

# Education and intercultural experiences from the perspective of protapi, a Yine anthropologist from Urubamba, Amazonia, Peru

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## Introduction

This paper presents the research conducted by Alex Sebastián Caleb – Protapi, or Protapi (his indigenous name), a student and leader of the Yine-Yami indigenous group in Peru, in dialogue with anthropologist Peter Gow's work. Gow wrote his PhD thesis about Protapi's people, called by him

back then by the name: Piro. Nowadays, the indigenous people prefer to identify themselves by another denomination, the ethnonym Yine.

It observes the tensions that arise when indigenous students transition from oral traditions to non-indigenous formal spaces of learning, requiring them to acquire new logics and protocols for knowledge production. In addition to drawing on insights from other Latin American indigenous intellectuals, we highlight the importance of analysing the perceptions of indigenous people about their educational processes, particularly in the context of contacts with non-indigenous schooling. We suggest that Yine schools could give more attention and value to the *Gimatkalchi*, also studied by Gow. We understand this paper offers an epistemic critique of non-indigenous educational processes, based on Protapi's own historical experience. We also believe that non-indigenous schools and formal education settings can learn from indigenous people and pay greater attention to their knowledge systems.

To begin this paper, let us introduce ourselves, following a tradition we have learned from the indigenous groups we have worked with in Latin America. When we arrive in a community, we are often invited to introduce ourselves by sharing a brief biography, to start a political or community meeting. This helps everyone understand a bit better who the participants are and where we are coming from. In our case, this is what allowed us to meet and end up writing this paper together. Academically, we would like to pay our respects to Donna Haraway, who emphasizes the importance of acknowledging that all knowledge is "situated".

As written by her:

Situated knowledge requires that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not as a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and his authorship of "objective" knowledge. (Haraway, 1988: 592).

If Donna Haraway, our esteemed feminist theorist, emphasizes the "coyote trickster" position of feminist anthropologists, we can only imagine what indigenous perspectives on knowledge and schooling can bring to the academic debate. Let us subjectify our knowledge production and introduce ourselves as the authors of this text.

Protapi studied anthropology at the Federal University of Latin American Integration (UNILA), a Brazilian academic institution founded in 2011 with an international vocation, located in Foz do Iguaçu, at the triple border of Brazil with Paraguay and Argentina. Now, with his anthropologist diploma, Protapi has returned to his community where he works with social programs. He recently became a father.

Daniel Gordillo-Sánchez, originally from Colombia, is an anthropologist, linguist, and holds a PhD in education. During his doctoral studies, he completed an internship at the University of Hamburg in Germany, a period during which he contributed to the collective writing of this article. His academic interests include pedagogy, language teaching methodologies, and cultural diversity in education. After completing his PhD, he became a professor at the Federal Institute of Sergipe (IFS) in northeastern Brazil.



Finally, Barbara M. Arisi studied in Brazil for her MSc and PhD, with an internship in the United Kingdom (Arisi 2007; 2011). Since 2003, she has worked in the Vale do Javari Indigenous Territory, in the Amazon. She co-authored books on the colonisation of indigenous sexualities and taught anthropology in UNILA, in Brazil, and also in the Netherlands. Currently, she is a visiting professor at the Federal University of Bahia. In 2010 Spring, an Amazonianist encounter took place at the University of Oxford, where she met Peter Gow<sup>1</sup>.

At UNILA, the authors met and were caught in what Victor Turner (1967) names as a place “in between and betwixt”, in a liminal position of being in a university that has a mission to offer fruitful ground for a decolonisation of the academia and with all of them being raised by that very same tradition. The three authors met at the university’s Anthropology classroom.

## The Yine-Yami - as presented by Protapi

As Protapi (2016) explains, the Yine population lives in two Yine ethnic subgroups: the Yine-Manuhajene (located in the Madre de Dios and Las Piedras rivers, in the Madre de Dios department) and his group, the Yine-Yami (located in the Urubamba River basin, Cusco and part of Ucayali departments). “Yine-Yami” is a Yine term used to refer to the people who live in the *Rio Negro of Urubamba* (Yine = people, Yami = *Rio Negro*). The names of these ethnic subgroups are always associated with the geographical location where they live.

