


**CULTURAL SEMIOTICS: AN EXAMINATION OF TICUNA SYMBOLIC
REPRESENTATIONS AS RESILIENCE OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE
SYSTEMS**

**SEMIÓTICA CULTURAL: UM OLHAR NAS REPRESENTAÇÕES SIMBÓLICAS
TICUNA COMO RESILIÊNCIA AOS SISTEMAS DE CONHECIMENTO INDÍGENA**

**SEMIÓTICA CULTURAL: UN ANÁLISIS DE LAS REPRESENTACIONES
SIMBÓLICAS TICUNA COMO RESILIENCIA DE LOS SISTEMAS DE
CONOCIMIENTO INDÍGENA**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates Cultural Semiotics through the symbolic representations of the Ticuna people, one of the largest Indigenous nations in Brazil, with emphasis on the community of São Leopoldo, Amazonas. It seeks to understand how the Ticuna articulate their cosmology, memory, and identity through cultural and iconographic personifications of nature. The research adopts a qualitative approach, conducted through fieldwork in collaboration with five Ticuna interlocutors possessing extensive knowledge of their collective heritage. Data collection emphasized oral narratives and cultural practices, focusing on the symbolic and iconographic dimensions embedded in the Ticuna worldview. The findings reveal that the Ticuna preserve remarkable cultural vitality by maintaining their native language, traditions, and interpretive worldview. Nature represented through the earth, rivers, trees, wind, mountains, and other phenomena is personified as anthropomorphic, phytomorphic, and zoomorphic beings, which embody divine, heroic, and demonic attributes. These symbolic representations are central to the mythical universe of the Magüta and remain deeply embedded in the cultural identity and collective memory of the Ticuna. The study demonstrates that cultural semiotics provides an essential framework for documenting and safeguarding Indigenous symbolic systems. By recording the personifications of natural and cosmic elements, the research contributes to the protection of the Ticuna intangible heritage and offers a deeper understanding of Amazonian Indigenous worldviews. Furthermore, it highlights the broader role of cultural semiotics in reinforcing the resilience of Indigenous knowledge systems within contemporary debates on cultural preservation.

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Keywords: Amazonian Semiotics. Cultural Symbolism. Indigenous People of the Upper Solimões. Ticuna Cosmology.

RESUMO

Este estudo investiga a Semiótica Cultural por meio das representações simbólicas do povo Ticuna, uma das maiores nações indígenas do Brasil, com ênfase na comunidade de São Leopoldo, Amazonas. Busca compreender como os Ticuna articulam sua cosmologia, memória e identidade por meio das personificações culturais e iconográficas da natureza. A pesquisa adota uma abordagem qualitativa, conduzida por meio de trabalho de campo em colaboração com cinco interlocutores Ticuna detentores de amplo conhecimento sobre o patrimônio coletivo de seu povo. A coleta de dados privilegiou narrativas orais e práticas culturais, com foco nas dimensões simbólicas e iconográficas presentes na cosmovisão Ticuna. Os resultados revelam que os Ticuna preservam uma notável vitalidade cultural ao manter sua língua materna, tradições e visão interpretativa de mundo. A natureza representada pela terra, rios, árvores, vento, montanhas e outros fenômenos é personificada como seres antropomorfos, fitomorfos e zoomorfos, que incorporam atributos divinos, heróicos e demoníacos. Essas representações simbólicas são centrais para o universo mítico dos Magüta e permanecem profundamente enraizadas na identidade cultural e na memória coletiva dos Ticuna. O estudo demonstra que a semiótica cultural constitui um referencial essencial para documentar e salvaguardar os sistemas simbólicos indígenas. Ao registrar as personificações dos elementos naturais e cósmicos, a pesquisa contribui para a proteção do patrimônio imaterial Ticuna e oferece uma compreensão mais profunda das cosmovisões indígenas amazônicas. Além disso, destaca o papel mais amplo da semiótica cultural no fortalecimento da resiliência dos sistemas de conhecimento indígena nos debates contemporâneos sobre preservação cultural.

Palavras-chave: Semiótica Amazônica. Simbolismo Cultural. Povo Originário do Alto Rio Solimões. Cosmologia dos Ticunas.

RESUMEN

Este estudio investiga la semiótica cultural a través de las representaciones simbólicas del pueblo Ticuna, una de las naciones indígenas más numerosas de Brasil, con énfasis en la comunidad de São Leopoldo, Amazonas. El objetivo es comprender cómo los Ticuna articulan su cosmología, memoria e identidad mediante personificaciones culturales e iconográficas de la naturaleza. La investigación adopta un enfoque cualitativo y se desarrolló mediante trabajo de campo con cinco interlocutores Ticuna, portadores de un amplio conocimiento sobre el patrimonio colectivo de su pueblo. La recolección de datos incluyó narrativas orales y prácticas culturales, centradas en las dimensiones simbólicas e iconográficas de la cosmovisión Ticuna. Los hallazgos muestran que los Ticuna preservan una notable vitalidad cultural al mantener su lengua materna, tradiciones y visión interpretativa del mundo. La naturaleza - tierra, ríos, árboles, viento, montañas y otros fenómenos - se personifica como seres antropomorfos, fitomorfos y zoomorfos que encarnan atributos divinos, heroicos y demoníacos. Estas representaciones constituyen el núcleo del universo mítico Magüta y permanecen arraigadas en la identidad cultural y en la memoria colectiva de los Ticuna. El estudio demuestra que la semiótica cultural ofrece un marco esencial para documentar y salvaguardar los sistemas simbólicos indígenas. Al registrar las personificaciones de los elementos naturales y cósmicos, contribuye a la protección del patrimonio inmaterial Ticuna y a una comprensión más profunda de las cosmovisiones indígenas amazónicas. Además, resalta la importancia de la semiótica cultural en el



fortalecimiento de la resiliencia de los saberes indígenas en los debates contemporáneos sobre preservación cultural.

