

## INDIGENOUS FOOD CULTURE AND CUNHÃ CARE, CULTURAL EXCHANGES AND NON-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN THE COLONIAL AMAZON

Cultura alimentar indígena e os cuidados da cunhã, trocas culturais e educação não escolar na Amazônia Colonial

Cultura de la comida indígena y el cuidado de cunhã, intercambios culturales y educación no escolar en la Amazonia Colonial

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**Abstract:** The article analyzes the use of cassava as a civilization plant and the role of indigenous women as mediators of food knowledge in the colonial Amazon. Based on cultural history, this work highlights the aspects of daily life by conceiving food not only by its nutritional bias, but as a mediator of educational processes and knowledge circulation. Cultural exchanges around food have educational character, since they inform the global flow of people and the exchanges between kitchens from Amerindia, Europe and Africa. Indigenous women stand out as educators since they guaranteed everyday care and taught the food knowledge necessary for the survival of both natural and colonizers.

**Keywords:** cassava; knowledge; women; educational processes.

**Resumo:** O artigo analisa os usos da mandioca como planta de civilização e o papel das mulheres indígenas como mediadoras de saberes alimentares na Amazônia colonial. Inspirado na história cultural, ressalta aspectos da vida cotidiana ao conceber a alimentação não apenas pelo viés nutricional, mas também como mediadora de processos educativos e de circulação de saberes. As trocas culturais em torno do alimento possuem caráter educativo, pois informavam o fluxo global de pessoas e permutas entre cozinhas ameríndia, europeia e africana. As mulheres indígenas são flagradas como educadoras, posto que garantiam os cuidados cotidianos e ensinavam os saberes alimentares necessários à sobrevivência tanto dos naturais quanto dos colonizadores.

**Palavras-chave:** mandioca; saberes; mulheres; processos educativos.

**Resumen:** El artículo analiza los usos de yuca como planta de civilización y el papel de las mujeres indígenas como mediadoras del conocimiento alimentario en la Amazonia colonial. Inspirándose en la historia cultural, resalta aspectos de la vida cotidiana al concebir la alimentación no sólo desde una perspectiva nutricional, sino como mediadora de procesos educativos y de circulación de conocimientos. Los intercambios culturales en torno a la comida tienen un carácter educativo, ya que informaron el flujo global de personas y los intercambios entre cocinas ameríndia, europea y africana. Las mujeres indígenas son vistas como educadoras ya que garantizaban el cuidado diario y enseñaban los conocimientos nutricionales necesarios para la supervivencia de los nativos y de los colonizadores.

**Palabras clave:** yuca; conocimiento; mujeres; procesos educativos.

## INTRODUCTION

This article is the result of historical research based on printed and manuscript sources that inform about the food culture of colonial Amazonia between 1741-1757. Its objective is to analyze the uses of cassava as a "plant of civilization" in the extreme north of Brazil and the proposal of banishing its cultivation by the Jesuit João Daniel (2004), as well as the role of indigenous women as mediators of food knowledge. We argue that cultural exchanges around food issues have an educational character, as they inform the global flow of people, the acclimatization of plant and animal species, and the exchanges between cuisines (Amerindian, European, and African).

In the ongoing cultural exchanges, indigenous women emerge as educators, still little recognized by historiography, as they ensured daily care and taught the food knowledge necessary for the survival of both natives and colonizers. The European conquest of the American territory was accompanied by the European model of rationality that sought to subjugate local knowledge as backward and uncivilized, such as the food knowledge, particularly those related to cassava. In this context, cassava emerges not only as food but also as an element that is sometimes civilizing and sometimes as an obstacle to the ongoing civilizing process, and for this reason, as a pedagogical element.

On what concerns theory, we rely on Serge Gruzinski's concept of cultural mediation (2014) to characterize the cultural exchanges experienced between Europeans and other cultures. Drawing inspiration from cultural history, we emphasize aspects of daily life based on Giard (2013) and Fernand Braudel (1997), as well as Albuquerque (2012) for understanding food not only from a nutritional standpoint but also as a mediator of educational processes and knowledge circulation.

The primary source of this article is the monumental work of missionary João Daniel, entitled "Tesouro descoberto no Máximo Rio Amazonas" (2004). Biographical data about the author are limited. One of the most significant was likely written by Serafim Leite (1949), an important reference in studies of the Society of Jesus. According to the author:

DANIEL, João. Missionary, Historian and Physiographer. Born on July 24, 1722 in Travaçós, Diocese of Viseu. Son of Manuel Francisco Canário and his wife Maria [Daniel?]. He joined the Company in Lisbon, on December 17, 1739. He embarked for Maranhão and Pará in 1741. He completed his studies, including Physics, was a Cumarú missionary and made his solemn profession at the Ibirajuba Farm, on the 20th of November 1757. It was intended to be the Chronicler of his Vice Province. But eight days after his profession, on November 28, he left Pará exiled to the Kingdom, for having said, a few months before, on Good Friday, the Gospel of the day: that

“Annas and Caliphaz did their will and the Apostles of Christ slept.” For lack of any other pretext, the gospel served, so that the persecutors hand in hand (the Governor and the Bishop) took themselves for granted; and for this “horrible” crime he was exiled in 1757 and confined in Cárcere and two years later buried alive in the Cárceres de Almeida and S. Julião da Barra, where he died on January 19, 1776. In prison to serve him “as an honest fun in so much misery”, he says himself, he wrote the book, which illustrates his name (Leite, 1949, p. 190, emphasis added).

Throughout the colonial period, much of what was written about man and nature, both in Spanish and Portuguese America, was due to the work of religious missionaries. Living for years in contact with native peoples, studying their languages, and absorbing their knowledge of the forests, rivers, and wildlife made the missionary an intimate expert of the forest wisdom.

In the second half of the 18th century, exiled in Rome after expulsion from the Spanish colonies in 1767, jesuits Juan Ignacio Molina, Francisco Javier Clavigero, and Felippo Salvatore Gilij promoted debates about the nature of the New World, striving to refute negative ideas about overseas lands. While the ideas of the exiled Spanish jesuits resonated from Rome, there was almost no production during the same period from those missionaries who served in Portuguese colonies, with João Daniel's "Tesouro descoberto no Máximo Rio Amazonas" being one of the few exceptions.

