

Tilo Plöger

CATIMBÓ JUREMA SAGRADA



The Indigenous Tradition of the Sacred Jurema
Brazilian Shamanism

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*“Que as boas fumaças corram o mundo
Pelo bem da vida de todos.”*

*“A gente bebe a raiz da Jurema
pra chegar em outro mundo
e pra esse outro mundo
também chegar na gente”*

*“Vai fumaça pra onde eu mandar,
fuma cachimbo quem sabe fumar”*

*“Só fuma cachimbo quem sabe fumar,
Só manda fumaça quem sabe mandar.”*

*“O mesmo vento que leva a fumaca,
É o mesmo que traz ela para ti.”*

*“Os Juremeiros são médicos de almas
e a Jurema é o hospital do Nordeste”*

*“Meu pé de Jurema secou
Suas folhas caíram no chão
Veio o orvalho e molhou
Depois veio o sol e secou
E a Jurema se abriu toda em flor”*

“Só pega no Cachimbo, quem sabe pegar

Só manda fumaça, quem sabe mandar”.
“Eu ando no mundo, e você não me pega,
Cada fumaça, eu dou uma queda”.

“May the good smokes run the world
For the sake of everyone's lives.”

“We drink the Jurema root
to arrive in another world
and to this other world
also reach us”

“Smoke goes where I send it,
smokes a pipe who knows how to smoke”

“Only those who know how to smoke a pipe smoke,
Only sends smoke who knows how to send it.”

“The same wind that carries the smoke,
It is the same that brings it to you.”

“The Juremeiros are doctors of souls
and Jurema is the hospital in the Northeast”

“My Jurema tree dried up
Its leaves fell to the ground
The dew came, and it got wet
Then came the sun and dried up
And Jurema opened up in full bloom”

*“Just take the pipe, who knows how to take it
Only sends smoke, who knows how to send it”.*

*“I walk in the world, and you don't catch me,
Every smoke, I take a fall.”*

CONTENT

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INTRODUCTION

THE CATIMBÓ

The term

Catimbo and Jurema Sagrada

The history

The Catimbó-Jurema Umbanda of the northeast coast of Brazil

The origin of the Catimbós in Alhandra

Kingdom of Acaes – Reino dos Acaes

Jurema in a psychonautical context

JUREMA – DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS

The term

The plant

Botanical aspects

Morphological description

Juremas various names

Geographic distribution

Therapeutic properties

INDIGENOUS AND URBAN JUREMA

Indigenous Jurema

Jurema of the ATIKUM

Jurema of KAPINAWÁ

Jurema of Kariri-Xocó

Jurema in Karapotó

Jurema in Alhandra (Catimbó)

THEOLOGY AND COSMOGENY

The theology

Definitions and delimitations

Catimbó is not Macumba or Candomblé

Pajelança and Toré

Toré

The spiritual cosmos of Catimbó

THE MYTHS OF THE JUREMA

Origin myth of the Jurema among the Kariri-Shoko of Brasil

Jurema as Christ's blood

The legend of Cabocla Jurema

The Myth Of God And The Indigenous Devil

THE SYMBOLS

Introduction

Holy Pipe

Maraca

Princes and Princesses – Príncipes e Princesas

Incorporation of the enchanted

Jurema's sacred drink

Trance and possession

KINGDOMS, REALMS, DEITIES, SPIRITUAL GUIDES

The Structure of Juremá (spiritual world)

The 12 Kingdoms of Jurema

The spiritual guides

Caboclos da Jurema

Pretos Velhos e Pretas Velhas

The Masters

Other entities (guides)

Malunginho

Zé Pilintra

MESTRAS E MESTRES DO CATIMBÓ - LIST OF ANCIENT MASTERS

Ascended Masters mentioned in Meleagro

Nanãgiê, Nanãgiá, Nanãbicô, Nanamburucu.

Rei Heron (King Heron)

Pai Joaquim (Father Joaquim)

Mestre Ritango Do Pará

Mestre Carlos, King Of Masters (Rei Dos Mestres)

Mestre Manicoré

Mestre Manuel Cadete, King Of Vajucá.