Palabras clave: Semiótica Amazónica. Simbolismo Cultural. Pueblos Originarios del Alto Solimões. Cosmología Ticuna.

1 INTRODUCTION

The present study on *Cultural Semiotics: a look at the Ticuna symbolic representations* brings to the discussions the symbolic representations of personifications, which are constituted as anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and phytomorphic beings. The anthropomorphic beings, interpreted under the forms of the culture and perception of the original Ticuna people, were inspired by the beings who assumed the world of the Magüta as civilizers to pass on the knowledge of the culture, such as Yo'i, Ipi and others. Thus, characteristics and similarities of human beings are attributed.

Zoomorphic beings are pointed out by the indigenous people in the universe. Identified by them in celestial bodies and other environments, they are those that have animal characteristics and form. This is because, according to Faulhaber, Dittz and Nader, "the Indians continuously observe the movement of the celestial bodies visible to the eye" (2012, p. 4). While phytomorphic beings have their differentiated structure similar to that of plants and their representations of the plant kingdom that take on various forms in different environments.

Trees are genetic species symbolic of the sacred, and in the past, many moved in the sacred land of Eware. In the culture of the indigenous people, these trees have types of powers. When referring to trees, Gruber argues that "Trees have existed for many years in the world. Long before the beginning of the existence of the Ticuna people" (1997, p. 14).

The cosmology of indigenous knowledge decodes the iconographies of the constellations, indicating the time to flourish and exact for everything in the context of nature, controlled by the elements or phenomena; the readings of the universe and its dimensions are made in the light of the original Magüta knowledge in the region of Alto Solimões, Amazonas.

As Krenak (2019) presents us, the world cannot be thought of only from one of the rationalities, but must consider the different modes of existence. Therefore, the relevance of this research lies in the way in which the semiotics of culture through representations are interpreted from the perspective of natural phenomena by the connoisseurs of the Ticuna ethnic group. The discussions are not exhausted under the effects of the worldview, on the contrary, they establish relationships with natural phenomena, the beings of nature and cultural traditions.

This study was carried out in the Ticuna/Magüta indigenous community of São Leopoldo, located on the banks of the upper Solimões River and belonging to the municipality

of Benjamin Constant, state of Amazonas. The general objective was to investigate and graph the iconographic forms of the symbolic representations of the personifications of the earth, the waters, the forest and the cosmos of the Ticuna cultural universe. The specific objectives established were: to collect and create a collection of the iconographies of the beings of the forest, rivers, mountains and the sacred universe, as well as to describe the symbolic functions of gods, heroes, demons and supernatural deities of the ancestral Magüta/Ticuna world.

2 INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY OF SÃO LEOPOLDO: HISTORY, ORIGIN AND CONTEXTS

The Ticuna indigenous community of São Leopoldo belongs to the municipality of Benjamin Constant, Amazonas, and was founded on February 5, 1972. It is located in the center, between the green Amazon forest and the strategic points of sacred places of permanence of enchanted beings protected by the cultural gods of ancestry, as shown in Figure 1.

The first name given to the indigenous community was Marajá (Portuguese language) and *Yotarü* (mother tongue), a term and meaning given to the sacred mountain that exists there. The second name, given by the missionary José Francisco da Cruz, was Monte das Oliveiras. With the arrival of the religious mission of the crusade, the community came into force with great prohibitions by the religious leaders of the mission of the Holy Cross (Ciama, 2005). Due to the arrival of the Holy Cross, more people gathered in the place, especially the followers of the crusader mission. The people came together to build the church. The families sought the place as a religious refuge, a small space promised and blessed by the missionary (as he was called), who planted the cross as the symbol of the religious mission in the place. Unfortunately, the missionary brother José dictated rules to make indigenous traditions unfeasible. Traditional knowledge was prevented from being practiced by the people, such as rite, festival of the young girl, face and body painting, ajuri and others. Consequently, there was a change in the customs of the people of the São Leopoldo community, according to the biblical precepts of the Holy Cross. The duality between good and evil was fought by the communitarians. The Holy Cross won, interfering in the original traditional aspects.

Figure 1

Panoramic view of the São Leopoldo Indigenous community



Source: Paulino Alexandre, 2024.

In the same year, on September 29, the indigenous community took over: the first chief, Mr. Alfredo Gabino; and the vice-chief, Mr. Nilo Joanico Ramos (Ciama, 2005). During this period, there were already fifteen families in the community. The Ticuna people had the place as promising because it was dry land. The families gathered to make a large community garden for the planting of sugar cane; They also built a house for the production of rapadura and the Church of the Crusader Mission.

The brown sugar produced began to be bought by a gentleman who came from Rio Grande do Sul, exactly from São Leopoldo. In addition to buying the brown sugar, he brought and left a machine to produce them. He also named the place the indigenous community of São Leopoldo, where he was born. Over time, this adventurous gentleman left, but the community remains with that name to this day.

In the indigenous community, with the name of São Leopoldo, Mr. Paulo Quixino Pinto took over as chief and Mrs. Felícia Coelho Lucas as vice-president. The place currently has 720 inhabitants, who live in a constant housing process and struggles to improve the life of the place. There is a school, health center and church of the Holy Cross on site, the only sectors that are at the service of the people.

Currently, in the indigenous community of São Leopoldo, the faithful, to the hard resistance, continue with the original customs and habits: knowledge, food, drink, handicrafts, engraving, body painting, play, artifact archeology, graphics, history, the sacred rite in the ceremony at the feast of the young girl and other traditional rituals.

It is important to highlight that all peoples have the right to live and value their historical and cultural roots. Provided for in the Brazilian federal constitution. The Magüta society has an admirable culture that, despite so many modifications brought and imposed by external agents, continues to resist and exist in contemporaneity in its indigenous lands, the sacred ground of its ancestors.

