

## Environmental Laws

## People Katukina warns against misuse of kampô, the "vaccine sapo"

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Indians Cruzeiro do Sul, Acre, disclose letter denouncing unauthorized use of his name in marketing secretion frog *Phyllomedusa bicolor*, whose application has been published in the major cities of the country as a therapy indigenous miraculous. Meanwhile, the substance and its molecules are patented worldwide and the federal government tries to make kampô an emblematic case of benefit sharing related to genetic resources of Brazilian biodiversity.

The popularity of the secretion kampô frog (*Phyllomedusa bicolor*) in large Brazilian cities begins to worry the older keepers of this knowledge, the Katukina, indigenous people Cruzeiro do Sul, Acre. Earlier this month, the Association Katukina of Campinas (Akac) issued a letter requesting that people who make the business practice of "vaccine sapo", as the substance is known, do not use the name of ethnicity as a way to "legitimize" activity. The letter is directed in particular to two therapists, one of São Paulo and another in Belo Horizonte, mentioned by name in the document, which would be reliant on the name Akac to promote the application of the substance and profit from it. In the document, the Katukina also claim that the marketing of kampô brought problems for the indigenous community and ask that the practice is closed. Read [here](#) the full letter.

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The frog kampô is an important element in Indian culture Cruzeiro do Sul, Acre

The indigenous association sent copies of the letter to the offices of the Federal Police and the federal prosecutors in Rio Branco, and has twenty days to the misuse of kampô on behalf of the Indians was abandoned. The deadline ended yesterday, April 26. "We are worried because we do not allow anyone to use our knowledge. The police and the judiciary need to know that," says Fernando Katukina, vice president of Akac. The indigenous leader explained that the concern is regarding the use of the name of his people in the sale of applications secretion jia. "A lot of people promoting themselves upon our people, but we want the kampô be used legally, with respect to our knowledge and without stimulating biopiracy".

The use Katukina secretion primarily as a stimulant able to sharpen the senses of hunters, so the search for food in the woods to be successful. Sufferers *panema* (unlucky in hunting), so it is treated with applications of the substance. Anthropologist Coffaci Fabiana Lima, Federal University of Paraná, one of the greatest scholars of ethnicity, explains that, outside the context of hunting, men and women also make use of Katukina kampô. "From very early on, between the first and second year of life a child begins to receive kampô, often at the initiative of the grandparents," describes.

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Traditional knowledge of the Indians is the removal of secretion jia a delicate operation

Anthropologist says "this moderate use is done to relieve various ailments such as diarrhea and fever and drowsiness, which take people's morale to perform the simplest activities. But, even if we want to overcome the physical discomfort that cause various diseases, the use of kampô is determined much more by moral evaluation that makes discouragement they provide. After all, after being recommended as a stimulant to the hunters, the kampô is recommended to those who suffer from laziness (*tikish*)".

### **Panacea forest**

In recent years, the use of kampô has become popular among the population of large cities as a miraculous therapy indigenous. In leaflets indicating the substance is classified as a powerful energizing and strengthening the immune system, a true panacea capable of treating heart disease in general, hepatitis, cirrhosis, impotence, infertility, depression, among other illnesses. According to the promotional material, the kampô would be effective even in the treatment of cancer and AIDS. Each application secretion of amphibian - made on small open sores on the skin of the user from burns - would cost up to £ 120.00. The popularization of kampô also earned numerous articles in magazines and television, produced from the experience of journalists who underwent the effects of the substance.

Most narrators describes that after receiving the application kampô, sit in a few minutes a strong malaise, often accompanied by vomiting. Then, the kampô cause a feeling of regeneration of the whole organism and sharpening direction.

In 2004, the indiscriminate secretion increased so much that the National Health Surveillance Agency (ANVISA) has banned its propaganda, which had been mainly done on the internet. Months earlier, in April 2003, the leaders of the Indigenous Land Campinas / Katukina had officially requested the federal government to take steps to protect and enhance the traditional use of kampô by Indians. Besides Katukina Yawanawá, Kaxinawá and Marubo, among other indigenous peoples also have a cultural element in kampô important. The demand Katukina led the Ministry of Environment (MMA) to develop a design for, from the case of kampô, improve access to genetic resources of Brazilian biodiversity and benefit sharing to the holders of traditional knowledge.

### **Patented molecules**

The project has several partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations and also has among its goals, "contribute to the development of sustainable production chain 'vaccine sapo', promoting studies of the effects of application of the substance on the sociocultural and environmental sustainability, with a view to initiating a process that contributes to the analysis of the possibility of validating the use of non-traditional and traditional use protection that etnofármaco "as text of the ministry. In other words, the project aims to combat biopiracy kampô the research and develop medicines that result in secretion from amphibian that. According to survey done by the NGO Amazonlink, there are ten patent applications on *Philomedusa Bicolor* made by laboratories, universities or research center in patent offices abroad.

One of the project coordinators, Bruno Filizola, the Brazilian Program of Bioprospecting and Sustainable Development of Biodiversity Products (Probem), the MMA states that the secretion of the frog has about 200 molecules with commercial potential and that there are at least 80 requests for patent on the genre *Philomedusa* in patent offices worldwide. The records are focused on molecules with antimicrobial activity. The own and Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuaria (EMBRAPA), which is part of the government project about Kampo, has the patent of another kind of sapo, whose secretion also has properties with potential for the production of medicines.

Some Embrapa researchers even acknowledge that there is no traditional knowledge associated with the use of kampô. Argue that "science" had come to the knowledge of the properties of the genre *Philomedusa* , regardless of knowledge of the Indians of Acre. "Indeed many scientists have not yet internalized the principles of the CBD (Convention on Biodiversity)," recognizes Filizola. The CBD provides for the sharing of benefits from access to genetic resources of biodiversity to the holders of traditional knowledge associated with these resources. "The transformation of this cultural asset of Indians and market will certainly have an impact on indigenous communities. So we want to enable the production chain kampô "says Bruno Filizola.

The ISA's lawyer, Fernando Mathias, questions the effectiveness of the design of the Brazilian government in a case in which "biopiracy have been consummated." "What will the government do about the patents that already exist? This liability will be subject to negotiation between the Indians and companies? There will be space to discuss the break or at least the opening of patents already granted or the Indians will only receive a return in exchange for the privatization of their knowledge and the Brazilian genetic heritage?

"Question. "If that actually prevails in this and other cases are the interests of transnational pharmaceutical corporations, this government project runs the risk of no more than a smokescreen in the field of distribution of benefits."

**Learn more about Katukina.**

ISA, **Bruno Weis** .

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