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**THE INVENTION OF INDIGENOUS AMERICA: THE ROLE OF THE ATLANTIC
CIRCULATION OF OBJECTS IN THE PRODUCTION OF GLOBAL IMAGINARY ON
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN BRAZIL**

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AMAZÔNIA

L'Amazzonia ti resta dentro
perché in realtà
è lei che ti divora
coi suoi fiumi che sembrano laghi
in cui ti senti minuscolo,
perso e allo stesso tempo eterno
mentre a bordo di una barchetta
costeggi la vegetazione
immobile e mutevole
troppo varia e troppo uguale
per essere colta solo con gli occhi.

L'Amazzonia ti resta dentro
perché in realtà
è lei che ti avvolge
nelle anse del grande serpente;
dall'acqua ti trasporta in cielo
attraverso nuvole tanto basse
che ti sembra di poterle toccare
che ti proteggono dal sole cocente
ma ti espongono alla pioggia sferzante
che consuma la vita e fa marcire il sottobosco
da cui nascono le piante più belle.

The Invention of Indigenous America: the role of the Atlantic circulation of objects in the production of global imaginary on indigenous peoples in Brazil

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Abstract in Portuguese

Há várias décadas os museus são reconhecidos como espaços de debate público e educação cívica, onde os discursos produzidos por meio de exposições e outras atividades contribuem para construir e legitimar visões específicas da sociedade e do mundo em geral. Esta pesquisa decorre do desejo de participar do debate em andamento que visa repensar os museus etnográficos e suas formas de produzir representações sobre os *outros* e tem como objetivo buscar novos caminhos e possíveis soluções, juntamente com os já desenvolvidos, para transformá-los em espaços inclusivos onde produzir um conhecimento que seja o mais compartilhado, plural e descolonizado possível. A primeira parte adota uma abordagem histórica e visa entender como os objetos coletados no Brasil por naturalistas europeus, na virada dos séculos XVIII e XIX, contribuíram para a construção de uma imagem estereotipada específica dos povos indígenas do Brasil. Foram escolhidos objetos oriundos das coleções de Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, reunida durante a Viagem Filosófica de 1783-1792 e mantida em parte na Academia das Ciências de Lisboa e em parte no Museu da Ciência de Coimbra; e, da coleção de Johann Natterer, reunida entre 1817 e 1835 e mantida no Welt Museum de Viena. O foco específico caiu em dois objetos pertencentes ao povo Kambeba (uma tábua deformadora de cabeça e uma hélice de flecha), uma arma Sateré-Mawé e uma série de objetos de pena Munduruku. A escolha foi ligada, por um lado, às diferentes maneiras pelas quais a exibição deles evoca visões estereotipadas e, por outro, à possibilidade de estabelecer um diálogo com os descendentes das populações produtoras. De fato, a segunda parte do trabalho é de natureza etnográfica e tem como objetivo é discutir a presença dos objetos indígenas nos museus europeus a fim de trazer à tona diferentes discursos, histórias, relacionamentos; em outras palavras, outras categorias historicamente silenciadas pelo poder colonial e por meio das quais a cultura material é percebida e contextualizada, no espaço e no tempo. Em cada um dos três casos, o tema da educação indígena como um meio de resistência à perda cultural surgiu como uma estrutura central para a compreensão dos objetos, que assumem um caráter político e se tornam ferramentas para repensar o passado, transformar o presente e imaginar o futuro. Por fim, a participação dos representantes dos povos indígenas foi importante para a conclusão deste trabalho e sugeriu novas perspectivas no âmbito das dinâmicas colaborativas entre os povos originários e os museus, sobretudo com relação às mudanças que ainda precisam ser implementadas na prática museológica contemporânea e nos processos de descolonização e democratização do conhecimento.

Introduction

I love museums. They make me feel as simultaneously still and in motion; they give me the impression of being closed in silent contemplation and, at the same time, surrounded by voices that talk – sometimes shout – over each other; they transport me into different histories while abstracting me from time and space. Museums have a complex and problematic character, even more if we observe them in the light of current global social and political context.

This work is about some objects stored and exhibited in museums. In particular, we shall focus on: one bamboo board used to flatten the head and an arrow thruster of the Omágua-Kambeba people of the Upper Solimões River; a club/oar (*Porantim*) of the Sateré-Mawé people living in the region of the Andirá and Marau rivers; finally, on a set of feather works of the Munduruku people of the basins of Tapajós and Madeira rivers. These objects were collected during scientific expeditions organized at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Kambeba and Sateré-Mawé artifacts are part of the collection assembled by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira during the first, and one of the most important, exploration journeys planned by the Portuguese Crown, The *Viagem Philosophica* (1783-1792). They are currently preserved in the *Academia das Ciências* of Lisbon and in the *Museu da Ciência* of the University of Coimbra. Munduruku feather works were collected by Johann Natterer during the Austrian expedition (1817-1836), organized by the Austrian Emperor Francis I on the occasion of the marriage between his daughter, the Archduchess Leopoldina, and the heir to the Portuguese, Dom Pedro. They are exhibited in the room of the *Welt Museum* of Vienna dedicated to Brazil. This research aims at retracing the biographies of these objects in order to explore the ways in which they have been, and still are, interpreted and used to build imaginaries on indigenous peoples of Brazil according to the political, economic and ideological positionings of the subjectivities with whom they have and they still interact.

These objects, like the museums that hold them, are commonly called “ethnographic”, a term which has been associated to different – in particular non-European – social cultural contexts until at least the end of the 20th century. Ethnographic museums are places in which the discourses produced through exhibitions and other activities contribute to build and legitimize specific visions on society and the world in general. When we look at the display cases arranged in their rooms, it is not so easy to think of objects as things physically and

conceptually in motion, that once might have been commodities for exchange or that their meaning might go beyond what the museum tells us.

In reality, objects have always been circulating in multidirectional flows of goods and meanings even among the so-called “traditional societies”, that we are accustomed to think as static. From the 1980s, scholars from the global north increasingly focused their work on the circulation, consumption and social dimension of material culture from a global perspective, highlighting various factors that determined their geography – such as power and interethnic relations, social hierarchies, trade or gift economy. Special attention has been given to the Atlantic space and the integration of the Americas into the trade circuits, as many thought it was a decisive element for modern age exchanges to acquire a truly global dimension (see among the others: Crosby 1972; Appadurai 1986; Miller 1987; Thomas 1991; Bauer 2001; Smith and Findlen 2002; Brewer and Trentmann 2006; Bleichmar and Mancall 2011; Miller 2010; Gerritsen and Riello 2015, 2016).

It may not be so intuitive to conceive material culture as moving if we think of objects in museums because of the process of “singularization”¹ (Kopytoff 1986) that turned them inalienable part of a collection through the attribution of an authentic quality aimed at conveying a sense of truth. However, how Christina Kreps reminds us, objects are not ethnographic a priori. They are made ethnographic “by virtue of being defined, segmented, detached, and carried away by ethnographers” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991, 387) and recontextualized within a Western interpretative framework. “Ethnographic artifacts are [just] objects of ethnography” (Ibidem), that is, things that, in specific spatial-temporal circumstances, have been extracted from global circuits of circulation and resignification and freeze-framed into a single regime of value² which reduced them to *simple* historical evidences and symbols of an exotic otherness. The very concept of *ethnographic* raised during the colonial period as a category to classify identities and alterities from a Eurocentric perspective; consequently, it had a great impact in producing social and cultural discourses functional to establish hierarchical relationships of power (Bennet 2018). From the second

¹ Kopytoff develops the notions of “commodification” and “singularization” to identify those processes that determine the entry or extraction of objects from an exchange circuit. This dynamic is influenced by the value that is conferred to things. Such value is not intrinsic but changes depending on social and interpretative contexts in which objects circulate (see note 2 of this chapter).

² The idea that objects do not have an intrinsic value but that the latter depends on the net of relations in which it is involved and on the different regimes of value that coexist around it is developed by Arjun Appadurai in his researches on the social life of things (1986).

half of the 18th century, scientific expeditions were organized to collect natural specimens and non-European populations' material culture as evidences to support the production of a supposedly objective knowledge aimed reinforcing the global perception of Western superiority. Until the mid-19th century, ethnographic collections and natural specimens were preserved together in natural history museums. Only with the emergence of the discipline of anthropology they acquired a separate status and were gradually moved to separate institutions: ethnographic museums. Ethnographic (as well as historical) museums were basically places where cultures were assembled and governed (Bennet 2018); they were laboratories to define who people were and their behaviors and where difference was conceptualized in a way that naturalized the economic and political dominance of European empires on colonized countries. In this process a key role was played by the consolidation of a linear temporal perception divided in past, present and future and the establishment of European historical path as the only acceptable, like a benchmark for determining the position of different societies in the "natural order of things". The category of *modernity* emerged in this context as a way to separate those who thought within scientific rational paradigm and acted according to specific models of economic development to those who did not share the same "linear and cumulative sense of time" (Trouillot 2015, 7). For long time modernity has been considered as something ontologically given³; only recently, post- and decolonial studies pointed out how it is nothing but an invention of a Western collectivity who, feeling superior, needed to define itself with respect to an alterity which was considered inferior (Mignolo 2018). As a result of the racial-hierarchical division imposed by colonial policies, Europeans were assigned the role of exclusive protagonists of modernity while non-European populations were relegated to the condition of prehistoric ancestors excluded from historical progression and bound to unchanging traditions. Modernity was thus considered as the basis of *civilized* Western society but, at the same time, was perceived as pervaded by corruption and immorality because it implied the loss of a set of existential references through which to make sense of reality (Cohen 1988). Since rational thought had involved the moving away from God as a vehicle to truth, individuals needed new conceptual tools to articulate the relationship between the self and civil institutions in which they were no longer able to identify (Berger 1973; Bendix 1997). The category of *authenticity* arose in this context

³ An in-depth discussion on the concept of modernity was made, among the others, by authors such as: Latour 1993; Canclini 1995; Escobar 2012; Walsh and Mignolo 2018; Halbmayer 2018.

as a device to look for truth intended as an “uncontaminated status of the self” (Bendix 1997). As it could not be found in modern society, the search for it had to occur outside it and precisely in those other cultures seen as *primitive* and pre-modern, tight to nature and not corrupted by civilization. Museums played a key role in this process – not by chance it is considered by some scholars as the “temple of authenticity” (see Trilling 1972; Handler 1986). In fact, material culture became the instrument to turn authenticity into a scientifically verifiable entity that offered the possibility of appropriating a true and authentic experience. Objects collected among non-European societies were considered as more or less authentic depending on the feeling of purity, genuineness and naiveté that provoked to Western people. Museums invested themselves with the mission of *saving from time* everything that held this authentic quality but that seemed destined to succumb to the stream of progress (Clifford 1985). In addition to this, the power of the museum of legitimizing the knowledge produced within it reinforced the process of fetishization which attributed to objects and their cultures of origin an intrinsic essence of the past (Lau 2000). According to Pitt Rivers, material culture was endowed with the capacity of preserving unchanged the connections between the levels of the evolutionary scale and this made it particularly suitable for the study of the different phases of social transformation over time (Chapman 1985). Consequently, the collection and display of exotic artefacts in late 19th-century ethnographic museums was oriented at reconstructing a *natural history of man* which represented the linear, pre-determined path of human social development conceptualized by modern paradigm. This way of representing humanity over time actually constitutes an all-European memory, for the perspectives of source communities were never taken into account in the discourses offered by the museological narrative. In these terms, the processes of object selection, collection and display tell us much more about how Europeans were constructing their identity than about the populations they claimed to represent – evoking the correspondence suggested by Clifford between the act of collecting and the construction of the self (1985). With the gradual opening of ethnographic museums to the general public, the convictions implied in this interpretative model increasingly rooted in social imaginary. Museums turned into what Bennet (2018) defined as “exhibitionary complexes”, that is, spaces in which the act of exhibiting corresponds to a process of writing (Padiglione 2008) and automatically includes the construction of specific representations and ideological discourses. For decades, they worked as “machineries of modernity” (Bennet 2018), i.e., powerful rhetorical devices

apt to incorporate, transmit and reinforce Western hegemonic colonial ideology (Sleeper Smith 2009).

Recent approaches on the concept of authenticity have emphasized its constructed character and the projective mechanism implicit in its application (see, among the others, MacCannell, 1976; Bendix 1977; Smith, 1977; Greenwood, 1982; Cohen, 1988; Lacy and Douglass, 2002, Grünewald 2009). Works such as *The Predicament of Culture* by James Clifford (1988), *The Invention of Culture* by Wagner (1981), and *The Invention of Tradition* by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) also offer interesting insights for its revision. According to the authors of these essays, there is nothing like a pure essence; every culture is invented and symbolically constructed in the present, related more to contemporary concerns than to an unchanging and inherited tradition. Likewise, also “authenticity is always defined in the present. It is not pastness or givenness that defines something as traditional. Rather, the latter is an arbitrary symbolic designation; a designated meaning rather than an objective quality” (Handler and Linnekin 1984, 286). Authenticity is not an intrinsic quality of an object but a fluid and mutable process, based on categories of value determined by the ways in which individuals perceive a particular cultural experience (Grünewald 2009).

Only from the second half of the 20th century, the responsibility of museums in classifying otherness and conveying specific values and ideologies has been publicly recognized and a critical discussion on their epistemological structure was opened to question their status as places of neutral and objective knowledge (Lattanzi 2013). One of the main factors to determine the advancement of this process was the raise of social, subaltern movements as a consequence of the political independence from Europe reached by many countries around the 1950s⁴. Through strong manifestations and public actions, a significant mass of marginalized people looked determined to oppose homogenizing projects and colonial policies promoted by the *modern* and *developed* West. Active in various forms at a global and local level, they formed not only movements of socio-political struggle and resistance but of real cultural re-existence, whose purpose was – and still is – to claim their right to difference with respect to hegemonic discourses imposed by the West (Clifford 1988; Walsh and Mignolo 2018). This new context brought intellectuals from different schools⁵ to discuss over

⁴ The end of political dependence on European countries did not end the colonization processes as new dependencies arose, particularly economic and military dependence on the United States.

⁵ According to Ballestrin (2013), among the most famous contribution to the so-called post- and de-colonial thought we find: the triad composed by Aimé Césaire (1950), Albert Memmi (1957) and Franz Fanon (1961)

the relationship between the exercise of colonial power and the production of knowledge on themselves, on the others and on the world (Prakash 1995) and to recognize that the latter was not exclusively the result of academic work (Walsh 2011). Indeed, political mobilizations were accompanied by an “uprising of knowledges” until then disqualified and marginalized by Western science (Cadena 2005) which revealed how European thought and experience were not universal but specific and historically situated (Chakrabarty 2000). In several countries around the world, sectors of the population that had hitherto remained silent and invisible in official historical narratives began to demand to speak for themselves, to regain power on their past and present and to be respected in their own way of living and relating to each other (see Sahlins 1999). Works belonging to the movement of cultural critique such as those of Said (1978), Clifford and Marcus (1986), Marcus and Fisher (1986), Clifford (1988), Spivak (1988), Featherstone et al. (1992), Hall (1992), Bhabha (1994) and Sahlins (1999) were crucial in the analysis of these problematics. They began to question critically ethnographic authority showing how anthropological practice and its theoretical production, far from being neutral voices, contributed to the construction of non-European societies in such a way to justify *scientifically* their political subjugation and cultural annihilation. The gaze on the Other and its representation turned out to be just one arbitrary interpretation of a complex, multifaceted and polyphonic reality. An interpretation which tended to invent the *objects* studied through the projection of specific epistemological categories and classify it according to the Western, colonial “world-system” (Quijano 2000). Issues related to the right to representation and cultural property became central to the debate (Kreps 2003; Thomas 2016). Consequently, ethnographic museums – raised precisely to exhibit cultural alterity (and, simultaneously, build Western identity) – were overwhelmed by these claims and called to their responsibilities as institutions at the service of society (Kreps 2003).

One of the first points to be criticized was the role of museum as “factory of illusions” (Pacheco de Oliveira 2019, 398) where to produce adequate representations of the world

who played an important role as mediators for expressing the voices of subaltern groups in French colonial context; Edward Said’s work *Orientalism* (1978), where he shows how the *East* is basically an invention of the West and the production of knowledge over it was aimed at the dominion on the Other; the studies carried out by Asian and South-Asian scholars such as Chatterjee, Chakrabarty and Spivak and focused on the critique to the concept of subaltern as another essentialized category; Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy who focused on the union of post-colonial and multicultural studies; the Latin American movement of Modernity/Colonality/Decoloniality which raised in the 1990s and extends its critique to issues such as epistemic decolonization (see, for instance, Anibal Quijano, Arthur Escobar, Catherine Walsh, Walter Mignolo among the others).

through the decontextualization of objects from a specific context and their collocation into another semiotic system (Stewart 1984; Kreps 2003). The status of objects itself was questioned as they began to be understood not only as products of human action but also and especially as producers of arbitrary knowledge, meanings and imaginaries on the world in which individuals and societies live and interact (see Gerritsen and Riello 2016). In regard of this, an interesting perspective is contained in Daniel Miller's Theory of Objectification. According to the anthropologist, people and things are involved in processes of continuous, circular, reciprocal production since "persons and things exist in mutual self-construction and respect for their mutual origin and mutual dependency" (Miller 2005, 38). Producer subjects and objects produced are not seen as relating through an oppositional dynamic. Their roles interchange and both people and things become producers and products of social, cultural, political and conceptual realities. People make things but "clearly, [also] things make people, and people who are made by those things go on to make other things" (Pinney 2005, 256). Consequently, objects stored in museums and that had been long treated as metonymic fetishes had to be re-focused as dense entities (Paini and Aria 2014); as catalysts of relations, perspectives and processes; as active agents in the formulation of social and cultural identities (Lattanzi 2013). This also implied to recognize that before and besides being ethnographic, objects preserved in Western museums are something else for someone else; they tell different stories and reveal entanglements that go far beyond their functionality. They inhabit and act in other, parallel dimensions than Western, scientific one. A significant contribution to this analytical framework was offered by Igor Kopytoff who developed the concept that objects, like people, have their own biographies (1986). This idea is even more interesting when applied to ethnographic collections because it brings us back to the issue of circulation and to the continuous slippage between various levels of meaning – a process later silenced by the univocal narrative of the museum. To follow objects as if they were the protagonists of multiple stories, allowed to gain useful insights into the arbitrariness and partiality of Western discourses on human social development. In fact, like kaleidoscopes, when re-set in motion, they lead our gaze along their own trajectories and those of the subjectivities with whom they have interacted in the past, they are confronted in the present and they might construct new realities in the future.

To realize that objects were embedded in a multiplicity of perspectives and dimensions also meant to acknowledge that a deep, broader rethinking of the museum and its inherently

colonial structure was inevitable (Lavine 1992). Openness, inclusion, dialogue and democracy became the key words of a decolonization process aimed at turning museums from “temples” playing timeless and universal functions into “fora” for confrontation (Cameron 1972); from places where otherness was showcased into “contact zones” (Clifford 1997) where to deconstruct and re-negotiate relations of power through the collaboration between curators and source-communities (Peers and Brown 2003). As suggested by group of Native American scholars in the collection of essays *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, the only way for this process to be effective is that museums face the truth and, through their exhibitions, challenge taboos on topics that people often do not want to talk about openly and tell uncomfortable truths on colonial violence in an honest way (Lonetree 2009). Also, the professionals working in the field have to transform their attitudes and practices in such a way to consider the producers of the objects as subjects equally active in the elaboration of discourses about social dynamics and contemporary histories (Nicks 2003). In these terms, political inclusion must be accompanied by a reformulation of epistemic categories. We already stressed how knowledge production is intrinsically related to the exercise of power and, consequently, museum exhibitions are arbitrary. To go through epistemic decolonization implies to make this process explicit and assume an intellectual positioning which takes seriously the categories of the represented Other and consider them as equally valid, rational and legitimate as Western ones in the interpretation of social, cultural, political and environmental reality. This does not mean to decline or deny Western perspective but to consider it as just one narrative among many others (Trouillot 2015), as one possible alternative in the multivocal and heterogeneous production of discourses on diversity (Ribeiro and Escobar 2008). This process is very complex because often different ways of perceiving the world are not radically opposed to the hegemonic thought; they articulate in the fractures and interstices opened while trying to normalize the colonial process (Prakash 1995). In an article wrote in 2010, Johannes Fabian affirmed that the more he confronted the problems faced by museologists in the postcolonial world, the more he realized how insufficient the existing conceptual and intellectual frameworks are to offer solutions that go in different directions compared to the past. To this extent, it might be useful the concept of “oppositional postmodernism” elaborated by Boaventura de Santos (2002). With it, the author claims that to solve *modern* problems we do not have to rely on *modern*, rather on innovative, solutions starting from the

practical experiences of actors capable of producing alternative social and epistemological projections. To say it with Ferracuti, Frasca and Lattanzi (2013), we should go “beyond historical modernity” and string out crosswise to the spurs offered by contemporaneity. In this way, it might be possible to construct a new, non-hegemonic discourse with the alterities, which problematize mutual responsibilities and epistemological positionings (see also Dussel 2000). In museums, one of the main strategies to adopt this decolonial attitude (Maldonado-Torres 2007) involves the review and transformation of curatorship, preservation and exhibition practices in such a way to show more respect towards other societies’ cultural aspects – a process which Christina Kreps defined as of “liberation of culture” (2003, 144). Participative projects, activities of co-curatorship, negotiations to return specific collections to source communities, preserve and/or exhibit them according to specific rules have thus entered the agenda of ethnographic museums in order to promote the “creative re-imagining and reworking of its identity” (Hooper-Greenhill 2007, 1). Particular attention has been given to the so-called sensitive objects, that is to say those “of special significance in a particular culture” which “are believed to be, or have been in the past, spiritually active or possessing spiritual power” (Williamson 1997, 2). In reaction to indigenous claims over cultural property, many institutions began to reflect about the proper way to handle such objects, especially because they highlighted the problematic nature of practices at the very base of Western museology, such as physical preservation or exhibition. As for the former, it became clear that the concept of preservation itself is differently conceived depending on the cultural context. There are cases in which physical preservation is considered as damaging the cultural reproduction of a society rather than benefit it (Harth 1999). For this reason, demands for repatriation of cultural heritage are being entered to museums and specific ceremonial practices aimed at restoring objects’ physical and/or spiritual integrity are executed – even when this implies their destruction (Wilson and Yellow Bird 2005)⁶. Similarly problematized was the design of exhibition routes: we cannot take for granted that

⁶ Repatriation is a very complex and highly debated issue. In other circumstances, it is requested as compensation to colonial debt and to the violence suffered in the past when subjugated territories were constantly looted in the name of scientific knowledge⁶. The most famous case is that involving the Benin Bronzes, recently given back by some European institutions such as the British Museum of London and the Humboldt Forum of Berlin after years of heated debates and negotiations (see Hicks 2020; Oltermann 2022). However, even restitution can take neo-colonial turns because sometimes museums insist to give back things that the original populations do not want. As a matter of fact, back at *home*, some objects might raise conflicts and disagreements among groups; sometimes real owners are unknown, sometimes disputes for possession open, sometimes they are dangerous because no one has the skills and knowledge to handle their spiritual charge anymore (Lima Barreto 2014).

to put an object into display is the best way to transmit its value and its meaning. On the contrary, the original population might feel offended or disrespected (Idem). To solve this problem, some museums decided to leave their cases empty once they discovered that the exhibited objects were not to be seen by everyone indiscriminately but could only be handled by specific members of the original community (see Clifford 1988; Pearlstone 2001; Shannon 2009). The same occurred in those cases in which their exhibition was disrespectful of the represented people or reproduced racist stereotypes that classify non-European peoples as savages and primitive instead of leading the public to a greater understanding of other lifestyles (see Gulliford 2000; Peers 2009; Adams 2020). Objects were replaced by captions explaining the reasons for these operations and the work museums are doing to adopt “the appropriate and sensitive methods for storing, displaying and interpreting objects” in their collections (Gulliford 2000, 42). Elsewhere, the same problem was solved not by removing objects from the exhibition but by hiding them⁷ and trying to involve visitors through other sensory modalities – for instance, hearing or touching (see Hudson 1991; Augustat 2019; Bottesi 2021). In all these proposals, to leave objects in storages without offering an explanation was not considered a useful strategy because it would simply avoid the topic instead of inviting visitors to think critically about the accessibility to certain objects.

When objects’ physical preservation or exhibition do not represent a problem per se, the discussion on how to treat material culture in ethnographic museums focused on the narratives built through their exhibition and that until recently reproduced Western colonial, hegemonic visions and imaginaries. The desire of many curators to fulfill source communities’ demands of showing different histories and perspectives resulted in the design and execution of different collaborative projects⁸. In them, the contemporary descendants of objects’ producers are usually invited in the museum to discuss together over the meanings of objects, their uses and the best ways to exhibit or preserve them in storages. These processes are also very complicated and not always successful. Sometimes, the outcomes are satisfactory for all the parts involved; sometimes, it might happen that such projects end up taking on a neo-colonial character either because of physical and bureaucratic limits imposed

⁷ In some cases, visitors could decide whether looking at the object or not by moving a panel or a curtain. This solution is rather ambiguous and most of the time unsuccessful since Western public usually lacks the sensitivity to understand the proper thing to do, namely, not looking.

⁸ See, for example: Peers and Brown 2003; De Palma 2004; McMaster et al. 2018; Sleeper-Smith 2009; Augustat 2017; Driver et al. 2021; Karp et al. 2006; Rossi 2008.

by institutions and/or due to curators who impose their own interpretive categories anyway (Karp and Lavine 1991; Boast 2011).

This research stems from the desire to join this discussion, in particular as it concerns the way in which the collection of ethnographic objects participated in the construction of an exotic, stereotyped imaginary about indigenous people of Brazil. With the arrival of Europeans on the shores of the *New World*, objects coming from both indigenous and European contexts began to circulate with increasing frequency and intensity and encouraged processes of classification and interpretation aimed at imposing order on the conceptual inputs produced in the encounter of such different realities (Gliozzi 1993). Their role in the production of representations on indigenous populations perceived as a radical alterity was as important as that of iconographies and written sources; rather, their materiality gave a sense of concreteness and reality to the elements that were progressively added to the imagery about Brazilian natives through the continuous processing of information reported by travelers, missionaries, traders and imperial officers (Pagden 1988). Despite the geopolitical, ideological and epistemological transformations of the past decades (that we have briefly discussed above), many aspects of this imaginary are still strongly rooted in common thought. It is not rare to bump into descriptions that portray indigenous people as isolated, primitive, technologically backward individuals, who are plunged into a savage natural dimension and, because of this, walk around naked – or, at most, with ornaments made of plant fibers and feathers – hunting with bow and arrow and gathering fruits and forest products. This image conceals the heterogeneity of indigenous groups and hampers their attempts to disseminate views that recognize their diversity, modernity and plurality of ways of experiencing reality. As a result, the elaboration of a future different from that imagined in the past and in which some societies are denied a chance of existence is also compromised. To analyze the processes, mechanism and discourses through which the elements of such imaginary were assembled over time seems like a necessary effort to change the practices that still encourage its reproduction. This is even truer in the context of museums, since these institutions have been associated to the performance of educational functions at least from their opening to the public (Karp 1992)⁹.

⁹ During the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, they were aimed primarily at educating a public lacking technical and scientific knowledge that was to be oriented to the ideals of economic and social progress (Hall 2006; Macdonald 2010). This vision radically changed in the second half of the 20th century and specifically with the publication, in 1992, of the report *Excellence and Equity: education and the public dimension of museums*

In the following pages we are going undertake a journey across the time(s), the spaces, and the meanings that have marked the social and cultural lives of Kambeba bamboo board and arrow thruster, of Sateré-Mawé club/oar and of Munduruku feather works. I would like to imagine it like a labyrinth in which every sentence, paragraph, section is a corridor that takes us towards innumerable topics, questions and possible answers. Just as it is impossible to walk all the paths of a labyrinth, we will not be able to address all the issues we will come across. To approach the exit, we will have to make choices. I anticipate that we will not reach it (in fact, it may not exist) but I hope we will find some strategies to be able to better navigate each future step.

The thesis is divided in two parts. The first one is concerned with retracing the journey taken by the objects mentioned from the time they were collected in Brazil to their arrival in European museums. We adopted the perspective of European hegemonic narrative. Through the study and analysis of primary and secondary sources we shall observe critically the events and motives that favored the collecting processes. However, since our purpose is to reveal the multiple histories that objects may have to tell, the second part wants them to take – though figuratively – the reverse path. Taking its cue from the debate and strategies suggested by the processes of decolonization of museum spaces, the main action was to visit the descendants of the objects' producers to discuss with them other meanings, histories and uses (past and present) besides the clearly biased and tendentious ones offered by Europeans. In other words, the attempt is that of showing the perspective of source communities on their cultural heritage and the dynamics in which it has been involved in the last centuries, for it has been long silenced by Western ethnographic, colonial representations. In addition to that, it is important to stress that in many cases contemporary descendants of indigenous people do not personally and physically know the ancient artifacts which are preserved in European museums; they hold a know-how on aspects related to their manufacturing and cultural and cosmological meaning but they never had the opportunity of seeing or manipulating them. To show at least their pictures might be considered a (small) part of a broader process of repatriation which aims at encouraging the reconnection and transmission of memory and traditions. The idea of combining these two research paths into

by the American Association of Museums. Museum education began to be rethought in accordance with new pedagogical proposals based no longer on the domination of large knowledge sets but on the development of individuals' personal skills within constantly changing societies (Hooper-Greenhill 2007).

a single arose from the fact that questioning the structures of Western thought and the representations produced on the Other is useful – and crucial – but reductive if an alternative view cannot be offered. At the same time, such alternative cannot be devised without the involvement of the people who produced the objects and an open attitude towards their interpretative categories.

Methodologically speaking, this is interdisciplinary research. In the first part (chapters 1, 2 and 3), I used a historical and historiographical approach. To join the information which allowed a critical analysis of events and motives which brought Kambeba, Sateré-Mawé and Mundurucu objects within European museums, periods of time were spent in the storages, archives and libraries of the museums above-mentioned – and a few related others¹⁰. In October 2020 and May 2022, I spent a few weeks in Vienna; in June 2021 and June 2022, I visited and made research in the Portuguese museums. In this way, I could study at close quarters the collections, catalogs, caption apparatuses and, most importantly, the primary and secondary documentation produced during the naturalistic expeditions in which the objects were collected¹¹. On the other hand, the second part (chapters 4 and 5) is characterized by an ethnographic and anthropological approach and bases its arguments on information from fieldwork. It is very important to take into account some limits of this ethnographic field that, for the standards of anthropological research, might not be very thorough. This is due to different factors, first of all the fact that it is not the purpose of this research to produce ethnographies of the populations considered. As said above, objects are our protagonists and it is their paths and semantic shifts that we want to retrace. The information reported among the descendants of their producers were thus intentionally selected insofar as it helps us analyzing the objects' density and epistemological status in the different contexts in which they interact. In addition to this, the geographical extension and the multi-situated character of the field played a major role. How one can perceive by looking at the maps of figures 57, 66, 67, the territories currently inhabited by the populations considered are huge and very far apart. To organize dislocations has required effort and attention both in temporal and economic terms.

¹⁰ I also visited the archives of the *Naturhistorisches Museum* in Vienna and of the *Museu Nacional de História Natural e da Ciência* in Lisbon.

¹¹ Part of the documentation was provided to me digitally by the museum curators themselves; other materials are also available online.

So, within these circumstances, the data collected are the result of approximately seven months (October 2021 to February 2022/October-November 2022) spent in Brazil dialoguing, more or less intensely, with some representatives of the Kambeba, Sateré-Mawé and Munduruku peoples. This process was aimed at answering questions such as: what sensations accompany the fact that their objects are preserved so far from their original land? Do they agree with how they are being treated and exposed (if they are exposed)? What should they communicate to non-indigenous visitors (and, if there is occasion, indigenous) watching them? What stories should they tell? Which imaginaries should they evoke? The final purpose was to understand to what point the discourses offered by museums and Western narrative were shared or felt appropriate by the *represented* people. Ethnographic representations have long invented their objects and eclipsed their realities and interpretations of the world. To look for a comparison with the descendants of who produced the artifacts and try to establish a relation as cross-cutting as possible are indispensable actions to show indigenous contemporary realities for what they are in their complexity, density and contradictions. The choice of populations was not random but dictated by two main reasons. The first one is related to the topic of the research, that is the construction of imaginary and of homogenizing stereotypes on Brazilian natives. Kambeba, Sateré-Mawé and Munduruku objects were chosen for they are linked with the discourses produced by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira and Johann Natterer on indigenous people and which influenced the shaping of such imaginary. They were collected because useful – in different ways – to the production of representations that consolidated colonial power through conceptual dominion. Both the Portuguese and the Austrian collections are, of course, huge. Other objects could be analyzed in the same way. And here it comes the second reason which justify our choice. Since the purpose of the project is to reveal other perspectives and tell other stories, it was necessary to choose objects that could actually be discussed. Quite simply, among all the groups represented in the collections assembled by the two naturalists, the Kambeba, the Sateré-Mawé and the Munduruku were those with whom the opportunity of establishing a dialogue has arisen. As we will see, to have access to and work in indigenous contexts can be difficult and problematic because of innumerable issues, especially political. In Latin America, academic research has always been characterized by some kind of political engagement but the dynamics of interaction and exchange have become more complex in the last thirty years. To make research among indigenous groups implies being willing (and able) to enter into an

exchange relationship in which the researcher is asked to make a contribution to support, in a wide variety of ways, the struggle of the indigenous community with whom one wants to work. The outbreak of Covid-19 between 2019 and 2022 – years during which the majority of the research took place – has further complicated the fieldwork's context. The initial project involved different institutions, populations and research timelines. Due to the limitations imposed by the pandemic, all three elements underwent profound revisions to the point, in some cases, of exclusion and replacement with the contexts presented in the following pages. For all the limitations mentioned, the conversation I had with the representatives of the Kambeba, the Sateré-Mawé and the Munduruku were also limited to a few people. Therefore, they correspond to partial versions of indigenous perspective on their material culture and they are to be thought of as cues that is possible and desirable to deepen through future researches.

Another point has to be stressed. The combination of historical and anthropological research in one single project undoubtedly implies some theoretical and methodological *weakness*. What binds them and gives them greater solidity and coherence is their application to a specific context, that is, museums and the material culture preserved in them. Both historical and anthropological research are here to be considered not as independent dimensions but as approaches useful to investigate museological discourses and paradigms. In this regard, a remark on sources has to be done. As we said before, the analysis conducted in the first part of the thesis relied on primary and secondary, written and iconographic sources produced during and after the Portuguese and Austrian expeditions. In particular, I focused on the careful read of those documents directly linked to the objects and the circumstances in which they were collected and recontextualized in museums. Among them we find inventories compiled by the two naturalists during the expeditions, inventories and catalogs after the objects entered the museums, letters, reports, records referring to the political-economic context of the exploration voyages, and iconographic sources also important to reflect on the processes of objects interpretation and classification. All this material is scattered among various archives and libraries, especially of the museum institutions where the collections are kept or of other related museums (for instance, the Natural History Museums of Lisbon and Vienna). Precisely because of this fragmentation – derived from the processes of formation and redistribution of the collections over time (§2.3; §3.3) – access to sources has been of various kinds. When it has been impossible to personally visit the archives, the possibility of

consulting the documentation through already published material or through digital copies provided by the curators was fundamental for the success of the research.

Consulting these sources has been a preliminary activity not only because it helped to trace geographically and temporally the circulation of objects but also because it offers important insights into the role they played in the production of hegemonic colonial knowledge on the *Other*. In this sense, the approach to the archive echoes recent thinking developed in the context of the “archival turn” (Stoler 2010) and the questioning of the archive as merely a repository of supposedly neutral information from the past. Each document has been observed in light of its historically determined character and the knowledge it conveys as influenced by specific ideological positions and power relations (see Foucault 1980, 2005; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Derrida 1995; Stoler 2010; Trouillot 2015 among the others). The sources that have come down to us must be viewed for their partiality and positionality. They are always the result of processes of selection of information, from their collection to their subsequent recontextualization (regardless of the fact that many of them have been lost or damaged over the centuries) – Yakel (2007) speaks of “archival representation” in reference to the operations of selecting and organizing documents aimed at deciding what to remember and how to remember it. In their analysis, to circumscribe the focus on information about specific objects has helped in “‘descifrar la intencionalidad’ de la producción y conservación documental”¹² (Cohn 1980 in Muzzopappa e Villalta 2022, 17) because it allowed to observe well the transition between different interpretations. Indeed, the organization and classification of objects’ *metadata* has a great influence on the meanings attributed to musealized collections. It is a fact that things do not tell anything a priori; it is us who make them speak by projecting our gaze onto and through them (Crew and Sims 1991). The documents that make up the background for their contextualization in Europe have been read *crosswise* so as to bring out what the two naturalists and the subsequent curators made the objects say about Brazilian indigenous peoples.

To approach to sources in a way that considers their processual and historically determined character is key to this study also because it enables the opening of some space for those voices which have been ignored, silenced or hidden in the construction of social representations through ethnographic objects to emerge – the so-called “study of absences” as Trouillot teaches us (2015). It was precisely to better identify, question and, in a sense, fill

¹² “Decipher the intentionality of documents production and conservation”.

these absences that, in the second part of the research, I privileged an ethnographic approach and the collection of oral sources among the descendants of objects producers about the material culture considered through documents. Informal conversations (not recorded), interviews and collective discussions allowed to collect data and information that are crucial to reveal alternative, counter-hegemonic perspectives on objects in a broader context of decolonization of knowledge (cfr Walsh and Mignolo 2018). Until the second half of the 20th century, oral testimony was usually discredited as source from which to take valid and reliable information to reconstruct history in an *objective* way. This was related to the way in which the category of history itself was conceived when it arose in the late 19th within the positivist ideology. History as social science aimed at investigating human beings scientifically, which implied the application of a rational model of thought to the knowledge of the past. Through the selection of well-defined documents among the huge number of testimonies produced throughout the world, the task of historians was to elaborate an objective, universal narrative of mankind's path through time and (social) space (see Le Goff 1977; Foucault 2005; Trouillot 2015). Accordingly, written documents were the only ones to be hailed as historical records (Gomes da Cunha 2005). Oral testimony was not considered helpful evidence because it relied on the memory of individuals which, however socially mediated (see Halbwachs 1950, 1997), did not reach the standards of objectivity required by the historical discipline¹³. It was not until the 1970s that the emergence of Oral History studies reasserted the scientific value of oral sources. With it, the political importance of the life experiences that they reported and which had been usually excluded from historical narrative was given importance. In reality, the creation of the French school of the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* in 1929 had already made the first steps in this direction. Led by Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre and their students, such movement aimed at studying the past not only through big events registered by the official historical discourse but through the categories and imaginaries of social groups intentionally silenced by history. In the 1960s, the spread of a counter-hegemonic thinking that promoted the political autonomy of minorities and criticized their exclusion from the processes of knowledge production and transmission increased the popularity of this kind of historical research. The recognition of

¹³ The debate on history and memory is very broad and complex. To explore it further see for example: Veyne 1973; Le Goff 1977; Namer 1987; Nora 1989; Lowenthal and Gathercode 1990; Geary 1994; Fabietti and Matera 1999; Assmann 2002; Candau 2002; Assmann 2011; Trouillot 2015; Di Pasquale 2018.

recorded and transcribed interviews as documents similar in every way to written ones was the innovative aspects and one that most distinguished oral history from traditional history. In this way, all those subjects left at the margins of the debate would have gained their voice back and seen their point of view acknowledged. Also, their inclusion in the historical narrative allowed to grasp alternative versions about the events and let emerge a temporal perspective based on life experience (Grele 2017; Di Pasquale 2018). Obviously, this methodology is not without its problems and contradictions (see, for example, Portelli 2017). Nonetheless, it makes an important contribution to showing how people relate to things, events and values of the societies in which they live. On the whole, this process allows us to rethink collectivities in their complex realities rather than according to pre-packaged, homogenizing models; also, it is a good starting point to question archives and archival sources as devices of hegemonic power used to shape looks, representations and narratives on objects and social groups (see Foucault 1980; Derrida 1995). Even archival sources, traditionally regarded by Western social sciences as “traces of history” (see Assmann 2010), are actually fragments of memory, representations of collectivities constructed from specific ideological positions and power relations. To this extent, it might be worth and interesting to emphasize the operation of appropriation of historical documentation made by indigenous people. It is frequent to see them using it to recompose their jagged traditions. However, the way they read sources does not follow the hegemonic Western narrative but is always questioned, sometimes corrected and always understood through their own epistemological categories – in a way, it becomes another example of how the sources’ meanings change depending on the context of interpretation and use (Zeitlyn 2012; Muzzopappa and Villalta 2022).

A note has to be made on how the quotations from written and oral sources are treated in the thesis. Whenever it was possible, I decided to maintain the text in the original language and report its translation into English in a footnote. On the contrary, in the case of texts and documents which were consulted in a different language from the original one, I preferred to report the English version directly in the text.

As we said, objects are the protagonists of this research; our purpose is to retrace their biographies, social histories and, in particular, to grasp the ramification of narratives and representations built, over time, on them and through them. To achieve it, it was necessary to extend the gaze beyond archival and classic ethnographic research and to consider both of

them as complementary methodological approaches to the production of a multivocal knowledge capable of offering different perspectives on material culture and its contexts of interpretation. The two parts of the thesis can also be seen as complementary and, in part, specular since the same objects are first observed through Western lenses and then through native ones – as far as possible within the limits of translation through my gaze as a Western university researcher.

In total, the thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one is an introductory chapter to some aspects that is important to focus on to better understand both the discourses produced by the two European naturalists and further biological and social classifications of indigenous people of Brazil. It is devoted to the first encounter between European and Brazilian natives; to the innumerable, often contradictory, representations which followed and to the production of categories to “invent” them (Wagner 1981). The analysis is based on bibliographical and iconographic sources and early ethnographic collections as key elements for the freeze-framing of a composite portrait of indigenous people. The way Europeans perceived them, on the one hand reflected the contradictions of theological and philosophical speculation, while on the other hand bound them to the categories of wonder, curiosity and alterity. In particular, we shall consider the accounts of Pero Vaz de Caminha, Amerigo Vespucci, Hans Staden, Jean de Léry, Andre Thevet, Georg Markgraf and the drawings and engravings of Johann Froschauer, Hans Staden, Andre Thevet and Theodore de Bry. These sources are observed in relation to some objects collected between the 16th and the 17th centuries and which entered Cabinets of Curiosities (*Wunderkammern*) such as those of the Medici in Florence, of the Habsburg in Ambras (Austria) and in Prague, of the Marquis Cospi and the scholar Ulisse Aldrovandi in Bologna, of the King of Spain Philip II in Madrid and Segovia, and of François I and Henri II in France. This operation of comparison is useful to see how material culture played, since the beginning, an important role in the construction of a stereotyped imaginary on Brazilian natives.

With the second chapter we enter in the analysis of the case studies. It investigates the trajectory of Kambeba and Sateré-Mawé objects preserved at the *Academia das Ciências* of Lisbon and at the *Museu da Ciência* of Coimbra and which were collected during the first scientific expedition carried out throughout Brazilian territory: the *Viagem Philosophica* (1783-1792). The journey was organized by the Portuguese Crown and led by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, a student of Natural History who completed his studies at the University of

Coimbra in 1778. One part of the chapter is devoted to analyze the political and economic circumstances that favored the realization of the expedition as well as some of the scientific theories which influenced the production of knowledge on colonial territories and their populations. Two key events were the Treaty of Madrid (1750) which, aimed at discussing the frontiers with Spanish domains, encouraged the creation of a demarcation committee to consolidate Portuguese control on Brazilian territory; the reform of the University of Coimbra (1772) implemented by the Marquis of Pombal to promote the development of scientific knowledge according to European standards of Enlightenment thought. The second part focuses specifically on the objects produced by Kambeba and Sateré-Mawé peoples in relation to the written and graphic documentation left by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira. The purpose is to analyze their trajectory to Europe and to highlight the categories and the discourses used by the naturalist to interpret them and classify their producers. Ferreira's attitude was extremely pragmatic and oriented to illustrate the potential of the Brazilian territory and its inhabitants for the economic development of the Portuguese empire. By collecting ethnographic artifacts, he aimed at reconstructing a "history of the American industry" that could shed light on the broader process of social and technological development of human beings.

The third chapter has a similar structure to chapter two. It focuses on the trajectory and interpretation of feather works objects belonging to Munduruku people and which are currently preserved and exposed at the *Welt Museum* of Vienna. They were collected between 1819 and 1836 by Johann Natterer, an Austrian naturalist who was sent in Brazil on behalf of the Austrian Emperor Franz I. The purpose of the expedition was to collect natural specimens and ethnographic objects to enrich the Emperor's Cabinet of Natural History and increase his political power. In 1807, the Portuguese Court moved to Rio de Janeiro as a consequence to Napoleonic invasions and Brazil's frontiers were opened to other European powers. The occasion for Austria to enter the Brazilian territory and study its resources arrived in 1816 when the emperor's daughter, Archduchess Leopoldina, was given in marriage to the heir to the Portuguese Crown, Dom Pedro. The journey was organized to accompany her to Rio de Janeiro. The circumstances of collection are presented in detail in order to show how the interpretation and classification of indigenous peoples differed according to the specific political, economic and ideological context of each European power. The discourse produced by Johann Natterer on Munduruku people, and extended to natives

in general, is analyzed in the second part of the chapter. Objects are put in relation with the letters left by the naturalist and iconographic sources produced by some of Natterer's contemporaries. Compared to Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, Johann Natterer favored ethnographic objects which evoked a feeling of wonder and exoticism showing the persistence of categories of interpretation frequently adopted in 16th- and 17th-century Cabinets of Curiosities as well as the ambiguous attitudes existing towards indigenous societies. In any case, both men were colonial agents beyond naturalists; the science in the name of which they travelled was inseparable from the specific political-economic and ideological circumstances in which they lived and interacted. In both chapters, the last part is devoted to follow the objects' *life* from their arrival in Europe until their entering in late 19th-century ethnographic museums.

With chapter four we enter in the second part of the thesis, where the data of the nine months' fieldwork are exposed. Like chapters two and three, chapters four and five have similar structures. Chapter four, which mirror chapter two, is devoted to report the information collected during the visits to the Kambeba and the Sateré-Mawé. It is thus divided in two sections, both of which introduced by the analysis of the exhibitions at the two Portuguese museums and of the representations they offer, today, of Brazilian natives. Subsequently, the attention focuses on our encounter and on the importance that the objects have for the representatives of Kambeba and Sateré-Mawé peoples. The discussion on them, their history, and their multiple meanings let emerge some themes that are peculiar to the contexts of indigenous political claims. As for the Kambeba, the importance of the bamboo tablet and the related practice of head flattening (ritual of the *Kānga Pewa*) emerged strongly as a diacritical element for the claim of an indigenous identity silenced due to the colonial process. The exchange with the Sateré-Mawé was significant to grasp the spiritual and political significance of the club/oar (*Porantim*) as well as its role as a device for managing historical, ritual and everyday time.

On the other hand, chapter five is specular to chapter three and aims at showing the result of the discussion opened with the third Amazonian population considered, that is, Munduruku people, on the objects preserved and exposed in Vienna. After a critical analysis of the current exhibition in which the objects are on display, I shall introduce the circumstances in which the encounter with the representative of Munduruku people occurred and report the considerations of some representatives of the people on the objects

produced by their ancestors. In this case, it was more difficult to reveal the stories behind the objects because the majority of them are no longer produced. Thus, to have a look at the stories of the ancestors was a relevant part – more than in the other contexts – to understand the position of feather works in Munduruku cosmology and their importance in the transmission of memory today. The relationship with memory is a theme that emerged with preponderancy in all the three case studies. In fact, the transmission of specific memories vehicles a set of ways of being and act which are key to the construction of indigenous identities capable of facing contemporary challenges through the creative articulation of elements coming from their own cultures with others coming from the West. Another important issue that shall be treated in chapter four and five is the access to the fieldwork and the difficulties that may influence the relationship between the researcher and indigenous people. In the case of a research such as that presented here, the request for political engagement is also entered to the museums that hold the objects in their collections. In chapters four and five we will see how such requests were made by the Kambeba, the Sateré-Mawé and the Mundurku respectively. Last but not least, we shall address the topic of indigenous education. In fact, indigenous education is the conceptual frame in which the discoursed about heritage are placed and, thanks to its political nature, it gives a political role also to material culture, to the memory it guards and to the identities it represents.

That said, let's begin our journey.

Chapter one

Building Imaginaries: first steps for the invention of indigenous America

1.1 *Telling an encounter*

On the 1st of May of 1500, the scribe of the fleet of Pedro Álvarez Cabral, Pero Vaz de Caminha, wrote to the King of Portugal Dom Manuel:

Esta Terra, Senhor, me parece que da ponta mais contra o sul vimos até outra ponta que contra o norte vem, de que nós deste porto houvermos vista, será tamanha que haverá nela bem vinte ou vinte e cinco léguas por costa. Tem, ao longo do mar, nalgumas partes, grandes barreiras, delas vermelhas, delas brancas; e a terra por cima toda chã e muito cheia de grandes arvoredos. De ponta a ponta é tudo praia-palma, muito chã e muito formosa.

Pelo sertão nos pareceu, vista do mar, muito grande, porque a estender olhos, não podíamos ver senão terra com arvoredos, que nos parecia muito longa. [...] Águas são muitas; infindas. Em tal maneira é graciosa que, querendo-a aproveitar, dar-se-à nela tudo, por bem das águas que tem.¹ (Caminha 1987 [1500], 96-97)

In the traditional historiographic narrative, this episode is known as the *Discovery of Brazil*. Although very common, the term *discovery* has been revised in a critical perspective for some decades now, because of the Eurocentric character it implies. In European, as well as in Brazilian, school education the general trend is to show that the *New World* was an almost empty space (Gliozzi 1993). In reality, the American territory was already inhabited by several native peoples who *discovered* those places long before the Europeans, and had built on them a whole and complex corpus of knowledge. Interestingly, at the beginning, chroniclers like Caminha used the term *achamento* (finding) to talk about the landing on the New World, suggesting that during the first voyages through the Atlantic the idea of having found something was more popular. The concept of *descobrimento* (discovery) came later, together with the increasing of European influence on the Atlantic space and the necessity to endow

¹ “This land, Sir, it seems to me that from the southernmost tip we have seen to another tip that comes northward, which we have seen from this port, is so large that it has twenty or twenty-five leagues of coastline. It has, along the sea, in some parts, large barriers, some of them red, some white; and the land above is all flat and very full of large trees. From end to end, it's all a calm beach, very flat and very beautiful. From the sea, the innerland seemed very large to us, because when we looked out, we could only see land with trees, which seemed very long to us. [...] The waters are many; endless. It is so graceful that, if you want to take advantage of it, you will give it everything, for the sake of the waters it has.”

the first explorations with heroism and novelty, compared to the following ones. In any case, the proper expression to refer to the events which followed Pedro Alvarez Cabral's journey should not be interpreted in terms of *discovery* or *finding* but of real *conquest*.

Like for any human achievement, Portuguese arrival in Brazil would not be possible without some preconditions, whose roots went deeper in previous centuries. For many historians, not even Colombo's enterprise in 1492 is far considered as the result of his genius; consequently, the opening and expansion of the Atlantic routes would represent not much "l'inizio di un'era, quanto piuttosto il culmine di un processo molto più ampio"² (Morelli 2018, 19) which began in the late middle age. The development – and, sometimes, the appropriation – of geographical³, cartographic and nautical knowledge, the need of finding new trading routes for India and China⁴ and the diffusion of new models of economic exploitation to increase the production prepared the field to Colombo's journey and of many others after him.

The fantastic imaginary fed by legends and travel literature also played a significant role in pushing merchants to finance travels and expeditions of European sailors (Morelli 2018) who were looking both for richness and adventure. Since Columbus believed to have reached India, in the new world people expected to find those "unusual races" (Friedman 1981, 1) that, according to ancient and medieval sources⁵, populated the exotic, distant lands of India, Ethiopia, Eastern Europe, the Far East and of any other little-known and mysterious space (Jackson 2001). The artistic and cartographic production indulged in the representation of deformed and monstrous creatures and literary works such as the *Liber monstrorum de diversis generibus* (Bologna 1977) were committed to "dare un nome ed un volto a quelle "alcune

² "The beginning of an era, rather the culmination of a much broader process."

³ From the end of the 15th century, treaties such as Tolomeo's *Geographia* and Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi* (Morelli, 2018) introduced a different perspective and new awareness about the World dimensions and its sphericity, which was later confirmed by the circumnavigation of the globe realized by Magellano from 1519 until 1522 (Fiorani and Flores 2005).

⁴ The fall of the Eastern Roman Empire in 1453 and the consequent Ottoman conquest of Constantinople caused the obstruction of the Silk Road, the main trade route to reach the East and its precious goods.

⁵ There are several ancient and medieval sources that have dealt to a greater or lesser extent with the description and classification of "unusual and monstrous races". It is worth mentioning, for the ancient period, Homer's *Odyssey* (8th-6th century B.C.), Aristotle's *Generation of Animals* (4th century B.C.), Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis* (1st century A.D.), Ptolemaic *Geography* (2nd century A.D.) and Caio Giulio Solino's *Collectanea rerum memptabilium* (3rd century A.D.). In the Middle Ages references became more frequent, particularly through works such as Sant'Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* (5th century), Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* (7th century), bestiaries such as the *Liber Monstrorum de diversis generibus* (8th century), Richard of Holdingam's *Map of Hereford* (13th cent) and Ranulfo Higden's *Polychronicon* (13th-14th century). For the Renaissance period among the best known and most relevant works is Ulisse Aldrovandi's *Monstrorum Historia* (16th century). For further study see: Friedman 1981, Daston and Park 2000, Lawrence 2018.

altre” Cose, che rimangono in fondo al setaccio dopo che vi sono state filtrate “tutte” le realtà della Natura”⁶ (Bologna 1977, 23). So, when Colombo arrived in Central America convinced of having reached the coasts of India instead, those new lands immediately found themselves populated by the marvelous and scary beings of classical legends (Friedman 1981). Bond to popular imaginaries since Ancient Greece, they expressed ethnocentrism – an attitude that tends to relegate all those who did not share a culture to a position of otherness and classifies as abnormal and inferior who does not fit the ruling model. Mostly despised were those groups whose social life was not organized around urban structure, because considered as devoid of those moral and ethical qualities that any civilized individual should have (Idem). From these assumptions also originated the well-known distinction between civilized and *barbarous* populations, which was extended to the whole European area in Christian, Medieval Times and which, right after Colombo’s voyage, was used to interpret also indigenous groups of the New World⁷. Even when it became clear that what Europeans thought to be India was actually a whole new continent, some creatures of this mythical imaginary still became real symbols of its space, due to the attempt of reading those lands pervaded by a feeling of mystery and exoticism through familiar categories. Some of them were particularly successful among the first travelers, greatly influencing both the perception Europeans had of cultures which were different from their own and their representations. A quite famous example is that of the Amazons, a tribe of warrior women who, according to Herodotus (6th century A.D.), lived on the banks of the Thermodon river close to the Black

⁶ “Give a name and a face to those “some other” Things, which remain at the bottom of the sieve after “all” realities of Nature have been filtered into it.”

⁷ Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the publication of numerous treatises on good manners as well as the establishment of “norms of civilization” that distinguished the European from the *Other* (Klaniczay 2001) led to the revival and the redefinition of the notion of *barbaric* already in use since the time of ancient Greece. At the beginning, this strongly ethnocentric category was forged to identify those who did not fall within the canons of Hellenic culture but, with the passing of time and the extension of ancient thought to wider area, passed through a series of transformations. In Roman times, it was used to identify Celtic and German populations that threatened the borders of the empire until the first centuries after Christ. This perspective changed when Emperor Constantine established Christianity as the official religion of the Empire; its borders started to overlap with those of the Catholic community, so the term *barbaric* came to refer to all those who did not belong to it, i.e., heretics and pagans. If the ancient meaning implied that the relationship of inferiority and superiority was mainly based on aspects of the moral sphere, from the late Middle Ages it was further expanded, incorporating aspects such as violence and ferocity, experienced by Europeans in the frequent clashes against groups from Eastern Europe. With the advent of humanism and the recovery of Ciceronian thought, it was also associated with the image of the irrational creature identified in *Homo sylvestris* (Jones 1971). On the eve of the New World “discovery”, all the preconditions had been established to immediately identify Brazilian (and American) natives as the new form of barbaric non-European otherness.

Sea. It was during the first expeditions into the inner land of the New World⁸ that a correspondence with a group of warrior women was established. They were recorded in the region of the Nhamundá and Trombetas rivers and probably belonged to the Canuri or Conduri population; they were described as living in their own settlements, fully independent from men if not to have children, need for which they availed themselves of the contribution of men from neighboring groups. It was after the dissemination of these information that the river, previously known as *Santa Maria de la Mar Dulce*⁹, was officially named Amazon River (Souza 2019; Porro 2020).

What was then the gaze through which 16th-century men saw and interpreted indigenous people? With which words and images did they describe them to who did not have the opportunity to watch directly the new reality that the New World represented?

From first descriptions, it is clear that aesthetic appearance was one of the main concerns. Pero Vaz de Caminha, whose description of Brazilian lands we quoted at the beginning of this paragraph, was deeply affected – not to say upset – by the nudity of natives which was extolled by the ornaments and paintings they carried on the body.

Andavam nus, sem cobertura alguma. Não fazem o menos caso de encobrir ou de mostrar suas vergonhas; e nisso têm tanta inocência como em mostrar o rosto. [...] Traziam os beijos de baixo furados e metidos neles seus ossos brancos e verdadeiros, do comprimento duma mão travessa, da grossura dum fuso de algodão, agudos na ponta como furador. [...] E uma deles trazia por baixo da sola, de fonte a fonte para detrás, uma espécie de cabeleira de penas de ave amarela, que seria do comprimento de um coto, mui basta e mui cerrada, que lhe cobria o toutiço e as orelhas. E andava pegada aos cabelos, pena e pena, com uma confeição branda como cera (mas não o era) de maneira que a cabeleira ficava mui redonda e mui basta, e mui igual, e não fazia míngua mais lavagem para a levantar. [...] Outros traziam carapuças de penas amarelas; outros de vermelhas; e outros de verde. [...] Ali veríeis galantes pintados

⁸ The first to mention them was Frei Gaspar de Carvajal, chronicler of the expedition of Francisco de Orellana in 1541 (see note 17 in this chapter): “Here we saw Indian women with bows and arrows that made as much war as Indian men or more and commanded and encouraged the Indians to fight; [...] what we could understand and we took for granted is that those women who fought there as Amazons are those who, in many different accounts – or parts of them – about these Indians, have long been widely known and of whom the existence and bellicosity have long been told about . In this province, and not far from there, they have their lordship and merely mixed empire and absolute lordship, distant and apart and without contact with men; [...]” (Carvajal 2020 [1542], 67-68).

⁹ The name *Santa Maria de la Mar Dulce* was given by Vicente Yañes Pinzon, who reached the river mouth in 1500. At the beginning, he did not realize he was sailing on a river and was surprised that the water of that sea was not salty (Souza 2019).

de preto e vermelho, e quartejados, assim nos corpos como nas pernas, que, certo, pareciam bem assim. Também andavam, entre eles, quatro ou cinco mulheres moças, nuas como eles, que não pareciam mal. Entre elas andava uma com uma coxa, do joelho até o quadril, e a nádega, toda tinta daquela tintura preta; e o resto, tudo da sua própria cor. Outra trazia ambos os joelhos, com as curvas assim tintas, e também os colos dos pés; e suas vergonhas tão nuas e com tanta inocência descobertas, que nisso não havia vergonha alguma.¹⁰ (1987 [1500], 65-72-75).

Despite the psychological shock, the judge of Caminha on the encounter was generally positive and nudity was interpreted as the condition of naivety and pureness usually associated to prelapsarian condition. At the same time, the flourishing nature of the Brazilian coast reminded him of the Garden of Eden, causing the overlapping of the two places and the beginning of a process of semantic stratification that will characterize the following centuries.

This conceptual operation was central also to another important description that came to us from the very first years of the 16th century. Between 1501 and 1503, the king of Portugal sent Amerigo Vespucci on an exploration voyage directed to the same lands that Cabral had reached the year before; after 77 days of navigation, the Italian cartographer arrived nearby today's Guyana, went down to the Amazon River (Pozzi 1984) and continued along the coast for several kilometers up to São Vicente (see the map at page 30 in Almeida 2010b). As Caminha before him, he did not find empty lands but a rich one, full of unknown people, animals and plants. He described it in his famous letters:

Quella che qui viddi fu che vedemmo infinita cosa d'uccelli di diversa forma e colori e tanti pappagalli e di tante diverse sorte ch'era maraviglia: alcuni colorati come grana, altri verdi e

¹⁰ "They walked naked, without any covering. They did not bother to cover up or show their shame; and in this they were as innocent as in showing their faces. [...] They had their lower lips pierced and their true white bones stuck in them, long as a naughty hand, the thickness of a cotton spindle, sharp at the end like an awl. [...] And one of them had under her sole, from fountain to fountain behind, a kind of wig made of yellow bird feathers, as long as a stump, very long and very tight, which covered her upper body and ears. And it was attached to the hair, feather and feather, with a soft confection like wax (but it wasn't), so that the wig was very round and very enough, and very even, and no more washing was needed to lift it. [...] Others had yellow feathers, others red ones, and others green ones. [...] There you would see gallants painted black and red, and painted in quarters, both on their bodies and on their legs, which certainly looked that way. Also among them were four or five young women, naked like them, who did not look bad. Among them was one with one thigh, from the knee to the hip, and the buttock, all painted with that black dye; and the rest, all of their own color. Another had both knees, with the curves thus painted, and also the collars of her feet; and her shame so bare and with such innocence uncovered, that there was no shame in it at all."

colorati e limonati, altri tutti verdi, altri neri e incarnati. El canto de li altri uccelli che stavano ne li alberi era cosa tan soave e di tanta melodia che acade molte volte star parati per la dolcezza loro. Li alberi sono di tanta bellezza e di tanta soavità che ci pensavamo esser nel Paradiso terrestre. [...] La prima terra che noi trovammo esse abitata fu un'isola che distava dalla linea equinoziale 10 gradi. E quando fummo giunti con essa, vedemo gran gente alla origlia del mare che ci stavano guardando come cosa di meraviglia [...]. E come la gente ci vide saltare in terra e conobbe ch'erano gente difforme di sua natura, perché non tengono barba alcuna e non veston vestimento nessuno, asi gli uomini come le donne, che come saliron del ventre di loro madre, cossi vanno e non si cuoprono vergogna alcuna, e cosi per la difformità di colore, che loro son di color come bigio o limonato, e noi bianchi.¹¹ (Vespucci 1984 [1500], 62)

He too underlined the nudity of natives and their gentleness, and however, the innocence attributed to them at a first glance soon turned into an ambivalent feeling when, for the first time, he reported information about their bellicosity and their practicing cannibalism¹².

Son gente belicosa, e infra loro molti crudeli, e tute le loro armi e colpi son, come dice el Petrarca, comessi al vento, che son archi, saette e dardi e pietre; [...] e quando combatono, s'amazano molto crudelmente e quella parte che resta signor del campo tutti e morti di loro bande li soterano e li nimici li speziano e se li mangiano. (Vespucci, 1984 [1502]: 81)

[...] Viddi una certa città [...] dove le carni umane, avendole salate, erano appiccate alle travi, si come noi alle travi di cucina appicchiamo le carni di cinghiale [...] e salsiccia e altri simil cose.¹³ (Vespucci 1984 [1503], 103).

¹¹ "What I saw here was that we saw infinite things of birds of different shapes and colors and so many parrots and of so many different kinds that it was marvelous: some colored like grain, some green and colored and lemony, some all green, some black and incarnate. And the song of the other birds that were in the trees was such a suave thing and of such a melody that it happens many times to be still because of their sweetness. The trees are of such beauty and such suavity that we thought we were in Paradise on earth. [...] The first land that we found inhabited was an island that was 10 degrees from the equinoctial line. And when we came there, we saw great people at the edge of the sea who were looking at us as a thing of wonder [...]. And as the people saw us leap ashore and knew that they were people differing in their nature, because they have no beard at all and do not clothe themselves, as well the men as the women, who as they ascended from their mother's womb, so they go and do not cover themselves with any shame, and so for the dissimilarity of color, that they are of a color like gray or lemonade, and we are white."

¹² There is no trace of similar episodes in the report of Caminha, and this is probably due to the fact that Cabral's expedition only spent ten days in the proximity of the Brazilian coasts.

¹³ "They are a warlike people, and among them many cruel, and all their weapons and blows are, as Petrarca says, committed to the wind, which are bows and thunderbolts and darts and stones; [...] and when they fight, they kill themselves very cruelly and that part that remains lord of the field buries all and dead of their bands and spices the enemies and eat them. (Vespucci 1984 [1502], 81)

Actually, it is not sure if Vespucci really assisted to episodes of cannibalism. What it is sure, is that his descriptions quickly spread around, influencing the following chroniclers and, consequently, European imaginary. Also, they can be considered as the bases for the progressive identification of natives as *savages*, a concept which will be frequently discussed and redesigned in the Enlightenment debate of the 17th century (Lindo 2015).

Warrior attitude and cannibalism were not the only things to upset the Florentine traveler. Indeed, it seemed that they lacked any form of social, political organization and any religion. According to him, “non tengono né legge né fede nessuna. Vivono secondo natura. Non conoscono immortalità d’anima. Non tengono infra loro beni propri, perchè tutto è comune. Non tengono termini di regni o di provincia; non hanno re, né ubidiscono a nesuno: ognuno è signore di sé. Non amministrano giustizia, la quale non è loro necesario, perchè non regna in loro codizia”¹⁴ (Vespucci 1984 [1502], 79). This statement served as a base for the creation of another commonplace, that of considering indigenous people *sem fé, nem lei, nem rei*. According to Monteiro (2001), during the 16th Century this idea was used to classify all indigenous societies, and it was fed by theories such as those suggested by Thevet (1944 [1557]) and Gândavo (1980 [1570]), for who the apparent absence, in indigenous languages, of the three letters F, L, R, corresponded to the lack of the correspondent institutions, constraining these groups to live in a primitive and confused *state of nature* (see also Carneiro da Cunha 2017).

Complementary to these first literary descriptions and published as part of the first illustrated edition of Vespucci’s report, in 1505 Johann Froschauer (fig. 1) realized the first xylography representing the New World. In it, eleven natives are depicted around a hut by the sea shore engaged in their daily activities: women are taking care of the children and men are portrayed as hunters. The author also added a detail which was inspired from Vespucci’s account: the presence of some parts of a human body hanging from the beams of the house, while other individuals taste an arm and a leg, recall the reference to cannibalism. On the contrary, the physical appearance does not fit the description given by Vespucci, since natives are not

[...] I saw a certain city [...] where human flesh, having salted it, was hung from the rafters, even as we hang wild boar meat from the rafters [...] and sausage and other such things.”

¹⁴ “They hold neither law nor faith none. They live according to nature. They know no immortality of soul. They hold no property of their own among themselves, for everything is common. They hold no terms of kingdoms or provinces; they have no kings, nor do they obey anyone: each is lord of himself. They do not administer justice, which is not necessary to them, because avarice does not reign in them.”

represented naked but with several ornaments and feather skirts around the hips and covering the genitals. This detail is significant because it shows how, in the attempt of imagining and representing people that he had never seen, Froschauer was influenced both by previous artistic production, by the association between Brazilian land and the Garden of Eden and by the moral rules imposed by Catholic institutions. Feather dresses recall those wore by Adam and Eve in visual representations of the Expulsion from Paradise, originating a complex net of intertwined and overlapping meanings (Chicangana-Bayona 2010).

For all the 16th century, physical appearance and cannibalism were a central theme in the accounts of following travelers. The establishment of exploitation routes between Europe and the New World, led more and more people to face with that new reality but it was not until the foundation of the first colonial garrisons, towards the half of the century, that these descriptions became more accurate. Until the 1550s, knowledge on what is currently Brazilian territory remained very approximative. For being economically concerned with the other colonial domains, at the beginning the Portuguese Crown did not show such great interest towards those lands (Almeida 2010b). The attendance of the Brazilian coast was still sporadic and aimed mainly at the acquisition of *Pau-Brasil*¹⁵ (*Caesalpinia echinata*), a peculiar plant whose bark released a red dye similar to that of other materials coming from India and that could be used to paint clothes for nobility (Buono 2016). In terms of travelling and acquisition, *Pau-Brasil* was cheaper than goods coming from the East, arousing the interest of other European countries besides Spain¹⁶ and Portugal – whose jurisdiction on the *New World*'s territories had been established in 1494 with the Treat of Tordesillas (Morelli 2018). In 1541 the Spaniards carried out a first expedition along the Amazon River¹⁷ that awakened the interest of Germans, British, French and Dutch, who embarked in several conquest attempts (Souza 2019). The French, for instance, frequented Brazilian coasts as intensively as Portuguese did, in order to gather *Pau-Brasil* and expand the textile industry already

¹⁵ The name Brazil comes from this plant and substituted the previous one of *Ilha de Vera Cruz* o *Terra de Vera Cruz*.

¹⁶ The Amazonian and southern regions of Rio de la Plata were among the main areas to host the dispute between Spanish and Portuguese.

¹⁷ The entire journey was related by Frei Gaspar the Carvajal in the *Relación del Nuevo Descubrimiento del Famoso Río Grande de las Amazonas*. To a critical analysis, this work appears as a classical chronicle of discovery; the author reports geographical information of the course of the river but only few ethnographic descriptions of the people who inhabited it. Among the cultural aspects he distinguished stand out those related to language, clothing, weapons. What really calls attention in his account is the population density, serving as important ethno-historical source to partially reconstruct the socio-political conformation of Amazonian societies before the conquest.

developed in Normandy (Buono 2016). Germans undertook three expeditions in 1528, 1536 and 1541 after Charles V granted to merchants from Augsburg some lands in Venezuela (none of the three were particularly successful and the emperor soon withdrew the concessions). Later on, in 1599, Dutch established two forts along the Xingu River, while the English explored the Orinoco and the Amazon Rivers respectively in 1604 and 1610 (Souza 2019).

It was only in 1530 that the Portuguese Crown grasped the strategic importance of Brazil in trading relationships and decided to send an expedition whose purpose was to establish a permanent settlement. Led by Martim Afonso the Sousa (Monteiro 1999), it resulted in the foundation of the Colony of São Vicente in 1532 (Abreu 1976) and marked the beginning of the process of conquest and expansion of the Portuguese into Brazilian territory. The coastal area between Maranhão and today's state of Santa Catarina was organized according to the system of donations already in use in other Portuguese colonies and divided into twelve hereditary captaincies¹⁸, i.e., portions of territory that expanded from the coast to the hinterland. Each one was assigned to a *capitão-mor* in charge of managing its agricultural exploitation, its trade and its legal and fiscal system (Morelli 2018). However, King João III soon realized that this system was not properly functioning in Brazil as it did elsewhere. Only the Captaincies of São Vicente and Pernambuco managed to handle the pressures and conflicts between different European powers, settlers and indigenous peoples (Abreu 1975). In the others, anarchy reigned both in the administration and jurisdiction, and the realization of collective government policies was made impossible by the excessive autonomy of each *capitão-mor* in taking decisions (Abreu 1976). Thus, in 1549, the king opted for a decisive solution. He abolished the entire system and sent a governmental expedition to take possession of the territory: the new capital was established in Salvador, in the Captaincy of *Bahia de Todos os Santos*.

These events did not discourage the French, who were also trying to participate in this colonizing process. To support their voyages, they usually had to rely on private initiative – the Crown's finances were being entirely drained by the Wars of Religion, which devastated France during the second half of the 16th century (Vivanti 2007). However, in 1555, the French Government decided to authorize an expedition to build a fortress in which French

¹⁸ The twelve captaincies were: Maranhão, Ceará, Rio Grande, Itamaracá, Pernamuco, Bahia, Ilhéus, Porto Seguro, Espírito Santo, São Vicente, Santo Amaro, Santana.

traders could find protection from the attacks of the Portuguese and their indigenous allies (Shannon 2002). It was led by Nicolas Durand the Villegagnon and set nearby today's Rio de Janeiro. Tensions with the Portuguese gradually escalated until 1560, when Villegagnon was defeated and the French colonial project abandoned¹⁹.

This context allowed the arrival of some individuals that left us some of the most famous descriptions of 16th-century coastal Brazil. For Jean de Léry, Hans Staden and André Thevet²⁰ the nakedness of natives was one of the main concerns, as it had been for Caminha and Vespucci before them:

As for the rest – which is no less strange than difficult to believe by those who have not seen it – both men and women not only do not hide any part of their bodies but also, without showing any sign of shame or embarrassment, habitually move around naked as when they came out of the womb. And, yet, they are not at all hairy or covered with hair as some people and others would have us believe. On the contrary, they are naturally no more hairy than we are in Europe. (Léry 1991 [1578], 221-222)

They are a beautiful people in body and appearance, both men and women, just like the people here; only they are sunburned because they are all naked, young and old people, and have nothing to cover their shameful parts. They disfigure themselves with paintings, and they have no beards, because they pluck them out by the roots as soon as they grow. (Staden 2016 [1557], 123)

Surprisingly, their body was not furry as traditional medieval images of the wild man suggested (Chicangana-Bayona 2010). On the contrary they were rather hairless.

Many people think, by inadvertence, that these people, whom we call savages because they live almost like animals, in the woods and fields, have, similarly, the whole body hairy, like

¹⁹ Another attempt of establishing a colonial domain in Brazil was made in 1612 under the initiative of king Henry II. Initially thought as an exploratory expedition in the region of Maranhão, it changed direction due to the murder of the King and the ascent to the Throne of Maria de Medici. Her purpose was that of reinforcing Catholicism in France, so also the expedition assumed the character of a religious mission. During this journey, missionaries such as Claude d'Abbeville and Yves d'Evreux reached Brazil, leaving important reports and sources on some indigenous groups of the Northeast region (Shannon 2002).

²⁰ They were, respectively, a Calvinist French priest who reached Brazil in 1555 together with Villegagnon; a German explorer who, in 1549, boarded on a Portuguese ship headed to Rio de la Plata and was captive of the Tupinambá for almost a year; a Catholic French priest who also arrived in Brazil in 1555.

bears, deer and lions. And this is how these people paint it on their rich canvases. In short, whoever wants to describe a savage must attribute to him abundant hair, from head to toe, – his characteristic as inseparable as a crow's black color. Such an opinion is entirely false, although some individuals, as I have heard, insist on affirming and swearing that savages are hairy. If they take this fact for granted, it is because they have never seen savages. And this is the general opinion. (Thevet 1944 [1557], 191)

Even if it did not correspond to reality, this kind of representation remained very popular in literary and iconographic production of the 16th and 17th centuries. Especially in graphic works, the habit of copying rather than live drawing, as well as using the same stamps to print different subjects, was quite common among artists. This led to the proliferation of stereotyped and contradictory images, which rooted deeply in European thought and influenced the following intellectual production (Chicangana-Bayona 2010). At the same time, the questioning of the classical ideas, albeit just partially, can be interpreted as the first attempts to move away from the category of *wonder* (§1.3) and approach *more objective* and *realistic* observation²¹ (Chicangana-Bayona 2009).

Nevertheless, the problem of nudity remained. Why did these people go around naked if they were perfectly able to make cotton fabrics – as it had already been verified by these same chroniclers?

If the reader were to ask me what is the cause of this custom, whether it be, for example, indigence or heat, I would answer that natives could make cotton shirts as well as they know how to make their hammocks, or even clothes out of wild animal skins, with which to dress themselves in the manner of the Canadian Indians; for the natives have an abundant number of wild beasts, which they easily catch, although they do not know the domestic animals. But the savages believe that nakedness, better than clothing, makes them more agile and willing. (Thevet 1944 [1557], 181)

As we already mentioned, for Europeans, nudity without the related feeling of shame represented the prelapsarian condition (MacCormack 1999); at the same time, it was unacceptable to think that South American lands corresponded to the Garden of Eden. On

²¹ The concepts of *objective* and *realistic* were, of course, completely arbitrary, and the use of these terms must not divert from the profoundly Eurocentric vision according to which these descriptions were made.

the one hand, according to the Bible – which at the time was still the most authoritative source – the whole humanity descended from Adam and Eve and was therefore heir of the original sin (Carneiro da Cunha 2017). On the other hand, both the complete submission of natives to “irrational” impulses and the absence of any form of what was considered to be civilization legitimized their identification as savages and barbarians (see Pagden 1988). How could they not feel ashamed by such nakedness, then? (MacCormack 1999). Father Claude d’Abbeville²² gives a very clear answer:

According to the Scriptures, as soon as our first parents ate the forbidden fruit, their eyes were opened and they realized that they were naked, and they threw some fig leaves to cover their nakedness. How can it be explained that the Tupinambas, sharing in Adam's guilt and being heirs to his sin, didn't also inherit shame, a consequence of sin, as did all the nations of the world? It may be argued, in their defense, that because it is their old custom to live naked, they are no longer ashamed to show their naked bodies, and show them as naturally as we show our hands. I will say however that our fathers only felt their shame and concealed their nakedness when they opened their eyes, that is when they became aware of sin and realized that they were stripped of the beautiful cloak of original righteousness. Shame comes, in effect, from the awareness of the evil of vice or sin, and this comes from the knowledge of the law. [...] As the people of Maranhão never had knowledge of the law, they could not be aware of the malice of vice and sin; they continue with their eyes closed amidst the deepest darkness of paganism. (Abbeville 1975, 216)

The only chance that they dated back to a pre-Adamitic species (Idem), as first impressions of pureness, innocence, and absence of any religious and divine knowledge had suggested, were abandoned as soon as Europeans interfaced with those aspects of indigenous cultures such as warfare and human sacrifice. Meanwhile, the most accredited theory was that which identified natives as the descendants of Cam, the cursed son of Noah. The fact that he mocked the father’s nudity (Genesis 9, 20-27) would justify the barbarity, the ignorance of God’s law and, above all, the nudity (Carneiro da Cunha 2017). According to Léry:

Reste maintenant pour la fin, que je touche la question qu’on pourroit faire sur ceste matiere que je traite: assavoir, d’où peuvent estre descendus ces sauvages. Surquoy je di, en premier

²² See note 19 in this chapter.

lieu, qu'il est bien certain qu'ils sont sortis de l'un des trois fils de Noé: mais d'affirmer d'uquel, d'autant que cela ne se porroit prouver par l'Ecriture sainte, ny mesme je croy par les histoires prophanes, il est bien malaisé. [...] il semble qu'il y a plus d'apparence de conclure qu'ils soyent descendus de Cham.²³ [...] (Léry 2008 [1578], 421)

This theory was made even more plausible from the presence, among some groups, of some mythical narrations talking about a flood. Though not corresponding to the one told in the Bible, travelers, and especially missionaries, immediately associated it to the experience of Noé. The Jesuit Father Manoel da Nobrega, who arrived in Brazil with the governmental expedition of 1549, that very same year wrote to his master in Coimbra, Dr. Navarro: “têm memoria do diluvio, porém falsamente, porque dizem que cobrindo-se a terra d’agua, uma mulher com seu marido subiram em um pinheiro e, depois de mingoadas as aguas, se desceram, e destes procederam todos os homens e mulheres”²⁴ (Nobrega 1988 [1549], 101). This debate was actually part of a wider context, in which the attempt of pinning indigenous peoples in the Judeo-Christian genealogy and cosmology corresponded to the need of including them in the human species. The incoherencies that clearly characterized this process were not convincing enough compared to the ideological charge of the biblical paradigm that, affirming that Amerindians derived from Europeans, legitimized their juridical, political and religious subjection (Gliozzi 1993). A famous discussion on the ways in which such subjugation was to take place was the intellectual dispute of Valladolid (1550). Embodied in the figures of Bartolomé de las Casas e Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and their monumental works – respectively, the *Apología* and the *De convenientia militaris disciplinae cum Christiana religione dialogus, qui inscribitur Democrates* – it opposed those who affirmed natives’ tameness and wanted to impose a gentle domination through evangelization and those who condemned them to absolute barbarity and, for this, claimed the right to subject them to European rule in any possible way, including violence. Besides fueling the debate on just war, on which we will return later on in the chapter, it influenced the creation of canons to think about indigenous peoples and represent them.

²³ “Lastly, it remains for me to address the question that could be asked of me on this matter that I study: it is to ask whence these savages came. On this I must say, firstly, that they are issued from one of the three sons of Noah: but to claim this, as it cannot be proved by the Holy Scriptures, nor by profane histories, is very difficult. [...] it seems more likely to be concluded that they were descended from Ham.”

²⁴ “They have a memory of the flood, but falsely; for they say that when the earth was covered with water, a woman and her husband climbed up a pine tree, and when the waters had fallen, they came down, and from these all men and women came.”

Referring to natives of Mesoamerican and Andean regions, Las Casas argued that “los indios son hombres y no dan signos de barbarie tales que justifiquen la guerra para obligarlos a aceptar un género de vida supuestamente más civilizado”²⁵ (1988, 81). As for Brazilian natives, his opinion is not explicit. One can notice a correspondence between the socio-political and economic structure of these indigenous societies and some of the characteristics Las Casas listed in the second, the third and the fourth “clase de bárbaros” – such as the lack of writing, (apparently) of any political and social rule and of God’s knowledge (Idem, 87-119). However, to him none of these reasons justified the indiscriminate use of violence, unless an injustice (in the awareness of breaking God’s laws) had been committed. In his words, “nadie, por muy civilizado que sea, puede forzar a un bárbaro ignorante a someterse a su persona, sobre todo haciendo dejación de su libertad, si dicho bárbaro no cometió antes contra el una injusticia”²⁶ (Idem, 113). On the contrary, their condition as morally incomplete people condemned to damnation, could be redeemed through a correct evangelization and civilization (Gliozzi 1993), which implied the eradication of practices and beliefs judged as demoniacs and perverse – such as those connected to sexual, matrimonial and religious dimensions. Habits like crossed-marriages, polygyny, concubinage as well as their *wondering faith* and the presence of individuals identified as real sorcerers (Carneiro da Cunha 2017) were classified as unacceptable by missionaries (Forsyth 1983). Nevertheless, their attempts of fighting these aspects often found the resistance of natives, who continued to realize their rituals while juxtaposing them with Christian elements – and sometimes hiding the former under the latter – giving rise to several phenomena of religious articulation (Pompa 2003).

On the other hand, Sepúlveda identified natives as subhuman homunculi, whose barbaric costumes and especially anthropophagic tradition made them inferior because considered *against nature*. For the Dominican friar, nature was defined by divine law and this could not be disattended because naturally inscribed into human hearts; to his eyes, by not practicing Christian religious, natives were subtracting them from nature’s rules and thus represented threat to the possibility, for humanity, of acting for good. This aspect justified their

²⁵ “The Indians are men and do not show signs of barbarism such as to justify war to force them to accept a supposedly more civilized way of life.”

²⁶ “No one, however civilized he may be, can force an ignorant barbarian to submit to his person, especially by surrendering his liberty, unless the barbarian has first committed an injustice against him.”

subjugation as *natural slaves*²⁷ and, in case of rejection, their extermination through just war (2009)²⁸.

It has to be said that human sacrifice, anthropophagy and warfare were, among all indigenous practices, the most difficult for Europeans to understand and this was probably one of the reasons which made them so frequent in New World's narratives: it is not an exaggeration to say that they were a real obsession. After the first notices related by Amerigo Vespucci, information about these aspects multiplied and started to occupy a considerable space in the accounts about the exploration and conquest of Brazilian territories. The first obstacle to comprehend the conflictive/alliance dynamic among the different groups was the absence of a desire of conquest. Wars did not aim at appropriating enemies' lands or goods but only at getting revenge of the wrongs a community had suffered, originating a circuit that repeated itself infinitely. Manoel da Nobrega remarks it, saying that "eles não se guerreiam por avareza, [...] mas somente por odio e vingança [...]"²⁹ (1988 [1549], 91). Besides the political discourse, placed at the opposite pole to the European conception of war, the reasons of the clash were inconceivable especially because they were based on vindictive dynamics that Christian religion condemned and repudiated, exalting forgiveness instead. In fact, "amar a vingança" meant "odiar o próximo"³⁰ (Thevet 1944 [1557], 248) as well as to reject any kind of social and divine law. For Europeans this aspect corresponded to the total lack of rationality and morality. The vindictive dynamic is well illustrated in the account of Hans Staden, who spent nine months captive of the Tupinambá fighting with the idea that sooner or later they would eat him. Since he was identified as a Portuguese – he got there with a Portuguese ship and that's was enough for the Tupinambá to consider him their enemy – his killing would revenge

²⁷ The concept of *natural slavery* was developed by Aristoteles in the 4th Century B.C. According to him, individuals belonging to certain societies were inherently lacking in reason and intellect and consequently unable to master the passions of the human soul. The absence of these qualities made them incomplete, like half men whose condition could improve only if they submitted to the will of a "humanly superior" master. Freedom was considered as a damage to these individuals' life, since it meant to condemn them to live an incomplete existence (Pagden 1988).

²⁸ Slavery was a widespread practice in the territories controlled by the Portuguese crown as early as the 15th century and linked to sugarcane cultivation – particularly in the mainland region of the Algarve and the islands of the Azores, Madeira, São Tomé, and Cabo Verde. With the conquest of the New World, the plantation model was exported to the coast of Brazil, consequently encouraging the flow of slaves from Africa. Slaves were employed for large-scale production as sidekicks and replacements for indigenous slave labor. In fact, not only natives were physically less strong, and thus subject to higher mortality, but if they agreed to submit to Christian doctrine they were "protected" as subjects of the crown, thus immune from being enslaved (more in words than in real practice). For an in-depth discussion of slavery in Brazil see Klein and Luna's essay "Slavery in Brazil" (2010).

²⁹ "They do not wage war for greed, [...] but only for hatred and revenge."

³⁰ "To love revenge" meant "hate your neighbor."

the father of the two brothers who captured him and who had been killed by the Portuguese (Staden 2016 [1557]). After he was released, he returned to Europe, where he wrote about his experience in a publication entitled *Die Warhaftig Historia und Beschreibung eyner Landttschaft der wilden, nacketen, grimmingen Menschfresser Leuten in der Newenwelt America gelegen*. A section was dedicated to the description of some indigenous cultural aspects which abounds in details – even if they are almost surely distorted by the memory of captive condition and fictionalized by the fashions of his time (Whitehead 2000).

Hans Staden is not the only one to describe such episodes. Few years later also Jean de Léry and André Thevet report similar and equally precise description. Regarding war and human sacrifice, they report the practice of ritual killing by breaking the skull – which in recent studies was reconsidered as more important for the finalization of revenge than the consumption of the enemy's meat (Carneiro da Cunha e Viveiros de Castro 2017). The chroniclers first dwelt on how the prisoner was physically prepared and decorated with body painting and feather ornaments. Before being killed, captives were well treated were treated with consideration, fed well, and given the attention of one or more women. For example, Léry states that “as soon as they [prisoners] arrive, not only are they fed with the best meat they can find, but the men are provided with women, however, not husbands to the women. Whoever possesses a captive will not hesitate to give him his daughter or sister in marriage” (1991 [1578], 250-256).

Afterwards, the moment of the killing is usually described. For the occasion, also the other participants decorated themselves with paintings and feather ornaments: “On the day of the solemnity, all the assistants dress up with feathers of various colors, or paint their bodies. The person in charge of the mortal blow, above all, covers himself with his best equipment, not forgetting the wooden sword richly decorated with a pen” (Thevet 1944 [1557], 238).

The day of the execution, the captive was taken to the center of the village and tied with cotton ropes. The warrior in charge of murdering him stood in front of him and deftly hurled the wooden club at his skull, breaking it instantly. To quote once again Léry's word: “the one who is there, ready to carry out the execution, raises the wooden club with both hands and brings it down with such violence on the head of the poor prisoner, striking him with the rod that is on the tip, that I have seen some of them fall stone dead at the first blow without moving any more arms or legs” (1991 [1578], 250-256).

The “bestiality” attributed by the chroniclers to such action is perceivable from the comparison they make with the killing of oxen or pigs. Thevet’s comment is that “after various ceremonies, the Indians slaughter him, as if the prisoner were a pig” (1944 [1557], 238). Léry echoes him saying that “this is how in our parts butchers cut down oxen” (1991 [1578], 250-256). In support of this attitude there were also detailed descriptions of how the prisoner’s flesh was cooked and consumed after his death. Good examples can be taken from Staden’s and Thevet’s accounts:

[...] When it’s skinned, a man cuts him and cuts off his legs, above the knees, and also his arms. [...] Then they open his back, which they separate from the front side, and divide among themselves; but the women keep the intestines, boil them, and from the broth they make a soup called mingau, which they and the children drink. They eat the intestines and also the meat from the head; the core, the tongue and whatever else they have are for the children. When everything is finished, each one goes home and takes his part with him. (Staden 2016 [1557], 139-147)

[...] Then the body of the executed is reduced to pieces, taking care to trim the blood and bathe the children with it, in order to make them, as they say, wild. Finally, the body, thus reduced to pieces and roasted in the indigenous fashion, is distributed to all, each one getting his share, whatever the number of those present. It is true that the entrails are commonly eaten by the women; as for the head, the savages stick it on the end of a stick, placed in the hut, as a sign of triumph and victory. (Thevet 1944 [1557], 238)

These narratives are full of grotesque details but they begin to provide some details about the fact that meat consumption had not feeding, but ritual purposes – in other words, it was not cannibalism but anthropophagy (see Carneiro da Cunha 2017). During a ritual sacrifice nothing was left to chance, but each action followed a specific set of rules. Every participant had a well-defined role and even the partition of the body was determined by particular norms. At the end of the ritual, the warrior in charge of the killing gained prestige and charisma and got a new name in addition to the one he already had. The more names a warrior had, the greatest was his value and the social recognition granted to him.

According to Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro (2017) the accomplishment of a revenge was interpreted as a rite of passage to adult age; it conferred honor and encouraged the perpetration of a system in which such action was seen a symbol of value and dignity.

The deeper meaning this practice acquired in Tupinambá society can be better understood if compared to the ontology of some contemporary Amazonian groups, as Eduardo Viveiros de Castro accurately shown in his essay *Metafísicas canibais* (2015). This lays on what can be defined, according to Western epistemological thought, as perspectivism and multinaturalism. These concepts are used by the Brazilian anthropologist to mark the difference between a Western perspective and some Amazonian indigenous conceptions. While the former perceives the world as composed by one “nature”, which classifies and relates things and beings from their biological element, and several “cultures”, for the latter there is only one “culture” that also beings which are biologically different can share. The distinction between humans and non-humans does not depend on sharing the same biological body but on being endowed with a subjectivity that allows one to perceive itself as a *person*. To perceive or not the other as a *person* like us depends from the perspective one acquires within the hierarchy of all beings (see also Kohn 2013). In this context, what constitutes the relationship among beings is a “metaphysic of predation” and feeding, literally or metaphorically, on the other’s body means to establish a relation of affinity which allows to acquire the other’s perspective and maintain specific social balances (sociability which includes every being who is considered a person). To quote Viveiros de Castro’s words, anthropophagy is “motivo onnipresente na imaginação relacional dos habitantes destes mundos”³¹ (Idem, 38).

Very eloquent in describing the distinct ontological position of body and soul (intended as subjectivity) of Western and Tupinambá/Amazonian thought is the anecdote mentioned by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Race et histoire*:

In the Antilles, a few years after the discovery of America, while the Spaniards sent out commissions of inquiry to find out whether the natives had souls or not, the Spaniards tried to submerge white prisoners in order to verify, on the basis of a long and careful observation, whether or not their corpses were rotting. (2013 [1952], 364)

It is clear that what differs is the criteria to establish who is human. Europeans did not question the fact that natives had a similar body and yes, the fact that they had a soul, which would made them human. Natives did not wonder if Europeans had a soul, since also

³¹ “Omnipresent motif in the relational imagination of the inhabitants of these worlds.”

animals and non-human beings have it; rather, they questioned if their bodies were made of the same substance (Viveiros de Castro 2015).

Tupinambá anthropophagic ritual incorporated all these aspects; while the warrior in charge of killing the enemy identified with him and did not eat his meat, the rest of the group ate, through body's consumption, the condition of enemy itself and, thus, of alterity. However, it was precisely this identification with otherness that allowed to perceive and determine themselves as a collectivity. At the center of this mechanism of social construction was revenge, which also guaranteed the production of a temporality based on the perpetual imbalance among groups of enemies (Idem). To this extent, it can be significant to mention the dialogue between the warrior who killed the prisoner and the prisoner, as Staden reports it in his account: "the one who is to kill the prisoner takes the club and says: 'Yes, here I am, I want to kill you, because your [warriors] also killed many of my friends and devoured them.' The other replies, 'When I am dead, I still have many friends who will surely avenge me.'" (Staden 2016 [1557], 139-147). It comes out quite clearly here how to recall those who had already been sacrificed automatically implied to affirm that more would be killed in the future, so maintaining the system in perpetual motion.

The inability to grasp the complexity of this dynamic influenced the interpretation Tupinambá's rituals, which are always presented in a negative light. However, some accounts are more severe than others. A reason for this can be found in the writers' political, cultural and religious positions. The popular trend usually represents indigenous groups as forming a homogenous and compact front against the European invader but, in reality, this vision is quite misleading. First, it should be noted that the socio-political configuration of indigenous groups was very fluid and was constantly being restructured in accordance to complex dynamics of conflict and alliance (Monteiro 1999). From the very first moments when Europeans reached Brazil, a series of transversal alliances were established with native groups inhabiting the areas over which they gained influence³² (Almeida 2010b): Portuguese were

³² The way these relations were presented often suggested that indigenous had a passive and submissive role. On the contrary, especially in the first years of contact but also later with the intensification of European presence, native people had perfectly understood the rivalries between the French and the Portuguese and tried to use them to gain advantage in their own internal conflicts. To recognize the active role that they played in the establishment and development of the colonial system, is the first step to highlight the processes of political resistance and cultural and cosmological reconfiguration implied in the deep transformation suffered by their socio-economic structures (Langfur 2014; Carneiro da Cunha 2017).

allied with the macro-group of Tupiniquins³³, while the French forged ties with the Tupinambá, with whom they shared hatred for the Portuguese. By the time Léry, Staden and Thevet traveled to Brazil, the relationship with natives was still based on trade of natural products. Unlike the Portuguese colonizing enterprise who enjoyed the support of the crown, the French had to resort to private initiative: it would not have been smart on their part to present their commercial allies as absolute beasts³⁴.

Staden, who was identified as Portuguese by the Tupinambá, was treated like an enemy. Even if he said that he was alive thanks to mercy of God who wanted him to go back to Europe and tell everyone how those savages with inhuman habits lived, his survival probably depended on his ability in taking advantage of some lucky circumstances – or at least this is what he would like us to believe (Staden 2016 [1557]). In his account feelings such as contempt and fear predominate. This perspective is made even clearer in the series of 53 incisions that accompanied the first edition of his work, and that was published in Marburg in 1557. The illustrations show a stroke which is simple, but extremely clear in the way it presents a vision that was soon extended to all the indigenous peoples of the New World. This process, that William Sturtevant defined as *Tupinambization* (cit. in Feest 1987, 610), implied that, in European imaginary, traits such as nakedness, ingenuity, body painting, the use of colored feather dresses, lust, violence and anthropophagy were attributed with no distinctions to all Amerindian societies. We must not overlook the fact that artists rarely knew indigenous reality directly; therefore, to adapt New World representation to already popular models was a common strategy driven both by ignorance and by the attempt of attracting the public's attention through familiar elements. Staden wanted his work to be eloquent about the extremely negative and corrupted image of the natives and this is made clear already from the front cover (fig. 2): under the title, yet quite explicit, we see the representation of a man comfortably lying on a hammock who is tasting the leg of another individual; next to him some other limbs are roasting on a brazier (Voigt and Brancaforte 2014). In the other illustrations the barbarity of the natives is constantly opposed to the author who is portrayed in a position of submission, with his hands joined in prayer and his intimate parts covered with some leaves.

³³ Both the terms Tupiniquins and Tupinamba are macro-ethnonyms that included several other indigenous groups that shared a similar language and culture.

³⁴ Several sources are reporting episodes in which Tupinambá leaders and Tupinambá people were invited to France in order to show and reinforce this alliance (see Perrone-Moisés 2014).

On the other side, L  ry and Thevet saw the Tupinamb   through the lenses of alliance – even if, due to their religious conflict (L  ry was Calvinist while Thevet was Catholic) they accused each other of reporting false or exaggerated information. In their case, returning a description that only condemned natives as a barbaric alterity would be counterproductive for the trade relationships between France and Tupinamb   people. Therefore, in addition to the horror provoked by warfare and their ritual practices, we also find amazement, sometimes even admiration. Feather ornaments, body paintings, necklaces and other decorations were carefully described and often exchanged with other objects in order to send them to Europe as material witnesses of narrative accounts (§1.3). In particular, L  ry can be seen as the ethnographic counterpart of Staden (Whitehead 2000); he shows a more sociological interest, a sense of relativity and he tries to interpret differences and similarities in the light of what was happening in Europe during the War of Religions (see Vivanti 2007). There is no doubt that he harshly accuses the Tupinamb   sacrificing practices but he also recognizes that Europeans were proving themselves capable of such horrors in several occasions and, even worse, in the name of a religion that condemned certain behaviors. His more *relativist* perspective remained central in the French thought of the following decades, influencing theories such as those of Michel de Montaigne (Montaigne 1953 [1580]) – one of the first exponents of a literary and philosophical *anti-European* current (Viano 1993). In such context, sacrifice and anthropophagy as well as the other traits involved in the construction of an indigenous stereotype, were interpreted as symbols of a natural condition from which it was impossible to escape independently and, therefore, for which natives were not to blame (Marchi 1993).

This imaginary on Tupi groups accompanied also who sailed towards the inner regions of the Amazon River³⁵. The *Rela  o do Rio das Amazonas* written in 1639 by Pedro Teixeira is an example. He was the leader of an expedition³⁶ (1637-1639) whose objective was to ascend the Amazon River and occupy a territory which under Spanish jurisdiction on behalf of the Portuguese Crown. Referring to the Tapaj  s the officer says: “usam j  , todos os deste quadrante, de flechas hervadas t  o venenosas que vertendo mesmo um pouco de sangue n  o

³⁵ This was probably also related to the great Tupi migration registered from 1530 and 1612 (cfr 2.1.2).

³⁶ The same expedition was also related by Crist  bal de Ac   a in the *Nuevo descubrimiento del gran rio de las Amazonas* (1641) and by Alonso de Rojas in *Descubrimiento del rio de las Amazonas y su dilatadas provincias* (1639). While the former travelled with Teixeira, the latter probably reunited information by speaking to the members of the expedition. The accounts of Rojas and Ac   a are rich in ethnographic details but not as much as that of Teixeira (Porro 2020).

há remédio algum, nem os que as usam o conhecem; são todos notavelmente carnicheiros, comendo-se uns aos outros como fazem todos os do rio”³⁷ (2020 [1639], 129-130); similarly, on the Tupinambá he affirms that “essa nação é de gente mui feroz e carniceira e nunca quis conhecer sujeição; por isso vieram fugidos do Brasil rompendo por terra e conquistando grande número de gentios”³⁸ (Ibidem).

In terms of graphic representation, the work of some 16th-century Norman artists is remarkable. Unlike Hans Staden’s production, Brazil is depicted as a luxurious land, whose inhabitants are kind towards French people and greatly engaged in the gathering of *Pau-Brasil* to be exchanged for other European goods. References to cannibalism or to other condemned practices are hardly represented, preferring to emphasize the courage of warrior. The works depicting the celebration organized for entering of Henry the II in Rouen is a good example (fig. 3, 4)³⁹. Here, the artist wanted to inform the public about the strong alliance which existed between French and Tupinambá – considered as having a specific identity and not as *any other savage* – rather than creating an exotic and spectacular scene (Perrone-Moisés 2014). As we mentioned above, the reasons for this positioning were mainly political and economic: Norman traders needed the support of investors to conduct their inter-Atlantic trades but they would not probably get it if they represented natives as immoral and irrational savages (Davies 2012).

The creation of such representations did not really succeed in supporting the French colonial enterprise. Rather, and thanks also to the relativist positions expressed by Léry, Thevet and Montaigne, it contributed to fragment the imaginary and create another vision in which natives were freeze-framed in an ideal of pureness and naturalness. It was not a coincidence that many intellectuals date the raise of the myth of the *good savage* back to the France of those years (§1.2).

³⁷ “They already use, all those from this quadrant, arrows with herbs so poisonous that if they spill even a little blood there is no remedy, nor do those who use them know it; they are all remarkably butchers, eating each other as do all those from the river.”

³⁸ “This nation is of a very fierce and butcherous people, and never wanted to know subjection; that’s why they came fleeing from Brazil, breaking through land and conquering a great number of gentiles.” At the time of Teixeira, the referred region was still under Spanish domination as established by the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). The “escape” refers to the migration that involved some Tupi groups from the coast, who between 1530 and 1612 moved inland (see Porro 2020, cfr 2.1.2).

³⁹ For the occasion a whole Tupinamba village was reconstructed and 50 Tupinamba were brought to France. Next to them, several other people took part to the performing of daily life activities and to the enactment of a fight between the French and the Tupinamba on the one side and the Portuguese and the Tupiniquins on the other.

Among the most famous representations of Amerindian anthropophagy, we find those of the Flemish engraver Theodore de Bry, who worked in France and Germany in the second half of the 16th Century. Fascinated by the innumerable narratives coming from the New World, he realized one of the most important works dedicated to indigenous peoples of the known lands: *Le Grand Voyage* and *Le Petit Voyage* (Déak 1992). It is divided in 14 volumes which were published between 1590 and 1636 by De Bry himself and, after his death in 1598, by his sons Johan Israel and Johan Theodor. The section dedicated to indigenous people of Brazil is part of the volume entitled “India Occidentalis III” and is almost entirely inspired to the accounts of Hans Staden and Jean de Léry. As Groesen underlines, De Bry was greatly influenced by the models of the time in depicting the characters and in building the composition, and that he often reused drawings of other artists such as Jacques le Moyne and John White (2007). Since he never visited any of the territories he represented, he saw no other choice than to rely on images and descriptions produced by other people and reinterpret them according to his tastes or to the audience demand (Keazor 1998). Hence, what he shows of Brazilian lands correspond to those themes and narratives that were more successful among the readers of 16th-century chronicles: ceremonial and ritual scenes, the presence of nature, the theme of the naked body and, of course, anthropophagic practices are central in his work (fig. 5, 6). Thanks to innovations in printing techniques⁴⁰, De Bry could excel in detail, in the delicacy of his stroke and in complexity of composition. However, his engravings do not show anything new, either from the iconographic or from the symbolic points of view. Everything follows the traditional models used to think about a generic exotic other, who is standardized in representations that emphasize barbarity and moral corruption. Characteristics such as nudity, corporal mutilation, bodily decoration with feathers, and actions such as the participation to cannibal feasts are exaggerated both in the contents and in the shapes; any *guide* to the interpretation of images is made unnecessary by their eloquence in showing socially and culturally unacceptable behaviors (Groesen 2007). The intention of the author found an effective expressive channel in the Mannerist language⁴¹,

⁴⁰ The substitution of wooden stamps with copper ones made possible the development of a technique based on engraving rather than on relief. This way, artists had greater expressive freedom in the creation of forms and compositions.

⁴¹ Mannerism is an artistic current which arose in Italy between 1520 and 1620. Some consider it as the extension of the Renaissance period. It is characterized by voluptuous and passionate forms which aim at representing an artificiality far from the harmony and naturalism of the previous period. Drama replaces balance, and artist appear more concerned with the stylistic expression than with the subject depicted; art becomes the language of excesses both from a positive and negative point of view; purity, elegance, linearity and

whose voluptuousness and emotional charge – compared to the clean and harmonious style of the early Renaissance – lent itself well to exalting the differences between a reality considered wild and the European one, considered civilized (Deák 1992). The inferiority, ignorance and corruption of the natives were implied in the forms and positions of the bodies, arranged in tortuous forms and complex and unharmonious movements (Groesen 2007). It is interesting to observe how, despite the desire to convey such a message, the structural paradox typical of the gaze that Europeans projected onto the New World persisted in De Bry. In the minds of those who had never been there, it was conceived like a lost paradise, inhabited by individuals who resembled ancient divinities, and who were at the same time noble and primitive (Deák 1992). The characterization of this first engravings was extended without many distinctions to all non-European groups, feeding a process of knowledge production which, instead of debunking the false myths already spread in the European imaginary, reinforced them with new visions aiming at satisfying public curiosity. In this section, we only had the chance to analyze few aspects of some of the most popular literary and iconographic production on 16th- and early 17th-century Brazil⁴². Summing up, indigenous people appeared in these works as docile and gentle people whose big, naked and beautifully shaped bodies were covered with black and red painting, and ornaments made of stone, bones and feathers. However, other elements were opposed to this positive image. The association of nakedness to lust and sexuality, warfare and anthropophagy, and the apparent lack of private property, social and political organization, and religion encouraged Europeans to classify natives as savages and beastly individuals (Lindo 2015) totally alien to any form of reason. Considered by Manuela Carneiro da Cunha as the “inventário básico do que, daí por diante se dirá dos índios”⁴³ (2017, 186), these contradictory images started to pervade the European imaginary, influencing literary and iconographic works and slowly merging into the production of a stereotype which would serve as a base for the following representations (Idem). Also, the incorporation of these speculations in the Enlightenment philosophy of the 18th century led to the creation of the simplistic dichotomy cannibal-good savage that so long persisted in our Western thought, and perhaps still did not go away. As Langfur (2014) underlines, none of the several reports supporting one or the other position

harmony are opposed to ugliness, surreal and grotesque. In terms of equivalence, we could argue that Mannerism is to Renaissance, what, in Ancient Greece, the Hellenic period is to the Classical one.

⁴² For an exhaustive review of the iconographic production see Sturtevant 1976.

⁴³ “Basic inventory of what will be said about the Indians from now on.”

was able to perceive and return the complexity of the role that indigenous societies played once they entered the colonial system. Consequently, also the general perception assimilated the conviction that all the processes of transformation, migration, negotiation or alliance – that we now interpret in terms of resistance – would mean their soon disappearance, condemning them to live forever stuck in few categories that someone else had built for them.

1.2 Invented categories

The categories we use to define and describe the reality around us, and which influence our way of acting in the world are always determined by historical processes and ethnocentric perspectives. Many of the stereotypical visions that pervade our imaginary on indigenous people of Brazil were forged during the first encounters just discussed⁴⁴. The conquest of Brazilian territory was flanked by a process of classification⁴⁵ and representation that was built around a self-consistent system of analogies, distinctions and similarities (Foucault 2005) and led to the creation of specific criteria to circumscribe the category of *indigenous* according both to the political, economic interests of the European powers involved and to religious interpretations. Whether it was conscious or not, this process aimed at *imposing order* on a new and *wonderful* reality to understand and dominate it (Fiorani and Flores 2005). It is worth mentioning that “the order of things” is not something given *a priori* but is the result of an empirical process of analysis, juxtaposition and isolation of elements which aims at settling the parameters and limits within which the construction of a specific knowledge is possible (Foucault 2005). If we think about the notion of *indigenous* itself, it is a common denomination arbitrarily introduced to simplify a very complex context, made by several groups which differed for language and culture. Recent studies have estimated that, at the beginning of the 16th century, the indigenous population counted between two and four million individuals (Monteiro 1994), were divided in more than one thousand ethnic groups (Rodrigues 1986) and spoke an equally high number of languages.

⁴⁴ The accounts presented are a selection from those considered as richer and more comprehensive but descriptions of the indigenous peoples inhabiting present-day Brazilian territory are to be found in innumerable other sources that we do not have space to include here.

⁴⁵ In chapter two, we will approach 18th-century scientific debate and make an in-depth, theoretical analysis on classification as a tool to label, order, dominate and build the Other from a specific point of view – in this case, European hegemonic one.

Likewise, compared to the total alterity that America represented, Europeans too started to *discover* and define themselves as a collectivity endowed with a shared culture and identity (Morelli 2018). Two invented categories then, that soon began to embed roles, ideologies and stereotypes. For example, the generic term *índio* (Indian) became the base for building several other minor categories in which to pin indigenous societies according to the necessities of the colonization process. Deriving from the conviction of Columbus to have reached India, it spread and rooted very quickly across the globe. Even taking on distinct meanings according to local colonial peculiarities and to religious and political ideologies, its attribution usually entailed the exclusion from certain rights and reflected the hierarchy implied in the colonial power relations (Almeida 2010b). Since medieval times, both the idea of universality claimed by Christian Religion and that of being the heirs of classical antiquity, in addition to a political structure organized around practices of coercion and submission, influenced European attitude towards any kind of alterity. As Greenblatt (1991) points out, Europeans had a great confidence about their powerful superiority to other collectivities, which were included in the European conceptual space only in terms of negation of the difference they represented (Fiorani and Flores 2005). As for the rest of Latin America, also in Brazil the process of physical and conceptual classification corresponded on the one hand to the military and political submission, while on the other hand to moral and religious subjugation (Gliozzi 1993). The attempt of finding a place for indigenous people in the Christian Cosmology (§1.1) as well as the necessity of justifying economic expansion in the hinterland merged into the invention of several categories. Defined according both to physical and cultural traits, they were often built on dichotomies that still prove to be quite popular in the current popular imaginary.

A first distinction was elaborated on the basis of linguistic criteria. Three language strains had been identified: Tupi-Guarani, Macro-Jê and Arawak – and opposed the Tupi group to the Tapuia group. According to the Spanish missionary José de Anchieta, the former “têm uma mesma língua que é de grandíssimo bem para a sua conversão” (1988 [1584], 310) while the latter were made by “diversas nações de outros bárbaros de diversísimas linguas a que estes índios [os carijós, tupis] chamam tapuias”⁴⁶ (Ibidem) (fig. 7, 8).

⁴⁶ “Have one and the same language which is of great benefit for their conversion ... various nations of other barbarians of various languages that these Indians [the Carijós, Tupis] call Tapuias.”

