Abstract

The coca leaf, appreciated among the indigenous peoples since their first contacts and spread by them to other places during millennia, have entered into the complex, conflictive processes -both intercultural and international- of stigmatization and marginalization since the colonial period until up today. Argentina is included in these processes, because the coca is commonly used in Argentina’s northern Andean areas. This paper presents two Argentine social scientists -Juan Bautista Ambrosetti and Mario Rabey- that belong to two periods that not only separate the publication of their studies on the coca leaf uses by almost one hundred years but also give different meanings to their study object and its purpose. While Ambrosetti represents the hegemony that stigmatizes the non-European cultural practice and legitimates this hegemony with his texts, Rabey claims that such a practice is part of the cultural diversity understood as a discriminated cultural difference, with a critical attitude towards the national idiosyncratic hegemony. Through the comparison between them, this paper considers this change in the anthropological view as a product of the complex of relations developed between this difference and its meaning in science and politics.

Keywords

Coca, Anthropological view, Stigmatization, Legitimacy, Cultural diversity.