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CAPUCHIN MISSION AND TENTEHAR RESISTANCE: REREADINGS OF THE CONFLICT OF ALTO ALEGRE

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Abstract

The article analyzes the genesis, power relations and social impacts of the indigenous mission of the Capuchin Friars Minor in the Republican Maranhão State, from the perspective of the conflict and the indigenous resistance movement that destroyed the Colônia de Alto Alegre and its boarding school for Indian girls. A theoretical-methodological line was adopted that reconstructs analytically testimonies and archival documentation as they are investigated from the perspective of the indicative paradigm and placed in dialogue with various studies. There is emphasis on sociological, anthropological and historical works. The results show that the conflicting relations between indigenous people and missionaries, contrary to the catechesis and civilization project of the nations of origin, have generated very positive sociopolitical consequences for the Tentehar people.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS • INDIGENOUS PEOPLES • EDUCATION • HISTORY

MISSÃO CAPUCHINHA E RESISTÊNCIA TENTEHAR: RELEITURAS DO CONFLITO DE ALTO ALEGRE

Resumo

O artigo analisa a gênese, as relações de poder e os impactos sociais da missão indígena dos Frades Menores Capuchinhos, no Maranhão republicano, sob a ótica do conflito e do movimento de resistência indígena que pôs fim à Colônia de Alto Alegre e ao seu internato de meninas índias. É adotada uma linha teórico-metodológica que reconstrói analiticamente depoimentos e documentação arquivística à medida que são investigados sob a perspectiva do paradigma indicatório e colocados em diálogo com variados estudos, com ênfase para os trabalhos sociológicos, antropológicos e históricos. Os resultados estão inscritos na compreensão de que as relações conflitivas entre indígenas e missionários, na contramão do projeto de catequese e civilização das nações originárias, geraram consequências sociopolíticas muito positivas para o povo Tentehar.

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MISSION CAPUCINE ET RÉSISTANCE TENTEHAR: RELECTURES DU CONFLIT DANS LA MUNICIPALITÉ D'ALTO ALEGRE

Résumé

L'article analyse la genèse de la mission amérindienne des Frères mineurs Capucins dans le Maranhão dans la période républicaine (1889-1930), ainsi que les relations de pouvoir et les impacts sociaux de cette mission sous l'angle du conflit et du mouvement de résistance indigène ayant mis fin à la colonie d'Alto Alegre et à son pensionnat pour filles amérindiennes. La ligne de recherche théorique-méthodologique adoptée vise à reconstituer analytiquement les témoignages et la documentation archivistique dans la perspective du paradigme indiciaire et à les mettre en dialogue avec d'autres travaux, notamment d'ordre sociologique, anthropologique et historique. Les résultats s'inscrivent dans une perspective allant à l'encontre du projet de catéchèse et de civilisation des nations originales selon laquelle les relations conflictuelles entre les autochtones et les missionnaires ont entraîné des conséquences sociopolitiques très positives pour le peuple Tentehar.

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MISIÓN CAPUCHINA Y RESISTENCIA A TENTEHAR: RELECTURAS DEL CONFLICTO DE ALTO ALEGRE

Resumen

Este trabajo analiza la génesis, las relaciones de poder y los impactos sociales de la misión indígena de los Frailes Menores Capuchinos en el Maranhão republicano, desde la perspectiva del conflicto y del movimiento de resistencia indígena que puso fin a la colonia de Alto Alegre y su internado de niñas indígenas. Se adopta una línea teórica y metodológica que reconstruye analíticamente testimonios y documentación de archivos a medida que se investigan desde la perspectiva del paradigma indicionario y se ponen en diálogo con diversos estudios, especialmente los sociológicos, antropológicos e históricos. Los resultados se inscriben en la comprensión de que las relaciones conflictivas entre indígenas y misioneros, a contramano del proyecto de catequesis y civilización de las naciones originarias, generaron consecuencias sociopolíticas muy positivas para el pueblo.

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THE “ALTO ALEGRE TIME”, SO CALLED BY THE ANCIENT TENTEHAR¹ IN THE ETHNOGRAPHIC researches of Mércio Pereira Gomes (2002), or “Alto Alegre’s Massacre”, named by the Order of Capuchin Minor Friars, was one of the largest indigenous rebellions in Brazil’s history in the twentieth century, with hundreds of deaths (indigenous and non-indigenous).

This rebellion took place in 1901, in the Alto Alegre Colony, located between the municipalities of Barra do Corda and Grajaú, in south-central Maranhão. Founded by the Capuchins in mid-1896, the colony had the purpose of developing a project of catechesis and civilization of the Indians, in agreement with the state of Maranhão. But such a project was rejected by the Indians, who began their attacks on the colony on March 13, 1901, extending the onslaught to nearby farms and remaining in the region until pursued by the police force.

Amid such a context, the families of the indigenous leaders who participated in the revolt and other relatives dispersed, but continued their underground resistance and wandering life throughout the lands of Maranhão, and many found refuge in a place called Bacurizinho, located in the municipality of Grajau. There they reinvented their lives and expanded the Tentehar villages,

1 We opted for the designation Tentehar because it is the most commonly used today by indigenous leaders of this ethnicity, and it is also adopted by the most recent literature, although many scholars still use Tenetehara. It is a self-designation that means “the whole being, true people”. In Brazil, the Tentehar people are better known as Guajajara, which means “owner of the headdress”, a term probably given to them by the Tupinambá of São Luís Island (GOMES, 2002, p. 47, 49).

bringing to light new generations who fought for the demarcation of this territory, which occurred in 1979 (and the ratification in 1983). Today, the Bacurizinho Indigenous Land has an estimated population of 1,976 Indians, most of them Tentehar – one of the largest indigenous people in Brazil, with about 27,616 individuals, living in 11 Indigenous Lands, all located in Maranhão (INSTITUTO SOCIOAMBIENTAL, 2018).

In fact, the process of occupation of Bacurizinho by the Tentehar dates back to the mid-nineteenth century, when many of their ancestors came from the Gurupi River to live in this region, founding the first villages on the banks of the Mearim River and in the middle of the woods.² In the late nineteenth century, they had to negotiate several times with a farmer who appropriated the land and set up farms in the region, resulting in several descents from the Mearim to relocate the villages. In the meantime, the Gameleira Village was created, which became one of the shelters of the fugitive Indians from the military persecution of Alto Alegre (GOMES, 2002).

Many other villages were formed at that time and in later years. To this day, the people are constantly trying to reorganize their villages and continue to migrate inside the Bacurizinho territory. Indeed, as Wagley and Galvao (1955, p. 32) described, who did field work between the Tentehar in 1941 and 1942 (GALVÃO, 1996), “although they often reside for long periods or for a lifetime in the same village, the community of a village varies considerably over time. Sometimes an entire extended family group changes residence from one village to another.”

Nowadays, going through the Bacurizinho Indigenous Land, we find the descendants of Caiuré Imana (João Manuel Pereira da Silva, better known as Caboré), considered the main leader of the movement that ended the Alto Alegre Colony. At first glance, the memory of the rebellion no longer seemed so vivid in their minds, suggesting it was buried with their ancestors. However, it was possible to understand that they are living proof of one of the consequences of the conflict: the migration of the Tentehar people and the non-fading struggle for land tenure.

