la autonomía política en el territorio. Para la elaboración de este texto, se realizó una revisión bibliográfica respecto a los conceptos de territorialización, territorialidad e identidad, con énfasis en autores de geografía y áreas afines, así como incorporando las reflexiones resultantes de los diálogos realizados con el Katxuyana, obtenidos a través de entrevistas, encuentros y trabajo de campo.

**Palabras clave:** Indígena katxuyana, Identidad, Territorio, Territorialidad, Territorialización,

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## Introduction

The Amazon region features great biodiversity and exuberant natural beauty, in which different indigenous peoples with enormous cultural wealth coexist, producing spaces and, simultaneously, appropriate them, as a result of territorialization practices. These peoples have different relationships with the form of appropriation of the territory, often generating conflicts and struggles, which imposes the need for actions that are capable of organizing the territory.

In this way, the actions that involve the Katxuyana indigenous people in the territorialization process comprise revindications for the right of use and political autonomy over their territories of social experience and reproduction, with strategies of struggle and necessary social alliances, through associations, councils, and specific territoriality, according to their ethnic group.

Nevertheless, for the appropriation of this territory to occur, it is crucial to create and insert a system of symbols that are identified by the collectivity that interacts in the territory. Based on this identification, this system is implemented and marked by the tradition of the collectivity, by the workforce and by the relationships of production, thereby ensuring territorial domains. This is an important factor should not be neglected in the formation of the indigenous territory, as the totality of the effective relationships forms their territoriality. Thus, territoriality arises from actions developed by the collectivity, in an attempt to form and maintain a territory to control an area, people, and/or resources (HAESBAERT, 1997; SAQUET, 2010).

It is in this context that the analysis of the process of territorialization of indigenous people is developed as a problem that involves the

appropriation of their territory, with the Katxuyana indigenous collective serving as a subject of study. The issues that involve their territory are a central point of the rights constitutionally guaranteed to indigenous peoples, since, for them, they comprise a necessary value for the survival of their culture and the collective. These rights are supported as they have access to permanent possession of their traditional territory, as guaranteed by the State.

The particularities of the Katxuyana, with their cultural identity and way of life, motivated the study, mainly because they comprised a group that was forced to migrate from its territory of origin, in the late 1960s, taking up residence, for more than 30 years, in other territories, and returning only in early 2000 to the region of Alto Trombetas, in the state of Pará, Brazil. For the Katxuyana, this process of territorialization has a dual meaning: affirmation of an identity and the struggle for the demarcation of their traditionally occupied territory.

To develop this text, a bibliographic review was carried out referring to the concepts of territorialization, territoriality and identity, with an emphasis on authors from the field of Geography and related areas, as well as reflections of the dialogues carried out with the Katxuyana, obtained through interviews, meetings, and fieldwork.

Thus, the article is structured in four sections, the first being this introduction. The second section refers to theoretical references that address concepts of territorialization, territoriality and identity to understand the use of space by indigenous peoples. The third section discusses the process of territorialization of the Katxuyana and the mobilizations in the struggle to ensure their rights and the defense of their territory. Finally, the final remarks are presented.

## **Territorialization, territoriality, and identity: conceptual paths**

The territory is composed of a biophysical environment that forms the basis of the material and cultural relations of its inhabitants. According to Little (2002, p. 3) territory is defined as “the collective effort of a social group to occupy, use, control and identify with a specific part of its biophysical environment, thereby becoming its territory.” Therefore, it is where they express their interests and the way in which they territorialize. Territorialization can be conceived as a process of domain over and signification regarding a territory through the social relations of the collectives that inhabit it.

According to Andrade (1998, p. 214) “the formation of a territory gives the people who inhabit it the awareness of their participation, arousing a feeling of territoriality that, subjectively, creates an awareness of fellowship between them.” For this author, territoriality is defined within the subjective process that enables the population to be aware of being part of a territory, as the aspects that define their territory are identitarian, symbolic, cultural, and political.