João Daniel, like the exiled Molina, Clavigero, and Gilij, wrote in a reflective tone about his missionary experience. Unlike the Spanish, who were not imprisoned and had access to libraries and debates, João Daniel wrote approximately eight hundred pages of the "Tesouro" during the eighteen years he spent in prison. Therefore, without access to substantial readings, he cited from memory authors who contributed to his intellectual formation. Other characteristics make João Daniel's writing unique. Firstly, he experienced firsthand the political and administrative transformation in the Amazon accompanying the rise of the Marquis of Pombal. Secondly, his work remained unpublished for many years. From its first partial publication (1820) until 1976, the year of its full publication, two hundred years had passed since his death.

The “Tesouro” stands out from other religious writings as a treatise, that is, a collection of studies and proposals to better develop the economic potential of the Amazon. Furthermore, '[...] beyond a moral judgment and a plan for the exploitation of flora, fauna, and soil [...]', in the Tesouro, “[...] we also find efforts to understand and organize the natural world and expressions of awe in the face of natural phenomena and beauty” (Costa & Arenz, 2014, p. 97). His work is rich in analysis of “[...] the riches of this garden, describing its plantings, fruits, and vegetables” (Daniel, 2004, p. 413). Among the plants of this garden, particular attention is given to cassava.

## CASSAVA: "BRAZIL'S QUEEN"

Fernand Braudel (1997), the leading figure of the *Annales'* second generation of historians, highlights the role played by wheat in Europe, rice in Asia, and corn in America as "plants of civilization," that is, plants "[...] which organized material life and sometimes the psychic life of men with great depth, to the point of becoming almost irreversible structures" (Braudel, 1997, p. 92).

However, Braudel, upon reflection, did not include cassava among the dominant or civilization-forming plants, considering that "[...] in America, it only served primitive and regularly mediocre cultures" (Braudel, 1997, p. 92). Contrary to this viewpoint, Cruz's work (2011) offers a different perspective on cassava and Braudel's assertion regarding the stage of civilization of indigenous groups. According to Cruz (2011, p. 12, emphasis added by the author),

[...] it is important to consider that, both before colonization and during the existence of the colony, cassava flour was the basis of the diet of very different human groups, Indians and Portuguese, perfectly conforming to the model of "dominant plant", as it is the basic food of indigenous groups, they could not do without it so easily, while for the colonists, in addition to meeting their food needs, it also becomes an important element of their diet. It was one of the ways of controlling the indigenous labor.

In his "History of Feeding in Brazil," Câmara Cascudo (2011) dedicates special attention to cassava or, as he entitles it, "The Queen of Brazil." He highlights several qualities that have made cassava and its most common derivative, flour, indispensable to the Brazilian diet, without which it was impossible to sustain oneself:

It's bulky food, that fills, satiates, satisfies. They eat it pure, [...] chewing the raw material that cannot be sifted. "Without flour, no man can live". Regarding its indispensability in indigenous opinion, Alfred Russel Wallace heard in 1849 in Rio Negro, Amazonas, a native stating that he had been lost in the forest for ten days and without eating "because he had no flour". There was game and you could kill it, but without having flour it was not possible to feed yourself (Cascudo, 2011, p. 92, emphasis added).

The hunt, the fruits, or even the fish that natives could obtain during the days lost in the jungle, in his opinion, did not constitute proper food, or at least not enough to satisfy the hunger. The flour was lacking, the base, the essential. In order to demonstrate the importance of flour, Cascudo uses the account of a hunting

expedition in Maranhão in 1614: "They ventured far into the wilderness, and when fortune filled them with hunt, a misfortune happened to them: they ran out of flour" (Cascudo, 2011, pp. 92-93).

The indispensable cassava flour held a prominent place in João Daniel's treatise on the Amazon River (2004), which begins with what he considers the daily, common bread: cassava flour. In his treatise on the Amazon, he dedicates special attention to the cultivation of cassava and the consumption of its main product: flour. Regarding the mythical origin of its cultivation, he clarifies that, according to tradition, "[...] for some indigenous people, its invention is attributed to the glorious apostle Saint Thomas; because they say that he taught them how to cultivate it, perhaps enduring their brutality, as they had no use for planting seeds nor instruments to do so" (Daniel, 2004, p. 413).

Saint Thomas would have taught indigenous communities how to plant cassava, freeing them from suffering and brutality in which they lived, as the domestication of plants and animals "[...] allows man to become a master of the natural world" (Montanari, 2008, p. 22), by better controlling the food supply. However, it is important to note that "[...] the utilization of the territory through hunting and gathering requires an expertise, a knowledge, a culture [...]", as elaborate as agricultural cultures (Montanari, 2008, p. 23). The origin of cassava cultivation has other legendary explanations, including associations with the female body. Santos (2006), by researching the cosmology of a southern Amazon indigenous group, states that in Enawene mythology, the cassava plant houses the spirit of a teenage girl buried by her own mother, as evidenced in the text below:

One day, Atolo, a teenage girl, asked her mother Kokotero to bury her. Faced with insistence and filled with deep sadness, her mother finally complied with her daughter's request, burying her up to her waist in soft, cold earth. After her funeral, the girl asked her mother not to look back, and that she should return to visit her only after the first rain. Finally, she recommended to not forget to bring fish, and to keep the land around you always clean and well looked after. Kokotero did everything her daughter Atolo asked, and when she returned to the place, she found a beautiful and well-formed cassava field. A new plant had sprouted from each part of the girl's body, giving rise to the varieties of cassava now cultivated by the Enawene-Nawe (Santos apud Cruz, 2011, p. 29).