Mestre Itapuã or Itapurã

Mestre Tupá

Mestre Xaramundi

Mestre Roldão De Oliveira

Mestre Bom Florar, Bom-Florá

Mestre Inácio De Oliveira

Mestre Mussurana

Príncipe Da Jurema

Mestra Anabar

Mestra Iracema

Mestre Pequeno (Little Master),

Mestre João Pinavaruçu

Mestra Angélica

As Meninas Da Saia Verde (The Girls Of The Green Skirt)

Mestre Tabatinga

Mestre José Pereira

Mestre Antônio Tirano

Mestre Canguruçu

Malunguinho

Mestre Pinarona

Mestra Faustina

Mestre Luís Dos Montes

Mestre Filipe Camarão

Mestre Turuatá

THE ORGANIZATION

Mestre de Mesa (Master of Altar)

About the seed

Organizational basics

THE RITUALS

The "Mesa" (The Altar)

Construction of the Mesa

Opening of the Mesa (Abertura de Mesa)

Initiation

The Seven Sciences of a Master of Jurema

Juremação e Tombo (Tombamento) de Jurema – The tumble (tumbling)

HERBS AND TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Introduction

Traditional remedies

Fumigações & Defumações – Fumigations & Smokes

Ungentos - Ointments and other procedures

The Rapé

The Garrafada

Theriaca Brasilica – The Brazilian theriac

The implementation of the Garrafada in the context of the Catimbós

Herbs as listed in Meleagro

THE MAGIC AND SPELLS

Fechamento de corpo - Closing/Protection of Body

Mau-Olhado. Quebranto. Amuletos. Evil Eye. Amulets.

SOME SPECIFIC CONCEPTS

Envoltamento – Wrapping / Enveloping

The magic cross

"Orações Fortes". "Strong Prayers".

Various Works (From: Ribeiro)

To Attract One's Happiness

To Soften Enemies

To Sign Up for Life

To Keep an Unwanted Person Away from Your Life

For Discharge (Descarrego), Protection and Against Disease

To Drive Away Spirit That's Leaning On

To Increase Your Money

For a Person to Quit Drinking Addiction

To Heal a Child of Any Kind of Illness

BATHS

Banhos de Firmeza – Firming Baths

Banhos de Descarrego – Discharge Baths (Cleansing)

TRADITIONAL PRAYERS

Oração da Cabra Preta - Prayer of the Black Goat

Oração do Sonho de Santa Helena - Saint Helena's Dream Prayer

Oração da Pedra Cristalina - Prayer to the Crystalline Stone

Oração do Rio Jordão - Prayer of the River Jordan

Força do Credo - Strength of the Creed

Oração das Estrelas - Prayer of the Stars

Oração do Meio-Dia - Midday Prayer

O Credo às avessas - The Creed in reverse

Oração das Almas - Prayer of Souls

Oração dos Sete Caboclos - Prayer of the Seven Caboclos

Oração ao Sol - Prayer to the Sun

São João Batista

Santo Amanso

Oração de Santa Pelonha para curar dor de dente - Prayer of Santa Pelonha to cure toothache

Poderosa Oração de Nossa Senhora Aparecida - Powerful Prayer of Nossa Senhora Aparecida

Para as 18 Horas de Cada Dia - For the 18 hours of each day

Contra Qualquer Espécie de Doença - Against Any Kind of Disease

Contra a Cólera - Against cholera

Contra Hemorragias - Against Hemorrhages

Contra os Maus Espíritos - Against Evil Spirits

Para ter bons resultados nos negócios – To have good results in business

Contra Espíritos Obsessores e inimigos Invisíveis - Against Obsessing Spirits and Invisible Enemies

Para Anular Dificuldades e Embaraços nos Negócios - To Eliminate Difficulties and Embarrassments in Business

Ao Anjo-da-Guarda - To the Guardian Angel

Oração sonho de São Pedro - Prayer dream of Saint Peter

Oração para abrir os caminhos urgentemente - Prayer to urgently open the way

Oração Das Sete Forças Do Credo - Prayer of the seven forces of the creed

Oração À Santa Rita - Prayer to Santa Rita

CANTOS, PONTOS, LÍRIOS, LINHAS – TRADITIONAL RITUAL SONGS

“Linhas” according to Ribeiro

“Linhas” according to Cascudo in Meleagro

The structure of the songs during the rituals

Abertura - Opening

Encerramento - Closure

Licença - License

Firmeza – Firmness (for concentration of vibrational energies)