3 METHODOLOGICAL SCENARIO OF THE RESEARCH: ICONOGRAPHIC PANORAMA

Fieldwork makes us reflect and develop the methodology of a research; it leads us to the search. From this perspective, one must follow a path and follow the right direction in the investigative empirical field. Marques explains that "in research, as in any work of art, security is produced in the uncertainty of the paths." (1997, p. 114).

The purpose of this study is descriptive, as it aims to provide familiarity with the problem, involves conducting a bibliographic survey and aims to describe the characteristics of a given population (Gil, 2002). As for the approach, as Minayo (2002) clarifies, it is considered qualitative, since it is dedicated to the world of the meanings of human actions and relationships. The author, detailing the question of how qualitative research as a mechanism that answers very particular questions, wrote:

It is concerned, in the social sciences, with a level of reality that cannot be quantified. That is, it works with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes, which corresponds to a deeper space of relationships, processes and phenomena [...] (2002, p. 21-22).

The place of the research, with the records of the images and iconographies of the beings and personifications of the Magüta/Ticuna cultural symbolic world, it was the community of São Leopoldo.

The data collected in the field were analyzed and systematized for the elaboration of the product in its final version. Minayo (2002) points out that the analysis phase aims to establish an understanding of the information collected, as well as to expand knowledge about the subject that will be researched and already in progress.

To this end, three moments were proposed: in the first, a bibliographic review was carried out, when theoretical readings were carried out to support empirical discussions and, in parallel, to make records of images and iconographies of the beings and personifications of the mythical and cultural world of Ticuna at the locus of the research. In the next moment,

the fieldwork, where interviews were carried out with five social subjects of the Ticuna ethnic group, who helped us in this process. Finally, a catalog was produced about anthropomorphic, phytomorphic and zoomorphic beings that will remain as a collection for future research on the original group and the representations of its cultural iconographies, because referring to the categories of these beings, the catalog contemplates their respective symbolic representations. The Exhibition Catalogue of the Museum of Astronomy and Related Sciences was also used during the research (Faulhaber, Dittz, Nader, 2012).

4 SYMBOLIC CRAFTS OF CULTURAL BEINGS : ANTHROPOMORPHS, ZOOMORPHS AND PHYTOMORPHS

The Ticuna people of São Leopoldo have a very accurate view of the semiotics of symbolic representations of the ancestral world. In addition to maintaining the culture, they practice their rituals. In them are presented the anthropomorphic, phytomorphic and zoomorphic beings, which have forms and each one within a category. Therefore, they are still very present in the universe of the original people of this region of the Upper Solimões River, especially among communities far from urban centers. Many of these beings have a very strong representation in the rites of *the Worecū*; they go out to interact with the indigenous social environment during the ritualizations.

In the context of discussions about semiotics, Ribeiro (2010) explains:

Semiotics is the general science, metasemiotics, of which scholars have considered other sciences, such as sociosemiotics, psychosemiotics, ethnosiotics, semiotics of passions, semiotics of cultures, all object-semiotics, whose natures are verbal, non-verbal, and complex or syncretic, which oppose natural semiotics, such as zoosemiotics.

It is very common in indigenous communities to come across various iconographies stamped in various places. To understand iconography, it is defined as a broad language of visual predominance, making use of images. It studies the origin or origin of images, where and how they are exhibited and disseminated in a given place. In the original spaces they are well highlighted, in the clothing, on the walls and walls of educational institutions, in health centers, in traditional malocas, in tururis cloths and in objects there are many of these images to be read visually. For the Magüta/Ticuna people, iconographies have the greatest symbolic representation for culture. They make the visual reading in their own way, based on purely cultural aspects, that is, a kind of biological worldview created and pointed out by them.

Thus, a mosaic of collections of graphics, symbols, signs and figures representative of beings of ancestry (anthropomorphs, phytomorphs and zoomorphs) is formed, belonging to groups of beings of different categories in the light of the cosmobiocultural prism, as they say, explaining from the visionary universe of the ethnicity.

Figure 2

Entities of the Magüta world



Source: Auxiliadora Pinto, 2024.

According to indigenous thought, these beings who are written by them through iconographies (Figures 2) developed important activities on the land and in the world of the Magüta. The personifications of ancestry assumed social functions; some with more representation and others with less, but all with great cultural significance for the traditions of the ethnic collective.

In ancestral time, in the three kingdoms culturally categorized under the symbolic gaze, there were (and are) gods, demigods, monsters, demons and beings of the waters, the cosmos and nature with a human aspect (anthropomorphs) and beings with animal attributes (reptiles, birds and mammals, zoomorphs) and beings with characteristics similar to those of plants (phytomorphs). In the primordial world, everyone with great powers moved normally in the cosmic world until the loss of immortality.

Mrs. Goddess Joaquim Vicente, of the Japó clan (*Barücüã*), one of the first residents of the São Leopoldo (*Yotarü*) *indigenous community*, reported: "at that time, the community was smaller in size and in the afternoon and at night we saw small, large, dangerous and immortal types of animals. They came out from under the *Tchucugüne mountain*, in the community" (verbal information, 2024).

With regard to nature and its phenomena, Prigogine defines: "[...] one has always tried to divine nature, to decipher the secret of its stabilities and of the rare events that punctuate its course" (1991, p. 2).

In the semiotic cultural view of the ethnicity, these animals called "animals" are zoomorphs and anthropomorphs, which transmute themselves and attack people. Because they are carnivorous animals capable of devouring people. The animals with severe actions are: *yare monkey*, curupira and water jaguar (*airumacathi*). On these issues, the community elder Deusa Joaquim Vicente (2024) reports:

When we hear that huge, thin and long noise of the *Tchucugüne mountain*, like the sound of the enchanted person singing inside the mountain, we already know that it is the sound made by the curupira hitting trees, but it can also be the invisible soldier *Yureu* or other supernatural beings. The mountain, because it is sacred, attracts these beings, of all kinds, even, in fact, they live there. (verbal information).