As stressed by Monteiro (2001), before the arrival of Europeans the meaning of these two terms could change according to the context in which it was produced, showing a certain fluidity of perspective and reflecting the alliance-conflict dialectic that ruled the political relationships among the different indigenous groups (Almeida 2010b). On the contrary, the arrival of Europeans and the way they started to use these terms, that is to say, to define specific groups, marked their crystallization into clear categories. Their use in the accounts of conquerors, missionaries and travelers, makes almost impossible to rebuild the complexity and the dynamism of the ethnic mosaic previous to the conquest (Monteiro 1999) – always described in terms of isolationism but which we currently know looked much more like a moving kaleidoscope (Viveiros de Castro 1993). The process of signification and attribution of the two terms was highly influenced by the interaction Europeans had with Tupinambá natives of the coastal area, who referred to their hinterland enemies with the word *Tapuia*. This term was negatively connoted and used to identify either enslaved or defeated enemies (Pompa 2003) which had fled in the hinterlands (Almeida 1966). Therefore, also in the popular imaginary this notion started to be considered in opposition to that of *Tupi* or *Tupinambá*, used to address the groups who lived on the coast. We have to be careful though, because what was identified as a homogenous whole, in reality was made by several other subgroups. As Almeida (2010b) points out, the ethnonym of Tupinambá itself could refer either to the macro-group living on the eastern coast – which opposed to the Guaraní of the southern and western area – or to some of the minor groups within the macro one – such as the Tupinambá and the Tupiniquins, who fought against each other. Today, the reconstruction of the huge variety of the population of the coastline is facilitated by the information gathered by chroniclers eager to classify, make order and understand such an unknown reality; despite the Eurocentric vision that filtered their gaze, the accounts of the period are full of precious descriptions. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the groups labelled as *Tapuia*. Their documentation was scarce and approximate since they were living in more inner areas and were characterized by a higher ethno-linguistical variety – we currently know that they mostly belonged the Macro-Jê strain (Pompa 2003). Considered in terms of absolute otherness, they represented the greatest obstacle to Portuguese expansion. To better understand this last point, we are going to briefly describe this context.

The expansion towards the interior of the Brazilian territory followed two parallel processes: the first one is known as colonization of *sertão*⁴⁷ and aimed at increasing agricultural and farming production, acquisition of silver products and indigenous slaves for labor; the second was the imposition of Christian religion, carried on by the Jesuits and promoted as an alternative strategy to physical violence to *pacify, civilize and integrate* indigenous people into the colonial system. Even if they had different starting points, they ended up merging into a unique process of invasion.

From the beginning of the 17th Century, European settlers⁴⁸ moved towards the inlands in a very entangled and complex way, opening several routes which aimed at finding new spaces for implanting economic activities. From *Bahia de Todos os Santos* (State of Bahia) some of them went up the river São Francisco as far as the current states of Piauí and Tocantins while others followed the coastline, reaching the states of Pernambuco e Ceará (Puntoni 2002). In the south, the most important settlements were São Vicente and São Paulo (Abreu 1975). If in the southern region agricultural exploitation found excellent conditions of development, the dry climate of the northeast region suited better to the implantation of cattle farms (*fazendas de gado*). These activities had great success among less wealthy social classes, especially when its products started to gain popularity in the Atlantic trade (Pires 2002). Building a farm from nothing did not require a large initial capital and it was usually presented as the way to conquer a space in a land full of opportunities. Regarding the Amazonian region⁴⁹, the process of conquest began almost a century later than the occupation of the coast, that is, between the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th Centuries. Encouraged by the pressure exercised by other European powers for the control

⁴⁷ In the 17th century, the notion of *sertão* basically referred to the regions of the Northeastern and Amazonian hinterland. However, in everyday life, it could take on various meanings according to the different experiences of conquest and contact. They could be contradictory but all of them always meant physical and conceptual distance, respectively from the administrative centers of the colony and from the civilized lifestyle (Chambouleyron 2013).

⁴⁸ In the 17th century, European presence in what is currently Brazilian territory consisted mainly of Portuguese, Spaniards, French and Dutch. 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas had established the areas of influence with respect to the first two countries. Meanwhile, the French occupied the coast of Maranhão between 1612 and 1629, trying to establish a new colony after the failed attempt in Rio de Janeiro in the mid-sixteenth century (Shannon 2002). The Dutch, under the orders of João Mauricio de Nassau-Siegen, maintained control over the northeastern region from 1637 to 1654, when the Portuguese who regained control of the territory (Puntoni 2002; França 2014).

⁴⁹ Situated in the northern part of South America, the Amazon extends over nine countries, namely, Brazil, Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, English Guyana, French Guyana and Suriname. In Brazil, the Legal Amazon was circumscribed as a region in 1953; it covers the 59% of the whole national territory and covers, in whole or in part, the states of Pará, Amazonas, Maranhão, Tocantins, Mato Grosso, Rondônia, Roraima, Amapá e Acre (Souza 2019).

of land, it was no less violent and articulated. On the Atlantic side, for people coming from Europe, the entrance points to the Amazon were the two settlements of São Luis and Belém, major trading centers of the Provinces of Maranhão and Grão Pará – the administrative district was created in the 18th century by the Marquis of Pombal (§2.2.1) and named after the two rivers which crossed the region. The gradual occupation of the land did not only have political purposes but aimed also at extracting *drogas do sertão* such as cloves, cocoa, sarsaparilla, ginger, anil and woods to export to Europe as competitors with products coming from the East as well as implanting farms and cultivation close to floodplain areas (Dias, 1967).

Therefore, as the frontier quickly expanded towards the inner lands, indigenous groups who lived there had no other choices than to move even deeper into the country or to enter the colonial system and its economic model. In this last case, the socio-cultural dismemberment of a community was followed by the reduction of the traditional economic activities and their replacement with others that could guarantee the livelihood of the individuals. This process had significant political and cultural consequences, especially as far as it concerns the use of land: cultural, because indigenous people have always been practicing a collective use of land; political, because conflicts for land's possession and exploitation have always been a major source of conflict (Ribeiro 2013)⁵⁰.

One consequence was the beginning of the process of mixture, that so much influenced the attribution and appropriation of ethnic categories – and the access to specific rights – in the following centuries until present time⁵¹ (Pacheco de Oliveira 1998; Porro 2020). Usually narrated – in a very Eurocentric perspective – as the pacific occupation of a land that was waiting for someone to exploit it (Pires 2002), the colonization of *sertão* actually one of the most violent chapters of the Brazilian history. The tensions among central administrations, the actions of settlers and local indigenous populations often created situations of uncontrollable conflict, which in many cases turned into a real struggle for survival (Abreu 1975). To the eyes of Europeans, indigenous people represented an obstacle to the process of expansion which, although quite slow, soon assumed an irreversible character. The

⁵⁰ The so-called “question of land” (*questão da terra*) will be addressed further in the dissertation (chapters four and five).

⁵¹ This process is important because it significantly influenced colonial law in terms of access to land. It will be exhaustively analyzed in chapter two in relation to Pombaline policies for indigenous peoples and taken up in chapter four in relation to recent processes of ethnic claim.

solution to the problem that natives represented was found in their physical and cultural annihilation, which was pursued through two complementary strategies. First, there was the exploitation of intertribal conflicts among enemy groups and the relationships of transversal alliances previously established with European powers (Monteiro 1999). The Portuguese organized special incursions led by the *tropas de resgate* (a kind of militia); prisoners captured during tribal wars were taken and *tested* in order to understand if they could be converted to the colonial system – and to Christian religion – or not. If the answer was negative, imperial law justified their enslavement and extermination under the banner of the so-called *just war*. *Just war* was a device for political control which legitimized the use of violence towards all those people who did not accept to submit to the colonial system (Pacheco de Oliveira 2009). The first to regulate the subjugation of indigenous people to the Iberian crowns were the Spaniards with the introduction, in the *New World* of the regime of *encomiendas*. This system established that after the military occupation of a territory, the communities living there were *assigned* to those who had participated in the conquest expeditions and proved themselves worthy. The caciques (chiefs) of the communities were required to pay tribute to the new land owner in slaves, who could be exploited as labor for economic activities such as agriculture or mining. As Bartolomé de Las Casas later reported in his *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (2006 [1552]), violence and abuse against natives reached blameworthy levels even in the eyes of the authorities. The new feudal lords were also acquiring increasing power. To limit such power and improve conditions for indigenous people, the Crown enacted a number of measures through the enactment of the *Leyes de Burgos* in 1519 and the *Leyes Nuevas* in 1542. The former included the *Requerimiento*, which imposed to notify the natives that the Crown had taken possession of a territory on the basis of divine right⁵². If the community did not accept, it was considered legitimate to subdue it by violence through the aforementioned *just war*⁵³ (Livi Bacci 2005; Liso 2014; Morelli 2018). Also, in 1537, Pope Paul III enacted the papal bull *Sublimis Deus*, that excommunicated “tutti coloro che ridurranno in schiavitù gli indios o li spoglieranno dai loro beni”⁵⁴ (Paolo III, Bolla *Sublimis Deus*, 1537). As far as they were considered able to learn the *true faith*, natives were considered

⁵² There was no concern about how natives would fully understand the conditions, both in linguistic and juridical terms.

⁵³ The concept of *just war* as a justification to the coercion towards indigenous populations had its origins in theories such as Aristoteles *natural slavery* (note 27 in this chapter) and was discussed during the Valladolid debate in 1550-1551 (cfr Liso 2014).

⁵⁴ “All those who will enslave Indians or strip them of their property.”

as full-fledged men (Liso 2014). In other words, only those who proved to be tame and willing to accept missionary precepts had the right to go on living and were brought to the so-called *aldeamentos* (or *aldeias*) that missionaries of different orders were establishing on American territory. Who rebelled, was identified as an enemy and could be legitimately enslaved or killed⁵⁵ (Porro 1992; Pires 2002).

This system had already been adopted in the Iberian Peninsula during the *Reconquista* from the Muslims. In the New World, it served as a compromise to satisfy both the demands of settlers, who required slaves to exploit, and those of missionaries, concerned with the physical and spiritual integrity of peoples who had to be saved both from the damnation of their devilish cults and from the *evil Christians* – i.e., colonists (Almeida 2010b). With the union of the crowns of Spain and Portugal between 1580 and 1640, the model was exported to territories occupied by the Portuguese and exploited for the conquest of Brazilian lands (Morelli 2018). In this context, religious missions were promoted as a pacifist alternative to the coercive domination of settlers and conquerors; in reality, they represented the other side of a same coin. Violence and abuses against natives characterized both military and missionary action and free workers (those who had accepted subjection to the crown) were, in fact, treated as slaves. For this reason, many scholars believe that missionary action, more than soldiers', played a key role in making Portuguese dominion effective (Théry 1981). Officially, the purpose of missionaries was to save natives' souls from the condition of ignorance and barbarism in which they lived according to Europeans⁵⁶ but “para salvar as almas, era preciso evidentemente apropriar-se dos corpos”⁵⁷ (Idem: 82). During the 17th century, both Spanish and Portuguese missionaries occupied the regions up to the Solimões River and established innumerable settlements where to gather different indigenous groups, catechize them and, as mentioned, integrate them into the colonial system. Jesuits were majoritarian, but Carmelites and Capuchins were also numerous (Porro 1992). In Brazil, a specific legislation was issued to manage *aldeamentos*, the *Regimento das Missões* (Almeida 2010b). Wrote in 1686 by the Jesuit father Antonio Viera, it established that natives had to be divided according to different services: some of them were engaged with agriculture and food production both for local inhabitants and to sell outside; others had to help

⁵⁵ In Brazil, this distinction opposed *índios mansos* to *índios bravos*.

⁵⁶ See also §1.1.

⁵⁷ “To save souls, it was evidently necessary to appropriate the bodies.”

missionaries with the attraction of other indigenous groups to the settlement and their conversion; others were given to the central government, which distributed them to settlers for different types of work (Souza 2019). If entering a mission was a way to officially avoid slavery – because men were juridically free there – the price for this freedom was to renounce to anything related to indigenous beliefs and practices, to convert to Catholicism and submit to principles of *civil education*. Spiritual conversion was not only a religious priority, but also a political and cultural one, because it implied the eradication of all those practices that were considered either as morally and socially unacceptable or as economically unproductive. Moreover, missionary settlements were tanks for the creation of new ethnic contingents because groups coming from different regions, with different languages and traditions were obliged to live together and abandon their original languages to speak the *lingua geral* – Tupi neenghatu (Ribeiro 2013).

The fact that many people preferred to flee rather than remaining under missionaries' protection is quite eloquent of this reality but especially of the fact that the distinction generally remarked between a military colonization and a pacific one was not really perceived by indigenous groups. In both cases, their families were exploited, their culture denied (Pires 2002), and they were considered as nothing more than obstacles to economic and political expansion. Nevertheless, it has to be recognized that the *aldeias* were also spaces of resocialization in which, while being culturally expropriated, individuals had the chance of reformulate their own identities. They were places where there was a higher chance to survive than the *sertão*, where warfare conditions became chonical and increasingly dangerous. This perspective does not intend to deny the responsibility of missionaries in the process of massive extinction and cultural annihilation of Brazilian natives but can help to focus on the transformations that indigenous cultures underwent in their struggle for resistance. In fact, they never took a passive attitude towards the colonial system, nor they lived isolated from it (Almeida 2010b). On the contrary, they were constantly reorganizing, making new alliances and resisting in several ways. To escape, to reconstruct entire communities around spiritual leaders (Pompa 2001) and to enact political reconfigurations into “confederations” (Monteiro 1999) were among the most frequent strategies of resistance to European invasion. Also, the encounter between the retreating groups of the coast and other isolated groups of the backlands gave birth to several new social and cultural configurations. Sometimes, also the transformation or the denial of one's identity represented a way to survive; next to the

demographic decline caused by violence and epidemics, this aspect was central in the diffusion of the idea that several indigenous groups went extinct (Sampaio 2011).

In any case, Europeans did not interpret *Tapuia* refusal to negotiate their existence with colonial domain in terms of cultural and political resistance but as the incapacity to *progress* to a social system considered superior. Consequently, they represented them as nothing more than *primitive*, *wild* and aggressive people (Pires 2002), devoid of rationality and related to the natural dimension just as animal were.

The opposition between Tupi and Tapuia is only the most famous among other dichotomies, all of which based on the opposition between tame groups and fierce ones. It is the case of the opposition between the concepts of *povoado* and *sertão*, which respectively referred to the *urban* settlement built to assemble and better control the communities scattered in the territory and to the natural wild hinterland; or, between the notions of Christian Indians and *Gentios*, that were used as synonyms for *índios mansos* and *índios bravos*. In this case too, while the former were considered as having the capacities to reach a proper level of social organization and civilization, the latter were seen as savages and inferior sub-humans, lacking of any social, political and moral rule (Monteiro 2001).

In European context, the most popular distinction to think about indigenous peoples of the New World became that which opposed the figure of the *cannibal* to that of the *good savage*. It was structured on the same negative-positive polarity of the categories described above but it took on a more complex and ambivalent character because of the intense philosophical speculation in which intellectuals engaged between the 17th and the 19th centuries (Gliozzi 1993). This ambivalence reflected the contradictions involved in the European way of perceiving the physical appearance and the behavior of these populations. According to who described Brazilian reality, its political positioning and purposes, the relationship with the natural environment was interpreted and described either as idyllic or as brutish – respectively evoking traits such as nudity without shame or anthropophagic practice (§ 1.1). The figure of the savage cannibal devoid of rationality, morality and, consequently, humanity became particularly successful thanks to the high number of literary and iconographic representations. Like for *barbaric*, also the term *cannibal* claimed a European origin. On the one hand, it was linked to that medieval imaginary populated by monstrous beings which still echoed in the literature of the time. On the other hand, it recalled the possible misunderstanding (or overlapping) between the terms *Canibal* and *Caribi*, an indigenous

group who, already from the first voyages of Columbus, started to be opposed to the tame Taino⁵⁸. According to the alliance/opposition dialectics between groups, the latter identified the former as fierce and anthropophagus inhabitants of the mainland (Arens 2001). However, the warfare dynamic of Amerindian groups was too different from European one and, despite the efforts, Modern Age Europeans did not have the conceptual instruments to understand how war and sacrifice were lived by indigenous societies. Many travelers knew that the proper way to define these populations was not *cannibal* – that is to say, who feeds on human flesh – but *anthropophagus* – that is to say, who eats human flesh for ritual purposes – and their accounts are full of details that can be useful to catch the role of anthropophagy in Tupi cosmology (Whitehead 2000). However, it would have been impossible for them to go beyond that and understand how the dimension of revenge and sacrifice played a central role in the maintenance and reproduction of social and political relations among communities⁵⁹. This does not mean that this vision remained unchanged over the centuries. The first to put into question the idea of the fierce cannibal were French authors such as Jean de Léry (2008 [1578]) and Michel de Montaigne (1953 [1580]) who parallelly laid the foundation for the construction of the myth of the *good savage* (Gliozzi 1993). As mentioned in the previous paragraph, they showed a more relativist attitude. This approach was highly influenced by the political and economic context of France, which the Wars of Religion were turning into a horror theatre, full of hate and violence. In Léry words:

[...] Has it not happened that, in some regions of our continent – even among those who boast of the title of Christians, whether in Italy or elsewhere – not content with having their enemies cruelly killed, they could not satiate their ferocity except by feeding on their liver and heart? [...] Among the horrible acts perpetrated throughout the Realm and worthy of being recounted, were not men slaughtered in Lyons in more barbarous ways than those used

⁵⁸ The Taino were the first natives Columbus met on the island of Hispaniola, which today is divided between the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

⁵⁹ In a recent work, Manuela Carneiro da Cunha and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro explained (2017) that for Tupi groups revenge worked as a device to regulate political relationships of alliance or enmity in a temporal perspective. Briefly, to kill an enemy for revenge recalled the memory of the ally who had also been killed. The creation of a spiral mechanism in which every death evoked the one before and announced the following, ensured the maintenance of a continuity between past and present and the transmission of a specific political memory. In the words of the authors, “a guerra de vingança tupinambá é uma técnica da memória, mas uma técnica singular: processo de circulação perpétua da memória entre os grupos inimigos, ela se define, em vários sentidos, como *memória dos inimigos*” (Carneiro da Cunha and Viveiros de Castro 2017, 101). Under this perspective, revenge reveals itself as an opening towards the *other* – explicit in the act of holding his memory – , becomes fundamental for social reproduction and turns into a way to build the future.

by the Savages? [...] Thus, let there be no more abhorrence now of the cruelty of the anthropophagous Savages, that is, of the man-eaters. For there are similar, indeed more detestable and worse than them among us. Those from over there [...] hurl themselves only against enemy nations, while ours are steeped in the blood of their kinsmen, neighbors and countrymen. It is therefore not necessary to go all the way to America to see equally monstrous and horrible things. (Léry 1991 [1578], 259-260)

In this text the comparison between the atrocities committed by Europeans and indigenous anthropophagy is explicit. Using the French context, Léry justifies the bestiality of indigenous populations by stressing the fact that their fierceness was tied to an intrinsic and natural condition they could not get rid of. On the contrary, it was shameful that Christian people, who preached the values of the Gospel, showed such an attitude to violence.

In another essay, Montaigne offers a softener and even more relative gaze on Amerindian savagery:

Now, to return to my subject, I find that there is nothing barbarous and savage in that people, so far as I have been told of them, except that each one calls barbarous that which is not in our customs; as truly it seems that we have no other touchstone of truth and reason, than the example and idea of the opinions and customs of the country in which we are. [...] They [indigenous peoples] are wild, in the same way that we call wild the fruits which nature has produced of itself in its natural development: where, in truth, it is those which we have altered by our artifice and distorted by the common order, that we ought rather to call wild. In those are alive and vigorous the true and most useful natural virtues and properties, which instead we have bastardized in these, and have only adapted them to the pleasure of our corrupt taste. (1953 [1580], 213)

It should be said that Montaigne never went to America. Therefore, the vision he had of native societies was mediated by the representations of other authors and by performances such as that organized in Rouen for the Entrance of Henry II (Perrone-Moisés 2014). Watching the parade, Montaigne probably interpreted the fight between Tupinambá people and their enemies as a re-enactment of medieval chivalric values: the attribution of honor and audacity to natives encouraged their gradual idealization (Wintroub 1988).

With the development of 18th-century Enlightenment thought⁶⁰, this position radicalized and the relationship between the figure of the native and the idea of a pre-civilization status was reinforced. This status was thought not as an animal and immoral condition but as a pure and childish one, alien to the corruption and decadence brought by the progress of civilization (Lindo 2015). Among those who supported this idea it is worth remembering the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Heir of the humanist thought of the first Modern Age, he elaborated a new definition of *man* in opposition to classical and religious visions. This man was the *natural man* and represented an ideal individual who was completely immersed in a *state of nature* in the terms exposed in the Roman law's notion of *Ius Naturae*. This notion assumed the existence of a universal law which ruled moral and social norms through a rational principle and all local traditions (*Ius gentium*) had to comply to this rational principle. In other words, at the beginning every society was composed by individuals lacking any good or bad morality, living in a *state of nature* that only the processes of civilization and domination on the natural world could change. To this extent, the *natural man* represented the ideal condition of an individual who was morally unaffected by the corruption implied in the processes mentioned above. For the majority of Europeans, the unconsciousness, the absence of rationality and the incapacity of living in an organized society were proper to this condition (Pagden 1988). On the contrary, Rousseau and his advocates considered it as the witness of the different phases of one evolutionary process. Non-Europeans societies were considered to be at the bottom of it, and precisely in this pre-civilization status. They were like children that did not know the moral decline of *modern societies*; therefore, their savagery was somehow justified. They were considered as living in a past condition that Europeans already lived and from which they managed to get out, reaching the top of the *civilization pyramid*. At the same time, despite being harshly criticized, this *evolution* was seen as the inevitable path that every society would sooner or later take (§2.2.1).

Being them positive or negative, the cultural categories Europeans built to identify these socio-cultural groups basically stressed the distance in terms of European superiority-indigenous inferiority (Whitehead 2000). Natives remained inferior beings to educate or to enslave (Lindo 2015). With the introduction of Natural Sciences and the development of scientific evolutionary theories in the 18th and 19th Centuries (§2.2.1), the categories of *native*

⁶⁰ We will return on Enlightenment thought in chapter two (§2.2.1).

and *primitive* on the one hand, and of *European* and *civilized* on the other, further overlapped. Also, the association with the semantic domain of nature in the first case, and with that of culture in the second, further influenced the stereotypical and exotic visions in which indigenous groups were constrained.

Over the centuries, the trans- and deformation of the dichotomies described so far worked as the basis for the production of innumerable other categories, both in institutional contexts and in daily life. It would be a mistake to think about this process as an abstract and homogenous one since it was greatly influenced by the socio-political dynamics enacted by those who lived the encounter with *indigenous alterities*. The way in which indigenous groups were perceived in Europe was different from how they were perceived in Brazil, where the real interaction created a more complex and heterogeneous context. At the same time, a generic stereotype was being built, with no regard for cultural, linguistic and geographical differences and whose inner boundaries appeared progressively more blurred.

The encounter between the *Old* and the *New World* cannot be told in terms of discovery not only because someone was already there but also because its description looks rather as a process of invention. By “invention” we mean here what Roy Wagner (1981) defined as the interpretation of concepts and elements proper to an *other* culture through categories which are familiar to the mind of who watches. As Karp also states, in the production and transmission of an image on the other “the familiar becomes the bridge through which we understand the exotic” (Karp 1991, 11); however, this process implies the projection of one’s categories on such otherness. In this way, the differences and similarities to what is familiar are not just the basis for the interpretation and representation of the Other but they also make explicit the reference points within which it is invented. On this line, also the knowledge produced on indigenous people is far more representative of early modern European mentality, its ideologies, ambitions and contradictions, than of the groups it wanted to describe. Over the centuries, the naturalization of this invention in the global imaginary inevitably meant the normalization of the European perspective on the Other. Not only it influenced the public opinion but it also resulted in the production of an exclusion-inclusion dynamic which had great relevance in the application of indigenous politics.

1.3 Exchanging goods, collecting curiosities

The representation of people was not the only way through which Europeans began to know America, nor were literary and graphic descriptions the only things that contributed to the construction of a specific imaginary on it. A great number of objects soon started to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

Traditionally, the narrative built on the *material encounter* between Europeans and non-European cultures tells that indigenous people were willing to give anything in exchange for the highly desired European goods, which were mostly considered by the latter as knick-knacks. This phenomenon was defined by Philip Curtin as the “gewgaw myth” (1975) but the vision it offers of the process of exchange between the parts is misled by a strong Eurocentric perspective. As a matter of fact, the exchange that Europeans wrongly interpreted as unequal represented, for indigenous groups, a key element to seal political alliances functional to the social reproduction of their own communities (Almeida 2010b). Some of the objects were not traded as goods but given as gifts – in the terms explained by Mauss in his essay of 1925 – initiating a network of reciprocity that further accelerated the circulation of material culture between the two continents. Natural products, food and metals but also indigenous artifacts were reaching European ports, joining the market of rare and exotic goods demanded by industries, nobles and bourgeois. Among the others, there were feather capes, weapons, objects made of stone or ceramic, belt, necklaces and other bodily ornaments, musical instruments, hammocks, Mexican mosaics, masks and ceremonial pieces. After the first pieces arrived on the ships of Columbus, Cabral, Cortés and others, more and more objects started to be required, officially entering the process of globalization of the early modern time (Domenici 2017).

However, to the objects that Europeans considered in a way, native people gave another value. In his 1991 essay on the exchange of material culture in the Pacific, Nicholas Thomas wonders what would it be the indigenous version on these trades. What the *real* value of the objects European received back for their knick-knacks? Although he focuses on a different context, his reflections can also be useful to analyze the Amerindian experience.

Thanks to recent studies, we know that the exchange did not occur if it was considered as non-equal. As Almeida also points out, “se objetos valiosos para os europeus podiam ser trocados por bagatelas pelos índios, estes por sua vez, exigiam muito pelo que consideravam

raro e valioso”⁶¹ (2010b, 40). The suggestion is then to try to see the situation from a different perspective, in which the objects were interpreted with different categories “fondate su differenti concezioni della materialità e della preziosità”⁶² (Domenici 2017, 123). In the Mexican context, it appears quite clearly comparing the descriptions provided by Aztecs codes with the Spanish Chronicles; while the former are full of details about the materials and the symbolic meaning of the objects, the latter focus exclusively and almost obsessively on the presence of gold (Idem). Since for the Brazilian context we cannot rely on other written sources than European ones, we have at least to provide new interpretations for testimonies such as those of Pero Vaz de Caminha: “Resgatavam lá por cascavéis e por outras coisas de pouco valor, que levavam, papagaios vermelhos, muito grandes e formosos, e dois verdes pequeninos e carapuças de penas verdes, e um pano de penas e muitas cores, maneira de tecido assaz formoso, segundo da Vossa Alteza todas estas coisas verá, porque o capitão vo-los há-de mandar, segundo ele disse”⁶³(Caminha 1987 [1500], 85). Parrots were considered by Europeans as highly precious *goods*, both for their connection to the Eden and for their rarity. They were admired mostly for the beauty of their colored feathers. The same feathers had for native people symbolic meanings that made them precious and valuable in a completely different way with respect to European perception (Françoze 2014). Therefore, their exchange has to be considered in a more complex network of relationships and meanings, as well as for all the other objects which participated in this process.

Indigenous people were not naïve, nor incapable of *rationaly* grasping the value of things. They used trade to maintain some political alliances and to forge new ones that they thought would benefit them. When approaching to this topic, we should rather observe the socio-political dynamics reflected in the exchanging process, for it can indeed be a detector of how European objects – and Europeans as alterity – were appropriated, reinterpreted and included in indigenous cultural systems (Thomas 1991).

Speaking of appropriation and reinterpretation, once in Europe indigenous objects suffered transformations, both in their functions and their meanings. According to Baudrillard

⁶¹ “If valuable objects for the Europeans could be exchanged for trifles by the Indians, the latter in turn demanded a lot for what they considered rare and valuable.”

⁶² “Based on different conceptions of materiality and preciousness.”

⁶³ “They rescued there for rattlesnakes and other things of little value, which they carried, red parrots, very large and beautiful, and two little green ones and carapaces of green feathers, and a cloth of feathers and many colors, of cloth very beautiful, as Your Highness will see all these things, because the captain will send them to you, as he said.”

(1994), the meaning of an object depends on its function, which in turn can be of two types: to be used, or to be possessed. In the European system of collecting, these functions are mutually exclusive because once an object is deprived of its practical utility, its meaning is completely delegated to the subject who possesses and interprets it. In the context described here, goods such as sugar, spices, wood, natural dyes, etc. more or less maintained their practical uses in the circuit of a generic daily consumption – although it obviously differed from the indigenous one. On the contrary, indigenous artifacts mostly entered the market related to the collecting activity of noble and bourgeois families, suffering a stronger process of “cultural disconnection” (Norton 2011) and resignification.

The gathering of private collections was quite common among the high ranks of society since medieval times in the form of Chambers of Treasure, where the possess of strange and precious objects and their exhibition aimed at evoking a feeling of wonder in who observed. In the 16th century, the same feeling started to be pursued through the collection of a wider range of objects: golden and silver objects, precious minerals, shells, natural specimens as plants or embalmed animals, and also works of art such as paintings and sculptures, weapons and other exotic objects coming from the peripheries of the known world⁶⁴. For this reason, the places where these collections were kept started to be known as *Wunderkammern* or Cabinets of Curiosities (fig. 9, 10) (Feest 1993). They constituted a very heterogeneous reality, since any cabinet reflected the interests of the collector and his bonds to one or the other intellectual field. Nevertheless, they all aimed at showing the power, the richness and the grandeur of noble-royal houses or at raising the social status of bourgeois families through the ostentation of an encyclopedic knowledge (Françoze 2014). Their proliferation led to the creation of a real market of curiosities: several collectors not only commissioned the creation of special pieces from raw materials but also exchanged objects among them or sold them to who wanted to enrich their collection. The extensive international network which originated made possible the creation of some of the most famous *Wunderkammern* of the time, such as those of the Medici in Florence, of the Habsburg in Ambras (Austria) and in Prague, of the Marquis Cospi and the scholar Ulisse Aldrovandi in Bologna, of the King of Spain Philip II (reigned 1555-98) in Madrid and Segovia, and of François I (reigned 1515-47) and Henri

⁶⁴ At the time the center of the world was considered to be the area which now corresponds to the Mediterranean basin and to northern Europe. Central Asia, China, India, Africa and later America represented its peripheries (Daston and Park 2000). This vision is still evident in modern representations of the planisphere.

II (reigned 1547-59) in France – even if the political situation directed the crown’s finances more towards the religious issues (Yaya 2008). Unfortunately, the majority of the objects were lost or destroyed due to the passing of time, accidents and the dismemberment of collections; those which survived are currently part of some European ethnographic museum (Domenici 2017). It is precisely of these institutions that the Cabinets of Curiosities are considered to be the ancestors, both for their ideological and typological assumptions (Poulot 2013). Indeed, it was the first time that the collecting practice was interpreted as a way to know the world and produce an adequate representation of it through the recontextualization of a decontextualized object into a new system of meanings and values (Stewart 1984). In the 16th and 17th centuries, *Wunderkammern* collections were considered as real representations of the universe, microcosmos of the known world (Shelton 1994); it is important then not to underestimate their role in the construction of the classification and categorization structure that Europeans used to exert and maintain their domination of the collected *other* (Mullen Kreamer 1992).

Among all the epistemological categories used to frame the inhabitants of the new world and their cultures, the 16th-century collecting practice mainly appropriated of those of wonder and curiosity. During all the pre-Renaissance period, these notions were considered in opposite terms. Curiosity was denigrated as a vice and as an unstable state of mind that should be discouraged because distracted people from God and his redemption (Stagl 1995); on the other hand, wonder “was appreciated as a way of paying tribute to God’s creation” (Bujok 2009, 20). This attitude changed between the 16th and the 17th centuries, when curiosity started to be revaluated as a condition that would increase the production of knowledge on the world. All those objects whose creation was led by a feeling of curiosity were not considered as in competition with God’s creation anymore, but as instruments to gain a certain power over the world (Daston and Park 2000). As the term could refer both to the feeling and to the material object that caused it, it becomes clear in which terms the possess of these objects of curiosity led to the acquisition of political and intellectual prestige (Thomas 2016; Pomian 2003). About the concept of wonder, it was used as a term of classification since the late middle age. Objects, places and phenomena were divided into *naturalia* (made by nature), *artificialia* (created by the human hand) and *mirabilia* (things shrouded in mystery and in which echoed distant and exotic worlds). Among all the things, *mirabilia* were considered as the noblest creations of nature. Their existence was motivated

by a specific natural and symbolic order that worked according to a cause-effect principle but that could be suspended by God's hand to produce miracles or supernatural events. Their value was partly linked to their scarcity in the European market, partly to the belief that they were a source of natural, spiritual and magic power that those who owned them could absorb. The term did not necessarily have a positive connotation as we intend today, being perhaps closer to our concepts of surprise and astonishment. The objects that entered the collections of the 16th-century Cabinets of Curiosity inherited this status but with new meaning; now, it was the entangling of art and nature⁶⁵, *artificialia* and *naturalia*, that provoked wonder (Daston and Park 2000). Also, unlike the previous period, the notion of wonder started to be used as a category to produce a specific knowledge on the world rather than a way to describe it. Consequently, indigenous artifacts became devices for the production of a non-European otherness in the global imaginary.

As stressed by Pagden (1988), ethnographic material served as a witness to visually show something that was very difficult to describe and explain due to the huge differences that existed between Europe and America. The acquisition of this role was also due to a specific approach to what, today, we call "theory of representation". Until the 17th century, representation constituted a mirror of the things of the world. It laid inside things, and words – understood as terms referring to things – were far less important in defining them because they were part of the thing itself instead of acting as mediators (Foucault 2005). Consequently, objects, as physical manifestations, were privileged in representing the reality to which they were conceptually related. We should not forget that the European interpretation of the world and its constituent elements (*natural* and *social*) inevitably passed through a religious reading. Objects actively participated in the construction of categories within which to frame indigenous people and find a place for them in a Christian history. In many cases, they were perceived as manifestations of natives' humanity – understood as the presence of a soul that could be instilled with the precepts of the gospel – or of their demonic condition. For example, as we will see in a while, the ability to manipulate the elements of nature to create aesthetically beautiful and/or technically refined objects was seen as conducive to civilization through evangelization. Likewise, other objects were

⁶⁵ The notion of nature is highly problematic in the anthropological debate. Here, we refer to it in its western connotation, which identifies it with everything that is outside the human social and cultural domain.

destroyed because they were considered manifestations of the devil (a practice that continued in later centuries)⁶⁶.

Also, compared to written or graphic sources, they carried on themselves the idea of direct contact with another world (Daston and Park 2000). The interaction between printed texts and indigenous objects that circulated at different levels of society is made explicit in an anonymous text, probably written in the second half of the 16th Century (the date and place of printing are unknown) and titled *Descrittione dell'India occidentale chiamata il mondo novo, donde sotto breuità, Intenderai il modo de gli Idoli loro & del lavorar la terra, cose belle e rare, Raccolte da un sacerdote che di là è venuto & le ha portate seco alcune gentilezze fatte di mano de detti Indiani, suttilissimamente lavorate*. About the objects that were gathered and brought to Europe the author says that they are “cose antiche degne di esser viste, accioché vedendole si creda quel che alcuni hanno scritto, & per relationi si ha inteso”⁶⁷ (*Descrittione*, 1r apud Domenici 2017). Even if the text focuses on pieces coming from the Mesoamerican lands, we can easily imagine that this attitude also concerned objects collected among Brazilian natives, on which we are going to focus in the following paragraphs.

If we compare the few objects that have come down to us with narrative and visual representations contained in accounts such as those described in the first section of this paragraph, it becomes clear that they were complementing one another in the construction of a unique knowledge about the New World.

Among the most remarkable and desired objects certainly were feather objects. As an example, we can mention feather cloaks. Only eleven of them survived time and they are currently part of the collections of few ethnographic museums in Europe, among which the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology in Florence (Checchi and Stanyon 2014) and the Ambrosian Library (Gnaccolini 2018) in Milan (fig. 11, 12, 13). The National Museum of Denmark also held one (Françoze 2014) but it returned to the Museu Nacional of Rio de Janeiro in 2023⁶⁸. They were inherited from the Cabinets of Curiosities of the Medici family,

⁶⁶ The relationship between objects and the religious-spiritual dimension is a broad and complex topic that we do not have space to explore here. For a more in-depth look at it, we refer to the works of Serge Gruzinski, in particular *La colonisation de l'imaginaire: sociétés indigènes et occidentalisation dans le Mexique espagnol, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle* (1988) and *Images at War. Mexico From Columbus to Blade Runner (1492–2019)* (2001) and to Bernand and Gruzinski's *De la idolatria: una arqueología de las ciencias religiosas* (1992).

⁶⁷ “Ancient things worthy to be seen, so that by seeing them one may believe what some have written, & by relations one has understood.”

⁶⁸ The notice is reported on the website of the Museum. See: <https://shorturl.at/ouxL1>.

of João Mauricio de Nassau-Siegen⁶⁹ and of Manfredo Settala – a 16th-century Italian nobleman. The desirability of these objects was mainly related to their aesthetical beauty as well as to their symbolic importance. The collectors might have got information about them from accounts such as those of André Thevet, who reports the existence of innumerable types of birds whose feathers are of all kind and color and says that “of these feathers the savages make ornamental plumed hats of various kinds, with which they cover themselves, when they go to war or massacre their enemies; some make of the feather cloaks or barrettes in their own way” (Thevet 1944 [1557], 157). Claude d’Abbeville also praises their beauty saying that

All this is admirable, but nothing in comparison with their cloaks which they call *acoiaive*; they are woven with the most beautiful feathers and go down to the middle of the thighs to the knees. They wear them from time to time, not because they are ashamed of their nakedness, but for pleasure; not for securing the body, but as adornment, and to make themselves more beautiful at their feasts and solemnities. (Abbeville 1975, 219)

A more detailed description could be found instead in the account of the German naturalist Georg Markgraf (1648). According to him, natives:

They also make the clothes out of thick cotton threads similar to nets, and with any knot the feather is tied, just as the whole garment is covered with feathers, and in this way and with pleasure the feathers are alternately arranged in order, like fish scales. But this cape has a hood on the top, so that it can cover the whole head, shoulders, and thighs up to the anus. They wear ornaments on this cape according to necessity, since the ornament is actually made of very elegant red feathers of the Guará bird, or also with mixed black, green, gold-colored and various feathers of the Aracucarú, Caninde, Arara etc. birds. By necessity however because the rain does not penetrate this cape, but this ornament falls with the water. These clothes are called *Guara abucu*. (Markgraf 1942 [1648], 271)

The attention to the details makes us believe, in the first place, that the author personally saw one of these feather cloaks and, in the second, that it was the refinement of the technique

⁶⁹ General governor of the Dutch colony in the northeast of Brazil from 1637 until 1654 (see note 48 in this chapter).

as well as the exoticism of the materials that aroused interest among Europeans (Françoze 2014).

In written accounts though, the information regarding the use of the cloaks among tupi groups, that we today know was ceremonial⁷⁰, is rather poor. It can be counterbalanced by the graphic descriptions that also accompanied the arrival of the objects. In works such as *Tupi dance* (fig. 14), Theodore de Bry portrays a group of indigenous who are dancing in circle while at the center three people stand out wearing headdresses, belts and cloaks made from feathers and holding maracas – musical whose importance we will deepen later. Another example is the work of Frans Post *Festejo no arraial*, painted in 1652 (fig. 15). Here, human presence is part of a wider scene whose composition is typical of landscape painting. Natives are portrayed in the background as naked people dancing in circle. Among them, feather cloaks are recognizable in the red spots that emerge from the brown background.

In general, all feather objects aroused interest and wonder among rich Europeans, who sometimes flaunted them during fancy dress parties or in other social occasions⁷¹. Their presence was a constant in the accounts of travelers, who addressed to this element of indigenous culture with a certain amazement. Feather crowns are described by Thevet as “high plumed hats, beautiful and wonderful, [that] adorn the head” (1944 [1557], 197) while Hans Staden says that “they also tie bundles of feathers on their arms; they paint themselves black and also with red and white feathers, mixed together in no order. [...] They wear more than one ornament of ostrich feathers. It is a big round ornament that they tie on the back when they go to war against their enemies or when they have a party. It is called *Enduap*” (2016 [1557], 130). The same “wheel” made with feathers of the Ema bird (*Rhea americana*) is mentioned in the relation of the Portuguese explorer Gabriel Soares de Souza in 1587. Describing the “strange Tupinamba costumes” he tells that “usam também entre si umas capuchas de penas amarelas e vermelhas, que põem na cabeça, que lha cobre até as orelhas [...] Ornam-se mais estes índios, para suas bizzarices, de uma roda de penas de ema, que atam

⁷⁰ According to the anthropologist Alfred Métraux, these capes were used during ceremonies related to war and sacrifice. He underlines that not only the warriors belonging to a village wore them, but sometimes the prisoner himself was dressed with it and other feather ornaments “peculiares às grandes cerimônias tribais” (1979, 120).

⁷¹ In the Castel of Wasserburg-Anholt in the northeast of Germany is preserved a painting in which Sofia of the Palatinate is portrayed wearing a cape made of red and yellow feathers and a head ornament also made by feathers (Françoze 2014). The practice of wearing this kind of objects remained quite common also in the next centuries. For example, at the Museum of Ethnology of Munich are preserved two feather dresses that the First Emperor of Brazil Pedro I commissioned for him and for his second wife, Amelia Augusta Eugenia, probably to attend one of the parties organized at court (Schindler 2001).

sobre as ancas, que lhes faz tamanho vulto que lhes cobre as costas todas de alto abaixo”⁷² (2000 [1587], 235). The mention to this latter object is interesting because it was quite popular in the illustrations but rarely described in the treaties (fig. 14).

It is important to underline that the interpretation of qualities such as aesthetical beauty and refinement of the technique through the lenses of wonder was strictly related to another category, i.e., that of ingenuity. During the Renaissance, this category referred to an intellectual ability linked to sensitive knowledge and artistic creation and occupied a fundamental space of the philosophical, aesthetical and rhetorical thought. Those who possessed it were considered able to create cognitive associations through synthesis operations, as well as technically complex works and objects. In other words, it meant to be endowed with a rational thought that allowed individuals to arise from the *state of nature* in which humanity was born (Domenici 2017). In indigenous artifacts, the assembling of unusual raw materials was considered a defiance to traditional representation techniques and by assembling *natural creations*, in the same way Arcimboldo did in his portraits (Yaya 2008). The technical complexity of objects showed the “skill of the artist in taking advantage of the form and irregularities of the material in order to create an original work where the hand of the craftsman and merged with the hand of nature” and, thus, “to master and control his environment in making a masterpiece more complete than that of nature” (Idem, 175). Considering the conception according to which natives were subjected to a state of nature, this aspect revealed, to the eyes of some Europeans, the presence of some form of reasoning and opened up the possibility that an appropriate process of evangelization and civilization could redeem them from their savage condition. Although imbued with positive intentions, this conceptual device was actually another way to think and place indigenous societies in that superior-inferior/civilized-primitive relationship through which Europeans read the encounter with *the other*.

When analyzing 16th- and 17th-century collecting practice it is rather evident that it mirrored religious and philosophical speculations and their contradictions. On the opposite side to amusing feather objects, also weapons and objects related to war, sacrifice and anthropophagy were highly required for *Wunderkammern* collections. Next to classic objects

⁷² “They also use capuchins of yellow and red feathers, which they put on their heads that covers them up to the ears [...] These Indians also adorn themselves, for their antics, with a wheel of reha feathers that they tie over their hips, which makes them so big that it covers their backs from top to bottom.”

such as bows and arrows, the attention of travelers focused on some clubs that the Tupinamba used mostly during sacrifices. In his account, Léry described them in detail:

They have their Tacapes, that is, swords or clubs, some of red wood, others of black wood, normally five to six feet long. And as for their shape, they have a rounded or oval end, about more than two palms wide. This end, more than an inch thick at the center, is so well thinned at the edges that this hardwood weapon, heavy as boxwood, cuts almost like an axe. (Léry 1991 (1578), 244)

In this case too, graphic representations played a main role in spreading a specific imaginary about these objects which at the same time aroused contradictory feelings of wonder, amazement, fear and revulsion. Their use is well documented in works such as that of André Thevet, who depicts them in several illustration of his *Cosmographie Universelle* (1575). In *Banquet et dan[s]es des Sauvages* (fig. 16) we see a procession of people entering a house; in the first ground, two of them are holding wooden club. The same object is represented in two other engravings, *Combat des Sauvages* (fig. 17) and *Le prisonnier est tué en la place publique* (fig. 18). In both cases, the men who are holding the weapon are about to use it against enemies or a prisoner, as also Staden witnessed during his captivity. In fact, according to him the Tupinamba called it *Iwera Pemme*. It was the “instrument with which they kill people” (2016 [1557], 66) and with whom he believed they would have killed him too.

As for feather cloaks, some of the clubs that were part of *Wunderkammer* collections are currently preserved in European museums. The Weltmuseum Wien keeps one remarkable piece (fig. 19) and also has two axes with the same origin (Feest 1985); the club part of the collection of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology in Florence (Cecchi and Stanyon 2014) is similar (fig. 20), while slightly different is the one preserved at the Museum of Ethnology of Munich (Bujok 2009).

In the illustrations of Thevet we can find references to many other aspects of the Tupinamba culture that were gaining popularity in the European imaginary. Next to representations of war, sacrifices and anthropophagy, he portrayed scenes of daily life in which it is possible to identify other objects that we still consider part of the stereotype of the Brazilian indigenous. It is the case of the *maraca*, a musical instrument made of dried pumpkins filled with seeds or small stones and used during ceremonies, spiritual and healing rituals (fig. 21). About them, Gabriel Soares de Souza says: “levam na mão [...] direita um maracá, que é um cabaço

cheio de pedrinhas, come seu cabo, com que vai tangendo e cantando”⁷³ (2000 [1587], 235). The ceremonial use of these objects had been quite clear from the beginning and however it had been related to another belief European developed about indigenous people. As Hans Staden’s account demonstrates, Europeans understood the *maraca* as an idol in which indigenous believed instead of an instrument of mediation with the spiritual world.

The men stayed together in a hut and drank what they call *kawi*, having with them their gods, who are called Tammerka, in whose honor they sang, having prophesied that they would capture me. (Staden 2016 [1557], 99)

They believe in a fruit that grows like a pumpkin and has the size of half a pot. It is hollow inside and a stick is driven through it. Then they make a hole in it in the shape of a little mouth and put pebbles inside, so that it rattles. They rattle it when they sing and dance, and they call it Tammaraka. And in the following way: this instrument is only for men, and each one has his own. There are some among them whom they call Paygi [Pajé] and who are regarded among them as the diviners here. These go once a year all over the country, from hut to hut, affirming that they have with them a spirit that comes from far away, from strange places, and that has given them the virtue of making all the Tammarakas speak that they want and the power to achieve everything that is asked of them. (Idem, 134)

Finally, also hammocks populated both graphic representations and popular imaginary. Hans Staden reports: “in their language it was called *Inni* and was their bed, which they tied on two sticks above the ground, or when they were in the bush, between two trees” (Idem, 62). Similarly, Father Claude d’Abbeville says: “Their home furnishings are cotton hammocks that they call *ini*. They hang them from the ends, with twisted ropes, also made of cotton, which they tie to pieces of wood placed in the huts for this purpose” (Abbeville 1975, 215). According to Maria Berbara (2019), also the hammock participated in a specific ethnographic project aiming at creating a generic stereotype of different social groups. It could be representative of Brazil as much as of the whole Latin American continent; in both cases, it played a key role in the visual and rhetorical construction of the New World. It is no coincidence that we find it in the publications of several authors for many centuries. Among

⁷³ “Carry in their right hand [...] a maraca, which is a piece full of pebbles, eating its handle, with which they go on trolling and singing.”

the 16th-century representations, we recall for example those of André Thevet, Hans Staden or Giovanni Battista Ramusio. In several engravings, hammocks are depicted in soft shapes, hanging inside the houses or in outside spaces among two trees and with someone comfortably lying in it (fig. 22, 23, 24).

As we said, once they crossed the ocean all these objects were decontextualized, dehistoricized and interpreted with no distinctions through the categories of wonder and curiosity, either when they aroused aesthetical amusement or fear and revulsion. As a consequence of this process, they ended up constrained in a unique conceptual space in which they lost any function but that of spectacularize indigenous cultures. The complexity of their meaning was flattened in a non-European exotic dimension. This operation well emerges if we look at the inventories of the Cabinets of Curiosity. Saying that objects were equally conceptualized, does not mean that their organization had no specific order. The principles through which they were arranged were different: from the type of raw material, to the collection period, to the function, and yet none of them considered the ethnic or geographical origin (Yaya 2008). This was clearly a symptom of the lack of interest that collectors, travelers and merchants had in actually knowing something about the culture by which objects were produced. Objects that were labelled as *Indian* could come both from the *West Indies*, namely America, and the *East Indies*, namely Asia, making the distinction rather difficult. A similar use was made of other categories, such as those of *Turkish* or *Moorish*, more frequently addressed to pieces coming from Middle East or Africa but sometimes used to identify Amerindian objects as well. This *confusion* well shows how the idea of foreignness was perceived in a quite generalized way which ignored any kind of local specificity (Bujok 2009). This aspect greatly influenced how this *Indian* was conceptualized, that is, in homogeneous and stereotyped shapes far from the reality and synonym of wonderful and exotic. Also, it became the basis on which to build the idea of indigenous groups as a homogenous whole rather than a heterogeneous reality made of different groups, each with its own cultural peculiarities (Feest 1993).

Apparently, this flattening into the category of wonder could lead to the idea that objects were perceived in a positive way among the society of the time. They were not, because classifying something as *mirabilia* was a way to define it as not normal and ordinary, and consequently, to increase the distance between Europeans and what or who the object represented. In his work about wonders in the New World, Greenblatt (1991) stresses the

importance of this category as a strategy to appropriate a new reality, comprehend and dominate it. However, this process could cover several attitudes, often contradictory and ambiguous such as the feelings of desire, attraction, horror, repulsion, pain. Thus, the other was arbitrarily included or excluded from the different domains of identity and alterity and consequently from participating in a historical process imagined as the only possible. Although the modes have been changing throughout centuries, this approach has persisted until recent times.

Finally, the journey of indigenous material culture from the New World to the Old one offers the possibility to think about the concept of value and the way it was attributed to objects⁷⁴. The context presented so far confirms that the value we place on things is never intrinsic but arbitrary, and conferred according to different criteria of desirability, exchange possibility and recognition of some kind of authenticity (Simmel 1978). Also, economic dimension is only one of the several ways to measure the value of an object, which can coexist at the same time in different regimes of value and exchange circuits (Appadurai 1986). While travelling in space and time and jumping from one cultural system to another, objects are constantly appropriated, reinterpreted and recontextualized. The new meanings and identities that are built for them does not have to be considered separately, but layered on the objects as part of their “biography” (Kopytoff 1986). To explore them and to analyze the paths that material culture traveled allows us to deconstruct the epistemological and ideological categories through which they were constantly reinvented and to reveal the intersection points between the collecting practice and the colonial politics⁷⁵.

Nicholas Thomas (1991) suggests a perspective that consider the alienability and inalienability of objects, that is to say, their inclusion in, or exclusion from, an economic exchange circuit as depending from the social circumstances of which they are part. As an example, he brings the exchange of weapons in the Pacific. According to him weapons were not considered objects for exchange and thus did not imply a relational dimension. For this reason, they were perfect to be exchanged with Europeans, that were considered dangerous and with whom natives did not want to establish a relationship. For Tupi groups, the exchange of objects was constitutive of the relational dimension and regulated the

⁷⁴ For being such a complex issue, every chapter of the dissertation will provide a separate discussion in accordance with the specific context of investigation.

⁷⁵ This process will be particularly emphasized in chapters two and three with specific reference to the case studies considered (Portuguese and Austrian Empires).

maintenance of social and political balances. For Europeans it was an activity mainly related to the commercial dimension. And yet in both cases the categories with which these objects were interpreted in the moment they were given away were not the same as when they were received. In both cases objects were absorbed and included in another system, in which value was attributed according to pre-existing categories (Idem) – for example that of *mirabilia*. This way, rifles, blunderbusses, hats, clothes, mirrors, glass stones and all the other objects that indigenous received from Europeans entered the exchange circuit at the base of Tupi society and promoted a strong circulation of these goods in the Brazilian territory. According to Thevet, in the mid-16th Century “it is a fact that several savages possess some of them, because they were offered to them by the colonists soon after they met them” (1944 [1557], 231).

On the contrary, in Europe the appropriation of indigenous objects tended more to an aesthetic diversion⁷⁶ (Appadurai 2003) that often made them joining the circuit of luxurious goods and of the Cabinets of Curiosities. Even though, this process did not correspond to a complete singularization of the objects⁷⁷ (Kopytoff 1986) because they continued to be exchanged in a parallel market in which goods were made of rarities and curiosities. The recognition of an *authentic quality* played a key role in determining the passage of an object from one regime of value to another (cfr Introduction). Also, it was fundamental in legitimizing the discourses built around objects in terms of production of identities and alterities. In the 16th century it was still oddness, exotism, aesthetical beauty, the relation with literary production and the capacity of arouse curiosity and wonder which defined if an object was authentic or not, and consequently, if the representation of the world it offered had a value of truth. As we will further see in this work this interpretation would change significantly in the following centuries.

The arrival and recontextualization of indigenous objects in Europe were not only the result of the encounter between deeply different realities. As for written accounts and graphic representations, it turned out to be an instrument for inventing the other in order to include it in the cognitive horizon of European cultural system. In the next chapters we will deepen

⁷⁶ According to Appadurai (1986) the flow of goods is the result of the entanglement of socially regulated paths and diversions provoked by competition, which move the objects to other regimes of value and exchange circuits.

⁷⁷ Kopytoff distinguishes the processes of commodification and singularization, when an object enters or exits the goods circuit.

this discussion and see how certain interpretive dynamics of the first two centuries of the conquest influenced the later production of representations on Brazilian natives.

Chapter two

For a “History of the American Industry”: Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira and indigenous otherness in the 18th-century Portuguese Empire

2.1 Amazonian objects in Portuguese museums

The protagonists of this chapter are three ethnographic objects preserved in two Portuguese museums but originally – and culturally still – belonging to two indigenous ethnic groups of Brazil: the Omágua/Kambeba and the Sateré-Mawé peoples. To the former belong a small bamboo board used to flatten the forehead and a wooden arrow thruster (fig. 25; 26); to the latter a carved and painted wooden oar which is also a club (I decided not to put the its photo for I was suggested by a Sateré-Mawé leader not to do it). All of them were collected in the 18th century by a Luso-Brazilian naturalist called Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira to expand the collection of the *Real Museu da Ajuda* of Lisbon (see §2.2) but due to subsequent events – that we will see in detail in the following paragraphs – they are currently preserved respectively at the *Museu Maynense* of the *Academia das Ciências* of Lisbon and at the *Museu da Ciência da Universidade de Coimbra* in Coimbra. When visitors enter these two museums, they are plunged into two very different experiences. An in-depth, critical analysis of these exhibitions will appear in chapter four; for now, I would like to simply describe the *physical way* to the objects of our interest as we were to retrace a long journey back to the past, through the present and into the future.

The entrance of the *Academia das Ciências* in Lisbon is not particularly flashy. Next to a red door, a marble plate just states *Academia das Ciências de Lisboa*. On the contrary, the interior is decidedly sumptuous. To reach the *Museu Maynense* one has to walk through a few corridors lined with some austere-looking paintings. The entrance overlooks an inner courtyard and leads to the four rooms composing the museum. The second is dedicated to the journey of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira. The black walls and the arrangement of lights make every object catch the visitor’s attention, which, however, is likely to remain suspended between the curiosity for something usually unknown and the absence of proper information. The arrow thruster lays on the top shelf of an exhibition case, in front of five arrows; its surface is polished, reddish-colored. The information provided on it is the following:

ARMAS: MACHADOS E LANCHAS. No fabrico das armas os índios brasileiros tinham preferência pelos materiais de origem vegetal como madeira, cana, fibras vegetais e algodão ou animal como dentes, ossos, peles, pelos e penas. Os materiais cortantes consistiam em madeira afiada, cana afiada, osso e pedras, um pouco a semelhança de povos europeus há mais de 4000 anos a.C.

1. Propulsor de azagaia: funcionava como extensão do braço para aumentar a velocidade de lançamento de azagaia/lanças. Um dente fixo na extremidade servia para fixar o projétil. Índios Cambebas.¹ (Exhibition text, Museu Maynense, Sala Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira)

Unlike the arrow thruster, the board is shut in the storage, inaccessible to the eyes of the most.

In Coimbra, the exhibition is hosted in the Jesuit College, a Renaissance building located in the upper town. The visitor goes up to the first floor and enters a door leading to a sequence of large rooms. To reach the Sateré-Mawé oar, one has to reach the third hall, called the voyages room. A small panel introduces the context to the visitors:

No espírito iluminista a Coroa portuguesa organizou viagens filosóficas de reconhecimento de vastos territórios ocupados na América, África e Ásia. Estas viagens científicas incluíam a demarcação geográfica e o estudo e a recolha de exemplares de fauna, flora e minerais. Eram lideradas por naturalistas e riscadores que recolhiam, preparavam, desenhavam e remetiam milhares de espécimens para Lisboa. A Universidade recebeu do Real Museu da Ajuda uma remessa de 2000 exemplares em 1806. Na sua maioria ilustravam a viagem de Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira durante uma década na Amazônia.² (Exhibition text, Museu da Ciência, Sala das Viagens)

¹ "WEAPONS: AXES AND SPEARS. In the manufacture of weapons, Brazilian Indians had a preference for materials of vegetal origin such as wood, cane, vegetable fibers and cotton or animal materials such as teeth, bones, skins, fur and feathers. The cutting materials consisted of sharp wood, sharp reed, bone and stones, somewhat like European peoples more than 4000 years BC. 1. Throwing propeller: functioned as an extension of the arm to increase the throwing speed of javelins/throws. A tooth fixed at the end served to fix the projectile. Cambebas Indians."

² "In the spirit of the Enlightenment, the Portuguese Crown organized philosophical voyages of recognition of vast occupied territories in America, Africa and Asia. These scientific voyages included geographical demarcation and the study and collection of specimens of fauna, flora and minerals. They were led by naturalists and explorers who collected, prepared, drew and shipped thousands of specimens to Lisbon. The University received a shipment of 2000 specimens from the Royal Museum of Ajuda in 1806. Most of them illustrated the journey of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira during a decade in the Amazon."

In the middle of the room seven horizontal displays are regularly aligned crowded with naturalistic and ethnographic objects collected by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira and replicas of some of his illustrations. The club/sacred oar lies in the upper part of one of these cases. It is carved in dark wood; one of the ends is decorated with a geometric pattern reminiscent of eyes looking at you. Next to it a paper tag recites: “Clava. Mawé-Sateré. A.R.Ferreira”. Nothing else.

The choice of these objects is not casual and was made progressively during the course of the research (cfr Introduction). Since one of the crucial themes of this work is the construction of stereotypes and imaginaries, a first selection criterium was observing what, to the eyes of the collector, seemed to be relevant in materially representing some of the categories used to shape and classify indigenous peoples in *socio-evolutionist* terms – even if *social evolutionism* as theoretical concept is subsequent to the period of collection.

Regarding weapons such as the club and the thruster, we can affirm that they have been playing an important role as stereotyped symbols of Brazilian natives (cfr §1.3). They were rarely considered in their aesthetic and functional variety (which could be ceremonial besides warrior), being rather identified as embedding primitiveness and savagery. In general, objects collected by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira show a fairly diverse range of shapes and decorations, leading to speculate about the existence both of specific practical skills to produce them and of further value beyond their use in hunt or war. Sateré-Mawé club/oar is an excellent example to prompt us to think of other possible interpretations. Moreover, the relationship to primitiveness is here somewhat interesting since, as we will see in §2.2.3, it constituted a key aspect of the discourse produced by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira. To him, weapons were not intrinsically primitive – their value was widely recognized in 18th-century European society – but crucial for the documentation of a “História da Indústria Americana” (Ferreira 2005 [1787]). In fact, they represented the level and advancement of indigenous peoples in the *evolutionary path* of human societies (Idem). Close combat weapons, such as clubs and spears, were the most primitive while launch ones, such as blowguns, arches, and thrusters were already a step above.

On the other hand, the bamboo board used for head deformation is part of a discourse which is different but still functional for the establishment of a classification of human beings starting from their physical distinctions. Next to more classical debates over the skin color or

somatic traits, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira remarks other distinctions such as “monstruosos por natureza” and “monstruosos por artifício”³ respectively referring to bodily natural or artificially made deformations (Ferreira 1972b). Considering the historical period in which the journey took place – and on which we will focus in §2.2 – these definitions acquire a significant meaning; while on the one hand they still show a strong influence of classical conceptions related to the dimension of marvelous, on the other, they begin to be systematized into the new scientific epistemology the purpose of which is to produce and legitimize categories of knowledge aimed at interpreting all kind of phenomena (including indigenous peoples and their socio-cultural otherness) and place it into the *order of nature*. It goes without saying that even a simple object such as a bamboo tablet could be related to a specific position on the grades of social development as well as evoking the presence of radical alterity.

Of course, in the collection assembled by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira there are many other objects that would lend themselves to the same analysis. Another reason for choosing Kambeba and Sateré-Mawé pieces is that, among all contacts that I tried to establish with contemporary members of the populations represented in the collection (when not extinct), these were the most successful. Since, as already outlined in the introduction, the second part of this research focuses on the deconstruction of a hegemonic perspective through the dialogue with indigenous peoples and aims at opening up the debate to their interpretations, it seemed reasonable to choose objects on which there was a real possibility of discussion. In fact, during the fieldwork in Brazil, among all the indigenous groups represented in Ferreira’s collection, the Kambeba and the Sateré-Mawé were those with whom I was able to get into contact and establish a stronger relationship.

In this chapter, we will focus on the Western version of this story, namely, the one offered by primary and secondary documentation produced during and after Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira’s journey, and that both museums (the *Academia das Ciências* of Lisbon and the *Museu da Ciência* of Coimbra) propose as their official narrative.

However, before focusing on the *Viagem Filosófica* we must briefly address to the producers of these objects as they might be thought of by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira.

³ “[...] ‘naturally monstrous’ and ‘artificially monstrous’”.

2.1.1 Omágua-Kambeba: a brief historical overview

Despite not being among the best-known populations today, the Kambeba are mentioned in historical documentation since the first Spanish conquerors reached the river Amazon. To remain within the Western perspective offered in this chapter, I will here introduce some of the main historical sources which contributed to reveal the presence of this group to Europeans during the 16th and 17th centuries. Among some works that dwell in detail on this topic we find Porro (1992; 1996; 2020), Maciel (2011) and Souza (2014). Here, I will try to offer just a brief summary of a few key elements of the process of description – and invention – of Kambeba people. I will consider the chronicles of Frei Gaspar the Carvajal (1542ca), who followed Francisco de Orellana in the first expedition; Francisco Vásquez (1561), soldier during the expedition of Ursua and Aguirre⁴; the accounts of Pedro Teixeira (1639) – leader of the first Portuguese journey in 1637, Alonso de Rojas (1639) and Cristóval de Acuña (1641), who accompanied him; Laureano Montesdoca de la Cruz (1653), a Franciscan who spent three years in the Upper Amazon to pursue the evangelization of natives; Samuel Fritz (1686-1723), a Jesuit who, as Franciscans before him, committed to the catechization of indigenous people to Catholicism.

First, though, we need to make a terminological clarification. The ethnonym Kambeba, which I will adopt in this dissertation, is the one used by the actual members of this group⁵. In first historical sources they appear first as Aparia, Omágua and Cambeba even if there is some uncertainty if the latter descended from the former or they were only strictly related and occupying the same region (Porro 2020). Denomination was indeed one of the main reasons for which their localization has always been matter of discussion, as much among the chroniclers of the past as among today's intellectuals (fig. 28).

In 1542, Gaspar the Carvajal reported the presence of a settlement, called *Aparia Grande*, located in the area now corresponding to Tabatinga and Leticia, where lived a lord called Aparia who was respected from the region of the lower Napo River – where there was another

⁴ In 1558, Pedro de Ursua was charged by the viceroy Marquis de Cañete to lead an expedition in the footsteps of Orellana called *Jornada de Omágua e Dorado*. The purpose was to search the wonderful places believed to exist in the Amazon region such as El Dorado and the Country of Cinnamon. During the journey one of the officials, Lopes de Aguirre murdered the captain and took control over the expedition (Porro 2020).

⁵ We will see the issues related to its appropriation further on in the dissertation, precisely in chapter 4.

settlement called *Aparia Menor* – to the mouth of the Jandiatuba River, now corresponding to São Paulo de Olivença (Porro 1992; 2020).

[...] Seguindo nossa viagem fomos em demanda de uma povoação chamada Aparia, [nome] que é [também do] senhor principal daquela sua província, e [ela está] num abanda e outra do rio. [...] No dia seguinte, assim como saiu o sol, vieram os índios em paz falar ao capitão; e soubemos dessa gente que estavam em terra de Aparia o Grande e que daí em Diante havia muitas povoações e que não estavam os povoados queimados como até então haviam encontrado, razão pela qual havíamos visto um tão grande despovoado desde os Yirimai e desde o Aparia o menor [...].⁶ (Carvajal 2020 [1542], 47-48)

The correspondence between these people and the Omágua of the subsequent accounts is almost sure because of the several common traits such as the use of a Tupi language and of certain clothes, adornments and weapons on which we will focus in a while.

Most scholars agree that, during the 16th century, Omágua territory extended from the Napo River in Ecuador, where the Omágua-Yetê or real Omágua lived, to the region between the Javari and Iça Rivers, also known as *Gran Omágua* and inhabited by the *Omágua das Ilhas* (Maciel 2011; Porro 1996). In the 17th century, the boarder had already moved further down the course of the Amazon River arriving as far as the mouth of the Juruá River (Maciel 2011). Another issue that complexify the localization is that Carvajal identifies another group who lived on the river as Omágua: “Depois que os de Machiparo deixaram de nos perseguir, caminhamos nove ou dez léguas até um povoado que estava num alto, o qual acreditamos ser fronteira das povoações e senhorio de Homágua”⁷ (2020 [1542], 56). The same does Francisco Vásques when he tells the murder of Pedro de Ursua after he left Machifaro:

Dois dias depois que os tiranos mataram seu Principe, saímos daquele povoado ou sítio e caminhamos pelo rio abaixo oito dias e sete noites sem parar. Aqui apareceu, à mão direita, uma cordilheira não muito alta de savanas e serras peladas. Havia nessa cordilheira grandes

⁶ “Following our journey, we went in search of a village called Aparia, [name] which is [also the name of] the main lord of that province, and [it is] on one side of the river and the other. [The next day, as soon as the sun came out, the Indians came in peace to speak to the captain; and we learned from these people that we were in the land of Aparia o Grande and that from there on there were many settlements and that the settlements were not burned as they had found until then, reason why we had seen such a great depopulation from the Yirimai and from Aparia o menor [...].”

⁷ “After the Machiparo people stopped pursuing us, we walked nine or ten leagues to a village that was on a hill, which we believe to be the border of the towns and lordship of Homagua.”

fumaças e divisavam-se algumas povoações à beira do rio. Ali diziam os guias que ficava Omágua e a boa terra de que eles sempre nos haviam falado.⁸ (2020 [1561], 100)

In reality, this other people were not Omágua but, probably, Yurimagua or Yoriman and showed completely different cultural habits as well as they used a different language which Europeans and their Tupi translators did not understand (Porro 2020).

One thing which surprised most the explorers was the population density and the high level of socio-political organization. In this regard, to simplify and domesticate the great socio-cultural variability and complexity of the context, Carvajal divided the course of the river in provinces which, according to Fausto (2000), corresponded to alternate areas of settlement and depopulated areas. Each province received a name, which could be of the ethnic group which he registered as majoritarian or related to other factors: Aparia (Gran Omágua), Machiparo, Omágua (Yurimagua), Paguana, Aruaqui, Picotas, Província de São João, Província dos Negros, and others. Among the groups inhabiting them, the Omágua were thought as those of “de mas razon y major governo que ay en todo el Rio”⁹ (Acuña 1641, 24) because of the political organization in minor *cacicados* all respecting a major leader – who, as we mentioned, Carvajal identified as Aparia, and Heriarte, in 1662, as Tururucari. He states: “[...] governão-se por Principais nas aldeias; e no meio desta província, que he dilatada, há um Principal, ou rei deles, a que todos obedecem com grandíssima sujeição”¹⁰ (Heriarte 1847, 53 quoted in Maciel 2011).

In her dissertation, Souza (2014) problematizes the use of the word *province* as many others notions introduced to describe the organization of Omágua society, such as *kingdom*, *nation*, *lord*, which clearly recalled European political infrastructure (see also Maciel 2011) – *province*, for instance, had roman origins and was intended as an area that had been occupied and annexed to the territory of the conqueror. She stresses the fact that the attribution of these terms led to the creation of fixed and homogeneous population units within which to freeze-frame much more fluid contexts and identities (Souza 2014). The purpose, albeit

⁸ “Two days after the tyrants had killed their Prince, we left that village or place and walked down the river eight days and seven nights without stopping. Here appeared, on our right hand, a not very high mountain range of savannahs and hairy mountains. There were great smoky spots on this range, and some villages could be seen along the river's edge. There, the guides said, was Omagua and the good land they had always told us about.”

⁹ “[...] of more reason and better government than there is in the whole river.”

¹⁰ “They are governed by Principals in the villages; and in the middle of this province, which is very large, there is a principal, or king of them, whom everyone obeys with great submission.”

unconscious, was to try to make sense of a new reality since, as Maciel points out, “o olhar do colonizador estava preparado para ver o que lhe fizesse sentido, o que o seu universo cultural podia compreender. Uma visão que tomava seu mundo como referência comparativa”¹¹ (2011, 47). This attitude – of using European parameters to create comparisons – is one of the first and most evident signals of a Eurocentric attitude that characterizes every author and to which we have to pay attention when reading their works critically. It pervaded not only references to the political organization but to a whole series of *diacritical elements* that distinguished the Omágua from other groups. From the chronicles considered here, some sections are worth to be mentioned.

The Indians of this island are well-built and well-dressed; they wear brush-worked shirts; their houses are square and large; their weapons are a kind of palm-tipped stick, the size of a Biscayan dart, thrown by means of a kind of stick-thrower, [of those] that are found in most of the Indies and are called the arrow thrusters. (Vásques 2020 [1561], 93)

The Omágua Indians wear cotton shirts and blankets painted with a brush in various colors, blue, yellow, orange, green and red, very refined, from which it can be deduced that there is wood or herbs [of dye]. [...] Some nations are constantly in war with others. They use arrows, darts and other similar weapons. The Omágua play the javelin well, being very skilled in this kind of weapon. (Rojas 2020 [1639], 125, 127)

The clothes the Omágua wear are, for men, painted cotton shirts that reach their knees and have no sleeves, which they do not need most of the year, because without them they walk more unembarrassed. Women wrap themselves in cotton mantles that are so short and narrow so to decorate them very little [...] The Omágua are sustained by the ordinary provisions of the land [...]. Fish from these rivers are many and good, and there are many turtles, which are very good sustenance, as well as manatees. [...] The way of fishing and hunting birds and animals in those woods, nature and necessity have taught its inhabitants. The ordinary things are arrows, harpoons, blowguns and snares that they make in their own way. (Cruz 2020 [1653], 151-152)

¹¹ “[...] the colonizer's gaze was prepared to see what made sense to him, what his cultural universe could understand. A vision that took his world as a comparative reference.”

The Omagua pride themselves on having always had, even before they were Christians, a sort of civility [police] and government, many of them living a sociable life, showing great subjection and obedience to their principal, and dressing all of them, both men and women, with some decency; [...] Nowadays men wear cotton pants and shirts woven and painted very curiously; women are content with two pieces of the same cloth, one of which serves as a loincloth, and with the other they barely cover their breasts, painting the rest of their bodies and also their hair with the juice, blacker than mulberry, of a wild fruit called jagua. Men paint mainly their legs, hands and beards with it, in a curious imitation of the Spanish beards, gloves and boots or socks. Their weapons are usually the arrow and the thruster [...]; with them they shoot game in the bush and fish in the river, and also fight with other Indians. (Fritz 2020 [1686-1723], 184-185)

First of all, we notice that the use of decorated cotton clothes was something that positively impressed explorers in comparison with almost all the other groups living along the river and who walked around naked¹². It is impossible to know for sure the origin of this habit – Acuña’s hypothesis was that they were influenced by Spanish, Cruz’s that they learned it from the Tupi groups which migrated to the Amazon in 1549 (see Porro 2020) – but there is no doubt that Europeans considered it as a sign of some sort of civilization. Sometimes, the presence of golden and silver ornaments was reported, which created an almost immediate reference to the myth of the *El Dorado* (Souza 2014). Likewise, they seemed to value skills as hunters, fishermen and warriors, especially using the arrow thruster – which will gain importance also in Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira’s accounts.

Another element which became central in identifying the Omágua was the practice of deforming the head, to which the Europeans looked with curiosity and a bit of disgust. The first who actually mentioned it was Pedro Teixeira in the 17th century: “E [fomos] caminhando dali por outros sete dias sem gente até o primeiro povoado dos Omágua [...] que têm as cabeças chatas”¹³ (2020 [1639], 132-133). This fact raises some doubts about the moment the practice was introduced, also considering that, when describing the people of Aparia, Carvajal does not say anything. A hypothesis, offered by Francisco Xavier Ribeiro Sampaio who visited São Paulo de Olivença towards the end of the 18th century, is that it

¹² Cfr §1.1 on the problems raised from natives’ nudity.

¹³ “And we walked from there for another seven days without people to the first village of the Omágua [...] who have flat heads.”

might have been a strategy – of resistance I would add – to differentiate themselves from other groups in order to show to European soldiers that they were not *savages* and so escape capture and enslavement (Sampaio 1825 quoted in Maciel 2011). Anyway, it turned quickly into a real ethnic symbol.

Few years later, Cristóbal de Acuña describes it with more detailed in the official account of the expedition:

Son todos de cabeça chata, que les causa fealdad en los varones; si bien las mugeres major lo encubren con el mucho cauello: e está en ellos tan entablado el uso de tener las cabeças aplastadas, que desde que nacen las criaturas, se las meten en prensa, cogiendoles por la frente con una tabla pequeña, y por la parte del cerebro con otra tan grande que sirviendo de cuna, recibe todo el cuerpo del recién nacido; el cual puesto de espaldas sobre esta, y apretado fuertemente con la otra, queda con el cerebro y la frente tã llanos como la palma de la mano [...] de manera que mas parece mitra de Obispo mal formada que cabeça de persona.¹⁴ (Acuña 1641, 24-25)

A decade later, Laureano de la Cruz, report similar information:

The way they flatten the heads is as follows: they take a child who has been born a few days ago and they gird his head, in the part of the brain [in the back of the neck] with a wide strip of cotton and in the front part with a little board that they make of wild reeds, which holds it very tight from the eyes to the hair and in this way what the head had to grow as round grows up and becomes long, flat and very disproportionate. (2002 [1653], 151)

Finally, Samuel Fritz adds a precious information which also clarify the contemporary use of the ethnonym Kambeba. He says:

The Portuguese commonly call the Omágua with the name of Cambeba or Camga-Peva, which means flat heads, because the distinctive feature of this nation is to have a flat

¹⁴ “They all have a flat head, which makes the men ugly, although the women disguise it better by covering it with enough hair. The natives are so used to the habit of having their heads flattened that the children, when they are born, are put in a press, where their foreheads are compressed with a small board; and, for the part of the skull, by another so big that, serving as a cradle, receives the whole body of the newborn [...] they get their foreheads and skulls as flat as the palm of their hands [...] more like a malformed bishop's mitre than a person's head...”

forehead, flat like the palm of a hand; and to this end, until today, they put all their vanity, especially the women, who mock and insult those of other nations by saying that their heads are round like gourds or calabashes, like savages of the forest. To do this they gradually flatten the heads of little children, carefully applying a board or a bundle of broken reeds to their foreheads, with a bit of cotton so as not to hurt them, and tying them back against a board that serves as a cradle. (2002 [1686-1723], 183)

The frequency and persistence of these aspects is probably related also to the fact that travelers, influenced by other accounts, looked for specific things when facing the Omágua of the Amazon River¹⁵. By confirming them, they contributed to the construction of an increasingly rigid and stereotyped figure which, although considered more civilized, still represented an alterity. The fact in itself of considering the Omágua as more civilized compared to other groups is one of those Eurocentric parameters which denied them in their singularity to invent them as a model to measure the social evolution of other indigenous populations (Maciel 2011; Souza 2014). Maciel expresses very well this point explaining that the Kambeba were not regarded as more civilized in themselves but for showing “algumas características físicas e sócio-espaciais mais próximas do mundo europeu”¹⁶ (2011, 44). On the same line, Souza (2014) suggests that they were assembled as a real colonial category, with its features and related to specific points of references – i.e., the myth of *El Dorado* – that were already part of Western system of knowledge and Europeans used to make sense of every new experience. In my opinion though, she gives this category a connotation that is perhaps a little too positive when she states that:

A nomeação Omágua ganhou destaque associada a características positivas; [...] no espaço fluvial destacaram-se como bons canoeiros e, através da formulação “senhores do rio”, percebem-se as projeções que existiram em relação a esta nomeação, a qual foi associada a características civilizatórias, diferentemente da ideia de selvageria e barbárie que consta nos escritos coloniais.¹⁷ (2014, 142)

¹⁵ It's no coincidence that their transformation towards the end of the 18th century misled several explorers of the 19th century in recognizing them as Omágua/Kambeba (cfr § 2.2.2).

¹⁶ “[...] some physical and socio-spatial characteristics closer to the European world.” (cfr note 9 and 10 in this chapter and quotations pp. 85-86).

¹⁷ “The nomination Omágua gained prominence associated with positive characteristics; [...] in the fluvial space they stood out as good canoeiros and, through the formulation *lords of the river*, one perceives the projections that existed in relation to this nomination, which was associated with civilizing characteristics, differently from the idea of savagery and barbarism found in colonial writings.”

This is even more evident if we consider some considerations such as Pedro Teixeira's:

Ao cabo dessas [sete] jornadas começam os Omáguas, que tem as cabeças chatas; [...] gente mui carniceira, e suposto que todos os do rio o são e se comem um aos outros, esses passam da conta porque não usam de outra carne senão a humana e têm por troféu as caveiras dos que matam penduradas em suas casas [...].¹⁸ (2020 [1639], 132-133)

The issue of cannibalism might be problematic since Teixeira is the only one to inform it. More common was reporting on the state of warfare caused by inter-group rivalries. In any case, both elements were manipulated by Europeans who, despite their different purposes, agreed in thinking of natives as *savages* to save from a condition of moral ignorance or to exploit as slaves. Laureano de la Cruz refers to one of the *aldeias* he used to visit as a “province so large and so few in number and so far apart from one another, without police, reason, or government, without chieftains or obedience to anyone, and whose dealings with their neighbors were to kill and flatter one another” (2020 [1686], 149). A few years later, Samuel Fritz echoes him, saying that “in the days of their paganism, they went deep into the woods in search of these slaves, robbed houses at gunpoint, cruelly killed old men and women, and took young men captive for their service. Such an unjust custom was always fostered [...]” (2020 [1686-1723], 184). However, he adds, “continues to be so to this day, by many Portuguese among the Indians who are subject to their domination, offering them tools and other goods and forcing them by threats to wage war with other barbarian nations in order to obtain slaves to give to the Portugues” (Ibidem). Beyond the value judgment, the latter two testimonies reveal a context which was already passing through deep transformations and demographic decline as a consequence of the pression of the colonization process and which will result into near extinction in the following centuries (Maciel 2011). Near but not complete, thanks to the various strategies of appropriation and resistance that the Omágua managed to find.

¹⁸ “At the end of these [seven] journeys begin the Omáguas, who have flat heads; [...] they are very aggressive, and supposing that all those from the river are like this and eat each other, they are outnumbered because they do not use any meat other than human flesh, and have as a trophy the skulls of those they kill hanging in their houses.”

So, while on the one hand first chroniclers' accounts are precious sources to get an idea on how Omágua society might have been, on the other hand we must always remember that the image they built was mediated and often distorted by Western categories of thought. This will be even clearer in the documentation produced by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira on which we will focus in §2.2.2.

2.1.2 Sateré-Mawé: a brief historical overview

Unlike the Kambeba, historical information of the colonial period about present Sateré-Mawé, or groups related with them, are far scarcer. A possible reason is that the region they occupied did not raise, at least at the beginning, as much interest and curiosity as the Upper Solimões whose imaginary recalled the myth of the El Dorado and other legendary places.

The first official mention under the ethnonym Maués¹⁹ can be found in the Map drawn by the Jesuit father Samuel Fritz in 1691. He localized them in Tupinambarana Islands, in the area among the Amazon, the Tapajós and the Madeira Rivers – and which corresponds almost completely to the territory currently occupied (Pereira 2020) (fig. 29). The region was named after the establishment of innumerable Tupinambá groups who, between 1530 and 1612, fled from the coastal areas of Pernambuco, Maranhão and Pará to the inland in order to escape the pressures of European conquest (Fernandes 1963; Pereira 2020). Once they reached the region of the Middle Amazon River, they met previous inhabitants and established with them relations of warfare, alliance or vassalage inevitably accompanied by an intense process of mixing (Fernandes 1963). The Sateré-Mawé belong to the tupi-speaking groups, thus they might be one of those originated as a consequence of this great migration. The slow consolidation of this dislocation is suggested by the lack of mention, in 16th-century chronicles, of the Tupinambarana Islands. In the area between the Urubu River and Parintins, Carvajal speaks of a Province called of *Picotas* because of the many poles decorated with trophy heads in the proximity of the settlements encountered along the river and no information at all is found in the accounts produced during the expedition of Pedro de

¹⁹ During time, the Sateré-Mawé were called with many ethnonyms by non-indigenous travelers, explorers, missionaries, soldiers, natives' hunters, among the others. Pereira lists the following names: Maooz, Mabué, Mangués, Manguês, Jaquezes, Maguases, Mahués, Magués, Mauris, Mawés, Maraguá, Mahué, Maueses. Metraux and Martius also established analogies with the Arapiuns, but Nimuendaju revised this statement affirming that the Arapium represented a different group, more similar to the Tapajós rather than to the Maués (Pereira 2020).

Ursua – probably because of the harsh and violent conditions in which the journey continued under Aguirra's leadership (Porro 2020).

Only from the beginning of the 17th century, the region begins to be called Tupinambarana or Tupinambá Islands. Pedro Teixeira, Laureano de la Cruz and Samuel Fritz give, in their account, information of more general character. On the contrary, Cristóbal de Acuña offers a detailed description in the *Nuevo descubrimiento del gran rio de las Amazonas*:

Veinte e ocho leguas de la boca deste Rio, caminando siempre por la mesma vanda del sur, está una hermosa Isla, que tiene sesenta de largo, e consiguientemente mas de ciento de circuyto, poblada toda de los calientes Tupinambà, gente que de las conquistas del Brasil, en tierras de Pernambuco, salieron derrotados muchos años ha, huyendo del rigor con que los Portugueses les ivan fugetando. Salieron tan gran numero dellos, que despoblando a un mesmo tiempo, ochenta y quatro aldeas donde estauan situados, no quedò de todo ellos, ni una criatura que no traxessen en su compañía. [...] Son gentes de grande brio en la guerra e bien lo mostraròlos que llegaron a estos parajes, donde al presente habitans pues siendo ellos, sin comparacion, muchos menos que los naturales desde Rio, de tal fuerte los assolaron, y sugetaron a todos aquellos con quienes tuujieron guerras; que consumien do naciones enteras; a otras obligaron a dexar de miedo su natural, y irse peregrinos a tierras extrañas. Usan estos Indios de arco, y flecha, que con destreza disparan. Son de coraçones nobles y ahhidalgados; si bien, como ya casi todos los q al presente ay, son hijos, y nietos de los primeros pobladores, ya se van acomodando a las baxeas, y mañas de los de la tierra, con cuya sangre estan mezclados.²⁰ (1641, 35-37)

Although no mention to the Maués appears yet, interesting news are reported by another Jesuit, Father João Felipe Bettendorf, who identifies two populations living on the lands we

²⁰ "Twenty-eight leagues from the mouth of this river, always walking along the same path to the south, there is a beautiful island, which is sixty [legues] long, and consequently more than one hundred in circuit, populated all of the hot Tupinambà, people that from the conquests of Brazil, in the lands of Pernambuco, left defeated many years ago, fleeing from the rigor with which the Portuguese were fleeing them. They left such a great number of them, that depopulating at the same time, eighty-four villages where they were located, there was not a single creature left that they did not bring in their company. [...] They are a people of great warrior's spirit, and it is well demonstrated by those who arrived in these parts, where they now live, since being, without comparison, much less than the natives from Rio, they devastated them with such force, and subjugated all those with whom they fought wars, that they consumed entire nations, and forced others to leave their native land in fear, and go as pilgrims to foreign lands. These Indians use bows and arrows, which they shoot with dexterity. They are of noble and noble hearts; although, as almost all of them are children and grandchildren of the first settlers, they are already adapting to the strengths and weaknesses of those of the land, with whose blood they are mixed."

are considering: the Andirá, who live “para cima dos Tupinambaranas, em terras boas e assaz sadias” and the Maraguzes, who live “umas jornadas mais adiante, em terras algum tanto doentias”²¹ (2010, 769). Their presence is recorded in the wider context of foundation of Jesuits missions and process of bringing closer to settlements those populations still living in the inner land. For example, in 1661 and 1669 were respectively established the *aldeia dos Tapajós* (current city of Santarém) and the *aldeia Tupinambarana* – the latter later registered under the name of Santa Cruz dos Andirazes (Fernandes 1963).

Por aquele tempo formava o padre Antônio da Fonseca com grande zelo a aldeia dos tupinambaranas, acrescentando-a com gente nova, fazendo igreja e casas bonitas, acudindo juntamente aos andirazes com a doutrina e os sacramentos [...] Assistia em aquela aldeia e dela visitar as aldeias dos andirazes para riba e as dos curiatos para baixo, com muito zelo e trabalho, ensinando e formando-as até fazer nascer em ânímos daqueles bárbaros a fé de Cristo, que ele primeiro de todos lhes manifestou.²² (Bettendorf 2010, 526; 563)

Tendo o padre Manuel Nunes sido aliviado do pesado cargo de reitor do Colégio de Santo Alexandre, da cidade de Belém do Grão-Pará, como era varão zeloso pela salvação das almas, pediu ao padre superior Bento de Oliveira para que lhe concedesse a nova missão dos Maraguzes, situada entre os Tupinambaranas e Abacaxizes.²³ (Idem, 674)

In particular, the Andirá might be associated to the Maués because of the cultivation and use of guarana (*Paullinia cupana*), a berry with energetic properties and which knowledge and use is one of the main elements of Sateré-Mawé culture²⁴.

²¹ “[...] up from the Tupinambaranas, in good and quite healthy lands” and the Maraguzes, who live “a few days further on, in somewhat sickly lands.”

²² “At that time Father Antônio da Fonseca was forming with great zeal the village of the Tupinambaranas, adding new people, building a church and beautiful houses, helping the Andirazes with doctrine and the sacraments [...] He was present in that village and from there he visited the villages of the Andirazes upriver and those of the Curiatos downriver, with much zeal and work, teaching and forming them until the faith in Christ was born in the minds of those barbarians, which he first of all showed them.”

²³ “Having Father Manuel Nunes been relieved of the heavy duty of rector of the Santo Alexandre College, in the city of Belém do Grão-Pará, as he was a man zealous for the salvation of souls, he asked Father Superior Bento de Oliveira to grant him the new mission of the Maraguzes, located between the Tupinambaranas and the Abacaxizes.”

²⁴ Other indigenous groups make use of the guarana but its relevance is not as strong as in Sateré-Mawé culture, that is considered the first to domesticate the plant (Lorenz 1992).

Têm os andirazes em seus matos uma frutinha que chamam guaraná, a qual secam e depois pisam, fazendo dela umas bolas, que estimam como os brancos o seu ouro, e desfeitas com uma pedrinha, com que as vão roçando e em uma cuia de água bebida, dá tão grandes forças, que indo os índios à caça, um dia até outro, não têm fome, além do que faz urinar, tira febres e dores de cabeça e câimbras.²⁵ (Idem, 40).

Curt Nimuendaju, author of one of the first ethnographic descriptions of Sateré-Mawé population, seems to support this connection, stressing that the contact with Jesuits would be the first occasion for the Maués to meet Europeans (1948). On the contrary, Nunes Pereira, who also produced very important works on the topic, relies on sources of regional history to affirm that it occurred earlier than that thanks to the innumerable trading paths established precisely around the extraction and exchange of guarana (2020).

Anyway, the socio-cultural context of the aldeias, as well as of colonial process in general, was very variable and dynamic in terms of ethnic affiliation; it was common then for different groups to be confused and/or assimilated into each other. This might have been another reason for which the presence of the Maués remained silenced until the end of the 17th century. When Jesuits arrived in 1659, the majoritarian group was that of the Tapajós – after whom the river was named – and it is possible that the ethnonym turned into a general term to identify other populations who were living in the same area, such as the Maués, the Mundurucu, the Mura and the Parintintins (Pereira 2020). On the contrary, Barbosa Rodrigues hypothesizes that they appeared in the region between the 17th and 18th centuries as a consequence of the disappearance of many groups because both of European invasion and internal warfare. According to him:

Durante o tempo do domínio dos Tapayús, no baixo Tapajós, viviam também pelas margens do rio e para o interior outras tribus que mais tarde foram exterminadas pelos Mutirucus, hoje Mundurucus; ou fugiram para outros pontos da província. Entre ellas, como disse dando o histórico de Santarém, haviam as seguintes: *Apaunuariás, Amanajás, Marixitás, Apicuricus, Moquiriás, Anjuariás, Jararéuaras, Apecurias, Cenecuriás, Motuari, Anjuariás, Uarupás, Periquitos e*

²⁵ “The Andirazes have in their bushes a small fruit called guarana, which they dry and then tread on, making balls out of it, which they value as much as the whites do their gold, and undone with a pebble, with which they rub them and in a gourd of water they drink, it gives such great strength, that when the Indians go hunting, one day until the next, they are not hungry, besides which it makes them urinate, takes away fevers and headaches and cramps.”

Suariranas. Desaparecendo estas tribus, só existiam em 1768 as tres ultimas, e um diminuto numero de Tapayús, apparecendo comtudo outras, que viviam quasi sempre em luta. Eram estas as dos *Tapacorás*, *Cararys*, *Jacarétapiás*, *Sapopés*, *Iauains*, *Uarapirangas*, e *Mauhés*.²⁶ (Barbosa Rodrigues 1875, 131)

In the same year (1768), Father Monteiro de Noronha, General Vicar of Rio Negro who wrote the *Roteiro da viagem da cidade do Pará até as ultimas colonias do sertão da provincia*, localized them as living on the bank river of the Tapajós along with several other groups – further corroborating what has already been said about ethnic variability:

O Rio Tapajóz tem as suas fontes junto a conrdilheira das Geraes. [...] Ha neste rio grandes saltos, chamados vulgarmente Chachoeiras, cravo e oleo de cupayba. As suas terras ainda são povoadas de muitas nações de Índios infiéis das quaes as mais conhecidas são: Ta- pacorá, Carary, Maué, Jacarétiya, Sapopé, Yauain, Uarupá, Suarirana, Piriquita, Uarapiranga.²⁷ (1862 [1768], 21-22)

And in the region of Tupinambarana Islands:

Este rio tomou o nome dos indios da nação Topinambaz, dos quaes houve uma aldêa no lago, chamado Uaicurapá, que fica á parte oriental do rio dez legoas acima da boca, de cujas reliquias principiou a villa Boim, para onde passaraõ: vulgarmente chamaõ a barra do rio Topinambarânas boca inferior do rio Madeira; porque deste em distancia de doze legoas da sua barra vem um furo chamado Uarariã, que sãhe a Topinambarânas. Neste furo desembocaõ os rios Abacaxiz, Canumá, e Maué, o qual é habitado de mui- to gentio, cujas

²⁶ “During the time of the domination of the Tapayus, in the lower Tapajós, other tribes also lived along the riverbanks and inland, which were later exterminated by the Mutirucus, today Mundurucus; or fled to other parts of the province. Among them, as I said telling the history of Santarem, were the following: Apaunuariás, Amanajás, Marixitás, Apicuricus, Moquiriás, Anjuariás, Jararéuaras, Apecurias, Cenecuriás, Motuari, Anjuariás, Uarupás, Periquitos, and Suariranas. Disappearing these tribes, in 1768 there were only the last three, and a small number of Tapayus, while others appeared and almost always lived in a fight. These were the Tapacorás, Cararys, Jacarétiya, Sapopés, Iauains, Uarapirangas, and Mauhés.”

²⁷ “The Tapajóz River has its sources near the mountain range of Geraes. [...] There are in this river great jumps, commonly called Chachoeiras, clove and cupayba oil. Its lands are still populated by many infidel Indian nations, of which the most known are: Ta- pacorá, Carary, Maué, Jacarétiya, Sapopé, Yauain, Uarupá, Suarirana, Piriquita, Uarapiranga.”

nações são: Sapupé: Cõmany: Aitouariã: Acaraiuarã: Brauará: ùarupá: Maturucú: Curitiá. He o Maué abundante de cravo, e excelente goaranã.²⁸ (Idem, 26-27)

Only a few years before, between 1762 and 1763, during his journey across the *sertão* Benedictine Frei João de São José, had reported similar information, confirming the presence of the Maués in the same area: “E correndo as ribeiras do Tapajós de parte do leste, fazendo da última cachoeira viagem de um dia, se chega ao sítio em que pela terra dentro se acha já a nação Magues [...]”²⁹ (quoted in Nunes 2020, 22).

General information about the Maués describes them as excellent in the production of feather works as well as in the cultivation and commercialization of guarana and other plants. Both aspects gave them credit to the eyes of imperial and missionary administrations who aimed at absorbing them into an economic system based on farming and on the extraction of natural resources (Pereira 1942). The creation of a positive image when fitting European standards contrasted with the critics made to the frequent rebellions of Maué population against the violence and exploitation which characterized all relationships. In more than one occasion colonial authorities declared just war against them and their close relatives. Bettendorf reports the notice of just war declared, in 1692, to the Maraguazes, who were neighbors of the Andirazes, identified also with the Maués:

Antes que eu viesse visitar o Pará e partisse o governador para o Maranhão, fez ele uma junta dos prelados das religiões e ministros reais, sobre umas mortes dadas aos brancos pelos maraguazes e outras nações, e julgaram todos ser justa a guerra que se lhes podia dar, ponderadas as razões que para ela se alegavam; com que determinou o governador de mandar dar, por convir ao crédito da Coroa de Portugal e armas portuguesas vingar juntamente uns tão grandes atrevimentos de uns tapuias do mato, sem atentarem ao respeito que deviam aos brancos, que andavam por suas terras sem os agravarem. [...] Mandou, pois, o governador Antônio de Albuquerque Coelho de Carvalho, por cartas escritas no Maranhão ao capitão-

²⁸ “This river took the name of the Indians of the Topinambaz nation, of which there was a village in the lake, called Uaicurapá, which is on the eastern part of the river ten leagues above the mouth, from whose relics began the villa Boim, where they passed: they vulgarly call the bar of the Topinambará river the lower mouth of the Madeira River; because from this one in a distance of twelve leagues from its bar comes a hole called Uarariã, which is the Topinambarãnas. The rivers Abacaxiz, Canumá, and Maué flow into this hole, which is inhabited by many Indians, whose nations are Sapupé: Cõmany: Aitouariã: Acaraiuarã: Brauará: ùarupá: Maturucú: Curitiá. Maué is abundant with carnations and excellent goaranã.”

²⁹ “And running the banks of the Tapajós from the east, making a day trip from the last waterfall, one arrives at the place where inland the Magues nation is already found [...]”

mor do Pará, Hilário de Sousa de Azevedo, fosse com bastantes brancos e índios dar guerra aos Maraguzes e outras nações culpadas. [...] Se aviou a tropa, que constava de 100 brancos e 200 índios, que partiram do porto do Pará, com grandes aplausos, em fim do ano de 1692.³⁰ (2010, 605-606)

Similar events are mentioned by Nimuendaju, who tells that some natives living in the mission of Santo Ignácio (Boim) killed, in 1762, the director of the aldeia and later, in 1768, some merchants (1948). These facts prompted the governor Fernando Costa de Athayde Teive to send a letter to the Directors of the Captaincies of Pará and Rio Negro inviting them not to enter “em rio aonde conste que se poderá encontrar com os Índios da nação Manguês, porque tendo mostrado a experiência que esses miseraveis homens resiste mas práticas que se lhe fizer; [...] he necessário reduzi-los a necessidade, para delles tiremos os fructos de os descer”³¹ (quoted in Pereira 2020, 38). Although no military action was made explicit here, it is evident that his intention was to push them into submission to avoid starvation.

Even in this case, despite less information available, under the descriptions made by chroniclers and explorers we can glimpse the construction of an image distorted by European perspective. The influence of Western categories in fixing specific standards into which to frame and classify Sateré-Mawé people – and natives in general – will be even clearer in the documentation left by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira during the *Viagem Philosophica*.

2.2 Travelling throughout Brazil: The Viagem Philosophica (1783-1792)

On September the 1st 1783, the first official scientific expedition organized by the Portuguese Crown was leaving from Lisbon’s harbor. It was the beginning of the *Viagem Philosophica*, a journey throughout Brazil which lasted until 1792. Its leader was Alexandre Rodrigues

³⁰ “Before I came to visit Pará and the governor left for Maranhão, he made a meeting of the prelates of the religions and royal ministers, about some deaths given to the whites by the Maraguzes and other nations, and they all thought the war that could be given to them was fair, considering the reasons that were alleged for it; With that the governor determined to order the war to be fought, because it was convenient to the credit of the Crown of Portugal and the Portuguese arms to avenge together such a big dare by some tapuias of the bush, without paying attention to the respect they owed to the whites, who walked through their lands without aggravating them. [...] Therefore, Governor Antônio de Albuquerque Coelho de Carvalho ordered, through letters written in Maranhão to the Captain-Major of Pará, Hilário de Sousa de Azevedo, with enough whites and Indians to wage war against the Maraguzes and other guilty nations. [...] The troops, consisting of 100 whites and 200 Indians, left the port of Pará, with great applause, at the end of 1692.”

³¹ “[...] in a river where it is recorded that one can meet the Indians of the Manguês nation, for having proved by experience that these wretched men resist only the practices that are done to them; [...] it is necessary to reduce them to necessity, so that the fruits of their descent may be reaped.”

Ferreira, a brilliant student of Natural History, who completed his studies at the University of Coimbra in 1778 (Horch 1989) and was commissioned to carry out the exploration of the Captaincies of Grão Pará, Rio Negro, Mato Grosso and Cuiabá sailing along the Amazon, Negro, Branco, Madeira and Guaporé rivers (Corrêa Filho 1939). The purpose of this enterprise was to “perlustrar, estudar, figurar e coletar animais e plantas, rochas e minerais e ainda observar a geografia e geomorfologia, as povoações, as vilas e cidades, com o fim de reunir documentos para compor a economia e a história da Amazônia e Mato Grosso”³² (Cunha 1991, 15) as well as to enrich the collections of the *Real Museu da Ajuda* of Lisbon – an Imperial cabinet created in 1772 to entertain Prince João, son of Maria I (Carvalho 2005). The result was the production, in almost ten years of intense travelling, of a huge corpus of written (reports and correspondence), visual (drawings and gravures) and material (natural specimens and ethnographic objects) documentation (Silva 2006).

When talking about naturalist journeys of the 18th and 19th centuries, it is quite common to focus only on its leader; not by chance, the collection always takes his name. In our case, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira was obviously the main figure of the expedition, and the person in charge for it, but we must not forget that the general success depended on the cooperation of several other participants. If some of them are usually made known, others often remain silenced. Two drawers, José Joaquim Freire and Joaquim José Codina, and one botanist, Agostino Joaquim do Cabo, were officially charged of joining the naturalist (Horch 1989); in their wake, hundreds of natives and black slaves accompanied displacements as labor force or took part as informants about geographical, environmental and socio-cultural aspects. The possibility of physically carrying out the journey was also guaranteed by a series of imperial officials who favored intermediation with the highest authorities in terms of orders communication and financial resources (Silva 2006).

The route (fig. 30) was accurately described in the official diaries and reports written by Ferreira himself, and resumed in major revisions of his work such as those of Emilio Goeldi (1982 [1895]), Corrêa Filho (1939) and Thekla Hartmann (1991). After leaving Lisbon, the expedition reached the city of Belém on the 21st of October 1783 where it remained nine months to explore the surrounding areas. In September 1784 the group left Belém to sail on

³² “[...] to perlustrate, study, figure and collect animals and plants, rocks and minerals, and also to observe the geography and geomorphology, the settlements, towns and cities, in order to gather documents to compose the economy and the history of Amazonia and Mato Grosso.”

the Amazon River for five more months up to Barcelos, in the Rio Negro basin. There, they had to stop and wait for further orders about the direction to follow. Between 1784 and 1788 Barcelos turned into a sort of general quarter, where to systematize the material already collected and from which to make minor expeditions such as the journey along the Negro River up to the fort of S. José de Marabitanos on the frontier with Spanish dominions in 1785, the one on the Branco River between April and August 1786, and the journey undertook by the botanist Agostino Joaquim do Cabo – who was sent to explore the Solimões River because imperial orders had prevented Ferreira to go himself. Finally, in 1788, the expedition continued the voyage, taking the Madeira River towards the Captaincy of Mato Grosso. Compared with the previous years, this period is far less registered in terms of written accounts and documentation, because of the very hard conditions in which the members of the group found themselves: innumerable waterfalls, frequent defections of natives and other workers and devastating tropical diseases made navigation slow and exhausting. Nevertheless, the collection of natural specimens and ethnographic material did not stop, making these materials important testimonies of the last years of the *Viagem Filosófica*. The descent of the Madeira River took two years: in 1790 the expedition arrived in Vila Bela de Cuiabá (Mato Grosso) and spent the following two years travelling throughout the region as far as the Paraguay River. Then, on the 15th of October 1792, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira returned to Belém with his colleagues to sail back to Lisbon where he landed on the 12th of February 1793.

The idea of organizing such an expedition did not raise from nothing but was the result of a series of processes related to specific political, economic and intellectual needs in the wider context of colonization of the Amazonian region (cfr §1.2). In the next sections I shall offer an in-depth analysis of such processes aiming at, among other things, deconstructing the normalization of the scientific journey as a pure intellectual mission in itself. In fact, in his capacity as Crown officer, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira played a crucial role in the production of certain categories of (hegemonic) knowledge as well as in the consolidation of colonial projects of Portuguese empire.

2.2.1 Collecting: why?

As just mentioned, the reasons behind the *Viagem Filosófica*, and which set the rules of its execution, were mainly of two types: political-economic and scientific. To simplify their exposure and their comprehension I will focus on them separately, however, we must not forget that they were deeply intertwined, products and producer ones of the others.

I am going to consider the period which goes from 1750 to 1793, when the expedition came to the end. The year 1750 can be considered as a turning point in the process of expansion into the Amazon for two reasons: the first important event was the establishment of a new frontier with Spanish empire through the Treaty of Madrid, which had now to be consolidated; the second, was the election of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Marquis of Pombal, as prime minister of the Portuguese Crown.

Demarcating frontiers, developing agriculture

Until the 16th century, the establishment of strategic coastal settlements and trade relations allowed the Portuguese empire to constantly increase its power and influence. On the contrary, the 18th century was characterized by a situation of slow decline due to constant political instability and economic crisis. As a maritime empire, navigation was the fundamental gear to its maintenance; it encouraged the mobility of merchants, travelers, soldiers, missionaries, etc. and benefited from the information they gathered and which was useful for the development of new knowledge and technical tools (Cañizares-Esguerra 2009). Mercantilism and colonial exploitation laid at the base of the whole Portuguese economic system; these two strategies turned so much common in the centuries which followed that, in Europe, colonial dispute began to determine the predominance of some countries over the others. As Novais points out, “comércio dos produtos orientais, produção colonial, tráfico negreiro – são daí por diante objeto de afanosa competição por parte dos ingleses, franceses, holandeses, além dos precursors ibéricos”³³ (2019, 55). In the 17th and 18th centuries, while Iberian empires were losing ground, other powers were gaining it, increasing competition for the domination of global space and trade. England and France were the most successful but also the Netherlands were expanding their influence, especially in the East, where, on the contrary, Portuguese possessions began to shrink. This change of balances,

³³ “[...] trade in oriental products, colonial production, the slave trade - are henceforth subject to strenuous competition from the English, the French, the Dutch, and the Iberian forerunners.”

with the consequent decrease in commercial flow, led to a revalorization of the Atlantic and of Brazil as a colony – where the expansion into the Amazonian inland was going deeper and deeper. The fear that other European powers might advance claims on Brazilian territory and resources³⁴ made the Portuguese Crown to take an attitude of closure and neutrality. Only England managed to obtain some commercial benefits in exchange of political protection and the guarantee to maintain the remaining colonial domains³⁵ – Goa, Diu, Macau, Angola, Mozambique and Brazil. Among its actions there was the support of the Treaty of Madrid in 1750 and the establishment of a new frontier between Portuguese and Spanish South American possessions, almost corresponding to the current one. By doing so, England prevented France, its main competitor, from expanding into the Amazon (Novais 2019).

In a context shaken by strong tensions and numerous internal wars, Portugal survived in a quite precarious balance, but could not be considered as aligned with new European standards in terms of economic growth and intellectual production. It was in this direction then that the Marquis of Pombal decided to move once appointed *Secretário dos Negócios da Marinha e dos Domínios Ultramarinos* of King José I. The Marquis of Pombal is remembered as one of the representatives of the most extreme form of enlightened despotism (Maxwell 1996) and under its banner he enacted a series of reforms that aimed at increasing and reinforcing political and economic control over the territories belonging to the Empire. Concerning Brazil, the maintenance of the frontier established with the Treaty of Madrid was one of his main concerns. To this extent, in the same year of 1750, a demarcation committee, the *Comissão de Demarcação de Limites entre as fronteiras dos domínios de Portugal na América*, had been created and put under the control of Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, brother of the Marquis (Corrêa Filho 1939). The purpose of this committee was to maintain and consolidate the control over the newly acquired territories, its resources and populations, which implied an increasingly intense and frequent expansion towards the inner lands. For the same reason, the Captaincies of Mato Grosso and São José do Rio Negro were established, respectively in 1748 and 1755³⁶ (Domingues 1991). However, these

³⁴ We already mentioned the several exploration journeys that were being realized in the 16th and 17th centuries (cfr chapter one).

³⁵ A first treaty to seal such alliance was signed with Charles I Stuart in 1642; it was followed by the one sealed with the Lord Protector of the English Republic in 1654 and reconfirmed in 1661 through the marriage of Carlos II Stuart and Catarina de Bragança, daughter of King of Portugal João IV (Livermore 1966).

³⁶ In the second part of the *Diário da Viagem Filosófica pela Capitania de São José do Rio Negro*, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira report the letter wrote on March 3rd 1755 to the Governor of the State of Grão Pará e Maranhão, Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, in which the King himself inform his officer about the establishment of

political and administrative actions alone would not achieve the final aim. The Marquis was convinced that to possess a land it was necessary to inhabit it, thus he promoted an occupational policy which encouraged people feeling part of the Portuguese empire to live on frontier regions through, for example, land allocation or tax benefits³⁷.

In this process, it became necessary the inclusion of indigenous people, since Portuguese population was not enough, nor sufficiently adapted, to occupy spaces so vast and climatically different from Europe (Verran 2006). Climate issue is not to be underestimated and it offers us a view over natural environment not only as background of colonial events but as active and influent agent. In the Amazon, nature was totalizing and it made extremely difficult to manage colonial settlements:

Todo ano se divide em duas estações, que são o verão e o inverno: este consiste em chuvas abundantíssimas, aquele em calor excessivos: em um só dia se experimentam ambas sem raridade. Geralmente as manhãs e as tardes depois do sol posto são frias como as noites e os orvalhos abundantíssimos; o resto do dia é ardente. [...] Os calores depois das nove horas da manhã até as quatro da tarde são insuportáveis, de maneira que se não pode sair for a de casa. Com esta alternativa de calor e de humidade se gerana atmosfera uma tal podridão, que os vestidos e os papeis fechados apodrecem, os metais se enferrujam os couros se cobrem de

the Captaincy of São José do Rio Negro: “[...] Tenho resolvido estabelecer um terceiro governo nos confins ocidentais desse Estado, cujo chefe será denominado Governador da Capitania de São José do Rio Negro. O território do sobredito governo se estenderá pelas duas partes do norte e do ocidente até as duas raiais setentrional e ocidental dos domínios de Espanha e pelas outras duas partes do oriente e do meio-dia lhe determinareis os limites que vos parecerem justos e competentes para os fins acima declarados. [...]” (Ferreira 2007b, 225). Translation: “I have resolved to establish a third government in the western borders of this state, whose head shall be named Governor of the Capitania of São José do Rio Negro. The territory of the aforementioned government will extend through the two parts of the north and west to the two northern and western rays of the dominions of Spain and through the other two parts of the east and noon you will determine the limits that seem fair and competent for the purposes declared above.”

