

THE TICUNA PEOPLE FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: FROM THEIR MYTHOLOGICAL ORIGINS TO THE LOSS OF THEIR IDENTITY¹

O POVO TICUNA SOB UMA PERSPECTIVA HISTÓRICA: DE SUAS ORIGENS MITOLÓGICAS À PERDA DE SUA IDENTIDADE

EL PUEBLO TICUNA DESDE UNA PERSPECTIVA HISTÓRICA: DE SUS ORÍGENES MITOLÓGICOS A LA PÉRDIDA DE SU IDENTIDAD

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ABSTRACT: Indigenous peoples have remained unique due to their social and cultural strategies, and educational activities are one of them. Education carried out by indigenous peoples allows them to continue to survive and prevent their culture from being passed on from generation to generation. The Tikunas have had a long trajectory over their history. From its mythological origins to their first contact with the Western civilization, it was a peaceful, stable trajectory; but has been marked with symbolic and physical violence since, resulting in the loss or the denial of certain identity traits of the people. Here, we will study the consequences of such contact.

KEYWORDS: Contact. Ticuna. Non-indigenous. Worldview. Violence.

RESUMO: Os povos indígenas têm se mantido únicos devido às suas estratégias sociais e culturais, e as atividades educacionais são uma delas. A educação realizada pelos povos indígenas permite que eles continuem a sobreviver e evitem que sua cultura seja transmitida de geração em geração. O povo Ticuna teve longa trajetória no decorrer de sua história, ora marcada pela profunda estabilidade (das origens mitológicas ao primeiro contato com o povo não-indígena), ora marcada por uma profunda violência simbólica e física que ocasionou na perda e da negação de certos aspectos indenitários (a partir do primeiro contato). Veremos algumas das consequências desse contato, que por vezes permanecem até os dias atuais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Contato. Ticuna. Não-indígena. Cosmovisão. Violência.

¹ This article revisits, with new data, excerpts from my master's thesis.

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RESUMEN: *Los pueblos indígenas se han mantenido únicos por sus estrategias sociales y culturales, y las actividades educativas son una de ellas. La educación que realizan los pueblos indígenas les permite seguir sobreviviendo y evitar que su cultura se transmita de generación en generación. El pueblo ticuna ha tenido una larga trayectoria a lo largo de su historia, en momentos marcada por una profunda estabilidad (desde los orígenes mitológicos hasta el primer contacto con los no indígenas), en ocasiones marcada por una profunda violencia simbólica y física que llevó a la pérdida y negación de ciertos aspectos de indemnización (desde el primer contacto). Veremos algunas de las consecuencias de este contacto, que en ocasiones se mantienen hasta el día de hoy.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Contacto. Ticuna. No indígena. Cosmovisión. Violencia.*

Introduction

Writing about a history that was not privileged by historiography until the 1990s is challenging and instigating, especially when one is part of it. As a Ticuna, I have always been concerned about studying the consequences of the civilization process, implemented since the beginning of the conquest of the Americas by the Portuguese, in contemporary times, since violence, degradation, uprooting, and destribalization mark the Ticuna indigenous history, culture, and education.

Non-indigenous historiography points out that around 1500 there were from 1 million to 3 million indigenous people in Brazil (FUNAI)⁵, and that in five centuries, this native population was reduced to 306,000, which represents 0.03% of the Brazilian population, according to IBGE (2010).

The history of a people has a decisive value in the lives of its subjects, whether to plan a future full of achievements or simply to be complacent in the face of the most diverse situations, because they are unaware of their history. Thus, the objective of this article is to try to follow the paths of the history of the original peoples, and, in particular, of the Ticuna people, with a special focus on education. Starting with the mythological origins of the Ticuna, we will follow the destruction of the pillars of their social organization with the arrival of non-indigenous people, the indigenous movement, their struggles and achievements; arriving, finally, to a re-signification achieved by this people today.