Goddess Joaquim Vicente (2024) said that, in the community, incestuous people were attacked by beings of the supernatural of the earth and the forest, they were zoomorphs with animal characteristics and form, such as the hymenopteran bee insect (belonging to the groups of *Matchi'i*, *Otchatchi'i* and *Bei*), which stung the mouth of those who were lovingly involved with their blood relatives.

Many iconographies of these beings are considered archaeological elements today, which, in a way, were produced by a people at a certain time. They come in many forms and places. There are many objects with these characteristics in museums. In Alto Solimões, there is the Study Center for research: the Magüta Museum. It is the first indigenous museum in Brazil, built in the late 1980s and where some types of indigenous archeology of ancestry are included. In this place, species of artifacts, engravings, drawings and history of the Magüta people are safeguarded, as well as figures of various beings culturally considered by the Ticuna indigenous people as anthropomorphs, phytomorphs and zoomorphs.

Figure 3

Magüta Museum



Source: Brazilian Institute of Museums - Ibram, 2024

Many of these were made by artisans who still know the use of such symbolic objects and the essence of the culture on the ground of their traditional communities in a collaborative work. The objects reflect a resignification of these objects, formed by iconographic collections of the Magüta people, which represent a cultural past marked by figures of gods, demigods, demons, monsters and beings from rivers, the cosmos and nature, at different levels and scale of power.

Nowadays, many have become museum pieces: inside the country, such as the Emílio Goeldi Museum in Belém do Pará, the National Museum of Rio de Janeiro; outside the country, such as the Munich Museum and the Berlin Museum. The interests for this to happen were diverse. Many iconographies are written on ceramic pots, on tururis cloths, on the malocas of festivals, on the traditional central stages of the villages, in school environments and in other places.

Figure 4

Iconographies of the guardians of the sacred instrument To'cü



Source: Sildonei Mendes, 2024.

In the iconographies above (Figure 4), we have: *Mawü*, an entity, a mythological being capable of punishing people who did not follow cultural rules; *To'ü* is the guardian of the new girl's party, wears traditional clothing with the representation of her clan and takes care of *Worecü* (new girl), so that nothing bad happens and not even people touch her, because her body is sacred; *Natchine* is a shield used by the masked *Mawü* as protection against *Worecü*. All these entities have a fundamental role as guardians in the Magüta world.

4.1 TCHUCUGÜNE: THE SACRED AND MYSTERIOUS MOUNTAIN OF ST. LEOPOLD

The *Tchucugüne* mountain is located in the indigenous community of São Leopoldo (*Yotarü*). According to the residents of the community, there are intriguing facts linked to spirituality. When visiting the place, a different energy was perceived in the air. Both of ecstasy and of fear. There is no way to explain it, other than not being allowed to climb the mountain alone, as this was one of the guidelines of the elders of the place. The indigenous elders recount many episodes, such as the one passed on by the chief, Mr. Paulo Quixino of the Avaí clan (*Arücüa*): "Here in this place of nature, the body of a wrong person, a visitor who lived in another community, was stolen. She was visiting the mountain hill alone and suddenly disappeared definitively" (Verbal Information, 2024).

Figure 5

The top of the Tchucugüne mountain in São Leopoldo, Amazonas



Source: Paulino Alexandre, 2024

There is an⁵ enchanted creek exactly below the mountain (left side of Figure 5), where various types of dangerous and non-dangerous animals, terrestrial and aquatic, are seen, such as: snake (Nawü), monkey (Yare), water jaguar (Airumacathi), manatee (Airüwe), tracajá (Tori), among others. It is difficult for anyone to risk reaching the creek in the face of what has already happened to people in the place, who have even mysteriously succumbed. The greatest fear is to awaken the sacred entities that remain hidden above and below the mountain.

Historically, on the *Tchucugüne mountain*, in São Leopoldo, after 1972, the missionary José Francisco Cruz planted a cross right on the top of the hill as a symbol of the evangelization of the Holy Cross. Today, the cross of the brotherhood remains embedded in the hill of the *Tchucugüne mountain*. With the cross planted, the missionary of the religion considered that the community was a promised land of the brotherhood.

After that, with the increase in the population of this community and with people practicing erroneous acts (excessive drinking, incest, violence, suicide and witchcraft), there was the incredibility of the people to the founder of the mission. Thus began, on the mountain of São Leopoldo, to weaken the sacred customs, as well as the sacred trees around the mountain. However, the mysteries continued, as did the animals, medicinal plants, drinking

⁵ It is a small and narrow natural watercourse that the riverside people call the "arm of the river" that are used as a transport route for small embarkations.

streams and polished stones that remain under the mountain (sustainability in the community).

With the growth of the indigenous community of São Leopoldo, the *Tchucugüne* mountain became the center of the community. The elder Felicia of the Galinha clan (*Otacüã*) emphasizes: "in the sacred place under the mountain there are still groups of immortal beings in the form of people, animals and plants that move and come into contact with us" (Verbal Information, 2024). The people of the place preserve the culture; They claim that the sacred realms of the Earth come from the mountain in question.

Currently, these beings are written through cultural semiotics by the original people in the form of iconographies of different natures, with a function and as a value of cultural identification, inspired by ancestry. They start to write them in various environments, things and traditional objects. Ribeiro (2010) points out that the semiotics of culture implies that other cultures are part of their own culture, which is not without similarities and differences between different cultures. For the Ticuna, such graphics, read and interpreted under visual semiotics, are produced with meaning and purpose, through contemporary people. See Figure 6 below:

Figure 6

Iconographic graphics of the Ticuna people



Source: Pinto, 2024.