Louvações - Praise

MESTRES, MESTRAS AND OTHER REPRESENTATIVES OF CATIMBÓ

Chamada de Mestres e Mestras - Masters Calling

Malunguinho

Mestre Junqueiro

Mestre Zé Pelintra - O Rei de Alhandra

Mestre Antônio Olímpio

Mestre Benedito Meia-Légua

Mestre Bernardino

Mestre Carlos

Mestre Durval

Mestre Gavião Preto

Mestre José Galo Preto

Mestre Luis Dos Montes

Mestre Luís & Mestre Jacinto

Mestre Manoel Maior - “Mané Maior”

Mestre Nego Gerson

Mestre Oliveira Roldão

Mestre Pai Joaquim

Mestre Pau Pereira - Mestre Antônio Pereira

Mestre Manoel Quebra-Pedra

Mestre José Quebra-Pedra

Mestre Sibamba

Mestre Tertuliano

Mestre Xaramundi

Mestre Zé Bebinho – Seu Zé Bibinho

Mestre Zé Da Virada

Mestre José Pretinho – Seu Zé Pretinho

Mestre Zezinho Do Acais

Maria Do Acai (or Acais, Acaes)

Mestra Amélia

Mestra Ananí ou Naní

Mestra Aninha Do Angelò

Mestra Celina

Mestra Georgina

Mestra Geraldina

Mestra Iracema

Mestra Joana Pé de Chita

Mestra Dona Zefa 6 Dedos - Josefa dos 6 Dedos

Mestra Júlia Galega

Mestra Juvina

Mestra Laurinda

Mestra Laurentina

Mestra Luziara

Mestra Maria Do Bassulê

Mestra Maria Do Bagaço

Mestra Maria Bagaçeira

Mestra Maria Do Balaio

Mestra esquerdeira Maria Doida (Crazy Mary)

Mestra Maria Luziara ou Luziaria

Mestra Mariana

Mestra Nêga Luanda

Mestra Paulina

Mestra Rita Do Bagaço

Rita Ribonesa

Mestra Ritinha

Rosinha Do Amor

Mestra Severina

Caboclos – Songs for the whole working line

Caboclo Manuel Juremeiro

Caboclo Pena Branca

Caboclo Rompe Mato

Caboclo Sete Flechas

Cabocla Tapuia

Caboclo Ubirajara

Caboclo Urubatan

Boiadeiro - Cowboy

Mestra Rosinha Boiadeira

Família De Légua Boji

BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

This book about the Brazilian Catimbó is probably the first work in English that gives a little insight into this mysterious Brazilian tradition. Catimbó is a true Brazilian tradition, with roots in Northeast shamanism. It is also called the Jurema Sagrada, the Holy Jurema, because the cult is essentially based on the Jurema tree species living there. The Ayahuasca of the Amazon is the Jurema of northeastern Brazil. In Catimbó it forms the basis of the magic drink, the idiosyncratic (upside down) smoking of the pipe, the ceremonies of initiation, etc.

Jurema Sagrada, the so-called Holy Jurema, is a spiritual tradition. It is based on Indigenous shamanism and, over the centuries, mixed with European spiritualism, Jesuit Catholicism, and various African traditions.

Catimbó is perhaps the best and clearest example of the processes of Afro-European-Indigenous convergence. The "three waters" ("três águas" - one often speaks of the "three races" in Brazil) flow into a common river, recognizable in their respective elements and yet inseparably connected.

There is no uniform model, no uniform pattern to clearly describe and experience the Catimbó. There are whole families, lines that fill the tradition, all with common elements that unite them but with their own characteristics that make them unique. The oldest families are the indigenous groups who, despite the violent process of colonization since the 16th century, have preserved and developed their rituals. The tradition is very dynamic in its development, very regional and very family-related (line-related) in its characteristics. And unfortunately, it was only described for the first time in the middle of the last century. Only in the last few years has an enlightened science (in opposition to the then tendentious reporting by Christian officials) attempted to grasp and describe this tradition. – The tradition of Jurema has certainly existed much longer than the discovery of

Brazil, because Jurema, like Ayahuasca, has been an integral part of indigenous traditions since time immemorial. During Jesuit missionary work and the expulsion and enslavement of the Indian peoples, the rites of individual tribes merged with one another. Like the Afro-Brazilian tradition of Candomblé, syncretic forms of shamanic cults emerged. Much has been forgotten over the centuries, hardly anything has been written down. The collection of shamanic-spiritual traditions that was once summarized under Catimbó was persecuted and suppressed until the middle of the last century. Only with the official release of the Umbanda, another Brazilian spiritualistic tradition, could the Catimbó also be freed from the clutches of the judiciary - partly adopting the rites and terms of the Umbanda.