⁵ Pierre Clastres points to a higher estimate: about 25 million Indians inhabited, according to the author, South America, 100 million on the American continent as a whole; and that about a hundred years after the colonization process began, a quarter of the world's population had been wiped out; constituting one of the greatest tragedies of humanity (CLASTRES, 2012, p. 114).

Location

Today, the villages of the Ticuna people are located in the Alto Solimões region, in the state of Amazonas, on the banks of the Solimões River and the headwaters of small rivers.

Before contact with white people, there were no villages: there were clan families living far apart from each other. The first villages emerged with the presence of new agents from outside, at the beginning of the 20th century, with the presence of the Serviço de Proteção ao Índio-SPI; the first known village was Umariacú. Another agent responsible for gathering Ticuna families was Protestantism: this was the case in the municipality of Santa Rita do Weil, which granted land to families adhering to the religion, giving rise to the Campo Alegre Community; and in the municipality of Santo Antonio do Iça, from which emerged the Vila Betânia community.

Figure 1 – Location of the Ticuna people



Source: Google (2020)

The villages, now 250 in number, are located in the territories of seven municipalities: Tabatinga, Benjamin Constant, São Paulo de Olivença, Amaturá, Santo Antônio de Içá, Tonantins and Coari. In the last 25 years, some families have migrated from the Alto Solimões over 1,000 km down the Solimões River to the city of Manaus, where there is now an urban village in the Cidade de Deus neighborhood.

Due to the fact that their location is the triple border, there are also villages of the Ticuna people in the neighboring countries of Peru and Colombia. The relationship of communication and exchange with the villages of the three countries is constant, because for the individual Ticuna, the border barrier is a minor factor dividing the people: the factors that unify them, such as cultural and linguistic identity, are greater.

They are an ancient people who inhabited the Amazon Basin at least 2,000 years before the arrival of the Portuguese and Spanish colonizers. They occupied the firm lands and mainly the headwaters of the small rivers/igarapés, tributaries of the Solimões River. According to Silva (2014, p. 24) "according to archaeological records, the Tikuna date back to 950 (\pm 90) AD based on ceramic fragments similar to ceramics made by the present-day Tikuna."

Genesis of the Ticuna people from a mythological perspective

Usually the question to be asked by a non-Indian would be, "to which country do the Ticunas belong? Are they Brazilians, Peruvians, or Colombians?". Since the perspective this article seeks is identity, that is, how the Ticuna perceive themselves, the answer to this question inevitably comes through the myths told from generation to generation.

In this chapter, we will introduce the story of the creation of the world from the perspective of the Ticuna, with data collected from the accounts of the elders⁶, reorganized by me.

The elders tell that, before the world existed, Ngutapa, the God of creation, already existed, having no father or mother. He married Mapana, with whom he greatly desired to have a child. However, his wife could not become pregnant, and Ngutapa was furious: he invited her into the forest, where he planned to abandon her as punishment.

From the maloca where they lived, they went on a trail, and after walking a long way, he sat down on the trunk of a fallen stick at the edge of the trail, called his wife and asked, "Why didn't you give me a son, tell me the reason?" She replied, "Is that why you are angry?" He confirmed this and went after her, assaulting her. Helpless, she cried aloud for help, but no one was around to help her.

⁶ Data collected in the Community of Philadelphia, Santo Antônio Demarcated Land, municipality of Benjamin Constant-AM, during the year 2019.

Ngutapa beat her harder, beating her hard on the chest: Mapana fell to the ground half dead. He took a vine rope and tied her feet and arms to the trunk of a tree and left, abandoning her in the woods, far away from her home.

Mapana was left alone, tied by a vine rope to the trunk, with no chance to free herself. She cried in an alarmed voice, and it was at this moment that a bird called Coü approached and sang around her. Desperate for help, she asked: "Coü bird, it's good that you heard my cries for help, come and help me, this damned Ngutapa has punished me. The bird came down from the tree and asked, "Is that you my granddaughter?⁷ What happened to you ?"

