

ETHNIC HYBRIDITY WITHIN IDENTITY POLITICS

*BEING INDIAN AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LAND AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
AMONG THE PATAXÓ IN BAHIA, BRAZIL*

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Índio na guerra, ele não cança

Vive na luta, cheio de esperança

*(Indian at war, he doesn't rest
He lives in the fight, full of hope)*

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is based on five months of fieldwork in Cumuruxatiba and the surrounding region in the south of Bahia, Brazil, among the Pataxó Indians and an indigenous association called *Frente da Resistência e Luta Pataxó*, FLP (the Pataxó Resistance Front and Struggle). The purpose was to analyze how they are able to achieve a certain amount of political influence, and to suggest the consequences of this.

Due to an international concern for preservation of biodiversity and a widespread belief in indigenous peoples' knowledge as ecologically sustainable, indigenous peoples have been provided with important tools for strengthening their struggle within a national context. In Brazil, this struggle most often connects to Indians' struggle for land and preservation of a specific way of life. It is however a rather paradoxical fact that achieving political influence necessitates promoting their people as one homogenized ethnic group. They must adapt to an enchanted romanticism of themselves as *The Other* in which they are portrayed as *The Noble Savage*. It becomes even more paradoxical when ethnic symbols are ambiguous and *The Other* does not entirely fit the dominant discourse. Consequently, indigenous peoples perceived as "acculturated" become hybrid creatures not fit to receive public benefits such as a territory. The themes addressed by this thesis will deal with this paradox within the theoretical framework of discourse analysis, suggesting how frontstage of ethnopolitics is indeed a conscious display of certain symbols, while simultaneously being based upon shared life experiences backstage.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Some support us, others do not. I think it is all because we have lost our language. But now we are taking back our origin, culture and traditions; everything! We nearly lost it all, but with the help of God we will take it back.

From February to June 2004 I conducted my fieldwork among the Pataxó Indians in Cumuruxatiba and Discovery Park, Bahia/Brazil, as part of my MA thesis in social anthropology at the University of Oslo. The purpose of the research was to see how indigenous groups use their ethnic identity as a political resource, and the consequences of this.

Most Pataxó are poor, unemployed and face a harsh struggle only to survive. They are victims of an unequal division of land in which violence, threats and political rhetoric has always been used to deny them access. However, in recent times some individuals have successfully been able to turn Pataxó ethnicity to an advantage; gaining political attention and influence. In August 2003 three Pataxó villages were established within the borders of a national park by an indigenous movement called *Frente da Resistência e Luta Pataxó*, FLP (the Pataxó Resistance Front and Struggle). Despite many complaints from local non-Indians and environmentalists, the government did not force them away.

What follows is an analysis of how a suppressed people surrounded by resources controlled by others, can achieve influence due to modern¹ discourses about themselves as a people. It is a story about a modern idea of *The Other*, and how this idea influences policy makers and *The Others* in defining both ethnic identity and its inherent meaning.

¹ The dichotomy between “Modern” and “Indigenous” is not contested in this thesis, but is simply used to divide between an external (dominant) and an internal (inferior) perspective upon Indians— similar to a majority/minority perspective.

1.1 Where, how and why?

I have previously worked with Norwegian aid organizations to indigenous peoples in Brazil.

Witnessing an indigenous NGO having their support cut because of commercial logging made me reflect upon my own and modern ideas of Indians. Obviously they lost funding because they did not fulfill the expectations of their agreement. Aid was always based upon the idea that they preserve the forest, not deforest it. NGOs, policy makers and others (such as myself) often take for granted that Indians, by nature, should live without harming their environment. How could it be that these Indians had chosen not to? I realized then that it might be a substantial discrepancy between how we perceive Indians, contrary to how they perceive themselves.

To pursue this issue further I spent January 2004 in São Paulo studying the archives of an environmentalist NGO called ISA (*Instituto Socioambiental*). Based on my findings I decided to conduct my research among the Pataxó Indians in Bahia. In February I traveled to Salvador and met with another NGO called ANAÍ-BA (*Associação Nacional de Ação Indigenista-Bahia*), mainly consisting of anthropologists connected to the Federal University of Salvador. ANAÍ convinced me that I should focus on the political struggle of *Frente da Resistência e Luta Pataxó*, FLP (the Pataxó Resistance Front and Struggle), and introduced me to CIMI (the Indigenist Missionary Council), a Catholic NGO working with the Pataxó in the field.

After conducting preparatory studies at ANAÍ, I traveled south from Salvador and met with CIMI in Eunápolis. CIMI most helpfully brought me to Cumuruxatiba (Prado Municipality) and introduced me to several members of FLP. It was decided that I was to conduct my fieldwork in Cumuruxatiba, as many of FLP's Pataxó warriors live there and it is located close to three recently established villages inside a nature reserve called the *Descobrimento* (Discovery) Park. Non-Indians typically consider these villages illegal occupations, while the Pataxó refer to this as "retaking their land".

1.2 To be an Indian

Toni and his family live illegally in Discovery Park. He claims gunmen drove them off some 30 years ago. Their fields were burnt down and his little sister killed. In the city they barely survived starvation. No one cared; they were only Caboclos – “half-breeds”. But now they are back. The only problem is that the forest has been declared a national park, prohibiting human encroachment. With his fist clenched Toni swears they won’t give up their land again. Things will be different this time, he says. He is confident that no gunmen, government or environmentalists can take away their rights. They are Indians. And this time they are prepared. (Synopsis of field notes, 20.03.04.)

I found FLP to be interesting because although the Pataxó are victims of a violent encounter with Brazilian society, they have nevertheless experienced a significant cultural and political revival during the last decade – including violent *retomadas*, “retakings”², of what they consider their native land. They no longer speak their original language (except some few words and songs), they have lost almost all their land and most of them live in slum areas of the cities or at *fazendas* (farm, ranch) working as cheap labor. Usually they are considered *Caboclos* or *Cafuzos*³ – not Indians⁴. The Pataxó are “mixed breed” – their physical appearance varying from African/Black to European/White to Brazilian/Indian, they only speak Portuguese, they usually wear shorts and ordinary clothes like any other Brazilian, and they sing and dance *fórró* (Brazilian popular dance) and live more or less similarly to many other *baianos* (natives of Bahia). They constitute a part of Brazil and are by definition Brazilians. So what makes the Pataxó particularly Indian, as FLP is claiming? Why should they entertain rights to possess vast areas of land when others do not?

² The Pataxó are consistently referring to occupying land as *retomadas*, retakings, because they do not consider themselves illegal occupants. *Movimento Sem Terra* (MST) is well known in Bahia for illegally occupying land, but the Pataxó refuse to be compared to MST as they only wish to take back what they consider was taken from them.

³ According to Michaelis English-Portuguese Dictionary (1989), *Caboclo* is “(...) civilized Brazilian Indian of pure blood.” In popular use it usually means mix between Indian and white. *Cafuzo* is “(...) the offspring of Negro and Indian; very dark-skinned mulatto.”

⁴ The terms “Indian” and “Indigenous” are intermixed in oral language and daily use in Brazil, although “indigenous” is a somewhat broader term.

This is not easily answered. However, being Pataxó is not a question of choosing identity freely, but of heredity. The Pataxó sense a notion of belonging to a specific ethnic group and they consider themselves Indian. It is only one generation back that Pataxó families lived in the forest of those areas FLP are now trying to take back. But that does not mean they are officially acknowledged as Indian and their claims made legitimate. Important to note is that “Indian” is a category within a certain classification system that labels individuals and communities according to specific socio-cultural perceptions. Hence, a cultural and political revival among the Pataxó is dependant on constructing an ethnic identity within an external, modern notion of Indians. Most Pataxó actually live in the slum areas of big cities like São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, but they are not considered Indians. As the term has become increasingly important in gaining benefits and defining relations with the rest of Brazilian society, the Pataxó themselves are also gradually becoming more concerned about what it really means to be Indian.

Being officially acknowledged as Indians implies the right to free healthcare, free and diversified education as well as demarcation and sovereignty of native land. When an area is declared Indigenous Territory it becomes quasi-independent. The Brazilian Constitution states in article 232, Paragraph 2 that:

The lands traditionally occupied by Indians are intended for their permanent possession and they shall have the exclusive usufruct of the riches of the soil, the rivers and the lakes existing therein (www.v-brazil.com).

No one else is allowed to make use of the land without special permission from the Government, and not even the police are allowed inside the area without special permit from FUNAI (the Brazilian Indian agency).

According to Gomes (2000) is the possession of a territory is what ensures the maintenance of such a group, which is why the struggle for land is vital for the survival of an Indian *ethnie* (Gomes, 2000:171). Hence, the struggle for land is of uttermost importance to the Pataxó people in order to survive both physically, economically and as an ethnic group. But in order to achieve this they are, among many others, forced to present themselves within specific ideas of what Indians are supposed to be.

1.3 Presenting *The Other*

When writing about indigenous people it is important to consider the political implications of presenting people that are often marginalized, in a minority and in a politically difficult situation. Describing one people with one culture, where concepts such as ethnicity and culture are intermixed, does potentially have political consequences. According to Terence Turner (1993) this risks essentializing the idea of culture as the property of an ethnic group or race, reifying culture as separate entities and overemphasizing the internal homogeneity of culture in terms that potentially legitimizes repressive demands for communal conformity (Turner, 1993:412). Turner strongly argues that *The Other's* voice should be heard alongside the ethnographer's. Indigenous people's strongest political resource is their identity, *who they are*. Hence, it seems only fair that they too are admitted a reflective and theorized presentation of themselves.

Turner's approach contrasts that of many other anthropologists, such as Chagnon's (1992) famous monograph on the Yanomami people. *The Other* is presented here in a stereotyped way as wild, barbaric, stone aged, etc. Obviously, such an approach does not contribute to the Yanomami's present situations in which they are fighting a struggle for survival against Brazilian and Venezuelan authorities, gold miners, diseases, etc. As Ramos (1998) writes, many Brazilians are already of the opinion that Indians should either be killed off or disappear into the jungle. People with economical

interests within the Yanomami area could easily misuse a “scientific” and “objective” publication in which they are presented as wild, fierce and barbaric. Further, in his latest edition (1992) Chagnon states that an indigenous political spokesman such as Davi Yanomami Kopenawa is not to be trusted because he has been “seduced” by Brazilian NGOs to say whatever he is told. Not only does this suggest a rather paternalistic attitude towards the Yanomami, but also it quite explicitly undermines the work of Brazilian NGOs and indigenous spokesmen.

The distinction between these two examples can be seen as a distinction between *Diaspora* and *Hybridity*; the former emphasizing continuity, stable collective identities, territoriality and boundaries; the latter highlighting change and flux, individual strategies, deterritorialisation and openness (Eriksen, 2002: 153). The paradox within ethnopolitics is that indigenous people need to master the cultural code of the dominant society in order to gain influence, but at the same time it is their authenticity as indigenous that is their main political resource. They are always running the risk of loosing their “authenticity” within a modern notion of *The Other*. Chagnon seems to hold this view, considering the Yanomami to be polluted because of politically motivated wielding of cultural symbols.

Ethnographers, NGOs and *indigenistas* working with indigenous people are also forced to balance between *diaspora* and *hybridity*. At some point they are forced to consider how and to what extent contact with main society should be conducted. Romanticism or fear of the possibly devastating effect contact might cause, have led many to choose protectionism instead of inclusion. However, contact is most often inevitable in Brazil as the rainforest is disappearing increasingly fast. The only possible, moral and practical way to solve this dilemma is to enable *The Others* to make up their own mind. But, ironically, indigenous movements also tend to present their people as consisting of one culture, one people with one common history – not much different from Chagnon’s point of

view. The reason, according to Baumann, (1996) is because Indigenous movements, or *community leaders*, have to “face a dominant discourse that obliges them to deliver culturally homogenous communities” (Baumann, 1996: 155). Their symbolic and political power is provided through cultural essentialism.

On the other hand, although a dominant discourse enforces hegemony, it also provides resources of defining meaning to the categorization itself. Hegemony is, as Fairclough (1992) notes, a question of degree rather than consensus. It is always possible to negotiate what a conception such as “indigenous” should include. According to Eidheim (1992) has the Sámi People of Norway, well known for their ethnic revitalization the last 30 years, invented an “ethnic selfhood through the invention of a body of knowledge about themselves as a people” (1992:6). The creation of the term “indigenous” made them encounter and be categorized among other peoples in similar situations. Hence, promoting one official, objectified version of ethnic identity and culture has contributed to a reflective view about themselves as a people in which being Sámi is constantly developed and negotiated. The same can also be applied to the Pataxó who are currently revitalizing cultural traits of the past, searching for a historical lineage and constantly negotiating what it means to be Pataxó within a contemporary Brazil.

1.4 Essentialism and constructivism

Writing about *The Other* tends to balance between two (seemingly) contradictory standpoints: essentialism and constructivism. The Scandinavian school initiated by Barth (1969), has tended to emphasize social aspects and power relations of ethnic groups, while the American school has tended to focus on “the cultural stuff” – seeing culture as “written texts” (Heusch, 2000). Roosens (1989) focuses on the social aspects of culture, and claims that ethnicity is a strategically constructed category to conduct political manipulation, essentially being the same as nationalism. This is

strongly criticized by Heusch (2000) who argues that cultural units remain a “(...) basic anthropological element that cannot be ignored” (Heusch, 2000: 113). Ethnic revitalization is not only particular to those societies previously considered archaic, but is also found within old nations in Western Europe previously believed to be safely and historically established (Heusch, 2000: 114). The debate does not seem to be much different from the debate in the 1960s concerning primordialism vs. ethnic boundaries.

Bader (2001) argues that both points of view have their flaws and, more interestingly, can be traced back to the break of Enlightenment from Romanticism in which constructivism had implicitly been inspired by “normative notions of individual autonomy, agency and free choice” (Bader, 2001:268). The dichotomy seems difficult to escape, no matter how balanced the analysis may be.

My own research among the Pataxó is well consolidated within the Scandinavian tradition, although I do acknowledge that ethnic identity is far more than a strategically constructed category. If ethnic groups reintroduce cultural traits that have been long dead, my position is that it constitutes a conscious construction of cultural elements that may have specific desired political or social results. But that does not mean it is not true. If people within an ethnic group experience a trait as genuine, it becomes part of *habitus* and people’s practices. For instance, the Pataxó’s experience of learning songs in their native language is an invention, as no one speaks the language anymore. But the experience of singing in Pataxó language generates strong feelings of heritage and what it means to be Pataxó. Hence the practice has become a cultural reality and part of Pataxó practices and ethnic identity. Once symbols become embodied as felt experiences they also become part of reality. Although the Pataxó language itself is not an invention, the process of reestablishing it is. The same can be applied to Hovland’s (1996) study of the Norwegian Sámi people, who similarly have experienced an enormous revival of their native language during the past decades. Although their

language is not dead, as in the case of the Pataxó, many families who previously only spoke Norwegian have now raised their children to speak Sámi as their first language. Language is, as Hovland (1996) notes, one of the most important measures of creating homogeneity and to differentiate between people, thus establishing the borders of an ethnic group.

1.5 Discourses

I have chosen to use discourses as an analytical tool to distinguish between the different notions about Indians currently in use. Generally speaking Indians are considered *The Others*; people one does not know much about. A negative stereotyped perception of *The Other* as barbaric, wild, inferior, etc, has legitimized a conquest and domination of the less “civilized” (Kalland 2003). On the other hand, an equally typical, yet positive portrayal of *The Other* at the *Noble Savage* -- romanticized as living in harmony with nature -- led to global support for “the indigenous cause”.

Discourse is a mode of action, one in which people may act upon the world and upon each other, as well as a mode of presentation. It is a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning (Fairclough, 1992:64). The term in this thesis will be limited to encompass political rhetoric and how the Pataxó make strategic use of their culture compliant with underlying modern notions about Indians. My main concern is to analyze exactly how the Pataxó make use of the myths of *The Other* to gain political recognition. Within such an analysis I seek to investigate the political frontstage of the Pataxó and FLP to see how impression management is connected to specific discourses in different contexts. Consequently, I am referring neither to culture nor identity when using the concept. However, a strategic wielding of certain symbols does not mean that these do not constitute part of a shared meaning and cultural backstage. On the contrary, it seems that a reflective view upon their identity and conscious indication of ethnic boundaries necessitates shared cultural meaning. Thus, frontstage of

ethnopolitics is based upon life experience, and discourses within political rhetoric performed frontstage also mobilize a shared meaning backstage.

1.6 Scope of the thesis

The main objective of this thesis is to analyze how members of FLP use specific symbols linked to modern discourses to depict themselves as Indians, and to suggest the possible consequences of this.

This is put in more concrete terms through the following:

- 1) To analyze how some individuals among the Pataxó strategically present their “indianness” according to Brazilian/modern perceptions and discourses, analyze how this is communicated through interaction with others and suggest how this is also part of backstage and lived experience among the Pataxó.
- 2) To analyze how narratives of suffering and violence provide FLP with discursive power to mobilize ethnic revitalization, with specific focus on how FLP offers hope and protection against violence through religious practices. These narratives are formulated backstage, but are nevertheless part of negotiating the meaning of being Indian in Brazil.

This conflict is one of many between indigenous peoples and mainstream society, and therefore has many common features with conflicts involving other ethnic groups. As indigenous peoples in general have had some of the most efficient political strategies by using global networks, it is also necessary to include some considerations concerning Brazilian politics towards indigenous peoples within an international context. Within such an analysis I will include different notions of nature and preservation currently in use.

I hold the position that ethnicity is both constructed as well as being a part of lived experience; an ethnic identity has aspects of politics as well as aspects of symbolic meaning rooted in experience. In chapters 1-5 this argument is discussed with basis in anthropological literature and empirical examples, while chapter 6 is a detailed empirical case from my own fieldwork to illustrate how political influence can be successfully achieved through displaying ethnic identity as defined by modern discourses.

CHAPTER 2: THE RESEARCH SETTING

We spent two months running from gunmen, trying to escape in the forest... If I tell you about everything, I will cry. I don't like very much to talk about these things. Everybody was chased away from this place. (...) When we left, everything was covered with manioc, sugarcanes ... but they put everything on fire. (...) The law, I think, wants everybody to die. We are left to starve; we have nowhere to go.

This chapter will deal with where and how I was admitted to stay among the Pataxó of FLP, and how I was positioned amongst them. I will also include a description of methodological tools and how these gave access to certain data. In addition I will include some ethical considerations concerning my own presence, as well as how my positioning may have affected the research and analysis.

2.1 The Pataxó

The Pataxó Indians live on the balmy southern coast of Bahia, at the exact point where Cabral first sighted Brazil in 1500. At that time the land was inhabited by a sub-group of the Tupiniquim who had expelled other groups living there previously. The Pataxó were part of a number of ethnies – Kamakã, Maluli, Gueren, Baenan, all generally known as the Botocudos, living in the valleys by the rivers further inland. The Portuguese king-regent Dom João opened the area for immigrants who came with the legal sanction to kill Indians if needed. Many of the Botocudos died out, but not the Pataxó who kept to themselves and avoided any permanent contact. In the 19th century their territory was invaded, parceled out and turned into cacao farms. Through massacres, bloody skirmishes, deliberate contamination of clothing left on their paths, and even the poisoning of their water springs the Pataxó were destroyed (Gomes, 2000:168). Yet they somehow managed to survive. In 1861 the President of Bahia decided to gather all remaining Indians in the region into one village, Barra Velha of Monte Pascoal, north of Prado municipality. This is the only (recorded) existing Indian community in the region at the beginning of the 20th century. Barra Velha was more or less forgotten after this, and the Indians lived isolated there from 1861 to 1951 (Sampaio, 1996:7).



Above: The southern coast of Bahia, once occupied by the Tupiniquim. Photo: Annette Bull

In 1951 the Pataxó were attacked by the Brazilian armed forces in Barra Velha, their main village and origin of today's Pataxó. The attack happened due to alleged robberies and thefts of a local tradesman. Many were injured and killed, and the Pataxó were spread all over the region (see Sampaio, 1994). Some went to live in cities nearby or work as cheap labor on *fazendas*. Others chose to settle down among the Pataxó in Prado municipality further south. The “*fogo de 51*” (the fire of 51) is still well recalled by all the Pataxó, as the brutal killings were a terrible trauma which resulted in the present spread of the Pataxó of Monte Pascoal.

2.2 Modern times

During the 1970's a highway, BR 101, was established in order to connect Vitória to Salvador via Itabuna. This project made a tremendous impact on the Pataxó in the region, bringing logging companies, settlers, *fazendeiros* (farmer, great landholder), plantation companies and tourists to the region. Within some 20-30 years, the south of Bahia became more or less completely deforested and experienced a major economic boom connected to tourism, cattle keeping and plantations. Today, only 7% of the original Trans Atlantic Rainforest remains (Ricardo, 2000). Local property prices have increased tremendously after the "rediscovery" of Bahia's littoral Paradise - where the Portuguese first stepped ashore in 1500. Properties that were sold for 50-100 R\$ some 20 years ago, were now sold for more than 40.000 R\$ (approximately 100.000 NOK).