Cruz (2011, p. 28), still based on the work of Santos (2006), outlines an associative picture between the female body and the cassava plant, as shown below on Chart 1:

**Chart 1 - The female body and the cassava plant**

Vegetable parts	Body parts
Apical buds	Head
Side gems	Breast
Stem	Abdomen
Petiole	Arm
Sheet	Hand
Leaflets	Finger
Enter - gems	Leg
Source	Foot
Phloem/Xylem	Stomach/intestine
Bark	Skin

Source: Cruz (2011, p. 28).

It is clear, therefore, that cassava and its derivatives, such as flour, *beijus* and drinks meant much more than a source of food for indigenous populations. It represented transcendence, the connection with their ancestors, something that cannot be easily uprooted. The indigenous food culture relied on hunting and gathering, as well as the predominant cultivation of cassava, from which some varieties of flour were made. Daniel describes the four types or “varieties” of flour that are made from cassava roots. As he attributes a hierarchy or “social caste” between the four types of flour, he starts with the one “[...] which is equivalent to the most delicate wheat bread in its amount” (Daniel, 2004, p. 414): “*farinha d’água* - water flour”, as the Ignatian describes in detail about the preparation of the “delicate bread”:

Once the cassava root is removed from the ground, it is soaked in wells or tanks of fresh, good, running water [...]. After three days or a little more [...] they take it out of the water, and remove the skin, which gives in very easily, and after washing it well, they put it in the press to remove the moisture called *tucupi*, whose presses are of various modes. The most common is a straw measuring 10 to 12 palms, which they weave from vines or palm bark, at which the natives are not only good, but also quick masters. There are presses, which they call *tipiti*, with clips at the ends and in the upper part the mouth, through which they put that dough, and then the *tipitis* or presses are hung on forks, and pulled from below with some weight, which releases the *aguadilha*, or *tucupi* (Daniel, 2004, p. 414).

After this initial moment of preparation, “[...] after being well squeezed, they roast it in fire ovens, which are shaped like the top of a sun hat” (Daniel, 2004, p. 414). The final quality of the flour depended greatly on the quality of the plant, in addition, of course, “[...] the benefit of the *farinheiras*” (Daniel, 2004, p. 414).

The quote about the way water flour is prepared reveals to the reader – even those who have had minimal contact with artisanal flour production – a kind of historical continuity, possible analogies in the preparation technique and materials used. The result is the most esteemed and expensive flour produced in the Amazon in the 18th century, with historical records of trade between indigenous and white people, with the latter on the position of buyer “[...] for 100 réis, or even the expensive amount of 150 réis, [...] [and sold for] 300 or 400 réis ordinarily, a price that would rise or fall according to its abundance” (Daniel, 2004, p. 415).

The second flour is dryer, less popular than the first, and has the advantage of quicker preparation, eliminating the days of soaking cassava in running water, which is characteristic of the way water flour is prepared. In the manufacture of dry flour, one can see the influence of European techniques such as: “Wheels lined on the outside with copper drains, pulled either with ingenuity, or the bare hands, with the strength of two men each on their wing; and in the meantime an Indian woman would provide and give to him the cassava to eat through a hole on a board” (Daniel, 2004, p. 415).

Copper, iron and presses replaced old instruments such as the tipiti to remove the tucupi. In the indigenous way of preparing flour, the colonizer introduced new instruments to speed up the manufacturing process and meet the wishes of the colonial company. But they were not just objects, they brought with them more subtle ways in the production of flour, which would lead to reordering tasks and production stages, changes that would not be always accepted.

Considered more practical, the way of preparing dry flour was not well-received by workers. João Daniel justified the resistance by pointing out that “[...] the workers didn’t like these factories, because they sweat when pulling the wheels” (Daniel, 2004, p. 415). Could sweat really be the cause of the “workers’ lack of affection for the European way of manufacturing? Everything indicates that the reasons were different.

We share the idea that “[...] dietary habits constitute a domain in which tradition and innovation have the same importance” (Giard, 2013, p. 212). The indigenous people quickly assimilated tools that made their lives easier, especially iron. In the manufacture of flour, it was no different. The animal teeth or beaks, fixed to a board, used to grate cassava, were replaced by copper graters. However, it is necessary to emphasize that some aspects resisted changes. If the method of preparing dry flour shortened the production time, as it was not necessary to soak the cassava for two or three days, and required less labor, this method of preparation changed the flavor, making it less popular. We also consider that changes in the way of preparation profoundly altered steps enshrined in the traditional way of manufacturing. Another point was the profound change in the organization of work which, saving on labor, took away from workers the possibility of conversation, playing, singing, a moment of sociability, replaced by repetitive and mechanical work.

The natives' food culture would undergo major transformations when they met Europeans and Africans. The smuggling of elements from one's kitchen to another was the rule, not the exception. As a common point of human culture, food, and all the activities and instruments that civilizations use to produce it, carries knowledge within it. By observing food culture, it is possible to notice constant cultural exchanges, moments of sociability that highlight complex educational processes of non-scholar nature and, in general, subtle.

However, against the innovations in preparation techniques, accepted to a certain extent, the food care, that Giard (2013) called "body techniques", were preserved, as "[...] they are better protected from the superficiality of fashion and because material fidelity of great density comes into play" (Giard, 2013, pp. 215-216). Therefore, the way of making flour in the 18th century and the traditional ways of preparing it in the 21st century have several similarities.

The third type of flour is called "carimã", with several characteristics worth highlighting, especially for readers less familiar with cassava culture. Carimã or Puba is the finest flour extracted from cassava. It is especially appreciated by traditional populations because it is considered easier to digest, being used in porridge for the sick and also in baking, replacing wheat or mixed with it to add volume to the dough. According to Ignatian, in the 18th century, carimã was "[...] well known in Europe, where orders were sent" (Daniel, 2004, p. 416). Its preparation occurs through sieving the water and dry flours, described previously. The fourth species is tapioca flour, obtained by:

When they squeeze the flour in the presses, they trim the *tucupi*, or the *aguadilha*, at the bottom, which they throw, and that releases a lot of substance and a lot of pulp, which settles underneath. After that, they lightly remove the *tucupi* from above, and, having secreted this batter, they put it to dry in the ovens, where it emerges in granite form (Daniel, 2004, p. 416).