At that moment, the Coü bird transformed into a beautiful Ticuna Indian. Full of compassion for the Mapana woman, who was almost dying, he approached her, asking her again, "What happened to you, my granddaughter?" She replied, "Ngutapa is worthless, he punished me! Please untie me from this trunk! I am already exhausted, I can't stand the pain anymore."

Coü carefully loosened the ropes from her arms and feet, leaving her totally free, then guided her to return the punishment to Ngutapa: "You are going to catch a nest full of variegated paper wasp and you are going to wait for Ngutapa to pass by on the way. But you must hide yourself in the middle of the bush in such a way that he won't see you as he passes by the trap. You must throw the nest of variegated paper wasp at the height of his knees. Agreed?" She agreed, and proceeded to execute her revenge.

Mapana went looking for a nest of variegated paper wasp, and soon found one. With a leaf in his hand, he approached, picked up the nest, and carefully carried it down the trail.

Walking slowly, he approached the place where Ngutapa usually passed by: that day he would come playing a song and dancing, to celebrate the successful punishment of his wife.

Mapana, upon reaching the trail, looked for a place with plenty of bushes, where she hid. Discretely, she waited for the moment her husband would pass by. Before long, here came Ngutapa, singing and dancing. When she passed very close, she then threw the variegated paper wasp 's nest over him, right in the direction of his knees.

The variegated paper wasp stung both his knees: the pain was unbearable, and Ngutapa could not walk. Screaming, he asked his wife for forgiveness, and crawled back to his maloca, barely able to lie down in the hammock as soon as he arrived.

⁷ A form of family treatment.

After a week of much suffering and pain, his knees swelled up badly. The size was too big, and he wanted to know what was wrong. Suddenly, he realized that inside each knee were different people: on the right knee was Yo'i, who was making a blowgun, and his sister Aicüna, who was very busy weaving a net. On his left knee was Ipi, working with the making of a bow and arrow. On her side was her sister Mowatcha, also busy weaving a bag of tucum fiber.

So it was from the knees of Ngutapa that Yo'i, the good god, and Ipi, the god of evil, came into existence. These characters are important for the creation of the Ticuna Indians, because, according to the memory of the community elders, transmitted orally from parents to children, this people is called Magüta people, a term from the Ticuna language that means "real people", a name given at the moment of creation by the mythical hero Yo'i, the good God.

Yo'i, the Ticuna God, had the power to make real everything he thought or wished for. He filled the earth with life and hope, but he felt lonely, because he lived alone with his brothers. Yo'i and Ipi decided to cut down this tree and bring light into the world, inviting all the forest animals to help. But not even the woodpecker succeeded. Only the Taine Katoo made it, because he was promised marriage to Aicüna as a reward. He climbed to the top of the tree and discovered that a sloth was holding the tree in the sky. Taine threw fire ants into the sloth's eyes, and the sloth let go of the sky. With this, the tree fell, but the trunk regenerated very quickly, because the tree had a heart. Ipi tried to take it out with an ax, but the heart jumped far away: it was a butterfly that managed to catch it in mid-jump. She passed it to the calango, and the calango passed it to the agouti, who ran off and planted it, hiding from Yo'i and Ipi's brothers. But Yo'i searched and found the seed stone-heart, and took it to plant in his field. In time, the umari tree was born, and its last fruit gave birth to Yo'i's wife, who then had a son by Ipi. Yo'i called Ipi and his son, to purify him by painting his body with jenipap. Yo'i ordered Ipi to grate the jenipap incessantly, but in doing so he ended up grating his body together, and Ipi's flesh mixed with the jenipap dregs. The mixture of blood, flesh and seeds was thrown into the Eware river by his wife Tetchi arü Ngu'i, and turned into fish. She was sad that she had thrown it into the river, and asked Yo'i to fish it back out. Yo'i, tired of being alone and wanting to populate the earth and make the world more joyful and complete, caught the fish from the river, one by one. But only animals came with the hook, always male and female together: this is how the animals came into being. But Tetchi arü Ngu'i wanted his husband, and Yo'i wanted human beings: how to catch them? He decided to replace the bait with manioc: thus, everything he caught began to transform into beings