There is an importance of recording the images of traditional entities and their respective functions, describing them and bringing them to the field of scientific discussions.

It is known that, increasingly, the identity of the indigenous is mixed in adverse contexts and multiple cultures: "all cultures are the result of fluctuation and borrowing, of miscegenations that have not stopped happening, although at different paces, since the beginning of time. All are pluricultural in their way of formation" (Lévi-Strauss, 2008, p. 216). In cultural contexts, it is very common for indigenous people to draw their graphics and the heroes of immortality as a way of reaffirming their existence and establishing their permanence among the people so that they are known among generations. Write on objects and things so that they circulate among the group, creating vivid memories, especially of the children and young people of the ethnic group.

4.2 COSMOBIOCULTURAL TICUNA VIEW OF ANTHROPOMORPHIC BEINGS

The notion of cosmobiocultural refers to the inseparability between cosmos, life and culture, conceiving them as interdependent dimensions in a constant process of transformation. Inspired by Prigogine's (1991) reflections in *The New Alliance*, this understanding breaks with the mechanistic view of classical science and emphasizes irreversibility, instability, and creativity as constitutive forces of nature and existence.

In this horizon, the cosmobiocultural expresses a deep ecology in which the human is not the center, but part of a living network of interactions that cross the physical, biological and symbolic universe. Thus, as Prigogine (1991) explains, science, culture and life are not presented as separate spheres, but as dynamic processes of coevolution, in which symbolic and cosmological systems, such as those of indigenous peoples, reveal themselves not only as cultural narratives, but also as ways of interpreting and actively participating in the continuous metamorphosis of reality.

In sacred time, the divine entities of the ancestor of the earth and spirituality, coming from various environments. The anthropomorphic beings of our culture are inspired by the beings who took over the earth, such as *Yo'i*, *Ipi* and others. Thus, this category is attributed characteristics and similarities of human beings, who had the ability to teach the very value of culture on the land.

According to indigenous Ticuna cosmology, the warrior Magüta *Yo'i* and his sister *Mowatcha* lived and interacted as human beings, but were gods of immortality. He had the power of transmutation (sometimes human, sometimes object, sometimes animal, sometimes God). Figure 7 shows how these important figures are represented with dolls made of tururi - the traditional Magüta fabric - a sacred specialty.

Figure 7

Yo'i and Mowatcha dolls



Source: Auxiliadora Pinto, 2024.

Yo'i is the god of the Magüta people and comes from the sacred space of the Eware. Son of the Ngutapa, who begot his sons and daughters within his knees. When they were born, they had their own knowledge of the nascent culture. According to the story of the Magüta people, in the beginning, when the world was in complete darkness, *Yo'i* and *Ipi* opened it by cutting down the Samaumeira (*Wotchine*), stirring the royal sloth that held the branches of this tree in the sky.

Later, *Yo'i*, desiring to populate the Earth and leave the world, conquered his humanity by fishing with a rod in the water of the Eware creek the three different nations: the white, the black and the indigenous Magüta. While his brother *Ipi* fished the Peruvians and other peoples. Now his family is scattered in the Amazon region, including the tributaries of the Solimões River. *Yo'i* also had the gift of the work of organizing his people by pulling from the waters and dividing them into clans: curassow, maguari, jaguar, leafcutter, genipap, etc. This clan symbolic rite must be respected by the descendants of his village in the Amazon region.

Thus, culture and traditional knowledge were born, when *Yo'i* left with his brothers from inside his father's knees. And together they began to teach the people the ancient customs and traditions.

Figure 8

Ngutapa artifact



Source: Paulino Alexandre, 2024.

According to the tenth image, father *Ngutapa* (Figure 8, above), it is observed that the artifact is made of muraipiranga wood. This figure is of the immortal being, the one who arrived first and generated other divine beings, who came with the mission of forming, organizing humanity and teaching it. From the past, the demigoddesses *Aicüna* and *Mowatcha*, women of the indigenous Magüta people, belonging to the sacred land of Eware, are mentioned. They represent the spirituality and knowledge of the women of their origin. Currently, the function of the women of ancestry remains present with the function and value of identity.

The production of objects is done manually, many by women. They give shape and turn objects into symbolic pieces with striking features. Men also play an important role; they sculpt beautiful objects of different nature. In wood such as muraipiranga, for example, they carve sculptures such as that of *Mowatcha* (Figure 9), who, in the myth of origin, stands out for his artistic skills and for the dissemination of this knowledge in the world of the Magüta and their descendants.

Figure 9

Sculpture of the Magüta Mowatcha woman



Source: Magüta Museum, 2024.

The Magüta elders say that *Aicüna* represents the ancestral Magüta feminine beauty, a genius girl who has the gift of knowing feminine art. She is a holy young woman, who was betrothed in marriage to an animal, the Taine squirrel; from this union was born the daughter *To'oena*, the first *Worecü* (young girl) of the Magüta people of the Eware territory.

As mentioned, *Aicüna* portrays the beauty of the indigenous woman of the Magüta people. The facial and body graphics are made of genipap tincture, which, in addition to demonstrating the clan traces, has the power to protect the skin and body from diseases. The young *Aicüna* gave rise to the traditional knowledge and making of the element traced by the hands, they are: sieve, tipiti, bag and clay buri. This original tradition belonged to women warriors who were knowledgeable, practitioners and disseminators of indigenous art. *Aicüna* is the older sister of the *Yo'i* and *the Ipi*, children of the Ngutapa. See Figure 10 below:

Figure 10

Iconography of the cultural brothers Aicüna and Ipi, exhibited at the Magüta Museum



Source: Auxiliadora Pinto, 2024.