³⁷ In the letter mentioned in note 36 of this chapter it is stated: “[...] E por favorecer aos meus vassallos que habitarem na referida vila, hei por bem que tenham e gozem de todos os privilégios e prerrogativas que têm e de que gozam os oficiais da câmara da cidade do Grão-Pará, capital desse Estado, para o que se lhes passará carta em forma. [...] Por favorecer ainda mais os sobreditos moradores da referida vila e seu distrito, hei por bem de os isentar a todos de pagarem fintas, talhas, pedidos e quaisquer outros tributos; e isto por tempo de doze anos, que terão princípio no dia da fundação da dita vila, em que se fizer a primeira eleição das justiças que hão de servir nela, excetuando somente os dízimos devidos a Deus dos frutos da terra, os quais deverão pagar sempre como os mais moradores do Estado” (Ferreira 2007b, 225-226). Translation: “And for favoring my vassals that live in the aforementioned village, it is my will that they have and enjoy all the privileges and prerogatives that the officers of the city council of the city of Grão-Pará, capital of that State, have and enjoy, for which a letter will be given to them in form. [...] To favor even more the aforesaid inhabitants of the aforesaid village and its district, I have the good fortune to exempt them all from paying tithes, carvings, orders and any other taxes; and this for a period of twelve years, which shall begin on the day of the foundation of the said village, in which the first election of the justices who are to serve therein is made, except only the tithes due to God from the fruits of the land, which they shall always pay as the other inhabitants of the State.”

bolor, esgretam e se arruinam, o vinho, por pouco tempo que o deixem exposto ao ar, se derranca e se avinagra; a polvora, o sabão, o sal e todas as mais esponjas da humidade a atrae e se disfazem e tudo padece alteração.³⁸ (Ferreira quoted in Goeldi 1982, 63)

In more than one occasion, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira mentions the harsh conditions of Amazonian villages based on the implantation of Western models of production in the rainforest: generally decadent, submitted to river fluctuations, with precarious buildings and poor sanitary conditions (Ferreira 2007b). We might try to imagine the fear and distrust of those who were encouraged to live in a country that Ferreira himself described as “selvagem e sombrio, uma terra bruta e abandonada a si mesma”³⁹ (Ferreira quoted in Corrêa Filho 1939: 95), where nature was perceived as hostile to human activity and defying it meant more going to the apocalypse than to the Garden of Eden (cfr §1.1). Natives were the only ones capable of moving into and interacting with such an environment without being overcome by it. For this reason, their inclusion in the colonial project was fundamental: to control their bodies meant to gain increasing control over a territory otherwise impossible to manage and exploit.

The second half of the 18th century was thus quite rich in the promulgation of policies to transform indigenous people into subjects and, in part, they differed to previous models such as the *Regimento das Missões* (cfr § 1.2). Until then the relationship with natives had been in the hands of missionaries – especially Jesuits – and, despite the social and economic incorporation into the colonial system through *aldeamentos*, natives were kept separated from non-indigenous population. On the contrary, Pombaline reforms wanted to promote their assimilation into a colonial mixed population that would slowly conform to the metropolis’ standards and values (Almeida 2010b). Important laws were issued between 1755 and 1758 in the *Diretório dos Índios* (also known as *Diretorio pombalino*) which established new directives for indigenous policy such as the *Lei de Casamentos*, which encouraged mixed marriages, and

³⁸ “Each year is divided into two seasons, which are summer and winter: the former consists of heavy rains, the latter of excessive heat; in a single day it is not uncommon to experience both. Generally, mornings and afternoons after sunset are as cold as nights and dew is abundant; the rest of the day is blazing. [...] The heat after nine in the morning until four in the afternoon is unbearable, so much so that one cannot leave the house. With this alternation of heat and humidity, such a rottenness is generated in the atmosphere, that clothes and closed papers rot, metals rust, leather becomes covered with mildew, shrivels and spoils, wine, for the short time it is left exposed to the air, melts and sours; gunpowder, soap, salt and all other sponges of moisture attract it and disperse, and everything undergoes alterations.”

³⁹ “[...] wild and bleak, a land raw and abandoned to itself.”

the *Lei da Liberdade dos Índios*, which turned all natives into subjects of the Crown forbidding their slavery. For some things, such as the distinction between *índios mansos*/*índios bravos* (§1.2, note 55), the maintenance of collective rights on the territory of the *aldeia* and of tutelary rights, the *Diretório* showed continuity with previous legislation. Other aspects drastically changed, stressing with emphasis the very intention of Pombal's civilizing process. First of all, indigenous languages and cultural customs were forbidden, Portuguese substituted the *língua geral* as official language and natives were given a Portuguese name and surname. Then, colonial settlers' way of life was imposed on natives who were transformed into wage workers and farmers and were obliged to live in mononuclear houses. Also, it came to an end the legal discrimination between indigenous and non-indigenous individuals according to the criterium of blood purity⁴⁰; on the contrary, getting married with natives granted the access to land to cultivate and live on (Medeiros 2011). All these measures, which were presented as encouraging the emancipation⁴¹ of natives, were, in reality, the base for that process of biological and cultural whitening that would reach its political and ideological peak during the 19th century (Lesser 2013). To civilize natives meant to annihilate and eradicate indigenous cultures and the related identities, relegating to oblivion all those collective memories which represented a threat to the advancement of colonial project (Maciel 2011).

In this context, a crucial event was the expulsion of Jesuits in 1759 and their substitution with imperial officers. The ancient *aldeias* turned into new settlements called *Vilas* or *Directorias* and placed directly under the jurisdiction of the Crown. Although they promoted a kind of political fairness, these districts were actually organized according to strong hierarchies in which violence and injustices were constantly perpetuated: natives were given the opportunity to occupy political positions and yet they remained subjected to the power

⁴⁰ The concept of *limpieza de sangre* was a late medieval concept originally used in the religious sphere. During the colonial period it was enriched with new meanings and began to be used to distinguish various types of individuals depending on the color of their skin which, in turn, was related to a greater or lesser "ethnic mixture" (Morelli 2018).

⁴¹ The notion of emancipation deserves a brief insight. Manuela Carneiro da Cunha explains the difference among three concepts which should not be confused: assimilation, integration and emancipation. Assimilation, she says, refers to the process of dissolution into national society; integration also implies a process of dissolution but conferring the rights assured by citizenship; emancipation means to be accepted and recognized as ethnically differentiated groups and claim for specific rights which would otherwise be destroyed (2017). In the context of the Pombaline reforms, the concept of emancipation was used to address a process which was passed off as of liberation and acquisition of an independence – compared with previous missionary ward, but, in reality, corresponded to the dissolution into a system which denied natives' identities to construct them as alterities – which is, assimilation.

of a higher official because considered unable of self-governing (Almeida 2010b). The abolition of the *aldeamentos* had, however, also economic motivations. In fact, to recover control over portions of land run by Jesuits meant to open up the possibility, for imperial administration, of exploiting them for agricultural production and export of raw materials. The incorporation of natives to this system as free individuals through assimilation went in the same direction, since their transformation into sedentary farmers aimed at turning them from obstacles to colonial expansion towards the hinterland into work force necessary to compensate the lack of labor shortage resulting from the permanent abolition of indigenous slavery (Goeldi 1982). In general, the Pombaline era marked a change in the mercantilist model which held up Portuguese empire. In the attempt of clarifying its economic purpose (Souza 2019) as well as turning Brazil into an increasing important trading hub, the Marquis supported the progressive shift from extractivism – so far, the most popular activity in those regions on which a better control had to be established, namely, the Amazon and Mato Grosso – to productivism, in order to expand the export of farm products such as cocoa, sugar, indigo, rice, tobacco and cotton next to the *drogas do sertão* (Domingues 1991). One of the most important actions in this regard was, in 1755, the foundation of the *Companhia do Maranhão e Grão Pará* which, in the wake of other European economic companies, had the task of managing local production and global trade with Portugal and other European powers. In particular, it encouraged the importation of slaves from Africa to replace indigenous peoples' forced work; not by chance, the creation of the company coincided with the abolition of indigenous slavery (Sposito 2009).

In 1777, King José I died and Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo was dismissed from his position because the regent queen, Maria I, disliked him. In his place was appointed as *Secretário dos Negócios da Marinha e dos Domínios Ultramarinos* Martinho de Melo e Castro, farsighted man who gave continuity to the reformist political line of his predecessor (Carvalho 2005). The same year of his election the Treaty of Saint Ildefonso substituted the Treaty of Madrid, confirming its principles and defining some variations on the Amazonian frontier (Verran 2006). The new secretary also grabbed the importance that a systematic, scientific exploration would have for a better knowledge and exploitation of colonial possessions and resumed a project which was originally part of the committee for the demarcation of land but had not yet been implemented. During the last two decades of the 18th century, he organized three *Viagens Filosóficas* (one of which is the subject of this

research), “um tipo de expedição científica, [...] inteiramente organizada, dirigida e financiada pelo Estado lusitano [...], com a finalidade de explorar as riquezas no interior do território colonial, principalmente do Brasil”⁴² (Costa 2001, 995) – where indeed Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira was sent between 1783 and 1792. Political and economic motivations are made explicit in a letter sent by Martinho de Melo e Castro to the governor of Pará, Martinho de Sousa e Albuquerque (Areia et al. 2005) but the major evidence is represented by the documentation produced by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira himself. The issues mentioned so far take up much space in his accounts and are enriched with comments, critiques and potential solutions, revealing Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira role as officer of the Crown besides naturalist. Very interesting for our analysis are also those elements that, in the utilitarian dimension of economic production, begin to shape the figure of the native through the attribution of traits which later became pillars of the stereotype about them.

The *Diário da Viagem Filosófica pela Capitania de São José do Rio Negro* (part 1 and 2), the *Tratado Histórico do Rio Branco* and the *Relação circunstanciada do Rio Madeira e dos seus Territórios* are basically demographic and economic treaties in which are recorded population levels and individuals’ ethnic belonging (Ferreira 1788-1789; 2007; 2007b). It is important to keep in mind that Ferreira’s movements never left areas already scoured, even partially, by colonial troops. Territories inhabited by uncontacted or *not pacified* groups were cautiously avoided for fear of running into “hostile” natives whose ambushes posed a constant danger. Therefore, the majority of the settlement visited by the naturalist were ex-aldeias where the new legislation (*Direitório Pombalino*) clearly revealed its effects in terms of indigenous entry into the administrative system: Ferreira often mentions natives as occupying positions such as *capitão-mor* and *sargento-mor* and describes some working activities in which they were involved, as for instance, *oficiais de povoação*, *oficiais de ofícios*, *empregados em pescadores pela repartição das reais demarcações*, *empregados em outros diferentes serviços e empreendimentos*, *em serviço de alguns moradores*⁴³. One thing he points out is the difference of Amazonian settlements, which he calls *vilas de gentios*, from those of longer domesticated natives founded during the very first centuries of the conquest. In both cases, new settlements were urbanely organized in familiar houses arranged around a central church, obliging indigenous families to adapt

⁴² “[...] a type of scientific expedition, [...] entirely organized, directed and financed by the Portuguese state [...], with the purpose of exploring the riches in the interior of the colonial territory, mainly Brazil.”

⁴³ “[...] village officials, clerks, fishermen’s employees for the royal demarcations, employees in other different services and enterprises, in the service of some residents”

their social structure to this model. However, in coastal *aldeias* natives were already perceived as sharing the common identity of *mestiços*, partly because of their total involvement in economic activities such as farming and plantation work, partly because of the long coexistence of different groups and the effective mixing and transformation of ethnic identities. On the contrary, in Amazonian settlements indigenous peoples (the *gentios*, indeed) were still recognized as separate from each other. Descended by the tributaries of the Amazon River (cfr §1.2), they showed greater resistance to colonial assimilationist tendency, maintaining physical divisions and reproducing most of their own habits with regard to language, traditions, material culture and clothing in the space of the village (Ferreira 2005). When visiting São Gabriel da Cachoeira he says about Juri, Passés and Xamás that “toda a sua paixão e saudade è pelo mato que deixaram”⁴⁴ (Ferreira 2007b, 146); more in general, he reports that usually the choice of moving closer to villages was not led by the interest in becoming workers of the colonial system but rather by escaping warfare and conflicts with enemy groups:

Cuido que dura e durará no gentio a memória e o tratamento que fizeram aos seus maiores. Daqui procede, talvez, a maior força do seu retiro, porque, suposto que já hoje não se cometem violências que em outro tempo cometeram os cabos dos descimentos (quando, depois de darem soa índios a sua palavra de amizade e deles receberem os ofícios da hospitalidade, os alienavam dos sentidos para, nesse estado, os surpreenderem e cativarem), violências foram essas em que eles muito repararam e que, transmitidas de pais a filhos de então para cá, de tal modo rádicarem em todos a aversão e horror aos brancos que, só a sua memória os embrenha nos matos para não experimentarem, cuidam eles, o mesmo que seus pais. [...] Donde se segue que os muito poucos que descem por seu pé, indisputavelmente, não descem por fineza aos brancos ou predileção aos seus costumes, promessas ou alianças, mas por uma escolha que fazem ao seu modo de discorrer entre dous males que se-lhes representam, de, ou morrerem às mãos dos índios seus inimigos, ou descerem a servir aos brancos.⁴⁵ (Ibidem)

⁴⁴ “[...] all their passion and longing is for the forest that they left behind.”

⁴⁵ “I believe that the memory of the treatment of their elders endures and will continue. This is perhaps the source of the greatest strength of their retreat, because, assuming that the violence committed by the liars of the descents (when, after giving the Indians their word of friendship and receiving their hospitality, they dulled their senses so that, in that state, they could surprise and capture them), is no longer committed today. These were the kinds of violence that they considered very much and which, passed on from parents to children from then on, caused everyone to feel so much aversion and horror toward whites that only memory sent them into the bush not to experience, they believe, what their parents experienced. [...] It follows that the very few who

Basically, it was a question of survival which had quite an impact on the economic projects of colonial administration and the role settlements had to play in them.

One of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira's main concerns was, in fact, agriculture, which was considered the fundamental science to assure Portuguese rule over the Amazonian territory: it produced a major profit for northern captaincies with respect to extractive activities and, by fixing native workers to land, it guaranteed greater stability on the frontiers (Raminelli 1998). Also, it represented a central gear for the development of a metropolitan economic imperialism that exported raw materials to be processed in Europe and re-imported finished products (Hartmann 1991). To this extent, it is exemplary a document preserved at the Natural History Museum in Lisbon which shows a detailed report on "plantas indígenas e exóticas [...] raízes que se comem, [...] frutas mansas e silvestres"⁴⁶ – *Maniba, Arroz, Milho, Feijão, Caffé, Cacau, Canna, Tabaco, Algodão, Anil, Urucu, Hortaliza, Batata, Cara, Tamatarana ou Tamutarana, Uarehá, Taioba, Mamão e Banana ou pacava na lingua geral, Pupunhas, Cocos, Abio, Cajú cultivado, Ingá, Biribá, Ata, Araticú, laranja doce e azeda, Limão doce e azedo, Cobios, Sôrvas, Umarys*. It is accompanied by a correspondence with Antonio Vilela do Amaral, official in Barcelos, in which we understand that its compilation was requested by the naturalist in order to enrich the information collected during the expedition and as a service Amaral had to pay to the Crown as a contribution to the public good of the state (Correspondency between Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira and Antônio Villela do Amaral 1786-1787). According to Ferreira, agriculture was sharply in decline and backward compared to Captaincies such as Pernambuco or Bahia. Among the many reasons was the absence of skilled, trained people to instruct workers as well as labor shortage. In both cases they blamed indigenous peoples who were appointed as indolent and lazy⁴⁷ and whose knowledge were not ranked worthy for land exploitation. Likewise, the subsistence farming practiced by most of them was described as chaotic, monotonous and disorganized. On the contrary,

descend on foot, no doubt, do not descend out of kindness to the whites or predilection for their customs, their promises or their alliances, but because of a choice they make in their manner of speech between two evils that are represented to them, either to die at the hands of the Indians their enemies, or to descend to serve the whites."

⁴⁶ "[...] indigenous and exotic plants [...] roots that can be eaten, [...] wild and tame fruits."

⁴⁷ Laziness has been one of the main stereotypical traits attributed to indigenous peoples. In sub-chapter 2.2.3 we will analyze more comprehensively the profile Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira built of them.

monocultural model was thought of as guaranteeing the greatest benefits in terms of profit and quantity of product.

O meu juízo a respeito da agricultura do lugar è que o que a terra pode produzir de maniba, arroz, feijão e milho, e ainda de algodão e café, è sem conto, mas que o que de fato produz è muito pouco, porque o trabalho a fazer è muito, e a preguiça muito mais; porque os esforços dos que não são preguiçosos encontram a falta de braços de que necessitam; porque dos pretos que entram no Estado. [...] Porque os poucos índios que há são incessantemente distraídos para o serviço das expedições régias; porque os que nelas andam empregados e nelas desertam ou morrem não são substituídos por outros novamente descidos.⁴⁸ (Ferreira 2007b, 96)

Even when natives were found suitable to embrace Western modes of production, they would not have proved useful because engaged in other activities in the service of colonial administration and, when out-of-work, willing to make their own family plantation.

Se a maniba não fosse seu pão, nem essa plantariam. O índio que tem lembrança de plantar alguns pés de algodão contenta-se de recolher tanto quanto chegue para sua marca. Os que pensam a nosso jeito e são por isso capazes de maior esforço para adquirirem, não param nas povoações; porque, ainda que se restringe até o espaço de seis meses o tempo de serviço a que obrigam as portarias, na inteligência de ficarem livres os outros seis meses para trabalharem nas suas roças, liberdade è esta que jamais conseguem pelo ordinário; porque, pedindo-se incessantemente os índios para as diferentes expedições que se empreendem, apenas descansam oito ou nove dias, se é que descansam tanto, são de novo reconduzidos para o serviço por outros seis meses, sem lhes ficar tempo que empreguem na economia rústica e doméstica, como devem, de obrigações as suas famílias.⁴⁹ (Idem, 121)

⁴⁸ "My opinion about the agriculture of the place is that what the land can produce of maniba, rice, beans and corn, and also of cotton and coffee, is uncountable, but what it actually produces is very little, because the work to be done is a lot, and laziness much more; because the efforts of those who are not lazy find the lack of arms they need; because of the blacks that enter the State. [...] Because the few Indians that exist are incessantly distracted for the service of the royal expeditions; because those who are employed in them and desert or die in them are not replaced by others again descended."

⁴⁹ "If maniba was not their bread, they would not even plant it. The Indian who remembers to plant a few stalks of cotton is content to gather as much as is enough for his brand. Those who think our way and are therefore capable of greater effort to acquire it, do not stop at the villages; because, even though the time of service required by the ordinances is restricted to six months, in the intelligence that they remain free the other six months to work on their fields, they never achieve this freedom by ordinary means; Because, as the Indians are incessantly requested for the different expeditions that are undertaken, they only rest eight or nine days, if they

Apart from being lazy, natives were reckoned as physically under-performing compared to African slaves, who could better stand the inhuman working conditions of farms and whose slavery was still allowed (Ferreira 2007b). The idea supported by the naturalist was thus to increase the importation of black slaves to use in agriculture – something of which the *Companhia do Maranhão e Grão Pará* was officially in charge (Dias 1967) – and leave natives to activities to which they were more suited, such as extraction of *drogas do sertão* and rowing service on river expeditions (Ferreira 2007b). In reality, the abolition of indigenous slavery – as established by the *Diretório dos Índios* – did not bring significant changes in natives' treatment because high officers, villages directors, missionaries and traders committed worst violence and abuses against native population and perpetrated prejudices and discriminations. This does not mean that indigenous groups passively suffered the rules imposed by the colonial system; rather, they took several strategies of resistance, which included fleeing as much as negotiating. In fact, even if Pombaline policies aimed at dissolving them into non-indigenous population, they opened up new possibilities for natives to take advantage of colonial dynamics and act, more or less expressly, for the maintenance of their specific identities. As hinted above, the identification as *indígenas aldeados*, which is, natives who were not yet considered as mixed, assured collective territorial rights over the territory inhabited – an aspect, which was partly in contradiction with the intention of integrating indigenous groups to the rest of society. The appropriation of this condition according to the needs of each group was very common, also showing the fluidity in moving from one category to another (Almeida 2010b).

It is possible to observe, then, how the production of reports and accounts was a fundamental activity to know the territory to colonize, its resources, criticalities and peoples, whose existence was read and judged through the lenses of social and economic practicalness. The practice of collecting had the same purpose, confirming the truthfulness of what had been affirmed and allowing to carry on further research. Over nine years, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira sent at least 13 shipping which included “natural” and “industrial”⁵⁰ products

rest at all, and are then sent back to work for another six months, without having the time left for them to employ their families in the rustic and domestic economy, as they should.”

⁵⁰ “Industrial products” relates to the products of human industry, in other words archaeological and ethnographic materials.

properly prepared and crated, bottled up or placed in barrels⁵¹. Among the others, animals⁵², fruits, seeds, woods, minerals, stones, vegetable fibers, weapons, ornaments, daily-use and ceremonial tools. During their journey to Europe, these objects and documentation merged into an official discourse that consolidated the intentions and actions of colonial administration by attributing to its power a scientific nature. It is precisely on this point that arises the connection with the other side of the coin: the *Viagem Philosophica* as scientific expedition, on which we will focus in the following part. These two dimensions – political-economic and scientific – are complementary and not analyzable separately because they are part of a single process in which the occupation and exploitation of Brazilian lands went hand-in-hand with the production of knowledge on the things of the world and where territory represents a tank where specific relations of power lead to the construction of imaginaries that, in return, legitimize the colonization of that same territory.

Classifying nature

The development of a scientific knowledge cannot be separated from the political-economic context because, as just mentioned, it was functional to the consolidation of European rule on colonized countries. While until the 17th century, knowledge on the “things of nature” was mainly related to philosophical speculation (Aristoteles is considered to be one of the precursors of natural history), from the beginning of the 18th century its entanglement with expansionistic European history became stronger (Penha 1982). To travel and to collect became a way to know territories as well as actions such as naming, measuring, classifying and representing, strategies to control them. In fact, the organization of official naturalistic expeditions to collect objects and information was not only a way to increase knowledge over a land but aimed also at legitimizing it (and the consequent governmental actions) through the use of a new scientific language. In these terms, as suggested by Domingues (1991) the dispute around the frontiers between Portuguese and Spanish empires in South America might be thought more as of construction rather than delimitation. While on the one hand political treaties and economic agreements established the geographical borders of

⁵¹ The documentation regarding the 13 shipping is preserved at the Natural history Museum of Lisbon.

⁵² A good example to observe the utilitarian perspective under which everything was interpreted is the *Descrição do peixe pirarucu e Memória sobre o peixe pirarucu, de que já se remeteram dois da vila de Santarém, para o Real Gabinete de História Natural; e agora se remetem mais cinco desta vila de Barcelos, os quais vão incluídos nos cinco caixões que constituem a sexta remessa do Rio Negro*, in which the naturalist accurately describes every part of the Pirarucu fish (*Arapaima gigas*) and how it can be used not to waste anything (Ferreira 1972).

Portuguese empire on the Brazilian territory, on the other, intellectual speculation appropriated its conceptual space producing specific identities, roles and histories for everything inhabiting its territory.

Before focusing specifically on the Portuguese context, it is necessary to briefly dwell on an important topic which partly answer the question: why are we speaking of a new scientific language?

The beginning of the 18th century is marked by the new intellectual and ideological movement of the Enlightenment, which represents a moment of caesura in Western thought with respect to the past because of the new epistemological structures it gives rise. For Enlightenment followers the use of reason was the only possible way to investigate, interpret and comprehend the things of the world (Verran 2006) but, as Foucault points out, “not that reason made any progress: it was simply that the mode of being of things, and of the order that divided them up before presenting them to the understanding, was profoundly altered” (2005: xxiv). This alteration implied the shift from a knowledge based on classical order to another grounded on positive ideology (Idem). As a matter of fact, until the 18th century, Western knowledge referring to natural world was built inside classical and theological thought which was shaped according to ancient and sacred scripts (Domingues 1991). Creationistic metaphysics laid the foundations for, and gave a direction to, intellectual speculation over world phenomena, which was argued to be appropriate to study only reading the works of figures such as Aristoteles, Plinius, Herodotus, Gerald of Wales, Gervase of Tilbury, John Mandeville, St. Agostino, Marco Polo (cfr Daston and Park 2000). Also, they were conceived as possible only if analyzed through the category of wonder (see §1.3), which, on the contrary, from 1700, began to be dismissed as a key to read reality (Daston and Park 2000) in favor of a progressive normalization and naturalization of prodigies and marvels. The first to groundwork this change and develop a new way to think natural world⁵³ was Francis Bacon who proposed natural philosophy as a means to investigate reality and improve humanity (Findlen 1994). According to him, it was necessary to move away from seeing nature as pervaded of irregular habits and exceptional manifestations established by a divine

⁵³ By *natural* we intend here, everything that, at the time, was considered as such, which means, everything that was included in the human and divine dimensions. In fact, as we will see further on in the chapter, man joined the “natural dimension” only in the 18th century.

force to develop a new curious⁵⁴ and skeptical attitude which allowed to find some fundamental and inviolable laws, commons to all beings (Daston and Park 2000).

This attitude implied the need to develop a different method of investigation: direct observation and experimentation became the main guidelines for the production of theories that would help build an intellectual frame within which to give new meaning to world's phenomena. On the one hand, it brought to the creation of a new language for defining and representing things in such a way that, during their observation, no mediation with previous, not-verified notions was needed and, on the contrary, direct relations with them was established – in this connection, Foucault would later define the emerging discipline of Natural History as the “designation of the visible” in which language must get as close as possible to the look as things that are observed to words (2005). On the other hand, it entailed the appearance of naturalists as professional figures who, through the appropriation of this specific language and method, distanced themselves from the encyclopedic knowledge of philosophers (Findlen 1994) and joined the debate over the order of nature and living beings as new interlocutors. One of the novelties brought by their participation was the use of taxonomic classification as a conceptual tool to reveal the *natural* order of things. Foucault (2005) explains that to build a classification means to establish a point of reference from which to sustain the certainty of what we argue. At the beginning of the 18th century, classification was not perceived as the arbitrary articulation of a coherent system of analogies, distinctions and similes as it is today (Idem). Rather, it was considered to be intrinsic, turning the journey to discover nature a journey in search for truth and for the general categories which ruled it (Findlen 1994). Scientific language was used to translate and expose such truth, that was considered universal and infringeable. We know though, that scientific does not mean objective and this is most evident in the light of the greatest dispute over classification of the modern age – which at a contemporary glance suggests how science was basically bound to specific ideologies and guided by political and economic demands (Fattacciu 2021). The major opponents were the French Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon (1707-1788) and the Swedish Carl Nilsson Linnaeus (1707-1778) who systematized their positions respectively in the works *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du Cabinet du Roi* (1749-1789) and *Systema naturae, sive regna tria naturae systematice proposita per*

⁵⁴ During this period, while wonder declined, curiosity was revalued as a necessary attitude to all those who wanted to increase their knowledge about reality (Daston and Park 2000).

classes, ordines, genera & species (1735), known, more in general, as *The Method and The System*. The debate was exhaustively exposed by Giulio Barsanti in his essay *La Scala, la Mappa, l'Albero. Immagini e classificazioni della natura fra Sei e Ottocento* (1992), which I will use to summarize the central points. Both scholars descended from the previous research tradition which tried to discover criteria to outline a system within which to order natural beings and, in particular, were influenced, by Aristotelian thought⁵⁵. However, if both recognized the major division of nature in Minerals, Plants and Animals as well as the distinction in species, classes and genres, they focused on different aspects as for the criteria to be used in the definition of a general classification of beings. On the one hand, Linnaeus made his own the establishment of a hierarchy of characters, at that time spread mainly in cisalpine botanical tradition. His purpose was to build a classification through the recognition of a few anatomical and essential characters according to which to systematize all natural beings. Not every character had the same importance but followed a rigid hierarchy, on top of which stood the reproductive apparatus. To him and his followers this way of ordering was *natural* precisely because it revealed the essence at the base of bodies. On the other hand, Buffon's approach was more global and drew near to current ecological and ethological criteria. He affirmed that a proper classification could not be based only on a few characters, because it was not possible to prefer some to others; all characters had to be taken into consideration and beings had to be systematized according to the usefulness of a character in a specific relationship – for example, where they live, what they feed on, instinct, how they care for their babies, etc. In his opinion, for a classification that mirrored the order of things to be “natural”, it had to be all-embracing. The two of them upheld the indisputability of their theory and did not spare criticism to the rival. Linnean school accused Buffon of being chaotic, old-fashioned and of obstructing progress because too much concerned with philosophical, existential issues rather than with scientific ones – a distinction which entailed the terminological shift from *natural philosophy* to *natural history*. Buffonians charged Linnaeans with constructing an arbitrary system and to bend beings to it sometimes in forced and absurd ways.

⁵⁵ Aristotelian tradition became popular again after the 16th century. In particular, were considered two works, the *Historia* and the *De partibus animalium*, in which the philosopher describes more or less 450 species according to their anatomical, ecological, physiological, ethological and practical characters. Although he identifies some characters as more important than others, his classification can be defined as ecological and not anatomical (Barsanti 1992).

A contemporary critical analysis just as the one offered by Barsanti shows that what during the 18th and 19th century appeared as two incompatible positions⁵⁶ were in reality two complementary sides of the same path: Linnaeus, with his specialistic approach paved the way for comparative anatomy and cellular theory, while Buffon, as a generalist, can be considered as a precursor of evolutionary theories and ecological-ethological synthesis. In the end, the classification system of Linnaeus prevailed inducing the majority of naturalists to adopt his binominal nomenclature for the description of all things of the natural world – in which genre and specie appear juxtaposed and are defined according to restrictive criteria of *The System*.

In this general debate, different “images of nature” (Dauberton 1749, 4 quoted in Barsanti 1992: 3) took form, pandering to the need of conceptually and graphically translating this presumed natural order and the elements that composed it. These images were not simple visions, but western conceptualizations formulated to perceive, examine and comprehend the system of the world (Barsanti 1992). In one word, representations. Their objective was to demonstrate the continuity and fullness of nature as well as to discover the general, inviolable categories which regulated nature (1 2005). Basically, there are three types of images, which include all other possible variations: the staircase, the map and the tree (examples are provided by fig. 31; 32; 33). Even if they are usually described as subsequent one another, it is important to keep in mind that their existence continued in parallel for long time before the dismissal of the first two. Very briefly, the staircase organized things according to a progressive movement of improvement in which every being was followed by a more complex one (Barsanti 1992). It “establishes elements, the simplest that can be found, and arranges differences according to the smallest possible degrees” (Foucault 2005, 59). The most famous was the one elaborated by Charles Bonnet in 1779 (Kutschera 2011) on the Leibnizian model, which means, with no gaps among levels and without the presence of a super- or extra-natural dimension⁵⁷. Around the second half of the 18th century, some scholars participating in the debate started to notice innumerable discontinuities to

⁵⁶ Not everyone thought they were incompatibles. Peter Simon Pallas, for example, in his 1780 *Memoire sur la variation des animaux* notices that they were building two different models of natural history, with different objects, methods and purposes. According to him natural history should not choose between one or the other, but try to cover both at the same time (Barsanti 1992).

⁵⁷ The staircase was a model already in use from medieval times. However, its structure was divided in two sections, the “earth scale” and the “celestial scale”. In the former were listed all beings living on earth, while on the former the inhabitants of the celestial world who were related with the divine dimension (God, saints, cherubins among others). Man stayed in-between, as the junction point of these two levels (Barsanti 1992).

compromise the staircase. For a while a solution seemed to be found in the creation of different series within the same staircase, but with scarce success. Meanwhile, another image was raising as possible depiction of natural order, the map, which implied that nature was not proceeding on a single path⁵⁸ but according to a multiplicity of connections among things. Thus, natural order appeared, in the mind of the supporters of this model, as a network that expanded horizontally and in which beings were organized in clusters rather than series. According to the first authors who proposed the map, Vitaliano Donati (1717-1762) and Carl Linnaeus, there was no specific direction to follow, nor a trendline; it was Buffon who, once appropriated the model, oriented it, establishing a set of finished possible paths directed to a progressive enrichment. It is thanks to the image of the map that nature turned into a three-dimensional conceptual space where all possible combinations were feasible. However, towards the turn of the century, even the map proved to be unsuitable because of the many incoherencies. In 1766, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach offered to the debate another option, which differed rather radically from the previous because it started from the assumption that nature was not continuous nor full but discontinuous and non-homogeneous: the tree. As for the staircase and the map, also the tree was resumed from ancient images and appointed as an intermediate way between the first two. In fact, it did not assume the existence of a single path, nor of no path at all, but of specific choices that could be revealed only a posteriori through a careful observation of nature (Barsanti 1992). All these images were abstractions used not only in a metaphorical sense but as real tools to grab the true essence of things. This suggests, continuing to follow the reflections of Barsanti, that the representations produced during the 18th and 19th centuries were not conceived as projections of the observer's thought but constituted attempts of objectification and discovery of a single true evolutionary path – an argument on which we will focus soon. It is to this aspect that Foucault refers when, in his fundamental work “The Order of Things. An archaeology of the human sciences”, he affirms that the transformation of the epistemological field was a consequence to the “the withdrawal of knowledge and thought outside the space of representation” (2005, 263). In this process, the “relation of representation to that which is posited in it” (Idem, 259) changes radically because, from now on, the essence of what one wants to represent begins to be located outside the thing

⁵⁸ We do not have to forget that Nature was considered as a creation of God and as such it was him who had established the order naturalists were looking for.

itself and the person who produce its representation. A deep historicity began to pervade knowledge, which implied to ground the debate over the presumed order of nature on a historical *a priori* that legitimized the positivity – or not – of what it was said. To say it in Foucault's words:

This *a priori* is what, in a given period, delimits in the totality of experience a field of knowledge, defines the mode of being of the objects that appear in that field, provides man's everyday perception with theoretical powers, and defines the conditions in which he can sustain a discourse about things that is recognized to be true. In the eighteenth century, the historical *a priori* that provided the basis for inquiry into or controversy about the existence of genera, the stability of species, and the transmission of characters from generation to generation, was the existence of a natural history. (Idem, 172)

In the image of the tree as representation of the natural order, the question of time emerges strongly thanks to Jean Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829). The addition of a temporal dimension meant to think nature not only as an entity organized in fixed and atemporal connections but as a principle that moves and change over time. Until the 18th century theories regarding the formation of beings were influenced by a creationist vision which believed every species as fixed and immutable over time because of the divine essence they contained. Lamarck was one of the main supporters of a different idea, affirming that species on earth were submitted to a constant and spontaneous generation of primitive forms destined to progressively change and complexify. As later for Darwin, heredity was the key principle of this transformation whose purpose was to guarantee the adaptation of beings over time – even if Lamarck's theory still considered this process as pre-determined by some unknown higher force (Kutschera 2011). It was also thanks to these conceptual and scientific foundations that, at the beginning of the 19th century, Darwin elaborated what we know today as the Theory of Evolution. In reality, Darwin did not refer to his theory with this expression⁵⁹, which became of popular use once it was appropriated by Herbert Spencer in the 1850s after an articulated path of resignification. In its 18th-century meaning, the term was used in the embryological theory and referred to the deployment of pre-existent characters; the embryo of any species already had all the features that it would acquire later on during its life. A careful observation of

⁵⁹ The original title of Darwin's essay is *On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*.

natural forms and the influence of theories such as Lamarck's brought a shift in how the notion was thought. *Evolution* began to be associated with the formation of new species, supporting the idea that they presented a higher level of complexity and perfection compared to the previous ones. Darwin confuted both these positions and used the word "evolve" to indicate the "transmutation of the species" through the "heredity of characters" (Bowler 1975). However, this interpretation of *evolution* did not necessarily imply the rise of improved forms of life, nor it meant that the disappearance of simpler forms was a consequence of the appearance of more complex ones; the purpose of this constant mutations was to create beings increasingly adapted to the transformation of the environment they inhabited (Kutschera 2011, Bowler 1975).

In sum, in this renewed scientific context, naturalists' task was to classify beings to discover the *natural order* which laid at the base of their formation and evolution. At this point, a question becomes inevitable: what was the place occupied by humans?

Regarding the origins of human beings, in the 18th century the most accredited theories recognized men as all descending from Adam and Eve, who represented the ideal, divine perfection and of which the different populations represented a more or less corrupted version. This implied that, like the other natural forms, they were submitted to a single path of progressive improvement in which non-European societies began to be considered as *primitive* – in the sense of *first of mankind* – while Europeans as subsequent evolved and perfected forms (Schwarcz 2019). This position was corroborated by philosophical visions such as Rousseau's, who created a correspondence between the perfecting process and the capacity of free oneself from, and impose on, the *state of nature* (1978 [1775] quoted in Schwarcz 2019; cfr §1.2), legitimizing the civilizing intent carried out by colonial policies. In this context a more problematic question was if man, as divine creation, had to be classified among animals or not. The discussion on the matter occurred basically within the major debate between Buffon and Linnaeus we already referred to. According to the former, man was a superior being, not simple divine creation but "masterpiece of nature" (Buffon 1749, 2 quoted in Barsanti 1992, 139), incomparable to animals from both physical and spiritual point of view. On the contrary, Linnaeus *lowed* and classified him among quadrupeds, next to anthropomorphic apes and sloths, "condizione poco gratificante, che i fautori della Scala

giudicavano anzi ‘avvilente’⁶⁰ (Barsanti 1992, 61) – actually, also some follower of Linnaeus distanced themselves from this position.

The elaboration of classifications on possible connections of men with other beings and distinctions within the same species took place mainly in the attempt of creating different series based on a single character once the model of the staircase began to decline. It is worth stressing that, until the end of the 18th century, humans were still considered as belonging to a single species (monogenetic theory). The concept of race was not in use yet (it was introduced by Cuvier at the beginning of the 19th century), preferring notions such as *nation* or *population* instead. The idea that humanity was divided in different biological types characterized by permanent, hereditary physical traits⁶¹ – races, indeed – raised only later and was partly a consequence to the refusal of religious implications of monogenetic theories in favor of polygenetic ones (Schwarcz 2019).

One of the first to divide the human species into varieties was Jean-Baptiste Robinet (1735-1820) in his *Considerations Philosophiques* (1768 mentioned in Barsanti 1992); he distinguished mankind into *Negroes*, *Hottentots*, *Laplanders*, *Asians*, *Tartars*, *Chinese*, *Indians*, *Persians* and *Europeans* and attributed to each group their own physical and intellectual features. His purpose was to fill the gaps between apes and Europeans, reason for what his model is considered one of the first and clearest examples of assertion of white supremacy. In the same year, Peter Camper (1722-1789) imagined another possible classification of beings, based on the measurement of facial angle. This characteristic seemed to him particularly suitable for the recognition of human varieties, recalling the practice of craniometrical studies – which would become successful in 19th-century anthropology – among which we also remember the scale elaborated by Blumenbach in 1776.

Risultava infatti dai reperti archeologici, a suo giudizio, che gli antichi greci avessero un angolo facciale di circa 100° e gli antichi romani di circa 95°; risultava poi, dalle personali osservazioni di Camper, che gli europei oscillassero tra i 90° e gli 80°; gli asiatici tra gli 80° e i 70°, gli africani intorno ai 70°; e risultava quanto agli animali inferiori, che gli orangutan

⁶⁰ “[...] unrewarding condition, which the advocates of the Scale judged indeed ‘demeaning’”

⁶¹ Recent studies have completely controverted the existence of biological races within human species as it is for other animals such as dogs and cats.

presentassero valori di poco inferiori (intorno ai 60°), che le alter scimmie si disponessero gradatamente fino a raggiungere i 45° [...] e così via.⁶² (Barsanti 1992, 35)

A few years later, between 1775 and 1778, this criterium was taken by Johann Caspar Lavater who extended it to the psychological dimension “poiché dall’ampiezza dell’angolo facciale dipende ‘la formazione di parti mobile del volto’ e queste sono ‘lo specchio magico che ci rivela i nostril vizi e le nostre virtù, le variazioni della nostra interiorità, l’uso che facciamo delle facoltà che il cielo ci ha dato’”⁶³ (Lavater 1777-1778, IX, 1-9; Barsanti 1992, 36-37). Others naturalists after him, such as Georges Cuvier (1769-1832), Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1772-1844) and Charles White (1728-1813), appropriated this model and created innumerable anatomic-psychic scales which both in physical aspects and intellectual capacity always put Europeans on the top and everyone else on lower grades (Idem)⁶⁴. On the contrary the color of the skin, which naturalists knew was determined by the specific climate conditions of each geographical region and later became one of the main characters to underline the same difference, was not yet an analytical category, rather a descriptive one. In other words, this aspect was used to describe the specificities of each human variety but it was not the character on which they grounded.

Since, as we mentioned, Linnaean classification prevailed, in the end humans fully entered in the debate as animals submitted to the order of nature, opening a whole new epistemological field. Until the 18th century, mankind was not considered as a scientific object, something that could be studied as other phenomena were. When this changed, the implication that a specific knowledge could be built around it – and which would be later codified in the so-called social sciences – soon followed. Mankind as part of the order of nature meant the acquisition of its own historicity to delimitate its positivity, its conditions

⁶² “It appeared, in fact, from the archaeological finds, in his opinion, that the ancient Greeks had a facial angle of about 100° and the ancient Romans about 95°; it also appeared, from Camper’s personal observations, that the Europeans ranged between 90° and 80°; Asians between 80° and 70°, Africans around 70°; and it appeared as to the lower animals, that orangutans had slightly lower values (around 60°), that the other apes gradually arranged themselves until they reached 45° [...] and so on.”

⁶³ “[...] for on the amplitude of the facial angle depends ‘the formation of movable parts of the face’, and these are ‘the magic mirror that reveals to us our vices and our virtues, the variations of our inwardness, the use we make of the faculties heaven has given us’.”

⁶⁴ The tendency to apply this hierarchy, as well as the idea of a progressive development and evolution, to the social dimension arose later as part of the Theory of Progressive Development of Herbert Spencer. In the 1850s, he merged the development principle of Karl Erns von Baer (German embryologist who affirmed that the development of the embryo corresponded to a complexification and heterogenization process within the same organism) in his universal philosophy on development, creating a universal system of progress applicable to every field of existence (Bowler 1975).

of existence and its modes of development through time. According to Foucault this moment corresponds to the creation of man as Western epistemological category (2005) and there is no doubt that the comparison with non-European alterities highly contributed to the radicalization of different positions within a historical path perceived as single and universal. As a matter of fact, while Europeans invented themselves as subjects plunged into history and capable of acting inside it to influence its course, all the other populations were gradually excluded from it and from the possibility of participating in it if not by renouncing to their own cultural identities and historical paths.

In this context, nature was not only something to classify but also to own. To possess natural things was not only useful to deepen studies began during exploration journeys and carry out political and economic projects but turned into an important activity to organize ideas over the world and build an imaginary within which to give meaning to natural and social phenomena (Findlen 1994). The adoption of Linnean classification had quite an impact in encouraging the practice of collecting and the new guidelines for the organization of infant museums of natural history – and later of ethnographic museums. If the essence of something was regarded to be intrinsic to the thing itself, its observation in the original context was not so important, encouraging the process of decontextualization. In the collection of ethnographic objects, which we know were as much desired as natural specimens, this aspect had significant consequences because it accentuated the process of crystallization and stereotyping of their producers in few traits usually marking their difference and backwardness from European civilization.

It is within this intellectual framework that the Marquis of Pombal acted as prime minister of King José I. As we said, he was a great supporter of enlightenment thinking, thus he firmly engaged in bringing Portuguese empire up to the level of the other European powers (Amaral et al. 2013). According to him, the country did not have the necessary infrastructures to host the production of scientific knowledge because until 1759 scholar education had been ruled by Jesuits, whose intellectual positions were considered obscurantist and “inúteis para o estudo das Sciencias mayores como são as de Renato Descartes, Gassendi, Newton e outros”⁶⁵ (Veloso 1741 quoted in Pires and Pereira 2010, 185). Actually, recent studies reconsidered the role played by Jesuits in the development of Portuguese sciences, acknowledging their

⁶⁵ “[...] useless for the study of the major sciences as are those of Renato Descartes, Gassendi, Newton and others.”

contribution in building an educational system based on different colleges and in the production of literary (Costa and Leitão 2009).

However, the effective participation of Portuguese scholars in the scientific debate was a consequence of Pombal's policies. Along with political and economic measures, in 1772 he enacted a series of reforms directed to the University of Coimbra⁶⁶, founded in 1290 (Pires and Pereira 2010). Superior studies were reorganized and two new faculties were established, that of Philosophy – which substituted the faculty of Arts – and that of Mathematics where to carry out the study of exact sciences – logic, metaphysics, etc, natural history, experimental physics and chemistry (Verran 2006). The Marquis wanted each faculty to have the necessary instruments to develop proper scientific research and personally observe natural phenomena mentioned in ancient works, so he decided to create a museum of natural history, a botanical garden, a cabinet for experimental physics and a chemistry laboratory (Amaral et al. 2013). In 1775, these facilities were installed in the buildings of the Jesuit College which were empty since the expulsion of the religious in 1759 (Pires and Pereira 2010). To the museum were dedicated a few rooms at the first floor, organized in an amphitheater lecture hall and other rooms containing natural specimens and ethnographic objects (Gouveia 1983). Pombal did not act on his own in the implementation of these reforms but availed himself of some collaborators each of whom specialized in a different field of knowledge. Some figures who is worth mentioning are Ribeiro Sanchez, doctor at the University of Coimbra who was charged of making a selection of new possible intellectuals to work there; Domenico Vandelli, Italian naturalist who was charged of organizing the chemistry laboratory; Michele Antonio Ciera, astronomer; Michele Franzini, mathematician; João Antonio Dolabella, responsible of teaching experimental physics; Simão Gould and Luiz Cichi who received chair in medicine (Corrêa Filho 1939). Among them, Domenico Vandelli played an important role for the creation for the museum since the first natural-historical material to enter was that of his personal collection (Pires and Pereira 2010) – before that the collection of the University numbered only ancient Portuguese weapons (15th-17th centuries) (Amaral et al. 2013).

⁶⁶ The regulations of the new faculties established with the reforms are available in the original version at the following link: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=ucm.5323779705&view=1up&seq=9>. Accessed on 14/04/2022.

In the 18th century, natural history was still an omni comprehensive field which focused on social, cultural and economic aspects of a region as much as those related to the three natural kingdoms (Ferrão and Soares 2002). Therefore, even if the collection of Vandelli still resembled that of a Cabinet of Curiosity could very well be the base for the creation of a larger, and more specialistic, collection. Next to mineralogical, zoological and botanical specimens, it included ancient, ethnographic and numismatic objects (Pires and Pereira 2010) and before landing at the University of Coimbra in 1772, it was preserved at the botanical garden of the *Real Gabinete da Ajuda*, another cabinet established, in 1768, in Lisbon, by order of King José I. A few years later, in 1774 and 1775 two other collections entered the museum but a substantial growth only occurred after the acquisition of part of the collection of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira in 1806 (cfr §2.3) (Casaleiro and Pereira 2018). Moreover, in 1781, some scientists of the *Real Gabinete da Ajuda* wrote a pamphlet titled *Breves Instruções aos correspondentes da Academia de Sciencias de Lisboa sobre as remessas dos productos e notícias pertencentes a história da Natureza para formar hum Museo Nacional* with detailed instructions for carrying out a proper collecting activity during journeys of scientific explorations. Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira must have had one copy with him in addition to the *Systema Naturae* of Carl Linnaeus.

These events were indeed the background to Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira's training as a naturalist. Of Brazilian origins, he was born in Bahia in 1756 where he studied to become a priest until 1768 when he took minor orders (Horch 1989). In 1770 his father sent him to Portugal to begin a career at university. At first, he stayed in Lisbon, moving to Coimbra only after the reform of university in 1772. In Coimbra, he joined the law faculty but soon quitted to study natural history. In 1778 he completed his studies under the guide of Domenico Vandelli himself with whom he worked as *Demonstrador da História Natural* and who recommended him at Martinho de Melo e Castro as a valuable candidate to lead the *Viagem Philosophica* in Brazil (Goeldi 1982 [1895]). For this reason, he moved back to Lisbon in 1779 where he had to wait five more years before sailing with the expedition, time which he spent preparing the journey and carrying on other researches.

He knew that to accept this assignment meant to partly put aside the naturalist to embrace the role of colonial, governmental officer. Joined in the person of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, these two dimensions could not be separated. In the 18th century, scientific journeys did not have a purely cognitive purpose as it is often thought but aimed at building a corpus

of knowledge useful to consolidate the imperial rule on conquered territories. Science has never been neutral; at that time, it was explicitly oriented in favor of imperial economic development and political supremacy. The expedition of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira is today celebrated as a great enterprise and surely it was, given also the primacy it holds. However, we do must not forget its colonial objectives and the long-term consequences it had for the Amazonian regions. The period at the end of the 18th century sure enough corresponds to the first serious, systematic experience of colonization – intended as a process of both political and conceptual domination – of the Amazon and the rest of Brazilian inland (Dias 1967).

In the next section we shall focus on some of the consequences in relation to the (stereotyped) imaginary built on indigenous peoples.

2.2.2 A discursive analysis of objects and documentation

Previously in this work, I affirmed that the collection practice was (and, probably will always be) a tool for establishing a control over a specific context. In fact, to collect and to describe correspond to processes of conceptual appropriation of a space as well as of imposition of a political power on the peoples who inhabit it (Venturoli 2021). This part of the chapter will thus focus on the eloquence of the objects considered in this research with respect to the process of construction of a stereotyped imaginary on Brazilian natives and its strict relation with the political and economic interests of the Portuguese empire, that is to say, in which the production and naturalization of a *discourse* on indigenous peoples justified and encouraged the implementation of colonial policies.

By the term “discourse” I refer to the Foucauldian notion that frame knowledge as arbitrarily constructed through a series of utterances that, according to specific rules, organize concepts into coherent associations (see Escobar 2012). The discursive practice as an epistemological category was elaborated and is adopted to support the idea that so-called “scientific” disciplines which we tend to perceive as revealing intrinsic categories and, therefore, holding universal and time-linear knowledge about human life, are instead the result of a series of processes of rupture with the knowledge that preceded them (Rabinow 1984). Power plays a central role in this context as it causes certain subjects to be recognized as more authoritative than others in holding certain discourses and, consequently, to legitimize and naturalize the coherence and validity of the knowledge which is produced by them (Foucault 2002).

Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira (as well as Johann Natterer; cfr chapter three) was building the Brazilian space and the populations living there as subjects embedded in a specific system of knowledge organization (the colonial, hegemonic, Eurocentric one) in the very moment he was describing them. This process reverberates in the ethnographic objects they collected as much as in the narrative they are still part of.

The discourse built by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira on Brazilian natives was part of the context aforementioned and acted as device for its maintaining. It is formed of a wide, sometimes ambiguous, thought that we will try to partly analyze starting from the chosen objects. The purpose is to begin to show their density (Paini and Aria 2014) and how complex relations layer onto them – a process that will be enhanced in chapters four and five by revealing indigenous perspectives on them. This analysis will not proceed according to their ethnic origin but following typological criteria privileged by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira in his classification. To him the collection practice had to have a practical and utilitarian end that confirmed the backwardness of indigenous cultures and suggested possible solutions to improve political management and economic production. Consequently, function and raw material were among the favored criteria of collection and organization, disregarding aspects such as geographical and ethnic provenance⁶⁷. Rather, one thing that jumps out when reading the shipment lists is that sometimes ethnographic objects were more interesting for the material with which they were made than for their relationship with indigenous cultures. Details on cultural behaviors, ceremonial practices, songs, histories or myths are extremely rare (Raminelli 1998, 2001).

The first object we are going to consider is the Kambeba bamboo board for flattening the head. There is no mention of it in the shipping lists nor in the general relation called *Relação Geral de todos os Productos Naturaes dos tres Reynos Animal, Vegetal e Mineral; alem das Curiosidades artificiaes dos Gentios, e Indios domesticados [...]*; however, it is described in the report titled *Memória sobre os gentios Cambebas [...]*⁶⁸ and written specifically on the Kambeba people in 1787 during the stay of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira in Barcelos (Ferreira 2005b [1787]). This refers about the encounter, organized by João Pereira Caldas and Henrique João Wilkens, respectively general captain and officer of the demarcation committee, with the

⁶⁷ The document 26a, which will be analyzed in §2.3, is a clear example.

⁶⁸ *Memória sobre os gentios Cambebas que antigamente habitaram nas margens, e nas ilhas da parte superior do Rio dos Solimões; segundo o fez desenhlar e remeter para o Real Gabinete de História Natural o doutor naturalista Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira* (Barcelos, September 1st 1787).

“índio Dionísio da Cruz da nação cambeba, único dessa nação que se acha ainda com a testa chata”⁶⁹ (letter of Henrique João Wilkens of August 21st 1787 mentioned in Ferreira 2005b [1787], 9). It was the naturalist himself to require to meet him, making explicit that he had to be flat-headed in the manner of the ancient Kambeba according to what previous accounts reported (§2.1.1) – Ferreira mentions the relation written by the Captain Pedro Teixeira in 1639. The *Memória* is accompanied by an illustration (fig. 34) in which the board is depicted above Dionísio da Cruz and marked with the number 1, which corresponds to the following description:

É o modelo que o mesmo índio fen a minha presença, para me fazer compreender o mecanismo e a figura que tinham as tábuas, com que comprimiam as cabeças. Não eram logo duas tábuas como se tem escrito que eram; mas sim as ditas tábuas, as quais ou eram feitas de castaneiras das frechas, ou das canas. Entre as tábuas e a cabeça, diz ele que, para não se magoarem as crianças, se interpunha uma almofadinha e, com razão, porque, sendo certo que o osso coronal e os dous parietais, como todos os outros, são naquela idade cartilaginosos, dever-se-iam magoar muito as crianças a selhes não interpor a dita almofadinha, quando alias nenhuma dificuldade encontram nela os ossos da cabeça, para cederem a sua compressão. Havia testa da altura de um palmo; deixaram-se de semelhante costume depois de instruídos e civilizados nas nossas povoações.⁷⁰ (Ibidem)

From this extract we do not only understand how the flattening of the head occurred but also that the practice was already falling out of use, an element which, during the 19th century, will lead innumerable travelers to question the ethnic identity of Kambeba group and identify them as simple *caboclos* (Maciel 2011).

In general, if, on the one hand, Ferreira agreed with his predecessors that the Kambeba were the most “civilizados e racionáveis” (Ferreira 2005b [1787], 8) because of the lighter tone of

⁶⁹ “[...] Indian Dionisio da Cruz from the Cambeba nation, the only one from this nation who thinks he still has a flat forehead”

⁷⁰ “This is the model that the same Indian brought to my presence, to make me understand the mechanism and figure of the boards with which they compressed the heads. They were not two boards, as it has been written that they were; but the boards themselves, which were either made of chestnut trees or of reeds. Between the boards and the head, he says that it was placed a pillow, so that the children would not be hurt, and with good reason, because, since the coronal bone and the two parietal bones, like all the others, are cartilaginous at that age, the children would be very hurt if the pillow were not placed, when there is no difficulty for the bones of the head to yield to compression. There used to be foreheads the height of a span; they stopped this custom after they were educated and civilized in our towns.”

their skin and to the habit of using cotton clothes⁷¹, on the other hand, he classified them as “monstruosos por artifício” (1972b, 133) precisely because of the practice of deforming the skull. This definition acquires great importance for our analysis because it was one of the categories that stands out in Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira’s classification of the Tapuia and constructs them as alterity: “Classe dos mamíferos, 1ª ordem – dos quadrúpedes; 1ª divisão – dos terrestres; Unguiculados – Com as unhas planas e ovais; I – Gênero: HOMO (Syst. Nat.); 1 – Homo *sapiens*, Abá Mira – Homem; 1ª) Var. *americanus* – tapuia” (Idem, 131). In his description, the “monstruosos por artifício” are those people that deformed their body artificially not for reasons of aesthetic appreciation but to frighten their enemies in war (Ferreira 2005c [1787], 49). Europeans condemned these practices and considered unnecessary the transformation of human body which, created by God in his image and likeness, was already perfect as it appeared (Raminelli 1998). In another *Memória* dedicated to the Uerequena people Ferreira affirms:

Para se adquirirem semelhantes formas, arriscam as suas vidas e as de seus filhos, fazendo-os passar logo, desde o berço, pelos mais dolorosos trances, não se dirigindo eles a outro fim mais, do que a desordenarem o plano da natureza, debaixo do vão pretexto de aperfeiçoarem as suas obras. Porém é certo que o principal fim a que se dirigem estes diferentes meios e caprichos de ornarem as suas pessoas e de alterarem as formas naturais dos seus corpos, não é tanto para os embelecer, como se pensa, mas sim, para lhes darem um ar impostor, que com a sua presença e disformidade aterre ao inimigo [...].⁷² (Ferreira 2005c [1787], 48-49)

⁷¹ “Se entre as nações de índios se pode dizer que são os Cambebas os mais civilizados e racionáveis, a mesma sua cor é mais alva e a figura elegante. Sempre usaram de vestidos em ambos os sexos, cousa raríssima nos índios da América Meridional” (2005b [1787], 8). For Europeans, clothes represented one of those diacritical elements in determining the level of civilization of a social group (see the debate over nudity in chapter one) – as also did weapons (see further on in this chapter). Ferreira is quite eloquent on this point stating that “pode-se, quanto ao principio e ao progresso que tem tido entre os homens, a invenção dos vestidos, subir desde a sua infância, até o seu estado atual, percorrendo assim: Os homens primeiramente andaram todos nus; pouco depois trataram de cobrir somente as suas partes vergonhosas, donde se originaram as tangas, em que uma experiência e gosto mais tardio foi aperfeiçoando a forma e a matéria, cresceu o desejo, e em alguns países os obrigou a necessidade, a repararem os seus corpos contra as injurias do tempo e dos outros animais, passando eles a usarem roupa abertas, que primeiramente as fizeram de folhas, depois de entreascas das árvores e, pelo tempo adiante, de penas das aves e das peles dos outros animais. Fecharam-se ainda mais tarde as roupas, principiando em formas de casulas abertas pelos lados e sem mangas, donde passaram por um longo lapso de tempo para os feitiços e para as matérias de que hoje as fazem; depois que conheceram a lã, o linho, o algodão, a seda e depois que a arte ensinou a conhecer, cultivar, recolher, preparar, fiar e tecer cada uma dessas substâncias” (2005c [1787], 50).

⁷² “To acquire such forms, they risk their lives and those of their children, putting them through the most painful trances right from the cradle, for no other purpose than to disorder the plan of nature, under the vain pretext of perfecting their works. But it is certain that the principal end to which these different means and caprices of adorning their persons, and of altering the natural forms of their bodies, are directed, is not so much

To this category, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira adds that of “monstruosos por natureza” (Idem, 134), that is to say, those peoples whose deformation was from birth. Within this group the influence of ancient sources and of medieval imaginary on monstrous creatures is more evident. For example, the naturalist questioned himself about the existence of the “Cauanáz, espécie de pigmeus de estatura tão curta, que não passam de cinco palmos” and of the “Uginas [...] tapuias caudatos”⁷³ (Ibidem), originated by the union of man and coatá-monkey. However, he brought different arguments to demonstrate that it was impossible entire populations of these beings to exist. The Kambeba themselves were compared to “àqueles povos chamados macrocéfalos ou homens de cabeça longa, feita artificialmente, dos quais fala Hipócrates”⁷⁴ (Ferreira 2005b [1787], 8). Therefore, his knowledge, while defined as scientific, still owed much to ancient philosophy; he chose to use ones or the others categories according to which he considered more appropriate. In the case of the *monstrous races*, scientific classification did not yet offer alternatives convincing as much as Plinius and Aristoteles categories (Verran 2006).

As for the other two objects, that is to say, the Kambeba arrow thruster and the Sateré-Mawé club/oar, the former was classified as weapon, and appears listed in the *Relação Geral de todos os Productos Naturaes dos tres Reynos Animal, Vegetal e Mineral; alem das Curiosidades artificiaes dos Gentios, e Indios domesticados [...]* as a note to the 13th shipping sent on June 4th 1788: “[...] na remessa antecedente foi mais huma arma de tiro do Gentio Cambeba a q chamão = Palheta”⁷⁵. More in details, it is described in the abovementioned *Memória sobre os gentios Cambebas [...]* as follows:

Os Cambebas são guerreiros. [...] A sua arma é a frecha, a qual não lançam com o arco, mas com uma palheta de dous palmos e meio de comprimento, em que cravam em uma das extremidades o dente de algum animal de meio dedo de comprido e virado para a outra extremidade. Tomando a palheta na mão entre os dous dedos polegar e index, aplicam a frecha à ponta aguda do dente, que também hoje usam de ferro e, logo, fazendo a pontaria

to beautify them, as is commonly thought, but rather to give them an impostor's air, that by their presence and deformity may terrify the enemy.”

⁷³ “Cauanáz, species of pygmies so short in stature that they do not exceed five palms” and of the “Uginas [...] tapuias caudatos”.

⁷⁴ “[...] those people called macrocephalic or long-headed, artificially made men, of whom Hippocrates speaks.”

⁷⁵ “[...] in the previous shipment there was one more gun from the Kambeba people called = Palheta.”

ao objeto, arremessam a frecha a grande distâncias e com admirável dextriedade.⁷⁶ (Ferreira 2005b [1787], 8-9)

In a subsequent part of the same text, we understand that Dionísio da Cruz did not already have the thruster with him during the encounter with Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, but made it in that very moment in order to show its functioning.

About the latter the information is much scarcer; it might be identified in the list of the 10th box of the 1st shipment, sent on June 26th 1786⁷⁷: “Huma lança e um remo do Gentio da Nação Mauá”⁷⁸ but no other significant description is provided by the naturalist nor it appears in any of the illustrations. Considering the difficulty to identify it in the documentation produced during the *Viagem Philosophica*, its interpretation as tool (oar) or as weapon (club) remains a little ambiguous – in reality it is both at the same time (see chapter four) – at least until its entrance in the museum and its classification in the second type (cfr §2.3). This event, its double function and especially the fact that when exposed it has always been presented only as a club, allows us to consider it in the light of the classification of weapons outlined by Ferreira and their importance as organization criteria of an evolutionary social scale. The naturalist thought, indeed, that ethnographic objects were very useful for the elaboration of an “História da Indústria Americana” that should analyze and systematize the transformations occurred to human society – perceived as following one single path (§2.2.1) – over time. Very eloquent in this regard is an extract taken from the *Memória sobre os gentios Uerequenas* [...] ⁷⁹ where it is reported that weapons:

nos fazem reflexionar que as primeiras armas ofensivas foram sem dúvida as que ministrou o acaso; o que os primeiros esforços da arte para as aperfeiçoar foram muito simples e grosseiros. Tais são essas pequenas massas de pau pesado, que eu tenho remetido por vezes

⁷⁶ “The Cambebas are warriors. [...] Their weapon is the arrow, which they do not throw with a bow, but with a pick two and a half palms long, in which they sink in one end the tooth of some animal half a finger long and turned to the other end. Taking the pick in their hand between the two index and thumb fingers, they apply the quill to the sharp point of the tooth, which today they also use iron, and then, aiming at the object, they throw the quill at great distances and with admirable dexterity.”

⁷⁷ “Relação dos Volumes em que forão as Producções Naturaes da Primeira Remessa, da Villa de Barcellos Capital da Capitania de S. Joseph do Rio Negro, para o Real Gabinête de Historia Natural. Aos 26 de Junho de 1785.”

⁷⁸ “A spear and a remo from the Gentile Mauá Nation [...]”

⁷⁹ “Memória sobre os Gentios Uerequena, que habitam nos rios Içana e Ixié, os quais desaguardam na margem ocidental da parte superior do rio Negro, segundo a fe desenhar e remeter para o Real Gabinete de História Natural o Doutor Naturalista Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira” (Barcelos on August 29th 1787).

para o real gabinete, ebaixo do nome de braçangas, as quais são as armas curtas dos gentios, contundem e cortam como os sabres; as lanças de madeira simples ou tostada os fogo, para lhes conciliar maior dureza; os piques armados na ponta, ou com alguma pedra, ou com algum osso aguçado. Porém todas essas só servem para combater de perto. Os homens excogitaram depois um meio de ofenderem de longe ao seu inimigo. A esta idéia se deve a invenção dos arcos e das flechas, e semelhantemente, das palhetas e das zaravatanas que foram as primeiras armas de tiro e que ainda hoje são as únicas que possuem os povos que vivem na infância da sociedade. A funda contudo não é tão conhecida dos americanos. Quaisquer que sejam as armas de que usam os gentios desta parte da América, eu as tenho remetido no intuito de completar algum dia a História da Indústria Americana, sendo certo que para se chegar a adquirir um perfeito conhecimento do seu principio e progresso, é preciso mostrar o americano em todas as diversas situações em que a natureza o tem colocado; seguir os seus passos desde a infância da sua vida civil, até a madureza e a declinação do seu estado social; e observar os esforços que em diferentes tempos têm feito as suas faculdades ativas, em todos os ramos da indústria na guerra e na paz. O que certamente se não pode empreender com prudência, se não em vista das suas obras. Persuado-me que tenho respondido aos que me impacientam com me perguntarem para que ajunto eu e remeto semelhantes armas e galanterias.⁸⁰ (2005c [1787], 50)

Whom, among indigenous groups used close combats weapons as clubs, spears and axes was considered as backward compared to those whom used throwing weapons such as bows, thrusters and blowguns. Firearms occupied the highest level. From these words, it is possible to get how Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira was greatly influenced by the theories of his contemporaries (cfr §2.2.1) which interpreted natives as the first of human species and thus

⁸⁰ “[...] make us reflect that the first offensive weapons were undoubtedly those which chance ministered to; but that the first efforts of art to perfect them were very simple and crude. Such are those small masses of heavy wood, which I have already sent to the royal cabinet, which go under the name of braçangas and are the short weapons of natives, and which bruise and cut like sabers; the spears of plain wood, or fire-roasted, to conciliate greater hardness to them; the pikes armed at the point, either with some stone, or with some sharp bone. But all these are only good for close combat. Men then devised a means of offending their enemy from afar. It was to this idea that bows and arrows were invented, and similarly, the reeds and blowpipes, which were the first weapons of fire, and which even today are the only ones possessed by people living in the infancy of society. The sling however is not so well known to Americans. Whatever weapons natives of this part of America use, I have referred to them with the intention of completing someday the History of American Industry, it being certain that in order to acquire a perfect knowledge of its principle and progress, it is necessary to show the American in all the different situations in which nature has placed him; to follow his steps from the infancy of his civil life, to the maturity and declension of his social state; and to observe the efforts which at different times have made his active faculties, in all branches of industry in war and peace. Which certainly cannot be undertaken with prudence, if not in view of their works. Persuade me that I have responded to those who have impatiently asked me what I am gathering and sending such arms and gallantry for.”

represented, in terms of social, cultural and political structures, the past of Europeans, considered, on the contrary, to have reached a more advanced level. To tie this conception to material culture had among its main consequences to place the basis for the development of that part of the anthropological thought which, from the second half of the 19th century, will systematize the idea that material culture of non-European peoples was the privileged tool to testify their level of social evolution. Pitt-Rivers would be one of the main supporters of this theory, affirming that objects would allow to maintain unchanged the connections among the steps of a staircase which had to be climbed one by one (Chapman 1985; Bennet 2018).

The elaboration of such classification is particularly clear if we focus on objects such as weapons and clothes (cfr note 71 in this chapter) because Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira made his thought explicit on the matter; however, in the end, all the ethnographic objects collected were bent to this system. The role of material culture as conceptual tool from which to produce classification categories results also from the iconographic documentation that accompanies written accounts. Both in the full-length and in the half-length plates, people and objects are depicted isolated and decontextualized, as it was common in the 18th century. Drawings and gravures were not intended for aesthetic appreciation but as documents that proved a scientific, objective vision (Moura 2002). Also, they are eloquent about the fact that activities related to objects were not considered as interesting as the supposedly intrinsic meaning and its task of revealing a historical sequence of human material culture aprioristically defined (cf fig. 35; 36; 37). There were exceptions but represented activities which could be useful to the economic purposes of colonial administration, such as turtle fishing and the production of carved and painted *cuias* (cf fig. 38; 39).

Objects were channelers of perspectives and power relations. They were functional to the formulation of a discourse that, more in general, shows Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira as a figure of transition in-between two very different ways of thinking humanity, who tries to familiarize with the new and explain what he sees with the intellectual and literary tools at his disposal (Verran 2006). On the one hand, as we saw, he read the works of ancient writers and of other predecessors and embraced their theories and ideas; on the other hand, he was in all respects a 18th-century naturalist who based his conjectures on the meticulous observation of phenomena and their contexts. He privileged Linnean classification, even if in some cases he used ancient categories. Also, sometimes he used words in Tupi language

for labeling things, thus encouraging their appropriation by, and subjugation to, scientific language. Almaça (2002) supposes that it might be because of most of the species Ferreira described were not known in Europe yet and he had to make up for the lack of terminology as he could. The scholar distinguishes three criteria of classification in the scientist's work: ecologic, which recalled the environment in which beings lived (for example "riverine" or "lacustrine"); practical, which recalled indigenous terms or activities (for example "sylvan", "whose seeds are eaten" or "whose roots are consumed"); mixed, in which persisted the binominal nomenclature but to Linnean classes Ferreira added ethnobiological categories which hinted at the use animal had in indigenous cultures.

Concerning the variation of the *Homo americanus*, it is described in the text *Observações gerais e particulares, sobre a classe dos mamíferos observados nos territórios dos três rios, das Amazonas, Negro e da Madeira: com descrições circunstanciadas, que quase todos eles, deram os antigos, e modernos naturalistas, e principalmente, com a dos Tapuios* (1972b) next to other Mammals. As we already mentioned, the idea of classifying man as an animal was Linnaeus'. Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira appropriated it, questioning himself about different issues on the matter. He recognized that there was one single human species composed of different varieties and that it occupied the first place in the order of primates.

O homem natural ficou sendo o objeto das observações dos naturalistas. A sabedoria ligada à sua alma, à docilidade e o ensino, formam o caráter essencial de sua espécie. A diversidade de sua cor, os diversos lugares em que habita, os seus usos e faculdades corporais, indicam que, como em outros animais, também a sua espécie apresenta variedades. Neste sentido, o índio Tapuia é uma delas. Ele é tão homem como o europeu, o asiático e o africano; em razão da diversidade da sua cor e do país de sua habitação, nós pelo nome de sua própria língua os denominamos de Tapuia.⁸¹ (Ferreira 1972b, 74)

There is no doubt though, that the Tapuia represented a total alterity, which seemed docile at a first glance but hid a savage and suspicious side. Next to language and cultural habits,

⁸¹ "The natural man remained the object of the naturalists' observations. The wisdom connected with his soul, docility, and learning, form the essential character of his species. The diversity of his color, the different places he inhabits, his uses and bodily faculties, indicate that, as with other animals, his species also presents varieties. In this sense, the Tapuia Indian is one of them. He is as much a man as the European, the Asiatic and the African; because of the diversity of his color and the country of his habitation, we have named them Tapuia after their own language."

one of the most evident differences from Europeans was the color of the skin which, according to the naturalist, depended on the climate and the altitude of the region in which a group lived as well as on the type of work, as farmers or house servants.

A primeira coisa de imediato que todo e qualquer europeu chegado à América sente, é a novidade que imprime, no seu espírito, a presença de um Tapuia: um homem de uma cor, feições, língua, usos e instituições diversas. A primeira vista [...] o Tapuia representa um homem dócil, tranqüilo e tratável. Mas examinado de perto, logo deixa transparecer um ar selvagem, de desconfiança e sombrio. [...] A segunda é da sua cor. Todos a têm ou de cobre ou de castanho, com diferenças somente que em algumas nações é mais ou menos retinta que em outras. Isto, não devido à proporção da sua distância ao Equator mas sim, segundo o grau de elevação do terreno onde habitam. Assim os que vivem nas partes úmidas das serras e das montanhas são muito mais alvos que os que povoam as suas fraldas. [...] Contudo, por mais retinto que sejam, não deixa de existir entre eles a diferenciação para menos carregada a cor aos que menos trabalham expostos ao tempo e para mais a dos que sofrem a influência do mesmo. Um Tapuia, depois de passar dois meses fazendo manteigas numa praia do Solimões ou do Madeira, sempre exposto ao calor do sol ou ao fogo das caldeiras, pouco difere de um preto. E neste caso sendo um brando, há de parecer um mulato. Ao contrario, os que se empregam em serviços domésticos, sempre são mais alvos.⁸² [...] (Idem, 75-76)

In general, reading Ferreira's reports and notes, we can easily observe how his attitude towards indigenous alterity presented ambiguous aspects. This was probably due in part to the comparison between previous sources and field observation, in part to his personal sensibility.

⁸² "The first thing that any European who arrives in America immediately feels is the novelty imprinted on his spirit by the presence of a Tapuia: a man of a different color, features, language, customs and institutions. At first glance [...] the Tapuia represents a docile, calm and manageable man. But upon closer examination, he soon reveals a wild, mistrustful and somber air. [...] The second is its color. They are all either copper or brown, with the only difference being that in some nations it is more or less retinctive than in others. This is not due to the proportion of their distance from the Equator but according to the degree of elevation of the land where they live. Thus, those who live in the humid parts of the mountains and highlands are much duller than those who populate their fringes. [...] Nevertheless, as much retinct they may be, the differentiation between them does not cease to exist: the less charged color of those who work less exposed to the weather, and the more so of those who suffer its influence. A Tapuia, after spending two months making butter on a beach of the Solimões or Madeira rivers, always exposed to the heat of the sun or to the fire of the boilers, differs little from a black. And in this case, being a soft person, he must look like a mulatto. On the contrary, those who are employed in domestic service are always more target."

One dimension in which this ambiguity is more evident is labor. As shown by some extracts in §2.2.1, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira frequently complained for the laziness and indolence of natives. He remarked their scarce inclination to work which, according to him, might be due to some factors. First of all, not being used to it; then, the lack of proper farming instruments like metals or animals as workforce; the fact that, since their desires were so limited, nature already offered them everything they needed for self-sustainment; finally, the influence of lust which made them inclined to satisfy their sexual desire whenever and however they wanted to (Idem). At the same time, he strongly condemned their exploitation and the labor condition to which they were submitted, stressing that these were among the main causes of disease and death of indigenous population⁸³. In the first part of his account *Viagem Philosophica pela Capitania de São José do Rio Negro*, he points out that they

trabalham mais do que comem, porque ordinariamente jejuam a pão e água, não do nosso pão de farinha de trigo, mas da farinha de mandioca em água [...] ⁸⁴. Eles não morrem à míngua de repente, porém o trabalho e o jejum cotidiano insensivelmente lhes propicia a morte em diversos tragos; chega a doença, que há muito está forjada e, neste caso, os diretores não os tratam como os tratavam os seus padres, porque não há botica na povoação, provida ao menos dos remédios os mais domésticos, nem ainda que houvesse, sairia sempre bem sucedida uma aplicação vaga e arbitrária. Digo sempre o que disse, que os índios, depois de livres, ficaram, nessa parte, da pior condição que a tinham quando escravos [...] ⁸⁵ (2007b, 103).

⁸³ Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira writes a specific report on the causes of disease among natives. He lists the following: travel during dry season when they had to carry on their shoulders everything which made up the expedition, including canoes; fatigue of the spirit due to the restlessness related to the fear of having to face such “deadly” journeys or being punished if they tried to escape; conditions of violence and coercion perpetrated by white traders; exposition to “time ups and downs” which were more cruel with them because of their naked, vulnerable bodies; their diet, which was very poor in terms of quantity and rotten quality of food; finally, the lack of medicine and the incapacity of using them properly when available. (cfr doc. ARF_20 preserved in the Archive of the Museum of Natural History of Lisbon *Causas de doenças dos Índios*)

⁸⁴ As Rebecca Earle exhaustively illustrates in her work *The body of the conquistador: food, race and the colonial experience in Spanish America, 1492-1700* (2014) food was also a device for the construction bodies’ alterity. Feeding with indigenous foods, Spaniards and Portuguese were afraid to indigenize themselves and consequently lose that status of superiority and civilization which distinguished them from the first inhabitants of Latin America.

⁸⁵ “They work more than they eat, because they usually fast on bread and water, not of our wheat flour bread, but of manioc flour in water [...]. They don’t die suddenly of starvation, but the work and the daily fasting insensibly propitiates their death in several gulps; illness arrives, which has been brewing for a long time and, in this case, the directors don’t treat them as their priests did, because there is no pharmacy in the village, provided at least with the most domestic remedies, and even if there were, a vague and arbitrary application would always be successful. I always say what I said, that the Indians, after being free, were, in this part, in the worst condition they had when slaves. [...]”

In these words, it is implicit a rather strong critique to the modalities by which colonial policies were carried out in practical terms, demonstrating that reforms for the integration of indigenous people into the colonial system were not really intended to benefit them.

Another interesting issue concerns natives' intelligence. To discuss this point, Ferreira reports some previous positions, such as those of Chanvalon, Uchôa, De la Condamine and Robertson⁸⁶. All of them supported the idea that reasoning was related to the ability to think about God in abstract terms and comprehend the Christian doctrine as the only source of truth. Since natives ignored such knowledge and devoted themselves to other spiritual practices often (and erroneously) associated to idolatry, they were considered *stupid*, not smarter than animals, less people than Europeans. Chanvalon, for example, affirms:

Se a sã filosofia e religião não nos ministrasse mas sua luzes; se as decisões brotassem dos primeiros impulsos do espírito, inclinar-nos-íamos a creer que semelhantes povos não pertencem à mesma espécie humana que a nossa. Os seus olhos são o verdadeiro espelho de sua alma que parece não ter função alguma – a sua indolência é extrema.⁸⁷ (Quoted in Ferreira 1972b, 87)

Uchôa is of no different opinion when he writes that “os limites de sua inteligência parecem incompatíveis com a excelência da alma e a sua imbecilidade é tão visível que em bem poucos casos se pode fazer deles, idéia diferente da dos animais”⁸⁸ (Ibidem). Robertson also expresses himself in a similar way: “a inteligência dos índios é tão limitada, eles leva mas suas observações e reflexões tão pouco acima dos objetos, que ferem seus sentidos, apenas capazes de idéias abstratas, e não tem palavras para exprimi-las. A doutrina sublime e puramente espiritual do cristianismo deve ser incompreensível a semelhantes espíritos tão pouco exercitados”⁸⁹ (quoted in Ferreira 1972b, 88-89). Ferreira recognize their ideas, however, he

⁸⁶ Jean-Baptiste Mathieu Thibault de Chanvalon, *Voyage a la Martinique*, 1761; Charles Marie de la Condamine, *Relation abrégée d'un voyage fait dans l'intérieur de l'Amérique Méridionale*, 1745; William Robertson, *The History of America*, 1777.

⁸⁷ “If philosophy and religion did not give us more light, if decisions flowed from the first impulses of the spirit, we would be led to believe that these people do not belong to our own human species. Their eyes are the true mirror of their soul, which seems to have no function – their indolence is extreme.”

⁸⁸ “[...] the limits of their intelligence seem incompatible with the excellence of the soul, and their imbecility is so obvious that in very few cases can one make a different idea of them than one has of animals.”

⁸⁹ “The intelligence of Indians is so limited, they carry their observations and reflections so little above the objects that injure their senses, they are capable only of abstract ideas and have no words to express them. The sublime and purely spiritual doctrine of Christianity must be incomprehensible to such unexercised spirits.”

says that, as far as Christian doctrine is concerned, natives show to be indifferent rather than stupid. To him, stupidity is not innate but caused by the environmental and cultural conditions in which indigenous people grow up. While not completely denying his colleagues' theories, he argues that "por outra perspectiva, é de se reconhecer que estão em outro estado de sociedade, em outra ordem de coisas, em outro país e com diferentes necessidades, pelas quais perdem grande parte de toda a sua energia"⁹⁰ (1972b, 89). Climate returns here as one of the main aspects to determine natives' intelligence which simply did not develop because natives' desires, already very limited to the bare minimum, were completely satisfied by what nature offered:

Quando a fome os persegue, e não há com que satisfazê-la, qualquer raiz, qualquer animal lhes serve de alimento. [...] As árvores por todo o ano dão frutos – acabam umas e principiam outras [...]. Se lhes faltam os frutos, não lhes falta a caça no mato nem o peixe no rio e lagos. Para surpreenderem a caça, a natureza dotou-os de ardís e estratagemas, os mais apropriados para suprirem a imperfeição das suas armas. [...] Como o peixe é infinito nos rios Amazonas, Solimões e outros, nem a arte de pescar lhes é precisa; basta remexer a água com o timbó, cururu-timbo, o stacu e outras plantas venenosas.⁹¹ (Idem, 90)

Many of the things that Europeans had achieved by cultivating their own ambitions did not seem to arouse interest in the natives because "a quem não possui bem móveis descendentes para deles herdarem, nem moeda entesourada para contar, nem tem longos cálculos que fazer sejam sobre o tempo ou espaço, certamente para nada serve a aritmética"⁹² (Idem, 92). The conception of progress itself also did not make much sense for them since different were the ways of perceiving space and time. Nevertheless, they demonstrated perfect knowledge of their territory while lacking geographical, mathematical, and astronomical skills – as codified by Western science. In this regard it is worth mentioning when, while sailing on the Branco

⁹⁰ "[...] from another perspective, it must be recognized that they are in another state of society, in another order of things, in another country, and with different needs, for which they lose a great part of all their energy."

⁹¹ "When hunger pursues them and there is nothing to satisfy it, any root, any animal serves them as food. [...] Trees bear fruit all year round - some end and some begin [...]. If there is a lack of fruit, there is no lack of game in the forest or fish in the rivers and lakes. To surprise the game, nature has equipped them with tricks and stratagems, the most suitable to overcome the imperfection of their weapons. [Since fish are endless in the Amazon, Solimões and other rivers, they do not even need the art of fishing; it is enough to agitate the water with timbó, cururu-timbo, stacu and other poisonous plants.]"

⁹² "[...] those who have no material possessions to inherit, no accumulated money to count, and no lengthy calculations to make, either on time or space, certainly have no need for arithmetic."

River, a Macuxi draw with great precision, using some ropes, the course of the river, its affluents and the presence of indigenous villages.

O que faria um europeu criado como um desses tapuias ignorantes da existência da geografia, geometria, hidrografia, etc., se lhe fosse perguntado a respeito de um rio, sua direção, confluente, número de aldeias situadas? Posso responder o que fez um gentio quando a ele foram feitas estas perguntas; tomada uma corda, a estendeu pela terra de forma a representar as voltas do rio principal. À referida corda, lateralmente, da direita e da esquerda foram atados outros tantos cordões quantos eram os afluentes a representar, ajustando-os às distâncias que na sua mente tinham uns dos outros e também de forma a figurar as suas voltas. Finalmente, em cada um dos cordões laterais, deu tantos nós mais ou menos aproximados quantos eram as aldeias dos índios e suas distâncias uma das outras. Assim o problema que se lhe propôs foi resolvido sem ser preciso levantar qualquer carta. Isto me sucedeu no Rio Branco com um gentio da nação Macuxi que casualmente encontrei na povoação do Carmo.⁹³ (Idem, 93)

Finally, the naturalist's personal relationship with natives shows points of ambivalence, both in terms of physical dislocation and material collection. He lived with great frustration when natives ran away or deserted the expedition (especially going down the Madeira River) because they were scared of enemy nations or tired of the harsh conditions in which they worked. In these cases, he agreed that it was right to punish them. Nonetheless, he recognized their suffering and the concern for their own life and for their families' (Carvalho Junior 2000). He also depended on their collaboration for physical dislocation as well as for information on the collection of natural specimens and ethnographic material but the importance of indigenous participation during these journeys is nearly always silenced. The production of a scientific discourse availed itself with indigenous knowledge that was not

⁹³ "What would a European, raised as one of those Tapuias ignorant of the existence of geography, geometry, hydrography, etc., do if he were asked about a river, its direction, confluents, number of villages and where they are situated? I can answer what a native did when he was asked these questions; he took a rope, and stretched it across the land in such a way as to represent the turns of the main river. To that rope, on the two sides, right and left, as many other cords were tied as there were confluents to be represented, adjusting them to the distances which in his mind they had from each other, and also so as to figure their turns. Finally, in each of the side strings, he tied as many knots more or less approximately as there were but villages of Indians and their distances from each other. Thus the problem he set himself was solved without the need to raise any charts. This happened to me in Rio Branco with a tribe of the Macuxi nation that I casually met in the Carmo settlement."

recognized as valid until it was translated into a language molded by Western categories. Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira had two assistants who helped him with the preparation of the material to send to Portugal, Cipriano de Souza and Joseph da Silva. When he asked for them an official, royal acknowledgment and assignment as *naturalist assistants* he was ignored because their knowledge was recognized only if fitted European models and not aside from Western interpretations of natural order.

All these things seem to be in contradiction with each other but, in reality, they all participated to the production of a coherent horizon of meaning (Venturoli 2021) in which natives were constructed as an alterity comprehensible to European mentality – and later in the 19th century, functional to the formulation of a discourse on Brazilian national identity (cfr chapter 3, note 24). If, on the one hand, indigenous peoples were mostly presented as lazy, backwards and sometimes *monstrous* individuals, on the other, the peculiar sensitivity of the naturalist recognized these conditions as *perfectible*. In these terms, the ambivalence of his discourse was not the result of some kind of intellectual confusion but a strategic device to show that natives were ready to be educated and civilized as skilled farmers and good Christians.

To delegate to objects the role of truthful and authentic witnesses of the information reported into written accounts and iconographic representations also served this purpose. As much as descriptions made by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira contained a certain number of details, the classification of objects according to function, raw material or *technological advancement* led to the total levelling of ethnic distinctions in a few, stereotyped physical traits and social behaviors, dissolving a complexity and variety that did not dovetail with the assimilationist intent of the empire.

2.3 Object's life in the museum (1806-1889)

Once in Europe, the objects collected by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira were intended to join the collection of the *Real Gabinete da Ajuda*. When the naturalist returned from the expedition found them in great disorder, in bad preservation conditions and with a lot of labels which had been exchanged (Barbosa du Bocage 1869 quoted in Corrêa Filho 1939). According to Carvalho (2005) some theories affirm that it was Domenico Vandelli himself to mess it up, because of the competition he felt towards his former student.

Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira did not let himself be discouraged and began to reorganize the material preparing a first inventory on the 8th of November 1794. However, the work as researcher in Portugal did not last long because of the bureaucratic job he had to carry out to make a living. Also, the Crown did not show particular interest in publishing his work – probably wanting to keep the information gathered away from other European powers – causing him great intellectual dissatisfaction (Corrêa Filho 1939).

During the following decades several factors led to a dispersion of the collection. A first important event on this line was the promulgation, in 1801, of a royal decree to establish a collaboration between the *Real Museu da Ajuda* and the Museum of Natural History of Coimbra. Thus, in 1806, part of the collection was donated and sent to Coimbra in order to be used to implement the scientific research of the University. The list, titled *Relação dos Produtos Naturais e Industriaes que deste Museu se remetterão para a Universidade de Coimbra em 1806* (documents ARF_26 and ARF_26a at the Archive of the Natural History Museum of Lisbon), counts 321 objects coming from Asia, Africa, India, New Spain (collected during the other *Viagens Philosophicas*) and, above all, Brasil (Amaral et al. 2013). This document is not as detailed as other written by Ferreira which makes it difficult for us today to identify some of the objects. The criteria of organization do not consider the geographical origin but follow the function and manufacturing material fitting in the pragmatic vision described above – what 19th century anthropology would systematize as typological ordering. For example, concerning weapons, he distinguished close combat weapons from throwing weapons recalling the idea that they were used at different levels of social development.

From this moment on, the collection in Lisbon and in Coimbra followed different paths, undergoing further dispersions. The only event they shared was the Napoleonic looting in 1808, during which Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, accompanying general Junot, took away innumerable natural specimens, illustration and ethnographic objects to enrich the Museum of Natural History of Paris (Areia et al. 1991).

In the following parts, we will follow the movements of objects in the two cities until the places where they are currently preserved. In this process, it is possible to observe the influence of the diversification of Natural History in independent disciplines.

In Lisbon, the collection remained at the *Real Museu da Ajuda* until 1836. In that same year, the conditions of incompleteness and disorganization led the queen Maria II to order its dismantlement and the relocation of objects at the Natural History Museum of the *Academia*

das Ciências (Areia et al. 1991), founded in 1779 (Carvalho 2005). However, the space at the Academy was not enough to host the whole collection properly; for this reason, in 1858, part of it was moved to the Polytechnical school for teaching natural-historical disciplines, founded in 1837 (Almaça 2002). In particular, zoological, botanical and mineralogical material was moved. On the contrary, the ethnographic part remained at the Academy⁹⁴. This choice was decisive in saving them from a fire that, in 1978, destroyed a large part of the naturalistic collection (Areia et al. 1991). This separation suggests a change of trend with respect to the perception of natural and social phenomena (always taking into account the arbitrariness of these categories) as part of a single discipline, in favor of a progressive specialization of the different fields of knowledge.

Further dispersions were due to the dispatch, encouraged by consul Antonio Mendonça Vasconcelos de Drummond, of part of the documents to Brazil between 1840 and 1843. His purpose was to publish them and give them back to Portugal, however this never happened and many documents are still preserved at the National Library in Rio de Janeiro (Almaça 2002). Also, in 1892, some objects were lent to the Historical-European exhibition organized in Madrid and a lot of them never returned. In 1905, also the remaining written and iconographic documentation was moved to the zoological section of the Polytechnical school – officially renamed *Museu Bocage* after his founder, Barbosa du Bocage (Idem). Today it is part of the Archive of the Museum of Natural History of Lisbon.

In Coimbra, when part of the collection arrived in 1806, it was placed in the Jesuit college, where the Marquis of Pombal had established the Museum of Natural History. The beginning of the 19th century figures as a period of suspension in the acquisition of new collections because, in 1807, after the Napoleonic invasion, the court had moved to Brazil and no other scientific expeditions were promoted (Amaral et al. 2013). In 1815 Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira died depressed, without having had the chance to finish his research on the collection nor seeing his work published (Goeldi 1982 [1895]). In 1814 he had begun a first catalogue operation, even if the first official inventory is dated 1829⁹⁵. It was written by José Joaquim Barbosa and only part of it is known. Ethnographic material is listed as part of

⁹⁴ The museum of the Academy is today called *Museu Maynense* in honor of father Joseph Mayne (1723-1792) who played an important role in the scientific activities promoted by the Academy (cfr: <http://www.acad-ciencias.pt/academia/museu-maynense> accessed on April 27th 2022).

⁹⁵ *Sala 5ª. Espingardas antigas. Armas e utensílios dos Índios. Madeiras, cascas, raízes e outros productos vegetates*. 1829. Museu da Ciência da Universidade de Coimbra.

room number five where “Espingardas antigas. Armas e utensílios dos Índios. Madeiras, cascas, raízes e outros productos vegetates” were exposed hung at the walls or in display cabinets. In addition to this, there are two more catalogues, one if 1850⁹⁶ and another of 1881⁹⁷. The former was elaborated by Simões de Carvalho – and signed by the director Fortunato Rafael Pereira de Sousa – from 1842 and 1850 and includes all the objects contained in the ten rooms which composed the museum. Ethnographic objects occupied room number eight and were classified as “Antiguidades. Objectos raros e curiosos, tanto da Arte como da Natureza. Producções vegetaes da América e da África” (Martins and Amaral 2011; Amaral et al. 2013). It was in this period that the interest for increasing the collection of the museum was renewed, encouraged by new colonial enterprises undertaken in the remaining colonies as well as the will to have Portugal represented in the Universal Exhibitions which took place in London and in Paris between 1851 and 1889 (Cantinho 2010). During one of these events – Paris, 1878 – the Viscount of Vila Maior, Royal commissioner for Portuguese participation at the exhibition, mentioned for the first time the intention of establishing an anthropological section within the Portuguese Faculty of Philosophy. It is not a chance than, that in 1881 inventory, objects are labelled as ethnographic and described individually as much as collectively, reporting the year of acquisition, the donator and, when known the origin. The official division of the museum in four distinct sections of botany, zoology, mineralogy and anthropology dates back to 1885. A chair in Anthropology was also established, with Bernardino Machado as its responsible until 1907. Among his actions it is worth mentioning the periodical publication of the Journal *O Instituto* with an updated catalogue of the *Museu Ethnographico da Universidade de Coimbra* (Martins and Amaral 2011; Amaral et al. 2013). These catalogues are significant not only because they allow us to get an idea of the increase and transformation of the collection over time but also, and especially, because they reveal the different categories through which objects were classified. It is evident how objects were not already *ethnographic*: they became so towards the end of the 19th century with the birth and institutionalization of Ethnography and Anthropology as independent disciplines (cfr Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991). Before that, non-European material culture was considered like Antiquities, Industrial or rare and

⁹⁶ *Inventário do Gabinete de História Natural*. 1850. Museu da Ciência da Universidade de Coimbra.

⁹⁷ *Inventario dos objectos existentes na colleção ethnographica do Museu em Novembro de 1881*. 1881. Museu da Ciência da Universidade de Coimbra.

curious objects recalling previous notions and the imaginaries they evoked – from wonder to pragmatism. The reinterpretation of objects as *ethnographic* had among other consequences their integration into a discourse on non-European alterity which acquired scientific autonomy with respect to a generic Natural History and, with the same claim to universality as Enlightenment thought, began to identify cultural traits as markers of biological, beyond social, differences. The era of anthropology as handmaiden of the colonial enterprise⁹⁸ had begun; the purposes had not changed – to justify European expansion over other countries and societies – but now it had new tools for scientific legitimation.

Regarding the objects of our interest, those belonging to Kambeba population and preserved in Lisbon did not receive further mention after their collection. As for the Sateré-Mawé oar/club preserved in Coimbra and considered in this research, it is mentioned in two of the three catalogues, those of 1829 and 1881. This object is interesting also to observe the shift in its classification first as oar and later as weapon. In fact, if in 1829 catalogue it is registered as “Remo pequeno do qual a pá hé marchetada de riscos brancos e amarelos [1 un.]”⁹⁹, in 1881 catalogue it appears as “N. 264 - 1 arma ou setro (signal de comando?) de madeira com labores abertos em uma das extremidades”¹⁰⁰¹⁰¹. In addition to the transformation of the theoretical assumptions for the study of extra-European material culture a key role in the whole process of reinterpretation was played by the decontextualization to which they were subjected. In the case of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira’s collection this operation carried out on different levels: the extraction of objects from their original context was followed by the separation from the documentation produced on them since, as we said, was scattered in different institutions. Even if partial and ideologically-conditioned, Ferreira accounts, reports and drawings are the only elements to hint at the context of provenance of objects; to dissociate ones from the others implied a further essentialization of both the meaning of objects and the imaginaries produced with and by them.

I would like to conclude this chapter problematizing the expression used by Emílio Goeldi to describe Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira. The Brazilian scholar defined his predecessor as a

⁹⁸ The expression of the “handmaiden” is taken from the contribution of Cañizarez-Esguerra to the collection of essays “Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, 1500-1800” (2009) curated by Bleichmar, De Vos, Huffine and Sheehan. In the text he refers to science as the handmaiden of Iberian Empires. The definition, however, seemed appropriate also for the contexts described in this paragraph.

⁹⁹ “Small oar of which the blade is inlaid with white and yellow lines [1 unit].”

¹⁰⁰ “N. 264 - 1 weapon or scepter (command signal?) of wood with open ploughing on one end.”

¹⁰¹ This process of resemantization will be completed with the catalogue of 1990 where it is simply recorded as club.

“martyr of science” (1982 [1895]), who sacrificed himself for the necessities of a country without receiving back the proper acknowledgement for his work. It is crucial to contextualize the statement of Goeldi who, as a man of the 19th century, was fully representative of a positivist ideology founded on scientific progress. However, the tendency to glorify these figures as forgotten heroes is still quite common and shows well the myths on which the West feeds itself hiding ambiguities and contradictions. To question this point does not mean to deny the impressiveness of these enterprises, the difficulties faced by explorers and naturalists, their zeal and commitment to something in which they believed; it implies to fully recognize their role as colonial agents whose actions contributed to the construction and perpetration of a system on which many of today’s global issues depend.

Chapter three

Marvelous objects for a powerful Emperor: Johann Natterer and the construction of Brazilian natives in 19th-century Austrian Empire

3.1 Munduruku featherworks at the Weltmuseum Wien

When visitors enter the *Welt Museum* of Vienna (World Museum), they are welcomed by a wide neoclassical hall. The new permanent exhibition was opened in 2017 and is hosted at the first floor behind a dark door. Before crossing it, we can have a quick look from above: painted vaults, marble columns and white parapets are quite impressive and make the room look like a temple. The itinerary of the exhibition is not unilateral; one can decide to do it both ways round. If visitors go left, after walking through a few rooms they reach one entitled *Ein österreichisches Mosaik Brasiliens* (An Austrian Mosaic of Brazil). In it is impossible not to be captured by the aesthetical impact of the first case, which stands in front of people like a versicolored wall. Behind the glass, several feather ornaments – red, yellow, blue and black headdresses, arm and leg bands, belts, scepters – elegantly hang on a white background. In the middle, a mummified head (fig. 40). All of them belong to Munduruku people, an indigenous group living in the region of the Tapajós River (State of Pará, Brazil) and were collected between 1819 and 1836 by the Austrian Naturalist Johann Natterer.

By getting closer to the case, it is possible to read the short description that accompanies them. Placed on the left side it states:

From Warriors to Political Actors. Indigenous groups experienced the colonial era as marked by turmoil and suppression. In rare cases and for short periods, some of them were able to benefit from these conditions. In the early 19th century, the Munduruku were feared as head-hunters dominating the area between Rio Tapajós and Rio Madeira, and joined colonial rulers in their campaign against allegedly common enemies to “pacify” the region. As they became part of the colonial structures and missionary work, the Munduruku gave up both warfare and head-hunting. In consequence, their warrior rituals and related featherwork disappeared as well. In the 20th century, the Munduruku were not recognized as part of the rural Amazonian population anymore. Nevertheless, they entered the political arena and vehemently opposed large-scale energy projects threatening their lands in the early 21st century. “Every day nature gets farther away and hides itself from us because we are destroying it. Such a precious treasure, and people want to turn it into business. How far will they go

with this destruction?” (Exhibition text 2017; quotation from a letter by Munduruku political leaders to the Brazilian government 2013)

Moving rightwards while admiring the beauty of artifacts visitors reach the other side of the case, where some more texts – two quotations and objects’ labels – wait to be read:

Head-Hunting and Feather Decoration.

“In the past [we] the Munduruku were feared for [our] fame in the art of group warfare and we had effective strategies for attacking our enemies. We did not easily give up the pursuit of our enemies and our trophies were human heads that symbolized power. [We] left no one alive except the children whom we took back to our villages, whom we adopted and incorporated into our clans and treated as kin.” (Quotation from a letter by Munduruku political leaders to the Brazilian government 2013)

“Munduruku warriors wore festive costumes made of feathers for the major ritual cycle dedicated to head-hunting. The head trophy was a resting place of vital powers that could only be generated by the male warrior society. It was particularly the ritual presence of the killer and owner of the head that ensured [...] the increase of wild game.” (Wolfgang Kapfhammer, ethnologist, 2012)

These objects, along with a few others not exposed, are going to be the protagonists of this chapter. As for those treated in the previous part, their choice is not accidental but depending on two main, interconnected reasons. On the one hand, as we saw in the first chapter, feather objects have been hegemonically assigned the role of evoking stereotypical images of Brazilian natives. During the 19th and 20th century, Munduruku feather works were among the most valued and desired for their beauty and supposedly representativeness of indigenous culture – some of them, for example, explicitly reminded feather capes and crowns described by first chroniclers (§1.1); also, they elicited a similar feeling of wonder and condensed admiration and disdain (§1.3). The naturalist who collected those preserved in Vienna was simultaneously amazed by their aesthetical appearance and upset by the *barbaric* context of their use: head-hunting ceremony (§3.2.2). However, as we could observe when analyzing Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira’s view of natives (§2.2.2), attitudes that might seem contradictory to us were part of a single, coherent operation of construction of non-European alterity. In fact, the elements that made up the different discourses were arranged into an

interpretive framework that always distanced the *object of representation* from the Eurocentric observer as an exotic, unusual, abnormal entity that had to conform to the model of Western civilization or disappear. To this extent, to approach feather works with a contemporary, critical look, might help us to deconstruct classical, stereotypical views and the imaginaries they produced. Also, like for the Kambeba and the Sateré-Mawé, I was successful in establishing a dialogue with present Munduruku people in order to discuss about alternative perspectives, current meanings and appropriate ways of treating objects inside and outside the museum. On these aspects we will focus in chapter five. Here, I will analyze Munduruku feather works in such a way to reveal how the above-mentioned attitude characterized the geo-political context of their collection as well as the discourse produced by Johann Natterer on indigenous people. Through the analysis of the documentation produced during the Austrian expedition and the subsequent process of museological recontextualization, our purpose is to show the role that objects played in the construction, consolidation and perpetration of a homogenizing stereotype on Brazilian natives – in this case more polarized towards their dangerousness and savagery (§3.2, §3.3).

Before focusing on the context of our interest though, it is important to briefly summarize the historical information on Munduruku people, for it greatly influenced the perception of this group in the popular imaginary.

3.1.1 Munduruku: a brief historical overview

Historical information on Munduruku people is quite abundant because of the strong impact that contact with them had on colonial system, first in terms of conflict and later of alliance.

The Munduruku are an ethnic group of Tupi origins who live among the current states of Pará, Amazonas and Mato Grosso. They call themselves *Wuyjuyu*, while the ethnonym Munduruku, which means red ants, was probably attributed by their enemies because of their mass attacks during war expeditions (Ramos 2009; Munduruku 2014; Loures 2017).

They began to appear in colonial documentation only around the half of the 18th century. In 1742, a people called Manurucûs is mentioned in a document titled *Breve Noticia do Rio Topajôs* (Rocha 2017). A few years later, in 1768, Father José Monteiro de Noronha, General Vicary of Negro River, identified a group of “Maturucu” along the Maués river, in the region of the Madeira River (Horton 1948; Santos 1995): “Neste furo [Arariá] desembocam os rios

Abacaxis, Canumá e Maué, o qual é habitado de muito gentio, cujas nações são: sapupé, comani, aitouariá, acaraiuará, brauará, uarupá, maturucu, curitiá¹“ (Noronha 1862, 27). Significant is also the reference of Francisco Xavier Ribeiro de Sampaio who, in his account² reports what follows:

Os Muturicûs, que de quatro annos a esta parte hostilizão as nossas povoações do rio Tapajóz, trazem comsigo as mulheres, as quaes na ocazião do conflicto, lhes subministrão as frechas, como se observou no combate, que coma quella belicozissima nação teve o anno passado o commandanteda fortaleza daquelle rio, no qual sustentárão valerosamente o fogo que se lhes fez por um largo espaço de tempo.³ [...] (Sampaio 1985, 82)

Sampaio is actually the first to mention the dimension of warfare and hostility for which the Mundurucu soon turned one of the most mentioned and feared populations of the Amazonian region (Santos 1995).

Their first, and most consistent, settlements – called *Malocas das Campinas* – were identified in the basin of the Upper Tapajós, along rivers such as the Tapajós, rio Cururu, rio das Tropas, rio Cabitutu as well as in the lower part of the Madeira River, along rio Maué-Assú, rio Canomá and rio Abacaschi (Tocantins 1877; Barbosa Rodrigues 1882; Murphy and Murphy 1950; Spix and Martius 2017). However, earlier accounts, reports and administrative correspondence let it clear how, in reality, they moved throughout a much larger territory, which extended from the area included among the Amazon, the Madeira and the Tapajós and the Juruena rivers, until the basins of the Xingu and the Tocantins rivers (fig. 41). In a letter dated 29th of August 1793 the Governor of Pará (1790-1803), Francisco de Souza Coutinho, wrote to the Governor of Rio Negro, Manoel da Gama Lobo D’Almada: “Acabo agora de receber do Commandante de Borba hua Carta em que me participa os insultos, que àquelles Moradores tem cauzado o Gentio Mondurucú [...] Estes mesmos tem havido nesta Capitania; no Xingú, em Portel, Melgaço, e athe Oeyras, em Tocantins, e ha dias até o Mujú

¹ “In this hole [Arariá] flows the rivers Abacaxis, Canumá and Maué, which is inhabited by many peoples, whose nations are: sapupé, comani, aitouariá, acaraiuará, brauará, uarupá, maturucu, curitiá.”

² The original title of the account is: *Diário de uma viagem que em visita, e correição das povoações da capitania de S. José do Rio Negro fez o ouvidor e intendente geral da mesma, Fco. Xavier Ribeiro de Sampaio, nos annos de 1774 e 1775.*

³ “The Muturicûs, who for four years now have been harassing our villages on the Tapajóz River, bring with them their women that, during the conflict, provide them with arrows, as it was observed in the combat that the commander of the fortress of that river had with that belligerent nation last year, in which they bravely sustained the fire made against them for a long time.”

tem descido cometendo as suas costumadas atrocidades”⁴ (Carta do Governador do Pará Francisco de Souza Coutinho ao Governador do Rio Negro, Manoel da Gama Lobo d’Almada. Pará, 29 de agosto de 1793, mentioned in Santos 1995, 41).

At the base of these dislocations laid migration processes related both to the demographic alterations of regions already hit by colonial invasion and to warrior expeditions. Regarding the first point, by the time of the encounter between Portuguese and Munduruku, it is worth remembering that European colonial enterprise was concentrated on frontier demarcation and colonization of the Amazon (cfr §1.2 and §2.2.1) and lands around the Tapajós basin were still superficially known. While missions and settlements were being established in the current area of Santarém⁵ – where the Tapajós flows into the Amazon River – first explorations were carried out on its southern affluences, the Arinos and Juruena rivers: the first journey was undertaken by João de Souza Azevedo and Pascoal Arruda in 1745 (Santos 1995; Spix and Martius 2017). However, war expeditions were the major reason which made the Munduruku cover such large distances. Warfare among Amazonian populations was not something introduced with European invasion. Munduruku were already known for fiercely fighting against the populations with whom they shared the region, especially the Maués, the Mura and the Parintintins⁶. When Europeans arrived, they were simply absorbed into these socio-political dynamics and the pressure they exerted for territorial occupation led to a significant increase in conflict (Menéndez 1992). For this reason, Munduruku attacks became a recurring information in letters exchanged by colonial administrators about the management of the region. On the 17th of August 1788 Martinho de Souza Albuquerque, Governor of Pará (1783-1790) wrote to the Portuguese Minister Martinho de Mello e Castro:

Entre as Naçoens Gentias, q. aqui temos próximas a Nós, são oz Mondurucúz aquelles que se fazem presentemente mais terriveis, tanto em razão do seu grande numero, como da sua illimitada barbaridade. Estes homens habitantes no Certão do Rio Tapajóz, não só descem

⁴ “I have just received from the Commander of Borba a letter in which he tells me of the insults that the Mondurucú people have caused to those inhabitants [...] They have been in this Capitania; in Xingú, Portel, Melgaço, and even Oeyras, in Tocantins, and some days even in the Mujú they have been committing their usual atrocities.”

⁵ In 1661 Father Antonio Viera had established the “aldeia dos Tapajós” which turned into Villa de Santarém after the enactment of Pombaline legislation. Its population was mainly composed by the ethnic group of Tapajósos, who remained majoritarian in the region until the arrival of Munduruku towards the 18th century (Barbosa Rodrigues 1875).

⁶ We already spoke of the alliance-warfare dynamic characteristic of Tupi groups in chapter one.

repetidas vezes ás suas margens a encontrar as nossas Canoas, mas adiantado-se cada dia nos seos cursos, tem chegado por ultimo a inquietar, e a attacar os moradores daquelles districtos dentro mesmo dos seos sitios, e roças, robando e matando tudo quanto encontrão, sem reserva, nem piedade. [...] Elles não attendem nem a idade, nem ao sexo, só sim ao maior numero de victimas, para augmentarem com ellas o seu triunfo, e executarem aquella deshumanidade, que eu ia ja fiz vêr a V.Exa.nas cabeças, que lhe remeti de alguns infelizes, por elles mortos, e que vinhão preparadas e conservadas para ornato horrorozos das suas Cazas.⁷ (Carta do Governador do Pará, Martinho de Souza Albuquerque ao Ministro dos Negócios Ultramarinos, Martinho de Mello e Castro. Pará, 17 de agosto de 1788, mentioned in Santos 1995, 36-37)

Some years later, Francisco de Souza Coutinho, successor of Martinho de Souza Albuquerque as Governor of Pará, pointed out the danger represented by Munduruku for colonial settlements:

Desde todo o tempo de minha existencia nesse Governo tem sido sucessivas e continuas as representaçoens destes Moradores, e as Participaçoens dos Commandantes e Directores de diversos Districtos sobre os insultos e as atrocidades, que tem perpetrador os Gentios Mondurucus, e que já havião principiados em tempo de meu predecessor. [...] No anno passado pelo verão, que he o seu tempo, por todas as partes fomos investidos: em Borba puzerão os Moradores Brancos e Indios em termos de não poderem arredar um passo fora da Villa sem que logo fossem victimas desgraçadas da sua tirania, que nem aos Mortos perdôa, porque desses mesmos cortão as Cabeças para depois de preparadasa seu modo as conservão como trofeos de suas victorias.⁸ (Carta do Governador do Pará, Francisco de Souza Coutinho,

⁷ “Among the Nations of *Gentios* near us, the Mondurucuz are currently the most terrible, both because of their large number and their unlimited barbarity. These men, who live in the Innerlad of the Tapajóz River, not only repeatedly descend to its banks to meet our Canoes, but also advance every day in their courses, and have finally come to disturb and attack the inhabitants of these districts, even in their own places and farms, robbing and killing everything they find, without reserve or pity. [...] They do not pay attention to age or sex, but to the largest number of victims, to increase with them their triumph, and perform that inhumanity, which I have already made you see in the heads, which I sent you some unfortunate ones, killed by them, and that were prepared and preserved for horrific ornament of their Houses.”

⁸ “Since the entire time of my existence in that Government there have been successive and continuous representations from these inhabitants, and reports from Commanders and Directors of various districts about the insults and atrocities perpetrated by the Mondurucus people, which had already begun in the time of my predecessor. [...] Last year during the summer, which is their time, everywhere we were invested: in Borba they put the White and Indian inhabitants in such a way that they could not take a step outside the Villa without being disgraced victims of their tyranny, which not even the Dead are forgiven, because they cut the heads of the dead and after prepared in their own way, they keep them as trophies of their victories.”

ao Ministro dos Negócios Ultramarinos, Martinhode Mello e Castro, 15 de Agosto de 1794, mentioned in Santos 1995, 56)

We find here a first reference to one of the most discussed issues about Munduruku war culture, that is to say, the decapitation of their enemies and the mummification of their heads. However, it is necessary to wait until late 19th-century accounts to find detailed descriptions on this practice and its cultural and symbolic meaning (cfr §3.2.2).