similar to him, humans, who ran around on the land. This is how humanity came about, and this is how the Magüta people came about. During the spawning season he saw a different fish, with a golden forehead, but the fish would not take the bait. He had an idea, and asked Tetchi arü Ngu'i to try to catch it, because he thought the fish was Ipi. He got it right: the fish jumped out of the water and turned into Ipi. Ipi saw what his brother did, and wanted a people for himself, too. So, he fished other people with yuca, but tapered the nose of each one, to differentiate them from his brother's people: this is how the Peruvians were born, and he went with them towards the source of the sun. But Yo'i wanted to confuse his brother, and turned the world upside down, making Ipi go to the setting sun, where there was much gold. There, Ipi controlled the waters of the Amazon, making sure that there was neither too much nor too little flowing. Yo'i left the Magüta people in the sacred land of Eware and went to the rising sun, hoping to bring tools for his people's agriculture.

They say that when Yo'i was on the shore of Eware Lake, the sacred lake, he took his fishing rod and used a coconut seed (a seed of the tucumã palm, which is a kind of palm tree) as bait to try to catch fish. He soon threw the hook into the water, and when he pulled it out, the fish he had hooked turned into a bush pig. He threw the hook again, and another animal appeared, and so on, until all the animals appeared, each one with its male and female pair. Since the pig of the bush was the first to bite the hard coconut, its teeth are hard and tough to this day.

When Yo'i realized that the fish he hooked did not turn into people, he decided to change bait: he went to the fields in search of yuca, and as soon as he got some, he put it on the hook: the fish that were hooked turned into duu'gü (real people) and these were the Ticunas "the Magüta people. This is the reason why the teeth of the Ticunas are soft and not very strong.

Since the Ticuna people, from a mythological perspective, originated in the sacred land of Eware, today near the Community of Vendaal, municipality of São Paulo de Olivença, officially, the Ticuna have a Brazilian origin. However, it is worth saying that, in truth, they do not perceive their identity as belonging to any of the three countries, but rather to a Ticuna Nation, which encompasses the territory where they live.

Let us return, however, to the mythological narratives.

The grandfather of the indigenous teacher Santos Cruz tells that after Yo'i had fished the people out, the time came when all the people needed to take a bath in the sacred Eware lake, for this the people were divided into three groups. The first group that bathed was very clean, very white: these are the people who today have very white skin, like the Germans,

French, Italians, etc. The second group went to bathe in the same water, but as the water was a little dirty with the dirt of the first group, their skin was not very clean: these are the Ticuna. Finally, the third group went to bathe in the same water, but the water was already very dirty, so it was not possible to clean the skin: therefore, the people in the third group had quite black skin.

Let us notice, however, how this last narrative already has, in fact, the mark of contact with the non-indigenous; trying to include it in the indigenous cosmogony. However, unfortunately, the erroneous notion that there are "levels of cleanliness" for the population has also penetrated this myth, thus surreptitiously propagating the idea that one people would be superior to the other. Notice how this narrative highlights the penetration of non-indigenous symbolic violence into Ticuna culture, as it shows the superiority of another people, the Europeans, over the Ticuna, in their own cosmogonic narrative.

According to the elders of the tribe the story tellers, this part of the story is not told to the people in the first group and the third group.