When talking about identity, we enter an immaterial field of the geographical approach, which is revealed in space. In this sense, Moraes (2005, p. 23) argues that “the symbolic appreciation of space is a moment of its material appreciation, comprising the appropriation and production of space, which are processes guided by interests and material and symbolic values.” In these terms, claiming to belong to an ethnic group means to affirm/share collective meanings generated by social relationships that, through their experiences, are inserted into the identity pattern of the ethnic group to which they belong.

In this way, the territorialization process involves symbolic and material elements that make up the significant environment. According to João Pacheco de Oliveira (1998), notes in his classic “Uma etnologia dos índios misturados?” that the notion of territorialization is defined as a process of social reorganization that implies the creation of a new sociocultural unit through the establishment of differentiating ethnic identity.

It is in this context that the author (PACHECO DE OLIVEIRA, 1998, p. 55) considers “an ethnic group as an organizational type, in which a society used cultural differences to manufacture and remanufacture its individuality in the face of others with which it has been in a process of social interaction.” Therefore, it is not what they lost that counts, but rather what they built and re-developed throughout their trajectories that keep them alive and ethnically referenced. In fact, the Katxuyana indigenous people coexisted with other ethnic groups for more than 30 years, far from their territory of origin, being required to rebuild themselves to maintain their representations and ethnic identity aspects.

In fact, in the field of the legal battle for the recognition and demarcation of indigenous territories, this dynamic process of identity reconstructions must be contrasted with the so-called “ethnology of losses,” used by State structures to combat the processes of territorial demarcation. Arguments of this nature have operated in the courts in order to paralyze territorial demarcation processes while alleging a lack of “indianity” to applicants[1]. The ethnology of losses present in the legal field and widely accepted by common sense is what arbitrarily marks today’s indigenous peoples in relation to the time of the arrival of Europeans. In other words, from the standpoint of the ethnology of losses, the one who most preserved characteristics of the period of European conquest would be more Indian.

In view of this situation, the importance of the territory takes on a dual aspect, namely: actively participating in one’s identity process and maintaining one’s indigenous way of life. For indigenous people, owning a territory allows indigenous populations to more adequately (re)construct their symbolic and spiritual dimension in order to maintain life. According to Almeida Silva (2010), human collectives, through their experiences, produce “marks” or “territorial markers” that are endowed with qualities that are inherent in territoriality. In other words, territorial markers make up elements of culture, spirituality, and way of life,

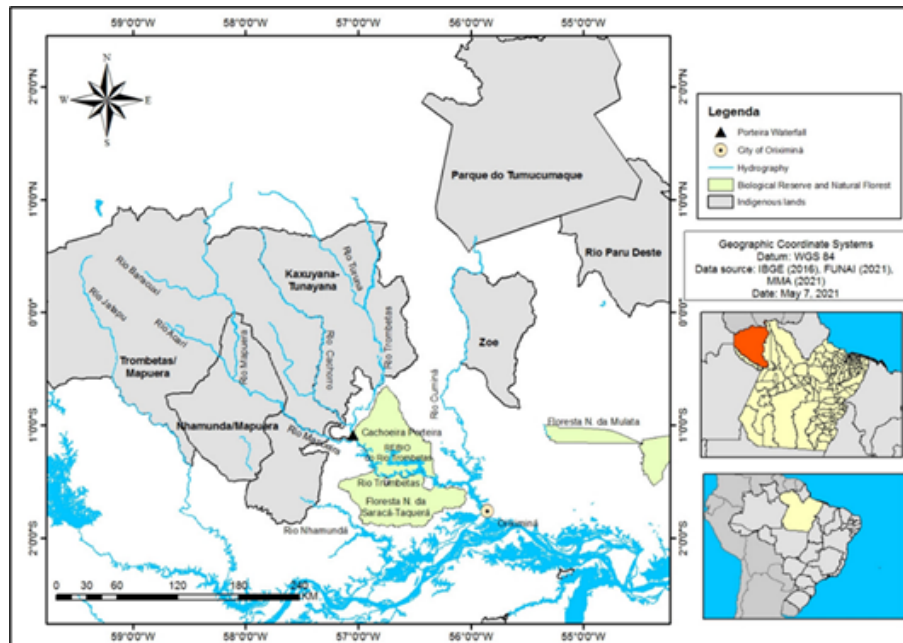
manifested in the field of representations that contribute to the territorial defense of a people.