Munduruku resistance to Portuguese attempts to penetrate their territory and enslave their inhabitants were other concerns of colonial administrators. Barbosa Rodrigues reports of an episode occurred in 1773 in which an expedition sent to the Upper Tapajós not only was forced back but it was followed by a contingent of munduruku warriors up to Santarém, where soldiers had to refuge and call a truce.

Os portuguezes acostumados a escravisar todos os povos com quem tratavam, com o fim de satisfazer á ambição que lhesé innacila, fizeram em 1773 uma expedição ao Alto Tapajós, chegando até este rio. Ahi fizeram propostas de compra de escravos, e como os Mundurucus não quizessem acceder á proposta, romperam em hostilidades, com o fim de fazerem prisioneiros, que depois seriam captivos. Os Mundurucus pegaram então em armas e pela numerosa população fizeram tal resistência, que obrigou a tropa portuguéza a debandar pelo rio abaixo, tendo-lhes faltado munições. Os indios então, sem perda de tempo, puzeram-se no encalço dos portuguezes e vieram devastando tudo quanto encontraram, levando a logo e flecha tudo, até o forte de Santarém onde se refugiou a tropa, que ficou sitiada por elles.

Intrépidos como eram os Mundurucus, guerreiros temidos em todo o valle do Tapajós, comtudo não escalaram o forte, só conservaram em duro sitio os portuguezes, que, julgaram mais acertado propor paz, sendo aceita pelos naturaes. Encontrei uma testemunha deste facto na ilha do Tracua, em casa do Sr. Silverio de Albuquerque Aguiar. É uma velha tapuya, hoje cega, de cabellos todos brancos, que conta talvez mais de cento e quarenta annos, conservando todavia as suas faculdades. Diz ella que estava então em Alter do Chão, d'onde é filha, quando elles passaram devastando tudo. Que era tal o terror que só o nome de mundurucú inspirava, que todos fugiam abandonando o que possuíam.⁹ (1875, 120-121)

⁹ “Portuguese, who are accustomed to enslave all peoples with whom they dealt, in 1773, made an expedition to the upper Tapajós, in order to satisfy their innate ambition, and reached the river. There they made proposals for the purchase of slaves and as the Mundurucus did not want to adhere to the proposal, they broke out in hostilities, in order to take prisoners, who would later be captives. The Mundurucus took up arms and by their large population made such resistance that they forced the Portuguese troops to stampede down the river,

The feeling of fear was also common among those indigenous groups who were victims of warrior expeditions. By the half of the 18th century innumerable populations who appeared in previous accounts had already disappeared, annihilated or assimilated by Munduruku expansion – it is the case of the Tapajósos, who were majoritarian in the area of the Lower Tapajós River but of whom, by the time Spix and Martius visited the region between 1817 and 1819, there was no longer any sign (Barbosa Rodrigues 1875; Spix and Martius 2017). To escape persecutions, other groups spontaneously moved into missions and villas where they enjoyed a little bit of extra protection. As we saw in chapter one, political and military relationships did not radically oppose Europeans to natives but were transversal, creating complex interactions and making colonial settlements places which, in some cases, offered the possibility to survive.

Munduruku represented a problem to the establishment of colonial rule because they obstructed agricultural activities limiting the economic development of the region (Santos 1995). An extract of one of the above-mentioned letters is quite eloquent on this point:

Os referidos Mondurucúz nas suas Barbaras Expediçoens, fui informado de haverem ultimamente cauzado bastante estrago no territorio da Vila de Alter do Chão, não só nas roças dos seos Moradores, que todas já tem desemparados por cauza destes Inimigos, mas ainda mesmo nas Feitorias aonde os Indios desta Povoação, se achavão a colher as Drogas do Certão, cujas Feitorias forão obrigadas a largar com pêrda de algumas pessoas, que o Gentio matarão, e de toda a farinha, que tinham para o seu sustento, recolhendo-se á Villa sem negocio algum, e nas circunstancias de dezertarem dela, aconservar-se o mesmo Inimigo na pequena distancia, em que se acha, de sorte que algumas vezes estão ouvindoo toque das suas buzinas, e outros instrumentos de que uzão estes Barbaros.¹⁰ (Carta do Governador do Pará,

running out of ammunition. The Indians then, without wasting time, put themselves in pursuit of the Portuguese and came devastating everything they found, taking everything by arrow, until the fort of Santarem where the troop took refuge, which was besieged by them. The Mundurucus were very intrepid, they were feared warriors throughout the Tapajós valley, but they did not climb the fort and they only kept the Portuguese in a hard place, who thought it best to propose peace, which was accepted by the natives. I found a witness to this fact on the island of Tracuá, in the house of Mr. Silverio de Albuquerque Aguiar. She is an old tapuya, now blind, with white hair, perhaps more than one hundred and forty years old, but still retaining her faculties. She says that she was then in Alter do Chão, where she comes from, when they passed by and devastated everything. The terror that only the name mundurucú inspired was so great that everyone fled, abandoning everything they owned.”

¹⁰ “I was informed that the Mondurucuz, in their Barbarous Expeditions, have lately caused a lot of damage in the territory of the Village of Alter do Chão, not only in the plantations of its inhabitants, all of which have been destroyed because of these enemies, but also in the trading posts where the Indians of this village used to

Martinho de Souza Albuquerque ao Ministro dos Negócios Ultramarinos, Martinho de Mello e Castro. Pará, 17 de agosto de 1788, mentioned in Santos 1995, 36-37)

At the beginning of the 1790s, Portuguese could no longer withstand the conflict situation and began a negotiation to establish a peace with the Munduruku and turn them into allies. Their purpose was not only to put an end to war expeditions but to exploit their strength to subject, by reduction or extermination, indigenous groups still considered hostile. The proposal to stop fighting in favor of an alliance came from the Governor of Rio Negro, Manoel da Gama Lobo D'Almada, as it appears from a series of letters addressed to Francisco de Souza Coutinho:

Illmo.e Exmo. Sr. = Sobre o que V.Ex.a me diz em Carta de 29 de Agosto proximo passado a respeito de se dever rebater os insultos do Mondorucú, farei o que me for possível com as poucas forças que tenho, o que me faz sempre recear o sucesso, que a não ser feliz pode ter consequencias desagradaveis: Nestes termos antes de passar abater o dito Gentio he o meu projecto conforme tinha já imaginado, e me dispunha a executar, ver se posso reduzir estes barbaros á mesma tranquillidade em que vivemos com os Muras. E se depois deste passo de moderação elles se não quizerem reduzir á paz que lhes offereço, e continuarem obstinadamente nas suas costumadas barbaridades, pertendo ver se posso afugenta-los para longe de nós, para que nos deixem algum tempo.¹¹ (Carta do Governador do Rio Negro, Manoel da Gama Lobo D'Almada, ao Governador do Pará. Fortaleza da Barra do Rio Negro, 23 de novembro de 1793, mentioned in Santos 1995, 47)

In order to do this, he attracted two Munduruku by the *vila* and gave them gifts and special treatment, so that once they would go back to their people, they would convince them of Portuguese good intentions (Leopoldi 2007).

collect the drugs of the "Sertão"; finding the village with nothing left, and in the circumstances to desert it, the same enemy keeps a short distance away, so much so that sometimes the sound of their horns and other instruments used by these barbarians can be heard."

¹¹ "Your Excellency = Regarding what you tell me in your letter of August 29 about the necessity of countering the insults of the Mondorocú, I will do what I can with the little strength I have, which always makes me fear success, which if it is not happy may have unpleasant consequences: in these terms, before I go to massacre the said people, it is my plan, as I had already imagined and was ready to execute, to see if I can reduce these barbarians to the same tranquility in which we live with the Mura. And if after this step of restraint, they are not willing to reduce themselves to the peace I offer them, and stubbornly continue in their usual barbarities, I would like to see if I can remove them from us, so that they will leave us for a while."

Ill.mo e Exmo. Snr. – Dou parte a V. Ex.^a que he Deus Servido hir abençoando as pacificas disposiçoens de que Sua Divina Misericordia me inspirou para pacificar o feroz Gentio Mondorucú, porque tendo eu mandado encontrar os ditos Barbaros com ordem de os não matarem senão em propria defeza por ser o meu empenho nesta diligencia e todas as minhas recommendaçoens que me trouxesse algumas pessoas vivas a quem eu podesse praticar com dadiva e bom tratamento para que vivessem connosco em paz; encarregado eu desta importante diligencia ao Tenente Leonardo José Ferreira de conhecido valor e acordo, resulto trazerem dous Mondorucús, hum dos quaes que sempre viveu ferido em huma perna, o mandei curar com tanto cuidado, que satisfeitos elles do bom tratamento que receberam e dando-lhe eu uns insignificantes, as adequados presentes, de que estes miseraveis muito se satisfazem, os despedi para suas terras [...]. Passados quatro mezes que daqui tinham sido despedidos, me mandarão, como me tinham promettido, outros Parentes seus a tratarem comigo [...] Dizem abertamente que se conservarão pacíficos commigo e promettem restituir-me alguas pessoas nossas que nos tem apanhado, chegando athe a dizerem que não terão duvida em vierem fazer povoaçoens aonde eu lhes destinar, mas sobre esta ultima promessa não faço ainda muita firmeza.¹² (Carta do Governador do Rio Negro, Manoel da Gama Lobo D'Almada, ao Ministro dos Negócios Ultramarinos, Martinhode Mello e Castro, em Lisboa. Fortaleza da Barra do Rio Negro, 21 de novembro de 1794, mentioned in Santos 1995, 63-64)

Moreover, he exhorted the Governor of Pará to be patient and keep a gentle attitude towards them “porque qualquer constrangimento os fará desconfiar, o que he preciso evitar porque não tornem para o mato aonde nada lhes falta ao seu modo de viver. [...] He preciso, torno a dizer, deixar passar mais tempo para que acabem de se domesticar; pois Tapuyas Silvestres

¹² “Most Illustrious and Most Excellent Sir - I declare to Your Excellency that God has served to bless the peaceful arrangements that His Divine Mercy has inspired me to pacify the ferocious Gentile Mondorucú, for, having ordered me to find the said Barbaros with orders not to kill them except in defense, and thanks to my efforts in this diligence and all my recommendations, I brought back some living people whom I was able to treat with kindness and good treatment so that they could live with us in peace. Entrusted with this important diligence by Lieutenant Leonardo José Ferreira of known valor and agreement, I brought two Mondorucús, one of whom had always lived wounded in one leg, and had him treated with such care until he was satisfied with the good treatment received, and giving them some insignificant, adequate gifts, with which these wretches are very pleased, I sent them back to their lands [...]. Four months after they were sent away from here, they sent me, as they had promised, other relatives to deal with me [...] They say openly that they will remain peaceful with me and promise to return to me some of our people that they took from us, saying also that they will have no doubt in coming to make villages where I will destine them, but on this last promise I do not yet make much firmness.”

não se levão como os mais homens que entendem a razão”¹³ (Carta do Governador do Rio Negro, Manoel da Gama Lobo D’Almada ao Governador do Pará. Fortaleza da Barra do Rio Negro. 15 de julho de 1795, mentioned in Santos 1995, 80).

Officially started in 1795, the process of pacification lasted until 1803 with the foundation of the first aldeia, “Santa Cruz, sete dias de viagem acima de Santarém, no Tapajós”¹⁴ (Spix and Martius 2017, 425-426). The dislocation of an increasing number of Munduruku down the river, closer to Portuguese settlements, as well as the foundation of non-indigenous villages in the areas inhabited by the Munduruku led to the establishment of constant trade relationships. Manioc flour, *drogas do sertão* as well as workforce were exchanged for things such as cachaça, clothes and metal tools in a flow of initial mutual dependance which would soon disbalance against natives (Leopoldi 2007; Schlothauer 2012-2013).

Another event which contributed significantly to the production of further information on the Munduruku was the opening of Brazilian ports after the move of the Portuguese court in 1807 (§3.2.1) (Loures 2017). Explorers, missionaries, colonial officers and naturalists from other European powers began to travel far and wide throughout Amazonian territories, reporting information about the populations who lived there and giving more attention to ethnographic details. Among the others it is worth mentioning Ayres de Casal’s *Corographia Brasilica* (1976 [1817]), in which he circumscribed and denominated the area among the Amazon, the Tapajós, the Juruena and the Madeira rivers as “Mundurukânia” to indicate the absolute predominance of that group over the others – Jumas, Maués, Pamas, Parintintins, Muras, Andiras e Ararás (mentioned in Tocantins 1877). Also Spix and Martius’ account *Reisen in Brasil* (2017 [1817-1819]) is of key importance. The two German naturalists crossed Brazil between 1817 and 1819¹⁵ reporting maybe the first relevant ethnographic information about Munduruku of the Tapajós and Canumá rivers where they visited respectively a *maloca* and a mission. Among the groups which already had contact with Europeans, they define them as one of the “most powerful and peculiar tribes of the entire Rio Negro Province, [...] still in their primitive state” (2017: 395, 139), free and who preserve their pre-contact authenticity. One of the traits they give most emphasis is, on the go of previous reports, the

¹³ “[...] because any constraint will make them suspicious, which we must avoid, lest they return to the forest, where they lack nothing in their way of life. [...] It is necessary, I repeat, more time to pass for them be fully domesticated; for Wild Tapuyas are not to be treated like the other men who understand reason.”

¹⁴ “[...] Santa Cruz, seven-day trip above Santarem on the Tapajós.”

¹⁵ They left Europe with the same expedition that brought also Johann Natterer to Brazil (cfr §3.2.1).

warrior tradition to which everything seems to be subordinate and functional. Descriptions such as those dedicated to Mundurucu physical appearance and to malocas are quite eloquent:

They were tall people (several were six and a half feet tall), broad-chested, strongly muscled, often very light-colored, with broad, well pronounced features, and, though affable, coarse, shiny black hair, cut short over the forehead, and the whole body tattooed with fine lines. One wonders at the thoroughness with which the painful beautification is practiced from head to toe. Probably the mundurucu want, with this disfiguration, to make their appearance warlike and terrible, because for them, more than for most tribes, war is a pleasant occupation; everything, from the beginning, seems calculated to make them assert themselves in war. [...] The surroundings of the huts also had a warlike aspect: some mummified skulls of enemies were stuck on poles, and around the huts, further inland, many skeletons of jaguars, coatis, bush-pigs, etc. were exposed. Today, the Mundurucus are the Spartans among the wild Indians of northern Brazil. (2017, 398-401)

Unlike colonial administrators' correspondence, the greater scientific curiosity of these and later descriptions of the 19th century gave to the representations produced on Mundurucu an aura of supposed truth and objectivity when binding them to the dimensions of war and ferocity. In reality, the gaze of European naturalists was far from being neutral and instituted specific negative value judgments useful to legitimize the identification of natives in the category of barbarian and, consequently, the need and right to civilize them. A good example is the definition of Mundurucu attacks – before the process of pacification – as “insultos”, a word with a highly negative moral connotation, or the description of their trophies as “horrible”, emphasizing the feeling of disgust.

At the beginning of the 19th century, information on feather ornaments is still scarce. The first reference is probably the drawing made during the *Viagem Filosófica* of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira (fig. 42), which however is not accompanied by any further notes; Spix and Martius rapidly mention their use when they speak about their arrival to one of their *malocas* and “the Indians [...] came out of their large conical huts and came dancing towards us: a feather headdress on their heads, long ribbons of feathers hanging down their backs and brandishing with their hands a cylindrical feather scepter” (2017, 398). For more detailed descriptions and illustrations it is necessary look at the documentation produced

from the 1850s onwards. I will focus on it later in this chapter (§3.3) since, as already mentioned, in this section the interest is to analyze the information that might have had an influence on Johann Natterer vision. In any case, Munduruku material culture was associated to warfare just for belonging to a population with such reputation. Along the impressiveness of their aesthetic beauty and refined technique, feather ornaments evoked revulsion for a savage attitude. However, it was precisely the intertwining between these two dimensions which made them so desirable. They conferred prestige to who possessed them because, on the one hand, they arouse wonder in the observers, while on the other, they confirmed Western military dominion on such a feared people and strengthened Austrian Empire's power in Europe. Also, their inclusion in a scientific discourse turned them into devices for promoting the idea that indigenous people had to be civilized or exterminated for advancing the progress of human species. In the following section, we will see more in detail how these processes articulated.

3.2 The Austrian Expedition

The journey of Johann Natterer to Brazil began on the 9th of April 1817, when two Austrian frigates – the Austria and the Augusta – set sail from Trieste. They arrived in Rio de Janeiro respectively between July and November 1817, passing through the Mediterranean, the Strait of Gibraltar and the Madeira Islands. The expedition, promoted by emperor Francis I and organized by the Prince of Metternich, Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, was made up of several members, each of whom specialized in a different field of, or adjacent to, Natural History: Johann Cristoph Mikan, doctor and botanist; Johann Emmanuel Pohl, doctor and mineralogist; Johann Natterer, zoologist and assistant at the Royal and Imperial Natural History Cabinet; Heinrich Wilhelm Schott, gardener; Dominik Sochor, hunter; Thomas Ender, landscapist; and Johann Burchberger, plants' drawer. Two German naturalists joined them, Johann Baptist Ritter von Spix and Carl Friederich Philipp von Martius, commissioned to collect information as well as naturalist and ethnographic material on behalf of the King of Bavaria (Schreibers 1969). Who first arrived, fueled the expectation and imaginary of what the expedition would find in Brazil which, until a few years earlier, had been accessible only to Portuguese. In a letter dated 15th of August 1817 Dr. Mikan writes:

The region there is of romantic beauty, but of impenetrable rusticity. The main paved road passing through here goes all the way to Minas Gerais; any deviation from the royal road or the rare existing paths leads to a tangle of all sorts of vegetation, with the risk of getting hurt by thorny mimosas or palm trees who penetrate them. Over the mountains covered with dense vegetation, from time to time grotesquely confusing rocks appear, the climbing of which requires twenty times more time and effort than would be necessary in our country to climb to the same height. If this is already the case in the inhabited surroundings of Rio de Janeiro, what will become of our future trips to the interior! Yet, how attractive to an exploring naturalist are these wild and typical regions! Everywhere the surprising, superabundant variety of vegetation that no winter abates the variety of multicolored birds, toucans, parrots and magnificent butterflies! [...] With impatience, therefore, I await my companions Natterer and Schott and the plant painter Burchberger, who will arrive with the ship *Augusta*. (Letter of Dr. Mikan, August 15th 1817, mentioned in Schreibers 1969, 212)

Once in Brazil, the expedition's members split up and continued independently to explore different regions. From the report published by Karl von Schreibers – director of the Imperial and Royal Cabinet of Natural History (Feest 1980) – in 1820, we know that Schott moved throughout the region of Rio de Janeiro, while a map (fig. 43) stored in the Archive of the *Welt Museum* in Vienna shows the journeys of two other participants, Johann Emmanuel Pohl and Johann Natterer. The former “undertook an extensive trip through the provinces of Minas Gerais and Goiás [...]” and up to the Tocantins River “from September 1818 and February 1821” (Feest 2012, 23) when he was ordered to return to Austria together with his companions because of the political tensions related to independence movements (cfr §3.2.1) (Schmutzer 2012; Santos 2018). Johann Natterer was the only one who succeeded in remaining in Brazil and carrying out a much longer journey across the regions of Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Goiás, Mato Grosso, Cuiabá, up to the Madeira, Negro, Branco and Amazon Rivers and finally reaching Belém in 1835 – where the revolt of the *Cabanagem*¹⁶ forced him to sail back to Europe. The objects of our interest were collected during this

¹⁶ The *Cabanagem* was a revolution which took place between 1835 and 1840. It exploded in Belém, capital of the State of Pará, but soon expanded to much of the Amazonian region, involving different actors and turning into an international movement. The name *Cabanagem* comes from its protagonists, the *cabanos*, people of low social background who lived in houses covered with palm leaves. Main target of this revolt were rich, white people, in particular Portuguese, who were accused of exploiting, subjugating and do not respect the rights of Amazonian population – composed by natives, mestiços and black people. It was led by Félix Clemente Antonio Malcher and supported by a political discourse which used patriotism to unite the *cabanos* against Europeans (cfr. Ricci 2006).

period together with a huge other amount of material; all over the years of his expedition he managed to send to Vienna “1.146 mammals, 12.293 birds, 1.678 amphibia, 1.621 fish, 32.825 insects, 409 crustaceans, 951 shellfish, 73 mollusks, 1.729 containers of fluid-preserved intestinal worms, 242 seeds, 430 minerals, 138 wood samples, 216 coins and 192 skulls” (Augustat 2012: 16) as well as 1.492 ethnographic objects¹⁷.

In the following pages, I will trace over the political-economic context which created the conditions to realize such journey in order to reflect critically on the production of scientific knowledge, and the correlated imaginaries, not as something objective and neutral but related to specific needs. Useful to this purpose is also the analysis of the documentation produced by Johann Natterer and the discourse on Brazilian natives which emerges. Although significantly fewer in number than that of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira (Johann Natterer did not have a great attitude for writing and a series of subsequent accidents caused its destruction), it is sufficient to observe the different perspective through which the Austrian naturalist built indigenous otherness.

3.2.1 Behind the scenes of the expedition

To tell about the Austrian expedition after recounting the Viagem Filosófica of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira is particularly interesting and useful for this work because it makes one notice how scientific enterprises were influenced by the political and economic circumstances to which they were meant to serve. Natterer visited Brazil only 34 years after Rodrigues Ferreira, however, not only he had different patrons but due to events such as the French Revolution, the crisis and restoration of Ancient Regime and Napoleonic invasions, global geo-political balances were quite changed. It was precisely these transformations that made the realization of the expedition possible.

The journey was conceived as an accompaniment to the move to Brazil of Archduchess Leopoldina, daughter of the Austrian Emperor Franz I, after she was given in marriage to Dom Pedro, son of King João VI and heir to the Portuguese Crown (Augustat 2012). As it was common for the time, this union was the result of a specific strategy which, through the union of the Bragança and Habsburg lineages, aimed at combining the political need of

¹⁷ These data are reported in a document preserved at the Archive of the Natural History Museum titled *Total Übersicht des Gehaltes aller aus Brasilien während den Jahren 1817 bis 1831 von den K:K: Naturforschern eingesickhten Sendungen* and compiled by Josef Natterer.

Portugal of sealing alliances helpful to maintain and reinforce its Monarchy with Austrian economic and scientific ambitions, geared towards the consolidation of its role as European leading power. The events which brought to its realization are part of a complex and articulated context which I will try to briefly summarize.

As already outlined in the previous chapter, 18th-century Portuguese Crown was facing a situation of political and economic difficulty related to the general crisis of the Ancient Regime (Novais 2019). The policies promoted by the Marquis of Pombal and his successor did not succeed in making the country regain its autonomy from Great Britain, whose importance was growing preponderantly over the Atlantic space. On the contrary, the alliance between Portugal and England increasingly resembled a relationship of vassalage determined by the imposition of a series of commercial exclusivity clauses in exchange for military and political protection from the interests of stronger European powers. The very maintenance of Brazil as a colony and of commercial monopoly over it depended on this relationship as well as, in turn, the economic survival of Portuguese empire in a system still based on mercantilism depended on colonial control over Brazil (Ricupero 2011). A turning point occurred in 1806, when Napoleon, who was at the height of his power, decided to declare a continental block – which is, the closure of ports for commercial purposes – against England to compromise its power. This measure was extended also to the Portuguese authorities who found themselves in front of a choice: to avoid French invasion by repudiating their historical ally and protector or to refuse the conditions imposed by Napoleon, keep their relations with Great Britain and prepare to the entry of French troops in the country. In the first case, there was at stake the loss of the colony whose control was guaranteed by the alliance with the English, while in the second, the loss of the metropole¹⁸ as political and economic hub of the Empire. In these circumstances, D. João VI, son of Maria I and regent of the Portuguese crown, decided to sacrifice Lisbon, well aware that losing control over Brazil, pillar of the imperial economy¹⁹, would mean the collapse of the entire system on which Portuguese Monarchy relied. So, in 1807, escorted by British ships,

¹⁸ The metropole represented the center of the empire, with respect to its peripheries. In the case of the Portuguese empire, the metropole and center of imperial power was Lisbon.

¹⁹ The mercantilist monopoly around which the economy of Portuguese empire functioned in such a way that raw materials were exported from Brazil at low prices, they were processed in Europe and then resold, as finished products, in Europe but especially in Brazil at higher prices (Silva 2011).

the majority of Portuguese court moved to Rio de Janeiro which all of a sudden turned into the new capital and center of the Empire.

The invasion of Napoleonic army entailed, besides political damage the loss of a commercial base in Europe and thus the possibility to trade with the other powers. To overcome this problem, even before reaching Brazilian shores D. João VI declared the opening of Brazilian ports to *friend nations*. This action had important consequences, since it determined the immediate dissolution of the very condition that kept Brazil in the status of colony, which is, mercantilist monopoly (Silva 2011). This event is recognized by historians as the moment which marked the beginning of the path to independence – an aspect on which we will focus further on in this section. As a matter of fact, it meant the opening to free trade and the formulation of new economic interests increasingly reluctant to accept mediation by Portuguese authorities (Ricupero 2011).

The warfare situation in Europe was already changing in 1808, when Portuguese troops started to progressively force back the French. Finally, in 1811 they regained full control over their country. With Napoleon's final defeat and the Congress of Vienna in 1815, D. João could return safely to his mother country. However, he decided to stay in Brazil – which was declared part of a new united kingdom that also included Portugal and Algarve – and rebuild from there new political alliances to reinforce the monarchy (Silva 2011). The proposal of organizing a marriage between his son, D. Pedro, and the Austrian Archduchess Leopoldina was part of these policies. A bond with Austrian dynasty, which at the time was the main emblem of European absolute monarchy, could consolidate the power of the king and thus help to ward off possible internal revolts that the wave of liberalism resulting from the opening of ports and England's influence could fuel. The Emperor of Austria accepted on the condition that, once order was restored and independency avoided, the court would return to Europe and previous dependency geo-political conditions reestablished. D. João accepted and, in 1816, the marriage contract was signed. The following year, short before the official ceremony, the two ships which would bring Johann Natterer and the other naturalists to Brazil raised the anchor from the port of Trieste (Ramirez 1968). For Austria, the alliance with Portugal represented an opportunity to gain access to new tradeable resources, naturalistic specimens and ethnographic material crucial in promoting technological and scientific progress functional to improve economic production. As Judson (2016) well explains in his recent work on the Habsburg Empire, the political conformation of Austria

at the time of the expedition had been established in 1804 from the remains of the Holy Roman Empire. This passage occurred following an important period of reforms enacted by the *enlightened despots*²⁰ of the previous century, such as Mary Theresa of Habsburg (1717-1780) and her sons Joseph II (1741-1790) and Leopold II (1747-1792). The objective of these reforms was to centralize and legitimize the power of Habsburg dynasty over a very large and diverse territory in terms of resources and population. Until that moment, control was exerted through relationships and negotiations with local nobility and not directly with the communities and individuals who lived on the land. During the reign of Mary Theresa several operations of mapping, census and collecting of information were carried out in order to develop a greater knowledge of Austrian domains, to establish a direct relation with the population – also of lower classes – and to promote political union and sense of belonging of subjects to the empire. By her death, in 1780, the Habsburgs held control over a territory which covered “from today’s cities of Innsbruck in the west, to Lviv in the east, from Milan and Florence on the Italian peninsula, to Antwerp on the North Sea and Cluj in the Carpathian Mountains, from Prague in Bohemia to Vukovar and down to Belgrad in the south” (Idem, 19). Under Joseph II, who succeeded her to the throne, the focus moved towards the development of educational policies in order to encourage the formation of a middle class which presented the Empire as a channeler of possibilities for economic growth. The encouraging of scientific research and philosophical speculation as instruments for producing knowledge, supporting social and economic progress of the Empire and promoting political prestige of its sovereigns became, in Austria as in other counties, central. In 1792, the nephew of Joseph II – and son of Leopold II who reigned only two years after his brother’s death in 1790 – inherited the throne as Francis II of the Holy Roman Empire. For the first period of his governance, which lasted until 1835, the difficulties related to the management of a multiethnic, multilingual and multireligious territory were aggravated by the tensions caused by the French Revolution and Napoleon’s rise. Furthermore, Francis II was neither by character nor by political views a reformer like his predecessors. However, loyal to the Austrian crown and law, he was determined to complete the projects started by the grandmother and the uncle and oriented to the construction and consolidation of a

²⁰ Enlightened despots were representatives of the so-called *enlightened absolutism*. This way of governing, supported by a network of scholars and intellectuals, refused to share power with the nobility and enacted policies which promoted the developing of knowledge as instrument to be employed in social institutions in order to improve humanity’s condition of life (Judson 2016).

unitary Austrian State. In 1804, he proclaimed the birth of the Austrian Empire of which he became sovereign as Francis I. Assisted by the Prince of Metternich as Minister of the Foreign Affairs, he never opted for experimenting new social and economic politics, preferring to maintain conservative positions instead, closer to the interests of aristocratic elites. Transformation was not seen as something positive for the country; on the contrary, it represented a danger for the delicate balances on which imperial society rested and that prevented outbreak of possible revolutions (Idem).

Nevertheless, Francis I had a certain interest in natural history and promoted its study and research. In addition to the collection of natural specimens, he was particularly fond of ethnographic material, proving to be aligned with the 18th-century scientific positions which combined “the interest in the cultural diversity of mankind [...] with an interest in its physical variability [...] in the sense of a united science of man” (Feest 2012, 22)²¹. In 1806, he charged Leopold von Fichtel to purchase at the Leverian Museum of London 250 objects among those arrived together with Cook’s expedition. In Vienna, they would integrate the ancient collections of Ambras’ Cabinet of Curiosities – by then preserved at the Belvedere Palace – in order to form the core of a first Imperial Ethnographic Collection (Feest 2013-2014).

We can thus consider the organization of the Austrian expedition in 1817 as part of this interest beyond the fact that collecting natural specimens figured as a *safe* strategy both to encourage the trade of new products in Austrian market without having to enact specific reforms and to gain prestige in political and scientific European landscape. For the occasion, the Director of the Natural History Cabinet, Karl von Schreibers, had drafted specific instructions for the naturalists leaving for Brazil, for the collection of materials to be done in such a way as to “contribute as much as possible to the exploration and knowledge of this large and supremely remarkable part of our planet” (Feest 2012, 21). During their trip, “the travelers were encouraged not only to collect “products of nature”, but also “trade goods and among them in particular the precious, fine species of wood, all plants cultivated on a large scale and all domestic and breeding animals, especially if they can under any circumstance be conveniently transported, acclimatized, and also may give hopes of being propagated in Europe”; sites of the finds, local designations, other useful observations on the items

²¹ In the same essay, Feest specifies that in Germany the terms *Ethnographie* (ethnography) and *Völkerkunde* (ethnology) were popular since 1771 when they were introduced, for the first time, at the University of Göttingen.

collected, as well as the collections themselves to be sent exclusively to the Natural History Cabinet” (Ibidem). Therefore, and again, it is evident how the production of scientific knowledge occurred within, and thanks to, specific political, economic and ideological conditions and interests (Santos 2018). Indeed, scientific enterprises have more often been intended to consolidate the political and economic importance of the imperial powers which organized them than to promote scientific knowledge aimed at intellectual speculation alone (Montez 2010).

Unlike 18th-century Portugal, the purpose was not to establish a direct control over Brazilian lands but get access to the resources it offered. Sure enough, this different dynamic entailed colonial power to be exerted with distinct modalities that for being indirect were for long time not considered as equally oppressive. This question falls within the debate, still ongoing among historians in the New Imperial History, on informal imperialism (see Besseghini 2019). According to the definition that Robinson and Gallagher (1953) – major references on the topic – offer on the informal empire it is correct to state that Austria was not a colonial power²². Over the period of our interest and for the following centuries, Austrian authorities desisted from making claims to direct control over non-European territories for different reasons. Partly, this choice was due to a series of economically unfavorable circumstances in the middle-east area of influence; partly, the concern for internal balances within the frontiers of the Empire was greater since, as we mentioned, it was characterized by a significant ethnic and religious variety; also, Austria was gaining an increasingly important role in Europe, especially from 1815 Congress, as leading authority in charge of maintaining the multilateral agreements which ruled colonial expansion. However, to not possess any colony did not prevent Austrian Empire from showing informal imperial attitudes and from participating in the colonial system broadly speaking, perpetrating its coercive actions, benefitting from its exploitative policies and contributing to the production of specific categories of knowledge turned to the classification of natural and social phenomena. The presence of Austrian crown officers as well as independent explorers and traders who, more

²² According to the authors, formal empire is characterized by direct and explicit presence of a power on other countries through the establishment of settlement colonies and the incorporation of the territory within that power’s frontiers. On the contrary, informal empire do not provide for territorial expansion rather for the exercise of a political-economic influence over formally independent countries (Robinson and Gallagher 1953). Both formal and informal empires are the result of imperialist actions which, in turn, can be more or less explicit; there is no rigid rule to define the relationship between empires and imperialisms: both formal and informal imperialism can lead to the creation of formal and informal empires (Besseghini 2019).

or less explicitly, were involved in colonial-style operations, was very common (Sauer 2012). The organization of an expedition such as that led by Johann Natterer confirms this positioning and shows how, in the construction of non-European alterity and in the production of epistemological categories, difference was stressed even stronger as dehumanizing element. In fact, since there was no need to justify the integration of indigenous peoples in an administrative and economic complex, it was more frequent to find them represented as an absolute alterity whose behavior was irreconcilable with the civilizing aims of the West (cfr §3.2.2).

According to the original plan, the expedition had to stay two years in Brazil; while some of the members returned already in 1818, others remained until 1821 when they were forced to go back to Europe because of the growing tensions related to the imminent independence of Brazil (1822), event which the Austrian emperor had tried to avert (Santos 2018).

In the aftermath of 1815 Congress of Vienna, while remaining in Brazil, the Portuguese Crown had fully reestablished its control over its territories in the Iberian Peninsula. In 1820, King João VI was made aware that a mounting discontent was spreading among subjects in the ancient Metropole. To soothe strains, he decided to go back to Europe in person and leave his son, D. Pedro, as prince regent of Brazil (Ramirez 1968). Meanwhile, the Courts had reunited in Lisbon and had resolved that Brazil had to return to the political condition previous to Napoleonic wars, which is, of colony. On the other side of the Atlantic, both the most revolutionary and the most conservative component of society firmly opposed to this decision. In fact, in addition to the resubmission to Lisbon, it would cause the re-fragmentation of provinces which, from the move of the court, were going towards unification (Silva 2011). D. Pedro perceived that the only way to save the Monarchy was to offer to people a constitution, a measure that Austrian government totally repudiated. The break-up with Homeland thus became inevitable (Ramirez 1968). When D. Pedro was recalled to Portugal on January 1822 he refused. Ten months later, on the 7th of October, the independence of Brazil was officially proclaimed. On the 12th of October, D. Pedro was acclaimed Emperor as Pedro I, so enshrining the final separation from the Portuguese crown (Silva 2011).

The particular aspect of this process, with respect to other Latin American independences, was that it did not lead to a republic but inherited the institutional structure of the Empire. Since the move of the court in 1807, D. João VI had established local political institutions

necessary to the exercise of the monarchic power (Schwarcz 2011). Over time, they assumed an increasingly “Brazilian” character. In these terms, independence marked a conceptual, besides political, turning point because it represented the beginning of a quest for national identity which aimed at moving away from sharing a Portuguese history and from the perspective of a common destiny. The origins of the *new* Brazilian Empire were found in the exaltation of the native as common ancestor of a people which turned mixture into the foundational process of a biological and cultural progression towards a whiteness of its own²³. This rhetoric is part of a more complex process of nation building that would reinforce and consolidate in the course of the 19th century but on which we do not have the space to dwell in depth hereby.

To mention the process of independence is of our interest because, unlike the other Austrian naturalists, Johann Natterer, together with his colleague Dominik Sochor, managed to remain in Brazil (Augustat 2012). On the 20th of April 1822 he wrote to Jose Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, a leading intellectual figure in the independence process²⁴, to obtain permissions to continue his explorations.

An Seine Excellenz, den brasilianischen Staatsminister, Herrn José Bonifacio d'Andrada e Silva. Mordomo môr, Ministro e Segretario d'Estado dos negocios do interior e estrangeiros. E[uer] Excellenz werden es nicht ungütig nehmen, ich es wage, durch diese Zeilen mich Euer E[xzellenz] ins Gedächtnis zu rufen und zwar sowohl um deroselben zum schnellen und wohlverdientem Fortschreiten in der von E[uer] E[xzellenz] eben so glücklich als ruhmvoll

²³ On the romanticization of the native as real first inhabitant of the Brazilian territory as well as hero who, mixing with Portuguese, favored the colonization of the inland and the progress of the nation see Carneiro da Cunha 1992, Monteiro 2001, Pacheco de Oliveira 2009, Almeida 2010b, Silva 2011. Among the innumerable problems that this narrative arouses is the fact that indigenous population's real conditions did not correspond to this image nor were they considered in the elaboration of indigenist legislation. The consequence was the creation of a double vision in which two figures opposed: an ideal native and a real native. While the former was promoted as national symbol, the latter continued to be excluded from participating in its construction. Native were thus freeze-framed in a stereotype that depicted them as a pure, kind, nature-tied entities related to a distant, nostalgic past which had inevitably to give way to the Brazilian nation.

²⁴ In the essay's collection *Cultura com aspas e outros ensaios* (2017), Manuela Carneiro da Cunha dedicates one chapter to the legislation elaborated by José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva and which, although it was never integrated to the constitutional project, was quite influential on the thought of the time. Heir of the assimilationist and homogenizing principles of the Marquis of Pombal, it was titled *Apontamentos para a civilização dos Índios bravos do Império do Brasil* and focused on the assumption that all human beings were “perfectible”, which is, they could raise from the “state of nature” to turn into individuals capable of dominating the natural world (see §1.2). However, hostile natives were considered incapable of doing it on their own because they did not live in civilized societies which gave them such opportunity. They were thought of as children that *civilized, modern* nations were in charge of educating and accompanying through this path until complete assimilation into Brazilian society.

begonnenen Laufbahn meine wärmsten Glückwünsche darzubringen, welche ich E[uer] E[xzellenz] huldvoll anzunehmen bitte, als auch gleichzeitig E[uer] E[xzellenz] mit einer kleinen Bitte zu beschweren. [...] E[uer] E[xzellenz] ist bekannt, dass ich den Befehlen und Wünschen S[einer] Maj[estät], des Kaisers von Oestreich, meines allergnädigsten Herrn, gemäss nun im Beginnen einer grossen naturforschenden Reise nach Matto [Grosso] und Pará bin, und dass dazu S[eine] Majestät der König die nöthige Erlaubniss und portarias, sowie Befehle und Empfehlungen für die respektiven Herren Gouverneurs der durchzuraisenden Provintzen ertheilte, damit dieselben mich überall ungehindert passiren lassen und mit allen, was ich nöthig hätte unterstützen sollten, und dem damahls in Rio anwesenden k[aiserlich]-öst[erreichischen] Gesandten, Herrn Baron von Stürmer, einhändigen liess. Jedoch nach den jetzigen Staatsveränderungen dürften vielleicht jene Papiere nicht mehr vom gehörigen Gewicht oder Ansehen und daher andre nöthig seyn, um deren gnädige Ausfertigung ich E[uer] E[xzellenz] inständig bitte.²⁵ (Johann Natterer to José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, Ipanema, April 18th 1822).

For this purpose, he said, he had prepared and attached a letter for D. Pedro stating what follows:

Senhor. Diz João Natterer, naturalista da Sua Mayestade Imperial Real Austriaca, encarregado pelo mesmo Senhor a fazer collecçoens de objectos de historia natural para o museo publico de Vienna, e viajando por aquello fim neste reino do Brasil com approvação e consenso regio, que sindo concedido ao supplicante pelo augusto pai de V.A. real a licenza necessaria para a sua livre jornada e transito pelas provincias de São Paulo, Minas Geraes, Goyaz, Mattogrosso, Pará e outras capitaes e havendo mesmo augusto Senhor ordenado às

²⁵ "To His Excellency, the Brazilian Minister of State, José Bonifacio d'Andrada e Silva. Mordomo môr, Ministro and Segretario d'Estado dos negocios do interior e estrangeiros.

Your Excellency will not mind if I dare to recall Your E[xcellency] with these lines, both to offer him my warmest congratulations on the rapid and well-deserved progress in the career that Your E[xcellency] has so luckily and gloriously begun, which I kindly ask Your E[xcellency] to accept, and at the same time to burden Your E[xcellency] with a small request. [...] Your E[xcellency] is aware that, in accordance with the orders and wishes of His Majesty the Emperor of Austria, my most gracious Lord, I am about to undertake a great naturalistic journey in the Matto [Grosso] and Pará, and that for this purpose His Majesty the King has granted the necessary permits and portaria, as well as orders and recommendations for the respective governors of the provinces to be crossed, so that they would let me pass everywhere without hindrance and provide me with everything I would need, and delivered them to the imperial envoy for the Orient, Baron von Stürmer, who was present in Rio at the time. However, after the present changes in the state, these documents may no longer have the proper weight or prestige, and so more may be needed, for the kind execution of which I earnestly request Your E[xcellency]."

autoridades constituídas de prestarem ao supplicante os auxilios pr[e]cisos e conducentes ao mencionado fim e desejando continuar na sua degressão implóra.

P. V.A. real se digne renovar com o seu beneplacito a refferida ordem de luja graça R.M.²⁶
(Johann Natterer to the Prince of the Crown, D. Pedro de Alcantara, Ipanema, April 20th 1822)

So, despite the rising political tensions, the journey continued. These were mainly related, on the one hand, to the breakdown of relations with Austria – which did not want to recognize Brazilian independence and remained very disappointed by the way D. Pedro treated Leopoldina, who eventually died in 1826 after a premature childbirth (Ramirez 1968); on the other hand, to the fact that not all provinces immediately supported independence, preferring to remain, for a little longer, loyal to the Lisbon Courts – it was the case of Pará, Piauí, Maranhão and Ceará (Silva 2011). Among the consequences of these circumstances, there was a loss of interest, by the Austrian government, in the expedition (Schmutzer and Feest 2013-2014) as well as an increased difficulty in internal travel. Their impact is perceptible from Natterer's correspondence which became more oriented towards obtaining permits to transit from one region to another and applying for financial resources. On the 27th of August 1823, for example, he informed Wenzel Philipp Leopold, Baron of Mareschal²⁷, that on the 2nd of August he received “einen Brief des Staatsm[inisters] Herrn José Bonifacio de Andrada e Silva an mich sammt einer eingeschlossnen portaria, lautend für die Capitanien, die ich ansuchte, worüber ich recht froh war”²⁸ (Johann Natterer to Wenzel Philipp Leopold Baron von Mareschal, Goiás, August 27th 1823). However, he added that the prosecution of the trip to the Amazon would occur the following year because by that time “werden sich wohl die Zweifel mit Pará ausgleichen, damit ich ungehindert meine Durchfarth auf den Tapajoz nach dem Amazona bewerkstelligen kann”²⁹ (Idem).

²⁶ Sir. Says Johann Natterer, naturalist to the Royal Imperial Austrian Majesty, commissioned by the same lord to make collections of natural history objects for the public museum in Vienna, and traveling for that purpose to the kingdom of Brazil with the approval and consent of the region, that the supplicant has been granted by Your Majesty's august father the necessary license for his free travel and transit through the provinces of São Paulo, Minas Geraes, Goyaz, Mattogrosso, Pará and other capitals, and having the same august Lord ordered the constituted authorities to provide the supplicant with the necessary help to achieve the mentioned end and wishing to continue in his journey.

P. Your Royal Highness deigns to renew with your approval the above order of grace, R.M.

²⁷ The Baron of Mareschal was an Austrian diplomat established in North and South America.

²⁸ “[...] a letter from the Minister of State, José Bonifacio de Andrada e Silva, addressed to me, with an enclosed ordinance for the Capitania, which I requested and I was very pleased with.”

²⁹ “[...] doubts with Pará will probably balance, so I can travel unimpeded to Tapajoz after Amazona.”

Still in reference to organizing the trip to the Amazon, another concern was that his financial resources would not have been enough:

Da ich so viele eintretende Umstände noch nicht kenne, so kann ich über den Verbrauch der Zeit nichts Bestimmtes sagen. [...] Jedoch macht mir der Gedanke an eine wahrscheinlich längere Dauer dieser Disgressionen insoferne einige Unruhe, dass mein noch vorrätiges Geld nicht bis zu meiner Ankunft nach Para langen würde, besonders wenn ich die Unkosten der auszurüstenden Fahrzeuge und Unterhalt der Leute nöthig zur Durchfahrt nach dem Amazona und noch überdies deren Unterhalt auf der Rückkehr bestreiten müsste. Ich habe desswegen voriges Jahres von Goiaz aus an Herrn von Schreibers geschrieben, dass er sich gütigst verwenden möchte, damit ich hier in Cuyaba Geld erhalte mittelst gnädiger Veranstaltung von E[uer] H[ochwohlgeboren]. Die Art, hier Geld zu erhalten, hat viele Schwierigkeiten. Durch die fazenda real ist es nicht möglich, die hat kein Geld, sond[ern] Schulden und hat nie nach Rio Geld gegeben, sond[ern] jährlich, um das Deficit zu deken, von Goyaz ein Anzahl Aroben Goldes bezogen. Dies hat aufgehört. Die Handelsleute wollen keine Wechsel auf Rio, da sie ihr Geld in Diamant, Goldstaub und -stangen umsetzen, um in Rio damit zu gewinnen. Es wäre vielleicht der einzige Weg, nach gehöriger Sicherstellung das Geld einen von denen vielen jährlich nach Rio gehenden Handelsleuten zu übergeben und den Transport dafür zu bezahlen.³⁰ (Johann Natterer to Wenzel Philipp Leopold Baron of Mareschal, Cuiabá, February 14th 1824)

Another frequent issue was asking for support with the boxes containing the collection. On the 25th of May 1825, he wrote to the English consul in Brazil William Whitaker to announce that some of his boxes were arriving with the shipment of Captain Sabino José de Mello and to ask if he could take charge of their shipping to Rio de Janeiro as well as of the economic

³⁰ "Since I do not yet know many of the circumstances that will occur, I cannot say anything definite about the consumption of time. [...] However, the thought of a probably longer duration of these disruptions makes me uncomfortable since my remaining money would not last until my arrival in Para, especially if I had to pay the expenses of the vehicles to be equipped and the maintenance of the people needed for the passage to the Amazon and, in addition, their maintenance upon return. For this reason, last year I wrote from Goiaz to Mr. von Schreibers to kindly help me receive money here in Cuyaba through a kind event from His Lordship. The way to receive money here presents many difficulties. It is not possible through the royal fazenda, which has no money but debts and has never given money to Rio, but has taken a certain number of gold rubles from Goyaz every year to cover the deficit. This has ceased. The merchants do not want promissory notes in Rio, because they convert their money into diamonds, gold dust and bars with which to win in Rio. Perhaps the only way, after due security, would be to deliver the money to one of the many merchants who travel to Rio each year and pay for its transportation."

aspects. Moreover, he asked to help the captain in case he would need any facilitation in further occasions.

O portador desta he o Senhor Cap[itão] Sabino José de Mello, que leva 12 caixões com objetos d'história natural pertencientes ao Imp[erador] de Austria para a villa de Santos. Conhecendo muito bem o caracter de V.S. proprio ao toda nação de que V.S. faz he hum tão digno membro e tendo em tão viva lembrança os muitos favores, que ja me fez, eu tomes a liberdade de dirigir o Senhor Cap[itão] Sabino a V.S. e de pedir a V.S. de tomar conta dos caixões, pagar as despesas do trasporte de Portofeliz para Santos e remettellas para o Rio de Janeiro aos Senhores G. Brittain, Scheiner & Co., d'onde V.S. ha de cobras as Suas despesas. O Cap[itão] Sabino, hum homen honrado, eu recommendo a V.S. s elle viesse no caso de precisar a sua intercessão.³¹ (Johann Natterer to William Whitaker, Cuiabá, May 25th 1825)

This point is important not much for the information that was exchanged but because it reveals the presence, in loco, of a dense network of political and personal relations as another fundamental prerequisite of scientific expeditions, allowing dislocations and facilitating the gathering of data and materials as well as their shipment to Europe (see also Santos 2018). In these terms, we can affirm that collecting, far from being an individual practice, was often the result of real negotiations and Johann Natterer, while not acting for gaining a direct control over territory, moved within and benefited from power dynamics intrinsic to colonial system, perpetuating and normalizing them through his scientific discourse.

Focusing on the acquisition of Munduruku material, the naturalist personally collected only part of it. The help he received is made clear in some letters he wrote to Karl von Schreibers where he explains that he acquired objects belonging to the Munduruku through Captain Peixoto de Azevedo, “ein thätiger Mann, der voll Wissbegierde und nicht ohne Kenntnisse ist” who “machte schon mehrere Reisen auf den Flüssen Rio Preto, Arinos, Tapajoz nach Santarem oder Pará, um Salz, Eisen, Wein zu hohlen”³² (Johann Natterer to Karl von

³¹ “The bearer is Captain Sabino José de Mello, who is bringing to the villa in Santos 12 crates with natural history objects belonging to the Emperor of Austria.

Knowing very well your character and the whole nation of which you are such a worthy member, and having a vivid recollection of the many favors you have already done me, I take the liberty of sending Mr. Sabino to your lordship and of asking your lordship to take care of the crates, to pay the transportation expenses from Portofeliz to Santos and to send them to Rio de Janeiro to the gentlemen, from whom you may collect the expenses. I recommend Captain Sabino, a man of honor, in case he needs your intercession.”

³² “[...] an active man, full of curiosity and not without knowledge” who “has already made several trips on the rivers Rio Preto, Arinos, Tapajoz to Santarem or Pará to get salt, iron, wine.”

Schreibers, Cuiabá, December 18th 1824). From some documents preserved at the Public Archive of Mato Grosso³³ we know that Antônio Peixoto de Azevedo was part of the militia of the Province of Mato Grosso. He was appointed, in 1777, captain of an expedition on the Jauru river (south of Mato Grosso), in 1789, military aid of *capitão-mor* Antônio Luis Rocha and, in 1814, *Tenente Agregado ao Esquadrão da Legião de Milicias* of Vila Bela de Cuiabá. In 1819, as Johann Natterer reports in another letter, “wurde [...] von dem damahligen General dieser Provintz, Francisco de Paula Magese Tavares de Carvalha beordert, den Rio Paranatinga zu befahren und auszuforschen, weil man voraussetzte, dass dieser Fluss der grosse und noch nicht befahrne Chingu sey”³⁴ (Johann Natterer to Karl von Schreibers, Cuiabá, February 18th/25th 1825). On the contrary, it later emerged that “der Rio Paranatinga einerley mit dem Rio São Manoel der frühern Entdecker des Juruena und einerley mit dem Rio das Tres Barras der Karte des Arrowsmiths sey”³⁵ (Idem) leading Peixoto de Azevedo as far as river Tapajós in the State of Pará. It was during this journey that he collected Munduruku objects³⁶ which came into Natterer’s possession – although at the beginning they were intended for the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro (Letter to Karl von Schreibers, Cuiabá, December 18th 1824).

For the Austrian naturalist it was of key importance to obtain these objects from Peixoto de Azevedo because it gave him the guarantee that some samples of those feather works would reach the Natural History Cabinet of Vienna even if he would not succeed in collect them personally further on the expedition (in the end, he did succeed). The reasons of such impatience are explained in a letter addressed to his brother:

³³ “Carta do [Capitão] Antônio Peixoto de Azevedo ao [Governador e Capitão-General da Capitania de Mato Grosso Luiz de Albuquerque de Mello Pereira e Cáceres].”, post 1780, without localization. Public Archive of Mato Grosso – BR MTAPMT.QM. TM. CA. 1000 Caixa N° 016; “Nomeação de Antônio Peixoto de Azevedo ao cargo de Ajudante [de Ordenanças], passada pelo capitão-mor Antônio Luis da Rocha”, September 10th 1789, Vila do Cuiabá. Public Archive of Mato Grosso – BR MTAPMT.SG. NO. 1089 Caixa N° 24; “Requerimento do Tenente Antônio Peixoto de Azevedo ao [Governador e Capitão-General da Capitania de Mato-Grosso João Carlos Augusto D’Oyenhausen e Gravemberg].”, November 3rd 1814, Vila Bela de Cuiabá. Public Archive of Mato Grosso – BR MTAPMT.SG. RQ. 3225 Caixa N° 059.

³⁴ “[...] was ordered [...] by the then General of this Province, Francisco de Paula Magese Tavares de Carvalha, to navigate and explore the Rio Paranatinga, because it was assumed that this river was the great and not yet navigated Chingu.”

³⁵ “[...] the Rio Paranatinga is one and the same with the Rio São Manoel of the early explorers of the Juruena and one and the same with the Rio das Tres Barras of the map of the Arrowsmiths.”

³⁶ Antônio Peixoto de Azevedo died in 1826, as reported in a letter of Johann Natterer to his doctor and friend Antônio Luiz Patricio da Silva Manso (Sugar mill of Captian Gama, August 18th 1826).

Von eben diesen Capitão [Antônio Peixoto de Azevedo] habe ich auch prächtige Sachen, besonders von den Indiern Mundurucus eingehandelt. Darunter sind 5 Blashörner, wovon das längste 7 Schuh lang ist, mehrere Kopfzierden oder Kappen wie Perrücken aus Arafedern, Armzierden, ein Schürze von Federn, Spiesse, Bogen und Pfeile. [...] Die Mundurucus wohnen an der untern Gegend des Tapajóz. Sie sind sehr zahlreich und kriegerisch und werden von allen benachbarten Nationen gefürchtet. Sie haben nun Friede mit den Brasiliern geschlossen. Obschon ich auf meiner Reise nach dem Amazonasfluss bey diesen Indiern einige Zeit verweilen werde, so glaubte ich, das Sichere wählen zu müssen, nämlich diese Arbeiten der Indier an mich zu bringen, da sie auf diese Art viel früher nach Wien kommen, wo sie alles, was von Indiern dort ist, an Schönheit übertreffen werden.³⁷ (Johann Natterer to Josef Natterer, Cuiabá, February 18th 1825)

Aesthetical beauty and popularity for belonging to a people so feared were thus the elements which oriented his desire. The intertwining of these two dimensions will be topic of the next section. Before moving on to it, I would like to dwell briefly on some issues still related to the circumstances and dynamics of objects' acquisition.

From the information provided by the historical and current catalogues of the Welt Museum we can deduce which part of the Munduruku objects were collected by Natterer himself. In fact, in some pieces are labelled as coming "von den Munduruku bei Canoma" or "Abacaschi" rivers, where Natterer passed by while descending the Madeira River. He specified this location in a letter addressed to Karl von Schreibers telling that "vor Tagesanbruch am 27. blieb der Arm des Madeira, der auf Arrowsmiths Karte Furo das Topinambaranas heisst, auf der rechten Seite. Man nennt ihn hier bloss Paraná-mirim da Canomá. In der Regenzeit strömt er sehr schnell nach Osten und nimmt die Flüsse Canoma, Abacaschi und Mauhé auf, deren Ufer von Mundrucús und Mauhés bewohnt sind"³⁸

³⁷ "From this same Capitão [Antônio Peixoto de Azevedo] I have also traded magnificent things, especially from the Mundurucu Indians. Among them are 5 blowing horns, the longest of which is 7 shoes long, several headdresses or caps such as wigs made of macaw feathers, arm ornaments, an apron of feathers, spears, bows and arrows. [...] The Mundurucus live in the lower region of the Tapajóz. They are very numerous and warlike and are feared by all neighboring nations. They have now made peace with the Brazilians. Although I will spend some time with these Indians on my journey to the Amazon River, I thought I had to choose the safe thing, namely to bring these works of the Indians to me, since in this way they will reach Vienna much sooner, where they will surpass in beauty everything that is there from the Indians."

³⁸ "Before dawn on the 27th, the arm of Madeira, called Furo das Topinambaranas on Arrowsmith's map, remained on the right. Here it is simply called the Paraná-mirim da Canomá. During the rainy season it flows very rapidly eastward and collects the Canoma, Abacaschi and Mauhé rivers, whose banks are inhabited by Mundrucús and Mauhés."

(Johann Natterer to Karl von Schreibers, Marabitanas, February 20th/28th 1831). In general, as for the modalities of acquisitions, we do not have detailed information but we know from accounts of other naturalists such as Spix and Martius and Henry Walter Bates – who crossed the region respectively in 1817-1819 and 1852 – that they could vary from buying, exchanging or acquisition under coercive conditions. The former tells that many of the trips made along the Tapajós from Santarém to Mato Grosso were aimed precisely at both trading products of the forest – such as *drogas do sertão* and guarana – with the Munduruku and Maués, who were majoritarian the region, and also at acquiring feather objects to sell to naturalists, collectors, or to Brazilian and European elites. To confirm this, there is another episode they report: upon their arrival at a Munduruku village, the father in charge of the nearby mission had the natives gather “ethnographic curiosities” especially for them (Spix and Martius 2017). We can imagine similar dynamics occurring during the journey of Peixoto de Azevedo or Johann Natterer. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that, even when presented as peaceful, exchanges and purchases happened within power relations unbalanced in favor of Western people. A story told by Bates is veiled but exemplary in this regard: “I bought of the Tushaua two beautiful feather scepters, with their bamboo cases. [...] The Mundurucus are considered to be the most expert workers in feathers of all the South American tribes. It is very difficult, however, to get them to part with the articles, as they seem to have a sort of superstitious regard for them” (1873, 226).

Part of the complexity of these dynamics lies in the overlapping of distinct elements to determine the conditions in which the exchange occurred and the way through which it was interpreted. Firstly, objects that we might consider sacred because related to spiritual, ceremonial dimension – such as the scepters purchased by Bates which composed the outfit of warriors during the ceremony of trophy-heads (cfr §3.2.2) – occupied, in reality, a different conceptual and epistemological space. As Evans (2003) points out, religious studies have underlined the variety of the concept of *sacred* in social contexts. Some indigenous languages do not even have a corresponding term; others have more than two or three terms to indicate *sacred* objects³⁹. In general, to hold a sacred value does not mean to be incompatible with economic sphere⁴⁰. On the contrary, there are situations in which the exchange of ceremonial

³⁹ Among Amazonian groups, objects are usually perceived as “sacred” when they facilitate the reconnection with the origins of society and the ancestors (Godelier 1999).

⁴⁰ This applies not only to indigenous Brazilian societies but also, for example, to Polynesian societies (Thomas 1991) or to Catholic culture itself (Tostado 2017).

objects is functional to the maintenance of political alliances necessary to the physical and spiritual survival (see also Thomas 1991, cfr §1.3). Since many groups consider them as extensions of the people who own them, it is their exchange which constructs social relation (Godelier 1999; Augustat 2011). We can thus hypothesize that, in case things counter-offered by non-indigenous people were considered as of equal value the trade was, albeit reluctantly, accepted.

Other times, objects were produced to be traded to Europeans on purpose. Some of the objects collected by Natterer, for example, look like they have never been used; in other situations, the design was adapted to the expectations and tastes of the buyers. (fig. 44, 45 show an example). After the *pacification*, Munduruku began to forge close trade relations with those passing through their region, proving to be anything but passive in the process of existence within, and resistance to, the transformations imposed by the colonial system as well as in taking the opportunities it offered for facilitating the daily survival of families. Moreover, natives desired European goods as much Europeans desired indigenous ones. Dynamics of mutual appropriation made objects protagonists of such exchanges to drift constantly among different regimes of value (Appadurai 2003) – which we know is not intrinsic to things but depends on conditions and relations external to them (Simmel 1978). The acquisition, by Johann Natterer, of Munduruku objects brought them throughout a way which from alienable ceremonial objects – even if we practically do not have information about the conditions which ruled their circulation – turned them into inalienable scientific witnesses⁴¹. What raises interest in this process is the criteria through which they landed to such scientific nature, which is *wonder* – in all the complexity entailed in 16th- and 17th-century category. It constituted a key element in determining the selection of Munduruku objects as *collectable pieces* for a Museum of Natural History which, in addition to confer social and political prestige to the Austrian Emperor, aimed especially at developing a universal scientific knowledge. This means that *wonder* turned into a – if not central, at least auxiliary – device for the production of a socio-cultural classification of non-European groups.

3.2.2 Schön and merkwürdig objects: Natterer's discourse on natives

Johann Natterer was born in 1787 in Luxemburg (Santos and Montez 2016) from a family of humble origins. His father, Josef Natterer Senior, worked as taxidermist and held a

⁴¹ On the process of singularization-commodification of objects see Kopytoff 1986.

zoological collection which was acquired, in 1794, by the Austrian Emperor to integrate the nascent Royal Cabinet. He was charged of its keeping allowing Johann and his brother Josef to grow up immersed in an environment pervaded by debates on Natural History and collection practice (Santos 2018). In 1816 Johann Natterer was appointed assistant of the Royal Cabinet and, as we already know, in 1817 he became a member of the Austrian scientific expedition (Santos and Montes 2016).

In this section of the chapter, I will address to some key aspects of his discursive production on Brazilian indigenous peoples and, specifically, on the Munduruku. To do this, we will explore the available documentation, although it is much scarcer than that left by other naturalists. This was due partly to losses occurred over time, partly to the fact that he was not particularly fond in writing. As he tells in a letter addressed to his brother in 1829:

[...] Doch eine Reisebeschreibung erwarte man ja nicht von mir. Dazu fehlte mir Auffassungsvermögen, Beobachtungs- und Nachforschungsgeist, höhere Studien. Mehrermalen habe ich wohl versucht, das Geschehen jeden Tag niederzuschreiben, doch bald bekam es Lücken durch wichtigere Arbeiten, die sich nicht aufschieben liessen und geriet gänzlich ins Stöken, weil ich sah, dass ich dazu unfähig war. Zu Reisebeschreiben hätte man eine Fähigern wählen sollen⁴². (Johann Natterer to Josef Natterer, Borba, December 21st/28th 1829)

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, on which objects to focus was not an accidental choice. In fact, Munduruku feather works seem appropriate to materialize a perspective which identified in wonder and curiosity good criteria for the selection of ethnographic material. To observe them as channelers and revealers of specific visions and Eurocentric practices of representations turns out to be very useful to accompany that process of construction of imaginary which, initially produced on munduruku people, soon incorporated other groups.

At the beginning of the 18th century, it was not yet popular the idea that collecting had to fulfill the mission of *saving primitive cultures* from the oblivion to which the civilizational

⁴² “[...] but a travel description was not expected from me. I lacked the perceptive faculty, the spirit of observation and investigation, and higher studies. Several times I tried to write down the events of each day, but soon it got Lücken by more important work, which could not be postponed and came completely to a standstill, because I saw that I was incapable of it. A more capable person should have been chosen for travel writing.”

process would relegate them (see Stocking 1985). Scientific expeditions had mainly economic and pragmatic objectives and aimed at collecting and discovering new products to trade as well as classifying different levels of technological and socio-cultural development (cfr chapter two). We find these aspects in Johann Natterer's experience; however, they were considered more relevant in the collection of naturalistic rather than ethnographic material. The latter was thought almost exclusively in political terms, which means that it was aimed at increasing the prestige of the Habsburgs with respect to other Western powers. In support of this, we can mention an extract of a letter sent in 1824 to the Baron of Mareschal:

Und da überdies der russische Generalconsul⁴³ auf diese beyden Flüsse seine Plane richtete, so kann ich kaum ohne das innigste Bedauern mir die Vorstellung machen, dass das Petersburger Musäum das Wiener, was Gegenstände jener Gegenden betrifft, übertreffen sollte! Oft erhebt sich so ganz im Innersten meiner Seele eine geheime Stimme und lispelt mir zu, dass vielleicht S. Majestät, der so gütige Kaiser, diese kleine Abweichung von dem vorgeschriebenen Ziele verzeihungswerth finden könnte, da dabey die Bereicherung und Verschönerung des unter seiner Regierung begonnenen und schon auf einer so hohen Stufe stehenden Naturhistorischen Musäum beabsichtigt wird! ⁴⁴ (Johann Natterer to Wenzel Philipp Leopold Baron von Mareschal, Vila Bela de Santissima Trindade, June 10th 1824)

Feather works made by the "Mundurucus, die an rechten Ufer des Tapajoz wohnen"⁴⁵ (Letter from Johann Natterer to Karl von Schreibers, Cuiabá, December 18th 1824) were regarded as fundamental in this embellishment operation since "[...] sind sehr merkwürdig und möchten wohl alles bisher von Indiern in Wien befindliche an Schönheit übertreffen. Es sind verschiedne Arten Hauben, Armverzierungen, Schampen, Schurze, Scepter, alles aufs

⁴³ The Russian consul in Brazil was the German Baron Jorge Henrique Langsdorff. Between 1825 and 1829 he led an expedition across the provinces of São Paulo, Mato Grosso and Pará and financed by the Russian Tsar, Alexander I. The journey was related by Hercule Florence, painter and typographer who was appointed second drawer of the expedition (Florence 2007).

⁴⁴ "And since, moreover, the Russian General Consul directed his plans to these two rivers, I can hardly imagine without the deepest regret that the St. Petersburg Museum should surpass the Vienna Museum as far as objects from those regions are concerned! Often, in the innermost part of my soul, a secret voice rises up and whispers to me that perhaps His Majesty, the so kind Emperor, could find this small deviation from the prescribed goal worthy of forgiveness, for the enrichment and embellishment of the Natural History Museum, which was begun under his reign and already stands on such a high level, is intended!"

⁴⁵ "[...] Mundurucus, who live on the right bank of the Tapajoz River."

Künstlichste aus Ara- und Mutum-Feder [...] geflochten”⁴⁶ (Ibidem). Also, in another letter, the naturalist reported that “die Apiacás und Mundurucus, die die Ufer des Tapajoz bewohnen, machen schöne Arbeiten, sowohl Waffen als Zierden von Federn, womit sie den Körper behängen”⁴⁷ (Johann Natterer to Josef Natterer, Cuiabá, December 16th 1824).

Aesthetic beauty and the imaginary of marvelous appear as the preponderant terms within which these ethnographic objects acquired importance. Words as *schön* (beautiful) and *merkwürdig* (remarkable but also weird) are recurring and, in addition to the information about manufacturing materials, are almost the only others used to describe the objects’ qualities. In chapter one (§1.3), I already briefly discussed about wonder and its complexity. Works such as those of Laura Ogden (2023), Tulasi Srinivas (2018) and Mary-Jane Rubenstein (2008) have paused to reflect on wonder, identifying it – even in different contexts – as a spiritual-epistemological disposition towards unfamiliar aspects. Wonder is an emotional state which arise from the confrontation with something radically new and unexpected (Daston and Park 2000) and holds a privileged relationship with alterity for it is difference that provokes it (Srinivas 2018). Throughout its intellectual history, the concept of wonder has developed along many branches. What seems to me more appropriate for analyzing Johann Natterer’s attitude towards Munduruku feather works is the branch which takes us to another related category, the sublime. The idea of the Sublime raised in the Middle Ages (Jaeger 2010) and gained further popularity between 1625 and 1825 (Sircello 1993) to describe various, sometimes contradictory emotions such as awe, pleasure deriving from aesthetic appreciation, confusion, fear, impotence, horror (Daston and Park 2000). These feelings could overtake a person when he/she was faced with phenomena that were difficult to understand through individual cognitive faculties. In the 18th century, philosophers such as Kant and Burke⁴⁸ were among the main theoreticians of the sublime as subjective experience and epistemological category, stressing out how it presented a tension between the powers of reason and of imagination as well as between the immanent and transcendent dimensions of the world. When one found him/herself in front of a sublime

⁴⁶ “[...] are very strange and would probably surpass in beauty everything that has been found so far by Indians in Vienna. There are various types of hoods, arm ornaments, mantels, skirts, scepters, all artificially woven from Ara and Mutum feathers.”

⁴⁷ “[...] the Apiacás and Mundurucus, who inhabit the banks of the Tapajoz, make beautiful works, both weapons and ornaments of feathers, to hang to the body.”

⁴⁸ See: Edmund Burke, “A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful” (1759); Immanuel Kant, “Critique of the Power of Judgement” (1790).

phenomenon/object, the pleasure provoked by aesthetic beauty was always accompanied by a feeling of fear, horror or powerlessness⁴⁹ (Kuhns 1982; Cochrane 2012). The stronger the fear, the more intense the experience of the sublime was (Cochrane 2012). Violent natural phenomena were the most commonly associated to sublime experiences; however, it could also arise in other circumstances such as deciding if something belonged to the realm of nature or art (Kuhns 1982). In Aristotelian thought, art and nature were thought as in opposition to each other. During Renaissance this distinction went into crisis and the intersection of the two was that which provoked wonder because art (*ars* in Latin, *techne* in Greek – meaning skill, mastery) began to represent the ability of intervene on nature by extending its creative power. In the 18th century, art and nature were once again divided but in a distinct way. The necessity of conciliating the rational perspective offered by Natural Sciences (§2.2.1) with theologian positions still influencing people’s experience of reality, led to interpret nature (and thus the power of creation) as exclusive of God while art as a work of man to imitate nature (Daston and Park 2000; Kaufmann 1994). When such imitation was successful, art was considered beautiful and the feeling it bred was of pleasure and harmony⁵⁰. We can imagine Mundurucu objects to create some confusion to this distinction since it was difficult to classify them as belonging to one or the other category. They were aesthetically appreciated but they did not imitate nature, rather they were made through the assembly of natural elements. In particular, it was their technical refinement that caused wonder. Johann Natterer was quite impressed by the process of making feather objects and he wrote in a letter to Karl von Schreibers:

Zu diesen Arbeiten haben sie in ihren Wohnungen eine grosse Menge Aras (aller Art, ausgenommen den dort nicht seltnen Araruna, *Psittacus* hyacinthinus, dessen Feder sie nicht benützen) und auch andre Vögel lebendig, denen sie nach Bedarf die Federn ausreissen. Durch dieses oft wiederholte Ausziehen der Federn und - wie es scheint - gänzliche Berauben derselben auf einmahl degeneriren die Federn gewöhnlich in Gelb, sodass sie zu Zeiten ganz gelbe Aras besitzen. Ganz gelbe und gelbgeflekte Schwanz- und Rückenfedern des *Psittacus* ararauna L. befinden sich bey den überschikten Federzierden. Der Flügelfedern

⁴⁹ Tom Cochrane defined it a condition of self-negation rather than fear (see Cochrane 2012).

⁵⁰ In §1.3 we reported the paintings of Arcimboldo as example of this condition.

bedienen sie sich gewöhnlich für die Pfeile.⁵¹ (Letter from Johann Natterer to Karl von Schreibers, Cuiabá, December 18th 1824)

The fact that natives were able to manipulate nature to create works of *industry* probably caused a little dismay because it made more difficult to have them taped into the category of the fierce savage completely subjugated to a state of nature⁵². This capacity was in fact perceived as a sign of some kind of rationality and opened the way for a possible *civilization* (cfr §1.2). At the same time, feather objects belonged to a population thought of as the quintessence of barbarousness because of warrior expeditions and trophy-heads preparation ceremonies. They evoked in who observed the idea of a wild, untamable, irrational humanity that could not be understood in its difference. As evidence of the coexistence of both aspects – aesthetic appreciation and fear – in the Austrian naturalist's perception is the fact that he sought to collect other things related to the ritual and which could have offered a supposedly appropriate interpretative context (for 18th-century Austrian public, of course): mummified heads. In 1830, for example, he asked to John Hislop⁵³ “si [...] pudesse arranjar duas cabeças de gentio, como as preparão os Mundrucus ainda silvestres” (Johann Natterer to John Hislop, Barra do Rio Negro, September 18th 1830). While the explicit purpose of this request was the collection of materials that could encourage the development of craniometric studies⁵⁴, implicitly, the collection of Mundurucu heads fulfilled another function, that of complete and *authenticate* the representation offered by feather objects through the evocation of fierceness.

⁵¹ “For this work they have in their dwellings a large number of macaws (of all kinds, except the not rare macaw, Psittacus hyacinthinus, whose feathers they do not use) and also other birds alive, which they pull out the feathers as needed. Through this often repeated pulling out of the feathers and - as it seems - complete robbing of them at once, the feathers usually degenerate into yellow, so that at times they have completely yellow macaws. Completely yellow and yellow-flecked tail and rump feathers of the Psittacus ararauna L. are found among the over-striking feather ornaments. They usually use the wing feathers for arrows.”

⁵² Further on in this section we shall see that Natterer's idea of natives was extremely negative.

⁵³ John Hislop was an English explorer and tradesman who lived in Cuiabá and travelled often in the Amazon.

⁵⁴ Craniometric studies were part of the new scientific methodology promoted by natural-historical investigation and which would become central devices for biological and social classification of peoples in 19th-century Anthropology. In a letter wrote in 1828 Johann Natterer let this issue emerge quite clearly: “S.M. o Imperador de Austria houve por bem enviar me para estas terras remotas para fazer collecções das diversas produções da natureza deste vasto paiz, juntamente com as armas enfeitos e outros trastes dos indios silvestres, acompanhado com o esqueleto das cabeças de alguns d'elles, para ver a differença na estrutura do cranio. Por esta razão peço a V.S., que no caso, que aconteça ser mortos alguns Cabexis em alguma balroada, mandar cortar a cabeça a hum ou dous indios ja feito homens, mandar tirar os miolos sem molestar o casco e secarllas perto do fogo para não podrecer muito” (Letter to José Gomez da Silva, Vila Bela de Santíssima Trindade, October 17th 1828.).

To better understand the context, it is worth making a brief digression on head-hunting ritualistic complex. Actually, the most accurate information we have dates back to the end of the 19th century. The only descriptions of head-hunting and mummification of Natterer's period are those of Spix and Martius:

In his triumph, the mundurucu does not spare any male enemy. As soon as he prostrates him on the ground with the arrow or the dart, which are never poisoned, he takes him by the hair and, with a short bamboo knife, cuts his neck muscles and the cartilage of his vertebrae with such skill that his head is separated from his body in an instant. According to Casal, because of this barbaric custom the mundurucus are called *paiquicés*, or “head cutters”, by the other tribes. The head, thus obtained, is then the object of the greatest care on the part of the victor. The skull, after removal of the brains, muscles, eyes, and tongue, is burned on a stake; for days afterwards, it is repeatedly washed with water, doused in urucum oil, and left in the sun to dry. After it has hardened completely, they fill it with artificial colored cotton balls, put resin eyes in it, put teeth in it, and finally adorn it with a feather cap. Thus prepared, the hideous trophy becomes the inseparable ornament of the victor, who takes it with him to hunt and to war, hanging it on a rope, and when he sleeps at night, on the common ranch, by day in the sun or in the smoke, at night he places it near his hammock as a lookout. (2017, 401-402)

By this time, knowledge on these ceremonies was still quite superficial, contributing to flatten their complexity and interpret them as total barbarity. To have more detailed sources it is necessary to wait until the 1870s with works such as those of João Barbosa Rodrigues (1875, 1882b, 1882c) and Antônio Gonçalves Tocantins (1877). According to the former, the main objective of Mundurucu assaults was to “perpetuar o odio de raça e o de trazer mulheres para si”⁵⁵ (Barbosa Rodrigues 1875, 144). For this reason, every year – towards the months of February or March, when the rain season turned to the end – massive military raids were organized. After the battle, the preparation of the ceremony – called *Pariuate-ran* or “reward fest” because warriors received rewards for their courage in battle – began. These were of two types: the trophy-head, *pariuá-á*, for those who had triumphed over their enemies by killing them; and the enemy belt, *pariuate-ran*, for warriors who had been wounded and could not gain a trophy-head. The holders of such rewards were all highly valued by the community

⁵⁵ “[...] perpetuate the race hatred and that of bringing women for themselves.”

and they were allowed not to work until the end of the ceremony, which was divided in different moments distributed over a few years (three to five). The preparation of the heads began still on the battlefield and continued all over the duration of the feast.

Logo depois de um ataque, finda a batalha, cada um dos combatentes, que tiveram ocasião de subjugar o inimigo e degolal-o, começa o trabalho da conservação do seu trophéo nesse mesmo local, e o acaba mais tarde na sua maloca. Principia por arrancar os dentes, que servem para o *pariua-te rau*, com o qual o tucháua o recompensará cinco annos depois; passa a extrahir os olhos e depois todo o interior da cabeça. Como um hábil taxidermista, vai virando o couro cabelludo e descarnando-o do craneo até chegar a descobril-o todo, ficando só preso pela face. Ahi, com toda habilidade, destaca os musculos com a pelle e regeita os ossos. Virada assim de dentro para fora a cabeça, sem distendê-la, com faca de taquara corta a musculatura quasi toda. Limpa, enxuga bem, o dá, quer interna, quer externamente, uma untura com óleo de andiroba (*Carapa Guyanensis*), e, com estopa e paina, raizes e folhas aromaticas socadas, passa a empalhar, procurando dar as fôrmas naturaes que não desfigurem o individuo. Empalhada, pendura-a sobre um muquem, e ao calor brando e fumaça vai seccando-a. Absorvido o óleo, e quando parece querer seccar, diminue o enchimento, unta-a novamente com óleo, e assim, seccando gradualmente, torna menor o volume ate chegar a um ponto que não seja mais possível a pelle encolher-se. Então fura-lhe os lábios, prendendo ambos com fios de algodão, donde pende um enfeite, também de fios pintados com urucú. Passa-lhe pelo alto da cabeça um longo cordão para trazel-a pendurada ás costas, e é guardada ao fumeiro o que dá a côr negra que tem a pelle, e impede, assim como o oleo, que os insectos a corroam.⁵⁶ (Barbosa Rodrigues 1882b, 39-40)

⁵⁶ "Soon after an attack, after the battle, each one of the combatants, who had the chance to subdue the enemy and slit his throat, begins the work of preserving his trophies in that same place, and finishes it later in his maloca. He starts by pulling out the teeth, which are used for the *pariua-te rau*, with which the tucháua will reward him five years later; he goes on to extract the eyes and then the whole inside of the head. Like a skillful taxidermist, he turns the scalp over and strips it from the skull until all of it is uncovered, remaining only attached to the face. There, with all skill, he detaches the muscles with the skin and straightens the bones. Turning the head inside out, without distending it, he cuts the musculature almost completely with a machete. He cleans, dries well, and anoints it, both internally and externally, with andiroba oil (*Carapa Guyanensis*), and, with tow and reed, roots and aromatic leaves punched, he starts to stuff it, trying to give it the natural shapes that do not disfigure the individual. Once stuffed, he hangs it on a grindstone, and with gentle heat and smoke, he dries it. After absorbing the oil, and when it seems to want to dry out, he reduces the filling, anoints it again with oil, and thus, drying gradually, reduces the volume until it reaches a point where it is no longer possible for the skin to shrink. Then he pierces her lips, fastening both with cotton threads, from which hangs an ornament, also of threads painted with anatto. A long cord is passed over the top of her head to carry it hanging on her back, and it is kept in the smokehouse, which gives the skin its black color and prevents, like the oil, insects from corroding it."

After the return to the village, the *tuxaua* organized a big hunt and, once it was over, he established a day for the community to meet to assist the preparation of the *pariuate-ran*. They were made of cotton and decorated with the teeth taken by hunted heads and only the *tuchaua* was authorized to make them. This process was accompanied by mourning songs in which the fallen were remembered and vengeance was promised to enemies⁵⁷. Once the belts were ready, it was possible to organize the final ceremony, during which victorious warriors displayed their trophies (*pariuá-á*) and wounded received their belts as a reward for their demonstrated value. Also three women, widows or sisters of the dead, received the belt (Barbosa Rodrigues 1882c). It was during this last feast that warriors wore feather ornaments such as those collected by Johann Natterer – and which differed in color according to the clan⁵⁸.

Ornam a cabeça com o *aquiri-aá*, uma espécie de coifa, tecida de algodão com pennas do corpo de arara, de maneira que externamente fica como que avelludada, emquanto que por dentro só aparece o tecido de algodão. Desta coifa, da altura das orelhas para traz, pende uma espécie de babado de duas ordens de pennas, da cauda da mesma arara unidas umas às outras e enfeitadas na extremidade inferior com pennas miúdas de côr diferente que encobre o pescoço. Pelos furos superiores das orelhas passam duas rozetas igualmente de pennas. Cingem na cintura o *tempê-á*, que é uma banda feita como *aquiri-aá*, isto é, a parte que se aperta á cintura é feita de pennas miúdas e delia pendem quatro divisões de pennas compridas, unidas e enfeitadas, que correspondem, duas aos lados e duas á frente e costas. Passam a tiracollo *carurape*, que é uma facha de pennas, terminada por uma grande rozeta, e ornam os hombros com o *báman*, ou dragonas de cachos de pennas miúdas; os pulsos com as *ipê-á*, ou pulseiras; e as curvas das pernas com os *caniubiman*, que são ligas com pennas que encobrem as canellas, enfeitadas com cascas de fruetos, para chocalhar. Nos tornozellos também levam o *caniubicrie*, que é uma liga de pennas miúdas, fechada por uma rozeta. Geralmente as pulseiras e dragonas e ligas são de pennas pretas de mutum e o resto do vestuário de pennas azues e encarnadas. Levam uns arcos enfeitados de pennas, *iraré*; outros lanças, *bécacá-ipê*, e outros uma espécie de sceptro, *putá*, feito das pennas mais longas da cauda

⁵⁷ This part of the ceremony calls to the mind Tupi rituals and the importance they had in establishing a temporal dynamic on which to build social and political relations (cfr §1.2).

⁵⁸ Barbosa Rodrigues identifies three clans: the red clan, the white clan and the black clan. The color of the feathers used to prepare ornaments changed according to the clan to which individual belonged. Red clan used mostly red feathers, white clan used mostly yellow feathers and black clan used mostly blue feathers (1882).

da arara, unidas as pontas por uma rozeta e enfeitadas com pennas miúdas na parte que prende a uma flecha, em que seguram.⁵⁹ (Barbosa Rodrigues 1875, 148)

This part of the ceremony could last several days, until everyone had received the deserved reward. When the whole ritual came to an end, the trophy-head lost its importance and power and the cycle continued. Although more detailed, even these descriptions and the interpretation they suggest of the ritual are partial and do not fully capture the meaning the ritual had for the Munduruku (§5.1.2).

So, contrasting feelings overlapped in the interpretation that Europeans – and Johann Natterer among them – produced of feather objects used in such rituals: from admiration for their aesthetic beauty to repulsion for the practices which encouraged their manufacturing. Distinct values layered onto artifacts and the categories of wonder and sublime were possibly felt as the most appropriate to deal with the resonance of these objects. They allowed people to produce a coherent synthesis between simultaneously *positive* and *negative* feelings and to incorporate into Western knowledge the experience of something that was not understood in its cultural complexity. It is not a chance that Munduruku ornaments were described as *weird*; among other things related to the intellectual and emotional speculation which followed the experience of the sublime, such weirdness made them more efficient than other objects in stressing the differences – from all points of view – between Europeans and non-Europeans. Therefore, their presence in a space dedicated to the study and classification of natural and social phenomena like a Natural History Cabinet was probably considered important.

⁵⁹ “They ornament the head with the *aquiri-aá*, a kind of hood, woven of cotton with feathers from the body of the macaw, so that externally it is as if velvety, while inside only the cotton fabric appears. From this hood, from the height of the ears back, hangs a kind of frill of two orders of feathers, from the tail of the same macaw attached to each other and decorated at the lower end with small feathers of different color that covers the neck. Through the upper holes of the ears pass two earrings also of feathers. At the waist they wear the *tempê-á*, which is a band made like *aquiri-aá*, that is, the part that is fastened to the waist is made of fine feathers and from it hang four divisions of long feathers, united and adorned, which correspond, two to the sides and two to the front and back. They pass around the neck the *carurape*, which is a headband of feathers, terminated by a large feather rose, and adorn the shoulders with the *báman*, or epaulettes of bunches of small feathers; the wrists with the *ipê-á*, or bracelets; and the curves of the legs with the *caniubiman*, which are garters with feathers that cover the shins, decorated with fruit peels, for rattling. On the ankles they also carry the *caniubicrie*, which is a garter of fine feathers, closed by a rose. Generally, the bracelets and epaulettes and garters are made of black curassow feathers, and the rest of the clothing is made of blue and red feathers. Some carry bows decorated with feathers, *irarê*; others have spears, *bêcacá-ipê*, and others a kind of scepter, *putá*, made from the longest feathers of the macaw’s tail, with the ends joined by a ratchet and decorated with small feathers on the part that attaches to an arrow, where they hold.”

Although we are used to think of the Enlightenment as a period when reason prevailed over any other approach of investigating the world, the attitude of the Austrian naturalist was not anomalous. Despite the norms wrote by Cabinets' directors, it was quite common for collectors to follow their own taste in the assembling of collections, especially ethnographic ones (Thompson 2013). Moreover, although natural history promoted rationality and systematicity as main collection criteria, the collection of curiosities continued to be part of its official discourse even after the 16th and 17th centuries (Vos 2009). As also Robertson points out in an article on curiosity during Austrian Enlightenment (2009), this attitude did not abandon at all explorers and collectors. Austria, in particular, had a long collecting tradition associated to *Wunderkammern*. We mentioned that of Ferdinand II of Tyrol in Ambras but very important were also those of emperor Maximilian II (ruled 1564-1576), of his son Rudolph II (ruled 1576-1614) and of Archduke Karl II of Inner Austria. Made up by "heirlooms, gifts and acquisitions" (Kaufmann 1994, 142) they contributed to implant wonder as criteria of selection and collection in such a way that it survived the *enlightened* reorganization of collections carried out by Mary Therese and his son Joseph II (Idem). The fact that 17th-century natural philosophers and 18th- and early 19th-century natural historians decided to ignore wonders because considered outside their field of investigation did not imply that wonder as feeling and as interpretative approach faded. Simply, there was a change both in the circumstances that encouraged the collection of objects read through the lenses of wonder and in those of their recontextualization – in a Natural History Cabinet instead of a Cabinet of Curiosity (Vos 2009).

Another point might help us to understand Natterer's positioning. As mentioned in the previous section, until 1807 Brazil had been shut to any European power except Portugal and Great Britain. The gaze of the majority of 19th-century European naturalists was thus still influenced by the feeling of discovery of unknown lands (Sallas 2010). Since wonder had always been a feeling associated to the sense of novelty and possibility (Greenblatt 1991), it should not surprise us if Natterer used it as a conceptual tool to translate and try to understand natural phenomena and social practices unknown to him. In this process, also the imaginary produced by previous centuries' accounts and iconographies played an important role (Sallas 2010). Observed from a Eurocentric, stereotyped perspective, *munduruku* objects present several analogies with representations such as those of L  ry, Thevet, Staden or De Bry, as much in the exuberance of feather works as in the correlation

with warfare practices. Their selection and collection – or to say it with Kopytoff (1986), their singularization – was part of a rather articulated circular process. They were, simultaneously, products of a stereotyped imaginary which, confirming their supposed authenticity, increased their desirability, and perpetrators of that same stereotype enriched with further meanings tied, for example, to scientific discourse. This latter aspect is not to underestimate since the production, on objects, of knowledge labelled as *scientific* implied their freeze-framing into one hegemonic, Western, colonial perspective. Ethnographic objects – and here, specifically, Mundurucu ones – lost their original meanings to turn into “semiophores” (Pomian 1990) whose value laid in the representation they offered of Brazilian natives as exotic, odd, brute individuals, who belonged to the past and whose only possibility of existence was to yield or succumb to civilization.

In the discourse produced by Natterer this process is accentuated by the general idea he had of indigenous peoples. Although no exhaustive account with structured speculations about natural social classification has come down to us, his moral positioning emerges from some letters. Both before and after personal interaction with them⁶⁰ his opinion remained unchanged (Santos and Montes 2016). A recurring element, and symptom of a rather negative view, is the fear for *hostile* natives’ attacks. The *Sertão de Lages*, for example, is described as “eine Wüste, wo man 15 – 20 Tage zubringt, ohne ein Haus anzutreffen und wo zuweilen die Wilden einen Besuch machen, um eine gute Nacht zu wünschen. Doch da reisen gewöhnlich mehrere zusammen und nachts werden Wachen ausgestellt und die Gewehre in guten Stand gesetzt. Die Hunde sind dann von grossem Nutzen”⁶¹ (Johann Natterer to Josef Natterer, Ipanema, July 8th/14th 1820). On the 17th of November, once he was ready to leave to explore it, he reassured his brother (and probably himself too) that “die Gewehre sind in gutem Stande, Patronen gemacht und so fürchte ich die Wilden nicht”⁶² (Johann Natterer to Josef Natterer, Curitiba, November 17th 1820). In a following letter he added that:

⁶⁰ Until 1826, Natterer’s opinion was mainly influenced by the ideas of *erfahrene Männer* (expert men) whom he trusted and whose vision he embraced. Personal contacts occurred only from 1827, while travelling across Mato Grosso and the Amazonian region (Santos and Montes 2016).

⁶¹ “[...] a desert where one spends 15-20 days without encountering a house and where sometimes the savages pay a visit to wish a good night. Usually, there are several travelling together and at night guards are issued and the rifles are put in good condition. The dogs are then of great use.”

⁶² “[...] guns are in good conditions; cartridges are made and so I do not fear the savages.”

Eine Hauptursache, dass diese Gegend noch nicht mit einigen Bewohnern versehen ist, ist wohl in den feindlichen Gesinnungen der Wilden zu suchen, die jede Ansiedlung zerstören. Diese Wilden, die man allgemein mit den Nahmen Bugres belegt, sollen von den Nationen Tactayas und Voturões seyn. Sie werden den Reisenden im sertão sehr gefährlich, die deshalb stark bewaffnet gewöhnlich in kleinen Karavanen reisen und nachts Wachen aufstellen, um sich vor Uiberfällen zu schützen.⁶³ (Letter from Johann Natterer to Karl von Schreibers, Rio de Janeiro, March 2nd 1821)

The attribution of *naturally congenital* features such as the tendency to run away and laziness also influenced Natterer's thought. In a letter to Karl von Schreibers wrote in 1826 and describing their arrival on the Amazon River from the Madeira River he told that "mittag fuhren wir ab und übernachteten auf einer langen Insel, wo in der Nacht mir 2 Indier entflohen, welches eine angebohrne Gewohnheit dieser faulen Menschen ist, die oft den Schifspatron ganz allein auf dem Schiff lassen. Zum Glücke stahlen sie mir keines von den Jagdcanoen"⁶⁴ (Letter from from Johann Natterer to Karl von Schreibers, Marabitanas, February 20th/28th 1831).

In addition to all this, the prejudice that any confrontation was due to the violent intentions of not yet domesticated groups always prevailed. The episode mentioned in a letter of January 1828 is quite eloquent on this matter:

Am 5. gieng es durch ebene Steppen mit sparsamen Gehölz versehen. Es war eine glühende Hitze und kein Wasser zu finden. Meiner Hunde wegen musste ich öfters im Schatten eines Baumes ausrasten, da Wassermangel und große Hitze sie schnell tödtet, und so zogen meine Leute voraus und ich blieb mit einem Neger zurück. Einige Zeit darauf hörte ich einen Schuss fallen, bald folgte ein zweyter, dritter und vierter. Ich gab meinem Pferde die Sporen und ritt mit meinem Neger rasch vorwärts, die Gewehre in Bereitschaft, in der Meinung, dass die Wilden vom Cabaçal meine Truppe angegriffen hätten. Bald erreichte ich sie und fand meine Maulthiere zerstreut, doch gab es keine Wilden. Meine Leute hatten eine geflechte Unze geschossen und waren schon beschäftigt, sie auf ein Maulthier zu laden. Mein Schütze, der

⁶³ "One of the main reasons that this region is not yet inhabited is probably the hostility of the savages, who destroy every settlement. These savages, who are generally called Bugres, are said to be from the nations of Tactayas and Voturões. They become very dangerous to the travelers in the *sertão*, who therefore travel heavily armed, usually in small caravans, and set up guards at night to protect themselves from attacks.

⁶⁴ We left at noon and spent the night on a long island, where two Indians escaped from me during the night, which is a habit of these lazy people, who often leave the ship's patron all alone on the ship. Fortunately, they did not steal any of the hunting canoes from me."

etwas vorausgieng, erblickte und beschlich sie und brachte ihr einen zwar nicht tödtlichen Schuss bey. Auf dieses kamen meine zwey Kerls herangeritten und trieben sie auf einem Baum, wo sie sie tödteten.⁶⁵ (Letter from Johann Natterer to Wenzel Philipp Leopold Baron von Mareschal, Cuiabá, January 8th 1828).

Fierceness and refusal to submission, behaviors such as running away or not working as white people expected as well as prejudice were all elements which, in Johann Natterer's mind, legitimized colonial actions of invasion, appropriation of resources and physical and psychological coercion. This radical position might be influenced, on the one hand, by the absence of that personal sensitivity that enabled to grasp the injustices of the colonial system – and that characterized some other naturalists such as Ferreira (§2.2.2), Humboldt or Darwin (Wulf 2017; Darwin 2018); on the other, by the fact that he had no need of justifying natives' humanity and eligibility to civilization for political and economic reasons. To him, indigenous people were useful only as informants in the collection of and as labor force while travelling across Brazil⁶⁶; outside of these dynamics they mainly represented obstacles to possibly avoid. In his thought there was no room for ambiguity. He simultaneously fed on, and nurtured, that primitivizing and stereotyped imaginary which essentialized natives into the dichotomy *tame* and *wild Indians*. The former distinguished from the latter only because less dangerous, for they had been *domesticated*. In this sense, it is interesting to notice that the German word used by Natterer is *zähmen*: semantically, this term alludes to animal domestication (Schmutzer 2011; Santos 2013), establishing a conceptual correspondence with beings, like animals, considered devoid of intellect, partially or completely subservient

⁶⁵ “On the 5th we passed through flat steppes with sparse woods. The heat was fierce and there was no water to be found. For the sake of my dogs, I often had to rest in the shade of a tree, since lack of water and great heat kill them quickly, and so my people went ahead and I stayed behind with a negro. Some time later I heard a shot, soon followed by a second, third and fourth. I put spurs to my horse and rode rapidly forward with my negro, my rifles at the ready, thinking that the savages of the Cabaçal had attacked my troop. I soon reached them and found my mules scattered, but there were no savages. My men had shot a braided ounce and were already busy loading it on a mule deer. My rifleman, who was a little ahead, caught sight of her and stalked her, and fired a shot at her that was not fatal. On this my two fellows rode up and drove her up a tree, where they killed her.”

⁶⁶ Natterer supported slavery. In a letter addressed to his brother he stated: “So viel man über die Behandlung der Sklaven geschrieben und geschrien hat, so sollte man nur jene Menschen hören und urtheilen lassen, die solche besitzen. Je mehr man ihnen Freyheit lässt und je besser man sie behandelt, desto schlechter ist es. Davon überzeugt man sich täglich und an mir selbst habe ich dies hinlänglich erfahren” (Letter from Johann Natterer to Josef Natterer, Cuiabá, February 18th 1825). Translation: “as much as it has been written and shouted about the treatment of slaves, one should only let those people hear and judge who own them. The more they are allowed freedom and the better they are treated, the worse it is. One is convinced of this every day and I have experienced this sufficiently myself”.

to nature and that only the guidance and teachings of Europeans could make indigenous peoples *etwas aufgeklärter*⁶⁷ (somewhat more enlightened) (Santos and Montes 2016). Like the capacity to manipulate nature, also *domestication* represented a humanizing device whose success laid in total assimilation to the European model – or, if not possible, in extermination.

The perception that prevailed, abroad, of Brazilian country might also help us to understand better these attitudes. While a general consensus lacked on many aspects, everyone agreed with considering Brazil as a “modelo de falta e atraso em função da sua composição étnica e racial”⁶⁸ (Schwarcz 2019, 48). The tendency to consider the presence of black, indigenous and mixed people as aspect of degeneration gained popularity during the Enlightenment thanks to the increase of studies on human classification (§2.2.1) and genetic hybridization⁶⁹; not by chance policies of social integration – such as those of Pombal (cfr §2.2.1) and José Bonifácio (§3.2.1, note 24) – promoted processes of assimilation and whitening. Imbued with a Eurocentric perspective, Natterer was profoundly influenced by such ideas of which he found confirmation in his daily life conditions, spent in *elenden* (wretched) villages constantly accompanied by a feeling of physical and emotional loneliness (Schmutzer 2011). On the 20th of April 1822 he wrote to the Baron von Mareschall that “Leider muss ich fast jeden Tag die traurige Erfahrung machen, wie wenig man hier, in einem noch halb wilden Lande, über die Umstände gebiethen und wie wenig man etwas im Vorhinein bestimmen kann”⁷⁰ (Johann Natterer to Wenzel Philipp Leopold Baron von Mareschal, Ipanema, April 20nd 1822). Formal tones are instead abandoned when addressing the doctor and friend Antônio Luiz Patricio da Silva Manso: “Quelle esperance me reste-t-il, éloigné de vous, ami cheri, qui seul pourroit soulager mes peines, dans un desert privé presque de tout, entouré

⁶⁷ Johann Natterer to Karl von Schreibers, Rio de Janeiro, March 2nd 1821.

⁶⁸ “[...] model of lack and backwardness according to its ethnic and racial composition”

⁶⁹ With respect to the 18th century, in 19th century polygenic theories about the origin of humanity began to gain popularity. They implied that “human races” originated in different moments and geographical centers and that these, in turn, determined biological and cultural distinctions. Mixture was not seen as something positive by Europeans whose systems of classifications demanded to draw well-defined lines between groups. Also, mixed individuals were considered as undefined types who did not inherit the characteristics of any of the “races” involved in mixing process (Schwarcz 2019). This approach was influenced by the idea, widespread among many naturalists, that interspecies interbreeding would lead to the generation of sterile individuals to prevent organic forms from intermingling. Through the analysis of previous researches such as those of Kölreuter, Gärtner and Herbert, Darwin was one of the first to confute this theory. In “The Origin of the Species”, he proved how interspecies sterility neither depends on universal laws nor had as final purpose to keep different species isolated from each other (cfr Darwin 2019, chapter 8).

⁷⁰ “Unfortunately, almost every day I have to make the sad experience of how little one can command over the circumstances here, in a country that is still half wild, and how little one can determine something in advance.”

des êtres, qui rivalisent en brutalité avec les Indiens voisins. Et a Matogrosso dans ce climat marciageux ne sera-t-il pas encore pire!”⁷¹ (Johann Natterer to Antônio Luiz Patricio da Silva Manso, Caiçara, November-December 1825).

Such difficulties were exacerbated by his health conditions which got worse day after day, especially because of climate and the poor hygiene. They are detailed described in some other letters addressed to the above-mentioned friend and to the brother, with whom he could vent freely without, for this, jeopardize his stay in the field (Montes 2010). In 1824, for example, he wrote to Josef Natterer that

[...] ich leide nun schon seit Monathen an der Leber. Lange schon fühlte ich beym Sitzen mit vorgebeugtem Körper, beym Schreiben oder andern Arbeiten einen stumpfen Schmerz auf der Leber. Ich achtete es jedoch nicht. Doch der Schmerz vermehrte sich nach und nach und es wurde eine Entzündung daraus. Ein hiesiger Chirurg, mein Freund, der mich behandelt, brachte mich durch starke Aderlässe und Blasenpflaster und gänzliches Vermeiden jener gekrümmten Stellung so ziemlich zurecht, aber meine wieder begonnenen Arbeiten, obschon meist im Stehen, besonders das langwierige Geschäft des Ordnen, Um- und Zusammenleeren und Aussuchen der nun zu überschickenden, sehr reichen Eingeweidewürmersammlung verschlimmerte meinen Zustand abermahls, sodass, wie es scheint, schon ein ziemlicher Anfang zu Verhärtungen gemacht ist. Ich nehme nun den Aethiops antimonialis und den Absud eines hiesigen Krautes und mache dabey täglich Bewegung und trachte, von hier auf einige Zeit wegzukommen, denn das Reiten und ermüdende Jagdexcursionen werden nur heilsam werden.⁷² (Letter from Johann Natterer to Josef Natterer, Cuiabá, December 16th 1824)

Again, in 1826, in a letter to Manso:

⁷¹ “What hope is there for me, far from you, dear friend, who alone could relieve my sorrows, in a desert deprived of almost everything, surrounded by beings who rival in brutality with the neighboring Indians. And in Matogrosso, in this marshy climate, won't it be even worse.”

⁷² “I have been suffering from my liver for months now. For a long time, I felt a dull pain in my liver when sitting with my body bent forward, writing or doing other work. However, I did not notice it. But the pain gradually increased and became an inflammation. A local surgeon, my friend, who treats me, brought me pretty much back to normal by strong phlebotomies and blister plasters and by completely avoiding that bent position, but my resumed work, although mostly in a standing position, especially the tedious business of arranging, emptying and selecting the very rich collection of intestinal worms that now had to be sent over, made my condition much worse, so that, as it seems, quite a start has already been made towards hardening. I am now taking the Aethiops antimonialis and the decoction of a local herb, and I am exercising daily and trying to get away from here for some time, because horseback riding and tiring hunting excursions will only benefit me.”

Bientôt après que je vous ai écrit ma dernière je fus attaqué d'une furieuse disurie, accompagnée d'un violent tenesme de sorte, que je craignois déjà une gangrene. Mais le bon Dieu a voulu encore conserver ma vie. Des bains d'eau tièdes et des bains de vapeur appliqué jour et nuit avec du camphre pris intérieurement m'ont soulagé bientôt mes douleurs et j'ai été libre jusqu'à présent d'une pareille attaque, quoique toujours incommode de mon foie. Il me semble, que je me sens un peu mieux avec la fréquent exercice, que je fais presque tous les jours à pied dans la recherche des oiseaux et en buvant le decoct de la Pariparoba, que j'ai trouvé ici. Dernièrement je pris trois grains de Calomel en quatre jours, ce qui m'a montré bientôt des mauvais effets sur la geneive et cela pour longtemps. Enfin je regarde mon mal comme la cause la plus sûre d'une mort prématurée.⁷³ (Letter from Johann Natterer to Antônio Luiz Patricio da Silva Manso, Windmill of Captain Gama, August 18th 1826)

So, Natterer's thought included all the different aspects mentioned so far: admiration, amazement, fear, revulsion, curiosity, suffering and longing for knowledge juxtaposed and intertwined in a complex narrative. However, as we already clarified, these feelings were not perceived as in contradiction to each other; on the contrary, they constituted solid criteria on which to build indigenous otherness in such a way as to confirm Western socio-cultural supremacy. In this context, the process of selection, collection and recontextualization turned ethnographic objects into material evidences of such discourse and essentialized representations of homogeneous ideal types, well-defined in contrast to European identity (Schmutzer 2012). Feather objects condensed better than others the elements of this Eurocentric, colonial vision also because they began to circulate exponentially in the Atlantic space and to fill European museums. This was related partly to the wonder they evoked and which made them highly desired, partly to the fact that they were quite easy to acquire through purchase and exchange⁷⁴ – even if a lot of them might have been stolen. Concerning this point, in the next section we will analyze in details the Austrian context.

⁷³ "Soon after I wrote my last letter to you, I was attacked by a furious disuria, accompanied by a violent tenesmus, so that I already feared cancrena. But the good Lord still wanted to preserve my life. Baths of warm water and steam baths applied day and night with camphor taken internally soon relieved my pains and I have been free until now from such an attack, although still inconvenient of my liver. It seems to me, that I feel a little better with the frequent exercise, which I do almost every day walking in search of birds and drinking the decoct of the Pariparoba, which I found here. Lately I took three grains of Calomel in four days, which showed me soon bad effects on the gene and that for a long time. Finally, I look at my illness as the surest cause of a premature death."

⁷⁴ Dom Pedro I, for instance, commissioned two feather dresses for him and for his second wife, Amelia Augusta Eugenia, probably to attend one of the parties organized at court. Today they are preserved at the Museum of Ethnology of Munich (Schindler 2001).

To conclude this section, I would like to suggest a critical thinking about the figure of the naturalist. In 19th century, setting out on such explorations meant to embark on real missions in the name of science. The majority of naturalists were led by a burning desire for knowledge, for which they were willing to suffer any kind of deprivation and even contemplate the possibility of not returning home⁷⁵. Natterer, for example, feared more that, once he would return to Vienna, his job would not be properly recognized⁷⁶. Once again, he expressed his concern in a letter to his brother:

Krankheiten, Entbehrungen aller Art, Strapazen, beständige Arbeit, selbst mechanische so lange Jahre miteinander wechselnd, sollten wohl endlich ein ruhigeres Leben mir wünschen machen, sollten wohl jene Begierde zu reisen und zu sammeln gekühlt haben. Doch nein, noch ist jene Begierde die selbe, mein Wille der selbe, nur meine Kräfte sind nicht mehr die selben. Sollte mein Entschluss in Wien gemissbilligt werden, sollten meine Schritte, die nur die Verschönerung des Kabinetts bezwecken, missverstanden werden und ich statt Lohn, oder vielleicht besser statt Zufriedenheitsäusserungen mit meinen Arbeiten, wenn ich einst in Wien anlangte, Ungnade zu erwarten haben, so beschwöre ich dich, berichte mirs in Zeiten.⁷⁷
(Johann Natterer to Josef Natterer, Borba, December 21st/28th 1829)

The courage and determination that drove these individuals to venture out in lands practically unknown to them and whose conditions were definitely hostile for Western people has to be recognized. However, it is also necessary to problematize the figure of the naturalist when identified as a politically neutral person and whose purpose was not to usurp but to “discover” things of nature and educate society about them (Santos 2013). This attitude as well as to the use of a codified scientific language, made these descriptions to be perceived as “truth to nature” (Schmutzer 2012, 81), *simple descriptions* of a universal and objective reality. On the contrary, they were “ideias compartilhadas por determinado grupo acerca da natureza, do homem e da civilização do Novo Mundo”⁷⁸ (Sallas 2010, 417). Johann

⁷⁵ Natterer’s companion, Dominik Sochor, died in Mato Grosso in 1826 because of tropical fevers and diseases.

⁷⁶ This aspect was precisely what sent Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira into depression.

⁷⁷ “Illnesses, privations of all kinds, strains, constant work, even mechanical alternating so long years, should probably finally make me wish for a calmer life, should probably have cooled that desire to travel and to collect. But no, that desire is still the same, my will the same, only my powers are no longer the same. If my decision should be disapproved in Vienna, if my steps, which only aim at the beautification of the cabinet, should be misunderstood and I should have to expect disgrace instead of reward, or perhaps better instead of expressions of satisfaction with my work, when I once arrive in Vienna, then I implore you, report it to me in time.”

⁷⁸ “Ideas shared by a certain group about nature, man, and civilization in the New World.”

Natterer's tone, when not explicitly negative, might seem indifferent to a moral judgment but it is not. In the process of "Grenzziehungen und Definitionen des Eigenen und des Fremden"⁷⁹ (2011, 161) through activities such as "Sammeln, Erwerben, Inventarisieren, Katalogisieren, Objekte für das Museum"⁸⁰ (Idem, 160-161), a western rhetoric, aimed at promoting Europeans' superiority over Natives' inferiority and at perpetuating unequal, colonial power relationships, strongly prevails (Santos 2013).

3.3 Objects' life in the museum: 1822-1929

In Brazil, the collection of material began soon after the arrival of the naturalists and, consequently, also the shipments to Austria. Whenever there was time, Natterer had to devote himself to the preparation of objects (animals had to be stuffed or put under alcoholic solution, ethnographic objects and plants had to be properly packed, etc.) as well as to the compilation of complementary documentation necessary to provide an interpretative context once the material would reach the museum. In his letters Natterer often mentions these phases of the journey and explains the possible routes that the crates, once ready, could take to get to Europe. Major ports where to embark them were Rio de Janeiro and Belém, both reachable through tortuous paths overland and by river. Once again, the network of political relations in which the naturalist was involved played a key role in ensuring the success of this process. For example, in a letter dated 24th of June 1830 and addressed to Baron Rothschild, he wrote:

Am 24. Dezember vorigen Jahres hatte ich die Ehre, E[uer] H[ochwohlgeboren] die unterm 30. November v[origen] J[ahres] gebene Nachricht, dass ich 22 für S[eine] Majestät den K[aiser] von Östreich bestimmte Kisten an den k[öniglich]-grossbr[itannischen] Viceconsul Herrn J[ohn] Hesqueth mit dem Ersuchen, selbe an E[uer] H[ochwohlgeboren] nach England zu befördern, nach Pará absendete, zu wiederholter und zu gleicher Zeit das Ersuchen gethan, meine beygeschlossenen Briefe an den Herrn von Schreibers nach Wien zu expedieren. Bey gegenwärtiger Gelegenheit mache ich E[uer] H[ochwohlgeboren] bekannt, dass ich am 17. Juny 7 grosse, ebenfalls für S[eine] Maj[estät] den Kaiser von Östr[eich] bestimmte Kisten sub marca K.N. No. 23 - 29 von hier mit Senhor Antonio Gonsalvez Marquez nach Pará einschifte, um sie Herrn Hesqueth zur Weiterbeförderung zu überliefern und ersuche E[uer]

⁷⁹ "Boundaries and definitions of the own and the foreign."

⁸⁰ "Collecting, acquiring, inventorying, cataloging, objects for the museum."

H[ochwohlgeboren], selbe bey glücklichem Anlangen in England auf dem sichersten Weg nach Wien zu befördern und womöglichst zu verhüten, dass die Kisten irgend auf den englischen Zollhäusern eröffnet werden.⁸¹ (Johann Natterer to Baron Rotschild, Borba, June 24th 1830)

Another aspect jumps to the attention by reading this extract, that is to say, not to open the crates until their arrival in Vienna. In a following letter, the tone of this request sounds even firmer:

Chegou hontem o Senhor Matheus e me contou, que os meus caixões forão logo embarcados para Londres, mais me disse que hum caixão sempre foi aberto na alfandega, no que tenho grande pezar, pois eu tinha escrito ao Senhor Presidente a esse respeito e pedido a elle de dar providencias para não abrir as caixões, visto que elles continhão so objectos de historia natural destinados para S[ua] Mayestade o Imper[ador] e foi culpa a sui correspondente não querer fallar ao Presidente. V.S. me fala o favor dizer ao Senhor Eaton, que não deixe mais abrir nenhuma caixa, si eu mandar algumas e que falle ao Presidente, a quem nessa occasião escrevo. (Johann Natterer to John Hislop, Manaus, September 18th 1830)

According to Schmutzer (2012) the disfavor towards this action was due to the fact that opening the crates could compromise the authenticity of objects because the information associated to them, and which witnessed their identity, could be altered. When this happened, it was the very *truth-value* with which objects were invested to be damaged and, consequently, their usefulness for scientific research.