Gruber, who worked on a book about trees with the Ticuna teachers, says about the myth of creation:

When the spawning season was over, Yo'i made a reed and went fishing, using ripe tucumã seeds. But the fish, when they fell to the ground, turned into animals: peccaries, tapirs, deer, and many others. Then Yo'i used bait made from cassava, and with this bait the little fish turned into people. Yo'i took advantage of this and caught a lot of people. But his brother was not among these people. Yo'i then handed the reed to Tetchi arü Ngu'i, and she managed to catch a little fish that had a spot of gold on its forehead. It was Ipi. Ipi jumped ashore, took the reed, and caught the Peruvians and other people. These people went away with Ipi to the side where the sun sets. From the people caught by Yo'i descend the Ticuna and also other peoples who went to the side where the sun rises, including whites and blacks (GRUBER, 1997, p. 18, our translation).

The Ticuna people, or Magüta people, as stated by the elders of the tribe, means real people, raised and endowed with intelligence to take care of their society, therefore organized politically, economically, socially and culturally.

Regarding the social organization, according to the stories, when they were still told orally by the village elders, they say that it was established by "Yoi" the regulatory system of the Ticuna society that consists of assigning a family identity based on the clan, which are extended families and whose function is to legitimize marriage, preventing the union with members of the same family, thus avoiding incest.

All peoples have ways of organizing themselves to avoid problems and live in harmony. For the origin of the clans, which solved the problem of consanguineous marriage, we have two different stories. **FIRST:** After being fished, the Ticuna people divided into pairs and were scattered, but everything happened good and bad. Yo'i decided to organize his people and divide them into clans: he looked for a jacarerana (ngiri), cut it up, and cooked it, giving it to everyone to eat. The first to taste the broth tasted blood (naiãca), and got the jaguar clan, the second tasted oil and got the curassow clan, the third tasted rotten wood (nguaca) and got the avai clan, and so on; dividing into two groups: "with feathers" and "without feathers. **SECOND:** It is said that the Ticuna practiced anthropophagy from time to time with someone. In this thought they would observe if someone in the middle got too fat: the Ticuna had the conception that a healthy person has a strong spirit. By practicing the ritual, they believed that the spirit was transferred to the people involved in the party. One day, they planned an anthropophagy ritual party where secretly someone was indicated to be part of the ritual. It was the pupunary (bird), but the pupunary became suspicious when the day of the party arrived and made a mask to observe the situation further. What he heard from the mouths of the party hosts was that the party would not begin because the pupunary was missing. Upon hearing this, the pupunary sent off, and fled far away from the group, turning into a bird. He went to get the Jacurana and threw it on the ridge of the house, then ran away. Since no more appeared at the party the expected one. The ritualists used the jacurana for lunch, and when each one went to taste it, they felt the flavors of certain birds, animals or trees. It was from this that the clans in the Ticuna ethnic group emerged. Since then, each clan group can no longer eat the animal to which they belonged, because it was understood that it is part of their body.

The Ticuna also have a series of other stories that explain their customs, their traditions, as well as existential questions such as "where do we come from?", "where are we going?", "what are we doing here?", etc. These stories, transmitted orally from generation to generation, contribute to the Ticuna people's positive affirmation of their identity in the environment in which they live, and, moreover, to their stability with respect to the past. With this, a phenomenon described by Clastres (2012) occurs: the indigenous people are not a people without history, but rather a people who choose a society where social changes are not desirable by its members, so that the history of the Ticuna people, to some extent, did not have major episodes between their mythological creation and the arrival of Europeans.

However, for the scope of this article, we prefer to stick to the myths already elucidated above, since we consider that the Ticuna vision is already well exemplified with

them, as well as some essential aspects of their identity (such as the origin of the clan division).

Even if we approached a scientific perspective for the origin of the Ticuna, which would not be the scope of this article, since it escapes the topic of how the Ticuna perceive their own identity, we would realize that, even after the arrival of the indigenous people in the South American region, few changes occurred: even the passage through the Agricultural Revolution did not awaken in them the desire for a centralizing power, for the accumulation of goods, for the creation of a State. The indigenous society remained, therefore, against such a State, as narrated by Clastres.