For this reason, we bring in this article, whenever possible, testimonials from the leaders Alderico Lopes Filho and Taurino de Sousa and the grandchildren of Caiuré – Acelina Mendes Guajajara and Zezinho Mendes Guajajara -, which were translated by the Alderico interpreter, since most of the informants speak the Tentehar language. They were collected in the interviewees’ own environment during the fieldwork carried out in 2018 in Bacurizinho villages, as shown in Photo 1, which favored ethnographic methods, with emphasis on thematic oral history technique and conversation circles (CRAPANZANO, 1991; PEIRANO, 1995; CLIFFORD, 2002; MEIHY, 2002).

² In the mid-nineteenth century, another Tentehar group began the process of migration from Maranhão to Pará, settling mainly in the northeastern portion of the state of Pará. They are identified by Lopes (2015, p. 219) as the “Tembé/Tenetebara”, “western branch of the Tenetebara”. These indigenous people were the target of the Paraense government’s colonization policy and, from 1898, part of them was added to the Santo Antônio do Prata Colony, managed by the same team of Capuchin friars who worked simultaneously in Maranhão.

FIGURE 1
DESCENDANTS AND RELATIVES OF CAIURÉ IMANA - COCALINHO VILLAGE



Source: Author's Picture (personal collection).

It is noteworthy that, for the Tentehar to share their versions of the Alto Alegre conflict and to declare that they had an ancestor involved in the rebellion, it was necessary to create bonds of trust, built in the Pedagogy Course of the Federal University of Maranhão (Grajaú campus), attended by indigenous teachers, and in the meetings of coexistence in the villages. In this experience, we observed something very similar to the conclusion of the anthropologist Mércio P. Gomes (2002), who lived with the Bacurizinho's Tentehar in 1975: the inhibition or apprehension to talk about the rebellion must be due to self-protection.

It must be said that we understand indigenous testimonies as reconstructed memory, which takes up the experiences of the past with images and ideas of the present, as it belongs to a set of representations that populate their current consciousness, altering their perceptions and value judgments (BOSI, 2012). In some cases, we hypothesized that the people of Tentehar have retained many stories of the conflict that have been interpreted, transmitted and retold over time, but without losing their basic issue, or embryonic layer, like other peoples of oral tradition, such as the ancient Hebrews, whose narratives were handed down from generation to generation from complex processes of reconstruction and resignification of the experience lived or told by the ancestors (GOTTWALD, 1988).

Further evidence and signs to address this history and the troubled power relations between missionaries, indigenous and the Brazilian State were found in the documentation of the Historical Archive of the Nossa Senhora Carmo de Sao Luís' Province and the Public Archive of the State of Maranhão. Both provided many clues about the contexts, principles, foundations and backstage of the so-called "Maranhão of Mission" and the indigenous movement itself that generated the Alto Alegre conflict, which shook a well-defined political and ecclesial project with a certain level of support from the Brazilian State.

A HÍBRID AND AMBIGUOUS PROJECT

As Marta Amoroso (1998) reminds us, between 1845 and the end of the nineteenth century, Brazilian “indigenism” was identified with the Catholic mission, leading the Brazilian State to resort to religious orders, especially the Order of the Capuchin Minor Friars, to share with them the responsibilities of indigenous affairs administration.

In the educational field, the village schools – subsidized by the state and run by the missionaries (mostly Italian Capuchins) – were synonymous with Catholic catechesis, imposing the official religion of the Brazilian State in the context of the Padroado system in force in imperial Brazil. With the Republic, this practice came to be questioned by the indigenous people, but this does not mean that it ceased to exist in the republican beginnings.

In Maranhão, with the promulgation of Decree no. 7 of November 20, 1889, which held the states responsible for the catechesis and civilization of the Indians, this task was initially undertaken by the Capuchin missionaries of the religious province of Lombardy in northern Italy. In fact, the Lombard Capuchins arrived in Brazil in 1892, at the invitation of the Brazilian government for a mission in the Amazon that was to reach the civilization of the Indians, colonization of the interiors and protection of the Amazonian borders (MEIRELES, 1977).

The new missionary front excited the Capuchin province of Lombardy, because at that moment the Order’s perspective was to expand geographically and form new cadres, considering that in the imperial period, when the Padroado policy was in force, like the other religious orders, the Capuchins could not recruit or train native religious or even import European novices.

This would not be the first time that the Capuchins in Italy had been doing missionary work with the prospect of reaching the north of the country.

At the end of the century. In the nineteenth century, during the Second Empire, Capuchin missionaries were present in Pará and Amazonas along the rivers: Andira and Purus (1842); Rio Branco (between 1850 and 1856); Tapajós River (between 1843 and 1883); Trombetas and Xingu River. (CASTROVALVAS, 2000, p. 11)

But the Capuchins of Lombardy took a rather arduous path to usher in the new mission. Initially they were located in Recife, at the Pernambuco Missionary City Hall, responsible for popular and indigenous missions and other pastoral work in the Northeast. The proposal was to do an internship with the Capuchins of the city and learn the Portuguese language; however, in practice, they experienced a series of power conflicts with the Friars of the place, until they were able to gain their autonomy and start missionary work starting in Maranhão – Carvalho (2017) described and analyzed all the complexity of these processes.

In any case, the passage through Recife allowed the Capuchins of Lombardy the opportunity to make contacts and learn a little about the Portuguese language and the missionary work of the confreres. In this context, Friar Carlo

of San Martino Olearo, who declared himself the leader of the Lombard group in the ardor of the youth of his ecclesiastical career, contacted Monsignor Antonio Cândido de Alvarenga, Bishop of Maranhão, to articulate the mission in the Maranhão territories, an important step because the Capuchins could “extend, in due time, to the Amazon region” (NEMBRO, 1957, p. 52).

Friar Carlo of San Martino Olearo became the first regular superior of the Maranhão of Mission and was the main creator of the project to work with the Indians, and the most controversial of his proposals was the founding of an “Indian Institute”, probably inspired by the Isabel Colony he met when he was an internship at the Pernambuco Missionary City Hall. Delighted with everything he saw in this colony, the friar shared his impressions with the readers of the 1893 *Annali Francescani*.

The four elementary schools, music school, carpentry, blacksmith, mechanic, tailor, shoemaker, baker, butcher schools all here you can find it with an American grandeur, because the Colony has to be self-sufficient. [...]

Outside the Colony, but still owned by the Colony, there are two large farms, which provide life and work for many families and, to the Institute, the entries of more than a hundred cattle.

And when we think that all of this is the creativity and initiative of Fr. Fidelis de Fognano, the work of the influence he exercised on “behalf” of the Empire, before, and afterwards on the “behalf” of the Brazilian Republic [...] (ORDEM DOS FRADES MENORES CAPUCHINHOS, 1893, p. 217 *apud* BELTRAMI, 1996, p. 17)

Through the study by Arantes (2005), we know that the Orphanage Colony Isabel was built in the place where the Military Colony of Pimenteiras once operated, in the municipality of Palmares (158 km from the capital of Pernambuco). Delivered to the administration of Italian Capuchins, it was founded by Fr. Fidelis de Fognano in 1873, having European schools as a model where teaching was more practical than theoretical. Owned by the state of Pernambuco, this institution was managed by the Capuchins until 1894 (NEMBRO, 1957).

In addition to Colônia Isabel, Friar Carlo certainly knew the new trends in education for indigenous people in Brazil that began to circulate at the end of the Empire.

