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Why do we fight for the existence of txamatxama? Material culture, memory and museums among the katxuyana-kahyana

Abstract

This article articulates the testimonies of two Indigenous people from the Katxuyana and Kahyana tribes – Juventino Pesirima Kaxuyana and Neide Imaya Wara Kayana, who is also an author – with aspects of these peoples' struggle to preserve their cultures within the context of cultural policies in Brazil. It highlights the leading role of Indigenous people in defending their rights and in initiatives for cultural self-esteem. It reflects on projects such as the reconstruction of the tamiriki house, within the scope of the Indigenous Cultures Award, and the inventory of the txamatxama feather crown, within the scope of an intangible heritage project. It emphasizes the importance of these Indigenous people visiting museums and accessing their museum artifacts in situ as a strategy and agency in cultural revitalization, the reactivation of memories, and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge.

Keywords: katxuyana, Kahayan, indigenous peoples, cultural policy, intangible cultural heritage

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Introduction

This work addresses the leading role of indigenous people in an intangible cultural heritage project. Based on our experiences and expectations, we present a brief account of the initial aspects of the Artes do Txamatxama project: documenting our practices and knowledge, strengthening our existence, and safeguarding our heritage.[1] Here, the authors – one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous – share their initial impressions of this project in the field of intangible heritage. Proposed and developed by an Indigenous organization, the Kaxuayana, Tunayana, Kahyana Indigenous Association (AIKATUK), with the participation of a non-Indigenous NGO, the Institute for Indigenous Research and Training (IEPÉ), it is funded by IPHAN within the scope of the National Intangible Heritage Program (PNPI). The reflection focuses especially on one of the objectives of the aforementioned project – visiting museums and having direct, on-site contact for research on the museum artifacts of the Katxuyana and Kahyana peoples, that is, pieces that were produced by their ancestors and collected by non-Indigenous people in different locations and time periods.

Therefore, we discuss the Katxuyana-Kahyana, the creators and implementers of this project, an inventory of intangible cultural assets associated with the txamatxama feather adornment. Thus, we begin the article with an overview of cultural policies for indigenous peoples which, although almost two decades old, can still be considered recent achievements.

When discussing the Katxuyana and Kahyana peoples, we emphasize their leading role in defending rights, such as securing their territory. For just over a decade, we have been following their initiatives for cultural self-affirmation. In this article on the txamatxama project, we highlighted one of its objectives – to learn about and document Katxuyana-Kahyana collections in two museums in Brazil – the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi (Belém/PA) and the Museu do Índio do Convento de Ipuarana (Lagoa Seca/PB).

The Katxuyana and Kahyana peoples live in the northern region of the country, in the western part of the state of Pará, between the Trombetas and Cachorro rivers and their tributaries. Forced to migrate and live among other indigenous peoples, the Katxuyana and Kahyana returned to their traditional territory in the early 2000s, when they embarked on a struggle that is still ongoing – the guarantee of the homologation[2] of its territory and, in parallel, a series of actions to reclaim their cultural practices. The Artes do txamatxama project is situated within this context.

Cultural policies for indigenous peoples in Brazil: Recent achievements

The creation of the Indian Protection Service (SPI) in 1910 was an important milestone for the Brazilian state in protecting indigenous peoples. Controversial, contradictory, and complex, for a long time the country's indigenous policy encompassed the areas of justice (demarcation of indigenous lands), health, and indigenous education. In 1967, during the military dictatorship in Brazil, the agency was replaced by the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), which, in 2023, became known as the National Foundation for Indigenous Peoples.

The change in nomenclature reveals how the nation-state perceives and acts towards indigenous peoples, gradually marking a shift from a paternalistic approach that tutored these peoples, from an assimilationist perspective, to a policy of dialogue and participation, influenced by the growing and intense protagonism of the indigenous people themselves. On February 2, 2023, for the first time in the history of indigenous policy, an indigenous woman – the lawyer Joenia Wapichana – was appointed president of FUNAI. That same year we also saw the unprecedented creation of the Ministry of Indigenous

[1]Information about the Artes do Txamatxama project can be found on the website of the Institute for Indigenous Research and Training (IEPÉ), available at:https://institutoiepe.org.br/2025/05/artes-dos-povos-kahyana-e-katxuyana-podem-virar-patrimonio-imaterial/

[2]The official recognition of the Kaxuayana-Tunayana Indigenous Territory was signed by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva during COP30, which took place in November 2026 in Belém, Brazil. For more information, see: https://www.gov.br/povosindigenas/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2026/02/mpi-comemora-homologacao-da-ti-kaxuyana-tunayana

Peoples under the leadership of another indigenous woman – Sonia Guajajara.