Within a few years, places like Cumuruxatiba became tourist attractions, thus attracting economic investments as well as outsiders. The Indians however, were mostly considered an obstacle to the development. In Cumuruxatiba, Indians who used to live in central parts of the town were bought out or simply removed by force from attractive properties near the beach. Discrimination towards Indians has persisted until today, and even in school the teachers are known to harass Indian children. In nearby cities it can be outright dangerous to be identified as an Indian, as many *fazendeiros* and gunmen live there. Few openly admit their Indian heritage except politically motivated individuals. Many Pataxó have chosen to live as ordinary Brazilians in order not to be harassed. According to ANAÍ, most Pataxó live in the slums of big cities like São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro.

In the region encircling Monte Pascoal there are approximately 20 different Pataxó villages. However, only three of these villages lie within what has been demarcated and recognized by FUNAI as Indigenous Territory. The rest are the result of "illegal occupations," so-called retakings.

2.3 Previous research

Much research has already been conducted by anthropologists among the Pataxó (see for instance Sampaio 1994, Grünewald 2001, Batista 2003 and Carvalho 1977). Carvalho conducted (1977) perhaps one of the most extensive and elaborate studies of the Pataxó, dealing with the inhabitants of Barra Velha and their economic system. Batista (2003) deals with the extensive cultural cosmology of the Pataxó to see how this is expressed through various rituals and dances. Much of her research was done in Cumuruxatiba using the same informants as myself, which is why I find her thesis particularly interesting. Among other things Batista notes that it is not accidental that the Pataxó have survived as an ethnic group considering all the other Indian groups that have already disappeared from the same region (Batista, 2003: 76). Had the Pataxó not been conscious of preserving their ethnic identity, they too would probably have vanished. Other studies deal with the violent history of the Pataxó, such as the “fire of 51” (see chapter 2.1). To understand where and how Pataxó villages have been established in the region, it is necessary to know the violent history of the Pataxó, as described by Sampaio (1994, 1999). However, little research has been conducted on how a Pataxó Indian identity is constructed within a Western/modern context.

Grünewald (2001) is one exception, and has conducted interesting research about the “tourist Indian” and how the Pataxó today are actively displaying an image of the “Discovery Indian” (*Os Índios do Descobrimento*) to tourists, as they today occupy the very beach where Cabral set foot ashore in 1500. Grünewald claims that such an image of the “Discovery Indian” is becoming more and more part of Pataxó culture. Today the production and sale of handicrafts to tourists has become an important element of Pataxó culture and identity – although with a short history of not more than some 30 years. Obviously, according to Chagnon and a cultural essentialist perspective, these Indians are far from the real thing. But Grünewald argues that Pataxó identity is created and recreated in a constant dialogue with international and Brazilian society, and continuously

incorporates mainstream ideas about what it means to be an Indian. To him Pataxó ethnic identity cannot be considered anything static or unchanging, just as every other culture is always in a process of change. Hence, similar to my own position, Grunewald argues that being Indian is not a question of *being* as such, but of doing, performing and acting.

2.4 Cumuruxatiba

Cumuruxatiba is a small town of some 3000 inhabitants, 50 km south of Porto Seguro. Including the rural areas south of Barra Velha such as Cahy and Pequi, approximately 1500 individuals there are considered Pataxó (Batista, 2003: 108). Cumuruxatiba was considered an Indian village in the 19th century when the outsiders arrived (Batista, 2003: 53). According to Batista the Blacks and Whites that married Pataxó often adapted to a native mode of life, which is why today one can find black Pataxó, Pataxó with blue eyes, blond Pataxó, tall features and many other combinations (Batista, 2003:55). Cumuruxatiba stayed intact as a fishing village until the 1970s as a result of no infrastructure and limited contact with the outside world. However, after the establishment of highway BR101 in the 1970s, logging companies and non-Indians began invading the municipalities of Prado (Cumuruxatiba) and Porto Seguro. Attracted by beautiful natives, gorgeous beaches and the easy attainment of land due to military dictatorship (1964-1985), Cumuruxatiba was soon transformed to a town with mixed a population (Batista, 2003:56).

The town is divided between natives, mostly Pataxó and Blacks (who do not consider themselves Pataxó), and newly arrived non-Indian tenants from other parts of Brazil or abroad – mostly from Europe. The latter consists of land investors and owners of restaurants, hostels, scuba diving centers and the like. As access to the town is limited by boat or by traveling along a poor dirt road, few pass

by unless being part of a prearranged packaged tour⁵. The town is usually a sleepy place where nothing much happens. However, from the end of December to the beginning of March it is packed with tourists. What was once an Indian village became a fishing village, but is ultimately becoming more and more a center for tourism.



Above: The main street of Cumuruxatiba. Photo: Annette Bull

Most of FLP's leaders and important Pataxó warriors live in Cumuruxatiba, side by side with investors, *fazendeiros* and their allies. The new tenants know little if nothing about how Indians were forced away from their land only a few years ago, while the Indians claim they lost their property in Cumuruxatiba due to trickery or threats. Despite the gorgeous beaches and peaceful

⁵ However, Prado Municipality currently has plans in progress to improve the access road to Cumuruxatiba to attract more tourists. After Lonely Planet mentioned Cumuruxatiba in its latest edition, it seems obvious that the place is at the

appearance of the town, there is a lot of tension between non-Indians and Indians. Non-Indians typically complain that natives have no sense of efficiency, they never plan ahead and they only work during tourist season and do nothing the rest of the year. Indians, on the other hand, typically complain that hotel and restaurant owners only hire non-Indians - employing outsiders instead of locals - that their children are harassed in school and that they are denied access to the beach during summer to sell handicrafts. Child abuse and child labor as fishermen or domestic servants for non-Indians is common among Pataxó children, especially during tourist season (Batista, 2003:56). In general there is a great economical gap between Indians and non-Indians, and the Pataxó are utterly dependant on those with money, which is probably why the tension is rarely expressed openly.

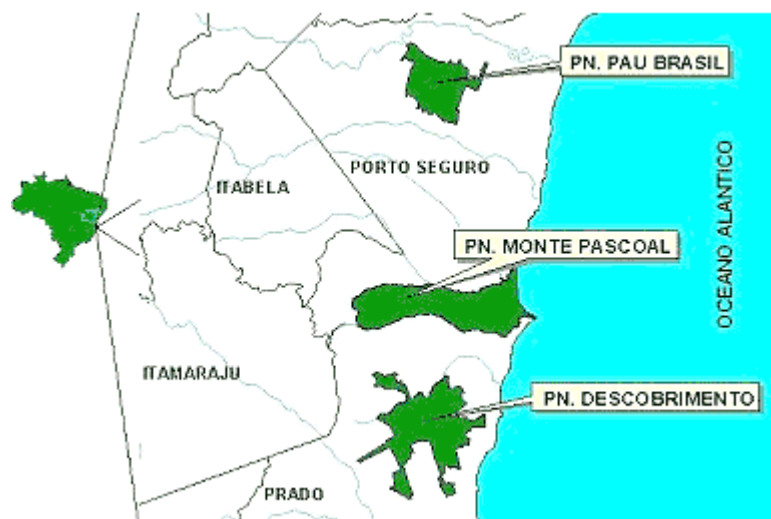
2.5 Discovery Park

Seven km inland of Cumuruxatiba lays Discovery National Park. It consists of 21.129 hectares and is the largest preserved area of the Trans Atlantic Rainforest in Northeastern Brazil. The area was bought from a logging company called Brasil-Holanda in 1999, and has, according to the newspaper “*Estadão*,” been declared part of the Natural World Heritage by UNESCO. The governmental agency IBAMA (*Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis*) is currently guarding the park to prevent illegal use of its resources, and trespassers are threatened to be shot on sight. Still, illegal logging and hunting is a great problem within the park.

The reason for establishing two National Parks in the region was to protect the areas from further destruction. The first one, the Monte Pascoal Park, was established in 1961 encircling the mount of Monte Pascoal and Barra Velha. After a long history of conflicts between Governmental officials from IBDF (later IBAMA) and the Indians, a small strip of demarcated land was successfully

brink of an enormous wave of tourism as investors are becoming increasingly interested.

identified in 1982 and finally registered as Indigenous Land in 1992 (Sampaio, 1999). The Indians, however, refused to accept such a limitation of their territory and successfully reoccupied the entire park in August 1999, expelling three IBAMA functionaries from the park. However, they were allowed back some time after and are still formally and legally in charge of the park.



Source: www.estado.com.br

In 2003 three retakings were conducted by FLP within the borders of Discovery Park, and the villages Tibá, Serra Verde and Alegria Nova were established. Upon writing this thesis a technical group from FUNAI (*Fundação Nacional do Índio*) is in the middle of an investigation concerning demarcation of Pataxó land encircling Monte Pascoal. Discovery Park is included in the research, although no one knows whether or not the area will be declared Indigenous Territory.

Environmentalists are deeply concerned that this will happen, fearing that the Indians will deforest everything (*Estadão*, 2003). Awaiting the outcome of this process, IBAMA has chosen to let the Indians stay for now.

Most of my fieldwork was conducted in Tibá or among villagers from Tibá in Cumuruxatiba, although I visited the two other villages on a few occasions. None of the villages had received any regular help from FUNAI, and all were facing severe sanitary problems and difficulties in sustaining

themselves. This was a great concern during the entirety of my fieldwork. Shacks were simply made of plastic bags and sticks, and health problems were treated with medicinal plants as few could afford other medicines. Most children suffered from worms or other parasites, dental problems and an insufficient diet.



Above: The entrance to Tibá. Photo: Annette Bull

2.6 Poverty among the Pataxó

The minimal salary in Brazil is 240 R\$⁶ (which was changed to 260R\$ during my stay). But there are few Pataxó who earn this amount of money. The few who do are employed by the municipality, but most people make their living through agriculture or fishing. Agriculture is difficult though, as land is usually controlled by either *fazendeiros* or the government. It is possible to work on *fazendas*

⁶ 100 R\$ = 222 NOK

as hired labor, but the work is hard and the salary small. Usually *fazendeiros* pay between 5 and 10 R\$ a day unless the employee has a legal work permit, which most Pataxó do not. Others live by fishing, but the amount of catch and income is highly unstable. In short, most Pataxó do not earn above minimal salary and will never be able to do so under the present conditions.

I interviewed five families from Tibá, as well as other families from Alegria Nova, Serra Verde and Cumuruxatiba concerning their monthly expenses. A family consisting of two adults and two children had the following monthly expenses:

10 kilo rice	(25 R\$)
10 kilo sugar	(20 R\$)
6 packets of coffee	(9 R\$)
5 kg meat	(40 R\$)
10 kg chicken	(50 R\$)
15 kg fish	(45 R\$)
12 kg beans	(30 R\$)
10 kg manioc flour	(20 R\$)
Sum:	239 R\$

This includes one meal a day, as well as breakfast consisting of coffee with manioc flour and sugar. The children go to school and sometimes receive food there. If the parents have money they give it to them, but usually the children have to go hungry all day. Additional expenses are 60 R\$ a year per child as school fee, 5 R\$ a month to cover electricity, medicine, toothpaste, clothes, etc. In short, a family with only two children has expenses far beyond what the minimal salary can cover; although this varies according to how many fields the family has planted.

Larger families of 5-10 children are obviously in a very difficult situation and cannot cover basic needs. When asked how they manage to survive, I only received shrugs and vague explanations that they borrow from others when in need. Similar to what Wikan (1980) writes from her fieldwork

among poor people in Cairo, most Pataxó only survive due to reciprocal relations within the extended family. Everyone has much larger needs than their income can cover.

2.7 Access

The majority of Cumuruxatiba's population is considered Indian, and most of them belong to a village/retaking called *Barra do Cahy*, established in 2000 some 12 km north of Cumuruxatiba. However, everyone was chased away by gunmen in the middle of the night only months later (see Batista, 2003). Some participated in retaking the Descobrimento Park, others decided to stay in town – fearing the violent encounters and starvation to which such retakings often lead. The two groups split apart, one remaining within the park, the other in town. Since the relation between these two villages was somewhat cold, I chose to remain among the villagers of Tibá most of the time.

Tibá consists of approximately 6 families on a regular basis, some 20-25 persons. But at least 14 additional families are considered part of Tibá's community while actually living in Cumuruxatiba. As the distance to town was short, many preferred to live close to school, work and other facilities while at the same time being able to grow fields. The village is located close to the border of Discovery Park, next to a *fazendeiro*, but far from the borders of the forest further inland⁷. Serra Verde is located some 3-4 km further inland from Tibá, at the border of the forest. It consists of 12 families, all of which originate from the region north of Coroa Vermelha. Alegria Nova is located in the northern part of the park, inside the forest, approximately 40 km north of Serra Verde and Tibá. It consists of approximately 12 families.

⁷ The forest in the part of the park where Tibá is located disappeared due to a great fire in 2000. Most of my informants suspect local *fazendeiros* did it in order to clear land for eucalyptus plantations.

I rented a house in Cumuruxatiba with my wife and bought a bicycle to travel between the villages. In the beginning of my stay, people were a bit suspicious – even though I was introduced as a friend of CIMI. A meeting was arranged where several Pataxó leaders questioned my motives, demanding to know what good this would do them. I managed to convince people that the publishing of my “report” could potentially mean economic support and aid from abroad – besides documenting general poverty, misery and maltreatment by the government. The Pataxó people suffer from many internal conflicts, and the final conviction was therefore made when one elder pinpointed that since an anthropologist from “the land of *bacalau* (cod)” had come to study them, it obviously meant that the FLP was the only legitimate association of the Pataxó.

And so I was accepted.

2.8 The tape recorder, the Indians and their political frontstage

Usually I spent 4-5 days a week in Tibá, occasionally visiting the other two villages as well. I soon discovered that Tibá did not have sufficient food to sustain its people nor newcomers like my wife and me. We began to bring food almost every day, which the villagers eagerly accepted. On advice from CIMI I did not spend the nights among them except on a few occasions, but never considered this a methodological problem, as I was mostly interested in investigating my informants’ political frontstage.

Using a tape recorder turned out to be an excellent tool to get people talking. They willingly talked for hours and seemed to enjoy the fact that they were taken seriously by a “*gringo* researcher”. I did not use structured interviews, as I wanted them to talk as freely as possible. The reason for doing this was because I consider such interviews part of a political frontstage where impression management is important.



Above: The anthropologist among the Pataxó of Tibá. Photo: Annette Bull

Thus, the things they stated during interviews were clearly filtrated in order to control what I was going to write. For instance, several of them talked about Pedro Álvares Cabral and his “discovery” of Brazil in 1500 (which happened on the coast of this very region) - which was a joke to them because “obviously the Pataxó were already here”. However, it is easy to pinpoint that when Cabral arrived some 500 years ago, other tribes, mostly Tupiniquim, occupied the coastline. The Pataxó people of today are a “*povo-novo*” (new-people), consisting of small bands of the Botocudos; Maxacali, Puri, Kamakã and Pataxó that were mixed during the 19th century – and have in reality no documented historical lineage further back than the beginning of the 19th century (Sampaio, 1994). Further, their physical appearances suggest that they have been mixing a lot with non-Indians the past decades. But to gain acknowledgement as Indians by the government requires a historical

lineage. Keeping this in mind it is obvious why almost every Pataxó I interviewed made references to Cabral and assurances that no Pataxó had ever left their land.

This does not, however, imply that the Pataxó people are faking their claims to be Indians. As Batista (2003) writes, most non-Indians have adopted Pataxó culture and way of life when they have married natives in Cumuruxatiba. The Pataxó insist they constitute an ethnic group distinct from others. The problem seems rather to be that the Pataxó does not consist of a pure category according to external perceptions of what “Indian” means. And as long as the meaning of the concept remains unchallenged, it is quite easy to undermine the arguments of a relatively weak group such as the Pataxó. Hence, they have up until recently remained *Caboclos*.

2.9 Interviews and getting stung by a bee (participant observation)

During my fieldwork I recorded approximately 25 interviews, in addition to several short interviews concerning household, family, economic issues, etc. I also gathered written material from previous anthropological work in the area and documentation on the conflicts in the region. But I consider my own presence and observation in the village(s) as the most important methodological tool.

Observation of the encounters between the Indians and representatives from government officials, NGOs or others, were important in understanding the importance of self-presentation. On such occasions the Pataxó always dressed up in traditional clothes, and they enjoyed “showing off” their few native words in front of *Branco*s (white men) very much. Even the word “*Branco*,” not referring to the literal translation of “White,” but referring to all non-Indians, is clearly a discursive boundary marker between *them and us*. Such boundary markers were always in use for instance whenever there was a meeting with CIMI. According to Fairclough (1992) discourses are modes of *acting and presentation*, something that indicates far more than oral communication only. Wielding of such

symbols clearly suggests discourses linked to issues like ethnicity, cultural plurality and human rights.

Participating in informal contexts, such as working on the field or eating lunch, gave me access to an abundance of information I would have otherwise never obtained. For instance, I was taken on a guided tour in the forest when a bee suddenly stung my nose. I reacted with fear and outrage, not knowing what stung me. My Pataxó guide virtually laughed his head off because of this. Fear is something Pataxó warriors insist they do not sense. Due to spiritual and religious preparation, they claim to be able to resist bullets and (as I was told on this occasion) bees, snakes and other poisonous creatures in the forest. Fear indicates lack of faith and spiritual weakness. Clearly, my fear of a bee (which happened to sting no one else) gave my guide a sense of superiority he found absolutely hilarious.

2.10 The truth is out there... or is it?

I believe I gained a deep understanding of the conflict between the Pataxó and their enemies, as well as their struggle for land and acknowledgment. As an outsider I was trusted by most of FLP's leaders because I had no economic interest in the conflict. I believe this trust was not only achieved by taking their movement seriously, but also because I brought food and money to the villagers of Tibá who, at a certain point, were close to starvation.

On the other hand, reality is complex and never consists of only one version.

The Pataxó are not a heterogeneous group of people. They have different objectives for what they do and the choices they make, and loyalty is mostly connected to family relations. The politically motivated and charismatic leaders of FLP talk about a common cause and one people with one

history, thus employing a discourse of essentialism in which one Pataxó identity is promoted. But many Pataxó do not agree to the militant ways of FLP, and some complain that FLP is entirely run by CIMI. Others have chosen to live their lives without getting tangled in politics, making the best of it by surviving “*na rua*”, in the city. Some Pataxó are employed by IBAMA as functionaries and guardians of national parks, and some have been able to make a fulltime living of tourism (especially in Coroa Vermelha, see Grünewald, 2000). Some Indians are even associated with *fazendeiros*. As I was positioned politically and socially among some few within FLP, others came to distrust my presence and intentions. It was rumored that there was “some talking” about me in other villages. Hence, it is obvious that my analysis is not representative, as such.

Secondly, although gathered from different sources -- written, spoken and/or acted -- my data is biased and should only be considered structured and constructed information. I never had the opportunity or the courage to conduct an interview with either *fazendeiros* or officials from IBAMA or FUNAI. I was advised by CIMI and my informants to keep a low profile and not to reveal that I was an anthropologist or that I was connected to Indians. As a *gringo*, it is impossible to go unnoticed in such a small place. Corruption and nepotism is common, and it is hard to know whom to trust among government officials in the region. Considering all the violent encounters and threats towards Indians, I simply did not take the chance to approach any of their enemies.

Hence, I chose to stay away from meetings with government officials except one in Salvador with the central authorities of FUNASA (The Brazilian Health Ministry, see chapter 6). Although I was able on some occasions to witness the encounter between IBAMA, FUNASA, CIMI and the Indians, I never had the opportunity to observe the Indians whenever they were invited to local meetings in nearby cities. All I could do was record their own version of what went on in these meetings. However, I was able to crosscheck some of the information with an anthropologist working for the

Procuradoria in Salvador (part of the Brazilian Justice Department that deals with legal complaints), as well as several other anthropologists from ANAÍ. I also traveled to other villages in the region and interviewed a wide range of Pataxó Indians – many of whom were very much against FLP’s line of work.

The data is also male biased because most of my informants were men. I did interview some women, and had many conversations with women from Tibá. But the frontstage of Pataxó politics is mainly acted and formulated by men. The few warrior women I met were frustrated that other women seemed to care little about their struggle, but gave no solution as to how they could be brought to join the movement. I was told that most women are so busy with housework and childcare already, that few can spare extra time to get involved in politics. This bias is probably also a matter of what kind of information I am allowed to access as a man.

2.11 Ascribed and achieved roles

My original intention was to participate as a volunteer in an indigenous association. However, I soon discovered that FLP was a somewhat loosely connected association lacking the bureaucratic form of an NGO. My role among them was soon shaped on the grounds of being a strange friend, a rich *gringo* and a person with international contacts who might contribute to advocate their struggle.

Obviously, I was never really considered equal to them – or a participant with the same abilities as every other native. My poor abilities as a football player or farmer were great amusements to everyone. Some respectfully declared me a warrior, but no one ever believed me to actually participate in retaking land alongside Pataxó warriors. They often had a laugh at my expense, claiming that on such occasions the *fazendeiros* would hand out “bullets for free” and that the

village-anthropologist really should take advantage of such a “grateful offer” (which I apologetically declined).