The Yine people suffered heavy exploitation after the invasion of Abya-Yala, as some indigenous people refer to the Latin American continent. As Peter Gow recorded in the early 20th century, the Yine “evoke the narratives of slavery and oppression suffered by the ancestors and by other kinspeople” (Gow, 1991: 4). Gow documented their oral histories and the system of “in-debt peonage” on haciendas. This system of slavery impacted many Amazonian indigenous populations, especially during the caucho and rubber booms of the First and Second World Wars. When Gow conducted his research in the 1980s, the local economy was dominated by lumbering. Peter Gow’s PhD thesis centered on studying native social classifications. For our paper, we will focus on analysing the impact of non-indigenous schooling on the Yine people. In particular, we will highlight Protapi’s research and reflections to illustrate how a young Yine leader perceives his people’s relationship to non-indigenous knowledge production.

In the paper *Steps towards an ethnographic theory of acculturation*, Gow (2015) develops an original theoretical framework for understanding the category of acculturation, through an ethnographic lens. He noted that traditional models of acculturation, which focus on the assimilation or rejection of a dominant culture by a subordinate culture, fail to capture the complex and dynamic nature of cultural interactions<sup>2</sup>. These models provide a superficial description of indigenous cultures and often ignore their logics and meanings in the process of establishing relations with outsiders. Therefore, the author stresses the importance of understanding categories in their local context, by asking people and questioning

1 At the conclusion of the paper, we have included a “brief memoir” that illuminates our encounter and highlights the reflections we present in our paper on alternative forms of knowledge and exchange in both educational and academic space.

2 He mentioned at the introduction of *Of mixed blood* the works of Wagley and Galvão (1949) as examples of these ideas of “loosing their [Tenetehara of Maranhão] distinctive cultures and becoming assimilated” (Gow, 19: 10)



pre-existing non-indigenous categories to truly comprehend the dynamics of cultural interaction. From this perspective, our paper is an effort to understand educational processes from an indigenous perspective and the experiences of the ancestors, leaders, and teachers of the Miaria community.

## The university and the school

Protapi was among the first students at UNILA. As it is a common narrative to indigenous students, his journey to reach the university and Brazil was not easy, and he also experienced a great clash when entering into the Latin American (non-indigenous) academic tradition. The experience was particularly difficult, especially because UNILA was a young university that had – by then - no experience receiving indigenous students<sup>3</sup>. Protapi was the first indigenous student to choose to study Anthropology at UNILA and he was, overall, among the first indigenous students to be at UNILA. He had to face the codes and practices of an academic tradition without much open space for intercultural encounters.

Although the arrival of indigenous students in Brazilian higher education should be celebrated, it is important to highlight that these students usually have difficulties keeping up with the pace of the scientific knowledge paradigm and how it is reproduced within non-indigenous institutions. Many of them drop out due to a lack of knowledge of the academic-scientific dynamics, language difficulties, and lack of institutional support, among other factors (Gordillo-Sánchez, 2016). Therefore, the fact that Protapi has completed his course is very significant and demonstrates his effort and concern to be able to help his community as a professional in anthropology.

Furthermore, Protapi's experience is similar to that of other Latin American indigenous anthropologists, such as Tonico Benites, who explained in his master's dissertation (2009) the significance of becoming a researcher and a professor to advocate for his indigenous community, the Guaraní-Kaiowá in Brazil. Benites emphasised the importance of occupying a space in the academy to establish a network with other researchers and authorities to bring visibility to the issues of his community. Protapi's BA thesis (2016) registered the tensions of migrating from the world of oral tradition to a non-indigenous formal space of learning, which requires the acquisition of specific logics and protocols for the production of knowledge. This cultural clash experienced by him was a great motivation for the choice of his research topic, and he believes that his work is crucial in creating visibility and addressing the challenges faced by the Yine-Yami people. In his own words, "I had achievements during my academic life, and I kept on developing it. I got to know the logic of academic knowledge in order to be able to criticise Western thought and to build knowledge from my own reality."<sup>4</sup> (Protapi, 2016: 21).

In his study, inspired by the contributions of Peter Gow, among other ethnologists, the indigenous anthropologist aimed to critically analyse the processes of schooling developed in his community since the first contact with missionaries. The fieldwork was carried out in Miaria, his home communi-

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<sup>3</sup> Currently, the university has implemented a special policy to attract and support indigenous students. In 2023, there were be 114 places available across 29 undergraduate courses specifically reserved for indigenous students.

<sup>4</sup> In the original: "Los logros durante mi vida académica se fueron desarrollando, fui conociendo la lógica del saber académico para poder criticar el pensamiento occidental y construir un conocimiento a partir de mi propia realidad".



ty, located on the Urubamba River, in the Peruvian department of Cusco. Its inhabitants speak Yine, from the Arawak linguistic family (like other indigenous peoples that live in the Peruvian Amazon such as Asháninka, Yánesha, and Matsigenka), and they also speak Spanish, as a colonial inherited language. The methodology he used was qualitative and was carried out with the leaders and elderly people of the Miaria community, who experienced these drastic changes in schooling. The fieldwork also included some interviews conducted previously, where contributions and suggestions emerged for modifications to an initial work. Oral interviews were conducted with both men and women to obtain different perceptions of Yine schooling.