At the end of the Capuchin period, we will see the tutelary and missionary powers investing in educational institutes outside the area of villages and in boarding schools for children in the cities, seeking to overcome the difficulties that the school encountered in the villages, where the old Indians resisted.

A missionary who worked among the Mundurucu [...] [reported:] “The experience has convinced me that it is

morally impossible to give the Indian boys and girls a complete education while they are in the hands of their parents, who are usually vicious, living in large houses, confusing men and women, large and small, married and single.” The boarding schools and educational institutes that put Indians in contact with Christian children were the way out of the impasse of catechesis. (AMOROSO, 1998, p. 110, emphasis added)

In summary, we can say that, based on his observations from Colônia Isabel, knowledge of Capuchin experiences with indigenous people in the imperial period (which were periodically published in the Franciscan Annals of the Order) and, above all, from their own appropriations and inferences, Friar Carlo drew up a plan for the Maranhão of Mission in line with the demands of Maranhão’s Diocese.

According to this plan, the Capuchins were responsible for some pastoral work in São Luís, served the interior and some locations in Ceará and Piauí (which at the time were under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Maranhão) with traveling missions and took over the Parish of Barra do Corda, who had been without a priest for more than 20 years, being a strategic region for them, as it had been the scene of the Order’s missionary work with the Indians in the Second Empire. From this parish they reached the indigenous people, who were Friar Carlo’s priority, through contact with the villages, catechesis integrated with parish work and the creation of an institute for Indian children. All of this based on a quick diagnosis, presented in the report on missionary activities carried out between May 1893 and May 1894.

He paid a visit to the village of the Canelas de Ponto Indians, Mateiros de Macura and Jacaré, and Guajajaras de Catité and the currently disabled Colônia de Dois Braços, founded and conducted with great development by the late Fr. Giuseppe da Loro.

On such a visit he was able to baptize 18 boys and dying people or entrusted to the care of good and wealthy Christians.

Came back from the exploration trip ever more convinced that, due to the absolute lack of established subsidies and the great disgust that has infiltrated the Indians, *it is no longer the case of thinking about colonization as a means of conversion, but that the only way is to treat them as parishioners of Barra do Corda*, where we can count about 5,000, with that caution and plans that were already exposed to the great Fr. General in a letter of April 15 and with all these means that the grace of God, experience and opportunity we can suggest in the implementation.

In addition to the bishop, who fully approves of this project, the state governor, to whom P. Carlo orally exposed his visit, found it more fruitful than the old colonization system and,

without being bound by anything determined, promised his moral support and also gave hope of [financial] support³ (RELATÓRIO..., 1894/1995, fl. 2, own translation and highlights) ⁴

In practice, the report intended to show that the intention was to baptize the indigenous and insert them into the coexistence with non-indigenous Christians. However, this idea was not confirmed, giving way to other intentions: according to the minutes of the founding of the house in Barra do Corda (occurred in May 1895), it was intended to “dismantle villages”, regroup the original peoples and take their children to educate them at the attached school (Instituto de Índios São Francisco de Assis).

The *Institute*, or rather, Casa da Barra do Corda, has two very important purposes:

1st It is the *Christianization and civilization of the Indians*;

2nd The cure of the vast parish of Barra do Corda [evangelization of the parish].

Care must therefore be taken to *dismantle villages and reduce them to families*.

Take caboclinhos [indigenous boys] from their small families who live in the villages.

Search for land and everything [for] those caboclos [indigenous adults] who wanted to leave the villages. (ORDEM DOS FRADES MENORES CAPUCHINHOS, 1894-1900, fl. 18, emphasis added)

Regarding the institute for Indian boys, there was a difference of opinion between Friar Carlo and his local councilors, the “discreet” (thus identified by the Capuchin Order). Against the advice of the council, Friar Carlo said that he would follow the guidelines of Antonino da Reschio, secretary of the Missions in Rome, who had been a missionary in the extinct Colony Dois Braços de Barra do Corda and a member of the Cabido de São Luís (collegiate of priests who contributed with the government of the diocese). In fact, the fragments of the opinion issued by Antonino, on August 24, 1895, seem to support the proposal of Friar Carlo and envision a new time for the indigenous mission in the Republic.

3 In the original: Fece una visita alle Aldee degli Indigeni Canelas di Ponto, Mateiros di Mucura e Jacaré e Guajajaras di Catité e della ora dispersa Colonia di Dous Braços, già fondata e condotta a grande sviluppo dal fu nostro P. Giuseppe da Loro. In tal visita poté Battezzare 18 bambini e moribondi o affidati alle cure di buoni e ricchi cristiani. Ritornò dal suo viaggio di esplorazione sempre più convinto che, per l'assolutamancanza di sussidi stabili e per la grande ripugnanza che s'infiltrò negli Indii non sia più caso di pensare a colonizzazione come mezzo di conversione, ma che l'unico mezzo sia quello di trattarli come parrochiani di Barra do Corda nel cui termine se ne possiamo contare un 5.000, con quelle cautele e disegni che già furono esposti al Rev. Generale in lettera 15 Aprile e con tutti quei mezzi che la grazia di Dio, l'esperienza e l'opportunità solo possono suggerire nel l'attuazione. Oltre a Mons. Vescovo, che pienamente aprova questo progetto, il Governatore dello Stato, cui P. Carlo diede orale relazione della sua visita lo giudicò più proficuo dell'antico sistema di colonizzazione e, senza obbligarsi a nulla di determinato, promise il suo appoggio morale e fece sperare anche materiali soccorsi.

4 At first, Friar Carlo wanted autonomy in relation to the government, that is, he wanted to carry out catechesis for the Indians, but without resorting to the State, following the suggestion of the bishop of Pará, to accept the charge of a parish close to the villages and, socio-ecclesiastical place, work with indigenous people. Barra do Corda was idealized in this perspective (CARVALHO, 2017).

Regarding the education of the *caboclos*, I already knew that little was to be expected from the system imposed by the Imperial Government, because evangelization was neither free nor stable. Little profit was made by the boys, remaining with their polygamous and worse parents [...]. Therefore, the real and effective way is to have children and keep them in school.

In establishments separate from adults, also from civilians, and occupied (in addition to frequent catechism) with religious functions and first letters, in agriculture, arts and crafts, and without changing their eating habits.⁵ (COLEÇÃO..., 1895, fl. 47, own translation and highlights)

In the 1896 report, which contains the description of Frei Carlo's canonical visit to the Instituto dos Índios in Barra do Corda (an annual activity of an evaluative nature, as it is usual in religious orders and congregations), there were already signs of a conflict that it would become more intense over time: it is mentioned that the indigenous people from the villages between Barra do Corda and Grajaú – the vast majority Tentehar! – “they were the most reluctant to give their children to the Institute, they did not want to know about the Government or the friars, so much so, that they tried to arrow Fr. Celso”, in charge of visiting the villages and recruiting the children. It is also reported that, in this circumstance, a meeting was held with society from Barra Grande and requested help from the chiefs to deny the stories that circulated around “our desire to enslave and enjoy the poor Indians” (RELATÓRIO..., 1896/1995, fl. 16, our translation).