The detailed description of the four varieties of flour made by João Daniel, as well as their preparation methods, allows us to understand Cruz's point of view (2011, p. 24), when he argues that "[...] the production of flour carried out through varied techniques, did not constitute a barbaric, wild food". As an example of that, there is the use of *Tucupi* and its leaves to be cooked with meat or fish. Both preparations require technique and great sensitivity. In both cases, the line between poison and food is fine.

Regarding the trade of Amazonian products with Europe, the astuteness of the Ignatians was remarkable. Guided by a skillful economic sense, they arranged their missions and villages along the river in such a way that allowed the flow of goods, products and services between them. The Casa de Santo Alexandre, in Belém, in



addition to being a large school and library, stored the products of the missions, which were later shipped to Europe.

The commercial boldness of the Ignatians bothered authorities and settlers, mainly due to the control they exercised over the indigenous labor force and how this was fundamental regarding the supply of foodstuff, including flour. Francisco Xavier de Mendonça Furtado, in a letter to the Marquis of Pombal on February 18, 1754, states the following about religious people:

As long as they do not take their control of the villages, they will be masters of all the wealth of this State. It is with the Indians that they extract drugs from these vast hinterlands; The Indians are the ones who make the butter, the turtles and the salting of all types of fish found here, which are the two most important branches of these captaincies; Finally, with the Indians, taking away their farms, they will manufacture on the land of their villages the same types of flour, cotton, beans, rice and everything else that they now manufacture on the farms, thus becoming more advantageous commerce and owners of greater wealth (Mendonça, 2005, pp. 117-118).

Upon assuming the throne in 1750, D. José I would have found a weakened State and under the strong influence of religious people, especially those of the Society of Jesus. In this context, Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, the Marquis of Pombal, rises to the status of a powerful minister, “[...] defender of an exacerbated regalism, a doctrine that defends significative State intervention in the affairs of the Church” (Souza Jr., 2009, p. 81).

Pombal ignored ecclesiastical immunity, asserting the supremacy of royal power over papal power, promoting changes in relations between the State and the Catholic Church in order to eliminate the latter's influence on the king's decisions. From 1751, Grão-Pará and Maranhão came to be governed by Mendonça Furtado, who represented, in the extreme north of the Portuguese colony in America, Pombal's aspirations to insert Portugal into modernity. To achieve this, it would be necessary to modernize the Portuguese state's administration, which is why Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo reformed the state administration by eliminating unnecessary positions, thus reducing the political power of the traditional nobility; and also “[...] developed the reform of the Portuguese educational system, taking it out of the hands of the Society of Jesus, whose culminating point was the reform of the University of Coimbra” (Souza Jr., 2009, p. 81). In order to guarantee solid intellectual training to members of the nobility, “[...] that would make them, in the future, efficient bureaucrats, Pombal created the “Colégio dos Nobres” (College of Nobles), in 1761, whose curriculum included subjects linked to the progress of science and technique” (Souza Jr., 2009, p. 81).

By the second half of the 18th century, the Amazon region was deeply marked by the clashes of interest between religious people, settlers, indigenous population and the colonial administration, which would culminate with the “[...] implementation of the Indigenous Directory Regiment, in 1755, just before the general expulsion, in 1759” (Souza Jr., 2009, p. 83). For some time, the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Amazon was analyzed by historians from a dualistic perspective, “[...] against or in favor of Pombal, against or in favor of the Jesuits” (Souza Jr., 2009, p. 84). There was also the crystallization of the thesis that, by implementing the Indigenous Directory Regime and expelling the Jesuits from the State of Grão-Pará and Maranhão, reforms that began in 1755, Pombal would already have a project ready to be imposed on the Amazon. Souza Jr. (2009) contests these analyses, which he considers “historical partisanship”, and seeks to understand the multiple faces of the process of expelling religious people, defending the following hypothesis:

The implementation of the Directory’s Regiment in the Amazon also resulted, largely, from the pressure exerted by the colonists in their demands for indigenous labor, as well as from the multiple practices of the natives, far from being in the condition of passive victims of the new experience history that had been imposed on them. They were autonomous subjects in the process they were inserted in by Portuguese colonization, in which, at the same time, they resisted, negotiated, hosted, made conquests, chose allies among foreigners etc. They lived and thought about their daily experiences in relations with the invaders, as actors in their history (Souza Jr., 2009, p. 84).

The Directory’s Regiment replaced the determinations established in the Missions Regulation of 1686 which, in Mendonça Furtado's opinion, would have given too much power to the regulars, due to the control they exercised over the indigenous workforce. Mendonça Furtado denounced the great autonomy that religious people had in relation to the authorities, accusing them of using religion to achieve their hidden interests of enrichment, harming the interests of the crown and the colonists. Among these interests, the dominance of drugs from the hinterland stands out, many of which are exported to Europe.

The European market for tropical foods did not show great interest in cassava flour, perhaps due to the inadequacy of its cultivation among European crops, which successfully acclimatized other American crops, such as potatoes, that seemed to have better adaptation. But in the Amazon, cassava dominated the preferences of both natural and adventitious. Eating cassava flour represented, among other things, a feeling of belonging and could reveal the degree of adaptation or assimilation of a foreigner in relation to the local food culture.

## CASSAVA FLOUR, CIVILITY AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES

Each society establishes, according to its own criteria, good table manners. In some cases, eating in this or that way implies revealing the individual's degree of familiarity with the culture that surrounds them and even being absorbed by it. If the idea of civilization is related to some “refinement” in the way of eating, cassava flour had its own, as João Daniel (2004, p. 417) observed:

The way to put it in the mouth, is either with the three little fingers, like the Tapuias and the ordinary people, or with spoons, like the whites, or with the fingers, with the most: so, from a certain distance they throw it to the mouth with such dexterity, that not only do they not miss the mouth, but not even a grain falls out of it.