There have been fusions between indigenous and Catholic rituals and beliefs since the 16th century. The families of the "Sertão" (the dry inland of the north-east) practiced their cults by setting up tables with saints, crucifixes, and candles, possibly under deciduous trees belonging to the Caatinga lands and on large rocks formerly considered sacred. Between the 16th and 17th centuries the first expressions of what can be considered Proto-Catimbó emerged: the "Santidades" - hybrid catholic-indigenous manifestations of spirituality. The Catimbós do Sertão, on the other hand, are characterized by a strong presence of Catholic elements. These Catimbós mixed old Pajelança (shamanic traditions) with popular Catholicism, a little European spiritism, and some elements of Jewish Kabbalah and African Quimbanda. Especially in the Rio Grande do Norte area - due to the lack of a port for the arrival of African slaves during the colonial period and the resulting low presence of blacks (compared to Recife and Bahia) - these oldest Catimbós are characterized by comparatively little syncretism with the African one's traditions.

In other regions of the Northeast, where African presence was very relevant during the colonial period, we see the emergence of so-called "Juremeiros", families in which African elements are prominent in their practices, worship, imagery, cosmologies, and theologies. Indigenous knowledge was supplemented by the "science" of African origin brought in

by enslaved blacks. Africans from different nations identified with Catimbó because it is an animistic religion that worships and communicates with nature, just as African Orishás and Voduns are connected to nature. In addition, the slaves needed knowledge of Indian herbs for their own traditions.

After the arrival of the Africans in Brazil, fleeing the plantations where they were enslaved, they found refuge in indigenous villages and through this contact the Africans shared their common religious knowledge with the Indians. That is why the great well-known Masters of the Jurema are very often mestizos with indigenous and black blood to this day. The Africans contributed with their knowledge of the Egum death cult and the nature deities, the Orishás, Voduns and Inquices. The indigenous contributed with the knowledge of the invocations of the spirits of the ancient shamans and the work carried out in the forests and rivers with the enchanted ones (Encantados). Therefore, the Jurema consists of two main working lines: the Mestres da Jurema (Masters) and the Encantados (enchanted ones).

The cult of Jurema is to the Paraíba and Pernambuco regions what the Irocô is to Bahia. This typical Northeastern tree was worshiped by the Potiguares and Tabajaras Indians of Paraíba many centuries before the Europeans arrived in Brazil. There is a community in Pernambuco that is called Jurema due to the large number of these trees that are found there. The Jurema (*Mimosa hostilis*), once grown, is a leafy tree that can live for over 200 years. All parts of this tree are used: root, bark, leaves, and seeds used in cleansing baths, infusions, ointments, drinks and for other ritual purposes. Devotees initiated into the rituals of the cult are called "Juremeiros". In the town of Alhandra, a municipality a few kilometers from João Pessoa, this cult became famous in the form of Catimbó. Jurema has been worshiped since ancient times by at least two major indigenous groups, the Tupi and the Cariri, also known as Tapuias. The Tupi were divided into Tabajaras and Potiguares, which were enemies of each other. At the time of Paraíba's founding, the Tabajaras formed a group of about five thousand Indians. They occupied the coast and founded the

villages of Alhandra and Taquara. These places are now considered the center and starting point of the Catimbó in its present form.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that, contrary to what many believe, Catimbó is not an addendum or appendix to the Umbanda, Candomblé, Santo Daime (Ayahuasca) or any other spiritistic, magical or religious tradition. Although it can exist in parallel and in close communion with other cults and religions, Catimbó is an independent tradition that has its own dogmas, precepts, principles, and liturgies.