The desire for individual accumulation, for the progress of the one and not of the whole, exists to a small extent, but there are myths that show the people the importance that if there is progress or change, it should be for the whole and not for the individual. The Ticuna witchcraft, for example, as narrated by Vasques (2014), is a social mechanism still present: those who try to accumulate become targets of requests for favors from their neighbors, and if they try to deny them, they become targets of witchdoctors.

Since we have already observed how the Ticuna system managed to remain stable over the centuries, let us now observe how the process of non-indigenous identity elimination deeply affected the social structure of the communities.

The destruction of the pillars of Ticuna society

From this section, we will follow the accounts of some researchers and travelers. First, Silva presents a brief justification for the use of travelers' accounts to reconstruct the history of indigenous peoples.

The reports of these travelers, although merely descriptive, serve as a basis, even, for knowledge of the way of life of this ethnic group as physical description, behavior, social organization, personality traits, customs, myths and cosmogony and also record their geographical location from the Napo River (in Peru) to the Upper Amazon (now Solimões River) in Brazil (SILVA. 2014, p. 24, our translation).

Clastres (2012) even values the travelers' reports in his works, because they are among the only documents we have about the indigenous peoples in the colonial period, especially if we consider the first centuries of contact. The indigenous peoples, unfortunately, because at that time they still did not master the written language, still do not have the means to contrast their history with the history of the whites.

Before the current geopolitical delimitations of the countries, the traditional Ticuna territory was originally one: the headwaters of the small rivers, where the Ticunas lived in their clan longhouses. Over the years, with the supposed extinction of the Kambeba people and the domestication of the Cocama people by the colonizers, the Ticunas moved down from the headwaters of the small rivers to try to inhabit the Solimões River, where they remained.

Already in the first half of the 19th century, in the Alto Solimões region, some peoples were already extinct or assimilated by the European culture. According to Bates (1973, p. 175), cited by Oliveira (2015, p. 59, our translation):

Around the first half of the 19th century travelers passing through the Alto Solimões drew the following picture: the Indians of the Iça are practically extinct (passes, juris, yumanas and mariates), except for a few dozen living together with non-Indians, especially in Tonantins of the omáguas there is no longer any reference [...]

The Kambebas or Omáguas were the inhabitants of the Solimões river banks, and were the first to have contact with the white man, suffering the greatest impacts of colonization. They were considered an extinct people, but in the last ten years, remnants of these people, who for many years remained silent, are resurging and asserting themselves as a people.

The Europeans who arrived here established a Eurocentric control system that for five centuries suffocated the indigenous culture. As a consequence, many people had to deny their identity, as a way to guarantee survival. Others moved away to places of difficult access, fleeing from the terror of the contact front of the bandeirantes settlers and extractivists and trying, in this way, to maintain their way of life.

Oliveira Filho (1988, p. 31) states that "The dominant concern was to show the progressive cultural decharacterization of those societies and the absorption of white people's beliefs and customs". In other words, absorbed by the dominant and dominating culture, the Indians were forced to abandon their own system of social organization and accept the imposed point of view.

As a consequence of the imposition of the Eurocentric culture, we unfortunately notice that many Ticuna people are unaware of the traditional knowledge, because, in the families and in daily life, much of the culture has ceased to be socialized.

In the following we will address two of the most easily verifiable aspects that have been lost among the Ticuna culture.

The clan longhouses

The original dwelling where the Ticunas lived, before the presence of colonizers in the region, until the end of the 18th century, was the clan maloca, designed to house all the members of an extensive clan family. The structure was built of wood from wellselected trees, so as to be long-lasting.