The ability to throw the flour into the mouth, using the hands or a spoon, is taken as a criterion of distinction, separating those familiar with wood flour, native or not, from “[...] European novices, who, at the beginning, would put the spoon in their mouth and drop half the flour, in danger of looking like novices, because they did not know how to put their spoonful” (Daniel 2004, p. 417).

The centrality of the use of flour as food in this passage, which does not exclude a certain tone of humor, reveals its close relationship with local identity. Being a novice or not also depended on knowing how to eat flour according to Amazonian etiquette, throwing the flour into your mouth without touching your fingers or spoon, and what's more, without losing any grains while throwing.

The spoon, popularized on European tables with the refinement of habits and the emergence of a new etiquette, mainly in the nobility and bourgeoisie environments of the 16th – 17th century, was already well known and used in the Amazon, according to João Daniel (2004). This is not a simple object introduced at the table, but something that already brings with it the idea of “civility”, of a refined custom reaching the borders of the new world. Thus, “food models and practices” are configured as areas of contact and exchange between different cultures, “[...] the result of the circularity of men, goods, techniques, tastes from one side of the world to the other” (Montanari, 2008, p. 189).

It is interesting to note that the introduction of new objects to the table, such as forks and spoons, was met with resistance even among refined Europeans. Braudel tells a curious and illustrative case of how table manners spread slowly:

There is a drawing that shows Maximilian of Austria at the table, around 1513; he has his hand stuck in a plate; some two centuries later, the Palatina says that Louis XIV, upon admitting his children

to the table for the first time, forbade them to eat differently from his own and to use a fork, as an overzealous preceptor had taught them. When did Europe invent good table manners? (Braudel, 1997, p. 16).

Braudel's question about the invention of good manners at the European table will remain unanswered. We could expand the discussion on good table manners, however, what is up to wheat-eating Europeans is not up to cassava eaters, since the latter have developed their own criteria for good manners and civility. However, through the introduction of the spoon and other utensils, as well as the acclimatization of new plant and animal species into the food practices of the 18th century Amazon, it is possible to visualize what Gruzinski (2014, p. 42) calls "globalization", or that is: "[...] exchanges of all types [...] [occurring between] different parts of the globe in the context of European maritime and commercial expansion". These exchanges also took advantage of the navigation potential allowed by the fabulous network formed by the Amazon River and its tributaries, which connected Spanish America and Grão-Pará and Maranhão to the Atlantic.

Exchanges involving food issues have been evident since the beginning of the occupation of the Amazon valley. Alírio Cardoso (2012), in a chapter dedicated to exchanges and acclimatization of plant species from other parts of the world, highlights that the first settlers in the Amazon region already considered this possibility, seeking support from governments. With this, it is possible to see that the difficulties of contact, the great distances and natural "barriers" did not prevent the exchange and circulation of knowledge mediated by food. Chambouleyron (2014) provides a good example of the connection between the Amazon and Spanish America involving a foodstuff that also figured with great importance, cocoa.

According to the author, in the mid-1670s, the Portuguese crown began to seriously encourage the cultivation of cocoa. In this regard, the Castilian experience was fundamental, as, at the beginning of the 17th century, cocoa was still little known in Europe, but widely consumed in New Spain. The main exporting regions were Guayaquil and Venezuela. Chambouleyron (2014) points out that several of the *encomenderos* who cultivated cocoa and traded slaves in Venezuela were Portuguese. Thus, the Venezuelan experience with cocoa was definitive in promoting the systematic cultivation of this genre in the Amazon, which took place in the mid-1670s, when the Portuguese crown began to encourage cultivation more seriously.

In the letter from the governor of Maranhão and Grão-Pará to the regent prince, there is a suggestion for cocoa seedlings to be cultivated "[...] as it is done in Castilla's Indias" (Chambouleyron, 2014, p. 33). Thus, cocoa appeared as one of the most important foods in the context of the Amazonian economy, being used even as a substitute for metallic currency. However, its importance as an export, land currency and food, was never close to matching the importance of cassava and flour in the

Amazonian food regime, as it is no exaggeration to say that “everything goes well if there is a little flour”.

## VIRTUES AND SCANDALS OF CASSAVA

The virtues of cassava are expressed in reports about its different ways of using it. Flour, for example, was much appreciated with fish and meat broths: the fatter the better. And “[...] for these soups, dry flour is preferred over the dry one” (Daniel, 2004, p. 417). While white people used spoons to drink their soups, the natives preferred straws through which they sucked the broths thickened by flour.

Flour was also fundamental in the work of overcoming distances across rivers, being a fundamental ingredient for drinks called “tiquaras”, which: “[...] are composed by a little flour in a cold water vessel, which was drunk mixed, and it is the common refreshment in hot weather, especially for the natives, when they are at work, or paddling their canoes” (Daniel, 2004, p. 417).

Daniel (2004), sometimes, calls cassava flour America's bread flour, using the old trick of comparing what was already known to Europeans with the new American products. In this way, the bread of America would be “beijus”. Daniel describes the various types of beijus and their respective preparation methods. First, the “beijus su”, made from dry flour that, after being squeezed out of the press, was pounded in a pestle, then given a rounded shape and placed in the oven. It was the ordinary bread and, mixed with butter, it gained in flavor with the exception that its preparation and perfection “[...] relied a lot on the cooks” (Daniel, 2004, p. 418).

Special occasions called for special dishes. Flour, in addition to beijus, was used to make small round cakes, which were kneaded with some butter, then cooked with eggs from birds, fish, snakes or lizards. “They call these cakes “miepês”, and domestic indians use a lot of them at their parties” (Daniel, 2004, p. 419). The second type of beiju is the water beiju, since it is made from the same flour. “The tapuias make their wines from these same water beijus [...]. The white people also make excellent brandy from them” (Daniel, 2004, p. 418).