In a context of threats to one's possession over territories, to defend the territorialization processes implies, once again, considering two sides. One involves the immaterial elements that generate territoriality and identity, with a sense of belonging to a group, being essential for the cultural preservation of indigenous peoples. The other involves natural resources as material elements of the territorial base.

Therefore, the adoption of the concepts of territorialization, territoriality and identity will provide us with a better understanding regarding the struggle of the Katxuyana people and the political use of the territory that shelters them, which meets not only the aspirations of material reproduction, but also the expression of cultural specificity that effectively mobilizes the collective.

### **The Katxuyana territorialization process in the Trombetas River basin**

The Katxuyana people, speakers of the Katxuyana language, belonging to the Parukotoan group, a Guyanese branch of the Carib family of languages[2] (MEIRA, 2006), inhabit the region of the Trombetas River basin (Figure 1), on the banks of the Cachorro River and other subsidiary rivers in the municipality. from Oriximiná. This region is one of the most preserved areas in the Brazilian Amazon, largely covered by forests and with a low population density (0.4 inhab./ km<sup>2</sup>), being inhabited by riverside communities, quilombola settlements – communities established by descendants of enslaved peoples – and indigenous peoples, who, in the course of the historical, social and cultural occupation process, were persecuted, having in the woods/forest their protection and refuge from the ills and human perversity produced by capitalism in this region.



**Figure 1**  
Map of the location of the Trombetas River basin  
Authors, 2021.

The main historiographical sources about Katxuyana and other indigenous peoples who inhabited the extensive Trombetas basin date back to the 17th and early 18th centuries. These are documents written by European travelers, chroniclers, and missionaries. Among these writings are the reports produced by Friar São Manços, in which the first mentions of the Katxuyana Indians, the “Caxonerá,” made during the exploration trips to the Trombetas River region, in the period between 1725 and 1728, are found (FRIKEL, 1970).

Nevertheless, contact with the Katxuyana of the Cachorro River and other indigenous neighbors was obtained in the first half of the 20th century by Friar Protásio Friel, through fieldwork, “whose experience and visits to the peoples of the Trombetas basin took place between the years of the 1940s and 1970s” (Girardi, 2011, p 23).

In the organization of data by Friel (1970), in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Katxuyana people originated from the mixture between two peoples who migrated to the Trombetas/Kaxúru area. One of them was “composed of migrants from western Pará, in the Lower Amazon mesoregion, who became Kaxúyana in the proper sense; the other was the Arikyana or Waríkyana, coming from the east, from the regions of the mouth of the Amazon River,” which go up the Trombetas and Erepecuru rivers and “mix” with the Kaxúyana” (FRIKEL, 1970, p. 9).

This mixture would have given rise to minor subdivisions: Axúyana, Waríkyana, Káhyana, and Ingarüne, among others, in a situation of isolation, which were named according to the regions inhabited near the respective rivers, plus the expression “yana” (people). Thus, a “[...] river-based naming system – of ethnonyms composed of a combination of a

fluvial root (Kaxuru, Kahu, Yaskuri, etc.) and a collectivizing suffix (-yana) [...].” (GIRARDI, 2011: 16).

Frikel obtains oral data from the Katxuyana on the occupation of indigenous peoples in the Trombetas basin, who descend from the interethnic contact of different indigenous peoples, who, due to the persecution of the “Portuguese crown” or “whites,” ascended the Amazon River and, subsequently, the Trombetas.