In the same report it appears that, despite recognizing all these difficulties, aggravated by the “insinuations of Christian businessmen, farmers and workers”, which further stimulated the distrust of the indigenous people, Friar Carlo planned with his confreres the implantation of the São José da Providência Colony (and a boarding school for Indian girls) on a farm in the Alto Alegre region (RELATÓRIO..., 1896/1995, fl. 17). This decision contradicted the initial diagnosis of not promoting “colonization as a means of conversion” (RELATÓRIO..., 1894/1995, fl. 2) and required yet another ecclesial investment: the sexual division of religious service.

Dividing indigenous women and educating girls, [even] if we only wanted to deal with it from afar, the India would be jealous and would give us arrows. The only conclusion that seems to me to be [viable] is for the Institute to send nuns, from the Mission, like us. We will think how to keep them, directing them, as much as we can, according to the rules

5 In the original: Riguardo alla educazione del *caboclos*, già notei che poco vi era da sperare dal sistema imposto dal Governo Imperiali, piché la evangelizzazione non era libera, né stabile. Pochissimo altresì era il profitto dei fanciulli, rimanendo coi loro genitori poligami e peggio. Quindi il mezzo vero ed efficace è quello di avere i fanciulli e tenerli collegialmente. In stabilimenti separati dagli adulti; anche civili; ed occupati (oltre che al catechismo assiduo) funzioni religiose e prime lettere, nell'agricoltura, arti e mestieri, e senza cambiare le loro abitudini nel mangiare.

of their Institute, but they must be like Salesians⁶ [admired by Capuchins for their work with indigenous people in Mato Grosso]. (COLEÇÃO..., 1896, fl. 62, our translation)

In any case, for the Capuchins, founding a colony was yet another important initiative to “incorporate the Indians into the civilized population”, forming good Christians and agricultural workers, with some support from the state government, which since “February 26, 1896 recognized the friars competence to take care of the education of the Indian boys”, granting a meager annual subsidy to maintain all activities, reason for friar Carlo’s complaint (RELATÓRIO..., 1979, p. 2; RELATÓRIO..., 1896/1995).

Anyway, we can say that Friar Carlo managed the construction of a hybrid project, that is, in a way aligned with experiences from previous periods, such as the creation of a colony that would remind in some aspects the settlements of the Empire which, by the way, did not work with the Capuchins. However, he was also not unaware of the new trends in formal education for the Amerindians, especially in the boarding school modality that had been emerging since the Second Empire.

However, a large part of the Carlisian plan achieved adverse results in the Alto Alegre Mission, confirming the fiasco that Carlo feared in the 1895 report and the criticism of missionaries such as Friar Mansueto da Peveranza, one of the missionaries of the Maranhão of Mission (discreet elder), that did not invest in the reduction of indigenous peoples, much less in the institutionalization of their children. According to Friar Carlo himself, when he wrote to Fr. Paolino de Verdello, newly elected provincial of Lombardy, Mansueto had written him a letter saying: “we are not on the right path” (COLEÇÃO..., 1896, fl. 65).

For Mansueto, the ideal was to adopt the traditional method of walking mission, which consisted of the practice of Capuchin wandering and residing in the villages and instructing the indigenous people in religion and letters as was done, for example, in the Tapajós River (NEMBRO, 1957; CASTRONALVAS, 2000). However, not even Mansueto could escape the representation of the indigenous mission of the Lombard Capuchins, which can be understood in the framework of thought of the 19th century, which combined the notions of catechesis and civilization with the practice of changing the customs of the Indians at any price. “Such was, without a doubt, the great lesson that the Jesuit experience had transmitted to his successors. Thus, in order to catechize and civilize Indians, they concluded that they would have to act to disrupt their societies and cultures” (GOMES, 2002, p. 267).

THE AQUILES HEEL OF THE MISSION

As we saw earlier, in that year of 1896, the work was already organized in Barra do Corda, the Capuchins immediately articulated the expansion of their mission,

6 In the original: *Dividerò le donne indie e ad educare le fanciulle, mentre se volessimo trattare di questo solo di lontano la gelosia india ci regalerebbe delle frecce. L'unica conclusione che mi pare dover essere dell'Istituto, che le manda e che monache sieno nostre, della Missione, e una sola cosa con noi. Noi penseremo a mantenerle, a dirigerle, quantum possumus, secondo le regole del loro Istituto, ma devono essere come le Salesiane coi Salesiani.*

choosing a place called Alto Alegre, which was a rural area known as “São Bernardo das Selvas”, a shelter of travelers, and “oasis of the jungles” (MONZA, 1908/2016, p. 49).

For this, they

[...] bought, with the help of the State Government, a plot of 36 km² located at equal distance from the cities of Grajaú and Barra do Corda and neighboring the villages of Cana Brava, Côco, Jenipapo, Crocagés, Manu and several others. However, according to Sidney Milhomem [interviewed by the IPES team], this land was part of the territory traditionally occupied by the Indians, its rightful owners, who, living under a communal property regime, had allowed Raimundo Ferreira de Melo, known as Raimundo Cearense, who, abusing the concession that the Indians had made him, sold the friars a non-existent right of possession, thus starting a conflict that has worsened today. (INSTITUTO DE PESQUISAS ECONÔMICAS E SOCIAIS – IPES, 1981, p. 27)

In this place, the Capuchins founded the Colony of São José da Providência (better known as the Colony of Alto Alegre), which initially brought together between 70 and 150 non-indigenous people and a few more Tentehar and Timbira families from nearby villages. In economic terms, this colony achieved some success, as in just four years it became a construction site cultivating cotton, rice, cane, beans, manioc, corn, etc., thanks to the good conditions of the land, to the investment technological development of Capuchins and the commitment of indigenous people who “learned with resourcefulness and intelligence” (ORDEM..., 1951, p. 23). Soon sugar and flour were produced and sold to neighboring markets and used for domestic consumption.

But it is necessary to question what was the cost of this success for the indigenous population. Like the settlements of the Jesuits of colonial times, analyzed by Baêta Neves (1978), it was a place previously chosen to group indigenous people regardless of their ethnicity, promoting the rationalization of their homes, work, clothes, use of their bodies and time according to non-indigenous standards. All of this generated a lot of dissatisfaction and constant escapes, which were subject to punishment and coercion by the indigenous guard constituted by the Capuchins.

The Colony of Alto Alegre had yet another aggravating factor: like the old villages of the Capuchin mission in the Second Empire, it was open to the Christian families of Barra do Corda, a practice that was avoided by the Jesuits and widely criticized by scholars of the imperial period in the sense of having been very harmful to the coexistence between indigenous and non-indigenous people, causing a series of losses for the Indians, such as contamination by many diseases. Later on we will show that the measles epidemic that devastated the colony caused many deaths, probably due to the fact that they “were living together with civilized personnel and then they were also contaminated with

the disease, so they thought that maybe it was a purpose, because they had never seen any of them sick”, reported Reginaldo Gomes de Sousa to researchers at the Institute of Economic and Social Research (Ipes) (1981, p. 80).

The same civilizing patterns of the colony would be reproduced in the female boarding school. To guarantee the fulfillment of this goal, as we have already pointed out, the Lombard Capuchins called their patricians, the Capuchins of Gênova, thus promoting the sexual division of missionary service. The positive aspect is that this action can be considered a feminization of the mission, placing the Italian Capuchins in the direction of an important undertaking, but knowing that in the ecclesiastical structure they would not have the power of the priest. Even so, as the nuns represented a workforce of great social utility for the mission, the Indian girls institute was only officially opened when they arrived in Alto Alegre, in 1899.