In his 2016 undergraduate thesis, Protapi incorporates indigenous reflections to inform his research and lived experience, resulting in a form of self-ethnography. By doing so, he continues the work of Gow by exploring the impact of schooling on the Yine people. Protapi became interested in working with the leaders and “wise” members of his community who had experienced the “drastic changes that came from schooling”. He describes in short, his own experience as a student in his community:

My school experience began in 1993. I started to study in the pre-school in this institution, it was my first school education until I was 5 years old where I learned basic knowledge such as how to recognise colours, to add up, to sing in Yine and in Spanish. The teachers were Yine. When I was 6 years old I started to study in the Bilingual Primary School N° 6446, here I learned everything about multiplication, addition and subtraction, language. The lessons were taught in the Yine language and in Spanish because most of the teachers were Yine and some were Spanish-speaking. In the art course we learned how to make arrows and bows, sometimes we went out into the community to see the environment. As for the school structures, they were traditional houses built of palm trees, thatched walls and earthen floors. The school buildings were built by the parents themselves because there was no support from the local government. I studied in this school until 2001. Later I began to study in secondary school in the agricultural school “Elías Sebastián Cushichinari” where I learned history, geography, language, physical education, education for work, family education, religion among other courses, but here it was not as focused on the reality we live in as it was in pre-school and primary school. Only in the work education course did we learn how to sow tomatoes, cabbages, roses, plant and harvest so that we could have our own vegetable garden at home and not depend on vendors. I studied at this school until 2006. I did all my schooling in my native community of Miaria<sup>5</sup>. (Protapi, 2016: 17, our translation).

5 In the original: “Mi experiencia escolar comienza en el año 1993. Comencé a estudiar en el inicial en esta institución, fue mi primera formación escolar hasta los 5 años donde aprendí conocimientos básicos como a reconocer los colores, sumar, cantar en Yine y en español. Los profesores eran Yine. A los 6 años de edad empecé a estudiar en la Escuela primaria Bilingüe N° 6446, aquí aprendí todo lo que concierne en multiplicación, suma y resta, lenguaje. Las enseñanzas eran transmitidas en lengua Yine y en español por que la mayor parte eran Yine y algunos profesores hispano hablantes. En el curso de arte aprendíamos como hacer flechas y arcos algunas veces salíamos a la comunidad para conocer el medio ambiente. En cuanto las estructuras de las escuelas eran casas tradicionales construidas de palmeras, paredes de pajas y de piso de tierra. Las construcciones de las escuelas hechas por los mismos padres de familia porque no hubo apoyo del gobierno local. En esta escuela estude hasta el año 2001. Posteriormente comencé a estudiar en la secundaria en el colegio agropecuario “Elías Sebastián Cushichinari” donde aprendí, historia, geografía, lengua, educación física, educación para el trabajo, educación familiar, religión entre otros cursos, aquí no era tan enfocado en la realidad que vivimos como fue en el inicial y en primaria. Sólo en el curso de educación para el trabajo aprendíamos como sembrar, tomate, repollo, rosar plantar y cosechar para tener nuestra propia huerta en nuestra casa y no depender de los vendedores. En este colegio estudié hasta el año 2006. Toda mi formación escolar lo hice en mi comunidad Nativa de Miaria.



## Anthropological fieldwork in his community

While returning from Brazil to his hometown in Perú for fieldwork, Protapi received valuable support from his university colleague, Taisa Lewitski. Together, they organized an engaging intercultural event in Miaria titled “Exchange of knowledge and experience between Cabocla culture from Brazil and Yine-Yami from Perú”.

Protapi (2006) elaborated on the planning and execution of the workshop. Taisa shared insights into her cultural background, which she identified as the “Cabocla culture”, she emphasized her community’s unique customs, including traditional dances, belief systems, and social and political organization. The Yine participants expressed great enthusiasm for learning about an unfamiliar culture, finding it to be a new experience.

Yine educator Jeremias stressed the importance of appreciating both the Cabocla and Yine cultures, fostering a sense of mutual respect and understanding. In the days that followed, Protapi continued engaging in valuable discussions with community elders and members, exploring topics such as knowledge transmission, education, and other aspects deemed crucial for his research. These conversations enabled him to outline the primary focus of his BA thesis in Anthropology and Latin American Diversity, which revolved around the Yine-Yami people’s perceptions of their education processes. Therefore, Protapi’s work brings the voice of an indigenous anthropologist studying and analysing his own culture.