In the entry "What is indigenous policy?" on the website of the Socio-environmental Institute (ISA)[3] It clarifies that the term "indigenous policy" was used for a long time to refer to government policies for indigenous populations. Since the 1970s, however, changes have occurred in the field of indigenism resulting, on the one hand, from the protagonism of indigenous peoples and, on the other hand, from the establishment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as Christian religious missions, whose evangelization and political mobilization actions among indigenous people predate this and it was very bad for the indigenous people.

According to the socio-environmental institute (ISA):

The progressive maturation of the indigenous movement since the 1970s and the consequent growth in the number and diversity of native organizations, led by the indigenous people themselves, suggests a first distinction in the field of indigenism: "indigenous politics," that which is led by the indigenous people themselves, is not the same as, nor is it subordinate to, indigenous policy. However, (...) a large part of indigenous organizations and leaders have been increasing their participation in the formulation and execution of policies for indigenous peoples. (ISA)

In the field of indigenism, pressure from the indigenous movement has contributed to many of these changes. While there is official indigenous policy (formulated and implemented by the State), other actions occur through partnerships established between government sectors, indigenous organizations, non-governmental organizations, and religious missions. As a consequence of this long and difficult struggle for the indigenous cause, a series of public policies have been created.

In the context of post-military dictatorship democratization in Brazil, we witnessed the leading role of indigenous peoples, civil society, and other agents who came together to ensure a new constitutional text that democratically encompassed the country's constitutive diversity, establishing duties and guaranteeing rights to citizens. Thus, the 1988 Federal Constitution (Brazil, 1988) was an important legal milestone for guaranteeing and defending the rights of indigenous peoples, as per articles 231 and 232.

In this Magna Carta, new contours were given to the understanding of Brazilian cultural heritage. Article 216 presents a comprehensive concept of heritage that broadened its meaning, incorporating intangible heritage in addition to tangible heritage, referring to intangible assets, that is, knowledge, practices, celebrations and places, echoing debates from the international context such as those of UNESCO.

The recognition that Brazilian society is made up of different cultural groups and that it is the State's responsibility to guarantee the full exercise of cultural rights for all appears in article 215 of the Federal Constitution. Again, article 216 guarantees that the following are part of the Brazilian cultural heritage: assets that are a reference to "(...) the identity, action, and memory of the different groups that make up Brazilian society".

Regina Abreu's reflection (2015) addresses precisely the entry and participation of new subjects in the field of heritage – traditional communities and populations – who cease to occupy a secondary role and begin to act as proactive and participatory subjects, whose initiatives are their own intangible heritage. The author reflects on how this participation occurs in Brazil and abroad, identifying a new heritage dynamic that she named "patrimonialization of differences".

The case of this project on the revitalization of the txamatxama highlights the considerations of Abreu (2005, 2012, 2015) and Oliveira (1994, 1998) regarding the autonomy and participation of these indigenous peoples – "new subjects of law" – in dialogue with the State and with numerous institutions concerning initiatives and policies that affect them. Oliveira (2014) emphasizes the promotion of "horizontality" in the relations between indigenous peoples and the State or civil society. For Abreu (2015), this has meant the empowerment of social groups previously "invisible" in Brazil.

This process of cultural revitalization carried out by the Katxuyana and Kahyana, linked to the memories of elders, can be understood as a process of "cultural self-awareness," according to Sahlins (1997). Sahlins uses this term in reference to numerous experiences lived since the 1980s by other peoples and occurring in different parts of the world. For both Sahlins and Carneiro da Cunha (2009), this exercise of "objectifying culture" is not merely a colonial or contemporary phenomenon, but gained strength precisely from the 1980s onwards. For Sahlins (1997), various peoples/groups begin to operate objectively with the term "culture," using it to claim their rights before the State.

