

EDUCATION AND MEMORY: SOCIAL FUNCTION OF ELDERS IN TUPINAMBÁ
CULTURE (1612-1614)

*EDUCAÇÃO E MEMÓRIA: FUNÇÃO SOCIAL DOS ANCIÃOS NA CULTURA
TUPINAMBÁ (1612-1614)*

*EDUCACIÓN Y MEMORIA: FUNCIÓN SOCIAL DE LOS MAYORES EN LA
CULTURA TUPINAMBÁ (1612-1614)*



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ABSTRACT: The article analyzes the relationship between education, memory and the social function of elders in the Tupinambá culture, highlighting how this relationship contributed to the preservation and transmission of knowledge and cultural values of this indigenous community, in the period from 1612 to 1614. The historical sources are the travel chronicles of priests Claude d'Abbeville and Yves d'Evreux, compiled in the works "History of the Mission of the Capuchin Fathers on the Island of Maranhão and surrounding lands" and "Journey to the north of Brazil: made in the years 1612 to 1614", published respectively in 1614 and 1874. Through analysis of bibliographical references – mainly Abbeville (2008), Evreux (2002), Menezes (1995), Vernant (1973) and Zumthor (1997), it is attested that the elders contributed to the preservation of the memory and education of the youngest, as they were the guardians and transmitters of ancestral knowledge and practices.

KEYWORDS: Education. Memory. Tupinambá Elders. Transmission of knowledge. Tupinambá culture.

RESUMO: O artigo analisa a relação entre educação, memória e a função social dos anciãos na cultura Tupinambá, destacando como essa relação contribuiu para a preservação e transmissão de conhecimentos e valores culturais dessa comunidade indígena, no período de 1612 a 1614. As fontes históricas são as crônicas de viagens dos padres Claude d'Abbeville e Yves d'Evreux, compiladas nas obras "História da Missão dos Padres Capuchinhos na Ilha do Maranhão e terras circunvizinhas" e "Viagem ao norte do Brasil: feita nos anos de 1612 a 1614", publicadas respectivamente em 1614 e 1874. Por meio de análise de referencial bibliográfico – mormente Abbeville (2008), Evreux (2002), Menezes (1995), Vernant (1973) e Zumthor (1997), atesta-se que os anciãos contribuíram para a preservação da memória e educação dos mais jovens, pois eram os guardiões e transmissores dos saberes e práticas ancestrais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação. Memória. Anciãos Tupinambá. Transmissão de conhecimentos. Cultura Tupinambá.

RESUMEN: El artículo analiza la relación entre educación, memoria y función social de los ancianos en la cultura Tupinambá, destacando cómo esta relación contribuyó a la preservación y transmisión de conocimientos y valores culturales de esta comunidad indígena, en el período de 1612 a 1614. Las fuentes históricas son las crónicas de viaje de los sacerdotes Claude d'Abbeville e Yves d'Evreux, recopiladas en las obras "Historia de la misión de los Padres Capuchinos en la isla de Maranhão y tierras circundantes" y "Viaje al norte de Brasil: made in the years 1612 to 1614", publicados respectivamente en 1614 y 1874. A través del análisis de referencias bibliográficas –principalmente Abbeville (2008), Evreux (2002), Menezes (1995), Vernant (1973) y Zumthor (1997), se atestiguan que los mayores contribuyeron a la preservación de la memoria y la educación de los más jóvenes, al ser los guardianes y transmisores de conocimientos y prácticas ancestrales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación. Memoria. Ancianos Tupinambá. Transmisión de conocimientos. Cultura tupinambá.

Introduction

The article aims to analyze the relationship between education, memory and the social function of elders in the Tupinambá culture, highlighting how this relationship contributed to the preservation and transmission of knowledge and cultural values of this indigenous community, in the years 1612 to 1614. Methodologically, this is historical research based on the travel chronicles of priests Claude d' Abbeville and Yves d' Evreux.

The work “History of the mission of the Capuchin Friars on the Island of Maranhão and its surroundings”, written by Claude d' Abbeville, was published in France in 1614. In this literature, the first months of the missionary and educational work of the Capuchin friars in the Maranhão, during the period in which friar Claude d' Abbeville was in the North of Brazil. The purpose of these reports was to publicize the region's natural riches and demonstrate ways of educating indigenous people according to the colonizer. This aimed to attract new investments, encourage the migration of settlers and obtain the support of the French monarchy for the colonial project in Northern Brazil.