Protapi emphasises that his people had been researched by non-indigenous anthropologists, who described them using their Western categories, without considering the Yine forms of knowledge, called *Gimatkalchi*. According to Protapi, *Gimatkalchi* is a body of knowledge and epistemologies within the Yine community. In the book *An Amazonian myth and its history*, Gow (2001) explains that it is a key aspect of Yine thought and action, referring to potent knowledge and different abilities, even present in shamanic discourse. This power is evident in the use of medicinal plants, showcasing a deep understanding of natural phenomena. Regarding this matter, Federico, a member of Protapi’s community, stated during the fieldwork: “[our parents] made us take medicinal plants to improve our aiming (...). Our parents prepared the plants to give us strength and prevent weakness” <sup>6</sup>. (Protapi, 2016: 45).

Alex Protapi (2016) adds that *Gimatkalchi* could also refer to the knowledge and wisdom involved in body painting, ceramics, and textiles. Thus, *Gimatkalchi* represents the collective experience and wisdom that have been developed over centuries among Yine-Yami. As Gonzales, one of Protapi’s interviewees in his community, says, “The advice we were given came from our parents, grandparents; that’s why we still follow that advice now.” <sup>7</sup> (Protapi, 2016: 45, our translation).

By including *Gimatkalchi* in academic research and teaching, universities can promote social justice and decolonization by acknowledging and valuing indigenous knowledge systems and their contributions to society. Philosopher and member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, Ailton Krenak

<sup>6</sup> In the original: [nuestros padres] nos hacían tomar plantas medicinales para mejorar nuestra puntería (...). Nuestros padres preparaban las plantas para darnos fuerzas y prevenir la debilidad

<sup>7</sup> In the original: Los consejos que nos daban eran nuestros padres, abuelos, es por eso ahora seguimos esos consejos.



(2020) reflects on the issue of colonial violence, based on the hierarchy between sociocultural expressions and epistemologies. The Brazilian writer and indigenous movement leader criticises the part of humanity that considers itself “enlightened” and its “civilising” mission to bring “light” to other “obscured” forms of humanity. The book is an invitation to enable other forms of knowledge production, like *Gimatkalchi*, other ways of understanding science, other aesthetics, and other ways of knowledge. We consider that Protapi’s work is moving in that direction, as it shows us an epistemic critique of educational processes, based on his own historical experience. Consequently, we can observe an endeavour towards a “historical counter-anthropology of the white world” (Kopenawa; Albert, 2015: 542) that aims to reshape these educational processes.

## Family heritage in education: knowledge and wisdom

Gow reflected on that romanticised idea of “wild” indigenous people (1991: 8). He could self-reflect that he had spoken to them as missionaries and a “white boss” romanticising the lives of “traditional people” and that in many senses the Yine would maybe try to “emulate the lives of people living in cities”, but they would be proud of having their own “eat food” (wild game, forest fruit, manioc from their gardens, etc.). Gow wrote that slowly, he could move into that category of becoming “*como familia*” or as he translates “like kin”, to be trusted, respected, and remembered. In that sense, Protapi is kin, “family”. In fact, his school experience is intrinsically linked to his positionality in the genealogy of his family within the Yine-Yami community.

As Gow (1991: 89) explains: “Personal identities on the Bajo Urubamba, so confusing for the outsider, are not confusing for the local people, for it is the multiplicity of identity which locates any person within the known world of kinship”. And so is the case of Protapi. He is very well located in the kinship and education genealogy, which show how education was developed also thanks to his intercultural family:

Of the four sons of Elias, one of them is my grandfather Juan, who was the first teacher and missionary in the Miaria community, translating the new testament bible into the Yine language. He also translated *Tokanchi Gikshijikowaka - Steno* (a dictionary translated from Spanish into Yine language).

(...)

My grandmother Teresa, who is also Yine, had 11 children. As an artisan and missionary she translated *Goyakalu Gimalwutikaluru* (Chorarios in the Yine language) from the New Testament verses translated by my grandfather, she was also the first nurse who acted as a midwife in the Miaria community.

(...)

My parents are from different cultures, my mother Elicia Caleb is a teacher from the Ashaninka culture and my father is a teacher from the Yine culture, his original name is Sheyna, in Spanish he is called Jeremias Sebastian. My father was the first high school graduate to graduate from the Padre Francisco Álvarez school in the Native Community of Sepahua. He was also the first stu-

dent to graduate from the Summer Institute of Languages (SIL) in the Ucayali region of the city of Pucallpa<sup>8</sup> (Protapi, 2016: 16, our translation).