In this sense, this project by the Katxuyana and Kahyana would fit within what Lima Filho (2015) termed "patrimonial citizenship," that is, an exercise of cultural rights in which social groups negotiate and use their heritage – tangible or intangible – to strengthen their identities and political presence. Therefore, agreeing with the author, we understand that this project and many others by the Katxuyana and Kahyana are not merely a preservation movement, but demonstrate an active negotiation around their cultural assets, acting as political agents in actions of cultural self-valorization.

In the Brazilian context, the Indigenous Cultures Award, which we will discuss later, was one of several outcomes of the changes in cultural policies that occurred a little over a decade after the promulgation of the Federal Constitution in 1988.

Historically, public cultural policies in the country date back to the 1930s (Decree-Law No. 25, of 11/30/1937) and referred to the policy of national historical and artistic heritage. This and other legislation primarily valued material heritage, of European aesthetic standards or of European influence. By primarily protecting buildings, it selected churches (Catholic parish churches), monuments, fortifications, and therefore, part of its history became known as the "stone and lime" policy.

However, this article does not address the history of heritage policy in Brazil. Therefore, we jump ahead to the end of the 20th century when this scenario was altered by Decree No. 3,551, of August 4, 2000, which established the Registry of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In 2002, the first registration of intangible indigenous cultural heritage occurred – the Kusiwa Art – body painting and graphic art of the Wajãpi indigenous people (AP).[4]

[3]Available at:https://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/O_que_%C3%A9_pol%C3%ADtica_indigenista

[4]In addition to this, we currently have the following registered as intangible indigenous heritage within the scope of the PNPI/IPHAN: Iauaretê Waterfall (sacred place of the indigenous peoples of the Uaupés and Papuri rivers), the Yaokwa ritual (celebration of the Enawene Nawe people, from Mato Grosso), Tava (reference place for the Guarani people), Ritxòkò (artistic and cosmological expression of the Karajá people), Traditional Agricultural System of the Upper Rio Negro (reference for more than 22 indigenous peoples of the Eastern Tukano, Arawak and Maku linguistic families).

In 2003, during Gilberto Gil's tenure at the Ministry of Culture (MinC), an anthropological notion of culture was implemented as a guideline for cultural policy in the country. From then on, a participatory approach involving civil society was established for the development of cultural policies, which fostered the holding of the First National Conference on Culture in 2005.

Lia Calabre (2010) systematized the discussions of this Conference on cultural policies focused on cultural heritage, organized into sub-themes. Among them, the sub-theme of heritage identification and preservation emphasizes protection and revitalization actions – the latter aimed at supporting initiatives to rescue local traditions, one of the objectives of the Indigenous Cultures Award.

To that end, at that time the ministry of culture created:

(...) sectoral directorates and secretariats, such as the Secretariat of Identity and Cultural Diversity (SID), which in 2011 and 2012 was merged with the Secretariat of Cultural Citizenship (SCC), creating the Secretariat of Citizenship and Cultural Diversity (SCDC). Also within the SID, working groups were established whose responsibilities included, among others, diagnosing specific needs. Thus, the Indigenous Cultures Award, conceived to be granted annually, resulted from proposals identified by the Working Group for Indigenous Cultures.[5]

The conception of the Prize in 2006 was one of the strategies to include, for the first time in public cultural policy, an action aimed at preserving indigenous cultures. From then on, cultural policies began to focus on the diversity of groups and communities that make up the Brazilian nation, and indigenous peoples began to enter more effectively into the country's public cultural policy.[6]

The katxuyana and the kahyana: indigenous protagonism, rights and cultural self-valorization

The Katxuyana and Kahyana are indigenous peoples who consider themselves "mixed." They number approximately 540 people (Siasi/Sesai, 2020). They live in the northern region of the country, in the western state of Pará, in the Lower Amazon mesoregion, in the Trombetas-Cachorro interfluve and its tributaries, in a region known as Greater Guiana or the Guiana Shield. Other yanas (people, peoples) also occupy this region, as well as other indigenous groups, mostly speakers of languages from the Karib linguistic family.Katxuyana is a compound ethnonym, derived from the place of residence (Katxuru River), plus the suffix -yana which means people. Similarly, the term kahyana refers to the people of the Kahu River.