This book does not claim completeness or correctness. Nor is it a guide to implementation. The Catimbó can only be selected to a limited extent, it is a cult of experience. Each region, each "family" is characterized by specific characteristics, united by the rites and insignia of the Jurema, as well as the cult and incorporation of the so-called "Mestres", the Masters of the Jurema. This elaboration is essentially a collection and classification as well as reproduction of older writings about the Catimbó. Except for scientific disputes, I have kept away from almost all newer sources, because they are all very obviously heavily mixed with modern, esoteric, spiritistic forms, especially the Umbanda. From my personal point of view, the Catimbó is one thing above all - shamanism. And in the second place it is spiritistic, in the sense of using ritual forms of trance and incorporation (which, however, also existed among the Indian tribes, so they are not an "invention" of European culture).

Historically, the Masters of the Jurema were both spiritual healers and naturopaths. The knowledge of naturopathy was often taken up by the Jesuits, integrated by the African traditions, but also often forgotten. Due to the problematic legal situation in Europe and the risks of self-medication, I will refrain from describing traditional naturopathy in this book and will concentrate on describing the spiritual rites. When describing individual herbs and recipes, I orientate myself on the older writings of the Jesuits and the notes from the middle of the last century. If you want to implement the Catimbó in Europe, you can certainly use European herbalism and work in analogies. Even the Sacred Jurema, an acacia form, offers European

analogies - even in a spiritual sense it is deeply rooted in Christianity. An "accidental" coincidence. With the music and the ritual objects, it makes sense and is necessary to take on the Brazilian songs. The pipes also have a very special energy in their original form and can hardly be replaced by western pipes.

The songs and prayers cannot be translated in their full multidimensional meaning - the interpretation would often be a bit more complex and is beyond the scope of this book. The translations offered are just a "quick and dirty" frame to follow and understand the basics.

In the Brazilian traditions one speaks of the "Segredo do Sagrado", the "Secret of the Sacred". There are important ritual details that must not be reproduced publicly. Nor is it in keeping with the nature of spiritual traditions and their rites that rituals, recipes conform to a standard. The book is more of a framework for comprehensive understanding and for individual work. I would recommend anyone interested to learn and experience the tradition through an experienced group with their respective Masters. No book can replace experience and the continuation of a "work and ancestral lineage". Especially since the spiritual world cannot be ordered and cannot be reduced to baking recipes. Without trance, without incorporation, without ritual embedding, without group dynamics, all rites and recipes are meaningless and ineffective.

Salve os Mestres e as Mestras Juremeiros.

Tilo Plöger

THE CATIMBÓ

The term

The origin of the term Catimbó is disputed, although most researchers claim that it comes from the ancient Tupi language, where *caa* means forest and *timbó* refers to a type of torpor akin to death. In this way, Catimbó would be the forest that leads to torpor, in clear allusion to the state of trance caused by the ingestion of Jurema wine in its variety of herbs. However, other theories relate the word to the expression *cat*, fire, and *imbó*, tree, in the same language in conjunction. Thus, the word would mean a "fire in the burning tree" or "tree producing a feeling of temporary burning" that consumption of Jurema typically causes. In several states of northeastern Brazil where Catimbó rituals are associated solely with the practice of black magic, the word takes on a derogatory meaning and can encompass any magical activity performed with intent to harm others. In fact, however, the cult of Holy Jurema is pure charity and aims to always provide free help, advice and healing to people who ask for it.

Some more quotes as interpretations and explanations of the term Catimbó (partially colored by religious preferences, note the date of the respective publication):

- Rodolfo Garcia: " *Catimbau* - practice of witchcraft or gross spiritualism. Etymology: Lenz, Etymological Dictionary, 183, gives as likely the origin of Quichua, from *katimpuy*: "to follow one who should have fallen behind"; but it is not impossible that the origin is African; indeed, Zorobabel Rodrigues, Dictionary of Chilenisms, 311 ascribes the latter origin to the term. Geographical Area: The term seems to be common in Chile and Brazil; the meaning mentioned here and what is not in the dictionaries is exclusive to Pernambuco,

where *Catimbó* is also more commonly used." (Dicionário de Brasileirismos, Peculiaridades pernambucanas. Revista do Instituto Hist. Bros., 76, 732)