The trust that he builds with his interlocutors resembles the trust between family members. Protapi's family wanted him to become a leader, and his BA thesis is part of his family's investment in his education and political development, imbued with affection and care. It is interesting to note that his grandparents were the first missionaries in their community, and they had an active role in translating the Bible and other religious documents into the Yine language. On top of that, the most important school in the region is named after his grandfather, *Elías Sebastián Cushichinari*.

Elías Sebastián Cushichinari, my great-great-grandfather belonging to the Yine people, was the first to be taught to read and write by his employer. He later became the first Yine teacher. In homage to him, the name of my mixed agricultural school is "Elías Sebastián Cushichinari" in the Miaria community<sup>9</sup> (Protapi, 2016: 16).

Protapi studied in this secondary school, which is why he refers to the school as "my school". Self-reflecting on his student experience in the school as a child, he writes:

In my experience as a Yine student I could perceive that, despite the fact that most of the teachers are Yine, the model of education taught at school was not a model of intercultural education. That model of education did not value our knowledge. With my high school classmates I remember having dialogues about the difficulties of applying knowledge in everyday life, that is why today I can perceive the disinterest of young people in going to school, let alone in criticising the established model of education<sup>10</sup>. (Protapi, 2016: 17, our translation).

We can then observe how a native researcher's internal insights and thoughts about intercultural education can contribute to different knowledge traditions, particularly Anthropology. He also took note of the diminishing value given to orality: "Many oral sources are not considered as written ones, they do not have the same weight<sup>11</sup>" (Protapi, 2016: 31). The missionary's presence among the Yine replaced, or better written, took the place, of the elders, as he also observed: "Young Yine generally

8 In the original: De los cuatros hijos de Elías, uno de ello es mi abuelo Juan, quien fue el primero profesor y misionero de la comunidad Miaria, su trabajo como misionero consistía en traducir la biblia del nuevo testamento al idioma Yine. Además de ello tradujo Tokanchi Gikshijikowaka – Steno (Diccionario traducido del español al idioma Yine). Mi abuela Teresa, quien también es Yine, tuvo 11 hijos. Como artesana y misionera tradujo Goyakalu Gimalwutikaluru (Corarios, en la legua Yine) a partir de los versículos del nuevo testamento que traducía mi abuelo, también fue la primera enfermera que actuaba como partera en la comunidad Miaria.

Mis padres son de diferentes culturas, mi mamá Elicia Caleb es profesora de la cultura Ashaninka y mi papá es profesor de la cultura Yine, su nombre originario es Sheyna, en castellano se llama Jeremias Sebastián. Mi papá fue el primer promocionante de secundaria en graduarse en el colegio Padre Francisco Álvarez de la Comunidad Nativa de Sepahua. Además, fue el primer promocionante en graduarse en la enseñanza superior en el Instituto Lingüística de Verano - ILV en la región de Ucayali de la ciudad de Pucallpa.

9 In the original: "Elías Sebastián Cushichinari, mi tatarabuelo perteneciente al Pueblo Yine, fue el primer alfabetizado por su patrón. Luego pasó a ser el primer profesor Yine. En homenaje a su persona el nombre de mi colegio mixto agropecuario es 'Elías Sebastián Cushichinari' de la comunidad Miaria"

10 In the original: In the original: "En mi experiencia como estudiante Yine pude percibir que, a pesar de que la mayor parte de los profesores son Yine el modelo de educación que se enseña en la escuela no fue un modelo de educación intercultural. Ese modelo de educación no valorizaba nuestros saberes. Con mis compañeros de secundaria recuerdo tener diálogos acerca de las dificultades de aplicar el conocimiento en la vida cotidiana, es por eso que hoy puedo percibir el desinterés de los jóvenes en ir a la escuela, menos aún en criticar el modelo de la educación establecido"

11 In the original: "Muchas fuentes orales no son consideradas como las escritas, no tienen el mismo peso"



learned from their parents and grandparents, who were the ones in charge of passing on their knowledge<sup>12</sup> (Protapi, 2016: 42, our translation).