The anthropomorph *Ba'ia*, in sacred time, was a human hunter of the supernatural, who inhabited the sacred space of the Eware. His wife is called *Ba'e*. The elder Hortêncio Alberto Inácio clan Avai (*Arucüã*) told us that:

Ba'ia, the mystical shaman hunter, hunted every day and always roamed the land of Eware. *Ba'ia* is a powerful sorcerer, who had the power to transmute himself into any being in nature, such as birds, animals, ants, humans, termite houses, among others. From the beginning, when the earth was sacred and there was no evil in the world, things were commanded by cultural thought. For the sake of revenge of the *Batü* animal, who got involved with his wife in the middle of the forest, *Batü* did an action of injuring *Ba'ia's* wife in the middle of the navel and tore her face. Because of this, the *Ba'ia* man began to attack and kill all the immortal beings of the forest kingdom and the nature beings of the Eware (verbal information, 2024).

In the territory of the Magüta, there were not only gods and goddesses; there was the presence of demons, some who already were and others who were transformed from their evil actions, as is the case of the *Nge'cutü* (Figure 11). It is a supernatural demon of the earth, who lives in the sacred space under the mountain of Pepper; it has black hair, human body, animal skin, open, large, long and deformed feet.

Figure 11

Iconography of Nge'cutü



Source: Paulino Alexandre, 2024.

In sacred times, when *Yo'i* was among the *Magüta*, the *Nge'cutü* were the guards who took care of the *To'cü*, a sacred instrument with long characteristics (identified as the trumpet). *Yo'i himself* was the one who colored and played this instrument. The painting was done in natural clay in parallel colors and bands; These colors gave him great powers.

The elder Oscar Ângelo of the Maguari clan, of the *Magüta* ethnic group, a resident of São Leopoldo, told us that "*Nge'cutü* is a friend of the masked guardian who also played the *To'cü*. He uses a signal, makes a noise, like, "*Ngeeee... Nge'cutü... Nobody... Nge'cutü*". When someone hears this noise, he tries to protect his son, because *Nge'cutü* is a demon of the supernaturality of the earth.

According to the history of the *Magüta* people, *Nge'cutü* was a guardian who became a demon and killed *Worecü To'oena*, niece of *Yo'i* and daughter of *Aicüna*. The *Worecü* died because of her disobedience, because she did not respect the rules of her feast (*Yu'ü*). Cultural history describes that *Nge'cutü* beat the young woman's body, washed her blood in the creek of the Eware, roasted the meat of the *Worecü*, which was then distributed where the festival was being held. Therefore, to this day, the water of the Eware is reddish.

Currently, the puberty party is still very present and has its meanings. It is versed in the book *Céu Ticuna* by Faulhaber, Dittz and Nader (2012, p. 18) as follows: "women prepare the crown of the girl during sunrise. The red macaw feathers in the crown represent the Sun.

The brother covers the eyes of the girls. The fact that it comes or is seen will cause great destruction to all.

In the Magüta territory, there was also the supernatural *Yureu*, known in the Ticuna culture as an invisible soldier, belonging to various environments of the earth and who kills people. It represents the class of the evil spirit. The guardian *Yureu* (Figure 12) has the function of judging the incestuous person. In the present time, it is found in a symbolic iconographic object and is much feared in the indigenous community of São Leopoldo, Amazonas.

Figure 12

Iconography of Yureu



Source: Pinto, 2024.

Yureu is from the forest kingdom. It is an evil angel that God has punished here in this world. It has a black body, bronze teeth and becomes people to kill people who practice incest. It has a perverse action: it tears the person's body, cuts it into small pieces and hangs it on top of small trees.

The elders say that *Yureu's* actions happen to this day, but in the São Leopoldo community, the performance of this bad being has softened since 1972 due to the arrival and interference of the crusader mission.

4.3 ZOOMORPHIC BEINGS IN THE TICUNA WORLDVIEW

The zoomorphic beings are also seen, identified and pointed out by the Magüta people in the celestial bodies. For them they are those who have animal characteristics and form. According to Faulhaber, Dittz and Nader, "the Indians continuously observe the movement of the celestial bodies visible to the eye" (2012, p. 4). Thus, these beings are represented and recorded through Ticuna iconographies.

In the ancestral world of the Magüta, there was the *Matchi'i bee*, its existence in the land of traditions is from the same time as *Yo'i*, when the cultural god ruled the traditional world of the land of Eware. The old lady Deusa said that this species of bee is the greatest avenger of the Magüta people, from when the sacred agents lived on the banks of the Eware stream.

For the ethnic group, the *Matchi'i bee* is of the zoomorpha species. This flying insect liked to hit the people, especially when there was a relationship between people with proximity between families, especially girls with their cousins, children who played in the free space and together. These family proximities attracted the bee, as it was forbidden (as a great sin between families), so they were attacked.

In addition, the old lady told us that *Aicüna* saved the people from a great revenge of *Matchi'i*: she poisoned the bee with bacaba wine (a wine that the bee likes very much). *Aicüna* made the wine, poured it into the gourd and placed it where the bee passed, both in the morning and in the afternoon; the beast *Matchi'i* saw it, took the wine and drank it. After drinking, he shouted aloud, in the form of a song, the names of the people who poisoned him. This corrective, given by *Aicüna*, caused the people to multiply in the land of the Magüta.

Still on the iconographies in the universe, Faulhaber, Dittz and Nader (2012, p. 7) highlight: "iconography of indigenous artifacts and drawings representing the fight between the jaguar and the anteater during the season [...] from May to November". They are highlighted and found in references to reptiles (snake, alligator, calango), birds (eagle, hawk, vulture) and mammals (jaguar, monkey, anteater). Likewise, the traditional sticks are demonstrated in the warrior artifacts.