From the document preserved at the Archive of the Natural History Museum of Vienna (cfr note 17) we know that Natterer sent to Europe approximately 55.692 things among which 1.492 were ethnographic objects (*Waffen und Geräte*). Although, compared to natural

⁸¹ "On December 24 last year I had the honor to present to His Highness, through the news of November 30 last year, that I had sent in Para 22 boxes destined for His Majesty the Emperor of Austria to the English Royal Vice-Consul J[ohn] Hesqueth with a request to His Highness himself to transport them to England, and at the same time I made the request to send my enclosed letters to Herr von Schreibers in Vienna. On this occasion I would like to inform His Highness that on June 17 I sent 7 large K.N. boxes, also intended for His Majesty the Emperor of Austria. No. 23 - 29 I sent them to Pará with Senhor Antonio Gonsalvez Marquez, to deliver them to Herr Hesqueth for onward transportation, and I request Herr Hesqueth to transport the same crates on the safest route to Vienna, if possible, to avoid the crates being opened at any of the English customs."

specimens, ethnographic material was in a strong minority, it still formed one of the biggest collections at the time⁸².

The first shipment arrived in Vienna in 1821 and it became clear that the Natural history Cabinet would not be able to host all the material that still had to come. Therefore, in 1822, it was moved to another building in the city center that was renamed *Brasilianum* (Brazilian Museum) and where everything arriving from Natterer's expedition poured in (Feest 2013-2014). On Saturday morning, it was open to the public, while scholars could access whenever they wanted. It was immediately a great success also thanks to the fact that the Austrian expedition had been greatly sponsored and people were eager to see the results (Schmutzer and Feest 2013-2014). Concerning ethnographic material, the opportunity of personally see objects coming from such a distant world was a way to give a sense of *truth* and *real* to the imaginary that circulated among society (Pagden 1988). As we said elsewhere, according to it, natives were portrayed as savage, naïve, ignorant, technologically and intellectually backward individuals, who needed the guidance of Europeans to get out of the *state of nature* and embrace modern civilization. In case of violent opposition to Western occupation, they were blamed of hindering the inevitable and unstoppable rush of progress and their extermination was justified.

Munduruku objects joined the collection from 1824, when Johann Natterer acquired the first artifacts from Peixoto de Azevedo (§3.2.1). Although there are no systematic inventories of this period, their presence is registered in two lists preserved at the Archive of the Welt Museum Wien and wrote respectively in 1827 and 1831. In the former titled *VIII. Waffen und Gerätschaften von Indiern und portugiesischen Brasilianern vom Herrn Joh. Natterer [...]*, there is a section dedicated to “den Mundurucus die am Flusse Topajóz wohnen⁸³”; the latter, *X. Waffen und Geräte der Indier aus Brasilien von H. Joh. Natterer eingeschickt und erhalten am 11. May 1831*, begins with a section named “I. Mundurucu”. They had to be among those which reawaked more curiosity because of their weirdness and their aesthetical beauty. Moreover, they were not completely unknown to Western people. In fact, other accounts and graphic representations were being produced in the same years, with whom they *completed* and

⁸² The Brazilian ethnographic collection of the Welt Museum Wien is, at the moment, the biggest and richest collection all over Europe.

⁸³ “[...] the Mundurucus who live on the Topajóz river.”

confirmed mutual truthfulness, contributing to shape a specific knowledge on Brazilian reality.

We already reported a few of the written sources but several illustrations were also circulating. Among the most popular images which date back to the same period of Natterer's collection, we can mention those of Spix and Martius, Hercule Florence, Jean Baptiste Debret and Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied. We do not know if Natterer left some kind of iconographic production on indigenous peoples and the ethnographic materials he collected. If he did, it has not come down to us. The comparison with such documentation was important because it gave Europeans an idea on how feather objects were worn and to what elements they were associated. At the same time, they favored the extension of the *marvelous* imagery they evoked to all other ethnic groups. Figures 46, 47, 48 are taken from Spix and Martius' account *Reisen in Brasil* and portrait respectively two profiles, a full-length individual and a scene that could help to imagine their encounter with the Munduruku and described in the text as follows: "when the Indians saw us rowing there, they came out of their large conical huts and came dancing to meet us: a feather boa on their heads, long ribbons of feathers hanging down their backs, and brandishing a cylindrical feather scepter with their hands" (2017: 398). All the images show some feature of Munduruku people that, despite presented separately⁸⁴, ended up building a single imaginary for which the Munduruku were considered one of the few, remaining "powerful tribes, still in a primitive state, but who had had some dealings with the whites" (Idem: 139).

Munduruku feather ornaments – and Munduruku people in general – occupies an important space also in the work of Hercule Florence, official drawer of the Langsdorff expedition (cfr note 43). Figure 49 shows a plate realized in Santarém in 1828 where a "Tuchaua (Principal) Mundurucu en costume de fête" posed sideways wearing his ceremonial ornaments. As naturalistic painting rules of the time established, the individual is isolated from any particular context not to *spoil* a visual description which wanted to show the aesthetical beauty of the objects but also witness the encounter with one of the most feared populations of the Amazonian region. This image is interesting because it offers more details on how

⁸⁴ Fig. 42 shows a man wearing a feather head-dress, fig. 43 a trophy-head on a wooden spear and fig. 44 the complete set of feather ornaments.

ornaments were worn and, specifying the origin as Munduruku⁸⁵, determines a point of reference to identify them in other contexts.

Not infrequently, representations of objects which we know were Munduruku were labelled as belonging to other populations or just attributed to a general Brazilian native. We can mention two examples in this regard. The first is the iconographic account of Jean-Baptiste Debret who, in his work *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil*⁸⁶ (2008), reports similar illustrations. Plates 28 and 33 (fig. 50, 51) show, respectively, two mummified heads with feather ear decorations and other feather ornaments for arms, head and shoulders. As label of the heads, it is stated:

Number 10 represents a botocudo head, mummified by the Pataxó, among whom it was found. Number 11 represents a puri head, also mummified and found among the coroados. These two heads, similar to a thousand others found in the indigenous villages, lead us to some details touching on their conservation. They are military trophies, attesting to the number of prisoners of war as much as to the ferocity of the victors. Every prisoner of war is destined to be eaten and provides a day of feasting for his enemies, transformed, with the victory, into cannibals. At the chosen moment, the victim is tied to a stump in order to be shot with arrows or blows of a club; after being killed, all the fleshy parts are cut off, while the fire is lit to roast them. The entire starving population gathers and the feast begins with the most turbulent displays of atrocious joy. The severed head, which has remained intact, is soon suspended from the stump by means of ropes that are threaded through the hole in the ears and come out through the mouth. The whole thing is arranged in such a way that one can artificially force the head into an approving motion which can be repeated as many times as wanted while the merry band of savages dance around it shooting arrows at it and insulting it covertly and mercilessly. Once the party is over, the victor of the victim has the right to take possession of the still bloody head, in order to keep it as his property. (Idem, 72)

⁸⁵ Among the later works which confirm this attribution we find an engraving made by the Italian naturalist Gaetano Osculati as part of the account *Esplorazione delle regioni equatoriali lungo il Napo ed il fiume delle Amazzoni* (pl. XIV, fig. 1 right, fig. 7) and another made by Barbosa Rodrigues and published in 1882 with the essay *Tribu dos Mundurukus*.

⁸⁶ This work is divided in three volumes published between 1834 and 1839 as result of the French artistic mission carried out from 1816 and 1831 under the leadership of Mr. Le Breton. Purpose of the journey was to collect material and documentation for the foundation of an Academy of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro (Debret 2008).

This description is very eloquent in showing how specific elements of 16th-century imaginary still had quite an impact on how everything regarding warfare was associated to practices such as anthropophagy, even when it did not correspond to real behaviors⁸⁷. Also some of the objects represented in plate 33 were ascribed to other populations, such as the Coroados (n° 5 and 6, while n° 2 is defined as necklace but it is probably a forehead band). These mistakes could be due either to a simple confusion made by the painter who never travelled throughout the Amazonian regions or to the fact that other groups had taken possession of such objects during intertribal exchanges and with such denomination they had arrived in the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro where Debret worked. In any case, misunderstandings played a significant role in shaping an image of natives limited to few stereotyped traits, which flattened the cultural differences and the colonial experiences of each group to a single model easy to place in the human evolutionary pathway worked out by the natural sciences. The echo of this process was greater outside Brazil, where the opportunity of coming into contact with the actual heterogeneity of Brazil's indigenous peoples was practically nil. When exposed to the public, ethnographic collections absorbed this gaze and gave back the same homogenizing view, polarized between the figures of the *cannibal* and the *good savage* (§1.2).

Another example well demonstrates such process of standardization. I am referring to a watercolor representing a trophy-head (fig. 52) and made by Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied during his journey to Brazil from 1815 and 1817. The image has no other information except the very general label *Brasilianer* as provenance or affiliation.

In all these cases, it was not images themselves to be problematic or tendentious but the look with which they were received and interpreted that was already laden with prejudice⁸⁸.

The *Brasilianum* remained open until 1835, when Emperor Francis I died. Johann Natterer, who returned from Brazil in 1836, arrived in Vienna precisely during its dismantling (Schmutzer and Feest 2013-2014). From this moment on, objects started a series of subsequent pilgrimages. In the first place, the collection was divided: while natural specimens were sent to the Natural History Cabinet, ethnographic objects were reunited to the

⁸⁷ No other historical source mention anthropophagy among the Munduruku, at least not in the way coastal Tupis practiced it.

⁸⁸ In the following chapters, when focusing on the indigenous perspective on objects and exhibitions this point will be further clarified.

collections preserved at Belvedere Castle⁸⁹ and moved together to a new building, located outside the city and called *The Emperor's house*. In this place, in 1838, a new museum was inaugurated, the *Imperial-Royal Ethnographic Museum* which was visitable on demand. Johann and Josef Natterer were commissioned to take care of the first exhibition and to draw up a first inventory – which, however, remained incomplete (Feest 2013-2014). To this period date back some anonymous watercolors that portray the display cabinets. Two of them were dedicated to Mundurucu objects, including feather works, hunt and ceremonial horns, spears, bows and arrows and, obviously, a mummified head (fig. 53, 54). Their arrangement is greatly aesthetic and decontextualized. The idea they give – especially to a contemporary, critical eye – is that of trophies exposed to celebrate Western collecting rather than representing the population which produced them. As Clifford points out, collecting, possessing and exhibiting have always been strategies used – in particular by Western societies – for the construction of the self (1985). People watching the display cases represented in the watercolors produced comparisons that, while assigning specific qualities to indigenous *otherness*, defined by denial, their own European identity. The already popular stereotype and the sense of exoticism consolidated and rooted in European perception because they were functional to establish and maintain specific boundaries between Western, *modern* society and *primitive* natives.

However, in 1840, also this museum was forced to close because the building was requested for Lombardo-Venetian Guard's use. Objects were packed and began to circulate in search for a new destination (Idem). Finally, in 1850, they were placed in the attic of the Imperial Castle in *Josefplatz* and forgotten (Schmutzer and Feest 2013-2014). Meanwhile, a consistent part of the material went lost: a first cause was Natterer's death in 1843 since he had not written down many information yet; another were the revolutions of 1848 when the roof of the royal library, where some of the objects and documentation were preserved, was bombed and set on fire (Feest 1980; 2013-2014).

The second half of the 19th century entailed some changes in the disciplinary field which influenced the subsequent trajectory and interpretation of ethnographic collections. One of the key aspects was the progressive differentiation of anthropology and ethnography from Natural History. In 1851, the emperor Francis-Joseph I, successor of Franz I, declared the

⁸⁹ They included the collection of the Ambras *Wunderkammer* and those acquired in 1806 from the Leverian Museum (cfr §3.2.1).

separation of the United Cabinets of Natural History. Afterwards, when a new, public Museum of Natural History (*Naturhistorisches Museum*) was established in 1876, his director, the geologist Ferdinand von Hochstetter, asked for a separate Anthropological and Ethnographic Department to be created. Within it, he divided research according to three main areas: anthropological, which had to investigate the “Stellung des Menschen in der Natur, insbesondere zu der Tierwelt”⁹⁰; prehistoric, whose focus was “dem Werden des Menschen und seiner Entwicklung im zeitlichen Verlaufe”⁹¹; and ethnographic, devoted to “allen jenen sinnlich erkennbaren Manifestationen des menschlichen Geistes in den durch die geographisch-klimatischen Verhältnisse des Wohnorts hauptsächlich bedingten Gruppen”⁹² (Feest 1980, 19).

Another important figure of this period was Franz Heger, also geologist (Feest 2013-2014). He was given the task of compiling a first catalogue in 1882-1883. Such operation continued for the following years and was extended to a more general and exhaustive work of inventorying (Feest 1980). In 1895 catalogue Munduruku objects are listed and described under the caption “29. Mundurucú [wohnen (nach Natterer) an beiden Ufen des Rio Tapajós, dann in der sogenannte Campina, den Steppen zwischen diesen Flusse und dem Rio Canomá und am Rio Abacaschi.]”⁹³. Not all the munduruku objects – collected by Natterer – which are part of the current collection were in this list. In fact, Natterer had kept some for his private collection, which entered the Museum only in 1899 after his daughter died (Feest 2013-2014). They are recorded as “Etnographische Gegenstände aus Südamerika (Brasilien) und Asien. Gesammelt von Johann Natterer, Geschenk des Herrn K.u.K. Rittermeisters Erich Freiherrn Schröckinger von Neudenberg”⁹⁴.

In 1884, the installation of the collections in the museum had begun. Six rooms were allocated to ethnographic material, 14th to 19th. We do not have drawings or photographs of this exhibition but it is known that objects were arranged in cases in a very crowded manner (Feest 1980). This exhibiting approach was typical of late 19th-century museums and reflected anthropology anxiety of “saving” the memory of cultures considered on the verge of

⁹⁰ “[...] Man’s position in nature, especially in relation to the animal world;”

⁹¹ “[...] the development of man and his evolution in the course of time;”

⁹² “[...] all those sensually recognizable manifestations of the human spirit in the groups mainly conditioned by the geographic-climatic conditions of the place of residence.”

⁹³ “Mundurucú [live (according to Natterer) on both banks of the Rio Tapajós, then in the so-called Campina, the steppes between this river and the Rio Canomá and on the Rio Abacaschi.]”

⁹⁴ “Etnographic objects from South America (Brazil) and Asia. Collected by Johann Natterer, gift of Herr K.u.K. Rittermeister Erich Freiherr Schröckinger von Neudenberg.”

extinction – without problematizing its own role as supporter of a system that enforced transformation through colonial violence and ideology.

In spite of this, rooms were organized not according to typological or evolutionary criteria but to geographical ones, such that the narrative focused on the local development of each culture (Idem). To confirm this, we can still observe, on the upper part of each room, innumerable pairs of statues (male and female) to represent the human groups who inhabited the region to which the room was dedicated. It is exemplary that the subjects chosen to represent Brazil were a pair of Botocudos⁹⁵ (fig. 55) and another of Munduruku (fig. 56). Both are depicted naked with a few ornaments made with natural elements such as flowers, leaves, feathers and seeds. While the former are distinguishable because of one big *botoque* in the lower lip of the man (who also holds a bow and some arrows), unmistakable marks of the latter are a mummified trophy-head and a feather scepter that, once again, the man is holding. Thus, not only do the elements of a stereotype now inseparable from indigenous cultures return but it becomes clear how much the presence of Munduruku people was significant in European imaginary for the representation of a homogenous *indigenous type* as radically opposed to Western civilization.

Even if, as we said, each region was considered kind of isolated from the others, references to a generic evolutionary context were, in reality, implicit in the juxtaposition – and indirect comparison – of *Brazilian* statues with the others which decorated sidewalls and were characterized by “elements of higher civilization” (clothes, farm implements, religious objects, technological tools, etc.).

The *regional* organization of rooms mirrored some trends towards which Austrian Anthropology and Ethnology were turning to in the process of differentiation of disciplines until then part of natural history. Unlike other European schools which, in the same period, were supporting evolutionistic positions, Austrian scholars felt closer to the cultural-historical model developed by Boas and promoted paradigms such as comparativism and cultural diffusionism. Ethnographic research had to focus on the study of local histories rather than on the development of universal theories on humanity (Haeckel 1959). To influence the emergence and diffusion of this kind of research was also the strong presence

⁹⁵ Botocudos was not an ethnonym used to identify a single ethnic group. It was rather a derogatory term adopted to identify all those groups who had, among their traditions, that of using “botoques” – small discs made of stone, wood, or shell and which were inserted into the lower lip or cheeks like contemporary dilators.

of disciplines such as philology and of folklore studies; their rooting, in Austria, was related to the political circumstances of an empire constantly engaged in keeping very heterogeneous and potentially conflicting realities in balance (cfr §3.2.1).

Among the most popular theories – today fully outdated – there was that of *Kulturkreise* (cultural circles/complexes). Suggested by Leo Frobenius in 1895, it tried to establish a chronological sequence of different cultures from the distribution of certain cultural characters. Other scholars such as Fritz Graebner embraced this theory and tried to apply it also to so-called *without history* peoples (Heiner-Geldner 1964). The particular study of society considered as *primitive* would allow to observe the relations among social groups and the processes of transmission of cultural elements with a wider geographical range and greater depth in time. To this extent, the interest in maintaining a dialogue with disciplines such as archaeology and prehistory was functional to the collection of data which went over the written source (Haeckel 1959). In reality, and as stressed as scholars such as Wilhelm Schmidt and Wilhelm Kopper a few years later, this approach was methodologically weak. *Kulturkreise* were in fact too unstable and variable to form starting points for the analysis of cultural phenomena (Heiner-Geldner 1964). The institutionalization of this approach in an Austrian School of Ethnology occurred in 1831, when Wilhelm Schmidt created the Anthropos Institute. The purpose was also to take distance from the *Anthropologische Gesellschaft* (Anthropological Society) – founded in 1870 – which maintained a stronger dialogue with ideas based on a strictly scientific, post-Darwinian, positivist approach and whose empirical study on human nature aimed at proving the linearity and continuity of its historical trajectory (Ranzmeier 2011).

These debates caused the raising of articulate theoretical positionings that while on the one hand recognized the difference and multiplicity of historical processes, on the other participated in the construction of a social hierarchy among different cultures of the World. Very important for the museological dimension was the maintenance of a strict relationship with archaeology. For all the 20th century, both collecting and the study of material culture were encouraged despite the institutionalization of Anthropology and Ethnology in the University – which in many other countries brought to the abandonment of objects as sources for the study of human societies.

With the foundation, in 1929, of the *Museum für Völkerkunde* (Museum of Ethnology) and the move of ethnographic collections in the *Neue Burg* building, objects were officially

appointed as witnesses for studying the acculturation processes lived by “primitive” societies (Feest 1980).

In the same period, due to different reasons some of which will be explained in chapter five (§5.1.2), Munduruku people were giving up producing the artifacts which had made them popular throughout Europe. In the light of what we said so far, to what could this have led, if not to a *charge* of extinction?

Chapter four

The journey back (first part): different perspectives on Kambeba and Sateré-Mawé objects

In the classical narrative on indigenous people, they have long been portrayed as societies on the verge of extinction precisely because of and to encourage the *progress of civilization* as conceived by the colonizing West. On the contrary, about a century later indigenous peoples are not extinct. Not only, they are bravely fighting for their rights to life, citizenship and difference (Sahlins 1999).

With this chapter we enter in the ethnographic part of the thesis and another part of the journey we are taking together with the objects described in chapters two and three. In them, I tried to retrace the trajectory of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira's and Johann Natterer's collections from Brazil to Europe – and specifically some Kambeba, Sateré-Mawé and Munduruku objects – by analyzing the political, economic and ideological circumstances of their collecting. The purpose of next chapters is to try to make them take the reverse route in order to reestablish a connection with the descendants of their producers and explore further the density of the objects considered.

The following chapters will mirror chapter two and three since they focus on the analysis of the discourses produced by the descendants¹ of Kambeba, Sateré-Mawé (chapter 4) and Munduruku peoples (chapter 5) on the objects made by their ancestors in the context of political revindication and museological debate set out in the introduction.

This chapter is divided in two sections, devoted respectively to the Kambeba and the Sateré-Mawé. In section 4.1 we shall observe the importance of the Bamboo tablet for deforming the head in the process of claiming of Kambeba identity. The arrow thruster will be left aside because I could not raise any particular information on it. In section 4.2 we shall analyze the multiple meanings related to the Sateré-Mawé club. Each part will be introduced by a description of the exhibitions of the museums that preserve these objects and by a brief contextualization of our encounter. Subsequently, I shall present the specific discourses

¹ The data collected on the field through conversations and interviews are the result of face-to-face dialogues realized only with some members of the groups involved, usually leaders or professors. Therefore, they are to be regarded as still partial views which do not exhaust the totality of the ideas on the themes raised by the confrontation with the objects.

which emerged from field data and discuss some themes proper to Brazilian indigenous context.

In June 2021 I visited the Portuguese museums to learn more about the collections assembled by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira and figure out which objects to choose for my research. Since the collection is huge, it was not possible to consider them all. Let's, therefore, pick up the story from the halls where, after many vicissitudes, our protagonists found themselves living. One hundred years or more later, it is worth wondering in which conditions they are today. We already know some of it from the brief descriptions of the path up to them (§2.1). Let's imagine ourselves back in those rooms to delve into the impressions that the exhibitions in Lisbon and in Coimbra leave, on visitors, about the peoples they seek to represent.

4.1 A bamboo tablet to flatten the head

At the Academy of Science of Lisbon, after walking through the door of the *Museu Maynense* and passed the first room we find ourselves immersed in a rather charming exhibition. Objects stand out against the exhibitions' cases black walls and horizontal supports, partly hidden, partly revealed by the suggestive play of light and shadow. It seems as if they want to intimate obsequious admiration, like that reserved for treasures or relics. In one of the explanatory texts, we can read that the materials with which they are made resemble those used by European populations more than 6.000 years ago. They are organized according to a criterion defined by traditional museology as *typological*: weapons and hunting tools, musical instruments, home utensils, ceremonial objects, and so on and so forth. Provenance and ethnic belonging do not seem to be considered as particularly interesting and useful information to be given to the public in order to explain what and who they are up against. It is true that Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira was not particularly detailed in reporting objects' affiliation – or the information has not come down to us – but even when known, it is reported in a very confused way. The most striking example is a mannequin that stands in one of the display cases: it shows a man wearing a Jurupixuna² mask but whose body is decorated with the graphism of another population (Apiacá), which not only does not live in the same region but that Ferreira did not even mention in his iconographic

² The Jurupixuna were another ethnic group whose objects Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira collected and who is extinct.

documentation³. It is unclear what this choice is due to, especially if we consider that, next to the mannequin, it is hung the reproduction of Ferreira's drawing of a Jurupixuna native wearing his mask. Obviously, the two representations differ. From these points already, the exhibition leaves no doubt that indigenous people are represented as inhabitants of exotic lands, part of a whole in which it is not important to distinguish sub-groups because they are all equally identifiable as relics from a prehistoric past. Their existence (or at least of part of them) in the present is far from being mentioned and there is no data about the historical, political, ideological context of collection, as if the preliminary knowledge of the public (whose visions are the most of the times structurally colonial) would be sufficient to interpret the objects. Even if the museum can be visited only accompanied by a guide, whatever she or he says would not jar the cues offered by the exhibition, especially if we consider the cognitive bias according to which we tend to filter information in such a way to confirm our beliefs (Darley and Gross 1983; Nickerson 1998). So, how would a nonexpert public imagine Kambeba people after looking at the display cases of the Academy?

4.1.1 Meeting the Kambeba

In chapter two (§2.1.1) we overviewed the presence of Omágua people, currently known as Kambeba, in the documentation of the colonial period. In the 20th century, historians and chroniclers considered them extinct because of the assimilation process⁴ but more recent studies affirm that they have been silencing their ethnic affiliation in order to survive to violence and discrimination (Maciel 2011; see §4.1.3). In support of this, the IBGE⁵ census of 2010 counted 744 individuals which identified themselves through as Kambeba in Brazilian territory. In 2014, the number raised to 875 (Siasi/Sesai). More recent analysis (2021) published on the portal of the *Instituto Socioambiental*⁶ report that there are currently 1500 Kambeba in Brazil, mostly concentrated in the State of Amazonas on the frontier with Peru. They live in cities and villages (*aldeias*) along the entire course of the Solimões River and up to the city of Manaus (fig. 57, 58, 59). In particular, the Kambeba population is

³ It was depicted instead by Hercule Florence during his journey at the beginning of the 19th century (cfr § 3.3).

⁴ Among the reasons why nineteenth-century chroniclers were unable to capture the transformation of the Kambeba population and thus their continued presence in the territory we probably find the confusion created by the mixing process, which reduced all indigenous people who did not correspond to the stereotype of the isolated, uncivilized primitive to the rank of caboclo.

⁵ Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. <https://indigenas.ibge.gov.br/apresentacao-indigenas.html>

⁶ <https://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/Povo:Kambeba>

distributed in the rural and urban areas of the municipalities of São Paulo de Olivença, Tabatinga, Benjamin Constant, Amaturá, Santo Antônio do Iça, Tonantins, Jutai, Tefé, Coari, Manacapuru and Manaus (Fermin Omágua 2020).

Movement between the cities and the hinterland – which occurs almost exclusively by water – is, today, particularly intense and allows the participation in different types of economic activities to sustain the families and the community. Many people hold wage jobs of various kinds in all sectors; among traditional activities, hunting, fishing and cultivation of manioc, bananas, cocoa, beans, Brazilian nuts and other fruits are still widespread and practiced. Both in cities and *aldeias*, houses are built of wood and elevated like piles. This architectural structure can be considered a legacy of the riverine culture that developed in the Amazon during the colonial and imperial periods as a result of the settlement of other contingents of people (non-indigenous and black people) looking for spaces in which to set up their productive activities (Maciel 2011).

The group considered for this research does not correspond to the Kambeba population in its entirety but is limited to the Alto Solimões region and, specifically, the city of São Paulo de Olivença. In this territory, they began to reassert their presence only in the late 1980s when the promulgation of the constitution promised the recognition of a number of rights previously denied. Today, two associations work to support the demands of the population: the OKAS (Organização dos Kambeba do Alto Solimões) and the OKOPAM (Organização Kambeba Omágua Paulivense do Amazonas). Both are juridically recognized and led by a council made by a president, a secretary, a treasurer and an executive board. Their current organization is the result of almost four decades of political struggle – as institutional rather than individual or familiar action. A first association to be founded was the OCAS (Organização dos Cambeba do Alto Solimões) which had as main task helping those who identified themselves as Kambeba. At this early stage, the claim for recognition was led in a joint action with three other ethnic groups that, according to a survey, were inhabiting the region: Kokama, Tikuna and Kaixana. However, cultural differences originated conflicts that hampered the movement; consequently, each group decided to go on separately while upholding the same principles. Between 2004 and 2008 a series of internal issues undermined the structure of the OCAS, whose influence diminished significantly. It was only in 2009 that some leaders managed to lift it up through the establishment of a new

organization, the OKAS⁷, and its alliance with the *cacicado geral*, reintroduced in the same period by Eronilde de Souza Fermin and her family. The *cacicado geral* is regarded to be a traditional political institution of the Kambeba people and, like ethnic identity, had been silenced for centuries during the colonial era. In the early 2000s, Eronilde, descendant of a lineage of leaders and determined to pursue the enhancement of Kambeba culture in all its aspects, decided to reassume the role of *cacique* previously held by her mother. The headquarters of the OKAS and the *cacicado* were both established at Eronilde's house in the neighborhood of Santa Terezina (São Paulo de Olivença) where the two institutions still work together. This new phase encouraged more and more inhabitants living in the municipality of São Paulo de Olivença to recognize and claim for their Kambeba descent as well as to take part in political mobilization.

The OKOPAM was created in 2014 in order to extend the action of the main organization at a national level and support all those Kambeba who, for different reasons, had to leave the upper and middle Solimões regions.

Both the OKAS and the OKOPAM manage their activities collectively and carry out periodic assemblies. They fight for their members having access to indigenous health system⁸, for the creation of indigenous schools and differentiated school programs and for the recognition of an indigenous land which comprises those places considered important for the preservation of Kambeba memory and ancestry. Concretely, leaders sign documents confirming the ethnic identity of members⁹, help people fill out forms that allow access to the services mentioned above, appeal against public authorities when they are denied and participate in political and academic events when invited¹⁰.

⁷ The substitution of the "C" with "K" was due to a desire to move away conceptually from that first association and a series of controversies that characterized its work (Fermin Omágua 2020).

⁸ Since São Paulo de Olivença is officially a city, indigenous people living there suffer discrimination because the legislative system tends to recognize as "true" natives only the *aldeados* – who lives in an *aldeia*, namely, an indigenous rural village. Besides reiterating that the neighborhood of Santa Terezina was an ancient *aldeia* – recently incorporated by the city – the association aims at eliminating, both juridically and conceptually, the idea that to be indigenous one must necessarily live in a rural village.

⁹ To be officially recognized as Kambeba and join the association, people have to sit for an interview with the *cacique geral* and the president of the OKAS, in which one is asked information about his/her family, relatives and their origins.

¹⁰ I was given the information presented above in some interviews carried out between december 2021 and january 2022 with Eronilde de Souza Fermin, Cacique Geral, José Jesus Seabra Braga, president of the Okopam and Dona Maria Zenaide, president of the Okas. However, it is also reported in Eronilde's book "Memorias vivas do povo Omágua (Kambeba) de Aparia Grande do Solimões de São Paulo de Olivença - Mumuri kwe awa uawa kãnga pewa Aparia'zaú Surimã tawa'y" (2020). This book is the result of 20 years of research and conversation with Kambeba elders and leaders of the Upper Solimões region.

It was precisely during one of these meetings that our first encounter occurred. In November 2021 I was in the upper Rio Solimões region, on the frontier with Colombia and Peru. The purpose of my trip was to visit the *Museu Magüta* of the Tikuna people; it was the first indigenous museum to be founded, in 1991, in the city of Benjamin Constant (Brazil). I think indigenous museums offer interesting insights into exhibition practices and the construction of self-representations, so I was eager to visit it. The director, Santos Cruz, said he would be happy to be my guide. Meanwhile, a conference on frontiers¹¹ was taking place at the Universidade Estadual do Amazonas (UEA) in the nearby city of Tabatinga. It sounded interesting, so I decided to follow a talk or two. Talks were about rights, territory, education, health, silenced memories, and resistance. At a certain point a woman came on stage. She wore a white cotton dress decorated with red and black graphics. On her head she had a sash with the same motif. She introduced herself: she was Eronilde Kambeba, *Cacica Geral* of the Omágua-Kambeba people of São Paulo de Olivença. Her speech was powerful, moving, disturbing. She spoke of colonial violence, usurpation, discrimination but also of struggle and resistance, of giving value to her culture and transmitting memory. As I listened to her, a light bulb went on. In Coimbra and Lisbon there are some objects classified as Omágua: a tablet for flattening the head, a practice Eronilde herself had mentioned, and an arrow thruster (fig. 25, 26). At the beginning I had not consider them because after studying the materials at the museums in Portugal I had decided to focus on a set of weapons consisting of various types of clubs, bows and arrows. Ferreira had used weapons as a criterion for classifying societies and their evolutionary level (see §2.2.2); it could be interesting to talk about imaginary through these objects, especially since many of them had decorations that hinted at possible ceremonial use. Unfortunately, the documentation left by the naturalist rarely specified the ethnic belonging of objects, making it difficult to trace the descendants of their producers and open with them a discussion.

However, bodily deformation was also central to the evolutionary discourse of the 18th-century naturalist. So, what if I tried to follow this path and leave weapons aside? When the debate session was over, I gathered all my courage and went to talk to Eronilde. After hearing her speaking with such force and resentment toward whites, I felt uneasy in her presence. I

¹¹ The CIPIF is the *Congresso Internacional dos Povos Indígenas das Fronteiras*. The second edition held in Tabatinga from the 24th to the 27th of November of 2021.

was afraid that my European legacy could blur the empathy I had felt during her speech and that I wanted to share in order to show my support to their struggles. In different ways depending on the cultural, social and political contexts, empathy as “an act whereby an individual is able to gain some access [...] to the embodied subjective experience of another” (Throop 2010, 772) is an inevitable condition of ethnographic fieldwork (Idem). As Hollan (2008) points out, to empathize is not so much about sharing a state of mind as it is about getting involved in an intersubjective, imaginative process in which one’s desire to understand someone else is complemented by the other’s desire to be understood. Erika had definitely expressed the necessity, as well as the desire, to feel that the difficulties of the Kambeba people were understood. However, and this was maybe my own projection, I perceived the resentment that her speech showed toward Whites as a condition that precluded me from establishing a dialogue with her.

Finally, I introduced myself and told her a little bit about my research on ethnographic museums. She told me that they would also like to do a museum. They already had a collection; only the structure was still missing. I asked her if it would be possible to visit them in São Paulo de Olivença to learn more about Kambeba reality and, maybe, talk a little bit about the objects preserved in Portugal. She agreed, although she did not show particular enthusiasm. For my part I felt that it was an opportunity not to be missed so I swallowed the discomfort and did my best to seem nice.

On the 30th of November, after a four-hour journey aboard a small boat with at least three quintals of luggage on the perilous cover, I arrived in São Paulo de Olivença. Eronilde, or Erika¹² as everyone calls her, had given me her address and said I could stay at her place. However, I had no idea where her house was or the means available to get there. It was raining, the phone had no reception, and the Solimões River was rushing next to me. Eventually, an acquaintance of her drove me to her house on a motorcycle. In return, I had to hold up ten kilos of oranges. I arrived and settled in the room of Erika’s daughter. I felt a little uncomfortable. I am not used to invite myself to people’s houses and I am always afraid of being intrusive. Besides, as Guber well explains (2001), the interaction between researchers and research subjects at the time of the first field encounter is always declined through mutual perplexity. On the one hand, researchers feels like they are bothering and do not really know what to say or to ask. On the other hand, research subjects wonder who

¹² Erika is an abbreviation of Eronilde Kambeba. From now on I will use this name to address her.

researchers are and what information they are looking for when talking to people. This situation can give rise to possible misunderstandings that make it difficult to focus intentions and access desired information. However, working on this relationship seemed to me very important for my research so I decided to stay with them for a few days. As soon as she gets acquainted, Erika is actually a great talker. She told me about the founding of the movement, the museum, her job as a *cacica*, the daily difficulties they have to go through – including death threats – and the need to get their voices as far as possible.

[...] Tudo isso a gente sofre aqui nesse interior e pra nós assim é uma honra receber as pessoas, pra conversar, porque a gente tem a esperança que vai levar essa notícia mais longe e aí muitas pessoas vão se tornar amigo. As instituições de ensino como a UEA e a UFAM e também outras universidades como a UFRJ e o Museu Nacional, eu tenho conhecido professores também da UFUSCA, que não todos, mas alguns são sensíveis a nossa causa e através de uma simples palavra, de um simples chamado eles conseguem mudar toda uma história e conseguem fortalecer a nossa luta. Né? Eu fui chamada pra escrever um capítulo dum livro lá na UFUSCA, pra prefaciar um livro, Saberes Indígenas. Aquilo vai dar um passo há mais pro meu povo que a partir do momento que eu prefacio um livro, não é só eu Eronilde que vou pisar lá na UFUSCA, é meu povo inteiro que vai pisar lá comigo. Quando eu vou pra um congresso, não é só eu, Eronilde, que tô lá. Eu tô representando todo um povo, então eu nunca tô só. Tanto os que estão vivos, tanto os ancestrais que já se foram. Então nos temos esse conhecimento, a gente vive dessa forma, essa é nossa cultura, é assim que a gente trabalha, então pra nós as parcerias são importantes porque é através dessas parcerias que hoje nos, lideranças, caciques, ainda estamos vivos e podemos contribuir com nosso povo.¹³ (Eronilde Kambeba, 03.12.2021)

¹³ We suffer all this in the hinterland, and it's an honor for us to receive people, to talk, because we hope to carry this news forward and many people become friends. Educational institutions like UEA and UFAM and also other universities like UFRJ and the National Museum, I also met professors from UFUSCA, not all of them, but some of them are sensitive to our cause and through a simple word, a simple call, they can change the whole story and strengthen our struggle. Right? I was called to write a book chapter by UFUSCA, to preface a book, Saberes Indígenas. This is going to take my people one step further, because when I preface a book, it's not just me, Eronilde, who sets foot at UFUSCA, but all my people with me. When I go to a congress, it's not just me, Eronilde. I represent a whole people, so I am never alone. Both those who are alive and the ancestors who are gone. So, we have this knowledge, we live this way, this is our culture, this is our way of working, so for us collaborations are important, because it is through these collaborations that today we, the leaders, the caciques, are still alive and can help our people.

Therefore, I proposed to work together on a blog where they could put all they thought it was important to divulge, so that information about contemporary Kambeba people and their struggles could be available for everyone who was interested. As stressed by recent literature on what doing ethnography in Latin-American contexts implies (Ramos 1990; Fox 1991; Albert 1997; Oliveira 1999; Grimson et al. 2004; Peirano 2008; Poole 2008 among the others) the demand of making the results of a research accessible to a broader public beyond academic institutions is increasing among the social actors involved in that research. Ethnographic monography as privileged form of dissemination of the information collected on the field must be accompanied by the production of other materials that the communities, subjects or partners of the study, can use to carry out their claims (Rappaport 2008). To create a website seemed to me, on the one hand, a good way to reciprocate their hospitality and openness to me, while on the other, an ethic strategy to collect data and interviews for my project. Erika enthusiastically accepted and we began to jot down some ideas, to take pictures of objects from their collection, and to gather other useful material. By the end of the week, I was convinced that following the trajectory of the Kambeba objects was better than insisting on weapons.

After a few weeks, in early January 2022, I was able to organize a second visit to the Kambeba to improve our acquaintance and fortify the groundwork of our possible future collaboration. In about ten days we worked together to finish the website in all its parts and they took me to get to know the surroundings. I came to know better some members of the movement who frequent Erika's house and did some interviews. However, it is worth emphasizing that Erika was my main interlocutor and her voice remains the preponderant one. This was due to some factors which characterized the fieldwork in the Upper Solimões Region. First of all, circumstances allowed me a rather limited amount of time to spend in São Paulo de Olivença¹⁴. As a consequence, I was not able to become familiar enough with the city to walk around alone among people's houses – and, if you are a foreign, white, blond, blue-eyed woman, it is necessary to be doubly careful. São Paulo de Olivença is not so small and Kambeba families are scattered among a heterogeneous population. My hosts drove me around by motorcycle but they were not always available to accompany me visiting other families. Although there was interest in the topics of my research, their lives revolved around other priorities. In addition to this, Erika is acknowledged and respected by the Kambeba as

¹⁴ In the Introduction I presented the limits imposed on my research by the pandemic outbreak.

a spokesperson, both for her role as an authority and for the work she has done over 20 years with the elders – and which is reported in her book *Memorias vivas do povo Omágua (Kambebe) de Aparaia Grande do Solimões de São Paulo de Olivença - Mumuri kwe awa uawa kãnga pewa Aparaia'zaú Surimã tawa'y* (2020).

We presented the work we did together during a small assembly right before my last departure; it was received with enthusiasm and gratitude. I also felt full of gratitude towards them, first of all for welcoming me and for granting me their friendship. It is not so obvious as it may seem.

As I hoped, this encounter gave me the opportunity to learn more about the objects preserved in Lisbon and, in particular, the bamboo tablet for cranial deformation.

4.1.2 The ritual of the Kãnga Pewa

Pra nós esse batismo é muito importante. [...] O nosso povo, ele foi muito julgado pela igreja católica porque eles diziam que só Deus tinha o dom de deformar um corpo que nascia perfeito. Não cabia aos Omágua deformar um crânio que nasceu perfeito [...] e disseram que era uma cultura do diabo, demoníaca¹⁵.

(Eroka, 03.12.2021)

These words, that Eroka told me during an interview, refer to the practice of deforming the head typical of Kambeba people. The choice of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira of collecting one of the bamboo tablets used in such occasions stresses the importance of such practice in the definition of Kambeba type¹⁶ with respect to other populations and to Europeans.

In this section of the chapter, we shall see how the way in which it was interpreted in the past by the naturalist deeply differs from the interpretation offered by contemporary Kambeba. The analysis of the discourse produced by Ferreira and exposed in §2.2.2 shows that the flattening of the head was considered an abominable, against-nature act because it jarred God's will by modifying the perfect bodies that he had created. This justified the

¹⁵ “For us this baptism is very important. [...] Our people were very judged by the Catholic Church because they said that only God had the gift to deform a body that was born perfect. It was not up to the Omágua to deform a skull that was born perfect [...] and they said it was a devil culture, demonic.”

¹⁶ The term “type” is here intended as “anthropological type”.

eradication of Kambeba's culture, regarded as inferior, and the imposition of Western civilization.

The encounter with Kambeba's representatives and the discussion over the bamboo tablet preserved in Lisbon let clearly emerge the tendentiousness of such perspective. In fact, it does not say much about Kambeba people except for what distinguishes them – negatively – from Westerners. On the contrary, if we pause to listen to what the community of origin has to say about the object, we can gain a much more complex and dense view of the practice of cranial deformation to which it is linked.

Bamboo tablets were key elements of the ritual of the *Kānga Pewa*¹⁷, which is, the ritual of baptism of newborns. Their use was reserved for the last part of the ritual that began as early as during the future mother's pregnancy. Erika described it in detail in one of our conversations:

Então, quando a mulher engravidava ela já tinha toda uma preparação. A parteira, ela já fazia ajeitação da barriga pra saber se a criança estava de cabeça ou se ela tava encaixada com a cabeça pra baixo ou pra cima. Aí a parteira ia palpar a barriga, se a criança estava por um lado ou não estava, aí ela ia ajeitar pra criança se encaixar direito, pra que ela não nascesse de pé. Aí, a gente usava, usa ainda, o óleo, a gordura da arraia que é um animal que tem muito aqui no Solimões. Aí aquela gordura serve pra anunciar o nascimento da criança quando a mulher completa os nove meses. Quando ela começa a sentir as primeiras dores, a parteira tradicional do povo Kambeba ela bem e faz uma sorvação. Sorva, como se estivesse massageando. Aí espera. Se a criança der três mexidas na barriga da mãe e for uma hora da tarde a criança está anunciando que vai nascer três horas da tarde. Se ela fizer três. Se ela fizer duas ela vai nascer duas. Se ela bater só uma, ela já está preste a nascer, porque ela vai nascer uma hora mesmo. Então nos temos todo esse conhecimento empírico da nossa cosmologia e aí, na hora que nasce a criança, a mãe já tem amadurecido essa ideia durante os primeiros meses da gestação. Desde quando ela sabe que está grávida, ela começa a olhar dentro da comunidade, dentro do povo quem são os padrinhos do filho. Então ela já começa a escolher. E na hora desse nascimento os padrinhos já sabem que eles estão ali porque vai ser anunciado, vai ser soltado um tipo de rojão, tipo quem solta um foguete, pra anunciar que ali está nascendo uma criança. Só que o rojão que a gente solta é um rojão que ele é feito de bucha de... a gente pega uma madeira, a gente raspa, raspa, raspa, tira-se um monte de bucha assim e soca dentro

¹⁷ *Kānga Pewa* is a Tupi expression that means *flat head* and to which the ethnonym Kambeba is inspired (§2.1.1).

dum determinado, chamado de roqueira, é um pau que ele tem um buraco no meio, tipo um bambu. Aí a gente soca aquilo, soca, soca, até aquilo esquentar. Quando aquilo tá bem quente aí a gente mete por aqui por baixo uma flecha e solta assim. Aí ele solta tipo um tampão assim, ele espoca. Aí então ele espoca, ele anuncia um barulho e aquele barulho já anuncia que ali já nasceu e aí os padrinhos vêm com as madrinhas, já vêm com algodão, já vêm com a prancheta, já vêm com o *pajuaru*, já vêm com as medicinas, a copaíba, o pó da semente do algodão, o algodão, já vêm com todos os preparos. Eles vêm dançando e cantando o ritual do nascimento. E esse ritual, vamos dizer, ele não é assim, “ah, a criança nasceu, vou bater com uma tábua vai achatar a cabeça.” Se for fazer isso vai matar a criança. Na nossa cultura o ritual, que é o ritual Kānga Pewa, que é o ritual do nascimento, é um tipo de batismo. É pegado a pranchetinha feita de bambu, ela é enrolada num algodão pra que não machuque a cabeça da criança, aquela é toda fechadinha com algodão bem macio, aí ele é colocado na testa, depende se você quer aqui, ou você quer aqui, ou você quer aqui. Depende do que você quer achatar. Tem um dos meus filhos que é aqui, mas se você quiser pra cá também você pode. Aí coloca e trança o algodão aqui. [...] Você pega a pranchetinha e você faz isso, assim como se estivesse fazendo um curativo. Aí você vai carinhosamente fazer como que faixa um pé quando quebra, a gente enrola, aí você vai fazer aquilo. Mas com carinho. E quem faz isso, os padrinhos da criança. Aí coloca aquilo, ajeita direitinho, já deixa lá e a criança é novinha, recém nascida, não vai mexer. Aí após um mês, dois meses, até seis meses, depende, remove e já vai estar lá o achatamento. E aí é só colocar a tiara¹⁸. (Eroka, 03.12.2021)

¹⁸ “Thus, when the woman became pregnant, already there was a complete preparation. The midwife was already adjusting the belly to know whether the baby was upside down or downside up. Then the midwife would palpate the belly, whether the baby was on one side or not, and adjust it so that the baby would fit well, so that the baby would not be born standing up. Then we used, we still use, the oil, the fat of the breed, which is an animal that we have a large amount of here in Solimões. This fat is used to announce the birth of the baby when the woman reaches nine months. When she starts to feel the first pains, the traditional midwife of the Kambeba people takes her by the hand and gives her an herb bath. She sips, as if massaging. Then she waits. If the baby makes three movements in the mother's belly and it is one o'clock in the afternoon, she is announcing that she will be born at three o'clock in the afternoon. If it makes three. If it makes two, it will be born at two. If it shakes only once, it is already about to be born, because it will be born at one o'clock. So, we have all this empirical knowledge of our cosmology and then when the baby is born, the mother has already matured this idea during the first months of pregnancy. From the time she knows she is pregnant, she starts looking within the community, among people, who the godparents of her child will be. Then she already begins to choose. And at the time of the birth, the godparents already know that they have to be there because it will be announced. A kind of rocket will be set off, like someone setting off a firecracker, to announce that a baby is being born there. But the firecracker that we set off is a firecracker made of dowels.... we take a wood, we scrape it, we scrape it, we scrape it, we take a whole bunch of it and we pierce it inside a certain wood, called a *roqueira*, which is a stick that has a hole in the middle, like a bamboo. Then we pound it, pound it, pound it, until it gets hot. When it is very hot, we put an arrow under it and let it go. Then it releases a kind of cap like this, which it spits out. Then it makes a spark, it announces a noise, and that noise already announces that it is already born and then the godfathers come with the godmothers, they already come with the cotton, they already come with the tablet, they already come with the *pajuaru*, they already come with the medicine, the

This description highlights the following of different stages and the intersection of different cultural and social aspects. First, we can notice the presence of a range of traditional knowledge related to midwifery practice, held by so-called “*parteiras*”¹⁹ and characterized by the use of specific substances of animal and plant origin. Second, there is the construction of a series of social ties for the not yet born – as well as the reinforcement of those already existing within his/her family – through the choice of godparents. They were the only ones to be authorized to see and care for the child in the first days after birth by bringing gifts and singing songs with an apotropaic function. Also, the idea, widespread among many chroniclers²⁰, that the practice was violent is contrasted – an aspect that consolidated the prejudice that saw the Kambeba as fierce people. Erika very well explains how the deformation took place gradually and gently, precisely so as not to injure the baby or damage his/her brain. Elderly women I spoke to confirmed that the ritual of *Kānga Pewa* is no longer practiced today. However, they remember their mothers passing down the memory of it precisely because of its importance in defining Kambeba people as such. Dorina Batalha (Kambeba), for example, said that “a minha mãe contava. Contava dos antigos, quando a criança nasce, aí eles vão fazer essa modificação. [...] Hoje em dia não tem mais isso aí. Já acabou”²¹ (19.01.2022). Similarly, when I asked if her mother deformed the head of her children, Erimilda Batalha (Kambeba) explained to me that “só a família dela, da mãe dela que faziam isso. Outra geração já não fazia mais isso aí. [...] Papai não queria não. Porque ele

copaiba, the cottonseed powder, the cotton, they already come with all the preparations. They come to dance and chant the birth ritual. And this ritual, let's say, is not like, "ah, the baby is born, I will hit him with a board and flatten his head." If you do that, you will kill the baby. In our culture, the ritual, which is the *Kānga Pewa* ritual, is the birth ritual, is a kind of baptism. You take the bamboo tablet, you wrap it with absorbent cotton so that it doesn't hurt the baby's head, you close it with very soft absorbent cotton, then you put it on the forehead, it depends if you want it here, or you want it here, or you want it here. It depends on what you want to flatten. There is one of my children that is here, but if you want it here also you can do it. Then you put and weave the cotton here. [...] You take the tablet and do it like this, as if you were making a bandage. Then you will do it lovingly like a foot bandage when they break, roll it up and so on. But lovingly. And the people who do it are the godparents of the child. And then you fix it, fix it properly, leave it there and the baby is young, a newborn, not moving. Then after one month, two months, up to six months, it depends, it is removed and the flattening will already be there. And then you just have to put the tiara on.”

¹⁹ “Parir” means “to give birth”, so “*parteira*” means “who makes the child to be born”.

²⁰ See, for example: Acuña 1641; Bettendorf 2010.

²¹ “My mother used to tell it all the time. She told about the old days, when the baby was born, they used to make this transformation. [...] Today that is no longer like this. It is over.”

diz que achava feio²²“ (19.01.2022). The fact that it was considered ugly or even aberrant led more recent generations to abandon the ritual for fear of being punished.

Os nossos antepassados iam ser castigados e toda a geração ia ser castigada, se a gente não parasse com aquilo. Então os nossos ancestrais parou e ficou totalmente, não totalmente, mas ficou muito tempo extinto, adormecido e aí a gente aos poucos está trazendo isso. [...] Não totalmente aquela deformação grandiosa como era no passado, mas mínimas, pequenas.²³ (Eroka, 03.12.2021)

Nevertheless, it did not disappear. Some people still practice it or began to do it again within a larger process of cultural recovery and enhancement²⁴. With respect to the past, the flattening is less pronounced because of the discrimination people would suffer. “Na era que a gente vive, a gente procura fazer assim uma coisa mais pequena. Aqui atrás ele quase não vai ser notado, mas aqui na frente ele vai ser muito notado e aquela pessoa pode sofrer muito preconceito por esses tempos de agora. [...] Nos temos algumas pessoas aqui, bem raro, não muitas, que praticam”²⁵ (Eroka, 03.12.2021). For these reasons, the tablets used today are smaller than those used in the past, of which the one preserved at the Academy of Science in Lisbon is an example.

With this ritual, when children were born, they were not only *born* but they were born Kambeba, thus endowed with a specific social identity that differentiated them from other peoples and put them in well-defined dynamics of sociality with human beings as well as with territory, its elements and inhabitants. No words are better than Eroka’s to explain it:

O ritual do Kãnga Pewa [...] é um ritual de batismo que serve pra se diferenciar dos demais povos. Também é uma forma de oferenda pra o nosso deus, Tururucari, que é o nosso deus do povo Kambeba, Tururucari. Ele é o nosso deus. A forma de achatamento é uma oferenda,

²² “Only her family, her mother's family that did this. Another generation didn't do this anymore [...] Daddy didn't want this. Because he said he thought it was ugly.”

²³ “Our ancestors were going to be punished and the whole generation was going to be punished, if we didn't stop that. So, our ancestors stopped and became totally, not totally, but for a long time extinct, dormant, and then we are slowly bringing this back. [...] Not totally that great deformation as it was in the past, but minimal, small ones.”

²⁴ Eroka herself practiced on her elder daughter.

²⁵ “In the era that we live in, we try to do something smaller. Here, in the back, it is difficult to notice, but here in the front it will be noticed a lot and that person can suffer a lot of prejudice for these times of now. [...] We have some people here, rarely, not many, that practice.”

dizendo eu tô aqui. Tu me representa, eu te represento. É uma ligação cosmológica entre a terra e o universo que através da medicina da ayahuasca a gente consegue ter essa visão e se ligar também. Então é uma oferenda [...] pra o nosso deus Tururucari dizendo que a gente tá aqui na terra e que a gente tá dando continuidade pra nossa crença que a ele nos ensinou. É que nem os católicos que usavam aquele crucifixo, dizendo “eu uso deus no meu cordão”, porque deus ele tem fé, eu tenho fé nele, ele me representa. Assim mesmo eu achatei minha cabeça porque eu tenho fé eu acredito, eu creio. Só que nossa crença vem através das forças da natureza, das águas, da terra, do universo em si e pra nós tudo tem vida né. O vento, a gente pode conversar com o vento. Tem um hino do vento, da chuva, do relâmpago, do trovão e são todos esses associados aos nossos clãs, a nossa identidade. [...] Então esse achatamento é muito significativo, ele é importante. Ele é uma identidade porque ele é o nosso batismo. Ele é a nossa comunicação. Ele é a continuidade da cultura que o nosso Deus passou pra nós e nós temos que continuar, que é Tururucari. O Tururucari tinha esse tipo de deformação e ele tentava passar pelo seu povo que todo mundo tinha que ter aquela linhagem para se diferenciar dos outros povos da região que eram vistos como cabeça redonda, cabeça de macaco. Então eles tinham essa cabeça assim, até porque a nossa cabeça, daquela forma, não se tornava só uma cabeça e sim um ponto de comunicação. Era como que fosse assim um sinal, um ponto de informação de mandar sinalização. Uma sinalização que ali tem aquele determinado povo que é linhagem de alguém. Ser reconhecido. Um modo de se diferenciar. Então é um dos rituais mais importantes. Não que os outros não sejam, mas o ritual cabeça chata é a própria identidade do povo Kambéba.²⁶ (Eroka, 03.12.2021)

²⁶ “The *Kānga Pewa* ritual [...] is a baptism ritual that serves to differentiate us from other peoples. It is also a form of offering to our god, Tururucari, which is our god of the Kambéba people, Tururucari. He is our god. The flattening form is an offering, I am saying here. You represent me, I represent you. It’s a cosmological connection between the earth and the universe that through the ayahuasca medicine we can have this vision and connect too. So it is an offering [...] to our god Tururucari saying that we are here on earth and that we are giving continuity to our belief that he taught us. It is like the Catholics that used to wear that crucifix, saying “I wear God on my necklace”, because God has faith, I have faith in him, he represents me. So I flattened my head because I have faith, I believe. But our belief comes through the forces of nature, the waters, the earth, the universe itself and for us everything has life. The wind, we can talk to the wind. There is a hymn to the wind, to the rain, to lightning, to thunder, and they are all associated to our clans, to our identity. [...] So this flattening is very significant, it is important. It is an identity because it is our baptism. It is our communication. It is the continuity of the culture that our God gave us and we have to continue, which is Tururucari. Tururucari had this kind of deformation and he tried to pass on to his people that everyone had to have this lineage to be different from the other people of the region that were seen as round-headed, monkey-headed. So they had this head like that, because our head, in that way, became not only a head, but a point of communication. It was like a sign, a point of information to send signals. A signaling that there you have that certain people that are someone’s lineage. To be recognized. A way of differentiating oneself. So, it is one of the most important rituals. Not that the others are not, but the ritual of flattening the head is the very identity of Kambéba people.”

In an opposite way to the assertions of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira and others before and after him, for the Kambeba the practice of cranial deformation was not something that subtracted humanity from the individual but conferred it. In his recent *essay, Fare umanità: i drammi dell'antropo-poesi* (2013), Francesco Remotti focused in detail on the role of culture as a device for the construction of human beings. Picking up on Geertz's argument (1973) according to which humans are born incomplete, the Italian anthropologist discusses the various forms of anthropo-poesies which have acted and currently act within human societies and through which men and women acquire their ontological dimension – that is, are determined as social beings besides biological organisms. Cranial deformation – in use also by other south American, and non, societies – is part of these processes and the bodily transformation it implies has had as main objective to create a truthful and authentic model of humanity. In this way, who belongs to it can be easily distinguished by other populations that are usually considered inferior when not fully human. Moreover, in Amerindian contexts, the body is the cornerstone around which human consciousness forms and transforms and that determines its relationship with other perspectives²⁷ (Viveiros de Castro, 1998; 2015). As Santos-Granero points out, “the Amerindian obsession with body-making and body-shaping techniques [...] and the use of particular body ornaments, is aimed at internalizing the *moral* and *civil* values that make humans human. [...] Through these means, native Amazonians seek to firmly anchor in their composite, artifactual bodies a properly human point of view” (2009, 23; see also Seeger 1975). Thus, among the Kambeba bodily transformation served – and serves – as a device for constructing identity and personhood as well as a means of communication with the supernatural and ancestral entities that accompany and guide people in their collective life. “O Kambeba tem essa forma de cabeças chata. É a nossa identidade, é o nosso ritual, é a nossa cultura e a nossa diferença”²⁸ (Eroka, 03.12.2021). The spiritual dimension also gains importance since, as Remotti reminds us, the practices of anthropo-poesies are often connected to the divinity. Sometimes, it is the divinity itself who makes the poietic action; some other times – as it is for the Kambeba – physical transformation aims at imitating the divinity – in this case, Tururukari (see note 26 in this chapter). To this extent, to forbid and encourage the eradication of such practice meant to deny the peoples' identity in terms of cognitive perception of the surrounding

²⁷ We briefly spoke about Amerindian perspectivism in §1.1 and we will return on it in the next chapter, §5.1.2.

²⁸ “The Kambeba has this flat head shape. It is our identity, it is our ritual, it is our culture and our difference.”

reality since one of the cornerstones of the relationships through which the Kambeba individual constructed his/her experience of the world went missing.

Despite the efforts of the colonizers, Kambeba people did not stop passing on the memory of such knowledge within their families. In the past two centuries, claiming to be indigenous meant having to face violence, discrimination and often death; consequently, many traditions were silenced and ethnic identity hidden under the mestizo identity of the caboclo (Maciel 2011). However, “silenciar para os Cambeba, não significa necessariamente aceitar a condição de silenciado, [...] mas pode ter sido a única possibilidade de continuar vivendo e até resistindo etnicamente. Assim, o silêncio ganha o sentido de resistência e de estratégia de sobrevivência diante de uma situação demasiado adversa”²⁹ (Idem, 76).

In fact, as we mentioned above, from the 1980s, the Kambeba decided to reaffirm themselves in the public space, so letting “underground memories” (Pollak 1989) come out into the open and claiming the rights guaranteed by the constitution to indigenous peoples. In a first survey, it became clear that while some cultural aspects were still strong among people, others needed to be strengthened or reintroduced in order to consolidate Kambeba’s identity and distinguish it from other populations. The ritual of the *Kānga Pewa* and head’s deformation are among the latter both in physical – even if moderately – and in symbolic terms. The very appropriation of the ethnonym *Kambeba* demonstrates it, as it entails the transformation of the colonial category (cfr §2.2.1) into an ethnic category and subverts the corresponding representation.

In the simplicity of its craftsmanship, the bamboo tablet is thus charged with a number of crucial meanings for past and present Kambeba culture. It becomes a symbol not only of existence but also of resistance and turns into a lens through which to look at the colonial encounter from another point of view.

4.1.3 People of the water: ethnic emergence and cultural revitalization

*Ser indígena é ser isso, é ser perseguido todo dia. Todo dia é dia de luta*³⁰.

(Eroka, 03.12.2022)

²⁹ “To silence for the Cambeba, does not necessarily mean accepting the condition of silenced, [...] but it may have been the only possibility to continue living and even ethnically resisting. Thus, silence gains the sense of resistance and survival strategy in the face of a too adverse situation.”

³⁰ “This means to be indigenous person, to be persecuted every day. Every day is a day of struggle.”

*Só o fato de ser indígena hoje a gente sofre uma certa discriminação, né, um certo olhar, não muito aceitado na sociedade, mas é isso que faz com que a gente possa continuar debatendo, discutindo, né, buscando e projetando a vida desse povo, para que a gente possa um dia ter as próprias pernas para caminhar.*³¹

(José Jesus Kambeba, 19.01.2022)

Today, the way in which the Kambeba are asserting themselves as a group resistant to the assimilation dynamics of the colonial period and therefore ethnically distinct from those who carry a generic national identity reminds us, in part, of the processes of ethnic emergence of other regions of Brazil (see Pacheco de Oliveira 1994, 1998; Arruti 1997, 1999; Gomes 2016). Ethnic emergence is a process that was first theorized in the northeastern regions of Brazil where contact with non-indigenous people and the process of mixture had a greater impact on native peoples. As the expression *ethnic emergence* suggests, central to these processes is the notion of ethnicity and its role in circumscribing social groups. The conceptual and political meaning of this term has changed over the last century and today is firmly linked to the actions of affirmation and resistance of indigenous peoples on Brazilian territory. Between the 19th and 20th centuries, anthropologists began to use it to classify human populations according to shared linguistic and cultural traits rather than through the biological distinctions defined by racial categories (Arruti 2014). During the 20th century, the term was exploited and signified in different ways according to the needs of each political and scientific reality, almost coming to replace the notion of race as a tool for the production of difference (Restrepo 2004). Also, it promoted a process of naturalization and essentialization of culture (Kuper 2008) that is today widely questioned in favor of interpretations that highlight its dynamic and relational character. Restrepo (2004) offers a good overview of the different approaches which have been used to investigate the concept of ethnicity and shows how their multiplicity and contradictoriness well reflect the complexity of the socio-political contexts in which they were formulated and in which they progressively collided and overlapped. Until recently, the tendency was to pit the category of

³¹ “Just for the fact of being indigenous today we suffer a certain amount of discrimination, a certain look that is not very accepted in society, but this is what makes us continue debating, discussing, searching and projecting the life of these people, so that one day we can have our own legs to walk on.”

ethnicity against that of nationhood, fitting both into that discourse of defining Western peoples as *other* than a European identity. On the contrary, in Brazil, the discussion over ethnicity developed within the process of searching for a national identity which had among its challenges that of managing the tensions associated to the coexistence of a mestizo population divided among indigenous peoples, black people of African origins and white people of European origin (Athias 2007). In opposition to European racial theories that interpreted mixing as obstructing the civilizing process, Brazilian intellectuals began to use the category of ethnicity to explain differences within this specific socio-cultural formation. According to them multiethnicity was at the ground for a Brazilian identity in which the *three races* harmoniously lived together, each contributing with their own cultural specificities (Schwarcz 2019) – a phenomenon which Gilberto Freyre called “racial democracy” (1934). This paradigm, the goal of which remained to whiten the population (see §2.2.1), originated a different type of racism, in which the groups’ specificities were not actually considered at all and social inequalities became structural elements both in the definition of political relations among them and in the ways in which they could have access to the national discourse (Wade 2010; Schwarcz 2019).

This approach to the concept of ethnicity permanently failed around the 1960s when the theories of Gilberto Freyre were publicly discredited and scholars began to fully support the use of the ethnic discourse to explain contact between indigenous and whites. This positioning – introduced almost fifty years before by Marechal Rondon (first director of the *Serviço de Proteção ao Índio* in 1910) – interpreted mixture as a process of assimilation that saw indigenous people gradually losing their own traits while joining the national society, to take on a new *caboclo* identity, neither Portuguese nor Amerindian (see Galvao 1979). The anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro, equally interested in the integration of indigenous population into Brazilian society, entered a critique to this model. In his work *O Processo Civilizatório* (1975), he suggests the notion of “ethnic transfiguration” to interpret the assimilation process. According to it, the advancement towards progress would transform indigenous cultures but would leave each group some ethnic autonomy. The concepts of acculturation and integration were thus revised as implying a mutual readjustment by the parties involved; nevertheless, the anthropologist was accused of still promoting an evolutionist and essentialist view for not taking into account those dynamics that arose in the relationship between indigenous groups and national society (Athias, 2007).

The focus on the relational character of interethnic dynamics led to develop later approaches using a sociological perspective that gave the dimension of contact a processual character. The idea of “interethnic friction” (1963) elaborated by Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira fits into this framework and identifies the relationship between ethnically distinct groups as always oppositional. The cultural transformation which results from such contrast implies the reorganization of each groups’ structures from the economic, social and political points of view. Consequently, also the concept of *integration* is filled with new meaning and it turns into an opportunity for indigenous peoples to participate in the construction of a national identity without losing their ethnic specificities and, on the contrary, acquiring greater space for political participation.

Internationally, reflections such as those of Frederik Barth (1969) were moving in the same direction. According to him, a group’s ethnicity is based on the social limits established by its members through dynamics of inclusion and exclusion rather than on its “substantive cultural content”. In other words, it is the continuous redefinition caused by confrontation and interaction with distinct groups that shapes ethnic identity (Arruti 2014). Another significant contribution for our context of analysis is Cohen’s (1969). To him, “ethnicity is essentially a political phenomenon, as traditional customs are used only as idioms, and as mechanisms for political alignment”; consequently, “it is only when, within the formal framework of a national state or of any formal organization, an ethnic group informally organizes itself or political action, that we can say we are dealing with ethnicity” (1969, 200). More recently, Joanne Rappaport pointed out how also these interpretations ultimately proved to be somewhat essentialist, since they were not really concerned with how such groups maintain their ethnic configuration in the political contexts of origin and with which they will inevitably interact (2008). To counter this problem, Manuela Carneiro da Cunha suggests thinking of ethnicity not as an analytical category to be used to analyze the cultural elements that distinguish one group from another but as a *native category*. In these terms, ethnicity becomes a criterion around which social agents within the group organize their common experience – in this case determined by the presence of a common origin and culture (Carneiro da Cunha 2017).

Within this theoretical framework the concept of *ethnic emergence* was formulated in reference to some collectivities that, after a long period of silence began to use the language of ethnicity rather than that of *mestizaje* to define themselves in the public, social space. This process

interested especially some groups in the Northeastern region of Brazil, who lived the mixing dynamics of the colonial period first and most intensely. In the 1920s-1940s and 1970s respectively, two *waves* of emergences brought groups identified as *mestiços* to be re-classified first as “remanescentes indígenas” and then as properly indigenous (Arruti 1997). This occurred as a consequence to two parallel and complementary actions: the external recognition of *indigenous traits* by some statal officers of the SPI who, at the height of the search for a national identity (1930s), were looking for folkloric elements that distinguished the Brazilian people from the Europeans; the reenactment, inside the communities, of a range of memories, knowledge and practices latent among older people but that began to be reintroduced to claim an indigenous identity and thus have access to the related rights as guaranteed by art. 231³² of 1988 Federal Constitution (Pacheco de Oliveira 1994; Arruti 1997, 1999). It is important to specify that in these processes identity takes on a processual and dynamic dimension: it is (re)constructed in ways that do not reproduce the elements of the past as it was but reinterpret and re-propose it in forms suited to the political, social and cultural context of the present, to the challenges it imposes and the opportunities it offers. Each group that appropriates the category of *native* does it by devising its own strategies from a series of diacritical elements considered as distinctive both conceptually and legally. Activities such as processing manioc, performing the ritual of the Toré³³ and manufacturing handicraft are among the primary devices of “indigeneity”³⁴ (Clifford 2013): every collectivity shapes and articulates them depending on their own local political, cultural and historical context. The creation of a cultural geography is another important aspect for thinking of and understanding the category of ethnicity. According to Wade “cultural difference is spread over geographical space by virtue of the fact that social relations become concrete in spatialized form” (2010, 16). In ethnogenesis movements, land is a central element since its

³² Accessible at:

<https://federalismi.it/ApplOpenFilePDF.cfm?artid=12908&dpath=document&dfile=09052009142145.pdf&content=Cost%2E%2BCostituzione%2Bdel%2BBrasile%2B%28lingua%2Boriginale%29%2B%2D%2B%2B%2D%2B%2B%2D%2B>

³³ The Toré is a ceremony of the ritual complex of the Jurema. It is considered a diacritical element of indigenous identity that, when absent, has to be reintroduced. For indigenous groups living in the Northeast, it holds simultaneously a religious and political importance since it represents a way to establish a contact with the *encantados*, i.e., spiritual entities who guide people in daily life and struggle for civil and political rights. For more details see: Nascimento 1994; Arruti 1996; Grünewald 2004; Oliveira 2009.

³⁴ Clifford’s concept of indigeneity (*indigènitude*) refers to the process of rearticulation of contemporary identities in which “traditions are recovered and connections made in relation to shared colonial, postcolonial, globalizing histories. Like negritude, *indigènitude* is a vision of liberation and cultural difference that challenges, or at least redirects, the modernizing agendas of nation-states and transnational capitalism” (2013, 16).

geographical and historical re-signification activates processes of social, political, cultural and spiritual reorganization of the entire community. João Pacheco de Oliveira studied in detail these phenomena and developed the notion of “territorialization” (1998, 54) to describe the strategies used by indigenous groups to claim a specific territory as the core of their shared identity. Its recognition as a key factor in the maintenance of ethnically distinct cultural traits (to which indigenous people are entitled by law) gives the opportunity to activate the processes of legal demarcation through which the community gains exclusive usufruct of the territory it has claimed³⁵. Although they follow similar patterns, each process of emergence is different and reflects the different ways of being indigenous as it concerns memories, traditions, cultural norms, geo-political contexts and reactions to the colonial process. When carefully observed, they show a great heterogeneity of experiences that can offer useful insights to rethink the rhetoric often proposed in the past by which native Brazilians constituted a culturally homogeneous whole.

In reality, indigenous-white interactions have been very intense also in certain areas of the Amazon – especially along the course of the Amazon River – and have led to the formation of new mestizo identities (such as the *ribeirinhos* or the Amazonian *caboclos*, see Ribeiro 2013; cfr §1.2 and §2.2.1). Therefore, emergence processes similar to those of northeastern groups are also to be found in this region. It is the case of the Kambeba, who use the narrative of silencing to support the claim of an indigenous identity in the face of those who accuse them of lacking cultural continuity with the past. Unlike other populations, they can then draw on a more detailed set of information about the culture of their ancestors thanks to the frequent mentions in colonial chronicles at least until the first half of the 1800s (cfr §2.1.1). However, the process of reassertion on the territory of the Upper Solimões follows a similar path and bases contemporary indigenous identity on the construction of a shared collective memory from the reformulation, reintegration and revitalization of cultural elements of the past (cfr Cabrero 2014).

The production of a collective memory is also central to understanding the formation and implementation of ethnogenesis movements. In the 1930s, Maurice Halbwachs was one of the first to recognize a connection between the elaboration of a group’s collective memory and its social identity (Halbwachs 1950; 1997). According to the French sociologist, memory works as a device of social cohesion among the members of a group and provides categories

³⁵ In chapter five we will return on the issues of Indigenous Land and of the processes of demarcation.

to interpret and decodify the reality experienced by the individuals. Collective memory – also defined as cultural memory³⁶ – includes that set of practices, knowledge, images specific to a group whose preservation is functional to its reproduction over time. Unlike individual memory which arises spontaneously, it is artificially constructed and preserved by the institutions of the group. Every society has a collective memory, even *historical* ones³⁷. In this process, while certain events are remembered, others are forgotten, according to specific political dynamics (see Lowenthal and Gathercode 1990) that reflect the ways in which each collectivity interprets contemporary problems and decides what strategies to adopt to face them (Candau 2002). By producing a collective memory, social groups perform an act of domestication of the past in which events are not faithfully reproduced but elaborated according to present needs (Trouillot 2005). Usually, people keep alive what they manage to resignify in the social framework of the present; past elements which lose such connection fall into oblivion. Memory is thus a representation of the past in the present. Not by chance it has been defined by Nora as “the reproduction of the past in the present” (1972), as a frame more than a content (1989) and as an actualized reconstruction rather than faithful reproduction (Candau 2002). The archaeologist Cornelius Holtorf is also eloquent when he says that “cultural memory is hence not about giving testimonies of past events, accurately and truthful, but about making meaningful statements about the past in a given present” (1998: 24). The purpose of this process of domestication is to support the construction and reproduction of specific social and cultural identities. In his essay *Memory and Identity* (2002), Candau picks up the statement of Elizabeth Tonkin “memory makes us, we make memory” (2000) to open his discussion on the mutual construction between memory and identity. According to him, collective memory constitutes the basis for the elaboration of a “discourse of self-presentation” (Muxel 1996, 31) which takes disjointed, fragmented events and reorganizes them in a coherent and meaningful way with respect to one’s life, desires and future projects. Memory keeps the group together through the construction of a “symbolic universe” (Berger and Luckman 1966) articulated around specific narratives and norms and

³⁶ For Halbwachs, the dimensions of memory are:

- Mimetic memory: it refers to physical action. We learn how to behave by imitating the others;
- Memory of things: it refers to those objects which remind us of who we are and of our past;
- Communicative memory: it is related to language and to the ability of communicating. It is relational because and based on the exchange with other subjects;
- Cultural memory: it unites the three afore-mentioned aspects and includes all the symbols and representations which make the identity of a group explicit.

³⁷ We will return on the distinction between history and memory in §4.2.3.

aimed at thinking the world as “relatively stable, plausible, and predictable” (Candau 2002, 92).

As mentioned above, the rearticulation of a collective memory among Kambeba people starts from the assumption that there has been a process of silencing over the last centuries and it was imposed both from outside and within the group. In the first case, it was caused by the prohibition of practicing certain activities as well as in linguistic transformation – for instance, by changing the name of places and prohibiting of speaking native languages. In the second case, people says that silence was self-imposed by the members of the indigenous group in order to survive the violence of colonial process and its agents (soldiers, missionaries, traders among others). Anyway, both narratives are part of a single discourse aimed at explaining the almost total absence of the Kambeba people in more recent historical sources and the disappearance of many cultural traits – two aspects which are usually associated with assimilation.

É muito relevante falar sobre a questão do povo Kambeba de São Paulo de Olivença porque aqui, desde do princípio aqui, antes de o povo mesmo se organizar, antes de fazer esta auto afirmação e tal, o povo já por si só, de forma empírica mesmo, já se dizia, já tinha esse reconhecimento de Kambeba. Porque até mesmo todos que nascem nesse lugar, querendo ou não estão na chamada Terra dos Kambeba, né? Os cabeça chata, e isso aí já há mais de cem anos. E vem acontecendo isso, desde o surgimento de vila, mas quando vem as províncias, a colônia, a principal influência religiosa, as expedições jesuíticas e tudo, os missionários. E eles começam a fazer um trabalho de base colocando, impondo a língua portuguesa. Até porque a gente mora na fronteira, então a gente vê que antes o próprio povo falava sua língua, dominava suas tradições, tinha falante da língua, mas só que com essa imposição tanto da coroa portuguesa, como da espanhola, influenciou muito para, vamos dizer assim, não para perder, mas para estagnar ou para manipular aquela forma cultural, aquela língua que era de origem, né.³⁸ (José Jesus Kambeba, 19.01.2022)

³⁸ It is very relevant to talk about the issue of the Kambeba people of São Paulo de Olivença because here, from the very beginning, before the people themselves were organized, before they made this self-affirmation and so on, the people already had this recognition as Kambeba, in an empirical way. Because even everyone who was born in this place, wanting it or not, is in the so-called Land of the Kambeba, right? The flatheads, and this has been going on for more than a hundred years. And this has been happening, since the beginning of the village, but when the provinces, the colony, the main religious influence, the Jesuit expeditions and everything, the missionaries. And they start to do a groundwork by imposing the Portuguese language. Even because we live on the border, so we see that before the people themselves spoke their own language, dominated their own traditions, had speakers of the language, but with the imposition of both the Portuguese and Spanish crowns,

Nesse contexto de história do nosso povo, muitas coisas aconteceram porque os Kambeba passaram anos no silenciamento. [...] Nos não tinha segurança pra gente se auto declarar diante duma sociedade como população indígena. A gente se afirmava como Kambeba, mas não era ingressado na luta e nem participava, vamos dizer, nos direitos. Aí quando chega esse Guimarães³⁹ e em 1988 a constituição geral e os capítulos 231 e 232 aonde fala sobre nossos direitos indígenas, a gente se agarra a esses capítulos da constituição e se auto revela ao nosso Solimões novamente, não com o nome original que era o nosso povo de Omágua, que significa “o povo surgido das águas”⁴⁰. [...] No meu livro, *Memorias vivas*, você vai conhecer a origem do nosso povo. O surgimento dos Omágua, surge a partir do contato da chuva com as forças da natureza e desse atrito nasce os Omágua, por isso que nos temos esse jeito forte de dizer, porque nos somos crias de relâmpago e trovão [...]. De volta a esse contexto, da constituição geral, a gente se agarra a esse capítulo e se revela no Alto Solimões como Kambeba, apelido dado aos Omágua pelos espanhóis e pelos portugueses porque quando chegaram aqui naquela época no passado, encontraram um povo que fazia o seu ritual privativo, chamado Kanga Pewa, o típico dos Kambeba era o achatamento da cabeça da criança. [...]. Então a gente começa a se organizar e fazer um diagnóstico se ainda existiam mais pessoas Kambeba no Alto Solimões. [...] Aí a gente começa a se organizar e faz esse reconhecimento dos Kambeba mesmo da sede de São Paulo de Olivença [...].⁴¹ (Eroka Kambeba, talk at the 2º CIPIF, 26.11.2022)

it influenced a lot, let's say, not to lose, but to stagnate or to manipulate that cultural form, that language that was of origin.

³⁹ Ulysses Silveira Guimarães was a Brazilian politician and president of the National Constituent Assembly between 1987 and 1988 when the Federal Constitution was promulgated.

⁴⁰ The Omágua address to themselves as people of the water because according to the stories told by the elders they were born from the encounter of water with wood.

⁴¹ “In the context of the history of our people, many things happened because the Kambeba spent years in silence. [...] We did not have the security to declare ourselves before a society as an indigenous population. We affirmed ourselves as Kambeba, but we were not part of the struggle, nor did we participate, let's say, in the rights. Then, when this Guimarães arrives, and in 1988 the general constitution, and chapters 231 and 232 talk about our indigenous rights, we hold on to those chapters of the constitution and reveal ourselves to our Solimões again, not with our original name, which was Omágua, which means “the people that emerged from the waters”. [...] In my book, *Memorias vivas*, you will learn about the origin of our people. The Omágua emerges from the contact between the rain and the forces of nature, and from this friction Omágua is born, and that is why we have this strong way of saying it, because we are children of lightning and thunder [...]. Back to this context, of the general constitution, we hold on to this chapter and reveal ourselves in Alto Solimões as Kambeba, a nickname given to the Omágua by the Spanish and the Portuguese because when they arrived here at that time in the past, they found a people that performed their private ritual, called Kanga Pewa, the typical Kambeba was the flattening of the child's head. [...] Then we started to organize ourselves and to make a diagnosis of whether there were still more Kambeba people in Alto Solimões. [...] Then we started to organize ourselves and did this reconnaissance of the Kambeba even from the seat of São Paulo de Olivença.”

In response to this silencing, the Kambeba people are now striving to write their own history. They do so by recovering a number of elements that define their distinctiveness from non-indigenous Brazilian population and by rearticulating them in a collective memory whose sharing reinforces the feeling of belonging to Kambeba culture. This process began in 2009, when Erika became *cacica geral* and started a campaign to revitalize her people's culture. In this regard, her words are quite eloquent:

Não basta só colocar um cocar na cabeça e dizer que é índio. Tem que ter toda uma história. Então a minha preocupação naquele momento foi conversar com os idosos, saber sobre a nossa língua, também fazer o diagnóstico do que tinha e do que não tinha, pra recuperar. Aí a parte da agricultura não precisava recuperar porque nos sempre mantivemos a cultura da farinha e fazer essas nossas comidas típicas, pescaria... O que precisava revitalizar? A língua e fortalecer a cultura, os rituais que nos estava perdendo. Estava ali, mas estava muito enfraquecido. E aí a gente passa a coletar os dados e aí eu tinha esse material, mas ainda não tinha a oportunidade de fazer assim tipo uma escrita para ter aquilo como uma memória. Aí eu passo a coletar, coletar porque a gente tinha um propósito, de ter esse material como fosse um documentário, até mesmo um acervo de conhecimento para o fortalecimento da cultura.⁴² (Erika Kambeba, 03.12.2021)

Among these elements, language is one of the most important, both because it represents one of the most valued diacritical traits and because it is through it that the Kambeba propose a different reading of the territory and the relationships among the beings who inhabit it. Until recently, almost no one was aware of the presence of elders who know and speak the indigenous language⁴³, precisely because, for fear of violence, they had kept this information hidden.

⁴² "It is not enough just to put a headdress on your head and say that you are Indian. You have to have a whole history. So, my concern at that moment was to talk to the elderly, to learn about our language, and also to make a diagnosis of what we had and what we didn't have, in order to recover. Then the agricultural part didn't need to be recovered, because we always maintained the flour culture and our typical foods, fishing... What needed to be revitalized? The language and strengthen the culture, the rituals that we were losing. It was there, but it was very weakened. And then we started to collect data and then I had this material, but I still didn't have the opportunity to write it down to have it as a memory. Then I started to collect, to collect because we had a purpose, to have this material as a documentary, even a collection of knowledge for the strengthening of culture.

⁴³ The Kambeba are a Tupi group and their original language belonged to the Tupi-Guarani log. However, it has been lost in its ancient form and the language which is being reintroduced is *tupi-nheengatu* (*lingua geral*) with some minor variations.

A minha bisavó ela contava pra mim porque não falava: porque foi proibido de falar. Porque se falasse era punido. Matava, fazia isso, aquilo... [...] Eu sei que a minha bisavozinha, a mãe da minha avó ela falava muito que não podiam falar. Eles foram proibidos de falar. E aí já com esse processo que a gente faz há mais de 20 anos na organização da Okas a gente foi catando os antigos, né. Os idosos são bem poucos, falantes que sabem também o significado. [...] É uma coisa que eu só vim descobrir que a bisavó falava, que a vó falava, quando a gente começou a mexer, a tentar criar e mexer um pouco também. Aí que a gente veio descobrir que eles tinham a língua. Eu tinha ouvido falar da língua geral e tal, mas a gente nunca tinha visto conversando assim.⁴⁴ (Auxiliadora Batalha Braga, 19.01.2022)

Next to language, other important things that the population decided to recover in order to *complete* their Kambeba identity are ceremonies, feasts, rituals, graphisms and traditional medicine – which were prohibited by missionaries or abandoned because of prejudice and discrimination – as well as the fabrication of handicraft items both for sale and for personal use. The reintroduction of the ritual of *Kānga Pewa* described in §4.1.2 is an example of such process.

Both in conversations with the group's leaders and in Eroka's book (cfr note 10 in this chapter) it is interesting to notice how, in writing their own history, the Kambeba combine elders' memories and cultural knowledges with the reading of ancient historical sources and the appropriation of the information contained therein⁴⁵. We can find an example in Eroka's talk at the 2º CIPIF (cfr note 11 in this chapter):

Pra quem não me conhece, eu sou Eronilde de Souza Fermin, mas o meu nome na minha língua é Wakarakwema, que significa pássaro do dia. Eu quero falar um pouco da nossa trajetória em quanto povo Omágua, também conhecido como Kambeba. Nesse contexto de aculturação indígena, há muitos anos, vamos falar no século XVII, o nosso povo era um povo numeroso aqui no Alto Rio Solimões. Esse Alto Solimões era dividido em duas partes. O

⁴⁴ My great-grandmother told me why she didn't speak: because she was forbidden to speak. Because if you spoke, you were punished. They killed, did this, did that... [...] I know that my great-grandmother, my grandmother's mother, she used to say that they couldn't speak. They were forbidden to speak. And then, with this process that we have been doing for more than 20 years in the Okas organization, we have been gathering the old ones. The elderly are very few, speakers that also know the meaning. [...] It is something I only discovered that my great-grandmother used to say, that my grandmother used to say, when we started to stir, to try to create and stir a little too. That's when we discovered that they had a language. I had heard about the general language and so on, but we had never seen them talking.

⁴⁵ For example, of chronicles presented in §2.2.1 and Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira's iconographies (§2.2.2)

Alto Solimões era comandado por Grande Aparia o nosso primeiro líder; e o médio Solimões era comandado por Machiparo, o outro líder. Então nosso grupo se dividia em duas partes sociais. Os Omágua da ilha e os Omágua da terra firme. E havia muita riqueza nesse Alto Solimões e o povo sempre teve autonomia própria. Então isso não agradava quando começou o contato. Ele não gostava daquele povo que tinha a sua determinação, a sua autonomia e que vivia muito bem organizado. [...] dos seus clãs, cada um em seu determinado lugar. Então, começou o conflito no Alto Solimões e assim foi diminuindo nosso povo. Passamos por vários retrocessos nesse contexto desde o contato com os portugueses e os espanhóis que queria a todo custo a invasão em nossas terras e assim nos colocar, os nossos ancestrais, como escravos. E aí começa as guerras muito fortes aonde era usado um veneno mortal que deu origem ao nome Solimões, o Surimame, um veneno que os Omágua usavam em suas flechas, nos compasses com os inimigos. Daí vem o nome Solimões [...] rio dos venenos, né. Então, nesse contexto de conflito, esses contatos trouxeram também a doença no nosso meio e muitos de nossos ancestrais foram infectados, foram morrendo. Pra você ter a nossa resistência ao longo dos tempos, pra chegar até aqui, passamos por o período da pandemia também da varíola, né, que dizimou quase todo nosso povo. Depois de anos [...] Samuel Fritz [...] foi um dos primeiros evangélicos da igreja católica a entrar aqui no Alto Solimões. Depois vieram muitos outros. [...] Muitos de nossos ancestrais, muitas de nossas meninas e menino, as crianças foram retiradas do seio da família pra aprender a língua portuguesa com as irmãs missionárias e os pais eram proibidos de ensinar a sua língua materna. [...] Aí vem as guerras, aí chega o coronelismo e também pega essa pequena parte do povo que restou e coloca nos seringais pra trabalhar na exploração da borracha. [...] Nesse contexto de história do nosso povo, muitas coisas aconteceram porque os Kambeba passaram anos no silenciamento, chega o período da ditadura militar. Quando minha mãe contava essa história, escondia lágrima porque ela lembrava do sofrimento que a gente passava.⁴⁶ (Eroka Kambeba, talk at the 2º CIPIF, 26.11.2022)

⁴⁶ “For those who do not know me, I am Eronilde de Souza Fermin, but my name in my language is Wakarakwema, which means bird of the day. I want to talk a little about our trajectory as Omágua people, also known as Kambeba. In this context of indigenous acculturation, many years ago, we talk about the 17th century, our people were numerous here in the Upper Solimões River. This Upper Solimões was divided in two parts. The upper Solimões was commanded by Grande Aparia, our first leader; and the middle Solimões was commanded by Machiparo, the other leader. So our group was divided into two social parts. The Omágua from the island and the Omágua from the mainland. And there was a lot of wealth in the Upper Solimões and the people always had their own autonomy. So this did not please him when the contact began. He did not like those people that had their determination, their autonomy, and that lived very well organized. [...] of their clans, each one in its own particular place. Then the conflict in Alto Solimões began, and so our people were diminished. We went through several setbacks in this context, since the contact with the Portuguese and the Spanish who wanted at all costs to invade our lands and thus put us, our ancestors, as slaves. And then the very strong wars began, where a deadly poison was used that gave origin to the name Solimões, the Surimame, a poison that the Omágua used on their arrows, in their encounters with their enemies. Hence the name Solimões

In addition to this, when listening to the descriptions of their ancestors and their lifestyle, it is not so rare to hear that they were more *evolved*⁴⁷ than other peoples because they did use clothes, they deformed their head or they had a well-structured political system⁴⁸. To understand to what extent this narrative is indicative of the ethnocentric gaze that characterizes every society and to what extent it corresponds to an appropriation of colonial discourse is very difficult. However, regardless of its origin, everything is recontextualized within a discourse geared toward demonstrating the continuity of the Kambeba people on the territory of the upper Solimões. Individual memories and ancient sources are considered equally valid in providing useful data for the reconstruction of a history that has long remained silenced; indeed, they complement each other, as the former fill those documentary gaps left by the latter and because of which a misinterpretation of the cultural and identity trajectory of the Kambeba people has been produced. The political movement institutionalizes such narrative and supports the legitimization of a different version of the colonial encounter. Within this vision, the Kambeba refuse the rhetoric of assimilation and extinction long proposed by official historical discourse, promoting that of resistance instead. According to them, over the centuries, they have not ceased to exist or to live according to their own cultural norms – as much as possible and often secretly. They have not abandoned their knowledge or forgotten the stories told by their ancestors. They adapted to circumstances and hid themselves when necessary, having to survive in a political and ideological context still too constrained by knowledge that used the rhetoric of authenticity to freeze-frame them in obsolete patterns or deny their physical and cultural existence. Precisely because of this, most of those who assume this indigenous Kambeba identity today

[...] the river of poisons. So, in this context of conflict, these contacts also brought the disease into our midst and many of our ancestors became infected and died. To get an idea of our resistance over time, to get here, we also went through the smallpox pandemic period, which decimated almost all our people. After years [...] Samuel Fritz [...] was one of the first evangelicals of the Catholic Church to enter here in Alto Solimões. Afterwards many others came. [...] Many of our ancestors, many of our girls and boys, the children were taken from the bosom of the family to learn the Portuguese language with the missionary sisters, and the parents were forbidden to teach their mother tongue. [...] Then come the wars, then comes the coronelismo and also takes this small part of the people that remained and puts them in the rubber plantations to work in rubber exploitation. [...] In this context of history of our people, many things have happened because the Kambeba have been silenced for years, then comes the period of military dictatorship. When my mother told this story, she would hide her tears because she remembered the suffering that we went through.”

⁴⁷ *Evolved* is a word commonly used by the Kambeba to describe themselves in relation with neighbor groups.

⁴⁸ The contemporary institution of the *cacicado geral* was created explicitly to reproduce such organized political system in present days. Its reintroduction is also part of the process of ethnic emergence.

were, until the last century, labeled as *mestizos*. This definition was given to those who were no longer considered indigenous because they were excessively transformed for externally imposed standards of “authenticity”⁴⁹ but were not “white” enough to be recognized equal to Brazilian citizens of European descent⁵⁰. Among these standards was the fact that, both in the legal sense and in the popular imagination, natives are usually associated with life in the *aldeia* performing traditional activities (cfr Nunes 2010; Almeida 2012; Luciano and Bezerra 2022). On the contrary, the Kambeba movement of São Paulo de Olivença is a predominantly urban movement both because, in the last decades, many have moved to the cities in search of better opportunities and because some aldeias have been encompassed by the expansion of the nearest urban centers. It is the case of Santa Terezina neighborhood, where the OKAS is headquartered and most Kambeba live. As Erika told during the 2º CIPIF, until recently it was in fact an *aldeia*:

[...] A gente vem lutando pela nossa existência e essa organização lá atrás, de Grande Aparia, que é uma organização muito forte e bem organizada ficou silenciada porque quase nos fomos silenciados. Ficamos em Santa Terezina que é a nossa aldeia dentro de São Paulo de Olivença, desde os séculos passados os nossos ancestrais ficaram lá. Meu avô, quando chegou a guerra, tirou nos desse lugar e levou pra esconder lugar de Aparia. É um lugar muito distante porque ele não queria que a família dele morresse e ele vinha duma linhagem de outros ancestrais de cacicado. [...] Passaram por muito tempo desse jeito se escondendo. E após dos conflitos ele retorna pra nossa aldeia de Santa Terezina que o nome era Akariaza’y, que quer dizer lugar dos líderes, e aí eles recomeçam a morar aonde sempre moraram. E aí chega fortemente, de novo a igreja católica que nunca abandonou esse lugar e muda, sem consulta, até porque naquela época muita das nossas ancestrais tiravam sabedoria da oralidade. Então, através de um senhor que chega em Santa Terezina, ele troca o nome da aldeia Akariaza’y por Santa

⁴⁹ Between the 1700s and 1800s, indigenous politics turned increasingly to the issue of land (*questão da terra*). The Pombaline reforms (§2.2.1) had transformed the *aldeias* into *vilas* in order to promote the assimilation of the indigenous population into Brazilian society. Subsequently, other laws were enacted to incentivize and justify the invasion, appropriation, and exploitation of indigenous territories (e.g., the *Regulamento das Missões* of 1845 and the *Lei de Terras* of 1850). The purpose of these policies was to *whiten* the indigenous population because cultural transformation (the so-called *civilization*) corresponded, for the institutions of the time, to a loss of ethnic identity and thus of the right of exclusivity over the inhabited territory (sanctioned by the *Regimento das Missões* of 1686). In fact, only those who fit into the stereotype of the primitive savage were considered *true* natives; the others were just *caboclos*, *mestizos* or *civilized*. However, the criteria of definition were never decided by the bearers of indigenous identities but always by institutions depending on specific economic and political interests (Almeida 2010b).

⁵⁰ This discourse relates to what was mentioned above regarding the theory of “racial democracy”, which actually silences the presence of asymmetrical power relations determined by the ethnic affiliation of citizens.

Terezina porque ele era devoto da santa e ele quis a elogiar, a santa que era padroeira dele. E até hoje permanece esse nome de Santa Terezina.⁵¹ (26.11.2021)

The incorporation into the city and the increase in proximity to non-indigenous society had a major impact on lifestyle and the maintenance of cultural elements and practices. Because of this, in common sense urban indigenous people are perceived as *less indigenous* while in legal terms they are denied those services to which the *aldeados* have access instead. One of the movement's struggles is to deconstruct this idea in the perceptions of non-indigenous society and, sometimes, in that of other indigenous groups as well (again underscoring the non-homogeneity of native peoples). As Auxiliadora Batalha Braga (Kambeba) is keen to stress, they should instead hold the same right:

Eu vim da comunidade, eu vim morar aqui, minha família veio, o meu sangue não mudou. A minha história não mudou. A gente veio em busca de melhoria. [...] O povo da zona rural tem o mesmo direito da área urbana e o povo da área urbana tem que ter o mesmo direito da área rural. Eu não preciso morrer andando nua, descalça e nem pintada. A partir do momento que eu me identifico e que digo que eu sou isso eu estou me identificando. Eu sou responsável por isso. Não é tu quem vai dizer quem eu não sou. [...] Tu não vem dizer pra mim que eu não tenho sangue Kambeba que eu tenho sangue Kambeba. Essa é minha raiz.⁵² (19.01.2022)

⁵¹ "We have been fighting for our existence and this organization from back there, from Grande Aparia, which is a very strong and well-organized organization, was silenced because we were almost silenced. We stay in Santa Terezina, which is our village inside São Paulo de Olivença; since the last centuries our ancestors stayed there. My grandfather, when the war came, took us from this place and took us to hide in Aparia. It is a very distant place because he didn't want his family to die, and he came from a line of other ancestors from cacicado. [...] They spent a long time like this hiding. And after the conflicts he returns to our village of Santa Terezina, which was called Akariaza'y, which means place of the leaders, and there they start living again where they always lived. And then the Catholic Church, which has never abandoned this place, arrives strongly and changes, without consultation, because at that time many of our ancestors drew their wisdom from the oral tradition. Then, through a gentleman who arrived in Santa Terezina, he changed the name of the village Akariaza'y to Santa Terezina because he was devoted to the saint and he wanted to praise her, the saint that was his patron saint. And this name of Santa Terezina remains until today."

⁵² "I came from the community, I came to live here, my family came, my blood hasn't changed. My story hasn't changed. We came in search of improvement. [...] The people from the rural area have the same rights as the urban area and the people from the urban area have to have the same rights as the rural area. I don't need to die naked, barefoot or painted. From the moment that I identify myself and say that I am this, I am identifying myself. I am responsible for this. It is not you who will say who I am not. [...] You don't come to tell me that I don't have Kambeba blood, that I have Kambeba blood. This is my root."

Physical and cultural transformation is, therefore, another cornerstone of Kambeba's "busca de identidade"⁵³ (Omágua Fermin 2020, 36). One of the *Cacica*'s most frequent statements is that they are "Kambeba of the 21st century", meaning that they claim a specific ancestry but do not necessarily have to be the same as their ancestors. On the contrary, according to her, traditions can change if the people so desire. By the same logic, if descent from some Kambeba family is provided, *blood purity* is not necessary. It is the individual who identifies him-/herself as Kambeba and participates in the political mobilization. In these terms, an exchange I had with the president of the OKAS during an interview is also exemplary.

Maria Zenaide: "[...] São Paulo de Olivença inteiro, ele era populado pelos Kambeba. Tanto que na história de São Paulo de Olivença só fala nos Kambeba. Até o hino de São Paulo de Olivença fala nos Kambeba."

Anna: "E aí, depois chegaram pessoas de fora, né?"

Maria Zenaide: "Isso. Aí, isso aí já foram se misturando, né. Hoje em dia já não tem mais Kambeba legítimo, já é só misturado. Já tem, que aqui é plantado quatro etnia, né, que é Kokama, os Kambeba, Tikuna e Kaixana. Então ali eles estão se misturando. Quase a gente não tem mais Kambeba, Kambeba legítimo. Só tem misturado. Agora esses Kambeba que a gente tem é que eles se auto... se identificam como Kambeba."

Anna: "Então assim, o fato duma pessoa ser misturada e depois fica como uma escolha pessoal de..."

Maria Zenaide: "Isso, exatamente."

Anna: "Mas isso não faz dele menos Kambeba... é Kambeba igual a outro Kambeba...?"

Maria Zenaide: "Na mistura? Não, porque aí tem o pai alemão e a mãe é Kambeba. Aí, tu vai decidir, tu vai ficar como Kambeba da tua mãe, que tu já tem o sangue de Kambeba, ou tu vai ficar como alemão. Entendeu como é que é?"

Anna: "Entendi. Mas tipo, um Kambeba misturado, se decidir de ficar Kambeba, ele é Kambeba?"

Maria Zenaide: "Ele é Kambeba, não tem nada ver."⁵⁴

⁵³ "Search for identity."

⁵⁴ "Maria Zenaide: "[...] All São Paulo de Olivença was populated by the Kambeba. So much so that in the history of São Paulo de Olivença only the Kambeba are mentioned. Even the hymn of São Paulo de Olivença mentions the Kambeba."

Anna: "And then people from outside came, right?"

Maria Zenaide: "That's right. Nowadays there is no longer any legitimate Kambeba, it's just mixed. There are four ethnic groups, Kokama, Kambeba, Tikuna and Kaixana. And they are mixing. We almost no longer have Kambeba, legitimate Kambeba. There is only a mixture. Now these Kambeba that we have, they identify themselves as Kambeba."

Silencing and transformation dialogue with each other, for where the former explains the emergence of memories and cultural practices, the latter legitimizes the different forms in which these appear. As a result, the possibilities through which to have access to civil rights – such as health, education and territory – increase. One of the most effective strategies is (and has always been) the appropriation of intellectual, legal, pedagogical and patrimonial tools from the Western world in order to gain official recognition outside the movement and to institutionalize their self-representation in the political and conceptual public space. This attitude shows a resistant and resilient people, able to constantly rearticulate *tradition* and *modernity*⁵⁵ into solutions that allow them to face the challenges of reality without giving up being Kambeba and to imagine futures different from the one envisioned, for indigenous peoples, by Western hegemonic perspective. Above all, it is a representation that disassociates itself from the image of a *primitive* or *childish* society that needs to be educated or protected. On the contrary, it reaffirms the self-management capacity of Kambeba people – and of indigenous peoples in general – and the desire for respect towards the way in which they deem it appropriate to continue living. As José Jesus Kambeba told me once, “hoje um Kambeba de São Paulo de Olivença é esse Kambeba que cada dia sonha com a sua própria autonomia, livre de escolha, de tomar suas decisões”⁵⁶ (19.01.2022).

4.1.4 The Museu Omágua Amãna

Among the non-indigenous tools that the Kambeba have adopted to support the processes of cultural revitalization and reinforcement of their identity we find the museum. As explained in the introduction, museums – in particular, ethnographic museums – are institutions with strong colonial legacies. However, indigenous peoples look with interest at

Anna: “So, the fact that a person is mixed... it is as a personal choice of...”

Maria Zenaide: “Exactly.”

Anna: “But doesn't that make him less Kambeba... he is as Kambeba as another Kambeba...?”

Maria Zenaide: “In the mix? No, because the father is German and the mother is Kambeba. Then, you will decide, are you going to be Kambeba from your mother, that you already have the Kambeba blood, or are you going to be German. Do you understand how it is?”

Anna: “I get it. But like, a mixed Kambeba, if he decides to stay Kambeba, is he Kambeba?”

Maria Zenaide: “He is Kambeba, it has nothing to do with it.”

⁵⁵ We will discuss the relationship of these two dimensions in the context of indigenous cultural and political mobilization in the conclusions.

⁵⁶ “Today a Kambeba from São Paulo de Olivença is that Kambeba who every day dreams of his own autonomy, free to choose, to make his own decisions.”

the potential they have in preserving ancient and contemporary objects and legitimizing the stories they tell through them. It was not traditional museums to gain such attraction but the spontaneous museums that arose after the foundation of the European movement of the *Nouvelle Muséologie* (MINOM 1984). Their goal is to build the museological space around practices and knowledge usually excluded from official discourse. In this way, the communities inhabiting a specific territory have the opportunity to let emerge their vision of that territory. These new museums thus cease to be places of representation of the Other and become places where various identities represent themselves (Abreu 2005). For indigenous peoples, the establishment of a connection between heritage and ethno-political discourse turned into an opportunity to restructure previously ignored memories and stress their ethnic specificities in the postcolonial context of questioning Brazilian national identity. It should come as no surprise then, that the appropriation of the museum, both as a concept and as a space, is a growing phenomenon in several areas of Brazil and especially where processes of ethnic emergence are most intense.

The first indigenous museum to be founded in Brazil was, in 1991, the *Museu Magüta* of the Tikuna people. In 1995, the Kanindé people followed and created their own museum to support the process of ethnic emergence. Afterwards, innumerable other experiences arose in different Brazilian states (Ceará, Pernambuco, Piauí, Maranhão, Amapá, São Paulo Amazonas, Rio de Janeiro among others), each inspired by the others but with its own organizational categories depending on the local traits of each indigenous culture and its socio-political context. Their multiplication and diversification transformed the museum from an institution to a mentality (Choay 2001) as through museum spaces communities think and make themselves indigenous (Arruti 1999). There is not one single model for indigenous museums. In general, indigenous museums are defined as “espaços construídos no interior de (e por) comunidades onde a identidade étnica indígena é (re)significada através da memória dos/nos objetos, que se tornam espaços relacionados com processos educacionais, de mobilização política e de organização sócio-comunitária”⁵⁷ (Gomes and Rodrigues 2010, 50). They are places of resistance, but especially of re-existence (Abreu 2005). In fact, by collecting and exhibiting their objects, histories and traditions as well as by

⁵⁷ “Spaces built inside (and by) communities where the indigenous ethnic identity is (re)signified through the memory of/in the objects, which become spaces related to educational processes, political mobilization and social-community organization.”

institutionalizing their memory (Chagas 2005), indigenous societies devise novel strategies to survive culturally, economically and politically in the contemporary world and to imagine their future (Abreu 2005). In indigenous museums, heritage works as “um instrumento de requalificação de relações, até então assimétricas, para bases que considerariam e respeitariam as singularidades dos povos indígenas e das populações tradicionais”⁵⁸ (Velthem et al. 2017, 737). Moreover, their role is not only to produce knowledge and communicate it to a public but also to educate about new lifestyles and new forms of citizenship.

There are two main initiatives in Brazil that support and promote the establishment of these museums. The best known is the *Rede de Memória e Museologia Social* which arose in December 2014 during the 2º *Encontro de Museus Indígenas* of Pernambuco and acts throughout the whole country. It is made up of indigenous people from different ethnic groups, indigenists and researchers, all of whom are committed to fostering interaction among the various museological experiences and developing the appropriate theoretical and conceptual tools to understand them in their complexity (Gomes 2016). Specifically in the Amazon region, another project related to the formation of indigenous museums is the *Projeto Nova Cartografia Social da Amazônia*⁵⁹ (PNCSA). It is linked to CNPq and began as a project to support traditional communities in the self-mapping of their territories in order to develop greater knowledge of them and reinforce the claims of indigenous, quilombola and riparian social movements. During the creation of the community maps, some researchers realized that some communities were creating collections of objects related to the lives of group members. Therefore, they decided to support these initiatives by encouraging the creation of local museums, called *Centros de Ciências e Saberes* – and not museums – to highlight their connection to the traditional knowledge of the target community (Almeida and Oliveira 2017).

The museum the Kambeba people have in mind fits into this second group although, unlike other experiences, the idea of founding a museum was a totally spontaneous initiative. When Erika took over the *cacicado* in 2009, she already made the proposal to create a museum where Kambeba history and culture could be preserved and told.

⁵⁸ “An instrument of requalification of relations until then asymmetrical, to foundations that would consider and respect the singularities of indigenous peoples and traditional populations.”

⁵⁹ <http://novacartografiasocial.com.br/>

Eu passo a coletar porque a gente tinha um propósito, de ter esse material como fosse um documentário, até mesmo um acervo de conhecimento para o fortalecimento da cultura. [...] A ideia de construir um acervo, que é o nosso futuro museu, parte de mim como liderança, como cacique, né, porque é uma coisa que vai valorizar a nossa cultura, a nossa identidade. Vai ficar para as futuras gerações, vai contribuir com a pesquisa. É uma coisa muito grandiosa que dentro dele também vai poder... as pessoas que estão lá fora e também que estão dentro e não valorizam a gente, não conhecem como funciona e vão poder conhecer melhor, né.⁶⁰ (Eroka, 03.12.2021)

The museum is named *Museu Omágua Amãna* in honor of Eroka's mother, a great political and spiritual leader of the Kambeba people. From that moment on, many other members of the community supported her project by donating object to enrich the collection in quantity and variability. Especially with the arrival of electricity and other conveniences, many items were replaced and old ones thrown away or set aside. Concerned about the disappearance of the stories and knowledge they represented, Eroka tried to sensitize the Kambeba about their cultural value and ask for their donation to the museum. People then began to bring to Eroka's house (and headquarters of the association) things they had at home or archaeological artifacts found in the surrounding area. These were organized and documented in such a way as to know which family the object belonged to and who donated it. In this way, the collection has grown a lot. Today it includes a wide variety of objects, both ancient and contemporary: pottery, cassava sieves, *tipiti*⁶¹, maracas, gourd bowls, hunting and fishing tools, archaeological fragments, clothing and body accessories, animal skins, a hammock, an iron, musical instruments, ritual objects, and braided straw fig. 60, 61, 62). Photographs (analog and digital) are also important, as well as documents attesting the struggle of the Kambeba movement in the region. However, it still does not have an appropriate facility to accommodate it due to the lack of a project to fund its construction. It is on this aspect that the partnership with PNCSA should intervene in the near future, bringing to fruition the dream of Eroka and many other Kambeba people. "Com a Eronilde

⁶⁰ I started to collect because we had a purpose, to have this material as a documentary, even a collection of knowledge for the strengthening of culture. [...] The idea of building a collection, which is our future museum, comes from me as a leader, as a cacique, because it is something that will value our culture, our identity. It will remain for future generations; it will contribute to research. It is a great thing that will also be able to... people who are out there and also those who are in there and don't value us, don't know how it works, and they will be able to get to know us better.

⁶¹ The *tipiti* is a cylindrical object made in braided straw and used to squeeze manhioc pulp before roasting it.

[...] a gente sonha muito com esse museu, porque a gente tem fotos dos nossos anciãos, dos antepassados [...]. Porque memória é importante. Pra mim é muito importante. Esse é um sonho. E tenho fé que vai acontecer”⁶² (Maria Zenaide, 02.12.2021). Not having a physical structure has brought some complications in the past. According to Eroka, political movements opposed to, and annoyed by, Kambeba’s claims allegedly accused the *cacica* of stealing objects from families to sell them abroad. In July 2021, the police showed up at Eroka’s house with orders to seize the collection and transfer it to the *Museu Goeldi* in Belém. The donation documents collected earlier prevented this from happening, along with the direct testimony of those who had donated the objects. This demonstrates the importance that the appropriation of non-indigenous legal instruments has for the success of indigenous resistance.

The *Museu Omágua Amãna* is a crucial place for the movement of cultural revivification because it preserves tangible and intangible memory of Kambeba people, it tells their history and make their continuous presence on the territory known. In its spaces Kambeba’s identity is constantly under construction and culture is passed from generation to generation so that the silencing that took place in the past shall not be repeated.