It also heavily affected intergenerational relationships, as Protapi himself points out: “before the arrival of intercultural bilingual education, children and young people had more respect for their elders” (Protapi, 2016: 26). The words and knowledge of the elders became less central to the young people, leading to a decline in their positionality in the inner hierarchy of knowledge values within their community. This shift occurred partly because the missionaries who introduced the schooling did not recognize the elders as valuable sources of knowledge, and oral history was not given the value it deserved. As Protapi also observes:

When schooling arrived, they left their oral culture in favour of a written culture. Formal education did not value the knowledge that is proper to the original peoples, the forms of knowledge production. Often history treats indigenous peoples without history, without memory and without writing<sup>13</sup> (Protapi, 2016: 29-30, our translation).

Gow analysed the influence of missionaries from the Summer Institute of Languages (SIL) among the Yine, especially via schooling and “formal” education. Protapi observes the same and he remarks on the ignorance of the religious people about the bigger dimension myths have in indigenous knowledge:

The evangelical missionaries brought their own customs and religion. They imposed ways of thinking and being in concepts such as God, sin, salvation, division of labour, myths, among others. For example, the missionaries categorised as myth, what for us Yine is our history (Protapi, 2016: 37)<sup>14</sup>.

Other indigenous scholars have reflected on the missionaries when establishing schools, like Tonico Benites in his studies about the Guaraní-Kaiowá pedagogy. Benites (2009) takes a historical approach that begins with the colonial context and identifies that the pedagogical practices developed by non-indigenous missionary-educators in the Guaraní-Kaiowá schools remain the same as those practised in the official schools in cities, such as methodology, didactic materials, evaluation, language, and the requirement for physical hygiene. In addition, although there are initiatives and projects aimed at integrating indigenous traditions into the classroom, Benites considers that they are often superficial or generic and fail to consider the unique cultural and linguistic specificities of these ethnic groups. Instead, they tend to oversimplify and caricature their culture.

As stated by Silvia Rivera-Cusicanqui:

12 In the original: jóvenes Yine generalmente aprendían con los padres y abuelos ellos eran los encargados de transmitirles los saberes

13 In the original: Cuando llegó la escolarización, abandonaron su cultura oral en favor de una cultura escrita. La educación formal no valoró los saberes propios de los pueblos originarios, las formas de producción de conocimiento. A menudo la historia trata a los pueblos indígenas sin historia, sin memoria y sin escrita.

14 In the original: Los misioneros evangélicos trajeron sus propias costumbres y religión. Ellos impusieron formas de pensar y ser en conceptos como; Dios, pecado, salvación, división de trabajo, mitos, entre otros. Por ejemplo, los misioneros categorizan como mito, lo que para nosotros los Yine es nuestra historia”

The official multiculturalism described above has been the concealing mechanism par excellence for new forms of colonisation. The elites adopt a strategy of crossdressing and articulate new forms of co-optation and neutralisation. In this way, they reproduce a “conditional inclusion,” a mitigated and second-class citizenship that moulds subaltern imaginaries and identities into the role of ornaments through which the anonymous masses play out the theatricality of their own identity (2020: 99-100).

## Elders as source of wisdom and counselling

In this sense, we observe that culture and education are mutually invoking and related terms. We understand education in a broad sense, as a process that recognizes history, culture, and tradition, and incorporates them into practices of knowledge transmission. It is not only about teaching academic subjects but also about preserving and passing on cultural and historical knowledge. Children in indigenous societies not only have a place of full participation in social life but also produce sociability and learning situations, through interaction with other actors. This kinship bond, produced in childhood, will determine fundamental relationships that adults will establish (Tassinari, 2009).

Benites (2009) points out that for the Guaraní-Kaiowá indigenous people the responsible members for education (such as parents) are guided by the leaders (grandparents) of the extended family. They are in charge of monitoring and evaluating, as well as reprimanding any actions considered incongruous with the rules of the extended family. Furthermore, during the process of transmitting knowledge, the leadership and supportive figures, such as the grandfather and grandmother, father, and mother of the children are fundamental people, with the authority to intervene in internal problems according to the moral norms established by them. These people are considered as legitimate guiding or educational leaders by their internal members and they are responsible for coordinating daily educational activities, educating, or guiding the correct behaviours and attitudes of inexperienced members of the family.

## Conclusion: school with space for *Gimatkalchi*

Protapi's observations of the Yine indigenous peoples' educational system highlight the significant role of the wise and old people, as they are fundamental in the process of transmitting knowledge. The importance of the grandparents' advice regarding traditional medicine and respect and appreciation for them is highlighted, and the need to find spaces where students can receive this advice is emphasised. During interviews with the elderly people, concern is expressed about the inclusion of this kind of knowledge in education, as it is considered essential for discipline and for maintaining Yine traditions and customs<sup>15</sup>.

