20 TIMES TO PROVE YOU ARE A MAN

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Courtesy of De Neil Griffin
The Satere-Mawe people are an indigenous tribe located in the Amazon. Right now the tribe’s estimated population is of 10,761 people. This tribe was the first to plant and cultivate guarana, which is a popular stimulant that grows in many places of Brazil. The Mawe people have little or none contact with the outside world since they stick to their traditions and cultures. This tribe has many different names, however the most known name is the of course Satere-Mawe. They speak their own language that comes from the Tupian and the Portuguese. This tribe has a special ritual called the bullet ant ritual in which they transform into men and warriors.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RITUALS

The Satere-Mawe bullet ant ritual is the way of a Satere boy to become a man and a warrior. For them completing this ritual without crying is a way of showing manhood, but they have to go through it not once but 20 times before become a real man. In this type of tribes, becoming a man is very important and showing the rest of tribe that you are old enough is a way of earning respect.

They have to show that they are not children any more and the only way of doing so is to go through this ritual 20 times without crying. This people believe that if you don’t go through any pain in their lives it wouldn’t be a good life and you would not be worthy of living it, this ritual not only turns them into a man but it will turn them into a better person.

All the men go into the jungle and dance around the gloves before putting them in the children’s hands. They have special dances that are performed in special occasions such as this one. The most special art of the ceremony is the dance that the children perform when they have the gloves on; this dance is performed by the child alone until the pain is too big, the medics from the tribe in the tribe have to help him. The dance is danced at the rhythm of a traditional song played by the elder of the tribe, they can take part on the ritual because through their life they have shown that they are real men and they have make sacrifices for the tribe.
go in to help him. The dance is played at the rhythm of a traditional song played by the elder of the tribe, they can take part on the ritual because through their life they have shown that they are real men and they have make sacrifices for the tribe. The women and girl in the tribe are in charge of painting the men and the children; these paintings are for special ceremonies and they are made out of special herbs.

Relationships are shown because this special ritual is made with bullet ants. The adults in the tribe collect the ants because they have experience and they have already proven that they are men. Usually, these are at the base of the trees. There are special ways to hunt the ants always giving them the respect that they deserve. The bullet ant sting can be worst than twenty wasps and the pain can go up to 24 hours, the locals call them veinticuatro. So the men are very careful at the time of hunting them.

The children have to dance ten minutes with the gloves full of ants but the pain is worst when they take the gloves out, they start convulsing and eventually the pain stays the next 24 hours. They drug the ants with herbal solution so that the sting can be more painful and venom is more effective. When the ants wake up and they found themselves trapped, the ants are more active and the sting can be even stronger.

Ceremony is shown because it is a special moment and everyone dances and cheers for the one doing the ritual. In order for a boy to become a man in this tribe, they must go through this rite. Only men participate in this ritual. However, the ritual can also be celebrated for men to become warriors instead of a boy becoming a man.

This is a bullet ant. Its name refers to its bite since victims say it feels like a bullet. (Courtesy of Neil Griffin)
The Satere-Mawe people have done this painful and horrifying ritual for hundreds of years because for them, becoming a man is a way of honoring their tribe and their elders. Bullet ants have one of the worst stings in the world, these children go through 24 hours of horror 20 times and this deserves recognition from their tribe and the rest of the world.

This is a drawing of a Satere-Mawe person doing the ritual. (Courtesy of Jess Suttner).
Bibliography