It is common to find groups of living beings of ancestry carved on the traditional ceremonial sticks of the traditional Ticuna people. They claim that these creatures are from the sacred space of the Eware (or enchanted forest). These zoomorphs are not human beings, some are owners of the species of the earth, animals, forest, water, mountain or others.

Figure 13

Iconographic graphics of beings, species and living objects of nature



Source: Pinto, 2024.

Making a visual reading of the iconographies in Figure 13, made by the indigenous Magüta and their descendants, they represent a variety of beings, species and living objects of nature. There are musical instruments harvested from nature, fishing utensils, cocaïns and graphics. The headdress means the crown. Avaí identifies the native plant from which the seeds are harvested to make musical instruments, such as the rattle; Avaí also represents the traditional clan in the Magüta culture. There is the canoe and the paddle at the base of the photo, used by fishermen, hunters and farmers, who play fundamental roles in the village.

Among zoomorphic beings, the dolphin (Figure 14) occupies a unique place in Ticuna cosmology. Made of tururi cloth presented through the semiotics of cultural representations, this mammal of Amazonian waters is seen as docile, but capable of becoming threatening when provoked, in addition to "playing" with fish in fishermen's nets. More than an animal, the dolphin is a liminal being: for the Ticuna, it transforms into a human, crossing the boundaries between the natural and human worlds. This transfiguration symbolizes the permeability between different dimensions of existence and reflects the Ticuna view that the forest and the rivers are alive, with their own forces and intentions. The dolphin also functions as an ethical and cultural guardian, transmitting teachings about respect for nature and aquatic life, reinforcing collective values that sustain the memory and identity of the community. Thus, this figure is not only a mythical animal, but a symbolic link between the imaginary, morality and cultural survival of the Ticuna people.

Figure 14

Iconography made of tururi at the Meparacü school



Source: Paulino Alexandre, 2024.

We bring to the discussions according to other perspectives the Mapinguari (Figure 15), the being from the forest that watches over the forest and still has attitudes and actions with the people who invade the spaces that are not allowed. According to Rocha (2023, p. 25):

The caboclos and Indians say that inside the Amazon rainforest lives a monstrous being, of great stature, hairy, one eye on the forehead, the mouth on the navel, long arms and large claws on the hands. For some, he is actually covered in hair, but wears armor made from the turtle's shell. For others, their skin is the same as alligator leather. This being is known as Mapinguari

Figure 15

The being of the forest, the Mapinguari



Source: Auxiliadora Pinto, 2024.

Those who suffer the most from his attitudes are the hunters in their trades because they fear finding him, it is necessary to have wisdom to be able to get rid of his actions in the middle of the dense forest. Rocha (2023, p. 25) points out how Mapinguari's actions occur:

He kills any animal in the forest, in addition to the human that crosses his path. It usually hunts during the day and sleeps at night. According to what people report, it is not a silent creature as it emits loud and consistent screams. It runs through the woods, breaking branches and knocking down trees, leaving a trail of destruction. Some believe that he only runs away when he sees the sloth.

There are many accounts of the Mapinguari being that emerge from oral tradition, feeding Amazonian literary sources. They are passed on to generations in the style of accountants and often spring from the reminiscent memories they once heard from their ancestors.

In addition, the representativeness of the wild animals of the forest is mentioned. At the indigenous school, students adorn themselves to represent various animals. This is so that students know the characteristics of each animal in the Amazon rainforest. In addition to the jaguar, there are other caricatures and artifacts of animals. They present many iconographies on the posters, painting on the murals and others.

The image of culturally zoomorphic beings is represented by the carnivorous animal in the center of the forest: the jaguar (Figure 16). At school, for the representations, they are made of light wood. This object is used for the folk dances of the region and is used as a didactic resource to teach indigenous children based on what they already know.

Figure 17

Jaguar mask made by an indigenous artisan



Source: Auxiliadora Pinto, 2024.

Speaking of the production of knowledge based on what is already known, we contemplate in the discussions *Ba'ũ*, an animal of a mythological cultural nature that has the shape and characteristics of a gecko and has transformed itself into this being in the humanity of the Magüta people. The gecko or *ba'ũ* (Figure 17) is perceived from the perspective of the sensitive gaze of the Ticuna indigenous people, in the kingdom of the forest, in the middle of the forest. There are male and female. This animal has twelve feet and transforms into people (who can be a man or a girl).

Figure 17

Drawing of Ba'ũ's iconography



Source: Pinto, 2024.

The elders of São Leopoldo told the story of *ba'ũ*, of the past time when he was a very dangerous animal. To this day, it appears in the dense forests and can kill the hunters who live in the indigenous place. This animal can be found in the jungle, in the middle of the road. It can be presented as a beautiful girl or it can be living people in the family who can transmute into this animal and confuse people. According to one of the interlocutors, Mr. Hortêncio made a report on *ba'ũ*. Let's look at his account:

In the community, at one point, the hunter went into the woods and, when he arrived in the middle of the forest, the man heard a huge noise: "boom, boom, boom... boom, boom, boom." The hunter heard the sound and saw nothing, as if the animal was hitting the paca nut fruit on top of the tree. He went as far as the sound was coming and, as he approached the noise, the hunter saw a beautiful girl knocking on a tree trunk in the distance. At this the hunter was frightened, for he had never seen a girl in the middle of the forest. The man approached and got close to her. Immediately, she sucked his spirit, but *ba'ũ* falls in love, involves and acts. So he did with the hunter. After wrapping it, suddenly, *ba'ũ* turned into a gecko. Her mouth was stuck to the hunter's penis and never let go, until it led to his death (Verbal Information, 2024).

In the community, the old residents claim that *ba'ũ* is the owner of the batata-cará, which is also known as wild potato, called "ui" in the mother tongue. Nowadays, in the traditional indigenous territory of the Magüta/Ticuna community, in the sacred forest where no one can easily reach, there are still many *ba'ũ* who protect the place.