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15 The register of indigenous elders' counseling and their poetic oral expression have been the concern for many anthropologists. The best example we know is the one we studied during the Indigenous Ethnology course at UNILA, produced in Uitoto and Spanish languages, with the narrative and counsels given by the Uitoto Hypólito Candre Kinerai and written by the anthropologist Juan Alvaro Echeverri (Echeverri and Candre, 2008 [1993]).



Protapi expresses a growing concern among Yine indigenous peoples that the younger generation no longer respects the wisdom and knowledge of the older generation, also due to the external non-indigenous influence. According to him, “(...) these ancient customs have been recently abandoned due to the migration of foreign people who bring their customs, which causes other changes in Yine customs lately”<sup>16</sup> (Protapi, 2016: 46, our translation). He quoted a suggestion made by Belaunde: “The idea is to find spaces where teachers and pupils can receive advice from elders and medicinal plants (Belaunde, 210: 131)”<sup>17</sup>. On the same path, Protapi has his suggestion on how to make the Yine school more appealing and interesting for the Yine new generations, like his own son: “I propose to value Gimatkalchi by teachers, pupils, school and academy”<sup>18</sup> (Protapi, 2016: 53).

We suggest that non-indigenous schools and formal education settings should give more attention and value to the traditional knowledge of indigenous communities and open up spaces for these encounters between old and new generations to feed each other with knowledge about ever-transformational worldviews.

In this paper, we analysed the impact of colonization on the Yine-Yami education process and tried to suggest paths in order to create intercultural dialogue between different epistemologies and generations. It is crucial to work towards decolonizing education by creating more opportunities for indigenous scholars and leaders, such as Protapi, to have a voice and contribute to knowledge production.

## *Post Scriptum, a memoir*

We would also like to register, as part of Peter Gow’s *festschrift*, a memoir. During her internship at the University of Oxford, as a PhD candidate, Barbara Arisi wrote to some teachers and researchers who had worked in the Amazon to present them her findings and share her reflections, she had the friendly answers of Steven Rubenstein and, recommended by him, also of Daniela Peluso. She visited and stayed overnight with them in Liverpool and Kent, respectively. Gow never replied to her. Finally, they met at an Amazonianist event. That same night, at a party in Elisabeth Ewerts’ house, while drinking and enjoying the warm evening under the moonlight, Gow asked us all who wanted to sing with him indigenous songs. The majority of the people just tried to convince him to change his mind because it was pretty late and people did not want to bother the neighbours. Arisi felt compelled to go along with him, she was also longing for this Amazonian knowledge-sharing moment. So, she sang to Gow and the others a Matis song (*tsari* chant, a song for the maize). To which Gow replied by singing a Yine chant as well.

We would like to take the opportunity to suggest that in meetings organised by the formal academic settings, we open up to singing, body painting, basket weaving, and other forms of knowledge transmission moments. We also love to remember the famous picture of Franz Boas performing an indigenous dance for his students. Why do schools and academies have to be so focused on non-indig-

16 In the original: esas costumbres antiguas últimamente se viene dejando por causas de las migraciones de personas foráneas que vienen consigo trayendo sus costumbre a ello se ve modificando las costumbres Yine últimamente.

17 In the original: Lo que se trata es de encontrar espacios donde los profesores y alumnos puedan recibir el consejo de los mayores y de las plantas medicinales” (Belaunde, 210: 131).

18 In the original: Propongo valorizar el Gimatkalchi por parte de los profesores, alumnos, escuela y la academi

enous written format <sup>19</sup>? We have to mimic more and more indigenous ways of learning and engaging with each other on this planet, it is more than time to indigenise ourselves in academic spaces, to stop being texts and word centric, and to teach what we have learned from indigenous people.

We are part of this anthropological circle that is also a sharing space of knowledge, embodied knowledge like Gow showed when chanting Yine songs. We all keep on learning from these small and big encounters we have with our colleagues in this planetary journey, like this encounter among Protapi, Daniel and Barbara that resulted in this paper. After all, knowledge can be just knowledge, but isn't it much nicer when it can be considered as well as part of a web of people entangled in nests and nets of affection, dance, songs, and maybe even shared wisdom? When we listen, we can even learn how to sing, like Protapi had learned in his primary school, and Gow from his Yine friends. Let's give it a try.

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#### FUNDING

*While co-writing this article, Daniel Gordillo-Sánchez received a doctoral internship scholarship to study at the University of Hamburg (Germany), granted by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES).*

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19 In the Associação Brasileira de Antropologia (ABA) meeting in Natal, Brazil, Deise Lucy Montardo danced and played together with Luiz Laureano da Silva and Moisés Luiz da Silva Baniwa, both from Itacoatiara Mirim - Amazonas, in the session "Debates around Collaborative Anthropology", another unforgettable performance moment, when the anthropologists show that they have learned and know how to teach the "indigenous way" by singing and dancing as they had been taught, in the Franz Boas and Yine tradition.