The histories, struggles, and trajectories of the Katxuyana, traditional inhabitants of the Katxuru (or Cachorro) River, and the Kahyana, inhabitants of the Kahu (or Trombetas) River, have been recorded by various non-indigenous authors (Frikel, 1955, 1966, 1970).(Kruse, 1955; Grupioni, 2010; Girardi, 2011; Russi, 2014 and 2019). Recently, indigenous people themselves, upon accessing universities, have been conducting their own research. An example of this is the undergraduate thesis of Neide Iwaya Wara Kauyana (2018), one of the authors of this work, who wrote about the process of her people's relocation to Tumucumaque..

Currently, the Katxuyana and Kahyana live in about 10 villages in Kahu and another 10 villages in Katxuru, totaling approximately 20 villages located in the municipality of Oriximiná, Pará state. They also live in other locations such as the Tumucumaque National Park Indigenous Territory (between the states of Amapá and Pará) and in the Nhamundá River region, on the border between the states of Pará and Amazonas.

Regarding these peoples, Russi and Fajardo explain (2021, p. 20):

Since the late 19th century, not only the Katxuyana and Kahyana, but practically all other yana groups mentioned in documentary sources and ethnographic research on the region have been recorded with different spellings, for example, Kashuièna and Kaciana, among others, in the case of the Katxuyana (the latter corresponding to the way they themselves recently agreed to spell their ethnonym). These differences sometimes make their identification difficult in some sources, texts, ethnographic collections, and other documents. Another difficulty related to the identification and delimitation of these yana groups (who exactly are the Katxuyana and the Kahyana, and so on) concerns the always plural nature of the composition of each people, and also the fact that it is almost impossible, if not completely impossible, to find a person or village that is entirely composed of a single yana – a person who can say that they descend solely from parents and grandparents of either Katxuyana or Kahyana origin; or, alternatively, a village formed solely by people of Katxuyana or Kahyana origin.[1]

According to Russi and Fajardo these two yanas not only maintain neighborhood and kinship relations with each other, but also historically and currently nurture these same relations with other yanas, even though this is rarely mentioned in the available sources, especially for the period from 1960 to 1990.[1]

These peoples lived immersed in intense relationships and exchange circuits materialized in frequent journeys between their villages. However, between the years 1950 and 1960, exploratory expeditions took place in the region, responsible for bringing infectious diseases to these peoples, causing epidemics and a high mortality rate among them. By 1968, they had been reduced to about 60 individuals.[2] Survivors of this tragedy found themselves faced with offers of help from Christian religious missions – Catholic and Protestant – to move from their territories and settle in central villages that functioned as "attraction bases".

In this process of forced migration and amalgamation among the various yana groups, the diversity of these peoples became invisible, and the population of the Cachorro and Trombetas rivers came to be widely recognized as Katxuyana. Despite these migrations, their traditional territories were never abandoned or completely uninhabited.

Uprooted and forced to leave their traditional territories around the end of the 1960s,[3] these indigenous people moved to live among other indigenous groups. Many migrated to the Tumucumaque National Park Indigenous Territory where they lived (and some still live) among the Tiriyó, and others went to the lower Nhamundá River region, on the border with the state of Amazonas, living among the Hixkaryana.

[5]Working group established through Ordinance No. 62, of April 18, 2005, of the Ministry of Culture.

[6]Over the years, the Award has undergone modifications. Four different leaders have been honored: in 2006, honoring Angelo Cretã.In 2007, Xicão Xucuru was honored; in 2010, the tribute was to the leader Marçal Tupã; in 2013, Raoni Metuktire was honored.In 2023, on the other hand, recognition of indigenous initiatives occurred within the scope of the Cultura Viva Award, honoring the leader Vovó Benaldina.

Since 2003, or even before, several Yana peoples, including the Katxuyana and the Kahyana, have been involved in a collaborative effort with various governmental and non-governmental agents and partners. On the one hand, they sought support for the return of families wishing to reoccupy their traditional territory, and on the other hand, they waged a long struggle for the demarcation of their territory.