The use of cassava flour to make intoxicating drinks worried Mendonça Furtado. The governor saw part of the genre, which would serve the military and civilians involved in demarcation expeditions on the upper Rio Negro being wasted in the “scandalous” practice of indigenous drinking parties. Mendonça Furtado de Mariauá wrote on July 10, 1755, that:

One of the great uses of the flour in here was for the indians to make a quantity of wine, from which they made their drinking parties. I called the Principals and told them that, if I found out that

these forest customs were preserved in some Christian villages, I was going to punish them, as that crime deserved, and also told that this seemed very bad, that when I was in need of flour to support the many people who came to me, they were wasting it, consuming it in something as scandalous as that and losing the price that would have been given for it (Mendonça, 2005, p. 415).

Mendonça Furtado condemned the use of flour for the production of wines, seen as “wild behaviors” that survived among indigenous people in the villages, harming the supply of the expedition to demarcate the new limits established by the Treaty of Madrid. This Treaty redefined the borders between the Portuguese and Castilian colonies in South America, replacing the old Treaty of Tordesillas, from 1494. The *bandeirantes* activity and the missionary action of the religious, who ignored the official limits during the period of the Iberian Union (1580-1540), had made the provisions of the Treaty of Tordesillas obsolete. In order to resolve the disputes between the Spanish and Portuguese due to the colonial limits, the Treaty of Madrid was signed in 1750. According to the new determinations established in the 1750 treaty, the Portuguese and Hispanic colonial limits would be consolidated through the principle of “*uti possidetis*”. This idea, originally proposed by Alexandre de Gusmão, Portuguese ambassador, suggested that the limits and belonging of each territory would belong to those who first occupied the region.

Indigenous beverages, however, did not mean only drunkenness or scandal, as Mendonça Furtado saw. Albuquerque (2012, p. 53), in a pioneering work, addresses these drinks as “[...] a recurring form of non-school education in colonial Brazil”. The “*cauim*” was drunk on several important occasions for educational purposes, like the birth, in order to highlight values in the boys, like: “bravery and vengeful spirit”. The affirmation of virility, marked among the Tupinambás by the piercing of their lips, was also fueled by their wines. Among the girls and their life cycles, there were also marked ceremonies involving the *cauim*. The girls did not meet men before menarche, “[...] an occasion celebrated with great parties and drinks, a rite that introduced them to the adult world” (Albuquerque, 2012, p. 95). Wedding parties were also filled with indigenous wine, as only married couples were allowed to drink *cauim*. So, during the wedding party:

The older natives took on the task of helping the groom drink his first gourd of *cauim*, as they believed that not a drop should be wasted otherwise they would compromise the greatest teaching transmitted on that occasion, which was courage (Albuquerque, 2012, p. 96).

Mortuary ceremonies were also filled with cauim. On these occasions, people would drink to remember their loved ones. No war or important decision was made without first drinking cauim. In this way, indigenous drinks, among which cassava was one of the main ingredients, were fundamental in the social and psychic organization of native populations, since the natives, driven by their effects, worshiped their ancestors, reaffirmed values and perpetuated their culture.

Mendonça Furtado's problems with indigenous drinks were not the only ones he would encounter on his trip to Rio Negro. In the abundant correspondence sent to his brother, the Marquis of Pombal, Furtado indicates that the Ignatians sabotaged the demarcation expedition by not providing indigenous people, supplies and canoes for the attempt. There was also incitement to military indiscipline, fueled by the rumor that the demarcation expedition was being carried out without royal authorization. Without cassava flour, the demarcation expedition was in danger of not happening, as it was essential to maintain the indigenous rowers and feed the troops.

Mendonça Furtado's complaints related to these beverages were surprising, since by the second half of the 18th century, cauim had already lost space in the natives' taste to sugar cane spirit. The spread of cachaça among the indigenous people was stimulated by trade between them and the whites. João Daniel, experienced in observing the customs of natives, advised those who were going to do business with them that the best exchange currency was "alambique cane brandy", since "[...] they will make great efforts for a bottle; that's why the best farm that white people can take to their missions to buy flour, etc., is brandy, because the Indians take that one out of their mouths, just by buying this one" (Daniel, 2004, p. 290).

The use of brandy left its mark on Amazon. A custom spread among the natives, cachaça became a common currency of exchange in the colonist's search for cassava flour, the more delicate form of which was carimã flour, which was bakeable and widely used in the colonists' recipes as a replacement for wheat. João Daniel (2004, p. 419) said that

The biscuit made from carimã and tapioca is tastier than the ones from Europe, and they make a variety of it, as everyone wants. Carimã is also used for delicious broths used not only by Americans, but also by Europeans, where natives would send a lot; and it is very substantial for the sick and old. It is also used for sponge cake, starch pasta, and for all the other uses that wheat has, so that it can be called Amazonian wheat without exaggerating the truth.

The foodstuff trades between Europe and America took place in a two-way street. American products invaded Europe after the conquest of the continent. The Europeans' attitude towards newly introduced foods was a mix of curiosity and caution. In a few centuries, the new products would be assimilated in such a way that

“[...] it would be difficult to imagine Europe without corn or potatoes, tomatoes or peppers [...] [to the point of] forgetting their exotic origin”. One of the ways of assimilating new foods was to treat “[...] new products with traditional procedures and preparations”. This is how *carimã* flour was used as a substitute for wheat in the European biscuit recipe (Montanari, 2008, p. 176).

In addition to replacing wheat in European recipes, João Daniel's quote about *carimã* and tapioca flours shows that they were considered good food for weak people, restoring energy to the old and sick. Therefore, in addition to nutritional issues, food takes on multiple meanings and is also associated with cultural identity, a sense of belonging and healing practices, based on the restoration of vital energies. Furthermore, there is still one last compliment from Daniel, this time for the cassava plant. A very useful plant. “Its stick or stem is used for planting [...]”, its leaf “[...] is excellent for cooking with meat, fish or any other stew”. And finally, the “[...] water used in the press, which they call *tucupi* [...], is an excellent seasoning for cooking stews” (Daniel, 2004, p. 419).