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## **EXPERIÊNCIAS EDUCACIONAIS E INTERCULTURAIS SOB A PERSPECTIVA DE PROTAPI, UM ANTROPÓLOGO YINE DE URUBAMBA, AMAZÔNIA, PERU**

**Resumo:** Este artigo apresenta a pesquisa realizada por Alex Protapi, um antropólogo e líder do grupo indígena Yine-Yami no Peru, em diálogo com o trabalho do antropólogo Peter Gow, que estudou o povo de Protapi, originalmente referido como Piro, mas que agora preferem ser chamados pelo etnônimo Yine. O artigo é baseado na investigação de Protapi, que explora as tensões que surgem quando comunidades indígenas transitam das tradições orais para espaços formais de aprendizagem não indígenas, exigindo a aquisição de novas lógicas e protocolos para a produção de conhecimento. Além de se basear em contribuições de outros intelectuais indígenas latino-americanos, o artigo destaca a importância de analisar as percepções dos povos indígenas sobre seus processos educacionais, especialmente no contexto de contatos e influências educacionais não indígenas. Sugerimos que as escolas Yine poderiam dar mais atenção e valor ao Gimatkalchi, também estudado por Gow. Acreditamos também que as escolas e instituições de ensino formais não indígenas poderiam aprender com os povos indígenas e prestar mais atenção em seus sistemas de conhecimento.

**Palavras-chave:** educação intercultural; Yine-Yami; Peter Gow; Miaria, Gimatkalchi.

## **EXPERIENCIAS EDUCATIVAS E INTERCULTURALES DESDE LA PERSPECTIVA DE PROTAPI, UN ANTROPÓLOGO YINE DE URUBAMBA, AMAZONÍA, PERÚ**

**Resumen:** Este artículo presenta la investigación realizada por Alex Protapi, un antropólogo y líder del grupo indígena Yine-Yami en Perú, en diálogo con el trabajo del antropólogo Peter Gow, quien estudió al pueblo de Protapi, anteriormente referido como Piro, pero que ahora prefiere ser llamado por el etnónimo Yine. El artículo se basa en la investigación de Protapi, que explora las tensiones que surgen cuando las comunidades indígenas transitan de las tradiciones orales a espacios de aprendizaje formales no indígenas, lo que les exige adquirir nuevas lógicas y protocolos para la producción de conocimiento. Además de basarse en los aportes de otros intelectuales indígenas latinoamericanos, el artículo destaca la importancia de analizar las percepciones de los pueblos indígenas sobre sus procesos educativos, particularmente en el contexto de contactos con influencias escolares no indígenas. Sugerimos que las escuelas Yine podrían dar más atención y valor al Gimatkalchi, noción también estudiada por Gow. Creemos también que las escuelas no indígenas y los entornos de educación formal podrían aprender de los pueblos indígenas y prestar mayor atención a sus sistemas de conocimiento.

**Palabras clave:** educación intercultural; Yine-Yami; Peter Gow; Miaria; Gimatkalchi.

**EDUCATION AND INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCES IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF  
ALEX PROTAPI, A YINE ANTHROPOLOGIST FROM URUBAMBA, AMAZONIA,  
PERU**

**Abstract:** This paper presents the research conducted by Alex Protapi, an anthropologist and leader of the Yine-Yami indigenous group in Peru, in dialogue with the work of anthropologist Peter Gow, who studied Protapi's people, originally referred to as the Piro, but who now they prefer to be called by the ethnonym: Yine. The article is based on Protapi investigation, which explores the tensions that arise when indigenous communities transition from oral traditions to non-indigenous formal spaces of learning, requiring them to acquire new logics and protocols for knowledge production. In addition to drawing on insights from other Latin American indigenous intellectuals, the article highlights the importance of analyzing the perceptions of indigenous people about their educational processes, particularly in the context of contacts with non-indigenous schooling influences. We suggest that Yine schools could give more attention and value to the Gimatkalchi, also studied by Gow. We also believe that non-indigenous schools and formal education settings could learn from indigenous people and pay greater attention to their knowledge systems.

**Keywords:** intercultural education; Yine-Yami; Peter Gow; Miaria, Gimatkalchi.

SUBMETIDO: 10/12/2024

APROVADO: 10/12/2024

PUBLICADO: 30/01/2025



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