When the Marawará arrived, he first stayed with Panano in Txurutá-humu. But then the Portuguese also came to chase prey there and killed a lot of people. Tawírikemá decided to leave and left with all his people. He moved to the land of the Pawíxi and lived in the region of the mouth of the Trombetas. First, everyone stayed together. Then Pawíxi left. He went up the Paríkuru (Cuminá) and built a great maloca of the Ponékuru (Penecura). Panano also left, with the others. He went up the Grande River, the Kahú. There, prénó spread. Some stayed in the dead river. Others entered the Kaxúru and Txórówáhô rivers, where they became the Kaxúyana. Others still stayed in the Yaskuri: they are the Waríkyana. Panano went even further upstream, to live at the headwaters of the (flowing) arms of the Kahú; they became the Káhyana. Mêrêwá went too, but went much further inland, towards the center – and that is where he still is (FRIKEL, 1970, p. 21).

Friendly or peaceful encounters with the Karaiwa (non-indigenous) occurred only with the Mekoro (blacks), descendants of former slaves who fled from cities and farms on the lower Amazon River who, in the historical context of resistance to attempts at colonial control and domination, constituted its uniqueness in the Trombetas River landscape (ACEVEDO; CASTRO, 1993; ANDRADE, 1995; FUNES, 1995; SAUMA, 2013; 2014).

The first records of the ethnonym “Katxuyana” – spelled as “Cachuana,” “Cachuianã,” “Cashuena,” and “Caxorena” – mention, precisely, the relations with the “mocambeiros” or “quilombolas,” who informed travelers about these Indians, then regarded as “hostile” or “wild” (SOUZA, 1873; RODRIGUES, 1875).

The indigenous people of the region of the Trombetas River, the so-called “Trombetas Indians,” underwent a decline due to diseases from contact with non-indigenous peoples. According to Frikel (1970), this occurred in the mid-19th and 20th centuries, with the emergence of serious diseases, such as a measles epidemic in the 1920s, described as one of the most devastating epidemics[3].

In view of the mortality that resulted in low population numbers, totaling less than 70 people, they faced an imminent risk of disappearance, and marriage options were restricted. Thus, the Katxuyana had to make the difficult decision to abandon their homes, farms and pets and split into two groups.

With the aid of the Brazilian Air Force (FAB) and Franciscan missionaries, most left their territory in the Trombetas River basin to live in the territory of the Tiriyo (Figure 2), another group that spoke a language of the Carib family, in a Franciscan mission located in Tumucumaque[4], in the Alto Paru de Oeste region; while a group of 5 or 6 individuals decided to join the Hixkaryana, also speakers of Carib languages, along with the Kassawá mission, established by

Evangelical Christians from the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) on the Nhamundá River (CAIXETA DE QUEIROZ, 2008; GRUPIONI, 2010; CAIXETA DE QUEIROZ; GIRARDI, 2012).



Figure 2

Migration map from the Katxuyana territory to the Tiriyo Mission in the Tumucumaque Park Indigenous Land and with the Hixkaryana on the Nhamundá River  
IMAZON, 2020.

As in the past, the indigenous peoples of Trombetas, Cachorro, Kaspacuru and the headwaters regions came together in order to avoid disappearing. The Katxuyana migrated to other territories so as to avoid becoming extinct, and “such a strategy does not mean ceasing to be oneself or incorporating the other. Thus, to survive, they should, as they had done on other occasions, join another group” (GALLOIS; RICARDO, 1983, p. 220). Also, according to the authors:

There were descendants of almost all of the aforementioned subgroups. Differences are now erased, leaving, however, the traditions and knowledge of the history of each group. Cecílio, one of the most prestigious Kaxuyana men in Paru, informed that the biggest difference was between the “Trombeteiros,” who were more acculturated and who all spoke Portuguese, being accustomed to contact with the regional population, and the inland Indians, who inhabited the more isolated areas. Among the former, descendants of the Iaskuryana, the Ingarüne and the Xikuyana inhabit Missão do Paru, in addition to the Kahyana-Ewarhoyana, whom the Tiriyo call Maipuriana. Among the latter, there are descendants of the Juruayana, the Xaromarü, and the Kaxuyana proper (GALLOIS, 1981 apud GALLOIS; RICARDO, 1983, p. 220).