The chronicles of friar Yves d' Evreux were published in Portuguese in 1874, with the title “Journey to the north of Brazil: made in the years 1613 to 1614”, whose first publication in French, which did not reach the hands of French readers, is from 1615, its title was translated into Portuguese: “Continuation of the history of the most memorable things that happened in Maranhão in the years 1613 to 1614”. This source describes the process of religious education in the Tupinambá villages on Maranhão Island and surrounding regions, by Capuchin priests from Paris, linked to the Catholic Church.

The Tupinambá people, who lived in these regions, were colonized by the French between 1612 and 1615; when they were expelled by the Portuguese, the colonization process continued more sharply, causing the extermination of the indigenous people.

Indigenous peoples did not know writing and had the power to store their memories and achievements cultivated in their daily lives in their memory. The social function of remembering belonged to the elderly, which provided them with an educational role in society. Memory delegated to the elderly the role of guardians of tradition, of ancestry, which gave them social prominence within their ethnic groups.

According to Le Goff (1992), the concept of memory can only be understood through understanding its historical development, which spans five periods: 1) ethnic memory in societies without mastery of modern writing; 2) from orality to writing (from the emergence of our ancestors to the Ancient Age); 3) oral and written memory in balance (Middle Ages); 4)

advances in written memory (Modern and contemporary Ages); and 5) current memory progress. Of these, we will take as a reference the first and second historical periods of memory, which were those experienced by the indigenous people of Maranhão, in the North of Brazil.

According to the author, in societies without modern writing, collective memory was based on ethnic or family groups, whose valorization was based on myths of origin and practical, technical and professional knowledge. Memory functioned as an element of power, which granted authority to those who had command of the word, and, at the same time, aimed to justify the power and prestige of traditional families. In these societies, memories were kept by guardians or memory specialists, characters also found among the Tupinambá of Maranhão. Among these natives, this role was occupied by the elderly people of the tribe, mainly men. After turning 40 years old, the old man worked whenever he felt like it, so he had time to dedicate himself to social functions in the Big House, where they were tasked with remembering the ancestral and glorious past of their ethnic group: “it is heard with complete silence in the casa-grande, speaks seriously and slowly, using gestures that clearly explain what he wants to say, and the feeling with which he speaks” (Evreux, 2002, p. 131, our translation). The Big House, for Father Yves d' Evreux, was the meeting place, the parliament, the place of the tribe's most important decisions, where the principals (princes), the elders and the other men of the village, met to instruct warriors about peace and war. The Big House was also the place of listening, where the elders kept the memory of the ancestors and traditions of the village alive, in other words, the Big House was also a place of learning and the creative power of memory at the service of the community.

The second phase of memory development is called by Le Goff (1992) as “orality to writing”, and encompasses the period from the appearance of the first hominids, the invention of writing and the Ancient Age. During this period, according to the author, two types of memory coexisted: commemoration and written document. Commemoration is the memory kept in commemorative monuments such as stelae and obelisks. The monuments were used to record an event considered important to that nation and were created based on allegories with few inscriptions, aiming to be read and understood by the population, especially the illiterate. Just like the commemoration, written documents also appear to record and save the history of heroes and their deeds as a national memory. The difference is that the written documents aimed to reach a select and elitist audience, those who were part of the city of literates.

The Tupinambá of Maranhão Island in the 17th century knew the monument and some learned about writing through the French. As a monument, we can mention the wooden cross

that was erected in the center of the villages by missionaries and the writing represented by a type of bilingual catechism in French and Tupinambá, whose purpose was to memorize Christian doctrine so that the natives could be baptized by priests. Evreux (2002, p. 254, our translation) highlights that, in the Big House, the place of speech, the elders said that the French priests would teach their children “to *daily* (writing) and making the *papere* (the paper) sent from far away to those who are absent speak”. The cross planted in Maranhão falls under the type of commemoration memory, as, according to Catholic teachings, it is the memory of God's power over death. It is still the cult of a hero who overcame death. It is a type of monument that also bears brief inscriptions: INRI (*Jesus, King of the Jews*).

The works analyzed in this article provide information about the daily lives of the Tupinambá people, as well as the region's flora and fauna, among other things. The natives of Maranhão are presented as those who had the power to make paper speak, demonstrating a certain superiority in relation to the elders, the memory men. It is as if the Greek goddess Mnemosyne, unknown to the natives of Northern Brazil, now had a competitor, the “speaking role”, demonstrating the magic of the Christian God who instructed religious people.