Nonetheless, people willingly told me their histories of fear, violence and misery, and many probably used me as a sympathetic listener to relieve their hearts. Both contributing economically as well as advocating their struggle through my research resulted in being (jokingly) promoted to the *padroeiro* (godfather, protector) of Tibá. I was a bit concerned about this, obviously being associated with the elite of FLP and paying them for data. But no one else seemed to bother, and it was only fair to contribute economically to people on the brink of starvation. Besides, I believe “going native” is in many cases an exaggerated belief about the anthropologist ability to blend in. Obviously structural differences such as social background, skin color and the enormous economical gap between my informants and myself meant I could never have passed for actually being one of them.

2.12 The importance of family

In the original project I assumed that Indians could be considered one actor, facing Western society, plantation companies and other external actors. However, what became quite clear is that reality is gray rather than black/white. Being considered Indian is sometimes important, other times not. The relevance of an ethnic identity is, of course, contextual. Many Indians are contracted by IBAMA or FUNAI; others work at *fazendas* as workers or gunmen. And according to CIMI and FLP, local anti-Indian politicians often buy the support of Indian leaders. Some Indians have been raised in the city, others in the forest. Who is an Indian is a matter of opinion, choice and context, and few actors behave in a consistent and easily understandable way.

An individual’s loyalty often depends on the case and the scenario, and probably the most important ties of loyalty lie within family relations. For instance, a great problem in Tibá was to gather enough

people to work the shared community fields. The same people ended up doing most of the work all the time, as no one felt particularly responsible. However, whenever a family wanted something done on their own fields all their relatives suddenly showed up.

Family relations could potentially have highlighted some of the confusions I experienced in trying to understand social processes within FLP. Unfortunately, I discovered this aspect too late to analyze it thoroughly. I was told by ANAÍ just before I left Salvador that one of the reasons why the fugitive leader of FLP, Joel Brás⁸, had such a success in uniting the Pataxó in a common political struggle is because he belongs to some of the most important Pataxó families in the region. Unfortunately, this aspect of FLP's struggle will be more or less absent from my thesis.

2.13 Ethical considerations

The Pataxó have experienced a brutal and unjust encounter with Brazilian society, and my personal sympathy obviously lies with them. Some may criticize my election of data and analysis because of this, although I am not purposely trying to portray the struggle of FLP as a heroic “David vs. Goliath”. Scientific ethics demand that what is being written should reflect the truth, something that is somewhat paradoxical. Obviously, there is no one truth to a discourse analysis, only aspects of the truth. Still, I believe my thesis reflects a wide range of different opinions and positions within the Pataxó nation and consists of several objective facts such as harassment, poverty and general violations of human rights.

⁸ Joel Brás is accused of the killings of two people during a retaking two years ago and is currently wanted by the Federal Police. FLP and CIMI refuse to accept the accusations, claiming them to be fabrications made by *fazendeiros* to damage FLP. No one knows his current whereabouts.

Before I left Cumuruxatiba I discussed my findings with several Pataxó leaders, and agreed not to present information concerning secret knowledge in my thesis. Hence, some of the empirically detailed descriptions concerning spiritual life, religion and most importantly, corporal protection, will not be emphasized in my analysis.

Another concern is the personal protection of my informants. Some of the data will therefore be presented in a general way, as to prevent identification of individuals.

2.14 Final remarks

In retrospect it is clear that I managed to keep much of my original scope of the thesis due to help and advice from ISA and ANAÍ. Obviously, performing fieldwork is quite different than designing a theoretical project. The researcher is never fully aware of how reality is actually constructed, no matter how much one is able to read and study about the location and phenomena. Being positioned within certain roles affects the flow of information. My close friendship with the ideological leaders of FLP obviously positioned me among the well-articulated elite among the Pataxó. And my particular interest in how the term “Indian” is constructed made my informants reflect and articulate ideas on several issues they had previously taken for granted. What was put into words sometimes gave the impression of being a dialogue among friends rather than an ethnographer documenting *The Others*’ perspective. Obviously the underlying dichotomy between “us” and “them”, not contested to the full extent in this thesis, is a tricky issue. However, I believe that my thesis reflects a wide range of different opinions and views among the Pataxó in addition to documenting certain objective facts.

To some extent the Pataxó struggle is similar to other Indians’ struggle. However, their struggle is not only about fighting suppression and gaining rights, but also about being acknowledged as Indians within an external framework for decision-making. The analysis will, in particular, address

the difficulties of belonging to a mixed ethnic category. Although I have left out other possible aspects of FLP's struggle, I still hope that my analysis will shed some valuable insight on what it means to be an Indian in today's Brazil.

CHAPTER 3: THE INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT

Today there are some 350.000 Indians in Brazil, whereas there were approximately 5 million in 1500 (Gomes, 2000: 2). Most of the Indian groups that once occupied the vast territory of today's Brazil are now gone, and few groups remain autonomous and untouched by main society. Not only did millions of human beings perish, but some 500 or more distinct ethnic groups were extinguished forever due to massacres or deadly epidemics (Gomes, 2000:2). Other Indian groups disappeared through a slower process of invasion, economic coercion, mixed marriages and forced migrations.

This chapter will deal briefly with the relationship through history between Brazil and its Indian population, demarcation of Indigenous Territories as well as how support, aid and the Indian movement came to be. Indian populations have received help from many ethnographers and others -- relationships that are both difficult and paradoxical. I will try to suggest how this assistance is based upon specific ideas and concepts, thus calling for specific discourses in which Indians are classified as part of a sustainable development. I will also consider how FLP is organized, and how they make use of such external discourses.

3.1 SPI, FUNAI and demarcation of Indigenous Territories

The Indian Protection Service, SPI (*Serviço de Proteção aos Índios*) was established in 1910 after the colonial period and Brazil became an independent republic. Gomes (2000) writes that this was due to a romantic image of Indians among the urban middle class, and the purpose was simply to protect them from being exterminated. This was especially important because Brazil's Indian population was important in establishing a common national identity (Ramos, 1998). Exterminating

the “noble savages” was not good for Brazil’s public image. The process of acculturation⁹ was nevertheless taken for granted, and Indians were expected to disappear within a short time-span. SPI worked on the expectation that Indians should one day become full-fledged Brazilians, and never considered them autonomous members or nations within the Brazilian society. Autonomous Indians were considered “people in isolation”, and were to be “attracted” or “pacified” by peaceful means. In 1964 SPI was replaced with FUNAI (the Brazilian Indian Department).

In 1988 the new constitution was able to grant Indians the right to lands they inhabit and the exclusive use of goods and resources. It also gave them the right to bring suit against whoever offends them, including the federal government. Some older laws were still kept, such as the Civil Code of 1916, regulating Indian vis-à-vis the nation. Indians are accordingly considered legal minors in age and only “relatively capable”, thus needing to be under the guardianship of the state – represented by FUNAI (Gomes, 2000:84). But the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, article 232, states that Indian associations are to be considered juridical legitimate entities, something that has had a great impact on Indian movements (Ricardo, 2001). Somehow the Indians today have achieved the status of full citizenship, without being entirely moved from the security of state protection.

One of the most important functions of FUNAI has always been to demarcate indigenous territories. However, the efficiency and amount of territories being demarcated have varied according to changes within Brazilian law and regulations, changing leadership within FUNAI as well as other institutions’ involvement in the process. Today, the process of land demarcation is led by a board

⁹ The origin of the idea of acculturation can according to Gomes (2000) be traced back to the Enlightenment and the Noble Savage. It has further been contained in theory of evolution, positivism, liberalism and the idea of progress, and merged with anthropological thought during the 20th century, thus establishing itself as a powerful paradigm (Gomes, 2000:20).

made up of representatives of several ministries, slowing the process of demarcation more and more as agrarian, political and military interests are intermixed with Indian demands (Gomes, 2000:87). The 1992 demarcation of the vast territory of the Yanomami Indians was performed exclusively by the will of President Fernando Collor de Mello, who was in need of showing a positive Brazilian will at the World Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (Gomes, 2000:97). FUNAI has unfortunately lost most of its credibility and autonomy to demarcate land, in addition to suffering numerous accusations of corruption and nepotism.

Indian lands and demarcation of such presents an enormous challenge to Brazilian authorities. Indians were the first to settle down in these areas, long before any Europeans arrived, and they form an important symbolic part of a Brazilian national identity. However, many argue that “Indian Nations” cannot be accepted and that Indians are Brazilians and must define themselves as such. They should cooperate in developing the Brazilian nation by having their natural resources properly exploited, preferably by non-Indians (Ramos 1998: 82). Many congressmen and others have argued that they themselves have Indian blood in their veins, as an alibi to defend development schemes on Indian territories. And among regional populations many argue more bluntly that Indians are undesirable and should either be killed off or pushed back into the wilderness of the jungle where they belong, away from civilization (Ramos, 1998).

Still the idea of acculturation of indigenous populations is strong in Brazil. While the process of demarcation is slowing down it is increasingly hard to gain official acknowledgment as Indians due to the belief in acculturation. FUNAI has lost much of its power and ability to defend indigenous’ territorial claims, something which leaves Indians by themselves to advocate their own demands through officially recognized channels of influence, such as an NGO.

3.2 Demarcation of Monte Pascoal and Discovery Park

So far only some small parts have been successfully demarcated as Pataxó Territory. This is due to several factors, the most obvious being that they live in a coastal area where property prices are high. Only few indigenous peoples have ever been able to successfully demarcate their littoral territory: the Pataxó, the Tremembé and Jenipapo-Canindé, the Guarani, the Tupiniquim and the Potiguara (Gomes, 2000:168). It is noticeably harder to gain acknowledgement and demarcate areas as Indigenous Territories when this is at the expense of economical profit and presence of non-Indians.

On top of this, the conflicting interests concerning preservation of biodiversity and national parks have further complicated the question. According to Diegues (2001), the concern for traditional populations in conservation areas is relatively recent in Brazil, and until a short time ago (still today for classical preservationists) was considered a police matter, since they were to be expelled from their traditional lands to make way for the creation of parks and reserves. He further writes that institutions such as IBAMA (Brazilian Institute for the Environment) and the Forest Institute of São Paulo have “(...) generally been formed by professionals in the natural sciences who consider any human interference in nature to be negative” (Diegues, 2001:6).

Nevertheless, there is currently a Technical Group appointed by FUNAI, consisting of individuals from ANAÍ, working on documenting the Pataxó people’s historical presence in the region to suggest if and where Pataxó land encircling Monte Pascoal should be demarcated. The research includes areas like Discovery Park, The Monte Pascoal Park, several *fazendas* and a few coastal villages such as Cumuruxatiba with its 3000 inhabitants. There are of course, many speculations on how, if and why there will ever be an official recognition of these land claims. Local non-Indians consider the question of demarcation of indigenous territory extremely controversial, although most refuse to take the suggestion seriously.



Left: a signpost at the entrance of Discovery Park saying: "Preserve Nature, IBAMA". Photo: Annette Bull

The process however, has taken more than five years and has yet to be concluded. No one knows what the outcome of this research will be, or whether or not FUNAI will have sufficient political power or willingness to force away resourceful non-Indians from the region. The Pataxó are nonetheless putting all their hopes in this report, hoping it will label them as Indians with historical roots to the land once and for all, as an elder in Cumuruxatiba told me:

When the area is demarcated all will be happiness... All of this is Indian land, but no one knows this today. We always moved around and never used to secure one area like the Whites do. Some died; then they moved to other areas. One year we lived here, the other year there. Take for instance the mangos in *Corumbão*; my grandfather planted those. It is forgotten today, but it was my grandfather who planted them – an Indian!

Land is a scarce resource in Bahia, something that complicates the question of demarcation. Another reason why so little has been demarcated is because the Pataxó do not constitute a pure category in the eyes of FUNAI. To document their historical lineage and establish a pure ethnic category is

difficult, as the Pataxó have consisted of various ethnic groups through time. They are “mixed breed” with various physical appearances and mixed bloodlines. They only speak Portuguese and are, in general, well adapted to Brazilian society. Even the Pataxó admit that their cultural heritage is vanishing, as one senior explained:

When I was 12 years I went to Prado with my dad. I held him hard in the hand because I was so afraid. We didn't have clothes, sandals or anything. We slept under open air and lived completely different from the Whites. But everything has changed. Today I am 59 years old, and I cannot do any of the work I did when I was 18. We no longer eat the things we ate in the past. (...) Most of the families here are already used to the White's way of life in the city. The only ones who have kept their culture are the elders. We were raised in the forest. I feel sick when I am outside the forest! But the ones that were raised in the city always want to be there, to watch television.

An important part of being Indian is to be in the forest, as no one considers an Indian in the city a real Indian. They are “adapted”, and are expected to vanish as an ethnic group. This makes it considerably difficult to argue for the demarcation of an indigenous territory. The question still remains whether or not a documentation of Pataxó presence in the past is sufficient to argue that the Pataxó today have legitimate claims to the land, which is exactly why FLP has decided to retake their land.

However, should the Government decide to demarcate all land claims made by the Indians; landholders, investors and local tourist business would face expulsion - many of which have vested interests and will do anything to avoid demarcation. According to CIMI, ANAÍ and the Indians, attempts of bribery, threats, media propaganda and false accusations toward the Indians in local media are frequently used to avoid or delay such an outcome. A discourse in which the Pataxó are portrayed as “false” Indians, vagabonds and land thieves is frequently in use, both in media and among non-Indians. Also, hiring professional killers against troublesome Indians is not uncommon.

3.3 The indigenous movement, support and cooperation

The Indigenous movement in Brazil began as a sympathetic reaction as the weakening military regime in the 1970s began adopting a policy of emancipating Indian peoples from tutelage, leaving them at the mercy of economic interests such as mining, logging, land owners and squatters, highways and hydroelectric dams. Associations and committees for the Indian cause emerged in all major Brazilian cities, and Indians also began organizing themselves in political movements (Gomes, 2000). In some places such associations concern economic sustainability and land preservation. In other places it is a struggle to retake land and rescue items of an abandoned cultural heritage.

There are approximately 250 indigenous NGOs just in the Amazons, most of which have been established during the last 15 years (Albert in Ricardo, 2000: 202). There are two reasons for the increasing number of such associations, the first one being the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, article 232, where such associations are to be considered juridical legitimate entities. The other reason is the politico-economic weakening of FUNAI combined with an increasing globalization of issues concerning the environment and rights of minority populations (Ricardo 2000). According to Conklin & Graham (1995) the emphasizing of sustainable development within environmental philosophy has resulted in an ecological rationale for defending indigenous land rights. Studies of Amazonian Indians' sustainable resource management and intimate understandings of plants, insects and ecological interactions (unknown to Western science), along with growing attention to long-term negative economic effects of environmental degradation, has further strengthened this idea. The scientifically legitimized goal of preserving biodiversity has become attached to the idea of preserving indigenous knowledge (Conklin & Graham 1995:698). A "traditional" way of life and ethnic identity of Indians has suddenly been transformed to a political resource.

3.4 Frente da Resistência e Luta Pataxó (FLP)

Symbolically it is easy to understand our fight, no? The Whites destroyed it all, and we are trying to rebuild it. They are the powerful ones. But we have help in this difficult struggle through our blood and our ancestors.

FLP was established in 2000 on initiative by a few individuals among the Pataxó, mostly from Cumuruxatiba and the region south of Barra Velha. Their aim is to reclaim land they consider theirs and advocate their struggle before Brazilian authorities. Reclaiming land is done by occupying (retaking) land they consider indigenous territory, whether private or public property. Advocacy is done through meetings with governmental agencies, public rallies and interviews in media. This renders necessary a lot of traveling to urban centers such as Itamarajú, Porto Seguro, Salvador and Brasília where political decision-making is conducted.

FLP represents approximately 14 Pataxó villages with two elected representatives from each community, most of which are located close to the Monte Pascoal Park. Although FLP is a recently established association, the individuals behind it are responsible for conducting several retakings during the last decade. The Pataxó from FLP are not the only ones retaking land. In Bahia especially it is the Tupinambá, Pataxó Hã Hã Hãe and the Pataxó (not only FLP) who are known to retake land. From time to time this strategy has resulted in practical results, such as FUNAI's demarcation of Coroa Vermelha north of Porto Seguro, and some small retakings close by. These Indians have successfully promoted themselves as "The Discovery Indians," and has based most of their economy on tourism (see chapter 5.8). These communities are however, not part of FLP, and although they have many warriors at their command they seldom meddle politically with the Pataxó further south. When I spoke to people living in Coroa Vermelha they accused their own leadership of being corrupt and of receiving money from local anti-Indian forces.

There is currently a great dispute between different Pataxó communities concerning which association should represent them vis-à-vis the authorities. FLP was established as a response to alleged corruption within *Conselho dos Caciques* (the Council of Indian Leaders), the association preceding FLP. Although few consider *Conselho dos Caciques* legitimate today; some communities still prefer this association rather than FLP because they consider the latter entirely run by CIMI. Others again argue that the militant methods of FLP cannot possibly help the Pataxó and that they should seek peaceful means.



Above: A banner showing the logo of FLP. Photo: Annette Bull

There are many ideas of what FLP really is, both among those who support it and those against it. According to my informants FLP was created because of external demands. It is an attempt to “name our resistance struggle”, as one Pataxó put it. Some are hoping that eventually the association will be able to receive project funding; others just want to use the name in media whenever the Indians

conduct a retaking as to prevent specific individuals from being identified as responsible. But it is important to note that it has, in fact, nothing to do with how the Pataxó conduct decision making internally, which is traditionally based upon family relations (see chapter 2.12). Establishing an association such as FLP is a way of organizing people with cultural and historical roots in Western countries. It constitutes a political framework connected to modern discourses.

However, this is not to suggest that organizations such as FLP are somehow “forced by some mysterious dominant discourse to represent their community as an *ethnic community*” (Bader, 2001:266). Veit Bader (2001) contests the postmodern view of constructivism, criticizing this perspective for reductionism because it does not provide adequate explanations of processes of cultural change, of community formation and of identity definition. He also challenges this perspective because of its counterproductive consequences for practical policies as it opposes any concept of cultural rights for specific groups. In fact, Bader is strongly opposed to studying culture as a discourse, claiming that such a perspective either completely neglects *habitus* and “materialized” culture or leads to an indiscriminately broad concept of “discourse” (Bader, 2001: 257). He strongly criticizes writers such as Baumann (in Bader, 2001) for his analysis of changing practices of arranged marriages amongst South Asian migrants, accusing him of not differentiating between changing ideas or conceptions and actual change of cultural practices. In other words, there is an important difference between what people say and what they do, and perspectives of culture and identity should not be confused with concepts of networks, organization, leadership and the strive for resources. A critical concept of culture is not the same as discourse about identity and boundary-maintenance (Bader, 2001:263). Frontstage of ethnopolitics is not necessarily based upon a group-based culture and *habitus* backstage, limited to one specific group only. Hence, it is not always meaningful to talk about an ethnic *habitus*.

Bader's perspective suggests that although FLP has adapted to a political framework in which specific discourses are made relevant, it does not necessarily mean they are changing either culture or *habitus*. According to Bader, organizations and leaders of minorities are not facing the problem of irresolvable dialectics, but rather how:

(...) to make the best strategic use of the existing political setting, policy traditions and policies, and, at the same time, trying to avoid externally imposed categorizations and other unintended effects (Bader, 2001:266)

Although writers such as Turner (1993) strongly criticize every attempt of ethnic categorization and cultural essentialism, Bader writes that abstaining from ethno-politics would only further weaken minority groups (Bader, 2001:267). He stresses that no one should forget that there are also advantages to be gained from group representation and institutionalization, such as changing the existent system of democratic influence and pluralism.

In view of Bader's perspective, FLP and the indigenous movement can be considered the best strategic use of political resources available to the Pataxó at the moment. However, although retaking land sometimes generates media coverage and increased political attention, it has seldom resulted in successful demarcation. In most cases it only leads to violence and persecution from police and gunmen. This is why in 2003 FLP chose to enter Discovery Park to retake governmental property instead of private property. As previously mentioned it is not yet decided whether a demarcation of Pataxó Indigenous Territory will include the park. Hence, until now all three communities within the park have been allowed to stay, although IBAMA keeps them under close surveillance and denies them every use of natural resources from the park. Had these communities not been considered Indian, though, they would have been expelled at once. Consequently, Bader is rightfully demonstrating that there are indeed benefits to be gained from group representations such as FLP.

3.5 “Being Indian” through indigenous associations

Many indigenous associations are able to achieve economic support through projects to support issues like territorial management, institutional strengthening, assemblies and meetings, health programs, commercialization and sustainability, cultural reaffirmation and divulgation. The recent flourish of indigenous associations in Brazil is thus made possible because of the new constitution as well as the “market of projects”, consisting of bilateral (dominated by north European countries) and multilateral cooperation (The World Bank, The European Union), international NGOs and religious networks (CIMI, Church Aid) followed by national investments by the ministries of Environment, Health and Education (Ricardo, 2000:197). Sometimes cooperation is also promoted through interests linked to a “traditional” ethno-ecological promotion of companies such as *Bodyshop* (Britain), *Aveda* (USA) or *Hermes* (France). A global network of environmental concern has established a whole new political framework for indigenous peoples.

