

CEDI - P. I. B.  
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Bentugaruru tells how members of his village were  
treacherously poisoned by Whites

This narrative was recorded at the suggestion of the Suyá  
Indians, and is summarized by the teller himself as follows:

I have told you how the very bad Whites kupen put  
some medicine into the tapir and all of my companions  
died. Nearly all of us died. The Whites did this to  
us.

This statement was recorded in the Tapayuna/Suyá language in  
1973, and translated by Anthony Seeger. The Tapayuna/Suyá were  
also known as the "beicos de pau" and lived near the Arinos river  
at the time the poisoning took place. This document translates  
only part of a much longer narrative, and begins when  
Bentugaruru's group hears the sound of a motorboat coming up the  
river. The Tapayuna had already begun establishing peaceful  
contacts with the Whites, and expected they might get some food  
and gifts from the Whites who were to poison them.

"Hey, the Whites kupen have arrived on the river. The Whites  
have arrived.

"Let's go visit them."

"I don't know."



In the afternoon, one of us said "let's go, their camp is over there." We went looking for it. We went looking and found it. A number of us went. Our leader said "Well, you know best. If they aren't belligerent, then you can meet them peacefully." We heard them kill a tapir. Toch, a shot. Toch, another shot. "They killed a tapir."

"Did they kill a tapir?" one man asked. "Yes, they killed a tapir." "Let's go see." I went with my companions, and we went to see the Whitemen who had killed a tapir. We walked and walked.

We walked into their camp. There were few of them. One of the Whites said "Do you want to sit down? Sit over there." There was a pot of tapir meat bubbling on the fire. A White man was putting a lot of white medicine on the meat of the cut up tapir. It looked like salt. When he finished putting it in, he said "All right, it is ready."

"Do you want some?" the White said to me. "Well, I'll take some" I said. "Yes, I'll take some." My companion took some as well. My wife's father took some, Teweiambu took some. Another one took some with bones, and my uncle took the head. We took the meat and cooked it. We cooked it right there. Over to one side some rice was being cooked. We stayed right there because there were only a few Whites. The Whites who gave us the poisoned food were very few.

Now then, it was still early in the morning we were still there. We could hear a motorboat coming slowly. It sounded like this: Tuktuktuktuktuktuk. "Come and eat! Come and eat!" the White men said. My companions went over. One said "Well, I am not sure, perhaps he has doctored it. Maybe he will put something in it that will make us swell up." But in the pot the meat was all cooked. My companions were all cooking the meat, and also some fish they had given us. My companions and I ate and ate and ate. When we finished, we said "Let's go."

"My friends, have something to drink." "All right" we replied. The Whites brought out a very big pot of sweet drink. And my companions drank and drank and drank.

"Let's go." We were ready to go. "Let's go." "Let's go now." "Let's go. We are going." "Where are you going?" asked the Whites. "We don't know, we'll just be off." "Be sure to come back soon again" they said. "All right." One of them put his arm around my wife. And Teweiambu said "Let's go."

We went. Then we began to feel badly. "Auuuuuuu. I am feeling badly. My head feels like it is exploding." My arm went tuk, tuk, (a kind of spasm). "Hey, This is bad!" We didn't know what had happened. "What is happening? Get me some herb medicine" my wife said to me. I gave her some medicine and she vomited it up, "hwe, hew, hwe." My father tied his head, and groaned heavily and rhythmically "Hii, hii, hii, hii." He sounded like that. It

was like a high fever. My father went "hii,hii,hii,hii. Then my companions began to scream and groan," heeeeeee," loudly and screechingly.

Teweiambu said "Those White men gave us something bad to eat." "I don't know" said someone. "Those immoral Whites gave us something." A boy's mother said "Oh my head." She lay still. Then my companions agreed the Whites had given us bad food.

I felt as though something were exploding behind my eyes. I began to shout. My head hurt. I lay there, and shouted to my father's sister. "Is your head hurting behind your eyes?" "Yes" Then my wife began to cry: "heee, heee, heee. We will all die. We should not have eaten the tapir. We will all die."

Some of my companions were ahead on the trail. They didn't know anything about this and were ahead. So we called to them. They said they were sick too. We shouted "We ate the tapir and we are all dying."

Then my brother died. My other brother died. My sister died. My wife died. Many people died. We shouted and began to cry "Hiiiiiiiiii, Hiiiiiiiiii. The Whites are killing us all. We are all dying." We sat and cried. My uncle Domba ate that night, and everyone lay down. Some groaned, and then they lay there. And my father Domba groaned and died.

Most of my companions were dead. By the next afternoon I

wasn't feeling too badly. Then Teweiambu said "Bentugaruru?" "What" I replied. "You aren't sick anymore?" "No." He called me and said "Our kinsmen don't know about this. Somebody should call them. Go and tell them we are all very sick."

I called to my wife "Gai do hro?" "Huh" "Bring me some urucum so that I can paint myself." She brought it, and I painted myself. I said I did not know where our other companions were. Teweiambu said, "Look over there in that direction." "Are you leaving?" "Yes, I am going now."

I went looking for them. I found them, and said to them "The bad Whites put medicine into our food. Teweiambu is still lying back there. My companions are all dead. My father died, my uncle Dombati is also dead, another uncle died. My wife's father died, my wife died, Teweiambu died, Gaimochi died."

"What happened? Our leaders are dead! Our companions are all dead!" We all sat and cried. Then we went to bury them. Then we went on. Then my few remaining companions travelled on.

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Prezados amigos Carlos Alberto, Vanessa, e Bruna,

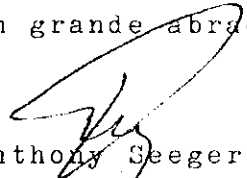
Estou enviando em anexo uma transcriçao ligeiramente modificada de um Tapayuna contando como ele e seus companheiros foram envenenados por um grupo de brancos fingindo que eram amigos deles. Faz tempo demais Bruna e Vanessa pedieram isso como contribuicao ao volume sobre o Xingu. Se servir, ou voces pderiam traduzir (que acho melhor) ou poderiam mandar de volta para eu fazer. Meu portuguese piora cada dia. O que talvez seja boa seria mandar a traducao para mim revisar, mas nao faco questao.

De qualquer forma, espero que sirva essa traducao. Eu tirei somente a parte central da narrativa, coloquei numa linguagem que tanto paralela o original quanto faz-lo mais inteligivel. Usei paragrafos par colocar em grupos os eventos conexos. Mas e extremamente dificil passar para papel uma narrativa, como Bruna e Vanessa certament sabem.

A CEDI estou enviando o original em fita, para guardar para qualquer eventualidade. Se alguem duvidar do evento, pelo menos a fita esta la.

Nossos votos para um excelente ano novo a voces todos.

Um grande abraço,



Anthony Seeger