The mastery of writing gave the French the possibility of recording on paper the daily memory of the trip made to Maranhão between 1612 and 1614. Control of writing allowed the French to make their version of the encounter with the native known. But Mnemosyne was not defeated and kept alive the fragments of the speeches of the Tupinambá elders between the lines of the records of Claude d' Abbeville and Yves de Evreux.

The study is the result of broader research into the presence and activities of Capuchin religious people in northern Brazil in the 17th century, with a view to understanding the educational process and cultural exchanges resulting from this relationship.

This text comprises this introduction in which we address the objective, the type of research, the sources of investigation and the importance of memory in indigenous societies; then, three topics are exposed: in the first, “The fountain as a place of memory”, we present the works of Claude d' Abbeville and Yves d' Evreux as a place of memory of the Tupinambá and Capuchinhos in Maranhão. In the second, “The educational function of memory in Tupinambá society”, we highlight the educational role, made possible by the transmission of cultural values to younger people. And in the third topic, “Tupinambá Elders: educators of tradition”, we describe elders as educators of tradition who, through ancestral memories, transmit values to younger generations. In the final considerations, we present the results of the research, highlighting that, through the elders, memory played a unique role in the educational process

of the Tupinambá communities in Maranhão, allowing the maintenance of traditions and customs among these people.

The fountain as a place of memory

For Zumthor (1997), European travelers, until at least the 17th century, dedicated themselves to saving and perpetuating memory, which was cultivated from idealized images. This zeal in guarding and perpetuating memory is noticeable in the works of the Capuchin missionaries Claude d' Abbeville and Yves d' Evreux, “History of the mission of the Capuchin Friars on the Island of Maranhão and its surroundings”, from 1614, and “Journey to the north of Brazil: made in the years 1613 to 1614”, 1874, respectively. These documentary sources enable the researcher to understand the culture, memory and educational processes of the Tupinambá of Maranhão and surrounding lands, such as Tapuitapera, Mearim river, Comã, Caetés, and Pará river.

Abbeville 's travel chronicle consists of more than 300 pages, varying depending on the edition, and is organized into 62 chapters, in addition to containing three letters about Maranhão written by Yves d' Evreux, Arsenio de Paris, and the Lord Louis de Pézieux. Father Claude d' Abbeville initially narrates the preparations and the journey to reach Maranhão Island; he then recounts his visits to the island's villages, accompanied by the Lord of Razilly, his brother Launay, Vaux 's interpreter and some indigenous people.

During these visits, the main village leaders were persuaded to accept the faith presented by the priests and the protection of the king of France. Consequently, crosses were erected in the center of villages as a symbol of this acceptance. The author also describes the Maranhão region and its population, including the customs and beliefs of the Tupinambá, as well as the region's flora, fauna, and climate, highlighting the abundance of food available.

The last chapters narrate the trip back to France, on which the friar took seven indigenous people with him, six being Tupinambá ambassadors and one Tapuia slave. The majority of ambassadors were children of the main chiefs of the largest villages in Maranhão and the region. Unfortunately, three of them died, possibly from tuberculosis, while the other three returned to Maranhão after being baptized and married to French women, adapting to the colonizing project.

The literature, produced by priest Yves d' Evreux, is structured into two treatises (temporal and spiritual), in which the religious man describes his experiences with the Tupinambá in Maranhão, Northern Brazil. The first treatise, the religious one, mainly addresses

the customs and bodily practices of the natives, highlighting education as a civilizing act in three chapters. The author argues that it is possible to “civilize the savages” and teach them European skills. In the following chapters, he describes the education practiced by the Indians, highlighting order, respect and relationships between members of the tribe. The fictional dialogue at the end of the treaty aims to demonstrate the adaptation of the French in the region, seeking to attract new supporters, financiers and immigrants to the colonizing project called “New France” or Equinoctial France.

In the second treatise, the Capuchin friar dedicates himself more to the spiritual content, reporting the conversions of natives and the models of conversion applicable to children, the sick, the elderly and adults. The way of educating, created or adapted by the Capuchins, includes the creation of a bilingual Tupi-French manual, fundamental for communication and learning. Christian doctrine should be taught in Tupi and French, and recited by heart before baptism. The author argues that the Tupinambá had a natural belief in God, which facilitated the catechization process. In the last chapters, the author demonstrates the fruits of his educational practice, highlighting the conversion of political and religious leaders, which made educating the tribe easier. The Capuchin friar highlights the importance of religious leaders, such as Pacamão, who recognized the authority of the Capuchins and their knowledge, which facilitated the spread of Christian doctrine.