Today’s Indians are well aware of the historic processes by which they have been reduced to a position of demographic and social marginalization, and are refusing to be labeled as *Caboclos* anymore. Barth (1969) proposes a subjective definition of ethnic boundaries in which “ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves” (Barth, 1969:10). However, simply refusing to be *Caboclo* is not enough to be a successful strategy as long as society and international donors consider labels such as “Indian” legitimate and to have specific implications, which why Barth (1969) also addresses the importance of ascription by others. The esthetics of “being Indian” is what matters -- something that boils down to impression management and wielding of specific symbols in specific contexts according to a dominant discourse. This is similar to what Rothchild (2001) writes:

(...) *the use of culture in ethnopolitics is (inevitably?) governed by the dominant discourse. It is far more concrete and “standardized”, it stresses, ideologizes, reifies, modifies and*

sometimes virtually recreates the putatively distinctive and unique cultural heritage of the ethnic group that it mobilizes (Rothchild in Bader, 2001: 264, emphasis added).

According to Albert (in Ricardo, 2000) the majority of indigenous associations are created to communicate a political statement within the group as well as in interethnic settings. However, scholars such as Heusch (2000) would probably disagree with this, as he is concerned about cultural units and is strongly opposed to reducing ethnicity to simply a matter of strategic, maximizing actors. I am not challenging this perspective, but simply suggesting that an indigenous association establishes Indian ethnic identity as a fact, thus being an important statement about *who they are*. For instance, anyone belonging to an association called “The Pataxó Resistance Front and Struggle” obviously claims to be Pataxó and they are obviously concerned about fighting injustice towards their people. Such an association ascertains a common Pataxó narrative of every single history of violence, poverty and suffering. Individual histories become part of a bigger picture in which “being Pataxó” is associated with FLP and a common cause. Hence, the message is established consciously by the actors themselves, and delivered both to other Pataxó as well as outsiders.

This means that ethnicities formerly believed to be extinct have reappeared on a national political stage. The very meaning of being Indian is suddenly disputed. They are not simply dying out, as formerly believed. The hegemony of a discourse is thus challenged by innovative agents who strategically make use of their own identity within the political framework of Brazil.

3.6 Being a warrior

Gunmen came after us, threatening us, in this very place! No one could sleep safely and everyone had to stay awake until 3-4 in the morning. One gunman passed, then another came along... This is a risk we take by occupying land, but we hope to survive.

Land is short in Bahia, and mostly owned by powerful *fazendeiros* who hire gunmen to protect it. Consequently, many Indians have already been killed because of involvement in retakings (see Ricardo 2000). During my fieldwork three hobos broke into several houses in Cumuruxatiba to steal food and clothes before disappearing northwards. Immediately a group of armed men were gathered and hunted them down, killing two and wounding one. As this story clearly illustrates, local non-Indians and *fazendeiros* often enforce their own justice without bothering to involve the police.

In order to cope with such a hostile situation, FLP have specially prepared (physically and spiritually) warriors to lead their retakings. These individuals are assumed to be fearless and impervious to bullets or slashes from machetes. Many Indians have disappeared, been assassinated or seriously hurt in similar confrontations, both in Bahia and other states of Brazil. However, FLP claims that this is only because other Indians are not sufficiently prepared - unlike themselves (to be further discussed in chapter 4). Both FLP and CIMI assert that no one from FLP has been killed yet during a retaking, although some have been wounded. However, many have made great personal sacrifices because of their involvement.

All the warriors I interviewed had participated on several retakings during the past years. They always wore paint to avoid recognition, but gunmen had still been able to recognize some of them. As a consequence these individuals had left their families to avoid assassinations, living secretly hidden in other communities. One informant admitted emotionally that he had not seen his wife or daughter for more than one year. Others, such as Joel Brás, the President of FLP, have been forced to

flee the region entirely. I was able to get in touch with him and conduct an interview on the telephone, during which he repeatedly broke into tears:

I have suffered a lot. This struggle, all the weight from it is on me. The *fazendeiros* have offered me thousands of *Reais*, tractor, nice car... everything! But I will never break the promise I made to my people (crying).

Do you want to stop the interview?

No... Our enemies have managed to get rid of me. I have several ongoing processes within the legal system. They are accusing me of several crimes, not because I robbed or killed or invaded someone's property... (crying) It is only because I am the leader of the indigenous movement. I am left without power... without ability... (crying) but they need me! They need my help, but I cannot do anything... (crying)

Being a fearless warrior is considered the ideal male role among the Pataxó (see Batista, 2003), although it is well known to be dangerous. As this role seems to fit the cultural code of conduct so well, it is probably why FLP has been able to mobilize hundreds of Pataxó warriors for some retakings. But not everyone enjoys the risks involved. Several warriors told me that "once the popcorn began" (gunshots), many just ran for their lives instead of staying put. One informant, not directly involved with FLP, admitted that he was afraid of retakings and tried to avoid them. But because of his familial ties to several other warriors he felt obliged to participate. With awe, he told of others who never sensed fear at all -- not even when fired at from close range. The narratives of bravery are obviously of great importance in mobilizing people to join FLP.

Every Pataxó I met agreed that the land encircling Cumuruxatiba belonged to them. The reason why some Pataxó still doubt FLP is because of their militant strategy and their close link to CIMI. Should FLP be successful, though, other Pataxó will also benefit economically. Thus, the objectives of FLP seem to be shared by everyone, whether pro or against FLP. Similar to what Hovland (1996) writes, the political struggle in ethnopolitics is often led by a few individuals. In the case of FLP, it is led by those who consider themselves warriors and are willing to fight for what they consider theirs. These

individuals are strongly dedicated to help their people, and the belief in supernatural protection is ultimately what ensures such a struggle, as will be further discussed in chapter 4.

3.7 FLP and CIMI

Sometimes I think that CIMI is good and sometimes not so good. If there were no Indians, there wouldn't be any CIMI either. So that is their role, really. CIMI helps, but if FUNAI did their job we wouldn't have to depend so much on CIMI.

FLP is in an early stage of organizing, and is presently much dominated by CIMI. There is no doubt that CIMI is responsible for bringing forth many of today's famous Brazilian Indian leaders into the public, and is to be credited in giving Brazil's indigenous population a public voice. However, most Pataxó (and probably many other Indian groups as well) consider CIMI to be just another entity receiving funding "on behalf of" them. Few are able to see the principal difference between CIMI and FUNAI. As FUNAI is known to be corrupt, many Indians believe CIMI to be as well. CIMI rarely includes Indians on equal terms among their own staff of "professionals".

Many Pataxó leaders question CIMI's alleged intentions and are deeply concerned about their presence in their communities. Some *caciques* have even decided to completely break contact because they claim CIMI is meddling with internal issues of the Pataxó. These communities have expressed little faith in FLP as well, as they consider it entirely run by CIMI. Few Indians have the cultural capital to take part of CIMI's cosmos of formalities, administration, politics and NGO work. And CIMI does not seem especially interested in training Indians in resuming their own role as indigenous experts.

The lack of inclusion has resulted in widespread speculations among the Indians concerning how much money CIMI is actually receiving when (apparently) so little money seems to reach Indian

communities. As most Pataxó are concerned with practical day-to-day challenges such as feeding their family, people often fail to see the point of CIMI's information and advocacy work as it hardly ever provides extra food or money for them. In fact, whenever CIMI enters an Indian village in a nice car, buys food at local restaurants and appears as if all of their personal expenses are otherwise covered, people get jealous. Knowing that CIMI receives all their funding due to the "indigenous cause" creates suspicion among the Indians, as one member of FLP expressed:

When they manage to fundraise projects of 3000 R\$ for the assembly of FLP, why is it so hard to get 1000 R\$ to register it? They have no interest in it! (...) Look, man: CIMI has a newspaper where they write about us, they make videos about us. And now they are even going to print a book about us. Then think about this: What is the benefit to us from all of this? They have money, man! What are benefits to the community? We receive nothing. Not once has CIMI explained to us what money they get because of our work.

However, the Pataxó always behave politely and seldom complain openly in front of CIMI's staff. CIMI is the only known ally of a deprived people, who generally feel lonesome and surrounded by hostile enemies. This makes the Indians desperate to please them. The asymmetric relationship is further strengthened because the Pataxó have a cultural conduct of avoiding conflicts. CIMI typically expects Indians to "follow orders", as they are the "professionals" when it comes to political advocacy. The more CIMI employees enforce their dominance, the more polite the Indians become. And as long as no one is complaining, there seems to be no reason why CIMI's staff should change their conduct. FLP feel utterly dependant, and are afraid of losing their one and only ally. But backstage there is a lot of muttering. CIMI has on several occasions pressured reluctant Indians to participate on retakings, resulting in many complaints, as one warrior expressed:

It's easy for them (CIMI) to tell us to retake land. But they are not the ones standing there once the "popcorn" (gunshots) begins. They're not the ones putting their life at stake. (...) We only have one life, you know. I still want to make a history, not to die because of stupidities during a retaking.

I discussed the issue of dependency with one CIMI employee, who stressed the importance of not giving away too much money to the Indians. It was argued that Indians should equally contribute

economically to political advocacy by paying for travel, food, seeds for their fields, etc, in order not to be entirely dependant on CIMI. The argument seems a bit odd though, considering the fact that dependency has already been created both economically and psychologically and the Indians do not produce a sufficient surplus to increase their living conditions.

The connection between CIMI and Indians in Brazil is complex, paradoxical and difficult. There is no doubt about the importance of CIMI making Indians visible on the national stage. But at the same time, CIMI and the Indians only share the same views and agenda to a certain extent. Gomes (2000) suggests that CIMI and the Church cannot be expected to “(...) leave behind its history and determination” (Gomes, 2000: 211). CIMI is part of the Church, with a long history of patriarchal attitudes. The general problem seems to be that there is a gap between a political discourse of indigenous’ rights and participation, contra CIMI’s own practice in the field. Although there are differences among CIMI’s staff, there is still a lack of an anthropological sensitivity to how their own presence is affecting the relationship with Indians. For the time being FLP have few options other than to continue their cooperation with CIMI. However, what the outcome of this alliance will be in the long run is hard to say.

3.8 Conclusion

I have in this chapter tried to show how the relationship between Brazil and its indigenous population has affected the enormous growth of indigenous NGOs the last decade, especially due to the new Brazilian constitution of 1988. Being acknowledged as Indian is to a large part dependant on having an indigenous association, as this establishes ethnicity as a fact -- both to the group itself and to outsiders.

The possession of a territory and demarcation of land is in most cases central to an indigenous association. Little has yet been demarcated of Pataxó territory due to high property prices and conflicting interests concerning preservation and the Discovery Park. FLP has chosen not to wait for the authorities to decide whether or not to demarcate the area, but instead take back the land by force. In most cases this strategy has proven unsuccessful, resulting in violent attacks and persecution. However, the retaking of Discovery Park proved successful, although IBAMA is constantly keeping the Indians under close surveillance. Consequently, the Indians are forced to depict themselves as “sustainable” to uphold their image as true Indians.

The Pataxó are part of a larger international trend concerning indigenous movements. The struggle for indigenous’ rights is a struggle established and led by populations such as the Native Americans in the USA and the Sámi, with networks across national borders through NGOs and the United Nations. Although the Pataxó are not directly involved in these networks, they are still employing means of gaining influence established by these other populations – such as the establishment of indigenous associations. Hence, the growth of such associations can also be explained as a result of the recent increase in global awareness concerning indigenous populations, preservation of biodiversity and sustainable management of natural resources. Indians have consciously adapted to an external discourse and been able to gain new alliances due to international networks on indigenous issues. One example of such “ethnic alliances” is the alliance between FLP and the Catholic NGO, CIMI. This relationship however, is both difficult and complex, something usually under-communicated because of FLP’s dependency on CIMI. CIMI and FLP represent rather different points of view, and there are great differences between how the two parties perceive the alliance.

CHAPTER 4: VIOLENCE AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE INDIANS

Everybody was chased away. They killed so many... mothers, fathers, children, relatives... many! And the police participated. They wanted our land. They didn't ask. My fields were so big... but everything was burned down. When they left, IBAMA came. We are in their hands now. But it is just the same thing.

The Pataxó have suffered a lot of poverty, misery, violence and harassment. This suffering has mostly happened due to unscrupulous investors trying to make fast money and the demand for progress and economic growth. North Eastern Brazil is one of the poorest regions of Brazil with high unemployment rates. Every politician, national or local, therefore, enthusiastically welcomes economic investment in the region, even when such investments involve conflict of interests and violent encounters with local population.

In this chapter I wish to draw attention to how the cultural interpretation of violence may contribute to defining Pataxó ethnic identity. I will further discuss how FLP offers hope and protection against violence through religious practices, and how this provides a discursive power to mobilize other Pataxó to join the Indian movement. What I wish to highlight is how frontstage ethnopitics is also part of backstage and lived experience -- both being based upon, as well as constituting, a shared meaning among the Pataxó.

4.1 A history of massacres

When Brazil was discovered in 1500 by Pedro Álvares Cabral, his reports to the Portuguese king contained romantic descriptions of the shimmering beaches, the dense forest and the amazing men and women striding around nude, laughing and candidly proposing a dialogue. This enchanted romanticism did not last long, however, and was soon replaced by an even greater interest in business and colonization. Indians soon became a problem, and fell victims to numerous massacres

to clear land for colonization. Wars of exterminations were part of Portuguese Indian policies from beginning to end, and vigilante death squads, so called *bugreiros*, specializing in killing Indians, were common up till the beginning of 20th century (Gomes, 2000).

Such measures are still being employed to deal with today's Indians. A well-known case is the massacre of Cintas-Largas in 1963 in the state of Rondônia. The village was first attacked by airplanes that dropped dynamite bombs, then by gunmen. Three years later photos of Indians being butchered appeared in the press, resulting in great public indignation and the replacement of the former Indian agency, the SPI, with a new one -- FUNAI. More recently there was a 1987 killing of 14 Tikuna Indians by loggers in the Amazon River and in July 1993, 18 Yanomami were massacred by gold prospectors (Gomes, 2000: 28). As these examples illustrate, violence towards Indians is not unusual; on the contrary, it is characteristic of relations with Indians.

4.2 Violence and trauma

They came upon us during day, shooting at us, and then they took my brother. They beat him up before they brought him to Itamarajú. There he was imprisoned.

Many of my informants had previously experienced dangerous situations in which their lives had been threatened. Most Pataxó families had members who were either killed or wounded during the 1970s when logging companies entered the region. Others could tell of how IBAMA had set their fields on fire and even shot at Indians entering the Monte Pascoal Park during the 1980s. I was also able to interview survivors from the "fire of 51" who witnessed their closest relatives being butchered. Different informants retold the story to me in order to illustrate how the Pataxó have always been victims to violence. And everyone could tell stories of policemen who had entered the homes of Pataxó to beat them up or put them in jail for no reason.

One informant told me the story of a young relative who fell in love with an American girl on holiday who soon became lovers. One day they were assaulted by unknown men who raped and then killed the girl. Beaten and barely alive, the boy was left in a ditch. The police did not bother to search for the men, but chose to torture the boy through electric shocks until he confessed to the crime. He received a life sentence. My informant cried as he told me of his relative, swearing that he would rather die than go to a Brazilian prison.

What this story illustrates is that it does not matter if people choose to be a part of the Indian movement or not. Local reality is often harsh and violent anyway, as is the case in most parts of Brazil. No doubt, violence constitutes an important element of shared meaning and experience among the Pataxó.

4.3 Violence in a theoretical perspective

I choose to define violence as "... an act of physical hurt deemed legitimate by the performer and (some) witnesses" (Richess in Schmidt and Shröder, 2001:3). What is important is the performative quality of such acts which may leave people dead, but which establish strong social meanings of power and legitimacy to the spectators. A long-term process only now and then culminates in real acts of physical violence. However, violence as a performance and symbolic act delivers its message over time and space to the large majority of people who are not physically affected by it (Schmidt and Shröder, 2001:6). Hence, when gunmen chase off the Pataxó, this is an act that clearly establishes a notion of power and inferiority to everyone -- not only to the ones actually experiencing the violence.

To be a victim of violence is terrifying, frightening and humiliating, as the expected effects of violence are pain and death. However, many scholars focus on the socially constituting element of

violence. Ajimer (2000) suggests that although violence may seem meaningless, it is, in fact, a "... constituting element of human society used as a cement in processes of social aggregation" (Ajimer, 2000:1). Similarly, Schmidt and Shröder (2001) claim that not only is violence a means to solve material issues, but also, "... a resource in world making, to assert one group's claim to truth and history against rival claims, with all the social and economic consequences this entails" (Schmidt and Shröder, 2001: 9). When threatened by external violence the borders of a group become clearly expressed. Considering all the violence towards the Pataxó, these perspectives suggest that violence might be an essential aspect of defining a common Pataxó identity.

Indians who are politically involved are particularly in danger of becoming victims of violence. Several of my informants had participated in previous retakings in which people were killed or wounded. They were all accustomed to open threats, and during my fieldwork, the *cacique* of Tibá received several death threats. One informant told me how he had been present in a retaking where approximately 40 gunmen, *capangas*, attacked them at night. They had tried to negotiate, as the village was full of small children. The gunmen, however, had answered by shooting at the Indians who were forced to leave everything behind and run for their lives. According to my informant they ran all night long through the forest, carrying their children on their backs.

Narratives and experiences of violent acts in the past and present provide a discursive value to the present struggle of FLP. It is essentially what defines FLP warriors and the Pataxó in opposition to an external enemy. But it is also important in establishing a common Indian identity. Violence of the past against their families, ancestors and against Indian nations in general is part of a discursive order in which past and present are interlinked, thus establishing an image of what it means to be Indian in Brazil. As one young Pataxó expressed:

I wish this country could offer a little more dignity to us Indians who, after all, were the first inhabitants. The Indian is owner of this land. No one should put a *fazenda* in this place. But they take it by force; they send gunmen to chase us away.

And this is what an elder said:

The same thing is happening everywhere. Indians have no rights at all, no. We always have to be on the lookout not to be attacked by the fazendeiros. They kill Indians easily, just like they've always done.

Both of these quotes can be considered different texts within a common discourse. Discourses shape social identities and relations according to Fairclough (in Jørgensen and Phillips, 1999), through such *inter-discursivity*. Different stories of violence are interlinked and shape a common history of violence with Indians as victims. This is not to suggest that Pataxó culture motivates violence, as culture alone rarely produces violence. But violence is always subject to a cultural interpretation (Besteman, 2002). It simply means that as victims of violence, violence has become important in defining the Pataxó as a group.

4.4 Ethnic mobilization through victimization and hope

The Whites destroyed it all, and we are trying to rebuild it. They are the powerful ones. But we have help through our blood and our ancestors who are helping us in this difficult struggle.

According to Roosens (1989) the Hurons of Canada picture themselves as a victimized people with a tragic past, and no professional historian will object to this (Roosens, 1989: 47). This is being connected to a political rhetoric in which the Hurons, as victims, can make legitimate demands. Their cause is righteous. The same can be applied to the Pataxó who also have a long history of suffering after being harassed, killed, chased off, and being forced to slavery after having lost their land. FLP's leaders picture the distant past as a time of harmony and perfection. Similar to what Roosens (1989) describes the Pataxó are also using the present situation to make romantic

descriptions of their culture wherein Indians possess a presumed bond to nature, they are less likely to profit than Whites, they are opposed to pollution and that the Indian culture is of higher value (or at least wiser) than White culture. Roosens seems to be of the opinion that such claims are nothing other than swindles. Romanticism of indigenous peoples and their way of life is all part of a critique of modernity and Western society with a hidden political agenda that ascertains the “indigenous peoples” as beneficiaries.

Then again, the Pataxó were not the ones who deforested the entire south of Bahia.

One may or may not take for granted such claims, but it is interesting to see how politically motivated Indians among the Pataxó use such rhetoric strategically when addressing the issue of land claims. This portrayal helps mobilize other Indians. Legitimacy is only achieved through discourses in which they are depicted as Noble Savages and victims. They become martyrs.

The Indians claim that gunmen usually arrive by night to kill people in their sleep. I tried on several occasions to ask how many Indians had actually died from gunshots but only received laughs and jokes on my behalf: “Have you not understood anything yet? Ha, ha, guns don’t kill Indians!” FLP warriors believe themselves unable from getting hurt or killed by bullets through spiritual protection.

This is what one experienced warrior told me about retakings:

We had a retaking and stayed there for 6 months, and then we left. 40 warriors participated, women, men... ten women, but mostly men. Afterwards we entered another area, and I stayed there for two months. (...) There were a lot of gunmen there with heavy arms. They began shooting at us from a distance of more or less 100 meters. But no one was hurt, only one Indian that was shot in his behind (laughter).

It was really a miracle that no one was killed or wounded. Were all of the warriors sufficiently prepared?

Yes, it was a miracle that no one was killed. They had more or less 44 carbines, 12 rifles and... But every one of us was prepared. We don't fight with heavy weapons, we only use *bordunas* (spears) and bow and arrows. Only one was hurt, in the behind. And there was one guy that received a shot in the knee. But that was it. (...) There's this one guy, *Zé Preto*, he is a hired assassin of the mayor of Itamarajú. He came here to kill Indians. Only, we're under protection of God.