- Morais, 1831 edition: "*Catimbau* — Ridiculous man. In Brazil, a little old pipe. Domingos Vieira, 1873 edition: "*Catimbau* — Brazilian term. Small pipe. lazy term. Ridiculous man." Rafael Bluteau writes in a manner like Constâncio. The moderns copied the ancients. Pereira da Costa explains more clearly in Pernambucano vocabulary: "*Catimbau* or *Catimbó* - Mandinga, witchcraft, spell, witch-house, session, or practice of witchcraft ... "
- Alfredo de Carvalhos: A corruption of *caatin-imbai*, bush or white leaf, bad catinga, which may very well also mean tobacco, nicotine tabacum, from Linnaeus. *Catimbao*, by a definition we have found, is a pipe, a long and smoky pipe, and as Morais writes, a small, ancient pipe, used from there, in witchcraft sessions, Catimbós or catimbaus. Thus, we have the etymology of the word according to the opinions expressed. However, there are doubts: *Catimbao* was a current term in Portugal and as early as the early 18th, undoubtedly of earlier date: "Tell Master Catimbáo to go away and give him the stick." It seems the term derives from *cantibai*, the term for a piece of wood used by French carpenters and joiners."
- João Juvenal da Costa Lima, Mestre Zinho, one of the authorities on the tradition, said that Catimbó in its true meaning "he knew from those who know", "from the Masters", "from the Elders", it was just 'cachimbo' (pipe), because without a pipe there was no Catimbó. Everything was ceremonially reduced to the invocations of the "Masters of the Hereafter" through the sacred smoke. And the "works" of Catimbó, which correspond to the "despachos" in Macumbas, are called "fumaças" (smoke).
- In the Tupi-Guarani languages, Catimbó means "fumaça de mato" and "vapor de erva", respectively "forest smoke" and "grass vapor". Currently, the term "Catimbó" is one of the terms that identifies a specific set of cultural and magical-religious activities, as well as

mythical, cosmological, and theological aspects, originating from the indigenous peoples of the north-eastern region of Brazil - elements that make up what some researchers think of hold one of the oldest Brazilian religions, also called "Catimbó-Jurema", "Jurema", "Sagrada Jurema" and "Culto aos Senhores Mestres".

Catimbo and Jurema Sagrada

Jurema is also called Catimbó, which is an older nomenclature that can mean pipe, poison bush or magic. The pipe is an object of great importance to the Encantados (the enchanted ones) of the Catimbó-Juremas, be it Mestres or Caboclos, the latter the expression of the enchanted spirits of the natives living in the northeast (ancestors in the spiritual realm).

The practice of Catimbó is also popularly referred to as Jurema. This fact is since Jurema is the energy center, the essential element and catalyst of tradition. In fact, the Jurema is of paramount importance in the Catimbó. Within this tree are the enchanted cities where the Ascended Most of the Catimbó "live".

The two types of Jurema (black and white - Jurema preta and Jurema branca) correspond to the powers of white magic or black magic, depending on the color of the seeds they produce. To clarify: Jurema Branca produces white seeds, so associated with the powers of white magic, Jurema Preta produces black seeds, which in turn are associated with the powers of black magic. Whereby black magic is not negatively occupied, rather it is a symbol for the power of dissolution, the denser fields of magic. These seeds, as well as the bark, leaves, roots, their magical powers, and their complex symbolism are of fundamental importance in the initiation process of the Catimbó and in its further ritual practices.