A criação desse museu aqui vai ser um fenômeno impactante para essa região porque o povo Kambeba ele é muito falado, né. Tanto nas gramáticas quanto na literatura, alguns pensadores falaram do povo Kambeba... Mas o fato de trazer um museu para São Paulo de Olivença do povo Kambeba, vai dar uma levantada na questão da história e da valorização do que existe, né. Porque você falar é uma coisa, e você poder ver e até chegar a tocar é diferente né. Por exemplo eu falo de longe, né, é uma coisa né e você está escutando, mas quando eu falar pra você perto é diferente, você está vendo aqui. O objeto, né, o objeto palpável. E as peças que a gente pode estar tendo nesse museu aqui, isso vai valorizar nossa própria identidade, né. Esse povo que há séculos estava deixando alheamente, assim, fora de uso, fora até de conhecimento, de valorização, né. E isso aí traz novamente uma transformação de uma nova era onde as crianças, os alunos, independentemente do povo Kambeba, mas o povo mesmo do município de São Paulo de Olivença pode estar se agraciando com isso aí porque vai ser um museu não somente de contos, né, mas sim de fatos, de realidade, de histórias verídicas. De uma trajetória de existência daquele material ou

⁶² “With Eronilde [...] we dream a lot about this museum, because we have photos of our elders, of our ancestors [...]. Because memory is important. For me it is very important. This is a dream. And I have faith that it will happen.”

de existência daquele povo que ao longo do tempo vem resistindo e tem uma forma cultural de como trabalhar com aquelas peças que deixaram ali. O que também a gente está podendo produzir de forma que as gerações presentes e futuras possam inserir trabalhando e desenvolvendo aquela arte ou aquele ensinamento.⁶³ (José Jesus Kambeba, 19.01.2022)

Então o museu pra nós, ele é a nossa identidade. Ele revela nossos direitos, ele é a nossa memória, ele é a nossa cosmologia, ele é a nossa continuidade pra futuras gerações e pra as demais pessoas e a gente tem com que ele vai contribuir nas instituições educacionais pra pesquisa, ajudar o nosso povo, ajudar assim mesmo como Kambeba, e ajudar todo nosso povo a ter ali respeito que eu acredito que através dele, as pessoas que hoje nos desrespeita, conhecendo o museu elas vão aprender a respeitar aquela cultura porque a partir daí eles têm conhecimento. [...] Então assim, eu acredito assim, que esse museu é uma iniciativa nossa própria e vai ser a nossa voz, a nossa resistência, dizendo faz tempo que nos estamos aqui, sempre vamos estar aqui. Então é estudando lá o passado que vamos estar aqui no presente e vamos estar também no futuro. Então pra nós isso é muito importante. É nossa própria história, é nossa própria vida. [...] E o povo ele é bem consciente, ele gosta, eles têm um grande respeito pelo nosso museu. Cada um faz uma arte, eles trazem pra doar. [...] Pra nós tem um grande valor, porque se ele fez aquilo, construiu, ele tem que ser lembrado. A memória dele tem que estar lá, ele não pode ficar na invisibilidade, ele tem que aparecer. Então pra nós é assim, queremos que a nossa identidade possa aparecer.⁶⁴ (Eroka, 03.12.2021)

⁶³ The creation of this museum here will be an impacting phenomenon for this region because the Kambeba people are very talked about. In grammars and literature, some thinkers have talked about the Kambeba people... But bringing a museum of the Kambeba people to São Paulo de Olivença will raise the question of the history and appreciation of what exists. Because one thing is to talk about it, another thing is to be able to see it and even touch it. For example, when I speak to you from afar, it is one thing and you are listening, but when I speak to you close by it is different, you are seeing it here. The object, the tangible object. And the pieces that we can have in this museum here will value our own identity. These people that for centuries had been left out of use, out of knowledge, out of value. And this, again, brings a transformation to a new era where children, students, not only the Kambeba people, but also the people of the municipality of São Paulo de Olivença can benefit from this because it will be a museum not only of tales, but also of facts, of reality, of true stories. Of a trajectory of existence of that material or of the existence of that people that, throughout time, has resisted and has a cultural way of working with those pieces that they left there. What we are also able to produce in a way that the present and future generations can insert by working and developing that art or that teaching.

⁶⁴ "So for us, the museum is our identity. It reveals our rights, it is our memory, it is our cosmology, it is our continuity for future generations and for other people, and we believe that it will contribute to educational institutions for research, help our people, help our people like Kambeba, and help all our people to have respect there. [...] So, I believe that this museum is our own initiative and it will be our voice, our resistance, saying that we have been here for a long time, we will always be here. So it is by studying the past there that we will be here in the present and we will also be here in the future. So for us this is very important. It is our own history; it is our own life. [...] And the people are very conscious, they like, they have a great respect for our museum. Each one makes an art, they bring it to donate [...] For us it has a great value, because if he did it, built it, he

The attitude conveyed by José Jesus and Erika towards material culture, clearly suggests how significant it is in telling Kambeba's perspective on their own history. This should make us further reflect on how objects are treated in Lisbon. As they are exhibited there, they show Kambeba's reality as monstrous and on the verge of extinction, while clearly, they should instead be talking about resistance and political struggle.

In this context, the bamboo tablet gains even greater importance beyond that conferred by the ritual of the *Kānga Pewa*. In fact, cranial deformation is so representative of Kambeba's identity that the shape they want to give the future structure of the museum is that of a flattened head because:

a gente não queria um museu que fosse formato de casa, como essas casas comum, como dizer, assim, um edifício porque isso aí é mais da parte do branco, do colonizador. [...] A gente reuniu e também foi aprovado que na construção do nosso museu, ele vai ser uma construção do Kambeba da cabeça chata, né. Porque a gente quer mostrar ali a nossa identidade. Um museu diferente, né, que ele traga assim identidade onde apareça como que viviam nossos ancestrais. [...] Nos vamos querer que essa estrutura seja a cabeça chata conforme o nosso ritual Kanga Pewa, né, que achatava no batismo a cabeça das crianças e nos vamos ter a tiara e nos vamos colocar também as peças, as roupas...⁶⁵ (Erika, 03.12.2021)

The tablet thus plays a privileged role in the transmission of memories from generation to generation and in telling the story of the people from its origins – when Tururukari taught how to deform the head – to the present. The ritual's stages of existence (common practice, silencing/almost total abandonment, recovery) also mark the different moments of Kambeba's existence and resistance. It has a direct link with people's identity since, as we said, it is an instrument of production of social identity through bodily transformation; it

has to be remembered. His memory has to be there, he can't remain invisible, he has to appear. So for us it is like this, we want our identity to appear."

⁶⁵ We did not want a museum that would be in the format of a house, like these common houses, like a building, because this is more from white people, from colonizers. [...] We got together and also approved that, in the construction of our museum, it will be a construction of Kambeba's flat head. Because we want to show our identity there. A different museum, that brings our identity, where we can see how our ancestors lived. [...] We will want this structure to be the flat head according to our *Kānga Pewa* ritual, which flattened the heads of the children during baptism, and we will have the tiara and we will also put the pieces, the clothes...

also has spiritual importance since it allows people to establish a connection with their ancestors and with divine entities (note 26 in this chapter).

At this point the question of repatriation arises. If the tablet is of such importance to the Kambeba people, do they not want it back? When I asked it to Erika, she explained to me that:

Naquele momento passado eles colocaram lá, colocaram que é do povo Omágua, tudo bem. Mas a partir daqui tendo nos aqui vivo pra reclamar nossa história, pra dizer que nos estamos aqui e a gente gostaria que os objetos permanecessem lá, mas que permanecesse contando uma nova versão, né de história. Contando que os Omágua existem no Alto Solimões, que no passado eles foram dado totalmente como extinto mas que hoje eles se reconhecem, estão vivos, estão aqui e que era importante fazer essa parceria entre os museus indígenas e os museus não indígenas pra que a gente tivesse essa aliança. Aí a gente gostaria também de um dia ir lá conhecer esses objetos, né, seria importante pra nós, a gente ir lá olhar conhecer de perto, ver a nossa história, o que o nossos ancestrais construíram. A gente olhar de perto e a gente pensa assim que eles pudessem se aprofundar um pouco na redação do que vai colocar lá do lado da peça para escrever, porque isso também vai fortalecer a nossa luta. [...] Nos não somos de querer repatriação, mas se pelo menos a gente tivesse uma réplica desses objetos pra ter também no nosso acervo indígena que é também pra poder construir essa ponte de interligação, nos aqui eles lá... [...] Isso é importante pra nós, que a gente tivesse uma réplica de cada objeto desses museus aí pra fora e que também pudesse ir lá conhecer de perto.⁶⁶ (Erika, 03.12.2021)

An element that stands out in the discourse is the issue of the object's authenticity. By suggesting the creation of replicas to put in their own museum, Erika demonstrates to have

⁶⁶ "In the past moment they put it there, they put that it belongs to the Omágua people, that's fine. But from here on we are here alive to claim our history, to say that we are here and we would like the objects to remain there, but telling a new version of history. Telling that the Omágua exist in the Alto Solimões, that in the past they were considered totally extinct but that today they recognize themselves, they are alive, they are here and that it was important to have this partnership between the indigenous museums and the non-indigenous museums so that we could have this alliance. Then we would also like to go there one day to see these objects. It would be important for us to go there to see them up close, to see our history, what our ancestors built. We would like to take a closer look and we think that they could go a little deeper into what they are going to put on the side of the piece to write, because this will also strengthen our struggle. [...] We are not wishing for repatriation but if only we had a replica of these objects to have in our indigenous collection and to be able to build this bridge of interconnection between us here and them there... [...] It is important for us that we have a replica of each object from these museums abroad and that we can also go there to get to know them first hand."

a different look compared to the Western one which used to consider authentic only objects related to some kind of pre-contact condition⁶⁷ (see Handler 1986; Bendix 1997; Varutti 2017; Geurds and Van Broekhoven 2013). On the contrary, for the Kambeba even the copies of ancient objects are bearer of a “true” knowledge because the authenticity of an object is not defined by its antiquity, but by the kind of knowledge it contains and conveys. In reference to this, knowledge produced on the Kambeba by Westerners is not considered as entirely reliable as it is that which originated from their traditional *science*⁶⁸ and experience of the world. When I asked him what was the proper way to show their objects to a non-indigenous public, José Jesus told me:

uma forma que eu vejo aqui, é que a Organização dos Kambeba seria a fonte mais certa, né, de dar origem, de com propriedade poder estar falando daquilo que que você conhece, daquilo que seu povo viveu. Porque todo de qualquer pesquisa científica, né, nos somos... todo pesquisador ele só é um, ele abre algumas fendas na pesquisa. Eu vejo assim, a pessoa pesquisada ele tem mais propriedade de falar, mais com propriedade, com outras finalidades, daquele fato né, daquela situação.⁶⁹ (José Jesus Kambeba, 19.01.2022)

The most important thing, then, is not to return objects to Kambeba hands but to create a reconnection between the indigenous group members, the fragments of the story told by objects and non-indigenous public; in particular, it is fundamental to adopt as main narrative that which objects’ cultural owners feel as more appropriate to represent them. It does not matter whether in their own territory or abroad.

To do so is the first step towards the construction of a new imaginary and a new future in which Kambeba people are not invented as an alterity but respected for the identity they chose for themselves.

⁶⁷ In the academic field, this paradigm has gone under deep revision (cfr Introduction). However, it is still quite spread both in the imaginary of many people and in the narratives produced by some museums among which the Science Academy in Lisbon.

⁶⁸ I put the term “science” in italic because “ciência” is a term often used by indigenous peoples to refer to the body of their traditional knowledge. This is, of course, the result of a process of appropriation and re-signification of the Western concept in order to see legitimized knowledge always labeled as superstitions, popular practices and beliefs.

⁶⁹ “One way that I see here is that the Kambeba organization would be the most certain source to originate, to be able to talk about what you know, what your people lived. Because all scientific research, we are... every researcher is only one, he or she opens some cracks in the research. I see it this way, the person being researched has more property to speak, more with property, with other purposes, of that fact, right, of that situation.”

4.2 The Porantim

In Coimbra, at the *Museu da Ciência*, the visit to the exhibition where Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira's collection is displayed begins in a room which purpose is to reproduce a 16th-century Cabinet of Curiosity and the heterogeneity of its exhibition⁷⁰. After it, we enter in the *sala das viagens* (journey's hall), dedicated exclusively to the philosophical journeys organized by the Portuguese crown in the late 18th century (fig. 63, 64, 65; cfr §2.2). The aim of this room is to show a different paradigm for the study of nature (compared to that of the previous room), and precisely, that which arose from Enlightenment thought. Seven horizontal display cases are placed at the center of the room. The first one is dedicated in a generic way to 18th-century expeditions, while the others are arranged in geographical order: Africa (Green Cape, Mozambique and Angola) are summarized in cases two and three; the remaining four contains the Brazilian part of the collection. Looking at the objects behind the glasses we notice that ethnographic material is in direct association and close relation with zoological and botanic specimens as well as with reproductions of documents and drawings. As professor Pedro Casaleiro, creator of the exhibition⁷¹, told me in an interview the objective was to reconstruct 18th-century all-embracing vision on nature *authenticating*

os objetos através das ilustrações que estavam em Lisboa. Por tanto nós fizemos reproduções das ilustrações e tentamos criar núcleos que validassem aqueles objetos da coleção. [...] Foi sempre, tentando de certa maneira equilibrar os núcleos em termos de etnografia, zoologia, botânica e zoologia. [...] Nós tentamos que a construção fosse o reflexo das imagens do Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, porque do ponto de vista de ilustrações de viagens, as portuguesas são entre as melhores. [...] O ponto de partida era mesmo os objeto etnográfico e depois reconstruir o contexto selecionando as coisas que eram mais parecidas [...] com as ilustrações⁷². (21.06.2021)

⁷⁰ I visited the exhibition twice, in 2019 and 2021. In the first occasion it was still open to the public, while in the second moment it was closed because of the pandemic situation. Today, it remains inaccessible and it is undergoing a refurbishing process.

⁷¹ The exhibition is a reduction of a temporary exhibition opened in 2015 and called *Natureza Exotica*. It was curated by professor Pedro Casaleiro and the museologist Helena Pereira and focused extensively on the *Viagens Filosóficas* organized by the Portuguese Empire at the end of the 18th century (see Casaleiro and Pereira 2018).

⁷² "Objects through the illustrations that were in Lisbon. So, we made reproductions of the illustrations and tried to create nuclei that validated those objects from the collection. [...] In a certain way, we tried to balance the nuclei in terms of ethnography, zoology, botany, and zoology. [...] We tried to make the construction reflect the images of Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira, because from the point of view of travel illustrations, Portuguese ones are among the best. [...] The starting point were ethnographic objects and from there we wanted to reconstruct the context selecting the things that were most similar [...] with the illustrations".

The idea, intuitable to a critical eye, might be interesting if the intention is that of creating a sort of “museum of the museum” (see Thurner 2015), however we should ask ourselves to what extent it is effective in communicating to visitors an appropriate look at the context of collection. Its reconstruction is historical but not historicized. In my opinion⁷³, this fact counters, in a way, the opportunity of thwarting the claim of the majority of ethnographic exhibitions to be universal and neutral; on the contrary, it put it completely into this perspective. By not making explicit the arbitrariness of the exhibition, curators are contributing to consolidate the hegemonic primitivizing and exoticizing visions of the 18th century. The perspective offered is not problematized as a product of a particular socio-political context, but re-presented as if nothing changed in 250 years. In particular, as if the indigenous peoples who are represented did not went through deep transformations – when survived to the colonial encounter. As a consequence, even when visitors run into images more consistent with the current reality of Brazilian natives, they might think that they are not “authentic” because they distance themselves from the discourse proposed by the museum as an institution holding *scientific* and *truthful* knowledge. Like in Lisbon, indigenous people are portrayed as societies frozen in time whose knowledge belong to the sphere of belief and not of *truth*⁷⁴. Consequently, there is no mention to the fact that several groups are still alive and fighting for their existence. So, what would visitors think about Sateré-Mawé people by observing their *club* in Coimbra?

4.2.1 Meeting the Sateré-Mawé

The second people with whom I had the opportunity to speak about objects in European museums were the Sateré-Mawé. As we saw in §2.1.2, they are originally from the region of the *Ilhas de Tupinambarana*, located between the Amazon River and the left bank of the Tapajós River. In 1986, part of the area on the border between the states of Amazonas and Pará was homologated as *Terra Indígena Andirá-Marau* from the names of the rivers that flow through it. According to data from the *Conselho Geral da Tribo Sateré-Mawé* (CGTSM) reported on the website of the Instituto Socioambiental⁷⁵, the Sateré-Mawé count

⁷³ It was not possible to collect the opinion of visitors since when I visited the museum for this investigation (2021) the exhibition was already inaccessible to the public.

⁷⁴ The comparison is even stronger since they are opposed to rational Enlightenment civilization.

⁷⁵ https://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/Povo:Sater%C3%A9_Maw%C3%A9

approximately 13.350 individuals, mostly distributed among the above-mentioned Indigenous Land but also in some communities in the Munduruku *Kwatá-Laranjal* Indigenous Land and in the cities of Nova Olinda do Norte, Manaus, Parintins, Barreirinha, and Maués (fig. 66). Socio-politically, they are organized in clans (*ywanias*) through which to regulate exogamic marriage and that are multi-located – that is, whose members are spread among different communities (Alvarez 2009). The Sateré⁷⁶ clan holds more prestige than the others because through it the line of succession of the *tuxaua* is handed down (Lorenz 1992). Other *minor* clans were considered allies or enemies. Time ago these relationships governed alliances in war; today they are maintained in a milder way. From the political point of view, the traditional institution is represented by the *tuxaua*, which is usually passed down from father to son. Alongside it, today we find several indigenous associations whose task is to interact with the national and international order (Alvarez 2009). The main Sateré-Mawé association is the *Conselho Geral da Tribo Sateré-Mawé* (CGTSM) consisting of a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Any political and administrative decisions involving the Sateré-Mawé people and indigenous territory must be considered by the council. It was created in 1991 following the example of another important Amazon indigenous organization, the Coiab⁷⁷. It is worth noting that many organizations existed before the 1990s, but were not officially registered at the time. Only with the enactment of articles 231 and 232 of the constitution was it possible to establish them as a legal entity and reinforce their political influence (Albert 2000). Their mediation between indigenous and non-indigenous society is crucial in advancing claims for fundamental rights such as the right to differentiated education and health in which cultural diversity is contemplated and traditional linguistic, environmental and medical knowledge is valued. The success of their struggle depends in part on the support of a range of other bodies such as indigenist institutions, missionary associations and NGOs (Alvarez 2009). In particular, the CIMI (*Conselho Indigenista Missionário*) has been playing an important role in promoting assemblies and activities aimed at intensifying interethnic relations and laying the groundwork for the development of a struggle shared with other peoples.

⁷⁶ Sateré means *lagarta de fogo* (fire caterpillar) and is a very poisonous caterpillar living in the Amazon Forest (*Lonomia obliqua*; *Megalopyge lanata*).

⁷⁷ Coordenadoria Indígena da Amazônia Brasileira.

The colonial process and contact with non-indigenous society over the past 300 years has transformed Sateré-Mawé society and its cultural traditions. However, a number of values, stories and knowledge considered central to the maintenance of a Sateré-Mawé identity still appear alive.

My first contact with the Sateré-Mawé occurred thank to the document I had prepared with the pictures of the weapons preserved in Coimbra. A Macuxi⁷⁸ colleague had forwarded it to some *parentes*⁷⁹ and one of them, Turi Sateré-Mawé, had noticed an unmistakable similarity with an object belonging to his people: the *Porantim*. We exchanged number and we started a discussion on it⁸⁰. Turi explained to me that the *Porantim* is both a weapon of war – but which was never used for real fight – and a sacred oar engraved with the stories and prophecies of Sateré-Mawé people – confirming my first impressions (§4.1.1). Turi lives in Manaus and since I was planning a visit there to visit two more indigenous museums, we arranged a meeting. It is always better to meet personally. He was friendly and well-disposed to talk about the object. He seemed interested in the possibility of establishing a dialogue about it, also involving other representatives of his people and especially those working with indigenous education. He told me a little bit about the history of the *Porantim*, its importance within Sateré-Mawé cosmology and spirituality. He explained to me that the piece in Portugal is not the only one; there are three more in indigenous territory. Moreover, it is a sacred object usually kept by a *pajé* (spiritual leader) and whose exhibition and use should be restricted to certain occasions and people. This got me thinking. In Coimbra it is under everyone eyes: not exactly respectful. Turi mentioned that they might want it back, after all it belongs to his people. I agreed. I wanted to record everything he was telling me but I felt that pulling the tape recorder out of the bag and turning it on would create tension and discomfort in continuing the conversation. We said goodbye after a couple of hours promising to each other to stay in touch. It was not much, but it was something. Hopefully, we would have had more opportunities to talk in the future. In fact, we had the chance to meet again a few weeks later and have another fruitful conversation about the *Porantim*. On this occasion, he told me that I should talk to Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, treasurer of the CGTSM, because he would better know how to handle the situation and he gave me his number to

⁷⁸ The Macuxi are an indigenous group living in the Brazilian State of Roraima and in English Guyana.

⁷⁹ *Parente* means relative and is an expression used by natives to refer to other natives, independently from their ethnic group.

⁸⁰ The *club* is the Sateré-Mawé object presented in chapter two (see fig. 27).

get in touch. I was able to finally meet Jesiel on the 26th of January 2022. We had a three-hour conversation about the *Porantim*, about the research, and the ways of possible collaboration. He is also an anthropologist and works with indigenous education. This made our exchange easier, but I still felt I had to choose my words carefully. By talking with him I understood even more the importance of the *Porantim*. He told me that some elders knew that a *Porantim* had been taken overseas, they just did not know where it was. The photos of the object preserved in Coimbra arrived like a surprise and were greeted with some kind of ambivalence. It was good news to have found it but it raised a number of tricky issues, for example, its eventual return. He said he would confront with the council of elders which is usually quite skeptical because of rather negative past experiences, such as an incident occurred a few years earlier:

Geralmente a primeira pergunta que a gente faz é “sim, mas quem ela é?”, “qual é o retorno que vai ter?” [...] Já aconteceu com nosso povo de pesquisadores ir lá, prometer uma coisa e se formarem e não dar retorno. E nosso povo se chatearem com isso. E aconteceu duas vezes isso. Uma vez foi engraçado porque a gente estava num evento nosso grande, um encontro, e essa pesquisadora foi lá e as lideranças e eu estava então com catorze, quinze anos, aí eu vi aquilo lá, sabe e era da Universidade, da UFAM, da Universidade Federal daqui do Amazonas. Ela tava querendo fazer um trabalho lá e o retorno do trabalho dela era a construção do PPP, o projeto político pedagógico. Era isso o comprometimento dela. Ajudar a construir... beleza. Isso na dissertação. Aí, os caras falando na nossa língua, os caciques, falando que não, a gente não vai aceitar, não sei o que, que já enganaram a gente uma vez, que a gente não vai aceitar não, que a gente não vai fazer nenhum documento falando o que a gente quer ou que não quer, tá. E aí mesmo ela foi lá, ficou chorando, e tal e os caciques saíram só eles né, conversaram, retornaram e “tá, a gente vai te dar essa chance, tudo bem”. Pronto, aí foi feito... aí a pessoa terminou o mestrado, também não deu retorno e [...] passou vários anos e eu fui, me tornei presidente de uma das associações dos professores e a gente fez um evento. Nesse evento ela foi e ela foi pedir outra autorização pra fazer o doutorado dela já. Aí, eu tava... eu fiquei assim, tu fica em choque sabe. Porra, essa não deu retorno pra nossas lideranças... eu vi aquilo, não foi contado pra mim. Então aí, como eu fiquei na linha de frente da organização dos professores eles estavam todos, então toda essa coisa eu já estava por dentro e ela foi lá pedir essa autorização, pra que eu desse a autorização enquanto presidente da associação dos professores pra trabalhar. Aí eu fiquei assim... “tá, vou conversar com eles”. Eu falei na nossa língua, falei da história que ela tinha feito, tudinho na nossa

língua. E eu falei que decisão eu tomaria, né. E aí “se vocês quiserem que eu tome, mesmo assim, que eu assine, eu assino, mas se não, eu particularmente não quero assinar não”. O nosso povo falou, “não, não assina não”. E aí eu não assinei. Eu falei pra ela em português e ela “não, tá tudo bem”. Aí, é assim, ela foi embora por causa disso. Mas assim, é bem complicado. Hoje assim... e qualquer retorno. Porque sabe, não é aquele retorno de... a gente devolver “ah, a gente vai construir um livro”, tá, a gente constrói o livro tá aí, esqueceu da... Não, acho que aquele momento de encontro que por exemplo a gente tá fazendo aqui, nessa postura e tudo mais, eu acho que é a outra pessoa se por. Se tem alguma coisa, tem como colocar em contato com pessoal de alguém, fazer essa troca, intercâmbio, tudo mais. Tem... não da pra toda vez, mas quando der a gente vai fazer isso, facilitar, todas essas coisas, beleza. Eu acho que essa é a coisa, sabe? Assim fica muito legal.⁸¹ (Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, January 26th 2021)

Episodes like this made the distrust of some indigenous groups towards researchers increase. When a researcher introduce him/herself as a member of a university who wants to carry out a specific study our interlocutors are able to create a classification in terms of mutual roles and responsibilities (cfr Goffman 1971; Guber 2001), demonstrating how, in the

⁸¹ Generally, the first question we ask is “yes, but who is she?”, “what will she give in return?” [...] It already happened with our people that researchers go there, promise something, get graduated and don't give any return. And our people get upset with that. And this happened twice. One time it was funny because we were at a big event of ours, a meeting, and this researcher went there to the leaders and I was then fourteen, fifteen years old, and I saw it, you know. he was from the University, from UFAM, from the Federal University here in Amazonas. She wanted to do some work there and the return of her work was the construction of the PPP, the political pedagogical project. This was her commitment. Helping to build... fine. This was in the dissertation. Then, the guys speaking in our language, the caciques, saying that no, they would not accept, I don't know what, that they had already been fooled once, that they would not accept, no, that they would not make any document saying what they wanted or did not want. And then she went there, she cried and stuff, and the caciques left, they talked and came back and said “Ok, we'll give you this chance, it's OK”. Then she finished her master's degree, she didn't give us any feedback and [...] several years went by and I became the president of one of the teachers' associations and we held an event. She participated in this event and she went to ask for another authorization to do her PhD research. Then, I was... I was like, you get shocked, you know. Damn, she didn't give any feedback to our leaders... I saw that, I wasn't told about it. Then, since I was in the front line of the teachers' organization, they were all there, so I was already aware of all this. She came to ask for authorization, so that I could give her the authorization as president of the teachers' association. Then I was like... “Ok, I'll talk to them”. I spoke in our language, I told them the story she had done, everything in our language. And I told them what decision I would make. And then, “if you want me to do it, even so, that I sign, I will sign, but if not, I particularly don't want to sign”. Our people said, “no, don't sign it”. And then I didn't sign. I told her in Portuguese and she said “no, it's okay”. So, she left because of that. But it's very complicated. Today like this... and any feedback. Because, you know, it is not that return of... you give back “ah, we are going to build a book”, you know. You build the book, and you know, you forget about everything... No, I think that that moment of meeting that we are doing here, for example, in this posture and everything else, I think that it is the other person putting himself/herself. If there is something, if there is a way to get in touch with someone's staff, to make this exchange, interchange, everything else. We can't do it every time, but when we can we do it, facilitate all these things. I think that this is the thing, you know? This way it is really cool.

ethnographic relationship, the subjects researched participate in the construction of anthropologists as much as the latter does with the former (Ortner 1991). This is even truer in Latin-American contexts where, from the 1990s, the action of researchers on the fieldwork has begun to be severely questioned. In many indigenous realities of Brazil, anthropologists and other social scientists are required to negotiate their presence by proving its usefulness for local demands “be they in the form of trade goods, machinery, fundraising proposals, or assistance in various activities” (Ramos 2008, 471). This process arose as a consequence to negative experiences in which the responsibilities defined in the ethnographic relation have not been fulfilled. Therefore, researchers (*pesquisadores/as*) began to be identified as potential problems; as people whose intentions are, in worst of cases to damage the indigenous group, while in the best to “steal” information for their own personal benefit – usually academical – without giving anything back. Alcida Rita Ramos well explains it in her 2008 essay “Disengaging Anthropology”:

Hardened by the experience of being grossly exploited in the name of scientific research, those Indians reacted as though all researchers were out to take advantage of them. In this, as in most cases, this sort of initiatory probation resolves itself with often elaborate negotiations that bind the disheartened researcher to an unforeseen course of action. But most likely the Indians will end up steering the researcher’s project to their own ends as a condition for his or her stay in the field. Malinowskian-style fieldwork is definitely a thing of the past, and a wad of tobacco is no longer enough for admission into an ethnographic haven. (2008, 471)

I was aware that good intentions were not enough to avoid misunderstandings related sometimes to bureaucratic limits, sometimes to the lack of communication on the real mutual needs and expectations. So, Jesiel Sateré-Mawé and I said goodbye promising to each other to stay in touch to negotiate the terms to continue our dialogue. Slowly, I was becoming aware that I would have to return because dealing with these issues from a distance and in a virtual way seemed rather difficult. And so it was. In October 2022, after some month in Italy, I returned to Manaus. I met Turi and we organized a trip to Parintins, from the 4th to the 7th of November, to meet with some Sateré-Mawé people. One of the points Turi was more interested in discussing was the restitution of the *Porantim*. Ideally, this was something to be discussed with the CGTSM but Jesiel could not join our trip for personal reasons. So,

we scheduled a conversation with the president and a few members of a minor association, the Kapi. From Manaus to Parintins it takes about a day by boat. As we glided slowly on the murky water of the Amazon River, we had time to rest and talk. Among the many topics Turi and I discussed, history often returned, especially in relation to the *Porantim* and to certain events that mark the history of his people. He kept repeating to me how they considered history those legends and myths that are for white people as fictitious tales. To them, those things happened; they were just never seen as such because the history of indigenous peoples, as it is studied today, was written by non-natives. So, one of the main struggles is to reappropriate that history and to be able to offer their perspective on it. For him, having the *Porantim* back might be part of that process.

The discussions of the weekend all went in this direction. We had one rather brief meeting with Josias (Ywania) Sateré, president of Kapi. He too stressed the importance of the sacred oar in the transmission of Sateré-Mawé culture to younger generations. A somewhat longer conversation occurred with Turi's uncle, Lúcio Sateré, who is also a connoisseur of stories and equally interested in a possible restitution. He told me that, in the past, a great Sateré-Mawé leader had left them with a promise to return. According to him, all those people who seek a dialogue with the Sateré-Mawé people and try to contribute to their cause in one way or another, are different forms through which this leader manifests his return. What a responsibility, I thought. I was hoping not to get myself into something bigger than myself. The third discussion was with João Sateré, Josias' father and *capitão geral*⁸². It was his son who had arranged the meeting, finding it interesting for both of us. Therefore, I felt more comfortable using the tape recorder. Of course, before turning it on I asked for his permission. "Wait, not yet." He replied. Then, we start talking about the *Porantim*, whether or not a return of it would have been appropriate and the way they would have wanted the museum in Coimbra to behave. As Jesiel had already told me months earlier, they were aware of its presence, they just did not know where exactly it was. According to him, it would be important to divulge its history and some of the knowledge it contains; not as the Portuguese would have done in the past, but from their point of view and in the way they think is

⁸² The *capitão geral* is a rather recent role in indigenous leadership. It is considered a "non-traditional" figure because it is not related to the cultural system of the *tuxaua* but to the participation in indigenous political mobilization. Its introduction dates back to the arrival of indigenist institutions like the SPI and later the Funai in the region inhabited by the Sateré-Mawé, and its task that of ensuring the respect of indigenist rule. From the 1980s the "captain" was absorbed into Sateré-Mawé traditional political structure and assigned to the organization of collective work (see Alvarez 2009).

appropriate. I could only agree and explained to him that it was precisely my concern to question how the museum was treating it.

Suddenly, after about an hour, *Seu João* exclaimed: “Well, now you can record. What did you want to know?”. I thought he had forgotten. Instead, I realized that he was testing me all time long, to understand who I was and what my ideas and intentions were. This dynamic recalls the reflections of Mariza Peirano on the use of language not only as purely descriptive mean but as a tool to create relational contexts (2008). In her conception of ethnography as “theory in action” (Idem, 2006), to exchange ideas correspond to “do things with words”, such as defining the borders and the conditions within which the sharing of specific information can occur. The conversation between João Sateré-Mawé and me until then represented, through our words, gestures and attitudes towards the discussed topic, a sort of implicit statement of intents. While observing and listening, I was in turn being *examined*, in a mutual attempt to understand who the person on the other side was. This process of analysis helps the interviewed with understanding how to modulate his/her speech according to what he/she thinks the interviewer needs to know: much information is not revealed at all or is granted little by little as trust grows – a process defined by Portelli as “revolutionary vigilance” (2017). For his/her part, the researcher must be aware of this situation as well as of the socio-political relationships in which the interlocutor is embedded in order to critically interpret the information which is conveyed.

After he gave me his permission, I turned on the tape recorder and began to ask him a few questions. We talked for another hour and a half.

The chance to meet Jesiel arose during the last days I spent in Manaus, first during a barbecue organized with some colleagues from Universidade Federal do Amazonas (UFAM) and later in his office. His position regarding the restitution of the *Porantim* was more cautious. Many issues needed to be taken into consideration, as much in relation to the physical spaces where to keep it as to the cultural and spiritual issues related to its eventual return. This needed to be discussed with the elders as well as with Pajés and *Porantim* guardians. I let it be clear that the choice was entirely theirs. On my part, I could offer a contact with the museum.

4.2.2 War club or sacred oar?

The *Porantim* (fig. 27) is one of the three related and complementary pillars around which Sateré-Mawé culture is organized. The others two are the guarana and the ritual of the

Tucandeira. In this section we shall analyze, in particular, the density of the former. The other two aspects will be briefly explored where they interlink with the *Porantim*.

I will use both information from known ethnographies on the Sateré-Mawé (Lorenz 1992; Alvarez 2009; Pereira 2020) and data gathered during the field period through conversations with some representatives of the Sateré-Mawé people. The things reported here do not, of course, pretend to exhaust the complexity of that context and should be considered commensurate with the time spent in Manaus and Parintins and the trust that my interlocutors have seen fit to grant me (§4.2).

Picking up on what we said in Chapter 2 (§2.2.2 and §2.3), the object that some representatives of the Sateré-Mawé people recognized as one of their *Porantins*, was classified by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira and his successors as oar/club and associated with a primitive stage of a supposed social and biological evolution. Even today, the information reported in the museum does not disprove this view; on the other hand, the interpretation of the original population completely distance itself from it. According to Sateré-Mawé tradition, the *Porantim*⁸³ is a sacred/magical oar made by the *tuxaua* (leader) *Uaciri-Pot* (also called *Anumarah'it*) and given to the people as a tool through which they could gain knowledge and regulate their social life. The story tells that the *Porantim* belonged to an evil spirit that persecuted *Uaciri-Pot* and wanted to kill him. However, *Uaciri-Pot* used a series of strategies based on cunning and metamorphosis to defeat him and appropriate his weapon. After that, he engraved the *Porantim* with the graphisms that we still see today while drinking the *çapó*, a beverage made with guarana⁸⁴ (Franco et al. 2022); they record major stories and prophecies of future events. Handed down from father to son through the *tuxaua* lineage, it has come down to present days (Alvarez 2009; Pereira 2020).

My interlocutors told me two slightly different versions of the story.

A gente tinha dois... esses seres também existiam já nessa época, o *Anumarah'it* e ele tinha um neto né, o neto tava na casinha dele e ele sabia que o tinha um espirito mal que estava pra caçar ele pra matar ele. [...] Ai ele fez um cigarro de tauari para ele, ai tu pode assoprar três vezes o cigarro e eles vão se espantar com alguma coisa ruim se esquecer de mim. Ai ele fez

⁸³ I am using the word *Porantim* since is the most common in literature and the closer one to the pronunciation. However, among Sateré-Mawé people it is also written as *Puratig* or *Purety* (*Pure* = oar; *ty* = small). According to Nunes Pereira (2020) another definition is *Aiuêçaiká-Porantim* which means “the oar which guides us and gives us strenght”.

⁸⁴ The *çapó* is obtained by mixing guarana powder into water.

dessa forma. Fez dessa forma e aí quando chegou dois rapazes lá, dois irmãos, deram um toque: “cadê teu avô menino?” “meu avô tá aí pra baixo, apanhando na jaina” – A jaina é uma palmeira comestível, uma comida sateré-mawé. E a gente não era carnívoro, a gente nos era vegetariano também. Só que conforme o tempo a gente foi se adaptando né. Porque isso é que fazia bem pra nossa saúde. [...] Lá no início da criação a gente só tinha mais frutas, inclusive o próprio guaraná. E aí eles foi, na segunda vez o Nhambu espantou ele e esqueceu. Na terceira vez ele já assoprou o cigarro e ele amaldiçoou ele, tomara que meu avô mate vocês logo. Aí desceram pra lá e encontraram o avô dele lá em cima da árvore. Papai conta que eles falaram assim, “oh, agora vamos te matar”, “Não mas deixa pelo menos eu apanhar essa fruta para levar para o meu neto... ou então, eu apanho e você leva lá pra o meu neto”. Aí ele apanhou, aí ele jogou a fruta em cima dele. Aí, quando ele jogou, ele soltou o pé dele em cima do cacho de inajá, aí são grandes os cachos né. [...] Aí ele pulou em cima e ele que estava com tacape, o irmão mais velho, ele caiu já praticamente morto e aí ele [o avô] pegou o tacape e cacetou o outro. Cacetou os dois. Um virou veado vermelho e o outro veado roxo. Dois veados que tem na nossa região e que a gente conhece como veado vermelho e veado roxo. E aí ele voltou pra casa entregou pra o *Uaciri-Pót* e toda sexta feira ele escrevia as profecias através de losangos, aqueles grafismos, tudo que ia acontecer, tudo que já aconteceu, que vai acontecer, no Porantim. E foi entregue pra os Sateré-Mawé, entendeu? Foi entregue aos Sateré-Mawé para ser os portadores disso aí como for a defesa deles, mas também é uma arma perigosa, por isso que ele fala, “o Porantim é uma arma perigosa, uma arma, um tacape”.⁸⁵ (Turi Sateré-Mawé, 09.12.2021)

⁸⁵ “We had two... these beings also existed at that time, *Anumarah’it* and he had a grandson. The grandson was in his little house and he knew that there was an evil spirit that was going to hunt him down and kill him. [...] So he made a *tauari* cigarette for him. “You can blow the cigarette three times and they will be surprised by something bad if they forget me.” So he did it this way. He did it this way and then when two boys arrived there, two brothers, they said: “Where is your grandfather, boy?” “My grandfather is down there, collecting *jaina*.” – The *jaina* is an edible palm tree, a Sateré-Mawé food. We were not carnivores; we were vegetarians too. But as time went by, we adapted, right? Because this was good for our health. [...] At the beginning of times we only had fruits, including the guarana itself. And then they went, the second time *Nhambu* scared them away and forgot about them. The third time he blew his cigarette and cursed him, “I hope my grandfather kills you soon. So they went down there and found his grandfather up in the tree. Dad says that they said, “Oh, now we are going to kill you”, “No, but at least let me collect this fruit to take to my grandson?” Then he picked it, and then he threw the fruit at him. When he threw it, he let go of his foot on top of the *inajá* bunch. [...] Then he jumped on top of it and he, who was carrying a club, the older brother, fell practically dead and then he [the grandfather] took the club and hit the other one. He hit them both. One became a red deer and the other a purple deer. Two deer that are found in our region and that we know as red deer and purple deer. And then he returned home and gave it to *Uaciri-Pót* and every Friday he wrote the prophecies through rhombuses, those graphs, everything that was going to happen, everything that has already happened, that will happen, in *Porantim*. And it was delivered to the Sateré-Mawé, do you understand? It was given to the Sateré-Mawé to be the bearers of this as their defense, but it is also a dangerous weapon, that is why he says, “the *Porantim* is a dangerous weapon, a weapon, a club.”

A história, ela fala o seguinte, que Jesus Cristo, ele chamava *Uaciri*, e havia o inimigo, que chama de Satanás, né, e que queria matar ele. E, o que é que ele fez? Ele queria pegar esse pau para matar... aí só que eles teceram [...] um chamado *rioalé*, uma arma, um brinquedo, né. [...] Aí, quando o Satanás veio, pra segurar o *Uaciri* pra matar, ele deixou esse *rioalé* chamado, ele é também pintado, igual isso aqui. Quando o inimigo Satanás veio, pra matar Jesus, que era o chefe do Porantim, que deu ideia pra fazer o Porantim pra trabalhar, ele deixou aqui e subiu aqui aquele... o *rioalé* fazendo *chiiuuu*, aí ele dobrou pra cá, aí, no que zuava aí pulou de lá e correu e foi interdito. Mas intenção dele era pensar que tinha levado o Porantim. Engraçada essa história... ela é muito longa, entendeu? E aí ficou, ele pegou isso aqui e saiu. E o inimigo do Sateré ficou brincando com aquele *rioalé*, *chiiuuu*, que chama pau de chuva, enquanto ele pegava o Porantim. Por isso que o Porantim é interessante, porque ele não quis usar o mal, porque a palavra de Tupã, que chama de Jesus em Português e *Anumarah'it*, que é o *Uaciri* que eles chamam, ele não é do mal, ele é do bem. Aí chama o *harihan*, que é o Satanás, ele só quer matar. Então ele não quis se apoderar do poder que tem o *Pure*, por isso que o líder que fez o Porantim ele fez também o *rioalé* para entreter o inimigo. A zoada que o *rioalé* fez, ele ficou lá olhando e dobrando. *Anumarah'it* que chama Jesus, sai, cansado, entendeu? Por isso que na tribo tem esse Porantim que é um símbolo da história de vencedor.⁸⁶ (João Sateré-Mawé, 07.11.2022)

There are four Porantins in circulation today. Three of them are in Brazil, in villages on the Marau, Andirá and Maraju rivers; the fourth is the *Portuguese* one. They resemble each other but have small variations in shape and decoration. This is because they were made by different *pajés* at different times. The only one whose author is unknown is the one preserved in Coimbra. According to Jesiel, this aspect and its antiquity are what would make it the

⁸⁶ “The story goes like this: Jesus Christ was called *Uaciri*, and there was an enemy, Satan, who wanted to kill him. And what did he do? He wanted to take this stick to kill ... then they wove [...] a so-called rain stick, a weapon, a toy. [...] Then, when Satan came, to hold *Uaciri* to kill, he left this rain stick, it is also painted, like this here. When the enemy Satan came to kill Jesus, who was the head of the Porantim, who gave the idea to make the *Porantim* work, he left it here and climbed up the river, making it *chiiuuu*. But his intention was to think that he had taken the *Porantim*. Funny thing about this story... it's very long, you know? And then he took this and left. And the enemy of the Sateré kept playing with that rain stick, *chiiuuu*, which is called *pau de chuva* (rain stick), while he took the *Porantim*. That's why the *Porantim* is interesting, because he didn't want to use evil, because the word of *Tupã*, which they call Jesus in Portuguese, and *Anumarah'it*, which they call *Uaciri*, he is not evil, he is good. Then he calls *Harihan*, which is Satanás, he just wants to kill. So he didn't want to take the power that the *Pure* has, that's why the leader who made the *Porantim* also made the rain stick to entertain the enemy. The noise that the rain stick did, he stood there watching and doubling down. *Anumarah'it* that calls Jesus, left tired, understand? That is why the tribe has this *Porantim*, which is a symbol of the history of victoriousness.”

original. The other three would instead be later replicas made to replace it once it was taken away.

[...] Nos estamos falando do ponto de vista histórico. Porque a gente sabe mais ou menos quem fez e qual os anos mais ou menos que foram construídos os que nos temos. Esse aí, não era pra gente saber, entendeu? Tipo assim, não era pra gente saber, não era as pessoas do nosso tempo. Esse aí é muito tempo atrás, por isso que esse cara, quem que fez era o *Uaciri*. Então ele já era uma coisa pronta. E aí, então por isso que a gente acredita que é o original que está pra lá. Depois que foi feito esses outros. Inclusive esse daqui já foi alguém que era cunhado desse que eu mostrei aqui. [...] Produziu, só que custou meses, construindo, ele tinha visão, como falando assim entre nós como se fosse a bíblia, né. Os caras que fizeram tiveram visão, então tudo isso né, pra tentar simplificar. E então por isso. E os outros também. Os outros *Porantim* que a gente tem também. Então por isso, desse aí quem sabe quem construiu, como foi feito. A gente sabe mais ou menos com fé. Então por isso que a gente acha que isso aí for o original.⁸⁷ (Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, 26.01.2022)

The original-copy issue is intensely felt by the members of the communities where the *Porantins* are kept. It constitutes a dead-end impasse, as everyone considers his or her *Porantim* original. However, as among Kambeba people, the condition of *copy* has a different meaning than in the West. It does not indicate a loss of authenticity, value or sacredness. On the contrary, making copies – authenticated because the work is done by the *pajé* – enables the (correct) dissemination of the *Porantim* knowledge, history and teachings to the Sateré-Mawé people. The first to be made was the one currently preserved in the aldeia Castanhal, on the Andirá River. The others followed: “[...] os outros *Porantins*, eles foram feitos para ficar pelos rios. Por exemplo o rio Marau fiz aí no rio Andirá e já levou pronto pro rio Marau. Pra ter,

⁸⁷ We are talking from the historical point of view. Because we know more or less who did it and, more or less, when were built the ones we have. This one, we weren't supposed to know, you know? We weren't supposed to know, it wasn't the people of our time. This one is a long time ago, that's why the guy who made it was *Uaciri*. So it was already a ready-made thing. And so, that is why we believe that it is the original that is there. These others were made afterwards. Even this one here was already made by someone who was a brother-in-law of the one I showed here. [...] He produced it, but it took months to build, he had a vision, as if it was the bible, you know. The guys who made it had vision, so all of this, to try to simplify it. And so, that's why. And the others too. The other *Porantins* that we have too. So, this one, who knows who built it, how it was done. We know more or less by faith. That is why we think this is the original.

pra mostrar e tudo, é mais fácil, mostrar, pro pessoal ver, é assim”⁸⁸ (João Sateré-Mawé, 07.11.2022). In particular, being the original or a copy does not democratize access to the *Porantim*, which continues to be restricted to certain people and strictly regulated.

In fact, one of the things frequently specified by my interlocutors is that the *Porantim* is a sacred object and therefore cannot be seen and manipulated by whoever. Physical access to it is restricted as well as the knowledge it contains. For this reason, each *Porantim* has a guardian who guards it – usually of the *tuxaua* lineage. “O Porantim pra nos é uma coisa sagrada, é algo sagrado. [...] Então quando vai se mostrar, tem que saber pra quem que vai se mostrar. Não pode ser mostrado pra criança, não pode ser mostrado pra grávida, porque se não a criança vai nascer meio atordoada. Então deve estar muito atento...”⁸⁹ (Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, 26.11.2022). Breaking the access rules can have negative effects for certain categories of people or, simply, be considered offensive if those observing it are non-natives who do not perceive and understand its spiritual value. “Aí o médico, alguém que vem de fora, “mas eu quero ver”, bora lá, bora fazer uma coisa, uma demonstração, sei lá, bora tirar fotos com as crianças... isso não vai rolar isso. Que para ele é apenas um pedaço de pau, para ele. Pra nós não, é outra coisa”⁹⁰ (Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, 26.11.2022). The insistence of many non-natives – including researchers – who demand to see and photograph it is indeed problematic. There are things that are not for all to be known. Forcing it is an attitude that reproduces systems of colonial violence. In addition, most of the time, people who required such information just go away without sharing their work or contributing in any other form to the struggle of Sateré-Mawé people.

The access to the *Porantim* is limited also because of its power as a weapon. In these terms, the definition given by the museum is not completely wrong. The term *weapon* in itself is appropriate; what differs is its meaning in relation to the *Porantim*. As Jesiel explained to me:

⁸⁸ “The other *Porantins*, they were made to stay by the rivers. For example, that by the Marau river, it was made on the Andirá river and then took to the Marau river. To have, to show and everything, it is easier to show, for people to see, that’s how it works.”

⁸⁹ “The *Porantim* for us is a sacred thing, it is something sacred. [...] So when it is going to be shown, you have to know to whom you are going to show it. It can't be shown to a child, it can't be shown to a pregnant woman, because otherwise the child will be born a little stunned. So you have to be very careful.”

⁹⁰ “Then the doctor, someone who comes from outside, “but I want to see it”, let's go there, let's do something, a demonstration, I don't know, let's take pictures with the children... this is not going to happen. For him it is just a piece of wood. Not for us, it is something else.”

Eles não estão errados quando falam de clava, por exemplo, ele é um instrumento de guerra. Ele pode ser usado e isso depende de quem tá no comando dele. Ele pode ser usado pra coisa ruim, pra coisa mal. Então ele é uma arma, só que dentro dessa arma tá nossa história. Então claro, tem aquelas regras, aquelas normas que tem que ser seguidas, que como tem que ficar, essas coisas. Mas ele não deixa de ser uma arma, eles não estão errados falando de arma, assim. Ele é uma arma, mas não é uma arma de chegar e pegar e bater, sabe, não é isso.⁹¹ (Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, 26.01.2022)

So, the Porantim is a weapon not so much in its club shape but because of its power. This is based on the coexistence of the principles of good and evil in a dynamic of complementarity quite common among Amerindian peoples (see Sullivan 2002) and that echoes the duality of Sateré-Mawé society. In fact, depending on the conflict situation the people face, they can assume both a warrior or a diplomatic attitude – the *boa palavra* (Alvarez 2009). The *Porantim* is a material manifestation of this duality and holder of its power: the engravings represent, on the one side, the people's stories of origin, while on the other, war stories. It can be used to pursue peace or war depending on the situation and on who manipulates it.

Dentro do Porantim, aquele risco de onde... ele tem um planejamento para o bem, também tem um planejamento, quer dizer não é que ele é mal, ele é pra defesa do povo. Dizer “não, nos não aceitamos”. Não é que ele vai atacar assim por qualquer motivo, que chama de mal, não. É que ele se defenda. Nos vamos agora pra não ninguém entrar e pronto. Um risco desse representa a palavra não. Outro risco representa a palavra sim. Então vai assim. São coisas que você vai manejando tranquilamente. Isso não é que ele é do mal, não é não. É como agora, que nos estamos conversando. Você veio fazer o bem você faz, se quiser fazer o mal, você faz. [...] É usar ele somente pra dizer “não, nos não aceitamos, a partir de agora nos...” *ciaf!* [claps his hands] [...] Antigamente quando eles botavam inverso era pra guerrear. Era pra se defender, não pra ele atacar. [...] Como um escudo.⁹² (João Sateré-Mawé, 07.11.2022)

⁹¹ “They are not wrong when they say it is a club; for example, it is an instrument of war. It can be used and this depends on who is in charge of it. It can be used for bad things, for evil things. So it is a weapon, but inside this weapon there is our history. So, of course, it has those rules, those norms that have to be followed, how it has to look, these things. But it still is a weapon, they are not wrong when talking about a weapon. It is a weapon, but it is not a weapon to reach out and grab and hit, you know, it is not that.”

⁹² Inside the *Porantim*, that risk where... it has a plan for good, it also has a plan, I mean... it's not that it's bad, it's for the defense of the people. To say “no, we don't accept it”. It is not that he is going to attack for any reason, that he calls evil, no. It is that he defends himself. We are going now so that no one can enter, and that's it. A scratch like this represents the word no. Another scratch represents the word yes. So it goes like this. These are things that you manage calmly. This does not mean that he is evil, no, he is not. It's like now, when

On both sides, the symbols engraved refers to specific laws, social norms and prophecies about events yet to come. Not everyone is allowed to read them, because it implies to have access to a knowledge that can harm Sateré-Mawé people if mishandled. For this reason, the *Porantim* is used only during restricted ceremonies in which a council of elders and leaders read the *Porantim* accompanied by the guarana⁹³ and carefully plan forthcoming events, assemblies and rituals (cfr Franco et al. 2022). Every action must follow specific spatial-temporal rules, which are outlined by the engravings and serve “para manter a sociedade viva”⁹⁴ (João Sateré-Mawé, 07.11.2022). The *Porantim* is thus also used as a socio-cultural calendar and as a map: “É um mapa isso aí. Entendeu? [...] Essa é a questão do risco aí. E aqui nessa frente aqui são tabatinga, um barro branco que a gente colocava, essas culturas aí. E que representa cada um desse é um rio, um igarapé, onde moram as pessoas...”⁹⁵ (João Sateré-Mawé, 07.11.2022).

It should be clearer now how its function is not that of killing like a club for hand-to-hand combat but is political, social and spiritual. Using it as a weapon means using the knowledge it contains to oppose an enemy with whom the path of diplomacy is not possible. To this extent, it is considered more like an “arma educacional” used to foresee “a vida e o futuro do povo Sateré-Mawé”⁹⁶ (João Sateré-Mawé, 07.11.2022). At this point, a very interesting comparison is made with similar “weapons” that indigenous people use today to fight their battles:

Hoje, por exemplo, na época que estamos, no século XXI, qual é a arma pra o povo se defender? É a parte educacional, escrevemos os projetos de educação, de saúde, de subsistência, né, e também ter arma como a flecha escrito. A flecha ela voa, então você manda

we are talking. You came to do good, you do it, if you want to do evil, you do it. [...] It is just using it to say “no, we don’t accept, from now on we...” *ciaf!* [claps his hands] [...] In the old days when they used it backwards it was for war. It was to defend, not to attack. [...] Like a shield.

⁹³ The guarana is prepared like a beverage and drank during the ceremony.

⁹⁴ “to keep the society alive.”

⁹⁵ “It is a map. Do you understand? [...] That’s the question of scratch there. And here on this side here are tabatinga, a white clay that we used to put, these cultures there. And that represent, each one of these is a river, an igarapé, where people live...”

⁹⁶ “Educational weapon [used to foresee] life and future of Sateré-Mawé people”.

um telegrama. É arma do povo indígena dentro do conhecimento que você tem.”⁹⁷ (João Sateré-Mawé, 07.11.2022)

This perspective completely subverts European view in two ways. On the one hand, it opposes Western representation of indigenous peoples as savages devoid of social and moral norms. On the other, it interprets cultural transformation and the appropriation of non-indigenous tools (such as project writing) as part of the process of resistance and struggle.

As mentioned above, the reading of the *Porantim* is accompanied by the guarana processed to obtain the *çapó* (cfr note 84 in this chapter). Not only it is accompanied, they are bound to each other. They are partners: “são dois que são muito procurados, esse *Purety* e o guaraná, que é o parceiro dele. O guaraná é bebido junto com ele. Quando se fala em trabalho com o *Porantim* tem que ter o guaraná do lado, pra se planejar toda a ação de trabalho”⁹⁸ (João Sateré-Mawé, 07.11.2022). It is the *çapó* that allows to read the *Porantim*, for it creates the right mental and spiritual conditions to “activate” it and transmit its knowledge. “É o guaraná que é a língua dele. Porque quando você trabalha o *Porantim*, você vai trabalhar através da bebida do guaraná. O guaraná ele é muito valioso. É parceiro dele”⁹⁹ (João Sateré-Mawé, 07.11.2022). The *çapó* is also drunk during other ceremonies because it is through it that *tuxauas* and *pajés* gain awareness and capacity to lead the community. Like the *Porantim*, it is a symbol of traditional power (Alvarez 2009) and its preparation and consumption are strictly regulated and curbed (Lorenz 1992).

As we saw in §2.1.2, guarana (*Paullinia cupana*) cultivation has always been associated with Sateré-Mawé people. Its energizing properties have been in demand on the global market since the time of colonization when it was classified as a *dorga do sertão* and purchased from natives in exchange for food, weapons, clothing among other things. Today, thanks to the support of some associations, the Sateré-Mawé have managed to establish a production and sales system with international reach (see Augustat et al. 2012). The importance of guarana

⁹⁷ “Today, for example, at the time we live in, in the 21st century, what is the weapon for people to defend themselves? It is the educational part, we write educational projects, health projects, self-subsistence projects, you know, and also have a weapon like an arrow but written down. The arrow flies, so you send a telegram. It is indigenous people's weapon within the knowledge that you have.”

⁹⁸ “There are two that are in great demand, this *Purety* and the guarana, which is its partner. The guarana is drunk together with him. When one talks about working with *Porantim*, one has to have guarana at his side, in order to plan all the work actions.”

⁹⁹ “The guarana is its language. Because when you work the *Porantim*, you are going to work through the guarana beverage. The guarana is very valuable. It is its partner.”

to the people, however, goes far beyond the economic dimension. It represents the origins of the Sateré-Mawé and from it derives the knowledge of the people.

A história fala muito errado, a gente não cultivou, não descobriu o guaraná, o guaraná que descobriu a gente né. Tem uma controvérsia aí... a gente surge do guaraná. E aí, esse guaraná, todas as aldeias tem que ter o guaraná porque é parte nossa, é parte social, política. Pra nos o guaraná é o princípio da sabedoria, né. [...] Qualquer trabalho tem que ter o guaraná no nosso meio, nas reuniões.¹⁰⁰ (Turi Sateré-Mawé, 09.12.2021)

According to the history of the guarana reported in Lorenz (1992), on the territory inhabited today by the Sateré-Mawé lived two brothers and a sister called *Ocumáató*, *Icuaman* and *Onhiámuaçabé*¹⁰¹. This territory was called *Noçoquem* – *there where the stones speak* – and it offered all the plants and animals necessary for the survival of the three siblings. *Onhiámuaçabé* was the holder of all the knowledge necessary for her family's survival (cfr Franco et al. 2022). One day, she was got pregnant by a snake and the jealous brothers expelled her from the territory. A son was born who, as he grew, wanted more and more to eat the nuts that grew in *Noçoquem*. He began to go there secretly to his uncles, who one day discovered him and had him killed. The mother found the body and cursed the brothers. Then, she tore out the child's eyes and planted them in the ground. First, she planted the left eye, from which the plant of fake guarana grew (*Bunchosia armeniaca*); then, she planted the right eye, from which the plant of real guarana germinated. Under it, *Onhiámuaçabé* buried the remains of his son. After some time, from the burial arose various animals and, finally, another child, who was the first of the Maués.

This story provides a set of spatial-temporal coordinates on the origins of the Sateré-Mawé people and, in longer and more complete versions, encodes knowledge and keys to interpret and understand the socio-environmental relations in which people are embedded.

In §4.1.3 we talked about how the maintenance of a shared identity goes through the elaboration and transmission of a collective memory. As already mentioned, this process implies to select certain elements of the past at the expense of others. In the transmission of

¹⁰⁰ "History is wrong, we didn't cultivate, we didn't discover guarana, it was guarana that discovered us. There is a controversy there... we came out of guarana. And then, this guarana, all the villages have to have guarana because it is part of us, it is a social, political part. For us, guarana is the principle of wisdom. [...] Any work has to have guarana in our midst, in the meetings."

¹⁰¹ According to Jesiel the three *Porantins* in Brazil represent the three siblings.

a group's memory, people will privilege those events called by Geary as *memoranda*¹⁰², namely, "those [things] worth remembering" (1994, 9), for they are recognized as bearing some truth in its horizon of meaning. The most common temporal references for defining them are: the moment of origins, core of a group's identity which justifies and naturalizes it in the social context; a set of important and circumscribed events which are arranged along the temporal axis established by the foundation myth (moment of origins) and that determine the logic of temporal experience in time (Candau 2002). An analogous concept is that of "figures of memory", introduced by Jan Assmann (2011). With this expression, he indicates some moments which work as reference points for the construction of a group's identity. They impart security and stability to the community, both because they are located in a concrete space and time and because they legitimize its existence through their constant reformulation according to the present context.

For the Sateré-Mawé, the history of the guarana defines the moment of origins. Other events which mark the trajectory of the people over time are enacted during the ritual of the *Tucandeira*, third pillar of Sateré-Mawé culture. The *Tucandeira* (*Paraponera smithi*) – *veaperiá* in Sateré-Mawé – is a large ant (about 2.5cm) that lives in several Amazonian regions. Its bite is particularly painful and venomous and, in some cases, can cause death. The ritual is performed periodically in Sateré-Mawé communities as a male puberty rite, that is, to mark the transition from child to adult stage. Participants must put their hands and/or arms into specific gloves made of braided straw inside which dozens of annoyed ants are released¹⁰³. For a number of days that varies depending on the number of participants, children go through this test accompanied by dancing and singing (Pereira 2020). "São vinte vezes, no mínimo, que a gente passa por isso"¹⁰⁴ (Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, 26.01.2022). For long time, it has been interpreted as a marriage ritual because afterwards initiates become fit for marriage. However, it is not mandatory to get married immediately. Simply, the person is considered physically and emotionally strong enough to maintain a home and family:

[...] ser um bom caçador, um bom pescador, um bom homem, não só de estatura, mas de valor né; como ser um bom pai, um bom filho, um bom irmão, um bom esposo, um bom ser

¹⁰² In the process of producing a history of memory, Geary distinguishes into *memorabilia* and *memoranda*. *Memoranda* are those things that, for a given community, are worth remembering in a spectrum of rememberable things, the *memorabilia*.

¹⁰³ There are several types of gloves according to the phase of the ritual.

¹⁰⁴ "That's twenty times, at least, that we go through this."

humano. [...] ele não é um ritual para casamento, mas porque tu consiga resistir as coisas, inclusive poder sustentar uma família e ter uma mulher. Tu não faz o ritual para te casar, mas após o ritual está apto para casamento já, porque tu se torna homem.¹⁰⁵ (Turi Sateré-Mawé, 09.12.2021)

Even after getting married, it is possible to repeat the ritual because it involves a process of continuous learning on how to live and relate to the forest:

[...] O ritual ele doe, assim. Tu aprende a se comportar até quando... porque a dor não é só física, ela também é psicológica. Tu passa por um processo de educação também nessa questão da dor. Tu passa por um processo educativo para questão da alimentação, quando começa o ritual tu não pode comer peixe, não pode comer carne, não pode ir pro rio, porque teu corpo tá aberto pra várias impurezas entrar, né. Então tá podendo vir coisa boa, mas tá aberto também pra várias impurezas. Então aí, nesse processo, tu começa a adquirir conhecimentos.¹⁰⁶ (Turi Sateré-Mawé, personal communication, 09.12.2021)

Also, it informs participants on Sateré-Mawé history from their origins to the present through the songs that are sang. These can be distinguished into three types: songs of origin, that is, those in which “os animais eram como a gente”¹⁰⁷ (quoted in Alvarez 2009, 89); songs of war against enemies, in which both mythical episodes (historical for natives) and wars between different clans are recounted; and finally, songs associated with the war against Whites, the most representative episode of which is the *Cabanagem* (§3.2, note 16). Songs are precisely what links the ritual of the *Tucandeira* to the *Porantim*: the stories they tell are the same that we find symbolically transcribed on the *Porantim*.

¹⁰⁵ “To be a good hunter, a good fisherman, a good man, not only in terms of stature, but in terms of value, right; like being a good father, a good son, a good brother, a good husband, a good human being. [...] it is not a ritual for marriage, but because you can resist things, including being able to support a family and have a wife. You don't do the ritual to get married, but after the ritual you are ready for marriage, because you become a man.”

¹⁰⁶ The ritual hurts, like this. You learn how to behave even when... because pain is not only physical, it is also psychological. You go through an educational process also in this issue of pain. You go through an educational process for the question of food, when the ritual begins you can't eat fish, you can't eat meat, you can't go to the river, because your body is open for various impurities to enter. So good things can come in, but they are also open to various impurities. Then, in this process, you start to acquire knowledge.

¹⁰⁷ “Animals were like humans.”

4.2.3 *Prophecy as a device for managing events*

The reason for which the guarana, the ritual of the *Tucandeira* and the *Porantim* are considered pillars of Sateré-Mawé culture is their function as supports for the transmission of people's memory and, thus, for the maintenance of a collective identity. The relationship among these three elements can be explored further in the light of reflections such as those of Severi (2004). According to him, arts of remembrance in oral cultures are always linked to the ritual and ceremonial dimension. This makes memory *shown*, that is, in which the conditions of enunciation of something are not only narrative but accompanied by other techniques of maintenance and transmission of the group's knowledge. In particular, the use of an iconographic language is frequent. Symbols and graphisms like those engraved on the *Porantim*, and usually associated to a *primitive drawing* precursor of writing, do not substitute words but complement them. They do not make thoughts visible but evoke them through a process of decoding and interpretation. Oral manifestation constitutes an even later step. Organized in specific repetitions, it guarantees the continuous reproduction of the memory evoked. The *Porantim*, the guarana and the ritual of the *Tucandeira* articulate in this process – defined by Severi (2004) as “figurative mnemonics” – as follows: the guarana is the key that allows to decode *Porantim*'s symbols and, thus, to evoke the ancient knowledge of *Noçoquem* – stories, laws, social norms (cfr Franco et al. 2022). In turn, the songs performed during the ritual of the *Tucandeira* reproduce such knowledge in a continuative and repetitive way. This process does not only keep the memory of the ancestors alive but elaborates and offers an actual historical trajectory of Sateré-Mawé people which combines *mythical* and *historical* events in a single horizon of meaning. Stories recounted by the elders and that Western perspective considers as *myths* (cfr §5.1.2) are indeed considered as facts that actually happened but which have been silenced by scientific and religious thinking: “Acabamos desacreditando nas nossas histórias, que não são mitos, não são lendas, são histórias de fato, são o que aconteceu. Essa questão da escola falando não, essa aqui é lenda essa aqui é mito, fez com que muitas pessoas desacreditassem, né, nessa realidade”¹⁰⁸ (Turi Sateré-Mawé, 09.12.2021).

¹⁰⁸ “We end up discrediting our stories, which are not myths, they are not legends, they are real stories, they are what happened. This issue of the school saying no, this one is a legend, this one is a myth, has made many people disbelieve in this reality.”

In 20th-century anthropological literature (cfr Leghissa and Manera 2015), the concepts of *myth* and *history* were used to identify forms used respectively by oral and written societies to represent themselves over time. A well-known distinction is the one suggested by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who defined the former as “cold” societies and the latter as “hot” societies (2002). Because of the impermanence of oral transmission, cold societies would pursue the stability of their memory through circular and repetitive narrations useful to give their institutions balance and continuity over time. On the contrary, hot societies would turn change into fuel for their historical development thanks to the adoption of writing as an instrument to overcome the limits of individual human memory.

This distinction was part of another opposition which characterized 20th-century debate, namely, that between history and memory. The concept of history as we conceive it today raised in the late 19th century within the positivist thought in order to produce a rational knowledge of the past and elaborate an objective, universal narrative of mankind’s path through time and (social) space. In the new historical discipline, only material documents¹⁰⁹ were considered reliable sources and historians had to select the most significant among the huge number of testimonies produced throughout the world (see Le Goff 1977; Trouillot 2005; Foucault 2005). On the contrary, memory – thought of as a collective operation of safeguarding and interpreting events of the past (Pollak 1989) – was associated to the individual capacity of remembering and to oral transmission, hence repository of false, distorted knowledge, inappropriate and unreliable to reconstruct humanity’s past (Assmann 2002; Di Pasquale 2018).

The overlapping of all these categories led to the elaboration of a system of classification that labelled as “without history” those societies in which memory was orally transmitted (Wolf 1990). The fact that they did not share the same temporal perception as Europeans¹¹⁰ also led to their estrangement from the historical discourse – a process which Fabian defines as “allochronism” (2000). This vision remained predominant for the majority of the 20th century until when the groups excluded from the historical process began to raise their voice and claim for different approaches. At the same time, further studies were highlighting the faultiness of these dichotomies on different levels and the existence of many solutions in-

¹⁰⁹ They include, for example, written sources, archeological records, ethnographic objects, monuments.

¹¹⁰ Oral societies usually have a circular conception of time while written societies, like European, developed a linear conception of time.

between the two poles (Severi 2004). The introduction of the new concept of “sense of history” – appointed as the “basic instinct ‘to preserve, remember and narrate events and forms of the past’” (Rothacker 1931 in Schott 1968, 170) – also represented a significant turn. To this extent, history did not only correspond to something that happened but to “a living part of people’s senses of who they are and how they relate to other elements of civil society” (Mullen Kremer 1992, 367). After the lecture held by Rüdiger Schott in 1968, *The Historical Consciousness of Illiterate Peoples*, intellectuals began to acknowledge that all societies are aware of their own past and develop different strategies to represent themselves in view of the passing of time. In addition, the advance of the debate on memory studies led to reconsider the objectivity of historical reconstruction. Since it is made by historians, it became clear that it will always be framed within a specific set of cultural references and thus express a specific point of view (Candau 2002). Hence, it is also partial and submitted to interpretation (Assmann 2002). The prejudice that oral testimony is more easily distorted because of its distance from the event was also dispelled. Portelli points out how writing goes through the same process, as it is always subsequent to the recorded event. It simply “maschera la sua dipendenza dal tempo presentandoci un testo immutabile (*scripta manent*) e ci dà l’illusione che le modificazioni che sono impossibili per il futuro del testo siano impensabili anche per il suo passato”¹¹¹ (2017, 15). This makes history a “child of memory” (Veyne 1973). Interesting perspectives on the relationship between history and memory, oral and written transmission are offered by other authors. Just to report a few examples, we can mention Goody’s work (1977). He stressed how memory and history, mythical and historical thought, orality and writing simply correspond to different strategies of remembering and, in this way, assure the survival of a society over time. Aleida Assmann’s (2002) suggests to think history and memory as two distinct modalities of remembering which do not exclude each other but relate prospectively. According to her, history, also defined “archive memory”, is an amorphous mass of unorganized memories, memory of all memories that have lost a relation to the present. On the other hand, memory, or “functional memory”, corresponds to living memory in the minds of individuals who share it; it is selective, coherent, and gives meaning to past events through a process of a posteriori interpretation. As we said, they relate prospectively: “archive memory” forms the background to “functional memory”. The

¹¹¹ “Masks its dependence on time by presenting us with an unchanging text (*scripta manent*) and gives us the illusion that changes that are impossible for the future of the text are also unthinkable for its past.”

critiques put forward by the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins (1986, 1992) are also appealing. His contribution is particularly valuable because it brought the cultural issue into the debate. He affirms that history is a cultural category that can be represented, experienced and acted differently depending on the cultural context in which the collectivities live. The way it has been thought of in the West reveals a Eurocentric view that leaves no room for other conceptions. Even societies excluded from the historical process would thus be endowed with their own ways of standing in time and relating to change. Kracauer uses a very effective metaphor to explain how time is something plural and temporalities are perceived differently depending on the cultural context of every society. He says that time is not to be imagined as a river flowing in a single direction but as a set of waterfalls, each with its own rhythm and direction and not necessarily consistent with each other (1969). To think of time as absolute and homogeneous or plural and diversified involves setting up classification, reordering and naming operations based on the act of remembering (Jeudy 1995) and which enable us to distinguish past, present and future. Every society has its own way of doing it. In these terms, Western history and its project of revealing the “true” past would be but one narrative among the others (Trouillot 2015).

The way in which Sateré-Mawé people perceive their existence in time, and for which claim the category of *history* and not just *myth*, is different from the vision offered by western historiographic production. From an emic perspective, Sateré-Mawé history begins with the birth of the first Maué from the plant of the guarana and continues in a time bet by other events starred by ancient characters. The encounter with white people in the 17th century marks a first moment of transition between the two dimensions, which reaches its peak in the *Cabanagem*. This event represents the first point of real intersection. The way it is told differs from classical Western interpretation, proving that memory can become a ground for conflict. In such disputes, other narratives flank the official one; they oppose the hegemonic discourse and claim recognition of their own point of view as equally valid in the (re)writing of the history of the community to which they belong (Pollak 1989). Western narrative describes natives as fighting first on the side of Portuguese and then of the *cabanos*. On the contrary, in Sateré-Mawé version, the *Cabanagem* becomes the symbol of indigenous struggle against Europeans who are included in the dynamics of inter-tribal warfare in a process of incorporation that Alvarez (2009) defines of “cannibalization” and “satererization” of the enemy. In these terms, the episode of the *Cabanagem* is not only used to classify Whites as

enemies but also to explain the process of physical and cultural mixing and transformation of the population during the last two centuries.

É assim. A cabanagem, ela existiu. Agora, claro, muitos dos brancos, que nos chamamos, se esconderam dentro da reserva indígena. [...] Tem uns outros [...] que entraram, com medo de morrer, namorando tudo jovem também. Aqui em baixo, no Boa Visita, temos um pessoal que não são [indígenas]. Mas como os bisavôs deles, os avos deles correram pra se esconder da guerra eles casaram e ficaram. [...] São cada grandão, maranhense, paraibano. E então assim foi ficando na área. Os Sateré-Mawé são meu estilo, assim, baixinho. Na área vê cada um com barba. Porque são todos mestiços. O Sateré-Mawé ele não é barbado, ele não se barba não. É muito difícil ter um Sateré barba, Sateré barbado. E não careca. Quem não é indígena, eles são carecas, entendeu? Aí você entra na área e vê alguns carequinhos, né. Então é assim. Porque eles entraram na reserva com medo de morrer, eles se alarjaram, como que eram jovens e bonitos e as meninas... A história da cabanagem ela é interessante se trabalha com muito cuidado. [...] O meu pai por exemplo foi muito gente boa com as pessoas de li, trabalhou e tinha muito amor. Porque tem muito não indígena que a Funai, o SPI mandou sair e meu pai disse não, eu como líder ordeno que devem ficar aí, porque já nasceram... mas se fosse pelo governo tinha expulsado todo mundo. [...] O papai era muito generoso, amoroso mesmo. Mas se fosse outro, tinha expulsado todo mundo.¹¹² (João Sateré-Mawé, 07.11.2022)

This perspective also changes the terms of *interethnic conflict* because natives are not portrayed as passive objects manipulated by colonizers but as active and aware agents willing to participate in the creation of an inclusive Brazilian society.

Within such narrative, a specific device allows to align mythical and historical events: prophecy. During the different moments in which history is retraced, prophecy is always

¹¹² It goes like this. The *cabanagem*, it existed. Now, of course, many white people, how we call them, hid inside the indigenous reserve. [...] There are some others [...] that entered, afraid of dying, they were young and flirted. Down here, in Boa Visita, we have some people who are not [indigenous]. But as their great-grandfathers, their grandfathers ran to hide from the war they married and stayed. [...] They are all big men, from Maranhão, Paraíba. And so they stayed in the area. The Sateré-Mawé are my style, like this, short. In the area you see each one with a beard. Because they are all mestizos. The Sateré-Mawé is not bearded. It is very difficult to have a bearded Sateré, he doesn't have a beard. And he is not bald. Those who are not indigenous, they are bald, do you understand? So, you go into the area and you see some bald people. So that's how it is. Because they entered the reserve with the fear of dying, they got all excited, as they were young and handsome and... The history of the *cabanagem* is interesting if you work with great care. [...] My father for example was very good with the people from outside, he worked and had a lot of love. Because there are many non-indigenous people that Funai, SPI, ordered to leave, and my father said no, I as a leader order them to stay there, because they were already born... but if it had been for the government, they would have expelled everybody. [...] Daddy was very generous, very loving. But if it was someone else, he would have expelled everyone.

recalled. “Sateré-Mawé sempre trabalhou muito em cima de profecia. [...] O guaraná é muito profético, o ritual da Tucandeira é profético, o próprio Porantim é profecia”¹¹³ (Turi Sateré-Mawé, 09.12.2022). The very first prophecy dates back to the birth of Sateré-Mawé people, when *Onhiámuaçabé* predicted that her son, reborn from the guarana, would become a great leader, forefather of a nation. For this reason, the guarana has a prophetic power. *Uaciri-Pot* was drinking guarana and predicting Sateré-Mawé history while engraving the *Porantim* which therefore holds the same prophetic power. “O guaraná... o que for falado durante o ritual, vai acontecer. Não interessa se for falar coisa boa ou ruim, mas vai acontecer porque é o que a gente está colocando e aí é compartilhado mesmo”¹¹⁴ (Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, 26.01.2022). Another one of my interlocutors, Lúcio Sateré-Mawé also demonstrated how prophecy is a device for combining mythical and – in this case – more recent events. During our conversation on the *Porantim*, he told me the ancient story of two brothers who lived in the territory currently occupied by Sateré-Mawé people. One day, one of them decided to go up to the river with part of their people. He left the brother and the remaining population behind to take care of their lands but promised that he would return in the future to check on them¹¹⁵. For Lúcio, those people and institution that today look for Sateré-Mawé people and try to contribute to their struggle are manifestations of the return of the brother who left.

As for the ritual of the *Tucandeira*, the reenactment of mythical/historical events allows to produce new meanings for the present and new visions for the future. Taking once again the *Cabanagem* as example, Turi told me:

Meu pai contava que quando chegou a cabanagem lá, eles estavam reunidos os Sateré, estavam reunidos numa noite, lendo o Porantim e as flechas estavam tudo no sereno do pé

¹¹³ “Sateré-Mawé have always worked very much on prophecy. [...] The guarana is very prophetic, the *Tucandeira* ritual is prophetic, the *Porantim* itself is prophecy.”

¹¹⁴ “The guarana... whatever is spoken during the ritual will happen. It doesn’t matter if it is good or bad, but it will happen because it is what we are saying and then it is shared.”

¹¹⁵ This story could correspond to the one reported in Pereira (2020):

“The legend says that, in the past, two brothers lived on the territory of the Andirá River: Mari-Aipoc and Urihé-I. At that time lands were fertile and rich in game. Mari-Aipoc was the leader of all the Maués. One day a huge insect appeared, bigger than a turtle (jabuti), called Apeeuató and along with it, the Mãe da Doença (mother of illness) that made all the abundance of the land disappear. The Maués were starving. So Mari-Apoc decided with his brother Urihé-I to leave. He gave him one of his oars and they agreed to gather their people and meet at the port. Urihé-I, however, eventually did not want to leave the lands where he had his plantation and did not show up at the meeting with his brother. Therefore, Mari-Apoc went alone with his people down the Andirá River to the Amazon. The place that Mari-Apoc left became black earth.”

e essas flechas caíram do nada. Sabe que na nossa Amazonia não venta né. Aí ele falou, [...] isso não é coisa boa. [...] Alguns iram pra cima, se isolaram. Nos temos povo isolado na nossa região. E aí o que acontece, esse grupo que foi, morreram, os cabanos mataram. [...] A cabanagem se espalhou pra toda a região do Estado do Amazonas praticamente. [...] Foi essa revolta contra a coroa portuguesa, né. Todos começaram a entrar pra dentro das regiões. Nos não fomos afetados tão por isso, porque estávamos preparados já, que já tinha esse relato que ia acontecer através do Porantim, né. Como também da entrada dos jesuítas muito antes da cabanagem. Os velhos falavam, que o próprio Porantim falava que viram como andorinhas, mas devastaram tudo né. [...] E quando fala em devastar tudo não é questão de jogar, de matar, disso aí, é questão de aculturar os povos indígenas. Então isso estava no nosso Porantim e nas músicas do ritual da Tucandeira. As músicas do ritual da Tucandeira também vêm profetizando.¹¹⁶ (Turi Sateré-Mawé, 09.12.2022)

So, in all three pillars of Sateré-Mawé culture the knowledge of the past already encompasses future experience. Through prophecy, past, present and future – which for Westerners are thought of sequentially – merge in a circular dynamic of continuous return. In this way, people are able to domesticate and make sense even of traumatic events such as the colonial domination and the consequent cultural transformation.

This process evokes, in part, De Martino's reflections on the truthfulness and nature of magical reality (2017). With the development of scientific thought, phenomena related to *magic*¹¹⁷ have been relegated to superstitions and false beliefs – just as it has been done with mythological narratives. According to De Martino, the reason is that the categories used by Western reasoning are not suitable for investigating the phenomenon of the “magical world” in its complexity. Scientific thought presupposes a world that is *given*, independent of the actions of the subjects who experience it and that can be understood only through its

¹¹⁶ “My father told me that when the *Cabanagem* came there, the Sateré people were gathered together one night, reading the *Porantim*, and the arrows were all in the serenity of the foot and these arrows fell from nowhere. You know that in our Amazon it doesn't wind. Then he said, [...] this is not a good thing [...] Some went up, isolated themselves. We have isolated people in our region. And then what happens, this group that went, they died, the *cabanos* killed them. [...] The *Cabanagem* spread to the whole region of the state of Amazonas practically. [...] It was this revolt against the Portuguese crown. Everybody started to enter the regions. We weren't so affected by this, because we were already prepared, we already had this report that was going to happen through the *Porantim*. As well as the Jesuits' entrance long before the *Cabanagem*. The elders said that *Porantim* itself said that they came like swallows and they devastated everything. [...] And when he talks about devastating everything, it's not a question of looting, killing, it's a question of acculturating indigenous people. So this was in our *Porantim* and in the songs of the *Tucandeira* ritual. The songs of the *Tucandeira* ritual have also been prophesying.”

¹¹⁷ The *Porantim* is also called *remo mágico* (magic oar).

observation. In contrast, magical reality – expressed here by prophecy – presupposes facts whose forms and meanings are historically and culturally constructed at the time they occur. In fact, its task is to redeem the presence of a community in the face of a historical drama that undermines its existence in the world. Indigenous people have seen their world dissolving because of the colonial process and its operations of physical and conceptual negation of their way of knowing and experiencing reality. In this context, the magical and prophetic powers of the *Porantim* are what make it possible to give new meanings to the events that have compromised the “risk of presence” and, thus, rebalance the sense of cultural disintegration experienced by Sateré-Mawé people. They are crucial in the elaboration of a consistent temporal trajectory which thwart the discourse offered by the West and restore their place in the contemporary world. In fact, the historical perspective offered by Western historiography is not appropriate for affirming Sateré-Mawé presence in a way that makes sense for their cultural horizon because, by denying the truthfulness of Sateré-Mawé stories, it undermines the fundamental reference points around which memory and collective identity are built. Through prophecy, the Sateré-Mawé dissolve *mythic* and *historical* narrative one into the other and subvert this view: “historical” events are placed in direct sequence after, and reread in the light of, *mythical* events; on the other hand, *mythical* events are historicized and, so, institutionalized in a broader process of rewrite and claim for truth of Sateré-Mawé history.

In light of how said so far, we realize how biased and tendentious is the information that the public receive when visiting the museum of Coimbra. Ideally, visitors should be led to reflect on the complexity of an object that is much more than just a *club*.

At this point, however, another question arises. If the *Porantim* plays such an important role for the Sateré-Mawé people, what circumstances allowed Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira to appropriate it? What is the Sateré-Mawé’s opinion of this event? What can the museum do to decolonize the view it offers of the *Porantim* and its producers?

4.2.4 Discussing repatriation

A gente sabe que historicamente ele está... que foi levado um daqui, pra lá. Só dizem que tá do outro lado, tá do outro lado daqui onde a gente tá e há muita coisa... não, tem gente que fala tá em tão local, em lugar tal e a gente fica assim, onde mesmo que está. E outros dizem,

*não a gente não sabe onde está exatamente. E também, eu já ouvi de mais velhos que, “não, deixa pra lá”. “E porque que tá pra lá?”*¹¹⁸

(Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, 26.01.2022)

It often happens that indigenous peoples are not aware of the existence, on the other side of the world, of ancient collection which belonged to their predecessors. On the contrary, some Sateré-Mawé leaders knew that one of their *Porantins* had been taken across the ocean thanks to the stories passed down by the elders. For instance, João's great-great grandfather told that one day, afraid of Whites' raids, the inhabitants of the aldeia where the *Porantim* was guarded run away leaving it unattended. On this occasion the Portuguese would appropriate it. There is no testimony that this was actually the case because Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira left no specific notes about it. However, by reading his chronicles it is clear that this *modus operandi* was quite frequent.

This story remained such for long time, until it found confirmation in the late 1990s. As we said at the end of chapter 2 (§2.3) Ferreira's collection remained forgotten until 1981 when a Brazilian researcher, Tekla Hartman, reconnected it to some documents preserved at the National Library of Rio de Janeiro and realized the first real study. Afterwards, in 1991, an exhibition was organized to bring together documents, naturalistic specimens, and ethnographic objects collected during the *Viagem Philosophica* and preserved at the Museum of Coimbra: *Memória da Amazônia* (Areia et al. 1991; 2005). In 1997, the University of Coimbra and the University of Porto in cooperation with the University of Amazonas decided to repeat the experience in Brazil, in the city of Manaus. The purpose of this new exhibition was not to describe the research work on the collection but to show the multiplicity of voices and perspectives that surrounded objects. Curators wanted the public to reconsider their ideas on the Amazon as a dynamic territory inhabited by hundreds of peoples interacting with each other. The exhibition was hosted by the *Alfândega do Porto* of Manaus. It included objects coming from Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira's collections and a workshop section in which natives of different ethnic groups involved visitors in some of their traditional cultural activities. The opening of a partnership with the Coiab and the

¹¹⁸ “We know that historically it is... that it was taken from here to there. They only say that it is on the other side, it is on the other side of here, where we are, and there are many things... no, some people say it is in such and such place and we are like, where exactly is it. And others say, no, we don't know exactly where we are. And also, I have heard from older people that, “no, never mind, let it there. “And why is it over there?”

Foirn¹¹⁹ made such collaboration possible (A Notícia, 01/03/1997) even if the two organizations questioned the connection that, more or less voluntarily, was established between the exhibition and the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Portuguese in Brazil (Jornal do Norte, 03.04.1997; 11.05.1997).

The *Porantim* was among the objects on display and it was on this occasion that João Sateré-Mawé – at that time member of the Coiab – saw it for the first time. It was also during this event that a first demand for restitution was entered to the institutions involved as concluding statement to the seminar *Nossa História*¹²⁰. According to reports in some local newspapers, the leaders of Coiab – supported by the Cimi¹²¹ – claimed for some objects of high cultural value to remain in Brazil instead of returning to Portugal. They felt it was unfair for European museums and governments to continue making money from collections stolen centuries earlier from their ancestors. Returning them was a necessary action for cultural, economic and moral reparation.

The institutions involved responded in the negative, appealing to uphold the agreements made initially that objects should return to Portugal and to the fact that the University of Amazonas did not have a suitable place for preservation. It was also widely believed that natives would not be able to take proper care of the objects, compromising their preservation. An article published on the 23rd of May 1997 on the newspaper *Diário da Amazônia* says:

Os índios se emocionaram ao encontrarem peças coletadas de seus antepassados há dois séculos e se reconheceram culturalmente nelas. Decidiram, então iniciar o movimento para assegurar a permanência do acervo no Brasil. “Isso tudo nos pertence e não é justo que os portugueses continuem ganhando dinheiro com isso”, ressalta o coordenador da Coiab (principal entidade dos índios na Amazônia), Darcy Marubo. O problema é que emoção só não basta. As peças estão guardadas a cerca de duzentos anos e preservadas o que é mais importante. A pergunta é se essas peças estivessem nas mãos dos índios estariam da forma que estão. Emoção não preserva.¹²² (Diário do Amazonas, 23.05.1997...)

¹¹⁹ Federação das Organizações Indígenas dos Povos do Rio Negro.

¹²⁰ The seminar was part of the activities organized within the exhibition and was held between 5th and 9th of May 1997.

¹²¹ Conselho indigenista Missionário.

¹²² “The Indians were thrilled to find pieces collected from their ancestors two centuries ago and recognized themselves culturally in them. They decided to start a movement to ensure the permanence of the collection in Brazil. “All this belongs to us and it is not fair that the Portuguese continue making money out of it”, points out the coordinator of Coiab (the main entity of the Indians in the Amazon), Darcy Marubo. The problem is that emotion alone is not enough. The pieces have been kept for about two hundred years and preserved, which

The debate over conservation is today one of the most delicate and controversial. Statements like this would be highly criticized today, especially if we consider the extension of the concept of *conservation* from the purely physical sphere to the cultural and spiritual dimension. At the same time, it has to be recognized that thanks to objects (and documents) preserved in European museums some indigenous societies are able to recover significant parts of their cultural traditions¹²³.

Sateré-Mawé suffered cultural transformation but, as we saw, still maintain strong the foundations of their culture. However, the restitution of the *Porantim* is a still open chapter. Discussing it with whom I had the chance to talk with, everyone showed interest for a possible return of the *Porantim* in Brazil. Circumstances of its collection¹²⁴, as well as the doubt if it is a copy or the original (cfr §4.2.2), do not influence so much the desire of having it back. Regardless of how it was taken away from the people and its *authenticity*, today the Sateré-Mawé are claiming a cultural property on it.

Eu tinha muita vontade de trazer esse Porantim um dia, mesmo pela questão histórica que a gente tem, dos Sateré-Mawé. Trazer pra nós, porque é nosso. Não pertence a outro grupo, pertence a nós. É tipo se apropriar de uma cultura que não é tua. Então, não interessa se é o verdadeiro ou não, mas é nosso. É uma coisa que foi tirada de nós. [...] Então um dia, nem que eu vou de cabeça branca, eu quero ir pra esse museu, pra mim pelo menos enxergar ele, ver e mostrar pro meu povo onde está.¹²⁵ (Turi Sateré-Mawé, 09.11.2021)

However, they also recognize the limits of this process. One of them is precisely conservation both physical and spiritual. Bringing the *Porantim* back to Brazil raise an important question: where should it be kept? Because, “não adianta trazer para colocar num lugar que não seja o

is more important. The question is, if these pieces were in the hands of the Indians, would they be the way they are? Emotion does not preserve.”

¹²³ An interesting case in this regard even not for the Brazilian context is reported in Aria 2007.

¹²⁴ Some claim it was stolen, others contemplate the possibility that their ancestors, more naïve toward whites, traded it for some other object considered of equal value.

¹²⁵ “I really would like to bring this *Porantim* one day, even for the historical issue that we have, the Sateré-Mawé. Bring it to us, because it is ours. It does not belong to another group; it belongs to us. It is like appropriating a culture that is not yours. So, it doesn't matter if it is the original or not, but it is ours. It's something that was taken from us. [...] So one day, even if I go with the head white, I want to go to this museum, so that I can at least see it, see it and show my people where it is.”

dele né. [...] A gente tem que ter um espaço pra ele né. [...] Se um dia conseguir trazê-lo”¹²⁶ (Turi Sateré-Mawé, 09.11.2021). The most obvious answer that might arise to us Westerners is that it should return to one of the communities in the Sateré-Mawé indigenous land or be put in a local museum. According to Jesiel, both options present not few problems. Taking it to an aldeia could be dangerous and counterproductive because it could create political conflicts and spiritual imbalances. The *Porantim* has a very strong power and the fact that it has been away from its home territory for so long is not to be underestimated. Rather than having it returned to indigenous land, it is better for it to stay in Portugal.

Como falei, ah, não, deixa pra lá, a gente não quer que traga pra cá porque se não vai dar confusão pra gente. Deixa já pra lá. [...] Tem alguns, como que eu posso dizer, mais velhos que diz que eles não querem que seja trazido porque eles estão comparando as coisas ruins que acontecem do outro lado do mundo né. Porque que está acontecendo lá, tremores de terra, os caras se matando, enchente, um bocado de coisa que acontece pra lá e porque disso? Porque isso aí não é pra deixar de qualquer jeito. Então como eles estão usando de qualquer jeito isso vai acontecer, porque ele é um instrumento de guerra. Então ele é pra ser usado, tipo assim, por isso que ele tem o guardião. Acordou, ele tem que seguir o sol, ele tem que seguir o sol. E aí tem um lado que tem que ser mostrado e tem um lado que não pode ser mostrado, que é o lado de guerra e outro não. E aí, muita coisa hoje acontece por causa disso então e a gente já comentou inclusive isso, entre a gente e tal. Como que ficaria.¹²⁷ (Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, 26.01.2022)

On the other hand, in case an urban museum would welcome it, its access should be strictly controlled because, as we explained above, “vai ter que seguir as normas sabe, quem pode ver, quem não pode ver, se tiver num museu por exemplo”¹²⁸ (Jesiel Sateré-Mawé,

¹²⁶ “There is no point in bringing it back to a place that is not its own. [...] We have to have a space for it. [...] If one day we are able to bring it back.”

¹²⁷ “As I said, ah, no, let it go, we don't want it to be brought here because otherwise it will cause confusion for us. [...] There are some, how can I put it, older people who say that they don't want it to be brought here because they are comparing the bad things that happen on the other side of the world. Why is it happening there, earthquakes, people killing themselves, floods, a lot of things that happen there and why is that? Because this is not to be left just like that. So, since they are using it anyway, it will happen, because it is an instrument of war. So it is to be used, like this, that's why it has a guardian. He woke up, he has to follow the sun, he has to follow the sun. And there is a side that can be shown and there is a side that cannot be shown, which is the side of war and the other side is not. And then, many things happen today because of this, and we have already discussed this, among ourselves and so on. How would it be?”

¹²⁸ “You have to follow the rules, you know, who can see, who can't see, if you it is in a museum for example.”

26.01.2022). At the same time, it would be easier to see it for authorized people. “Eu pessoalmente, gostaria muito que o *Porantim*, por exemplo, não fosse para aldeia, mas que tivesse foto de referência na cidade, aqui no Amazonas por exemplo. Pode ser aqui em Manaus, pode ser em Parintins, [...] que fica muito mais fácil, até o nosso povo ter esse contato porque tá pra lá”¹²⁹ (Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, 26.01.2022).

Accessibility is another complex issue that has been raised, especially as far as it concerns the transmission of the knowledge the *Porantim* encompasses and, consequently, of the people’s memory. Compared to the past, there is a changing sensibility regarding the disclosure of stories and rules reported on the *Porantim*. In my conversation with João Sateré-Mawé, his concern about young generations’ estrangement from their own culture repeatedly emerged. One of the causes of this process has been the reticence of many elders in sharing traditional knowledge, rules and meanings related to the *Porantim* with members of non-Sateré clans¹³⁰. In a complementary way, more and more young people have stopped seeking such knowledge, attracted instead by non-indigenous reality and the desire to be part of it. This trend may also be associated with the strong discrimination that natives still suffer in public spaces and from which young people try to escape by *whitening* themselves. Today, in order to contrast this movement many would be more open in divulging the memory evoked by the *Porantim* within Sateré-Mawé society. As Candau (2002) points out in his work on the relationship between memory and identity, memory production increases from the moment a group begins to perceive its identity as faltering – a phenomenon that he defines as “mnemotropism”. Given the role played by the *Porantim* in the transmission of Sateré-Mawé cultural foundations and in the maintenance of its identity, this change of attitude proves how the flexibility of traditions is necessary for a people’s resistance.

Part of this information could also be disseminated beyond the borders of Sateré-Mawé society, as long as this is done in the correct way and according to their point of view. While in the past the incorrectness of much information gathered by Westerners could be attributed to translation problems, today the language barrier is largely overcome. To make their culture known and valued by a growing number of individuals, the Sateré-Mawé do not need someone to speak for them. They are perfectly capable of doing it by themselves. What

¹²⁹ “I personally would very much like the *Porantim*, for example, not to go to the village, but to have a reference photo in the city, here in Amazonas, for example. It could be here in Manaus, it could be in Parintins, [...] it would be much easier, even for our people to have this contact, because it is there.”

¹³⁰ As mentioned above, Sateré clan rules over the others.

they are asking for is support to be able to occupy enough political space to be heard. The debate on restitution fits into this discourse. The *Museu da Ciência* is in fact seen as one of the institutions from which to ask for such support in exchange for the possession and display of the *Porantim*. The return of the object is important but not indispensable – as well as made problematic by the circumstances outlined. It could stay in Portugal and the Sateré-Mawé could even provide more information on it so that the museum can demonstrate its commitment towards a greater inclusion and democratization. In turn, the museum should fund opportunities to support indigenous people in carving out a space in a society that hardly understands and respects their way of life.

This dialogue has not been open yet. Discussing over a possible restitution requires time and negotiation. If this will be the case of the *Porantim*, the stuff of the museum in Coimbra will have the opportunity to face a population perfectly aware of its history, its socio-political dynamics and its needs. Even this alone, could perhaps help to reframe the narrative to be adopted in future exhibitions.

Chapter five

The journey back (second part): exploring the density of Munduruku feather works

As said at the beginning of chapter 4, this chapter focuses on some points that emerged from the discussion opened with the third people I had the opportunity to establish a relationship: the Munduruku of the Tapajós river. The territory occupied by Munduruku people is vast and, for many reasons, it was not possible to visit it entirely. The information reported hereby thus come from the dialogue with the Munduruku living on the middle Tapajós, where I spent a few months between 2021 and 2022¹.

The chapter is divided in two sections. Section 5.1 is devoted to the critical analysis of the data collected on the field with regard to the Munduruku collection preserved at the *Welt Museum* of Vienna. Like in previous chapter, I shall briefly present the exhibition, the circumstances of our encounter and the discourses currently produced by natives on their ancestors' objects. On the other hand, section 5.2 focuses on another issue which came out in all the contexts considered: indigenous education. As far as I could observe, for indigenous people, education is the conceptual and political framework within which to situate the discussion over heritage and the transmission of the memory it encompasses.

5.1 Feather clothes

When in October 2020 I visited the *Welt Museum* of Vienna I was not clear about which part of Johann Natterer's collection to choose as case study for investigating the topics I wanted to approach in my research. The answer emerged by itself as soon as I walked through the exhibition: Munduruku feather works and the way they are displayed immediately seemed suitable for a discourse on imaginaries and stereotypes; moreover, unlike other collections, no project had been carried out on them yet. But let us go in order.

To reach the hall dedicated to Brazil one has to cross half of the permanent exhibition, which is planned and made in a very different way with respect to Portuguese museums. Geographic

¹ The only exception is the *Cacique Geral* Arnaldo Kaba Munduruku, who lives in the *Aldeia Katô* situated in the region of the upper Tapajós. However, I met him at an assembly that was taking place in a village of the middle Tapajós.

and thematic rooms² alternate and welcome visitors with plural expository languages that result from the dialogue among different disciplines and technical skills and well convey the complexity of the represented scenarios. It is pretty clear that the perspective adopted on alterity is European and specifically Austrian. However, this is done in a critical manner: implicit suggestions and explicit questions let Western responsibilities on colonial past emerge – it is less clear what it can be done in the present to change direction. The title of the Brazilian room, *An Austrian Mosaic of Brazil*, further highlights this positioning. It is a composition of five displays each of which dedicated to a different ethnic group and to a different moment of natives' history in Brazil and their encounter with Europeans. Taken as a whole, it gives a plural and rather topical view of natives. Even so, the astonishment provoked by the first case that visitors see, and where Munduruku objects are arranged, precedes every other impression: colorful feather ornaments, musical instruments and, in the middle, a mummified human head (fig. 40). The use of a highly aesthetic language creates a rather ambiguous interpretative situation. If one does not read the explanatory texts, objects such as those on display can be very evocative of the stereotyped imaginary produced over the last centuries. Isolated in their materiality they appear as fetishes, symbols of exotic and distant others who are freeze-framed in time and decontextualized in space. By contrast, captions (they are reported at the beginning of chapter 3) offer another vision which, on the one hand, portrait Munduruku people through the lenses of cultural loss stating that the ritual of trophy-heads (cfr §3.2, §5.1.3) is no longer performed, while, on the other, mention the resistance of people to current unfavorable governmental actions. This little, superficial information is not enough to deconstruct primitivizing ideas such as those brought back to mind by the mummified head – which is probably the most problematic element of the case. Its exhibition seems not problematic in itself as human remain since as the curator, Claudia Augustat, pointed out in one of our conversations the head was made to be exposed to the members of the community. So, why should we not do the same? Also, it would not make much sense to give it back.

We have no idea from which group the Munduruku had taken the head. And I don't think it's a solution to give this head back to the Munduruku, and they don't want it. [...] I know there was a thing... some years ago Germany repatriated a Botocudo head, back to the

² They are: *The World in Motion*, *Colonialism*, *The Viennese School of Ethnology*.

Krenak. And the Krenak, they were like “yeah, what should we do with it? We are not living in the area where Botocudo are, so it’s not really a coming back home. [...] (Personal communication, 30.10.2020)

The controversial point regards the information that allows a correct contextualization and interpretation: a digital table in the previous room³ which is placed in another point of the exhibition not so easy for visitors to run into.

Another arguable issue is the kind of story that is told. The moment of indigenous history it wants to describe is colonial interaction, however neither from the collector, nor really from the people, point of view. Between 2013 and 2015, Claudia Augustat and her colleague, Wolfgang Kapfhammer, tried three times to initiate a project which unfortunately never got approved and financed (personal communication, 30.10.2020). This prevented from opening a dialogue with Munduruku people and led curators to decide to show their own perspective:

We wanted to include the Munduruku, but this was not possible, so it was the solution to show the feather headdresses and all these beautiful things to show that in the colonial times when these objects were collected the Munduruku were strong. They had these beautiful objects, and they were warriors, they were fighting together with the Brazilians against other indigenous groups, so it was really to show it like a big blossom. (Personal communication, 30.10.2020)

Limits have sometimes to be accepted. However, choosing to emphasize that ceremonies linked to head-hunting are no longer executed – and the objects related are no longer produced – without offering any conceptual tool to interpret cultural transformation, implies to privilege the discourse of loss⁴ to that of resistance. For the public, accustomed to the rhetoric of extinction, the former is undoubtedly easier and more comfortable to think about. This is also encouraged by the fact that, although captions mention Munduruku fights for civil and territorial rights, there is no other reference to their reality nor any great

³ The digital table occupies the center of the thematic room on colonialism. On it, innumerable question marks float and visitors have to press on them to find out what topic they contain. Among them is the Munduruku head but it is by no means a given that they will find it.

⁴ For a deeper look at the imaginaries of loss and its relationship with the dimension of resistance see Ogden 2023.

indication of where they can be found. It is true what the curator says, that if someone “wants to know more on where they are living, people can google it” (personal communication, 30.10.2020) but what about the role of the museum as mediator then? The risk of the exhibition to convey ideas still held to traditional stereotypes is high and it is confirmed by the opinion of some visitors with whom I had the chance to speak as well as by the feedback of the responsible for didactic activities. To the question “what idea do you get of Munduruku by looking at this exhibition?”, most of the answers referred to the bond with the forest and the environment (which is true but is probably perceived in romanticized forms and not in real difficulties and contradictions), to the presence of a mystic ceremonial dimension (here too, through which categories do they think about it?), to the color and liveliness of feathers, to the feeling of simultaneous curiosity and fear for the head at the center of the case and, finally, to the scarcity of information.

Considering the debate about the renewal of ethnographic museums and contemporary claims of indigenous peoples, we might wonder to what extent even this exhibition is appropriate. Would the Munduruku agree to such representation?

5.1.1 Meeting the Munduruku

Munduruku people live in a wide area among the Brazilian states of Pará, Amazonas and Mato Grosso and counts today more or less 14.000 individuals⁵ (Ramos 2003). They speak Munduruku – a Tupi language – and denominate themselves *Wuyjuyu* that means “we”, “one similar to the other”⁶. On the contrary, the term *Munduruku* means *red ants* and was given by an enemy group, probably the Parintintins, who frequently suffered their attacks (Santos et al. 2007; Loures 2017). The region with the highest Munduruku population density is the Tapajós River Basin, in particular the upper and the middle Tapajós. Totally, there are around 130 villages, the majority of which (approximately 120) situated within the municipality of Jacareacanga. The rest are located in the municipalities of Itaituba and

⁵ See: <https://pib.socioambiental.org/pt/Povo:Munduruku> (accessed on 07.02.2023).

⁶ According to Jairo Saw Munduruku, one of my interlocutors, the term *Wuyjuyu* appeared in ancient times during the dispute between Karodaybi and Yori Cug’pu (see 5.1.4) to identify the people of Karodaybi who resembled each other: “[...] Ai que apareceu esse nome, né. *Wuyjuyu*. *Wuyjuyu* quer dizer “nós”. Uma semelhança do outro. Um parecido com o outro, que significa “nós”. Se um é parecido com o outro, então é o mesmo povo, né. O Daybi, dizia, “gente, nos, nos parecemos um com o outro”. (Jairo Saw, 11.10.2022). [That’s when this name came up, right. *Wuyjuyu*. *Wuyjuyu* means “us”. A similarity of the other. One resembles the other, which means “us”. If one is similar to the other, then they are the same people. Daybi said, “People, we, we look like each other.”]

Santarém. In the State of Amazonas and Mato Grosso, some aldeias are to be found in the municipalities of Borba, Nova Olinda and Juara⁷ (fig 67).

The life of Munduruku people alternates between the village and *nearby*⁸ cities, which frequentation is necessary to have access to specific services such as higher education, special health benefits, access to financial aid made available by the government, buying and selling of some basic necessities, and participation in cultural and political events. Many people live stable in the city or in close villages – it is the case of the *aldeias Praia do Mangue* and *Praia do Índio* in the suburbs of Itaituba – and carry out working activities in the urban context. However, the majority of Munduruku still prefer to live in their villages and to carry out self-support economic activities such as hunting, fishing, fruit gathering and plantation of manioc and bananas. This life style is firmly defended by the Munduruku but highly compromised by territorial disputes ongoing, for some decades, throughout the region traditionally occupied by this indigenous people.

[...] O povo está lutando pelo seu território, ter um espaço para plantar, né, pra cultivar, pra poder saber que existe o povo e tem o seu espaço, no território. Então essa é a luta aqui no médio Tapajós. O importante é a terra para eles poderem sobreviver numa forma de resistência. Eles costumam caçar, coletar, pescar, fazer roça, né, são as atividades do dia-dia⁹. (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 07.10.2022)

There are innumerable threats to maintain control over the territory necessary for the social, but also spiritual, reproduction of the group¹⁰. Among the most invasive we find deforestation aimed at timber sale and at the opening of private *fazendas* (Moreira and Loures 2021). The reduction of the forest results in the decrease of habitat for the fauna hunted by the Munduruku and, therefore, the difficulty in obtaining food through this activity. As Adriano Saw Munduruku, cacique of the village *Sawre Apompu*, stressed during an interview

⁷ Cfr note 5 in this chapter.

⁸ I put the word *nearby* in quotation marks because distances can actually be quite large, taking up to one or more days by car and/or by boat to get to some villages.

⁹ “People are fighting for their territory, to have a space to plant, to cultivate, to let [non-indigenous society] know that [Munduruku] people exist and have their space, in the territory. So, this is the struggle here in the middle Tapajós. The important thing is land for them to be able to survive in a form of resistance. They usually hunt, collect, fish, plant, you know, those are the day-to-day activities.”

¹⁰ The Middle Tapajós region is home to numerous places considered sacred by the Munduruku because they were scene of events important to their cosmology. Their preservation is therefore crucial to transmit the people’s history and keep the relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds in balance.

released to two professors of the Universidade Federal do Oeste do Pará (UFOPA) on the occasion of a report on the construction of the road *Transamazônica*¹¹: “Não tem mais mato, não tem mais aonde a gente caçar. Essa terra aqui toda [são] cem hectares. Mata não tem. E agora meus netos eles vão caçar lá nos terrenos dos outros. [...]”¹² (Adriano Saw Munduruku, 13.02.2022).

Another problematic activity is the mining of gold and other minerals from the bed of the Tapajós and its tributaries (*garimpagem*). In particular, it is the use of mercury to separate gold from other geological components to damage Munduruku population. Mercury is a highly toxic mineral and, once released into water, it poisons the whole eco-system and the indigenous population who gets its sustenance from it – fish but also plants which grow on poisoned ground. Recent studies carried on by the Fiocruz¹³ declared that the rate of mercury in more than half of the indigenous population exceeds the 6µg.g-1 (6 micrograms), which is the maximum limit established by the health agencies¹⁴.

Isaias Akay Munduruku, professor in the middle Tapajós region, told me that where he lives water has a different color and fishes are almost all gone. Worried about what they are going to feed on in the future, they fight firmly against each government that encourages activities harmful for indigenous people’s lives¹⁵.

Deforestation and mining are damaging not only because of their direct environmental consequences but also for the situations of violence and social conflict that they cause between who supports them and who, on the contrary, defends land preservation and indigenous people’s rights and safety. This situation is aggravated by the fact that the last governments have been supporting such resource exploitation actions through their inclusion in the *Plano de Aceleração do Crescimento* (PAC). The PAC was elaborated in 2007 during President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s second term in office. Its goal was to develop new infrastructure works to foster the country’s economic development. One of its main projects is the construction of 43 hydroelectric plants along the Tapajós River, which, if

¹¹ This meeting took place on the same days as my visit to the village, which we will discuss later in this section.

¹² “There is no more forest, no more places to hunt. This whole land here [is] one hundred hectares. There is no forest. And now my grandchildren are going to hunt on other people’s land.”

¹³ The Fiocruz (Fundação Oswaldo Cruz) is a Brazilian institution that promotes researches and scientific dissemination on health and social development (<https://portal.fiocruz.br/en>).

¹⁴ <https://portal.fiocruz.br/noticia/estudo-analisa-contaminacao-por-mercúrio-entre-o-povo-indigena-munduruku> (accessed 10.02.2023).

¹⁵ My conversation with Isaias Akay occurred during the 17th General Assembly of Munduruku people of the Middle Tapajós that we will talk about further in this section.

completed would bring huge hydrological problems to the region. Unpredictable droughts and floods, imbalances in flora and fauna, and a general rise in temperatures would be unavoidable consequences and would severely affect the Munduruku economic system, which, as we said, is still mostly based on hunting, fishing, farming, and gathering. Furthermore, in none of these cases were the indigenous peoples of the region ever consulted as stipulated in International Labor Organization Convention 169 (Loures 2017; Moreira and Loures 2021).

Among the innumerable battles carried out by Munduruku people to guarantee their right to life and to citizenship, the fight for land certainly has priority. In particular, what natives try to make non-indigenous (*pariwat*¹⁶) institutions and population to understand is the different perception they have of the territory they inhabit and of the cultural importance of specific areas. Again, Isaias Akay was quite eloquent in showing how this situation makes the Munduruku suffer but also their determination in defending their home. This because there is a relationship of mutual interdependence between his people and natural environment that the government has no interest in safeguarding. According to Isaias Akay, the only goal of federal institutions is to destroy and make the most profit from the exploitation of resources. The *cacique geral* (general chief) Arnaldo Kaba Munduruku whom I had the opportunity to interview agrees with him¹⁷.

Eu luta muito, eu luta arriscando minha vida e procurando ajuda pro meu povo, né. Procurando qual solução que a gente podemos de achar, né, de lutar nela, pra poder defender nosso direito e nossa área indígena também, entendeu? Porque nos estamos perdendo todo. Nos estamos perdendo até... todo que tinha lugar sagrado não tem mais [...] Não pode acabar a floresta. Se acabar a floresta aí fica, como assim, fica feio. Fica feio. O que que passa mal, passa fome. Todo vai passar fome, mal de fome. Como a anta, como a queixada, como os peixes, a gente mesmo também. Não pode destruir, por causa disso. O que que está deixando de acabar essas coisas é o garimpo. Né. É o garimpo, é o pessoal que mexe soja, então essas empresas aí acaba deixar a floresta acabada. [...] Então, isso aí que está... até está ficando pouco pássaro hoje em dia porque não tem mais a floresta. A ara nem sei mais onde vai hoje

¹⁶ In Munduruku, the term *pariwat* means *enemy*. In the past it was addressed to other indigenous groups while currently is used in reference to members of non-indigenous societies, in particular White people.