The books by Claude d' Abbeville and Yves d' Evreux are necessary documentary sources to understand the history of French colonization in Maranhão and to study the culture of the Tupinambá people. Furthermore, the works represent places of memory that preserve and transmit information about the life and education of indigenous peoples and Capuchin missionaries from the beginning of the 17th century. The books offer us a view of life and education in the 17th century, allowing us to understand the complex relationship between colonizers and colonized.

The concept “place of memory” was coined by the French historian Pierre Nora, in his work “Les Lieux de Mémoire”, published in Paris in 1984. The Portuguese version, entitled “Os Lugares da Memória”, was published in 1993, with a reissue in 2015. The work is recognized as an important contribution to studies on memory and history, providing a detailed analysis of the places, symbols and rituals that form collective memory in diverse societies. The author argues that these places are intentionally built to preserve memory and cultural identity, becoming “places of memory” that function as points of reference for future generations (Nora, 1993).

We can consider places of memory: objects, books, photographs, buildings, among others. Thus, a documentary source can be considered a place of memory when it acquires a symbolic value in understanding an event, period or cultural tradition.

The works of Claude d' Abbeville and Yves d' Evreux fit into this profile, as they comprise specific reports on endangered indigenous cultures, making it possible to understand the very formation of Brazilian society. The works under study are references to the cultures of the indigenous people of Maranhão between the years 1612 and 1614, and also bring to light the educational function of memory among indigenous peoples. We will delve deeper into this last statement in the next topic.

The educational function of memory in Tupinambá society

When we talk about memory, we refer to the ability to memorize that has been extremely valued and admired throughout history. Let's look at some cases.

In Ancient Greece (17th and 8th centuries BC), for example, memory was worshiped as the goddess Mnemosyne, responsible for making human beings remember. This deity granted mortals the “power of remembrance [...] to bring to light the 'memories of conquests'". This deity was delegated the function of presiding over poetry, whose skill was inspired by this goddess. The gift of poetry was, therefore, supernatural (Vernant, 1973, p. 136, our translation).

Memory, worshiped as a deity by the Greeks, empowered men and women, granting them the power of speech. From the Greek *aedos*, who recited poems inspired by the muses, to Sheherazade, the weaver of history: both storytellers and inspired by the supernatural power of the word.

The memory of the legendary Sheherazade is impressive for its ability to store no less than 1001 stories told every night to her husband, Sultan Shariar. She decided to marry the sultan in order to protect the young virgins who were supposed by law to marry the sovereign at dusk and at the break of dawn from being murdered. The law was intended to preserve female fidelity. With each night's narrative, the young weaver of the story preserves intact, at the break of a new day, the end of the narrative, piquing the sultan's curiosity, who kept her alive to conclude the story the following night, which did not happen for 1001 night, when, finally, the power of memory breaks the stoned heart of the sultan who decided to abolish the law that decreed the death penalty for his wives (Menezes, 1995).

Father Evreux also admired the Tupinambá elders' ability to memorize, as they easily remembered what they had experienced or heard, and frequently narrated the traditions and

deeds of their ancestors. They had a very good memory and were very happy to remember everything they lived and heard, including all the circumstances of the place, time and people involved: “As for memory, they have it very happily, because they always remember what that they saw and heard, with all the circumstances of the place, the time, the people” (Evreux, 2002, p. 121, our translation). The elders' cognitive abilities allowed them to retain specific information and use it efficiently. His memory capacity was useful in several situations, especially when it came to helping educate society in decision making, problem solving and effective communication.

According to Evreux (2002), memory plays a fundamental role in maintaining tradition and social values, as well as respecting customs, being responsible for saving and conserving what was known and learned. Thus, according to the same priest, for the Tupinambá, memory was a central element in the construction of their cultural identity and in the transmission of their values and knowledge from generation to generation.

Zumthor (1997) argues that social groups are guided by values that determine which fragments of memory should be remembered or forgotten. Although the desire to forget may reject the memory, it is never completely eliminated. Memory is selective and updates the past with the most significant and useful fragments to maintain or empower a certain social group. The heroic memory of ancestors, for Zumthor (1997), allows the poet to overcome the inertia of individual memories and collective forgetfulness in a predominantly oral world. Forgetting is also a creative element, since, when the poet forgets a part of the poem, creativity comes into play to contextualize it through the place of speech. Consequently, forgetting is one of the foundations of fiction at imaginary and discursive levels.