Although cassava, or manioc, was widely known among the native populations of Brazil, some groups did not use its roots to make flour. Daniel (2004) reports that there were natural people who preferred to make their flour with wild fruits and only consumed *yuca*, as it did not have the disadvantage of being poisonous and could be consumed after simple cooking. The fundamental difference between manioc and *yuca* is the amount of hydrocyanic acid found in their roots. Cassava has 100 mg of HCN per kilogram of fresh peeled root, requiring longer processing before it can be consumed. *Yuca* has only 50 mg of HCN per kilogram of fresh root and its consumption depends on simple cooking. Certainly, groups on the move or with limited instruments would choose to use cassava for consumption.

Regarding dishes derived from cassava, care in food conservation and many other aspects of daily life in the Amazon today and in João Daniel's time, it is worth highlighting the indian woman's work, since the best of indigenous culture was received from her. The sleeping hammock, personal cleanliness and body hygiene, the cultivation of corn, cashew and cassava and its food complex that consists of *beijus*, flour, cakes, drinks and alcoholic fermented beverages all come from the woman's work. It is never too much to emphasize that

To the female figure is given the role of food knowledge guardian, in addition to sensuality, which, on the other hand, seems to correspond to historical reality; Scholars are unanimous in admitting female primacy in the observation and selection of plants that accompanied the emergence of agriculture around the first villages (Montanari, 2008, p. 26).



It is also worth highlighting the character of the Portuguese colonizer, in which it was noted that:

Maximum temporization between adventitious and native culture, the conqueror's with the conquered ones'. Thus, a Christian society was organized [in Brazil] in its superstructure, with the newly baptized indigenous woman as wife and mother of the family; and using many of the traditions, experiences and utensils of indigenous people in their economy and domestic life (Freyre, 1995, p. 91).

Probably, one of the strongest ways in which indigenous food knowledge penetrated the settler's life was in everyday relationships. Seen as educators of everyday life, indigenous women, taken as wives or even used in domestic services, when living with the elements of adventitious cuisine, added new elements to their repertoire of care and food knowledge and left profound marks there.

So far, only praises for cassava flour. However, the arguments in favor will soon give way to a real campaign against its cultivation. The eradication of cassava cultivation, proposed by João Daniel, is justified by a series of “inconveniences” in its culture.

## **BETWEEN CIVILIZATION AND DELAY: THE PROPOSAL TO PROHIBIT CASSAVA CULTIVATION**

In the seventh chapter of the fifth part of the treatise written by the Ignatian, whose title is “The cultivation of cassava and wood flour must be banished from the Amazon”, João Daniel lists a series of arguments to justify the eradication of manioc from the Amazon, considering that its rustic cultivation is the cause of delay and misuse of land.

The first reason seems closely related to the cultivation's mobility, which in turn corresponds to the semi-nomadic character of traditional indigenous peoples, constantly in search of new lands for burning, hunting, fishing and offering fruits and seeds. In this sense, João Daniel argued that:

[...] the cultivation of maniva, or wooden-flour, being the cause of the seasonal variations of the land in the river, or states of the Amazon, it seems that they should not look for more reasons to exile from the world. A cultivation that, being the more laborious, demands new forests and new lands every year, it does not deserve the attention of men even if it were the most delicious food in the world (Daniel, 2004, p. 168).

João Daniel further presents another six arguments against the cultivation of cassava. In general, these arguments are related to what was previously exposed in the passage above, which is: the need for new land for cultivation; the felling and burning necessary for planting, an extremely dangerous activity for workers; the long root ripening cycle; as well as the risk of losing or compromising production due to excess moisture. The use of a large amount of labor in the production of flour is also seen as negative and a justification for the eradication of cassava. To understand the radical change in João Daniel's view of flour, the arguments of the Argentine philosopher based in Mexico, Enrique Dussel, may be useful.

In the conferences given by the philosopher at the German University Johann Wolfgang Goethe in Frankfurt, in 1992, Dussel understands modernity as a fact that is not strictly European, but in a dialectical relationship with the non-European. For Dussel (1993, p. 8), the year 1492 “[...] is the birth date of Modernity”. The arrival of the European in America is the moment in which Europe “[...] can define itself as an ‘ego’ that discovers, conquers, colonizes otherness” (Dussel 1993, p. 8, emphasis added). Discovering and conquering America marks in the European ego the moment of transition from an Europe on the periphery of the Muslim world to an Europe at the center of world history, and this transition is marked by “[...] a ‘myth’ of very particular sacrificial violence and at the same time, a process of ‘concealment’ of the non-European” (Dussel 1993, p. 8, emphasis added).

Dussel provides the basis for understanding the change in João Daniel's point of view in relation to flour, which, despite describing several qualities of the food, then proposes its eradication. No wonder! João Daniel spoke from an eurocentric, colonizing point of view. Although he recognized the centrality of flour as an everyday food, he proposed the replacement or the “cover-up” of a food to which he had previously attributed qualities. In Daniel's view (2004, v. 2, p. 195), “[...] only with the crops of Europe can there be abundance in the Amazon”.

The missionary even criticized the Portuguese who had adopted the cultivation of cassava and the use of flour to replace the cereals known in Europe. He proposes that the settlers “[...] should seek a better economy, and better benefit the land, and not get used to the rustic life of the natives; because the wise should not be subjected to the brutal life of the rustic” (Daniel, 2004, p. 192).

Everything indicates that Daniel understood the adoption of the indigenous eating habits by the Portuguese as something negative, as it implied the subjection of the civilized to the “rural lifestyle”. Thus, the rustic way – among which cassava flour and its use stood out – needed to be eradicated, dominated, since the conqueror was interested in controlling daily life and its practices, including food. For Dussel (1993, p. 50):

The colonization of the indigenous daily life, and the African slave's life shortly after, was the first European process of modernization. The civilization of subsuming (or alienating) the Other as itself; [...] as an object of an erotic, pedagogical, cultural, political, economic praxis.

According to Dussel, the myth of modernity has a rational and irrational component. The rational component is characterized as endowed with goodness, a "civilizing myth". However, this "civilizing myth", in turn, justifies the irrationality of violence against the Other. Here, violence must be understood not only in its physical dimension (enslavement, genocide), but also in its psychological, social, cultural and religious dimensions.