Under the general command of the Lombard Capuchins, the Capuchins of Gênova organized the girls’ boarding school in the same socio-educational format as the male institute of Barra do Corda, starting with the questionable recruitment method that was carried out during visits to the villages, as indicated in the texts presented below.

These [friars and nuns], through the Christianized Indians who were more loyal, removed the young children from their mothers’ arms. This is what residents of Barra do Corda and the old Indians themselves, who were witnesses of the tragic occurrences, tell. They say that there were Indians who went mad, entering the woods, mourning the loss of the children that the friars cloistered in the convent and never presented to their parents again.

Many of them split their breasts, say the Indians, because the friars took the *culumisinhos* [young children] that were still suckling. One told me that his father moved from there to the Pindaré forest so that the friars would not take his children. (ABREU, 1931, p. 220)

Another version that criticizes the child recruitment methodology was developed by Mundico Carvalho, Tentehar from the Olho D’Água village, who came to live with relatives affected by the sequels of the post-rebellion police persecution (they carried bullet fragments in the body).

They put an employee of them, who was Athanasius, who was the carpenter of the priests, they assigned to go to the villages. They took a lot of things, cigarettes, these things as soon as they took them. [...]. See the Indian when he sees the *carai* [white man] arrive like this, in the village, he gathers a child who... Athanasius took, kept the little Indian apart, cheating, even when he was finished. Those who wanted to go, he took it to him. “There is so much little Indian in the

village, so and so, so and so, yes ...” But he did it, taking it by force, by force. He walked there in a village by the stream. The Indians, who were disgraced there, almost immediately killed him. He left there with an arrow, with a knife point attached to the tip of an arrow, you see, he escaped because the arrow, when he released the arrow, caught it was on the mainstay of the house. From there, he ran, but he already came with a lot of little Indian. [...]

Now, an Indian woman was resting, he picked up the soft child and took it there. There, neither father nor mother saw that child anymore. (IPES, 1981, p. 111-112)

We also have a relevant narrative recorded by the missionaries of Alto Alegre themselves in their book of chronicles, which, unfortunately, was not found in the Capuchin archive of São Luís.

In the Cronaca of the mission of S. José da Providência, it is read that when the entourage [taking Capuchin chief who were in Alto Alegre to the city of Barra do Corda in order to embark for São Luís and return to Italy] came close to a village, the Indians, seeing all those people, “imagined it was an assault to steal the boys and girls” for a forced education. “For this reason, the women with their children ran away, screaming, going into the woods”. Sometime later, the chief of the village, whose son had been lost for a day at that time, set up a trap for Father Salvatore, one of the missionaries... (TOSO, 2002, p. 239)

In these contexts, we can see that the Alto Alegre boarding school, in addition to teaching how to read, write and count (rudimentary education), added girls of different ethnicities to modify their customs, standardize their clothes, rationalize their time and, supposedly, erase their knowledge indigenous people transmitted by traditional communities. For this, the nuns were concerned with Christian etiquette and taught how to dress in the clothes of white women, read, pray and behave like them, in addition to the domestic and needlework that was part of the condition of non-indigenous woman, a service naturalized behind the scenes of the boarding school, but very different from the daily life of women in the villages (ZANNONI, 1998a). The evidence of this type of education can be seen in the excerpts of letters from the religious of Alto Alegre sent to their Italian colleagues (ORDEM DOS FRADES MENORES CAPUCHINHOS, 1951; TOSO, 2002).

This work of cultural homogenization was facilitated by the socialization between indigenous girls and poor Christian girls and the local elite, who were “sent by their parents to stay with the nuns in boarding for educational purposes”, since many families wanted to educate their daughters according to Catholic principles, but they had no option in those interiors of Brazil (GOMES, 2002, p. 267). In addition, there was another underlying intention in the constitution of

this female boarding school: that of preparing girls to preferably marry the boys trained by the Barra do Corda Indian Institute, regardless of their ethnicity, in order to constitute Christian families to preserve the Capuchin teachings.

Far away from native pedagogy, nuns and friars believed that everything was going well in the Colony of Alto Alegre, because there were already approximately 82 students at the boarding school. However, other unforeseen events ended up hampering the mission, such as a measles epidemic that led many children to death in both institutes, greatly affecting the development of these institutions. In the narratives, the strongest indigenous reactions are from the parents of the girls from Alto Alegre.

In the Colony an epidemic breaks out, decimating children in a few days.

“Within a few hours our house was filled with “caboclos” – says Sister Inez [...] – and everyone to see their own daughter. To calm them down, *since we feared a revolt*, we had to host and keep the girls’ mothers for two days and nights. Our residence has become a real village; they sang, shouted, cried and we ran to one or the other and caressed them so that the children would not be taken from us... ”.

Only after extensive efforts and prayers did the Sisters regain the confidence of the savages. And here the travel in the villages is resumed and *they are so badly received* that they ask for the temporary suspension of such visits to the villages, because there were those among the Indians who cried and those who threatened. (ORDEM DOS FRADES MENORES CAPUCHINHOS, 1951, p. 36, emphasis added)

As seen in the previous fragment, from that day on, the climate of hostility and distrust has intensified even more in the relationship of indigenous families with the religious ones. Whether because of this episode or any other related to infant death, the Tentehar people retained and retold many stories about the way friars and nuns did towards children. We can conjecture that, in the processes of interpretation, transmission and recreation of these events, the basic layer of the narrative preserved over time is the story that the missionaries were not treating indigenous children well and they were dying. How this happened is due to the creativity that generates oral tradition, as the testimonies presented below point out.

The first report is from the ethnographic study of Mércio P. Gomes (2002, p. 269): “Years later, the Tenetehara reported anguish, and without realizing that there had been an epidemic, how the children of the mission were dying and the nuns they just threw their little cadavers into a dry well”. In another moment, inquiring about the causes of the Alto Alegre conflict, the same author (p. 271) collected the following version: it was a “way of expelling the Capuchins from their lands, as they were irresponsibly taking their children out of breastfeeding, mothers’ lap and taking them to the mission, only to later, when they died, simply throw them in the bottom of a well”.

In our research, the leadership of Bacurizinho narrated a version very close to those captured by Gomes, but adding the intervention of Cauré (Caboré), which makes us conjecture that he promoted a rumor laden with emotion that motivated the rapprochement between the Indians and the enthusiasm to fight, which is the basis for the formation of a movement of contestation, according to the analysis of Castells (2013) used later to deal with the uprising of the indigenous people.

The priests took the boys and said it was to take them to study at the school. They spoke to the parents of the boys who were evangelizing the children; they separated a house only for boys and another place only for girls. The Indians thought they were really educating, but it was not.

When one got sick, then they took it and threw it up and put the sword like that and then the boy fell on top of the sword. That was how they were doing it. [Or] They would make a hole in the yard and pick up a boy and put it there.

Then, when they discovered that they were not evangelizing, they were killing their children, then they started to know that it was not so.

It was this Caboré who discovered that indigenous children were dying for a long time in Alto Alegre. Then he told his relatives. That's why the children's parents got together and went there. As soon as this business started [conflict]. (Taurino de Sousa, Bacurizinho leadership)

The hypotheses for the alleged behavior of the friars and nuns are also launched by another leadership, showing the appreciation that the Tentehar have for their children, who must be educated in the extended family and with the help of the entire indigenous community.