As observed by Zumthor (1997), we can say that the Tupinambá select and update the fragments of their memory that were significant and useful to maintain and empower their social group. The heroic memories of their ancestors allowed the Tupinambá to maintain their cultural identity and reinforce their community values. Furthermore, forgetting was also important, as it allowed the Tupinambá to update and recreate their traditions according to changes in their environment and society.

The role of memory in Tupinambá culture also highlights the creative aspect highlighted by Zumthor (1997). By transmitting their stories and rituals, the Tupinambá were able to contextualize them and adapt them to their place of speech, incorporating new experiences and influences. In this way, memory was a vital element in the construction of cultural identity and in the constant renewal of these indigenous traditions.

The Tupinambá of Maranhão had a rich cultural tradition that was transmitted through collective memory. Through orality, stories, myths and legends were passed from generation to generation, and thus kept the traditions and customs of their people alive. This oral tradition was a dynamic form of memory, as described by Bosi (1994), which is not parked in the past, but is continually reconstructed through memories of the present.

Therefore, for the Tupinambá, memories were not just reports of the past, but experiences still present in society, being a way of connecting with ancestors and nature, and of understanding the importance of harmony and balance between human beings and the environment.

In this culture, memories had the role of educating, through the transmission of cultural values to younger people, such as: traditions, customs and beliefs. Through the stories told by their elders, young people learned to respect and value nature, to understand the importance of community and shared leadership, and to keep the culture and history of their people alive.

Furthermore, memoirs were also a way of teaching practical skills, such as: hunting, fishing, agriculture and the art of weaving. Through the stories and experiences shared by their elders, young people learned how to use natural resources sustainably and preserve ancestral knowledge.

The memories empowered the Tupinambá elders and delegated them the role of educators of the tradition. This is what we propose to discuss in the following topic.

Tupinambá Elders: educators of the tradition

The Tupinambá Elders were central figures in the transmission of the cultural tradition of the Tupinambá of Northern Brazil. As educators, they held ancestral knowledge and were respected for their life experiences. Through their stories, rituals and daily practices, the elders transmitted the values of the Tupinambá culture to younger generations, thus ensuring its continuity for generations. In this context, it is important to highlight the fundamental role played by these elders as guardians of the memory and cultural identity of the Tupinambá people. Holders of accumulated wisdom, the Tupinambá elders played a fundamental role in education, contributing to the formation of cultural and moral values in their communities.

According to Evreux (2002, p. 131, our translation), in the Tupinambá culture, a man reached the stage of elder from the age of 40, this being considered the most honorable stage and “surrounded by respect and veneration, especially for brave soldiers and prudent captains.”

During this phase, Tupinambá had the freedom to work whenever he felt like it ³. He was heard in complete silence in the Big House and spoke in a serious and slow manner, using gestures that clearly conveyed the meaning of his words and the feeling with which he spoke, as described by the priest: “Everyone responds to him with gentleness and respect, and the young men listen to him attentively” (Evreux, 2002, p. 131, our translation).

The priest himself did not fail to record his admiration for the elders, considering them transmitters of the traditions of the Tupinambá. According to Evreux, old people were considered guardians of memory and tradition, they had the custom of telling, in front of younger people, the story of their ancestors and what happened in their time. These narratives were held in the Big House or in private residences, always inviting people to listen to the story. Telling stories was an educational habit, because when they visited each other, they hugged each other with friendship and told each other, word for word, who their grandparents and ancestors were, and what happened during the time in which they lived (Evreux, 2002). In this way, the oral tradition was maintained and the history of the people was preserved. The practice also demonstrated the value of memory and the importance of connection between generations, strengthening the social and cultural ties of the Tupinambá.

According to the text, it is clear that the Big House and some residences were some educational places in the village, where the elder carried out his social function. In them, the village chiefs, the elders and the French authorities, rested in their hammocks smoking pipes and talking on an equal footing. There, they talked among themselves and educated the other members of the tribe who came to listen to them. Thus, the Big House was the Tupinambá's parlor, the place where the authorities spoke, including the Capuchin priests: “He made this and other similar speeches, and then, traveling around the Island, in each village he repeated them in the Big House”. It was also the place where the tribe's problems were resolved: “Upon arriving, the principals and elders gathered at the Big House [...], in order to resolve the matter” (Evreux, 2002, p. 57-138-224).