These narratives, far from being just legends or myths, function as devices of memory and cultural resistance, as Krenak (2019) suggests when emphasizing myths to postpone the end of the world.

4.4 PHYTOMORPHIC BEINGS FROM A TICUNA CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Phytomorphic beings have a structure similar to that of plants and their representations of the plant kingdom are presented in various forms, such as Avaí and Buriti. They are written on things and objects. The phytomorphic beings in the past tense, the trees, are genetic and symbolic species of the sacred; many moved in the land of the Eware. These trees, in the culture of the indigenous people, have powers.

In ancient times, the divine powers of the *Ngutapa* and Mapana ancestors were disseminated by *Yo'i* and *Ipi*. They gave power to trees and, therefore, in contemporary times we, the Magüta people, believe that trees have power, such as Samaumeira, Umari, Avaí, Jenipapo, masked tree and others. In traditional culture, always present in everyday life, we will not see in the world and in the environment of nature some species of these trees, such as the masquerade, the machete and the fish.

Thus, these trees are currently symbolically written by the people. Many of them representative of image, figure, drawing, history, graphics. For these discussions about phytomorphs, Avaí is introduced, which, in the past, originated from a plant from the sacred territory of the land of Eware. The Avaí plant currently has meaning on symbolic objects and is drawn on tururi clothing (Figure 18).

Figure 18

Iconography on tururi's clothing



Source: Paulino Alexandre, 2024.

In the ritual of the Magüta people, this plant is much sought after, especially when the festival of the young girl arrives, since this original people makes a musical instrument (rattle) and it refers to the clan identification. Therefore, the plant in question is representative of a musical instrument, of the clan nation and of the historical preserved in the cultural environment in the community of the Magüta people.

In addition to what has already been mentioned, there is also iconography in the costumes, wheels and shields. The latter were photographed and arranged as figure 20. In them, the meanings of the symbologies present in the iconographies of the garments, circles and shields of the Magüta culture stand out. It begins with the figure that demonstrates on the circumference various visual graphics, such as the differences of the clans of the Magüta people: Boi, Maguari and Arara. This symbology referred to is a sacred instrument in the ritual of the Magüta, *Natchine people*, formerly of a shield of the guardian *To'cü*, used in the feast of the young girl to protect the ceremony of the *Worecü girl*.

Figure 20

Traditional shield used at school to teach children the different animals



Source: Auxiliadora Pinto, 2024

Currently, this object called the traditional shield has an important symbolic representation in indigenous culture, it is usable in the ritual of the festival of the new girl (*Worecü*) and in various spaces representative of traditional scenarios: school, traditional ritual and others.

The subsequent object, on the element of visual graphics, represents a tradition of symbology with the painting of drawings of zoomorphic beings: birds, leafcutters and snakes. In addition to this image, a group of the symbology of the visual clans is illustrated: the maguari, the leafcutter and the curassow clans.

These figures constitute an artifact used in the rite of transition of the young girl used by the masked guardian. In addition, this object, which is called deepening, is an opposition to the graphics that represent species of water beings, such as the boa constrictor and the maguari. It is an artifact also used by the masked *Õ'ma* in a traditional sacred ceremony that is highly respected by the indigenous group.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In developing the final outline of this research, one comes to the conclusion that the trajectory was worthwhile because it allowed the entry into the universe – somewhat unknown – of beings with functions of action in the world of Magüta/Ticuna, but who are currently

revived in religious acts and rituals. It is pointed out that even with all the difficulties faced, the original population maintains its belief about the world of traditions.

In the field of research, objectives were set in order to better develop the research in order to conduct a more assertive result. In the general objective, it was sought to investigate and graph the iconographic forms of the symbolic representations of the personifications of the earth, the waters, the forest and the cosmos of the mythical and cultural universe Magüta. The specific objectives of the study were: to collect and create a collection of the iconographies of the beings, as well as to describe the symbolic functions.

During the course of the investigation, a catalogue produced with tururi fibre, taken from the forest, was prepared to trace on it the symbolic iconographic figures of the mythical Magüta universe. The research was limited to the field, the indigenous community of São Leopoldo, *Yotarü*, in the municipality of Benjamin Constant. Thus, the study on Cultural Semiotics: A Look at the Ticuna Symbolic Representations as Resilience to Indigenous Knowledge Systems brought to the academic space the personifications of the original and cultural Magüta universe. They are beings of ancestry, who took over the world of the Magüta of the Alto Solimões region, Amazonas.

In the course of the investigation, there were many perceptions, the report of the research was limited to allowing the interlocutor indigenous subjects to act according to their indigenous visions, interpretations and wisdom about the beings, their iconographies and representations of the cultural universe.

This study is of paramount importance and determines a difference in the knowledge about visual iconographies and sacred immortal beings; has a relevance because it results in the reflection of an existence of the cosmology of the Magüta universe of the traditional community acting of the time from the investigation in field research in the indigenous community.

From facts and iconographic images that come from ancestry and are passed on by the elders through traditional education, they serve to stimulate the students' visual reading, such as: facilitating the learning of images of ancestral iconography; to develop the intellectual and spiritual potentialities of learning; progress through the trajectory of the search for a better understanding of a cultural world of so many possibilities and scientific vision.

Thus, in line with Krenak (2019), it is understood that the cultural survival of the Ticuna people is not only resistance, but also poetry inscribed in their graphics, narratives, and rituals, revealing the interpretative depth of their symbolic universe. Perhaps we should learn

from them that, between signs and images, cultural semiotics unveils paths of permanence and hope: to look at the Ticuna symbolic representations is to recognize in them one of the "ideas to postpone the end of the world", because in them pulsates the resilience of indigenous knowledge systems and the possibility of reinventing our relationship with life, the forest and the cosmos.

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