In these territories, the indigenous people learned about medical care, primary school, and paid work. There, they also became familiar with the non-indigenous habit of “demarcation” – the delimitation of a territory that, in other times, “went as far as the soles of one’s feet wished to go” (GRUPIONI, 2011, p. 321). For these indigenous people, the idea

of territory exceeded physical limits, as the configuration of a territory is given by the multiethnic relationships established amid the sharing of spaces.

Familiarizing themselves with life in the “closed land” (GRUPIONI, 2011, p. 322), the Katxuyana of Paru, as those who migrated to Tumucumaque became known (GALLOIS; RICARDO, 1983), lived with the Tiriyo for more than 30 years. They became mixed with them, got married, and had children. Nevertheless, they always felt like “exiles,” inhabiting a territory occupied by the Tiriyo. Thus, for example, the language taught at school and many cultural practices in that place were Tiriyo. The Katxuyana had difficulties in adapting, particularly in terms of the organization of the village, the collective work system, and kinship relationships. According to Gallois and Ricardo, the interaction of the Katxuyana with the Tiriyo:

Took place at a relatively fast pace, through marriages (see chapter “Tiriyo”). It is mainly Kaxuyana men who marry Tiriyo women, which makes the absorption more complete, as the men, upon marrying, take up residence near their Tiriyo in-laws, leaving the Kaxuyana “neighborhood” in the mission’s village. Even so, the Kaxuyana had difficulties in adapting because they felt they were in a status of permanent “guests,” that is, they inhabited someone else’s land. They say that for a long time they thought about returning to the area of origin. To partially solve this problem, they formed their own village – Acapu – located two hours away from the mission, where the Kaxuyana leader, Manoel Souza, permanently resides. Even so, the Kaxuyana are almost always at the mission, either because they work, have children at school, or are married to Tiriyo women (GALLOIS; RICARDO, 1983, p. 220).

The Katxuyana founded separate villages in Tumucumaque, “aiming to strengthen the independence of their people in relation to other indigenous people in the area” (GALLOIS; RICARDO, 1983, p. 215). The Katxuyana who went to the Nhamundá River began to inhabit Aldeia Porteira. In this discussion, the different references of identities constructed by the various ethnic segments in the territory are perceptible.

According to Grupioni (2010), the Katxuyana have always insisted on highlighting their different characteristics from the Tiriyo, and that some have never given up on the dream of returning to their territory, which became a reality, in early 2000, when a group of Katxuyana indigenous people organized to reoccupy the old territory, on the Cachorro River (Figure 3).



**Figure 3**

Aldeia Santidade on the Cachorro River, a tributary of the Trombetas River (Pará)  
Grupione, 2008.

Only part of the Katxuyana returned[5] from Paru. Initially, one family returned, and soon after, other families that are related to the former relocated to the place. As of 2009, there were eight families distributed across three villages: two on the Cachorro River and one on the Trombetas River. Outlining a movement to reclaim their traditional territory, the first families looked for an old village where they had lived for over a decade prior to the migration, under the leadership of Juventino Matxuwaya.

This is how the relatives of this leader founded the Warahatxa Yowkuru village, at the site of the former village, the old Santidade village, as it is known, in Portuguese. Juventino Matxuwaya lived inhabited that old village with his family before their migration,. Almost half a century later, it was here that the Katxuyana decided to reopen their village. This place gave rise to the name Katxuyana itself, translated as “people” or “people” (-yana) of the “Cachorro” (Katxuru) – which means “the Cachorro people.”