The history

Although there are differing viewpoints on Jurema traditions, in almost all research on the subject, scholars agree that Jurema encompasses a mythical-ritual universe of indigenous origin that has existed in northeastern Brazil since colonial times. In the 1930s, the first writings on the ritual use of Jurema appeared. Mário de Andrade (1893-1945) and the "scholars" of the Christian mission "Missão de Pesquisas Folclóricas", dedicated to the inventory of Brazilian cultural manifestations, catalog songs recorded, transcribed, and commented on by the modernist writer, for example in *Música de Feitiçaria* ("Witches' Music") no Brasil (1933). There the author makes a melodic analysis of the chants of the "Catimbó" - the name then used to describe the use of the Jurema in rituals in the cities of Natal and Recife - pointing out the hypnotic function of musicality and highlighting its presence of some symbols in ceremonies such as "the Masters" and the "Jurema Tree". At the same time, the physician and folklorist Gonçalves Fernandes (1909-1986) used the terms "religious mixture" and "syncretism" in his works *Xangôs do Nordeste: Investigações into the Black Fetish Cults of Recife, 1937* and *O folclore mágico do Nordeste, 1938* to talk about the practice of Catimbó in the Recife context and to make contrasts between the Catimbozeiro rites and the universe of Xangô. According to some intellectuals, Xangô as a special form of expression of Candomblé was the legitimate cult of African origin. In 1945, in *Black and White Images of the Mystic Northeast*, the acclaimed French sociologist Roger Bastide (1898-1974) describes a Catimbó ritual that confirms the indigenous origin of Jurema and contrasts this practice with Candomblé in Bahia. Next, Câmara Cascudo (1898-1986), publishing some of his writings on folklore such as *Meleagro* (1978) and the *Dictionary of Brazilian Folklore* (1969), repeated the ideas of Mário de Andrade by proposing and disseminating an anthology of cultural manifestations a subject that has occupied, and still occupies, a prominent place in social thought and in Brazilian social sciences: the myth of the three races. In this sense he sees Catimbó as the result of the confluence of Iberian witchcraft, the indigenous naturopathy of the Jurema and the rhythmic musicality of the Bantu Macumbas from Africa.

Until the 1990s, researchers hardly focused on the traditions (religions) of the Jurema. In the first half of the 20th century some authors have described Jurema in the context of "magic", "witchcraft" and "low spiritism" and the analyzes are generally limited to brief descriptions of the rituals. A few exceptions are worth noting, including the work of René Vandezande (1930-2017) who studies the use of the Jurema (drink) in Terreiros (cult houses) of the Umbanda in Paraíba (in: "Catimbó: pesquisa exploratória sobre uma forma nordestina de religião mediúnica, 1975). In the 2000s, new research on the subject emerged; some emphasize the historical horizon, such as Guilherme Medeiros in "O uso ritual da Jurema entre os indígenas do Brasil colonial e as dinâmicas das fronteiras territoriais do nordeste no século XVIII, 2006". It proves the use of the Jurema since at least XVIII. Other research - such as "Toré e Jurema: emblemas indígenas no nordeste do Brasil, 2008" by Rodrigo de Azeredo Grunewald on the use of Jurema by the Atikum Indians - turns to the ethnic identities constructed by the indigenous groups of the Northeast, who, with the aim of demanding the recognition of autonomy before the Brazilian state and the conquest of rights, use Jurema as a symbol of their status as "traditional peoples".

From the 2010s, the scientific literature on the use of Jurema is expanding and completely new narratives are emerging. In 2017, the Juremeiro and founder of the NGO Quilombo Cultural Malunguinho in Pernambuco, Alexandre L'Omi L'Odo, defended the Master's thesis "Juremologia: uma busca etnográfica para sistematização de princípios da cosmovisão da Jurema sagrada", in which he prepared a report on the Jurema tradition from the perspective of its practitioners and elucidates the prominent figure of the Malunguinho, who is both the name of the leader of the Quilombos do Catucá (the illegal "city" of fugitive slaves) - built and destroyed in the first half of the 19th - as well as a Deity from the pantheon of Catimbós.

The cult of the Jurema tree dates to primeval times, even before the Portuguese colonization of America. At that time, several indigenous tribes in what now northeastern Brazil is worshiped Jurema for its psychoactive properties and introduced it to various rites of communicating with the

deities of their pantheon through trance, some of which are still preserved by the communities of the region. Among these rituals, the Toré, a specific form of Jurema worship, is perhaps the last remaining overarching form of cultural identification among the Northeast Indians.

However, this cult diversity was greatly reduced during European contact, so that the sacred and original Jurema tradition had to be adapted to catholic regulations due to the strong colonial suppression of all cults considered pagan. Thus, the vast aboriginal pantheon was gradually suppressed, and the deities of traditional Catholicism were incorporated into the rituals of the Caboclo people. However, due to its great influence, the cult of ancestors was retained and adapted to the reality of the Jurema Masters. Unlike in the Candomblé, the original pantheon of the indigenous population was largely lost or absorbed in syncretism.