The Big House was the main place for the word, where the elders were listened to attentively and in silence: “When I think that I am the son of one of the great ones of my land, that my father is a feared man, that everyone surrounded him to listen to him when he went to the Big House” (Evreux, 2002, p. 53, our translation). In this excerpt, an indigenous man

³The elder Tupinambá's culture of working whenever he felt like it was misunderstood by the French missionaries, especially by Father Yves de Evreux, who labeled him as “extremely lazy” (Evreux, 2002, p. 124, our translation).

enslaved by the enemy tribe remembered his father as an important man, as he was listened to in the Big House.

One can see here the promotion of some educational values by the elderly, such as the importance of listening carefully, maintaining silence and showing respect for the elderly. In this culture, the word was considered sacred, as it was through it that communication with spirits and gods was established. Furthermore, the word was an instrument of power and leadership, as it was through it that political and religious leaders communicated with the community and made important decisions. Thus, the word was used in different contexts: in stories, songs, dances, rituals, and ceremonies.

The educational process promoted by the elders occurred by repeating stories to young people, so that they could memorize, and do the same when they became elders. Because, if these stories were not told repeatedly, they would be buried along with the old man. Thus, the elders were a “living library”, whose knowledge could not be forgotten.

The chroniclers paid little attention to the content of the elders' teachings during conferences in the men's house or Big House. However, they described some speeches by the main people about supporting the French, including adherence to Catholic baptism. The translation of the speeches was done by the interpreters and the priests made some notes. The religious, upon returning to France, wrote the final texts that made up the book, using resources such as notes and memories, that is, they also used their memory. This can help us understand why the supposed speeches of the elders presented in the works of the travelers under study are full of biblical teachings, support for the French and the desire to be baptized. In other words, the education they received from the Capuchin friars in particular. There are no speeches contrary to the French in the books under analysis. French priests are always the best, they are more respected than shamans, tribal chiefs and elders.

In the narrative of Father Yves d' Evreux, it is possible to observe that he uses his speech to interpret the speeches of the natives. An example of this is when the elderly man mentions that he is lazy and cannot get up from his hammock to get food from the stove in his own home.

Even though the chroniclers' speech was used to interpret the speech of the indigenous people, the French let one element shine through, namely, the admiration they had for the elders for the power of the words they had at their disposal: “There was no one in the company who did not marvel at seeing and hearing speak this brave and venerable old man” (Abbeville, 2008, p. 89). Evidently, the speech was in favor of the French presence among the natives, otherwise, perhaps, the reaction would have been condemnatory rather than complimentary.

To exemplify what is being exposed, we transcribed Japiaçu's speech from Claude d'Abbeville 's book, given at a meeting in the Big House. This elder was the leader of the Junipará village, the largest on the island, and of the entire Ilha Grande. In reality, the transcription of this native's speech was made within the interests of the colonizers, in demonstrating the support of the main authority on that island, for the Equinoctial France project, which was the name given to that place by the French colonizers. This is how Japiaçu's words were transcribed by French priests in the Big House:

He had always been a friend of the French and had recognized in them a much more pleasant and mild convenience than that of the Perós [Portuguese] and others; that he had always wished to obey them and accept their protection; therefore, he felt a lot of satisfaction with their arrival and with the news that they had come here to take up residence and make the French nation and his own one homeland; this he had always desired and protested that he would never fail to promise to recognize the sovereignty of the king of France, submitting to his laws under the authority of the one who was sent to them to reside in the land and defend it against their enemies. As for the law of God, he said he was infinitely glad to have the great King of France sent Pais and prophets to instruct them; who had long wanted to embrace Christianity, as he had promised to do so more than once to Mr. Vaux, especially when he had asked him to return to France and report it to the king. For in truth, he said, we know well that there is a God, creator of nature, who made Heaven and Earth and all existing things. We believe that this God is good and that he gives us everything we have and everything we need. But knowing Him, saying what He is like or how we should serve and worship Him is what we don't know. We met many French people who had been doing business here for some time, but none of them ever taught us anything about it. We now wait for the Pais from France to teach us; but we regret that there are only four, as we wish there were more of them so that they could live in all our villages and teach us together with our children. Since, however, this cannot be done now, while we wait for the morubixaba to return to France with one of the Pais to bring us others, I would like one of those who stays to live with us in the village of Junipará, where we will build him a house and next to it a chapel. You will stay among our huts and we will take care of your food and everything you need. We will send our children to him so that they may be instructed; As for me, I hand it over to you now for this purpose, so that the four that I have may be baptized and made children of God. Finally, he said that he wanted the two Pais visiting there to plant another cross in the center of the village of Junipará, thus testifying to the eternal alliance with God, the solemn promise to receive Christianity and renounce Jurupari. The other principals, together with the elders gathered in the men's house, confirmed Japiaçu 's response, saying that they were very pleased with the arrival of the French and especially the Paí; and even though they wanted to give all their children to them to be instructed and baptized, and they said so as if in a challenge to each other (Abbeville, 2008, p. 117, our translation).