The story that Juventino Pesirima Kaxuyana recounts below helps in understanding this collective movement. Born in 1962 in the village of Santidade, on the banks of the Katxuru River, he is the son of a great Katxuyana leader – Matxuwaya Kaxuyana – and Maria Tawaya Kaxuyana. Displaced from his traditional territory, like many of his relatives, he went to live in Tumucumaque as a child, at the Franciscan mission among the Tiriyó.

In 1968, my people were taken from their ancestral lands to the Tumucumaque Indigenous Territory by Franciscan missionaries with the support of the Brazilian Air Force (FAB). In 1976, I left the Tiriyó Mission to study outside the village, at the Salesian school on the Rio Negro, in São Gabriel da Cachoeira (AM). In 1980, I returned. Since I no longer received support from the FAB to take us to continue our studies, I went back to the Tiriyó Mission and took over the school in that region in 1981. I was the first indigenous teacher in that region, in the Kuxeré village, where I ran the school for three years. At the end of 1983, I returned to the Tiriyó Mission base where I took over the school. With the support of the Franciscan missionaries and indigenous leaders, I was chosen to take over the classroom because there was no one else to do it at that time. I worked as an Indigenous teacher between 1981 and 1997. I was a translator and bilingual teacher, only having a 4th-grade education at that time. In 1997, I was appointed by the Tiriyó and Kaxuyana chiefs to manage the FUNDEB (National Fund for Basic Education Development) resources for four years (...). In 1998-1999, I left the village and came to live in the city of Macapá, as I was unable to manage resources within the village due to the difficulties. There in Macapá, I learned how to work with associations. I was vice-president of the Association of Indigenous Peoples of Tumucumaque (APITU) for four years. From that moment on, Valéria and I were already working towards a return. We separated from APITU and created the Association of Indigenous Peoples Tiriyó, Kaxuyana and Txikiyana (APITIKATXI), headquartered in Macapá. I managed APITIKATXI for three years and we achieved several projects – "Strengthening New Villages" and a second project was "Training Indigenous Project Managers." We also had agreements with the state government and FUNASA. (...) Speaking of our region, in 2001, my brother, the late Honório, and I came to talk to the mayor of Oriximiná to see how our territory was doing. Around that same time, some families had already come, but there have always been people here; this region has never been abandoned. Renato was here with his family, and Esther, Angela's mother, was there too.[7] The family of João do Vale and Maria de Nazaré also came. Then I came here (to Oriximiná) in 2001, when the Santidade village had already reopened. (Testimony of Juventino Pesirima Kaxuyana on 02/21/2025).

In 2003, indigenous leaders formally requested the demarcation of their ancestral territory from FUNAI (National Indian Foundation). Parallel to this political and bureaucratic process, leaders who had been born on their territory (along the Cachorro and Trombetas rivers), but who had grown up far from it due to forced migration, such as Juventino Kaxuyana, began a mobilization to return and reoccupy their land. They thus initiated a collective effort to affirm their identity, (re)elaborate their histories, and reactivate their memories.

[7]Ângela Kaxuyana is one of the creators of the Artes do Txama txama project.

It was in 2018, 50 years after the removal of these peoples to Tumucumaque, that the Kaxuyana-Tunayana Indigenous Land was recognized by the Ministry of Justice, and now, in 2025, its borders are undergoing physical demarcation.[8] Throughout this long process of migration, invisibility, and living in other territories with other Indigenous peoples, the Katxuyana and Kahyana have embarked on initiatives of cultural self-affirmation as a way of reclaiming their traditional knowledge and practices.

Among such initiatives, the Tamiriki reconstruction project, carried out between 2009 and 2010 in the former Katxuyana village – Warahatxa Yowkuru (Holiness) – on the Katxuru River, which had been reopened in 2003, deserves special mention. The project, Tamiriki: Building a House and Reconstructing a Culture (APITIKATXI, 2008), was awarded the Indigenous Cultures Prize in 2007. Indigenous people were the protagonists throughout the entire process, from its conception to the actual construction of this traditional communal house. This large, circular house has a conical roof. This entire complex process, described by Russi et al.,[4,5] was led by the Katxuyana themselves, articulated and/or supported by NGOs such as the Institute for Indigenous Research and Training (IEPÉ), universities (such as the Federal Fluminense University and others), and other non-indigenous institutions.