But do you actually feel the presence of God during a retaking?

Yes, the *pajé* makes the prayer, and then we close our eyes and make our prayers. We believe in *Tupã* ("God" in Pataxó language) and the prayer, and that's the way. We don't have any fear, no.

Well, to me this is... If I had been in the middle of a retaking, I would certainly feel frightened...

(laughter) I have no fear no.

Do you always feel the presence of God in every retaking?

Yes, I have participated in Águas Belas, and in the Monte... and we always are prepared. The *cacique* chooses who will go from the village.

And you never felt any fear?

No, never. We cannot have fear. We have to fight for our rights, precisely.

So it is more dangerous when you feel fear?

Yes, if you don't believe – that's why you feel fear. You shouldn't be afraid if you truly believe in *Tupã*.

And it never happened that one who truly believed was wounded?

No, in this region, no. No one has ever been hurt, only that guy who received a bullet in his behind (laughter).

Suppressed people often attach a cultural meaning to their suffering. Research on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict suggests that among many Palestinians the suffering is transformed into a male rite-de-passage that allows them to reclaim agency and political identity (Schmidt and Shröder, 2001:6). In the case of the Pataxó and FLP, it seems that suppression and suffering has somehow been transformed to a "just war" in which God is on their side and their enemies are, ultimately, chanceless. By fearlessly taking back land from the *fazendeiros* they are making an example for others to follow. Should anyone get wounded or be killed, this is simply explained by lack of faith. A warrior sensing fear would lack faith in God, and consequently his protection would be weakened.

But when God is on their side they are in control and need not fear anymore. As one warrior explained:

There is no more fear. The *pajé* unites everyone. He starts to pray, and all of us must trust him. If we had not trusted in him, we would never have taken back any land. There are a lot of heavily armed gunmen, you know.

Some Pataxó are reluctant to support retakings because they believe it is hopeless, too dangerous or give a false image of Indians as militant. They fear it will only increase the Pataxó's suffering. But even skeptics can be brought to revise their opinion if there is a slight chance that FLP might be right. If it is true that neither bullets nor machetes can harm the Pataxó, then FLP could actually have the solution to end their misery. In order to prove this, FLP need to send their warriors against the gunmen and retake land. Every Pataxó community has stories of retakings and bravery, bullets that miraculously miss or hit without penetrating the skin. Fearlessly they oppose the powerful ones who do not hesitate to kill them. Such narratives become one story of a chosen people supported by God. The ultimate power is on their side, and they become fearless, bold and righteous warriors.

4.5 Providing hope through spiritual protection

The ones of us that truly believe in Tupã and the Pajé are more protected, you see. But there are others that don't believe...

On three occasions during my fieldwork I was able to participate in secret rituals of spirit possession. The reason for secrecy was because some Indians were deeply Christian, and believed such rituals to be pagan. Other Pataxó simply thought it was old fashioned and superstitious. My informants were reluctant to thoroughly explain the cosmology of their religion (which consists of a very complex and elaborated system), and some even denied they knew anything about such things. What they feared was that other Indians might misunderstand and believe that they were performing *macumba*, black magic. In a small community such as Cumuruxatiba, gossip can easily cause social stigmas. In

fact, social control and gossip (or fear of) seemed to be a strong motivator of most codes of conduct. Two Indians actually had to leave Cumuruxatiba for nearly a month because of such gossip. But my informants assured me that they were indeed good Catholics. What they feared was that such rumors might create reluctance among other Indians towards FLP and retakings in general.

In spite of this I was allowed to make a general recount of their practices, while promising not to describe rituals and spiritual protection in detail. This was mainly because gunmen are also believed to receive protection through *macumba*, and would gain the upper hand if they knew exactly how Indians are protected.

The rituals consisted of conversations with various “spirits of the forest” who, if they were in the mood, could offer protection. *Tupã* was considered equal to the Christian God, and other “forces of the forest” were compared to Catholic saints. Hence, a hybrid religion between nature religion and Christianity seems to have evolved¹⁰ where the rituals are means to achieve divine powers and protection. Different spirits enter and leave the body of a medium that reacts with violent and spastic movements whenever the spirits enter and leave his body. This is supposed to cause an enormous strain on both body and spirit. When a possession is completed the medium talks and acts differently. A spirit is believed to have taken over the bodily functions, and the Indians are free to talk with or ask favors from the spirit. Protection from bullets and strokes of machetes is achieved by “closing the bodies” of the warriors. Afterwards, they are believed to be able to resist every attempt to attack them with machete or firearms: machete can no longer cut and bullets either miss or do not

¹⁰ According to several of my informants, bits and pieces of the rituals actually originated from Candomblé (Afro-Brazilian religious rites). Many of the Pataxó were said to have learned a few “tricks” from the Blacks at the *fazendas* during the period they spent as labourers among them. Bits of their religion are probably relatively new inventions while other parts belong to an older heritage. This was also confirmed to me by the anthropologist Carvalho in Salvador, who witnessed similar rituals at the beginning of the 1970s before contact with outsiders reached its peak.

penetrate the skin. They are also able to see approaching dangers through visions or dreams. Some Indians can become invisible, and sometimes the protection can confuse hostile gunmen and make them forget what they are doing or whom they are supposed to be killing.

In order to strengthen their protection the warriors must perform a wide range of actions such as spending time alone in the forest, sexual abstinence, keeping certain days sacred, etc. The knowledge is considered secret and is most often kept within the family, inherited from father to son and mother to daughter. In addition, every village has a *pajé*, shaman, who conserves knowledge about medicinal plants, ritual practices and forces of the forest.

Faith in the divine as well as the righteousness of what they are doing is ultimately what protects the Pataxó. As one warrior explained:

Man, some people just aren't fully prepared. When the time comes that the *popcorn* - "BAM" – begins, you have to be prepared. We have to remain in control. You need courage when the bullets pass close.

A warrior sensing fear would weaken his protection, as this would indicate lack of faith in God. Consequently, what happens during a retaking is not only a conflict of economic interests and a risk of violent death, but also a spiritual fight of Good versus Evil in which fear is the worst enemy.

4.6 Under attack

After participating in possession rituals on two previous occasions I was asked to bring my wife along for the next session. We arrived in the late afternoon and were led to a small shack full of children and some elders. It was crowded, hot and difficult to breath. The performance of the ritual was slow and somewhat less impressive than the previous ones, and it seemed to me that the same topics were repeated over and over again. It gave the impression of being a theatrical play with the

sole purpose of making the children laugh. As it went on for hours and hours I became tired, hungry and not too happy about the long way home in the dark on a slippery dirt road. The fascination I had previously experienced to these rituals was all but gone.

We were just about to excuse ourselves when the medium suddenly told us that gunmen were coming. I did not take his statement very seriously at that moment, and was just about to leave the shack but one villager suddenly grabbed my hand and told me that we could not leave. The medium, still in trance, went on repeating that gunmen were already on their way and would be coming soon. According to the medium they were going to enter the village in a little while from different directions. Two were supposed to be Federals from IBAMA (heavily armed with automatics), and one was a one-eyed “old monkey” (who knew the forest well and was an experienced killer) who would sneak into the village through the manioc fields. I thought it had to be some kind of joke, but everyone else was deadly serious. People suddenly began to equip themselves with bows and arrows, machetes and knives, and warriors put on their darkest clothes to hide in the dark. I was told that it was unsafe to return to Cumuruxatiba and that we must stay in the village and obey every command.

Children were weeping and people were running back and fourth while shouting orders. Warriors were making sure that the entrances to the village were properly guarded and, seeing how serious the preparation was taken, I began to feel a little nervous myself. The medium kept repeating how many gunmen would arrive, from which direction they would come and what kind of arms they would carry. We joined hands and prayed to *Tupã* for protection. Then, each and every person disappeared into the dark to perform their assigned tasks.

There are few cars in Cumuruxatiba and usually no one travels along the poor dirt roads surrounding the town at night – especially not the one close to Discovery Park. But all of a sudden we could hear

a car coming towards us from a distance. We were quickly taken to a small shack where women, children and a couple of young men already sat huddled together. Everybody was told not to light anything or to make even the smallest sound. The entrance was shut and we were left in complete darkness. Suddenly we could hear distant shots -- some singular and some in a row as if from a machinegun. Everybody was terrified and several children began to weep. A warrior entered the opening to the shack and brusquely told us that unless we were silent we would be dead. Some women tried to comfort the weeping children while the rest of us just held our breath. The floor became wet as someone urinated on themselves and I found it increasingly difficult to keep an analytical, relativistic point of view. Could it really be that we were going to be slaughtered in this small village? Did the Indians really have divine protection? Could they really prevent bullets from harming them? *And what the hell were those gunshots?*

And so we waited. We sat for what must have been hours in the dark without hearing anything. It was uncomfortable, crowded, hot, smelly, difficult to move and impossible to talk. From time to time a warrior entered the shack telling us that the gunmen were close, but thanks to our protection they were still lost in the forest. Hopefully, they would never find their way in the dark. This may have offered comfort to the others but I had to admit that I was skeptical of both the ritual and the prediction that gunmen were actually arriving. Then again, I could not deny the fact that we had heard the sound of a car and several gunshots in this place, where usually no one else appears at night. I also knew that many of the villagers had previously experienced similar attacks at night during other retakings.

Suddenly, one of the children's alarm clocks made everyone jump as it began beeping furiously. A warrior entered and told us we had to move quickly to another shack. One by one we were led across the middle yard of the village to an even smaller shack. A small girl urinated her pants and a woman

began crying frantically. Others comforted her by telling her that God would not allow us to be killed because the village was under protection. The warriors were urging everyone to keep silent. The gunmen were supposed to have been spotted just outside the village.

Again we were left to wait for further instructions. The warriors kept guarding the shack and people sat whispering Ave Maria prayers in the dark. Everyone was trying to comfort each other by saying things like: “God will protect us,” “God will never allow for us to be killed like this,” etc. Then we were told that the gunmen had gathered just outside the village and were likely to launch an attack on us at any moment. The shack was made out of sticks and plastic wrapping and would not offer much shelter from bullets. We were told to throw ourselves flat on the ground if shooting began. I sat anxiously waiting for the predicted attack to begin. Like everyone else, I was scared, soaked in sweat and utterly terrified. However, after some time I simply fell asleep.

Early the next morning I was awakened by the warriors outside shouting: “Come on, chicken! Do you think I am not a man!? Come and fight us, cowards! Do you think we are afraid?” It was still dark and I went outside to see what was going on. One of the warriors explained to me that the gunmen had gathered in a small hut belonging to a *fazendeiro*, just outside the village. They had spotted lights there, and now they were convinced that someone had lit a cigarette inside. Everyone believed that the gunmen were afraid of entering the village (as they usually only kill people in their sleep). Now they were trying to challenge them by shouting insults. The warriors laughed heartily at their pathetic enemies who did not have the stomach for a real fight.

Dawn came and we were finally told that the danger was over. It was safe for us to return to Cumuruxatiba. Apparently, the gunmen had fled. We had coffee and people laughed and made jokes

of the *gringo* anthropologist who, at least two heads taller than most Pataxó, obviously must have been spotted while crossing the yard when we were changing shacks during night.

I saw nothing suspicious on our way back to Cumuruxatiba.

4.7 Different narratives

After the incident I left Cumuruxatiba for nearly two weeks. When I returned, people were reluctant or completely refused to talk about what had happened. The few who agreed to discuss the matter had different stories to tell. Some were convinced that gunmen had actually been there but that they were either lost in the forest or too scared to attack the village. Others told me that an outsider Indian had been possessed by evil spirits and tried to attack the village at night just to scare people.

Apparently, someone had actually thrown several big rocks into the middle of the village the night after the incident.

I also spoke to a woman in the village who laughed and thought the whole thing was nothing but a wild fantasy. She claimed that she did not believe in such “superstitious” rituals. According to her, the whole thing was merely a result of *Semana dos Santos* (week of the Saints) when ghosts can walk freely around. This was apparently why people had seen lights and heard noises at night. She claimed the gunshots and the car were from a neighboring farm where a manioc thief had been caught in the fields.

Before I left Cumuruxatiba I discussed this with one of FLP’s leaders. He told me that he was not entirely certain there had actually been gunmen present that night but was convinced that “something” had been around. The reason why no one wished to talk about it was because they did not want people to become afraid. If people left the village it would only weaken the retaking of

Discovery Park. Hence, the leaders of FLP had agreed to deny there was ever a danger and to never discuss the matter again. This was in order to calm things down as well as to avoid any more rumors of *macumba*.

To my knowledge, no such rituals were conducted again during my fieldwork.

I never received a convincing explanation of what really happened that night. The only certainties are that there was a car and some gunshots at night. Seeing it from a distance, it is easy to question the entire episode. However, I remain certain that no one put on a show just for fun. That night I sat among a group of truly terrified people.

4.8 Conclusion

It seems likely that the Pataxó have been deeply traumatized by violent encounters with gunmen in the past. Every Pataxó I talked to had family members who had been shot at, beaten up or killed. Many had experienced violent encounters themselves while trying to retake their land. In Tibá, nearly all the children had memories of fleeing in the middle of the night while gunmen were shooting at them (during other retakings). They have lived with fear and persecution for many years and I believe that fear of hired gunmen may have evolved into a nightmarish “boogey man.”

Being poor, miserable, landless, harassed and without powerful allies, makes the Pataxó struggle seem futile. However, violence appears to have been attached by FLP to a cultural interpretation in which the Pataxó are the ones in control. Why fear gunmen if bullets cannot kill Indians? Why not retake all Indian land from the *fazendeiros* if there is no risk of being harmed? Ultimately, they consider themselves to be under God’s protection. Evil cannot defeat Good, and the whole predicament seems to be interpreted through a Christian deterministic view in which the triumph of

Pataxó struggle for land is self-evident. Whenever talking about rights, they are not simply referring to judicial rights, but moral rights. As God is considered the ultimate defender of such moral rights, they believe they will evidently be victorious. They are the chosen ones. Hence, the indigenous movement is trying to convert their stigma into cultural capital. Just as “black is beautiful” FLP is trying to say: “Pataxó is beautiful.” Whereas acts of violence against them are supposedly signs that they are weak, the Pataxó are converting this to signify their strength. Without such faith, the whole indigenous movement would probably be futile.

Pataxó ethnic identity is thus confirmed and strengthened through the violent context in which they live. The power relations that hired gunmen and threats of violence are meant to establish are somehow transformed into an alternative worldview, which seems to strengthen Pataxó ethnic identity. As one informant put it: “If we weren’t warriors the whole thing would already be ended.” Their identity as Pataxó is closely linked to being warriors. Violence, suffering and submission have become important measures in FLP’s struggle for ethnic revitalization. Hence, frontstage of ethnopolitics cannot simply be reduced to a “constructed” identity because it is also part of people’s lived experience. The symbols, statements and narratives concerning violence against Indian nations are not arbitrary, but form part of cultural perceptions and a shared meaning among the Pataxó.

CHAPTER 5: REVITALIZING ETHNICITY

They don't want Indians to be Indians anymore. They want us to move to the city. But the Indian isn't anyone's slave!

In 1988 Brazil acknowledged Indigenous People's rights to their traditional land -- a judicial right that was included in the Brazilian Constitution. After both national and international pressure, the country was forced to change its public attitude towards Indians. Brazilian policy towards the Indians has always been somewhat paradoxical and far from consistent. On one side, the Government has been trying to emphasize a humanitarian attitude towards the "romantic past" of Brazil – desperately trying to preserve the last "wild" Indians from extinction. On the other side, Brazil's strive towards economic growth and investments have often collided with the interests of its indigenous populations.

Both of these views represent patronage and paternalistic attitudes towards Indians. The Indian is considered a primitive being, the equal of a child. It also constitutes a general opinion that Indians are condemned to extinction, or at best to be "White" or *Mestizo* like everybody else. However, the Indians are not dying out, nor will they necessarily vanish as peoples or ethnic groups considering the recent growth of indigenous associations. How, then, is Brazil to cope with the land claims made by such groups? This chapter deals with the discourses in which Indian movements must articulate their ethnic identities and the consequences of essentializing such identities .

5.1 The striving for goods

Large parts of anthropological literature deal with the question of why modernity is so attractive to people all over the world. Eugeen Roosens claims that:

(...) the kind of material resources is invariably the same: in our case, ethnic minorities want the latest and most sophisticated products and try to get as much as they can... No relativism is found here (Roosens in Nordanger, 1997:160)

It seems inevitable that the yearning for exclusive goods is universal. A well-known strategy by missionaries in the Amazons was (and still is) to give away goods to make Indians convert to Christianity (Ramos, 1998). Foreign aid has been one possible way to gain goods. However, what happens when the framework for gaining goods is defined to encompass indigenous peoples?

Knut Nordanger (1991) has made an interesting study of ethnic organizations from the Beni-region of Bolivia. In his research Nordanger suggests that when people see their interests on the background of a framework introduced by others, they will perform accordingly – whether directly or indirectly. In this case, foreign aid is targeted towards indigenous groups with an “authentic culture”. Consequently, people display their “authentic culture” in order to achieve economic support (Nordanger 1997:167). He stresses that traditional culture cannot be separated from the sphere of economics, and underlines that there is a strong external demand that Indians should live according to their culture as inherited by their forefathers, preferably in harmony with Nature (Nordanger, 1997:163). Nordanger’s informants do not, in fact, consider their cultural backstage as worthy of preservation. They want wealth and development, and are pressured to pose as Indians in order to achieve the things they truly desire. This is part of a modern discourse of *The Other* -- a constructed world of meaning, which the Pataxó also need to master.

Although other scholars may criticize this view for uncritically essentializing economics at the core of cultural change and performance, I still find it plausible considering Roosens statement. The Pataxó are so desperately poor that they are capable of anything to improve their living conditions. And if that means displaying a so-called “authentic culture,” they will.

5.2 A changing worldview

During my interviews many Pataxó told me that one cannot separate the Indian from the forest – the two are the same. One informant told me that although many Pataxó live in São Paulo, they are not Indians anymore because they are “accustomed.” They have forgotten how to be Indian.

However, things have changed drastically for those that stayed put as well. The Pataxó language disappeared some 50 years ago due to increased exposure to Portuguese (although some words are still preserved) and still more elements of Pataxó culture are disappearing and changing. The forest is gone, and with it disappeared knowledge and a worldview that cannot be retrieved. Pataxó children growing up today have never seen the forest as it once was and do not share the experiences of their parents or grandparents that grew up in the forest without even knowing its borders. The new generations of Pataxó are accustomed to a Brazilian reality in which money, work, electricity, television and the like play an important role. Some still have a close understanding and connection to the forest, although this depends on family and upbringing.

Robert Harms (1987) suggests in his study of the Nunu people of Equatorial Africa that a changing environment can result in significant cultural and social changes within a short time-span. Harms writes that the connection between landscape and culture is evident although he stresses that the relationship is complex, making it nearly impossible to determine exactly why cultural changes

occur. In the case of the Pataxó, great cultural and ecological changes have happened simultaneously, suggesting a probable correlation.



*Above: What was a forest only 30 years ago is now reduced to eucalyptus plantations and farmland.
Photo: Annette Bull*

This is what an old Pataxó man told me:

When we first came to live here the forest was full of thick trees. Today there is no more forest in this place. They took all the brazil-wood, the *oisgote*, *madeira de lei*, everything, everything! The children know almost nothing of the trees anymore; they don't exist any longer. (...) In the old days, when I was a kid, there were a lot of "visions". I have seen several, at night... WEEEOW (whistling)! But today everything has ended. No one sees anything. When I was five I saw *Caipora*... (*Telling a story about how he got lost in the forest and then ended up on the same place following Caipora – a being who looks human and attracts people to follow*).

Are there other creatures like her?

Yes, for instance the *bicho homem* (animal man) - Father of the Forest. He is all covered in fur, like piassava. He was living here, but he disappeared with the forest. And then there is the *sepultadas* (the buried)... dead Indians not burned. And *Mãe da Lua* (mother of the

moon)... My mother knows her story, but people are forgetting. And *Lobishomem* (werewolf). I saw him once, and then I stayed home for more than a week without going out at night.

But why did it end?

I don't know, boy. These days I don't see anything. When I was a kid I saw a lot of things. My father knows a lot more. (...) Today, no one tells any stories anymore, no. No one knows the stories anymore. The young ones do not believe, they only say: "That's not true! That's only a legend, that couldn't have happened!" But I know what I saw.

It is simply not possible to separate the forest from the views of the generation that grew up in it.

The new generation has never even seen the forest that once existed. Hence, their worldview is different. A Pataxó growing up in the city might still be able to preserve an ethnic identity as an Indian, but will lack intimate knowledge of the forest and its creatures. Although the forest still plays an important symbolic role, most Pataxó have found alternative ways of physical survival without the forest. Most are dependant on small-scale agriculture, however, which is why demarcation is considered important.