¹⁷ I will explain in detail the circumstances of my encounter with Munduruku in the second part of this section.

em dia. Ficou pouquíssima. A ara, o pássaro. Então as coisas está tudo mudado deixando o povo triste.¹⁸ (Arnaldo Kaba Munduruku, 19.12.2022)

The legal instrument that grants natives the right to a portion of territory is demarcation. Demarcation is a process consisting of several stages of recognition and delimitation that, when completed, allows the indigenous group exclusive use of a region¹⁹. There are three homologated indigenous lands in which the Munduruku live: the Terra Indígena Munduruku (Decreto s/n - 26/02/2004) in the Upper Tapajós Region; the Terra Indígena Kwatá-Laranjal (Decreto s/n - 20/04/2004) in the State of Amazonas; the Terra Indígena Kayabi (Decreto s.n. - 25/04/2013) in the State of Mato Grosso. In other regions, including the Middle Tapajós region, processes are still stuck at earlier stages. As a result, the situation is more unstable and the indigenous population more exposed to the threats mentioned above. In particular, in the municipality of Itaituba, an extremely delicate and contentious situation concerns the recognition of the *Sawre Muybu* Indigenous Land (*Daje Kapap eipi*). It includes seven of the region's Munduruku villages²⁰ and some places sacred to indigenous cosmology and history. The main challenge to demarcation lies in the application of the *Marco Temporal*²¹ to the area concerned and thus the non-recognition of that territory as

¹⁸ “I fight a lot; I fight risking my life and looking for help for my people. Looking for what solution we can find, right, to fight for it, to be able to defend our right and our indigenous area too, you know? Because we are losing everything. We are losing even... everything that was a sacred place is no longer there [...] The forest can't end. If the forest disappears, it will be ugly. It is ugly. People are going to be bad, are going hungry. Everyone will be hungry, starving. Like the tapir, like the peccary, like the fish, like us, too. You can't destroy, because of this. What is destroying these things is mining. It's mining, it's people who work with soybeans, so these companies end up leaving the forest be destroyed. [...] So, that's what it is... there are not many birds left nowadays because there is no more forest. I don't even know where they go anymore. There are very few left. The plovers, the birds. So, things all changed, making people sad.”

¹⁹ Demarcation is a complex process that we have no space to discuss here. It begins after a group make an official request to the Funai (Fundação Nacional do Índio) and consists of four stages: identification/delimitation, demarcation, homologation, land regularization. For an exhaustive analysis see Lenzi Grillini 2010.

²⁰ *Dace Watpu*, *Boafé*, *Sawre Muybu*, *Sawre Aboy*, *Daje Kapap*, *Karo Muybu* and *Poxo Muybu*.

²¹ The so-called thesis of *Marco Temporal* (time frame) is a legislative measure that restricts the original right of indigenous peoples to traditionally occupied lands, which is established in Articles 231 and 232 of the federal constitution. If applied, the *Marco Temporal* grants recognition of an Indigenous Land only if the people claiming the territory can prove that they occupied it in 1988 (the year the constitution was enacted). Otherwise, the right is denied, even when indigenous people have been subjected to processes of forced migration and violence. The *Marco Temporal* argument was developed in 2005 for the demarcation of *Terra Indígena Raposa Serra do Sol* and regained strength in 2017 in reference to the Xokleng case. Its main objective is to reduce the percentage of land that cannot be economically exploited by intensive agriculture projects, mining, and construction of hydroelectric networks. For this, it has been extensively enhanced by the governments of Michel Temer (2017-2018) and Jair Bolsonaro (2018-2022), both of whom favor resource exploitation on territories traditionally occupied by indigenous peoples. For more details see: <https://apiboficial.org/?s=marco+temporal> (accessed 20.03.2023).

traditionally occupied by the Munduruku people²². Not receiving any support by the government in defense of their territory, in 2015 some Munduruku representatives initiated a process of self-demarcation of territory that they believed had to be recognized as indigenous land. The registration of this step of the process occurred on the 19th of April 2016, when it was published on the *Diário Oficial da União* soon before the destitution of Dilma Rousseff from her assignment as president²³ (Loures 2017). Notwithstanding, frontiers are often not respected and indigenist policies on health and education not implemented. For these reasons, the associations²⁴ in which the Munduruku are juridically organized realize periodical meetings and assemblies²⁵. Every decision regarding the development of projects, collaborations, initiatives and researches involving non-indigenous institutions (governmental, non-governmental and academic) must be collectively discussed as established in the *Protocolo de Consulta* (council protocol) drawn up in 2013²⁶.

It was precisely during one of these assemblies – the 17th General Assembly of Munduruku people of the Middle Tapajós held in the village *Sawre Juybu* from the 19th to the 21st of December 2021 – that my first effective contact with Munduruku reality occurred. A few weeks earlier I had had the opportunity to meet the *cacique geral* Arnaldo Kaba Munduruku and three more leaders at an ethnographic film festival that was taking place in Belém. I had decided to join it because the *Museu Emilio Goeldi*²⁷ that I wanted to visit was closed due to the pandemic. I had been trying to contact Munduruku people through virtual channels for months but without success. Meeting their highest representative by chance was an occasion I could not waste to try to establish a dialogue with the descendants of the producers of the collection preserved in Vienna. A good fortune was that Arnaldo Kaba was familiar with the objects I was studying: he had seen them in 2013, during a visit to Europe organized by

²² Many historical sources report the presence of Munduruku people throughout all the basin of the Tapajós river, up to the Madeira River on the left side and to the Xingu River on the right side (cfr §3.1.1).

²³ According to what Karo Munduruku told me when discussing about land demarcation in the Middle Tapajós, this recognition, as well as those of the two urban villages (*aldeias urbanas*) *Praia do Mangue* and *Praia di Índio*, was a political strategy that the dismissed government adopted to stump the incoming government of Michel Temer rather than an effective recognition of indigenous right.

²⁴ The Munduruku have several associations. The most important are: Conselho Indígena Munduruku do Alto Tapajós – Cimpukat (CIMAT), Da'uk, Ipereg Ayu, Kerepo, Pariri, Pusuru, Wuxaximã.

²⁵ The first assemblies of Munduruku people occurred in 1985/1986 and had as main goal the demarcation of indigenous land in the Upper Tapajós River, which was finally obtained in 2004.

²⁶ The council protocol is a document that defines the rules to be followed to start an institutional research project in Munduruku territory with Munduruku people. It is available at: <https://acervo.socioambiental.org/sites/default/files/documents/mud00083.pdf> (accessed 20.10.2021).

²⁷ The trip I was planning aimed at learning something more about ethnographic and indigenous museums in the Amazon region, in order to observe the ways in which they deal with the preservation and display of objects.

Greenpeace. He seemed interested in issues such as museums and memory and he looked a little sad because his people have been losing a lot of their ancestors' knowledge. I also had the chance to talk with Aldilo Kaba Munduruku, president of the *Wuxaximã* association, who told me about his personal trajectory and his anthropological studies at university. From these first conversations I already began to perceive the difficulties of doing research in contexts that are so politically complex and where the indigenous population has (justly) developed a great distrust of *pariwat*. When I tried to explain who I was, my intentions and the goals of my research I felt my own introduction to them extremely awkward. Their answers were all directed to the externalization of their needs and concerns about the conditions in which Munduruku people are living. The conversation sailed on the brink of constant negotiation on how to reconcile our positions, increasingly shaping an implicit question to which I had to find an answer if I wanted to do research with them: what did my research offer to Munduruku people and their struggle? Ramos' remarks come back to mind (cfr §4.2.1). If academic researchers want to have access to fieldwork, not only they are called for some kind of activism and advocacy but they have to adapt the objectives and outcomes of their studies to the demands of the indigenous population they want to work with (2008). I had no clear answer to the question of the *cacique*; however, I was given permission to participate to the general assembly that was going to be hold near Itaituba to present the pictures of the objects. On the 19th of December, I left from Itaituba accompanied by Anderson Painhum Munduruku, former president of the *Associação Pariri*²⁸. I got his contact through another Munduruku, Rozeninho Saw (who had been in Vienna together with Arnaldo Kaba), whose number I had received from one of the participants in the ethnographic film festival and to whom I had wrote to figure out the details of the assembly. As soon as we got to the village *Sawre Juybu*, I felt the stares of people weigh heavily on me: curiosity about my appearance, but mostly distrust. I did not blame them. Not only they had never seen me before but my arrival was unexpected. I felt like an intruder. I tried to exchange a few words, a few smiles but all I wanted was just to disappear into thin air. I did not even understand what most people were saying, because they were talking to each other in Munduruku. The only foothold was the arrival of the *cacique geral*; he recognized me and welcomed me. Perhaps that would have made me less of an *enemy*. I took advantage of a

²⁸ The *Associação Pariri* is the most important association that runs the indigenous Munduruku movement in the region of the middle Tapajós.

moment of initial introductions to say who I was and explain why I was there. They told me that at the end of the day, if I wanted, they would give me a moment to present my work. However, seeing the progress of the discussions, I was beginning to doubt that it would really happen. Then, I decided to hang in the open air the photographs of the objects which I had printed in order to see what reactions they elicited (fig. 68). Curiosity, for sure. Admiration, puzzlement... “Did these objects really belong to Munduruku people?” I was asked.

For three long days I observed and I was observed; while I was building my own idea of Munduruku reality, they were deciding in which category of *pariwat* I could fit. I managed to strike up some clumsy conversation only with three or four people, mainly in front of the photographs or during breaks for lunch and dinner. Someone asked me to pass the pictures, either by email or in a pen drive.

The atmosphere was tense, permeated of heated discussions about territory, health, education. Every topic was ticklish. One could perceive with intensity the weariness of people but also their strength. They went on talking until they had said everything they had to, no matter what time it was. It was impossible to remain indifferent; it either absorbed you and made you want to share the resistance or it made you run away. I felt I tended more towards the first reaction. Other non-natives explained to me that the presence of researchers is very problematic for the Munduruku because of past and recent events²⁹. With a sad voice, Cacique Arnaldo himself told me that:

O cacique quer cuidar do povo dele, mas o povo branco fica tá de olho nele. Porque o presidente tá mandando o povo dele pra entrar dentro da área indígena, pra destruir, né. E tá pra mentir. E mente. “Olha, quando você liberar minha entrada na área indígena eu vou te ajudar”, mas não. Ele não ajuda. Apenas ele faz é roubar e indígena fica sem. Ele fica sem nada. Indígena só fica com aquela doença mesmo. Agora riqueza, ele leva, né. Não sei pra onde ele leva. Indígena fica do mesmo jeito [...]. Complicado³⁰. (Arnaldo Kaba Munduruku, 19.12.2021)

²⁹ Some of them are reported in Loures 2017.

³⁰ The cacique to take care of his people, but white people are watching him. Because the president is sending his people to enter the indigenous area, to destroy it. And he's about to lie. And he lies. “Look, if you allow me to enter the indigenous area, I will help you”, but no. He doesn't help. He doesn't help. All he does is steal and the indigenous people are left with nothing. They get nothing. The only thing natives have left is disease. Richness, they (white people) take it away. I don't know where they take it. Natives stay the same way [...]. It's complicated.

For this reason, researches have to be approved in collective discussions of the caciques and key leaders (cfr note 26 in this chapter). They have to decide whether or not it would benefit the movement's struggle.

One of the greatest dilemmas was the use of the recorder while talking to people. How boldly was I going to go around asking people for interviews in this situation? I found it almost paradoxical how the recorder is, at the same time, a tool that reduces mediation since it allows one to report word for word what someone said and an object of power that establishes, with its mere presence, a relationship of disequilibrium. Portelli (2017) is among those who took an in-depth look on the problematic nature of interview as privileged tool for ethnographic research. In his reflections on Oral History and on the production of narratives from below, he lingers over the fact that, even when faithfully transcribed, the information passed by the interviewee will always be framed in the researcher's discourse. Even when such discourse is agreed with the interlocutors, they partly lose control on their words. For this reason, despite the possibility of reporting thoughts in their fullest form, the recorder is perceived as an instrument of power by many native populations – who, more than other collectivities, fear to be *exploited* (cfr §4.2.1; Ramos 2008). By recording, I was kind of *stealing* the words I heard. In the past, knowledge and information had been already used by Europeans “against” the indigenous people who shared it (we will return to this point in §5.1.3). My case may have been no different. It was up to me to deconstruct this image and prove otherwise. So, I tried to activate the brain and remember as much as possible. The result was to end each day with a big headache but maybe with the possibility of establishing a relationship.

Only at the end, when I almost gave up hope and half of the participants had left, I was given a few minutes to present my project. When I shut up, a young man³¹ took the floor: “I have a question. I would like to know what the objective of this research is”. I realized I had missed the point or had forgotten something important. I told something else about wanting to make Munduruku history known from a point of view other than the Western one but, at this point, I did not even know what to say anymore. I was afraid of saying the wrong thing and I was tired. Perhaps it was their plan all along to take me to task or, more probably, they had other priorities. Eventually, they said they would arrange a meeting in the near future to

³¹ He was Antônio Dace, professor and leader in the field of indigenous education.

talk and think about it. I had to stay in touch with Alessandra Korap, the new president of the Pariri Association. What a relief. It was not a yes but it was not a no either.

This episode helped me thinking about the effective connection between my research – which I regarded as useful in order to promote the inclusion of indigenous peoples in the debate over the political uses of heritage – and Munduruku everyday reality. Over the last fifty years, there has been a proliferation of literature criticizing contributions that, although oriented towards re-founding the ways of thinking about and dealing with otherness, still proved to be too theoretical and far removed from the concrete needs such otherness showed. In the review essay of the collection edited by Richard Fox *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (1991), Escobar carefully analyzes this debate. Following the proposals of the contributions' authors, he wonders what concrete actions anthropologists should undertake once the interpretative turn of the 1980s³² acknowledged the limits of their authority to speak about and for others (Escobar 1993). The relationship between the production of knowledge that critiques the system and political engagement becomes one of the crucial points of the discourse. In Latin America, academic research has been tied to activism since the second half of the 20th century and, as Teresa Caldeira explains, “intellectuals have a prominent role in public life. They think of themselves first as public intellectuals working to influence public debates” and who “conceive of their work as a civic responsibility” (2000, 7-8). There are many ways in which such commitment is enacted (see Low and Merry 2010), all are oriented to support through practical initiatives the claims and struggles of subaltern groups in order to improve their existential (primarily physical) conditions. In these terms, the pretention of cultural critiques' proponents of producing knowledge opened to non-hegemonic categories while maintaining political neutrality represent a contradiction (Hale 2006) – it is indeed one of the issues raised in Fox's collection. Another problematic point relevant to my ethnographic context regards the real possibilities for the people involved in new intellectual production to access and use the concepts created to understand and manage modern world complexity and plurality (see Rappaport and Pacho 2005; Rappaport 2008). When the moment comes for the researcher to enter the ethnographic relationship which will ground his/her research, to ask oneself who is really going to benefit from the project and what profit would the indigenous group turn from it must go hand-in-hand with a

³² See: Marcus and Fischer 1986, Clifford and Marcus 1986, Clifford 1988, Rosaldo 1989, Hymes 1969 and Asad 1973 among many others.

reformulation of the language used to communicate intentions and objectives. Beyond the scientific value that, as anthropologists, we can attribute to our research and/or see ourselves acknowledged by the academic community, making ourselves understood is a key step in achieving the reconnection also yearned by the authors of *Recapturing Anthropology*. Before starting to work among natives³³, I had never thought about these issues properly. The lectures at universities had never been very clear about the problems and difficulties of negotiating, finding compromises and, above all, how important this phase is for the success of each study. Among the Munduruku, I was experimenting the enormous difference between talking about decolonization, inclusion and collaboration and act for it.

A second visit to Itaituba occurred in February 2022. For days I had been suspended in indecision about whether or not to return to visit the Munduruku, from whom I had heard no more official word. Alessandra Korap was virtually unreachable. This was making me wonder. I had tried to push a little but I did not want to force the relationship. She was certainly very busy but I also started to wonder if maybe my work did not raise so much interest among them. And if they were not interested, who was I to impose my views on the importance of such research? That would have been a decidedly neo-colonial action and went against the very goals of my project. Even a rejection can be extremely eloquent and help us reflect on the “dilemmas of engagement” (see Low and Merry 2010).

In the end, I was convinced to return to middle Tapajós by the insistence of others Munduruku with whom I was in contact and who, working in indigenous education, were more captivated in the possible results of this research. Rozeninho Saw had managed to arrange a visit to an aldeia where the cacique, Adriano Saw, considered by the Munduruku themselves to be among the wisest and most knowledgeable people. As we looked for dates that would work for everyone, I focused on visiting other caciques and professors of the aldeias near Itaituba (*Praia do Índio* and *Praia do Mangue*). The more days passed, the more I realized that, in fact, there were several people who were willing to discuss about these objects. I decided to focus on my relationship with them. Maybe, in the meantime, I could be able to discuss my engagement with the representatives of the association. It is very intriguing to see how each group’s relationship with non-indigenous people differs depending on the problems they face and the historical-political trajectory. An enriching contribution on this topic are the studies of Ortner on processes of resistance, which she says are extremely

³³ The first real experience in this sense was for my master thesis in 2018.

heterogeneous in terms of political actions, cultural articulation and production of individual subjectivities (1995). To stress these differences allows to de-construct the idea of natives as a homogeneous whole. They are not since while fighting a common struggle, each does so through its own political and cultural modes. As my experience with the Munduruku shows, contradictions and conflicts are the order of the day even within the same ethnic group. As in any collectivity, it is normal for there to be contrasts, disagreements, and different points of view among the individuals who form it. On the contrary, to ignore this aspect participate in forming that aura of romanticism which reinforces stereotypes that are counterproductive to indigenous struggle (with which, we repeat, the researcher is invited to side) and returns a falsely complete idea of the ethnographic context described. In fact, since the information collected always depends on the relationships built on the field and it is impossible to be able to interact with all the components of a group³⁴, the knowledge produced through the ethnographical work will always be partial and non-objective (cfr Haraway 1988).

In this situation, I arranged some meetings. The most interesting were those with the professor and philosopher Francisco Ikõ³⁵ and with Everaldo Manhuari, an artisan who runs the craft center where he works as a potter and who has a passion for the books that have been written about his people. During one of our many conversations he explained to me that:

O medo da gente é que... existe vários tipos de gente. Existe quem quer fazer o mal e quem quer fazer o bem. Como a gente tem algumas decepções, a gente fica meio assim, como eu te falei, que já teve uns parentes aí, de Ongs que já ajudaram nos, mas tem uns que a gente não tem, eles tipo usam a gente assim... não são todos, tem alguns. E esse tem que ter muito cuidado com isso. Teve um tempo que a gente estava aceitando nem conversar, só mesmo com parente mesmo... ele falava assim, “você não pode receber qualquer tipo de gente não, ainda mais estrangeiros”.³⁶ (Everaldo Manhuari Munduruku, 07.02.2022)

³⁴ As for the Kambeba and the Sateré-Mawé, the Munduruku people with whom I was able to establish a dialogue are only a few of those who could express themselves regarding the topics discussed. This selection was directed by the temporal and political limitations of the research itself and not by a lack of interest in other interlocutors.

³⁵ He defines himself as such.

³⁶ Our fear is that... there are many kinds of people. There are those who want to do evil and those who want to do good. As we had some disappointments, we get a little bit like that, as I told you, we already had some relatives there, people from NGOs that helped us, but there are some that did not, they used us like that... not

I was beginning to understand the distrust they have of white people. However, I felt that slowly, and for some, the way my presence was perceived was changing. Of course, there was still a lot of work to be done to show that my intentions were to support their struggle and not hinder it or benefit from it for my own academic self-interest.

Finally, we marked our visit to the village of Cacique Adriano Saw, *Saure Apompu*, for the days between the 12th and the 14th of February. I left together with Honésio Dace, a Master student and a SEMED official (*Secretaria Municipal de Educação*), and Claudete Saw, daughter of the cacique. We had planned to present the collection and discuss it together with the people living there. Again, I was nervous and a little intimidated. The cacique was kind but very serious. I did not really know what to say and as I listened to what he told me about the difficulties his family faces for surviving and having access to basic rights such as education and health, I felt that the little I had to say made not so much sense. I felt sorry and helpless because I knew that my research would not have an immediate impact on their living conditions. For being related to the transmission of memory and to scientific dissemination it would take time before there would be actual changes in the way people act. Although slowly, we started a conversation. We also organized a collective meeting in the school to discuss about objects and what they evoked in people's memory. Not much. As the curator in Vienna had anticipated to me, it really seems that the knowledge about these objects is fading. The cacique himself was keen to point it out, saying to me that maybe those people who visited their lands in the past could tell their history better than him. Many of the things which existed, and are currently preserved in European museums, no longer exist; so, he could not know about them. These words upset me. To think that people who entered in natives' areas might know Munduruku history better than the Munduruku themselves sounds to me too much like the misappropriation of someone else's history. What history were we talking about? I am sure that *Seu*³⁷ Adriano preferred not to share a lot of things with me because I am a researcher, because I am a *pariwat* and because, after all, he did not know me. It was okay, I did not want to push and create tension. I was already grateful to him and his family for welcoming me into their home.

all of them, there are some. And we have to be very careful with this. There was a time when we didn't even accept to talk, only with relatives... he said, "you can't receive just any kind of people, especially foreigners".

³⁷ *Seu* is a colloquial form for *Senhor* and indicates respect for someone.

A few days after returning to Itaituba, I went back to Italy but I was aware that the time spent among the Munduruku had not been enough to establish a proper relation. Therefore, in October 2022 I organized a third trip to the Middle Tapajós to develop further our mutual knowledge and a discussion over possible ways of collaborating. I arrived in Itaituba on the 2nd of October. The city was in the turmoil over the upcoming elections. I devoted the first few weeks to visiting the people I had met during my last stay, to see how they were doing, to get updates on the progress of the processes and projects involved in their struggle and to figure out how I could fit in, again, in that context. I met Honésio Dace, struggling with his master's thesis; professor Francisco Ikō, busy in organizing the assembly that would be held in the village *Praia do Mangue* a few days later, and Rozeninho Saw. This time, his brother was hosted at his house: Jairo Saw, *cacique* of the village *Sawre Aboy* and among the wisest and most respected people. Their village was going through a difficult time economically. Rozeninho's idea to improve the situation was to promote a project of Açaí plantation, the harvesting and sale of which could provide the revenue needed to support the needs of the families living in *Sawre Aboy*. We had discussed this before, rather vaguely. At that moment, their request for support became explicit, especially in terms of drafting a plan and seeking funds. I explained that it was not my area and I had no experience with projects but that within my possibilities – in terms of time and expertise – I would gladly offer my cooperation. Although not directly related, this seemed to be an important part of what they expected from researchers like me in return for the answers I was seeking for my work. The *cacique* Jairo Saw is held in high esteem among his people for his great knowledge of Munduruku history and heritage (his main interest is Munduruku language) and seemed to be interested in the collection. I thus asked him if we could talk a bit about the objects preserved in Vienna and he agreed. Our dialogues were rich of ideas and confrontations about different topics and made me understand better Munduruku conception on reality. At the same time, as the days passed, we continued to add ideas to the project for their village. Rozeninho and Jairo invited me to visit it and meet the people who lived there. I told them it would be a pleasure. We arranged for the days in-between the assembly and my departure.

The assembly began on the 15th of October (fig. 69). The schedule was crammed, from 8a.m. until midnight, for three consecutive days. My intention was to show up on the first day and then attend only the day devoted to education. It was people working in this area that had shown themselves particularly interested, thus, it could be a good time to discuss with

professors, and in front of the *caciques*, how such objects and my presence could benefit indigenous education³⁸. As part of the engagement that they required from me as researcher, I had been asked to support the foundation of an association of professors; I wanted to take advantage of that moment to make myself available and evaluate together how I could be involved.

Like the previous year, those days were physically, intellectually and emotionally very intense. On the first day, the members of the audiovisual collective asked me to bring the printed photographs of the objects and helped me to hang them up (fig. 70). One of them told me that it would be useful to give a short presentation so that everyone could understand. I accepted without hesitation. I asked the organizers for a few minutes to talk between discussions and I was told to wait, that perhaps there would be a space later. Again, the topics of discussion were many and very sensitive. Local institutions were being called upon to respond to pressing emergencies. Neither Saturday nor Sunday I managed to introduce myself. I understood the urgency of the other issues so I patiently waited. I passed from moments of tranquility, chatting with people whom I knew approved my research, to moments of deep discomfort when I felt the stares of those who did not know me and questioned my presence upon me. Who was I? What were my intentions? I understood their doubts, however, for my part I was trying hard to explain who I was and why I was there. Monday morning the cacique Jairo Saw approached me, saying that such questionings had been explicitly asked the night before. It would have been appropriate for me to introduce myself, in a more restricted discussion. I pointed out to him how I had already requested it but there had been no time until that moment. In the end, I was there for that. After talking to the caciques, he told me that they would give me ten minutes that evening and, if I wanted, to prepare something. However, as was understandable, in the evening everyone was exhausted. We put it off until the next morning. Again, I was nervous. I had been waiting for four days, but when they called me, I was taken by surprise. This time my speech was clear and seemed quite appreciated.

We spent the days between the 21st and the 24th of October in the village *Sawre Aboy*. It takes approximately two hours to get there (one by car and one by boat). While sailing on the Tapajós, I recognized a bit of those visions that appear in the illustrations of the 18th- and 19th-century naturalists whose footsteps I felt like I was retracing: an expanse of greenish-

³⁸ We will discuss in detail issues about indigenous education in §5.2.

brown water separated from the blue sky only by a thin strip of lush vegetation. From a distance, it looks a bit like that drawn in comic books, seemingly uniform and with only a few sketches defining its contours. In reality, it is a tangle of branches, leaves, flowers, lianas, with a few small houses popping up here and there. It is hard to describe the emotions it conveys. A drawing from the 1800s is probably more eloquent than a photo in the way it manages to transmit the feeling of contemplation evoked by these landscapes (fig. 71, 72). Francisco Ikō came with us as professor in charge of the local school. Besides getting to know the place, it happened to be a valuable opportunity to talk about the stories of the Munduruku people and their importance in the educational process as well as to understand the depth and complexity of Munduruku struggle for the right to exist and live as they deem appropriate.

5.1.2 Reconnecting things and words

Hoje não há mais guerra, mas nós continuamos lutando de outra maneira. [...] Wako Borun guerreou para recuperar a cabeça do seu irmão. Os homens, hoje, vivem em uma guerra em busca do direito de viver em seu território, por isso hoje estamos nas universidades para adquirir conhecimento com o objetivo de enfrentar seus maiores inimigos: o preconceito, a ignorância, a discriminação dos indígenas que vivem na cidade e a violação dos direitos constitucionais conquistados. Mas a guerra não é mais cortando a cabeça dos seus inimigos, mas por meio de documentos e elaboração de projetos; da mesma forma como Karo Daybi buscando seu poder e, quando conseguiu dominá-lo, foi passando de geração em geração.³⁹

(Kaba Munduruku 2022, 1-2)

In chapter three we introduced Munduruku people for how they were known in the past centuries, that is, as fierce warriors. Their reputation preceded them and made them feared by all their enemies. This aspect interests us for two main, related reasons. The first one is

³⁹ “Today there is no more war but we continue fighting in another way. [...] Wako Borun fought to recover his brother’s head. Today men live in war in search of the right to live in their territory. That is why, today, we are in universities: to acquire knowledge in order to confront its greatest enemies – prejudice, ignorance, discrimination against indigenous people who live in the city – as well as the violation of conquered constitutional rights. War is no longer about cutting off the heads of their [Munduruku] enemies but through documents and projects’ elaboration; in the same way that Karo Daybi sought his power and, when he managed to master it, passed it on from generation to generation.”

that this attitude is still felt as a distinctive character by the group's members who, despite the transformations occurred during the last century, compare current fights in defense of their territory to ancient warrior expeditions (Moreira and Loures 2021). Enemies, strategies and objectives changed but determination and the desire of assertion on the region they inhabit remain the same. The second one takes us back to the central issue of this work, i.e., objects collected by Johann Natterer and preserved at the *Welt Museum* of Vienna. They used to and they still occupy an important space in the activities related to warrior expeditions and to fighting processes. Compared to the other populations considered in this research, it has been harder to reconstruct the relationship with Munduruku history, memory and identity because their production has been suspended due to social, economic and cultural transformations of the last century. Not only, because today very few people remember or have heard about their uses and meanings.

From ethnographic accounts such as those left by Spix and Martius (2017), Barbosa Rodrigues (1875; 1882, 1882b), Tocantins (1877) and Coudreau (1897), we know that there was a connection between objects and warrior expeditions. According to Barbosa Rodrigues (1875) it was precisely during the ceremonies organized to celebrate the acquisition and preparation of trophy-heads that warriors wore ornaments such as those collected by the Austrian naturalist (§3.2.2, note 59). What these travelers misunderstood were the reasons behind these practices, identified in a sort of primitive lust for revenge (§3.2.2, note 57). On the contrary, more recent ethnographies like those of Robert and Yolanda Murphy (1954, 1958) were able to grasp their deep connection with the social, economic and cultural reproduction of Munduruku society. By collecting some elders' knowledge and memories on the ritualistic complex of head-hunting, they understood how warrior expeditions and trophy-head ceremonies were deeply related to economic activities of hunting-gathering which the spiritual power of the head had the brief to propitiate. Since the first *pacific* contacts (§3.1.1) at the end of the 18th century, the inclusion of Munduruku people into Western, colonial economic system led to the substitution of these activities with others related, in particular, to extracting economy (rubber, drugs, minerals, etc.) and to the trade of products with Europeans⁴⁰. Between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th

⁴⁰ Ritual heads were probably also part of such circuit once they had lost their power and had become useless (see further on in this section). National authorities suppressed their trade by the end of the 19th century (Souza and Martins 2003/2004).

century this relationship intensified. Work conditions were usually pervaded by exploitation and violence; however, they gave access to higher income which could be used to pursue Western goods. The best period of the year to join these activities was the same when warrior and hunting expeditions were realized (the dry season) making it impossible to participate in both economic systems simultaneously. Hunting was partially abandoned and, with it, the ceremonies which guaranteed its success⁴¹ (cfr Murphy and Murphy 1954). To encourage the disintegration of Munduruku socio-economic system and the abandonment of the ritual also intervened the arrival of missionaries. A first attempt of catechization occurred in 1871 with the foundation of the capuchin mission of Bacabal. In reality, their action aimed more at the introduction of Munduruku into the rubber trade than at carrying out their evangelization and the mission was closed in 1875. This attitude, albeit in a more regulated way, also characterized the second mission which was established by Franciscans on the Rio Cururu in 1911. During this period, the detribalization of Munduruku communities and their reduction in villages close to the mission was pursued with even greater intensity as well as the eradication of warrior practices that missionaries condemned for their violence and incompatibility with Christian education (Murphy 1958; Loures 2017; Belik 2017; Dace Munduruku 2021). This point was well described also by Everaldo Manhuari Munduruku:

Eles dizem assim porque os colonizadores foram entrando, foram entrando os regatões – regatões são aqueles comerciantes antigos que começaram a entrar pelos rios, que naquele tempo não tinha muita estrada – e aí foram conquistando os parentes, vendendo coisas assim, do não índio, coisa do branco. E de lá pra cá, até hoje veio muita facilidade, né. E eles viram que naquele tempo veio o círculo desse de cortar cabeça e exportar pro exterior, aí depois veio o círculo de matança de animais. Naquele tempo eles matavam animais como anta, gato maracajá, jacaré... essas coisas assim, né. Foi uma das primeiras economias que eu sei assim

⁴¹ As a consequence, the indigenous population needed to earn money to buy that food that they could no longer obtain through hunting but was necessary for the sustenance of the community. This dynamic produced a relationship of deep dependence that continues to these days.

For example, in one of our conversations Jairo Saw well explained to me the mechanisms that nourish this relationship. According to him, private and public entrepreneurs who want to exploit the resources on Munduruku territory leverage the government's absence of public policies and projects that promote the economic empowerment of indigenous peoples. They offer material goods (homes, cars, fuel, boats among other things) in exchange of lands where to practice mining and deforestation or of indigenous labor. In this way, natives are kept in a position of dependence and not encouraged to engage in activities that would enable them to achieve economic independence while respecting the traditional way of life – for instance, by supporting the sale of products derived from sustainable agriculture.

que veio pra cá. Depois vinha o círculo da borracha, essas coisas assim, aí quanto mais fazia mais ia ficando fácil pros indígenas e aí foi deixando aquela arte de fazer. Porque parente conta que o Munduruku deixou mesmo de ser Munduruku de verdade no ano de 1911. Porque ele deixou a prática de cortar cabeça. Aí de lá pra cá foi passando o tempo... Aí também em 1911 os Padres entraram na região do Tapajós. E aí vieram até o Alto Tapajós de lá da missão Cururu. A missão São Francisco. Porque o Munduruku, ele não morava na beira do rio. Ele era campista, morava nos campos. Tanto que é que ele não pescava. Só caçava e coletava frutas. E aí com essa facilidade que eu estou falando de regatar os comerciantes da época e a própria missão São Francisco, fizeram com que, atrair esses indígenas do campo pra beira de rio. Aí, com a missão, o primeiro padre que veio [...] ele chegou em 1911 e aí começaram a construir a missão São Francisco e de lá iam catequisando os parentes. Os parentes andavam dias e dias nos campos pra chegar até a missão. Aí de lá, como estou te falando, os parentes eram muito atraídos pelas facilidades que os padres começavam a dar, roupa... os parentes mais antigos, eles contam que quem tirou a metade da cultura munduruku foi os jesuítas [franciscanos]. Os próprios padres, os próprios freis. Por causa que eles falavam assim, “tu não pode falar a língua indígena porque isso aí não é de Deus; tu não pode se pintar porque isso não é de Deus; tu não pode fazer pajelança porque isso aí não é de Deus; tudo isso aí é do mal”. E outra coisa que eu sei que o padre tirou do indígena, ele tirou as casas em círculo. As casas em círculo e a casa dos grandes guerreiros no meio. Ele tirou porque ele dizia que não era de Deus, ele dizia que o certo era fazer a casa familiar. É uma aqui, outra ali, outra por lá, outra ali, outra ali... essa era casa de verdade. Por isso em muitas aldeias tem casa ali, outra ali, outra ali, mas por causa dessa cultura que botaram na cabeça da gente.⁴² (Everaldo Manhuari Munduruku, 07.02.2022)

⁴² They say this because the colonizers came in, the *regatões* came in – *regatões* are those old traders that started to come in through the rivers, that in those days there weren’t many roads – and then they conquered natives, selling things like this, of non-Indians, white people’s things. And since then, until today, a lot of things have been easier, you know. And they saw that at that time there was the circle of cutting off heads and exporting them abroad, and then there was the circle of killing animals. At that time, they killed animals like tapirs, *maracajá* cats, alligators... these kinds of things. It was one of the first economies that I know of that arrived here. Then came the rubber circle and these things, and the more they did the easier it became for indigenous people. So, that art of doing things was left behind. Our people tell us that the Munduruku really stopped being Munduruku in 1911. Because they stopped the practice of cutting off heads. Time went by from then on... Then, also in 1911 priests entered the Tapajós region. And then they came to the Upper Tapajós from the Cururu mission. The São Francisco mission. Because the Munduruku did not live by the river. They were *campista*, they lived in the fields. So much so that they did not fish. They only hunted and collected fruits. And then, with this facility that I am talking about, the traders of the time and the São Francisco mission itself made it possible to attract these natives from the countryside to the riverbank. Then, with the mission, the first priest who came [...] he arrived in 1911 and there he began to build the São Francisco mission and from there to catechize natives. Natives would walk for days and days through the fields to get to the mission. From there, as I am telling you, natives were very attracted by the facilities that the priests started to give them, clothes... the older Munduruku tell us that it was Jesuits [Franciscans] who took away half of the Munduruku culture. Priests

In 1942 the SPI⁴³ arrived in the region in order to subtract the Munduruku to missionaries' control. The indigenist institution was still strongly paternalistic and assimilationist and found the way paved to pursue the process of transforming Munduruku people into national workers to be employed, once again, in rubber production (Loures 2017). By that time, war expeditions and ceremonies were no longer executed and the objects made for such occasions no longer produced.

Today, when talking to Munduruku people, the relation between the objects and the whole ritual complex appears fragmented and having access to information about the objects' meanings beyond Western perspective is not easy. This might be due partly to linguistic barrier – the knowledge on them is held mostly by elders who speaks little Portuguese – and, partly to the distrust towards the *pariwat* and the use they make or might make of such knowledge (§5.1.1). Every time I showed the pictures of the artifacts preserved in Vienna it was possible to perceive a feeling of surprise among the presents. When asked, many people answered that they belong to another time and another generation.

Esse aqui, como eu te falei naquela hora, eu não posso contar direto isso aí, porque eu não sei. Porque sumiu porque nossos avos não fizeram nada de livro, por isso que as coisas, muita coisa ficou den' do escuro né. Agora se fosse deixar feito no papel, aí não sumia não. Por isso que eu não posso contar. Porque eu não vi. Eu não sou do tempo deles também. Eu sou indígena, só que não sei de tudo.⁴⁴ (Arnaldo Kaba Munduruku, 19.12.2021)

themselves, friars themselves. Because they said, "You can't speak the indigenous language because it is not of God; you can't paint yourself because it is not of God; you can't do shamanism because it is not of God; all this is evil." And another thing that I know priests took away from indigenous people, they took away circle houses. Circle houses and the house of the great warriors in the middle. They took them away because they said they were not of God, they said that the right thing was to make family houses. One here, one there, one around there, one there, one there... that was the real house. That is why in many villages there is a house there, another one there, another one there... because of this culture that was put into our heads.

⁴³ The SPI (Serviço de Proteção ao Índio) was an indigenist institution created in 1910 to manage every issue concerning indigenous people. In 1967 it was dismantled and substituted by the Funai (Fundação Nacional do Índio).

⁴⁴ "This one, as I told you at the time, I can't tell you directly about it, because I do not know. It disappeared because our grandparents did not make a book of it, that's why things, a lot of things were left in the dark, right? Now, if it had been put down on paper, then it would not have disappeared. This is why I cannot tell you about it. Because I have not seen it. I'm not from their time either. I am indigenous, but I do not know everything."

O pai [o cacique Adriano Saw], nem todos [os objetos] ele reconhece aqui. Ele só sabe dizer daquele ali, entendeu? Porque isso daí já foi muito tempo.⁴⁵ (Claudete Saw Munduruku, 12.02.2022)

Ele [o cacique Adriano Saw] explicou que a maioria dos artefatos ali ele não conhece. Não tem ideia porque são muito, muito antigos.⁴⁶ (Honésio Dace Munduruku, 12.02.2022)

The mummified head was what provoked greater curiosity since it evoked directly the legacy of warriors and head-hunters still claimed by the Munduruku. As for body feather ornaments, some people traced them back to the ceremonial sphere and to authority but no explicit connection was immediately established with specific events or ancient figures as it happened with the Kambeba or the Sateré-Mawé.

Esse material bem ali que a gente está vendo foto, esse aí quem usava de primeiro, como nos estamos agora, [...] tipo festa, né. Nos estamos aqui reunidos, né. [...] Então aquele material que é de antigo, pessoal usava isso aí não é o dia de brincadeira viu. O dia era assim de luta, que ele usava esse material bem ai. Quem esse material que eles usavam? Era autoridade, como os cacique, como o pessoal chamava naquele tempo, o Tuxaua, né. Então ou guerreiro.⁴⁷ [...] (Arnaldo Kaba Munduruku, 19.12.2021)

Não era qualquer pessoa. Então esses adornos, enfeites, capacete, as vezes era feito para comemorar uma cerimônia. Um reconhecimento, né. Para honrar o outro... tipo uma patente, né. “Esse aqui, você merece, então esse aqui, toma como uma patente.” Então, os capacetes que estão lá, tem essa finalidade, né. [?] tiver esse capacete para enfeite, mas não é para enfeite é para uso da autoridade.⁴⁸ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

⁴⁵ “Dad [cacique Adriano Saw] does not recognizes all of them [objects] here. He can only say about that one, you know? Because that was a long time ago.”

⁴⁶ “He [the chief Adriano Saw] explained that most of the artifacts there he does not know. He has no idea because they are very, very old.”

⁴⁷ “This material right there that we see in the picture, who used to use it first, as we are now, [...] like a party. We are reunited here. [...] So that material from the old days, when people used it, it was not a day for playing, you know. It was a day of struggle, when they used this material. Who used this material? They were authorities, Vlike the cacique, as people called them at that time, the *tuxaua*. Or warriors.”

⁴⁸ “It wasn't just anybody. So, these adornments, ornaments, helmets, were sometimes made to commemorate a ceremony. A recognition, you know. To honor the other... like a patent. “This one, you deserve it, so this one, take it as a patent.” So, helmets that are there, have this purpose. [?] have this helmet for decoration, but it is not for decoration, it is authorities who used it.”

One thing that almost everyone recognized was the clan to which objects belonged depending on the colors of the feathers. Compared to the information reported by Barbosa Rodrigues (1882) who identified three clans, the Munduruku now recognize only two⁴⁹: the red clan (*ipakpakayũ*) and the white clan (*iriritayũ*) (Dace Munduruku 2016). The former uses mainly red and black feather of the red macaw (*Ara macao*) while the latter uses yellow and blue feathers of the yellow macaw (*Ara ararauna*); both uses black feathers of different species of curassow (*Crax fasciolata*; *Crax alector*).

Beyond this, any question about who and how objects were made, what they represented and their stories were matched by vague and unsure answers. It was by extending the conversations with my interlocutors to other topics that I began to realize that the presence of *enfeites de plumas* or *artesanatos* (feather ornaments/handicrafts) was recurring in ancient stories, especially those narrating the origins of head-hunting practice. What was missing was the establishment of a connection between the objects of the narrations and the objects preserved in Vienna: no longer produced for over a century, people had lost almost all visual reference regarding their appearance. Therefore, to adopt an inductive rather than deductive perspective seemed a better strategy to reconstruct the objects' density and find their place in Munduruku history and cosmology. In fact, while few references are found for the objects in the conceptual universe of contemporary Munduruku, the same cannot be said of the warrior expeditions and the process of preparing the heads. Even if threatened by the intense contact with non-indigenous society, the memory of these events is still alive and passed down from generation to generation. Also, it is becoming a research subject for those Munduruku who enter in universities and want to offer new insights on their history and culture compared to those traditionally reported by non-indigenous anthropologists. One of the most appealing works for the topic of our interest is the dissertation written and recently discussed by Aldilo Kaba Munduruku and entitled *Nôpağõ: Histórias de Guerra Munduruku*. In the introduction of his work Aldilo Kaba explains that the purpose of his research was precisely to *correct* that information wrongly reported by White people, “principalmente sobre o que realmente acontecia em nôpağõ, (as expedições de guerra): meu avô sempre me dizia que os brancos inventavam a sua descrição. Por isso é importante que o conhecimento

⁴⁹ Cfr §3.2.2, note 58.

munduruku seja registrado por nós mesmos, pesquisadores munduruku”⁵⁰ (Kaba Munduruku 2022, 2). Through the information collected by dialoguing with a few elders coming from one of the most ancient Munduruku villages of the Upper Tapajós (*aldeia Kaburuá*), the author reconstructs and reports the strategies used by the Munduruku in warrior expeditions and the stages of preparation of trophy-heads. Particular attention is given to the reasons behind warrior expeditions since, as we mentioned above, this has been the aspect mostly misunderstood by Westerners: “não era por vingança que os Munduruku iam para guerra, era para cortar a cabeça dos seus inimigos. Por meio dessas cabeças, eles controlavam os espíritos *pucaxi*, as mães dos animais, e *kapido*, as mães das plantas, e assim garantiam fartura de alimentos”⁵¹ (Idem, 5). In fact, once they were cut, the enemies’ heads gained a specific power that allowed their owners to control and attract food (animals and plant-based products) for the sustenance of the community: “cada lugar no mato tem sua *ya’e pucaxi*, uma mãe espírito, e é por causa delas que existem todos os animais, todas as frutas e todas as plantas cultivadas na roça. Por meio da pajelança, uma mãe espírito era colocada dentro da cabeça do inimigo, que era usada assim para garantir a fartura del alimentos”⁵² (Idem, 49). Over time the power of the head diminished and so it was necessary to hunt more heads. That was why Munduruku people were always at war. For the head to acquire such power, it had to pass through a long process of preparation, defined by several actions. First of all, right after cutting the head, the warrior painted its face with black genipap paint not to let his spirit to get out of his body and be captured by the spirit mothers contained by the enemy’s head. Afterwards, he wrapped it in açai palm leaves and brought it back to the camp where he sprinkled it with oils and other substances and started smoking it so that it would not putrefy. The effective preparation of the head as a trophy occurred in the village once the warrior had returned. The head was boiled, deprived of soft parts, teeth and brain; then it was smoked and oiled again and exposed to the sun. When completely dried, the decoration could begin. The eye sockets were filled with resin and the ears adorned with tufts

⁵⁰ “Especialmente sobre o que realmente aconteceu em *nôpağô*, (expedições de guerra): meu avô sempre me contou que os brancos inventaram a descrição. Por isso é importante que o conhecimento Munduruku seja registrado por nós mesmos, pesquisadores munduruku.”

⁵¹ “Não era por vingança que os Munduruku iam para guerra, era para cortar a cabeça dos seus inimigos. Por meio dessas cabeças, eles controlavam os espíritos *pucaxi*, as mães dos animais, e *kapido*, as mães das plantas, e assim garantiam fartura de alimentos.”

⁵² “Cada lugar no mato tem sua *ya’e pucaxi*, uma mãe espírito, e é por causa delas que existem todos os animais, todas as frutas, e todas as plantas cultivadas na roça. Por meio da pajelança, uma mãe espírito era colocada dentro da cabeça do inimigo, que era usada assim para garantir a fartura del alimentos.”

of feathers of different colors and different animals depending on the clan. Finally, teeth were used to prepare necklaces or belts with which great leaders were honored. There are various opinions about the completion of this process, but it could take up to a few years. Heads' hunting and preparation was then celebrated in big collective ceremonies in which other people from allied villages were called to participate. Jairo Saw described it as follows:

Ela é chamada de *pariua-a*, quer dizer, a cabeça do inimigo é enfeitado. É adornado. Antes eles faziam o processo de tratamento, pra não, como se diz, a cabeça ficar intacto tudo, né, morrer, sem alguma mudança. Então era guardada. Mas quando chegava um ano, era preparado seu adorno. Botava [...] um tipo de brinco com pena, os enfeites, coífa tudo isso para homenagear. Pra dizer, o espírito dele subiu. E considerava como guardar ele, né. Antes ele era esquecido como inimigo, mas depois que recebia aquela virtude, aquele poder mágico, eles renovavam, como a igreja católica canoniza uma santa, né? Então ele era lembrado por cem anos e mais. [...] Era assim esse ritual. Para dizer, “esse aqui foi um grande guerreiro, nos matemos, mas nos trouxe muito benefício, trouxe muita vitória, trouxe sorte, então nos vamos adornar e vamos festejar.” Fazia tudo o preparo. Com adorno e tudo. E era assim que era feita a cabeça mumificada do inimigo.⁵³ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

Once the ceremonies came to an end, the heads preserved their magical power for a few years. During this period, they were kept in the house of men (*uk'sa*), each one close to its owner. When it was the time to realize a hunting expedition, a man who knew the songs of plants and animals sang them while holding the head so to attract by the village the spirit mothers of each species and, consequently, their sons (the animals)⁵⁴. Killing them was easier and hunters could always provide food in abundance (Kaba Munduruku 2022).

⁵³ “It is called *pariua-a*, that is, the enemy's head is adorned. It is decorated. Before they did the treatment process, so that the head wouldn't, how can I say, remain intact, you know, die, without any change. So, it was kept. But when a year arrived, they prepared its adornment. They put [...] a kind of feather earring, ornaments, headdresses, all this to pay homage. To say, his spirit rose. And they considered how to keep it, you know. First, he was forgotten as an enemy but after he received that virtue, that magic power, they renewed it, like the Catholic Church canonizes a saint, right? Then, he was remembered for a hundred years and more. [...] This was the ritual. To say, “this one here was a great warrior, we killed him but he brought us a lot of benefit, he brought us a lot of victory, he brought us luck, so we are going to adorn him and we are going to celebrate”. They did all the preparation. With adornment and everything. And this is how the mummified head of the enemy was made.”

⁵⁴ Honésio Dace Munduruku underlines the importance of songs in munduruku culture: “Na cultura Munduruku, o acervo dos cânticos existe não simplesmente para cantar por cantar. [...] Todos os cânticos Munduruku estão relacionados às histórias contadas oralmente. [...] Todos os cânticos Munduruku, não são cantados à toa, geralmente, eles representam as histórias remotas, sobre as pessoas, os animais, as plantas e peixes” (2016, 75). [In Munduruku culture, the collection of songs exists not simply for the sake of singing. [...]

The whole process of hunting and celebrating trophy heads thus had several objectives all oriented to guarantee the continuity of the community's existence. Echoing Jairo Saw's description, we can glimpse that dynamic of familiarization and mediation of the alterity represented by the enemy (Fausto 1999 in Kapfhammer 2013) deeply analyzed also by Viveiros de Castro in other Amazonian contexts (2015; cfr §1.1). Through this process, the enemy's death, on the one hand, allowed to gain greater control over ecological resources and their exploitation by harnessing the energy contained in the head; on the other, made it possible to increase Munduruku human capital and influence on the territory through the capture and "mundurukuzation" of other indigenous groups' women and children. In fact, after a battle, warriors took them back to the villages to marry the former and raise the latter as Munduruku (cfr Barbosa Rodrigues 1875; Tocantins 1877; Kapfhammer 2013; Almeida 2010; Kaba Munduruku 2022).

Warrior practice was a key aspect of Munduruku society not only because it promoted its physical preservation but also for its connection to the memory of origins and, thus, to its identity. During war expeditions and rituals, the teachings of past great warriors were reenacted and passed on, in particular those of *Karo Daybi*, forefather of Munduruku people⁵⁵.

In ancient times, *Karo Daybi* had been the first to cut and prepare heads as we described above. He and his brother, *Yori Cuğ'pu*, lived in two villages in the region of the Upper Tapajós River and invited each other to participate in ceremonies and parties that were taking place in the respective villages. One day, *Karo Daybi* suffered a wrong from *Yori Cuğ'pu*, so he decided to start beheading the women of his brother's village and mummify their heads in revenge. It was *Mureko Doibu* – a snake capable of transforming into a person⁵⁶, great leader

All Munduruku songs are related to orally told stories. [...] All Munduruku songs are not sung for nothing; generally, they represent the remote stories, about people, animals, plants, and fish.]

⁵⁵ The story of *Karo Daybi* is told in its complete form in some works with greater ethnographic depth. See, for example: Murphy 1958; Loures 2017; Kaba Munduruku 2022.

⁵⁶ Transformation is a key point of Amerindian thought. It is related to what Viveiros De Castro has called "perspectivism" and to the capacity of adopting the other's perspective by transforming one's body, that is, the symbolic referents of the surrounding reality. In many cosmologies, at the origin of the world there was no such thing as the morphological distinction of beings; humans, animals and spirits all perceived one another as anthropomorphic-looking people: Therefore, they did not need to "change body" to communicate. Today this is no longer the case and shamans are the only people able to consciously manage this transformation in order to interact with/travel across different perspectives. For a more accurate explanation see Viveiros De Castro (1998).

of animals and master of many knowledges – to teach him. Aldilo Kaba reports this episode in his work:

[...] Mureko Doibu começou a fazer o tratamento da cabeça. Primeiro cozinhou a cabeça, depois tirou os dentes e os miolos e deixou a cabeça no sol até ressecar. Mureko Doibu fez enfeites com pena de arara vermelha e colocou na orelha da cabeça. “Faça esse enfeite com a pena de arara vermelha, que é do seu clã, porque você ainda vai derramar muito sangue”, falou para Karo Daybi. Mureko Doibu colocou a cabeça na ponta do seu cajado de bambu para enfeitá-lo.⁵⁷ (Kaba Munduruku 2022, 13)

The two brothers began to wage war against each other, and soon the conflict spread to their respective peoples. According to the stories told to me by Francisco Ikō and Jairo Saw, more than 3.000 people were killed at that time and traces can still be seen today in specific places⁵⁸. The extension of the conflict to the entire population is known as “internal war” and is considered a watershed for the origin of the Munduruku people and the other ethnic groups. In fact, some time after the war began, *Yori Cuğ’pu* decided to leave the region of the Upper Tapajós; from him descended different ethnic groups which scattered along Brazilian territory. Karo Daybi remained and gave origin to Munduruku people who continued to hunt the heads of their enemies – especially Kayapó and Parintintin – for centuries to come.

Na guerra interna nasceu o reino Munduruku que nos contamos. E na guerra interna também saiu as outras etnias. Por isso que a história Munduruku, toda sua história sempre nos traz informações acerca das gerações passadas e das gerações presentes e dessa, como pode dizer assim, dessas famílias que estavam lá e geraram os outros povos que hoje tem no Brasil.⁵⁹ (Francisco Ikō Munduruku, 08.02.2022)

⁵⁷ “[...] Mureko Doibu began to treat the head. First, he cooked the head, then he removed teeth and brain and left the head in the sun until it dried. Mureko Doibu made ornaments with red macaw feathers and put them on the ear of the head. “Make this ornament with the red macaw feather, which is from your clan, because you are going to shed a lot of blood”, he said to Karo Daybi. Mureko Doibu put his head on the end of his bamboo staff to decorate it.”

⁵⁸ These places are sacred to the Munduruku of present time because they compose an “historical landscape” (Arruti 2006, 164) functional to the transmission of a set of memories and, therefore, the maintenance of a shared identity.

⁵⁹ “In the internal war it was born the Munduruku kingdom that we talked about. And in the internal war other ethnic groups also emerged. This is why the Munduruku history, all of its history always brings us information about the past generations and the present generations and this, how can you put it, these families that were there and generated the other peoples that we have today in Brazil.”

Feather objects are part of these stories not only in relation to trophy-heads but also in the form of bodily ornaments like those preserved in Vienna. Karo Daybi and some of his warriors were great craftsmen and they were called by all villages to manufacture them.

Karo Daybi, ele não era de guerra. Ele era inteligente. Ele vivia... ele tinha um dom, de fazer enfeite. Trabalhar muito com as plumagens. Todas as pessoas iam lá confeccionar adorno, tipo coifa... [...] As pessoas de outras aldeias e o *Yori Cug'pu*, trazia para ele fazer. E aí eles produziam vários outros tipos de plumaria, né, a arte de se enfeitar para mulher, para homem...⁶⁰ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

For Munduruku people, the production of feather ornaments, as well as the periodical realization of warrior expeditions and celebration of trophy-heads, represent the legacy left by *Karo Daybi* to them. During the whole ceremonial complex, it was passed down to future generations and new alterities were physically and conceptually domesticated. In this process, the production and use of objects like feather works entailed manufacturing practical skills exclusive of *Karo Daybi* descendants so distinguishing Munduruku from other indigenous groups. Also, they encompassed a deeper knowledge on Munduruku cultural universe if they were contextualized in the stories narrated. As for the cases mentioned in chapter four, such stories tell about the origins of the people and establish a set of references within which to frame Munduruku experience of the world. They build the foundations of Munduruku collective identity – and external recognition – as warriors. Consequently, objects also absorb this function as they materialize, in a sense, the memory of the ancestors.

[...] Tem vários parentes, a gente procura conversar muitos com os anciãos, aqueles que ainda tem a cultura mesmo no coração. E eles se orgulham muito do Munduruku ser grande guerreiro. É por isso que isso não sai da gente assim, porque são histórias que a gente guarda pra gente, que explica pros netos, pra eles conhecer. Tem que saber né. [...] Pra manter a

⁶⁰ “*Karo Daybi*, he was not warlike. He was intelligent. He lived... he had a gift, of ornament making. He worked a lot with feathers. All the people went there to make ornaments, like headdresses... [...] People from other villages and *Yori Cug'pu* would bring them to him to make them. And then they produced various other types of feather works, the art of adorning themselves for women, for men...”

memória viva e dar valor aquilo ali que é, que vai passar pra as pessoas.⁶¹ (Everaldo Manhuari Munduruku, 07.02.2022)

The role of stories is meaningful especially as they define a set of rules and values that have to be respected in order to perpetuate Munduruku social and cultural existence over time. “A oralidade é a característica marcante e uma da manutenção das histórias Munduruku. Histórias contadas oralmente é que representam a vida dos Munduruku enquanto ser vivo na terra, porque através dessas, não só os conhecimentos empíricos são repassados, mas uma gama de variedades de valores culturais, éticos, morais, religiosos e políticos”⁶² (Dace Munduruku 2016, 54).

The social and symbolical function of myth (how these stories are called in social science literature) has been extensively investigated and recognized by innumerable scholars of the 20th century acting within anthropological, psychological and religious studies⁶³ (Segal 2004). The various approaches that were developed allowed, in part, to get around the problem of the *non-objectivity* of myth in describing reality and to reevaluate their importance within different types of societies. Both aspects had been questioned in previous century researches when myths had been observed as forms to pursue a universal, objective knowledge of the world: did the stories they told correctly describe and explain natural phenomena? Needless to say, the answer was negative. In different ways that we cannot explore here, mythic storytelling was associated with the sphere of religion – thus belief – and with a primitive stage of thinking. Myth as an explanation of the physical world was a stage in a larger evolutionary process and would eventually be replaced by science as a truthful, rational and

⁶¹ “[...] There are several Munduruku, and we try to talk a lot with the elders, those who still have the culture in their hearts. And they are very proud that the Munduruku are great warriors. That is why this does not leave us, because these are stories that we keep for ourselves, that we explain to our grandchildren, for them to know. We have to know, right? [...] To keep the memory alive and give value to that which is there, which will pass on to others.”

⁶² “Orality is the defining characteristic and one [which allows] the maintenance of Munduruku stories. Orally told stories represent the life of the Munduruku as a living being on earth because through these stories not only empirical knowledge is passed on but a range of varieties of cultural, ethical, moral, religious, and political values.”

⁶³ Among the most important studies we recall those of Rank (1914), Malinowski (1948), Campbell (1949), Tylor (1958 [1913]), Lévi-Bruhl (1966 [1926]), Lévi-Strauss (1966, 1986), Freud (1963 [1913]), Jonas (1963 [1958]), Turner (1964), Jung (1967 [1956]), Horton (1967), Eliade (1968), Douglas (1970), Geertz (1972), Cassirer (1979), Bultmann (1984).

*modern*⁶⁴ form of knowing and experiencing reality⁶⁵ (see Segal 1999). Although twentieth-century theories have recognized myths as having a function distinct from that of returning an accurate description of the physical world, these narrations have continued to be regarded as non-scientific in the kind of knowledge they produce about the world. As a result, they have been deprived of qualities such as truthfulness and historicity. Recent post-modern and post-structuralist interpretations have helped reverse the trend of these approaches by questioning the claim of truth, objectivity and universality of Western scientific knowledge and discussing over the constructed character of both myth and science as discourses (in Foucauldian terms) produced within specific dynamics of power (see Barthes 1972; Derrida 1976; Foucault 2005). However, the association of the term *myth* with the idea of fiction and invention still prevails in the common thought; for this reason, the Munduruku prefer to call the episodes which compose their own representation over time as *histórias* and to define as *história*⁶⁶ the whole of them.

In a series of long conversations, Francisco Ikō explained to me what they intend for “Munduruku history” and its importance for the physical, social and cultural reproduction of the population. Munduruku cosmology assumes the existence of two worlds, that he calls “mythic”⁶⁷ and “mystical”, respectively corresponding to the physical and the spiritual dimension. Who, like White people, is unable to perceive the relationships beyond the physical world, only grasps a superficial vision of reality and is led to interpret myths as fictitious narratives that tell nothing more than what they describe. According to Francisco, to read them correctly one must have a set of specific knowledge related to mysticism because it gives access to a deeper understanding of reality. Through mystic reading, Munduruku stories acquire a sense of truth and historicity: “a história Munduruku pra nos ela é mística. Ela sai do mítico para o místico”⁶⁸ (Francisco Ikō Munduruku, 08.02.2022). Also, they

⁶⁴ We already discussed the opposition between *traditional* and *modern* in the Introduction and we will return on it in §5.2.

⁶⁵ Taylor (1958 [1913]) and Frazer (1922) have been two key figures for the study of myth in the 19th century.

⁶⁶ I prefer to maintain here the original Portuguese terms since translating them into English might imply a semantic shift.

⁶⁷ The use of these terms, “mystical” and “mythical”, reveal the obvious presence of processes of syncretism and appropriation of concepts from the Western world (from the Christian religion in the case of “mystical” and from anthropological literature in the case of “mythical” – at least in terms of the meaning of “fictional narrative” attributed to the term in this context). Delving further into these processes and how they are articulated with traditional Munduruku epistemological and ontological categories is something that narrow ethnographic field did not allow me to do. Hopefully, it will be an argument for further researches.

⁶⁸ “Munduruku story for us is mystical. It goes from the mythical to the mystical.”

become points of reference in individuals' educational process because they provide key notions to articulate life experience as Munduruku, over time and on a specific territory. In compliance with Munduruku history, both the mythic and the mystic worlds are regulated by a set of "active principles" established by the creator *Karosakaybu* and that ensure the balanced functioning of all spheres of existence. While the mythic world is equally accessible to everyone, the mystical one is exclusive of *pajés* (shamans). They are the only people able to establish a contact with the spiritual dimension and to handle the relationship with the entities that inhabit it. These beings, called *iba'aremremayũ*, are considered to be spirits of dead people who surround the living and sometimes interact with their lives positively or negatively (Dace Munduruku 2016). This creates an indissoluble link between the historical and religious dimensions⁶⁹. "A religião munduruku, não se restringe em adorar algum tipo de divindade, em prol de suplicar a salvação ou algum tipo de herança, mas fundamenta-se na organização do pensamento munduruku sobre como viver em harmonia com seres das divindades místicas"⁷⁰ (Dace Munduruku 2021, 6); "[...] todo Munduruku tem o conhecimento de seu mundo real sob a ótica do mundo fictício ou místico, em que, decifrado, através do compartilhamento de histórias antigas, perpetuam seus valores e sua essência"⁷¹ (Dace Munduruku 2016, 54). Mythic and mystical world are conceptually but also phenomenologically interconnected since every time that someone breaks the rules of an "active principle" this is altered, making it easier for entities of the spiritual dimension to influence the physical one. This process makes it manifest through the establishment of new environmental, social or political, mechanisms that, from that moment on, are incorporated to the cultural dynamics of society and condition its existence. Munduruku history contains all the information to understand these dynamics and, if correctly interpreted, offers to people the proper tools to learn how to behave according to the situation.

[...] Eu aprendi, que o Munduruku ele tem um conhecimento muito profundo que a maioria deles não consegue interpretar. [...] As vezes eu vejo, a lenda munduruku, não é uma lenda.

⁶⁹ Some aspects of Munduruku religion have been analyzed by Murphy (1958), Alencar (2001), Dace Munduruku (2021).

⁷⁰ "Munduruku religion is not restricted to worshipping some kind of deity in order to beg for salvation or some kind of inheritance but is based on the organization of Munduruku thought on how to live in harmony with the beings of the mystical deities."

⁷¹ "[...] every Munduruku has the knowledge of his/her real world from the perspective of the fictional or mystical world, in which, decodified through the sharing of ancient stories, they perpetuate their values and essence."

Ela é um ensinamento. É até uma leitura, que no final você tem que dizer assim, “qual é o moral da história, né?” O verdadeiro sentido daquela história. Como definir... tipo assim uma definição, né? Aí diz, “olha, é isso e isso”.⁷² (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

[...] Quando eu olho pelo lado do místico aí vou entender realmente uma outra leitura sobre o mundo, que nos cerca. O que a gente tá vendo aqui, em paredes, em rasgos... existe um mundo que você não enxerga. É o mundo místico.⁷³ (Francisco Ikõ Munduruku, 08.02.2022)

Recent studies on Amerindian ontologies turn out to be very helpful in understanding this way of experiencing reality. The distinction between *mythic* and *mystical* world reminds the one between *natural* and *supernatural* underlined by authors such as Viveiros De Castro (1998, 2015, 2015b), Kopenawa and Albert (2013), Barcelos Neto (2004), Santos-Granero (2009b) among the others. In Amerindian thought this distinction is the only one perceived as dichotomic and separates the domain of what is *human* from what is *non-human*. These two categories are different from Western ones since to be *human* – and to perceive oneself in anthropomorphic shape – does not depend on the sharing of a given human *nature* (a human body) but on being endowed with a subjectivity (a soul) regardless of the body one *wears*. This system, which has been defined by Viveiros De Castro as Multinaturalism (2015), recognizes the status of *person* also to some non-anthropomorphic beings (plants, animals, objects) and obliges us to rethink the way in which the categories of *nature* and *culture* have been articulated in Western thought. In Amerindian societies, *nature* and *culture* are inseparable because it is the union of the two dimensions that guarantee a *human/person* to exist as such; it is the presence of a body that gives to subjectivity the ability to interact in the world. In fact, the relationship among beings occurs through the acquisition of the other’s perspective – for this reason Viveiros De Castro defines Amerindian ontology as “perspectivism” (1998, 2015). This process does not mean to *simply* acquire its representation of the world but to change body and, consequently, the symbolic references that build one’s reality. Death is the only moment in which body and soul separate: the person’s soul enters the supernatural

⁷² I learned that the Munduruku have a very deep knowledge that most of them cannot interpret. [...] Sometimes I see, the Munduruku legend is not a legend. It is a teaching. It is even a reading, that at the end you have to say like this, “what is the moral of the story, right?” The true meaning of that story. How to define... like a definition, right? Then you say, “Look, it’s this and this.”

⁷³ “When I look at it from the mystical side, then I really understand another reading of the world that surrounds us. What we are seeing here, in walls, in tears... there is a world that you do not see. It is the mystical world.”

world with other spirits and, since they do not have a body, they are classified as *non-humans*. The relationship with the supernatural/non-human dimension is complex and dangerous because if improperly handled can lead to the de-subjectivation of individuals (when spirits of the supernatural world appropriate someone's body) causing their social death. Shamans are the only people able to handle it properly thanks to the capacity of consciously travelling through worlds and to change perspective without the risk of having their soul stolen by non-human entities.

In this context, myths play an important role because they show to people how this system works and instructs about the behaviors that who belongs to the human world must maintain in order to survive physically and spiritually. To this extent, myths do not represent reality – they are not cultural constructions through which to give meaning to human experience – but they shape it and organize the relationship between human/non-human, natural/supernatural worlds (Viveiros De Castro 1998; 2015). In mythical narrations the limits between the different dimensions dissolves or are overcome: animals, humans and spirits all perceive one another in the same way as persons, like it was at the origin of the world before the “fallibility of the ancient people” led to the separation in many corporal natures (Santos-Granero 2009, 4). This element of *error* is also present in Mundurucu cosmology and is one of the central aspects of the educational process because it is used to explain how the “active principles” afore-mentioned work and how they influence the relationship between the mythical and the mystical worlds. To better illustrate this system, it might be worth to report some of the examples Francisco Ikõ gave me.

Quando uma aldeia, uma sociedade cresce, em que as regras elas servem pra dar um equilíbrio pra comunidade, pra sociedade. Uma sociedade sem regras ela é fatal para se autodestruir. [...] Eu vou botar um exemplo aqui. Certa vez, um casal lá na história não diz se eles eram casados, se eles tinham casa a parte, se eles estavam... só sei que eles se encontraram entre cinco e seis horas da manhã, tiveram relação sexual, escondidinhos entre uma passagem uma aldeia muito grande e o esperma dessa pessoa caiu na terra e gerou uma criança fora do corpo duma mulher. E na verdade era o próprio filho do criador que disse assim “olha, vai lá, nasce lá, pra ser um, pra avaliar. Você vai mas o eixo central é avaliar como que tá a saúde da sociedade. Se eles estão bom, se eles melhoraram, se estão guardando ensinamentos, e valores ali que foi ensinados, se ainda são uma marca daquela sociedade”. Então a criança foi lá, cresceu, gerou, começou a crescer ali e naquele show de enrola os pais sumiram. E aí todos,

ao amanhecer acordaram pra suas atividades normais. Uns iam caçar, outros iam pescar, outros iam tirar lenha, outros iam tomar banho, outros iam pra roça, outros iam... eu sei que estavam numa atividade contínua, mas todos que passava, por lá só observava a criança e não tinha nenhuma atitude de pegar ela e cuidar. E nessa história tinha uma senhora, ela observava de longe e então ela disse assim, *jewekarasasan*. A tradução é “malditas são vocês mulheres, porque vocês estão vendo um situação e vocês sequer tiveram compaixão dessa criança”, nem mesmo pra ver o que estava acontecendo, o que tinha acontecido. Então quando ela falou esse tipo de maldição, *jewekarasasan*, ele praticamente, aquele princípio que não era pra ser instalado se instalou, no tempo e no espaço. [...] O que aconteceu? Então quando ela falou isso, ela disse assim “mulheres, de hoje em diante vocês vão ter problemas na gestação. Vocês vão ter dores de parto. E essas dores de parto significa também que vão ter complicações.” [...] Então aquilo lá se instalou. Aquilo lá foi uma marca. Então hoje os velhos contam, eles dizem assim “olha, isso não era pra ter acontecido”. Só que aconteceu. Então em todas as nossas histórias tem um tipo de maldição. Aconteceu na história da agricultura também, isso aí. Eles faziam, praticamente no passado, num passado bem distante, eles praticamente quando eles faziam uma roça eles procuravam o melhor terreno, analisavam a terra, analisavam as árvores, as frutas, o que tinha aqui, o que não tinha, os animais, as plantas pra remédio e tudo e também eles observavam os pequenos animais. Aonde poderiam ser afetados, quais dos animais que se alimentavam de frutas, quais as plantas ruins que eram proibidas. Então havia todo um estudo, uma análise para fazer uma roça. Então antes de fazer isso eles descascavam a árvore, tiravam a casca dela até uma altura de um metro e meio até três metros, dois metros de altura e a planta, a árvore, ela com tempo ia secando até o tempo de morrer. Levava de três a seis meses a folha caía e eles tocavam fogo – eles já dominavam o fogo, né – e aí fazia [...]. Mas chegou um tempo que as coisas ficaram muito difíceis. Então chegou um ser e disse assim, “olha eu posso ajudar vocês, só que vocês não podem ver o que está acontecendo. Vocês só acertar o local e deixem que o povo que está lá vai fazer”. E aí era o sucesso, o povo indicava e quando passava o período que não era pra ver, eles chegavam lá e tava tudo roçado, tudo caído e eles tocavam fogo. [...] Então um dia alguém ficou curioso, “quero ver, qual é essa coisa que eles estão falando aí, que é proibido”. Ele chegou lá, literalmente os machados estavam fazendo o serviço de homens, só que eles não estavam vendo. Na verdade, existiam seres que estavam cortando, mas na visão dele não conseguiu enxergar. Era só o machado. Derrubando. Quando ele viu aquilo lá, se assustou, praticamente e os machados pararam, caíram. E aí vem de novo essa frase *jewekarasasan*. Eles disseram “olha, vocês perderam essa grande oportunidade, de não fazer o trabalho pesado”. E aí lá vai o homem se ferrar de novo pra fazer o tudo manual. Então em

todas as nossas histórias elas têm um tipo de... uma moral.⁷⁴ (Francisco Ikō Munduruku, 08.02.2022)

In this excerpt Francisco Ikō mentions two examples in which active principles were altered and the curse *jewekarasaran* sparked off. More in general, he pointed out how Munduruku history insists on this type of information, in order to teach people to obey and reflect on their individual and social role, to understand how to behave in or to express an opinion on specific circumstances. To act consciously within the cultural rules imposed by Munduruku cosmology is important to prevent the curse from being triggered again. This would imply to lose other opportunities or to encourage the establishment of conditions unfavorable to the

⁷⁴ “When a village, a society grows, the rules serve to give balance to the community, to society. A society without rules is fatal to self-destruction. [...] I’ll give you an example here. I only know that they met between five and six o’clock in the morning, had sexual intercourse, hidden in the middle of a passage in a very big village, and the sperm of this person fell into the earth and generated a child outside the body of a woman. And in fact, it was the son of the creator himself who said “look, go there, be born there, to be one, to evaluate. You go, but the central axis is to evaluate the health of society. If they are well, if they have improved, if they are keeping the teachings and values that were taught there, if they are still a mark of that society”. So, the child went there, grew up, generated, started to grow up there, and in that show of deception the parents disappeared. And then everyone woke up at dawn for their normal activities. Some went hunting, others went fishing, others went gathering firewood, others went bathing, others went to the fields, others went... I know they were in a continuous activity but everyone who passed by just watched the child and had no attitude of taking her and caring for him. And in this story, there was a lady, she was watching from afar and then she said, *jewekarasaran*. The translation is “Damn you women, because you are watching a situation and you didn’t even have any compassion for this child”, not even to see what was happening, what had happened. So, when she said this kind of curse, *jewekarasaran*, it practically, that principle that was not supposed to be installed was installed, in time and space. [...] What happened? When she said that, she said “women, from now on you are going to have problems in pregnancy. You will have labor pains. And those labor pains also mean you’re going to have complications”. [...] So that settled in. That was a mark. So today the old people tell us, they say “look, this was not supposed to happen. But it happened”. So, in all our stories there is a kind of curse. It happened in the history of agriculture, too. They used to do, practically in the past, in the very distant past, when they would plant a field, they would look for the best land, analyze the land, analyze the trees, the fruits, what was there, what wasn’t, the animals, the plants for medicine and everything, and they also observed the small animals. Where they could be affected, which of the animals that fed on fruit, which of the bad plants were forbidden. So, there was a whole study, an analysis to do a plantation. So, before doing this, they peeled the tree, they removed the bark up to a height of one and a half to three meters, two meters high and the plant, the tree, with time it would dry out until it died. It took three to six months for the leaves to fall and they would set it on fire – they already knew how to use fire, you know – and then they would do [...]. But there came a time when things became very difficult. Then a being came and said, “look, I can help you, but you can’t see what’s happening. You just set the place and let the people who are there do it”. And it was a success, people indicated [the place] and when the period that they were not supposed to look passed, they got there and everything was cut, everything was fallen and they set fire to it. [...] Then one day someone got curious, “I want to see, what is this thing that they are talking about, that it is forbidden”. He got there, literally the axes were doing men’s work, only they weren’t seeing it. Actually, there were beings that were chopping, but in his vision he couldn’t see. It was just the axe. Chopping. When he saw that, he got scared, practically, and the axes stopped, fell down. And here comes that *jewekarasaran* phrase again. They said, “look, you missed this great opportunity not to do the heavy lifting”. And there goes the man again, to do all the manual work. In all our stories, they have a kind of a moral.”

reproduction of Munduruku society. Also, once the principle is altered there is no way to return to previous conditions.

[...] Toda vez que um velho hoje, numa grande reunião, numa grande assembleia diz assim, nos perdemos a oportunidade, é porque ele já olha lá no início, quando foi, e são essas histórias. [...] Eles choram porque eles perderam uma grande oportunidade de mudar a realidade que eles estão vivendo. Então eles literalmente falam, “nos erramos no passado” porque ele se considera que a liderança do passado também tinha a mesma oportunidade que eles têm de mudar a realidade, porém não têm mais força.⁷⁵ (Francisco Ikõ Munduruku, 08.02.2022)

Alguma coisa no tempo e no espaço, né, ela se aplicou ali, uma consequência, uma maldição. E é uma maldição hereditária, podemos assim dizer. Fatores com uma interferência espiritual. Já por causa das ações humanas. Não daquele momento, que aconteceu lá, parou, não. Ela veio por gerações. Então isso é um princípio ativo instalado e um princípio ativo, quando se instala, ele continua.⁷⁶ (Francisco Ikõ Munduruku, 20.02.2023)

This discourse, and the way it interprets events, also reserve some space for the colonial process and its domestication. In many stories, some of what are now considered advantages were granted to white society precisely because certain rules were broken in the past. “[...] E aí vem de novo a expressão *jewekarasasan*. Me desculpem, mas você perdeu a oportunidade de ter esse domínio que a sociedade branca vai ter. [...] Esse conhecimento eu estou te dando de graça, só que você não quer, vou dar pra sociedade branca”⁷⁷ (Francisco Ikõ Munduruku, 08.02.2022). For example, one situation which is explained through this dynamic is current economic dependence of Munduruku society from Whites. It is told in what Jairo Saw Munduruku calls the *history of merchandising*.

⁷⁵ “Every time that an old man today, in a big meeting, in a big assembly says, “we missed the opportunity”, it is because he already looks back at the beginning, when it was, and these are the stories. [...] They cry because they missed a great opportunity to change the reality that they are living. They literally say, “we made a mistake in the past” because they think that the leadership of the past also had the same opportunity that they have to change the reality, but they no longer have the strength.”

⁷⁶ “Something in time and space, you know, has happened there, a consequence, a curse. And it is a hereditary curse, we could say. Factors with a spiritual interference. Already because of human actions. From that moment, that happened there, it didn't stop. It came through generations. So, this is an active principle installed, and an active principle, when it is installed, it continues.”

⁷⁷ “And here comes the expression *jewekarasasan* again. Excuse me, but you lost the opportunity to have this mastery that the white society is going to have. [...] This knowledge I'm giving you for free, but you don't want it, I'll give it to white society”.

A economia Munduruku, nunca foi assim, de comercializar. Sempre foi pra uma subsistência, né. Pra suprir as necessidades da comunidade. Família, das crianças. Plantavam, colhiam, mas era pra atender sua família. O modo de sobreviver, né? E nunca pensaram, “não, isso vai...”, eles podiam até fazer isso. Segundo a história, né, que a mamãe conta, a capital de Belém seria lá nessa região do Mundurukânia, quando uma antiga serpente, *marana*, ele foi criado, no meio do Munduruku e alguém adotou ele e ajudou ele a crescer e ensinou tudo o que deveria aprender. E aí ele foi em Belém. Ele foi lá e o pai dele despediu e aí cresceu e olhava, “ah tu precisa ir, tu sabe se cuidar, eu já fiz a minha parte. Ia te contar, que você cresceu, comeu, você sabe muito bem como é a vida. Você tem que ir. Ter o domínio de se mesmo. Você que vai ser responsável pela tua vida.” Aí ele se foi. Agradeceu por ter lhe adotado, criado desceu pra Belém e dizendo chamava alguém que pudesse cuidar dele. Desceu em Belém lá e surgiu a ser tipo uma cidade e o povo trazia muita mercadoria de lá, né. Aí uma certa vez [...] ele viu que o pai adotivo dele tava na cidade, na vila, na aldeia. Quando ele ouviu agradeceu o pai, né, abraçou por ter criado ele, por ter ensinado a ele e agora o povo vinha buscar algumas mercadorias que ele tinha. Então ele falou assim, “eu vou lhe dar esse presente, porque você me criou, você ainda é meu pai. Vou lhe dar esse presente aqui.” Não se sabe se era caixa grande, se era pequena. Sei que ele deu uma caixa de presente pra ele, assim oh, “aqui tem tudo o que tu precisar. Só abra assim que chegar lá na aldeia. Você vai abrir lá.” Ele agradeceu, se despediram. E nem sequer se distanciou, acho que não foi nem um dia de viagem, ficou curioso... “O que foi que ele me deu?” Abriu a caixa e quando ele abriu as mercadorias que ele tinha dado, derramou tudo. E aí apareceu um montão de mercadoria e ele colocou, “como é que aquele tanto de produto cabeou ali?” Aí não sabia e resolveu voltar. Pediu pra ele, “filho eu abri a caixa e agora não sei como coube tudo isso dentro da caixa. A caixa é pequena...” Aí ele já sabia, “Ah, não, eu pedi pra você abrir quando você chegasse lá. Eu falei isso pra tu.” Aí ele lançou tipo uma maldição, né. Disse, “olha, por isso, porque você fez isso, o teu povo, a futura geração, vai ficar dependendo sempre das pessoas que tem poder. E era pra vocês ser pessoas que tem poder. Então essas pessoas que estão aqui, eles dizer que iriam empurrar por vocês.” Quer dizer, “nos seremos não índios e o *pariwat* é que deveria ser o indígena e poderiam estar comprando, adquirindo aquilo para seu consumo de nós. Mas não seria mais Munduruku. Os *pariwat*, qualquer *pariwat* era pra ser índio. Como a curiosidade fez com que ele abriu a caixa, nos nós tornamos

cada vez mais miserável. E hoje nos estamos dependente dele. Então essa é nossa dependência.⁷⁸ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

According to Francisco Ikō and to return to the central topic of our discussion, also head-hunting practice began consequently to this process. The collective rape of *Karo Daybi*'s wife by *Yori Cug'pu* and his warriors (the wrong for which he wanted revenge) represents the moment in which some rules were broken and the *active principle* altered. From that moment on, the use of violence as a solution to solve conflicts established as foundational dynamic of the political relationship of Munduruku society. Head-hunting and their preparation as trophies turned into the visible manifestation of this principle of violence into the physic/mythic world and became the necessary condition for the reproductive success of Munduruku society – based on success in hunting through the attraction of animal mother spirits and military superiority.

⁷⁸ “Munduruku economy has never been one of commercialization. It was always for subsistence. To supply the needs of the community. Family, children. They planted and harvested, but only to supply their families. The way to survive, right? And they never thought, “no, this will...”, they could even do that. According to the story that mom tells, the capital of Belém would be there in this region of Mundurukânia, when an ancient snake, Marana, he was raised among the Munduruku and someone adopted him and helped him to grow and taught him everything he should learn. And then he went to Belém. He went there and his father let him go and then he grew up and looked at him and said, “ah, you need to go, you know how to take care of yourself, I have already done my part. I was going to tell you that you have grown up, eaten, you know very well how life is. You have to go. Take control of yourself. You are going to be responsible for your life”. Then he left. He thanked him for having adopted him, and went down to Belém, saying that he was calling for someone who could take care of him. He went down to Belém which became a kind of city, and people brought a lot of merchandise from there. Then one time [...] he saw that his adoptive father was in the city, in the village. When he heard that, he thanked his father, hugged him for raising him, for teaching him, and now people were coming to get some goods that he had. So, he said, “I’m going to give you this gift, because you raised me, you are still my father. I’m going to give you this gift here”. It is not known if it was a big box, if it was a small box. I know that he gave him a box as a present, like this, oh, “here is everything you need. Just open it when you get to the village. You will open it there”. He [the father] thanked him, they said goodbye. And he didn’t even get far, I don’t think it was even a day trip, he was curious... “What did he [the son] give me?” He [the father] opened the box, and when he opened the goods he [the son] had given, everything spilled. And then a bunch of merchandise appeared and he wondered, “How did that much product fit in there?” Then he didn’t know and decided to go back. He asked him, “Son, I opened the box and now I don’t know how all this could fit in the box. The box is small...”. Then he [the son] already knew, “Oh, no, I asked you to open it when you got there. I told you that”. Then he put a curse on it. He said, “look, because of this, because you did this, your people, the future generation, will always depend on the people who have power. And you were supposed to be people who have power. So, these people who are here, they said they would push for you”. That is to say, “we would be non-Indians and the *pariwat* is the one who should be the Indians and they could be buying, acquiring that for their consumption from us”. But it wouldn’t be Munduruku anymore. The *pariwat*, any *pariwat* was supposed to be Indian. As curiosity made him open the box, we became more and more miserable. And today we are dependent on him. So. this is our dependence.”

Quando é costume, é uma coisa interessante, mas quando você segue ele perpassa as gerações, ne que passa essa tradição ele passa a ser problema. Porque ela cria uma crosta em ti que você vai depender pra sempre daquilo. Por isso que a observação é lá daquela palavra que eu falei *jewekarasasan*. Permanece. Ele é um peso há mais pra ti. Então essa é a relação. Existe vários. [...] Faz parte da cultura. Mas uma coisa interessante nessa observação é que quando alguém dizia assim, “ah, na nossa cultura é normal o sexo coletivo, o estupro.” Não é normal. Aonde que está a explicação? Na mística. Ela se instalou no tempo e no espaço e ela se torna já o princípio ativo. Ah, agora a gente diz, “faz parte da cultura”. Pode até fazer, mas não é normal. Não é natural. Então isso depende dos valores que são imprimidos na cabeça, então continuar ou parar com isso. Então a mesma coisa foi com os cortadores de cabeça. Foi pra resolver um problema, só que ele continua. Aí que vem a questão dos troféus, né. É os espíritos que vão alimentando aquilo lá.⁷⁹ (Francisco Ikō Munduruku, 08.02.2022)

Ele na verdade é um espírito que se instala, né, ali naquele momento, em relação... essa instrução, ela é uma instrução de um outro mundo, tá entendendo? E esse espírito tem a ver com o espírito da violência, mas ele só se instalou em função do próprio Karo Daybi ter a necessidade de resolver um problema particular, pessoal, né, na esfera sentimental. Então não é só o corte da cabeça em si. Não, tem todo uma historicidade por trás, tem todo um envolvimento e tem a ver com o surgimento desse ser. [...] Ele surgiu por causa de alguma coisa que ocorreu lá com Karo Daybi e o Yori Cuğ’pu, né. Humanamente falando, ele queria se vingar. Ele queria dar o troco, que aconteceu aquela situação com a esposa dele. Não por ele, porque os outros, já tinham feito uma avaliação, né que o chefe errou, então nos podemos errar também. Se ele fez, nos vamos fazer. Então alguma coisa no tempo e no espaço, né, ela se aplicou ali, uma consequência, uma maldição. E é uma maldição hereditária, podemos assim dizer. Fatores com uma interferência espiritual. Já por causa das ações humanas. Não daquele momento, que aconteceu lá, parou, não. Ela veio por gerações. Então isso é um princípio ativo instalado e um princípio ativo, quando se instala, ele continua. [...] Traduzindo, né, ele abriu um portal pra que os espíritos agissem naquela

⁷⁹ “When it is custom, it is an interesting thing, but when you follow it through the generations, when this tradition passes on, it becomes a problem. Because it creates a crust in you that you will depend forever on that. That is why the observation is there of that word that I spoke about, *jewekarasasan*. It remains. It is one more weight for you. So that is the relationship. There are several. [...] It is part of the culture. But an interesting thing in that observation is that when someone would say like this, “ah, in our culture it’s normal to have collective sex, rape”. It’s not normal. Where is the explanation? In mysticism. It is installed in time and space, and it already becomes the active principle. Ah, now we say, “it is part of the culture”. It may be so, but it is not normal. It is not natural. So, it depends on the values that are imprinted in the head, so to continue or to stop it. The same thing was with the head cutters. It was to solve a problem, but it continues. That’s where the question of trophies comes in, right? It’s the spirits that are feeding it there.”

geração, mas que ela se estendeu, né, por vários séculos, né. Ou milênios, né. [...] Aqui na região em que se, como podemos dizer assim, esses fatos se espalharam para outras etnias, né, chegando até mesmo alguns historiadores acompanhar esse fenômeno, né, que ocorreu principalmente na mumificação, né, das cabeças, entendeu?⁸⁰ (Francisco Ikõ Munduruku, 20.02.2023)

In this interpretative context, everything is connected to everything else through physical and symbolic dynamics of causality. So, when recontextualized in Munduruku cosmology, objects related to warrior expeditions and trophy-head ceremonies become channelers of the principles contained in these stories. Far from being only some aesthetically appreciable ornaments, they turn into open chinks on the particular way of Munduruku people to perceive and experience the reality around them. Through the information they encompass (for example, about the clan norms of marriage regulation depending on the color of feathers, the knowledge related to the materials used to produce the objects and their symbolic values, or the ancestors who taught and transmitted this art from generation to generation), they allow contemporary Munduruku to establish a contact with the mystic world and with the legacy left by ancestors and masters⁸¹. Moreover, in a present context in which their production has been abandoned and part of the knowledge related to them has been lost, they work as parameters to value past events and experience like the stories which animate them. For the Munduruku with whom I had the chance to interact, to reappropriate at least their images is felt as an opportunity to reestablish a connection with parts of their history and their ancestrality, thus to reinforce the feeling of belonging to Munduruku ethnic

⁸⁰ “It is actually a spirit that installed itself at that moment, in relation to... this instruction, it’s an instruction from another world, do you understand? And this spirit has to do with the spirit of violence, but it was only installed because *Karo Daybi* himself needed to solve a particular personal problem in the sentimental sphere. So, it is not just the cutting of the head itself. No, there is a whole history behind it, there is a whole involvement, and it has to do with the emergence of this being. [...] He appeared because of something that happened there with *Karo Daybi* and *Yori Cuğ’pu*. Humanly speaking, he wanted revenge. He wanted to pay back the situation that happened with his wife. Not for him, because the others had already made an evaluation, you know, that the boss made a mistake, so we can also make mistakes. If he did it, we will do it. So, something in time and space applied there, a consequence, a curse. And it is a hereditary curse, we could say. Factors with a spiritual interference. Already because of human actions. Not from that moment, that happened there, it stopped, no. It came through generations. So, this is an active principle installed, and an active principle, when it is installed, it continues. [...] In other words, it opened a portal for the spirits to act in that generation, but it extended over several centuries, or millennia. [...] Here in the region where they were, how can we say, these facts spread to other ethnic groups, and some historians even followed this phenomenon, which occurred mainly in the mummification of heads, you know?”

⁸¹ Munduruku spiritual dimension is clearly much deeper and more complex with respect to what I reported here. I had access to a very small part of it, both for temporal and *trust* limits that we already discussed.

identity in a political context in which physical and cultural existence is highly threatened. To look at them through this perspective, might help us to overcome classical exoticizing and primitivizing visions – which emphasize either aesthetical beauty or the relation with the brutality of warrior expedition – and explore the complexity of Munduruku vision of themselves and of reality.

In the next section we will go deeper into these two points. On the one hand, we shall focus on the role played, today, by ancient and present feather ornaments in the process of cultural and political resistance. On the other, we shall reflect on how the museum should enter into this process both as regards objects treatment in the exhibition and in terms of colonial reparation.

5.1.3 New life for ancient objects

In addition to capturing the dense dimension of objects, the fieldwork period spent in the middle Tapajós region aimed at understanding what the Munduruku think about their presence in Europe, in particular as far as it concerns their exhibition and treatment in terms of adequacy of representation to non-indigenous public.

Every time I showed the objects' pictures during assemblies and in individual conversations with people, an initial moment of amazement was followed by questions on how they arrived in Europe and on their possible return. On the first aspect there are contrasting opinions. Some people think they were stolen or obtained through some deception; others think they were exchanged for something considered of equal or higher value or given to people whom the owner esteemed. “Eu acho que por um lado, no meu entender, eles não são roubados, ele alguém deu pra ele. Com insistência, né, as vezes a pessoa se mostrava educado, pessoa legal para uma liderança, para o povo e com certeza o chefe tuxaua dava de presente pra ele”⁸² (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022). Although we do not have any specific information regarding the effective circumstances of acquisition of the objects preserved in Vienna, we presume from other colonial accounts and from classical and recent studies on exchange dynamics among indigenous groups in general⁸³ that both these situations probably occurred. Regardless of that, the Munduruku with whom I had the chance to speak frequently showed

⁸² “For how I understand it, I think that on one hand they are not stolen, someone gave them to him. Sometimes, with insistence, the person showed himself to be polite, a nice person towards a leader, towards people, and certainly the *tuxaua* chief gave him a gift.”

⁸³ See among the others: Mauss 1990 [1925], Weiner 1992, Thomas 1991, Santos-Granero 2009, Fausto 2008.

the desire of regaining possess of their objects, albeit with some reservation. Two main concerns were raised during our conversations. The first is about objects' conservation. The Munduruku are well aware of their antiquity and fragility – in particular of feather objects. Given the importance they assume once reconnected with the ancestors' memories, the last thing they want is to see them destroyed. To take them back to Brazil without the guarantee of a space where to guard them properly would mean to condemn them to deterioration. “Assim, se a gente dissesse, “não, traga tudo isso aqui”, mas como é que a gente poderia trazer, colocar aonde. Porque isso aí, tem que ter, já que está lá guardado com tanto cuidado, se a gente trazer pra cá, pra ficar só pra estragar, eu acho que... não sei como que a gente poderia fazer, né?”⁸⁴ (Claudete Saw Munduruku, 12.02.2022).

Almost as if he wanted to answer the question posed by Claudete Saw, Jairo Saw believes that an interesting solution might be to take back only the most resistant objects while leaving the most fragile in Europe where, if properly treated, they could talk about Munduruku reality. “Eles poderiam trazer. Alguns, né, porque a gente sabe que alguns tens 300 anos. [...] Depois de identificar poderiam se manter lá”⁸⁵ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022). However, conservation is not the only aspect that pushes Munduruku people to think that it would be better for some objects to remain in Western ethnographic museums. In fact, they were used in ceremonies which implied the presence of spiritual forces, some of which might still represent a danger for who does not have the capacity to handle them. These could be related either to more material aspects such as the use of some feathers – for example, curassow feathers, which if wrongly handled might cause outflow of the person's spirit from the body (see Dace Munduruku 2021) – or to the energy absorbed by the objects at the time of its manufacturing.

É como estou dizendo, tudo isso aqui pra nos é coisa sagrada. Não se pode brincar não com esse negócio bem aí. Ela é coisa que não é, como eu falei, não é brinquedo. É coisa seria que nem fosse nossa identidade, uma coisa assim que como documento qualquer. Então por isso que isso aí ela tem muita história grande. O vovô do Bonifácio Saw, ele morou aqui, aonde está morando agora. Ele era cara preta. Todo ele contava pra nós, ele dizia, olha esse aqui, a

⁸⁴ “So, if we said, “no, bring all this over here”... but how could we bring it, where would we put it? Because this, must have, since it is kept there with so much care, if we bring it here, just to spoil it, I think that... I don't know how we could do it?”

⁸⁵ “They could bring it. Some, right, because we know that some are 300 years old. [...] After their identification, they could stay there.”

pena do mutum, ele não é brinquedo, né. E você não pode brincar com a pena do mutum. Aí, a gente faz cocar com arara. A pena da arara, papagaio e qualquer pássaro.⁸⁶ (Arnaldo Kaba Munduruku, 19.12.2021)

A gente chama... como... não saberei dizer em português, é tipo um poder magnético, uma vibração, uma energia. Aquela força vem pra aquele instrumento e muitas vezes é positivo ou é negativo, dependendo da pessoa que tá confeccionando também. Se ela está se apresentando como uma pessoa ruim, as energias ruins vão estar se acumulando aí. Se ele tiver uma energia positiva, sem pensar em coisas ruins, a energia positiva, as boas virtudes, né, vão pra ali também. Naquele artesanato. Seja madeira... e faz com que quem usa, tenha um poder sobre ele. E o poder que eu falo é tipo, alguma arma que alguém usa, então tudo provoca uma autoridade, que não pode ser desrespeitado.⁸⁷ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

The people recommended to interact with such energies are the *pajés* thanks to their knowledge of the mystic world and the ability to handle the relation with it (cfr Kopenawa and Albert 2013). However, also due to the transformations of the last century, there are things that even they no longer know how to deal with. To this extent, mummified heads are among the most discussed objects. Even if they lost their powers (cfr §5.1.2), they can still produce energies which can be negatively manipulated by who mess with the spiritual world.

Assim, para trazer esses, como é que chama, esses artefatos, né? Eu não acharia, no meu ponto de vista, não acharia legal trazer porque as cabeças mumificadas, elas produz uma energia, como eles estão falando, né. Existe pessoas espirituais, no nosso meio, que tens boas intenções, mas tem outras que tem mal intenções e podem provocar uma... tipo assim, um vírus pode acontecer, tipo umas coisas ruins, ou algum desastre ecológico, vai haver uma

⁸⁶ “It is what I am saying, all of this here is sacred to us. You can’t play with this thing right there. It is something that is not, as I said, it is not a toy. It is something that would be like our identity, something like any other document. So, that is why it has a lot of history. Bonifácio Saw’s grandfather, he lived here, where he is living now. He was a *cara preta* [he had his face permanently tattooed in black paint]. Every time he told us, he would say, look at this one, the curassow feather, it is not a toy, you know. And you can’t play with curassow feathers. So, we made headdresses with macaws. The macaw feather, parrot and any other bird.”

⁸⁷ “We call it... it is like a magnetic power, a vibration, an energy. That force comes to that instrument and many times it is positive or negative, depending on the person who is making it. If one is presenting himself as a bad person, bad energies will be accumulating there. If one has a positive energy, without thinking about bad things, the positive energy, good virtues, go there too. In that handicraft. Be it wood... and it makes whoever uses it have a power over it. And the power that I speak of is like a weapon that someone uses, so everything generates an authority that cannot be disrespected.”

mudança climática dentro da sociedade munduruku por causa dessas cabeças. [...] Existe aqui no meio de nós uma força mística e as cabeças, os espíritos estão vivos. Então essas cabeças, de animais, qualquer cabeça, estão captando a nossa conversa, né. Assim, uma espionagem. Eles levam essa informação pro centro deles, pra sociedade deles. Eles vão estar dizendo, “olha, tá falando sobre nos sobre isso.” Então já estão fazendo alguma coisa pra acontecer alguma coisa de ruim.⁸⁸ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

Jairo Saw argues that this occurs only with respect to the Munduruku. On the contrary, Francisco Ikõ points out that the heads could also pose a danger to non-indigenous population. Therefore, he believes they should be removed from display.

Por exemplo, a exposição duma cabeça dessa. Algumas pessoas por não entender, elas vão entrar nesse ambiente, é um ambiente pesado. Alguma coisa aconteceu ali, esquartejaram ela, atiraram, falar não sei. Quando a pessoa entra num ambiente dessa, se ele se arrepiar, tem alguma coisa ali. É bonito, mas é assustador. Não é aquela coisa, mas é o que tá por trás disso. Qual a finalidade? Não da exposição, mas o que que está gerando esse medo, que gera essa ansiedade, esses arrepios, pesadelos. Então as vezes uma pessoa vai pela primeira vez e vai ser tudo bonitinho, mas ela vem com um carregado. Talvez a vida dela nunca mais vai ser a mesma. A partir dessa exposição. Por isso que o mundo não deveria estar expondo.⁸⁹ (Francisco Ikõ Munduruku, 08.02.2022)

As regard the exhibition, another aspect that has been stressed related more to the social dimension rather than with spirituality was the random organization of objects on display. Both according to Jairo Saw and to Tiago Ikõ (cacique of the village *Praia do Mangue*) it would

⁸⁸ “Well, to bring these, what do you call them, these artifacts, right? I don’t think, in my point of view, I don’t think it would be good to bring them because mummified heads produce an energy, as they say. There are spiritual people in our midst who have good intentions, but there are others who have bad intentions and can cause a... For example, a virus can happen, or bad things, or some ecological disaster, there might be a climate change within the Munduruku society because of these people. [...] There is a mystical force here among us and the heads, the spirits are alive. So, these heads, of animals, any head, are capturing our conversation. Like a kind of espionage. They take this information to their center, to their society. They would be saying, “Look, they are talking about us, about this”. So, they are already doing something to make something bad happen.”

⁸⁹ “For example, the exposure of such a head. Some people for not understanding, they will enter that environment, it is a heavy environment. Something happened there, they dismembered it, shot it, talked about it, I don’t know. When a person enters an environment like this, if he/she gets creepy, there is something there. It is beautiful, but it is scary. It is not that thing but it is what lies behind it. What is the purpose? Not of the exhibition, but what is generating this fear, what generates this anxiety, these shivers, nightmares. So sometimes a person goes for the first time and everything is fine, but they end up with a heavy load. Maybe their life will never be the same again. From that exposure. That’s why the world shouldn’t be exposing.”

be better if they followed clan rules: artifacts belonging to the red clan should be divided from those belonging to the white clan.

Tem que saber exatamente que clã é esse que pertence, branco ou vermelho. Aí da pra fazer dividir e, “olha esse aqui são fabricados pra identificar o clã branco, esses aqui pra identificar o clã vermelho.” Sabe pela cor. [...] Porque se for misturar eles vão dizer, “mas não, como assim”. Pra o povo deveria ser organizado dessa maneira. Como são formados, divididos em dois clãs, um clã é o vermelho, outro clã é o branco. Mas são vários clãs brancos e vários clãs vermelhos também, não são só dois. Por exemplo, clã branco, é poxo, kirixi, korap, muhru, paraua... são clã branco. Já o vermelho já é saw, painhum, kaba, mahuari... são os clãs, né. Cada um tem um nome.⁹⁰ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

A part from this, not many other considerations were made about the exhibition.

Given the controversies and issues related to the repatriation of items in Munduruku territory, one of the most interesting suggestions put forward with one voice was to remake the objects preserved in Western museums. In part, the reintroduction of objects inspired by ancient models is already a reality, for example in the headdresses used by some leaders. Although the technique is not so refined, a lot of Munduruku – men and women – well dominate crafts such as palm leaf weaving, cotton weaving, wood and seed carving and feather working. If they could see the way ancient objects are manufactured, they would not have difficulty in reproduce them exactly.

Also in this case, the dichotomy “original-copy” is not associated to the authenticity of the object. Objects realized “tirando o modelo”⁹¹ – according to the definition of Brasilino Painhum (*cacique* of the *aldeia Praia do Índio*) – would not be less authentic and identifier of Munduruku people. Quite the contrary, since to remake them in accordance within current spiritual balances would allow to use them without the risk of being harmed. Not all of them though. Some objects that were particularly related to spiritual dimension and the use of

⁹⁰ “You have to know exactly which clan you belong to, white or red. Then you can divide it up and say, “look, this one is made to identify the white clan, and this one is made to identify the red clan”. You know by color. [...] Because if you mix them together, they will say, “but no, what do you mean? For the people it should be organized this way”. How they are formed, divided into two clans, one clan is red, the other clan is white. But there are several white clans and several red clans too, not just two. For example, the white clan is *poxo*, *kirixi*, *korap*, *muhru*, *paraua*... they are white clans. The red ones are *saw*, *painhum*, *kaba*, *mahuari*... are the clans. Each one has a name.”

⁹¹ “Looking at the model.”

which was limited to very specific moments and objectives cannot be reintroduced, neither in the original version nor through a model. In this regard, we can mention two musical instruments, the *Pêm* and the *Kadoku*, which were used during warrior expeditions and hunting ceremonies⁹².

Tem que ver com essa questão do sagrado, né. Se pode, não pode... [...] Segundo o Adriano esse tipo de artefatos antigos eles têm relação com espiritualidade, com o sagrado, né. No caso o *pêm*, que ele estava falando era um instrumento de guerra. Tem essa buzina aqui, feito em madeira rosa, os guerreiros utilizavam pra espantar seus inimigos, tocavam, espantavam e ao tocar o som da buzina, na crença, tirava o espírito da pessoa. Porque Munduruku é muito [ligado à] espiritualidade. Quando a pessoa perde o espírito, ele fica doido. E era assim que o inimigo ficava. Tocava e ficava doido porque o espírito tirava com som da buzina e era uma estratégia de guerra. [...] Por exemplo eu estava te falando, né, por exemplo, o *Kadoku* eu não sei. O Seu Adriano não reconheceu o *Kadoku* aqui. Eu imaginava que era um daqueles aí. Ele é um dos artefatos muito sagrado então não teria como dizer assim, “ah, a gente vai revitalizar, ou trazer, ou refazer de novo”. Trás este porque na cabeça da gente isso não pode ser repetido. Digamos que esse tipo de arte não é igualmente, mas também tem que... pensar assim, pode, não pode.⁹³ (Honésio Dace Munduruku, 12.02.2022)

As far as I could observe, the reproduction of objects – when possible – stands as a reaction to a process of transformation perceived, for some aspects, as a loss (Candau 2002, cfr §4.2.4). In almost all the exchanges I had with adults and elders, leaders and professors, they let their sorrow emerge for many young's disregard of Munduruku traditions or for their use of elements from other ethnic groups⁹⁴. To regain the skill necessary to produce their own objects is thus perceived as a way to pass on knowledge and memories that define a specifically

⁹² Some exemplars are respectively preserved at the *Welt Museum* of Vienna and at the *Museu da Ciência* of Coimbra.

⁹³ “It has to do with the question of sacred. If it can, it can’t... [...] According to Adriano, these kinds of ancient artifacts are related to spirituality, to the sacred. In this case, the *pêm* that he was talking about was an instrument of war. There is this horn here, made of rosewood, the warriors used it to scare away their enemies. Because Munduruku is very [connected to] spirituality. When a person loses his/her spirit, he/she goes crazy. And that is how the enemy used to get. They played and went crazy because the spirit was taken away with the sound of the horn, and it was a war strategy. [...] For example, I was telling you, for example, I don't know about *Kadoku*. Mr. Adriano didn't recognize the *Kadoku* here. I thought it was one of those. It is a very sacred artifact, so there is no way to say, “ah, we are going to revitalize it, or bring it back, or remake it again”. [We cannot] bring this one back because in our minds it cannot be revived. Let's say that this kind of art is not the same, but we also have to... think like this, we can, we cannot.”

⁹⁴ For example, body paintings, necklaces and bracelets, feather works.

Munduruku historical experience and worldview. In line with what said at the end of §5.1.2, objects' reintroduction plays a crucial role in the educational system because they become tools to rebuild and materialize a connection with the memory of ancestors, hence to reinforce the sense of a collective identity distinguished from other indigenous peoples. This symbolic value is made explicit also in the fact that the moments thought as more appropriate to wear them are when it is necessary to make their voice heard: assemblies, mobilizations and reunions. Feather works, necklaces, bracelets, bows and arrows and other objects are already used on such occasions; however, to make them on the exact model of ancient ones would give greater strength to Munduruku claims in front of national society. For they are so exclusive in identifying Munduruku culture and warrior attitude, to wear them would nourish the feeling of belonging to the community and so, encourage an increasing participation to the struggle for civil and territorial rights.

Eu acho assim, esse é meu ver. Porque como tu falou que o Aldo fez, eu acho que quase todos tem interesse [...]. Porque a gente trabalha na língua materna e por isso, justamente, como papai sempre fala, não vai voltar, mas a gente queria como professor, a gente queria pelo menos o que foi falado, que não tá escrito, não tem nada escrito em Munduruku, não tem nada em história munduruku. As outras etnias podem entrar em qualquer site aí tem contado tudo, do munduruku você não tem. [...] Isso daí, pra quem é artesão, poderia estar fazendo isso. A arte, poderia estar trazendo isso aí. Já que o pai disse que não conhece. [...] Pra fortalecer. Isso aqui é nosso. Eu acho que está no interesse de cada um dos jovens, das pessoas, de artesãos. [...] Então acho que mais que uma pessoa usar, isso aqui, [...] porque nos sabemos que temos duas cores, vermelho e branco. Eu acho que [...] seria bom usar no movimento porque as outras etnias usam, porque não poderia estar voltando aos nossos, né?⁹⁵ (Claudete Saw Munduruku, 12.02.2022)

⁹⁵ "I think that, that is my point of view. Because, as you said that Aldo made one, I think that almost everyone is interested [...]. We work in the mother tongue and because of this, exactly, as dad always says, it will not come back, but we would like, as teachers, we would like at least what it has been said, which is not written, there is nothing written in Munduruku, there is nothing in Munduruku history. Other ethnic groups can go to any website and see everything but the Munduruku you don't have. [...] This, for those who are artisans, they could be doing this. The art, they could be bringing this. Since father said that he doesn't know. [...] To strengthen it. This is ours. I think that it is in the interest of each one of the young people, of the people, of the artisans. [...] So I think that more than one person can use it, this here, [...] because we know that we have two colors, red and white. I think that [...] it would be good to use it in the movement because other ethnic groups use them, why couldn't it be coming back to our [things], right?"

As this, as well as previous quotations, show, Munduruku existence is deeply pervaded by a sense of loss and by the anguish and grief implied in it. In her brilliant essay “Loss and Wonder at the End of the World” (2023), Laura Ogden treat with great subtleness a number of contexts related to this phenomenon and reports reflections which can be helpful when observing Amazonian indigenous people’s realities. The anthropologist offers a look on loss that does not simply considers it an absence but a real way of staying in the world which transforms individuals and the way in which they relate with things and people. In those societies where loss is more intense, everything has to be constantly reinforced and replanned. And however, it is precisely in this kind of attitude towards “reconfiguration” that lies the generative potential of loss processes. At every moment of their fragmented present, the Munduruku negotiate with this condition without resigning to Western invasiveness. To them, loss does not imply extinction but transformation. Munduruku people resist and fight in order to find the right compromise between the will to participate in the dynamics of the modern world and that of keeping firm to their roots, history and relationship with the territory – two attitudes that Western thought has considered as opposing and incompatible until recently.

Munduruku struggle is political but also deeply spiritual. Spirits and entities from the mystical world closely accompany both craft production and mobilization actions. As reported by Loures (2017) these activities are compared to ancient warrior rituals; enemies and objectives have changed but the transmitted values remain unchanged. In this context, and given the violence that often characterize these situations, objects have not only decorative and symbolic meaning. They guide and protect their owners.

Not asking for objects’ repatriation does not mean that the museum is perceived as a neutral agent in this fight for existence. The fact that it holds part of Munduruku heritage makes it responsible for what such heritage encompasses and conveys both towards indigenous population and visitors. In this sense, rather than material theft, the collection of ethnographic objects and natural specimens is seen as the theft of a knowledge that existed before European naturalists appropriated and codified it through hegemonic scientific language (cfr §2.2.1).

Existe coisas que roubaram. O conhecimento eles roubaram. Algumas coisas que pertencem a nós, eles roubaram, digamos que despatentearam, vamos dizer. [Anna: Tipo?]

Conhecimento, digamos, da medicina, se apropriaram como se fosse deles. Na verdade, não é deles. Eles têm uma mania de dizer, “olha esse aqui foi nós que descobrimos.” No caso da Inglaterra podemos dizer que eles patentearam lá o açaí. Mas não existe açaí lá Inglaterra! E se apropriaram, né. Igualmente o Japão, os Japoneses, patentearam o cupuaçu, que só existe aqui na Amazônia. Como é que eles...? E tudo isso tem alguns que realmente, só queriam roubar. Plagiaram. Sendo que essas coisas são nossas. Então é assim, né. Esses tipos de adornos com certeza algum deu, mas outros eles conseguiram trazer... por exemplo, na medicina, certos tipos de plantas que tem um princípio ativo, a ciência vem, né, “Não, essa aqui fui eu que descobri.” Não tem nada... ele rouba o conhecimento, a ciência. Porque na verdade se estuda na faculdade que isso é plágio, né? Pegar uma coisa do outro, porque não é dele, não foi ele que [fez].⁹⁶ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

Besides being *stolen*, such knowledge has been used to develop classifications that celebrated the superiority of Western thought while relegating their real discoverers to a position of eternal epistemological inferiority. Ethnographic museums were agents and supporters of this processes. Today, like other institutions, they are called to confront this legacy and restore the knowledge and memory that indigenous people claim as their own as a form of moral compensation – especially in cases where these have been lost.