Almeida Silva (2015, p. 23) points out that indigenous territoriality is related to “the understanding that indigenous people have of their universe, where they establish connections with the land and with the other components existing in it.” Therefore, it is necessary to understand that symbols, mythology, spaces/territories are inseparable for indigenous people, as they work as a system that is interdependently integrated, adds the author. Territoriality is, therefore, composed of the lives and experiences established within its territory.

The residents of the Santidade village are relatives – by blood or similar affiliation– of the extended family of João do Vale Pekirirua and his son Mauro Makaho, respectively, former and current chief of the village. They are also relatives of Honório Awahuku and Juventino Petirima

Junior, sons of former leader Juventino Matxuwaya. In Santidade village, the residents are Katxuyana, Tiriyo, Txikiyana. Some are Kaxuyanânê, as they say, that is, true Kaxuyana, unmixed. Most, however, are sons and daughters from interethnic marriages, especially between Kaxuyana and Tiriyo. They are the kaxuyana tóskema, those with mixed blood, as reported (JUVENTINO KATXUYANA, interview held on 2/2/2021).

After a long time living in another territory, alongside the Tiriyo people, João do Vale Pekiriruwa showed pride in his village, an old village of the Katxuyana people that had been reoccupied, and where he has lived since then (MELLO, 2014, p. 27). The location of the former Ewarho Mahunkatpĩri village, that is, the last village where his relatives lived, before the migration from their territory, was more distant, and this would also mean more costs in the frequent displacements from the village to the urban center of Oriximiná. The site of the old village itself was considered inappropriate for two reasons: i) there were no good areas to set up nearby farms, which ii) would limit the possibility of the village growing and housing several families. The process of returning to the Katxuyana territory is described by Juventino Katxuyana as follows:

In early 2000, I came with other Katxuyana to tell the mayor that we wanted to return to our land, to our ancestors. I was a child when my family went with the missions. They told us it was because of diseases, but I do not remember, I was very young... I do remember the sadness of our people for having to leave everything home, even our dogs. Everything was abandoned. Our desire to return only increased. My father really wanted to return to our old land. I remember him saying that our land was good for living – there were lots of fish, trees, and fruit. When we arrived at Cachoeira Porteira, we had a meeting with the quilombola community of Cachoeira Porteira, in which we talked about our return and reopened an old village called Waraha hatxa you kuru, which is the Santidade village (interview held 2/3/2021, in the city of Oriximiná).

Upon returning to the Trombetas, Cachorro and their tributaries, the Katxuyana indigenous people organized themselves politically to claim their rights for the demarcation of their traditionally occupied lands, creating the Kaxuyana, Tunayana and Kahyana Indigenous Association (AIKATUK), with support from the Indigenous Research and Education Institute (IEPÉ) and the São Paulo Pro-Indian Commission (figure 4).



**Figure 4**

Meeting of the indigenous people on the regularization of their territories  
Indigenous Research and Education Institute (IEPÉ), 2014

In 2005, the Katxuyana mobilized and submitted documents requesting the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) to formalize the land tenure regularization. It was only in July 2008, however, that FUNAI established a technical team to prepare the Detailed Report on the Identification and Delimitation of Indigenous Land (RCID) of the Kaxuyana-Tunayana TI (Ordinance 875 of 7/31/2008), which was completed in 2013. On October 20, 2015, FUNAI published the Report on the Identification and Delimitation of the Kaxuyana-Tunayana Indigenous Land, inhabited by the Katxuyana, Tunayana, Kahyana, Katuena, Mawayana, Tikiyana, Xereu-Hixkaryana, and Xereu-Katuena peoples, as well as other isolated peoples.

The publication of the report was one of the joint demands of the indigenous and quilombola groups of Oriximiná. After the publication of the Report was followed by its approval. In September 2018, the Indigenous Land was declared official by the Minister of Justice. The last step towards finalization, however, is the registration by the President of the Republic[6], which, as of the time of the study, has not been done (IEPÉ, 2020).