5.3 Acting like an Indian

"Indian" is a rather paradoxical term lacking a consensus regarding its meaning. To some it connotes "indigenous peoples," to others it simply refers to native peoples in the past. What caught my interest is the argument made by many non-Indians, that *Caboclos* are not really Indians anymore. This argument is clearly connected to the belief that all Indians will finally be acculturated, join mainstream society and live ordinary lives like any other Brazilian. However, as Gomes (2000) shows, there is no reason to believe that this is really going to happen, considering the fact that the numbers of Indians and (registered) indigenous groups in Brazil has increased during the last 30 years.

However, in Brazil this line of thought is often used as an excuse to deny Indians access to land and economic privileges. That the notions of the *Noble Savage* and “real Indians” belong to a romantic past was well confirmed by all non-Indians during my fieldwork. Thus, in order to be acknowledged as an Indian with certain rights guaranteed by the constitution and international human rights, it is necessary to prove one’s “indianness”. For instance, at every meeting with IBAMA or FUNAI officials, the Pataxó were always careful to wear feathers, painting or other traditional outfits such as loincloth. On one occasion IBAMA entered Tibá unexpected, and it was almost comical to observe the *vice-cacique* desperately charge for his shack to put on feathers and loincloth, before returning some 15 minutes later to greet the visitors formally.

Indians have, in general, been considered by Brazilian authorities to be wild beasts that need to be “tamed” and “domesticated” – terms still being used to characterize first contact with autonomous Indian groups (Gomes, 2000:122). A legal paternalism -- including demarcation of indigenous territories -- is the result of a social pact “within the ensemble of forces that make up Brazilian nationality” (Gomes, 2000:129). But without the forest, without *aldeias* (Indian settlements), the Indian is reduced to a hybrid creature -- liminal and lost. This point was clearly demonstrated during my fieldwork when FUNASA suddenly threatened to deny health services to the Pataxó in Cumuruxatiba. Usually FUNASA visits every *aldeia* once a week, however, the Pataxó in town were considered unqualified to receive such special attention. Even Pataxó living in the villages in Discovery Park approved of this decision, because “the Indian does not belong in the city.” Indeed, why should the government need to take specific care of already “domesticated” Indians?

Obviously, FLP is well aware of this pitfall, trying to convince others that they must not give up on being Pataxó. By fearlessly retaking land, openly wielding symbols of Pataxó ethnicity (painting, etc), living off the land instead of selling their labor to *fazendeiros*, and establishing *aldeias*, they try

to convince others to follow. Such conscious acts are all part of an Indian frontstage. Ultimately, the struggle for demarcation is a struggle for ethnic survival. The Pataxó have reached a point where every individual has to make up their mind whether or not they want to be Indian.

Similar to what Hovland (2000) writes of the Sámi movement it is through mobilizing meaningful, profound symbols that political control is established. One Pataxó warrior told me that “(...) we don’t live in this *aldeia* for the cause of ourselves, no. We’re doing it for everybody. Who has ever heard of an Indian in the city?” Symbols of ethnicity constitute an important element of the relation between the Pataxó and others, and impression management is of great importance to establish adequate classification according to the prevalent discourse.

5.4 Marginal identities

When indigenous peoples can refer to and prove themselves to be one people with one culture and a common history, a pure category of “natives” emerges (in contrast to “Whites”). According to Barth (1969) such dichotomizing of ethnic identities in which cultural differences are being essentialized is quite common in multiethnic contexts. Symbols for affiliation such as language and customs are developed and presented. There is no need to develop such symbols unless there is a sense of an encounter. However, negotiations of identity in such contexts are not substantially concerned with what it means to be indigenous or not, Indian or White. It is a question of symbolic constructions within a discourse where negotiations of “language” for instance, might as well be negotiations about “influence” (Hovland, 1996). Symbolic borders are often developed faster and more thoroughly if there is a situation in which actors are competing for a culturally defined benefit (Hovland, 1996:195). As the Pataxó are striving for demarcation of their land, such symbols are being developed faster than would otherwise be necessary. However, to be acknowledged as Indian

or indigenous of “pure blood” is difficult when the symbols are not consistent. One of my informants, an Indian *cacique* living in Santo André (north of Porto Seguro), told me the following:

It is so easy for them to say that today we aren't really Indians because we only speak Portuguese; we haven't got any more traditions, customs, etc. But I know I have! I have a small field, and I make sculptures in wood, I make trays, I make drawings in wood of animals and such. Everything is in wood; hence I have my culture! (...) I eat beans, meat and rice, but I don't like it much. My organs feel the difference, you know. I don't eat much salt, like the Whites do. Our food is very different from the food of the Whites.

Obviously, this man was trying to convince me of his “indianness” by drawing on symbols of culture and “traditional” handicraft, as well as the argument that only Whites like salty food and that his organism -- that of an Indian -- disliked the foodstuffs of the Whites.

However, when I talked to the neighbor of this man, she told me that today there are no more Indians in the region. I asked her politely about her neighbor, to which she just laughed and told me that she was referring to *real* Indians, and that this man had lived most of his life in the city. The next day I visited a Pataxó village, Mata Medonha, where this man had lived about 10 years before he left. The reason why he left, I learned, was because of internal conflicts with the other villagers who had elected him their *cacique*, but complained later on because his governing was “too White.” He was not considered a true Indian, as he had grown up in the city and was “accustomed.” Besides, his family was not of Pataxó origin but came from two other Indian ethnic groups that were already extinct. Obviously, he was not accepted as a real Indian because the symbols did not match the discourse.

It is interesting to note that even Indians seem to adopt the essentializing and naturalizing discourse of what it really means to be Indian (as opposed to “White”). During my fieldwork several members of FLP traveled to Brasilia to demonstrate among many other indigenous groups. Although it proved

to be a successful rally, several of my informants were harassed by other Indians because of their mixed appearances:

(In the middle of an interview about the rally in Brasilia)

I have heard other Indians say that the Pataxó are not “really” Indians because you are mixed...?

Yeah, it is just like the Xavantes... They claim that we aren't really Indians. But you know... where was Brazil discovered? This was the place they made contact with us, you know. In Barra do Cahy. The Xavantes are prejudicing us, saying that we aren't really Indians. But we made first contact. Let's say that Brazil was discovered in Pernambuco, in the Amazons or any other place, do you think you would find any pure Indians there anymore? No. This was the place they first came, that is why you have exactly what you see today. There are some pureblood Pataxó as well, but most of us are not.

What this story clearly illustrates is that the most stigmatized people are not necessarily indigenous peoples as such, but those that are mixed breed. They lack the abilities of distinguishing symbolically between different ethnic categories. Even between the different Pataxó communities I visited people who accused one another of being “mixed”, “less Indian than our village”, “Whiter than us”, etc. Symbolically, being Indian and non-Indian at the same time does not make sense. Hence the category of partly Indian, partly non-Indian indicates “not-really-Indian” as well as “not-really-White”. Being a category in between (“liminal”) makes the situation extremely difficult because it implies stigmatization and/or expulsion from both groups.

5.5 Language-games and discourses

It is generally agreed upon among Brazilians that FUNAI seems to “make up” indigenous areas, and people think it is rather unjust that some are privileged to land while others are not. After all, the Indians in the region are mixed and acculturated; hence it makes little sense to grant rights and land to them on condition of their being Indian considering their “impure” lineage. Politicians and local media such as Rádio 99 FM of Itamarajú are, according to FLP and CIMI, controlled by *fazendeiros* and continuously accuse Indians of stealing land, attacking innocent workers at the fazendas, etc.

Obviously, such accusations are part of a contra-discourse to claim that the Pataxó are not really Indians.

According to Eriksen (1991), engaging in social interaction amounts to playing a language-game. These games consist of different concepts and rules, which define a particular version of the world as relevant: “They have acquired different knowledge about the world, and they reject each other’s proposed rules” (Eriksen 1991:132). However, in FLP’s case, they are structurally unable to dictate, or even argue, what the rules of the game should be. This is not to suggest that all members of FLP necessarily share the same language-games (there tend to be great cultural and social differences between generations -- between those that were raised in the forest and those that were raised in the city or on *fazendas*), but that they have to adapt to a language-game -- a discourse -- based on a rather different assumption of how the world is put together and classified.

This is what one *cacique* told me:

Are there many Whites saying that the Indians in this area aren’t really Indians?

Yeah, we hear that a lot. There are lots of Whites coming to us saying: “Mmmh, you’re not Indians, no, you’re only invaders, you’re just like the bunch from *Movimento Sem Terra* (MST). You’re not Indians, no.”

But why do they say these things?

(...) It’s, I don’t know... It’s because, although we are Indians today, but our lineage, mainly speaking of us the Pataxó, is frequently being attacked. You see? Frequently attacked, because... Take me for instance: I’m not a pure Indian. My father is a son of an Indian mother and a father from Minas Gerais. Hence, my father is son of a man from Minas Gerais, while my mother is pure Indian. You see?

It seems like most Brazilians have an idea that Indians should live in the forest, eat traditional food and walk around naked...?

Yeah, and that’s what their critics are all about (other Pataxó men nearby shouting: “Yeah, yeah; exactly!”)... That we have learned too much from the Whites, that we dress in clothes, etc. They criticize a lot...

But that’s an absurd accusation, no?

Yeah, it’s an absurd thing, but a joke? No way.

The Pataxó have to make use of the dominant discourses already established, such as Indian ethnicity and judicial rights connected to such an identity. This can also be viewed against Stein Bråthen's (1983) theory of power in which power relations are maintained by agents presenting a legitimate model of social reality. His theory is based upon the assumption that social actors attach others' perspectives onto themselves, thus establishing a power relation where the rules of interaction are established according to only one agent's perspective. The weak party in such a relation is the agent who has to adapt to a different perspective of what is defined as relevant. In the case of the Pataxó, they have to adapt to a discourse in which their ethnicity, historical lineage, belonging, cultural traits, etc, is important. They cannot make successful claims on grounds other than being indigenous. Clearly, in such a language-game the Pataxó are the weaker party because they do not possess a legitimate model of social reality, but have to adapt to other dominant perspectives.

This being so, one of the most powerful discourses and political resources for Indians today is twentieth century environmentalism, intent on the preservation of wilderness areas and biological diversity.

5.6 The Nobel Savage

An agreement was made between IBAMA, FUNAI and the Indians in Discovery Park in 2003, offering health services and food supplies to the Indians in exchange for their obligation to refrain from hunting, fishing or opening new fields and to always dress traditionally (in feathers, painted and dressed in loincloth) whenever entering the forest. The latter was to avoid mistakes as IBAMA opened fire at any stranger caught in the forest without permission. Breaking the agreement was said to result in expulsion. The Indians are therefore extremely careful not to be caught doing anything

“illegal.” However, the promised food supplies from FUNAI never showed up. How then, to survive? One informant was especially annoyed with IBAMA because of this:

In order to preserve, we have to starve. We cannot make fire, we must respect the fish, the plants, etc., and we have to wait for everything to recover. We cannot even kill snakes! Everything is to be preserved, the forest, the fish, the animals... but what about the Indians? We need preservation as well! We need to eat!

IBAMA never liked the idea of having Indians occupy a national park, even though they are painfully aware of the fact that Indians have a constitutional right to their traditional land¹¹. They have previously been known to threaten, open fire at Indians and set their fields on fire (see Sampaio, 1994). Their ideological point of view is clearly influenced by the American preservationist view where wild nature is considered to be untouched and untouchable (Diegues, 2002). FLP, however, stresses their intimate knowledge of the forest, arguing that Indians have never destroyed any forest in contrast to the White Man, as one cacique put it: “We Indians know what we’re doing within the forest!” Another elder told me this:

This region used to be the richest forest in the entire Bahia! But the *fazendeiros*, the loggers... they took it all away. Everything changed; the culture, everything. Indians adopted the way of the Whites... But back in the old days we used to share. Today there is too much fighting between Indians.

This argument is obviously contrasting “way of the Whites” today, versus “the old days” when Indians lived in the forest and everything was harmony. FLP is constantly emphasizing that Indians should live in the forest, not in the city. The past is romanticized, and traditional Indian knowledge and culture is opposed to the “way of the Whites.” Indigenous knowledge such as that of medicinal plants is viewed as “much stronger” than Western medicine¹².

¹¹ According to article 232 of the Brazilian Constitution, Indians “...shall have their social organization, customs, languages, creeds and traditions recognized, as well as their original rights to the lands they traditionally occupy, it

The Indian as an ecological *Nobel Savage* “living in harmony with nature,” has empowered Indians with new symbolic and political power, in addition to having given them powerful allies worldwide. Kalland (2003) claims that indigenous knowledge is often considered to be an alternative to scientific knowledge, as it is better able to cope with problems of resource management. However, “(...) indigenous knowledge tends to go through a transformation in environmental discourse” (Kalland 2003:3). An external market has provided Indians with a certain amount of symbolic power dependent on their identity as natural symbols of ecologically harmonious ways. But this power can equally be taken away, especially if the conditions of its legitimacy is failed to be met. Environmentalists and Indians only share the same agenda to a certain extent. After all, environmentalism is not a language-game defined by Indians. As Conklin and Graham (1995) point out, such symbolic power only exists as long as Indians’ political identity coincides with the global trends and concerns of the moment. And this is exactly the danger the Pataxó are facing.

This is not to say that the Pataxó are not genuinely concerned about preservation. They certainly are, especially the elder generation who grew up in the forest and witnessed it all disappear within a few decades. As one elder explained:

When they began taking out all the forest here, I was working for them as well. I was helping to end everything that belonged to us ... The big trees... you cut down one, and ten more was falling. And we thought it was good. But it was all wrong... All wrong!

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the Pataxó are well aware of their symbolic power as “Guardians of Nature” and are playing a difficult and paradoxical game towards IBAMA within environmentalist discourses. Every village in Discovery Park was painstakingly careful not to leave any garbage floating around, as IBAMA officials often come on unexpected visits. Fields were

being incumbent upon the Union to demarcate them, protect and ensure respect for all of their property.” (Sampaio, 1994:17)

secretly opened in cover of darkness, and they were cautious not to log any trees. However, there is no guarantee that the Pataxó will be able to maintain their image as “ecological” in the long run. They must survive somehow, and without receiving any food supplies they are dependant on the forest’s resources. IBAMA often passes through their villages on unexpected visits, photographing their fields and interviewing different people about their daily schedule. Although they have not yet made any attempt to force people away, it seems as though they are only gathering evidence to prove that human presence is ecologically harmful in order to legitimately expel everyone from the park.



Left: IBAMA officials visiting Tibá on Dia do Índio (Day of the Indian) during a Toré performance. Photo: Annette Bull

¹² However, most people seemed to prefer Western medicine when actually ill.

5.7 The game of paradoxical contradictions and impression management

It is a game, but it is no joke.

The Pataxó are striving for an official acknowledgment as Indians, and are forced to play a “game of symbols.” The game is based on a modern discourse, a notion of *The Other*, and is thus a response to an external demand for authenticity. The game is played in relation to tourists and in political contexts, in which the Pataxó deliberately enhance their “indianness.” Image decides who will succeed in life. Image decides who will sell handicrafts and who will earn land. In short, image is everything.

The process of demarcation could potentially mean that IBAMA will lose all its influence.

Consequently, IBAMA wants to be on good terms with the Indians, but they equally want to show who is in charge. Two years ago, Indians were shot on sight within the park. Today they can walk freely, but only when dressed traditionally and when unarmed. The game between these two actors is extremely complex and paradoxical, and the rules are changing fast. It could easily lead to disaster for the Indians as well as a successful process of demarcation.

The struggle for demarcation is a complex conflict containing many different stakeholders, not just IBAMA. And while IBAMA on a central level has declared its support to “the indigenous cause”, many officials on the local level are eager to get rid of the Pataxó. Hence, I believe my metaphor as a game to be fruitful, although this does not indicate any link to game theory. The behavior of the participants of this game is far too inconsistent to be analyzed as rational behavior within a fixed set of rules.

5.8 Is it all just a lie?

Some people have been reading a lot, studying, saying negative things like: “Today there aren’t any more Indians.” But this is the traditional land of Indians. We are Indians, and we were the first who arrived here.

I visited Coroa Vermelha, just north of Porto Seguro, which is a demarcated Indigenous Territory. Some 3000-4000 individuals live there, in what looks more like an urban slum area than anything else. Coroa Vermelha is situated between highway BR101 and the coast and also consists of a minor area further inland. The area is located at the exact spot where Cabral landed and performed his first service among Indians. The Pataxó living there today have been able to make a full-time industry of tourism, including selling handicrafts and beverages to the tourists at the beach. What is interesting is that after they gained recognition and the area was successfully demarcated, the Indians there received public support from institutions such as FUNAI, FUNASA and MEC among others. This makes it highly profitable to be considered Indian, and as a result many poor people in the region have come to join their “fellow tribesmen.”

I spoke to a local peddler woman who explained to me that FUNAI has great difficulties in singling out who is who, and many of the ones joining the village are either Indians from other nations or poor non-Indians. Their image as Discovery Indians gives them legitimacy and authenticity in the eyes of tourists and local authorities, although the first Indians Cabral ever visited in 1500 were probably the Tupiniquim (see Grünewald, 2000).



The main entrance to Coroa Vermelha, marking the border of the demarcated area. Photo: Annette Bull

Friedman (1992) has criticized Hawaiians of simply inventing their history and ethnic identity based on anthropological and ethnographic material on authentic Hawaiian culture. He claims that traditional Hawaiian culture can be seen as a game modern Hawaiians no longer play. Hence, cultural experts such as anthropologists have become the custodians of their former way of life. As their genetic pool has been mixed with many different immigrant groups, even their genetic purity has been lost. Hawaiians today are playing a political game in which American and Indian egalitarian and ecological values are projected onto the past as the essence of cultural traditions that can be brought back to life by breaking with the present (Friedman, 1992:207). Friedman's point is that if history is largely mythical, this is because the politics of identity consist of anchoring the

present in a viable past. The past is then constructed according to the conditions and desires of those who produce historical texts in the present.

Hovland (1996) argues in opposition that ethnic identity might be a construction and it might serve a political purpose. But that does not make it a lie. Seeing one's culture from the outside does not necessarily imply that one can no longer be authentic or truthful when claiming the right to tradition (Roosens in Hovland, 1996:181). A reflective view upon one's identity does not necessarily make it any less real. Although the Hawaiians might be a special case, there are numerous other people throughout the world experiencing ethnic revitalization. It seems a bold statement to claim that all of them are simply lying.

Eriksen (in Hovland, 1996) claims that each and every people do not necessarily need an ethnic identity. Culture is first and foremost a means of communication. But many are led to believe that some sort of belonging, defined connection and culture is necessary. According to Eriksen this is especially the case of cultural or religious minorities, in particular when competition for culturally defined benefits such as a territory is at stake. For instance, when charismatic leaders from FLP tell their people of the importance of being Pataxó, people begin to feel and sense the importance of their identity, bloodline and way of living. It is felt and experienced as true, further confirmed by economic, political and social benefits offered by the government on the grounds of their ethnic identity. Hence, the symbols of a modern discourse become somehow embodied -- shaping local reality and sense of self. Hovland (1996) writes that the Sámi political movement is responsible for creating a Sámi ethnic identity, which is what has happened among the Pataxó too - clearly stated by one of my informants: "Without the Indigenous movement no one would say: I want to search for our old customs, I will indeed search for them."

The political project of FLP consists of turning Pataxó symbolism into something beautiful and authentic in the view of others and the Pataxó themselves. As previously explained, the symbols and discourses depicted in political contexts are not arbitrary, but form part of a shared meaning and lived experience among the Pataxó. Dressing up in feathers and paint whenever encountering IBAMA or FUNAI is obviously a conscious act, but it is no less authentic than any businessman wearing a smart suit to impress a customer. The Indians of Coroa Vermelha might not be descendants of the people Cabral actually met in 1500, but they are indeed descendants of the first people living in the region. Hence, I do not consider it a lie, but rather a reflective perspective on identity within the framework of a modern state such as Brazil.

5.9 Reflective identities

Today you can put a thing on the Internet, and everyone will know. We can call Brasilia and they will know what is happening here.

Obviously, there is a certain historical, authentic core of the Pataxó's image/identity. For instance, they use a language consisting of Portuguese mixed with approximately 200 "native" words. These words are widely used in meetings with tourists and government officials as a way of deliberately demarcating and symbolizing indianness. According to ANAÍ, although most of the words do have Pataxó origin, many of them originate from other languages such as Tupi and Krenak. Pataxó are a *povo-novo* (new-people), a people mixed by many other peoples formerly living in the region. During the 19th century they all became one, mixing different languages and customs. However, all the words are native, and thus make part of whatever Pataxó-ness they seek to establish today. Important to keep in mind though, is that the process of re-establishing it is a conscious and well reflected idea.

According to Hovland, one of the most important differences between modern and traditional societies is the way a person's identity and self-esteem is established. This is pretty much the same argument scholars such as Giddens (1991) and Beck (1994) hold: In traditional societies a person's identity was mostly established through ascribed roles, whereas today everyone is forced to form a "reflective construction of the self". Although grand theories such as these may be too general while uncritically dichotomizing "traditional" from "modern," I believe that such lines of thought can provide interesting insights in the case of the Pataxó. They used to live in the forest in the past and were born members of a specific bloodline. There were no choices concerning education, employment or lifestyle. Today all of that has changed. Although most of them live in poverty, some have been able to take higher education and choose between different ways of making a living. Others have to choose between working at a *fazenda*, fishing, small-scale peddling, making handicraft, hunting, logging, etc. Because the forest has disappeared there is a great difference between the lifestyles of elder and younger generations. There is no longer a connection between how young Pataxó live and how their parents used to live. Whereas most roles were ascribed in the past, they can be achieved today. And to some extent, it is possible to choose whether or not they want to be considered Pataxó and Indian. It is similar to what Hovland writes on the Sámi: "changes and insecurity have made it necessary for each and every individual to create themselves in a constant reflective process from birth to death" (Hovland, 1996: 207).