This fight happened like this: when the team arrived to capture the Indians to take to evangelize, there were hiding from them, I think that was why they were angry. I arrived at the place where I was supposed to pick up and didn't meet anyone, went to another place and didn't meet anyone. There was a time when they met some and took them and then they got excited. But only what they were taking was not to evangelize.

[The child] Had nothing to do with them. He's not a son, or a relative, or anything. If you take a small child who is still nursing... a mother who is not a mother does not have the caring as the true mother has. That was where things happened... (Alderico Lopes Filho, leader of Bacurizinho)

As experts analyze, the indigenous people “found no meaning in that type of education, and were dissatisfied with being separated from their children”

(ZANNONI, 1998b, p. 102). In a pioneering study, Fróes Abreu (1931, p. 220-221) inferred that:

It seems that there was pressure on the Indians, in their eagerness to obtain large numbers of children in the convent. Whether it was the desire to give light to a large number of souls, whether because the official subsidy would be proportional to the number of students, the fact is that catechesis was dissatisfying the Indians, even those who voluntarily took their children to the convent, because in a few days when they wanted to take them back to the village, the friars opposed this.

In the specific case of the Tentehar people, the issue of the confinement of the girls seems to have been one of the pivot points of disagreements with the friars. In this sense, the story of Luís Costa, one of the witnesses of the ecclesiastical process opened after the Alto Alegre rebellion, is emblematic, whose documentation was also not found in the Capuchin archive.

Manuel Justino, one of the chiefs of the Guajajaras Villages residing in Alto Alegre, also addressed Frei Renaldo [former director of the Colony Alto Alegre, was murdered during the rebellion] and asked him to have his daughter who was in the convent and Frei Renaldo he replied that not only did he not consent to doing what he asked, but he was willing to forbid his wife to continually bring food, fruit to the same daughter. (DOCUMENTOS..., 1901-1903)

Although Tentehar education is marked by a gender difference, with the affirmation of male superiority over female that can be observed in several rituals (first delivery, introducing the child to the community, female/male initiation), the importance of women is remarkable in the social, economic and political organization of these people.

In this sense, an important milestone is the ritual of the first menstruation, when the girl is imprisoned in an “ambush” (inside her own house) for five to seven days. “This is a period surrounded by taboos, as it is believed that the girl is vulnerable to all kinds of danger” (ZANNONI, 1999, p. 22). It is also a period of great care, materialized in various symbolic gestures: the girl cannot bathe, but she is cleaned by her grandmother who squeezes her with her hands, starting with the buttocks, so that she can create strength to be a future mother. The grandmother also always squeezes the girl’s legs (against each other) so that the menstrual flow is stopped and she never has problems with the uterus.

Upon leaving the stakeout, on the last day of seclusion, the girl will take a purification bath and the grandmother recites the formula: “my daughter, I will bathe you with the water of the ‘mother water’ so that she can protect you” and

goes with the other hand squeezing the whole body, and continues: “it will be a beautiful, strong and healthy girl” (ZANNONI, 1998a, p. 89).

After the seclusion is over, the girl goes through the initiation rituals that last up to one year, being instructed by her grandmothers about the changes in the body and the function of a woman. The last stage of these rituals is the presentation of the young lady to the community, known as Moqueado (indigenous party).⁷ From that moment on she will be able to marry and procreate (ZANNONI, 1998a, 1999).

From a socioeconomic point of view, after undergoing initiation rituals, young girls can form an extended family, bringing their husbands into their parents’ family group, since the residence is uxorilocal (the man settles next to the group of women). In this way, women contribute to the livelihood of their family of origin, as they attract more male workers and they increase the political and economic power of the family to which they belong.

The Guajajara [Tentehar] social organization is based on the extended family. This is made up of nuclear families, whose boss has his daughters and nieces under his control. This is because women in Guajajara society have a fundamental role in maintaining culture. It is the woman who attracts men into the family group, who become part of the father’s family through marriage, since the husband takes up residence in his wife’s house and provides services to his father-in-law. In this way, the more sons-in-law the head of an extended family has, the stronger it will be economically and, consequently, a politically powerful family. (ZANNONI, 1998b, p. 104)

As we can infer, the practice of capturing and keeping girls in prison in Alto Alegre “would end up disrupting the social organization of the Guajajara [Tentehar], since these girls would eventually learn new values and new techniques foreign to their culture” (ZANNONI, 1998b, p. 104). This would also attack the worldview of these people, whose religious universe is populated by spiritual beings, especially the spirits of the forest and waters, who can benefit or punish them if community rules are not followed, including the practice of the female initiation ritual. In other words, a girl needs to go through the ritual of initiation into a woman’s life, otherwise she will go crazy, get sick or may even die. A girl who goes through initiation rituals becomes a strong and healthy woman, free from any risk of life (ZANNONI, 1995).

Thus, the type of education that the Tentehar wanted for their girls was very different from capuchin education, certainly constituting one of the motivations that led them to lead the repudiation not only of the Colony of Alto

⁷ The Moqueado demanded time for the community to organize hunting meetings and for the grandmother to prepare the ornaments for the girl. In the past, the party was made in a personalized way; nowadays, it is carried out with the participation of all the girls who menstruate in the same year due to several reasons, among them the scarcity of hunting and the difficulty of the indigenous people to get away from work.

Alegre, but also of the female boarding school that worked there, removing his daughters and relatives and destroying the mission in that place.

REBELLION: SIGNS OF THE INDIGENOUS COUNTERPOWER

Before analyzing some aspects of the Alto Alegre rebellion, let us see a description of this event in the light of the examined documentation. As mentioned in the introduction, the revolt started at dawn on March 13, 1901 and continued for a few months. It was articulated by some Tentehar leaders who managed to gather hundreds of warriors from various extended families.

After the first attack, which culminated in the death of religious, employees and Christian families who lived in the Colony of Alto Alegre, the indigenous people were in charge of that colony. Simultaneously, part of the rebels extended the attack to nearby farms and occupied those places. In all these occupations, they enjoyed the material goods found, especially agricultural products, but the main objective was to rescue the lands that once belonged to their ancestors (ZANNONI, 1998a).

They also detained some Christian girls, who resided in the colony's boarding school, namely: Benta Mourão, Sindona, Thereza, Petronilia Ribeiro and her sister Úrsula. These girls remained in their company at times in the besieged colony, at other times in the villages or forests when they dispersed, with the exception of Úrsula, who ended up being rescued by the military during an operation in the Cana Brava Village, which caused the rout of the indigenous people (04/05/1901, 11/05/1901, 22/06/1901, 29/06/1901, 13/08/1901). Later, the Capuchins recorded the death of Úrsula, which occurred on April 22, 1907: "at the age of 18, more or less, without religious assistance and was buried in the civil cemetery of this city. This is the girl who was saved from the Alto Alegre Massacre" (ORDEM DOS FRADES MENORES CAPUCHINHOS, 1894-1925, n. 18).

In order to guarantee their security and the possession of these territories, the indigenous people controlled the exits and entrances of Alto Alegre, paralyzing the public service (postal communications were cut off) and commerce (the navigation of the Grajaú River was interrupted) and causing the population to migrate who lived in nearby regions.