The struggle for the guarantee of a normative territory, in the legal bases of land demarcation, maintains the perspective of the sociocultural dynamics developed through customs and traditions. In this sense, the indigenous organize themselves:

Socially, politically and economically within a spatial configuration that involves all parts of its world, operating on a continuum in which old and new social relations interact, integrating the past and the future as a condition of the present (Ladeira, 2008, p. 105-106).

In this context, we understand that the acquired territorial control makes sense as a form of cultural resistance. This concept incorporated

by the indigenous people was initially used as an instrument for claiming autonomy or a strategy of usufruct of a series of neglected rights (ALMEIDA SILVA, 2015).

It is possible to glimpse the dynamics of the Katxuyana territory, in which the format of a living space as in the villages is established by natural divisions, such as rivers, hills, and forests, which enable the establishment of fundamental relationships of reciprocity that are inherent in the existence of a true territory (SAQUET, 2007).

Since the return of the Katxuyana to their territory of origin, the population has been growing. The last Demographic Census (IBGE, 2010)[7] noted that the Katxuyana population has approximately 418 inhabitants, while, in turn, this ethnic group had been almost extinguished during the 1970s, totaling 64 people, composed of 31 men and 33 women (FRIKEL & CORTEZ, 1972).

In the 1980s, Gallois and Ricardo (1983) noted that data on the evolution of the Katxuyana population were scarce. For this reason, they argued that it would be difficult to know whether the population increase was the result of demographic growth or the aggregation of other peoples, due to the process in which interethnic marriages with other groups were established (especially with the Hixkaryana and the Tiriyo). Even today, with the continuity of intermarriages, it is difficult to accurately report the Katxuyana population quantity. Currently, 43 families inhabit the Katxuyana territory, distributed across nine villages in the Alto Paru do Oeste region, on the Nhamundá River and on the Cachorro River (Katxuru), which are tributaries of the Trombetas River basin (Chart 1).

**Chart 1**  
Location of Katxuyana villages

Location	River	Village
State of Pará - within the boundaries of the Trombetas-Mapuera Indigenous Land	Cachorro Trombetas	Warahatxa Yowkuru (Santidade) Chapéu Visina
Border between the states of Amazonas and Pará - in the boundaries of the Nhamundá-Mapuera Indigenous Land	Nhamunda	Areal Cafeza
Border between the states of Pará and Amapá - in the Tumucumaque Park Indigenous Land	Paru de Oeste	Tiriyo Mission Orokofa Tut Komiti Santo Antonio

Authors, 2021

The elderly people with whom we talked always claimed that at the time they had to migrate to Tumucumaque (to the Mission, as they call it), there were almost no children in the village. According to data from Frikel and Cortez (1972), children (aged 0 to 9 years old) accounted for 36% of the Katxuyana population at that time. In the last census, the population of Katxuyana village was made up of 64 individuals, 59% of whom were under 14 years of age.

A relevant aspect to be highlighted is the fact that more than 50% of the population attends school, which is an important gain in the offer of academical instruction to the indigenous people. Students from different grades study in the same room, that is, single teenagers, married men and women with children coexist in the same space. Indigenous people are aware of the need to learn formal knowledge, “to be able to be aware of their rights and fight for them” (Juventino Katxuyana, interview held 2/3/2021, in the city of Oriximiná).

## Final remarks

The dynamics of indigenous social and spatial expression in Brazil show a field of study that offers an opportunity to advance the need to articulate concepts that address territory, territoriality and identity within the scope of different sciences, in order to respond to the process of territorialization that certain populations have undergone, as is the situation of the Katxuyana.

The Katxuyana indigenous people are expressive of manifestations for their collectivity, which evidence their indigenous identity. Their collective existence, manifested in rituals, meetings, assemblies, clothing and claims for access to indigenous rights, translate their ethnicity. It is in this process that territorialization occurs, which is manifested by the representation, action, organization and strategy of this people.

