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Fall 10-2018

Curupira

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Recommended Citation

Patchett, Gianna, "Curupira" (2018). *USU Student Folklore Fieldwork*. Paper 565.
https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/student_folklore_all/565

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Israel de Souza Carvalho
Manaus, Amazonas, Brasil
October 2018

Curupira (pronounced Coo-roo-peer-a)

Brazilian Legend (Supernatural Non-Religious)

Informant:

Israel (pronounced Is-hi-el) is a native Brazilian, native to the state of Amazonas. Manaus is the capital of Amazonas and is a fairly large city though less developed than other cities in Brazil. I met him as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints when I was serving in Manaus. He is a member of that church as well. He has indigenous heritage and strong indigenous features. He loves to tell crazy stories and is a great story teller. He is a bit of a jokester and likes to make fun of things. However, the stories he tells are ones that he believes in completely. He believes very strongly in the supernatural and seems to be well in tune with the strange things happening around him. He is in his early thirties, is married, and has two young children under the age of six. In the time that I have known him he has moved between a lot of different jobs. Though he and his family have very humble means, they seem to be happy.

Context:

Israel told me this story when I asked him for some legends from the Amazon Rainforest. He told me over Facebook Messenger using voice message. He spoke in his native Portuguese and I transcribed and then translated into English. However, just a funny note, Israel likes to joke about speaking English (he can only say a handful of phrases like “My name is...” “Speak English...”) so he jokingly said that he could come here to Utah State and tell us the stories in English. This particular legend is one that he was often told by his grandparents who lived in the villages in the jungle. He mentions in the story that his grandma lived in Urucurituba, a small village, when she saw the Curupira.

Text:

Portuguese:

Vou falar um pouco da lenda do Curupira que é um personagem da Amazônia e ela diz assim, bom, minha avó fala que a avó dela contava para ela que a lenda nos conta que o Curupira é a defensor dos animais, sendo ele um dos mais populares personagens do folclore brasileiro. Então é isso, entendeu? Só que ela continua dizendo que o Curupira gosta de sentar na sombra das

mangeiras para comer os frutos. Lá fica entretido deliciando cada manga mas percebendo que está sendo observado, logo sai correndo numa velocidade tão grande que a humana não consegue acompanhar. Não adianta correr atrás de um curupira.

Eu: Como o Curupira defende a floresta?

Israel: O Curupira, ele defende a mata, a fauna, a flora...eh, dos predadores tipo cortadores, destruidores demais, esse negócio todo entendeu, então ele só parece para as pessoas que vão fazer mal pra floresta. Assim minha avó contava que ela viu uma vez o Curupira também em vida quando ela tinha vinte anos aquele negócio todo que ela morava no interior Urucurituba. Mas esse mesmo a história do Curupira.

[Dito depois de uma segunda lenda contada na mesma mensagem] Então essas duas lendas estou contando para você. Se alguém tiver dúvida aí, pode falar para vim em Manaus, em Amazonas, e eles podem ver que é real, o encontro das águas e histórias reais e os antigos contam bem melhor que eu. Estou só te contando o que minha avó contou para mim, entendeu?

English Translation:

Israel: I will talk a little about the legend of the Curupira that is a person from the Amazon and the legend says this, well, my grandma said that her grandpa told her this legend and told us that the Curupira is the defender of the animals, him being one of the most popular people in Brazilian folklore. So it is this, understand? Only that my grandma continued saying that the Curupira likes to sit in the shade of the mango trees to eat the fruits. There it stays enjoying every mango but noticing that it is being observed, right away it leaves running at a velocity so fast that humans can't follow. It's no use running after a curupira.

Me: How does the Curupira defend the forest?

Israel: The Curupira, he defends the jungle, the animals, the plants...um, from the predators like those who cut down trees, people who destroy too much, this whole kind of thing understand, so he only appears for the people who will harm the forest. Like that my grandma said that saw a Curupira once in real life when she was twenty years old that whole thing when she lived in the interior of Urucurituba. But this is the story of the Curupira.

[After another legend told in the same conversation he said this] So these two legends that I'm telling you. If anyone has doubt there, you can tell them to come to Manaus, to Amazonas, and they can see that it is real, the meeting of the waters and the real stories and the elderly tell them way better than me. I'm just telling you what my grandma told to me, understand?

Texture:

Israel told me this story as true. The details are kind of spotty which I think is due to the medium of digital voice messages. In person, he tells much more detailed stories with more inflection and excitement. Over the voice messages, he told this story pretty straightforwardly and I had to ask for further clarification. Even with my asking, some things remained unclear because of his busy schedule and the distance between us.

Israel has a habit common in the Portuguese language to add the word "understand?" to the end of his sentences. Sometimes it is an actual question but mostly it is just habitual, especially because he told these stories in a voice message where I could not respond in real time.

He told me two different legends at the same time and ended his message with the final paragraph included in the text section. It is basically just an assurance that what he told is true and if anyone doubts it, they just need to come to Manaus and see for themselves.

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Introduction to Folklore/English 2210

Dr. Lynne S. McNeill

Fall 2018