The mobility of the Tikuna settlements interfered with the housing structure, which during the Spanish-Lusitanian exploration was still the maloca. Built to house grandparents, parents, children, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren, it presented in the 19th century, according to Marcoy (2001) a rounded shape, described in more detail by Bates (1857, p. 292-294) in his trip to São Paulo de Olivença: '[...] an ample hut of ablong shape, whose internal part was arranged in a disorderly and asymmetric way that gave the impression of having been built by several masons working independently and placing beams, props, etc., without being aware of what the others were doing. The walls and ceiling were covered with a braid of palm leaves. Nets hung between thick posts that supported the ceiling left a free passage in the center, where the fire was lit; on one side there was a jirau made of palm trunks split in half lengthwise (SILVA, 2014, p. 44, our translation).

Before building the maloca, the architecture was very well thought out and planned in order to meet the demands of all the needs of the large family, such as comfort and safety. Above all, it had to be well protected against dangerous jungle animals that could invade the inside of the house, such as snakes, jaguars, mosquitoes and other insects that could be lethal.

The shape of the maloca was oval, covered from the floor to the ceiling with a type of noble palm known as caraná, taken from the bush with the help of all the inhabitants of the dwelling. On the first day, with everyone's help, the palm trees are cut and tied in bundles of up to 80 kg, in order to facilitate transportation. For the roof of the maloca, 15 to 20 bundles were needed, which were transported to the construction site, where they were woven together, sewn onto a stick in the shape of a comb. Once transformed into the shape of a comb, they were grouped together to shape the maloca: for the roof and the wall, 200 to 300 combs, made of caraná straw, were needed.

In the 1920s, when the German ethnologist Curt Nimuendaju visited the Alto Solimões region for the first time, he verified that the maloca culture was already extinct. Based on the memory of the Ticuna people with whom he had contact, he makes some observations on the subject.

Nimuendajú (1952), cited by Silva, S. (2014, p. 44, our translation), "[...] depicts through oral testimonies, the design of the Tikuna maloca, in an 'apparently' circular shape with a square-shaped rectangular section, one, two or three meters long."

The Ticuna dwelling type, the clan huts, was one of the pillars that was destroyed and extinguished by the colonizers who arrived here, more popularly known as the "bosses" or "colonels of the ravine". They forced the Ticunas to abandon the maloca, because they thought that living in large numbers in the same house made them lazy and a possible risk in case they organized a rebellion.

Since the main interest of the "bosses" was the large-scale production of extractivism products, once under the colonizers' domination the indigenous people were forced to live and work in the interests of the "bosses". In addition to living in houses that reflected the family nucleus, in models similar to those of the "bosses," another important change occurred: they could no longer only produce for themselves in a self-sustainable life model, they were forced to stop being autonomous and to serve the interests of others.

Regarding the abandonment of the clan longhouses and the end of the self-sustainable life model by the Ticunas, Silva (2014, p. 78, our translation), also states: "According to Cardoso de Oliveira (1964:54); Umbarila (2003); Garcés (2000) the debt system for latex exploitation to which the indigenous people were subjected, promoted to the Tikuna of Brazil and Colombia the abandonment of their longhouses."

The Leadership

Documents regarding the Ticuna people before contact with non-indigenous people are scarce. Regarding this reality Nimuendajú (1952, p. 116), cited by Oliveira (2015, p. 48, our translation) states:

Data on the "pre-contact situation" are quite scarce and are conjectural and fragmentary. What little can be said with relative certainty is that the Ticuna, before the arrival of the Portuguese and Spaniards in the region, were dryland Indians who inhabited the high igarapés located on the left bank of the Solimões River, in the stretch between Tabatinga and São Paulo de Olivença. They were unaware of canoes and ubas, and systematically avoided the banks of the Solimões River, occupied by the Omaguas, an enemy of the Ticuna, who in some of their myths and legends appear conducting raids against their longhouses.

However, stories told and passed down from generation to generation point out that the Ticunas, before suffering territorial invasion, enjoyed autonomy with respect to their own way of governing, with each clan hut having its own leader, better known as (To'ü eru), whose ability was compared to the cunning of the monkey (To'ü).