In the struggle for their rights – demarcation of territory, dignified access to indigenous health and education, the right to memory – cultural self-esteem occupies an important place as a political-educational strategy aimed at the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and practices, or as the Katuxyana say, their kwe'toh kumu (our own way of being and living).

In this sense, in 2023 the Kaxuyana, Tunayana and Kahyana Indigenous Association (AIKATUK), in partnership with IEPÉ, submitted the project "Artes do Txamatxama documenting our practices and knowledge, strengthening our existence, safeguarding our heritage" to the public call for proposals no. 05/2023 of the National Institute of Artistic Heritage (IPHAN). Included within the scope of the National Intangible Heritage Program (PNPI), this project has a direct connection with the National Museum Policy (PNM) and the National Sectoral Museum Plan (PNSM).

Txamatxama material culture, memory and museums

Why do we fight for the existence of the txamatxama? For us, the txamatxama is a symbol of resistance, a symbol of existence, a symbol of nature. Our existence, our strength to exist, is drawn from it. It is a symbol of the Katxuyana-Kahyana people. (Juventino Pesirima Kaxuyana, 2025)

The Artes do Txamatxama project, which began in December 2024 and will last 18 months, was collectively conceived by the Katxuyana and Kahyana indigenous communities and aims to:

(...) to identify, revitalize and, in the future, record the practices and knowledge related to the txamatxama. This feather artifact, used exclusively in meetings and rituals, is not only a ceremonial adornment of unique aesthetics and technique, but a cultural reference of extreme importance for our spiritual, intellectual and political existence. Through this initiative, we hope to document the practices, processes, techniques, knowledge, values and meanings related to the txamatxama, making them visible to Brazilian society. Furthermore, we aspire to stimulate the intergenerational transmission of practices and knowledge related to this artifact, which are threatened because

[8]About the Kaxuyana-Tunayana Indigenous Land see:https://www.gov.br/funai/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2024/funai-assina-acordo-para-avancar-na-demarcacao-da-terra-indigena-kaxuyana-tunayana

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they are currently known only by three living elder masters. With the support of IPHAN, we therefore wish to know, document, value, make visible and safeguard our cultural heritage (...). (AIKATUK and IEPE, 2023). (emphasis added).

Regarding the Txamatxama Inventory project within the scope of IPHAN, Juventino Kaxuyana states the following:

This project we are doing, the Txamatxama project, and the research you are conducting, which will eventually involve two Indigenous women participating in museum research – both within and outside of Brazil – is very important to us because our culture was already disappearing without the knowledge of the young people. That's why we made this effort with this rescue (Txamatxama project) to bring back the knowledge and to learn about the materials that were taken away. (Testimony of Juventino Pesirima Kaxuyana on 02/19/2025).

In this testimony, Juventino P. Kaxuyana refers to the material culture of his people, whose artifacts were collected by various agents, including explorers, researchers, and government officials, between the late 1920s and 1970s, and which were later incorporated into museum collections in Brazil and Europe. Since 2012, motivated by the Katxuyana, one of the authors of this text – Adriana Russi – has been conducting surveys and research on these collections, summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Preliminary summary table of the Katxuyana-Kahyana collections in museums in Brazil and Europes[9],[10],[11]

Museum / City / Country	Quantity of pieces
National Museum of Denmark / Copenhagen / Denmark	220
Emílio Goeldi Museum of Pará / Belém / Brazil	154
Museum of the Indian of the Convent of Ipuarana/ Lagoa Seca/ Brazil (items located)	136
British Museum / London / England	104
Ethnographic Museum of the University of Oslo / Oslo / Norway	97
Hamburg Museum of Ethnology / Hamburg / Germany	72
National Museum of the Fifth Region of Boa Vista/ Rio de Janeiro/ Brazil	46
Moesgård Museum/ Aarhus/Denmark	22
National Museum of Indigenous Peoples / Rio de Janeiro / Brazil	?
Museum of the State of Pernambuco / Recife / Brazil	?
Total number of kaTXUYANA-KAHYA pieces in museums:	**805 (?)**

Source: Adapted and expanded by the authors from Russi and Kieffer-Døssing (2019).