The sacred Jurema is a vestige of the religious tradition of the Indians who inhabited the coast of Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte and the Sertão of Pernambuco and their shamans, great connoisseurs of the mysteries of the afterlife, plants, and animals.

In 1742, the ritual of the Jurema of the Sucuru and Canindé Indians of the mission "Missão Boa Vista no Brejo Paraibano" is described in a denouncing letter to the king of Portugal. It states that as a drink, the Jurema produces visions that the devil produces:

... uzão dehuma bebida de huma rais que chamão Jurema; que transportando-os do seu Sintido ficão como mortos, equando entrão em Si da bebedeira, Contão as vizoens que o diabo lhes Repezenta, Senão he que em Spirito os Leva as partes deque dão noticia. (CARTA do capitão-mor da Paraíba, Pedro Monteiro de Macedo ao rei D. João V. 1742, setembro, 22, Lisboa. AHU_ACL_CU_014, Cx. 11, D. 966.)

In his various works, Grunewald structures and describes the emergence and development of the Catimbó. The following presentation is based on

this elaboration, supplemented by other sources wherever useful.

"In the semi-arid region of the Northeast, where Jurema is more abundant and where, from my understanding of experience, the bark contains much higher concentrations of DMT - as evidenced by its intense reddish tint characteristic of Jurema growing on dry soil - we have no historical record of their use in pre-colonial or even colonial times. In the historiography of Jesuit and Franciscan evangelizers there seems to have been a deliberate silence on the use of this plant, although rites such as those described by Pompa (2003) have been recorded. Archaeological elements that can be associated with the Jurema were presented by Hohenthal Jr. as part of one of his collections in the 1950s (Grünewald and Palitot 2011).

In fact, it was only from 1938 with the Missão de Pesquisas Folclóricas, carried out on the initiative of Mário de Andrade (Carlini 1993), that the Toré, the most frequent performance among the indigenous peoples of the north-eastern country (in the above case among the Pankararu), systematically registered will. At the same time, the first records of the use of the Jurema appear, more precisely by Carlos Estevão de Oliveira (1942), who recorded the 1938 festival of Ajucá with the use of the Jurema also by the Pankararu of Itaparica in Pernambuco. It was also among the Pankararu in Tacaratu that Gonçalves de Lima (1946) isolated nigerine (later reclassified as N, N-dimethyltryptamine - DMT) from native Jurema. From then on, with Estêvão Pinto (1956) or Hohenthal Jr. (1954 and 1960), the ceremonial dance of the Toré and the associated use of the Jurema became a constant in the ethnology of the Indians of the interior of the Northeast and, frequently analyzed in more recent ethnographies, which were developed from the late 1980s, as shown by the dissertations by Mota (1987), Batista (1992), Grünewald (1993), Nascimento

(1994) and later works. In fact, the use of the Jurema became emblematic of the ethnicity of the Northeast Indians and fundamental to their cosmologies to stand out as a distinctive feature of Northeast Indian "Indianness".

Although the Toré and ritual use of Jurema in public (mostly celebratory) and private contexts for different purposes (mostly healing) recurs among virtually all indigenous peoples of northeastern Brazil, each of them has their own specific approach to Jurema and ritual elaboration developed. I have no empirical knowledge of most of these populations, especially those who perform the praiá or still have the ritual space of the Ouricuri, although the literature on their rituals is already quite extensive. Attempting to describe the details or nuances of the use of Jurema in each of the records mentioned in this literature would be beyond the purpose of this article. Therefore, I will briefly characterize here how Jurema is used among the Atikum, an indigenous people inhabiting the Serra do Umã, in Carnaubeira da Penha, in the Pernambuco hinterland, with whom I have extensive empirical experience.

First, the ritual practice of Toré spread among the Northeast Indians from the 1930s and continues to this day. In fact, the Serviço de Proteção ao Índio (SPI) demanded that the indigenous peoples carry out the Toré as a recognition of indigenous territories from this decade onwards, as a kind of document of Indianness (Grünwald 1993; 2002; 2005a; 2005b). From a wide communicative network (Léo Neto and Grünwald 2012), many emerging indigenous groups began to learn from other indigenous groups (or to recover and revitalize from their own experiences) such rituals, which were largely based on the use of the Jurema.