5.10 Pataxó identity and its relative importance

No Pataxó can choose not to be Pataxó, although the meaning, relative importance and degree of being Pataxó varies. The Pataxó know perfectly well which family everyone belongs to.

Consequently, it is not always possible to pretend to not be Pataxó -- choosing one's identity is only possible in some contexts. In time, individuals detaching themselves from a Pataxó identity will

probably lose their ethnic identity as an Indian. As one *cacique* told me when we discussed the term “Indian”:

When the accident happened in this region (note: attack in the 1970s by hired gunmen), my brother left for Belo Horizonte. There he made children, he already has grandchildren. And now his son is a “mineiro” (Braz. native of the state of Minas Gerais). All because he raised his family there, in Belo Horizonte (...) But they are still a part of our race, the Pataxó. Only, he should have raised his family here. But he is more than 50 years old now; it is too late.

Being Pataxó is a question of heritage and (partly) ascribed roles. For instance, the leader of FLP, Joel Brás, is accepted as a leader as much for his relations to some of the most important families among the Pataxó as for his charismatic personality and leadership abilities. According to the anthropologist Carvalho, his kinship ties are what has made it possible to unite so many different villages in one united struggle, as such a political unity is uncommon among the Pataxó.

However, many try to under-communicate their Pataxó-ness, seeing it as a sociopolitical stigma. What the indigenous movement is trying to do is to convert this stigma into cultural capital. Like the “black is beautiful” ethos, the indigenous movement is trying to say: “Pataxó is beautiful.” But not everyone chooses to play this game. Most Pataxó are not wielding their ethnicity openly because they might get harassed. Others have moved to big cities where their ethnicity as Pataxó is of no importance. As far as non-Indians in the region care, the Indians are extinct and should behave accordingly, as acculturation is considered a natural process. Indians occupying land are considered liars and false Indians -- nothing but thieves and vagabonds on the edge of society and the law.

What non-Indians often fail to see is that there is no one, singular Indian culture. Although Pataxó today speak of the “Pataxó Nation”, this is most likely a term introduced by outsiders. The Pataxó of the past consisted of small slash- and burn peasants and hunters in the forest. They have never existed as one people with one shared culture. Even today there are many cultural differences to be

found between the various villages concerning traditions, religions, dances, handicrafts, etc. Many Pataxó have moved to the cities or found alternative ways of earning their living. There are great differences between the perspectives, worldviews and opinions among the Pataxó – something the FLP is well aware of. As a young FLP warrior told me concerning Indians living in the city:

People who live off the land are trying to preserve our culture, while those that live in the city are accustomed to the Whites' culture. They are not in contact - how to say - with *the things*. Those who choose to stay in the city will be acculturated. They will lose things. And that is why we want people to go back to their communities, not to stay here in Cumuruxatiba.

Indians within FLP seem to have adapted to a discourse in which “Indian” emphasizes one specific way of living. The public opinion is that *real* Indians do not live in the city -- an opinion equally shared by FLP followers. The Pataxó of the past probably did not have a well-articulated idea of what it essentially meant to be an Indian. However, today's politically motivated Indians do indeed have a well-developed and conscious idea about how and what an Indian should be. In essence, they have adjusted their opinion on what it means to be Indian according to the discourses prevalent in the rest of Brazil. This does not mean they are lying, but that they reflectively attach an external cultural classification onto themselves. All of a sudden it has become important whether or not an individual is considered Indian, something that was basically less important in the past.

5.11 Conclusion

According to IBAMA's notion of preservation, this term does not include people. Their conservationism is dichotomizing “parks” from “people” and ignoring the fact that the Indians previously lived in symbiosis with the forests, rivers and coastal areas. It is illegal to log trees. But in order to open a field one has to cut down trees, most of which, according to the Indians, are not in danger of extinction. It is illegal to kill animals, even poisonous snakes. But what is one to do when such creatures enter the house? Is the Indian part of Nature or not? Obviously, IBAMA's rather

static view on Nature considers it to be unchanging and fixed in opposition to Culture, which is considered changeable and flexible. The park has been set apart and forbidden; a symbolic act which further strengthens the position of Nature as something holy and untouchable -- not to be tampered with. But how is it possible to exist within a natural habitat without affecting nature?

It is simply not possible.

This means that the Pataxó are balancing on the edge between survival and Brazilian law, with the danger of being caught breaking environmental regulations all the time. Not only does this strengthen the position of IBAMA and their effort to get rid of the Indians, but it also undermines the symbolic and political power of the Indians as natural symbols of ecologically harmonious ways. In other words, they are very likely to lose the game of symbols in which impression management is so important to gain acknowledgement as Indians. Of course, within a modern discourse and notion of what a “true Indian” consists of, *He* would never harm *Nature*. One who does would obviously have to be a “false Indian” – and not worthy of any special treatment.

The landscape has changed, and so has the worldview and way of living among the Pataxó. It would be wrong to conclude that the Pataxó are not sincerely concerned about preserving their traditional culture. And it would be wrong to suggest that they are inventing a fake identity. But this does not exclude the possibility that when poverty can be avoided by enhancing an ethnic identity based on a specific discourse, the process of developing cultural symbols and displaying them will evolve more rapidly. All of a sudden a “traditional authenticity” has become of great importance. Today, the Pataxó are increasingly fast attaching a reflective perspective upon themselves as a people according to external discourses on Indians, in which essentialism lies at the core.

CHAPTER 6: RALLYING THE STREETS OF SALVADOR

In this chapter I will try to illustrate how symbolic power connected to acknowledgement as “true Indians” may successfully be transformed into practical politics. There are several levels of the Pataxó’s political struggle for land, many of which take place on a higher political level. The ILO-convention on Indigenous’ rights has already been ratified by Brazil, recognizing Indigenous’ rights to land, to participation in decisions affecting them and to their own culture, religion and way of life. In Brazil, Indians have a constitutional right to land, in addition to other judicial rights to health services and special education. However, having abstract rights is no guarantee that these will actually be put to practice. In most cases, additional political pressure is necessary.

In April 2004 I traveled to Salvador with the Pataxó of FLP to rally against FUNASA. Joining us were CIMI and two other Indian ethnicities -- the Tupinambá and the Pataxó Hã Hã Hãe. I have chosen to describe this incident at length as I consider it an illustration of how Indian ethnicity can be successfully displayed frontstage in order to gain political influence.

6.1 Background for the rally

The government does nothing on its own. We’re going to Salvador to ensure that they actually do the things to which we have a constitutional right!

FUNASA is responsible for providing health services to all Indians, and they are supposed to visit every village once a week. However, their equipment and medicines are very limited, and often they fail to come at all (especially during rainfall). Dental problems are solved the cheapest way: by simply pulling out the aching tooth. The Pataxó typically have to wait weeks to receive treatment for simple matters like infected wounds, headaches, fevers, etc, and none of the villages ever received extra medicine to store in case of emergencies. It usually takes hours for the ambulance to arrive

because of long distances and the lack of telephones in the villages. Hence, there is seldom time to save life in case of a serious injury.



Above: FUNASA entering Tibá on one of their weekly visits. Photo: Annette Bull

After years of complaining to FUNASA's local health administration, FLP and CIMI decided that it was time to address the matter on a higher political level. Administrative problems are seldom solved locally. But it is equally difficult to address such matters on higher political levels. Whose responsibility is it anyway? Politicians in Brasilia generally respond that practical policy implementation is a local responsibility of the municipality (in Itamarajú/Prado/Porto Seguro), the state (in Salvador) or (in case of legal complaints) a matter for the *Procuradoria* (in Ilhéus). As one Pataxó explained to me:

We won't resolve the question of land just by fighting the landowners here, no. Indians will die, Whites will die, *fazendeiros* will die... And so we will only continue this suffering for another 500 years without solving anything. These journeys are necessary. We go to

Itamarajú to talk to IBAMA and FUNAI, although we solve none of the problems there. And in Ilhéus we solve nothing either. But in order to go to Brasilia we need to visit Ilhéus first, then we go to Salvador and then we go to Brasilia. If we go directly to Brasilia they'll only say that it is the responsibility of the *Procuradoria* in Ilhéus. And if we haven't already been there, we're ordered to go. That is why we have to go first to Ilhéus, he-he-he, and so on! Can you believe it?

Within the complex bureaucracy of modern Brazil, it is hard to establish a practical follow-up of indigenous juridical rights. The Constitution simply states that Indians have a right to their traditional land. However, who is an Indian, what is traditional land and where should the borders of such land be set, are concerns linked to a practical policy implementation, which are not easily answered. Every matter concerning indigenous' rights has to be presented on a different political and bureaucratic level, from top to bottom. Consequently, Indian political influence is dependant on a lot of traveling over vast distances. As Indians consist of a relatively weak interest group they are frequently ignored. Corruption on all political levels further complicates the situation. Hence, demanding concrete steps to be taken by Brazilian authorities is exceptionally difficult.

Nevertheless, at the end of April, FLP and CIMI decided it was about time to address FUNASA's poor management of health services to the regional office in Salvador. The rally was to be organized by CIMI in cooperation with CUT (the Union) in Salvador, as well as by representatives from the Pataxó, the Pataxó Hã Hã Hãe and the Tupinambá.

6.2 Leaving Cumuruxatiba: the problem of CIMI

Everyone was supposed to meet at CIMI's headquarters in Eunápolis where CIMI had rented a bus for the trip. Eunápolis is located approximately 600 km South of Salvador and 80 km west of Cumuruxatiba. We were going to travel at night, followed by a street rally the next day and return that night.

Most Pataxó villages are located far apart and have no telephone. As a result, there were misunderstandings as to how many could participate from each village. There were additional misunderstandings concerning the connecting bus to Eunápolis from Itamarajú, resulting in everyone from Cumuruxatiba (representing Tibá, Barra do Cahy, Serra Verde and Alegria Nova) being forced to wait at Itamarajú central bus station for more than 8 hours. The warriors claimed to have been recognized by passing gunmen in the street while waiting, and expressed deep frustration that CIMI had unnecessarily put them in such danger.

Hungry and tired upon arrival in Eunápolis at night, CIMI told the Indians that the bus was already overbooked, and that at least two Indians had to return. This caused a lot of quarrelling, nearly resulting in physical confrontation between CIMI's regional coordinator and some of the Indians. Traveling to distant places is considered one of the few benefits of being part of the Indian movement, and obviously no one wanted to return. It took three hours of negotiating before finally two Indians from Monte Pascoal reluctantly agreed to return to their village (I was somehow allowed to join the trip by both parties, although I volunteered to stay). Yet the episode created great dissatisfaction towards CIMI, followed by additional complaints that some Indians received beverages during dinner while others did not. One protest fueled another and soon everyone was moaning that CIMI would not pay for toothbrushes or soap bars for those without, that the bread was too dry, the soda too warm, etc. Before long the whole bus was making jokes about the "rich" and "selfish" staff of CIMI, while CIMI's regional coordinator was trying hard to ignore everything by pretending to be asleep in his seat.

The episode clearly suggests a general disapproval of CIMI among the Indians, as previously discussed in chapter 3.7.

6.3 Backstage: the difference that became apparent

We arrived in Salvador early the next morning and went to CUT's office downtown. Inside, hundreds of Indians from the Pataxó, Pataxó Hã Hã Hãe and Tupinambá were already gathered. All of them were dressed up in loincloths, feathers, painting and war-like costumes. People were obviously in good spirits, laughing and joking while helping each other paint their bodies. Although living far apart, there is still a strong sense of solidarity and common cause between these three ethnic groups. Many warriors and *pajés* (spiritual leaders) have participated in retakings by the other groups and sense an intimate cross-ethnic friendship. The difference between Indian and White suddenly became very obvious.

I found it somewhat difficult to justify my own presence and felt completely alienated from my informants who seemed to have lost all interest in *Branços* as they were sharing a pipe with their fellow "relatives" of the Tupinambá. The feeling of alienation was further strengthened when I was introduced to a Tupinambá Indian who, upon hearing I was an anthropologist, condescendingly replied: "Oh, just another one..." Then he shrugged and, disinterested in further conversation, turned his back on me before I could reply. The framework for interacting was obviously creating a dividing line between White and Indian. By clearly demonstrating Indians' knowledge of anthropologists and how fed up they are with "noble White men" and "indigenous experts", the Tupinambá was most efficiently able to attach our brief meeting to a larger narrative of the relation between Whites and Indians by simply turning his back on me.

The Indian leaders held several speeches, urging everyone to cede from alcohol, as it would affect the whole rally negatively. The "Drunken Indian" was probably not a desirable image in this context. And then everybody went to dance Toré in the streets outside.

6.4 Toré, displaying the Nobel Savage

*Verde e amarelo é o cor do meu Brasil
A terra dos pataxós foi Cabral que invadiu
(Green and yellow are the colors of my Brazil
It was Cabral who invaded the Pataxó's land)*

Lyrics from a popular Toré song

Toré was danced by all the three ethnicities present, although there are differences in lyrics, style and performance. The participants form a circle where they dance while singing and shaking their maracas in rhythm with the music. Lyrics are mostly in Portuguese (some songs are in Pataxó) and every community has its own special songs and styles of performance. Toré is considered important to gather spiritual strength and fellowship as it invokes the spirits of ancestors. When the fellowship in a community is strong, people usually say: “Toré is strong within.” Sometimes participants go into trance while dancing, possessed by spirits. Toré can be strong or weak and is said to attract rain sometimes when the performance is extraordinarily strong. When a successful Toré is performed, everyone in the community is said to notice the effects.

People express a feeling of utter joy, positive energy and happiness both during and after a Toré performance. Afterwards, people typically state that “the strength of the community has increased,” “the unity and solidarity of the community has improved” or that “negative influence and forces have been chased away.”

As suggested by other anthropologists (see Batista, 2003), the Toré and Auê¹³ dances are central and of great importance to understanding Pataxó culture and cosmology. According to my informants

¹³ Auê is another Pataxó dance, mostly performed in communities further north, especially in Barra Velha. Toré is said to be a newly invented dance used by many different Indian ethnicities in the region. But the Pataxó often sing Auê songs in Pataxó language while performing Toré, and there is no general opinion on the difference between the two as every community has its own style and way of dancing. Auê is Pataxó for “dance.”

their struggle for land is completely dependant on Toré, as the dance is what unites past and present, Indians and ancestors, good forces vs. evil, etc. The dance unites them against their enemies, and is an important symbolic act, differentiating “us” from “them.” It is both a representation and presentation of the struggle, identity and connection through time and space with ancestors and other spirits. According to my informants there would be no Indian struggle without Toré.



Above: The Pataxó of Alegria Nova performing Toré. Photo: Annette Bull

I will not go into further analysis of the symbolic importance of Toré dance here, as this is not the purpose of this analysis. But important to note is that Toré is both an important symbolic act to the Indians, as well as being a powerful outward display of ethnicity and traditional customs. Toré invokes strong feelings and is danced with passion by its participants. The act and mode of dancing

is embodied and thus part of people's *habitus*. Hence, frontstage and backstage unite during Toré. Such embodied symbolism makes the audience experience the display as even more authentic. Consequently, frontstage and impression management in this specific political context is also part of shared meaning and life experience among the participants.

6.5 The occupation of FUNASA

As the performance took place outside CUT, many people stopped by - deeply fascinated by the impressive show. As the crowd grew, more and more Indians joined the circle of dancers in the street. Soon the whole street was crammed with people, and it was interesting to observe the attention they were able to command. People pointed, laughed and took photos while lifting children on their shoulders to better see what was going on. Everyone was amazed by the spectacular show. A symbolic representation of "true Indians" -- the *Noble Savage* -- was successfully being presented to a cheering crowd. Obviously, none of the Indians would appreciate the participation of a *Branco* very much (and probably not the spectators either) so I took photos just like every other non-Indian (thus, in a Goffmanian perspective, fulfilling my expected part of the performance). Painted Indian warriors sang and shouted resistance slogans in front of the crowd. As the street became jam-packed, everyone began to move down the street.

We rallied the streets of Salvador for hours, shouting and singing while at least three TV-stations, accompanied by additional photographers and journalists, were filming every move. Once more, Toré was performed in the streets, followed by TV-interviews and photo sessions. The sidewalks were crammed with spectators. And then everyone headed for FUNASA's building. One of the Indians constantly shouted slogans in a microphone: "Indians of Bahia are being massacred, but we're not dead! You all know that Indians are being killed, but yet you do nothing! We are dying of diseases, the government does nothing!"



Left: Indians rallying the streets of Salvador. Photo: Knut Lakså

The Indians were received amiably at FUNASA's doorstep and invited to a formal meeting with three regional directors. The Indians were animated and spoke boldly of what they demanded – far more direct than usual. One by one every *cacique* spoke of his village's problems: sick and elders dying, children suffering and lack of medicines. The directors replied that FUNASA had a strict budget to attend. Nothing could be done at this level of bureaucracy - although they all sympathized a lot with the Indians (on a personal level). They promised to inform Brasilia of the Indians' conditions, hoping for a budgetary increase next year. This was not received lightly. The Indians kept demanding an immediate solution, and became more and more boisterous. After hours of negotiations they suddenly stated that no one would leave the building until they had concrete results

in hand. FUNASA's regional directors were firmly rejected as people with "nice words of no practical value." Once more the Indians began dancing.

6.6 Political attention from Brasilia

Going to Brasilia does not work; first we have to go here because we're in Bahia. And now we are waiting, hoping that FUNASA will listen to our demands.

People came rushing from other floors and offices to see what was going on, as the noise of hundreds of singing and stomping Indians was impossible to ignore. A dance circle was formed around the 7th floor elevators, corridors and offices. Every participant was dancing with even more passion and determination than before, many soaked in sweat. The air was gray with smoke from (mostly) the Tupinambá who continuously smoked their pipes. Some employees invited Indians for coffee and soon bureaucrats and Indians were having coffee together, eating biscuits and conversing while surrounded by other dancing Indians. The contrast was simply remarkable.

Symbols of ethnicity constitute an important element of the relationship between the Pataxó and others. In this context it was fairly obvious that mobilizing meaningful, profound symbols succeeded in establishing political control. The contrast, the authenticity and the ability to connect their demands and present situation to a much larger narrative about injustice towards Brazil's indigenous population gave the act an immense political power. I was no less than astonished by how the Indians had firmly dismissed the Bahia state directors of FUNASA, but were nonetheless allowed to stay in the building.

After several hours the regional directors returned to inform everyone that the national director of the Department for Indigenous Health (*Departamento de Saúde Indígena*, DSEI) was coming on the next flight from Brasilia. Not knowing what to do with the angry Indians, they had pleaded with

Brasilia for help on the telephone. Obviously, the national media coverage of Indians rallying in the streets of Salvador had attracted serious political attention - enough to make even national politicians concerned.



Above: Indians dancing Toré while being interviewed by the national TV station “Globo”. Photo: Knut Lakså

The Indians did not know whether or not to trust these promises and what to expect, but boldly stated that none of them were afraid if it came down to fighting the police. This hardly seemed probable considering the massive media coverage, though. Several Brazilian journalists were still inside the building, and TV cameras had covered the entire rally live to national news bulletins. The image of Indians being beaten by the police would simply draw too much negative attention¹⁴. In

¹⁴ During the 500-year celebration in 2000 there was an alternative commemoration in Porto Seguro that was crushed violently by the police. As a result Brazil received worldwide negative PR concerning the treatment of its indigenous peoples. This, along with similar cases in the past, is probably why Brazilian authorities are careful to avoid similar public acts of violence towards Indians.

addition, CUT was originally established by President Lula himself, which might as well be the reason why they were allowed to stay. In any case, it is obvious that the dancing, the feathers, the words and the speeches had most successfully led to political attention few others among Brazil's poorest population could ever dream of achieving.

6.7 Negotiations: practical politics vs. practical problems

Some guy is coming to negotiate with us from Brasilia, so let's see what will happen. FUNASA isn't doing their job, and we have many demands for them!

Around midnight the director of DSEI finally arrived. The Indians were still dancing, and kept on doing it for a long time just to emphasize their indifference to him. Eventually, a table and some chairs were arranged, and the meeting was formally opened.

The director was polite and told the hostile crowd of angry Indians that he was very happy and honored to discuss such important issues with them. He proudly stated that he had brought along an additional grant of 50.000 R\$ from Brasilia to cover their demands. All they had to do was to agree on the terms and conditions. At first everyone was surprised. Was it really that simple? But then people began arguing on several issues concerning such an approach. Was this an additional grant just for one year? What about next year? What about corruption within FUNASA's local administration? As the negotiations began I tried to note the different points of view being presented on behalf of the two parties, and the reality upon which their arguments were based.