[9]The collection of Katxuyana artifacts that existed at the National Museum (MN)/UFRJ was completely consumed by fire in 2018 during the tragic fire that destroyed a significant part of its entire collection. Only photographic records and some digitized documents remain from this collection, which were systematized by Russi and Endreffy (2016). These archives were made available to the Katuxyana-Kahyana people years before this tragic event.

[10]The National Museum of Indigenous Peoples (formerly the Indian Museum) of FUNAI, in Rio de Janeiro, has pieces from the Katuxyana-Kahyana people, incorporated into its collection some years ago. These are mainly pieces made of beads. However, it has not yet been possible to carry out a preliminary survey at this museum, and the Tainacan platform of the Museum, which houses the online collection, experienced technical problems during the consultation.

[11]The pieces from the MN/UFRJ were not included in this total.

Regarding the txamatxama project, Juventino Kaxuyana states:

This project is especially important for our young people who know very little about the life of the Katxuyana people, as they have assimilated the culture of other people's such as the Tiriyó, and the Katxuyan-Kahyana culture has been somewhat forgotten. However, as we returned, we remembered our culture, our ornaments, and we asked them to do research and find out where our objects, ceramics, other fabrics, and even songs recorded with the shamans and our parents are. This is very important; it rescues our culture, to remember our people, to strengthen our culture in this region. Our expectations are positive, as are the adults who went to Nhamundá and are also interested. Unfortunately, religion ended up destroying much of our lives, but we are trying to bring back what was forgotten. (...) We want everyone to know that the Katxuyan-Kahyana still exist, and we want to be seen because until now we were invisible; we want to be seen and known by everyone. (Testimony of Juventino Pesirima Kaxuyana on 02/19/2025).

Knowledge of and access to indigenous material culture, once housed in museums, is a fundamental step in guaranteeing the right to memory and in the processes of cultural self-valorization or "cultural self-awareness" in the terms of Sahlins (1997). In this sense, we perceive the importance of in situ access, that is, direct access to artifacts in museums. All of this is part of an important process among the Katxuyana-Kahyana of resuming some of their cultural practices impacted by the adversities of the brutal migratory process they suffered.

According to Marilia Cury.,[6] museums with indigenous collections have an unavoidable commitment to the indigenous peoples from whom their collections originate. According to the museologist, museums must recognize the leading role of indigenous people in curating and developing museum narratives.

Roger Bastide.,[7] establishes a connection between matter and memory. For Bastide, matter is "innervated" and updates our memories. Based on our thoughts and feelings, these recollections are activated and rearranged over time. Thus, seeing images of artifacts made by their ancestors or visiting them in museums are movements that are fundamentally intertwined for the Katxuyana-Kahyana in their struggle for the right to memory. In this sense, one of the authors of this work – the indigenous woman Neide Imaya Wara Kaxuyana – is part of the research team developing one of the objectives of the Txamatxama project – to visit museums to see and document the pieces produced by their ancestors in museum collections.

The visits will take place at the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi (Belém/PA), which in Brazil has the largest collection of Katxuyana-Kahyana artifacts (154 artifacts), as well as at the Museu do Índio under the care of the Franciscan friars at the Convento de Ipuarana (Lagoa Seca/PB), with a collection that has been very little studied (of the 409 artifacts registered in the institution's documentation, only 136 pieces have been located). The visit to these museums is scheduled to take place sometime in 2025.

Neide IW Kaxuyana, currently 37 years old and with four children, like other relatives Katxuyana and Kahyana, was born in the Tiriyó Mission. This Franciscan mission operated between 1960 and 2018. It was a project of the Brazilian government in partnership with Franciscan friars and is located in the North, in the state of Pará, on the border with Suriname. With very difficult land or river access, it is practically only possible to enter or return from the mission by air transport. Neide Kaxuyana left the mission when she was 15 years

old to accompany her mother, having lived for four years in Manaus, where she finished her primary education. Accompanying her sister Ana Lúcia Kaxuyana Chagas.[12] She then moved to Santarém where she completed high school and subsequently entered university. In 2019, she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in History and Geography from the Federal University of Western Pará (UFOPA). Her undergraduate thesis was entitled "The trajectories of the Kaxuyana people in the Trombetas River valley: 1960-2010".[8] This work deals with the displacement that her people underwent and what she always heard from her ancestors.