The transcription of the speech attributed to Japiaçu, the greatest morubixaba in Maranhão, provides us with an insight into the relations between some chiefs in the region and

the French, as well as the introduction of Christianity in this context. Firstly, it is important to understand that Chief Japiáçu was the one who negotiated with Mr. des Vaux, a Frenchman who lived among the Tupinambá for 10 years, the permanence and French rule in Maranhão. According to the fragment of the speech of this native temporal leader, the Tupinambá would agree to submit to the power of the French king in exchange for protection against the Portuguese and continued trade with France to acquire products such as axes, sickles, etc. As in the initial negotiations, the arrival of the Capuchins was not part of it, as they were invited by Queen Marie de Medici only in the final months before the trip, it is very likely that they instructed him to make these speeches, demonstrating their interest in abandoning their beliefs and embrace the Christian faith. Therefore, we will analyze some elements of the speech of the main speaker from Maranhão Island.

Japiáçu states that he has always been a friend of the French and that he saw them as a more pleasant and mild alternative compared to the Portuguese and other groups. This can be interpreted as a diplomatic strategy to position oneself in relation to the different European actors who were vying for control of lands in the New World. It is important to remember that America was a scene of intense competition between colonial powers, and indigenous leaders often sought alliances that best served their interests.

He expresses his willingness to submit to the sovereignty of the King of France and obey his laws. This attitude can be interpreted as an attempt to obtain protection against the Portuguese. It may also reflect the perception that the French could offer better trading opportunities.

Japiáçu's speech about Christianity is complex. He states that there is a God who created nature and that they want to know him better and learn how to serve him. At this point, the Morubixaba seems to demonstrate an openness to the Christian faith and believes that the Paí (priests) sent by the French could bring this instruction. It is believed that Japiáçu's willingness to hand over his children to be instructed and baptized denotes political and commercial interests, given that if the natives appropriated French cultural elements, they could negotiate without interpreters.

The mention that they wished to renounce Jurupari (spirit, evil angel or devil who persecuted the natives) in favor of Christianity raises questions about cultural assimilation and the impacts of evangelization on indigenous beliefs and practices. The replacement or superimposition of traditional beliefs by a foreign religion can have profound consequences on the cultural and spiritual identity of indigenous communities.

Japiaçu proposes to build a house and a chapel so that one of the Pai can live with them in their village and they would take care of their food. This offer of welcome demonstrates the willingness to establish a relationship of trust and cooperation with the French missionaries.

Japiaçu 's speech reveals a complex dynamic of political, commercial, diplomatic and cultural interests between the region's indigenous people and the Europeans, specifically the French. It also shows the willingness of Japiaçu and other indigenous leaders to embrace the Christian faith and allow missionaries to work on their lands. However, it is essential to consider that these relationships were influenced by different interests and that the consequences of the arrival of Europeans and evangelization were not uniform for all indigenous communities, varying according to the historical context and the specific actions of each colonial group.

In the speech below, we will see that there was opposition to the French colonizing project. An elderly man, in a meeting at Big House, using memory resources, exposed the similarities between the Portuguese who colonized Pernambuco, and the French who presented themselves as the “salvation” of the Tupinambá.

I saw the arrival of the [Portuguese] Perós in Pernambuco and Potiú; and they began as you Frenchmen do now. At first, the Perós did nothing but traffic without intending to take up residence. At that time, they slept freely with girls, which our companions from Pernambuco considered highly honorable. Later, they said that we should get used to them and that they needed to build fortresses to defend themselves, and build cities to live with us. And so it seemed that they wanted us to form a single nation. Then, they began to say that they could not take the girls without them, that God only allowed them to have them through marriage and that they could not marry without them being baptized. And for that they needed Pai. They sent the Pais to come and they erected crosses and began to instruct our people and baptize them. Later they stated that neither they nor the Pai could live without slaves to serve them and work for them. And so, our people were forced to provide them. But not satisfied with the slaves captured in the war, they also wanted our children and ended up enslaving the entire nation; and with such tyranny and cruelty they treated it, that those who remained free were, like us, forced to leave the region.