As we showed in the introduction there are different reactions and attempts to decolonize museological exhibitions and representations (cfr Introduction). However, it was not on this aspect that the Munduruku focused their attention and their requests. This might be due, partly, because of the little awareness on the potential of museum exhibitions and, partly, because they need more immediate solutions. As Anderson Painhum told me once we were talking about how the transformation of exhibitions would be useful to change people's opinion and, consequently, actions: “quantos [munduruku] tem que morrer antes das pessoas mudarem suas ações?”⁹⁷ (Anderson Painhum Munduruku, 12.10.2022).

⁹⁶ “There are things they stole. They stole Knowledge. Some things that belong to us, they stole, let's say they unpatented them, let's say so. [Anna: Like?] Knowledge, let's say, of medicine, they appropriated as if it was theirs. Actually, it's not theirs. They have a mania of saying, “Look this one we discovered”. In the case of England, we can say that they patented the açaí there. But there is no açaí in England! And they appropriated it, right? Likewise, Japan, the Japanese, patented the *cupuaçu*, which only exists here in the Amazon. How did they...? And there are some who really just wanted to steal. They plagiarized. But these things are ours. So that's how it is. For example, in medicine, certain types of plants that have an active principle, science comes up with, “No, I discovered this one. There's nothing... it steals the knowledge, the science. Because in fact we study in college that this is plagiarism, you know? To take something from another person, because it is not his, he did not do it. “

⁹⁷ “How many [munduruku] have to die before people change their actions?”

What the Munduruku demand from the *Welt Museum* in order to pay off its colonial debt and rebalance power relations is to return that specific knowledge which would allow to remake the objects as well as to encourage, from now on, their physical preservation and the related memories. How? By elaborating and supporting, both politically and financially, projects which promote the development of structures aimed at supplement indigenous educational system. In this way, all the material and immaterial, past and present aspects of Munduruku culture could be passed on to future generations.

Essa conversa é importante porque primeiramente, quando eu falei né que essa aqui é nossa cultura, nos não queremos perder ela não. [...] A gente está pedindo hoje em dia, nos queremos de ter de ajuda. Porque como eu te falei de novo, a gente não quer perder mais. Porque se não, não da pra gente dormir direto, todo tempo, né. Nos vamos poder dormir direto, comer direto, só quando resolver esse pensamento que nos estamos querendo fazer, porque se não, não da pra nos dormir direto. A gente dorme, quando acorda lembra lá mesmo de novo. Toma a fome da gente. [...] Todo tempo o que eu falo é isso. Porque se não como é que eu posso me calar. Não tem como pra mim calar. Não pode parar. [...] Então por isso aí, lembrando que de como é que nos podemos fazer. Ou então a gente peça recurso pra poder fazer uma casa primeiramente dentro da nossa aldeia, né. Essa é uma questão mais importante pra nós, né. Como nos temos muito netos, filhos, esses jovens novos, vamos precisar de ver, né. Qual é a cultura, quem é as pessoas que usavam aquilo? Então nos precisamos fazer pra duas. Como ficar uma casa assim, tipo um museu. Dentro dessa casa tem que ter tudo, né. Um outro que estamos querendo fazer, é um papel, um livro quer dizer, né, pra poder distribuir dentro das escolas, né. Que tem escola. De lá nossos netos, que vão aprender, eles vão se lembrar disso, lembrar dos tempos passados, né. “Ah, assim que estava nos tempos passado”. O povo quer ver, o povo de hoje quer ver. Como muita gente já viu aquilo ali. Um falou muito bem ai, “poxa, isso era pra ter começado há muito tempo”, agora nenhum de nos, hoje em dia, [sabe] o que é que é isso aqui, que é isso, quem é essa autoridade que usava. Esse povo querendo saber isso e nos não pudemos explicar muito bem porque não tem nenhum artesão dos antigos. [...] Isso aqui nos perdemos muito também. Agora nos queremos continuar de novo, entendeu? Para isso que nos estamos a precisa de ter apoio. Precisa de apoio e precisa de ter um cacique que tem que andar. Tem que andar porque se

não pode acontecer de novo mesmo assim. Para não acontecer isso de duas vez, a gente não aceita de acontecer mais do que isso.⁹⁸ (Arnaldo Kaba Munduruku, 19.12.2022)

In other words, the Austrian museum is called to the same activism which characterize *doing anthropology* in Latin America and which we discussed at some points in §4.2.1 and §5.1.1. It is not perceived differently than other researchers and institutions; on the contrary, its European origin makes plausible, in the eyes of the Munduruku, that through researching the objects its purpose is to gain international prestige. To counter this belief, people who work there are called to come out of the *temple* and prove to support indigenous struggle with initiatives that natives can benefit from and not only hear of. These demands recall those claimed by Sateré-Mawé people (§4.2.3) and allow us to reflect on the ways in which proposals for participation, dialogue, and inclusion of indigenous peoples in museum discourse are developed. When curators organize collaborative projects on collections preserved in Europe, it is more common for them to invite the producers of the objects in the museum rather than the other way round (cfr Introduction). These visits are important of course but they somehow impose some limits that would be good to overcome. First, the initial space of the relationship belongs to the curator, so defining a priori power dynamic that risks to reproduce hegemonic forms of knowledge (cfr Escobar 1993). Second, the information exchanged is usually restricted to questions formulated from the classifications systems proper of museum cataloguing and conservation, making it difficult to reveal aspects which are interconnected to but might not be explicitly evoked by objects. As first step for the

⁹⁸ “This conversation is important because first of all, when I said that this is our culture, we don’t want to lose it. [...] Today, we are asking for help. Because as I told you before, we don’t want to lose it anymore. Because otherwise, we can’t sleep right away, all the time, right? We will be able to sleep right through, eat right through, only when we solve this thought we are trying to do, because otherwise, we cannot sleep right through. We sleep, and when we wake up, it’s like we are right there again. It takes away our hunger. [...] All the time this is what I say. Because if I don’t, how can I keep quiet? There is no way for me to shut up. We can’t stop. [...] So that’s why, thinking about what we can do. Or we ask for resources to be able to build a house first of all inside our village. This is the most important issue for us. As we have a lot of grandchildren, children, these young people, they need to see. What is the culture, who are the people that used to use that? [...] Like a house like this, like a museum. Inside this house there has to be everything, right? Another thing that we want to do is to make a paper, a book, so that we can distribute it to the schools. There are schools. From there, our grandchildren, who will learn, will remember this, remember the times of the past. People want to see it; today’s people want to see it. As many people have already seen that. One of them said very well, “well, this should have started a long time ago”, now none of us, nowadays, [knows] what this here is, what this is, who is this authority that used to use it. These people want to know it, and we cannot explain it very well because we don’t have any artisans from the old days. [...] We lost a lot of this here too. Now we want to continue again, do you understand? For this reason, we need support. We need support and we need a cacique that goes around. He has to be active, because if he doesn’t, it can happen again. So that this cannot happen twice, we do not accept it to happen more than this.”

establishment of a dialogue, I support those initiatives (in which many curators throughout the world are already engaging) that see museum professionals themselves go to the field and present their projects' proposals immersed in the real conditions in which people live. This because listening to claims for recognition and self-representation surrounded by people staring at you, either with distrust or hope, forces one to get out from his/her comfort zone and to go towards the Other according to its rules. I also believe that visiting communities might increase a lot our awareness about the urgency to work for a dissemination which undoes the exotic, primitivizing, romantic imaginary on natives, shows the complexity of their realities and takes seriously what they claim as their priorities.

On the whole, the people I talked to seemed to like having their items on display (heads excluded). The Munduruku are very proud of their history and the beauty of their ancestors' artistic productions. However, more than that they wish to show non-indigenous society the historical and spiritual depth of past conflicts and present struggle, the purpose of which is to be respected in their difference as well as in their rights to exist and participate in the contemporary world. I hope that, in future exhibitions, the museum will consider to reveal something more about such depth.

5.2 Material culture, indigenous education and political re-existence

The last section of this chapter focuses on a topic that all three ethnographic contexts have in common and thus seemed appropriate to treat in a separate, final discussion. I am referring to education and, in particular, to indigenous education. In fact, both the Munduruku, the Kambeba and the Sateré-Mawé perceived education as the conceptual and political framework within which to situate the debates regarding the objects preserved in European museums. As we mentioned earlier, indigenous struggles for the recognition of civil rights develop around three macro areas of implementation: health, territory and education. The latter includes all the mobilizations, initiatives, projects and claims directed to the valorization and transmission of practices and values proper to each indigenous culture in contrast to Western hegemonic education. The passing on of indigenous memories and history from generation to generation is classified as an educational process since it is fundamental in the formation of the individual as part of a specific indigenous society in relation with contemporary challenges. Thus, because of their connection with the dimensions of indigenous history, memory and identity also objects are included in

educational sphere. This thing became clear during a meeting of Munduruku professors occurred on the 16th of February 2022 in the village *Praia do Mangue* (Itaituba). While discussing on the meanings of objects and of their possible uses in present time, Honésio Dace stressed that it would be crucial to talk about them in school classes because young people know almost nothing about them. Similarly, during our discussion about the Porantim, João Sateré-Mawé expressed the wish to insert it in indigenous school curricula: “por isso que é interessante e tornar isso no colégio. Eu tenho esse sonho de ver ainda muitos alunos Sateré-Mawé entender melhor isso aqui e não só ver. Retornar pro colégio e ter cartilha Sateré-Mawé, brincando e se passando”⁹⁹ (João Sateré-Mawé, 07.11.2022).

To understand better what education implies in indigenous contexts and grasp its cultural and political significance it is first necessary to distinguish between the notions of “indigenous education” and “education of indigenous peoples”. Until the 1950s, education was thought in accordance with the latter concept and thus associated to the Western institution of school. This perspective implied that natives did not have their own educational practices and, therefore, had to be educated. Therefore, since the arrival of Europeans in Brazil, educational policies served as tools to promote the colonial project and politically subjugate natives (Silva and Azeredo 1995). The first to engage in indigenous peoples’ schooling were Jesuit missionaries. From 1549, when Father Manoel da Nobrega first arrived in Brazil (cfr §1.1), until 1759, when the Jesuit order was expelled from the country (cfr §2.2.1), they used catechization and religious conversion as main instruments to pursue an education which aimed at “civilizing the savage” (Furtado 2022). After the expulsion of Jesuits, new policies on indigenous education were defined by Marquis de Pombal’s *Diretório dos Índios* (1757) (cfr §2.2.1). In it, the civilizing intent was complemented by the project of incorporating natives into the national society by teaching them how to become workers useful to the economic development of the Portuguese empire. This paradigm remained unchanged also after Brazil independence (cfr §3.2.1) and until the beginning of the 20th century when indigenous issues were taken over by infant indigenist bodies such as the SPI (see note 43 in this chapter). Even if the official discourse promoted in this phase encouraged respect for cultural diversity, in practice indigenist educational

⁹⁹ “That’s why it would be interesting to make it part of the school. I have this dream of seeing more Sateré-Mawé students understand this better and not only see it. To return to the school and have Sateré-Mawé books, to pass on [knowledges] by playing.”

policies continued to be oriented to the integration of native population to national society (Lima 1995; Lima 2022). One innovation was the recognition of indigenous languages as an element to be valued and maintained; they began to be considered as a fundamental part of indigenous educational programs, however, more as a tool of transition to Portuguese language (Oliveira and Nascimento 2012). So, we can say with Silva and Azevedo (1995) that until the half of the 20th century indigenous education policies maintained an approach aimed at denying natives' difference and turning them into something as close as possible to Europeans. In the 1970s, to oppose this trend raised some non-governmental organizations¹⁰⁰ engaged in supporting indigenous social movements. While remaining anchored in still romantic and stereotypical views of natives, these organizations fostered activities that could open spaces of discussion, such as teacher training courses and interregional meetings. Also, in 1973, the Funai had issued the *Estatuto do Índio*, dedicating one section to indigenous education especially as far as it concerned bilingual teaching. However, at the time, still little attention was paid to the adaptation of school curricula to the specific social realities (Ferreira 2001).

A real conceptual change of educational paradigm occurred at the end of the 1980s, after the promulgation of Brazilian Constitution (1988) and the incorporation of international regulations such as the Convention n°169 of the International Labor Organization (1957). The action of indigenous groups – to whom articles 231 and 232 of the Constitution guaranteed self-determination – led to the development of numerous initiatives and projects in school education (Lima 2022; Furtado 2022). Later on, in the 1990s, new decrees came to supplement the legislative landscape and created the *Coordenação Geral de Apoio às Escolas Indígenas* (Ministerial Order 559/91) and the *Comité de Educação Escolar Indígena*. The purpose of these institutes should be to outline educational programs that work with different epistemologies according to the local context of each indigenous community (Lima 2022). In reality, even when well defined on paper, many obstacles difficult the implementation of these policies and the struggle of communities to access quality education is the order of the day. Both José Jesus Kambeba and Jesiel Sateré-Mawé made it quite clear during our conversations:

¹⁰⁰ For example: Operação Amazônia Nativa (OPAN) – 1969; Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI) – 1972; Comissão Pro-Yanomami (CCPY) – 1978; Centro de Trabalho Indigenista (CTI) – 1979; Associação Nacional de Ação Indigenista (ANAI) – 1979.

Nos temos onze escolas, né [...] de educação escolar indígena do povo Kambeba. Então dizer assim, são onze escolas que a gente tem que organizar, que tem uma demanda de professores, que tem uma demanda de funcionários, de serviços gerais também, que é do mesmo povo, né. Os professores, o que precisam hoje é ganhar força acadêmica. A gente precisa avançar nessa questão também, mas porque a maioria dos professores que tem graduação ficam na sede, então os professores substitutos são contratados mais pra as comunidades. Vamos dizer assim, que eu como professor hoje que está na coordenação hoje, nosso intuito é querer fazer com que nessa educação seja vista, que ela tenha sua marca, que ela tenha sua própria, o seu próprio material didático para que possa ser trabalhado e também ao mesmo tempo ser construído das comunidades, na sala de aula, no dia-dia... [...] Como professor Kambeba eu tenho muito orgulho, né. Só que as vezes a gente precisa mais o poder público ter esse olhar diferenciado.¹⁰¹ (José Jesus Kambeba, 19.01.2022)

Eu falo muito da doce ilusão pedagógica. Porque disso? Porque aqui fora, os caras falam uma coisa, e quando vai para pra prática, eles fazem o contrário, sabe? Por exemplo, um indígena tem direito nisso? Você tem direito, tem isso, não sei o que tal, beleza. Mas e daí, quando vai pra prática a gente não vê um exemplo, questão de escola, a gente não vê material didático, trabalhando a realidade. Então... há um desrespeito muito grande com a classe de professores principalmente indígenas e muito desses profissionais que mandam dar aula pra os indígenas são os que desconhecem a realidade e vão desrespeitar e eles levam uma cultura, eles levam uma verdade daqui desrespeitando a verdade daquele povo [...]. Outra coisa que eu fico pensando, que nos temos esses materiais, é que a gente não tem materiais didáticos nas escolas por exemplo. Nos temos... a gente fala tanto de educação indígena... aqui, por exemplo, eu sou presidente do Conselho Estadual da Educação Particular Indígena do Amazonas. [...] É daqui que saem as leis sobre escola indígena, ao nível de estado. E aí, eu fico assim pensando. Como fortalecer todas essas riquezas? Eu sei, mas dificilmente a gente vai encontrar isso nos livros. Tem coisa ali muito pobre de informação, vamos dizer assim. E

¹⁰¹ “We have eleven schools, right [...] for indigenous education among the Kambeba people. So, there are eleven schools that we have to organize, and the people itself enter a demand for teachers, staff and general services. The teachers, what they need today is to gain academic strength. We need to advance in this matter too, but because most of the teachers who have a degree stay at the headquarters, then substitute teachers are hired more for inner land communities. Let’s say that I, as a teacher that is in the coordination today, our intention is to make sure that this education is seen, that it has its own mark, that it has its own didactic material we can work on and, at the same time, it is created by the communities, in classrooms, on a daily basis... [...] As a Kambeba teacher I am very proud. It’s just that sometimes we need public authorities to have this differentiated look.”

sabe o nosso povo, mas aí, como seria hoje esse trabalho. Como seria, como que a gente poderia estar fazendo esse trabalho de pegar mais informações, tudo mais. [...] A responsabilidade é muito grande e eu tenho esse cuidado de como trabalhar essas informações, levar pra, por exemplo o PPP [Plano Político Pedagógico]. Eu não consigo ver no PPP. [...] Onde está o Porantim no nosso PPP? Onde está o guaraná no nosso PPP? Onde está o nosso ritual, o ritual da tucandeira. Eu não consigo ver.¹⁰² (Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, 26.01.2022)

Despite the daily challenges, to open this debate allowed to recenter the other notion mentioned above, that is, *indigenous education*. Indigenous education does not just refer to teaching usually non-indigenous knowledge in indigenous schools but to a wider educational process which gives importance to ways of producing and transmitting knowledge proper of natives (Luciano 2006). Also appointed as informal education, it develops in daily life from the interiorization and passing on over generations specific cultural, social and political practices and values (Furtado 2022).

O pai, aí vem pro filho, passa pros netos, os bisnetos. Aquela é uma geração. O conhecimento ele é guardado na cabeça do Munduruku por quarenta anos. Tudo aquilo que ele aprendeu, sentiu, experimentou, fica na cabeça dele. Tanto é que o processo de ensino-aprendizagem ele começa, não sei se eu falei na vez passada, que ela começa por detalhes, que passam as vezes despercebidos e eles também são imperceptíveis.¹⁰³ (Francisco Ikõ Munduruku, 08.02.2022)

¹⁰² “I talk a lot about the sweet pedagogical illusion. Why? Because out here, the guys say one thing, and when they put it into practice, they do the opposite, you know? For example, does an indigenous person have right to this? You have the right, you have this, I don’t know what, fine. But then, when it comes to practice, we don’t see an example, in school issues, we don’t see didactic material, working with reality. So... there is a great disrespect towards the group of teachers, especially indigenous ones, and many of these professionals that are sent to teach indigenous people are the ones that do not know the reality and will disrespect and they take a culture, they take a truth from here disrespecting the truth of that people [...] Another thing that keeps me thinking, that we have these materials, is that we don’t have didactic materials in schools, for example. We have... we talk so much about indigenous education... here, for example, I am the president of the State Council of Indigenous Education in the Amazon. [...] This is where the laws about indigenous schools come from, at the state level. And so, I keep thinking. How can we strengthen all these riches? I know, but we will hardly find this in books. There is very little information, let’s say. And you know our people, but then, how could this work be today? How would it be, how could we be doing this work of getting more information, everything else? [...] The responsibility is very big and I am very careful about how to work with this information, to take it to, for example, the PPP [Pedagogical Policy Plan]. I can’t see it in the PPP. [...] Where is the Porantim in our PPP? Where is the guaraná in our PPP? Where is our ritual, the ritual of the tucandeira. I can’t see it.”

¹⁰³ “[From] the father it comes to the son, then to the grandchildren, the great-grandchildren. That is one generation. Knowledge is kept in Munduruku’s head for forty years. Everything that he has learned, felt,

It encompasses the relationship with the Amazon Forest and its inhabitants as well as social practices and rules. I report below some examples extracted from conversations with some of my interlocutors:

Eles tinham um conhecimento muito avançado [...] Eles já conheciam muito bem a floresta. A relação, a convivência na floresta, com os animais. Eles tinham contato. Eles sabiam, assim, dizer... ter uma comunicação. Com tempo, eles sabiam definir horário, a pesar de não morar na beira do rio, eles sabiam quando era tempo de verão. Então eles sabiam o calendário, né. Mesmo eles não sabendo eles sabiam.¹⁰⁴ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

Por mais que pra cá seja muito longe, nos indígenas, não digo todos, mas alguns, a gente não precisa assim de... tem um relógio, mas a gente sabe quando é seis, quando é meio dia, quando é três. Só através das cigarras. A gente sabe quando vai chover, quando o sabia começa a cantar e essas coisas assim. [...] Sabe quando o verão vai chegar, quando tá chovendo a gente sabe quando a chuva vai passar, essas coisas assim.¹⁰⁵ (Everaldo Manhuari Munduruku, 07.02.2022)

E o ritual ele doe, assim. Tu aprende a se comportar até quando... porque a dor não é só física, ela também é psicológica. Tu passa por um processo de educação também nessa questão da dor. Tu passa por um processo educativo para questão da alimentação, quando começa o ritual tu não pode comer peixe, não pode comer carne, não pode ir pro rio, porque teu corpo tá aberto pra várias impurezas entrar, né. Então tá podendo vir coisa boa, mas tá aberto também pra várias impurezas. Então aí, nesse processo, tu começa a adquirir conhecimentos. [...] E aí, o que acontece... é assim esse processo educacional do ritual.¹⁰⁶ (Turi Sateré-Mawé, 09.12.2021)

experienced, stays in his head. So much so that the teaching-learning process begins – I don't know if I said it last time – in details, which sometimes go unnoticed and are also imperceptible.”

¹⁰⁴ “They had a very advanced knowledge [...] They already knew the forest very well. The relationship, the coexistence in the forest, with the animals. They had contact. They knew how to, like, let's say... have a communication. With time, they knew how to set the time, even though they didn't live by the river, they knew when it was summer time. So, they knew the calendar. Even if they didn't know, they knew.”

¹⁰⁵ “Even though here is a long way away, we, indigenous people, I don't say all but some of us, we don't need a clock... we have a clock, but we know when it is six, when it is noon, when it is three. Only through the cicadas. We know when it's going to rain, when the birds start singing and all that kind of stuff. [...] We know when summer is going to arrive, when it's raining, we know when the rain is going to pass, all that kind of stuff.”

¹⁰⁶ “And the ritual hurts. You learn how to behave even when... because pain is not only physical, it is also psychological. You go through an educational process also in this issue of pain. You go through an educational

Na década de setenta existia uma casa dos homens – que eu chamo *uk'sa* – na educação. Ali foi no centro o fundamento da educação. [...] A casa dos homens. Ali você aprendia a cantar, você aprendia a pintar. [...] Tanto homem como mulher. Aprendia a confeccionar [vestimento?], artesanato, interpretar sonhos... uma ciência, uma arte, tipo uma universidade. As pessoas se preparavam, pra família, pra se tornar um chefe, um chefe de família, um caçador, um pescador.¹⁰⁷ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

Yet, to recognize such educational practice does not mean that those who debate over indigenous education refuse school as institution. They criticize its Eurocentric, hegemonic structure – as regards both contents and teaching methods – but also consider it part of a system in which indigenous people participate today. Political struggles on indigenous education aspire to create an Indigenous school education (*Educação Escolar Indígena*) that combines and articulates formal and informal education according to the specificities of different context. This implies to focus school curricula on aspects proper to each culture in order to value *traditional* knowledge as much as non-indigenous knowledge and create programs which respect communities' temporal organization – for example by not having class when other activities such as fishing, planting or preparing manioc are planned. If properly set up and put into practice, indigenous school education can offer important tools to think on transformations of indigenous societies (Lima 2022); also, it might help in deconstructing stereotyped and homogenizing visions which still treat difference in an exotic and/or folkloric way (Macedo 1995). For it aims at producing knowledge starting from different cultural experiences and epistemologies, it gains a central role in supporting the creation of contemporary indigenous identities able to react to still ongoing processes of colonial domination. To this extent, to educate becomes a way of doing politics because it enables greater critical awareness of power dynamics at work in one's own context and to think strategy to subvert them (Muraca 2019). This is stressed clearly by Emilson Frota de

process for the question of food, when the ritual begins you can't eat fish, you can't eat meat, you can't go to the river, because your body is open for various impurities to enter. So good things can come in, but it is also open to various impurities. Then, in this process, you start to acquire knowledge. [...] And then, what happens... this is how the educational process of the ritual works."

¹⁰⁷ "In the seventies there was a men's house, that I call *uk'sa*, in education. It was the center of the foundation of education. [...] The men's house. There you learned to sing, you learned to paint. [...] Both men and women. You learned to make [clothing?], crafts, interpret dreams... a science, an art, like a university. People prepared themselves, for family, to become a chief, a head of the family, a hunter, a fisherman."

Lima (Munduruku) who, in his dissertation on Munduruku education in the *Kwatá-Laranjal* region, considers school as “um campo de reflexão para se entender o processo de transformação cultural de um povo indígena. [...] A civilização ocidental nos alcançou, porém não nos eliminou. A educação em sua modalidade escolar indígena passa a ser um forte instrumento de recomposição política dos Munduruku ante a sociedade nacional”¹⁰⁸ (2022, 16).

One of the most appropriate paradigms to look at indigenous education as pedagogical and political practice is interculturality. Interculturality is a project proposed by some of the authors of the decolonial movement – such as Catherine Walsh (2009), Catalina Vélez (2006), Marisol de la Cadena (2005), Juan Carlos Goddenzi (1996), Norma Fuller (2002) and Walter Mignolo (2000) among the others – that has as main purpose to refound the structures of society from “other” ways of thinking, being, learning, teaching and treating diversity. It arose in the Andean region as response and reaction to the management of difference in multicultural realities still subject to dynamics of coloniality of power and knowledge (Cadena 2005; cfr Quijano 2000). According to Mignolo, the latter has been responsible for subordinating the knowledge produced by the “other” through the creation of a hegemonic system of institutional knowledge aimed at reproducing those mechanisms and social forms that preserve Western power (cfr Vélez 2006). On the contrary, the intercultural paradigm aspires at revealing these power relationships and creating new concepts and practices to handle difference in a more transversal and inclusive way.

Walsh identifies different types of interculturality. Indigenous education develops around what she defines as critical interculturality, precisely by virtue of its connection to knowledge production and transmission. “La interculturalidad constituye al mismo tiempo punto de partida del acto educativo y punto de llegada de la educación como proceso”¹⁰⁹ (Vélez 2006, 50) because it is concerned with contents as much as with the methods through which they are passed on. Interculturality is inspired by Freire’s pedagogy (1967, 1970) and recognizes the processes of alienation and oppression entailed in school formal education but it also overcomes it by focusing on the processes of agency and resistance within such hegemonic

¹⁰⁸ “A field of reflection to understand the process of cultural transformation of an indigenous people. [...] Western civilization has reached us, but it has not eliminated us. Education in its indigenous school modality becomes a strong instrument of political recomposition of the Munduruku before the national society.”

¹⁰⁹ “Interculturality constitutes both the starting point of the educational act and the end point of education as a process.”

structures. It aims at turning conflict into opportunity and looks for strategies to oppose to the system from within (Vélez 2006).

Indigenous education embraces and encourages this model and its intentions of socio-political transformation by appropriating national educational structures and claiming their rearticulation from natives' *informal* educational practices. If observed through the lenses of interculturality, it works as a technology to build a new type of knowledge (cfr Cadena 2005) that takes into account the plurality of ways of seeing and experiencing the world. In line with this, I find it interesting to report the thought of Francisko Ikō since he considers indigenous education as a practice of self-reflection because “é uma reflexão sobre a filosofia que essas histórias tem por trás”¹¹⁰ (Francisko Ikō, 08.02.2022). For indigenous youth, having access to an education that invites them to reflect on themselves in such a way to value cultural diversity instead of denying it compared to a supposed model to conform to, is crucial to imagine new ways to exist in the present and in the future. To adopt this perspective can help us in de-essentializing indigenous identities and acknowledge their dynamicity and hybrid character. Picking up on Canclini's reflections on the concept of hybridism (1995), such quality would allow to move between what is classified as “traditional” and what as *modern*. Classic modernist thought has conceptualized the categories of modernity and tradition as in opposition and mutually exclusive and constrained indigenous people to the former (cfr Introduction). On the contrary, in the essays collected in the volume edited by Ernst Halbmayer, *Indigenous Modernities* (2013), many authors argue with great clarity how contemporary indigenous identities are as modern as Western ones since they are products of the colonial process in the first place. In particular, to analyze the ways in which they juxtapose, reformulate and rearticulate elements coming from different contexts and discourses might be very useful to reconceptualize and pluralize the category of modernity itself. In fact, quoting Halbmayer, “the coexisting processes of the indigenization of modernity and the modernization of indigeneity produce distinct indigenous modernities” (2013, 19). Similar assumptions lay at the base of Clifford's concept of *indigènitude*, that defines a specific way of living the condition of “indigenous” in which “traditions are recovered and connections made in relation to shared colonial, postcolonial globalizing histories. [...] *Indigènitude* is a vision of liberation and cultural difference that challenges, or

¹¹⁰ “It is a reflection on the philosophy behind these stories.”

at least redirects, the modernizing agendas of nation-states and transnational capitalism” (Clifford 2013, 16).

Intercultural indigenous education enhances hybrid identities and forms of indigeneity as a way of staying true to one’s local traditions and specificities while participating in global modernity. It does so by encouraging each ethnic group to reflect critically on the best strategies to creatively articulate elements of their pasts in the present. As Erika pointed out when discussing about the project of the *Museu Omágua Amãna* (§4.1.4): “esse museu é uma iniciativa nossa própria e vai ser a nossa voz, a nossa resistência, dizendo faz tempo que nos estamos aqui, sempre vamos estar aqui. Então é estudando lá o passado que vamos estar aqui no presente e vamos estar também no futuro. Então pra nós isso é muito importante. É nossa própria história, é nossa própria vida”¹¹¹ (03.12.2021).

Although these topics are part of the public and academic debate for nearly half a century, in practice who lives in-between different cultural systems still goes through many difficulties.

Eu venho percebendo muito, sabe, essas coisas, tanto pela formação, de fora e também pela formação que eu recebi do nosso povo. E aí eu fico assim... eu acho que há uma briga muito forte entre as informações. As vezes eu não consigo fazer essa costura, sabe. E eu tenho muito medo disso. Eu tenho medo também, diante de tudo isso, de perder a minha, a originalidade, o que eu trago de lá, que tem comigo que eu aprendi primeiro. Porque é muito forte as informações que vem daqui. E eles fazem, “eh, tu faz isso por isso e por isso”, aí ele controla “tá aqui oh: teórico tal diz isso por isso” ou “teórico diz isso, mas outros também falam que é diferente”. Tá. Eu sempre digo que ao nosso povo não interessa isso, ele não quer saber se eu sou mestre, ele não quer saber se eu sou doutor, ele só quer saber se eu tô por dentro do que é do nosso povo, do que bom, do que não é bom pro nosso povo. Então, mas fora de tudo, essas coisas que estou aprendendo, é pra ajudar. E aí, hoje ocupamos esses espaços, que foi uma conquista nossa e não é por acaso que a gente tá se encontrando agora aqui.¹¹² (Jesiel Sateré-Mawé, 26.01.2022)

¹¹¹ “This museum is our own initiative and will be our voice, our resistance, saying that we have been here for a long time, we will always be here. It is by studying the past there that we will be here in the present and will also be here in the future. So, for us this is very important. It is our own history; it is our own life.”

¹¹² “I’ve been noticing a lot, you know, these things, both because of my training, from the outside, and also because of the training I received from our people. And then I get like this... I think there is a very strong fight of information. Sometimes I can’t make this seam, you know. And I am very scared of this. I am also afraid, in the face of all this, of losing my own, my originality, what I bring from there, what is with me that I first learned. Because the information that comes from here is very strong. And they say, “hey, you do this for this and this”, and then they control “oh, here you are: such a theorist says this for this” or “such a theorist says this, but others also say it is different”. Right. I always say that our people are not interested in this, they don’t care if I

[A transformação] pra os tempos atuais não é uma coisa negativa. É claro que o munduruku pensa em proteger o seu espaço, o seu ambiente, o seu território e quer acompanhar a tecnologia, mas não da forma que destruindo. Ele quer achar uma alternativa para que sobreviva o povo, mas sem deixar, como é que diz, o seu costume. Ele vai mudando sim, mas vai mudando também o modo de falar a sua educação com o decorrer do tempo vai, mas nunca vai deixar de ser munduruku. Mas, o que vem de negativo, as vezes é o impacto, né? É uma ameaça de destruir o costume do povo, duma nação. Deixar de falar, deixar de viver de acordo com seu costume é matar o povo. [...] Eu vejo que o estudar, o que se aprende numa cultura diferente, que não é nossa, só vai ajudar a comunidade. Ele vai aprender o sistema diferente desse povo, ele vai dizer “o sistema é assim; o modo de viver na cidade é assim”. E a gente tem que se preparar para poder [...] também seguir esse sistema aqui.¹¹³ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

For they are guardians of memories, practical skills, ancient knowledges, spiritual energies, objects preserved in Europe acquire a key role in such educational processes and become bridges to pass through these multiple dimensions of existence. If we look across their density, we can glimpse possible futures as through the lenses of a telescope because, far from being dead and silent, they are re-existence devices that can help us design a less divided and more shared world.

Eu, analisando a nossa conversa, a gente aprende que assim que nos Munduruku, nos população indígena, quer também ajudar a construir, a melhorar a sociedade lá fora. Não é como eles pensam que somos, nos também sabemos contribuir com nosso conhecimento. Já chega de guerra um contra o outro, tanto como nos internos como eles também. Só tendo

am a Master Graduate, they don't care if I am a Doctor, they only want to know if I know what is good for our people, what is good, what is not good for our people. So, apart from anything else, these things that I am learning, are meant to help. And then, today we occupy these spaces, which was a conquest of ours and it is not by chance that we are meeting here now.”

¹¹³ “[Transformation] for present times is not a negative thing. It is clear that the Munduruku think about protecting their space, their environment, their territory and want to keep up with technology, but not in a way that destroys it. They want to find an alternative for the survival of the people, but without leaving, as they say, their customs. Yes, they are changing, but they are also changing the way they speak and their education over time and even so they will never cease to be Munduruku. What is negative sometimes is the impact, isn't it? It is a threat to destroy the customs of a people, of a nation. To stop talking, to stop living according to one's customs is to kill the people. [...] I see that studying, learning in a different culture, which is not ours, will only help the community. One is going to learn the different system of these people; he is going to say “the system is like this; the way of living in the city is like this”. And we have to prepare ourselves to be able to [...] also follow this other system.”

guerra entre eles, né. Por causa da organização. Um quer ter poder mais que o outro, ter mais conhecimento que o outro, então acaba gerando conflito isso. Então é pensar como Munduruku, nos queremos também ensinar às pessoas a se organizar. [...] Nos temos que mudar para melhor, né. A intenção nunca é piorar, nos queremos achar uma solução. Eu acho que nos conversando, uma sociedade indígena, com uma sociedade não indígena, achar uma forma de poder com que a gente viva em harmonia.¹¹⁴ (Jairo Saw Munduruku, 11.10.2022)

¹¹⁴ “Analyzing our conversation, we learn that we, the Munduruku, the indigenous population, also wants to help to build, to improve the society out there. It is not as they think we are; we also know how to contribute with our knowledge. Enough with the war against each other, both us internally and with them as well. There is only war between them, you know. Because of the organization. One wants to have more power than the other, to have more knowledge than the other, so this ends up generating conflict. So, it is thinking like Munduruku, we also want to teach people how to get organized. [...] We have to change for the better. The intention is never to make things worse; we want to find a solution. I think that by talking, an indigenous society with a non-indigenous society, we can find a way for us to live in harmony.”

Conclusion

Living objects for living people

Now that this journey has come to an end, it is impossible for me to look at the objects in the showcases of Lisbon, Coimbra and Vienna museums with the same eyes. Immersed in the silence of the halls, I watch them, and the more I stare, the more I see their shapes changing: they stretch, they extend, they envelop themselves in time, space and through the lives of the people with whom they interacted. It is a slow transformation, though, like that of the clouds in the sky that change shape through constant, imperceptible movements. I left for this trip with a suitcase full of questions, first of all *how do ethnographic objects preserved in Western museums talk about who produced, collected and handled them?* and *why do they tell what they tell in a certain way?* As with any self-respecting trip, luggage is unpacked and re-packed several times and its content changes. One keeps some things and leaves along the way or gains other things. Among the latter there are new questions and a few answers. For example, it clearly emerged that objects do not tell anything a priori – or, at least, one should not consider them capable of doing it (see also Crew and Sims 1991). There is always someone who makes them speak through his/her own interpretation, almost as if they were used as megaphones to make someone's voice prevail over that of others. In the chapters of this thesis, we tried to highlight this process and to show how according to the different political, economic, ideological and epistemological background objects acquired different meaning and values. A key role in this continuous resemantification was played by their circulation across the Atlantic space both in physical and conceptual terms; in fact, even when stationary in a museum, objects travel in the minds of people who saw and touched them, they build symbolical references and are used as criteria for comparison.

In the first three chapters we considered material culture of Brazilian natives in order to observe and try to comprehend how ethnographic objects have been used throughout the centuries to legitimize, consolidate and justify the exercise of colonial power and the idea of Western supremacy. Through the juxtaposition and the comparison with written and iconographic sources it was, in part, possible to reconstruct the context within which objects were interpreted and offered as representations of identities and alterities. A Western perspective was privileged since it is the one that originated the imaginary we aim at deconstructing. Also, for this historical period, it is almost impossible to trace the worldviews

that indigenous people in Brazil had at the time without them to be mediated by sources written by others or by readings that the descendants of ancient indigenous societies make, today, of their own past – a process that, as memory studies remind us, is inevitable (cfr §4.1.3).

Chapter one does not focus yet on the specific case studies but served to introduce a set of categories that originated during the first decades of a revolutionary encounter (for all the parties involved) and turned into the foundations for the production of all subsequent imaginaries until at least the mid-20th century. In the 16th century, the collection of ethnographic objects was encouraged by the role they were attributed as tools to classify indigenous people in a world still shaped by knowledge inherited by ancient philosophers and by Christian ideology. They were valued and regarded *authentic* insofar as the manner in which they were manufactured and used defined natives as either potentially civilizable through Christian teaching or as half-beasts subservient to a state of nature and therefore whom it was legitimate to assimilate or exterminate. Some objects, such as weapons, unmistakably recalled the second condition; others, such as feather works, mirrored a greater difficulty of framing natives into one or the other pole because if, on the one hand, they evoked a savage and “primitive” lifestyle, on the other hand, they showed the ability of manipulating and assembling natural elements in aesthetically appreciated objects. In this context, the category of wonder and its potential in encompassing and translating ambivalent feelings became the privileged lens through which to focus and seek to understand otherness. To classify and civilize natives remained main purposes for the following centuries as well, even if the coming of the Enlightenment thought and the development of a new scientific method based on direct observation of phenomena rather than on previous descriptions changed the background cloth on which to place non-European societies and the way to describe them. The question for those interacting with natives on a physical and cognitive level was no longer whether or not they were human (which was now established) but what place they occupied in the evolutionary path of the species both biologically and socially (cfr §2.1.1). The scientific expeditions organized from the second half of the 18th century onwards – and which include the two journeys that we have analyzed in detail in chapters two and three – aimed at producing specific information in this regard also, and above all, by collecting as many natural specimens and ethnographic objects as possible. The latter served precisely to witness the technological level of each cultural group on a scale at the top of

which were Europeans; to collect, study and exhibit them were regarded as crucial actions to describe the world and its populations in a supposedly objective and *true* way. The knowledge originated from this process was far from being neutral and an end in itself. It was inherently tied to the political and economic objectives of the European power that organized the expedition and that coincided with the increase of their own wealth and influence in the global imperial landscape. This bound is quite evident when we look at the collections considered in this research. The collection assembled by Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira on behalf of the Portuguese Crown between 1783 and 1792 and currently preserved in Lisbon and Coimbra (chapter two) let emerge, both in the type of the objects selected and in the way the naturalist classified and interpreted them, a deeply pragmatic discourse. In it, everything is oriented at understanding how to integrate the objects' producers in a system that needed them to occupy the land and participate actively in economic activities in order to remain standing. The rhetoric of civilization and the search for paths to reach this goal is preponderant in conceiving material culture. Objects such as those chosen as case studies (Kambeba bamboo tablet and arrow thruster and Sateré-Mawé sacred oar/club) fitted into this interpretative context and contributed in shaping a primitivizing, paternalistic imaginary which encouraged natives' assimilation into Western socio-economic model.

On the other hand, the collection preserved in Vienna and assembled by Johann Natterer for the Austrian Emperor Franz I (chapter three) is different despite the proximity in time (1819-1836) and the similar trajectory of the voyage. Ethnographic objects were selected and collected to enrich in variety and beauty the Imperial Cabinet of Natural History; the purpose was primarily to show the emperor's power and prestige in the wake of 16th-century *Wunderkammern* tradition. Feather objects are indeed many and very different from each other: among them, there is Munduruku collection – which is the richest and more complete of those kept in European museums. In this context, the category of wonder emerges as guiding the interpretation of Johann Natterer and of the public which saw the objects once they were put on display. Probably, wonder was still perceived as the most appropriate category to make understandable an incomprehensible alterity; this was even truer in the case of a population such as the Munduruku who were able to make such beautiful objects for occasions considered the epitome of barbarism: warrior expeditions and trophy-head ceremonies. Anyway, the identification as indigenous people as backwards societies who obstructed Western progress prevailed and this was also due to the fact that, unlike

Portuguese government, the Austrian empire had no particular interest in assimilating natives to their economic system as workforce.

What these interpretations have in common is their operation of invention of the *other* (see Wagner 1981) and their identification with a *them* compared to an *us*. Brazilian natives were one of the many *them* with which European societies confronted itself: their reduction to few homogenized and stereotyped traits is much more eloquent about the construction of a Western identity protagonist of the myth of progress rather than about the populations that aimed at being described. Whether they were treated *benevolently* or aggressively (i.e., assimilated or exterminated), the result was the same: their denial. The fact that the knowledge Europeans built on natives has never been objective but conveyed through a univocal point of view and functional to turn them into convenient subjects for the ambitions of the West is also confirmed by the way in which indigenous peoples talk about themselves in present time. The narratives and discourses they offer on themselves and on the objects made by their ancestors reveal a huge complexity with regard to the space they occupy in each cultural context, to the memory they evoke and pass on and to the ways they are currently interpreted. In chapters four and five, I tried to show a little of such complexity even if, of course, the information collected and reported is but a small part of the knowledge each group has of objects. As specified elsewhere in the text, this is due partly to temporal limitations and partly to the difficulties in accessing the field. Nevertheless, I hope the material exposed to be a valuable starting point for other indigenous and non-indigenous researchers.

In chapter four, we focused on the artifacts preserved in Lisbon and Coimbra. The conversations with Eronilde Kambeba were enlightening to reveal the centrality of a simple objects like the bamboo tablet. It was clear how the indigenous perspective was completely different from Western one: while for the latter to deform the skull corresponded to an action of “dehumanization” because it turned a body perfectly shaped by the Christian God into something monstrous, for the former the ritual of the *Kānga Pewa* (head flattening) represented an action of *humanization* that established a connection between individuals and their God (see Remotti 2013 on the concept of anthropo-poiesis). With regard to the Sateré-Mawé, I tried to explore the density of the *Porantim*, which is displayed in Coimbra like a simple “club”, a label which evokes the idea of war and backwardness. It is actually one of the most important and sacred objects for Sateré-Mawé people because it has engraved the

ancient stories and the prophecies that guide Sateré-Mawé future path. The *Porantim* is a power device through which people maintain themselves in contact and harmony with spiritual entities; it is also an educational instrument that enables the passing on to young generations of the ancestors' memory and teachings.

Chapter five is entirely addressed to the collection of Munduruku feather works preserved in Vienna and to the space they occupy in Munduruku contemporary reality. The question that moved this part of the research was if and how objects that have not been produced for almost a century and, sometimes, are not even recognized, could represent Munduruku people of the present. The answer was positive and, even if in some cases the visual references (i.e., the objects' appearance) have gone lost, their presence in ancient stories and traditions is still pervasive. Not only, the desire of valuing such knowledge emerged with strength as well as that of reproducing and reintroducing feather works in daily life as tools for handing down the ancestors' legacy.

In all the three contexts experienced, the objects were put in deep connection with the identity of each group. Indeed, they were taken as symbols of it for they materialize part of the memory that supports such identity and encompass, in their tangible and intangible aspects, key knowledge to reproduce social structures and cultural forms over time. One thing that all my interlocutors were keen to emphasize in this regard was their heterogeneity beyond the generic epithet of *native*. What the Kambeba, the Sateré-Mawé and the Munduruku have in common is the fact that they found themselves on the same side of the colonial process and saw their worldviews discredited, their histories silenced and their right to existence impaired. Today, they share the same struggle in order to regain public space and being recognized and respected for their own specificities. To a hegemonic discourse unable to think of them as other than frozen in time or *inauthentic*, they oppose a rhetoric that has in the creative rearticulation of their identities the primary strategy of resistance – and re-existence¹. These processes are always marked by the powerful and authoritative speeches of many indigenous leaders who are willing to be taken seriously in the first place and claim a truth value for their narratives on the world. In this process, everything is political: intentions, actions, means and results. Consequently, also objects acquire a strong and explicit political value. They become tools through which to regain a voice and reaffirm

¹ On the creative rearticulation of indigenous identities and cultural elements see: Liep 2001; Favole 2010; Clifford 2013; Hallmayer 2013 among the others.

that indigenous peoples are alive and claim for physical space and epistemological credibility. However, their patrimonialization – that is, that process of reappropriation and recovery of past history and traditions in order to regain control over space and time (Jeudy 1900 and Fabre 1996 quoted in Lattanzi 2013) – has another purpose beyond political revindication: to strengthen the connection with their own ancestry and reestablish the balance with the spiritual dimension. In fact, “ethnographic” objects, that Westerners are accustomed to think of dead things, are for indigenous people not dead at all. They are living entities who incorporate and channel energies and mediate the relationship with the ancestors, with spirits and with the non-human world. Many researches carried out in the Amazonian regions and addressed to the study of material culture point out how Amerindian societies have what the Western academic world calls their own “theory of materiality and personhood”². According to it, some things, and especially those related to ritual practices, are endowed with a subjectivity that makes it possible to enter in a social relationship with them. This means that they are not perceived as representations of ancestral or spiritual entities: they are those very entities. To manipulate objects is like having a direct conversation with these entities and discussing with them about the life of the community and about how to behave in order to guarantee its wellness. This point has been clarified also by Suzana Karipuna³, responsible of the storage of the *Museu Emílio Goeldi* in Belém (Pará), and her daughter Manuela Karipuna, Ph.D student in Anthropology at the Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA), whom I had the chance to meet in November 2021. Suzana was born in a village in the region of the Oiapoque. She is daughter of *pajés* and acquired from her parents many knowledge on the spiritual world. She decided to enter the faculty of Social Sciences that gave her the opportunity of making an internship at the *Museu Goeldi*. From that moment on her career as museologist never stopped.

Manuela: Porque os objetos, não são meros objetos pra gente. São pessoas [...] A mamãe tem uma relação afetiva com a cultura material desde a aldeia, né, quando ela ainda não chamava por esse nome, de “cultura material”. Mas com a mãe dela, que é minha avó, que ensinava pra ela fazer as cuias, ensinava fazer os grafismos. Então ela já tinha essa formação na área desde a infância. Começa bem com a aldeia. E ela fala que quando ela tá dentro da reserva

² See, for example, the essays of the volume edited by Santos-Granero, “The occult life of things” (2009); Barcelos Neto 2004; 2008; 2012; 2020; Viveiros de Castro 2015.

³ The Karipuna are an Indigenous group living in the region of the Oiapoque, northern Brazil.

técnica não é estar dentro duma reserva técnica, mas é estar com vários povos indígenas, é estar com vários parentes, é estar numa grande aldeia.

Suzana: É um grande território. Inclusive esse meu discurso do museu agora, né, eu falo que estou dentro dum grande território, com vários povos [...]. Eu posso dizer que ao mesmo tempo eu estou no Xingú, ao mesmo tempo eu estou no Oiapoque. [...]

Manuela: Para o antropólogo não indígena, aquilo muitas vezes é só uma peça inerte, e pra gente não, aquilo tem espírito, tem vida.⁴ (Suzana and Manuela Karipuna, 21.11.2021)

For Suzana, to stay inside a museum and its storage is like to move across a great mystical indigenous land where objects are inhabitants of a village. This perspective implies, of course, its own set of rules to treat, preserve and expose objects and relate with them. Many aspects of this type of curatorship are impossible to manage for a non-indigenous curator who lacks knowledge and sensibility to feel objects in the multiplicity of its material and immaterial dimensions; for this reason, Suzana calls it “curadoria do invisível” (curatorship of the invisible) (López Garcés and Santos Karipuna 2021).

I believe that this vitality should become a cornerstone for every museological exhibition that, when not properly *decolonized* and *decolonial*, can be appointed at least as appropriate to introduce any narrative on Brazilian natives. Curators should turn to objects and to the communities of whom they speak not as something to give new life in a world that is trying to rebalance its power dynamics but as something that never died and has always taken part in such dynamics in one or the other way. In a 2006 essay, Hal Langfur sets out well the process of involvement of indigenous people in the colonial system. He portrays them not only as victims chased away from their lands and bent by disease but also as perpetrators of wars and conflicts. According to him, this violent attitude was not irrational, haphazard, nor

⁴ M: “Objects are not mere objects for us. They are people [...] my mother has an affective relationship with material culture since she lived in the village, you know, when she didn't call it “material culture” yet. With her mother, who is my grandmother, who taught her how to make gourd bowls, how to make graphics. So she already had this training in the area since childhood. [...] And she says that when she is inside a storage it is not standing inside a storage, but it is to stand in the middle of several indigenous peoples, it is to stand with several relatives, it is to stand in a big village”.

S: “It's a great territory. Even this speech of mine at the museum now, right, I say that I am inside a large territory, with various peoples [...]. I can say that at the same time I am in Xingú, at the same time I am in Oiapoque [...]”.

M: “For non-indigenous anthropologists, that (object) is often just an inert piece, and for us it is not, it has spirit, it has life.”

driven by some kind of barbaric fierceness how chroniclers of the time described it; it was part of a set of specific and conscious strategies to resist to the physical and epistemological invasiveness of Western society. On the other hand, also silence, transformation and adaptation to new circumstances have been part of such strategies and my interlocutors have pointed this out at multiple times in our confrontations. To represent natives as people who have always been involved in dynamics of struggle and resistance should become the norm in museums exhibitions because it allows both to recognize them as endowed with their own agency and to reconsider the processes of socio-cultural transformation. Of course, to reflect on transformation implies bringing at the center of the debate another issue which has already emerged throughout the chapters: authenticity. In the Introduction we said that the concept of authenticity is a cultural construct, a category elaborated to endow with a sense of truth the reality we experiment individually and socially (see, among the others, MacCannell, 1976; Bendix 1977; Smith, 1977; Greenwood, 1982; Cohen, 1988; Lacy and Douglass, 2002, Grünewald 2009). Until the second half of the 20th century natives had no space to speak for themselves and they were considered authentic, and therefore “truly indigenous”, only if they fitted in the stereotype of the good or fierce savage as far away as possible from the Western world both in geographical and cultural terms. The way of treating material culture reflected this attitude, because only objects prior to the colonial encounter were considered *authentic* and *original*, thus worthy of faithfully representing indigenous societies. They were thought to hold an “aura” – to use the concept as used by Benjamin Walter (1977) – capable of sending the observer back to the specific spatial and temporal circumstances in which they had been produced. This aura went lost in reproductions made for different purposes than their original use (for example, the exhibition in a museum). As for collections of non-European peoples, they evoked the condition of *pristine* of a primitive humanity not yet spoiled by the inexorable rush of progress towards modernity. This conviction is still quite popular in contemporary Western society and the way some museums themselves display their collections leads to the reproduction of such essentialized and obsolete imaginary. A deeper study of the collecting processes on the one hand and the comparison with the interpretations offered by source communities on the other are instead very useful to highlight the constructed character of this perspective as well as the unreliability of the criterion of authenticity to classifying indigenous peoples and their material production. By analyzing in details paths and discourses such as those made by Alexandre

Rodrigues Ferreira and Johann Natterer it comes out clearly that the boundaries between *authentic* and *non-authentic* was much more blurred. It was not necessary for an object to be *original* to be considered worthy of integrating the collection. Quite the contrary, since very often the naturalists themselves asked for copies to send to Europe. The fundamental thing was that the objects arrived on the other side of the Atlantic and, given the high probability that they would be lost, destroyed, or damaged while travelling, it was much safer to have multiple versions. Regarding indigenous attitude towards their own heritage, during the conversations with the Kambeba, the Sateré-Mawé and the Munduruku, it came out how concepts such as *original*, *copy* and *authenticity* are articulated differently and one does not rule out the others (cfr §4.1.4, §4.2.2, §5.1.3). Copies and originals are equally *authentic* if they are made by the people considered as appropriate to do it: *pajés*, craftsmen, masters and all those who hold the knowledge to handle the spiritual energies which are produced during their manufacturing and social life.

The rhetoric of authenticity appears then as a dynamic that comes into play when objects are recontextualized in the museum and thus concerns the narratives and representations the latter offers on identities and alterities. These have never been neutral because ethnographic museums are not neutral spaces; they are power devices through which to elaborate, legitimate and spread specific knowledge on social phenomena. Over time, its scientific authority has been used to authenticate some representations rather than others – thus to give them a truth value. Its contribution in the dissemination of a hegemonic colonial imaginary which promoted Western superiority at the expense of non-European societies is undeniable. And, this imaginary had quite an impact on the lives of who underwent it. Ethnographic museums share colonial responsibilities and today they are called to face it. The demands entered by Brazilian natives – among the other populations whose material culture is kept in their halls and storages – are innumerable, from different types of restitution of part of their heritage to the organization of collaborative projects within the museum or on their territories (cfr §4.2.4, §5.1.3). In each of these cases, the assumption imposed as the basis of the political and epistemological relationship is to respect and take seriously their own ways of being indigenous. This implies to recognize and accept that they went over deep transformations because of the colonial process but this does not make them less indigenous; quite the contrary, since it was the ability to change and adapt to circumstances that enabled them to endure and pass on the foundations of their identities

from generation to generation. In other words, museums are asked to *authenticate* representations that show what it is like to be indigenous in the 21st century according to who experiences this condition directly; that is, that portray indigenous people as they determine themselves (identities) and not as we would like them to be (alterities).

This process should translate into ways of treating collections that take into account objects not as symbols of reified cultures but as results of processes of various kinds. As far as the first attitude prevails, the material culture preserved in ethnographic museums will continue to be “*segni intenzionali con cui il potere presente afferma il proprio diritto di definire il significato del tempo storico e dello spazio pubblico*”⁵ (Portelli 2020, 109). On the contrary, a relational perspective suggests that they might be thought of as documents to be read “along the grain” (Stoler 2010) as it happens for archival and oral sources. In everyday museum practice, this implies that exhibitions, whether done in collaboration with source communities or curated exclusively by the staff, have to make explicit that the indigenous groups represented by the objects on display are societies in constant movement and change who have their own perspectives on reality and have been playing a role in history other than just defining, by contrast, Europeans. To do this, to be open to inclusion and sharing of a multiplicity of points of view is not enough. Indeed, while we have to assure to *cultural owners* of collections the space to speak for themselves, we cannot take for granted that their voices are always understood by who listens. Museum visitors might lack the conceptual tools to handle an information that involves a major revision of their interpretive categories and, despite the good will, this might generate further misunderstandings and misrepresentations. So, curators – as managers of the spaces where through objects the encounter of different interlocutors, worlds and lifestyles takes place – have the great responsibility to provide people with the tools to understand the processes of transformation and diversification that Brazilian indigenous societies underwent over time.

The museum will never stop being a place of classification and there is no way for its representations ever to be neutral; as Levy pointed out, “there is no view from nowhere” (1998, 168). The knowledge produced in its spaces will always be geo-politically and epistemologically situated as well as endowed with the power of influencing people’s ideas and actions thanks to its authority as educational institution (see Karp 1992; Hall 2006; Hooper-Greenhill 2007; MacDonald 2010). For a decolonization to be undertaken one must

⁵ “Intentional signs for power to assert its right to define the meaning of historical time and public space”.

first become aware of the partiality and politicality of each perspective because such condition gives us the possibility and the responsibility to decide which side to take and for which future to work. Hopefully, for one in favor of diversity and pluralism that can be both in conceptions and in actions also indigenous.

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MVK Natterer, 33/15-16, 34/1. Johann Natterer to John Hislop, Manaus, September 18th 1830.

MVK Natterer, 33/4-5. Johann Natterer to Baron Rotschild, Borba, June 24th 1830.

MVK Natterer, 38/6-8, 39/1-16, 40/1-8, 41/2-4. Johann Natterer to Karl von Schreibers, Marabitanas, February 20th/28th 1831.

MVK Natterer, 38/6-8, 39/1-16, 40/1-8, 41/2-4. Letter from Johann Natterer to Karl von Schreibers, Marabitanas (São José de Marabitanas), February 28th/28th 1831.

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WStLB HS Natterer 7882. Letter from Johann Natterer to Josef Natterer, Cuiabá, December 16th 1824.

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Figures



Fig. 1: Johann Froschauer, Woodcut of South American Indians, 1505, The New York Public Library.



Fig. 2: Front cape of the 1557 Marburg edition of Hans Staden "Die Warhaftig Historia und Beschreibung eyner Landtschafft der wilden, nacketen, grimmigen Menschfresser Leuten in der Newenwelt America gelegen".



Fig. 3: Anonymous painter, "The Royal Entry Festival of Henri II into Rouen", 1st October 1550.



Fig. 4: Anonymous, "Reconstruction of a Brazilian village", 1550.



Fig. 5: Theodore de Bry, "Tupinamba men women and children eating the roasted limbs and trunk of the prisoner", *Le Grand Voyage*, Part III, Frankfurt 1592.



Fig. 6: Theodore de Bry, "Tupinamba women and children eating the boiled parts of the Prisoner. Head, viscera and broth", *Le Grand Voyage*, Part III, Frankfurt 1592.



Fig. 7: Albert Eckhout, Índio Tupi (1643) and Índia Tupi (1641), oil on canvas.



Fig. 8: Albert Eckhout, Índio Tarairiu (Tapuia) (1643) and Índia Tarairiu (Tapuia) (1641), oil on canvas.



Fig. 9: Ferrante Imperato, *Historia Naturale di Ferrante Imperato napolitano* nella quale ordinatamente si tratta della diversa condition di miniere, pietre pretiose ed altre curiosità. Con varie historie di piante, ed animali, sin'hora non date in luce, Napoli, 1599. Available at: <https://www.cabinet.ox.ac.uk/ferrante-imperato-1599#/media=1095> (consulted on: 13/02/2021).



Fig. 10: Case of the exhibiting section “Kunstskammer Wien” at the Kunsthistorischesmuseum of Vienna (Photo: Anna Bottesi).

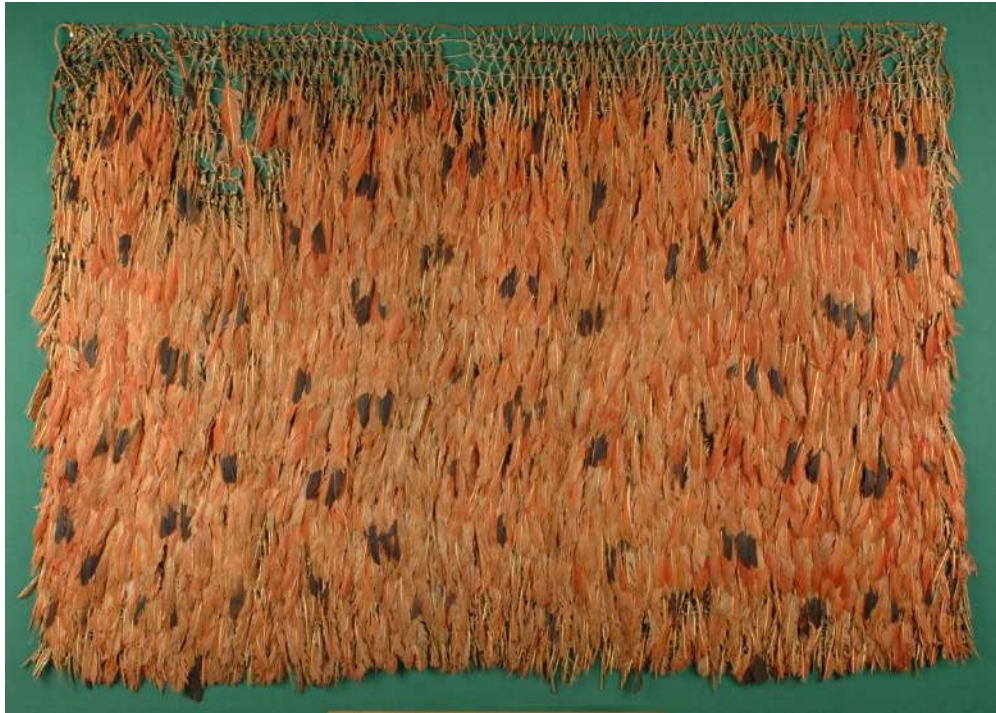


Fig. 11: Feather cloak preserved at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of Florence, Cat. 281. (With permission of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of Florence).



Fig. 12: Feather cloak preserved at the National Museum of Denmark. Photo credits: Niels Erik Jehrbo, The National Museum of Denmark. (With permission of the National Museum of Denmark).



Fig. 13: Feather cloak preserved at the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, Milan.



Fig. 14: Theodore de Bry, "Tupinamba Dance", engraving in "Navigatio in Brasilian Americae", Frankfurt 1592. Available at: <https://g.co/arts/9DSw6kTTCDfa9gpV7> (consulted: 13/02/2021)



Fig. 15: Frans Post, "A Village in Brazil", between 1645 and 1680, oil on panel, cm 51.1 x 59.1, The Royal Collection of Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth II, London (UK).



Fig. 16: André Thevet, "Banquet et dan[s]ed des Sauvages", La Cosmographie Universelle, Tome second, (Paris, 1575).



Fig. 17: André Thevet, "Combat des Sauvages", La Cosmographie Universelle, Tome second, (Paris, 1575).



Fig. 18: André Thevet, "Le prisonniers est tué en la place publique", La Cosmographie Universelle, Tome second, (Paris, 1575).



Fig. 19: Tupinamba club preserved at the Weltmuseum Wien, VO_10440. (With permission of the Weltmuseum Wien).



Fig. 20: Tupinamba club preserved at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of Florence, Cat. 31. (With permission of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of Florence).



Fig. 21: André Thevet, "Arbre de l'Ahouai", La Cosmographie Universelle, Tome second, (Paris, 1575).



Fig. 22: André Thevet, "Comment les Sauvages boivent et mangent", La Cosmographie Universelle, Tome second, (Paris, 1575).

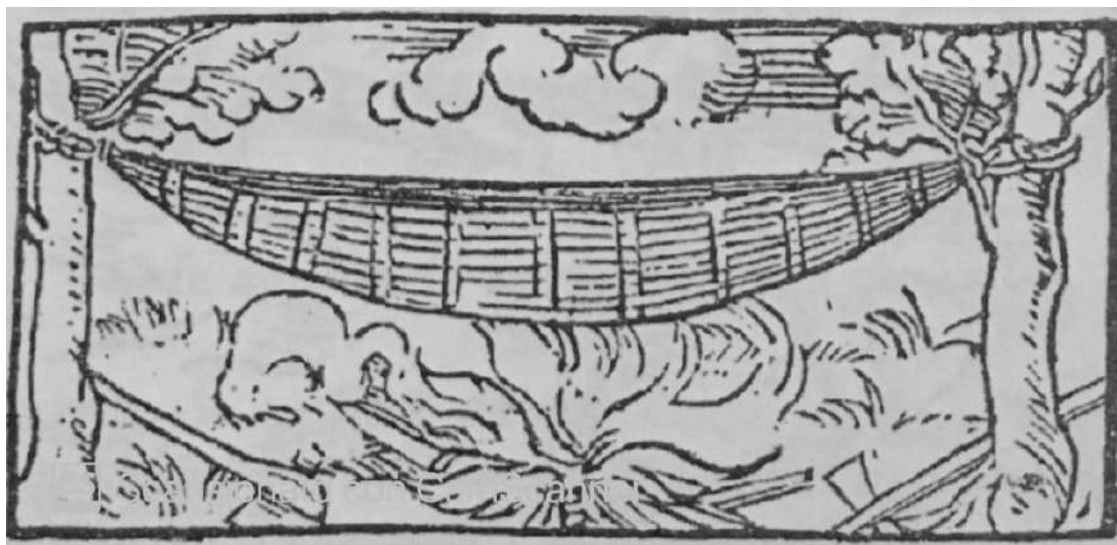


Fig. 23: Hans Staden, Hammock, “Die Warhaftig Historia und Beschreibung eyner Landttschaft der wilden, nacketen, grimmingen Menschfresser Leuten in der Newenwelt America gelegen” (Marburg 1557)



Fig. 24: Giovanni Battista Ramusio, Brasile, “Terzo Volume delle Navigazioni et Viaggi Raccolto già da M. Gio. Battista Ramusio Nel Quale si Contengono Le Navigazioni al Mondo Nuovo” (Venezia 1563-1606).



Fig. 25: Bamboo board to deform the head. Omágua-Kambéba. ACL***. Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira collection (1783-1792). Academia das Ciências de Lisboa. Lisboa, Portugal.



Fig. 26: Arrow thruster. Omágua-Kambéba. ACL***. Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira collection (1783-1792). Academia das Ciências de Lisboa. Lisboa, Portugal.

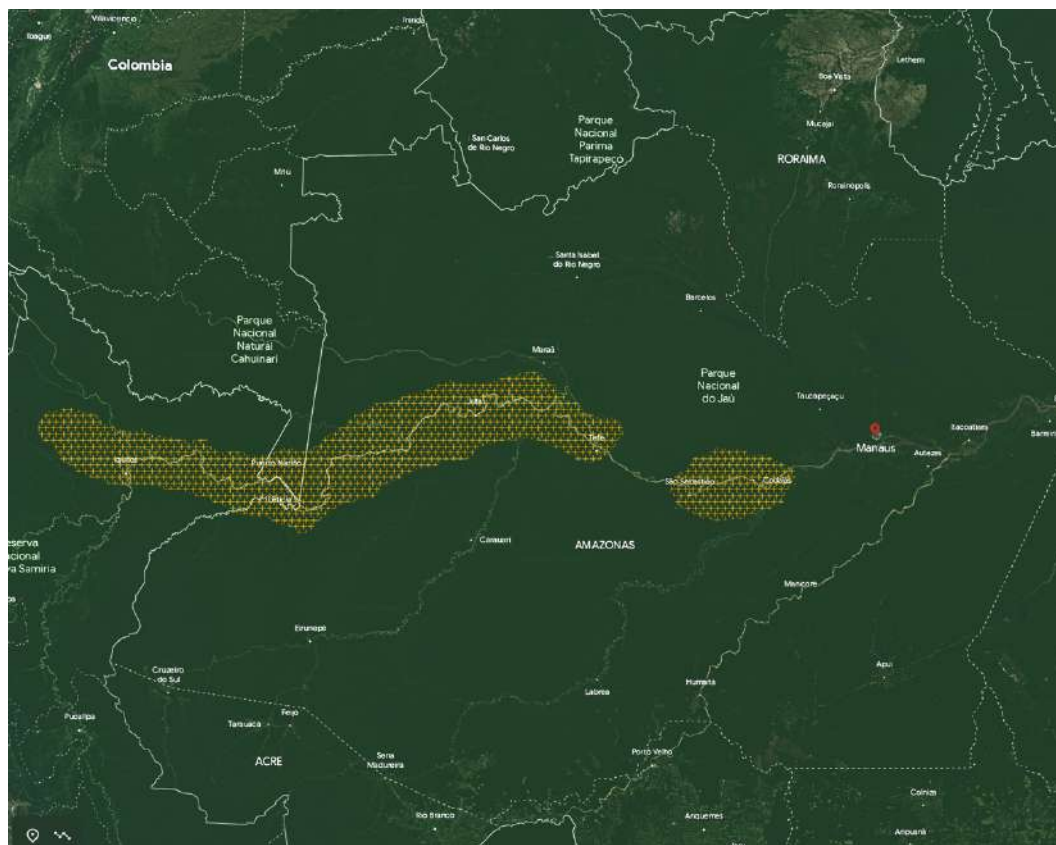


Fig 27: Territory occupied by the Kambeba during the 16th and 17th centuries.

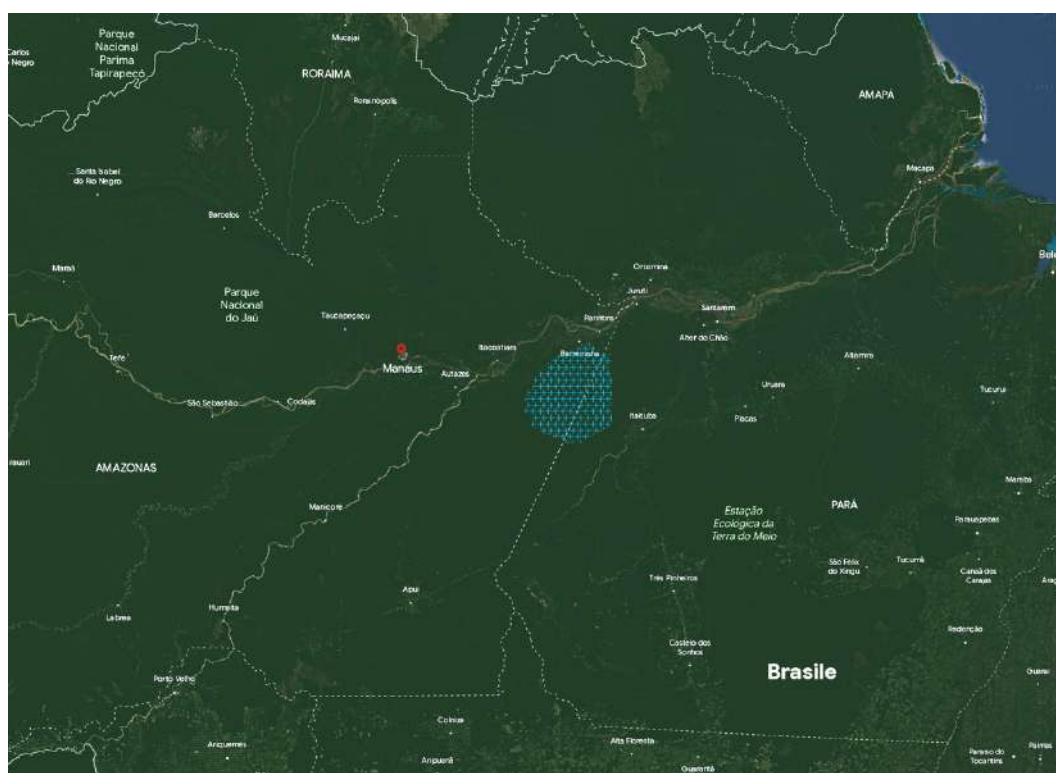


Fig 28: Territory occupied by the Sateré-Mawé from the 17th to the 20th century).

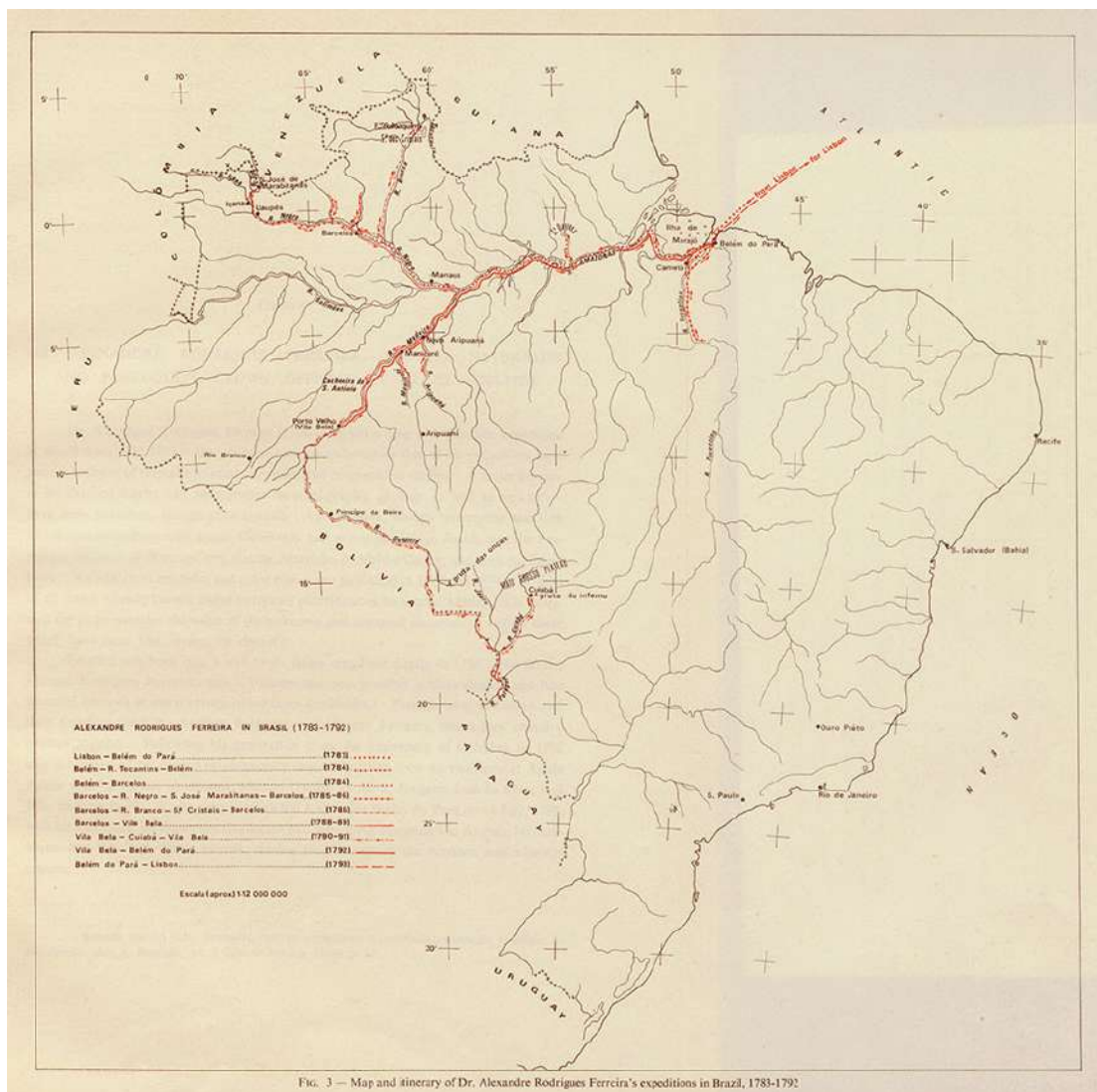


Fig. 29: Map depicting the route of the *Viagem Filosófica*. 1783-1792. Source: Simon, William J., *Scientific Expeditions in the Portuguese Overseas Territories (1783- 1808)*, INIC, 1983. Available at: <https://www.galeria-arf-acad-ciencias.pt/>

IDE'E D'UNE ECHELLE
DES ETRES NATURELS.

L'HOMME.	Sentitive.
Orang-Outang.	PLANTES.
Singe.	Lychens.
QUADRUPEDES.	Moufflures.
Ecureuil volant.	Champignons, Agarics.
Chauvefouris.	Truffes.
Autruche.	Coraux & Coralloides.
OISEAUX.	Lithophytes.
Oiseaux aquatiques.	Amianthe.
Oiseaux amphibies.	Talcs, Gyps, Sélénites.
Poillons volans.	Ardoises.
POISSONS.	PIERRES.
Poillons rampans.	Pierres figurées.
Anguilles.	CrySTALLISATIONS.
Serpens d'eau.	SELS.
SERPENS.	Vitriols.
Limaces.	METAUX.
Limaçons.	DEMI-METAUX.
COQUILLAGES.	SOUFRES.
Vers atuyau.	Bitumes.
Teignes.	TERRES.
INSECTES.	Terre pure.
Gallinectes.	EAU.
Tenta, ou Solitaire.	AIR.
Polypes.	FEU.
Orme de Mer.	Matières plus subtiles.
Sentitive.	
PLANTES.	

Fig. 30: Scala naturae, Charles Bonnet. 1745. Source: Barsanti 1992.

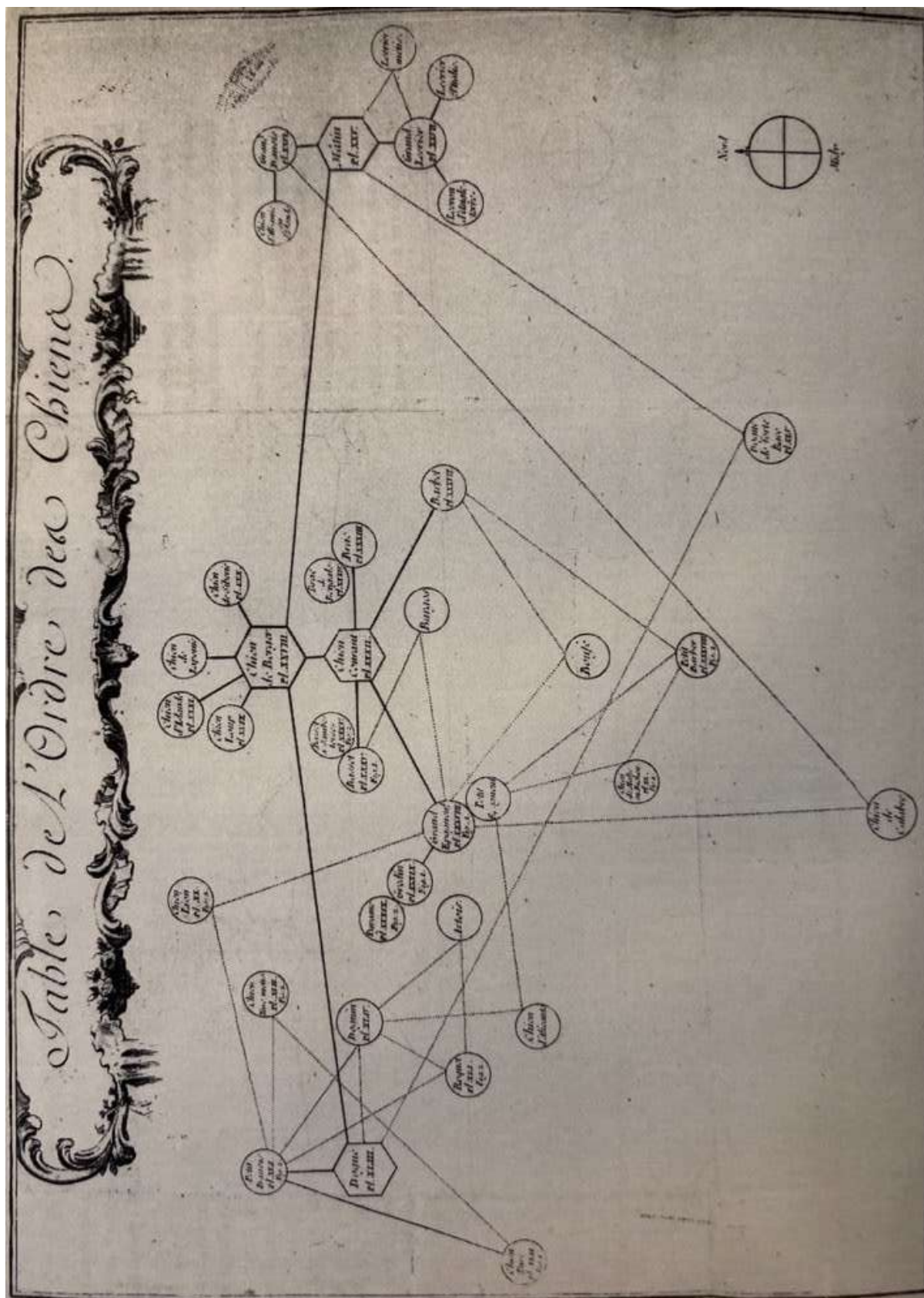


Fig. 31: The Map, Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon. 1755. Source: Barsanti 1992.

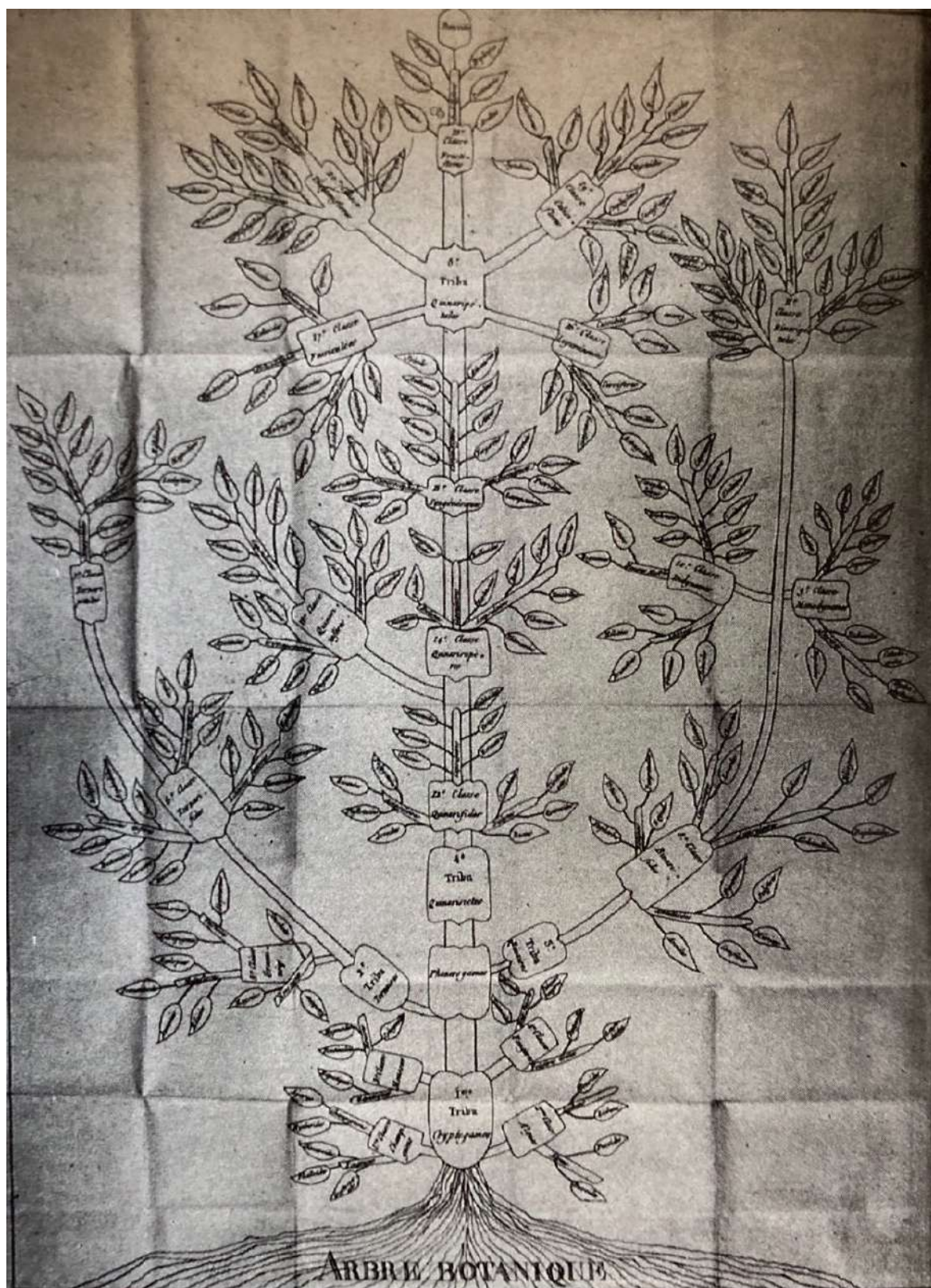


Fig. 32: Arbre Botanique, Augustin Augier. 1801. Source: Barsanti 1992.



Fig. 33: Plate illustrating the Kambéba Dionísio da Cruz. The label says: "Anno 1787. Gentio Cambeba habitante no Rio Yapurá que desagua no Solimões". Viagem Philosophica de Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira (1783-1792). National Library of Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Fig. 34: Plate illustrating a Mauhás native. The label says: “Gentio Mauhás habitante nas margens do Rio Cumiary o qual desagua na margem oriental do Rio Jupurá”. 1787. Viagem Philosophica de Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira (1783-1792). National Library of Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

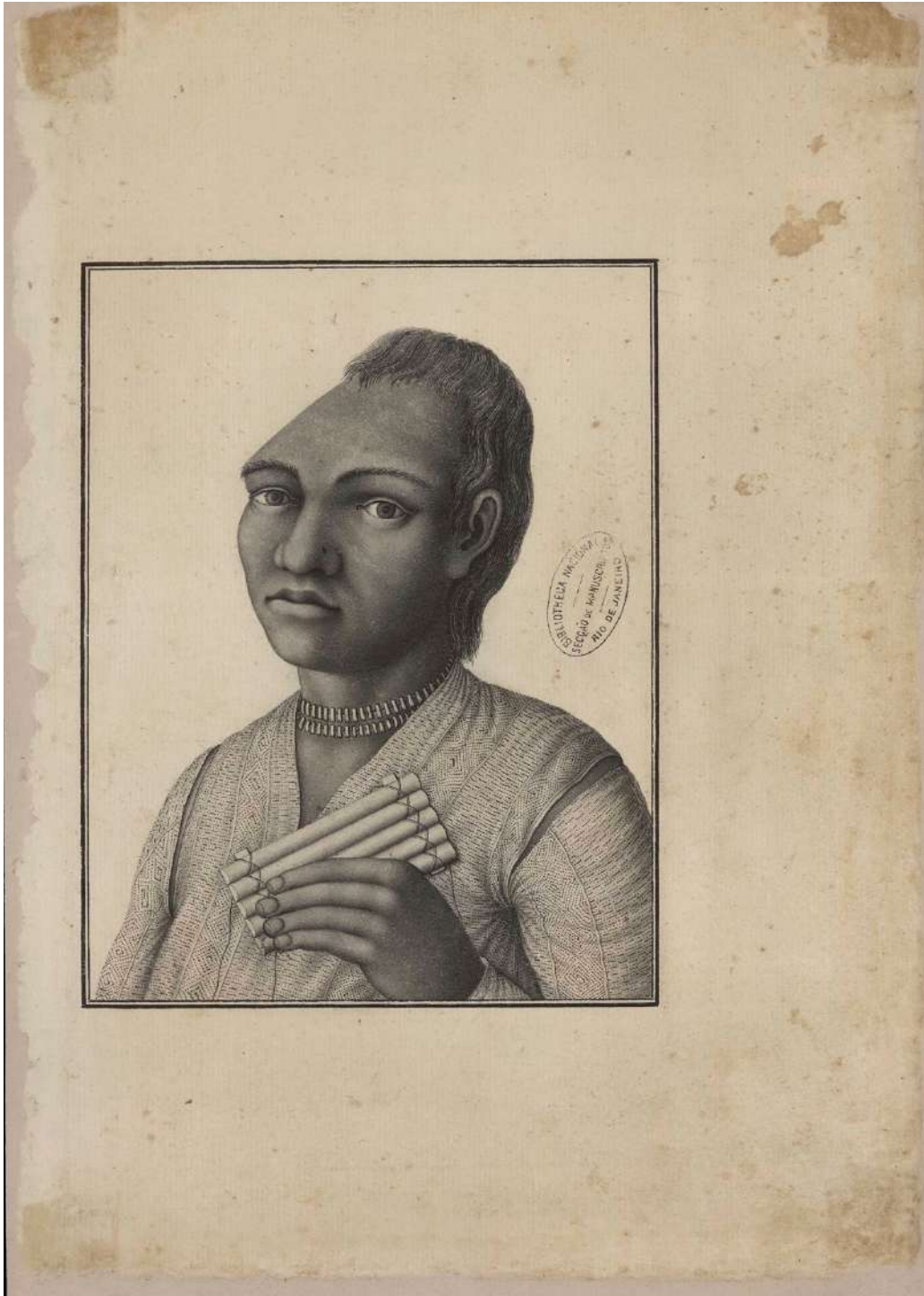


Fig. 35: Plate illustrating the Kambéba Dionísio da Cruz in half-length. *Viagem Philosophica* de Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira (1783-1792). National Library of Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Fig. 36: Plate illustrating native women carving and painting *cuias*. *Viagem Philosophica* de Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira (1783-1792). National Library of Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Fig. 37: Plate illustrating natives fishing turtles. *Viagem Philosophica* de Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira (1783-1792). National Library of Rio de Janeiro. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Fig. 38: Exhibition of Munduruku objects in the room of the Welt Museum Wien “An Austrian Mosaic of Brazil”.

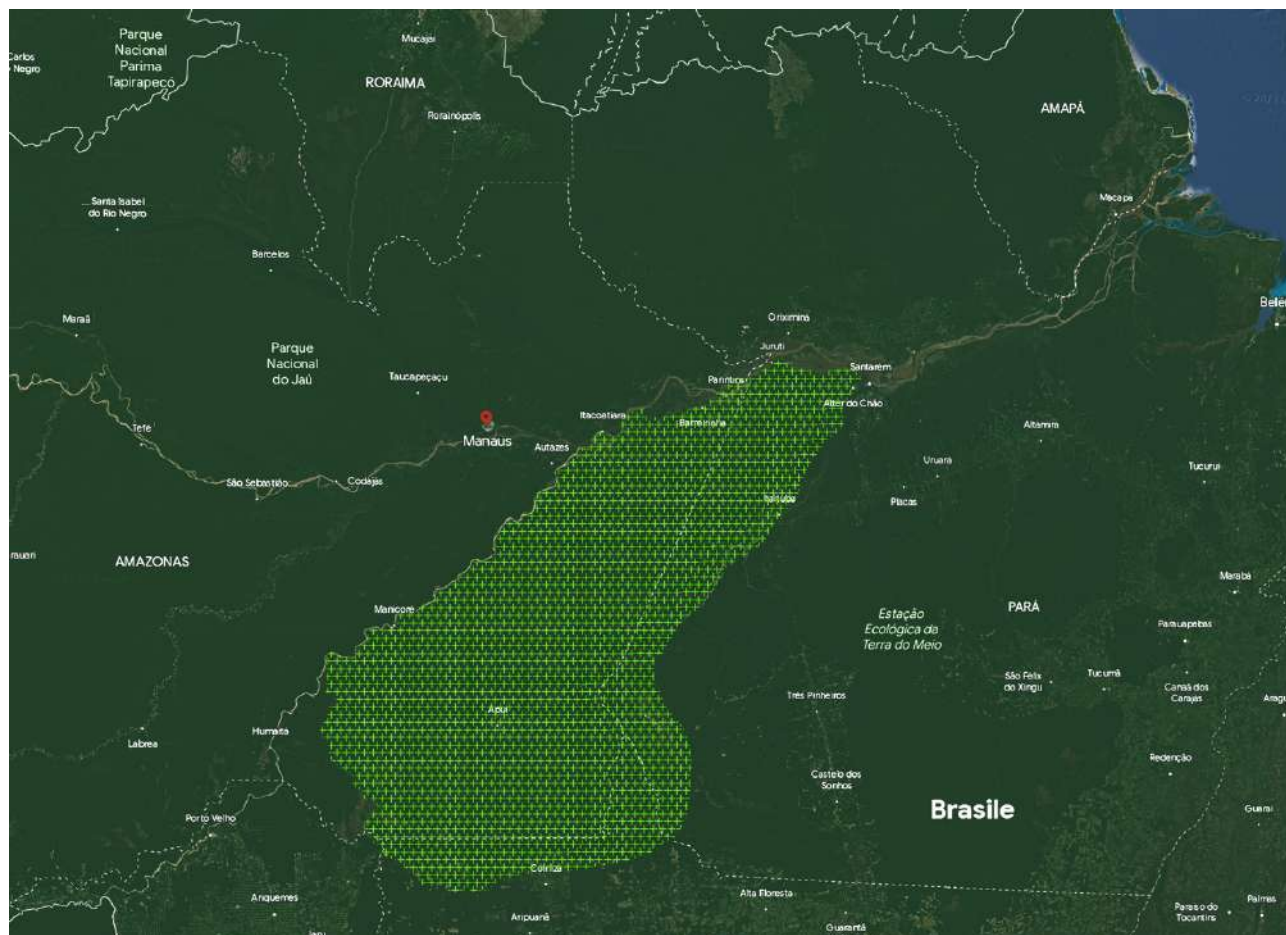


Fig 39: Territory occupied by the Mundurucu during the 18th and 19th centuries.



Fig. 40: Munduruku portrayed by one of the drawers of the Viagem Philosophica (Source: Biblioteca Nacional Digital)



Fig. 41: Map of the Journeys of Johann Baptist Pohl (blue) and Johann Natterer (red) respectively between 1817 and 1821 and 1817 and 1835.



Fig. 42: Panel realized with feathers probably to be sold to Europeans. Preserved at the Museu da Ciência of the University of Coimbra (Catalogue nº Br 164)



Fig. 43: Panel realized with feathers probably to be sold to Europeans. Preserved at the Museu da Ciência of the University of Coimbra (Catalogue nº Br 181)



Fig. 44: Bottom left and center: “Mundurucú” with body painting and with a feather headdress in the style of those preserved in Vienna. In: Spix, J.M. Von and Martius C.F. Von. 1854. *Reise in Brasilien*. Augsburg: Jaquet.

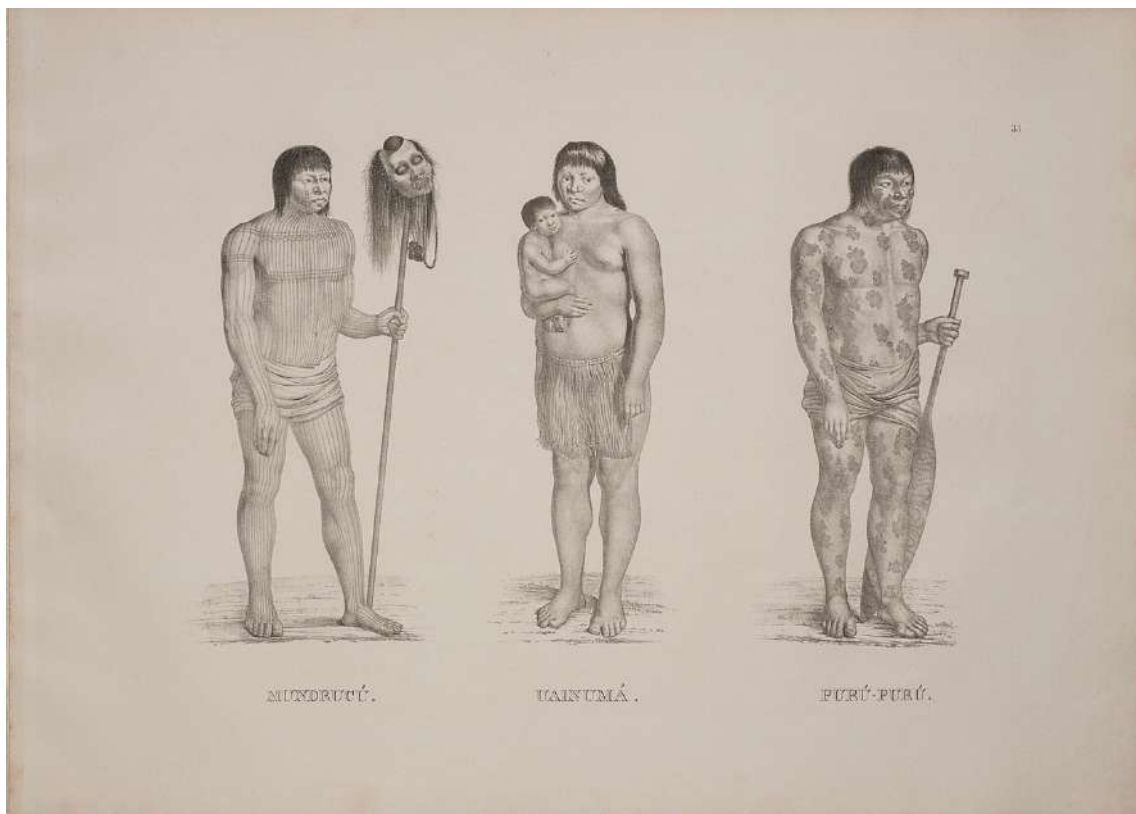


Fig. 45: The first figure from the left represents a “Mundurucú” gripping a stick with a mummified head on the top. In: Spix, J.B. Von and Martius C.F. Von. 1854. *Reise in Brasilien*. Augsburg: Jaquet.



Fig. 46: “Visit to the Mundurucús” portraying two Munduruku in their ceremonial feather dresses. In: Spix, J.B. Richter von, Martius, C.F.P. von. 2017 [1817-1820] *Viagem pelo Brasil*, vol. 3. Brasília: Senado Federal.



Fig. 47: Hercule Florence, “Tuchaua (Principal) Mundurucu en costume de fête” Santarem, August 1828. Book reproduction, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil. 2010.

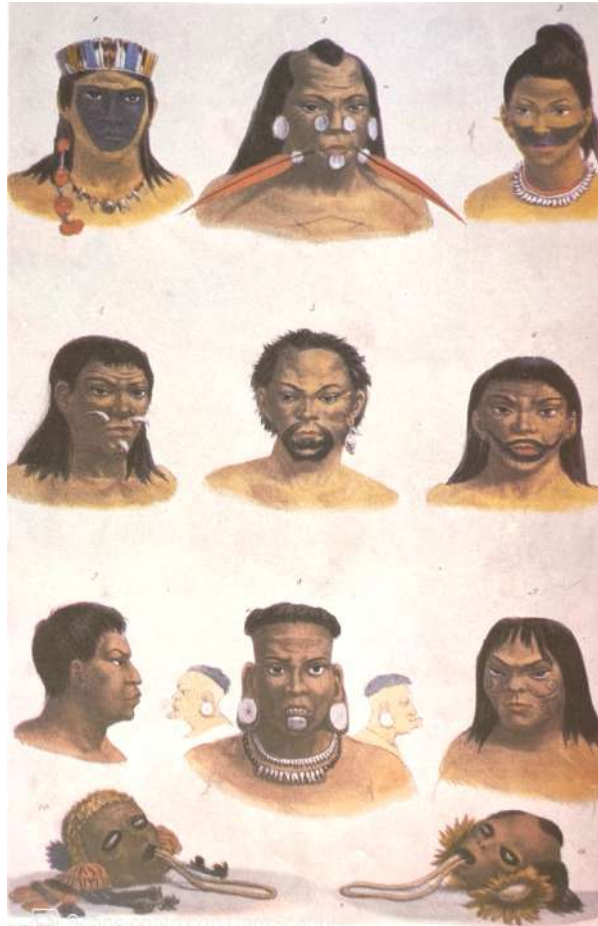


Fig. 48: Plate 28 from “Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil” representing “heads of different savage tribes” among which two mummified heads at the bottom (Debret 2008).



Fig. 49: Plate 33 from “Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil” representing “scepters and clothing of savages chiefs” among which we clearly recognize some Munduruku feather works (Debret 2008).



Fig. 50: Trophy head "Brasilianer Mumienkopf". Watercolor of Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied. In: "Brasilien Bibliothek der Robert Bosch GmbH". Katalog Vol. II. Estate of Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied. Part I: Illustration to the Journey from 1815 to 1817 in Brazil. Stuttgart.



Fig. 51: Watercolor “IX” of Mundurucu exhibition between 1838 and 1840 at the Imperial-Royal Ethnographic Museum in Vienna.



Fig. 52: Watercolor “VIII” of Mundurucu exhibition between 1838 and 1840 at the Imperial-Royal Ethnographic Museum in Vienna.



Fig. 53: Statues of Botocudos on the upper part of one of the walls of the Natural History Museum of Vienna.



Fig. 54: Statues of Munduruku on the upper part of one of the walls of the Natural History Museum of Vienna.

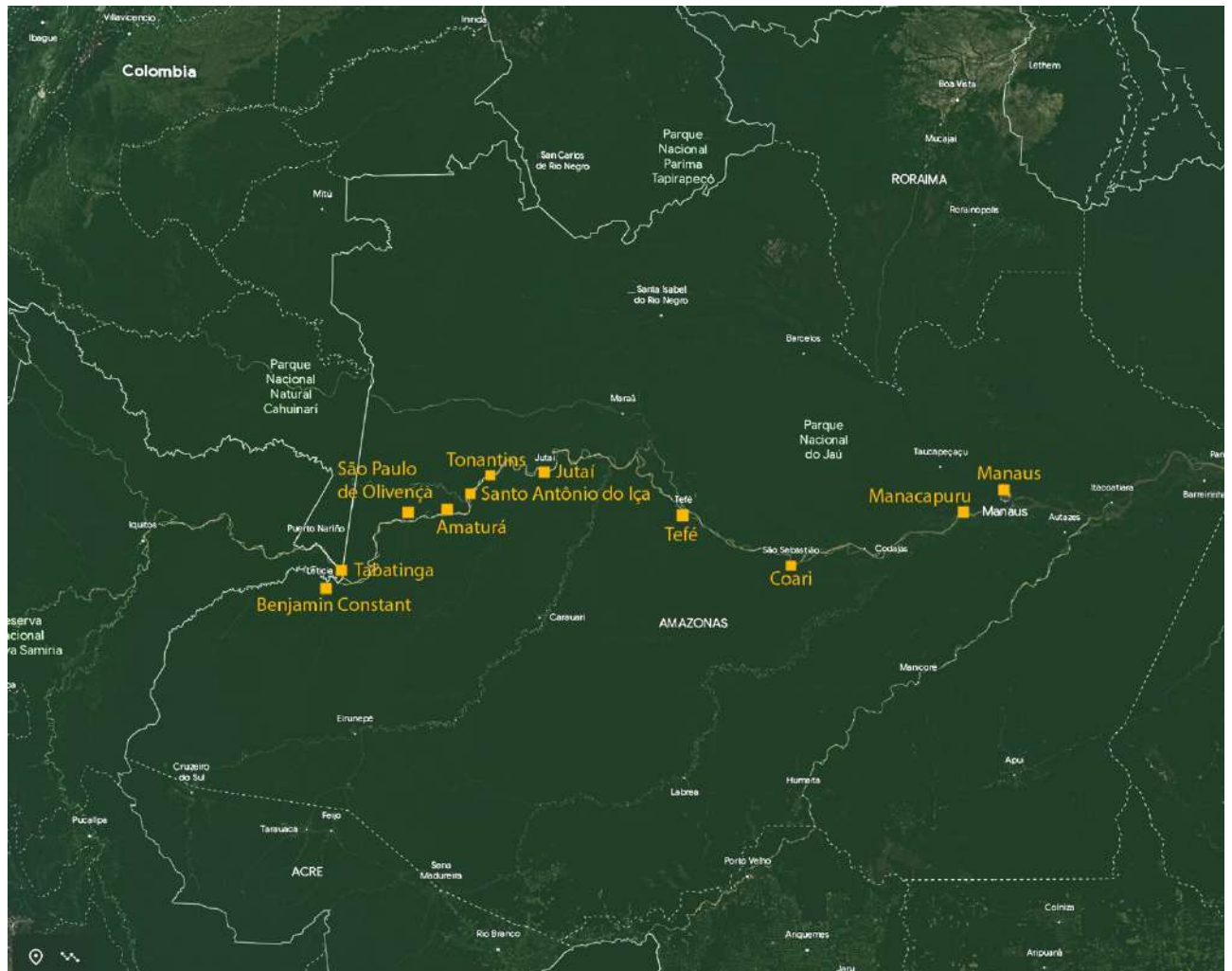


Fig. 55: Municipalities where Kambeba people of the Upper Solimões currently live.



Fig. 56: View of the Upper Solimões River. Personal archive of the author.



Fig. 57: View of São Paulo de Olivença on the Upper Solimões River. Personal archive of the author.



Fig. 58: Objects of the collection of the Museu Omágua Amãna. Personal archive of the authors.



Fig. 59: Objects of the collection of the Museu Omágua Amãna. Personal archive of the authors.



Fig. 60: Objects of the collection of the Museu Omágua Amãna. Personal archive of the authors.



Fig. 61: Exhibition of the *Sala das Viagens* at the Museu da Ciência de Coimbra in 2019 and 2021. Personal archive of the author.



Fig. 62: Example of exhibition case of the *Sala das Viagens* in which ethnographic objects are associated to natural specimens and graphic documentation. Personal archive of the author.



Fig. 63: The Porantim (covered) on close-up display in an exhibition case of the *Sala das Viagens*. Personal archive of the author.

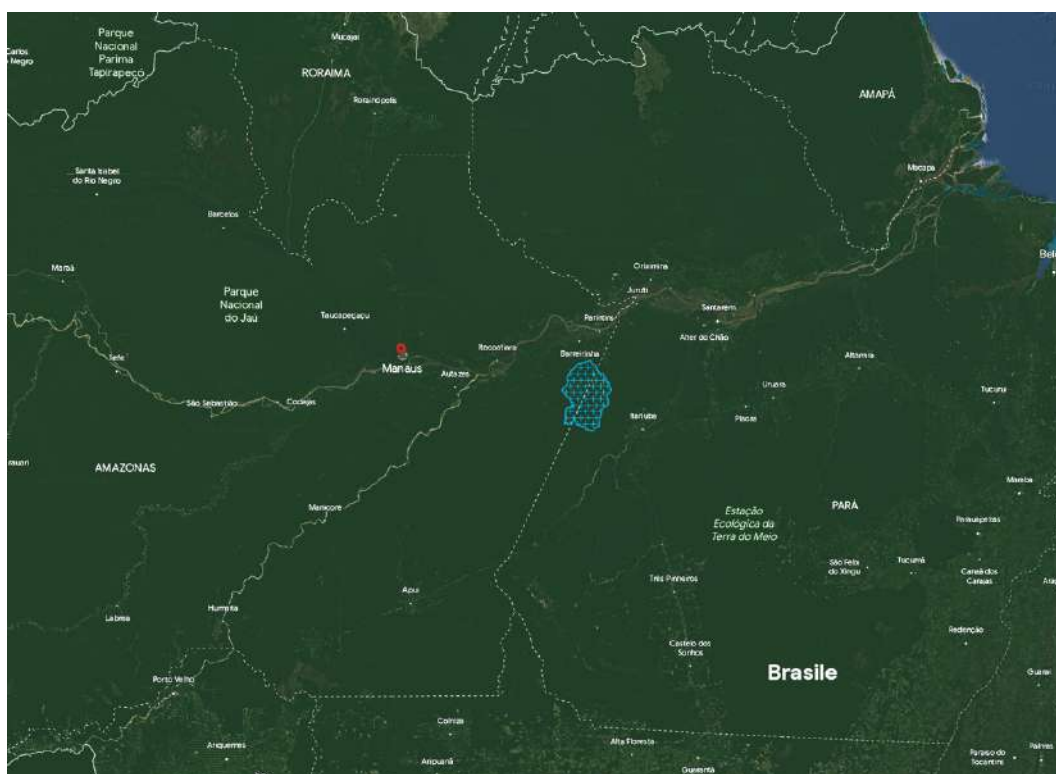


Fig. 64: Recognized indigenous Land Andirá-Marau of Sateré-Mawé people.

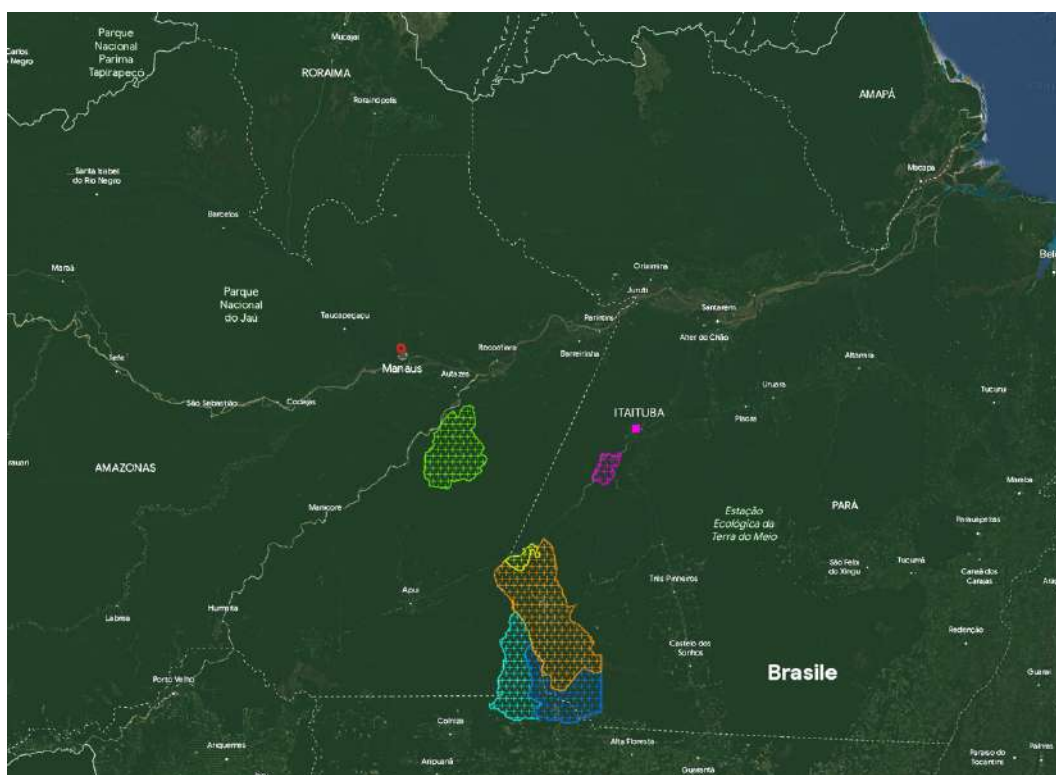


Fig. 65: Recognized Indigenous Lands where Mundurucu people live: Kwatá-Laranjal (green); Sawré-Muybu (pink); Sai Cinza (yellow); Munduruku (orange); Kayabi (blue); Apiaká do Pontal e isolados (light blue).



Fig. 66: Photos of Munduruku objects at the 17th General Assembly of Munduruku People of the Middle Tapajós, aldeia Sawre Juybu, 19th-21st of December 2021. Personal archive of the author.



Fig. 67: Entrance of the aldeia Praia do Mangue (Itaituba) where the 18th General Assembly of Munduruku People of the Middle Tapajós was held between 15th and 18th of October 2022. Personal archive of the author.



Fig. 68: Photos of Munduruku objects at the 18th General Assembly of Munduruku People of the Middle Tapajós, aldeia Praia do Mangue, 15th-18th of October 2022. Personal archive of the author.



Fig. 69: View of the Tapajós River. Personal archive of the author.



Fig. 70: View of the Tapajós River nearby the aldeia Sawre Aboy. Personal archive of the author.



Fig. 71: Mummified and decorated head currently preserved at the Welt Museum of Vienna. Catalogue number VO_1232. Database of the Welt Museum of Vienna, Austria.