The European conquest of American territory marked the rise of a model of rationality, science, epistemology and education, so that European common sense became the "[...] parameter and criterion of rationality or humanity" (Dussel, 1993, p. 63), subjugating other forms of knowledge and educational processes considered crude and backward, such as the food knowledge that derived from cassava. From this point of view, cassava is therefore configured not only as a food or nutrition factor, but also as an element that is sometimes civilizing, sometimes delaying the ongoing civilizing process. Therefore, as a pedagogical element.

Thus, the conquest of the colonial Amazon was not just a challenge from the point of view of territorial dominance, control and commercial exploitation. The conquest was also a supposedly civilizing-spiritual mission. "The entire imaginary 'world' of the indigenous people was 'demonic' and as such should be destroyed" (Dussel, 1993, p. 60, emphasis added). When proposing the replacement of cassava cultivation with wheat and other crops in Europe, João Daniel (2004, p. 171), as a member of the Society of Jesus, did not exclude a "Christian" justification for the food, as according to him:

It is already known that wheat has the first place in all crops, because it has primacy in every grain variety, and it was enough for its blessing to choose it and our Creator and Redeemer, the wheat bread to be sacramented in it in the venerating, and tremendous Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Replacing a pagan food with another one linked to the Catholic liturgy was necessary for effective catechization and colonial rule. Thus, even in matters of spiritual power, food was present, thus going beyond the simple relationship with nutritional issues. Daniel's (2004) writing is not deprived of the colonizing idea of European superiority. Unlike other writings of his time, João Daniel's rhetoric is a treatise, that is, a technical study of how best certain actions can be carried out. In the case of the Treasury, a development project for the potential of the Rio Máximo,

exposed mainly in the fifth and sixth parts – both the manuscript that belongs to the National Library of Brazil and the one preserved in Évora. In the proposals to develop the Amazon, Daniel, like other projects created from outside the Amazon, did not include local knowledge, but rather discredited it, describing it as “brute” or “rude”.

However, cassava persisted, and in this persistence, or rather, permanence, it is impossible not to highlight the agency of indigenous women. It were these anonymous women who “[...] made the flour, baked the jewelry, cooked the meals and prepared the medicine [...]”, acting in the silent effort to guarantee the daily care of life and teach – as educators who were – food knowledge, many of which are still present in our meals today (Costa & Arenz, 2014, p. 78).

The dominant plants and their forms of cultivation were introduced into exotic environments, profoundly changing men's lives. Their dispersion movements took centuries, sometimes millennia. However, after the “discovery” of America, these movements multiplied and accelerated. “Plants from the Old World arrived in the New; conversely, those from the New World arrived in the Old: on one hand, rice, wheat, sugar cane, coffee plants [...]; on the other hand, corn, potatoes, beans, tomatoes, cassava, tobacco” (Braudel, 1997, p. 144).

In the case of cassava, Cascudo (2011) reveals a brief picture of its dispersion. First, across the American continent, in a flow contrary to that of corn, cassava would have left the South to be cultivated in the North. With European maritime and commercial expansion, “[...] the Portuguese brought cassava to the African continent since the first years of colonization” (Cascudo, 2011, p. 100). Wherever Portuguese vessels docked and the climate permitted, cassava was acclimatized. Like this:

Cassava is planted from Mauritania, upper Senegal, and comes along the coast and regions all the way to the Southwest, from Guinea, Ivory Coast, Gold Coast, Dahomey, Togo, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, all of Angola. Through the Congo, it gains hinterland, heading towards the coast, both in Kenya and Tanganyika and in Mozambique, even close to the lakes, facing the old “historical” and local cereals. Not only was the very useful *Manihot* exported, but its food complex, the method of cultivation, the preparation of flour and cakes, an additional burden for black women, as in Brazil it was the duty of the wild wedge (Cascudo, 2011, p. 100, emphasis from the author).

However, it was up to indigenous women to have original control over the “food complex” around cassava, involving a diversity of knowledge that enriched the tables of many peoples and without which the subsistence of Europeans in Portuguese America would not have been possible.

## FINAL REMARKS

Worthy of the title of Brazil's Queen, plant of civilization, fundamental food, cassava and its form of cultivation have survived the centuries in an almost immutable way. Even in our age of fast food and processed foods, it has a permanent place on the table of a large part of the Brazilian population, not just the poor. And everyone wants their portion of flour, because, as the popular saying goes: "little flour, my pirão first".

João Daniel's proposal to end cassava cultivation was never put into practice and, if taken seriously, would probably not have been successful. In the Amazon in the 18th century, cassava planting and flour production can be understood as mediating elements of relations between indigenous people and Europeans. Cultural exchanges mediated by food therefore take on an educational dimension, as they reflect the global flow of people and exchanges between different cuisines (Amerindian, European and African). In these exchanges, indigenous women emerge as educators, still little recognized by historiography, through whom food knowledge circulated, guaranteeing the survival of indigenous people and Europeans.

Furthermore, the latter's adoption of the natural food system has an eminently educational character. After all, if Europeans incorporated cassava and flour into their diet, they had to learn the appropriate cultivation and land management techniques, selection of species and their diverse uses. In this particular case, the knowledge of indigenous women related to the multiple uses of cassava was decisive: as food, drink, medicine. Such knowledge was transmitted in a daily pedagogy, in the daily repetition of gestures, in the sociability relationships that permeated the kitchen.

By taking indigenous women as a wife or for domestic tasks, the adventitious brought close to them the knowledge they carried, involving hunting, fish, preparing flour, beijús and many others. It is also worth highlighting the essential role that women played in the production of intoxicating fermented drinks made from various products, in particular cassava. Marked by femininity, the production of drinks was central in the transmission of indigenous values, which is why they assumed an eminently pedagogical dimension (Albuquerque, 2012).

Queen of Brazil, wooden flour caused heated discussions that highlighted both its virtues and its delay in building a "civilized" world according to the colonizer's logic. The proposal for its complete exile (Daniel, 2004), however, was not successful, and cassava persists and resists as an essential food in the culture of countless people, many of whom prefer hunger to having to eat without flour.

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