This is basically what was said:

GENERAL THEME OF DISCUSSION	INDIANS (LOCAL REALITY)	FUNASA (BUREAUCRATIC REALITY)
Lack of ambulances to transport the ill	Illness does not wait! Why should we wait another 1 1/2 months? People are dying as we speak and more people will die!	Because of bureaucratic processes it takes a minimum of 1 ½ month to require a car for the health posts. It is necessary to invite tender, make the right petitions, acquire requisitions, etc.
Keeping cars in the villages	We don't have any telephones, and people die because they have to be brought all the way to Porto Seguro. It is too far; we need cars in the villages.	We cannot offer each and every village a car of its own. The cars need a resort, and the health posts are the only fit places.
Local municipalities have public cars which are not in use	We need cars; the local authorities have several cars they don't use. What is the harm in taking them?	We cannot take cars from the municipalities; it is illegal.
Bureaucratic processing time	Our people are dying now!	We know it takes time, but we have to follow the law. We have to abide public regulations concerning tendering and requisitions.
Indigenous' rights	Usually it is other people with cars who save lives, not FUNASA. But it is your duty to offer us a satisfying health service! We have rights, but we have "to chase after them."	Many people are asking for money. This additional grant of 50.000 R\$ is all we can offer this year.
General disapproval	We have no medicines, no cars, no money to repair broken cars, no communication, etc.	When FUNAI was responsible for Indigenous Health the annual budget was only 6 million R\$, but with FUNASA it has increased to 85 million R\$.
Radio and communication	FUNASA promised every village a radio when they assumed the responsibility for Indigenous Health, but this promise was not kept. Many communities are located in distant areas. Snakebite means death because you only have 2 hours. 4-5 radios are not sufficient, and every village will think it is needier than the others.	We do not have sufficient money to grant every village a radio. Maybe four or five villages will get one.

At five in the morning the negotiations were closed, and it was agreed which conditions were acceptable. The result was that every group received some extra medical equipment, two extra cars and a couple of radios – all of which were going to be located at the health posts. Obviously FUNASA wanted to generate good public relations. A one time grant of 50.000 R\$ is not really that much money, and it was probably not going to change FUNASA's practice a whole lot. None of my informants believed that this was all it took to solve their problems.

The bus back to Higianópolis left immediately after the negotiations.

6.8 The Indians about Salvador

People were happy about the trip, and on our way back to Cumuruxatiba everyone seemed to be content by the extra cars and equipment they had secured. They all considered the director from Brasilia a real “*esperto*,” though -- smooth-spoken, clever and sly¹⁵. The Indians believed they might have achieved better results if the *caciques* had been more demanding. Few of the Pataxó actually dared to raise their voices during the negotiations, while the Tupinambá and the Pataxó Hã Hã Hãe leaders were less shy. Their cultural code of avoiding direct confrontations may be why they perceived the negotiations as difficult. But everyone was entirely content that the Chief Director of DSEI had actually come all the way from Brasilia to negotiate.

Within the national state of Brazil, Indians have achieved a symbolical role promoting national identity and ecologically harmonious ways of living. Because they are considered closer to “Nature” and an imaginary Eden than “Culture” they are perceived as something akin to mythical creatures. This myth does not only provide Indians with political power, but also assures that any politician who is publicly accused of not helping to preserve the last “wild Indians” will lose credibility and political support. As Brazil has a long history of exterminating these peoples, the national guilty conscience has the power to commit the Brazilian state and its politicians to (at least pretend to) preserve the last few natives. What is important to note however, is that there tends to be a great discrepancy between how national politicians treat the question of Brazil’s indigenous population and how locals perceive the question. Considering Brazil’s decentralized structure of power, corruption and nepotism, influence on a national level does not necessarily lead to any solutions to practical challenges on a local level. As Ramos (1998) shows, many among Brazil’s regional

¹⁵ Interestingly enough, the same director from Brasilia was accused of corruption only two weeks later and forced to leave his position. Allegedly, he had been one of several individuals responsible for large-scale corruption within FUNASA, responsible of the theft of more than 30 million R\$ from the national health budget.

population argue quite bluntly that Indians should either be killed off or pushed back into the wilderness. Pataxó narratives of violence and prosecution illustrate the same point. When actually faced with an economic conflict of interest because of Indian presence, the enchanted romanticism seems to vanish instantly.

Although the Pataxó were able to actually achieve something in Salvador, the additional grant of 50.000 R\$ was perceived by everyone as a clever strategy from the government to avoid any long-term commitment. No one believed it would be sufficient to make a significant change in health services back in Cumuruxatiba. Still, receiving national attention from the media and promises from Brasilia was extraordinary. Cheerfully, everyone agreed that the Pataxó struggle might be hard but far from impossible. Moved by the successful rally one *cacique* proudly stated that “(...) people are actually beginning to believe in us. We saw it while walking in the streets of Salvador; they were filming us, and everything... People are finally starting to believe that we exist!”

The successful journey was celebrated with soda pops and muffins on the back of a pick-up truck from Itamarajú to Cumuruxatiba.

6.9 Conclusion

Considering the fact that a relatively weak interest group was able to achieve such negotiations, I believe the rally in Salvador clearly illustrates how strong ethnic (Indian) symbolism can be within a modern discourse on *The Other*. The Director and the Indians clearly represented two different realities and perspectives in which the contents of their discourses were emphasizing rather different aspects of reality. One was the bureaucratic, formalistic and political reality in which abstract principles and regulations were important. The other one consisted of concrete day-to-day needs in which the abstract principle of rights to health was only important as a means to solve practical

problems. Whereas politics is about implementation of policy according to the totality of needs and demands in society, demanding rights is about changing the policy already implemented.

National political rhetoric concerning Indians in Brazil is linked to a Brazilian national identity and origin. As Ramos (1998) shows, many Brazilians have a romantic idea when it comes to Brazil's native population. Such an image provides today's Indians with a strong symbolic power, both with respect to Brazil's international relations and the public opinion in general. Hence, to gain influence it is essential to be identified as native Indians and victims of colonization. The discourse in which Indians are depicted as *Noble Savages* is, in fact, fundamental. But even though this strategy may be successful from time to time, there are catches as well. They cannot be considered "half-breeds" or "false Indians," as this would not grant any support or moral obligation from the government.

Strategic wielding of cultural symbols, as in the case of FUNASA, can lead to success. But it could equally lead to disaster if the symbols are not perceived as authentic.

What matters to the Pataxó are not the theoretical principles of human rights, indigenous rights or the law itself. They are mostly concerned about solving practical everyday challenges and survival. Being poor, landless and Indian are three social stigmas that can potentially be inverted through ethnic revitalization and a demand for political solutions. However, the result of implementing abstract principles of indigenous' rights into practical politics is not given. Such a process is open to interpretation on many levels within local and national bureaucracy, involving different actors with different agendas. Political rhetoric on a national level does not necessarily lead to local changes.

What is considered fair or unfair makes little difference to policy makers unless it harms their public image. But as local authorities tend to either ignore the Indians or be closely associated with their enemies, political pressure on a national level is crucial to achieve any changes at all.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The Pataxó's main problems are that they are poor, unemployed and stigmatized. Violence has forced them to flee, leaving them at the mercy of paid labor under harsh conditions at plantations or in the cities. They have experienced enormous changes in their environment, culture and way of life during the past decades, and many have chosen to under-communicate an ethnic identity as Indian. However, a changing view on indigenous populations and their collective rights has provided the Pataxó with a political resource that could possibly change their present situation. Consequently, entrepreneurs among the Pataxó have decided to introduce a new form of social organization through indigenous associations such as FLP, in order to achieve such political influence.

In the first part of this thesis I explained how the framework for indigenous movements and NGOs is constructed within specific modern ideas of *The Other*. I have further demonstrated the paradoxical relationship between Indians and the Brazilian state. Despite forming part of a Brazilian national identity as the *Noble Savages*, they are still regarded as a problem for economic expansion, investments and control of natural resources. The latter is exemplified through Pataxó narratives and experiences of harassment and violence. I suggest that not only is this part of a discourse in which Indians are defined as "animals", "better off dead", etc, but it is also an important part of defining the Pataxó and Indian nations in general as opposed to Brazil and non-Indians. The narratives of suffering have a constituting element in which Indians are victimized, and thus have a moral right to their demands. This is not only expressed externally in political contexts, but also internally to mobilize a common narrative of what it means to be Indian. Spiritual protection against violence and narratives of bravery has offered hope to other Pataxó, thus mobilizing a social movement. FLP provides means to deal with the violence, something that also inspires other Indians to join. Without such faith, the whole movement would probably be futile.

Notions of the *Noble Savage* have provided Indians with a political resource they consciously make use of to gain influence. In the case of the Pataxó and FLP, they are currently illegally occupying a national park controlled by IBAMA. While waiting for FUNAI to decide whether or not a demarcation of Pataxó Indigenous Territory will include the park, IBAMA has reluctantly decided to let the Indians stay. However, considering a weakening FUNAI and how slow the process of demarcation is, it is essential that the Indians promote themselves as “living in harmony with Nature” through “traditional” indigenous knowledge. IBAMA has denied them use of the forests resources, without offering any food supplies or economic aid to compensate. The result is that the Pataxó are forced to play a game of impression management in which they promote their assumed traditional knowledge as “sustainable,” but where they are, in fact, forced to break environmental regulations every day, thereby risking expulsion.

7.1 Patterns of conservation

Janice Harper (2002) has studied the process of preservation through national parks on Madagascar, and how this specific idea of conservation can be traced back to how Yellowstone National Park in the USA was established. Similar to Diegues (2002), she suggests that this model is dichotomizing “parks” from “people” and that:

(...) by revising history to suggest that Native Americans never played a significant role in the Yellowstone region, the concept of the ecosystem as pristine and untouched by humans prior to settlement by Whites was reified; in other words it became possible to argue that there was a “natural” state which could be preserved for the enjoyment of visitors (Harper, 2002: 225).

As in Discovery Park, Harper shows that the government of Madagascar, on advice from USAID, has chosen to deny poor people use of the forest’s natural resources. These examples are not unique. Close to ten percent of the Earth’s surface consists of protected areas (McNeely and Scherr in

Harper, 2002). Sixteen of 25 biologically diverse hotspots are located in areas of high malnutrition. In fact, these areas encompass nearly one quarter of all the undernourished people in the developing world. De facto, Brazil has much larger under-nutrition rates in the vicinity of biologically diverse hotspots than the country as a whole (McNeely and Scherr in Harper, 2002: 224).

The current policy of preservation will, according to Harper (2002), only lead to increased environmental degradation unless it is linked to broader economic issues. Preservation should not only demand changes among Earth's poorest and most powerless people, but also from the rest of us. This is sustained by Diegues (2002) who also argues that in underdeveloped countries conservation would be better achieved through real integration and participation of traditional populations, who, to a great extent, are responsible for maintaining a biological diversity we are today trying to rescue (Diegues, 2002: 11). Large parts of what is considered "wild" in the Amazon are in fact, cultivated by indigenous populations. Increased production, pollution and consumption in wealthier countries are the real issues that threaten to bring environmental destruction, while islands of wilderness are preserved at the expense of starving people. Secondly, if currently protected land areas remain wildlife habitat, between 30-50% of the species will be lost because the surrounding landscape brings alien invasive species, pollution and development pressure (McNeely and Scherr in Harper, 2002:228). This means that not only do such areas affect poor and stigmatized people negatively, but they also fail to fulfill the goal of preserving biodiversity.

Protected areas, especially those with restricted use, express a particular relationship between humans and nature. The US model of preservation is based upon the myth of an untouched natural paradise, similar to the image of Eden. It is also based upon another images of "reactive conservationism" in which the natural world is attributed with all the virtues and society all the vices (Diegues, 2002:10). Even now, at this period in history when urban-industrialized societies have

secularized the world and seemingly weakened the power of mythology, the image of preserved areas and “virgin nature” confirm that myths can still be reborn under the shade of rationality (Diegues, 2002: 10).

The myth of preservation is just as much a myth as the “ecologically noble savage.” Although some indigenous peoples indisputably possess intimate knowledge of the workings of their natural surroundings, it does not mean that their indigenous knowledge “naturally” provides them with an ecologically sustainable management of resources. This however, is the myth in which they are provided with a certain symbolic and political influence within the complex framework of the Western world.

7.2 Mirror images of modernity

The Pataxó themselves are mainly concerned with everyday challenges. They want to feed their families. They want to avoid hostile conflicts and violence. They want their children to grow up. They want a school and they want money. In short, they want to change their social position to achieve material goods -- something quite the opposite of what the Western World wants from the *Noble Savage*.

Nordanger (1997) describes the modern myth of the *Noble Savage* as a part of other social levels than local reality. He argues that aid to Bolivia only provides jobs to the educated elite, while the actual indigenous people in local communities receive little aid. The problem is that donors define the purpose of the money, while NGOs try to satisfy every demand to gain funding. Consequently, “indigenous” becomes part of a fictitious reality and a discourse of modern centers instead of being based upon local wishes, values and goals (Nordanger, 1997:224). Nordanger further argues that this level of what he refers to as the “ethnic alliance” is mainly consisting of actors critical of modernity

and their own society. Within such rhetoric it is favorable to use examples from less known populations, generally referred to as *The Others*. Based upon these populations, a romantic idea of utopia emerges heralding how modern societies once used to live. Solidarity and environmental movements can use these ethnic groups to promote values to which most people would agree. A mirror image of modernity is presented through indigenous peoples. They illustrate examples of alternatives to modernity through the specific understanding we have of them, and they become a living example for us to follow. Most people are concerned about the problems of their own society, and it is vital for governments to assert these goals, if not only to score a rhetorical point before voters (Nordanger, 1997: 225).

The ever-growing global ecological catastrophe is one example. It is a process of destruction, which continuously keeps us worried, but not enough to truly do anything about it. This modern apathy is challenged when indigenous peoples become the (idolized) proof that it is still possible to live in harmony with nature and each other. Although some may claim that cultural variety and stigmatization is why special attention is promoted for indigenous peoples, Nordanger still holds that “the indigenous cause” is mainly dominated by people standing up for a culture of which they would not actually like to be a part. For instance, CIMI is, in general, not especially concerned about the factual local reality of indigenous peoples. Rather they are more likely interested in politics, rhetoric and modernity connected to the relationship between Brazil and its indigenous populations. Other examples are environmentalist organizations such as the Rainforest Foundation or companies such as Body Shop and their alliance with peoples from the Xingu Indigenous Park. This is not to criticize the work undertaken by these institutions, but to call attention to the underlying romanticism and critique of Western modernity that constitutes the basis of such coalitions. Such “ethnic alliances” are further connected to practices in industrialized countries by approval of formalized rights such as the ILO-convention (Nordanger, 1997). It is all part of the same myth.

During my stay, FLP representatives not only traveled to Salvador, but also to Brasilia where they occupied the national assembly and managed to get a meeting with President Lula himself. They may be poor, stigmatized, victims of violence and harassed in their local settings, but on the national stage they are the pride of the nation and treated accordingly. On this level of authority their ethnicity provides a political influence otherwise impossible. If Nordanger is correct that the myth of the *Noble Savage* is mainly part of other social levels than local reality, then that explains why FLP can achieve so much attention on the national stage, but not at the local level.

7.3 Differences in scale and abundance, frontstage and backstage

The structural relationship between marginalized groups and the national state has generated similar conflicts of interest in many parts of the world. Modernity and romanticism for the *Noble Savage* have led to formalized rights and earmarked transfers to indigenous populations, resulting in common structural features among many different populations. I have, in this thesis analyzed FLP's struggle in view of comparable cases such as Hovland's study of modernity among the Sámi (1996) and Nordanger's study of Bolivian indigenous NGOs (1997). However, it is important to also be aware of the differences between these cases.

Similar to my own research, Hovland stresses the link between frontstage and backstage of Sámi ethnopolitics. He emphasizes the difficulties among those of the Sámi who do not constitute a pure category and become hybrids within the political framework of ethnopolitics – a problem similar to that of the Pataxó. Although a similar issue, there are differences with regard to scale and wealth between the two different examples. While the Norwegian Sámi live in a small but extremely wealthy country where land is abundant, the Pataxó live in one of Brazil's poorest regions where land is scarce and they are forced to compete with a much larger population. Although the Sámi also

have a long history of suppression and have their own difficulties, they would not face the same critical consequences as the Pataxó, should they not be acknowledged as indigenous. In the case of the Pataxó, acknowledgment is a matter of survival. It is a matter of sustaining themselves and their families, and they have few alternatives besides demarcation of their territory in order to grow fields. Consequently, the Sámi and the Pataxó can only be said to face the same challenges to a certain extent because of the enormous differences in scale and abundance.

Nordanger focuses on indigenous leaders he considers illegitimate because they neither represent their people's perspectives nor do they wish to preserve their ethnic identity; they are simply adapting to an external discourse imposed by international donors. The indigenous population in his research is not really interested in preserving their culture, but wants to gain economic development and goods. The same innovative actors who promoted themselves as "workers" and "the proletariat" during the 1970s are today marketing their image as "indigenous populations," thus simply adapting to an external discourse on aid.

The main difference between my own research and Nordanger's seems to be that I consider my informants from FLP legitimate representatives of their people, while Nordanger considers his informants the educated, cultural elite and illegitimate representatives. Contradictory to Nordanger, I hold the position that frontstage and backstage ethnopolitics cannot be separated, while Nordanger seems to doubt there is any substantial part of this identity that can be considered factual. Although his perspective reveals important mechanisms of power, the analysis still neglects to explain the origin of ethnic symbols.

Ethnic symbols are not arbitrary. On the contrary, their origin is based upon a shared meaning among people. In the case of the Pataxó, it is obvious that identity is indeed depicted consciously

and strategically in political contexts. In political rhetoric they are constantly emphasizing their belonging to the land, that they are descendants of the first people and how violence against Indian nations is still used to suppress them. Ethnic symbols such as Toré, body painting, loin-cloth, spears, feathers, ornaments and decorations are further used to demonstrate that despite their struggle, the Indians are still here. However, these narratives and symbols are not only part of frontstage ethnopolitics but also part of shared life experiences among the Pataxó. I fail to see how identity politics can be successful unless it is based upon certain facts and actual lived experience. Identities cannot simply be invented out of nothing. Although the Pataxó fight for land and economic development is evident, this struggle did not begin in 1988 with Brazil's new constitution or with the increasing global awareness for the "indigenous cause" during the 1990s. FLP's struggle cannot be reduced to merely consist of innovative entrepreneurs pursuing economic benefits.

7.4 Final remarks

Most of the Pataxó have chosen not to be Indians. Due to lack of land and work they have been forced to migrate south and settle down in the slums of big cities like São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro. There, their ethnicity no longer matters. All that matters is that they have no education, no property, no money and no way of sustaining themselves but to work as cheap labor. They are forced to compete against millions of other poor people migrating from North East Brazil to the big cities in hope of new opportunities. Hence, they have become part of the poorest segment of the Brazilian population -- a population of which approximately one third have a monthly consumption of less than 108 R\$, according to *Centro de Políticas Sociais* (www.fqv.br/cps). Some may be able to make it, but most of them will probably end up among the poorest of the poor in the slums, the *favelas* - well known for notorious high crime rates, drug trafficking and violence. Being acknowledged as Indian will probably offer far better prospects for the future.

Hovland's study of the Sámi people in Norway is a successful story about how ethnicity can be turned to a political resource. And there are other examples of success, such as the demarcation of the Yanomami territory in northern Brazil in 1992. What remains to be seen is if a mixed people such as the Pataxó are able to achieve the same success, lacking the wealth of the Sámi and the presumed ethnic purity of the Yanomami. Hopefully, the Technical Group from FUNAI will prove once and for all their historical belonging to the land. And hopefully, FUNAI will have the political will and ability to demarcate the Pataxó territory. It all depends on how well the Pataxó can manage their hybrid identity as a political resource.

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APPENDIX: ACRONYMS

- ANAÍ-BA:** Associação Nacional de Ação Indigenista da Bahia (*The National Association of Indigenist Action in Bahia*)
- CIMI:** Conselho Indigenista Missionário (*The Indigenist Missionary Council*)
- CUT:** Central Única dos Trabalhadores (*The Central Union of Workers*)
- DSEI:** Departamento de Saúde Indígena (*Department of Indigenous Health*)
- FLP:** Frente da Resistência e Luta Pataxó (*The Pataxó Resistance Front and Struggle*)
- FUNAI:** Fundação Nacional do Índio (*The National Foundation for Indians*)
- FUNASA:** Fundação Nacional de Saúde (*The National Health Foundation*)
- IBAMA:** Instituto Brasileiro do meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis (*The Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Natural Renewable Resources*)
- IBDF:** Instituto Brasileiro de Desenvolvimento Florestal (*The Brazilian Institute for Forest Development*)
- ISA:** Instituto Socioambiental (*The Socialenvironmental Institute*)
- MEC:** Ministério da Educação e Cultura (*Ministry of Education and Culture*)
- MST:** Movimento Sem Terra (*The Landless Movement*)
- SPI:** Serviço de Proteção ao Índio (*The Service for Protection of the Indian*)
- USAID:** United States Agency for International Development