The born leader, since his childhood, was separated and trained by the masterleader in all the knowledge of the tribe in order to build himself as such. This included abstinence from certain foods and from sex outside the permitted time, because he should have total commitment to the interests of the people and not waste his time on other matters. He was, therefore, as Clastres (2012) states, a figure who emanates from the people, a true democrat in a society where centralizing power is not allowed: a society against the state.

This leader should have the ability to prepare the people for the wars that constantly took place between neighboring peoples. It was also his role to undertake the making of blowpipes, bows and arrows used in animal hunting activities and also in warfare.

With the arrival of the colonizers, the figure of the born leader was extinguished, being replaced by the non-indigenous leader and boss. Later on, this figure was also substituted by the foreman and the captain, leaders that no longer represented the interests of the people, but those of the dominating non-indigenous boss.

Over the years, hybridity⁸ and the gestation of dependence on the dominant European hegemonic culture was produced.

This has generated serious psychological and social consequences.

Two factors will combine to give the seringueiro-indian the feeling of abandonment and deterioration of his living conditions, a fact that the Ticuna informants sometimes attribute to the succession of management within the company, others coming to replace the "good bosses" of old (OLIVEIRA, 2015, p. 75, our translation).

Once the genuine leader was extinct, the Ticunas spread out in any direction, following anyone. An example often remembered by some Ticuna is that of the pig herd, when its main leader is killed by the hunter.

The legacy of Spanish-Lusitanian hegemony was the chronic dependence of the Indians on some leader, by accepting the position of inferiority with respect to nonIndians.

Final considerations

The entire colonization process of the Ticuna people, since the arrival of the nonindigenous, was inevitably permeated by European thought especially that coming from the Industrial Age, responsible for the extinction and silencing of the diversity of indigenous cultures.

⁸ From the contact of one culture with another, a third is born.

The type of social structure proper to the industrial age leads, on the contrary, large masses of the population, belonging to discontinuous lower cultures, toward normalized, homogeneous, secularized high cultures, transmitted not only by the elites, but by specialized educational institutions supported by the central power (POUTIGNAT; FENART; BARTH, 1988, p. 47, our translation).

Also according to Luciano (2006, p. 41, our translation), "The objective, therefore, was not so much cultural or racial, but, above all, economic, guiding the whole policy and practices adopted by the colonizers". Thus, the caravans coming from Portugal arrived to the land that was inhabited by the different indigenous nations, motivated by the accumulation of wealth, disregarding the autonomy, the social, political, religious type of life and the economy of the indigenous peoples.

Upon landing on the land already inhabited by the Indians, the caravan of nonIndians observed the abundant natural wealth, which in their imagination was owned by no one, and imagined how easy it would be to take possession of it.

In the attempt to exploit the wealth found, they realized that it would not be possible to extract the wealth in large quantities with the labor of the few men who arrived here, because the work was difficult and manual: the alternative found to speed up the exploitation work was to include indigenous labor, and later black labor, against the will of these people.

At the moment of meeting the foreign visitors who arrived here, the indigenous people's intention was to provide the best reception, offering help with lodging, protection, food, and even giving gifts as precious goods, attitudes that had as their main objective to know the other better, in order to build good relationships, as the owners of the house.

Such attitudes prove that the original or native peoples of this land were autonomous societies very well governed and economically self-sufficient; however, the intention of the European visitors was to exploit the wealth found and consequently to subjugate the Indian to slave labor, to promote their own interests. Thus, the encounter was unequal and gradually destroyed the indigenous society, having as its main symbols the loss of the clan maloca and its replacement by houses; and the loss of the traditional leader, who was replaced by "bosses", foremen of these bosses, by the public power, and, more recently, by the caciques, elected leaders.

With the conquest of some legal landmarks and land, the Ticuna people, deprived of part of their identity, struggle to try to keep what they have left.

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