Over time, the supply of food and ammunition for firearms ran out (although they also used the so-called "bladed weapons"), making the indigenous people vulnerable to military attack. Thus, after some confrontations with the police force, the leaders of the movement left Alto Alegre and took refuge in the forests, villages or in the homes of non-indigenous families in the region of Grajaú. And their families and other relatives who lived in the surrounding villages of Alto Alegre, fearing police repression, dispersed to the regions of the Grajaú, Mearim, Zutiwa and Gurupi rivers.

The military then set up a barracks in Alto Alegre and began to patrol the forests and villages to capture the leaders of the movement. In this context, the indigenous movement was divided and only the group closest to João Caboré remained, considered the main leader of the revolt. Of that group, some were

arrested, others surrendered. Inexplicably, several of them were found dead in the Barra do Corda jail.

In order to analyze these episodes, we will initially turn to the questions raised by Castells (2013), which, to a large extent, serve to think about the Alto Alegre rebellion: how did the indigenous people constitute themselves as a revolting group? What were your values and perspectives for social transformation? In the theoretical framework of the aforementioned author, we can discuss these issues based on the concept of power and counterpower, based on the assumption that “power relations are constitutive of society because those who hold power build institutions according to their values and interests” (CASTELLS, 2013, p. 3), as we saw in the case of Frei Carlo, who outlined a well-defined plan for working with the indigenous people. This power can be exercised through coercion and/or symbolic manipulation, as the Capuchins did, trying to “build meaning” in the minds of the indigenous people, although without success among the majority of the people residing in the Colony of Alto Alegre or contacted in the villages of Barra do Corda.

In addition, the missionaries underestimated the ability of the indigenous people to massively rebel against them, choosing not to critically interpret the small signs of resistance manifested in the daily lives of these peoples, such as the fact that they stop visiting their home/ boarding school; not to mention the attempted attacks of some indigenous people, who were faced in the colony and during visits to the villages (ORDEM DOS FRADES MENORES CAPUCHINHOS, 1951; MONZA, 1908/2016).

In Alto Alegre, the counterpower was materialized in an articulation that won the adhesion of a network of villages, from a communication made by hand, village by village, probably telling many stories of domination and exploitation of the indigenous people and repeating ideas of struggle and liberation in a circular fashion, something typical of the style of these people. Evidence of the origins of this movement can be read on the news in the local press, which gave ample coverage to the so-called “hecatombe” of Alto Alegre and its military expeditions.

Communicating with each other, *they established a chain of transactions* in this regard between the various villages that take place on the banks of the Grajaú and Mearim rivers and in the extensive uncultivated region that extends from the riverside points to the vast forests of Gurupi, Monção and Pindaré. Several tribes, divided into numerous villages, dominate this vast area, completely unknown to civilized or Christian people.

Among the most trusted Indians of the friars, Alto Alegre counted João Caboré, Manoel Justino and Cadete, who, having all the customs and uses of civilized people, *prepared the movement*.

Some of them know all the ways in which repetition weapons are used and have been in the entrenchments that have been done recently in Grajaú. (O NORTE, 23/03/1901, p. 1, emphasis added)

In the same vein as Castells (2013), we can ask why one person or more than a hundred of them decided to join a risky movement, which would certainly be the target of much punishment. One possible answer is that, at the base of the movement, there should be a set of collective and individual motivations that fed the struggles and demands. The collective motivations, according to the sources consulted, aimed to break with the domination in the colony and in the female boarding school, as well as to regain the right to possession of the land of Alto Alegre and the surrounding area, making the villages fight together around a common cause.

But there were also individual reasons, such as the indignation of Cauré (Caboré), who was punished and even retained by the indigenous guard of the Colony of Alto Alegre because he contracted a second union not permitted by Christian doctrine (IPES, 1981). Gomes (2002, p. 269) even comments that the chronicler of the mission wrote that “Caboré was chained in the basement of the main building, ‘sometimes by the arms, other times by the feet or the neck’”. We could mention many other cases of personal dissatisfaction against Capuchin orders in the daily life of the colony, interpreted by the Order’s narrative as signs of ingratitude by the indigenous people (MONZA, 1908/2016).

In short, the movement’s main interests and objectives were to rescue the girls to educate them according to tradition and regain possession of their land in Alto Alegre and the surrounding area. The murders of friars, nuns, households and neighbors of the mission, as well as the destruction of agricultural equipment and tools in the colony and the attack on farmers and their families, were due to the great indignation that affected these people at the time of the revolt. It is as Zezinho Mendes Guajajara says in his testimony: “it was not supposed to be that way, but as there was no other way... then it happened...”.

We can again turn to Castells (2013) to better understand the motivation and attitude of each individual involved in the rebellion, as well as the sense of collective action by the indigenous movement. For the author, who works with the assumptions of the theory of affective intelligence, social movements are emotional (at the individual level) and their big bang happens when the emotion of individuals turns into action. In this perspective, the most relevant emotions for social mobilization and political behavior are fear (negative affect) and enthusiasm (positive affect). These affects, in turn, are linked to motivational systems of approach or avoidance.

When individuals are mobilized to achieve a certain objective, they come closer and become enthusiastic for the cause pursued, being also affected by the prospect of hope and future. But in order for these positive emotions to arise, they need to overcome anxiety (resulting from avoidance), which is an emotion that generates fear and has a paralyzing effect. “Overcoming anxiety in socio-political behavior often results from another negative emotion, anger” (CASTELLS, 2013, p. 10).

All of these assumptions can help to understand the conflict in Alto Alegre, as Tentehar and others who joined them may have overcome anxiety and fear with anger, something typical of socio-political behavior according to the analysis

of the aforementioned author. Then, driven by anger, which increased as they realized that an unjust action was taking place in the colony, boarding school and the surrounding area, they identified the responsible agents in Capuchins, Christians and other non-Indians.

Evidently, the price of rebellion was very expensive for the indigenous people. Proof of this is the police persecution that carried out several eviction expeditions from Alto Alegre and hunting the leaders of the movement, which were well publicized by the newspaper *O Norte* and reproduced in the *Diário do Maranhão*. This news, which carried the ink in the description of the damage caused by the attack by the indigenous people, carries between its lines traces of military violence. Seen in this light, journalistic sources can reveal many indications about the police truculence used against indigenous peoples, which can be understood as the exercise of power through coercion and intimidation, an essential mechanism for imposing the will of the State to regain control and order in the interior of Maranhão.

Somewhat ambiguous and contradictory was the position of João Gualberto Torreão da Costa, governor of Maranhão, who recommended the expeditions not to attack the indigenous people, as he was convinced that in a short time they would naturally return to their villages and their normal lives, therefore, there was no need to face them. However, if Torreão da Costa, on one hand, showed a certain protectionism towards the indigenous people, on the other hand, it financed the police with state of the art armament for the conflict, even ordering, in a telegram published by the press, that military commanders from other cities to go to Barra do Corda, also supporting the recruitment of volunteers to join military troops (DIÁRIO DO MARANHÃO, 23/03/1901).

In the opposite direction, a voice that spoke in favor of the indigenous people and for that reason received a lot of criticism was that of a pastor mentioned in Capuchin historiography, who made himself heard during the farewell of the second military expedition, celebrated with the sound of the boys' band of the Institute of Indians of Barra do Corda.