In the demarcation of Indigenous Lands, the State limits itself only to the physical territory. In turn, for the indigenous peoples, the territory is woven based on sociocultural relations, in which each indigenous person carries a perspective that is reflected in the occupied space, surpassing territorial metrics, but which is necessary for their cultural reproduction of the collective.

A new look has been launched on issues that refer to indigenous sociocultural processes with the construction of identity references, through the weight of cultural experiences. This new stage of life, or this new moment for the indigenous must be understood while taking into account the different cultural relationships, because it is this relationship that will decipher the Katxuyana Territory. The result of this process occurs through struggles and revindications.

The Katxuyana show a dynamic that is inserted in a field of dispute over identity and territorial domains, which was structured in the confrontation of economic and geopolitical interests in their traditionally occupied territories. We hope that the production of this article can contribute to the struggle of these people, making visible the political processes on the Katxuyana Territory.

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## Notes

[1]One example that illustrates this situation is the sentence handed down in 2015 by the Federal First-Degree Court of Pará, second court of the Santarém subsection (Available at: [http://www.prpa.mpf.mp.br/news/2015/arquivos/Sentenca\\_TI\\_Maro.pdf](http://www.prpa.mpf.mp.br/news/2015/arquivos/Sentenca_TI_Maro.pdf)), in which the indigenous status of the peoples of the Maró Indigenous Land is contested. In the reasoning of the sentence, the analysis via anthropology of losses is explicit.

[2]According to linguist Aryon Rodrigues (1993), the Carib or Karib family of languages is one of the three largest in the Amazon and the most widespread across South America, along with the Aruák and Tupi-Guarani families. The Carib family is essentially Amazonian, with around 40 members spread both north and south of the Amazon River. Modern Carib languages are mainly concentrated in the Guiana Shield (Greater Guyana region) and in the region between the Orinoco River in Venezuela and the state of Roraima in Brazil. One of the properties of the Carib languages is the “OVS order” (object – verb – subject). Regarding the Carib language family, its characteristics, and the evolution of the languages of this family, cf.: Rodrigues (1985), Wallace (1970), and Meira (2006).

[3]Frikel (1970) estimates that the indigenous population numbered between 300 and 500 between 1920 and 1925. In the first half of the 20th century, the spread of measles epidemics would have contributed to a drastic reduction in the population. As noted by the missionary, many of these people may have perished: “Older Indians claimed that those who were still well had no more time or desire to bury the dead, abandoning the corpses along with the sick, as [they] fled to the woods” (FRIKEL, 1970, 44).

[4]With the support of the Brazilian government, Franciscan missionaries founded the Tiriyo Mission in Tumucumaque in the 1950s. In addition to catechization, the missionaries, with the support of the Brazilian Air Force (FAB), guaranteed the provision of services relating to transport, healthcare and education for the indigenous people.

[5]Not everyone wanted to or could leave Tumucumaque. In the article on Kaxuyana migration, in which they discuss the process of dispersion and fusion, Caixeta de Queiroz and Gonçalves Girardi (2012) return to the rules of the kinship system and the son-in-law’s obligations to his wife’s family. According to these rules, the newly married young man must carry out a series of jobs to help his father-in-law, such as helping him cut down the forest to make a garden.

[6]Since 2016, both former president Michel Temer and current head of Palácio do Planalto, Jair Bolsonaro, have not demarcated an inch of indigenous territory in Brazil. The current government is characterized by a disruptive agenda regarding social, economic and territorial rights, especially for the Brazilian countryside, which is home to a diversity of traditional territories (COSTA SILVA, 2022).

[7]Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to conduct the 2020 Census. The survey is carried out in Brazil every 10 years and was scheduled to be conducted in 2020, but it was postponed to 2021. The Secretary of Finance of the Ministry of the Economy, Waldery Rodrigues, however, confirmed that there are no funds to carry out the Census (AGÊNCIA BRASIL, 2021).

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