This is what happened with the French. The first time you came here, you only did it to traffic. Like the Perós, they did not refuse to take our daughters and we thought we were happy when they had children. At that time, there was no question of settling here; you were only content with visiting us once a year, remaining among us only for four or five moons. Then return to your country, taking our goods to exchange them for what we needed. “Now you tell us about settling here, about building fortresses to defend us against our enemies. For this, you brought a Morubixaba and several Paí. In truth, we are satisfied, but the pears did the same.

After the arrival of the Paí, you planted crosses like the Perós. You now begin to instruct and baptize just as they did; you say that you cannot take our daughters except as wives and after they have been baptized. The Perós said the same. Like these, you did not want slaves at first; Now you ask for them

and want them like them in the end. I do not believe, however, that you have the same aim as the pears; In fact, that doesn't scare me, because as old as I am I fear nothing anymore. I just simply say what I saw with my eyes (Abbeville, 2008, p. 156-157, our translation).

The phrase attributed to the elder, who took a stand against the missionary intentions of the Capuchins in Maranhão, is a critical and insightful analysis of the strategies employed by Europeans (whether Portuguese or French) over time to establish control over lands and indigenous people of the region. Let's explore some important points from this analysis below.

The old man compares the arrival of the French to the events that had previously occurred with the Portuguese. He notes that, initially, the Portuguese also only trafficked in the region with no intention of establishing themselves permanently. This observation suggests a deep understanding of local history and previous colonial dynamics, which allows him to identify similar patterns and trends with the French.

He highlights how the colonizers' ambitions changed over time and mentions that, initially, they only sought trade and exploration, but gradually they began to build fortresses and cities, desiring deeper integration with indigenous communities. This pattern of progression of ambitions was seen as a warning sign, since initial colonial interests seemed benign, however, over time, they could become more intrusive and harmful to the Tupinambá.

The elderly man pointed out how the introduction of Christianity by the colonizers brought with it changes in thinking in indigenous culture and customs. He noted that French priests, like Portuguese priests, required indigenous women to be baptized before marrying colonizers, altering traditional patterns of relationships and marriage in indigenous communities. Furthermore, he highlighted that the colonizers also began to demand slaves to work for them, which caused oppression and cruelty against the indigenous people. These cultural changes were seen as a worrying and damaging element for the identity and autonomy of local communities.

The Tupinambá expressed that the French might not yet have the same malicious intentions as the Portuguese, but he noted that there were similar patterns in the actions of the two groups. This considered approach suggests that he was attentive to the nuances and complexities of colonial relations, not generalizing all Europeans but highlighting how historical actions can have repercussions on future actions.

The elder's speech brings to light important questions about the colonization process, forced cultural assimilation and the exploitation of human and natural resources. He is skeptical about the intentions of the colonizers, based on past experiences, and points to the need to

remain vigilant in the face of the changes that the arrival of the French could bring to his community. This perspective offers important insight into the effects of colonialism on indigenous people.

Final remarks

The documentary sources produced by priests Claude d' Abbeville and Yves d' Evreux preserve the memory of the indigenous people of Maranhão, as they present records of their oral traditions and cultural practices. Furthermore, even if they only present the interpretation of colonizers, they also allow the understanding of the relationship between the Tupinambá and the French missionaries, who arrived in Maranhão in the 17th century, and can, as a document, be considered a privileged place in the memory of the Tupinambá of the Maranhão is an essential record for understanding the culture and history of this important indigenous people.

In general, the education transmitted by Tupinambá elders was not only a means of preserving culture, but also a means of strengthening identity, social cohesion, as well as criticizing colonial domination. They warned their community not to make known mistakes, which could lead to the destruction and domination of the village. Evidently, some chiefs, for various reasons, such as: protection, trade, or even personal reasons, could make agreements with other peoples and countries, and made a more malleable speech to external dominations. Elders are the educators of tradition, teaching about the history and values of their culture, and ensuring the continuity of ancestral knowledge for future generations.

The culturally accumulated memory guaranteed the elders confidence in speaking and respectful listening to the younger generations. Therefore, being an elder among people who did not know modern writing was like being a living library.

Reflecting on the importance of Tupinambá elders also invites us to think about the way we deal with the elderly in our own society. Do we sufficiently value the knowledge and knowledge accumulated by our elders? Would we respect them as we should? These issues are important and must be taken into consideration, as the preservation of the memory and culture of a people depends, to a large extent, on the role played by the elders.

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