[...] there was a discordant voice, a voice of discouragement, a voice of deterrence, a voice of disapproval, a voice that said it was cruel to march against innocent and harmless savages [...] they had not done anything else if not to get rid of undue slavery, to proclaim freedom and thought. It was the voice of a Protestant pastor. (MONZA, 1908/2016, p. 114)

It is difficult to say for sure who this pastor was, as his name is not mentioned in Monza's text (1908/2016). We only know that at the time there was a "crippled evangelist" – so named by missionary Eva Mills [19–] – who resided in Barra do Corda and did the work of a lay pastor (not ordained), being described as a great preacher. This is João Batista Pinheiro, from Ceará, whose example of life and preaching led to the emergence of a small evangelical church in Barra do Corda, bringing together many families who took up residence in a colony

known as “Centro dos Protestantes”, a target of criticism in the documentation capuchin.

In any case, this “dissenting voice” did not stop the persecutions that lasted for months, based on the justification that it was a defensive and non-offensive armed force. But the indigenous people were only defeated when the police command managed to gather a large number of troops, including the assistance of the Canela-Apanyekra, who lived peacefully but had a well-structured warrior organization and maintained a strong spirit of rivalry with the Tentehar (GOMES, 2002). It is worth mentioning that they were joined by a number of Tentehar who did not join the indigenous movement.

All of these episodes, especially the flight to escape police persecution and the fear of the Canela-Apanyekra people, were told and retold for a long time, affecting the mobility of Acelina, Zezinho, Alderico and, certainly, many other relatives.

I did not know my grandfather Cauré, nor did my mother get to know her father well because shortly after the conflict they caught him and took him to Barra do Corda. At that time, my grandfather warned people in the villages that persecution was coming, some did not believe it and were caught. My relatives spent their lives in hiding, and so did we, afraid of the people. They always went further. There was a chief who kept watch and always warned us to go more to the woods. (Acelina Mendes Guajajara)

My grandfather Cauré's family came here and settled here, but the rest of the family stayed in Alto Alegre. I want to meet the rest of the people who stayed in Alto Alegre. Since the conflict, we have never been there. Because my mother said it was dangerous there. “There, people were everything... That's why I left there.” [She said] There was one of her cousins who went to Alto Alegre and broke her leg and was killed there... The others ran, one came to here and another headed for the Long Language. (Zezinho Mendes Guajajara)
I don't know what miracle Zezinho's brothers followed in the direction of Arame [current Urucu/Juruá Indigenous Land]. They didn't walk like that. They stayed in their village. They were very afraid of the Canela, who walked with a bundle of arrows in their back... (Alderico Lopes Filho)

Our ancestors say that, after the massacre, they would once speak to the boss in the city, who owned a boat, to arrange the routine service. But on the road, they saw a bunch of priests and policemen mixed with other Indians. Then they fled through the forest... The survival of our ancestors and the things they had, such as indigenous territories, was a struggle. (Alderico Lopes Filho)

Altogether, more than 30 indigenous people were arrested in 1901. But in 1905, only 15 went to trial, as the rest did not resist and died in prison. The press

regretted the result of the trial, which acquitted the indigenous people involved in the rebellion for being considered “minors” (incapable of being charged) as provided by the Penal Code of the time (MONZA, 1908/2016). But the press did not explain the cause of the prisoners’ deaths, reporting only that the one of Cauré (Caboré) was the target of unfounded suspicions, as he died due to malaria fever. Finally, the one who was “crueller than a jaguar!”, the Capuchins write in the record book of the “deceased known in Barra do Corda”, ended their days of struggle (ORDEM DOS FRADES MENORES CAPUCHINHOS, 1894-1925, n. 21).

To this day, the leaders of Bacurizinho retell this story and lament the death of their ancestors as prisoners, weaving their own interpretations, as Alderico did: “when they arrived in Barra do Corda, they died one by one, one after the other... they died because the relatives of the non-indigenous people they had killed were angry at them”.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Finally, the actions taken in the Alto Alegre rebellion can be better understood if we discuss issues of an ethnic-cultural order. For this, we will resort to the interpretation of Zannoni (1998a), because his studies relate conflict and culture Tentehar, placing the events of Alto Alegre within the scope of interethnic conflicts.

For Zannoni (1998a, p. 254), conflict is the “cultural engine and regulator of social relations” of the Tentehar society, which “generates dynamism and reestablishes the socio-political-economic cohesion” of this people. In this direction, he observes that the conflict is present in the various dimensions of the Tentehar daily life, starting with the religious life.

In this one, Tentehar always maintain a conflictual relationship with their cultural heroes and spirits, having as reference the narrative of the emblematic itinerary of the twins Mayra-ywa e Mukuwra-ywa, who weave conflicting relationships in their supernatural stories and seem to represent the journey of a Tentehar’s life, marked by many trials and sacrifices. With regard to spirits such as those of the forest and the waters, the conflict is also present because they can be useful or harmful to a Tentehar, if the indigenous person does not respect the cultural rules of his community (we have already pointed out the relevance of the female initiation ritual, whose non-observance can cause many evils for the young lady). Not to mention the wandering spirits of the dead, who can attack at night or in the forest, and the spirits of animals, which are dominated only by the shaman, whose shamanic function is also conflicting, as he is credited with both healing skills and witchcraft powers that can cause illness or death (WAGLEY; GALVÃO, 1955; ZANNONI, 1995).

In turn, economic and political life are also permeated by conflicts and seem to be intertwined with each other and linked to the social organization of the Tentehar. From the field observations of Froés Abreu (1931), corroborated by Wagley and Galvão (1955), it is known that the most important unit in the social structure Tentehar is the extended family, often the target of conflict situations

as mentioned by Zannoni (1995). For this author, conflict is always latent when an extended family accumulates assets and stands out more than other families. But, somehow, the issue will be resolved and socioeconomic leveling will reign in the community again.⁸

On the political issue, similar conflicts were observed when someone projected himself as the main leader of the community, managing to remain in that position only for a certain time and, even so, generating a series of problems with the leaders of the extended families. This is because in the Tentehar culture, the most important leadership is the head of the extended family, the legitimate political representative of the nuclear families connected to him by kinship (the studies of all the aforementioned authors have reached this conclusion).

Among all these types of conflict, Zannoni (1998a) identifies the events in Alto Alegre within the scope of one of the greatest conflicts in the interethnic relations experienced by Tentehar in the region of Barra do Corda. The deeper causes of this event are obvious: on one hand, the Tentehar never accepted the confiscation of their girls at the capuchin boarding school, making it impossible to experience important rituals, such as the initiation of the young lady, and therefore the expansion of the extended family; on the other hand, the Tentehar wanted their land back, either the territory of the colony or the territories of the farms around the colony. Deep down, the Tentehar fought against colonization and oppression, which they faced since the most remote times.

In the first invasion that arrived in Brazil came this group that was part of the religion. People came from religion and from the state. When they arrived, they found people from indigenous nations. They saw these people and said that the people that were found in this place, were like the white people, but the difference was that they considered them as animals, wild beasts, a savage of the bush.

Then they thought: couldn't a project to capture Indians be done? Evangelization? They took the indigenous people, it was not to educate, it was a capitalist interest because it was like that, an Indian head was worth more than a diamond stone. They were running around after Indians...

This massacre business did not start in Alto Alegre, it started there in the first invasion of Brazil. Since then this kind of conflict has taken place. (Alderico Lopes Filho)

8 Zannoni (1995) brings interesting examples of his fieldwork, such as stories of wealthier families who lost cattle, pigs and chickens overnight without knowing exactly what had actually happened, starting to live in the same conditions as the village families they belonged to.

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