When asked about the topic and the reasons that led her to research the history of her people, Neide IW Kaxuyana explains:

"Transfer, right? I did my final course project on the displacement of our people. It was a personal interest because when I was a child, I heard a lot about life in another territory. When I left the village and went to the city, I started to question some of the things I heard every day. Because we don't learn about our lives on paper, it's in everyday life, in our interactions with our parents, grandparents, and family that we learn our history. From questions posed by some people, like teachers and colleagues... I became interested in learning about and documenting how my people grew. I realized that my ancestors weren't from the territory where I was born. So I did this final course project on the displacement of my people (...). I didn't know the history very well, because we heard some things in my grandparents' conversations... We don't have a written history. We live our traditional life partially, we speak our language, we live our way of being among ourselves, but what prevailed and prevails until now is the influence of other cultures among us." That is why we feel the need to record certain things that are extremely important to us as a people. Since we don't have anything written that recounts our lives, we end up losing some important information that dies with us, because we don't put what we know into written form. We still live as in previous times; our classroom is still our lived experience, and our knowledge and learning still occur through interaction and daily life. (Testimony of Neidei Imaya Wara Kaxuyana on 03/02/2025).

Regarding the artifacts of her people preserved in museums, Neide Kaxuyana commented:

I never imagined they had our materials, you know? It was only when I got involved in these projects that I started to realize (...). I thought we were very isolated when I was a child. My grandparents had contact with non-indigenous people. I also didn't know that some materials in museums had somehow been taken by non-indigenous people. I was unaware of that. I felt very isolated, that nobody took material made by our people. Despite having contact with the Franciscans who were among us, right? And I imagined that only the Franciscans who lived in the village had this contact with the objects, but I discovered through the information that our materials were also outside. (...). But we don't have much of an idea, an idea of what was happening, why they were taking them. We didn't have that questioning, did we? (Testimony of Neidei Imaya Wara Kaxuyana on 03/02/2025).

In her testimony, Neide Imaya Wara Kaxuyana acknowledges that many of her relatives were unaware that their material culture, their artifacts, had been collected and displayed in museums. She was also unaware that some were exhibited in museums in Brazil and various European countries. This is the case with the txamatxama. Neide questions the form and purposes of these collections, revealing an interest in closely following the research on the Katxuyana-Kahyana collections within the scope of the Artes do Txamatxama project.

Several artifacts displayed in museums are integrated into complex ritualistic practices with the txamatxama. However, today only three elders know how to make them. A few other elders understand their meanings and significance. This fact is alarming because it highlights that a universe of knowledge is seriously threatened, hence the urgency, anxiety, and anguish that we observe among the indigenous communities directly involved in the Artes do Txamatxama project.

Final consideration

The Txamatxama project is just beginning, and the pieces in the museums are part of this large and important inventory conducted by the Katxuyana-Kahyana themselves, in partnership with non-indigenous organizations and researchers, and funded with resources from the IPHAN's public policy on intangible heritage.

In this brief account, the authors presented some aspects of cultural policies aimed at indigenous peoples. They exemplified projects conceived and developed by the Katxuyana-Kahyana themselves to revive some of their cultural practices – the construction of the tamiriki house within the scope of the Indigenous Cultures Award and the Artes do Txamatxama project within the scope of the PNPI/IPHAN. These projects materialize the public policy of culture aimed at indigenous peoples. The visit to the museums and the studies of the Katxuyana-Kahyana collections illustrate what is advocated by the National Sectoral Plan for Museums, namely, dialogical processes between and/or with the indigenous people themselves.

Here we aim to show how indigenous leadership and participation, in this case, has been fundamental to the implementation of these public policies. Finally, there is still much to do, to record, and to say about this entire process, but that will be the subject of another work.[9–25]

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Conflict of interest

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